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Encyclopedia of



THE NOVEL

VOLUME 2

EDITED BY PAUL SCHELLINGER

Encyclopedia of THE NOVEL

Volume 2

M – Z

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Volume 2
M – Z

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M

Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis 1839–1908

Brazilian

Machado de Assis was a prolific novelist, short-story writer, chronicler, playwright, poet, and essayist. He left a legacy of nine novels, eight short-story collections, four volumes of poetry, 13 plays, and numerous critical essays, all of which are collected in his *Obra completa* (Complete Works). He is regarded as Brazil's most gifted and important writer of the 19th century, having significantly influenced several generations of authors in that country.

Literary critics often compare Machado to authors such as Laurence Sterne, Henry Fielding, Gustave Flaubert, James Joyce, and Marcel Proust. Machado was a voracious reader, familiar with most European writers and philosophers, to whom he made explicit reference in his texts. In the second edition of *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas* (1881; *Epitaph of a Small Winner*), Machado added an explanatory preface intended as a reply to puzzled critics, who could not decide if *Epitaph of a Small Winner* was a novel, a moral dissertation, or a humorous book. In his explanation, Machado defends his writing style and compares it to Laurence Sterne's and Xavier de Maistre's.

It was not until the mid-1900s that the English-speaking world acknowledged Machado as a first-rate novelist and short-story writer. Numerous English translations of his texts have appeared since then. Occasionally, contemporary writers in the United States have credited Machado with a meaningful impact on their careers as novelists. John Barth, for one, has discussed in numerous interviews how Machado's texts, particularly *Dom Casmurro* (1899; *Dom Casmurro*), inspired him to write his first novel, *The Floating Opera* (1956). Although Barth also finds similarities between Machado's and Sterne's narrative devices, he considers Machado a more passionate writer than Sterne. Susan Sontag also has acknowledged her literary debt to Machado, citing especially *Epitaph of a Small Winner*.

Machado witnessed the trends of several literary movements, including romanticism, realism, naturalism, symbolism, and impressionism, absorbing the best of them without becoming subservient to their tenets and characteristics. Although his works reflect pertinent historical and political ideals, social problems, local color, and the cultural transition that Brazilian society underwent in the 19th century, his novels transcend regionalism.

While his themes reflect the epoch in which he lived, his style distinguishes him from any other writer of that period. His use of irony, dark humor, philosophical speculation, and narrative self-consciousness has led critics to emphasize that not only did he survive the rigors of realism and naturalism in Brazil, but he also created his own aesthetic orientation.

Scholars and critics frequently overlook the gradual maturation of Machado's ideas and style, preferring to divide his works into two separate phases, pre- and post-1880. The so-called romantic or early stage includes the novels *Ressureição* (1872; *Resurrection*), *A mão e a luva* (1874; *The Hand and the Glove*), *Helena* (1876; *Helena*), and *Yayá Garcia* (1878; *Yayá Garcia*). The second phase, which defines him as a great writer, begins in 1881 with the publication of *Epitaph of a Small Winner* and also includes the novels *Dom Casmurro*, *Quincas Borba* (1891; *Philosopher or Dog?*), *Esau e Jacó* (1904; *Esau and Jacob*), and *Memorial de Aires* (1908; *Counselor Ayres' Memorial*). Although at first glance there seems to be a separation between the two phases, a strict division of Machado's work is an oversimplification. The second phase may be considered a continuation and perfection of the first phase, presenting the maturation of his style, technique, and aesthetic principles. The Brazilian critic Afrânio Coutinho believes that Machado's literary progression is even more evident in his short stories than in his novels (see Coutinho, 1960).

In terms of experimentation with literary technique and word choice, Machado was a virtuoso whose texts parody the scientific pretensions and philosophical trends of the 19th century and question values commonly accepted as truths. Machado makes skillful use of irony and ambiguity, allowing his characters to explore their psychological world. The use of multiple perspectives, suspense, temporal dislocations, parody, and wordplay demonstrates his narrative mastery on every page.

Even though Machado belongs properly to the 19th century and his themes conform to a 19th-century reality, his experimentation with writing and the deconstructive quality of some of his novels, especially *Dom Casmurro*, *Epitaph of a Small Winner*, and *Philosopher or Dog?*, place him beyond the dogmas of realism and naturalism. By mastering narrative technique and probing the characters' ontological and epistemological dilemmas,

Machado anticipates narrative trends found in modern and post-modern novels.

In his last five novels, Machado often presents narrators who destabilize any concept of truth that the texts themselves attempt to formulate. He crafts a "poetics of fracture," an expression coined by Vincent Leitch in *Deconstructive Criticism* (1983), in the sense that he uses techniques of fragmentation that disrupt the linear flow of the narrative and bring forth the characters' inner conflicts. In *Dom Casmurro*, for example, the constant fluctuation between oppositions (reliability/unreliability of the narrator, truth/lie, fidelity/infidelity, appearance/reality) unravels and underscores textual contradictions and double logic.

Ambiguity and the analysis of the narrators' paradoxes and contradictions constitute the main focus of Machado's later works. His novels establish a textual dialogue with readers in the sense that the reader is invited to participate in the narrative process. At the end of each text, Machado leaves the reader with the task of reading between the lines and sorting out the multiple layers of meaning.

MARIA JOSÉ SOMERLATE BARBOSA

See also *Dom Casmurro*

Biography

Born in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 21 June 1839. Worked as a clerk and later typographer's apprentice at the National Press, 1854–58; salesman and proofreader, Paulo Brito Bookshop; published his first works in periodicals including *A Marmota Fluminense*, *Correio Mercantil*, *Diário do Rio de Janeiro*, and *A Semana Ilustrada*; clerk, then Director of accounting division, Ministry of Agriculture, Commerce and Public Works, 1873–1908; member and censor, 1862–64, Conservatório Dramático Brasileiro; granted the Order of the Rose, 1888; founding president, Academia Brasileira de Letras, 1897–1908. Died 29 September 1908.

Novels by Machado de Assis

Ressureição [Resurrection], 1872

A mão e a luva, 1874; as *The Hand and the Glove*, translated by Albert I. Bagby, Jr., 1970

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Posthumous Reminiscences of Brás Cubas, translated by E. Percy Ellis, 1955

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Hugh MacLennan 1907–90

Canadian

From the beginning of his career, Hugh MacLennan was determined, at one and the same time, to become a commercially successful writer, to employ his art in the service of pressing social themes, and, above all, to lay the firm basis for an essentially na-

tional Canadian literature. To achieve these ends, he adopted, quite openly, the principle of the sugared pill. His novels invariably contain strong and absorbing plots—including a prominent love component—specifically designed to arouse and maintain

the interest of the general reader. Although they are often involved in enterprises that might be described as epic or heroic, MacLennan's characters are basically ordinary folk living in accurately represented Canadian milieux and caught up in issues concerning community and country. MacLennan was not an experimental—or even a “literary”—novelist. His preoccupation was always didactic: fiction was primarily a vehicle for the exploration of social, political, national, and religious questions. As the title of one of his essays in *The Other Side of Hugh MacLennan* (1978) indicates, for him the writer is always “The Writer Engagé.”

His first published novel, *Barometer Rising* (1941), conveniently illustrates MacLennan's basic procedure. Set in Halifax during World War I, it is one of the first novels to be located in a specific and meticulously described Canadian city. *Barometer Rising* tells the story of Neil Macrae, who has been accused of cowardice on the battlefield and is believed to have died somewhere in France. But Neil survives, returning to Halifax incognito in order to clear his name and win the woman he loves. His return coincides with a famous disaster that took place in December 1917 when a munitions ship, involved in a collision in Halifax harbor, exploded and destroyed a large part of the city (an event to which the young MacLennan was an eyewitness). In this largest man-made explosion before Hiroshima, Neil's accuser is providentially killed, and Neil himself is able to perform acts of heroism and regain his self-esteem. Readers initially attracted to the human story are inevitably provoked to consider such questions as the nature of war and the political relation between Canada and the conflict in Europe. The explosion, presented with vivid documentary realism, is offered as a kind of Canadian rite of passage between the old world and the new.

MacLennan's subsequent novels focus on crucial aspects of Canadian experience. *Two Solitudes* (1945) examines the uneasy relations between the English- and French-speaking peoples in Quebec. Beginning with the conscription crisis during World War I and ending at the outbreak of World War II, *Two Solitudes* attempts to review all aspects of the subject, dealing also with the related clash between rural and industrial values and the conflict between religious and secular attitudes to life. A marriage at its close optimistically unites representatives of the two peoples. MacLennan returned to the subject later in *Return of the Sphinx* (1967), which is set at a time when the so-called “Quiet Revolution” and the increase of separatist sentiments in Quebec were becoming less quiet. The later novel presents a darker view of the split and boldly challenged nationalistic euphoria at the time of the Canadian centennial.

The Precipice (1948) takes up the vexed issue of Canadian/American relations, while *Each Man's Son* (1951), more social and less overtly political in intent, takes a hard look at the impact of the Calvinist religious conscience on the inhabitants of a Cape Breton mining community. Two more novels followed, *The Watch That Ends the Night* (1959) and *Voices in Time* (1980). The latter is set in a grim future after an accidentally initiated nuclear disaster has overtaken Montreal, but it reaches back to recreate the world of Nazi anti-Semitism in the 1930s and the confusion of moral values represented by the 1960s.

The Watch That Ends the Night, which enjoyed a commercial and critical success when it first appeared in 1959, is still generally regarded as MacLennan's finest novel. The plot, as so often

in MacLennan, is unlikely and melodramatic (including another character who returns after being presumed dead). But the social commentary is organically integrated with it. One of the main figures narrates the story in the first person, and MacLennan shrewdly makes him a political essayist and commentator by profession. As such, he comments naturally and acceptably on events that range from just after World War I, through the Depression, to the cold war years of the early 1950s. The struggles of ordinary human beings to survive with dignity in a dangerously threatening world are impressively evoked. The novel also contains a passionately presented religious question inspired by circumstances involving the illness and death of MacLennan's first wife. A personal urgency surfaces here that is uncommon in MacLennan's fiction. The whole is played out against a moving, detailed, and historically comprehensive portrait of Montreal in the first half of the 20th century.

Although MacLennan was hardly a technical innovator, he habitually employed an unusual combination of the realistic and the mythic. As George Woodcock was the first to point out, MacLennan (whose original training was in classical languages) offers variations on the Homeric story of Odysseus returning to his homeland. (In *Barometer Rising*, the name of Neil's beloved is Penelope.) The outcome of these Odyssean returns is often violent, as in *Each Man's Son*, where the returning husband kills his wife and her lover and almost immediately dies. Although MacLennan's stories are popular and even sensational, the use of the Homeric motif endows them with an intriguing dimension that permits symbolic and often profound psychological interpretation.

MacLennan is important in the history of Canadian fiction more for his example than for his achievement. He constructed a sturdy foundation upon which others were to build more confidently, imaginatively, and experimentally. Many subsequent Canadian novelists would have to agree with Robert Kroetsch when he remarked (in an address reprinted in Cameron, 1982): “Hugh MacLennan, more than any other writer, made it possible for me to write.”

W.J. KEITH

Biography

Born 20 March 1907 in Glace Bay, Nova Scotia. Attended Halifax Academy; Dalhousie University, Halifax, B.A. 1928; Oriel College, Oxford (Rhodes scholar), B.A., M.A. 1932; Princeton University, New Jersey, Ph.D. in classical studies 1935. Classics master, Lower Canada College, Montreal 1935–45; full-time writer, 1945–51; associate professor, 1951–67, professor of English, 1967–79, and professor emeritus from 1979, McGill University, Montreal. Died 7 November 1990.

Novels by MacLennan

Barometer Rising, 1941
Two Solitudes, 1945
The Precipice, 1948
Each Man's Son, 1951
The Watch That Ends the Night, 1959
Return of the Sphinx, 1967
Voices in Time, 1980

Other Writings: essays, lectures, and other nonfiction.

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Madame Bovary by Gustave Flaubert

1857

Gustave Flaubert began to write his best-known work, *Madame Bovary*, in September 1851 shortly after returning from an 18-month trip to Egypt and the Near East. (The heroine's dreams—of a honeymoon set in a bejewelled city overlooking the sea, or of the rich life awaiting her in Paris if only fate would allow her to live there—owe a great deal, no doubt, to the colorful memories accumulated during this journey.) After five years of wrestling with an increasingly uncongenial subject, Flaubert published the novel in October 1856 in the *Revue de Paris*—an unwise choice considering the *Revue de Paris*' liberal tendencies were viewed with suspicion by the imperial government. Subsequently, the author and the publisher were brought to trial in January 1857 for publishing an obscene work. The following month, thanks to a skillful defense counsel (and also, perhaps, to Flaubert's social standing as the son of an eminent doctor), they were acquitted. (Later the same year, Charles Baudelaire's *Fleurs du Mal*, on a similar charge, did not fare so well.) Published by Michel Lévy in April, the novel enjoyed an initial *succès de scandale* and excellent sales: it has remained ever after the work with which Flaubert is usually associated.

If Flaubert was, as Henry James believed, "the novelists' novelist," then *Madame Bovary* must surely be regarded as the novelists' novel. From the brief but perceptive comments by contemporaries such as Ivan Turgenev and Guy de Maupassant to the detailed analyses by 20th-century writers as diverse as Marcel Proust, Nathalie Sarraute, and Mario Vargas Llosa, Flaubert's obsessive preoccupation with the art and craft of writing has been an endless source of fascination to writers and would-be writers alike. *Madame Bovary* has also been, preeminently, a translator's novel, finding its way into all the major languages of the world. The standard bibliography by D.J. Colwell lists 14 versions in English alone, the best known of which, by Karl Marx's daughter, was revised in 1965 by Paul de Man. Above all, this apparently straightforward story of an unhappy marriage, frustrated dreams, and financial setbacks, culminating in the suicide of the heroine and death of her hapless, adoring, but ill-matched spouse, has been the work that, of all the canonical texts written in France in the 19th century, appears to have been written with future critics in mind. It has been discussed as a key example, a model, and a test case for at least three of the

major literary movements of the last 150 years, namely realism, modernism, and postmodernism.

In Flaubert's lifetime, as well as in most standard literary histories and major theoretical works such as Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis* (1946), *Madame Bovary* has been linked to the theory and practice of realism. Flaubert disliked both the term and the works associated with it: *faire rêver*, rather than *faire vrai*, was (and would remain) his chief aesthetic ambition. Nevertheless, a certain authenticity, notably in the celebrated descriptions (a true-to-lifeness not only in the detailed reality effects found on virtually every page but also, at a more general level, in the evocation of provincial life), has undoubtedly contributed to the novel's appeal to successive generations. The accounts of Emma's convent education, which alienates her from the society in which she is destined to live, and of Homais' steady progress to fame and fortune—as he says, "il faut marcher avec son siècle"—are only two among countless examples of a vein of historical realism as profound as any passages from Balzac or Tolstoi.

However, as some of Flaubert's earliest admirers were aware, the concept of realism, however defined, has never served as an entirely adequate critical tool with which to define the special qualities of *Madame Bovary*. Rather, what struck James and would remain the principal focus of several generations of critics was the quality of the writing, the carefully modulated rhythms, together with a structural integrity more reminiscent of classical tragedy than of the "loose and baggy monsters" that novels, even before Flaubert's great Russian contemporaries came on the scene, naturally tend to become. Flaubert's letters undoubtedly fostered the myth of the master-craftsman of Croisset, agonizing for hours over a single paragraph, bringing to fiction an obsessive care usually more associated with the writing of poetry. With a century and a half of hindsight, it is easy to point out both the cluster of half-truths to which this myth of *l'homme-plume*—the writer given over entirely to his art—has given rise, and, more particularly, the way in which Flaubert's stylistic difficulties were elevated into a virtue rather than a handicap, which, biographically speaking, they undoubtedly were. Nor have critics been slow to point out the contradictions in the poetics of fiction that Flaubert elaborated in his letters to Louise Colet and

other friends. On some evenings, after a day spent wondering how to integrate a particular episode into the whole narrative, he would declare that a great work of art could be made out of the humblest material, since everything lies in the treatment. Elsewhere, Flaubert claimed that the key to lasting greatness may be found, rather, in the marriage of subject and style. The fact remains that it is for its formal properties—the carefully balanced sentences, the composition of individual scenes, and the overall structure—that *Madame Bovary* has received the highest praise.

This orthodox view of *Madame Bovary* as the first truly modern novel, and of Flaubert—whose belief in narrative objectivity and whose skill in treading the fine line between lyricism and irony made him the natural father figure and progenitor of high modernism—prevailed for at least half a century. However, when Nathalie Sarraute wrote in 1965 of “Flaubert *précurseur*,” she was referring to affinities with her own writing and that of her *nouveaux romanciers* colleagues rather than to the experiments of Virginia Woolf or James Joyce. Since 1970, owing to the persuasive arguments of Jonathan Culler (1974) and to Jean-Paul Sartre’s insistence that Flaubert’s notorious difficulties with language are more revealing than the ways he found to overcome them, a more playful image of Flaubert—closer to *Bouvard et Pécuchet* (or to Julian Barnes’ *Flaubert’s Parrot*) than to the blend of irony and pathos that underlies *Madame Bovary*—has found widespread acceptance among academic critics. Yet Culler’s claim that Flaubert’s novels succeed to the extent that they prevent the reader’s attempts to make sense of them may be carrying postmodern playfulness to excess. *Madame Bovary* is in no sense the “book about nothing” that Flaubert, in a quite different context, said he wanted to write. It has a subject to which readers of many different backgrounds can relate, and its formal properties, which include a beginning, middle, and end that are apparent even to the most unsophisticated reader, have stood up

to the most rigorous analysis. Above all, like Cervantes’ *Don Quixote*, a book that Flaubert preferred above all others and that he re-read every year, *Madame Bovary* takes the reader into the poignant, tragicomic gap that separates life as it could be, or as it might have been (had Emma chosen a more intelligent husband or more sensitive lover), and life as it is.

GRAHAM FALCONER

See also Gustave Flaubert

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Magazines. See Periodicals and the Serialization of Novels; Reviewers and the Popular Press

Maghribī Novel. See African Novel: Northern Africa

The Magic Mountain by Thomas Mann

Der Zauberberg 1924

The Magic Mountain is a Bildungsroman. The novel of education, or apprenticeship novel, focuses on the hero's spiritual and emotional development toward independence and enlightenment. Many of Mann's contemporaries were puzzled that he employed this form. Although it had flourished during the 19th century, the Bildungsroman had been considered obsolete for several decades. Mann revived the form because he believed it was the best way to portray the profound spiritual changes occurring in Germany after World War I. *The Magic Mountain* is, therefore, also the story of an epoch during which an entire nation and its people are being transformed. Representing 1912 Europe in microcosm, the sick and dying inhabitants of the sanatorium Berghof frivolously refuse to face facts. With surgical precision Mann autopsies the values and attitudes that led to the catastrophe of war.

Characteristic of the novel of education is the lack of plot in the conventional sense. Hans Castorp, 23, spends seven years at Berghof. Here he meets people from whom he learns the myriad possibilities that life has to offer. That summarizes the external action. The internal action concerns Hans' self-discovery and his attainment of spiritual and emotional independence. Since Hans also functions as a representative of Germany, the implication is that the nation as a whole must embark on a similar path.

Traditionally, the hero of the Bildungsroman stands above the average and is gifted in some way. Mann deviates from the norm in that Hans is an unmotivated, average man from the middle class without any particular talent. Yet he achieves the same ideal that his more distinguished predecessors achieve. In this way, Mann shows that the road to enlightenment is open to everyone.

Another common feature of the Bildungsroman is the mentor who assists the hero. Often the member of a secret society, the mentor instructs the seeker in the principles of the group he represents. Mann again diverges from the traditional form by introducing two mentors who promote opposite ideologies. Both are equally brilliant, equally persuasive, and equally determined to gain Hans as a disciple. The first half of the novel is dominated by the Italian humanist and Mason, Ludovico Settembrini, and to a lesser extent by the Russian, Clavdia Chauchat. Settembrini represents the classical ideals of Western civilization, of the Renaissance, and of the Enlightenment. Clavdia Chauchat invokes the temptations of the East. Her mentality is basically irrational, lethargic, and submissive. (*Chauchat* in French means "hot cat.") Clavdia is replaced by Leo Naphta as the representative of Eastern mentality after Walpurgis Night (witch's Sabbath). Converted from Judaism to Catholicism and educated by the Jesuits, Naphta stands for the intellectual side of Oriental mysticism. His cast of mind is decidedly irrational. Using terror when necessary, he promotes the worship of the dark, instinctive forces. The tension and irreconcilability of East and West emerge most vividly during the scintillating, wonderfully articulate disputes between Naphta and Settembrini. The latter defends reason against the former's blind faith, monism against dualism, spirit against flesh, humanism against terrorism, the Renaissance against fanatic medievalism. According to Mann, these are the two ideologies facing Hans in particular and Germany in general.

The resolution of such conflicts is the central theme. The novel's turning point comes when Hans, torn between the two ideologies, has an epiphany in the chapter "Snow." He realizes that neither Naphta nor Settembrini has the answer. He understands that their disputes are based on the arbitrary creation of polarities. In a flash he perceives the fundamental unity beneath their standpoints. Hans speculates on the polarities of spirit and flesh, duty and inclination, reason and faith, and concludes that they exist only in the mind. A dream reveals that opposites are reconciled through enlightenment and love. This is the beginning of the new Hans.

The irrelevance of Settembrini's and Naphta's intellectual subtleties is underscored by the arrival of yet another mentor, Mynher Peeperkorn, a rich planter from the Dutch East Indies. Irrational, inarticulate, and sensual, he is devoted solely to the "simple pleasures" of food, drink, and sex. This Dionysian figure is diseased and no longer young, yet he holds center stage effortlessly through the overwhelming magnitude of his personality. He demolishes Settembrini's and Naphta's abstractions with the simple observation, "cerebrum, cerebral." Although Hans is strongly attracted to this figure, he is not influenced by him any more than he is by the others. In fact, no single ideology remains intact at the end. Peeperkorn commits suicide when his sexual powers fail. Settembrini, the advocate of enlightened humanism, is condemned to a life in the sickbed. Naphta, the spokesman for faith and obedience, blows his brains out in a maniacal rage. What remains is Hans Castorp who has learned to stay independent of ideologies and rely on himself. In the end, he is a soldier in Flanders in 1914. He is 30 years old. Ironically, "30" is editorial jargon for "end of manuscript."

Another of Mann's innovations consists of making the Bildungsroman accommodate contemporary problems in literature—in this case, the problem of time. The theme of time is one of the central concerns of modern literature. Numerous parallels to Mann's conception of timelessness are found in the works of Rainer Maria Rilke, Hermann Broch, Marcel Proust, and James Joyce. Mann's objective is to erase the reader's concept of past and future in favor of an eternal present. He achieves this in a number of ways, the most obvious of which is the repetitiveness of routine. The day at Berghof revolves around five mealtimes. The invariability of the mealtime schedule converts time into a series of unending recurrences. It also serves as a point of reference for the remainder of the novel in that the reader knows exactly what is happening at any time of day. The eternal present is further achieved by the extensive use of the leitmotiv: Hans' cigars, Settembrini's checkered trousers, and Naphta's flashing spectacles all contribute to produce the effect of a timeless present.

In other matters of style Mann displays great virtuosity. For him, language is an instrument to be played. The long and complex sentences for which he is known are rich with epithets and symbolic meaning. His superb gift of description is seen in his meticulous rendering of interiors, dress, mannerism, and character. Mann is also known for a unique stylistic device. He enjoys taking readers into his confidence and talking to them in a direct

and friendly way. He frequently steps out of the story to comment on the action or to help his readers with a few remarks. Concerning this he wrote: "Discursive speech, the author's intrusion, does not need to be alien to art, it can be part of it, and itself be a means of art."

The Magic Mountain revived the German Bildungsroman. By expanding its limits and inventing new techniques, Mann breathed new life into a moribund form. Along with Hermann Hesse, Mann is directly responsible for the renaissance that the Bildungsroman has experienced this century.

JOHN D. SIMONS

See also Thomas Mann

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Magic Realism

Magic realism (also called magical realism) is a style or manner of writing in which the author, through a variety of artistic techniques and strategies, seeks to combine unusual with ordinary elements of human existence in order to provide as complete a representation of reality as possible.

The term *magic realism* emerged during the interwar years in an intellectual atmosphere dominated by the political, social, and economic aftermath of both World War I and the Russian Revolution, as well as by Freud's works dealing with the unconscious and dreams. It is generally agreed that the term was first used by the German art historian Franz Roh in the title of his 1925 book, *Nach-expressionismus: Magischer Realismus: Probleme der neuesten europäischen Malerei* (Post-Expressionism: Magic Realism: Problems of the Newest European Painting). Here Roh applies *magischer Realismus* to new German painters of the period, especially those of the Munich-based *neue Sachlichkeit* (New Reality) school. Roh did not intend the term *magischer Realismus* to imply a blending of the fantastic, the absurd, and the grotesque with everyday reality, as it has come to be understood today. To Roh, magic realism was equivalent to postexpressionism, an approach to painting that sought to represent the unusual occurrences in people's lives, in contrast to the art of the contemporaneous surrealists, which embodied a more transcendent view of reality and style of representation. Surrealists hoped to understand a superior reality by augmenting their external experience, which many of them saw as shackled by human reason, laws, and mores, with the interior, unfettered force of the unconscious; hence their preoccupation with unconscious processes, especially dreams and hallucinations, and automatic writing.

Magic realists, rather than concentrating solely on the dark

realms of the unconscious, sought to enrich the idea of what is real through the dimensions of magic, myth, and the unusual that occur in ordinary, everyday life. One important implication of this difference in emphasis is that the best of the surrealist writers expressed their intense interactions with the unconscious through poetry and for the most part avoided the larger, more leisurely novel form. Magic realists, by contrast, have chosen as their primary medium of expression prose fiction, both the short story and novel, where they are capable of intense flights of imagination that often seem quite surrealistic but that are contained within a logical, sequential narrative flow. Moreover, there is virtually no magic realist poetry of note. Another important distinction is that surrealists largely eschewed political engagement in their writing by comparison with magic realists, who seem to emerge from and to thrive on times of marked political foment and social turmoil.

In Spring 1927 a portion of Roh's book was published in a Spanish translation with the title "Realismo mágico" by the influential Madrid-based journal *Revista de Occidente* (Journal of the West), edited by José Ortega y Gasset. The term gained popularity in art circles in the United States during the 1940s, most notably in a 1943 show at the New York Museum of Modern Art entitled "American Realists and Magic Realists." Among those painters exhibited, Edward Hopper became the most famous. The term has retained currency in a slightly altered form with the group called the Vienna School of Fantastic Realism, associated with the painters Wilhelm Dachauer, Anton Lehmden, Peter Proksch, and others. Many of the best-known works of the contemporary American painter Andrew Wyeth are said to contain magical realist elements.

Soon the term *magic realism* was applied to written works, notably those of the Italian novelist Massimo Bontempelli and his *stracittà* (Across the City) movement of the 1920s and 1930s. In a series of novels such as *La scacchiera davanti allo specchio* (1922; *The Chessboard in Front of the Mirror*) and *Eva ultima* (1923; *Last Eve*), as well as through his work as cofounder (with Curzio Malaparte) and editor of the short-lived (1926–29) but influential Italian French-language journal '900: *Cahiers d'Italie et d'Europe* ('900: Notebooks of Italy and Europe), also known as *Il novecento* (The Twentieth Century), Bontempelli sought to "clothe the most sorrowful things with a smile and the most common things with wonder." Some literary historians cite Bontempelli as the first person to apply the term *magic realism*, known in Italian as *realismo magico*, to writing.

Shortly thereafter, in the late 1920s and early 1930s, magic realist techniques attracted three Latin American writers who, for various political and artistic reasons, were living at the time in Paris, a city whose arts were dominated by surrealism: Venezuelan Arturo Usler Pietri, Cuban Alejo Carpentier, and Guatemalan Miguel Ángel Asturias. Usler Pietri, a diplomat at the Venezuelan embassy in Paris and later a political exile in New York during the 1940s, may have been the first to use the term *realismo mágico* (later called *lo real maravilloso*) in Latin American literature when he applied it to two of his short stories, "La lluvia" (1936; "The Rain") and "El fuego fatuo" (1936; "Ignis Fatuus"). Later, Carpentier, whose liberal political activities precipitated his flight from Cuba to Paris, fell under the influence of his friend the French surrealist poet-novelist Robert Desnos, as well as the Irish novelist James Joyce, who was writing in Paris at the time. Carpentier elaborated on the term *magic realism* in his prologue to *El reino de este mundo* (1949; *The Kingdom of This World*), a novel that, like Usler Pietri's stories, combines magic, religion, and myth from European, African, and native Latin American sources to produce its admixtures of magic realism and mundane reality. Most of Asturias' fiction stems from his profound interest in Mayan folklore and mythology. His *Leyendas de Guatemala* (1930; *Legends of Guatemala*), published while he was in Paris, draws its inspiration from indigenous Guatemalan sources. *Hombres de maíz* (1949; *Men of Maize*), initially dismissed by critics as poorly constructed, and his *Trilogía bananera* (1949–60; *Banana Trilogy*), together with *El alhajadito* (1961; *The Bejeweled Boy*) and *Mulata de tal* (1963; *Mulatta*), constitute his major contributions to magic realism.

Some scholars insist that the origins of magic realism are to be found farther south in Latin America, in the works of the Argentine poet, essayist, and short-story writer Jorge Luis Borges. They submit that his *Historia universal de la infamia* (1935; *A Universal History of Infamy*) is the first work of magic realism in Latin American literature. Borges continued to use magic realism in his best-known short stories, such as "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius" (1941), "La biblioteca de Babel" (1941; "The Library of Babel"), "La muerte y la brújula" (1942; "Death and the Compass"), and "El Aleph" (1945; "The Aleph"). Wherever the origins of magic realism may lie, it has been a major defining feature of Latin American fiction to the present day.

Probably the most celebrated exponent of magic realism for the novel form is Colombian Gabriel García Márquez, winner of the Nobel prize for literature in 1982, whose *Cien años de soledad* (1967; *One Hundred Years of Solitude*) is considered the prototypical magic realist novel. Many of his subsequent works are

also written in the magic realist vein. This tradition continues strongly in the writing of younger Latin American authors, such as Chilean Isabel Allende, especially her *La casa de los espíritus* (1982; *The House of the Spirits*), and Mexican Laura Esquivel, with her *Como agua para chocolate* (1990; *Like Water for Chocolate*). In the United States, magic realism is also an important aspect in contemporary southwest Chicano writing, notably in the works of Rudolfo A. Anaya and Jimmy Santiago Baca.

While a satisfactory, comprehensive definition of magic realism is impossible, critics generally agree that it is not a "movement" in the same way symbolism or surrealism were movements, but rather a mode, technique, method, or style of writing, or a tendency in writing, that is distinguished by a number of features, some of which it shares in varying degrees with other kinds of writing.

Probably the most notable characteristic of magic realism is the author's introduction of unexpected fantastic, bizarre, or absurd turns of plot or events into what is an otherwise realistic narrative flow. For example, when his sister offers him snails for lunch, the young Cosimo Piovasco di Rondò, protagonist of *Il barone rampante* (1957; *The Baron in the Trees*) by the Italian Italo Calvino, scampers up a tree and remains living there for the rest of his life, his mother communicating with him via military flags. Similarly, in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, the beautiful Remedios Buendía, hanging her wash out to dry on a washday no different from any other, is bodily assumed into heaven. At age three, Oskar Matzerath, the narrator of *Die Blechtrommel* (1959; *The Tin Drum*) by the German Günter Grass, will himself not to grow up and remains for many years a dwarf who possesses a voice that can shatter glass but who prefers communicating through the bang of his drum.

Critics have pointed out that many characters in magic realist novels defy gravity. Remedios Buendía's assumption into heaven, mentioned above, is one such example. In *Nights at the Circus* (1984) by Britain's Angela Carter, Sophie Fevvers, the *aerialiste extraordinaire* star of Colonel Kearney's circus, is able to perform her remarkable act because the swan wings she seems to wear as part of her costume are, in fact, extensions of her body. The two main characters in *The Satanic Verses* (1988) by Indo-British Salman Rushdie, Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha, are miraculously saved when their London-bound plane is blown up by terrorists; they float to earth singing silly Indian film songs, landing unharmed on a desolate beach. *Sexing the Cherry* (1989) by Britain's Jeanette Winterson features an entire city and its population floating above the earth. *Kniha smichu a zapomnení* (first published in French in 1979, in Czech in 1981; *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*) by Czech Milan Kundera offers two such incidents: the first, the fable entitled "Angels," in which two American girls, Gabrielle and Michelle, and their teacher, Mme. Raphael (each named after an archangel), laugh and dance heavenward in a circle; the second, in which Kundera describes a circle of young Communists dancing, levitating, and floating away, in their midst the French surrealist-turned-Marxist poet Paul Éluard, whom Kundera ironically calls "The toast of Prague" and "Prague's Darling." Gravity in magic realist novels may often be understood to refer both to the natural physical force that keeps humans attached to the earth and to the notion of seriousness, particularly in connection with the grave, sobering events transpiring in the world and in human relationships.

Fantastic elements often appear as an abrupt surprise or horrific

ic shock, as in, for example, the famous description of eels swimming out of the dead horse head in *The Tin Drum*. Many of these fantastic or absurdist features remain unexplained, leaving the reader to guess the relationship between the seemingly unconnected event and the main narrative flow. Where realist writers might infuse coherence and logic between and among such elements, magic realists often require that readers stretch their understanding of reality and work hard at tracking what is going on in the plot, thereby creating, *inter alia*, an effect of tenuousness and uncertainty, which, for many readers, makes the magic elements all the more believable, more real. Just as the unexpected, inexplicable, and unbelievable come out of nowhere in people's daily lives, so too do such events emerge in magic realist writing.

The reader's attempts to connect these disparate, seemingly unrelated events are further complicated by the author's skillful, sometimes virtuosic, manipulations of time, which result in quick and unexpected shifts either backward or forward, requiring unusually careful attention on the reader's part. Not unique to magic realism, of course, this technique contributes as well to making magic events seem as real as mundane reality.

Like many naturalist and realist works of the 19th century, the plots of magic realist novels often cover several generations of a family or group, thereby producing not only a labyrinthine story line but also a confusing plethora of characters, some of whom have very similar or identical names. For example, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* treats three generations of the Buendía family, in which there are no fewer than three José Arcadios and four Aureliano Arcadios. Names, too, are often unusual or strange, quite in keeping with the unusual and strange events that befall the characters bearing them. Calvino's narrator in *Le cosmicomiche* (1965; *Cosmicomics*) and *Ti con zero* (1967; *T Zero*) is palindromically named Qfwfq. The novels of American Thomas Pynchon provide a veritable litany of odd, striking names: Benny Profane, Herbert Stencil, and Rachel Owingglass in *V.* (1963), Roger Mexico and Jessica Swanlake in *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973), and Prairie Wheeler and Frenesi Gates in *Vineland* (1990). Names in magic realist novels often form the basis for elaborate puns and dazzling wordplay.

Obscure or esoteric texts or knowledge often play an important part in magic realist novels. Asturias' early *Leyendas de Guatemala* is related directly to his work in Paris translating into Spanish the French rendering of two 16th-century Mayan documents, *Popul Vuh* (The Book of Counsel) and *Anales de los xahil* (*Annals of the Cakchiquels*). The old, undecipherable manuscript that the gypsy magician Melquíades brings to the Buendía house in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is, the reader learns at the end of the novel, written in Sanskrit, the sacred language of India. Similarly, the existence of the so-called "Satanic Verses" in Islamic lore, essential to Rushdie's novel of the same name, is virtually unknown by most Muslims, except scholars, many of whom deny the authenticity or even the existence of such verses and brand as blasphemous those who even talk about them.

Literary critics and historians have discussed magic realism from a wide variety of perspectives. Some have tried, with only moderate success, to define the term precisely and to distinguish it from styles with which it shares certain qualities, especially those that fall under the headings of the fantastic, the absurd, and the grotesque. Thus, much critical inquiry has sought to establish a link between magic realism and such writers as E.T.A. Hoffman, Franz Kafka, and William Faulkner. In this context,

feminist critics see precursors to magic realism in Gothic novels written by women such as *Frankenstein* (1818) by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, and in modernist novels such as *Orlando* (1928) by Virginia Woolf. Other scholars are seeking to isolate magic realist elements in such disparate texts as the Arthurian cycle and Chinese ghost stories, *The Thousand and One Nights* and Italian Renaissance epics, even in Mozart and Handel operas, contemporary film, television shows, and music videos.

Reader-response analyses have attempted to identify the effects of and reactions to magic realism on the part of the reader. One view holds that magic realism offers the reader a connectedness to the past, thus a sense of security, belonging, and identity, which is well exemplified in Latin American magic realist writing. Others suggest that it provokes a sense of anxiety, estrangement, and isolation—feelings, Freudians point out, discussed by Freud in his essay "Das Unheimliche" (1919; "The 'Uncanny'"). Postmodern critics emphasize that this type of writing has flourished at times of considerable political turmoil, unrest, and stress, thus explaining its appeal to Latin American magic realists, who very often use the political and social conditions of their countries as the backdrop for their works. While Kundera's attraction may be similarly explained in relation to the complex political history of postwar Czechoslovakia, especially during the repressive Communist period, Rushdie's affinity seems to flow from the palpable atmosphere of racial tension and post-colonial aftershock found in contemporary Britain. Similarly, feminist and lesbian critics attribute the relatively recent adoption of this style by women writers to the gender and culture wars being waged in contemporary society. Such critics submit that these wars have created an atmosphere as portentous for women and minorities as those spawned earlier by dictatorships and totalitarian systems in Latin American and Central European countries.

