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| Veranstalter | Prof. Dr. Stephan Karschay | |
| Thema | Victorian Sensation Fiction [ENG-6, ENG-6a, ENG-12, AA7, AA10, LAA9, LAA12, IAA21, IAA23, IAA 24, AA-MA01, AA-MA02, AA-MA04, AA-MA06] | |
| Art der Veranstaltung | Seminar II | |
| Veranstaltungsnummer | 53-549 |  |
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The serialisation of Wilkie Collins's mystery novel *The Woman in White* in Charles Dickens's periodical *All the Year Round* from 1859 to 1860 is often regarded as the birth of a new type of fiction in Victorian England that came to dominate the literary market in the 1860s: the sensation novel. Even though recent criticism has widened the remit of the genre to include examples from earlier decades, Collins's novel of mystery, deception and murder exerted an unprecedented cultural influence: readers (like the seasoned novelist W.M. Thackeray) are reported to have sat up all night ploughing through the pages of Collins's doorstopper in a frenzy to find out what happened next. The novel became a singular object of consumption in other respects as well: ladies with money to spare could treat themselves to *Woman-in-White* fashion and *Woman-in-White* perfume, and music lovers could dance to *Woman-in-White* waltzes. Other novelists followed Collins and created ever more exciting 'novels with a secret', and the 1860s alone saw two further genre-shaping examples with Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862) and Ellen Wood's *East Lynne* (1861). This overwhelming popular success prompted conservative critics to rail against these titillating productions: the novelist Margaret Oliphant was appalled by the representation of sensation fiction's heroines as "fleshly and unlovely", and the Dean of St Paul's, Henry L. Mansel, condemned sensation authors like Collins, Braddon and Charles Reade for offering cheap literary fare and – more dangerously – for "preaching to the nerves" of their readers.

In this seminar, students will read three sensation novels and familiarise themselves with several others. We will place the novels in their rich historical and cultural contexts and engage with the immediate responses to the genre. We will study sensation fiction's generic predecessors (such as the Gothic romance and the silver-fork-novel) and weigh its significance for modern forms like the detective novel and the psychological thriller. We will look at our examples through different critical lenses from feminist and Marxist criticism to psychoanalysis and queer studies.

This is a reading-intensive class that will require you to engage with a wealth of critical materials in addition to our (sometimes very long) primary texts.

Set Texts (a third novel will be announced in class):

Please buy the following editions; the ISBN numbers will guide you to the correct text.

Collins, Wilkie. *The Woman in White* [1859-1860], ed. John Sutherland (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996). [ISBN: 9780199535637]

Braddon, Mary Elizabeth. *Lady Audley's Secret* [1862], ed. Lyn Pykett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). [ISBN: 9780199577033]

Workload:

Studienleistung: Regular contributions to seminar discussions, lively participation in teamwork, an oral group presentation, and written course work (such as reading-response papers). *Prüfungsleistung:* academic term paper.

Further Reading:

Gilbert, Pamela K., ed. *A Companion to Sensation Fiction* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011).

Mangham, Andrew, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Sensation Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).