

Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

TCLC 130

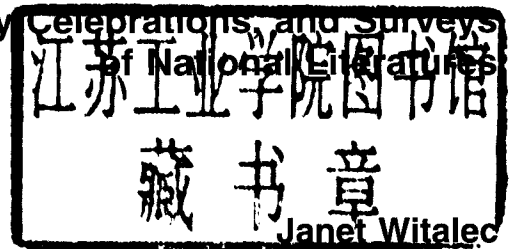
TOPICS VOLUME

Volume 130

Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

Topics Volume

**Criticism of Various Topics
in Twentieth-Century Literature, including Literary
and Critical Movements, Prominent Themes and
Genres, Anniversary Celebrations, and Surveys**



Janet Witalc
Project Editor



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Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism, Vol. 130

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Janet Witalec

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Jenny Cromie, Scott Darga, Kathy D. Darrow,
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Preface

Since its inception more than fifteen years ago, *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism* (TCLC) has been purchased and used by nearly 10,000 school, public, and college or university libraries. TCLC has covered more than 500 authors, representing 58 nationalities and over 25,000 titles. No other reference source has surveyed the critical response to twentieth-century authors and literature as thoroughly as TCLC. In the words of one reviewer, “there is nothing comparable available.” TCLC “is a gold mine of information—dates, pseudonyms, biographical information, and criticism from books and periodicals—which many librarians would have difficulty assembling on their own.”

Scope of the Series

TCLC is designed to serve as an introduction to authors who died between 1900 and 1999 and to the most significant interpretations of these author's works. Volumes published from 1978 through 1999 included authors who died between 1900 and 1960. The great poets, novelists, short story writers, playwrights, and philosophers of the period are frequently studied in high school and college literature courses. In organizing and reprinting the vast amount of critical material written on these authors, TCLC helps students develop valuable insight into literary history, promotes a better understanding of the texts, and sparks ideas for papers and assignments. Each entry in TCLC presents a comprehensive survey on an author's career or an individual work of literature and provides the user with a multiplicity of interpretations and assessments. Such variety allows students to pursue their own interests; furthermore, it fosters an awareness that literature is dynamic and responsive to many different opinions.

Every fourth volume of TCLC is devoted to literary topics. These topics widen the focus of the series from the individual authors to such broader subjects as literary movements, prominent themes in twentieth-century literature, literary reaction to political and historical events, significant eras in literary history, prominent literary anniversaries, and the literatures of cultures that are often overlooked by English-speaking readers.

TCLC is designed as a companion series to Gale's *Contemporary Literary Criticism*, (CLC) which reprints commentary on authors who died after 1999. Because of the different time periods under consideration, there is no duplication of material between CLC and TCLC.

Organization of the Book

A TCLC entry consists of the following elements:

- The **Author Heading** cites the name under which the author most commonly wrote, followed by birth and death dates. Also located here are any name variations under which an author wrote, including transliterated forms for authors whose native languages use nonroman alphabets. If the author wrote consistently under a pseudonym, the pseudonym will be listed in the author heading and the author's actual name given in parenthesis on the first line of the biographical and critical information. Uncertain birth or death dates are indicated by question marks. Single-work entries are preceded by a heading that consists of the most common form of the title in English translation (if applicable) and the original date of composition.
- A **Portrait of the Author** is included when available.
- The **Introduction** contains background information that introduces the reader to the author, work, or topic that is the subject of the entry.
- The list of **Principal Works** is ordered chronologically by date of first publication and lists the most important works by the author. The genre and publication date of each work is given. In the case of foreign authors whose

works have been translated into English, the English-language version of the title follows in brackets. Unless otherwise indicated, dramas are dated by first performance, not first publication.