Magic realism has attracted writers from many countries who have used its features and techniques to varying degrees. Some, such as García Márquez and Calvino, have integrated magic realism as a central artistic element of their work; others, such as Americans Maxine Hong Kingston and Nobel prize-winner Toni Morrison, have used some of its features in one or more of their major works. Some other notable novelists, not treated in this article, who employ magic realism in either of these two ways include Mikhail Bulgakov (Russian), Fausta Cialenta (Italo-Egyptian), Elsa Morante (Italian), Juan Rulfo (Mexican), John Fowles (British), John Barth (American), Umberto Eco (Italian), Fay Weldon (British), Zulfikar Ghose (Indo-British-American), Don DeLillo (American), Fabrizia Ramondino (Italian), and Emma Tennant (British).

CARLO COPPOLA

See also Historical Novel; Latin American Novel (all sections); Surrealist Novel

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Nagīb Maḥfūz 1911–

Egyptian

Nagīb Maḥfūz is arguably the most prominent Arab novelist to date. When he was awarded the Nobel prize for literature in 1988, many in the Arab world saw this as somewhat ironic, not least because the work for which he received the prize had been published at least three decades earlier. Maḥfūz had been acknowledged as the master of the Arabic novel since the 1960s, and some of his works had already acquired the status of classics. But his importance goes beyond that of an outstanding novelist and assumes a historical dimension within the context of modern Arabic literature and the novel in particular.

Maḥfūz wrote articles and short stories before turning to the novel. His first three novels—*ʿAbath al-aqdār* (1939; *The Mockery of Fate*), *Rādūbis* (1943), and *Kifāḥ Ṭibah* (1944; *Thebes' Struggle*)—were historical, their subject matter and themes taken from ancient Egyptian history. They were conceived as part of a larger unfulfilled project of 30 novels meant to cover the whole history of Egypt. However, following the third novel, Maḥfūz shifted his interest to the present. His writings of this second period include the novels from *Al-Qāhirah al-Jadīdah* (New Cairo), published in 1946, as well as his celebrated Cairo Trilogy—*Bayn al-Qaṣrayn* (1956; *Palace Walk*), *Qaṣr al-Shawq* (1957; *Palace of Desire*), and *Al-Sukkarīyah* (1957; *Sugar Street*)—which he completed before the July Revolution of 1952. These writings made Maḥfūz the most celebrated Arab novelist of the period. The writings in his third period, which include *Awlād Haritnā* (1967; *Children of Gebelawi*) to *Mīrāmār* (1967; *Miramar*), are more complex and controversial. The fourth period extends from 1967 to the present and includes works such as *Al-Marāyā* (1972; *Mirrors*), *Malḥamat al-ḥarāfīsh* (1977; *The Harafish*), and *Layālī alf laylah* (1981; *Arabian Nights and Days*). Some of the novels written during this period are considered by many critics to be inferior to his earlier works.

In 1970 Maḥfūz stated that he made a journey that started with Sir Walter Scott and ended at the gates of Nathalie Sarraute. This

statement, although to a large extent true, needs many qualifications. While it is true that Maḥfūz's work may be divided into successive phases, some common traits appear in all of it.

Maḥfūz's historical novels, generally mediocre, stand as evidence of an apprenticeship through which he developed his abilities to construct a fictional world. Narrated in the third person, these stories attempt to create the illusion of merely recording events without authorial intervention.

Some of the realistic novels Maḥfūz wrote in his second period, such as *Al-Qāhirah al-Jadīdah*, *Zuqāq al-Midaqq* (1947; *Midaqq Alley*), *Khān al-Khalīlī* (1945; *Khan al-Khalili*), *Bidāyah wa-Nihāyah* (1949; *The Beginning and the End*), and the Cairo Trilogy, are considered by many critics to be his best. These realistic novels include details illustrative of the practices that make up our social world, and of the storehouse of cultural stereotypes, accepted knowledge, proverbial expressions, and ethical maxims that are based upon cultural generalizations. Also during this second period, Maḥfūz began to explore the possibilities of representing a character's consciousness. His omniscient narrators, often through free indirect discourse, allow us to see events from different points of view (without resorting to multiple narrators as in *Miramar*). Maḥfūz also brought colloquial speech into modern standard Arabic prose.

Place is central in all these novels (most of them derive their titles from names of places or streets). Action and incidents usually occur in specific and well-described spaces with clear boundaries. And the temporal organization is carefully structured and reinforced by constant references to historical data, most of which would be common knowledge to Maḥfūz's readers. With respect to narrative time, one generally finds many ellipses, some descriptive pauses, and very little summary. The setting of a scene is encountered mostly in dialogue. Endings, on the other hand, tend to be mostly open.

Although some important changes took place during Maḥfūz's

third period, the fundamental principles upon which he based his strategies of fictional construction were the same. Space remained central for the works of this period (for example, the pension in *Miramar* and the houseboat in *Thartharah fawq al-Nīl* [1966; *Adrift on the Nile*]). Maḥfūz was careful, too, in the temporal organization of his fiction, resorting to analepsis and memory much more than in his earlier works, usually through interior monologue. Third-person narration is mixed with interior monologues that take the place of free indirect discourse, as in *Al-Liṣṣ wa-al-kilāb* (1961; *The Thief and the Dogs*) and *Al-Summān wa-al-kharīf* (1962; *Autumn Quail*). In the case of *Miramar* Maḥfūz uses a form of multiple first-person narration in which four narrators tell the story.

The most important differences between the novels of this third period and those of the second concern the relative decrease in authorial intervention and the relative democratization of the modes of narration. The question of how to represent reality becomes more complex and more problematic, but the possibility of representation is never questioned. For Maḥfūz, the basic tenets of realism are still valid; what he comes to question in this period is reality itself, not its representability.

Since the 1970s, one notices the influence of many younger writers on Maḥfūz's work, especially the technique of using traditional Arabic narratives as subtexts, as in *Arabian Nights and Days* and *Rihlat Ibn Faṭṭūmah* (1983; *The Journey of Ibn Faṭṭūmah*). One noticeable technique that Maḥfūz uses quite successfully is the construction of novels in chapters each one of which tells the tale of one character or one family, as in *Mirrors*, *The Harafish*, and *Ḥadīth al-ṣabāḥ wa-al-masā'* (1987; *Morning and Evening Talk*). In most of these works one notices a more dominant presence of summary rather than the meticulous detail of the previous period. The interest is now more in destinies, ideas, and human types.

Without question, Maḥfūz's major accomplishment as a novelist, certainly the work for which he is best known internationally, is his Cairo Trilogy. As a set, these three texts comprise one of the most important Arabic novels written in the 20th century. However, despite its having an enormous impact on Arabic fiction that came after it, the Cairo Trilogy cannot be described as particularly innovative or revolutionary. Rather, it brings the Arabic novel to a new level of perfection within the long and venerable tradition of the realist novel.

The trilogy brings together a huge fund of social, political, economic, and anthropological materials and blends them within the fabric of the life of a middle-class Egyptian family over the course of three generations. In many ways this is a novel about history as much as it is a family saga. The history is that of 20th-century Egypt; the saga is of a family that is not only a part of that history but also emblematic of it. However, the greatness of the novel does not lie in its depiction of Egypt's history as much as in the ability of the author to write this history without in any way forcing it on the plot or turning the individual characters into representatives of the different historical currents. To the contrary, history seems to flow from the richness of the characters and from their psychological, intellectual, and social dimensions. Not reducible to history, neither can the novel be reduced to psychology, ideology, or politics. Maḥfūz draws credible characters by showing the fictional individual subject to be a complex entity constituted by the interaction of multiple forces and tensions such as heredity, social environment (family, class, culture, geography),

and personal experience in relation to the social world—that is, the interaction of the personal with the public. Depicting character within such a network, rather than in a more restricted ideological scheme, counts as perhaps the Cairo Trilogy's major accomplishment and contribution to the Arabic novel.

WALID HAMARNEH

Biography

Born 11 December 1911 in Gamaliya, Cairo. Attended the University of Cairo, 1930–34, degree in philosophy 1934, postgraduate study 1935–36. Secretary, University of Cairo, 1936–38; journalist, *Ar-Risāla*, and contributor to *Al-Hilāl* and *Al-Ahrām*; civil servant, Ministry of Islamic Affairs, 1939–54; director of censorship, Department of Art; director of Foundation for Support of the Cinema for the State Cinema Organization, 1959–69; consultant for cinema affairs to the Ministry of Culture, 1969–71; retired from civil service, 1971; board member, Dār al-Ma'āref publishing house. Awarded Nobel prize for literature, 1988.

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Norman Mailer 1923–

United States

One of a very few novelists who has enjoyed immense fame and critical acclaim from his first book to his most recent, Norman Mailer has nevertheless confounded the terms of his own notoriety to become a style of writer quite different from what both commentators and he himself expected. Although he was eager to become a major novelist in the manner of Ernest Hemingway, writing narratives that would be fictive encapsulations of their times, Mailer's most lasting mark on the history of the novel will probably be his role as an innovator of what would come to be called the nonfiction novel. Using the techniques of fiction to investigate more deeply what most people consider subject matter for journalism, Mailer blurred distinctions between literary artistry and fidelity to fact, even as he challenged the novel's ability to reflect experience in a conclusive way.

As a Harvard graduate and veteran of military service in World War II, the young Norman Mailer felt well qualified to write "the big novel" of his generation, relating the war to both personal development and larger moral issues of the times. As such, *The Naked and the Dead* (1948) balances microcosm and macrocosm in a way that pits the individual (and the small group, in this case a platoon fighting in the Pacific) against larger organizational forces. The antecedent for this approach was obvious in the work of John Dos Passos, whose achievement Mailer admired, and it carries over into the domestic scene of *Barbary Shore* (1951), which uses the circumstance of rooming house neighbors debating the radical politics of their pasts, a technique reminiscent of Dos Passos' *Manhattan Transfer* (1925). In *The Deer Park* (1955), the author shifted his focus to Hollywood, but once again seemed eager to write a thematic tour de force (here of supposedly typical movieland behavior). In each case Mailer was writing with essentially prewar notions of the novel in mind: that such fiction should totalize experience (in the manner of James T. Farrell)

while relying on the synthetic powers of all-encompassing observation (Dos Passos) to fashion a statement.

The first major shift in Norman Mailer's career came with his fourth novel, *An American Dream* (1965). Here he took advantage of the insider's perspective won by his parallel career as a feature essayist and commentator (*Advertisements for Myself*, 1959; *The Presidential Papers*, 1963) to blend fantasy with fact, interweaving the fortunes of a protagonist dedicated to testing the limits of human experience with the doings of a very real figure who in the public's imagination did much the same (John F. Kennedy, here seen in his Senate days, but for a readership mindful of his presidency and assassination). *Why Are We in Vietnam?* (1967) unleashes this style of protagonist to an extent that his acts eclipse even those of history. The Vietnam War, so central to American political, social, and cultural concerns during these years that its mention in the title is unexceptional, manages not to be cited until the novel's last sentence. But the pressure of public events gets equal time in the work that would establish Mailer as a pioneer of the nonfiction novel, *The Armies of the Night: The Novel as History, History as a Novel* (1968). Here the author not only uses the techniques of fiction (such as characterization, dialogue, and development by means of imagery and symbolism) to dramatize a massive protest march against the Pentagon, but studies his own reactions as a barometer of the events themselves. Here the author faces the challenge set to his protagonist in *An American Dream*: how to create one's self in a world of seemingly overwhelming forces.

Throughout the 1970s, Mailer distinguished himself by treating larger than life personalities with the fictive rigor that their cultural importance would make appropriate. Representative of this phase are *Marilyn: A Novel Biography* (1973) and *The Executioner's Song: A True Life Novel* (1979). As Marilyn Monroe

was more than just a movie star, Gary Gilmore loomed larger in the public's estimation than simply as a convicted murderer. Her life was an iconization of sex and beauty; his execution was the first after several decades' suspension of capital punishment in the United States. Both figures riveted popular attention, and each triumphed (in this fashion) in death, something conventionally accorded only to truly great historical figures (from Jesus Christ to Napoléon Bonaparte) or to characters in novels. Mailer's quest in these works is to discover just how creatures of the imagination (as Monroe's and Gilmore's public personalities surely were) manage the same power as those who have acted deeply on the forces of history.

Sex and violence figure prominently in *Marilyn* and *The Executioner's Song*, both as indices to the exercise (if not the genesis) of power. When exploring these interests in conventional novel form, Mailer is less successful with his literary art even as he propounds the issues in almost essayistic terms. *Ancient Evenings* (1983) covers two centuries of pre-Christian history yet seems most concerned with what one reviewer called the author's "psychosomatics" and "poetics" as released from his "repressed unconscious." On the other hand, *Tough Guys Don't Dance* (1984) takes pleasure with the flat conventions of the private-eye thriller; in something of a parody of this well-worn subgeneric form, Mailer characterizes, digresses, and at times pontificates in a way that only an essential lack of respect for the medium can allow. More serious business awaits in *Harlot's Ghost* (1991) and *The Gospel According to the Son* (1997), where the author's ego is given a fair match in terms of the Central Intelligence Agency and the Christian New Testament, respectively.

Mailer's most insightful critics trace his genesis as an important writer to an essay he wrote in 1957, published as a pamphlet called *The White Negro*. A full decade before the flourishing of a countercultural revolution, the author in this piece identified the true vitality in American life as lying within the domain of the outsider, the person whose raw energy (often misconstrued as illicitly sexual and destructively violent) gives him the impetus for being an "existential hero," Mailer's code name for the type of person who can act with great determination when the future is unknown. This essay separates his early derivative novels from the groundbreaking work of the 1960s and 1970s and also explains his fascinations of the 1980s and 1990s that have led to long and (for some readers) dogmatically overbearing works.

JEROME KLINKOWITZ

Biography

Born 31 January 1923 in Long Branch, New Jersey. Attended Boys' High School, Brooklyn, New York, graduated 1939; Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts (where he served as associate editor of the *Harvard Advocate*), 1939–43, S.B. (cum laude) in aeronautical engineering 1943; the Sorbonne, Paris, 1947. Served in the United States Army, 1944–46: Sergeant. Cofounded, 1955, and wrote column, 1956, for the *Village Voice*, New York; columnist ("Big Bite"), *Esquire*, New York, 1962–63, and *Commentary*, New York, 1962–63; member of the executive board, 1968–73, and president, 1984–86, PEN American Center; independent candidate for mayor of New York City, 1969.

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Bernard Malamud 1914–86

United States

Bernard Malamud was an important 20th-century American fiction writer and one of the most important of post–World War II American Jewish writers. He published eight novels in his lifetime (an unfinished one, *The People* [1989], was published posthumously); some of them feature experimental techniques,

while others are more traditional. All his novels are concerned with the need for the protagonist to move from a state of self-centeredness to one of selflessness; to accept moral responsibility for others; and to be able to express love, mercy, compassion, and charity. Malamud once stated, "My work, all of it, is an idea

of dedication to the human. That's basic to every book. If you don't respect man, you cannot respect my work. I'm in defense of the human" (see Lasher, 1991).

His first novel, *The Natural* (1952), differs from any that followed. Baseball becomes a knightly joust at times, with the characters taking on roles from Arthurian legend. The game is played by a team called the Knights, on Knights Field. In addition, the grail legend and fertility myths are of central importance, with a Fisher King figure; a dessicated, "wasteland"-like playing field; and a concern for heroes, with hero-nurturing and hero-destroying women. There is no other American baseball novel that is so packed with mythic references, Malamud having stated that before he could write a baseball novel he found it necessary to transform the game into myth, possibly because of the game's essential lightness. Remaining as a basic stance, however, is his distinctive theme of self-development and personal growth through suffering. In this novel the hero learns too late about the importance of selflessness and does not achieve the secular salvation that marks most of Malamud's other works. American novelists generally do not place a major emphasis on these themes.

The successful fulfillment of this moral imperative may be seen in *The Assistant* (1957). Philip Roth views the suffering Malamud imposes on his characters as almost a sign of masochism. The addition of the prison motif also serves to intensify both the suffering and redemptive quality achieved. Malamud makes some use of fantasy, a device that marks his best work, and points to the limitations of a purely realistic approach to novel writing. A further important development is his use of Jewishness as a metaphor for a character's suffering and taking on of moral responsibility for others—a "Jew" being someone who is a selfless individual and not necessarily a member of the Jewish people or one who practices Judaism. This stance is reflected in Malamud's famous remark that he sees the Jew as symbolic "of the tragic experience of man existentially. I try to see the Jew as universal man. Every man is a Jew though he may not know it" (Lasher, 1991). This use of a religious/ethnic label to stand for a moral individual is peculiar to Malamud's approach to liberal humanism.

A New Life (1961) is written in a realistic vein, slightly tempered by a romantic view of nature. This "college novel" tries to come to grips with the implications of McCarthyism. It is more conventional in style than *The Fixer* (1966), which was awarded a Pulitzer Prize in literature and Malamud's second National Book Award. Malamud based *The Fixer* on the blood libel leveled at Menahem Mendel Beilis in czarist Russia, focusing on areas that were not part of the historical record—in particular, the thoughts and human development of the protagonist in his prison cell. He has said that "*The Fixer* is largely an invention. That is, I've tried to bring it as close to a folk tale as I could" (Lasher, 1991). This can be seen in its presentation of medieval beliefs concerning Jews. The themes of imprisonment (with real, not symbolic, bars), suffering, and growth in responsibility and morality are very much present, with the use of a schlemiel-like antihero figure used to carry the tale, as in previous novels. *The Assistant* and *The Fixer* mark high points in Malamud's career as a novelist, encapsulating some of his best explications of theme and suitability of form.

Pictures of Fidelman: An Exhibition (1969) is a short-story cycle in which the stories can stand on their own or serve as chapters of a novel. This form was also used in Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919) and William Faulkner's *The*

Unvanquished (1938), both of which, as in *Fidelman*, develop common themes and characters to create unity and coherence. Viewed as a novel, which is how Malamud planned it after writing the first story, *Fidelman* is a combination Bildungsroman and Künstlerroman. There are also parallels with James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) and, in its use of the picaresque and Bildungsroman, with Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884). The protagonist develops an ability to love, thus achieving a state that is of central importance in Malamud's novels.

In *The Tenants* (1971), Malamud created a novel concerned with contemporary issues, something he had not been particularly concerned with before: "Jews and blacks, the period of the troubles in New York City; the teachers strike, the rise of black activism, the mix-up of cause and effect. I thought I'd say a word" (Lasher, 1991). The novel marks a return to the use of fantasy, in which the tenement becomes a vertical island where issues of race and anti-Semitism are paramount. There is also much discussion on the nature of art and, by implication, of the novel, with Jamesian versus revolutionary views being set against each other. There are three endings, each of which reflects a different possible outcome to the racial tensions in the United States, although the novel's movement seems to point more toward tragedy than either pity or interracial marriage. Criticized by some African-Americans for taking on racial issues in part from a black perspective, the novel makes a strong case for compassion and selflessness if tragedy is to be avoided, although neither of the two main characters achieves these moral states.

Dubin's Lives (1979), although superior stylistically, resembles *A New Life* in that it is written in a traditional manner with a traditional plot structure. In Malamud's last completed novel, *God's Grace* (1982), he returns to fantasy and experimentation. Talking monkeys, a gorilla who says Kaddish, and sexual relations between the protagonist and a chimpanzee are part of this beast fable about the destruction of the human race and its relationship to God, there being continual reference to the Hebrew Bible. *God's Grace* is much more pessimistic than Malamud's earlier novels, with human beings encountering real difficulty in surviving their own moral shortcomings. This novel is firmly placed within a tradition of bestiaries—*Aesop's Fables*, *Gulliver's Travels*, and *Animal Farm*—and island dramas such as *Robinson Crusoe*, *The Tempest*, and *Lord of the Flies*. *Dr. Doolittle* is also relevant. Malamud uses this form to raise major theological and social issues.

A writer of deep morality, Malamud's literary legacy is one of compassion in the face of the forces of indifference (or worse) that have plagued life in the 20th century.

EDWARD A. ABRAMSON

Biography

Born 26 April 1914 in Brooklyn, New York. Attended Erasmus Hall High School, New York; City College of New York, 1932–36, B.A. 1936; Columbia University, New York, 1937–38, M.A. 1942. Teacher, New York high schools, evenings 1940–49; instructor/associate professor of English, Oregon State University, Corvallis, 1949–61; member of the Division of Languages and Literature, Bennington College, Vermont, 1961–86; visiting lecturer, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1966–68; president, PEN American Center, 1979–81. Died 18 March 1986.

Novels by Malamud

The Natural, 1952
The Assistant, 1957
A New Life, 1961
The Fixer, 1966
Pictures of Fidelman: An Exhibition, 1969
The Tenants, 1971
Dubin's Lives, 1979
God's Grace, 1982
The People, 1989 (unfinished, posthumous)

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Malavoglia. *See* *House by the Medlar Tree*

Malaysian Novel. *See* *Southeast Asian Novel: Malaysia*

Malone Dies. *See* *Molloy* trilogy

David Malouf 1934–**Australian**

It is not surprising that David Malouf has earned a reputation as what one critic has called the “lyrical epicurean” of Australian literature. Coming to prominence in the 1970s as a poet, Malouf has become widely known as one of Australia’s most acclaimed novelists, a distinction supported by various international and national literary awards. His prose is characterized by

a signature lyricism that blurs the boundaries between the novel form, poetry, and even music. (He is also the author of several libretti.) The broad appeal of his novels is perhaps partly owing to the fact that they all in one way or another deal with issues familiar to every culture: the question of how people map out an identifiable position in the world, particularly through language

and the narratives of myth, and the ways in which people interpret their histories in order to do so.

Malouf explores these aspects of “being in” the world in his first novel, *Johnno* (1975). For its Australian audience, the novel’s biographical style created an intimate portrait not only of its central characters but also of a regional setting. In telling Johnno’s story, the narrator Dante tells his own story as well and invents himself as a writer; yet, perhaps more powerfully, he tells the story of a particular time and place, re-creating the local history of Brisbane, Queensland’s metropolitan center, in the decades after World War II. Here Malouf explores what will become one of his later work’s most characteristic features: the interweaving of private and public histories. This theme emerges in each of his subsequent novels, most strongly perhaps in *The Great World* (1990), a sweeping narrative that weaves together three generations of private histories within the broader fabric of Australia between World War I and the Vietnam War.

Early on in *Johnno*, as he traces the outline of Australia in a geography lesson, the schoolboy Dante wonders about the nature of maps and their boundaries; he has learned their names by heart, but “beyond that is a mystery. It is what begins with the darkness at our back door.” The mystery, in effect, is a mystery of language. If history is the stuff from which identifying myths are made—narratives for locating one’s self and one’s place within time and space—then language is its most crucial vehicle, the category that expresses and determines both world and consciousness. Malouf’s interest in language as both an inventive tool and a regulatory device frames the recurring material of his fiction as well as his particular quality as a writer. This interest in language has special significance in the history of colonized Australia, which was founded on a crisis between an imported language and a reticent landscape. As Malouf stated during a 1986 interview, “What we had was a highly developed language and names for everything, and a reality in front of us that did not fit.” Yet as Malouf has argued elsewhere, this crisis between language and world has been, for Australia, an opportunity to “mythologise spaces and through that mythology . . . find our way into a culture.” This is not to say, of course, that such a mythology fits neatly over the space of a country. The mythologies of place belonging to Aboriginal Australia, which lie like palimpsestic texts beneath and alongside those of settler Australia, form part of the tension of forces in Malouf’s historical narratives. The present, Malouf has said, “is always a mess, a confusion of forces.”

Malouf’s internationally acclaimed novel *Remembering Babylon* (1993), in particular, pursues the crossing points between these different forces. Its protagonist, Gemmy Fairley, is a “white black man” who, taken in by an Aboriginal community as a child, seeks out his “own kind” among the white settlers of northern Queensland. As in Malouf’s other novels, language is allowed a kind of primacy over the world it describes, even possessing a kind of physicality that the world itself—indeterminate until framed in language—is not given. Readers learn that Gemmy “would see [things] clearly enough, but no word was connected to them, and when his mind reached for it, the object too went thin on him.” This most fundamental power of language to invent becomes the basis of the novel’s exploration of the political dimension of words and of the worlds they encode. In this sense *Remembering Babylon* extends the concerns of Malouf’s earlier, most poetic short novel *An Imaginary Life* (1978). A parable and a fictional autobiography, *An Imaginary Life* uses

the voice of the Roman poet Ovid to articulate the capacity of world and consciousness for metamorphosis. In this process, Malouf, like Ovid in the *Metamorphoses*, recycles mythic narratives in order to explore the role of the writer as a mouthpiece for his or her cultural history. Given the “confusion of forces” that constitutes any culture’s present, it is perhaps not surprising that Malouf has used the term *terrorist* to describe the writer: “A lot of what a writer has to do is to go against the grain, to go against your own nature if you are ever going to shock yourself into discovering new things.”

This suggestion of balance between potentially oppositional ways of perceiving is apparent in a tension of the aesthetics that Malouf brings to his novels. In each of his works, there is a tension between what might be called a romantic conception of potential wholeness in the world and a postmodern conception of fragmentation. This tension applies not only to the novel’s material but to its production. On the one hand, Malouf has suggested, his writing is an attempt to render something like Martin Heidegger’s “primitive and anti-Platonic” conception of “the word and the object [as] absolutely one, as if there never was any question of mind and object being separate”; on the other hand, the writing process is like lining up a series of connected photographs: “you would get a total picture, but there would always be gaps.”

The capacity of Malouf’s work to express different models of interpreting the world (as well as the writing process) is lived out in the diversity of forms he brings to the novel. His use of the genre is dense with a range of narrative modes: the poetic, the autobiographical or confessional, the playfully metafictional, the historical epic, and the parable. In both the subjects and the forms he chooses for the novel, then, Malouf seems fascinated by that balance of opposites, in which the potential of one state is contained in, or shadowed by, its others.

AMANDA NETTELBECK

Biography

Born 20 March 1934 in Brisbane, Queensland. Attended Brisbane Grammar School, 1947–50; University of Queensland, Brisbane, 1951–54, B.A. (honors) in English 1954. Lecturer, University of Queensland, 1955–57; teacher, St. Anselm’s College, England, 1962–68; lecturer, University of Sydney, 1968–77.

Novels by Malouf

Johnno, 1975
An Imaginary Life, 1978
Child’s Play, 1982
Fly Away Peter, 1982
Harland’s Half Acre, 1984
The Great World, 1990
Remembering Babylon, 1993
Conversations at Curlow Creek, 1996

Other Writings: several collections of poetry, a book of semi-autobiographical essays, a collection of short fiction, several libretti, and many essays and reviews.

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The Man Who Loved Children by Christina Stead

1940

Of Christina Stead's 16 books—novels, novellas, and collections of short stories—*The Man Who Loved Children* has become the most highly regarded and most frequently discussed since its publication in the United States in 1940. While the novel is set on the east coast of the United States, Australian readers have been eager to claim it as an Australian novel in which Washington, D.C., and Annapolis, Maryland, stand in for parts of Sydney (Bexley and Watson's Bay) and in which Stead's experiences of family life in the 1910s have been transposed to the 1930s. Yet the novel also depends on its American references, in particular the clashing ideologies of North and South expressed in the backgrounds of husband and wife, father and mother, and the privations of the Depression and looming war. Randall Jarrell, who managed to bring the novel back into print in 1965, commented on the way its detail and particularity (clearly based on Stead's own childhood) achieve the effect of universality so that readers find themselves recognizing their own childhoods in its rendering of the horrors of family life.

In his introduction to the novel, Jarrell compares *The Man Who Loved Children* to the fiction of Fedor Dostoevskii for its combination of plausible naturalism and extreme situations. Although 19th-century naturalism is part of the novel's heritage, *The Man Who Loved Children* also demonstrates what Stead called the "drama of the person." The novel is structured around a series of dramatic scenes set entirely within the Pollit houses: the first, which takes up a third of the novel, observes 24 hours in the house in Washington in 1936; another devotes 50 pages to the day of celebration for Sam's return from Malaya; and a third (another 50 pages) covers two days of fish boiling at Annapolis, which culminate in Henny's death. Stead separates these major scenes by interludes that inform readers about life outside the home—Louie's maternal family; Henny's visit to her family home at Monocacy and her trips to town; Sam's experiences in Malaya; and Louie's life at school. In this way, Stead establishes the social and political history of each character—Louie's mother came from an abolitionist Bible-reading family at Harper's Ferry, Henny's family represents a decayed aristocracy, and Sam's foolish innocence and unwitting racism is given full expression in the adult world of Malaya. Although the settings appear as limited as the set of a stage play, the novel is full of subsidiary storytelling and textual allusion—the characters speak their own versions of existence, ordering it into stories that place them at the center of ideological universes. In fact, the novel demonstrates a remarkable

self-consciousness about the nature of storytelling as exemplified by Henny's funny and scarifying pictures of a world full of sleazy and pathetic people, Sam's rhetoric of wonder at the natural world, and Louie's immersion in fairy tale, romance, and myth. Some of the characters are also writers. Sam's friend, Saul Pilgrim, writes a serial in a weekly newspaper, which he can never finish because a happy ending would be implausible and a sad ending too unpopular with his readers. Louie proffers Sam the birthday gift of a play, written in her own "Choctaw" language, in which father devours daughter, and she plans a cycle of poems (to contain a poem in every possible form and meter) for her teacher, Miss Aiden.

The novel not only draws attention to the way its characters "tell" their own stories, heavy with political and cultural meaning, but also to its own status as a structured work of art. Louie's positioning as an observer and as a writer has suggested to some readers that the novel is a version of the female artist's quest for freedom. Certainly, Louie is aligned with high-culture literary art by comparison with the populist Pollits; but Stead also suggests that literature—written stories—may be read and appropriated in myriad ways by different people to support their own world-views. Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* (1861) is a case in point, providing Louie with a further literary endorsement of the terrors of childhood and Grandfather Pollit with a comic turn as he plays both Wemmick and the "Aged P."

While writing the novel, Stead remarked that "there was no trouble in the subject, but the arrangement was an immense difficulty, the surplus material and surplus drama getting in the way" (Geering and Segerberg, 1994). Yet the relatively controlled structure of the finished novel may account at least partly for its success with readers. In her later novels, Stead resisted the kind of resolution established by Henny's death and Louie's determination to go for "a walk round the world." This suggests that the novel's structure may be based on the same kind of classical Greek tragedy that Louie favors for her play; like Euripides' plays, the novel explores the "middle kingdom of sexual horror" beneath the negotiations of family life, including the unspoken possibility of incestuous relationships.

With this novel and her next one, *For Love Alone* (1944), Stead seemed to purge herself of childhood and family experiences, for she was never to write in such a clearly autobiographical way again. Her novels published after 1944, although based on Stead's friends and acquaintances, explored the state of

society in the United States and Europe in a much more public way. While several of her later novels, especially *Dark Places of the Heart* (1966) and *I'm Dying Laughing* (1986) have gained critical admiration, *The Man Who Loved Children* has retained its status as Stead's masterpiece.

SUSAN LEVER

See also Christina Stead

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The Man Without Qualities by Robert Musil

Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften 1930-43

When Robert Musil died in Switzerland in 1942, a desperate and destitute emigrant whose books were banned in the Third Reich, his novel *The Man Without Qualities* was left unfinished. Two volumes of the book had appeared in 1931 and 1933 and a further 20 chapters were published from the corrected proofs after his death. A more complete edition published in 1952 attempted to reconstruct the whole of the torso out of early drafts, and it was only then that Musil's work was rediscovered and recognized as one of the great novels of the century, placed beside works like Thomas Mann's *Der Zauberberg* (1924; *The Magic Mountain*), Marcel Proust's *À la Recherche du temps perdu* (1913-27; translated as *Remembrance of Things Past* and also as *In Search of Lost Time*) and James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922). A new critical edition that included even more unpublished material without constructing a particular sequence out of them was produced in 1978, and the recent English translation by Sophie Wilkins and Burton Pike is to a large extent based on that edition.

Musil's work was conceived on an ambitious scale. In a grand dialectic gesture, it was to encompass "analysis and synthesis"—nothing less than a thorough intellectual analysis of his times and a suggestion of a positive solution. Corresponding to this plan, the novel was divided into two parts, Book I starting with "a sort of introduction" and Book II finishing with "a sort of ending." It aims everywhere to represent the typical and general and seeks to integrate ideas from philosophy, psychology, and ethics into the discourse on an unprecedented scale.

Ulrich, the protagonist, is burdened with all the intellectual baggage of a modernist hero. He is not the average intelligent bourgeois, like Thomas Mann's Hans Castorp in *The Magic Mountain*, but is a highly trained mathematician, scientist, and psychologist. He engages with reality but primarily as an observer, turning his probing eye upon himself, his acquaintances, and the public sphere as a whole. With a thoroughness unprecedented in the history of the novel, Musil's hero analyzes (and decon-

structs) such concepts as the self, beauty, and love. His overriding sense of having no definite character is expressed in the formula of the title: Ulrich feels himself to be merely the convergence of impersonal qualities, gained from his membership in a class, profession, nation, and sex. Paradoxically, he sees this impersonality as a threat but embraces it as the basis of his quest for the true self in harmony with a deep morality.

In order to find the right way to live, Ulrich takes a year's holiday from life. His individual quest is submerged in a general one when he becomes honorary secretary of a patriotic committee, a kind of high-level social, humanitarian organization, which is set up to find a crowning idea for the celebration of the anniversary of the Austrian Emperor's rule. The setting is Vienna, capital of Kakania, the fictional equivalent of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. Musil gives us no strictly historical picture, since he considered Kakania to be the prototype of a modern state, and his intention was to write a *Zeitroman* (a topical novel), developing out of the historical novel. The general setting provides Musil with a broad canvas for his investigation of the ideas, ideals, and ideologies of a time of great intellectual and political ferment. The temporal setting in the last year before World War I and the fact that celebration of the "emperor of peace" is planned for 1918 put the whole enterprise into an ironic frame and give it an added sense of urgency. The world presents itself as a chaos of unresolved contradictions that seem to lead inevitably to war.

The protagonist's general stock-taking allows Musil to introduce a number of representative figures. Musil proves to be a sparkling satirist, unmatched in 20th-century German literature, giving us delightful satiric portraits and lively scenes. Musil's wit can be humorous as well as satirical, and his strong sense of irony allows him to be serious and poetic without ever becoming pompous. His characters range from the revolutionary socialist to the aristocrat who believes that all political opposites can ultimately be reconciled in a "true" feudalism. The benevolent portrait of the general with "special cultural responsibilities" who

draws up a strategic plan of the confusing array of modern ideas is counterbalanced by the biting satire of the elegant industrialist and successful writer Arnheim, based on the real-life figure of Walther Rathenau. Many of the characters are based, or partly based, on friends, acquaintances, or figures from public life. For example, the writer Franz Werfel appears in a thinly disguised portrait under the name of Feuermaul, the representative of the expressionist belief in an all-embracing brotherly love, darling of the salons and coformulator of the final, contradictory resolution of the patriotic committee. Finally, there is the pivotal figure of the sex murderer Moosbrugger, who holds a special fascination for Ulrich but takes on a different significance for all the major figures, thus providing an important thematic link.

The novel is divided into chapters, many with ironic headings. They allow the author to emphasize the principle of analogy and variation, one of the main structuring features of the novel, which is used to juxtapose and contrast the false and the genuine. According to Musil's "constructive irony," all characters reflect aspects of the protagonist's own concerns and preoccupations. Like him, they are all aware of their stagnation, and they too yearn for renewal, a state of oneness that would make their existence truly meaningful. All are, however, shown to achieve merely illusory solutions to their problems. Only Ulrich persists in his analytical and experimental attitude, treating life as a hypothesis. Even when, after all his other experiments have failed, he enters into the ultimate experiment of love in the mystical "Millennium," he does so with the critical consciousness of the scientist or Nietzschean thinker.

Love in *The Man Without Qualities* is explored from many angles. But it is in the second half of the novel, when the satire of the patriotic action recedes into the background, that the focus shifts to Musil's "ultimate love story" between the "last Romantics of love"—Ulrich and his sister Agathe. Their love is characterized as a form of self-love, love without the intrusion of anything alien, representing the possibility of total involvement. In their "utopia of the Siamese twins," each participates to such an extent in the emotions of the other that even physical unfaithfulness becomes a shared experience. Here the narrative impetus slows down, some chapters becoming essays disguised as diary entries or a kind of Platonic dialogue on love between Ulrich and his sister, Agathe, the most positive female figure Musil ever created.

The tantalizing question is, how was the novel to end? Musil himself envisaged various conclusions. Considering the date of 1913, the shadow of the war looms inevitably behind all events. Musil saw, from a new historical perspective, how everything was to lead into the great catastrophe, the destruction of European culture in the form of his, after all, nostalgically portrayed Kakania. Some critics believe that the novel should, and indeed was intended to, end with the last chapters that Musil was revising shortly before his death. The last chapter on which he was working, entitled "Breaths of a Summer Day," seemed to absorb him particularly. It might be taken as a kind of testament, containing the real message Musil had to impart to the world. Musil portrays a sublimated spiritual love, as brother and sister feel mystically united while sitting in their garden meditating on the spectacle of blossoms floating down from the trees. Doubts have been expressed as to whether the protagonist—seemingly having aged with the author during the long period of creation, although he has not reached the end of his year's holiday from life, having become much wiser, more resigned and less cynical—has

reverted to the more dynamic emotions expressed in the drafts of 20 years earlier, which would have taken him and his sister on a "journey into paradise," where their union would have been physically consummated. According to the original plan, the hero would have been dismissed into the Great War to become a spy. At one time, Musil thought of replacing this with an epilogue in which Ulrich comments on his author from the point of view of 1942. What Musil might in the end have done with his material will always remain open to speculation.

