

Literary Terms for Dickens' *Old Curiosity Shop*

- **Sensation Novel:**
  - usually comes from the serialized novel, of which Dickens was the master:
    - 1) psychologically, to describe the assault which fiction makes on the nerves of the reader
    - 2) sensation fiction typically addresses itself to some journalistic sensation of the day
    - also considered up-to-the minute in their topicality and were termed "newspaper novels"
  - Dickens =father of sensation novel b/c he:
    - fixes on a particular abuse
    - interest in topical crime
    - the disruptive immediacy of his style and devices (Harmon *Handbook to Lit* 7<sup>th</sup> ed.)
- **Sentimentalism:**
  - The effort to induce an emotional response disproportionate to the situation, and thus to substitute heightened and generally unthinking feeling for normal ethical and intellectual judgment
  - The term is used in two senses:
    - (1) an overindulgence in emotion, especially the conscious effort to induce emotion in order to enjoy it
    - (2) an optimistic overemphasis of the goodness of humanity (sensibility), representing in part a reaction against Calvinism, which regarded human nature as depraved. (Harmon *Handbook to Lit* 7<sup>th</sup> ed.)
- **Realism:**
  - Realism is, in the broadest literary sense, fidelity to actuality in its representation; a term loosely synonymous with verisimilitude.
  - Realists espouse what is essentially a mimetic theory of art, concentrating on the thing imitated and asking for something close to a one-to-one correspondence between the representation and the subject.
  - realists are unusually interested in the effect of their work on the audience and its life.
  - Realists eschew the traditional patterns of the novel.
    - Life, they feel, lacks symmetry and plot; fiction truthfully reflecting life should, therefore, avoid symmetry and plot. Fiction should concern itself with ethical issues and—because selection is a necessary part of any art—select with a view to presenting these issues accurately.
    - democratic attitudes of realists tended to make them value the individual very highly and to praise characterization as the center of the novel.
    - The surface details, common action, and minor catastrophes of middle-class society constituted the chief subject matter of the movement.
    - Most of the realists avoided situations with tragic or cataclysmic implications.
    - Their tone was often comic, frequently satiric, seldom grim or somber. (Harmon *Handbook to Lit* 7<sup>th</sup> ed.)
- **Allegory:**
  - A form of extended metaphor in which objects, persons, and action in a narrative are equated with meanings that lie outside the narrative itself. Thus, it represents one thing in the guise of another
  - attempts to invoke a dual interest, one in the events, characters, and setting presented, and the other in the ideas they are intended to convey or the significance they bear.
  - The characters, events, and setting may be historical, fictitious, or fabulous;
  - the test is that these materials be so employed that they represent meanings independent of the action in the surface story.
    - Such meanings may be religious, moral, political, personal or satiric. (Harmon *Handbook to Lit* 7<sup>th</sup> ed.)
  - OCS = allegory of moral journey
- **Allusion:**
  - A figure of speech that makes brief reference to a historical or literary figure, event or object. . . .
  - It seeks, by tapping the knowledge and memory of the reader, to secure a resonant emotional effect from the associations already existing in the readers mind. . . .
  - The effectiveness of allusion depends on a body of knowledge shared by writer and reader. (Harmon *Handbook to Lit* 7<sup>th</sup> ed.)

- Nell relays that she's very familiar with John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, drawing similarities between her journeys and the pilgrimage to salvation
- **Picaresque Novel:**
  - "Traditionally, the picaresque hero is always moving towards a destination, both topographical and metaphorical; there is the optimistic implication that arrival will bring success, a resolution of problems, a fresh start . . ." (Intro OCS xv)
  - from Harmon *Handbook to Lit* 7<sup>th</sup> ed.
    - A chronicle, usually autobiographical, presenting the life story of a rascal of low degree engaged in menial tasks and making his living more through his wits than his industry.
    - The picaresque novel tends to be episodic and structureless.
    - The *picaro*, or central figure, through various pranks and predicaments and by his associations with people of varying degree, affords the author an opportunity for satire of the social classes.
    - Romantic in the sense of being an adventure story, the picaresque novel nevertheless is strongly marked by realism in petty detail and in uninhibited expression.
    - Seven chief qualities distinguish the picaresque novel:
      - 1) It chronicles a part of the whole of the life of a rogue. It is likely to be in the first person;
      - 2) The chief figure is drawn from a low social level, is of loose character, and, if employed at all, does menial work;
      - 3) The novel presents a series of episodes only slightly connected;
      - 4) progress and development of character do not take place. The central figure starts as a *picaro* and ends as a *picaro*, manifesting the same qualities throughout. When change occurs, as it sometimes does, it is external, brought about by the *picaro's* falling heir to a fortune or by marrying money;
      - 5) The method is realistic. Although the story may be romantic in itself, it is presented with a plainness of language and a vividness of detail such as only the realist is permitted;
      - 6) thrown with people from every class and often from different parts of the world, the *picaro* serves them intimately in some lowly capacity and learns all their foibles and frailties. The picaresque novel may in this way be made to satirize social castes, national types, or ethnic peculiarities;
      - 7) the hero usually stops just short of being an actual criminal. The line between crime and petty rascality is hazy, but somehow the *picaro* always manages to draw it. Carefree, amoral perhaps, the *picaro* avoids actual crime and turns from one peccadillo to disappear down the road in search of another.