- Reprinted **Criticism** is arranged chronologically in each entry to provide a useful perspective on changes in critical evaluation over time. The critic's name and the date of composition or publication of the critical work are given at the beginning of each piece of criticism. Unsigned criticism is preceded by the title of the source in which it appeared. All titles by the author featured in the text are printed in boldface type. Footnotes are reprinted at the end of each essay or excerpt. In the case of excerpted criticism, only those footnotes that pertain to the excerpted texts are included.
- A complete **Bibliographical Citation** of the original essay or book precedes each piece of criticism.
- Critical essays are prefaced by brief **Annotations** explicating each piece.
- An annotated bibliography of **Further Reading** appears at the end of each entry and suggests resources for additional study. In some cases, significant essays for which the editors could not obtain reprint rights are included here. Boxed material following the further reading list provides references to other biographical and critical sources on the author in series published by Gale.

Indexes

A **Cumulative Author Index** lists all of the authors that appear in a wide variety of reference sources published by the Gale Group, including *TCLC*. A complete list of these sources is found facing the first page of the Author Index. The index also includes birth and death dates and cross references between pseudonyms and actual names.

A **Cumulative Nationality Index** lists all authors featured in *TCLC* by nationality, followed by the number of the *TCLC* volume in which their entry appears.

A **Cumulative Topic Index** lists the literary themes and topics treated in the series as well as in *Classical and Medieval Literature Criticism*, *Literature Criticism from 1400 to 1800*, *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism*, and the *Contemporary Literary Criticism Yearbook*, which was discontinued in 1998.

An alphabetical **Title Index** accompanies each volume of *TCLC*. Listings of titles by authors covered in the given volume are followed by the author's name and the corresponding page numbers where the titles are discussed. English translations of foreign titles and variations of titles are cross-referenced to the title under which a work was originally published. Titles of novels, dramas, nonfiction books, and poetry, short story, or essay collections are printed in italics, while individual poems, short stories, and essays are printed in roman type within quotation marks.

In response to numerous suggestions from librarians, Gale also produces an annual paperbound edition of the *TCLC* cumulative title index. This annual cumulation, which alphabetically lists all titles reviewed in the series, is available to all customers. Additional copies of this index are available upon request. Librarians and patrons will welcome this separate index; it saves shelf space, is easy to use, and is recyclable upon receipt of the next edition.

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William H. Slavick, "Going to School to DuBose Heyward," *The Harlem Renaissance Re-examined*, ed. Victor A. Kramer (AMS, 1987), 65- 91; reprinted in *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism*, vol. 59, ed. Jennifer Garipey (Detroit: The Gale Group, 1995), 94-105.

Suggestions are Welcome

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Special Commissioned Essay on the American Novel of Manners

Roderick Mengham

This special topic entry, written by Roderick Mengham, presents an overview and analysis of the American Novel of Manners.

INTRODUCTION

The following chronology provides an overview of key social, political, and cultural events in America during which the novel of manners emerged.

1861-1865: The American Civil War, or War between the States, as it is more commonly known in the South, raises the question of American political and economic identity, and the victory of the Union solidifies the power of the new industrialized Northeast, where the supremacy of the “Robber Barons” emerges through steel mills, railroads and factories. New money acquired through these ventures rises to challenge the social supremacy of the Old Money in Boston and New York.

1873: Financial panic hits the Stock Market in late September.

Ellen Glasgow is born in Virginia.

1880: The population in New York reaches 1.2 million.

Henry James publishes *Washington Square*.

Andrew Carnegie develops the first large furnace for making steel, the source of his wealth.

New York streets are first lit with electricity.

1881: James publishes *Portrait of a Lady*.

Charles Darwin dies. His theory of evolution was read by Ellen Glasgow, who used it to underscore her novels of social change.

1883: Ivan Turgenev, the Russian writer who was read by Edith Wharton, James and many others, dies.

The new Metropolitan Opera House opens in New York.

The Brooklyn Bridge is completed and opened to traffic.

The first skyscraper, ten stories tall, is finished in Chicago.

The luxurious train the Orient Express makes its first run from Paris to Istanbul.

1884: Mark Twain publishes *Huckleberry Finn*.

1885: Edith Newbold Jones marries Teddy Wharton in New York City.

Sinclair Lewis is born in Sauk Center, Minnesota.

The sport of golf is introduced to the United States.

1886: James publishes *The Bostonians*.

Karl Marx’s classic attack on industrial capitalism, *Das Kapital*, is published in English.