Throughout the novel Musil faced the problem of how to integrate ideas into the narrative, and the question became especially urgent with the later chapters. He felt that in engaging with the "irrational" and embarking on the path of the mystics, it was even more necessary to proceed with almost scientific exactness. *The Man Without Qualities* is a unique experiment, often compared in its daring (and because of its sheer length) to the work of Joyce and Proust, but very different in its aims. Musil's ideal, which sets him apart from most novelists, was "precision in matters of the soul," in other words, in the realm of feelings and ideas. He was always conscious that he was turning the relationship between plot and ideas upside down, but he hoped that his new method would justify itself by creating a new kind of novel. Dissatisfied with story-telling but also averse to the creation of a philosophical system, he opted for a hybrid form, which Thomas Mann recognized as Musil's most important contribution to the development of the modern novel: the "elevation" (*Erhöhung*) and "intellectualization" (*Vergeistigung*) of the German novel. With the creation of this new form, Musil felt himself, with some justification, to have been more successful in pushing the boundaries of the novel than even his illustrious contemporaries Thomas Mann and Hermann Broch.

Musil's characteristic mode of writing is that of irony. He plays ironically with traditional forms, with the idea of a hero as much as the concept of reality in general. *The Man Without Qualities* is many things but never fits neatly into any of the conventional categories. It fuses the novel and essay, social portraiture and radical critique of ideology, fluctuating between abstractions and a wealth of original images, and moving from satire to utopia. The novel never presents ready-made solutions but suggests what Musil called "partial solutions"—models, patterns of "how to be a human being" ("wie man Mensch sein kann"). Although unfinished, *The Man Without Qualities* is a fascinating torso. In fact, its very incompleteness gives a post-modern feel to the romantic ruins of one of the great literary enterprises of the 20th century.

LOTHAR HUBER

See also Robert Musil

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The Man-Eater of Malgudi by R.K. Narayan

1961

R.K. Narayan's work was first published in Britain in the 1930s, largely thanks to the efforts of his longstanding friend and correspondent Graham Greene, who was also responsible for establishing Narayan's reputation as an Indian Chekhov, a categorization that has been applied to him repeatedly ever since. Such a label suggests that Narayan is a chronicler of the *longueurs* of provincial life. In fact, Narayan has often been regarded as a comic novelist who uses irony as a vehicle for exposing the foibles of the inhabitants of Malgudi, the fictional south Indian town (based on his own hometown of Mysore) that he has peopled for more than half a century. To classify Narayan as a comic novelist, however, only partly identifies what is distinctive in his fiction. His work also incorporates layers of Hindu myth and symbol, and it is the coexistence of these two elements—Westernized social comedy and traditional Indian fable—that establishes the highly individual flavor of his work. Narayan's fiction represents a particularly interesting response to the problems facing anglophone Indian writers. Narayan's contemporary Raja Rao clearly expressed the nature of their dilemma in the foreword to his own first novel, *Kanthapura* (1938): "One has to convey in a language that is not one's own the spirit that is one's own." In Narayan's case the interaction between language and culture is especially complex: he came from a traditional Tamil brahmin background and was educated at an English-language school, the Maharaja's College in Mysore where English and Sanskrit classics were equally familiar to him from an early age.

The Man-Eater of Malgudi belongs to the middle period of Narayan's fiction, in which he repeatedly returns to the same subject, that of a south Indian small businessman who finds his orderly life threatened by the advent of outside forces. In the novel, the protagonist Nataraj, a printer, has his daily routine disturbed by Vasu, the man-eater of the title, a bullying taxidermist newly arrived in Malgudi. From the moment he first appears in Nataraj's press, Vasu violates "its sacred traditions" by passing through a curtain that separates its inner sanctum from the outside world. This act of symbolic penetration anticipates all Vasu's subsequent behavior. When he takes over Nataraj's attic without Nataraj's explicit permission and uses it for his work

as a taxidermist, the Hindu Nataraj is horrified to find that the room has been "converted into a charnel house."

In the ensuing narrative the consequences of Vasu's invasion of Nataraj's world are, on one level, comic, as the put-upon Nataraj finds himself falling afoul of the civic authorities and incurring the displeasure of his neighbors as a result of the antisocial actions of his uninvited guest. Narayan also gently satirizes Nataraj himself. From the outset it is clear that he is capable of petty trickery: he speaks of having a staff, but his "staff" consists of a single well-wisher, Sastri, a general factotum who effectively runs the press; and he attracts would-be clients by showing them the more modern printing machine owned by his next-door neighbor.

However, underlying the comic surface of the novel are references to mythology. From the moment when Vasu first appears, he is described in terms that suggest a demonic force: "a new head appeared . . . a tanned face, large powerful eyes under thick eyebrows and a shock of unkempt hair, like a black halo." His profession flies directly in the face of Nataraj's traditional brahminical Hinduism, which maintains that all life is sacred, and this conflict is underscored by various mythological references. When Nataraj finds Vasu in the attic working on a dead eagle, he warns him that the eagle is a messenger of the god Vishnu, a sacred creature. This conflict of values appears to center on different forms of preservation, since Vishnu is said to be a protector of life, while Vasu as a taxidermist preserves his subjects in a very different sense.

As events unfold, Nataraj feels he may have to act as a Vishnu-like preserver when he suspects that Vasu is about to kill an elephant that has been chosen to play a central role in the annual spring ceremony of the local Krishna temple. However, he is never required to do this, since Vasu accidentally kills himself—in Narayan's quietistic moral universe solutions to problems are usually achieved without the intervention of the protagonist—but it is clear by this point that the novel involves an archetypal conflict (from a Hindu perspective) between Vasu, who sees himself as "a rival to nature," and Nataraj, who champions "the natural." The balance is weighted in favor of Nataraj's values. Lest the reader miss the story's mythic dimension, Sastri explains

that Vasu “shows all the definitions of a *rakshasa*” and further defines Vasu as “a demoniac creature, who possessed enormous strength, strange powers, and genius, but recognized no sort of restraints of man or god.” Sastri points out that *rakshasas* always contain the seeds of their own destruction; when Vasu kills himself the mythic pattern is complete.

V.S. Naipaul has written (1977) that after initially reading Narayan as a writer of social comedies, he later came to view Narayan’s novels as Hindu fables dramatizing the conflict between quietism and an impulse toward social action that is usually defeated. This assessment sums up the central thematic conflict of *The Man-Eater of Malgudi*, a novel that walks a tightrope between Western and Hindu narrative modes without ever entirely allowing one mode to dominate.

JOHN THIEME

See also R.K. Narayan

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Thomas Mann 1875–1955

German

One of the most famous monographs in English on Thomas Mann is titled *The Ironic German* (see Heller, 1958). The label describes well the two determining features of Mann’s fiction. At least since the romantic era, irony has been a serious matter in German literature, and since Arthur Schopenhauer and Friedrich Nietzsche German culture has entertained the idea, crucial to Mann, that illusion is existentially necessary. To this aesthetic inheritance, Mann came increasingly to add an ethical appeal to “Humanität”—a phrase conveying shades of humanity, humanitarianism, and humanism—as the barbarism of the 20th century unfolded.

The notion of ironic illusion as a component of reality—as well as the basic condition of fiction—is the leading thought in *Bekenntnisse des Hochstaplers Felix Krull* (1954; *Confessions of Felix Krull, Confidence Man*). Begun in 1910, the work was taken up again at the end of Mann’s life and thus spans almost his entire oeuvre. This picaresque novel recounts the career of an attractive but penurious young man who exploits the possibilities of illusion and seduction to make his way in the world. In his hands, beautiful surfaces obscure sordid material circumstance, but they are no less real for being surfaces, no matter how deceptive. Krull tells the beguiling narrative of his confidence tricks from a prison cell, but that he has been caught does not invalidate the illusions of success. More significantly, Krull is a figure of the novelist, his tricks not essentially different from the illusions and seductions of fiction. Not Mann’s most accomplished novel, *Felix Krull* nevertheless epitomizes one of the central concerns of his art.

Mann rose to fame as the author of *Buddenbrooks: Verfall einer Familie* (1901; *Buddenbrooks: The Decline of a Family*), which became the best-selling novel in Germany in the first half of the 20th century. It was the first realist novel in German to

achieve international status, eventually leading to the award of the Nobel prize for literature in 1929. It combines the social realism of the great European tradition—with *Renée Mauperin* (1864) by Jules and Edmond Goncourt as a specific model—with the interest in morbid psychology of the fin de siècle. This combination is itself ironic, since the novel describes the decline of a family in incontestably splendid realist narrative and in doing so narrates the decline of the realist attitude upon which the social novel of the 19th century rested.

Mann never again referred to realism—whether as a style or a worldview—without distancing himself from its naive certainties. His second novel, *Königliche Hoheit* (1909; *Royal Highness*), expresses Mann’s self-consciousness about his role as an artist. The novel points out that the figures of prince and poet are alike in that they represent the many by representing themselves. Two of Mann’s shorter works deal with the same concerns. *Tonio Kröger* (1903) and *Der Tod in Venedig* (1912; *Death in Venice*) are exquisitely wrought examples of self-conscious artistry. In each, a writer-protagonist is torn between self-discipline and decadence, a dilemma created by art, which will always point both ways. As the narrator of *Death in Venice* puts it, “and does form not have two faces? Is it not at once moral and immoral?”

Yet despite this artistic self-consciousness, which remained with him always, Mann never abandoned the formal conventions of the traditional European novel, retaining a superficially unproblematic perspective on reality, as well as coherent and urbane narration, plot, setting, and characters. The broadest irony of Mann’s work lies in his simultaneous and brilliant use and questioning of the novel form. His continued reliance on traditional forms helps to explain his great popularity. Mann’s work was always accessible to a broad readership that did not have to

come to terms with unfamiliar literary procedures. At the same time it was always evidently *about* the profound and difficult questions of the time. His art is always sustained, even at its most serious and tragic, by the trickster-artist's sense that art is an irresponsible endeavor that achieves a profundity precisely by virtue of its ludic character.

History dictated that Germany should be one of Mann's major themes. After World War I, he was obliged to think over his initial unquestioning identification with the German romantic cultural inheritance and seek, as an artist, to continue the tradition in ways compatible with modern political democracy. *Der Zauberberg* (1924; *The Magic Mountain*) parodies the German Bildungsroman in order to give an ironic portrait of prewar Europe, but the parody also attempts a renewal of the genre's humanistic tradition. Hans Castorp, the protagonist and an embodiment of "Germanness," is an engaging character with the capacity to learn and grow despite the overwhelming spiritual disorientation of the time. At once satisfying fictional creations and evidently allegorical figures, all the major characters share this quality with Hans.

While *The Magic Mountain* hoped for a democratic future in Germany, the 1930 novella *Mario und der Zauberer* (*Mario and the Magician*) is less optimistic, deftly allegorizing the ominous power of fascism in a holiday anecdote about the murder of a sinister stage hypnotist.

Mann's next two major works, *Lotte in Weimar* (1939) and *Joseph und seine Brüder* (1933–43; *Joseph and His Brothers*), are responses to the historical failure of the first German attempt at democracy and Mann's associated exile. *Lotte in Weimar* continues Mann's commitment to maintaining and renewing the German cultural legacy. The novel deals with Charlotte Kestner's visit to Weimar, residence of the already famous Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Kestner was the real-life model for Lotte in Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* (1774; *The Sufferings of Young Werther*), written 24 years before the visit. Mann's novel explores the relation between art, life, and responsibility, largely through interior monologue. In the *Joseph* tetralogy, Mann falls back upon his enduring skill as a storyteller. Through the life of the biblical Joseph, the novel presents individual experience as patterned by myth. Mann uses myth in most of his works, like other more obviously modernist novelists such as James Joyce, but the *Joseph* novels specifically counter the Nazi abuse of mythology. Since Joseph is both interpreter of dreams and civil administrator, he thus also represents an ideal of a spiritual but practical humanity as an answer to fascist terror.

Mann's engagement with the theme of Germany culminates in *Doktor Faustus* (1947; *Doctor Faustus*). Mann had always thought of music, especially that of Richard Wagner, as a defining component of German culture, and in his version of the Faust story (once more a reference to the work of Goethe) Mann casts a composer, Adrian Leverkühn, as the representative German artist-musician who makes a pact with the devil. This is Mann's most moving and tragic work. Germany's overwhelming guilt and its suffering in World War II all but bring Mann's ludic artistry to silence. The humanist tradition speaks through the well-meaning but uncomprehending voice of the narrator, Serenus Zeitblom. Critics still argue whether or not Mann ultimately consigns Leverkühn, and Germany with him, to the devil, yet there can be no argument that the novel is itself

magnificently sustained and finished, contriving to escape the disintegration that it so graphically portrays.

Mann's writing is not easy to translate, and the reader who knows his work only in translation may miss something of the lightness of touch that pervades his elaborate prose. Although in many ways a writer who belongs to a bygone era of high culture, Mann remains much loved and very widely in print as one of the very few great modern novelists who appeal as much to the ordinary reader as to the intellectual elite.

MICHAEL MINDEN

See also Buddenbrooks; Doctor Faustus; Magic Mountain

Biography

Born 6 June 1875 in Lübeck, Germany. Brother of the writer Heinrich Mann and father of the writers Erika and Klaus Mann. Attended Dr. Bussenius' school, 1882–89; Gymnasium, Lübeck, 1889–94. Served in the military, 1898–99. Employed in insurance company, Munich, 1894–95, writer thereafter; lived in Switzerland, 1933–36 (deprived of German citizenship, 1936), Princeton, New Jersey, 1938–41, Santa Monica, California, 1941–52, and Switzerland, 1952–55. Awarded Nobel prize for literature, 1929. Died 12 August 1955.

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Mann ohne Eigenschaften. See Man Without Qualities

Manners. See Novel of Manners

Manon Lescaut by Abbé Prévost

1731

In 1731, Antoine-François Prévost d'Exiles, better known as simply the Abbé Prévost (1697–1763), published the *Histoire du chevalier des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut* (*Manon Lescaut*), the seventh volume of his *Mémoires d'un homme de qualité qui s'est retiré du monde* (1728–31; *Memoirs of a Man of Quality*). Although some critics have displayed interest in Prévost's *Histoire d'une grecque moderne* (1740; *History of a Modern Greek*), *Manon Lescaut* survives as the primary product of an enormous output: the 1783 Serpente edition of Prévost's selected works ran to 39 volumes; his complete works included 112 volumes, including 47 translations. Readers and critics in the 18th and especially early 19th century assumed that Prévost had drawn his inspiration from his own adventures. They accepted as factual various anecdotes about him, such as that he had murdered his father and that he had died at the hand of an ignorant surgeon who performed an autopsy while the abbé was still alive.

At first, *Manon Lescaut* elicited ambivalent responses. Eighteenth-century critics such as Palissot de Monterroy and La-Harpe expressed wonder at Prévost's skill in gaining readers' sympathy for profoundly amoral characters. The blind passion that transforms Des Grieux, a young man of good family, into a cardsharp and a murderer for the sake of a feckless, pleasure-loving charmer, Manon, certainly ran counter to established 18th- and 19th-century moral tenets.

Critics and writers in the 19th century responded to its depiction of grand passion: Stendhal used *Manon Lescaut* as a source for *De l'amour* (1822; *Love*); Balzac thought of it when describing the passion of Lucien de Rubempré for the courtesan Esther in *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes* (1844; *Splendors and Miseries of Courtesans*). Alfred de Vigny saw Des Grieux as a romantic, set apart from the common herd by his total commitment to passion. More middle-class values-oriented critics, such

as Jules Michelet and Anatole de Montaignon, criticized Manon's amorality, and Alexandre Dumas *fils* saw her as the prototype of the courtesan. Most, however, agreed on the fascination exerted by Prévost's portrayal of absolute love. The naturalness of the style and the sincerity of the emotions endowed the novel with authenticity, and readers equated Des Grieux, Prévost, and the "implied author," whose function is to articulate the work's moral values. Critics sometimes sounded guilty over the pleasure the novel gave them, and felt called upon to temper their delight with moral disapproval, often justifying Prévost's seeming amorality as, after all, being a faithful reflection of the manners and morals of a particularly libertine period, the Regency of Philippe d'Orléans. Some critics even noted that the reader sees Manon entirely through Des Grieux's eyes, but few of the early critics seemed to have been aware of the Abbé's sophisticated narrative technique.

The story of Des Grieux and Manon Lescaut concludes the memoirs of a gentleman, *un homme de qualité*, a much traveled, much tried man of the world who has loved, married, and lost a beautiful Turkish girl, Selima. The memoirs belonged to a French 18th-century genre, the memoir novel. In Prévost's *Memoirs*, the protagonist encounters only dead ends, accepts this fatality passively, and as Jean Sgard (1968) has pointed out, chooses a name, "Renoncourt"—composed of the verb *renoncer* (renounce) and the adjective *court* (short)—which reflects both his passivity and his renunciation. The stories he has related mainly happened to others. Now 70, his curiosity is piqued when he meets a young man escorting several cartsful of women who had been deported to Louisiana in punishment for their libertine ways, and wonders about the pretty deportée in chains with whom the young man is obviously in love. Renoncourt charitably gives Des Grieux some money and they part. Two years later, quite by chance, Renoncourt encounters Des Grieux in Calais and elicits from him the story of his life and of Manon's death in the "deserts" of Louisiana. The main narrator of the *Memoirs* thus steps aside, but not without remarking on the analogy between his long life and Des Grieux's story. The sympathy he feels for the young man guides the reader's response, and although the story changes its narration to the first person, it is introduced by two scenes, set two years apart, in which the narrator describes Des Grieux as a solitary "he," which contrasts with the couple around which the rest of the story is organized.

When Des Grieux relates his story, Manon has been dead only nine months. There is no distance, either temporal or moral, between the narrator and the young man who lived the passionate affair. Throughout the narration, where ostensibly Des Grieux stands aside and lets the story unfold, he, in fact, interjects comments, sometimes a word, sometimes a sentence, and occasionally a paragraph for analysis and reinforcement. These interventions blend so smoothly with the narration that it is often impossible to know whether Des Grieux the lover or Des Grieux the narrator now converted to religious sentiment is speaking. The narration, so precise in its depiction of the protagonists' emotions and of the regency's social and moral atmosphere, is vague in the extreme when it comes to Manon's appearance. The reader is told repeatedly that she is "beautiful," "charming," but never learns the color of her eyes or her hair. Des Grieux's fascination with the image of his lover robs him of his ability to describe her, and so she exists only through his memory of her.

But there she exists so strongly, however, that generations of readers have endowed Manon with a mythic quality, and she gradually displaced Des Grieux as the focus of the novel. For Prévost, the chevalier was the central character; his fall from respectability into vice and his final redemption comprised the theme. But almost immediately readers had begun shortening the title to *Histoire de Manon Lescaut*, then *Manon Lescaut*, and often simply *Manon*. Generations have seen Des Grieux as a martyr of absolute passion and Manon as an innocent, almost naive, femme fatale.

The lovers commit numerous nefarious deeds. Des Grieux cheats at cards, shares his mistress with rich lovers, acquiesces in deceiving and robbing them, and shoots the porter of the hospital where Manon is imprisoned, but his narration expresses little shame or remorse. Overall he finds excuses for his conduct in the depraved morals of his time, in the levity of youth, and especially in the overwhelming power of his passion. Imbued with the sentimental morality often found in 18th-century literature, Des Grieux feels that his wrongful deeds have not altered the innocence of his heart. Neither have Manon's misdeeds altered her fundamental goodness, so when the lovers reach Louisiana she can be redeemed and, for several months, live blissfully, although in extreme penury, with Des Grieux.

The irony of *Manon Lescaut* is that when the heroine is finally redeemed, and when European social constraints (her lowly birth, her status as a fallen woman) no longer matter, the couple seeks to be united lawfully, thus revealing to the governor's lustful nephew that Manon is single and available. Threatened with separation (the governor is most ready to give his nephew the pretty colonist he desires), the lovers flee New Orleans, and, unable to bear the harshness of the "deserts" outside the city, Manon breathes her last, a victim of her redemption.

In many respects, *Manon Lescaut* belongs to the romance tradition, its basic pattern being a typical romance device, the separation and reunion of the lovers. Shipwreck and storms play a part, and characters believed dead (such as the governor's wicked nephew) turn out to be alive. And like romances, it hinges on a love story, beginning with love at first sight and setting up love as justification for any deed, however evil. But love in *Manon Lescaut* is not the elegant passion of chivalric romances or 17th-century heroic pastorals; it is more akin to the *amour fou* of André Breton: a pathological attachment, an obsession, a madness. Moreover, *Manon Lescaut* differs from the traditional romance by the realism of its setting. The manners and morals of Paris during the Regency of Philippe d'Orléans are vividly depicted. Although Louisianians smile (when they do not laugh) at the "deserts" outside New Orleans and the sand in which Des Grieux digs a grave for his lover, the manners and morals of colonial Louisiana ring true: in the first half of the 18th century, the colony was rife with poverty, violence, corruption, and nepotism.

Prévost very much wanted to endow his story with an aura of authenticity. Not only did he use the device of a tale told to a spectator who then writes it down for the reader, but he borrowed from works composed about real people the technique of the initials and the ellipses: Monsieur de G.M., for example. This simple device endows Manon's elderly admirer, who is barely sketched, with a verisimilitude he would lack had he been given a name. Prévost's use of the pseudo-memoir enabled him, as Madsen (1978) points out, to create a situation "in which an intense subjectivity is given credence by an external objectivity."

The impact of *Manon Lescaut* can be measured by the number of imitations and adaptations it has provoked. In the 19th century Manon and the passion she inspires reappear in Dumas fils' *La Dame aux camélias* (1848; *Camille*), Prosper Mérimée's *Carmen* (1846; *Carmen*), and George Sand's *Leone Leoni* (1835; *Leone Leoni*), to name but a few. Besides the much performed operas by Massenet and Puccini, Manon is the eponymous heroine of plays, ballets, vaudevilles, comic operas, melodramas, and one work labeled a "cry from the heart in three acts" (*Madelon Lescaut* by P.A.A. Lambert Theboust, 1856). As recently as 1977, the historian Hurbert Jules Deschamps published *Manon l'Américaine*, which relates the Louisiana love affair between Manon's daughter and Des Grieux's younger brother. Only Dumas fils' *Camille* (especially in Verdi's operatic version, *La Traviata*), however, has come close to exerting the lasting fascination of *Manon Lescaut*, and Dumas' Armand is the only bereft lover

to have communicated to generations of readers (or listeners) the sense of total passion and of absolute loss that pervade the narrative of Prévost's Des Grieux.

MATHÉ ALLAIN

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Man's Fate by André Malraux

La Condition humaine 1933

Man's Fate marks a significant turn in Malraux's career as a novelist. His first widely acclaimed work, it won him the Prix Goncourt in 1933 and is generally considered his masterpiece. Although Malraux was already known in the literary world by such novels as *Les Conquérants* (1928; *The Conquerors*) and *La Voie royale* (1930; *The Royal Way*), these works had not earned him the respect and admiration that *Man's Fate* was to bring to such a young writer (he was 32 when the novel was published). These first novels, set in the Orient, were fairly well received, but the main characters were basically adventurers motivated by self-interest, and their individual quests stirred little emotional response from readers. *Man's Fate*, in contrast, exploited the interest in the Orient, told a compelling story, and engaged the audience with some of the leading political and intellectual issues of the day.

Man's Fate, along with *The Conquerors*, *The Royal Way*, and later on *L'Espoir* (1937; *Man's Hope*), belongs to the first stage of Malraux's evolution as a writer: during this period his fascination with death dominates. This novel reflects the concerns of the times and the worldwide political and social unrest. In the aftermath of a war (World War I), the rise of fascism, and the failure of religion to alleviate the suffering of the masses, society had become disillusioned and was looking for new ways of bringing about the changes needed. *Man's Fate* expresses the despair, alienation, and sense of emptiness that were beginning to affect the intellectual climate in France.

Until Malraux, the 20th-century French novel had focused primarily on the personal aspect of life: a character's relationship to and place in society, as in Roger Martin du Gard, or on the individual's inner world, as in André Gide and Marcel Proust. Malraux's vision is much broader; he is the first novelist to present man's relationship to an absurd universe. He, too, asks the

Pascalian question: "What am I in the universe?" but unlike his Jansenist predecessor, who turned to God for answers, Malraux places his faith in man.

The story is set during the 1927 uprising in Shanghai (which ultimately failed), an appropriate stage for Malraux to play out his own sympathies for the communist ideals. He experienced the Orient as a man of action and applied his knowledge of the area to create a powerful background for the ideas presented in *Man's Fate*. In particular, his use of the opposing Western and Eastern world views—action (represented by the character named Kyo) versus passivity (represented by Gisors)—demonstrates the power of commitment to transcend man's fate. Katow's self-sacrifice (he gives his cyanide to two frightened young people, thus sparing them the agony of being burned alive) ends the novel on a note of hope for mankind. By contrast, Gisor's drifting off in a drug-induced fog is clearly no alternative for Malraux.

In this world of men, sentimentalism has little or no place, and the role of women remains severely limited. Valerie, Ferral's mistress, seems to have no other purpose than to be a sex object for Ferral. Hemmelrich's wife has endured a life of misery and suffering. As for May, Kyo's wife, although a capable independent doctor, she possesses few feminine traits. Malraux's women end up almost as caricatures: Valerie is a child, Hemmelrich's wife a victim, and May is really a man. They are all lacking; they are incomplete, unfinished. The depiction of women in *Man's Fate* is typical of women characters in Malraux's other novels.

Malraux breaks ground in his use of cinematic techniques (flashbacks, close-ups, shadows and lights that create a black-and-white effect), with much of the action taking place at night with artificial lights to create dramatic effects. Instead of chapters, the book is divided into seven parts and subdivided by days and by the times of the day. There is no linear plot development

with clear chronological references: Malraux focuses on the torments of the individual and the spiritual quest of the characters, not on their physical appearance.

Malraux became a champion of the struggle against fascism and injustice and believed in being "engagé"—politically committed in one's writing. Likewise, Malraux's heroes in *Man's Fate* have chosen a political commitment that they believe aims at eradicating injustice. Yet the Shanghai revolution serves mainly as a pretext to demonstrate the timelessness of man's destiny. It provides a stage whereby some individuals may achieve a brief moment of glory (like Katow at the end) through a gesture that transforms their lives and ultimately gives significance to their death. In this novel, Malraux brings an awareness of the absurd as well as the idea that the meaning of existence depends upon one's acts, thus prefiguring existentialism.

MARTINE CREMERS PEARSON

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Manticore. See Deptford Trilogy

Manuscrit caché. See Framing and Embedding in Narrative

Alessandro Manzoni 1785–1873

Italian

An early 20th-century tribute to Alessandro Manzoni (Hachette *Almanac*, 1923) mentions his "many novels." This error is understandable: although Manzoni produced only one novel (*I promessi sposi* [first published 1827; *The Betrothed*]), it has the weight, scope, and variety possessed by most writers' collected works. Moreover, the impression that Manzoni was prolific is not so very inaccurate. What he *did* publish, in addition to *The Betrothed*, was an extraordinary range of critical disquisitions—essays on language, literature, history, and religion—as well as two tragedies, a series of poems on religious festivals (the *Inni Sacri* [1815; *The Sacred Hymns*]), and a powerful ode to Napoléon (*Il cinque maggio*). This material is just as useful to the student of the novel as might have been those phantom volumes of fiction. The concept of heroism in history offered by *Il cinque maggio* clarifies, by comparison, the very different notion

of historical agency in *The Betrothed*. Manzoni's novel may be considered as an expression of his religious opinions (expressed argumentatively in *Sulla morale cattolica* [1819; *A Vindication of Catholic Morality*]). The near-obsessiveness of his linguistic interests—he once spent a series of evenings listening to most of the letter A read from a dictionary—helps make sense of his closely related effort to recast his great tale of the past in a national language for the future.

Among these ambitious satellite projects, his treatise on the historical novel, *Del romanzo storico* (*On the Historical Novel*), was begun in 1828 but not published until 1850, in the sixth fascicle of the author's collected works. This essay—available to English-speaking readers in Sandra Bermann's lucid translation—is one of the major theoretical statements on the power and limitations of the historical novel as a genre, and on the

place of historical fiction as the inheritor of epic and tragedy. The first section of Manzoni's essay poses a double difficulty with historical novels. On the one hand, historical novelists blend fact and invention without distinguishing one from the other. Manzoni imagines the complaint of a prospective reader who has been promised "a richer, more varied, more complete history" than is to be found in conventional historical works, but who then realizes that historical fiction provides no reliable and consistent means of separating actualities from the novelist's own creations. The author makes up "falsehoods" to engage the reader's interest, but these falsehoods corrupt the process of instruction that they were intended to facilitate. Furthermore, a diametrically opposite criticism is also plausible. A second, equally just reader might well complain that the historical novel *constantly*, by implication or otherwise, suggests that some of its parts are historically based while others are mere inventions. (The most conspicuous form of such a separation is to provide footnotes signifying the truth of a particular claim—a common, often-parodied practice in 18th-century novels as well as in the works of Walter Scott.) This practice, also, is virtually impossible to avoid. Historical fiction is thus condemned doubly: initially for having too much unity and then for not having enough. It fails first on historical and second on artistic grounds.

Having posed these criticisms, Manzoni eagerly acknowledges their justice. Next he works toward successive and increasingly subtle restatements of each case, establishing by this means both that the readers whom he has mimicked have naive (and self-contradictory) expectations and that the historical novel, by its nature, is a shifting field of unities and disunities, continually readjusting the balance between invention and fact. (Along the way he skillfully dismisses the argument that history is just as fictional as fiction itself.) In conclusion, as long as the genre of historical fiction remains a narrative form working with heterogeneous materials, it can satisfy neither the historical purist nor the adherent of formal unity. "The historical novel does not have a logical purpose of its own; it counterfeits two, as I have shown." Thus, books such as Manzoni's *The Betrothed* are intrinsically unstable; the compound they presume to sustain can on no account last.

Even when running rings around his two presumed interlocutors, even when demonstrating their foolishness, Manzoni is also yielding ground to these nagging, interior voices. He is demonstrating the capabilities but also the futility of the genre in which he himself had excelled. Like some of Lev Tolstói's essays on art, *On the Historical Novel* appears to be a retraction. Part two of the essay, however, puts a significantly different light on things. Manzoni shows in fascinating detail that if historical fiction is intrinsically unstable, so are epic and tragedy, and for similar reasons. When, at the end of the argument, he returns to the subject of historical fiction as such, the reader's perspective on the genre has been fundamentally altered. It seems now that *any* genre attempting to incorporate history and poetic invention is subject to the same contradictions as historical fiction. The death of the historical novel (predicted or perhaps just registered by Manzoni) thus repeats the fall of these more venerable and prestigious forms. If historical fiction's life span has been shorter than that of epic or historical tragedy, that is because historiography itself has flourished, diminishing the effective opportunities for original invention *within* or merely adjacent to the realm of fact. The rise of history as a discipline—an underlying cause

of historical fiction's popularity in the 19th century—is thus, concurrently, the cause of its eventual fall.

Manzoni's essay is significant on at least three levels. First, *On the Historical Novel* helps explain why its author wrote one famous novel rather than many. Second, the piece reenacts, in a more specialized and concentrated manner, a problem that had dogged novelists for centuries. In the era of Daniel Defoe, the mixing of fact and fiction had been understood as a flaw or lure of novels in general. (One frequent solution, at this stage, was to claim for first-person narratives the status of unadorned fact.) By the 19th century, this sort of mix is much more taken for granted—even in narratives, like those of William Godwin and John Galt, which echo the Defoe formula—but the arrival of the historical novel à la Scott revives the old controversies; it is as though the founding quarrels of the novel are being reenacted for a century dominated by historical thinking (and in its later decades by historical positivism). Third, the issues so subtly defined by Manzoni are apparently still alive; for instance, the controversy between Natalie Davis and Robert Finlay (on the 17th-century case of the impostor Martin Guerre) demonstrates the high passions raised in the present cultural climate by attempts to integrate historical and novelistic techniques. Manzoni's treatise still has much to teach historians, novelists, and writers who claim to work in the treacherous space between history and fictional invention.

RICHARD MAXWELL

See also Betrothed

Biography

Born in Milan, 7 March 1785. Attended the Somaschian college at Merate, 1791–96, and Lugano, 1796–98; Barnabite Collegio dei Nobili, Milan and Magenta, 1787–1801. Senator of the Kingdom, 1860; Honorary Citizen, Rome, 1872. Died 22 May 1873.

Novel by Manzoni

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Mao Dun 1896–1981

Chinese

Mao Dun (pen name of Shen Yanbing), novelist, essayist, literary critic, social activist, and communist ideologue, is best known as the naturalist author of *Ziye* (1933; *Midnight*), a massive novel about life in Shanghai, and a rural trilogy (three short stories) entitled *Chuncan* (1932–33; “Spring Silkworms”). Mao Dun is the author of 13 novels, more than 100 short stories, and over 300 essays on Western literature and literary theory. His major works include the trilogy *Shi* (1927–28; *Eclipse*), *Hong* (1929; *Rainbow*), *Midnight*, *Fushi* (1941; *Putrefaction*), and *Shuangye hongsi eryuehua* (1942; *Maple Leaves as Red as February Flowers*). In 1921, Mao Dun became one of the founding members of the Literary Studies Society, an organization that advocated a practical program of “literature for life’s sake.” The organization included some of the literary giants of the period, such as Zheng Zhenduo, Zhou Zuoren, and Yu Dafu. Before he began writing novels and short stories in 1927, Mao Dun had already served a long literary apprenticeship by translating many Western works of literature into Chinese and by writing literary criticism. His works are generally well-crafted, elegant, lyrical, and reflect his interest in the works of Émile Zola and the naturalists. Mao Dun was also a Marxist. Many of his characters, often females, are in one way or another caught up in the tumultuous political and historical events of their day as they seek their own fulfillment. Mao Dun is one of the most important political and ideological writers of modern China and one of the first to explore extensively the interplay of sexuality and politics in literature.

Mao Dun’s first work, *Shi*, a trilogy consisting of three slim volumes, *Huanmie* (1927; *Disillusion*), *Dongyao* (1928; *Vacillation*), and *Zhuiqiu* (1928; *Pursuit*), portrays a generation of young, brooding intellectuals, men and women, who are caught up in the tidal wave of revolutionary fervor without a true understanding of the nature of revolution and its aftermath. As a consequence, over a course of time spanning the May Fourth Movement (1919) to the end of Chiang Kai-shek’s successful Northern Expedition (1926–28) to unite the country, which ended with the betrayal of the young communist revolutionaries, the protagonists suffer disillusionment as their fragile idealism and personal lives are shattered, and they turn from revolution to self-indulgent nihilism and ennui.

Mao Dun’s next major work, *Rainbow*, tells of a young woman named Mei who escapes from her bourgeois family to join the revolutionary May Thirtieth Movement (1925) in Shanghai. Rather than succumb to the forces at home and in the school where she taught, Mei is determined “to overcome her environment, to overcome her fate.” At the same time that Mei finds her identity in political action, an intricate interplay of her emergent sexuality and politics begins to unfold. Ironically, Mei finds that her newly awakened sexuality must be curtailed as she works in the underground communist organization. Geographically, Mei’s liberation moves her from her home in Chengdu to the town of Luzhou, also in Sichuan, where she teaches school. Her final liberation takes place in the modern metropolis of Shanghai, where she takes part in the demonstrations of the May Thirtieth Movement and meets her revolutionary hero Liang Gangfu.

Mao Dun’s next novel, his magnum opus, *Midnight*, is a Zolaesque study of the complexity of life in Shanghai, the nerve center of China’s national economy, with its capitalist industrialists, striking factory workers, bourgeois youths, young communist agitators, and women in search of love and fortune. It is a long, sprawling novel of more than 500 pages, containing some 70 characters and numerous plot twists and turns. No other modern Chinese novel has been able to capture the excitement and drama of the stock market and the adventurous speculation of the foreign and nationalist capitalists as *Midnight*. Mao Dun’s naturalistic depiction of the evils of city life in Shanghai, coupled with the deterministic thrust of the communist thesis on the decline of capitalism, foredooms the efforts of the shrewd silk factory owner and national capitalist Wu Sunfu in his heroic struggle against his rival, the comprador capitalist Zhao Botao. This struggle forms the main theme of the novel. Aside from this political theme, as David Der-wei Wang (1992) points out, the novel also employs a feminine/feminist theme that skillfully depicts the city of Shanghai as a voluptuous femme fatale, a city pulsating with female body parts: swaying hips, red lips, quivering breasts, and naked legs. Although this is the standard fare in Shanghai, it overwhelms the elder Mr. Wu, the protagonist’s father, who has just come to Shanghai from the countryside. Shanghai is further personified in the body of the female protagonist, Xu Manli, whose bold and ribald liberated ways enable her to best the financial wizards on Shanghai’s Wall Street for money and privilege. She dances a seductive “death dance” atop billiard tables for four budding Shanghai industrialists.

In 1937, after the publication of *Midnight*, Mao Dun wrote a novella entitled *Duojiao guanxi* (*Polygonal Relations*), which is essentially a continuation of the same theme, dealing with the many-sided relationship between landlords and workers, capitalists and peasants, bankers and industrialists. The sociopolitical circumstances are such that one group is forever exploiting and indebted to another.

Before he completed his massive novel *Midnight*, Mao Dun wrote several minor masterpieces, including his famous rural trilogy of short stories, “Spring Silkworms,” “Autumn Harvest,” and “Winter Ruin,” which are widely regarded today as the best examples of his prose style. The rural trilogy presents touching, intimate portraits of three generations of a poor peasant family, whose fates are being determined by economic and political forces totally beyond their comprehension and control. With the passage of the seasons, the family is brought closer and closer to ruin. In *Fushi*, Mao Dun uses the first-person epistolary form to tell the story of a young woman who is a secret agent for the Nationalist Party, the Kuomintang (KMT), during the War of Resistance against Japan (1937–45). The protagonist, a young woman of 24 named Zhao Huiming, is trapped into working for the KMT as a result of her vanity and strong sense of bourgeois individualism. Her mission is to seduce a young communist revolutionary, also her lover, to force him to divulge the names of other communist party members. However, her middle-class, bourgeois sentiments conflict with the ruthlessness of her mis-

sion. In her diary she reveals her dilemma and her desperate search for her own sense of self.

