

The Novel in England and Ireland, 1749-1949: Samuel Richardson to Elizabeth Bowen

Overview:

Today, the novel is taken for granted as the vehicle for prose fiction. But the origins of what we now call 'novels' can be traced to England in the mid-eighteenth century, where the idea of 'fiction' (as distinguished from falsehood or untruth) was still in the process of developing. The novel has since gone through many changes of dress, and although the 'death of the novel' has been predicted more than once, the form remains alive and well. This course will focus on a selection of moments over two hundred years in the life of a literary form, tying generic innovations in novel-writing to the broader political, cultural and personal contexts which shaped their composition: from how conduct writing and epic poetry informed the early novels of Richardson and Fielding, to how the experience of war fed into the differently experimental novels of Sterne and Woolf.

Each class will begin with a brief talk on the topic at hand, in the style of a lecture, offering biographical, geographical, political or historical context. This will be followed by an analysis of excerpts from the texts under discussion, in the format of a Cambridge practical criticism class, and further discussion of the kind usually conducted in a seminar. Texts and passages to be considered will be supplied during the sessions. Students might wish to read or look at the works of some of the novelists mentioned in advance, but there will be no expectation that anyone has already read widely in any of these areas of literary history.

Outline:

1.	Henry Fielding, Samuel Richardson, Laurence Sterne	The mid-eighteenth century and the 'rise of the novel'
2.	James Hogg, Mary Shelley, Emily Brontë	The Gothic novel
3.	Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, George Eliot	Realism and the nineteenth-century novel
4.	Oscar Wilde, Thomas Hardy, Henry James	The Fin de siècle novel
5.	Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, Elizabeth Bowen	Modernism and the novel

Dr Eliza Haughton-Shaw is a Fellow in English at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. Her research is primarily on Romanticism and the long eighteenth century. She is currently writing a book on eccentricity in the work of prose writers from Sterne to Dickens, while a new academic project addresses association and the Romantic essay. She has articles published in *Victorian Poetry*, *Romanticism*, and *The Cambridge Quarterly*.