John Singer Sargent’s painting “Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose” is completed.

The Statue of Liberty is dedicated in New York.

1888: Raymond Chandler is born in New York.

The very first beauty pageant is held in Spa, Belgium.

1889: The first May Day, celebrating workers of the world, is held in Paris, causing concern among Industrial Capitalists.

1890: The first motion picture shows open in New York, providing the medium in which novelists like Wharton and F. Scott Fitzgerald will have their work adapted.

The Daughters of the American Revolution is established in Washington, D.C. In response to rising numbers of immigrants, such groups attempt to define themselves as an American aristocracy or High Society.

1891: Thomas Hardy, the English novelist whom Glasgow met and admired, publishes *Tess of the Durbervilles*.

Herman Melville, a cousin of Edith Wharton’s, and author of *Moby Dick*, dies.

1892: The Homestead Strike pits railroad workers against Henry Clay Frick and Pennsylvania Railroad. Frick brings in military to break the strike, resulting in the deaths of many strikers. Frick's success establishes the power of the Industrialists to join with the federal government to overpower workers.

The American poet Walt Whitman, admired by Wharton, dies. She took the title of her autobiography, *A Backward Glance*, from his work.

A major strike by iron and steel workers occurs in the United States.

1893: Henry Ford builds the first automobile, creating the symbol of speed and mobility that will change the manners of America.

J. P. Marquand is born in Wilmington, Delaware.

1894: Thomas Edison opens the Kinetoscope Parlor in New York, while in Paris the cinematograph is invented by Louis Lumiere, both leading to wider public access to motion pictures, with the first public film being shown the next year in Paris.

1896: Harriet Beecher Stowe, whose novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was among the first best selling works of fiction in America, dies.

The Nobel Prize in Literature is established.

F. Scott Fitzgerald is born in St. Paul, Minnesota.

1897: Wharton publishes her first major work, *The Decoration of Houses*, with Ogden Codman, a designer who helped her with The Mount, her house in Lenox, Massachusetts. The book's success points to Wharton's skillful eye for interior decoration, key to understanding her use of rooms, furnishings and architecture throughout her fiction.

1898: Ernest Hemingway is born in Oak Park, Illinois. Along with Fitzgerald and other Modernists, he is one of the younger writers whom Wharton feels see her as outdated after the First World War.

1901: Queen Victoria dies in England; Edward VII ascends the throne (which he will give up in favor of marriage to Mrs. Wallis Simpson, an American divorcee).

President William McKinley is assassinated by an anarchist; Vice President Theodore Roosevelt, a close friend of Wharton's, becomes President.

1902: A nationwide coal strike cripples the United States from May to October.

1903: James publishes *The Ambassadors*.

The first sound recording of an opera, Verdi's "Errani," appears.

Orville and Wilbur Wright successfully fly a plane with an engine.

Emmeline Pankhurst, an advocate of women's suffrage, starts the National Women's Social and Political Union in England. Suffrage and education for women become current issues throughout the United States, but especially visible when embraced by wealthy socialites.

The Ford Motor Company is founded.

1904: Roosevelt is re-elected.

James publishes *The Golden Bowl*.

In Paris, France, the ten-hour workday becomes law.

The Broadway subway line is opened in New York, making travel to work easier for workers.

A woman is arrested in New York City for smoking a cigarette in public.

Foreign shipping lines reduce the cost of a steerage-class fare to ten dollars, enabling more immigrants to leave Europe.

1905: Wharton publishes *The House of Mirth*, her first novel, initially as a serial in magazine form, and on October 14 as a two-volume novel. It is a best-seller, with over 100,000 copies sold by the end of the year.

Wharton also publishes *Italian Backgrounds*, essays on Italy which she has been writing for the last decade.

1906: Lewis publishes *The Jungle*, a muckraking novel exposing abuses in the meat-packing industry.

The population in New York reaches four million, while an earthquake devastates San Francisco.

1907: Austria extends suffrage to women.

The United States bars Japanese immigrants.

J.P. Morgan brings \$100 million in gold from Europe to stop a panic that leads to a run on the banks.

The U.S. restricts immigration by law.