Shuangye hongsi eryuehua is the tantalizing first part of a projected trilogy that was left unfinished. The story tells of the rivalry between Zhao Shouyi, a member of the powerful landed gentry, and the new-style industrial capitalist Wang Boshen, the head of a steamship company. While the Zhao and Wang families—the former representing the traditional agricultural community, the latter representing the new capitalist mercantile interests—are feuding for power, the members of the younger generation are caught in unhappy marital relationships. Zhang Xunru is listlessly married to a traditional woman, and his sister Wan-qing is unhappily married to Huang Heguang, who suffers from sexual impotence. While the marital squabbles mar the lives of these couples, an idealistic young man and widower, Qian Liangcai, carries the revolutionary banner forward to protect the farmer peasants from the incursions of Wang Boshen's steamship company. Unfortunately, the circumstances for political action are not yet ripe, and his efforts to save the farmers end in failure. In this novel, as in "Spring Silkworms," Mao Dun returns to pre-1919 China, where the internal contradictions of Chinese society among the newly emerging capitalists, the conservative landed gentry, and powerless, reform-minded intellectuals are highlighted. Because of their inability to work together, all their good intentions only result in more suffering for the peasants.

Mao Dun's other war novels include *Di yi jieduande gushi* (1937; *Story of the First Stage of the War*) and *Jiehoushiyi* (1942; *Pieces Picked Up after the Calamity*), patriotic novels about the siege of Shanghai in 1937 and the fall of Hong Kong in 1942, respectively. After 1943, Mao Dun did not produce any more major works of literature. He continued to write articles and essays after the war and became Minister of Culture after the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949. However, as far as his creativity as a writer is concerned, it ended essentially with the war years in 1945.

PETER LI

Biography

Born in Chekiang province, 1896. Education interrupted in 1916 because he ran out of money. Soon after became a proofreader for the Commercial Press in Shanghai, later promoted to editor and translator; in 1920 joined several other young Chinese writers in taking over editorial management of *Hsiao-shuo yüeh-pao* (Short-Story Magazine); elected editor by the group, a position he held until 1923; joined the Northern Expedition as secretary to the propaganda department of the Kuomintang (KMT) Central Executive Committee; fled to

Kuling when the KMT broke with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP); helped found the League of Left-Wing Writers, 1930; founded and edited two patriotic literary journals during the Sino-Japanese War (1937–45); participated in several literary and cultural committees after the CCP came to power in 1949; Minister of Culture, 1949–1964 (dismissed from his post); later served as vice president, Chinese Writers Association, and edited a magazine of children's literature. Died 27 March 1981.

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Mar Mani. See Mr. Mani

Márquez, Gabriel García. *See* García Márquez, Gabriel

Marxist Criticism of the Novel

Terry Eagleton points out in *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (1990) that the very notion of the aesthetic arose historically in conjunction with the rise of capitalism and bourgeois society. The complicity between bourgeois ideology and the whole notion of the aesthetic is particularly powerful in the case of the novel, which any number of observers have identified as a fundamentally bourgeois genre. (Ian Watt's *The Rise of the Novel* [1957] is still paradigmatic.) It should thus come as no surprise that Marxist thinkers have paid considerable attention to the realm of culture and particularly to the novel. The novel, as the literary form in which bourgeois ideology is expressed most clearly, has been a principal focus of Marxist critique from Marx and Engels on down. The tradition of the bourgeois novel also served as a central resource to Marxist thinkers such as Georgy Plekhanov when they began to develop an alternative system of aesthetics in the early 20th century. This effort received a particular boost in the early years of the Soviet Union, as Soviet writers and critics sought to develop socialist realism as a new mode of novelistic expression. The 1930s saw a burgeoning of leftist culture worldwide that involved increased production in both Marxist criticism and in leftist novels (see Murphy, 1991). As part of this phenomenon, Marxist critics such as Britain's Christopher Caudwell, Ralph Fox, and Alick West or America's Granville Hicks and V.F. Calverton examined the tradition of the bourgeois novel while seeking ways in which the novel might become an effective mode of socialist literary expression.

The dual Marxist traditions of ideological critique of the bourgeois novel and of the search for an alternative socialist novel converge in the work of the Hungarian philosopher and critic Georg Lukács. Seeking to provide guidance to revolutionary socialist writers, Lukács put forward the fundamental insight that the European bourgeoisie were at one time a revolutionary class and that bourgeois literature played a major role in the historical victory of the emergent bourgeoisie over their aristocratic predecessors. Lukács reminded his contemporaries that the European bourgeoisie, however decadent and conservative they had become by the end of the 19th century, were in their younger days the most successful revolutionary class in history, making bourgeois literature (epitomized by the realist novel) arguably the most effective revolutionary literature of all time. Lukács began his studies of literature with the early *Die Theorie des Romans* (1920; *The Theory of the Novel*), which is an essentially Hegelian account written before he became a Marxist. Lukács' later work, however, is firmly rooted in the tradition of historical materialism pioneered by Marx and Engels. In this work, Lukács consistently privileges realism as the literary mode best suited to capture the sweep of history toward socialism. In addition, he sees the realist novel as the genre best able to repre-

sent human society as a totality and thereby to counter the tendency of capitalism to fragment human experience into separate realms, thus impoverishing and unsettling the human subject.

In works such as *A történelmi regény* (1937; *The Historical Novel*), Lukács sees realism as the only literary mode capable of representing the totality of society by revealing through its narrative form the underlying movement of history. For Lukács, great 19th-century realists such as Walter Scott, Honoré de Balzac, and Lev Tolstoi thus provide potentially valuable models for 20th-century socialist writers. Indeed, Lukács believes that the greatest realist literature, embodying the forces that enable historical change, is always progressive, regardless of the political leanings of the authors themselves. Thus, in *Wider den missverstandenen Realismus* (1958; *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism*), he argues that any novel that represents history accurately is by definition a contribution to the cause of socialism, regardless of the author's actual intention. For Lukács, however, the "accurate" representation of the historical process need not imply the inclusion of exhaustive detail. Indeed, he notes in *The Historical Novel* that individual details need not even be accurate so long as the work captures the overall flow of history and the historical necessity of the situations it describes. Similarly, Lukács' insistence that the most effective literary works must strive to represent society as a totality does not imply that texts must seek, in an encyclopedic way, literally to represent all aspects of society. Rather, successful works of literature must seek to represent their characters and events in ways that show their participation in the totality of society. Crucial here, for Lukács, especially in the case of characterization, is the technique of typification, or the ability of writers such as Scott and Balzac to create vividly individualized characters who are nevertheless clearly the products of social and historical forces larger than themselves.

Rooted in the history of European civilization, Lukács' work also involves a firm sense of literary history. If the great age of realism corresponds to the rise to power of the bourgeoisie in the 18th and early 19th centuries, Lukács argues, then the bourgeois turn to conservatism after this power is achieved leads to a decline in realist literature. This decline eventually gives rise to the appearance of naturalism, which for Lukács is a degraded form of realism that focuses on description instead of narration and concentrates on local detail at the expense of the ability to represent society as a whole. In "The Ideology of Modernism" (included in *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism*), Lukács extends this historical analysis to modernism, which he sees as even more decadent and less able to represent reality accurately than naturalism. He argues that the formal fragmentation of modernist texts and the brilliance of their verbal constructions

participate in the process of reification that is itself central to the fragmentation of social life under capitalism. He further condemns modernist writers like Joyce and Kafka for making technique an end in itself, without regard to the human realities that this technique might convey. For Lukács the “negation of outward reality” is a central project of modernist writing, which represents a turning away from the world and a retreat into an aesthetic realm divorced from social reality. And this disengagement is in direct complicity with the main cultural thrust of bourgeois society, which seeks to isolate art in a separate realm and thus deprive it of any potentially subversive political force. Modernist texts, for Lukács, rather than interacting with history in a positive and productive way, are sterile artifacts caught up in the inexorable drive of capitalist society to convert all it touches into mere commodities.

Many of Lukács’ Marxist contemporaries, although they were influenced by his work in important ways, did not share his wholesale rejection of modernism. The disagreements led to important aesthetic debates on the left. Indeed, the “Brecht-Lukács” debate, with the Marxist dramatist Bertolt Brecht (who explored innovative modernist forms in his own writing), became one of the central aesthetic debates of 20th-century Marxism. Prominent Marxists aligned with the Brechtian position included Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno, both of whom were in other ways strongly influenced by Lukács.

Benjamin also made important contributions to the understanding of the novel as an expression of bourgeois ideology. In “The Storyteller” (1955), Benjamin argues that in the modern world the ability to tell meaningful stories is rapidly becoming a lost art. Always concerned with the relationship between works of art and the physical technology available to produce and distribute those works, Benjamin suggests that the demise of storytelling begins with the invention of the printing press and occurs as part of the shift from oral to print culture (and from stories to novels) that has characterized Western society for the past four centuries. Taking this argument a step further, he posits that the rise of the novel has contributed to the inability of the contemporary individual to relate to others. In contrast to the communal activity of telling (and listening to) stories, both the reading and the writing of novels are for Benjamin solitary activities that foster an individualism closely aligned with bourgeois ideology. Unlike Lukács, Benjamin thought that the new techniques developed by modernist and avant-garde artists (and new technologies such as film) offered exciting possibilities for the reversal of this cultural trend.

The American Fredric Jameson parallels Benjamin and Adorno in his belief that a critique of capitalism was an important part of the modernist project. Yet Jameson’s work is informed most crucially by the influence of Lukács. In works such as *The Political Unconscious* (1981) and *Postmodernism* (1991), Jameson has elaborated an influential Marxist critical practice focused largely on the novel and based on a strong understanding of the close connection between literature and history. Jameson supplements his Marxist theoretical perspective with a sophisticated use of psychoanalytic, structuralist, poststructuralist, and other critical approaches, but he is unwavering in his insistence on the primacy of political interpretations of literature and on the fundamental superiority of Marxism to any other political approach to literature. And Jameson, while seeing great critical potential in modernism, echoes Lukács’ reminder of the revolutionary role played

by 19th-century realism. Meanwhile, he applies much of Lukács’ critique of modernism to postmodernism, which he considers a direct reflection of the “logic” of capitalism in its late, global/consumerist phase. Jameson’s most important debt to Lukács may reside in the central emphasis of both critics on history as the basic fabric of human existence. In particular, Jameson follows Lukács in placing great emphasis on the way literature (especially the novel) reflects the Marxist notion of history as class conflict. Thus, in *Signatures of the Visible* (1992), Jameson declares that history in the modern sense is an invention of the European bourgeoisie, designed to tell the story of the cultural revolution through which a particular class rose to hegemony in Europe. The story of “the transition from feudalism to capitalism,” suggests Jameson, “is what is secretly (or more deeply) being told in most contemporary historiography, whatever its ostensible content.” Further, Jameson argues, this view of history makes the bourgeois cultural revolution “the only true Event of history.” Thus, the Lukácsian injunction “Always historicize!” with which Jameson begins *The Political Unconscious* implies not only an insistence that critics be aware of the embeddedness of literary texts in their historical contexts, but also an awareness of the way the discourses of history and literature have been used to support and legitimate bourgeois hegemony in Europe.

Given the central role of literature in the establishment and maintenance of bourgeois hegemony in Europe, it is not surprising that so many Marxist literary critics, like Terry Eagleton, have focused particularly on the realm of ideology. The most influential figure in this vein of Marxist criticism has been the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci, whose work is represented principally by a series of notebooks written during a ten-year imprisonment for his left-wing political activities. Gramsci focused on the way the European bourgeoisie gained and maintained their power through a complex of political and cultural practices that convinced the more numerous lower classes willingly to support bourgeois authority. Thus, bourgeois power resides principally in the ability of the bourgeoisie to obtain the spontaneous consent of the masses by having them identify with the bourgeoisie’s worldview. Literature, of course, can play a central role in the development of this consent. If absolutely necessary, consensual obedience may be supplemented by more directly coercive forms of state power, that is, by institutions like the police and the army, which use physical force to impose discipline on those groups who withhold their consent. This apparatus is, Gramsci argues, largely supplemental, residing primarily in the background and coming into play only in moments of crisis when more subtle forms of control have failed.

While Gramsci himself made relatively little direct contribution to Marxist criticism of the novel, his work has proved extremely influential for a number of subsequent Marxist critics. The most important of these Gramscian Marxist critics is probably Louis Althusser, whose extensive body of work is particularly distinguished by his attempt to integrate Marxist thought with the structuralist methods of analysis that were dominant in France during the 1950s and 1960s. Especially concerned with delineating the complex relationship between art and ideology, Althusser developed the concept of “interpellation,” or the “hailing of the subject”—the process through which ideology shapes the subject. According to Althusser, we do not form our attitudes so much as they form us, because the individual subject is literally created by ideology.

Echoing Gramsci, Althusser emphasizes that the process of interpellation allows the existing power structure of capitalist society to maintain its domination over the general population without resorting to violence or force. Interpellation occurs in subtle ways, through the workings of what Althusser calls "Ideological State Apparatuses" (ISAs), including official culture and specific institutions like churches and schools, although it is constantly backed up by the physical force represented by the "Repressive State Apparatus" (RSA) of the police and the military. Althusser's discussion of interpellation has much in common with the frequent arguments of Marxist critics that ideological manipulation of the individual psyche lies at the heart of the bourgeois conception of the free autonomous individual, a conception that turns out to be nothing more than a ruse to hide the fact that individuals are largely determined not by their own choices but by the needs of the economic and political systems in which they live. Indeed, Althusser directly contrasts ideology (as knowledge thoroughly conditioned by politics) with science (as direct objective knowledge). This opposition leads to a special emphasis in Althusser's work on culture and literature, which he situates somewhere between the poles of science and ideology. He argues that art plays a privileged role in ideological critique because the workings of ideology can potentially be detected in art in ways that they cannot in society at large.

Althusser was an important influence on several other critics. One of these is Pierre Macherey, whose *A Theory of Literary Production* (1978) made an important contribution to Marxist criticism of the novel from a structuralist perspective, while his later work pioneered poststructuralist Marxist criticism. Lucien Goldmann's *Towards a Sociology of the Novel* (1975), while sometimes a bit mechanical in its application of theory to the readings of actual texts, resembles Althusser's work in its structuralist approach. However, Goldmann echoes Lukács in his insistence that the realist novels of writers such as Balzac and Stendhal were ultimately artistic reflections of the capitalist market system.

The Gramscian vein of Marxist ideological critique has also been central to the tradition of British cultural materialism. A key founding figure in this tradition is Raymond Williams, whose work grows directly out of the strong British tradition of socialist class and working-class culture. However, Williams also draws extensively upon the continental Marxist tradition of thinkers like Althusser, especially later in his career. Emphasizing the role played by literature and culture in the development of society as a whole, Williams analyzes cultural artifacts as part of a project to develop a general vision of British socialism. In *The Country and the City* (1973) he presents nothing less than a Marxist revision of the entire history of British literature from the Renaissance forward. Williams' work is marked by a distinctive emphasis on the creative potential of ordinary people. He pays serious attention not only to traditional "high" culture but also to popular culture, and his work on such popular media as television has been extremely influential for cultural critics in recent years. Williams' view of culture as the embodiment of the lived experience of ordinary people and therefore as a source of organic unity has struck many contemporary Marxist critics as somewhat nostalgic and idealized. Nevertheless, his insistence on paying attention to the needs and experiences of common people as a necessary element of cultural criticism has set a positive example for many subsequent critics, particularly Eagleton, his most illustrious successor.

Eagleton's own critical practice, in works such as *Exiles and Emigrés* (1970) and *Criticism and Ideology* (1976), has focused largely on the novel, which continues to be a major emphasis of Marxist criticism, although many recent Marxists (including Lukácsians such as Jameson) have followed Williams' lead in paying serious attention to film, television, and other forms of popular culture. Sophisticated Marxist critics such as Eagleton and Jameson have in fact spearheaded a resurgence of Western Marxist criticism in the past quarter of a century, making Marxist criticism one of the most vital and innovative trends in approaches to the novel as the 20th century comes to a close. For example, Franco Moretti's *The Way of the World* (1987) continues the Lukácsian tradition with its strongly historicized treatment of the European Bildungsroman. Aijaz Ahmad's *In Theory* (1992) brings a trenchant Marxist critical practice to the study of postcolonial theory and culture, while M. Keith Booker's *Colonial Power, Colonial Texts* (1997) reads the tradition of British novels about India within a broad Lukácsian historical framework. Finally, Barbara Foley's *Radical Representations* (a 1993 study of American proletarian novels from the 1930s) makes a central contribution to the revitalization of critical interest in the long history of leftist cultural production, a history largely obscured in the West during the dark years of the Cold War.

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See also Class and the Novel; Critics and Criticism (20th Century); Ideology and the Novel; Politics and the Novel; Proletarian Novel; Social Criticism; Socialist Realism

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The Master and Margarita by Mikhail Bulgakov

Master i Margarita 1966–67

Bulgakov spent the last decade of his life working on *The Master and Margarita*, which he regarded as his masterpiece. Although essentially completed, the novel was not published during his lifetime and did not appear in print until it was published in installments in 1966 and 1967 in the journal *Moskva*. At that time, experimental fiction was again in vogue in a Soviet Union growing increasingly decadent and moribund. *The Master and Margarita* aroused great interest in the Soviet Union, and Bulgakov suddenly became, after the fact, an important predecessor of contemporary Russian writers such as Vasilii Aksenov, Andrei Siniavskii, and the Strugatskii brothers: a link between the new wave of postmodernist Soviet literature and the past tradition of Gogol' and Dostoevskii. Moreover, with its anticipations of postmodernist experimentalism, *The Master and Margarita* appealed to Western tastes and was soon widely translated and republished in the West, where its apparent satirical critique of Stalinism accorded well with the ideological requirements of the Cold War.

Dialogues between East and West (often in the form of Western scientific rationalism versus Eastern religious mysticism) are very much at the heart of *The Master and Margarita*. In the novel, a mysterious sorcerer named Woland (a figure of Satan and, presumably, the West) steps out of Goethe's *Faust* to visit modern Moscow with his entourage and wreak havoc on the populace as punishment for their philistine pettiness, greed, and vanity. Literature and writing are major subjects of the text, and much of the book's satire may be interpreted as Bulgakov's bitter commentary on his own lack of literary success in the Soviet Union. The "master" of the title is a novelist, and another major character is the poet Ivan Nikolayevich Ponyrev (who writes under the pen name Bezdomnyi, or "Homeless"). Much of *The Master and Margarita* involves representations of the work of these writers and of their difficulties with the Soviet literary establishment. Allusions to the work of previous Russian writers (like Aleksandr Pushkin and Dostoevskii) and to Western writers (like Goethe) are also prominent in the text.

The narrative that takes place in contemporary Moscow is intertwined with a second narrative strand that relates the story of Pontius Pilate and his encounter with Jeshua (Christ) in ancient Jerusalem. This second story may be variously interpreted as narrated by Satan himself, as the plot of the Master's destroyed novel, or as a story written by the failed poet Ivan Homeless. This part of the novel explores the crucial role played by cowardice in the relations between people and their rulers, as Pilate is forever tormented by the cowardice he displayed in his dealings with the tramp-philosopher Jeshua.

This highly complex narrative structure enables Bulgakov to create a dialogue between the events surrounding Woland's visit to Moscow and those surrounding the arrest and crucifixion of the Jeshua in Jerusalem. The narrative is further complicated by a combination of interacting and competing discourses from the realms of science, religion, literature, history, and politics. This dialogic mixture produces a fantastic, ambivalent satire with clear relevance to the social and political situation in the Stalinist Soviet Union of the 1930s. Bulgakov's depiction of the Soviet bureaucracy (especially the literary and medical establishments), and his delineation of the impoverished social conditions in Moscow, may be taken as severe criticisms of the Stalinist regime, just as the literary mode of the book seems to hark back to the fantastic realism of Gogol' and Dostoevskii and to radically reject the principles of socialist realism. On the other hand, much of the satire in *The Master and Margarita* appears to be aimed at lingering bourgeois elements in Soviet society, elements to which Stalin himself expressed firm opposition. Moreover, as Judith Mills has pointed out (1989), it is possible to read Bulgakov's book as a tribute to Stalin in which Woland, usually read as an anti-Stalinist figure, may potentially be interpreted as a figure of Stalin himself, working to eradicate the vestigial bourgeois elements impeding the growth of Soviet society.

The fantastic realism of *The Master and Margarita* (with its elements of ontological confusion, fantastic characters, and fantastic events based upon the ordinary pushed to its extreme)

locates Bulgakov as a pioneer of the technique of magical realism. He thus becomes an important predecessor not only of many contemporary Russian writers but of numerous postmodern writers around the world, such as Günter Grass, Gabriel García Márquez, Jorge Luis Borges, Flann O'Brien, and Salman Rushdie. Indeed, Rushdie has suggested that *The Master and Margarita* provided crucial inspiration for his controversial novel, *The Satanic Verses*.

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See also Mikhail Bulgakov

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Medieval Narrative

In *The Waning of the Middle Ages* (1924), the historian Johan Huizinga says that "Of no great truth was the medieval mind more conscious than of St. Paul's phrase, 'Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face'; medieval scholars, at least, strove to know the ways of God and man through the uncertain mirror of the natural world, in the hope that vision in the next world might be clearer. The desire to discern elements of reality through nature and through the representation of nature suggests three aspects of medieval literary theory that are relevant to the development of the novel. First, the writers' ability to read the message of nature wisely and to communicate that reading to an audience was beneficial to the individual reader and to society. Second, in a period when (in theory, at least) the state of the soul is of primary importance, the representation of the individual in action and in moral process within a social context becomes an instructive use of narrative. Third, therefore, through both the reading of history (*historia*) and fiction (*fabula*) a person might gain insight into his own character, into the behavior of others, and into the hidden messages of God in nature.

In his commentary on Cicero's *The Dream of Scipio*, the philosopher Macrobius defends the use not only of narrative but of fiction as a vehicle for moral instruction: "A conception of holy truths can be expressed under a seemly veil of fictions [*fabulae*], conveyed by honorable matter honorably arranged." Further, such fictions entice the youthful reader while teaching the more experienced. In *Anticlaudianus* (12th century), Alan de Lille points out that "the sweetness of the literal sense will sooth the ears of boys, the moral instruction will inspire the mind on the road to

perfection, the sharper subtlety of the allegory will whet the advanced intellect." These views reflected first a value for narrative as a vehicle for moral instruction in theology and philosophy, and led eventually to an appreciation of narrative itself as a means of revealing the hidden mysteries of fortune, character, and choice.

These principles of medieval literary theory had two sources. One source was the influence of classical rhetoric as it was taught in the medieval schools and used in the arts of persuasion and oratory. Rhetoric was dominated by a study of formal argument, tropes, and the Roman poets, especially Virgil. Narrative, in the forms of exempla, parables, and historical examples, served the purposes of the argument. The other source of theory was the monastic tradition of scriptural exegesis. Like Plato, the medieval schoolmen were suspicious of "the lies of poets," but the prevalence of narrative in scripture forced writers to analyze the forms, and the use of narrative in sermons and saints' lives led first to the retelling of scriptural stories and eventually to the instructive fictions of religious romance.

The narrative literature of the Middle Ages includes chronicle, epic, and romance. The stories, transmitted both orally and in writing, were offered in Latin and in the vernacular languages. These works may be said to precede the novel in that they developed vivid characters whose motives and actions invite interpretation rather than certainty; moral and emotional ambiguity were staples of the plots. Further, as the narrative genres developed, writers explored techniques for representing not only action but consciousness and emotional process. The early chronicles, extended accounts of towns, monasteries, or

regions, were usually grounded in fact and embroidered to serve a social or political agenda. Similarly, the Icelandic sagas preserved a sense of personal and regional history and were based on the lives of real settlers. Written mostly for a courtly audience, the romances and epics combined historical event, folk material, and lively imagination to produce narratives centering on challenge or quest, moral trial, and choice. At the same time, a popular form of oral storytelling existed in the homes and marketplaces of Europe, and the conventions and values of these narratives eventually insinuated themselves into the fabric of written compositions.

Early medieval religious views of epic and romance were ambivalent. Alcuin, the eighth-century teacher and cleric of the Merovingian court, asks, "What does Ingeld have to do with Christ?" suggesting that monks should have more profitable activities than listening to the scop recast pagan Germanic and Norse legends. Nevertheless, the prevalence of narrative in scripture and subsequently in church teaching and preaching contributed to a close connection between narrative and religious thought. Certainly the early preachers were aware of the value of a good story, both as an aid to memory and as a vehicle for complex and varied interpretation. After the development of the Franciscan movement in the 13th century, with its emphasis on physical existence, the lower and middle classes, and realistic representation, religious narratives became even more concerned with representation of character and realistic psychology. Further, since Christian authors are concerned less with action than with motive ("As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he"), the representation of consciousness becomes a central element of narrative.

Early in the Middle Ages, chronicle, epic, and hagiography supplied the need for narrative, and extensions of these forms in the vernacular languages also produced romance. The romances combined elements of history, folklore, adventure, and eroticism in a form intended, at least partially, to appeal to a growing audience of women readers and patrons. And while all of these forms continued to be popular well into the 15th century, by the beginning of the 14th narratives of social commentary and psychological realism also assumed an important position in popular and secular literature. Eventually, the medieval narratives were subsumed into the adventure stories and the dramatic literature of the Renaissance. In time languages and scripts became difficult to read, and medieval literature became the property of antiquarians and philologists until the early 19th century, although elements of the stories were retained in fiction, popular drama, and children's literature. However, with the renewed interest in linguistic study in the 19th century, along with the romantic enthusiasm for medieval art and lore, the romances and epics found a new and appreciative audience. A new edition of *Le Morte D'Arthur* (1836), the novels of Sir Walter Scott, the poetry of Alfred, Lord Tennyson, and the rise of the Arts and Crafts movement all contributed to a general interest in medievalism in England. The popularity of Scott in America also ensured that the ideals of chivalry would make a significant impression on the new frontier as well as in the Old South. Thus, in the 19th century the revival of interest in medieval narrative became an influence on the development of the novel, one that continues in the present century.

In the early Middle Ages the need for public records, and indeed for national identity, fostered an interest in chronicle. The

Venerable Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (c. 731), the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (597–1154), and the *Peterborough Chronicle* (the Laud manuscript of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* from 1070 to 1154) reflect primarily a need for the preservation of historical information. Yet in these and other historical writings, scenes and characters may be rendered with brilliance, suggesting the beginnings of a narrative style. The scene in Bede's *History* in which the missionary Bishop Paulinus preaches to King Edwin of Northumbria and his Druid priest Colfi (Chapter 13) is justly famous, and while less well known, the descriptions in the *Peterborough Chronicle* of the Norman Conquest, and later of the civil war between Stephen and Matilda, are also dramatic, including action, character, and social comment. The anonymous author says of William I that he "had fallen into avarice, and he was completely devoted to greed," yet the account does not depend on this statement of opinion. Rather, he describes the harsh royal game laws that the king maintained in defiance not only of the common people but of the nobility and the church as well. In the passages on the civil war, the author presents a vivid picture of the disintegration of town and village caused by the warring factions; lands were destroyed, people reduced to beggars, the church ignored: "Where anyone tilled the earth, the land bore no corn, for the land was devastated by such deeds, and the people said openly that Christ and His saints were sleeping."

In the 12th century the chronicles became less about place and more about the royal houses. Wace, Walter Map, Geoffrey of Monmouth, and Lazamon developed chronicles of the British kings, and with these accounts established not only the outline of the Arthurian narratives but also the tales of King Lear and Cymbeline, among others. Although much of the material in the British chronicles is more legendary than factual, each author maintained that his was the true story. In Lazamon's *The Brut* he says that the Bretons "boast of and tell many lies about Arthur the king," but says of his own book that "the truth has been set down in writing, how the deeds of Arthur came to pass, from beginning to end, neither more nor less, but just as his way of life was." Nonetheless, each of these accounts offers scenes of swift action and moral choice. For example, Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain*, in describing Uther's illicit passion for Igraine, the Duchess of Cornwall, and Merlin's complicity in her seduction, not only depicts the actions but develops the feelings and motivations of the characters as well. All of these accounts blend myth, history, and fabrication, and their descriptions become the basis of much of subsequent romance.

Another early form of narrative is found in religious instruction through saints' lives. These accounts range from straightforward accounts such as Bede's *Life of Cuthbert* to fully developed religious romances such as *The Voyage of St. Brendan*. In both kinds of saints' lives, the primary function of the narrative is to increase the devotion of the reader or hearer. Yet precisely because the pieces must reflect moral and spiritual experience, the authors must devise methods of representation that allow them to reveal the consciousness and the emotional process of the characters.

Bede's *Life of Cuthbert* reflects a scholar's commitment to accuracy and a pastor's desire for edification. The miracles are few and, according to Bede, well attested by reliable witnesses. Yet like a novelist choosing episodes that reveal character, Bede selects miracles that illustrate aspects of the saint's personality and

teaching and that further serve to connect the life of the saint to the events of scripture. Healing, feeding, being fed by ravens are all miracles through which the saint enacts the gospel for his flock, and the author, by extension, for his readers. *The Voyage of St. Brendan*, on the other hand, makes little pretense to history (unlike the more straightforward *Acts of St. Brendan*). Instead, it relates the events of the Abbot Brendan's mystical journey with 14 of his brothers on the North Sea in a small coracle. The episodes of *The Voyage of St. Brendan*, many of which are frankly supernatural, are presented through action, dialogue, and description, and rather than revealing a naturalistic progress, they are made to parallel both the seasons of the liturgical year and the seasons of the individual's life. Whether realistic or magical, these and other similar hagiographical writings related events in such a way as to reveal not only individual action but also interior choice and resolution. In writing for the edification of the reader, the authors develop modes of representing motive and behavior.

A more sophisticated representation of interior experience is found in the Anglo-Saxon elegies—actually interior monologues—such as “The Seafarer” and “The Wanderer.” Also a part of this tradition is the English epic *Beowulf*, one of the earliest narratives to combine mythic, historical, and fictional elements to display character, culture, and interior development. J.R.R. Tolkien, in his 1936 essay “The Monsters and the Critics,” was one of the first critics to interpret *Beowulf* as a poem revealing the interior life of the hero as he reacts in youth and in old age. John Leyerle, in “The Interlace Structure of *Beowulf*” (1967), further suggests that the speeches, sermons, and secondary narratives, seen by 19th-century scholars as distracting digressions, are in fact a carefully plotted network of images and themes that reflect the stages of the hero's life and his relationship with his *comitatus* (action). After *Beowulf* has slain Grendel, his action is framed by the scop's song of Sigemund the dragonslayer and Heremod the avaricious king. These two secondary narratives suggest the range of the hero's choices, and further, they foreshadow elements of his future. Moreover, the narratives also indicate the responsibility of the hero in relation to his society. As A.C. Gibbs (1966) has pointed out, the medieval epics in general relate to actual historical and political situations, and “[their] heroes act in some way as representatives of their people, even though their conscious motivation is heroic self-assertion.” However, in *Beowulf*, as in other later Germanic epics, the hero's interior landscape is presented in the light of these secondary narratives.

The word *romance* referred originally to any story written in the vernacular languages rather than in Latin. The term came to refer to a story of heroic quest, trial or challenge, erotic love, and moral choice. Supernatural events were often elements of the plot, and chivalry and courtly love were the ideal value systems. In many instances, the romance reflects the action of the knight alone in wood or wasteland, battling human opponents and supernatural beings. As Gibbs points out, the romance reflects a move from the military expedition of the *chanson de geste* to the solitary adventures of the knight. This combination of ingredients led to a personal and affective narrative form that was as concerned with feeling as with action. Northrop Frye (1985), in addressing the move from oral to written narrative, says that in the presentation of heroes alone the romance implies “a more private relationship between reader and writer” as

well as “wider possibilities for the direct communication of experience.”

That women are more interested than men in the discussion of feelings is a questionable truism of the late 20th century. However, it is demonstrably true that the shift in literature from *comitatus* and honor to love, quest, and sentiment corresponded to a rise in the importance of women as readers and as patrons of the arts. During the 12th century, when the Crusades produced frequent and prolonged absences of the men, women were left as administrators and guardians of the younger dependents. One such woman, Eleanor of Aquitaine (1122–1204), was the granddaughter of William IX of Aquitaine, the first troubadour whose works yet survive. She was married to two kings, first to Louis VII of France and later to Henry II of England. Her large family of children included two kings, Richard I and John I, and a daughter who was regent for her young son. Eleanor was an active proponent of the arts, especially of the development of a secular courtly poetry. Because of her worldly tastes, Bernard of Clairvaux thought her a bad influence on the French court.

Eleanor's daughter, Marie de Champagne, set up her court in Troyes, where, in addition to her skill at management, she continued her mother's artistic patronage, sponsoring both Andreas Capellanus (*The Art of Courtly Love*) and Chretien de Troyes, one of the most prolific and influential romance writers.

This period also sees one of the first women authors, Marie de France (fl. 1160–90), a French woman living in the English court. A highly educated woman, Marie is best known for her *Breton Lais*, romances derived from Celtic folk motifs and written in Anglo-Norman couplets. These stories are charming, but also psychologically astute and morally demanding. In one of her *lais*, *Eliduc*, the wife befriends her husband's young lover and actually arranges for their marriage, but in the end, all three of the main characters leave the courtly life to enter religious houses. The morality of this triangle is left open to the reader's judgment. While the roots of romance are clearly in the heroic literature, the women as patrons and as artists effected significant changes both in their tone and in their subject matter.

Although romances include a diverse range of sources, subjects, and techniques, they are often classified by subject matter, following the tradition established by the French romance writer Jean Bodel (12th century). Bodel refers to the “Matter of Britain,” the stories of Arthur and his court, the “Matter of Rome,” the classical romances, most frequently those of Alexander the Great, and the “Matter of France,” the adventures of Charlemagne and his court. To these categories, modern scholars added the “Matter of England,” romances about English heroes unrelated to Arthur, such as *King Horn*, *Sir Orfeo*, and *Havelok the Dane*. A few of the romances seem to fit none of these categories, being derived from Middle Eastern folklore, while others combine elements from several sources, for the romance reflected the fluid nature of European culture. Like the modern novel, the romance transcended regional and political boundaries and the limitations of strict categories.

The range and complexity of these categories may be seen in the summary of the largest, the Matter of Britain, including love stories of Arthur, Lancelot, and Guinevere, of Tristan and Iseult, the political and familial intrigues of Arthur's parentage and his son Mordred, the magic of Merlin, and the quest for the Holy Grail. Some of these had their early development through the chronicles and are elaborated by Chretien de Troyes and the au-

thors of the French Vulgate cycle, and eventually in Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur* (1485). The Tristan narratives, included in Malory's account, probably derive from Celtic sources, now lost, and are depicted further in the romances of Beroul, Gottfried von Strasburg, and Wolfram von Eschenbach. The Merlin story, prominent in the later chronicles and in Malory, also forms an individual romance, *Merlin*, by Robert de Boron (13th century). The Grail quest, central to the Vulgate cycle and to Malory's account, is also found in Robert de Boron's *Joseph d'Arimathie*. And this list is far from complete.

The large number of accounts leaves ample room for diversity, even contradiction, in event, in character, and in narrative point of view. Indeed, as Charlotte Spivack and Roberta Lynne Staples (1994) point out, "Lancelot is both faithful and disloyal, Mordred both malign and vulnerable, Arthur both strong and weak." Spivack and Staples, however, see this quality as a narrative advantage both to the romances themselves and to their modern imitators: "Since the contradictory personality is an accepted fact in modern psychology, it serves as a convincing basis for the effectively complex characterizations that so many recent authors offer."

In any case, this web of narrative produces a complex vision of each individual story. In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* the rivalry between Morgan le Fay and Guinevere, although offered as the motive for the whole game plot, seems relatively insignificant. The romance offers only the briefest glimpses of the women's characters. Yet it is impossible to read *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* without recalling from other romances Morgan's malice and Guinevere's disloyalty, and these memories lend weight and interest to characters about whom *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* itself says little. In another example, the anonymous Cistercian author of *Le Conte Del Saint Graal* reveals the unsuccessful quest of Lancelot for the Holy Grail, along with his spiritual and emotional challenges. His readers might recall, however, that Lancelot, now on a religious quest, still carries the guilt of his affair with Guinevere and his disloyalty to his friend and king, Arthur. The complexity of this particular characterization is enriched by the existence of several well-known romances about the same character.

This was not, of course, a new device in the Middle Ages. In *The Odyssey*, Homer expects his hearers to know the whole story of the House of Atreus and to compare their fortunes and choices with those of Odysseus and his family. This artistic use of an extensive background narrative is occasionally a feature of modern novels as well. For example, in his trilogy *The Hamlet* (1940), *The Town* (1957), and *The Mansion* (1959), William Faulkner draws on characters who appear in other novels, and further, through the character of V.I. Ratliff, he tells the stories of a barn burning and of a herd of spotted horses, both narratives that appear from different points of view in earlier short stories. The mythos of Yoknapatawpha County may be said to form a "Matter of Mississippi" with a web of relationships, characters, and narrative points of view that enriches the individual characters and episodes of each novel.

The narrative skills of romance, epic, and chronicle culminate in Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur*. Although Malory refers to a "French Book" as a source, he clearly draws from both the French Vulgate cycle and from the English alliterative and stanzaic romances as well. Like *Lazamon*, Malory maintains that his book is "the whole story of King Arthur and of his noble

knights," but in fact in nearly every episode he shortens his sources, making them more forceful. Moreover, Malory combines the diverse elements of the Matter of Britain with thematic unity. Certainly the book is sometimes uneven in style and coherence, yet as a whole it displays remarkable coherence in character and tone.

Nearly a century before Malory completed his romance, another form of literature was developing, at first in Florence and northern Italy and later in England. Psychological realism, narrative point of view, and the representation of consciousness produced a body of secular fiction that, although written early in the 14th century, is often classified as "Renaissance" literature.

First among these is *The Divine Comedy* of Dante Alighieri (c. 1322). This work is unusual, although not unique, as it employs a first-person narrator: "I awoke to find myself in a dark wood where the way was wholly long and gone" (Canto I). As the pilgrim moves from dark wood down through the Inferno, up Mt. Purgatory, and into Paradise, Dante not only relates realistic conversations and dramatic actions, but he also is at pains to reveal the narrator's feelings and sensations directly. Further, since Dante chooses historical characters to represent the various sins and virtues, he is able to explore their senses and experiences as well. He departs from the relative simplicity of direct allegory for a more ambiguous realism. In one famous passage (Canto V), readers often find that, despite her sin, they feel sympathy for Francesca da Rimini. She and her lover Paolo represent lust through their adultery (a sin inspired, incidentally, by their reading of a romance of Lancelot). Dante, however, through Francesca's conversation, reveals extenuating circumstances for her behavior, and her soft speech and youthful charm introduce an element of ambiguity that is not entirely dispelled by the admonitions of the Roman poet Virgil, who is the narrator's guide through *The Divine Comedy*.

Dante's most immediate successor, Giovanni Boccaccio, went even further both in subject and in technique to represent realistic character. One critic, Gregory Lucente (1981), says that with Boccaccio, "the realist mode gained full development in both stylistics and ideology." He further adds that while the life of the next world remained a major concern, "the new fascination with man himself affected every area of human endeavor," including the development of representational fiction. In both the novellas of *The Decameron* (written 1349-51) and the longer narratives of *Il Filostrato* (1340) and *Elegia di Madonna Fiammetta* (1343-45; *The Elegy of Lady Fiammetta*), Boccaccio explores passions and motivations that are more often psychological than otherworldly.

Boccaccio's *Il Filostrato* is an adaptation of Benoît de Sainte-Maure's *Roman de Troie* (c. 1160). Since Benoît is principally concerned with the siege of Troy, the story of the lovers is scattered throughout the *Roman de Troie*. Through the comments of his narrator and by direct revelation of the characters' thoughts, Boccaccio centers the story on the love affair and the moral and emotional experience of his characters. He plots the progress of Troilus' passion in tormented monologues, and he also depicts Cressida's reluctance and surrender in terms that account for, if not excuse, her defection. Further, although Boccaccio appears in his conclusion to adopt the misogyny of his sources, in fact he is careful to show that Cressida's choices are gravely limited. If her actions are unfortunate, at least her motives are completely believable. In *The Elegy of Lady Fiammetta*, Boccaccio not only

uses a first-person narrator, but that narrator is a woman. The narrative includes very little action, but instead reveals Fiametta's feelings and reactions as she matures, marries, suffers an unrequited love, and writes her book. Several critics have seen *The Elegy of Lady Fiametta* as the progenitor of the psychological novel. As Thomas Mauch notes in an introduction to a recent edition of the novel, Fiametta represents Boccaccio's "early attempt at creating an image of a self becoming conscious of its uniqueness, ambivalence, and multiplicity." And with regard to narrative technique, the story is certainly one of the earliest protracted uses of interior monologue.

The English poet Geoffrey Chaucer traveled in Europe and read widely; thus he was much influenced first by the French poets, and even more by Boccaccio. His *Canterbury Tales* (written 1385–1400) are remarkable for their realistic portraits of the pilgrims and of the characters in their tales, for the social and religious commentary, and for the development of characters from the middle and lower classes. Of even more importance, however, to the background of the novel is his *Troilus and Criseyde* (c. 1385), for whereas the *Canterbury Tales* often employ realism in character and innovation in the use of narrators, *Troilus and Criseyde* is a sustained exploration of the lovers' emotional lives. Although Chaucer draws heavily on Boccaccio's version for scene and plot, he goes even further in developing the emotional content of the romance. In his account of Criseyde he is especially careful to show her sensations, her motives, and her alternatives, leaving moral judgments ambiguous and open to the reader's interpretation.

A third medieval account of Troilus and Cressida is Robert Henryson's *The Testament of Cressid* (c. 1460), unique in that it relates Cressida's life in the Greek camp after her unfaithfulness to Troilus. Although Cressida is jilted by Diomedes, reduced to poverty and prostitution, and afflicted with leprosy, Henryson does not offer an unambiguous condemnation of her character. Before her death she consigns her soul to the virgin goddess Diana and warns women to "Beware of men, and harken to what I say!" David Benson (1990) sees *The Testament of Cressid* as "unique in its time and . . . exceptional thereafter in refusing to make Cressida an *exemplum* of feminine wickedness." Benson goes even further to say that Henryson's poem "instead asks readers to defer judgement and to consider alternate interpretations."

By the early 16th century, because of changes in languages and in the circulation of new narratives in print, many romances were lost to the general reader. However, in the 19th century, many writers and artists revived an interest in the values and the narratives of the Middle Ages as an anodyne to the pains of modern industrialism. A new edition of Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur* in 1836 gave new readers an opportunity to explore romance. The novels of Sir Walter Scott, with plots and characters drawn from English romances, received both popular and critical acclaim. In both his early romances such as "The Lady of Shalott" and the longer *Idylls of the King* (1859), Alfred, Lord Tennyson contributed to a public eager to enjoy the Arthurian tales. The Arts and Crafts Movement, generated by such writers as Thomas Carlyle, John Ruskin, and William Morris, offered medieval aesthetics and economics as alternatives to the corruptions of the Industrial Revolution. At the same time, Morris and the Pre-Raphaelite artists and writers made extensive use of medieval motifs and themes in poetry, fiction, and painting.

The historical fiction of Sir Walter Scott, popular in England,

was also formative in America. In southern homes, Scott's novels occupied the imaginative space afforded to John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678, 1684) in New England. According to his diaries, General Robert E. Lee enjoyed Scott's novels, and the values of southern aristocracy were directly related to their love of medieval romance. This enthusiasm translates into irony in modern fiction. In *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936), William Faulkner says that the small Compson family library included the Bible and the complete works of Sir Walter Scott, and Quentin's northern roommate Shreve refers to the southern characters as "all of those doomed Bayards and Guineveres." Thus the imaginary chivalry of the Old South was rooted in the romances of knighthood and quest and the allure of the lost cause.

The interest in medieval romance continues in the 20th century as well, as modern versions of old stories appear and as medieval motifs and images sustain novels and films of fantasy and science fiction. In *The Once and Future King* (1939), T.H. White combines elements of French and English romances with the romantic poetry of Tennyson. Rosemary Sutcliff, in *Sword at Sunset* (1963), recasts the Arthurian triangle in the light of archeological knowledge, while Marion Zimmer Bradley gives the same story a marked feminist twist in *The Mists of Avalon* (1982). In his spiritual thriller *War in Heaven* (1930), Charles Williams revives the legend of the Holy Grail, and in several of his novels the American writer Walker Percy uses the motifs of Arthurian legend to represent aspects of the preconscious experience and philosophical dismay. In fantasy and science fiction, medieval motifs have dominated such diverse works as the Dragonquest novels of Anne McCaffrey, George Lucas' *Star Wars Trilogy*, and innumerable episodes of *Star Trek*. From serious fiction to popular amusement, the themes and characters of medieval narrative continue to win readers.

The reasons for the 19th-century romantic interest in the Middle Ages and the continuing market for medieval narratives are complex and varied, but surely one must be that the medieval epics and romances offer an iconography of quest, trial, challenge, love, and choice that allows us to represent the deepest aspects of psychological experience. To paraphrase Alan de Lille in a somewhat different context, "The invention appeals to young readers, the rich characters and relationships to adults, and the layered subtlety of the structures to those readers who are willing to work for it."

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See also Biblical Narrative and the Novel; Epic and Novel; Greek and Roman Narrative; Novel and Romance: Etymologies; Renaissance Narrative; Romance; Saga; Verse Narrative

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Melmoth the Wanderer by Charles Robert Maturin

1820

Melmoth the Wanderer, arguably one of the greatest Gothic novels ever written, was, in fact, published some 20 years after the heyday of the Gothic novel proper, and effectively marks the *finis* of that form. While the Gothic novel in general quickly became the subject for mockery (witness Jane Austen's mockery of Mrs. Radcliffe in *Northanger Abbey*), *Melmoth the Wanderer* was well received from the beginning, and its influence was obvious. William Makepeace Thackeray and D.G. Rossetti praised it. Oscar Wilde was clearly thinking of it when he wrote *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891; indeed, Wilde took on the pseudonym of Sebastian Melmoth after his release from Brixton Prison). Edgar Allan Poe's "The Pit and the Pendulum" has often been mentioned in connection with Maturin. However, it was in France that Maturin's book had its warmest reception, being praised by successive generations of French writers and artists from the romantics to the surrealists. André Breton found Maturin "sublime"; Charles Baudelaire ranked him with Beethoven, Lord Byron, and Poe; Honoré de Balzac wrote an imitation of *Melmoth the Wanderer* under a pseudonym and then an overt sequel, *Melmoth réconcilié* (1836); Eugene Delacroix painted a picture entitled *Melmoth; ou, L'Intérieur d'un Couvent de Dominicains à Madrid* and considered illustrating the whole of *Melmoth the Wanderer*.

There are a number of things that account for this kind of reception. While other Gothic romances situate their impossible tales of the supernatural, macabre, and fantastic in the predictable setting of a haunted castle or abbey isolated among the cataacts, valleys, and precipices of some wild, romantic landscape, *Melmoth the Wanderer* appears at first to be another Anglo-Irish "Big House" novel. The main narrator, John Melmoth, is summoned from his studies at Trinity College, Dublin, to attend the deathbed of his uncle, the owner of a large and dilapidated house in Wicklow, which is occupied by the stereotypical crowd of native Irish servants eating and drinking in the kitchen below, while the uncle, a member of a Cromwellian family that had dispossessed the original inhabitants, lies neglected and despised upstairs. The description of the house, and the intense

awareness of the political and historical complexities of 19th-century Ireland, locate the tale in a recognizable setting from which it then departs in a less abrupt manner than is common in other tales. The Melmoth of the title is the brother of the original Cromwellian soldier. He has entered into a compact with the Devil, who granted him an extension of life along with some supernatural powers in return for his soul. Melmoth could, however, escape his bargain if he could persuade someone else to take it upon himself. The story, spanning 160 years, moves from the prisons of the Spanish Inquisition to Bedlam (the lunatic asylum) in London, to a paradisiacal island in the Indian Ocean, to the house of a wealthy merchant in Seville, and finally back to the coast of Wicklow. Through discovered documents, directly personal eyewitness accounts, and reported tales, John Melmoth is told of the earlier Melmoth's wandering the world with his curse, seeking someone in the extremes of agony or fear of death who is prepared to exchange Melmoth's bargain for the sure promise of rescue from present extremity. In all his wanderings, Melmoth finds no one who will barter his soul, and the book culminates with the devil's arrival to claim his payment. The plot, then, allows limitless scope for the depiction of terror and extremes of cruelty in the most lurid and melodramatic language.

Maturin himself claimed that what he presented was realistic. He wrote against a background of intense sectarian conflict, and the violently anti-Catholic tenor of many of the passages of *Melmoth the Wanderer* reflects the tone and language of some of his, and others', sermons and the antipopery tracts that were produced in abundance at the time. In the preface to an earlier novel, *The Milesian Chief* (1812), he had written: ". . . I have chosen my own country for the scene, because I believe it the only country on earth, where, from the strange existing opposition of religion, politics, and manners, the extremes of refinement and barbarism are united, and the most wild and incredible situations of romantic story are hourly passing before modern eyes."

It is arguable that it was that "strange existing opposition of religion, politics, and manners" that was the major factor in en-

abling Maturin to take a comparatively worn-out form and make it capable of accomplishing something much more. It has been pointed out that the staying power of the best Gothic fiction (we might include *Frankenstein* and *Dracula* here) is owing to its ability to convey truths, attitudes, desires, and responses that are frowned upon or suppressed within the official culture—that the power of Gothic lies, to some extent, in its subversive charge that is, nevertheless, rendered less subversive by being obliquely presented or apparently fantastic. Maturin's presentation of, for example, the young lovers prepared to sacrifice all for love yet turning cannibalistically on each other when condemned to die slowly, in the dark, of starvation, while melodramatic, is, nevertheless, full of the power of *psychological* truth, as is his compelling presentation of insanity, or of the effects of starvation, poverty, or prolonged sexual repression. His subject, he said, was "the obscure recesses of the human heart."

Melmoth the Wanderer is unusual, as well, in being a profoundly religious book. Melmoth is ultimately condemned, not because of his bargain with the Devil but because he despairs of salvation. Maturin, in the conclusion to the book, does not succumb to the crudity of presenting the Devil in full view. Melmoth's damnation takes place off-stage, the details left to the terrified imagination of the reader. Neither does Maturin resort to the cozy rationalization and happy ending of Mrs. Radcliffe, for he believes in the existence of the evil he portrays. It is, ultimately, that combination of intense theological concern and pro-

found and subtle psychological awareness that makes *Melmoth the Wanderer* rise above other examples of the Gothic novel.

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Melodrama

The term *melodrama* draws attention to the mixed origins of this artistic mode and to the confusing signals that it has often sent to interpreters. Simply, the term means drama with incidental music. Melodrama has never freed itself entirely from its origins on the popular stage, nor from related opprobrium. Until recently, the notion of melodrama signified, in critical and popular discourse, a coarsened and exaggerated kind of emotionalism, flamboyant language and gesture, and stylized plots in which imperiled virtue at the last moment made its escape from predatory villainy. Such a description—appropriate in outline to a good deal of Victorian fiction, not least to some of the novels of Charles Dickens—shows how melodrama has escaped generic boundaries.

This is not just a matter of the situations and idioms of stage melodrama (which was the most popular kind of theatre in the 19th century) being taken over by novelists. Narrative paintings of bourgeois life in the same period clarify the relations of melodrama with realism and show the two styles to be interdependent rather than antithetical. Those solid Victorian domestic interiors (ably analyzed by Peter Conrad in *The Victorian Treasure-house*, 1973), replete with the material objects that seem to guarantee status and prosperity, offer only the illusion of stability. They are inherently vulnerable and can swiftly be undermined by drink and gambling (as in R.B. Martineau's "The Last Day in the Old Home") and adultery (for instance in August Egg's trip-

tych "Past and Present"). Personal indulgence and deceit can destroy the respectable appearances that sustain the edifice of middle-class family life.

Fear of dispossession is the emotional core, and hence the narrative core, of melodrama, whether this involves threats to life, property, or chastity, and whether a play, a novel, or a painting is the form in which the action is represented. Those detailed surfaces, those intricate relations of persons and properties central to realist art (or, perhaps more precisely, to its doctrinaire development into naturalism) are the stuff on which melodrama feeds, exposing their susceptibility to collapse and the hollowness of their pretensions.

The rehabilitation of melodrama was the business of creative writers long before such critics as Eric Bentley (1964), James Smith (1973), and Peter Brooks (1976) came to the task. Henrik Ibsen and Anton Chekhov are the playwrights who most profoundly explored the insubstantiality of bourgeois morality, especially as this was invested in the acquisition of property and a name. Both writers employed the devices of melodrama integrally in such plays as Ibsen's *Samfundets støtter* (1877; *The Pillars of the Community*; also rendered as *Quicksands* in a telling alternative translation) and Chekhov's *Chaika* (1896; *The Seagull*). As Bentley appositely remarked, "melodrama is the Naturalism of the dream life," or, indeed, of nightmare. He also regarded melodrama as "drama in its elemental form; it is the

quintessence of drama.” And Bentley conceded the emotional immaturity of the form, for whose characters “the distinction between *I want to* and *I can* is not clearly made.” Speaking of its continuing power, Bentley concluded that “Melodramatic vision is paranoid: we are being persecuted, and we hold that all things, living and dead, are combining to persecute us.”

Bentley's influence on theories of melodrama has been signal, notably on Peter Brooks' seminal study *The Melodramatic Imagination* (1976) which is concerned with the adaptation of elements of melodrama in the novels of Honoré de Balzac and Henry James. Brooks saw melodrama's rise and diffusion as related to the Western crisis of spiritual belief: “the vertiginous feeling of standing over the abyss created when the necessary center of things has been evacuated or dispersed.” In melodrama this state of psychic and emotional extremity means that “Nothing is spared because nothing is left unsaid; the characters stand on a stage and utter the unspeakable.”

Analyzing the paranoid condition (“a refusal to be left out”), psychiatrist Adam Phillips (1993) has written of a disposition to treat the outside world as “a repository for the terror inside, an elsewhere for those desires and objects that bring unpleasure.” In artistic terms, as Brooks had recognized, this is to see melodrama as a fundamentally expressionistic mode. That term, borrowed from the visual arts, is another reminder of the invasive, the transgeneric demeanor of melodrama.

Melodrama's attractions for novelists may now be documented unapologetically. The villain of Mrs. Henry Wood's best-selling book *East Lynne* (1861), the aristocratic seducer and murderer Sir Francis Levison, is the classic melodramatic predator now assuming a central role in a novel. Also playing a central role is an American counterpart, the violent, drunken plantation owner and slave driver Simon Legree in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852). Both novels were dramatized, melodramatically, for the stage soon after publication.

Other figurations of the melodramatic villain in fiction are more ambiguous. Dark, brooding, of mysterious and perhaps disreputable origins (Irish or gypsy), the founding Heathcliff is the implacable, dispossessing agent/villain of melodrama in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847). At the same time (in one of those complications that perhaps more truly mark the fictional occurrences of melodrama than novels such as Wood's or Stowe's), Heathcliff may be regarded as reclaiming his rightful inheritance. And his end is peaceful. The hero of Dickens' *Oliver Twist* (1838) is more like a stock victim of melodrama, a figure of innocence traduced, robbed of his birthright, fallen among thieves, his life imperiled. Dickens' later treatments of such a victim were more complex and abstract. Willfully blind to the source of his wealth, Pip in *Great Expectations* (1861) is threatened with something more dire than poverty and the loss of his assumed social position. Magwitch's revelations mean that Pip's veritable identity is endangered, his delusive sense of self is overturned. A fragile selfhood is what he almost loses, and then painfully and partially regains.

The subduing of melodrama at the same time as its primal roles and dire threats are deployed is also a feature of the writing of celebrated 19th-century American novelists. Without doing justice to the complexity of Nathaniel Hawthorne's moral inquiry, one can see the importance of the melodramatic strain in *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), wherein Hester Prynne loses her name and her position after the birth of her illegitimate child, only to

become a triumphant pariah, a sign of the hypocrisy and censoriousness of the New England community rather than of her own transgression. In Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* (1851), the melodramatic burden is concentrated in the figure of Ahab, the hero-villain whose unbridled rhetoric, caustic and exalted, is fit for the stage. Ahab's understanding of the whale is half-aware of how he projects his own anguish upon it: “He tasks me; he heaps me; I see in him outrageous strength, with an inscrutable malice sinewing it.” As Melville's narrator comments: “The White Whale swam before him as the monomaniac incarnation of all those malicious agencies which some deep men feel eating in them.”

Nor did the transmutation, sophistication, and subversion of the melodramatic mode lose attraction for novelists in the 20th century. Brooks wrote of Henry James' *The Wings of the Dove* (1902) that it was “very much about how one can subtilize and complicate the terms of melodrama, their relation to individual character and their conflict, while at the same time preserving their underlying identity and nourishing drama from their substratum.” The point has a wide reference. Brooks concedes that he might as well have concentrated on Dickens and Fedor Dostoevskii, on Joseph Conrad (for example “Heart of Darkness,” 1902) and D.H. Lawrence, or on William Faulkner.

The number of novelists to exploit the melodramatic mode is more extensive still. Melodrama is the sovereign weather of Thomas Keneally's fiction, as for that of his compatriots Marcus Clarke (in *His Natural Life*, 1874) and Christina Stead. Clarke's hero Rufus Dawes, wrongly transported to Australia for penal servitude, has not merely suffered material loss but “knew that the name he once possessed was blotted out.” The destruction of identity is the cardinal deprivation and anxiety of melodrama. Hetty Pollitt, abused wife in Christina Stead's *The Man Who Loved Children* (1940), feels that every room of her marital home is “full of living cancers of insult, leprosy of disillusion, abscesses of grudge, gangrene of nevermore, quintan fevers of divorce.” This fervid speech is in the idiomatic spirit of melodrama. The location of Hetty's torments within marriage reminds us how often melodramatic fiction is concerned with family crisis.

Yet melodrama also has infused (true to its origins) some of the most popular kinds of modern fiction—notably spy thrillers. The paranoid temper of the spy novel is in the melodramatic line. Its ambiguous depiction of good in jeopardy and evil that preys upon it is congruent with the changes and complications of melodrama in the 19th-century novel. Practitioners such as Graham Greene, John Le Carré, and Len Deighton have been sensible of how melodrama's apprehension of a moral void, of the terrors of apparently motiveless persecution, can invigorate contemporary fictions. The once traditional happy ending of melodrama (in fact long withheld in the works under discussion) is a most unlikely outcome in sour tales of espionage. Their continuing popularity, however, shows the powers of renewal, mutation, and surprising enlightenment that the melodramatic mode continues to exhibit in fiction.

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See also Gothic Novel

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Herman Melville 1819–91

United States

In a letter of 13 August 1852, Herman Melville offered the outline of a possible story to his newly discovered New England neighbor and fellow author Nathaniel Hawthorne. Originally told to Melville by a New Bedford lawyer, it concerned a Nantucket woman abandoned by her weak, bigamist sailor-husband. Hawthorne, Melville suggested, might care to work each “tributary” item into an imaginative whole: Agatha’s patience and resignation, the rotting of the wooden post box, her cliff-side habitat and isolation, the contextual New England bleakness. In summary, he wrote, here was “a skeleton of actual reality” to be “built about with fulness & veins & beauty.” Hawthorne tactfully declined the offer of the material, which contains a working credo for Melville’s own fiction.

The nine full-length narratives with *Moby-Dick* (1851) as the centerpiece, the 15 or so stories written between 1853 and 1856, the novella *Israel Potter* (1855) with its lyric, haunting portrait of human isolation, and the triumph of *Billy Budd, Sailor* (written 1888–91, published 1924)—all pose a problem as to their exact kind or genre. Did Melville in fact write *novels* as such? Would not “fiction of fact” or “nonfictional novel” be more, or at least equally, apt? How best to categorize each narrative with its “isolato” storyteller (Tommo, Typee, Taji, Ishmael, Redburn, and White-Jacket)? As quest, or playfield, or anatomy? Is there not, too, most of all in *Moby-Dick*, *Pierre* (1852), and *The Confidence-Man* (1857), the anticipation of a later age’s concern with reflexivity, self-reference, narratives told in canny and often exuberant recognition of their own telling? Little wonder that, for all his busy, firsthand factuality of Atlantic and Pacific seafaring and the modern city, Melville has increasingly been claimed as a precursor of American literary modernism and, in its wake, of the whole postmodern turn.

Certainly, Melville knew that he was not writing well-made Victorian domestic novels. His unabating curiosity and sense of the world’s contradiction pressed too hard for that. Yet each “voyage thither” (to use his subtitle for *Mardi*, 1849), each of the journeys-out, labyrinths, becalmings, and entombments creates a pattern and organizing voice for the work it figures in. Perhaps his celebrated observation in “The Honor and Glory of Whaling” in *Moby-Dick*—“There are some enterprises in which a careful disorderliness is the true method”—is the most accurate description of his own work.

The balance of care and disorder can be seen in the “strife as memory” and “moods variable” of the Civil War poetry of *Battle-Pieces and Aspects of the War* (1866); in the dialectical quest for faith of his massive verse epic, *Clarel* (1876); in “Hawthorne and His Mosses” (1850), which is as much about Melville’s own habits of subterfuge and ambiguity in “the great Art of Telling the Truth” as it is about Hawthorne; and in the correspondence with Hawthorne, Evert Duyckinck, and R.H. Dana (“to cook the thing up, one must throw in a little fancy,” about *Moby-Dick*). Each helps to situate Melville as fiction writer with a dramatic sense of appetite tempered by craft and the shrewdest imaginative guile.

Virtually every one of his narratives ostentatiously displays a naive disorder. *Typee* (1846) speaks of offering the “unvarnished truth” of a ship desertion and Polynesian hiding-out. Yet a more equivocating orchestration of imperfect opposites could not be imagined: colonizing and exploitative Euro-America is confronted with cannibal Typee Valley, with its tattoos, sag-eyed gods, and “noble savagery.” *Omoo* (1847), an island-odyssey sequel, could as easily be travelogue or diary as novel. And in *Mardi*, Melville took a practice run for *Moby-Dick*, ostensibly yet another South Seas romance but in fact a bookish, mythopoetic 16-island fantasia informed by Melville’s newly acquired reading, from Dante Alighieri to Thomas Carlyle, from William Shakespeare to the English romantics.

“Cakes and ale” and “beggarly” were Melville’s own dismissive phrases for *Redburn* (1849), as if the poor sales of *Mardi* and his publisher’s reproofs had clipped his imaginative wings. Yet the Atlantic sea voyage of its neophyte hero again shows a far savvier compositional dexterity than he himself acknowledged. The novel carefully balances the linked narrative drama of life above and below deck aboard a merchantman; the malign, consumptive figure of Jackson; Liverpool as a City of Dreadful Night; and the powerful scenes of delirium tremens, fever, and Irish steerage. *White Jacket* (1850), seemingly lacking a clear plotline, builds the return journey of an American navy frigate from the Marquesas into a species of documentary theatre, the battleline ship replete with naval hierarchy, custom, and lore as synecdoche for a “man-of-war” world.

Moby-Dick, “woven of ships’ cables & hausers,” “hell-fired,” and full of “sea-room,” as Melville at different times described it,

poses a still greater challenge. It approaches epic and mock epic in equal measure. It combines Faustian revenge drama with contemplative anatomy, "boy's own whaling adventure" with a compelling journey of mind. For all the narrative impetus of the progress of the *Pequod*, the text approaches an anti-novel. Digressions like Melville's daringly symbolist "The Whiteness of The Whale," the riddle of Queequeg as a South Seas "Indian," the use of Ishmael to mediate Melville's meditations on the world as language, enfabulation, anatomy, conundrum—such elements undermine any conventional conception of the genre. However construed, *Moby-Dick* indeed remains a pursuit of light, whale oil functioning as a tongue-in-cheek metaphor for illumination. The novel also stands at the utter center of all North American narrative.

With *Pierre*, Melville's imagination turned inland, presenting a fable of a blighted "Old New York" dynasty that starts in a mock-bucolic mode and transforms itself to an urban fiction that casts Manhattan as penitentiary, nightmare, tomb. In the portrait of Pierre Glendinning, "Fool of Truth" and angry, embittered would-be author of his own "Book of Revelation," Melville turned romance on its head and created the foundation of such later, equally self-mirroring and writerly American fictions as John Barth's *The Sot-Weed Factor* (1960) and Vladimir Nabokov's *Pale Fire* (1962).

In *The Confidence-Man*, a dark, Voltairean satire of American optimism set on the Mississippi, Melville showed that his powers had anything but diminished. Yet another kind of travel fiction, which harks back to Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (written 1385–1400), John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678, 1684), and Shakespeare's *As You Like It* (1623), *The Confidence-Man* offers pointers to much of Melville's theory and practice of fiction. The most important of those reflections on fiction is the thought that fiction "should present another world, and yet one to which we feel the tie." *Billy Budd*, Melville's fable of the Fall of Man set in the Napoleonic age and told as a man-of-war drama of impressment, accusation, and hanging, also addresses the play of fable and fact, story and history.

"Truth uncompromisingly told will always have its ragged edges," Melville writes. That can serve, in part or whole, as a closing recognition of the founding principle of Melville's work.

A. ROBERT LEE

See also *Moby-Dick*

Biography

Born 1 August 1819 in New York City. Attended New York Male School; Albany Academy until the age of 12. Began working at age 12 as clerk, farmhand, and schoolteacher; ship's boy on the *St. Lawrence*, bound for Liverpool, 1839–40; ordinary seaman on the whaler *Achushnet*, 1841, jumping ship in the Marquesas in 1842; departed the islands on the Sydney whaling barque *Lucy Ann*, and jumped ship in Tahiti, 1842; harpooner on whaler *Charles and Henry*, out of Nantucket, in

southern Pacific, 1842–43; clerk and bookkeeper in general store, Honolulu, 1843; returned to Boston on US Navy frigate *United States*, 1843–44; writer from 1844; lived in New York, 1847–50, and Pittsfield, Massachusetts, 1850–63; toured countries in Near East and Europe, 1856–57; traveled on lecture circuits in the United States, 1857–60; lived in Washington, D.C., 1861–62, and in New York after 1863; district inspector of customs, New York, 1866–85. Died 28 September 1891.

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Narrative of Four Months' Residence among the Natives of a Valley in the Marquesas Islands; or, A Peep at Polynesian Life, 1846; as *Typee*, 1846; revised edition, 1846
Omoo: A Narrative of Adventures in the South Seas, 1847
Mardi, and a Voyage Thither, 1849
Redburn, His First Voyage, 1849
White Jacket; or, The World in a Man-of-War, 1850
The Whale, 1851; as *Moby-Dick, or, The Whale*, 1851
Pierre; or, The Ambiguities, 1852
Israel Potter, His Fifty Years of Exile, 1855
The Confidence-Man, His Masquerade, 1857
Billy Budd, Sailor, 1924

Other Writings: stories, poetry, travelogues, letters, and lectures.

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Men in the Sun by Ghassān Kanafānī

Rijāl fī al-shams 1963

The modern Arabic novel has developed in a distinctly different fashion from the modern novel in the West. While we may speak of two traditions of the modern Western novel—one experimental and avant-garde belonging to the first decades of the 20th century, the other more socially conscious succeeding it—the modern Arabic novel, emerging in the middle of the 20th century, was socially conscious from the start, and this social consciousness has always taken precedence over other literary impulses. This has nowhere been more true than in Palestine, occupied since 1948, where the modern novel has defined itself, along with other forms of literature, primarily as an expression of political resistance, while narrative experimentation and subjective expression have developed only secondarily, in the shadow of this overwhelming preoccupation.

The early 1960s was a period of deepening political tensions in the region, presaging the Six-Day War of 1967. At the same time, it was a period in which the Arabic novel began to take an experimental turn under the influence of such Western trends as existentialism and the “theatre of the absurd.” Ghassān Kanafānī’s work exemplifies the confluence of these tendencies. A spokesman for the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and the editor of its weekly, *Al-Hadaf*, Kanafānī fled Palestine with his family in 1948, finally settling in Damascus. Later he moved to Kuwait, and then to Beirut. He was killed in the explosion of his booby-trapped car in 1972, thought to be the work of Israeli agents. What makes Kanafānī’s work remarkable, given his position as a lifelong Palestinian refugee and activist, is that, unlike most politically committed writers of the time, he refused to resort to polemicism or to impose an ideological scheme on his fiction except in a general sense. Instead, he reworked his overtly political themes to give them a more profound, universal meaning.

Men in the Sun, Kanafānī’s most famous work, is a short and powerful allegorical novel. Three Palestinians, each representing different generations and stations in life, attempt the difficult journey across the desert from Iraq to Kuwait in order to escape from their past lives. They are picked up by the driver of a water truck, who agrees to take them over the border inside the closed tank. The conditions inside the tanker as it travels under the blazing desert sun are life-threatening, and the fate of the passengers depends critically on the time it will take them to cross the border. A delay at the Kuwaiti border caused by the officials’ refusal to sign the driver’s papers and their foul jesting causes fatal minutes to pass for the men in the oven-like tank. By the time the driver has crossed the border and can open it, his three passengers are dead. In the ignominious conclusion, he leaves the corpses at the municipal dump and, not long after departing, returns to remove their valuables.

The story of the disaster that befalls the three passengers represents the larger tragedy that has befallen the Palestinian people. In particular, the novel may be read as an exposé of the weakness of the Palestinians, depicting them as weak-willed and preferring the search for material security to the fight to regain their land. The driver, Abū Khaizurān, represents the ineffective Palestinian leadership that has ultimately betrayed its own people

and led them along the road to disaster. Khaizurān is a eunuch who has lost his masculinity by being wounded in battle, and his name, which means “bamboo,” symbolizes an individual who seems impressive on the outside but is weak and hollow within.

While the political message is important, the structure of the work, its narrative technique, and its degree of interiorization make it highly innovative. Kanafānī focuses on each character in turn, centering his subject in each individual’s consciousness. For instance, the narrative begins with an omen of death in which the first passenger, Abū Qays, who has come the long way from Palestine to the Shatt al-Arab waterway in the southern part of Iraq (near the Kuwaiti border), is resting on the moist earth as a black bird circles high above. The stream-of-consciousness element in the narrative emphasizes the existential quality of his situation:

He turned himself over and lay on his back, cradling his head in his hands. He started to stare at the sky. It was blazing white, and there was one black bird circling high up, alone and aimless. He did not know why, but he was suddenly filled with a bitter feeling of being a stranger, and for a moment he thought he was on the point of weeping. No, yesterday it didn’t rain. We are in August now. Have you forgotten? Those miles of road speeding through a void, like black eternity? Have you forgotten it? The bird was still circling round alone like a black spot in the blaze spread out above him. We are in August. Then why this dampness in the ground? It’s the Shatt. Can’t you see it stretching out beside you as far as the eye can see?

It is the ending, however, that gives *Men in the Sun* its absurdist flavor. Kanafānī intends to pose the existential question of whether or not one can have control over one’s destiny with respect to the issue of national will, purpose, and destiny. The conclusion is open-ended. We do not know why the passengers choose to die rather than risk discovery and imprisonment. Abū Khaizurān’s questioning, however, transcends issues of individual and collective guilt, bringing the novel to a close on a subjective note of despair and questioning:

He turned to look back to where he had left the corpses, but he could see nothing, and that glance simply set the thought ablaze so that it began to burn in his mind. All at once he could no longer keep it within his head, and he dropped his hands to his sides and stared into the darkness with his eyes wide open.

The thought slipped from his mind and ran on to his tongue: “Why didn’t they knock on the sides of the tank?” He turned round once, but he was afraid he would fall, so he climbed into his seat and leant his head on the wheel.

“Why didn’t you knock on the sides of the tank? Why didn’t you say anything? Why?”

STEFAN MEYER

See also Ghassān Kanafānī

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Men of Maize by Miguel Ángel Asturias

Hombres de maíz 1949

Writing in 1967, at the height of the boom of the Latin American novel, the Chilean writer Ariel Dorfman declared: "Although its origins are lost in remote regions and its socio-cultural coordinates are still debated, the contemporary Latin American novel has a quite precise date of birth. It is the year 1949, when Alejo Carpentier's *The Kingdom of This World* and Miguel Ángel Asturias' *Men of Maize* appeared. Although the latter novel is the source and backbone of all that is being written in our continent today, it has suffered a strange fate, like so many other works which open an era and close the past." The "strange fate" to which Dorfman referred was the fact that the novel was "consistently underrated by critics and neglected by readers."

Things have changed significantly in the 30 years after Dorfman's complaint. *Men of Maize* supplanted *El Señor Presidente* (1946; *The President*) as Asturias' most admired novel. It was translated into English in 1974, and it inspired critical editions in both Spanish (1981, 1992) and English (1993). Little by little, *Men of Maize* began to occupy the historical place that Dorfman had claimed for it—as precursor of the 1960s boom and as a unique and remarkable literary reflection of extraordinarily complex social, cultural, and aesthetic problems. *Men of Maize* is, indeed, a text that situates its author's own experience of life within the history of his country and his continent, implying a meditation on the meaning of Latin America within world history and, simultaneously, on the meaning of humanity's emergence from "primitive," preliterate societies on the road to the contemporary capitalist world. It is perhaps not surprising that such a conception—which might be called "Joycean"—gave rise to a literary structure whose complexity has been difficult for readers to assimilate.

In its most elementary terms, Asturias' novel sets out to resolve one of the most enduring problems confronted by Latin American novelists: namely, how to do justice to the essential "hybridity" or "heterogeneity" of the region's complex cultural identity. In the case of Guatemala, this involves exploring first of all the great Mayan civilization that dominated Central America long before the arrival of the Spaniards in the 1520s. The novel also portrays the culture of its heirs, the Indians who still live in scattered highland maize-based communities throughout the region. Finally, the European cultural traditions of the Spanish invaders and their descendants, the "Ladinos" (Mestizos) who

have governed Guatemala since the early 19th century, also find a place in *Men of Maize*.

Asturias' solution is one of astonishing complexity, but also of remarkable lucidity. He shows that the struggle of the Indians against the Ladinos in the 20th century is an endlessly reenacted continuation of the war between the Spaniards and the Maya of the 16th century. These two conflictive phases are then superimposed on an even vaster canvas, itself dual, in which the experience of loss undergone by every human being from birth to maturity is used to chart humankind's inherently violent dialectical transition from the "state of nature" to the West's contemporary technological civilization. In practice, this involves a text that resembles a Maya bas-relief, in which each minute glyph is multiply connected both to the glyphs surrounding it and to the aesthetic and thematic structure of the whole. At the same time, the initial tightness of this design is gradually loosened as the dense weave of tribal culture—poetic, paradigmatic, connotative, based on economic and kinship relations that are impossible to disentangle—gradually unravels into the relentlessly linear, prosaic, and positivistic 20th-century experience, associated with metonymy and displacement, in which individualism, alienation, transience, and death form a persistent equation.

The novel is organized symbolically in three historical phases—tribal, feudal-colonial, and capitalist-neocolonial—in each of which an Indian protagonist is defeated, loses his intimate relationship both to the earth and to the feminine other, and turns to alcohol and despair. Each of these phases, based on modes of production, is aligned mythologically with the three-part Mayan structure of the universe—underworld, earth, sky (past, present, future)—which is the trajectory of Quetzalcoatl, the plumed serpent and Meso-American culture hero. His inherently Freudian trajectory, an endlessly repeated irruption from prehistory, is itself based on the sun's daily journey around the sky and beneath the earth.

The result of this conception is that the contemporary characters live in a cosmic eternity, whether they know it or not, although Asturias is also concerned to emphasize the insistent gestural spontaneity and violence that Franz Fanon identified as key aspects of third world experience and revolutionary writing. Finally, the reader may conclude that, in retrospect, it is astonishing that a novel written in 1949, with such a focus on the

historical past, should also have foreseen so many central themes of Latin America's future. The most striking of these, undoubtedly, are the turn to guerrilla warfare and the shadow of ecological catastrophe: both are posited on the novel's very first page.