1908: Ford makes the Model "T" a popular car.

1910: Twain dies.

1911: Wharton publishes *Ethan Frome*, a short novel set in a fictionalized version of Lenox, Massachusetts.

James visits Wharton in Lenox. She later sells The Mounts, and separates from her husband, living in Europe.

1912: In Lowell, Massachusetts, textile workers go on strike. The impact is national, affirming the power of the unions.

The *Titanic* sinks, resulting in the deaths of many socially-prominent figures, as well as immigrants and workers.

1913: Demonstrations for women's suffrage occur in London.

The U.S. government passes the 16th Amendment, establishing the Income Tax.

Wharton publishes *The Custom of the Country*.

Sargent completes his portrait of James.

Cornelius Vanderbilt opens the new Grand Central Station, asserting the wealth of railroads even as the automobile is growing increasingly popular.

1914: World War I begins.

Booth Tarkington publishes *Penrod*.

Immigration to the U.S. between 1905 and 1914 exceeds ten million. Most arrivals are from eastern and southern Europe.

1915: Margaret Sanger, an advocate of birth control, is arrested and put in jail for publishing *Family Limitation*, a book offering advice on contraception.

The first transatlantic telephone call, from New York to San Francisco, is completed.

Ford produces his one-millionth car.

1916: James dies.

Wharton receives the Legion of Honor from the French government in recognition of her work helping refugees.

Sanger opens a birth control clinic, the first in the U.S.

A congressional bill makes literacy a requirement for citizenship, thus restricting the number of applicants.

Bobbed hair becomes the fashion, and will appear as a frequent image in the fiction of Fitzgerald, representing the freedom of the "flappers." The U.S. Congress rejects President Woodrow Wilson's bill for broader suffrage.

1919: WWI ends with the Treaty of Versailles.

Race riots devastate Chicago.

Dock workers strike in New York.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox, a popular poet satirized by Wharton and others, dies.

Frick and Carnegie, both wealthy industrialists, die.

Congress attempts to further limit immigration.

1920: William Dean Howells dies.

Lewis publishes *Main Street*.

Wharton publishes *The Age of Innocence*, which wins the Pulitzer in 1921.

Fitzgerald publishes *This Side of Paradise*.

The population in New York City exceeds five million.

1921: Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti are found guilty of murder. The trial of the two Italian immigrants accused of being anarchists stirs national interest and protest.

Christine Nilsson, the Swedish opera singer featured in the first chapter of *The Age of Innocence*, dies.

James Joyce publishes *Ulysses*, a modernist novel Wharton dismissed as mere pornography.

Lewis publishes *Babbitt*.

Emily Post publishes *Etiquette*, which becomes the standard guide to manners in the United States.

The Stock Market "boom," begins.

Tarkington wins the Pulitzer Prize for *Alice Adams*.

1922: Two hundred thousand people participate in a Ku Klux Klan gathering in Indiana.

The Teapot Dome Scandal erupts in Washington.

Sanger opens the first birth control clinic in New York.

1924: A congressional bill excludes Japanese from immigration quotas. Theodore Dreiser publishes *An American Tragedy*.

Ford Motor Company produces the ten millionth car.

1925: Fitzgerald publishes *The Great Gatsby*.

Hemingway publishes *In Our Time*.

Lewis publishes *Arrowsmith*.

Sargent dies.

1926: Hemingway publishes *The Sun Also Rises*.

Lewis rejects the Pulitzer Prize.

Lewis publishes *Elmer Gantry*.

Charles Lindbergh flies nonstop from New York to Paris in 33.5 hours.

Sacco and Vanzetti are executed.

1928: Amelia Earhart flies across the Atlantic; she is the first woman to do so.

George Gershwin writes *An American in Paris*.

1929: Hemingway publishes *A Farewell to Arms*.

Lewis publishes *Dodsworth*.

Thorsten Veble, author of *Theory of the Leisure Class*, dies.

Black Friday, the day the Stock Market crashes, signals the end of the Jazz Age and the beginning of the Great Depression.

1930: Lewis wins the Nobel Prize in Literature for *Babbitt*.