GERALD MARTIN

See also Miguel Ángel Asturias

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George Meredith 1828–1909

English

George Meredith's career as novelist stretches over a major portion of the later Victorian period, from *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* (1859) to his last completed novel, *The Amazing Marriage* (1895). The course of that career, and its aftermath, was and continues to be an erratic combination of success and failure, beginning with the withdrawal of *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* from the novel list of Mudie's, the largest of the circulating libraries, owing to "the urgent remonstrances of several respectable families, who objected to it as dangerous and wicked and damnable." In spite of this unfortunate initial bout with the constraints imposed by the Victorian reading public, Meredith gradually developed an enthusiastic, if limited, following of intellectuals who admired his work. Robert Louis Stevenson, when he referred to himself as a "true-blue Meredith man," could also have been speaking for the likes of Leslie Stephen, John Morley, J. M. Barrie, and Oscar Wilde, to name a few. Meredith's popularity reached its peak in the early 1890s, and, three decades later, when Virginia Woolf looked back at this period, she ranked Meredith along with Henry James as the two most influential novelists of her parents' generation.

There is a direct connection between Meredith's rejection by "Mudie and the British Matron" and Virginia Woolf's acknowledgment of his extraordinary influence on her and her fellow practitioners of the early modern English novel. This connection consists in what Woolf herself described as the "experimental" quality of Meredith's fiction; she saw him as "a brilliant and uneasy figure" who "excites our interest as a great innovator" (*The Second Common Reader*, 1932). And this edgy, avant-garde quality is what continues to excite—and repel—interest in Meredith today, as his novels are increasingly seen as significant precursors to modernist fiction. What this quality means above all else is that Meredith seemed instinctively to question and disrupt novelistic tradition as well as Victorian popular values and taste (*pace* Mudie and the British Matron).

Meredith's novelistic experimentation, then, involved sometimes radical innovations in narrative technique and uses of genre as well as controversial contemporary themes—qualities

found in abundance in such novels as *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*, *One of Our Conquerors* (1891), and *The Amazing Marriage*. The innovative/protomodernist impulse in Meredith is manifested at various points in his fiction by a self-reflexive and artificial style, by a dialogic narrative interaction between playful and competing voices that suggests a corresponding distrust of such abstractions as truth and identity (in *Sandra Belloni* [1886] and *The Amazing Marriage*, for example, there is a literal struggle between two narrators, one preoccupied with storytelling, the other with analysis), by the depiction of a disintegrating subject (Richard Feverel, Purcell Barrett in *Sandra Belloni*, Richmond Roy in *The Adventures of Harry Richmond* [1871], Willoughby Patterne in *The Egoist* [1879], Victor Radnor in *One of Our Conquerors*, and Lord Fleetwood in *The Amazing Marriage* all develop into highly unstable personalities), by the use of the city as a setting for disorientation and loss, especially in *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*, *The Adventures of Harry Richmond*, and *One of Our Conquerors*, and, late in Meredith's career, by a rendering of characters' thoughts that suggests the simultaneity of past, present, and future we identify with stream-of-consciousness writing, seen especially in the depiction of Victor Radnor's troubled mental associations in *One of Our Conquerors*.

In addition, we can see the questioning impulse of a modernist sensibility in Meredith's distrust of traditional generic boundaries (see separate entry on *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* for the most famous example of Meredith's generic transgressions), in his repeated and increasingly radical questioning of proper roles for women in marriage and society (Meredith's 19th-century feminism is evident from the beginning of his career, but particularly central to his last four novels), and in his running critique of the endemic sentimental egoism he saw everywhere cloaking the presumptions of Victorian patriarchy (most famously dramatized in *The Egoist*).

Another element that is essential to appreciating Meredith's originality is his invocation of an ethic of "common sense," seen everywhere in his fiction but articulated most cogently in his fa-

mous *An Essay on Comedy* (originally titled *On the Idea of Comedy and the Uses of the Comic Spirit*, 1897). This principle of common sense provides a traditionalist basis to Meredith's experimental agenda, underlying everything from his feminism to his rejection of the limitations of genre. This recurring rationalist principle provides a coherence in Meredith's work, a consistent attitude toward the self-defeating actions of men and women, whether those actions lead to the "laughter of the mind" described in *An Essay on Comedy*, to a world of impossible romance, to tragedy, or, as is the case in *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*, in all of these directions. For Meredith, it is betrayals of common sense—the lapses into sentimental egoism—that account for human absurdity as well as for much of human suffering. The tension that develops between Meredithian common sense and this sentimental egoism is central to all of his fiction.

There is, then, an orientation in Meredith that is both forward- and backward-looking, a radical/conservative outlook that can help one to understand Meredith's strategic role in the history of the novel. While Meredith refers to rational norms associated with classicism and the 18th century, he also invokes these traditional values as the basis for his radical critique of—and departure from—what he saw as regressive or merely trendy in Victorian art and society. The experimental and questioning instinct in Meredith is inseparable from this strong rationalist bias.

Another point is equally important in this context, however, and that is Meredith's recognition of the limitations of the rational component. From the beginning of his career Meredith insisted upon the need for harmonious balance within the triad of "blood and brain and spirit." The characterization of Sir Austin Feverel in his first novel immediately suggests Meredith's keen sense of the extreme dangers of a purely rationalist androcentric position. Instead, the term *common sense*, as he uses and dramatizes it in his fiction, suggests a Meredithian union of intellectual and emotional intelligence combined with a Goethean openness to the many-sidedness of life.

RICHARD C. STEVENSON

See also *Ordeal of Richard Feverel*

Biography

Born 12 February 1828 in Portsmouth, Hampshire. Attended St. Paul's Church School, Southsea, Hampshire, and another boarding school, possibly in Suffolk; Moravian School, Neuwied sur Rhine, Germany, 1843–44; articled to a solicitor in London, 1846–49. Coeditor, *Monthly Observer*, London, 1848–49; contributor, *Chambers Journal*, 1849, and *Fraser's Magazine*, 1851–52, both London; columnist, *Ipswich Chronicle*, Suffolk, 1858–68; contributor, 1860–1909, and editor, 1867–68, *Fortnightly Review*, London; reader and literary adviser, Chapman and Hall publishers, London, 1860–94, and also for Saunders and Otley publishers; contributor, *Pall Mall Gazette*, London, 1860s; special correspondent, *Morning Post*, London, during Austro-Italian war, 1866; relocated to Box Hill, Surrey, 1868; columnist ("Up

to Midnight"), *Graphic*, 1872–73; lectured on comedy at the London Institute, 1877. Died 18 May 1909.

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Emilia in England, 1864; as *Sandra Belloni*, 1886
Rhoda Fleming, 1865
Vittoria, 1866
The Adventures of Harry Richmond, 1871
Beauchamp's Career, 1875
The Egoist: A Comedy in Narrative, 1879
The Tragic Comedians, 1880
Diana of the Crossways, 1885
One of Our Conquerors, 1891
Lord Ormont and His Aminta, 1894
The Amazing Marriage, 1895
Celt and Saxon, 1910

Other Writings: like Thomas Hardy, Meredith saw himself as a poet who supported himself by writing fiction; he published close to a dozen books of poetry over the period 1851–1909. His most famous poetical work, "Modern Love" (1862), is a sequence of 50 16-line poems depicting the failure of a marriage, written soon after the breakdown of Meredith's own first marriage to Mary Peacock Nicolls. In addition, he published numerous short stories and novella-length "tales." His collected letters are edited by C.L. Cline, *The Letters of George Meredith* (3 vols., 1970).

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Mertvye dushi. *See* Dead Souls

 Metafiction

Metafiction is a style of fictive narrative that explores the conditions of its own making. The term *metafiction* literally means “after” or “about” fiction, and practitioners of this type of writing have tended to employ metafictional techniques in order to undermine the element of illusion that characterizes the traditional realist novel. Antimimetic in nature, it discards such conventions as the reflection of reality and the willing suspension of disbelief in order to display the writer’s act of fabrication as it happens. In its many varieties, metafiction may employ the author as a self-evident figure present within his or her work (as happens in Kurt Vonnegut’s novel, *Slaughterhouse-Five*, 1969); highlight the physical act of typing words onto the page (as does Raymond Federman’s novel *Double or Nothing*, 1971); or involve the mechanical operations of bookmaking (as does Italo Calvino in *Se una notte d’inverno un viaggiatore* [1979; *If on a winter’s night a traveler*]). Especially popular during the 1960s and 1970s, “metafiction” as a term endured some critical misuse as an umbrella label for any novel or short story that was not traditionally realistic. Most properly, the term designates fiction writing that not only draws attention to the author’s act of composition but makes that act the work’s subject matter.

Contemporary practitioners of metafiction are fond of citing its 18th-century origins, particularly Laurence Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* (1759–67) and Denis Diderot’s *Jacques le fataliste* (1796; *Jacques the Fatalist*). Because metafictional works of the 1960s and 1970s were often attacked as illegitimate forms of fiction, metafictional writers looked back to Sterne and Diderot as authors yet unencumbered by the realistic tradition. Two hundred years ago, today’s metafictionalists reasoned, the novel could have developed in other ways; only long usage and enforced familiarity allowed the representational novel to become the only acceptable form for book-length fiction. Yet this argument has its limits. Even in *Tristram Shandy* the illusion is maintained that the narrator is telling a “real” story, one that is represented as having happened in the world, the same device Henry Fielding uses as a justification to counter Samuel Richardson’s ploy of outfitting his own novels as bundles of letters in order to explain the narrative’s reason for being. Metafiction in the hands of a contemporary master such as Ronald Sukenick or Gilbert Sorrentino forgoes even Sterne’s pretense of representing an external action; in their hands, writing becomes truly metafictional, practicing no illusion whatsoever.

The first modern example of metafiction is Flann O’Brien’s *At Swim-Two-Birds* (1939). Conceived as an antidote to fellow Irishman James Joyce’s weighty stylistics and ponderously serious myth making, O’Brien’s novel is a self-consciously comic delight in which an author writing just such a work begins by commenting on the task. Three different beginnings are submitted for the reader’s choice: one involves a mythic character, the

giant Finn Mac Cool; another describes a more quaint figure from Irish folklore, the Pooka MacPhellimey (“a member of the devil class”); and the third presents what would seem to be a conventionally drawn realistic character, Mr. John Furriskey. Yet no sooner do these narratives get underway than they infiltrate and corrupt one another. To make things worse, the characters of the otherwise realistic plot dislike the motivations they are given toward sin; ashamed at what their author has devised for them, they revolt, eventually lulling him to sleep so they can rewrite the action more to their liking.

Metafiction flourished in the United States during the socially disruptive decades of the 1960s and 1970s. Its challenge to traditional realism may be viewed alongside political and cultural transformations of the times. Its impulse came from an equally new quarter: not from British or continental fiction, which previously had been the strongest influences on American writing, but from South America. Signaling this shift in influence was novelist John Barth’s important essay “The Literature of Exhaustion,” first appearing in *The Atlantic* in August 1967 and later collected in Barth’s *The Friday Book* (1984). Believing that widespread practice had exhausted the novelty of the novel and that its conventions were “used up,” Barth proposed following the example of the Argentine Jorge Luis Borges and focusing on the “felt ultimates” of such exhausted fiction as its own subject. A more metafictional angle was taken by Borges’ countryman Julio Cortázar, whose novel *Rayuela* (1963; *Hopscotch*) assumes a different meaning if its 155 chapters are read in alternative orders. Climaxing this self-described “boom” in Spanish American literature were the magical realist novels of Gabriel García Márquez, a Colombian whose offhand incorporation of patently unrealistic materials made his otherwise realistic narratives read quite differently from conventional fiction.

Among the American novelists most immediately influenced by these and other South American writers were Barth himself, Robert Coover, and William H. Gass. Barth’s stories collected in *Lost in the Funhouse* (1968) stem from his arguments in “The Literature of Exhaustion,” which now reads as an apology for his subsequent work. In Robert Coover’s *The Universal Baseball Association, Inc., J. Henry Waugh, Prop.* (1968), a metafictional situation is dramatized. Waugh, a lonely bachelor, fills his time by devising and playing a complex statistical card-table baseball game. Complete with league histories and player personalities, the action of this game takes on a viability of its own. Soon, the narrative has moved to the level of the ballplayers, who can ponder the motives of J. Henry Waugh only as humanity can construct theologies for divine purpose. The most extreme example of American metafiction is Gass’ *Willie Masters’ Lonesome Wife* (1971), in which writing is the subject and physical love only a metaphor for its actions. Printed on four different colors of pa-

per and in many differing typefaces (most of which are arranged artfully on the page), Gass' novella, in its very presence, refuses to be taken for anything other than what it is: not a narrative about something else but a testimony to its own presence as a literary artifact.

"It seems a country-headed thing to say," Gass volunteers in his *Fiction and the Figures of Life* (1970), "that literature is language, that stories and the places and the people in them are merely made of words as chairs are made of smoothed sticks and sometimes of cloth or metal tubes." Yet both writer and reader can benefit from the metafictional impulse, if only to keep them anchored where they belong. "It seems incredible," Gass explains, "the ease with which we sink through books quite out of sight, pass clamorous pages into soundless dreams. That novels should be made of words, is shocking, really. It's as though you had discovered that your wife were made of rubber: the bliss of all those years, the fears . . . from sponge." Hence the attention-getting devices of *Willie Masters' Lonesome Wife* and the equally radical experiments undertaken by Gass' contemporaries, all of which are meant to reaffirm fiction's essentially metafictional nature.

A more aggressive motive for metafiction characterizes Gilbert Sorrentino's work. An accomplished poet, critic, and editor who had little patience for the thoughtlessly formulaic fiction that crowded the marketplace, Sorrentino raged against tradition in his essays and novels. "Novels are cluttered with all kinds of signals," Sorrentino notes in "The Various Isolated: William Carlos Williams' Prose," a 1972 essay collected in *Something Said* (1984)—"flashing and gesturing so that the author may direct our attention to a particular configuration of character or plot in order that his work, such as it is, may be made simpler for him, and for us." The nature of such signals is that they "assure us that we are here, oh yes, in the world that we understand; what we 'understand' are the signals." The problem with this approach, Sorrentino continues, is that "signals are gimmicks, elements of craftsmanship, or the lack of it. They allow the writer to slip out from under problems that only confrontation with his materials can solve. Novels are made of words. The difficulty in writing fiction is that the words must be composed so that they reveal the absolute reality of their prey, their subject—and at the same time, they must be real; i.e., they do not have to stand for a specific meaning."

Sorrentino's own novels are hilarious examples of how metafiction can serve such critical purpose. *Imaginative Qualities of Actual Things* (1971) has much of the roman à clef to it; as a story based on the 1960s New York art world, it is replete with insider references and slightly veiled characterizations of actual painters, poets, and critics of the time. Yet the narrative voice expresses such distaste for this world that it almost immediately becomes vindictively metafictional. When the author dislikes a character, he says so and makes gleeful comments about how he will punish this figure by subjecting him or her to astounding indignities. Passing comments are given sarcastically dismissive footnotes; themes and subthemes cross and tangle in a manner that defies any other logic than the author's own malevolent purpose. A longer example of Sorrentino's metafiction is his 200,000-word novel, *Mulligan Stew* (1979). Inspired by Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds*, it incorporates many of that novel's devices while taking into account a half-century of worldwide novelistic experiment subsequent to O'Brien's classic

work. Characters go on strike against their author and undertake various subversions of his text. Sorrentino also registers his complaints about the commercial publishing world, including rejection letters from a wide range of houses that were deeply dissatisfied with the manuscript.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, American writers reveled in the great potentiality of metafiction. Raymond Federman's *Double or Nothing* had to be published with its author's typescript photo reproduced, as typesetting would have obscured its unique typographic achievement. Each page presents a different physical structure, such as typing a page of narrative in the form of a Christmas tree. To complete the metafictional picture, Federman presents a novelist (much like himself) setting up to write a novel—renting a room to which he will confine himself with enough food and supplies to last a year. Computations necessary to effect this plan begin on page one and never end, for by the narrative's closure it becomes apparent that an initial miscalculation means the entire plan will have to be refigured.

Even more concrete metafictional devices were devised by Ronald Sukenick and Walter Abish. In his novel *Out* (1973) Sukenick numbers his chapters backward, beginning with 10 and ending with 0. For each chapter the typesetting changes, beginning with ten lines of print and then for chapter 9 dropping one line of print and adding a correlative line of space, chapter 8 offering 8 lines of print for each 2 lines of space, until as the end approaches the reader is flipping through pages at an accelerated speed. Then, with chapter 0, the print disappears, leaving nothing but blankness. This mechanical device complements the novel's action, a cross-country trip from the clutter of New York to the openness of California (ending with the vast emptiness of the Pacific Ocean). Abish's *Alphabetical Africa* (1974) uses the alphabet rather than numbers for its chapter titles. In chapter A every word begins with the letter A: "Ages ago, Alex, Allen and Alva arrived at Antibes, and Alva allowing all, allowing anyone, against Alex's admonition, against Allen's angry assertion: another African amusement, . . ." Chapter B allows words beginning with that letter to enter the mix, until by chapter Z the full alphabet is available. Thus the first-person narrator cannot appear until chapter I. It would be difficult to imagine a more emphatic reminder that fiction is made of words. Yet Abish does just this in his novel's second half, a set of chapters beginning with Z and proceeding backward. Now persons, places, and things depart from the narrative after their lettered chapter, until at the end readers are again left with only the letter A. The novel itself, together with its possibilities, expands and contracts before the viewer's eyes. A more extreme example of metafiction has not yet been written.

Metafiction's novelty enhanced its popularity, but this same novelty prompted many of its practitioners to abandon such experiments and reembrace traditions of mimetic fiction. Yet their narratives profited from their earlier rigorous interrogations, to the point that the compositional self became a much more important factor. A good example is found in the work of Kurt Vonnegut, which in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s took greater liberties with the writer's own obvious presence, as opposed to the subgeneric excuses (dystopian fiction, spy thrillers, apocalyptic tales) that had been used for his earlier novels of the 1950s and 1960s.

Metafiction's great success remains an American phenomenon. Although writers in England were less disposed to experiment

with the form, some metafictional techniques were employed there; the most popular example is John Fowles' self-conscious storytelling. The continental novel's metafictional shadings were drawn more from language theory than from narrative art. The most successful were outright employment of details from book manufacturing by Italo Calvino, himself a publishing executive.

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See also Framing and Embedding; Historical Writing and the Novel; Postmodernism

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Mexican Novel. See Latin American Novel: Mexico

Middlemarch by George Eliot

1872

In a review of *Middlemarch*, Edith Simcox remarked, "To say that *Middlemarch* is George Eliot's greatest work is to say that it has scarcely a superior and very few equals in the whole wide range of English fiction." This opinion reflected the contemporary consensus, and although Eliot's reputation declined in the early modernist period, by midcentury *Middlemarch* had again achieved a firm standing as one of the greatest of all English novels, and it can reasonably be ranked among the masterpieces of world fiction.

Middlemarch is Eliot's seventh substantial piece of fiction, her sixth novel, and her penultimate novel. In retrospect, all her previous works seem like preliminary studies or sketches for portions of this one grand novel. While absorbing her previous experiments in genre, characterization, and theme, *Middlemarch* adds entirely new elements, and it fuses all the elements into a satisfying artistic whole. The one novel that follows *Middlemarch*, *Daniel Deronda* (1876), is equal in intellectual sophistication, but it has a smaller scope of action and less variety of portrayal, and it has commonly and correctly been felt to fall into two parts, a psychological study in the mode of severe ironic realism and a symbolic drama, strained and fantastic, in the mode of utopian idealism. For most readers, *Middlemarch* remains the richest and most complete realization of Eliot's genius.

There are three main stories or sets of dramatic relations: Dorothea Brooke and her two husbands, Edward Casaubon and Will Ladislaw; Tertius Lydgate and Rosamond Vincy; and Fred Vincy and Mary Garth. The banker Bulstrode is involved in Lydgate's downfall, but late in the narrative he also emerges as a center of dramatic interest. For many readers the central character of the novel is Dorothea Brooke, a spiritually ardent and emotionally passionate young woman. Dorothea seeks to break free from the constraints of the conventional roles accorded to women and to achieve some higher order of existence. In this effort she is the culminating figure in a sequence that includes—from Eliot's other works—the methodist preacher Dinah Morris in *Adam Bede* (1859), the autobiographical Maggie Tulliver in *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), and the Renaissance Florentine Romola in the novel of that title (1863). In her moral and social idealism, Dorothea also assimilates Eliot's depiction of the eponymous Felix Holt (1866), and in her energetic exercise of imaginative sympathy she prefigures Daniel Deronda.

Fred Vincy is the culminating figure in a series of weak but well-intentioned young men that includes Arthur Donnithorne in *Adam Bede* and Godfrey Cass in *Silas Marner* (1861). Adam Bede, a young carpenter, is modeled on Eliot's own father, and a similar character, in middle age, appears as Mary Garth's father,

Caleb. Will Ladislav's sympathy with Dorothea's desire for a wider life affiliates him with Philip Wakem in *The Mill on the Floss*, and his cultivated aesthetic temperament affiliates him with Stephen Guest in the same novel. Mrs. Poyser, the sharp-tongued, strong-minded matron from *Adam Bede*, prefigures Mary Garth's mother. The relationship between Fred Vincy and Mary Garth turns on the sacrosanct character of fidelity, and it thus resumes a central theme from *The Mill on the Floss*. The reverend Farebrother, closely involved with both Lydgate and the Garths, is Eliot's finest depiction in a gallery of worldly clergymen, scant on doctrine but of sterling character, that includes Mr. Gilfil in *Scenes of Clerical Life* (1858) and Mr. Irwine in *Adam Bede*.

Two of the main characters in *Middlemarch*, Lydgate and Mary Garth, have no antecedents in Eliot's work. These two characters personify crucial aspects of Eliot's own narrative persona, and their inclusion no doubt helps account for the exceptional range and power of Eliot's commentary in this novel. Lydgate is a young doctor with ardent scientific aspirations, and Mary is a young woman who is plain and socially obscure but who has impressive powers of humorous observation and vigorous moral judgment. Through Lydgate, Eliot depicts an intellectual passion for diagnostic understanding. "He wanted to pierce the obscurity of those invisible thoroughfares which prepare human misery and joy." Eliot, too, seeks to pierce this obscurity, and Lydgate is one of the chief objects of her incisive analysis. Mary holds the perspective of the satirist, taking life as a comedy and observing that "people were so ridiculous with their illusions, carrying their fool's caps unawares." Through Dorothea, Lydgate, and Mary, Eliot fashions an internal dramatic correlative for the tonal interplay among chief elements of her own persona: her spiritual fervor, the cerebral intensity of her dispassionate scientific analysis, and the angry contempt of her satiric revelations.

The formal order of the novel integrates two polar principles: one of social and psychological realism and the other of thematic and symbolic structure. At the level of social and psychological realism, the plan of the novel is suggested in the subtitle, *A Study of Provincial Life*. The setting is given precise geographical and historical specification: a Midlands industrial and commercial town in the years just before the first reform bill and the coming of the railroads. The multitude of characters provides a representative cross section of this social world. At the level of symbolic and thematic signification, the main characters exemplify both elemental qualities of temperament and sexual identity and also cultural forces specific to their time. Dorothea's marriage with Ladislav symbolically represents traditional Christian spiritualism in the process of being absorbed and transformed both by romantic aestheticism and by Victorian social idealism. Lydgate's scientific objectivity is correlated with his arrogance and his insensitivity, and in the larger movement of the plot, his specifically masculine ethos is subordinated to Dorothea's female ethos of communitarian sympathy. At a period of political upheaval and tumultuous industrial development,

Fred Vincy ineffectually clings to an older tradition of genteel idleness, but he ultimately submits to the bourgeois work ethic exemplified by the Garths.

In the geniality of its humor, the moral resonance of its satire, and the rich array of its tonal palette, *Middlemarch* has qualities peculiarly English. Eliot is the legitimate heir to Henry Fielding and Jane Austen, and a peer of Charles Dickens and William Makepeace Thackeray. Although capable of an ironic social realism as tough-minded as that of Honoré de Balzac or Gustave Flaubert, she also has qualities of kindly humor and moral refinement that are alien to them. Eliot shares with Lev Tolstoi the power of panoramic social display and sustained psychological analysis, and she influences the efforts of Marcel Proust to evoke the development of an inner sense of personal identity. By making the psychological development of her characters the chief moving principle in the construction of her narrative, Eliot serves as the single most important model for Henry James. Through her assimilation of the subjects of fiction to the meditative power of the modern intellect, she is the progenitor to Thomas Hardy, Joseph Conrad, and D.H. Lawrence. Among the surprisingly few novelists who concern themselves with depicting the dramatic quality of intellectual experience, perhaps only Thomas Mann is Eliot's equal.

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See also George Eliot

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Midnight's Children by Salman Rushdie

1981

Salman Rushdie was only 34 years old in 1981 when the publication of his second novel, *Midnight's Children*, turned him into an overnight celebrity of international stature. It won him the Booker Prize, Britain's top award for fiction. *Midnight's Children* was acclaimed by critics as a literary event of international importance and drew favorable comparisons to such classics as Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (1759–67), Gabriel García Márquez's *Cien años de soledad* (1967; *One Hundred Years of Solitude*), and Günter Grass' *Die Blechtrommel* (1959; *The Tin Drum*). The success of *Midnight's Children*, a work that expresses the experience of postcolonial Indians, spawned a whole genre of postcolonial fiction, helping to bring to the attention of Western readers the fiction of Indian writers such as Anita Desai, Amit Chaudhuri, and Vikram Chandra.

Midnight's Children is narrated in the first person by Saleem Sinai, who was born on 15 August 1947, along with 1,000 other infants, during the first hour after India acquired independence from Britain. Prematurely aged at 31, Saleem reflects on a lifetime during which, he claims, "I had been mysteriously handcuffed to history, my destinies indissolubly chained to those of my country." The novel attempts to recoup the major events in the history of the Indian subcontinent through the protagonist's fallible memory of his experiences during the first three decades of independence and through his family's history during the three decades before that. Rushdie has said that the novel is intended to read as a comic epic. Saleem's unreliable narration reflects his own outsider's recollection of India, which includes the separation of Pakistan from India, the rebellion leading to the establishment of Bangladesh, and Indira Gandhi's declared emergency in 1975. "To understand me, you'll have to swallow a world," Saleem insists. Saleem gets dates (such as the date of Indira Gandhi's assassination) wrong, attributes victories to the wrong generals, mixes up the Mahabharata with the Ramayana, and commits numerous other historical errors. These mistakes underline the author's insistence on the superiority of imaginative over factual truths to produce what Rushdie has called "intensified images of reality." Saleem's vision of India turns sour by the last of the three books into which the novel is divided, where his nightmarish participation in the Bangladesh war parallels the epic's obligatory visit to the underworld. The subsequent emergency represents the dark underside of the hopes born with India's independence.

By contrast, the first two books offer a comic, personalized account of Saleem's interaction with his country's chaotic progress. Saleem's narrative teems with others' stories, many of which remain incomplete, suggesting the inexhaustible superabundance of Indian life. Saleem is the child of a poor Indian woman and a departing Englishman. His mixed parentage enables him to embody Rushdie's own duality, born Indian but educated and living in Britain. As Rushdie says of Indian writers living abroad, they "are capable of writing from a kind of double perspective." Rushdie's success in rendering this experience of being both an insider and an outsider in both countries accounts for the novel's wide appeal. Even Saleem's huge nose is an intertextual reference both to the elephant-headed Hindu god Ganesha and to such Western models as Tristram Shandy and Cyrano de Bergerac. The

book implies that in the same way, modern India is the outcome of miscegenation. The novel parallels British atrocities such as the Amritsar massacre with Indira Gandhi's program of forcible sterilization. Saleem is further faced with his double, or shadow, in the form of Shiva (also the name of the Hindu god of destruction), who mocks Saleem's search for a purpose to the birth of the 1001 children of midnight: "there is only me-against-the-world," he insists. A common theme in all of Rushdie's works concerns individuals divided, as he is, from themselves.

Saleem's narration is addressed to Padma, an ignorant and superstitious woman whose "what-happened-nextism" highlights Saleem's nonlinear narrative. This is not just Saleem's story but the story of his writing it. Rushdie's use of an unreliable narrator, magic realism, and fabulation (a witch dematerializes him at one point) unite to create a story of displacement, alienation, and life seen by the dispossessed. In adopting this strategy, Rushdie invented a voice uniquely suited to the postcolonial experience. *Midnight's Children* uses a combination of Western and Indian forms of the English language. The linguistic struggle that ensues reflects the ideological struggles between colonizer and colonized that still linger. This is apparent in the various receptions that his book has received in the West and in the East. Where Western readers have seen it primarily as a fantasy, Indians have talked about it in historical and political terms. Western critics tend to praise it for its formal complexities, intertextuality, and metafictional innovations, or to criticize it for its loose episodic structure and didacticism. Indian critics prefer to dwell on the novel's political dimensions, for example its exposure of the corruption and exploitation of those in power, rather than its portrayal of "representative" individual characters and events. As Rushdie says, "description is itself a political act." The truth of this proposition has subsequently been confirmed by the violent reception of *The Satanic Verses* (1988). It is Rushdie's ability to force the language of the West to communicate the experiences of the non-Western world while appealing to both worlds that has turned him into a major influence and international figure within the field of postcolonial literature.

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See also Salman Rushdie

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Migrations by Miloš Crnjanski

Seobe, 1929, and Druga kniga Seoba, 1962

The first volume of Miloš Crnjanski's novel *Seobe* (*Migrations*) appeared in 1929. The second, *Druga kniga Seoba* (The Second Book of Migrations), was written soon after the first but was not published until 1962, because of the author's self-imposed exile after World War II and the official proscription of his works until his return in 1965. The two publication dates frame a turbulent period in his career, which took him from a lofty position as leading Serbian poet and as diplomat in the royal Yugoslav government to a difficult life as an emigrant in London during and after the war. The war years are depicted in his later novel *Roman o Londonu* (1971; *Novel about London*).

Migrations follows the fate of the Serbs in the Austro-Hungarian province of Vojvodina in the 18th century, decades after they emigrated to the area north of Belgrade, to escape the wrath of the Turks after the War of Succession. Even though the Vojvodina Serbs were granted a special status and many privileges by the Austrian rulers in exchange for their military services, *Migrations* portrays them as never feeling quite at home. They are allowed to use their own language, practice the Orthodox religion freely, and possess land. Yet they yearn to live with other Serbs—an impossibility because the Serbian lands are still under Turkish rule. Deprived of that option, they dream of emigrating to another Slavic and Orthodox country, Russia, where they hope to feel more at home. In the second volume, they finally realize their dream, although not perfect happiness.

The protagonist, Vuk Isaković, a colonel in the Austrian army, admonishes his people to resist being drowned in a foreign sea. While serving the Austrian army bravely and more or less faithfully on long campaigns that take him and his soldiers all the way to Mainz, Isaković never loses sight of his people in the fertile homeland. Isaković dreams of going to Russia, where the Serbs would enjoy greater freedom and a sense of belonging among their racial brethren. The second book of *Migrations* brings the story to a successful conclusion. After many years, Isaković's son, Pavle, arrives in Russia with a number of his people and begins a new life. But slowly and inexorably the small Serbian colony is eroded and assimilated, until only the Serbian names of a few little towns and villages are left.

Crnjanski uses this broad canvas to present the plight of a national minority serving a foreign power and attaining independence only through migrating in search of a better life. But the author does not stop there. Ending the book with the statement that "There is no death, there are only migrations," he seems to say that the whole of mankind is constantly migrating, in search of its true identity. Such philosophical undertones give Crnjanski's novels a deeper and universal meaning.

The novels are based on historical facts and derive an air of authenticity from Crnjanski's careful use of archaisms. But he uses history only as a decor for his tale about a small nation that is always in an inferior position. To underscore this unfortunate fact, the author presents the protagonist in a constant state of melancholy and in need of basic care: "he looked like a straw-stuffed monster. . . . His skin was flaccid, his gray yellowish hair

bristly, his mustachio unkempt and twitching." His relations with other characters are hardly such as to dispel his misery. His beautiful wife Dafina, for instance, left behind to pine for her husband, seeks solace in an affair with his own brother. This subplot lends the novel a tragic thrust, as she dies from a frightful disease, which she thinks of as God's punishment for her sins. She leaves behind a sickly child, symbolizing perhaps the predicament of the entire nation.

Combining the qualities of a linguist, historian, ethnographer, and psychologist, Crnjanski created a masterful, at times stunning, novelistic achievement that is almost impossible to imitate. Like Boris Pasternak, Crnjanski is primarily a poet and not a novelist. Nevertheless, this epic is one of the most significant novels in contemporary Yugoslav literature. It is indeed "the novel of a nation," as Zoran Glušević calls it in *Perom u raboš* (1966). It adroitly encompasses, in the words of Ken Kalfus in *The New York Times Book Review* (1994), the four "sorrowful themes" of Serbian history: defeat, suppression, exile, and encirclement. It is also one of the first lyrical novels in Serbian literature, which broadened the horizons of the predominantly realistic Serbian novel.

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The Mill on the Floss by George Eliot

1860

From its first publication in 1860, much has been made of autobiographical elements in *The Mill on the Floss*. These elements include the sibling relationship between Tom and Maggie Tulliver, the drawing of characters based on people from Eliot's pre-London life, and the evocation of the landscape and small town environment Eliot had herself lived in. It must be said at once, however, that Eliot's decision to transmute the normally comic Bildungsroman into tragedy, whether from her own psychological conflicts or from her avowed purpose of treating the genre of the novel as a vehicle for "experiments in life," and thus to give it a status reflected in Virginia Woolf's assertion that Eliot was the first novelist to write for adults, radically separates Maggie Tulliver's tragically unfulfilled potential from what Eliot herself had been able to achieve as a Victorian intellectual.

Before *The Mill on the Floss*, the Bildungsroman had proved a successful genre for male and female novelists. Dickens' *David Copperfield* (1850), Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), and Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South* (1855) used the form both to trace the development of an individual through the school of experience and to treat issues of social and economic importance. In all of the earlier novels, however, despite the seriousness with which they engaged contemporary issues, the essential plot structure remained that of romantic domestic comedy. They reached closure through various forms of wish fulfillment that compromised their realism. David Copperfield's marriage to Agnes Wingfield and the unexpected fortunes that allow Jane Eyre and Margaret Hale to marry the men they love are cases in point.

In rejecting the romance plot of these versions of the Bildungsroman in favor of a tragic ending, Eliot aimed at a greater realism. At the same time, however, she turned to literary and scientific sources as well. She mined Greek tragedy, which she read as the complex interplay between character and fate. Wordsworth served as an exemplar, not merely for his focus on nature and country life, but also for the way he located tragedy in the everyday world. Darwin yielded the concept of natural selection, which shapes the portrayal of Maggie, who has inherited characteristics that are useless to her as a woman in her particular culture but which would have been of advantage to her brother Tom. To these sources Eliot adds empirical observations derived from her own experience. Her precise recording of provincial life, particularly in her descriptions of the way behavior is determined and controlled by powerful social and family conventions, amounts to a sociology of the provincial petty bourgeoisie.

Eliot clearly conceived *The Mill on the Floss* as a tragedy from the first: Maggie's eventual death by drowning is foreshadowed in the opening chapters. Only the disproportionate space she gives to the detailed treatment of Maggie's childhood in relation to the more condensed presentation of Maggie as an adult may obscure the overall conception. In spite of such foreshadowing, however, some readers of the novel continue to regard the flood at its end as a *deus ex machina* brought in to impose closure and related in no obvious way to the impasse in the lives of the principal characters. Moreover, the flood seems to contradict an essential premise of the novel, which adheres to a gradualist theory both of individual development and of changes and modifica-

tions in social structures—a theory of processive change that Eliot shares with Darwin. The ending, then, replaces that gradualism with a catastrophic mechanism of change.

Perhaps a more important contradiction in the novel results from a disparity between the commentary of the omniscient narrator and the representation of events, characters, and relationships within the novel—a disparity between telling and showing. One important instance of this contradiction is the narrator's evocation of an almost edenic pastoralism, in which Tom and Maggie's childhood relationship is described as "the days when they clasped their little hands in love and roamed the daisied fields together." This idealized Wordsworthian image of childhood innocence is nowhere reflected in Eliot's acutely realized and psychologically probing depiction of the conflicted relationship between Maggie and Tom, a depiction sensitive to the age and gender differences between the children. A measure of the importance of this difficult relationship is that Eliot generalizes and thematizes it later in the novel as the problematic situation of a gifted woman in a male-dominated culture, which denies her any degree of self-fulfillment.

Eliot's strong focus on Maggie throughout the novel almost inevitably invites feminist readings of *The Mill on the Floss* as a female Bildungsroman. The usual premise behind feminist critiques is that, given the restrictive forces that repress or deny autonomous female identity and individuality in a patriarchal culture, a Maggie Tulliver will either be forced into one of the culturally acceptable roles for women, such as wifehood, or, in resisting these roles, she will be silenced—as the adage goes, marriage or death.

Eliot is more subtle than this. The novel is a double Bildungsroman, following, although not in so detailed a way, Tom Tulliver's development as well as Maggie's. Just as Maggie's personality and intelligence make it impossible for her to assume the conventional roles for a woman in provincial society, so Tom's innate characteristics do not permit him successfully to assume the expected male roles in the same society. In the world of the novel, both Maggie and Tom are anomalous, in quite different ways. In Eliot's version of the tragic concept of character as fate, fate is the historical condition of culture and circumstance that overwhelms both Maggie and Tom. It should be pointed out that it is not specifically the flood, with its primordial and mythical associations, that overwhelms them, but a piece of modern technology, in the form of a large wooden structure in the harbor, unmoored by the flood, that finally sinks their boat. In Darwinian terms, neither of them is fit for the world in which they live. Maggie represents a type that her world is not yet ready to accept, while Tom, almost as a throwback, is thrust into a world for which he is not equipped.