1931: The Empire State Building is completed.

1932: Grant Wood's satirical painting *Daughters of the American Revolution* is completed.

1933: James Gould Cozzens publishes *The First Adam*.

1934: Fitzgerald publishes *Tender Is the Night*.

John O'Hara publishes *Appointment in Samarra*.

1935: Gershwin produces *Porgy and Bess*.

1936: Fitzgerald publishes *The Crack-Up*.

1937: Wharton dies, and is buried in France.

Hemingway publishes *To Have and To Have Not*.

Marquand publishes *The Late George Apley*, which wins the Pulitzer Prize in 1938.

Earhart is lost over the South Pacific.

1938: Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf* appears in English translation.

Joyce publishes *Finnegan's Wake*.

Wharton's incomplete novel *The Buccaneers* is published posthumously.

1939: World War II begins in Europe.

1940: Fitzgerald dies.

Hemingway publishes *For Whom the Bell Tolls*.

Raymond Chandler publishes *Farewell, My Lovely*.

Roderick Mengham (essay date 2002)

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[In the following original essay, Mengham provides an overview of the American Novel of Manners, focusing on its history, representative writers, hallmark works, and critical response.]

HISTORY OF THE NOVEL OF MANNERS IN AMERICA

OVERVIEW OF THE NOVEL OF MANNERS

In *The Writing of Fiction*, Edith Wharton praises the French novelist Balzac, whom she greatly admired, for the ability "to draw his dramatic action as much from the relation of his characters to their houses, streets, towns, professions, inherited habits and opinions, as from their fortuitous contacts with each other" (8). She might have applied the same description to her own fiction. She adds that his "viewing each character first of all as a product of particular material and social conditions . . ." (9) establishes him as breaking new ground for the novel, for he is "continuously aware that the bounds of a personality are not reproducible by a sharp line, but that each of us flows imperceptibly into adjacent people and things" (10). Without actually using the term, Wharton nevertheless provides here a description of the novel of manners.

The novel of manners, which can also be called the social novel, then, differs from the psychological novel, the romantic, or the historical novel, by its emphasis on things, what is called by historians the material culture of the world it portrays. The characters are meant to be understood not only by what they say and how they think and act, but by what they wear, where they live, what they do for a living, or what position they hold in

society. These objects and activities, as presented by the novelist of manners, are not morally neutral, but must be read for the values they confer on a character. Lionel Trilling, a literary critic, defines manners as used by these novelists as "the culture's hum and buzz of implication . . . the whole evanescent context of its explicit statements. It is that part of the culture which is made up of half-uttered or unutterable expressions of value" (145). In other words, the novelist of manners asks us to "read" the markers of culture like an anthropologist, seeking to create meaning not only from the explicit evidence, but also by drawing inferences from what is implicit. Questions of the moral and social value of society emerge from such evidence.

More concretely, the novel of manners examines the class structure of the society it describes; the "manners, special attitudes, gestures, and conventional responses that people make because they belong in a certain stratum of society" (Milne 12). Most familiar are such novels that take as their subject the upper strata of a given society, the rich or aristocratic or upper middle class about which the larger world is curious. For example, many of Edith Wharton's characters belong to the wealthy class of American society in the late-nineteenth or early twentieth centuries, as do the characters in the novels of William Dean Howells and Henry James, where status belongs to old money and family distinction. F. Scott Fitzgerald examines the new social order based not on old family money, but on youth and new money in the Jazz Age, an era in which disdain for the puritanical moral values of the earlier society dominated. The novelist of manners may also select, however, a special social circle such as the clergy, or academics at a particular college, titans of business, or members of a society no longer intact, like antebellum America. Such worlds are portrayed by Booth Tarkington, J. P. Marquand, John O'Hara, J. G. Cozzens, or Ellen Glasgow. While the best known novels of manners, then, are those about the middle and upper classes, about successful professionals, there have also been novels of manners written about "average" citizens from the middle or even working classes, as is evident in Sinclair Lewis' work. Raymond Chandler adapts the form to the detective novel, creating a closed social world violated by a serious crime, requiring the detective to remove the intruder and restore the social order, but not before revealing glimpses of the lower strata, the mean streets of the city beneath the protective manners and money.