This tragic vision of the fate of the individual trapped and crippled by historical circumstance will be developed to its fullest in Eliot's masterpiece, *Middlemarch*. Its final statement in the 19th century, after Eliot's death, will be the late novels of Thomas Hardy.

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See also George Eliot

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Mimesis

Representation and Referentiality in the Novel

Henry James, in "The Art of Fiction," remarked that "the only reason for the existence of a novel is that it does attempt to represent life." The question of how the novel seeks to represent "life" or "reality" in language is one of the most complex issues in literary theory. The question touches on the fields of philosophy (particularly the philosophy of language), linguistics, poetics, and narratology, insofar as a novel's narrative technique may be seen as an expression of its worldview. Historically, different types of referentiality underlie different conceptions of mimesis, which in turn correspond, although not along strictly chronological lines, to phases in the development of the novel.

Different aspects of linguistic representation need to be considered here. Representation can be heteroreferential (referring to an extralinguistic or extratextual reality) or autoreferential (referring to language itself). The type of sign used in linguistic representation is usually symbolic (having an arbitrary relation to its referent, or object of representation, via the signified, the mental concept it generates) as opposed to iconic (resembling the referent). Finally, the referent can be either reality or a fictional world. Normal linguistic representation may thus be described as symbolic heteroreferentiality, via the signified, to "reality."

In poetics, this referential use of language finds an equivalent in the classical concept of mimesis, which has exerted an enormous influence on Western thought about the arts in general. Translated broadly as "imitation," mimesis refers to the relation between experiential reality and its imitative representation in the arts. For Plato and Aristotle, mimesis was the essence of artistic representation. Far from the postmodernist view that works of art create their own reality, Plato saw art as purely imitative and emphasized the inferiority of the imitation to the original, dismissing the poets from his ideal state for this reason. Aristotle, with his very different understanding of the material world, regarded the referentiality of art in a positive light. Rather than detract from the essence of things (which for Plato lay in a world of ideas beyond the material world), art, Aristotle argued, has the power to clarify the essential, which remains obscure in the phenomenal world.

During the Renaissance, the concept of mimesis resurfaced with the rediscovery of classical poetics. Frequently, the mimetic function of art was expressed in the image of the mirror, the best-known example probably being Hamlet's statement that art should "hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature." The traditional conception of mimesis regarded external reality primarily as a medium partially revealing some "higher reality," which it was the function of the work of art to reveal more clearly. The neo-classical understanding of mimesis rejected the exact imitation of reality in all its bewildering detail in favor of the delineation of generally valid truths, the higher reality intimated in the phenomenal world. Reflections of this aesthetic are still to be found in the 18th-century novel.

According to two widely influential accounts of the genesis of the novel, Ian Watt's *The Rise of the Novel* (1957) and Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis: Dargestellte Wirklichkeit in der abendländischen Literatur* (1946; *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*), the rise of the novel is intimately related to the genre's pursuit of mimesis. Watt operates on the premise that "the novel is a full and authentic report of human experience," including "details which are presented through a more largely referential use of language than is common in other literary forms." The primary function of language in the novel is thus not aesthetic but referential, providing the reader with the information relevant to his or her appreciation of the individuality of the characters and the specificity of temporal and topographical locations. According to Watt, the novel's reference to reality is grounded in its representation of individual experience, which replaces traditional subjects as the main concern of fiction. The works of Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding, upon which Watt draws as his prime examples, are related to, if not directly influenced by, the empiricist philosophy of Locke and Hume with its emphasis on individual experience. They reflect the rise of a mercantile middle class and its ethos of individual initiative. Therefore, Watt claims, the novel appears as the congenial literary medium of a culture that emphasizes the new (cf. the very term "novel"), as individual experience is always singular and thus "new."

The novel's attempt to represent the diversity of human experience is manifest in its accurate descriptions of geographical, topographical, and historical setting, as well as of social milieu (Watt cites Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* [1719] as an important early narrative with a sustained focus on topographical detail and the quotidian activities of the hero). It features highly individualized characters who are true to life and act within specific circumstances, instead of types acting within archetypal situations. Moreover, the attention paid to chronology in 18th-century novels indicates the growing recognition of time as an important dimension in the physical world and as a shaping force in individual and collective human history. In this respect, the novel's functionalizing of the past through its emphasis on "past experience as the cause of present action" appears as a significant innovation, with teleological, realistic plots replacing the fantastic or mythological plots of romance along with the latter's reliance upon "disguises and coincidences," as Watt describes them.

Like Watt, Erich Auerbach is concerned with locating the comparatively new genre of the novel in European cultural and literary history. Auerbach studies "the interpretation of reality through literary representation or 'imitation,'" discussing examples from Homer to the modern novel, along with much drama and nonfiction. Assuming the essential unity of European culture, Auerbach's *Mimesis* identifies the stages of cultural history with a variety of literary styles. His method relies on the close parallel analysis of content and language. Of the two basic varieties of style Auerbach identifies, one, he argues, was to become decisive for the emergence of the novel as a literary form. Descriptive, balanced, and cohesive, this plain style is characterized by directness and lack of ambiguity. It is restricted to the presentation of historical phenomena and to an assessment of the human condition. The rigid separation of stylistic levels in classical antiquity between the high and low styles (*sermo sublimis* and *sermo humilis*), which prescribed the low, comic mode for the description of everyday life, gradually dissolved in the course of European literary history to allow for a combination of the realistic and the serious. Realistic works of literature, in Auerbach's sense, locate the tragic, the problematic, the serious, and the sublime within everyday life—whereas in antiquity such material would have been the exclusive domain of the heroic mode and the high style.

According to Auerbach, it was Stendhal who first rendered a modern worldview in the sense that his work evinces not only a consciousness of continuous historical change but also an uncompromising pursuit of mimesis. Stendhal's programmatic sentence in *Le Rouge et le noir* (1830; *The Red and the Black*) that a novel is a mirror moving along a road ("... un roman est un miroir qui se promène sur une grande route") postulates an understanding of mimesis that transforms the old metaphor of the mirror, identifying fiction with the mirror. George Eliot also uses the mirror image in *Adam Bede* (1859):

my strongest effort is . . . to give a faithful account of men and things as they have mirrored themselves in my mind. The mirror is doubtless defective; the outlines will sometimes be disturbed, the reflection faint or confused; but I feel as much bound to tell you as precisely as I can what that reflection is, as if I were in the witness-box narrating my experience on oath.

One can perceive behind these statements a heightened self-con-

fidence on the part of the novelist. Instead of the previous presentation of novels as authentic "histories" (with the implicit acknowledgment of fiction's comparatively low prestige), we find a conviction that the novel is a medium as well suited to the scientific exploration of reality as any other. Such claims of scientific validity, made explicitly by Honoré de Balzac, for instance, are based on verisimilitude or *vraisemblance*, the notion of realist fiction's "fidelity" to the external world. Privileged by its capacity to render circumstantial detail, the novel can achieve an impression of truth, a semblance of reality. In the words of Flaubert, the novel is reality transposed into writing, "le réel écrit."

It must be emphasized that realism is not coextensive with mimesis. While all realistic novels are mimetic, not all mimetic novels are realistic, since mimesis encompasses not only the realist aesthetic. Similarly, mimesis presupposes an ontological difference between "original" reality and the mimetic artifact, from which it follows that a work of art will at best offer only an illusion of reality. Thus, there is considerable overlap between the concept of mimesis and that of aesthetic illusion, which involves the tacit acknowledgment of the fictionality of the work by author and reader, as well as the reader's "willing suspension of disbelief." Aesthetic illusion is a feature of many novels that are not mimetic. The utopian novel, for instance, endeavors to create an illusion of the truth of the world it presents but certainly lacks any direct reference to an empirical reality.

In the 20th century, mimesis lost its hold on theories of art in general and on the novel in particular and was supplanted by *poiesis*. In contrast to the mimetic concept of language and art, the poietic concept plays down the importance of reference to an external reality and emphasizes instead the capacity of the work of art to create its own reality. In poietic views, reality itself is predominantly understood not as something that exists independently of our sense perception but as a mental construct. Hans Blumenberg, for instance, has described "reality" as the result of a process of realization (see Blumenberg, 1979). The poietic view is as old as the mimetic and may be traced back in the English tradition to Sir Philip Sidney's *An Apology for Poetry* (1595). Goethe, in his *Maximen und Reflexionen* (*Maxims and Reflections*), emphasized that "we know of no world except in relation to man, and we want no art except that which is an image of this relation." The novel, according to Goethe, is a "subjective epic, in which the author takes the freedom to present the world in his own manner." Central to the aesthetics of romanticism, the poietic model of literature has had considerable currency since then, but has only recently ousted mimetic views of the novel.

The poietic model has profound implications for an understanding of the relation between the novel and reality: the question, it appears, can no longer be how the novel represents reality as something external or other (reality *in* the novel), but how the novel builds up its own reality (reality *of* the novel). Referentiality, according to this view, is to be understood in the sense of a symbolic heteroreferentiality via the signified—but now to a fictional world, rather than to "reality."

The fragmentation of a unified worldview in literary modernism also plays down the significance of external reality as an object of mimesis. Focusing on the perceiving subject, modernist novels move away from symbolic heteroreferential relationships between the literary artifact and (outer) reality. They come closer to an iconic use of language, as speech, whether uttered or

not, becomes the object of representation. In Erich Auerbach's words, modern fiction, as exemplified by such seminal texts as Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* (1927), "dissolves reality into multiple and multivalent reflections of consciousness." Testifying to a change in human experience, the realism of the modern novel lies in its presentation of conjectures instead of convictions, of individual consciousness instead of facts, of doubts and possibilities instead of assurance and knowledge.

The novel's increasing preoccupation with the inner states of its characters, with the subconscious and irrational, not only parallels the development of modern psychology but reflects the conviction that reality is constructed in the mind. Indeed, we have come to regard modernist novels that focus on inner life as more truthful and "realistic" than realist novels with their focus on an external world. Even in the poietic model, then, mimesis still plays an important role, albeit in a reconceived, metaphorically extended formulation.

As the object of mimesis has shifted from the external world to the inner world of consciousness, critics have begun to redefine the concept so as to efface the central idea of imitation. George Whalley, for instance, describes mimesis not as static imitation but as "the continuous dynamic relation between a work of art and whatever stands over against it in the actual moral universe, or could conceivably stand over against it" (see Whalley, 1985). Some critics even go so far as to say that mimesis involves an imaginative transformation of reality, a mimetic text being "like a set of instructions for constructing a fictional world" (see Ron, 1981). This understanding of mimesis is highly problematic, as the original meaning of the term ("imitation of reality") appears to have been obliterated. The tendency in contemporary aesthetics to extend the concept of mimesis makes it increasingly difficult to establish criteria for what is mimetic in literature and what is not.

Other critics have attempted to limit the applicability of the term to speech representation. Plato already refers to mimesis as direct representation of speech (when the poet impersonates a character) as opposed to diegesis (when the poet speaks *in propria persona*). As an illustration of this kind of mimesis, Plato cites an example from the *Iliad*, Chryses' plea to Agamemnon to release his daughter. Like Plato, Aristotle recognizes the significance of speech representation in Homer, yet unlike Plato he does not place mimesis in opposition to diegesis. Rather, he divides mimesis into two modes: the direct (dramatic) and the diegetic. In the 20th century, Gérard Genette has expounded on these differences between Plato and Aristotle to show that the concept of mimesis as "imitation of reality" can be applied to narrative only in a restricted sense, as narrative either falls short of imitation (in narrative discourse) or transcends it (in dialogue):

In contrast to dramatic representation, no narrative can "show" or "imitate" the story it tells. All it can do is tell it in a manner which is detailed, precise, "alive" and in that way give more or less the illusion of mimesis—which is the only narrative mimesis, for this single and sufficient reason: that narration, oral or written, is a fact of language, and language signifies without imitating.

It is only when "the object signified (narrated) be itself language" that the mimetic principle applies, as "mimesis in words can only be mimesis of words." Mimesis is thus to be used, ac-

cording to Genette, in the Platonic sense as an equivalent for dialogue (see Genette, 1980).

Different ways of representing speech will create various "degrees of mimetic illusion" (see Rimmon-Kenan, 1983). This insight underlies the dichotomy between "showing" and "telling" as proposed by Percy Lubbock, following Henry James, and the postulate that the novelist should aspire to the objectivity of drama by suppressing the voice of the narrator and letting the characters reveal themselves in dialogue. Opposing this simple model, Wayne C. Booth has suggested that the novel is in fact a rhetorical genre capable of accommodating a variety of communicative situations (see Booth, 1983). What distinguishes the novel from drama, however, is its internal frame of communication including the fictional narrator and addressee. F.K. Stanzel has demonstrated that "showing" (or "figural narration," as he calls it) can at best achieve an illusion of immediacy, as mediation by a narrator "is the generic characteristic which distinguishes narration from other forms of literary art."

The work of Mikhail Bakhtin once again extends the analysis of speech representation, proposing that the novel represents the social sphere through the representation of speech. Treating language as a social phenomenon and as a constituent of social reality, Bakhtin argues that the novel encompasses a multiplicity of social perspectives through "heteroglossia"—the internal stratification of language into dialects, sociolects, and idelects, as well as myriad instances of individual usage. Although every novel is polyphonic in the sense of capturing the full social complexity of a culture at a given moment, Bakhtin finds the fullest realization of the polyphonic potential in the work of Dostoevskii: a "plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices is in fact the chief characteristic of Dostoevsky's novels."

Raymond Williams in *The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence* (1970) similarly characterizes the novel as a medium uniquely able, through the subtlety of its narrative techniques, to represent the intricacies of social development through language. However, Williams argues that "the most deeply known human community is language itself." The view that human images of reality are linguistically generated reaches back to C.S. Peirce's *Theory of Cognition* (1868) and has found its most uncompromising formulation in our century in the theories of Sapir and Benjamin Whorf. This view opens up almost unlimited perspectives to the novel: if language is the shaping force in our perception of the phenomenal environment, then no aspect of this environment will be unavailable to literary representation. Fiction and reality are thus to be understood as complementary rather than as opposed concepts.

Structuralism and poststructuralism emphasize the nonreferentiality and autonomy of literary discourse. As many critics have felt, there is indeed something paradoxical about postulating the novel's proximity to reality while at the same time acknowledging its status as fiction. Against the traditional view of the novel as a realistic representation of human experience, structuralism has argued that all narratives are first and foremost engendered by narrative conventions. Jonathan Culler in his *Structuralist Poetics* (1975) has identified categories of verisimilitude or "naturalization" that are employed to endow a text with an appearance of referentiality. Along the same lines, David Lodge has suggested that realism should be defined as "the representation of experience in a manner which approximates closely to descriptions of

similar experience in non-literary [i.e. referential] texts of the same culture" (*The Modes of Modern Writing*, 1977). This involves a decisive modification of the problem of mimesis: "Literary mimesis does not aim at truth . . . it aims at conveying an impression that it is a *semblance* of true discourse" (see Ron, 1981). Thomas Pavel has criticized structuralist "mythocentrism," that is, its overemphasis on plot and narrative structure: "By overemphasizing the logic of plot, mythocentrism helped to create the impression that problems of reference, mimesis, and more generally of relations between literary texts and reality were merely aftereffects of a referential illusion, spontaneously projected by narrative syntax" (see Pavel, 1986).

Among deconstructionists, representation has become increasingly problematic, even simply impossible, as language has come to be conceived as decentered and incapable of conveying meaning. J. Hillis Miller in *Fiction and Repetition* (1982), for instance, is concerned with demonstrating the invalidity of referential techniques of interpretation. Thus, in the sentence "The novel is a representation of human reality in words," the emphasis should be placed on the last element, as "all the turnings of language away from straightforward representation" in a literary work will "inhibit . . . the coherent or noncontradictory working of the other two dimensions of fiction" addressed in the sentence, "representation" and "reality." The disregard of the novel's fictionality all too easily results from an over-emphasis on human experience, in the same way that a purely phenomenological criticism arises from too close a focus on representation.

Poststructuralist and deconstructionist positions have deeply influenced the postmodernist novel, causing novelists to question traditional concepts of representation by underlining the self-referentiality of all literature. Authors like John Barth, William Gass, Donald Barthelme, Richard Brautigan, and Robert Coover in the United States, as well as Jorge Luis Borges and Julio Cortázar in Latin America, use experimental techniques to replace any sense of heteroreferentiality with autoreferentiality. Their novels constantly refer back upon themselves through a variety of metafictional devices. One view, however, holds that the postmodernists' apparent abandonment of mimesis in fact carries the mimetic principle to an extreme: "what postmodernist fiction imitates, the object of its mimesis, is the pluralistic and anarchistic ontological landscape of advanced industrial cultures" (see McHale, 1987). This statement may well be seen as symptomatic of the ferment in the debate about mimesis in the novel.

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See also Critics and Criticism (all sections); Description; Dialogism; Diegesis and Diegetic Levels of Narration; Discourse Representation; Genre Criticism; Historical Writing and the Novel; Narratology; Narrator; Postmodernism; Psychological Novel; Realism; Structuralism, Semiotics, and the Novel

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Les Misérables by Victor-Marie Hugo

1862

When Victor Hugo published *Les Misérables* from exile in 1862, he was already the most famous French poet, playwright, and novelist of his time—and a figure of considerable literary and political controversy. The author of three earlier historical novels, including the widely celebrated *Notre-Dame de Paris* (1831; *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*), he had begun drafting in 1845 a tale of moral degradation and spiritual redemption in post-Revolutionary France. Originally entitled *Jean Tréjean*, then *Les Misères*, the text was well on its way to completion when the Revolution of 1848 swept Hugo into a full-time career as a constitutional and legislative representative to the Second Republic. His move from the Right to the Left during the next three years, his experience after the 1851 coup d'état as an outcast from Napoléon III's Second Empire, and the maturation of his epic, lyric, satiric, and visionary genius in the poetic works of the 1850s all affected the expansion and conclusion of *Les Misérables* during 1861–62.

Appearing simultaneously in Paris, Rio de Janeiro, and a host of European cities from Lisbon to St. Petersburg, the long-awaited novel was an instant success with readers of every race, class, and nationality. As one of the world's best-selling classics to this day, it has ensured Hugo's literary immortality, notwithstanding the virulent critical attacks that marked most of the first 100 years of its history. Indeed, the novel's immense popularity is closely linked to the negative reactions of political and literary conservatives alike. If the people embraced it, as such contemporary exponents of stylized fiction as Gustave Flaubert, Théophile Gautier, and Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve indicated, it could not be very good literature. (Thirty years earlier the aesthetic iconoclasm of Hugo's novels and plays had similarly outraged and threatened the reigning neoclassicists, who had also accused the young romantic of "bad taste.") Other critics contended that the outlaw characters and sprawling design of *Les Misérables* were merely derivative of *Notre-Dame de Paris*, Honoré de Balzac's *La Comédie humaine* (*The Human Comedy*), or Eugène Sue's *Les Mystères de Paris* (1843; *The Mysteries of Paris*). The novel's mass appeal likewise provoked reactionary defenders of the Second Empire and French Catholicism during the 1860s, of the Third Republic at the turn of the century, and of fascism during the 1930s and 1940s.

By the same token, the moral, social, and visionary aspects of *Les Misérables* were warmly received by Émile Zola, who transposed entire passages in *Le Ventre de Paris* (1873; *The Belly of*

Paris) and *Germinal* (1885); by Fedor Dostoevskii, in his conception of both *Prestuplenie i nakazanie* (1867; *Crime and Punishment*) and *Idiot* (1869; *The Idiot*); by Lev Tolstoi, as the inspiration for *Voina i mir* (1863–69; *War and Peace*); by the republican opponents of Napoléon III's empire; by the communist bloc countries during the 20th century; and by people in revolution and upheaval everywhere. Finally, the dramatic and lyrical qualities of the text have made it a favorite of children's literature and of operatic, theatrical, cinematic, and televised adaptations the world over.

Whether admired or reviled, Hugo's epic tale of individual and collective progress occupies a unique position in the history of the novel. As the variety of critical responses suggests, it combines virtually all literary genres—drama, lyricism, myth, epic, comedy, tragedy, satire, romance, confession, and prophecy—into an enormous, heterogeneous ensemble that has no real models or imitators. Drawing on a wealth of shared myths and images, Hugo reshapes the story of Satan's fall from grace into the struggles of the ex-convict Jean Valjean for social and spiritual redemption. His unrecognized moral superiority is emblematic of the untapped potential of all of society's rejects, beginning with the poor and uneducated men, women, and children who populate the text. At the same time, the fugitive's exemplary displays of moral daring, physical prowess, and self-sacrifice are intimately intertwined with the glory and martyrdom not only of Jesus Christ but also of the French revolutionaries of 1789, Napoléon Bonaparte, the young insurgents who died on the 1832 barricades, and the exiled writer himself atop his rock in the Channel Islands. Although historical references in the novel end in 1848, such cross-generational correspondences enable the reader to perceive the satirical thrusts aimed at the Second Empire, as well as Hugo's vision of the resurrected republic in the not-too-distant future.

On first approach, then, the interplay in *Les Misérables* of numerous generic modes and rhetorical registers, running from legend to historical digression, from romantic idealism to realist observation, and from the grotesque to the sublime, results in a random, discontinuous, even chaotic appearance. But through recurring themes, motifs, and patterns at every textual level, Hugo consolidates his work into a well-orchestrated, coherent whole. While his dramatic genius structures a memorable plot full of suspense, ambushes, confrontations, chases, moral dilemmas, and recognition scenes, his poetic mastery of the French

language generates the system of analogies that permeates the novel. In the end, Hugo demonstrates that the sublime is not the antithesis of the grotesque but its other, luminous, transcendent side. The multiple structural, metaphorical, and symbolic resonances of the text, which inflect its characters, story line, digressions, and thematics, enable Hugo to transcend the conventions of prose fiction and to explore the formal limits of the genre.

A stunning verbal tour de force, *Les Misérables* may be compared to the equally ambitious projects represented by Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* (1913–27; translated as *Remembrance of Things Past* and also as *In Search of Lost Time*) and James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922). More frequently, however, critics class it with major epic poems such as Virgil's *Aeneid* (19 B.C.) or Dante's *Divine Comedy* (1321), parallels that Hugo himself readily fostered. Given the absence in 1862 of any French national epic of such scope and stature, the novelist's aspirations for his work seem clear. *Les Misérables'* unrivaled international fortune shows that Hugo's faith in his work was not misplaced. Today, readers and critics alike consider *Les Misérables* to be the abiding literary anthem of the French republic.

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See also Victor Hugo

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Mishima Yukio 1925–70

Japanese

Mishima Yukio's spectacular suicide by seppuku (the traditional samurai method of slitting open the belly) in 1970 has tended to cast a pall over critical evaluations of his work, especially in his native Japan. Alarmed and even embarrassed by his right-wing politics, Mishima's contemporaries often dismissed his writing as a poisonous blend of fascistic romanticism and fanatical, emperor-centered supernationalism. To be sure, Mishima's works are characterized by colorful imagery, a yearning for past glories, and larger-than-life characters, all of which may be summed up under the "romantic" label. Furthermore, the writings of his final decade do contain a striking number of paeans to the Japanese imperial house. Overall, however, Mishima's oeuvre contains more hard-edged realism than most of his detractors would admit. Even his most lushly romantic work is usually balanced by a tough-minded awareness of the constraints of the real world. Mishima's work shows both the allure and the impossibility of the romantic ideal, and this may be one reason that, confounding the critics, his writing remains internationally popular decades after his death.

Critics in Japan also lambasted Mishima's writing style. Compared to the confessional approach of the mainstream *shishōsetsu* (I-novel), which tended toward meandering autobiographical revelations, Mishima's work possesses what Japanese critics have called an artificial quality. Although there are occasional autobiographical elements, Mishima's fiction touches on an

enormous variety of subjects, ranging from Adolf Hitler in his 1968 play *Waga tomo Hitler* (My Friend Hitler) to a pair of star-crossed lovers in the first novel of his final tetralogy *Haru no yuki* (1969; *Spring Snow*). Mishima's novels are also strongly plotted and action-packed, a far cry from the subtle and lyrical meditations of such older writers as Kawabata Yasunari or Shiga Naoya. As opposed to the confessional style that often privileges sincerity over art, Mishima's work glories in its fictive qualities, in its function of opening a window into richer and more romantic possibilities than the *shishōsetsu* could ever encompass.

Mishima's first major work, *Kamen no kokuhaku* (1949; *Confessions of a Mask*), is clearly autobiographical, but, unlike the *shishōsetsu*, it is also remorselessly analytical. A stark exploration of a young man's inner life, especially his development as a homosexual in the stratified and repressive society of 1930s and 1940s Japan, the novel coolly examines its agonized young subject's attempt to create a mask of normality to protect himself from the outside world. No knowledge of Mishima's own life is necessary to appreciate the cold beauty and tight artistic control with which the young man's sado-masochistic fantasies, fumbling attempts at love, and paroxysms of suicidal despair are described. *Confessions of a Mask* remains one of the truly great Bildungsromane of the 20th century.

Confessions of a Mask was Mishima's only truly autobiographical work, but he continued to explore the major themes of

that novel, especially the tension between art and reality, throughout the rest of his fictional oeuvre. Perhaps he examined this theme most fully in his 1956 masterpiece *Kinkakuji* (*The Temple of the Golden Pavilion*), which uses an actual historical incident, the burning of a centuries-old temple in 1953 by a crazed acolyte, to produce a rigorous but fascinating meditation on beauty, violence, and, as in *Confessions of a Mask*, the intense power of the mind's inner visions.

Like the hero of *Confessions of a Mask*, the protagonist Mizoguchi is also an outsider, an ugly stuttering loner who becomes, through Mishima's prose, a mouthpiece for the writer's theoretical preoccupations with the nature of action and the romantic ideal. Unlike the protagonist of *Confessions of a Mask*, however, Mizoguchi turns his inner obsessions (in this case the impossible beauty of the golden temple) into real-world action, burning down the temple so he can retain its true beauty forever in his soul. Mishima also develops this theme of protecting one's ideal, even to the point of destroying it, in the 1963 novella *Gogo no eikō* (*The Sailor Who Fell from Grace with the Sea*).

The early 1960s also saw Mishima beginning to wed his personal political ideology, his preoccupations with beauty and death, and his idiosyncratic view of his country's history into his most important and controversial works. "Yukoku" ("Patriotism"), one of his best-known stories both in the West and in Japan, is a particularly good example of Mishima's bending of history to create his own artistic vision. As with *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion*, Mishima uses an actual historical incident, in this case an attempted coup by young officers in February 1936, to weave another meditation on the preservation of the romantic ideal through violence. In the case of "Patriotism," however, Mishima creates two larger-than-life characters, the stalwart Lieutenant Takeyama and his beautiful and docile wife Reiko, whose spectacular traditional suicides embody their creator's distinctive blend of ideology and art. The story itself consists of two almost equal parts. The couple's decision to die and their final lovemaking, described in vivid detail, make up the first half of the story, and their suicides, also vividly described, make up the second half.

"Patriotism" is Mishima's clearest expression of the equivalence of Eros and Thanatos. But perhaps even more interestingly, it is also Mishima's clearest attempt to rewrite history, to impose a colorful romantic vision on the events of the 1930s that ultimately crushed certain Japanese traditions, perhaps forever. The lieutenant and his wife die proclaiming "Long live the Imperial Forces," but by the time Mishima wrote this, he knew that the Imperial Forces and the world that produced them were long gone. And even in this story's most dizzyingly romantic moments, Mishima builds in ironies, especially ones suggesting the lieutenant's inherent narcissism, which tend to undermine a solidly romantic message.

The twin themes of a longing for romance and the need to undercut the romantic ideal achieve their fullest expression in Mishima's final tetralogy, *Hōjō no umi* (*The Sea of Fertility*). In these four volumes, *Spring Snow*, *Homba* (1969; *Runaway Horses*), *Akatsuki no tera* (1970; *The Temple of Dawn*), and *Tennin gosui* (1971; *The Decay of the Angel*), Mishima relates the history of modern Japan from the early 20th century to 1972. This is a story of a decline from aristocratic and martial nobility to decay and pathos. It begins in the aristocratic world of the turn of the century with *Spring Snow* and carries on to a

soldierly flowering in the 1930s terrorism/heroism of *Runaway Horses*, but declines into corruption and decadence in the two novels set in the postwar era. *Spring Snow*'s aristocratic young hero is supposedly reincarnated in each of the novels, to tantalize readers with the potential for realization of the romantic ideal even in the fallen postwar world. However, the final scene of the aptly titled *The Decay of the Angel* removes even that possibility, as we learn that the incarnations are false. The novel's aging protagonist stumbles out into a world in which reality's relentless truth blinds him like the midsummer sun.

Throughout his works, Mishima played with and even seemed to endorse the possibility that art and the romantic ideal could offer an alternative to the dreariness of real life and the overpowering events of actual history. His last work explores this belief again, only to suggest that, in the end, artifice will not suffice against the crushing finality of reality. Yet Mishima's books are still read precisely because they consistently present those alternatives, offering the reader a colorful world made more appealing by its very ephemerality.

SUSAN J. NAPIER

Biography

Born Hiraoka Kimitake in Tokyo, 14 January 1925. Attended Peers School and College, graduated 1944; Tokyo University, degree in jurisprudence 1947. Civil servant, Finance Ministry, 1948; then freelance writer; also worked as film director, designer, stage producer, and actor. Died (suicide) 25 November 1970.

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Mission to Kala by Mongo Beti

Mission terminée 1957

Mongo Beti has played an important role in the development of the Cameroonian novel. Together with Ferdinand Oyono, he made the novel into an instrument of protest against French colonial rule. *Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba* (1956; *The Poor Christ of Bomba*) and *Le Roi miraculé* (1958; *King Lazarus*), for instance, strongly criticize French colonial policy in West Africa and attack the Catholic Church as a tool of colonial power. To express his political themes, Beti created sophisticated narrative forms by building on Cameroon's already highly developed autobiographical and folktale traditions. He has also acknowledged the influence of Richard Wright and Chester Himes on his work. Although Beti is interested in African narrative forms, he has consistently written in French—a practice he has frequently been called upon to defend. His later work, vehement attacks on the independent Cameroonian government of Ahidjo, was written in exile and dramatizes Cameroonian history.

Mission to Kala, which originally appeared in the United States as *Mission Accomplished*, is Beti's third novel and belongs to the early phase of his career. The story is the first-person narrative of Jean-Marie Medza, a young man educated in a French school in the city, who goes to a village in the bush to retrieve the adulterous wife of a relative. Apart from references to forced labor and the colonial practice of corrupting local chiefs, there is

little direct mention of the European presence in Cameroon. However, Jean-Marie sees his mission as a parallel to the quest to bring back Helen of Troy. Some critics read the novel primarily as an attack on a young man's exaggerated enthusiasm for the foreign and imported. Others see it as a critique of the colonized mentality that produces such enthusiasm.

The novel contrasts young Cameroonians educated in French schools in the city and villagers with limited knowledge of European culture. The encounter between the educated youth and his village relatives produces a comic situation in which the villagers frequently prove to be more intelligent than he is. However, *Mission to Kala* suggests that the mentality of both city and village Cameroonians has been affected by colonization and recognizes that the residents of the village of Kala never lived in a golden age of pastoral simplicity and natural virtue. For instance, they are greedy. When Jean-Marie's uncle speaks of the importance of family ties in the traditional village, his unstated purpose is to justify appropriating half of the sheep the villagers have given to their educated relative from the city. Moreover, the novel points out that Jean-Marie is at least as influenced by his tyrannical father as by his French-language schooling. *Mission to Kala* places the blame for the disorder and corruption of Cameroonian society on both French colonization and human nature in general.

Mission to Kala uses Jean-Marie's forced parallel with the *Iliad* as an occasion to parody the heroic epic. In the prologue, presumably addressed to a former schoolmate, a much older Jean-Marie attempts to give an inflated historical dimension to his experience, which, in its insignificance, compares to the famous bathetic conclusion of Gustave Flaubert's *L'Éducation sentimentale* (1869; *Sentimental Education*). Chapters begin with plot summaries reminiscent of the 18th-century picaresque novel. As a tale of an innocent confronting the corruption of society, *Mission to Kala* can also be compared to Voltaire's *Candide* (1759). Ironically, Beti's narrator is more innocent than *Candide*, unable to accept the offers of village girls and embarrassed to lose his virginity. Beyond the humor of such echoes of European literature lies a subtle criticism of Jean-Marie, who can only see his life in European terms. However, the European society he has attempted to imitate cannot be a model, nor can he adopt the easygoing hedonism and lack of ambition of the young men of Kala. His initiation into adulthood is clearly a failure.

On the surface, *Mission to Kala* is a lighthearted satiric comedy of manners, but its humor frequently deepens into irony. Critics agree that Beti's playfulness masks an underlying pessimism. The ironic tone of *Mission to Kala* and Beti's other novels has

been a significant influence on the work of younger francophone African novelists such as Boris Birago Diop.

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Mo Yan 1956–

Chinese

Few writers in the post-Mao era (1976–) have caused as much controversy or reached as wide an audience in China and in the West as the northern (Shandong) novelist Mo Yan (pen name of Guan Moye). A member of the so-called root-seeking generation of disillusioned young Chinese who grew up during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), Mo Yan, who is also the author of dozens of short stories and novellas, has reinvigorated and recast the art of historical fiction in China, merging historiography and myth in a series of novels that have been labeled breakthroughs by his supporters and blasphemies by his detractors. Indeed, they are both.

In 1985, five linked Mo Yan novellas subsequently were published together as a novel entitled *Hong gaoliang jiazu* (*Red Sorghum: A Novel of China*), resulting in the most significant literary event of its time. Often compared to Gabriel García Márquez's *Cien años de soledad* (1967; *One Hundred Years of Solitude*) as a work of magic realism and historical imagination, *Red Sorghum* both baffled and exhilarated its readers with a blend of myth and history (personal and national) that spans the entire Chinese Republican era (1911–49) and the post-liberation era into the Cultural Revolution. Using a first-person omniscient narrator who convincingly relates events he could not have witnessed and investing his characters with supernatural qualities, Mo Yan quickly established himself as the most innovative novelist of his generation. The narrative power of *Red Sorghum* is accomplished not only by its startling evocation of the bloody

history of one quasi-autobiographical family across three generations, but also by its uncommonly sensuous prose, creating a text filled with scenes of graphic violence, pulsating eroticism, and an idiosyncratic manipulation of colors and odors, plus a series of bizarre mutations of nature.

The tone of *Red Sorghum* carries over into Mo Yan's second, and most ideological, novel, *Tiantang suantai zhi ge* (1988; *The Garlic Ballads*), which constitutes an angry denunciation of the government's inhumane policies toward the peasantry. Based upon an actual 1986 incident in which local garlic farmers rose up in revolt against local bureaucrats who denied them their livelihood, the novel centers on two families who are exploited in turn by real people and supernatural forces. The struggle of marginalized peasants to survive replaces the heroics of the *Red Sorghum* family in this "subversive" novel, which was banned briefly in the wake of the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre for fear that it would increase resentment among the populace.

The following year *Shisan bu* (Thirteen Steps) was published, Mo Yan's densest and most obscure novel to date. A political allegory based upon the 13 symbolic steps of a mythological bird, *Shisan bu* is a virtuoso, if not totally successful, attempt to create a modernist text in an age when only realist works were favored by the literary bureaucracy or appreciated by domestic readers (interestingly, only the French have shown an interest in translating this novel).

An experimentalist by nature, Mo Yan followed up the publication of *Shisan bu* with his most artistically ambitious work, *Jiu guo* (1992; *Wine Country*), a long metafictional novel of such startling originality and creative energy that its eminent publication in translation will likely elevate its author into the top ranks of international novelists. *Jiu guo* is a sardonic tale of cannibalism, gourmandism, intrigue, murder, adultery, and drunkenness. The novel is interrupted by a series of fictional correspondences between the narrator (a novelist named Mo Yan) and a fawning yet contentious hack writer from the mining town of Wine Country who sends his stories to “Mo Yan” for publication. The stories dutifully appear in the text, each one more bizarre than its predecessor, and each shortening the distance between the narrator and the narrated text, as the epistolary insertions and story line bleed into and intersect one another. Unity is achieved at the end of the novel, as the fictional correspondent appears to have descended into madness, and the story’s protagonist, a government functionary sent to investigate rumors of children raised for the jaded palates of local dignitaries, dies in a cesspool. The symbolic nature of these events—mirroring a society mired in chaos—is impossible to overlook.

Mo Yan’s most recent and longest work, *Fengru feitun* (1996; *Full Breasts and Ample Hips*), is, in many ways, reminiscent of *Red Sorghum*: the historical sweep, the vitality, and the gripping interfamily intrigues and struggles capture the reader’s imagination. But *Fengru feitun*, which spans the same historical period, is bawdier, livelier, and more controversial than its predecessor. Winner of China’s most prestigious literary prize, the novel and its author have been vilified by the conservative literary establishment for an inappropriately earthy tone and a “cavalier” approach toward sex and violence. More importantly, the novel has been attacked for a historical view of 20th-century China that privileges the role of the “losers” in the decades-long political struggle with the Chinese Communist Party. Interweaving fictionalized history and real events, *Fengru feitun* tells the stories of several daughters from a single family to reveal a mixed and highly provocative legacy.

Mo Yan is not a “careful” writer, either in his use of language, much of which is a response to the “Maoist dialogue” that has monopolized literary productions for decades, or in his revisionist view of official communist history. Like Milan Kundera, Mo Yan is convinced of the metaphorical power of depicting sexual

acts; that aspect of his art is further enhanced by incidents of brutality—characterized as gratuitous by his detractors—that permeate his fictional world. Highly cinematic tales and colorful prose are the hallmarks of a body of work by an author who has barely entered middle age, yet continues to amaze his reading public with remarkably inventive novels of 20th-century China.