The novel of manners, in addition, may be comic or tragic. The comedy of manners uncovers the faults of society, its idiosyncrasies or hypocrisy, but the writer is satisfied to ridicule rather than revenge faults. The more pessimistic version, like *The House of Mirth*, reveals the same or more serious violations—adultery, greed, inhumanity—and calls the offenders to account. The re-

sults may be loss of social status, loss of money and power, or even loss of life. Novelists may create hybrid forms as well, with measured amounts of both social comedy and tragedy; Ellen Glasgow is such a novelist.

Several themes are common in the novel of manners, as critic Gordon Milne suggests:

The adjustment of standards caused by an environmental transplanting (from rural to urban, or from national to international); the effect wrought by time and circumstance upon a society (the Civil War's impact on the South); the problems besetting the social climber (adjusting to new codes of behavior, coping with the intricacies of social deportment).

(12)

Thus the genre of the novel of manners is flexible, and also persistent, adapting to current fashions and values, but nevertheless providing a lens through which the reader can examine human behavior in a social context.

THE NOVEL OF MANNERS IN ENGLAND

A century before the novel of manners emerges in America with Henry James' *Washington Square* (1880), the novel was still a new form, without established social acceptance or assured popularity. Parents and preachers were quick to condemn what they feared would inspire foolish romantic notions, especially in young women. Richard Brinsley Sheridan, a successful playwright whose *School for Scandal* anticipates many of the social tensions and satires later developed by Wharton and other novelists of manners, highlights the distrust of fiction reading held by pious members of late eighteenth-century British society. Lydia Languish, the heroine of Sheridan's play, hides a novel she is reading under her pillow and replaces it with a book of sermons when her strict guardian arrives. While she thus maintains the appearance of propriety, Sheridan employs acerbic wit, as will the novels of manners.

While Sheridan himself enjoyed good novels, and was himself the son of a successful, Frances Sheridan, he knew his audience. England in the late eighteenth-century was a nation in which the middle class was emerging as a distinctive economic and social group. Napoleon jeered at them as "a nation of shopkeepers," but far from being insulted, the British bore the slogan with pride. The rise of the middle class meant that more citizens were literate than in any other European country. Along with economic stability came leisure time. The result was an increase in reading, and a new market for poetry, history, essays, letters, biographies, plays, travelogues, and the evolving genre, the novel. To feed this new hunger, lending libraries sprang up, especially in resort towns like Bath, where leisure time for upper class women in particular was plentiful. For an annual membership fee, readers could join lending libraries to borrow the latest books.

Middle-class women read voraciously. By the time Sheridan's scene was being staged in London, in fact, the novel was gaining respectability and emerging as a form viewed by some as a tool for providing the readers with models for correct behavior (clues to dress, conversation, and manners) as they navigated the shifting class boundaries that mapped their social terrain.

Among the first novels to examine manners and to connect them to social morality was Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa*. Prior to this immensely popular tale, novels were frequently collections of short adventures (picaresque novels), or bawdy and scandalous adventures unsuitable for adolescents or women (like Defoe's *Moll Flanders*, or the works of Aphra Behn or Mary Delariviere Manley). Influenced by popular sentimental plays like Colley Cibber's *Love's Last Shift*, another type of novel measured its success in the amount of tears it drew from the reader, like those by Oliver Goldsmith; or, novelists exploited the Gothic taste and imitated *The Castle of Otranto* by Horace Walpole or Mrs. Radcliffe's tales of horror like *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. The novel of manners was an antidote to the excesses of the sentimental and the supernatural adventure in these tales, as writers attempted to describe and analyze everyday life.