HOWARD GOLDBLATT

Biography

Born in rural Gaomi County, Shandong province, 5 March 1956. Graduate of Lu Xun Literature Academy. During the Cultural Revolution (1966–76) worked as a peasant, then as a common laborer; joined the People’s Liberation Army, 1976, serving first as a political instructor, then was assigned to the Cultural Affairs Department as a professional writer; first short story appeared in 1981. Currently lives in Beijing.

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Moby-Dick by Herman Melville

1851

Any account of the place *Moby-Dick* occupies in the history of the novel must address itself to the vexed question of whether Herman Melville’s masterpiece is, indeed, a novel. A fictional narrative that begins with an etymology, in 13 languages, “supplied by a late consumptive usher to a grammar school,” and a list of extracts “supplied by a sub-sub-librarian” (each of them

little more than provocations toward an understanding of whales and whaling, and each admitting the impossibility of ever completing the task), and that contains soliloquies and dramatic staging, must, as so many commentators have noted, be something more than a novel. The opening chapter, however, reads rather like a novel by Charles Dickens in its atmospheric evoca-

tions of character and place; and the subsequent adventures that take Ishmael to Nantucket, his comic-erotic encounter with Queequeg, and his signing on for a three-year journey on the *Pequod* belong to the conventions of 19th-century comic realism, not merely those of Dickens but also those of Nikolai Gogol' and Honoré de Balzac. But *Moby-Dick* quickly dispels our sense of familiar territory, for the entrance of Ahab and other seamen on *The Pequod* brings not only a dramatic change of mood but also a suspension of techniques and conventions associated with fictional realism. Indeed, so great is the shift that the reader is confronted by a plurality of linguistic discourses, including those appropriate to the scientific essay, to the Bible, to philosophical speculation, to history and historiography, and, above all, to the conventions of the stage, especially the Shakespearean stage.

What are we to make of all this? By the standards of fictional realism established in the 19th-century novel and, particularly, by Henry James in his prefaces, Melville cannot tell a story and is confused by some of the most basic matters of fictional technique. Ishmael, his first-person narrator, seems to possess a preternatural ability to hear the thoughts of others and has an extraordinary amount of information about the past lives of characters he has barely met. We quickly conclude that Ishmael is really Melville embellishing his experiences on a whaler with elements of quasi-Shakespearean rhetoric and dramatic staging while simultaneously displaying his prodigious knowledge of whales and the whaling industry. But the reader seems unperturbed by these "mistakes" and reads on. This is partly due to the power of Melville's prose and the depth of his intelligence, but it is explained more persuasively by our unstated awareness that prose fiction is not constrained by rules or conventions and that, to a large extent, each major work of fiction erects a structure and a form that best serves its intentions.

Paradoxically, however, *Moby-Dick* does have much in common with some of the great works of 19th-century realism: for example, in Balzac's *Illusions perdues* (1837-43; *Lost Illusions*) there are long stretches of fairly inert technical narrative describing the workings of the French printing industry that as expository prose have much in common with the cetological chapters of *Moby-Dick*; and Tolstoi in *Voyna i mir* (1863-69; *War and Peace*) is not at all averse to intercalary chapters devoted to his analysis of the nature of war, history, and causality. But it would be a mistake to think of Melville's novel in its total effect as being like these other works, for it possesses strengths and, indeed, weaknesses that bespeak its uniqueness as a work of fiction.

Not surprisingly, critics have struggled to find a terminology for *Moby-Dick*, a work largely ignored by contemporaries but rediscovered by 20th-century readers for whom it is considered one of the great achievements of the North American imagination. D.H. Lawrence in his influential *Studies in Classic American Literature* (1923) recognized the epic qualities in what he describes as "one of the strangest and most wonderful books in the world," and E.M. Forster in *Aspects of the Novel* (1927) speaks of Melville, alongside Fedor Dostoevskii, Lawrence, and Emily Brontë, as a writer of "prophetic fiction," arguing that it is the quality of "song" in *Moby-Dick* that lends it its distinctiveness. Some 20 years later, Charles Olson in *Call Me Ishmael* (1947) sees the novel in both dramatic and musical terms, noting both its immense indebtedness to Shakespearean tragedy and its effects of contrasting cadence (the differing "voices" of Ishmael

and Ahab) and counterpoint. More recent critics, for example Edward H. Rosenberry and John P. McWilliams, have also pointed to its epic and mock-epic qualities, so much so that we might be tempted to conclude that to call *Moby-Dick* an epic, or an epic-romance, is sufficient for taxonomic purposes. The novel does, indeed, contain much that is epic in character—catalogues, interludes, information, elements of the oral folktale, epic simile, its registers of the heroic and the sublime, and what Melville himself called its "mighty theme"—but it steadfastly resists such a final classification because the terms of classical epic were no longer available to the 19th-century writer (particularly an American one), in part because the very history of the novel, combined with a writer's awareness of the resourcefulness of the genre, made any appeal to the epic mode fraught with difficulties and constraints.

Melville's own understanding of the nature of his work is articulated on many occasions in *Moby-Dick*, and it is this self-referentiality that has tempted some critics to construe it as a peculiarly modernist work, one insistently aware of its own ontology and of the necessary limitations on what can be achieved in prose fiction. What Melville says, through Ishmael, about writing frequently points to romantic and organic theories of composition: works of art grow like plants or trees; they take their shapes from their material, not from some preexistent idea of form that is immutable and unchanging; they are often left incomplete, merely gestures toward something that can never be realized; although they seek to express, they often end up expressing inexpressibility.

In such "theorizing" about art we can see the adumbrations of writers like James Joyce, Jorges Luis Borges, Vladimir Nabokov, and Thomas Pynchon. But to see only these adumbrations would do a disservice to our sense that *Moby-Dick* is, in many ways, a very 19th-century book, one engaging with the possibilities of what is, especially for the American writer, a new medium and, at the same time, engaging with 19th-century intellectual and moral preoccupations. If we put aside our knowledge that *Moby-Dick* is the story of a whaler captain's hunt for a monstrous white whale, we find that its meditative and reflective moments are very much concerned with the claims of religious faith in a world increasingly dominated by the claims of science, issues that were as real to Melville as they were to contemporaries such as George Eliot and Alfred Tennyson. For all his sense that he had written a "wicked book," Melville remains in the novel uncertain about faith and the workings of God's intelligence, and he is as sceptical at times about the conclusions of naturalistic science as he is about those of Christian orthodoxy. (Melville was not to resolve these matters until his last great work, *Billy Budd, Sailor*, a story left unfinished at his death in 1891.) *Moby-Dick*, in other words, is a complex book that frequently warns us against the dangers of complexity, a book that equivocates while simultaneously mocking those who equivocate.

In many ways *Moby-Dick* was a failure, derided and misunderstood by those who read and reviewed it, and resurrected long past the date when Melville could gain any pecuniary reward for what he had achieved. Although he continued to write prose fiction in the years immediately following *Moby-Dick*'s publication, his efforts were confused and faltering. *Pierre; or, The Ambiguities* (1852) has moments of brilliance but is more often artificial and unreadable; *Israel Potter* (1855) courts popularity by presenting a story of drama and high adventure, but the

historical materials—the novel is set during the Revolutionary War—are accorded none of the urgency and immediacy Melville was able to give to his whaling experiences; and *The Confidence-Man, His Masquerade* (1857) allows the enigmatic and the ambiguous so central a role that many readers set the book aside, perplexed and bewildered. It is, arguably, in his anonymously authored stories, notably “Bartleby” and “Benito Cereno” (published in the volume *The Piazza Tales* in 1856), that Melville’s real achievement in fiction after the publication of *Moby-Dick* is to be found. After *The Confidence-Man* no more of Melville’s fiction was published during his lifetime. His later years were taken up entirely by verse, until sometime in the late 1880s when he began the story of the innocent English foretopman, Billy Budd. Forty years separate this last unfinished work and Melville’s masterpiece, 40 years that saw the suicide of a son, the Civil War, and Melville’s decline as an author of international repute (secured largely by his first two works, *Typee* [1846] and *Omoo* [1847]) to almost total public neglect. But *Moby-Dick* and *Billy Budd, Sailor* have much in common: each is a work searching for an appropriate form, each is a work at whose moral center lies a profound enactment of the problems of duty and responsibility in a world of uncertainties, and each is a work of a uniquely American kind in the history of the novel, caught between the world of romantic narrative fiction and that of a more complex, symbolic protomodernism.

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See also Herman Melville

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Modernism

The Modern Novel

The Period of Modernism

All literary schools and movements are somewhat incoherent and divided in their aims and purposes, but the group of revolutionary approaches to writing loosely referred to as modernism is more various than most. In literature, these aesthetic initiatives start with the movement *el modernismo* in Latin America in the early 1890s—which despite the name was not yet full-fledged modernism—and may be said to reach a climax (or a dead end) with the publication of James Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake* in 1939. But modernism took a surprising variety of forms in different countries, and even within the same national literature. It has been described as less a style of writing than as a search for style. Critics disagree even as to the period of modernism, but many date it from around the turn of the century, regarding the innovations of writers of the 1890s as preparatory. Some feel the

key years for modernism are those immediately preceding the outbreak of World War I in 1914; these critics stress the experiments in narrative form of Joseph Conrad in *Lord Jim* (1900) and Henry James in *The Ambassadors* (1903), or the various portraits of modern alienation in books like Thomas Mann’s *Tonio Kröger* (1903), E.M. Forster’s *Howards End* (1910), or the early stories of Katherine Mansfield. Certainly the prewar years in modernist poetry are crucial, with the early work of Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot.

Immediately following the war, Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) uniquely combined a number of modernist themes with striking formal experiments. Its sensitive, suffering modern protagonist was rivaled only by that in Eliot’s influential volume of poetry *Prufock and Other Observations*

(1917). But the preeminent decade of modernist masterpieces is the 1920s, which featured D.H. Lawrence's *Women in Love* (1920), Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922), Italo Svevo's *La coscienza di Zeno* (1923; *Confessions of Zeno*), Mann's *Der Zauberberg* (1924; *The Magic Mountain*), F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925), Franz Kafka's *Der Prozess* (1925; *The Trial*), Willa Cather's *The Professor's House* (1925), Gertrude Stein's *The Making of Americans* (1925), André Gide's *Les Faux-monnayeurs* (1926; *The Counterfeiters*), Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* (1927), Alfred Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1929), and William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), as well as most of the volumes in Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* (1913–27; *Remembrance of Things Past*; translated recently as *In Search of Lost Time*). The 1920s also witnessed the Harlem Renaissance, and some critics feel that works like Jean Toomer's multigenre *Cane* (1923) should be approached as modernist novels; others argue that the Harlem Renaissance marked a separate achievement that in fact pointed beyond (white) modernism.

Most critics agree, however, that by the 1930s a counterreaction had set in; novels appearing in the 1930s were markedly less experimental (especially in Anglophone countries) and in many ways returned to the conventions of 19th-century realism, against which modernism had rebelled. On the other hand, outstanding novels directly in the modernist tradition have continued to appear up to the present day, such as Lawrence Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet* (1957–60) and many of the works of Vladimir Nabokov. While most critics now see modernism yielding to a separate literary movement called postmodernism sometime after World War II, there is little agreement as to the exact distinction between the two movements—or, indeed, whether postmodernism is not simply an exaggeration of certain modernist tendencies. In any case, the vast majority of novels published today, just as in 1890 or in 1925, are neither modernist nor postmodernist but written within the classical realist tradition developed during the 19th century.

Modernism and Modernity

Modernism, in both its Anglo-American and European forms, was first a response to the experience of modernity and often assumed the form of a reaction against it. The modern condition was most deeply marked by a century's worth of increasing industrialization, with its vertiginous effects, including urbanization and the social displacements resulting from the shift from an agricultural to an industrial economy. At least to people who had felt themselves at home in an earlier time, the experience of the 20th century seemed fragmentary and violent, without the consolation of the old truths offered by religion and social consensus. Charles Darwin had displaced mankind from its central location and replaced Providence with a world of brute struggle and random changes, while Karl Marx had challenged not only the right of the bourgeoisie to power but also its social and moral assumptions, which he reduced to mere ideology.

While science, technology, and a belief in social engineering were in the ascendant in the new century, and the creed of progress served as the semi-official doctrine of most of the Western world, the great majority of modernist artists and thinkers seemed driven by an impulse to protest against that creed along with most other bourgeois beliefs. Some, like the futurists associated with the Italian artist Filippo Marinetti or (to a degree) the

vorticists associated with Wyndham Lewis and Pound, embraced the new world of speed, violence, and immensely powerful machines, and called for a new aesthetic to celebrate it. This was one of the trends to which the philosopher José Ortega y Gasset pointed in his 1925 essay entitled "The Dehumanization of Art." On the other hand, modernist writers as different as Lawrence, Forster, Eliot, and the southern American writers associated with the "Fugitive" group all harkened back to a pre-modern agrarian world of lost unity. Indeed, for many modernists it was art itself that offered the only chance of restoring lost unity to a fragmented world.

Rebellion and Fragmentation

For conservative critics, however, modernist art of all kinds seemed only to exacerbate the fragmentation. Writing in 1930, G.K. Chesterton saw modernism as a "jagged sensibility"—"music cut up into notes, pictures cut up into cubes, prose cut up into impressions and episodes, and poetry often cut up into isolated images." In music, modernism was closely associated with the abandonment of the diatonic scale and the exploration of atonality, while in the graphic arts cubism was the most memorable of the many modern schools and movements, most of them embodying a move toward increasing abstraction. Pablo Picasso's "Les Femmes d'Alger" (1907) is often called the first truly 20th-century painting. The "International Style" of modernist architecture was noted for its emphasis on form as function and its abandonment of architecture's historical inheritance and its traditional use of ornament (these were replaced by pure expanses of concrete, glass, and steel). Perhaps all that truly unites these disparate "modernist" arts is the insistence on novelty, a fresh start, an art that defines itself against its own immediate past—an art that adopted Pound's slogan, "Make It New." Indeed, in some splinter groups, such as the dadaists and surrealists, the insistence on novelty and revolution became so extreme as to constitute an attack upon the concept of art itself. Still, there are many examples of modernist artists in different fields who claimed to learn from one another despite the differences in their forms—Gertrude Stein and Pablo Picasso, for example, or Pound and the sculptor Henri Gaudier-Brzeska. In the 1910s and 1920s a galaxy of modernist artists collaborated in the world of dance and theatre in Paris, while another remarkable synergy of graphic artists, writers, and musicians comprised the Harlem Renaissance.

Modernist writers quite self-consciously saw themselves as engaged in a rebellion against the characteristic forms, themes, and attitudes of the 19th century. In poetry this often was manifested as a revolt against what Pound called "the tyranny of the iamb"—that is, regular meter—and against regular rhyme as well. For novelists, a revolt against 19th-century fiction might lead in various directions. In her essay "Modern Fiction" (1919) Virginia Woolf complains of the superficial realism of novelists such as Arnold Bennett, H.G. Wells, and John Galsworthy, whom she terms "materialists" because their entire interest seems to be in plot and in external descriptions of items like clothing. "If a writer were a free man and not a slave" to literary conventions, she writes, there would be "no plot, no comedy, no tragedy, no love interest, or catastrophe in the accepted style, and perhaps not a single button sewn on as the Bond Street tailors would have it." Woolf points to James Joyce as a "spiritual" innovator, for his interest in the movements of the mind itself,

the way he traces the impressions of the “atoms as they fall upon the mind”—no matter how odd, difficult, or uncommercial the result may be. One of the casualties of this revolution was character as it had been conceived in the 19th century. For all its complexity, the major 19th-century novelists conceived character as attributes that could be specified and rationally analyzed. In contrast, character in modernist works became far more mysterious, fluid, and intangible. Robert Musil’s unfinished novel sequence *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* (1930–43; *The Man Without Qualities*) may be said to trace the effects of a disintegrating society on selfhood.

The Move Inward

Woolf’s discussion of the modern novel applies most directly to the group of concerns and techniques of “literary impressionists,” among whom one usually counts not only Woolf and Joyce but also Conrad, Ford Madox Ford, James, and some of Stephen Crane. But it also points more broadly to the modernist novel’s concern with subjectivity, especially the subjectivity of a mind that is in some way set against social norms. For one branch of the modernist novel this results in an increasing interiority in fiction, a shift of novelistic focus from external action and description to the question of perception, the complexity of temperament, and the movements of the mind itself. This shift is evident in the extended stream-of-consciousness passages in Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), Joyce’s *Ulysses*, and Dorothy Richardson’s multivolume *Pilgrimage* (1915–67); moreover, Henry James in his later works and Thomas Mann often employ a narrator who expands generously upon a character’s consciousness. The Norwegian writer Knut Hamsun, early in the century, explicitly devotes himself to exploring “the life of the mind” (in this sense Fedor Dostoevskii is an important precursor of modernism). But not all modernist novels express their interest in subjectivity this way: Wyndham Lewis in his novel *Tarr* (1918) expresses a fascination with the varieties of personality almost entirely through stylized descriptions of the external world. This secondary tendency of modernism is sometimes associated with *expressionism*, and evolves from another modernist tendency—more evident in painting—to restrict representation to flat, external surfaces.

Along with the dominant focus on interiority often came an interest in the quality of experienced time—what the philosopher Henri Bergson called *la durée*—as opposed to external, measurable “clock-time.” Joyce, Woolf, and Döblin all published long novels that take place in a single day, each of them exploring the movements of consciousness back and forth from past to present. Perhaps the masterpiece of “time-consciousness” is Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time*, in which the protagonist Marcel finds that the taste of a particular cake, the *madeleine*, almost magically brings back forgotten memories. Marcel’s moment of sudden memory recall upon tasting the *madeleine* is related to a repeated motif in modernist art, which is best known under the title Joyce gave it, the *epiphany*: a single momentary flash of almost magical perception that is closely related to creation. Woolf speaks of “moments of being,” and the idea probably descends from William Wordsworth’s “spots of time,” but in the 20th century the concept carries the inevitable suggestion that there is no fixed, stable point of reference from which the truth of things can be determined, independent of any individual observer. Both Joyce’s *Ulysses* and Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury* exploit

the effect of using very different organizing consciousnesses in different sections of the novel, and *Ulysses* also features unusual, unnaturalistic narrators—an insanely pedantic questioner in one section, a narrator borrowed from popular romance fiction in another. The overall effect is to suggest that no viewpoint is uniquely privileged—including that of the traditional godlike omniscient narrator frequently employed in 19th-century fiction.

Extremity and the Irrational

But the epiphany implied more. Because it is a moment of rather mysterious emotional and spiritual insight, not one in which a rational conclusion is drawn, this aesthetically privileged instant constituted a rejection of discursive reason and positivistic thought. Much modernist art turns instead to an exploration of irrationality and to various sources of prerational thought: to dream, myth, and the unconscious, and to what were then figured as “primitive” cultures. Sigmund Freud was the most influential of several researchers in the 1890s who began an investigation of the unconscious contents of the human mind, and his model of a divided mind and self permanently altered Western conceptions of selfhood. Where the novelistic romances of Sir Walter Scott and Victor Hugo had featured adventure and dramatic tableau and the realist novels of Honoré de Balzac, George Eliot, William Thackeray, and Charles Dickens had examined the workings of social justice, the rise and fall of characters in society, and the permutations of the “marriage plot,” the 20th-century novel’s inward turn led to explorations of the anti-social impulses of exceptional protagonists. In Conrad’s “Heart of Darkness” (1902), Kurtz, who indulges in unspeakable horrors as a chieftain and god in Africa, is one such figure; but the more representative character is the “good man” Marlow, who is baffled by his own loyalty to Kurtz, frightened by his response to the native drums, and horrified by the colonial exploitation that brings into question so much of European civilization. All of Europe went into the making of Kurtz, Marlow observes, and the revelation that this apostle of enlightenment can be so easily transformed into a gluttonous tyrant constitutes a typically modernist indictment of bourgeois rationalism with all its romantic aspirations.

Modernist novels often explore extremities. Conrad’s novels, set on shipboard and in exotic islands and countries, explore the strains on men under pressure who are far from home in less sophisticated milieus, as do many of Ernest Hemingway’s stories and novels. The settings of Mann’s *The Magic Mountain* (a sanatorium) and Ford Madox Ford’s *The Good Soldier* (a spa) both serve to isolate the characters and intensify the relations among them. Both Stephen Crane in *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895) and Hemingway are interested in the reactions of men under the extreme pressure of war. Lafcadio, the protagonist of Gide’s *Les Caves du Vatican* (1914; *The Vatican Cellars*), embraces the irrational by committing an apparently motiveless murder as a liberating “*acte gratuit*”—a theme anticipated in Dostoevskii’s *Prestuplenie i nakazanie* (1867; *Crime and Punishment*) and echoed later by Albert Camus’ *L’Étranger* (1942; *The Stranger*).

D.H. Lawrence is well known for his celebration of irrational, instinctive drives and what he terms “blood knowledge” as opposed to abstract mental activity. Several of his novels are set in more “primitive” countries (Australia and Mexico, for instance) where he believes people are more in touch with the body and

the “dark sources” of wisdom and less corrupted by a European society that crushes individuality in its unhealthy emphasis on mechanism and abstraction. Like some other modernists, Lawrence’s thought shows the influence of Nietzsche’s demolition of positivistic science, his attacks on Christianity as a “herd religion,” and his celebration of the exceptional man who is beyond the reach of ordinary morality. Characters as Lawrence conceived them are no longer stable, self-enclosed egos but are impelled by larger, mysterious forces of which they are usually ignorant. Lawrence carefully traces the swells of emotion that shape and transform his characters, but his vision was ultimately mythic, subordinating individual character to superhuman forces of creation and destruction.

As plot and the movement toward rational and moral conclusions on the part of a novel’s protagonist become less important, alternative ways of structuring the novel, especially those based on myth and symbol, become correspondingly more important. In a well-known essay Eliot praised Joyce’s practice of using the myth of Odysseus to structure a novel about a young Dublin writer and an advertisement canvasser. This “mythic method,” he suggested, was a way to order the anarchy and futility of contemporary life. Other writers, especially poets, seemed to develop their own myths. Some, like Lawrence, alluded frequently to a wide variety of myths from different cultures, while a late-modernist writer like Malcolm Lowry in *Under the Volcano* (1947) deployed a complex series of references to Mexican religious belief. But writers who had no particular interest in myth in any classical sense still relied upon mysterious symbols at key points in their novels (the huge eyeglasses brooding over an urban wasteland in Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*, for instance) to suggest a larger pattern of meaning. While symbolism as a doctrine originated among 19th-century French poets and has been of primary importance to modern poetry, it has also profoundly, although unsystematically, influenced the novel.

Sexuality and Alienation

As early as 1900, in *Die Traumdeutung* (*The Interpretation of Dreams*), Freud had argued that through dreams, free-association, or creative work the unconscious mind expresses itself through symbols and that the primary content of that expression is sexual. Meanwhile, late-19th-century “sexologists” such as Krafft-Ebing and Havelock Ellis were exploring the enormous variety of sexual expression, including those farthest from what 19th-century society considered normal. The 20th-century novel probably made its largest impression on the reading public by the degree to which it brought the discussion of sexuality into the open. Books by Lawrence and Joyce were banned for their sexual frankness, while many of the works of Colette from 1900 on won notoriety because of their scandalous nature. Women especially seemed sensitive to the depravations of sexuality and sexual politics; the fiction of Jean Rhys, Katherine Mansfield, Djuna Barnes, and Anaïs Nin all carried a disturbing suggestion of bohemian depravity for bourgeois readers. Sexual ambivalence characterizes important modernist characters, such as Eliot’s Tiresias in *The Waste Land* (1922) or Bloom, the “new womanly man,” in *Ulysses*. Meanwhile, a very large proportion of modernist writers, especially in England, considered themselves either homosexual or bisexual—the “Bloomsbury Group” was especially well known for this—almost as if “normal” sexual orientation were one of the Victorian verities that the 20th

century would demolish. Although few made this an explicit theme of their work, the author’s experience of marginalization by the surrounding society certainly is reflected in the novels of many homosexual and bisexual modernist writers.

In fact, the alienation of the artist is a dominant theme in modernist works, whether that alienation be sexual, aesthetic, or broadly ideological. The critic Lionel Trilling memorably characterized modernism as “a culture of opposition.” Kafka’s protagonist who awakens to find himself transformed into a giant cockroach is the most famous emblem of modern alienation, but the modernist period is also filled with examples of the *künstlerroman*, in which the artist, by virtue of his being an artist in an age of Philistines, finds himself an emotional (or literal) exile. The protagonist of Ralph Ellison’s late-modernist masterpiece *Invisible Man* (1952) is clearly marginalized because of his race, but his final retreat into some hidden cellar mirrors the plight of alienated protagonists starting with Dostoevskii’s *Zapiski iz podpol’ia* (1864; *Notes from Underground*). Modernists themselves, however, tended to flee abroad. Indeed, a surprising number of modernist novelists were either permanently displaced (including Joyce, Stein, Rhys, and Mann) or temporarily self-exiled (including the host of American artists living in Paris in the 1920s). Some, like Lawrence and Rilke, spent an enormous amount of time traveling. This condition no doubt gave modernism its status as preeminently an *international* movement, so that a writer as difficult as Joyce might find himself actually better known and far more appreciated in Paris than in Dublin or London, even as literary London found itself dominated by the American-born Pound and Eliot.

Form and Style

Feeling themselves less valued by a society they saw as materialistic and hypocritical, and increasingly inclined to turn elsewhere even for entertainment, modernist novelists exercised increasing control over the one thing wholly in their power: the form of their work. Style and structure, the formal concerns of a novelist, became prominent concerns of fiction writers who, in the wake of Gustave Flaubert and Henry James, came to see themselves as artists more than entertainers. There is some irony in the fact that some of the most carefully and elaborately structured modernist works, such as Joyce’s *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses*, were at first seen by hostile reviewers as chaotic and formless—no doubt because their form was not conventional. By abandoning convention and turning inward, modernist authors exacerbated the already strained relationship between themselves and their audience. As a result, their readership dwindled.

In some modernist novels there is a sense of the author at play, exhausting formal possibilities simply for the sake of doing so; as such, the work’s ultimate subject appears to be its own construction rather than some idea regarding the world to which it putatively refers. Extreme personal styles of writing proliferated during the modernist period. Gertrude Stein’s highly repetitious, run-on strings of simple but rather vague words, which most readers found unreadable, nonetheless influenced Hemingway, who helped type one of Stein’s novels. Indeed, even Hemingway’s more accessible minimalist style was far more original and mannered than it now appears (if Hemingway’s prose style now seems conventional this is because it has been so heavily imitated). Faulkner’s huge, ornate, winding sentences are equally

famous. Joyce is known less for any given style than for the exploration of a multitude of styles, although in the language of *Finnegans Wake*—an English substratum with a host of (mainly European) languages punningly interlayered—he reaches some sort of limit of stylistic innovation. It was with reference to *Finnegans Wake* that Samuel Beckett claimed that Joyce was not writing *about* something but rather *writing something*. The work becomes its own world, and writing becomes increasingly self-referential. In Gide's *The Counterfeiters*, a major character is the novelist Edouard, who is writing a novel entitled *The Counterfeiters* and who keeps a journal about the writing of that novel whose entries obviously apply to the book in which he appears. Edouard's favorite model for fiction is Bach's "Art of the Fugue," and both he and Gide are interested in what a British imitator of Gide, Aldous Huxley, termed "the musicalization of fiction."

In fact, it is easy to overstate the formalism of the modernist novel. Following Flaubert, modernist artists were very much inclined to speak in terms of formal control, and the critical movement most closely associated with modernism—the "New Criticism" that dominated American literature departments in mid-century—reflected this emphasis. But in retrospect it is surprising how much daily chaos modernist novels included—in some respects, far more than did the "loose, baggy monsters" of 19th-century fiction. *Ulysses*, for all its complex formal patterning, contains a huge amount of random "street furniture" and is seeded with loose narrative ends, withheld climaxes, and major and minor mysteries—all the chaos of both life and literature. John Dos Passos' trilogy *U.S.A.* (1930–36) mingles narratives focusing on a large variety of fictive characters with the biographies of actual historical persons, and sets such narratives next to the impressionist descriptions of the "Camera Eye" sections and the newspaper montages of the "Newsreel" sections.

Another aspect of modernist formalism is what the New Criticism saw as the apolitical nature of modernist works. But (again, in retrospect) this seems debatable. Dos Passos wrote political protest throughout his career. Woolf was an avowed feminist, like Rebecca West and Katherine Mansfield, and indeed several of the most important modernist journals were also feminist organs. Joyce was a socialist, and whatever else it may be about, *Ulysses* certainly raises the issue of anti-Semitism. Both Pound and Eliot had strong social agendas. Pound was imprisoned for treason because of his vocal support of fascism, while Mann was nearly as famous for denouncing Hitler. Perhaps it is more accurate to say that modernist writers seldom made overt and unambiguous statements about politics in their own novels. With politics, as with most issues, their artistic means were indirect.

Modernism and National Literatures

Many critics have focused their discussion of modernism in the novel on the English, Anglo-Irish, and North American literary traditions, since there more than elsewhere modernism was a self-conscious movement among writers of fiction—and recognized as such by literary historians. In part this may be owing to the lack of a native tradition of avant-garde writing in English-speaking countries; literary movements like naturalism gained less foothold and were far less coherent in England than in France, for example. French writers and literary critics later in the 20th century were less inclined to speak in terms of mod-

ernism and more inclined to speak in terms of self-promoting avant-garde movements such as surrealism or dada, which barely registered on the British or American literary scenes. Even within the Anglo-American critical establishment consensus was slow to form. It could hardly even be said that modernism was generally regarded as the most important literary movement of the century until the 1960s, when critics began discussing whether the movement had ended and been superseded. Another difficulty in discussing the modernist novel internationally arises from the fact that most European countries have been much quicker to recognize a native modernist movement in the genre of poetry than in fiction. Finally, local historical circumstances have had enormous and varied effects on the shape and timing of international movements. In Russia, an early, energetic modernist flowering after 1900 was cut short by the revolution and driven underground by Stalinism. Although the Scandinavian dramatists Henrik Ibsen and August Strindberg, writing in the late 19th century, were crucial to the modernist writers who followed them, the Scandinavian countries produced few important novelists one might call modernist. In Iceland and Finland a movement called modernism did not flourish until the 1940s and 1950s, and in Denmark not until the 1950s and 1960s—and in each case the movement featured poets.

Even within Anglo-American modernism, there is a distinction between American modernism and the variety practiced in Great Britain, although this is probably more true for novelists than for poets, where Pound and Eliot were mediators between the two countries. But it is difficult to locate precisely where the difference lay. The critic Hugh Kenner entitled his book on American modernism *A Homemade World*, implying that there was a provisory, informal, and perhaps a domestic flavor to the American movement. Some writers, such as William Carlos Williams, in fact conflated the project of modernism with the development of a rebellious, distinctively American voice that would owe little to literary tradition. To an extent, this emphasis on Americanness ran counter to the internationalist trend of the British and European branches. Some themes of American novels, such as the protest against sexual repression in Sherwood Anderson or the attack on small-minded capitalism in Theodore Dreiser and Sinclair Lewis, differ substantially from the themes of European novels. Even in the most European of American modernists, Gertrude Stein, there is the sense of a radical individual project that stands or falls with the individual author. The American novelist with the greatest influence on European and Latin American writers, William Faulkner, was valued less for the Joycean play with time and narration of *The Sound and the Fury* than for his continuing poetic evocation of dark regional themes, to the verge of obsession; this quality was picked up both by French writers of the *nouveau roman* such as Claude Simon and by the great Latin American novelists who rose to prominence in the 1960s and 1970s, such as Gabriel García Márquez. The intonation given to modernism by writers of the Harlem Renaissance—or by later African-American novelists such as Richard Wright—was unique to the situation of the United States.

In Latin America the movement called *modernismo*, led by the Nicaraguan poet Rubén Darío in the 1890s, took a cosmopolitan approach and incorporated elements of art-for-art's sake. While it produced some evocative, impressionistic poetry, and even exerted influence back in Spain, it had little effect on the Latin American novel, and in any case has only tenuous con-

nections to modernism. Up until the 1960s the Latin American figure with the greatest international impact on fiction was the Argentine Jorge Luis Borges, whose writings from the 1940s through the 1970s offer brilliant and complex explorations of metafictional themes; whether he should be approached as a late modernist figure or an early postmodernist is another question. Meanwhile, two Spanish literary figures younger than Borges, neither of them primarily novelists, are important to the early development of modernism. Miguel de Unamuno, a major figure of the "generation of '98," in his essays, poems, and novels is a paradoxical and often suffering exponent of the interior life as against the false objectivity of historians or sociologists, and reflects the influence of Henri Bergson and Søren Kierkegaard. A generation younger than Unamuno, Ortega y Gasset was influential throughout Europe as both an apologist for early modernist art and its ironic critic. Another member of the generation of '98 was the Basque Pío Baroja, a prolific novelist who attained modernist effects by putatively abandoning form and style in favor of the messiness of "real life." A Nietzschean element is evident in his widely-praised *El árbol de la ciencia* (1911; *The Tree of Knowledge*). Another remarkable figure is the rather theatrical Ramón del Valle-Inclán, Baroja's countryman and contemporary. In his best novel, *Tirano Banderas* (1926; *The Tyrant Banderas*), he developed the modernist style he termed *esperpento*, which suggests the distorting mirrors found at carnivals.

But if we are to step back and look at Latin America as a whole, it is possible to distinguish between, on the one hand, a varied group of early modernist novelists, including Borges, Mario de Andrade, Miguel Ángel Asturias, Alejo Carpentier, Juan Rulfo, and João Guimarães Rosa, and on the other the famous "boom" generation of novelists who came to prominence beginning in the 1960s, including Carlos Fuentes, Julio Cortázar, Mario Vargas Llosa, and Gabriel García Márquez. The so-called magic realist novels of these authors have been seen as the climax and consummation of Latin American modernism, but they also have been claimed for postmodernism.

The style of several European and Latin American novelists, such as Valle-Inclán, could easily be termed "expressionist," and indeed European literary critics—as opposed to Anglo-American ones—frequently use this term to refer to the aspect of modernism that stresses distortion, forceful representation of the emotions, and an antinaturalistic approach to art that frequently leads to satire and the grotesque. Expressionism flourished especially in Germany, where the term has been applied to early 20th-century work in painting, theatre, and the cinema. Much of Alfred Döblin's work has been called expressionist. Other German writers dealt with the irrational in more restrained ways. *Die Schlafwandler* (1931–32; *The Sleepwalkers*) and the densely poetic novel *Der Tod des Vergil* (1945; *The Death of Virgil*) shows the depth of Hermann Broch's fascination with philosophy and the richness of his formal innovations. Broch's work shows the influence of Joyce, who praised him and helped him to escape Germany after his arrest by the Nazis. Like Wyndham Lewis and Robert Musil—but unlike most Anglo-American modernists—Broch deploys satire and pastiche as a form of critique. A similarly philosophical novelist was Hermann Hesse, who became a Swiss citizen in midlife, and whose novels became a rage on American campuses during the 1960s and 1970s. From *Demian* (1919) through the utopian *Das Glasperlenspiel*

(1943; *The Glass Bead Game*), Hesse plays upon the material of Jungian psychoanalysis and Eastern mysticism, producing effects that might be termed magic realist. Like Thomas Mann, Hesse received the Nobel prize. Like many of the major figures in the German novel of the 20th century, such as Mann, Broch, Musil, and Döblin, Hesse wrote books that are explicitly concerned with philosophical issues to a far greater extent than are the major novels in the Anglo-American tradition. This relative emphasis on exposition of abstract ideas contrasts with the Anglo-American emphasis on formal experimentation, considered a hallmark of modernism; but in fact both are significant departures from the dominant 19th-century modes of narrative romance and the novel of manners.

French literary historians, like their German counterparts, tend not to see the 20th-century novel in terms of modernism, although Proust and Gide are two fundamental figures in most histories of that movement. Many modern French writers fit only uneasily into a modernist mold. Colette, for instance, shows a "modern" attitude toward sexuality but comes too close to nostalgia and sentimentality for the taste of most modernists. The entirely bizarre Raymond Roussel, whose best-known work is *Impressions d'Afrique* (1910; *Impressions of Africa*), was championed first by the surrealists and then by the *nouveau romanciers* of the 1960s; he employed a formal linguistic method of invention that led to highly un-novelistic novels. Far more conventional novelists are Roger Martin du Gard and François Mauriac, both of whom—like a large proportion of 20th-century French writers, from Joris-Karl Huysmans to Georges Bernanos—wrestle with Catholicism in their novels. Another significant writer without parallel in the Anglo-American tradition is Louis-Ferdinand Céline, a brilliant, unbalanced anti-Semite whose hallucinatory *Voyage au bout de la nuit* (1932; *Journey to the End of the Night*) might well be termed expressionist.

An avant-garde movement often seen as ushering in modernism, but whose effects were limited in Britain and America, was futurism, which was founded by the Italian Filippo Marinetti but had its greatest impact in Russia. The Italian novelist Massimo Bontempelli was briefly a futurist; his novel *La scacchiera davanti allo specchio* (1922; *The Chessboard in Front of the Mirror*) is a modernist fantasy, although not particularly futurist. Apart from Italo Svevo, Italy has produced surprisingly few important modernist novelists; among its best-known 20th-century writers, Ignazio Silone and Alberto Moravia both are realists. Cesare Pavese is also a realist, although his work shows the influence of Gertrude Stein and William Faulkner, whom Pavese translated. The Russian variety of futurism, which abjured Marinetti's celebration of war, had an important impact on modernist poets such as Vladimir Mayakovsky, Velimir Khlebnikov, and Andrei Voznesenskii, but on few novelists. Russia gave the world arguably the most distinguished group of realist novelists of any country during the 19th century, including Tolstoi, Turgenev, and Gor'kii, but its contribution to novelistic modernism is far less recognized in the West. Anton Chekhov is a tremendously important forerunner, especially in leading writers to abandon the well-made plot. His influence on other European writers, both directly and through admirers such as Katherine Mansfield, is considerable.

Perhaps the major Russian modernist novelist from early in the century is the former symbolist poet Andrei Belyi, whose