Richardson's *Clarissa* was self-published in 1744 by one of Britain's shopkeepers, a printer by trade, who began with the idea of printing model letters to help guide the middle class in the etiquette of correspondence by providing models of letters. His practical project grew into a novel, a story told in letters exchanged among the characters, exceeding a million words, published serially. It became a best-seller. *Clarissa Harlowe*, a young upper-class woman, is threatened by her family with an arranged marriage to a man she calls the "odious Soames" and compares to a toad. The Harlowes are eager to join their estates to the neighboring one owned by Soames, and are willing to exploit *Clarissa* toward their ends. Thus the family represents the old world, or aristocratic view of marriage not as a personal choice but as a matter of business and family. *Clarissa* escapes, espousing a newer view of marriage, as tied to romance as well as money. She escapes at the urging of the handsome but immoral Richard Lovelace (pronounced loveless), who favors seduction over marriage. Convinced that *Clarissa* will be at his mercy, Lovelace assumes he will easily conquer *Clarissa*'s reputation for virtue. However, *Clarissa* resists Lovelace's numerous attempts, which she describes in letters she secretly sends to her friend Anna Howe. She realizes that if she surrenders to Lovelace she will lose her power over him, and have no guarantee of marriage. Frustrated at the failure of his many attempts at seduction, Loveless resorts to administering a drug to *Clarissa*, whom he then rapes. Yet his act of violence is a defeat. *Clarissa*'s will is unbroken. She retains her au-

tonomy, choosing to die rather than live as Lovelace's victim. Lovelace finally repents, and is killed in a duel by his one-time friend Bedford, who has become *Clarissa*'s champion.

Richardson's novel dramatized the conflict between the rising middle class, rooted in Protestant values of self-improvement and hard work, and the idle aristocracy, perceived as degenerate and destructive survivors of a society where power was based on inherited wealth. In simple terms, Lovelace, the old money, is broken by the strength of the new. The novel is, of course, far more complex than the summary suggests, but locating the formula in the stormy and tragic fiction is a way to point to *Clarissa* as setting the stage for the emerging novel of manners.

Richardson's focus on characters and society prepares the way for Henry James and Edith Wharton and those that follow. Both *Clarissa* and *Lovelace* are imprisoned in the social class to which they belong, and their actions reflect the class tension present in Richardson's own society between the upper middle class and the aristocracy. However, as Wharton argues, "the true orientation of English fiction was away from the fine-drawn analysis of Richardson, the desultory humors of Sterne, in the direction of an ample and powerful novel of manners. Smollett and Fielding brought fresh air and noise, the rough-and-tumble of the street, the ribaldry of the tavern, into the ceremonious drawing-rooms depicted by Richardson and later by Miss Burney" (WF 48). The days of the wealthy, idle Rake—the handsome immoral (or amoral) seducer—are numbered. The new heroine—sprightly, witty, virtuous, sensible—has begun to dominate the novel. When Jane Austen adopts and refines the character types set in motion by Richardson, and embeds them in the surrounding of a small English village, the true novel of manners is born. Edith Wharton calls her "the impeccable Jane Austen" (WF 76).

Pride and Prejudice (1814) is, to most readers, the first major novel of manners. Jane Austen read and admired Richardson's work, especially his third novel, *Sir Charles Grandison* that features a hero who is, unlike Lovelace, an honest, gentlemanly moral history. The sprightly heroine of *Pride and Prejudice*, Elizabeth Bennett, and her eventual husband, Fitzwilliam Darcy, enact a plot that reflects Austen's familiarity with Richardson but with shifts the marriage plot into a comedy of manners rather than a tragedy. Austen transforms the eighteenth-century epistolary model into a narrative controlled by the third-person omniscient narrator who maintains a satirical point of observation on the characters. These two major alterations prepare the way for the American novel of manners as written by Howells, Glasgow and others who follow the common thread, even to writers as recent as Diane Johnson, whose *Divorce and Marriage*, published in 2000 and 2001, reflect the persistence of the form.

Set in a small English village, *Pride and Prejudice* examines the relationship of character to society, dissecting the role of manners in daily life, and in class-consciousness. Elizabeth Bennett is one of five daughters of a respectable but not very rich middle-class family. Marriage is the only path by which girls can assure a comfortable future for themselves. However, the model of their own parents' unsuccessful marriage warns the satirical and sensible Elizabeth and her older sister Jane to choose a husband with extreme care. Mr. Bennett married a foolish, self-centered wife whose good looks alone cannot sustain his happiness, or educate his daughters properly. He retreats to his study, leaving the girls to get on as best as they can under Mrs. Bennett's erratic supervision. Elizabeth and Darcy, the main characters, will find happiness in marriage only after examining and discarding their respective prejudices about class, wealth, and family. The power of society to prevent their happiness is strong, and only their stronger characters and their willingness to undergo self-examination permit them to resist the social pressure. Just how close they are to losing their happiness is evident in the subplots of three younger daughters, who lack Elizabeth's good sense. They flirt freely with military officers, and the youngest runs off with Wickham, who had earlier tried to seduce Darcy's sister, Georgiana. Only through the determination of Darcy himself is Wickham forced to marry Lydia and save her reputation, and the family's. Jane, the oldest, falls in love with Darcy's friend Bingley, but faces opposition from his snobbish family until both are reunited by the intervention of Darcy and Elizabeth.

Throughout the novel, the characters are interpreted by others—correctly or not—by their manners. Darcy's seeming incivility as he refuses to dance at a public assembly at first blackens his reputation. Wickham's seeming charm and gallantry win him immediate approval, and disguise his large debts and his disreputable behavior toward women. Jane's general kindness is misread by Bingley as indifference to him. Elizabeth's muddy skirts are read with disdain by the haughty friends of Darcy, when they are more accurately read as evidence of her haste to visit her sick sister. The misreading of manners by various characters is treated with irony by the author. If some of these misapprehensions are resolved in the happy conclusion, characters like Lady Catherine de Bough, Darcy's rich and snobbish aunt, and Mr. Collins, her sycophantic clergyman, remain as evidence that pride and prejudice are still significant social forces.

Austen's novel is told in the third person, with an omniscient narrator who stands outside the story, but we hear the characters' voices through extended dialogue. Thus Austen allows her characters to reveal themselves through their speech, but at the same time moderates our impressions with commentary that is often ironic,

humorous, occasionally bitter. This combination of dialogue and irony will become a fingerprint of the American novel of manners.

One critic offers an analysis of the relation of the novel of manners to specific historic and social circumstances:

The term "novel of manners" describes a work in which the outer forms of a relatively closed society are stable, so that the character may be tested against them as against a fairly inflexible yardstick of conduct and belief. At few times in the history of the modern world have adequate conditions existed for such novels of manners in an absolute sense. Jane Austen, writing of the country gentry in English rural villages in the days of the Napoleonic Wars, produced the most nearly absolute comedies of manners, which the English language has known. Within her rural villages change occurred very slowly, and the English squirearchy defined a view of life being modified at a snail's pace; yet Jane Austen wrote during two decades of British history which produced the most radical changes in the structure of England before the Second World War. She sat in country parsonages while Napoleon dominated Europe and penned novels concerned essentially with marriage as a social institution; and while two brothers were in Nelson's fleet at Trafalgar, she continued to portray not the world of war but the same closed British society. Miss Austen's novels of manners were essentially novels which tested men and women in a sharply arrested moment in human history.

(*The Roots of Southern Writing* 109-10)

Richardson and Austen were among the many early British novelists who prepared the ground for the novel of manners in America. The elements that later prepared the ground for the novel of manners in America. The elements that later novelists borrow and adapt include these four, according to Gordon Milne: a focus on a segment of society; the excessive reliance on dialogue and 'good talk'; the employment of a precise and witty style; and the exact depiction of background (74). More particularly, the novel of manners usually contains a marriage plot, an emphasis on character that is defined by context, that is, not by psychological analysis, but by an examination of the character in his or her surroundings (class, family, setting, possessions). The novel of manners, then, depends on the material culture of the society to reveal character. Houses are described in detail, as are their furnishings. It is worth remembering that Edith Wharton's first book was called *The Decoration of Houses*, and was a guide to interior design. Clothes, carriages, cars, careers, and conversation are the keys to understanding the characters in the novel of manners.

THE EMERGENCE OF THE NOVEL OF MANNERS IN AMERICA

In the early nineteenth century, before the Civil War, Americans were viewed by Europeans, and often viewed themselves, as lacking the qualities of "civiliza-