*Very rough notes here—just sharing as requested. . . .*

The novel's realism lies not in the kind of life it presents, but in the way it presents it.

* + Also key to note, though, that *subject matter* is “realism” too—this entirely new at the time in fiction
  + Real, “common” people in “real” circumstances—sort of voyeuristic with Moll

The novel reflects **18th century reorienting of society to individualism**: the novel's primary criterion was truth to individual experience, which is always unique and therefore new. Previously literature reflected conformity to tradition, a literary decorum derived from accepted models.

* + From Renaissance on, growing tendency for individual experience to replace collective tradition as the ultimate arbiter of reality.

**Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel* (1957), Characterizing the novel:**

1) Defoe and Richardson first great British writers not to take their plots from mythology, history, legend or previous literature.

* + Defoe disregarded contemporary critical theory and **allowed his narrative to flow spontaneously from his sense of what his protagonists might plausibly do**.

2) Actors and scene of their actions placed in a new literary perspective: the plot had to be acted out by particular people in particular circumstances, rather than by general human types against a background primarily determined by literary convention.

* + Novel distinguished from previous forms of fiction by the amount of attention it gives to individualization of its characters and to the detailed presentation of their environment.

3) Characters of novels can only be individualized if they are set in a background of particularized time and place. Further, novels break with tradition of using timeless stories to mirror the unchanging moral verities by its use of past experience as the cause of present action: **a causal connection operating through time replaces the reliance on disguises and coincidences, tending to give the novel a much more cohesive structure. We get a sense of personal identity subsisting through duration and yet being changed by the flow of experience.**

4) In novels, space is the necessary correlative of time; introspection shows us that we cannot easily visualize any particular moment of existence without setting it in its spatial context also.

5) The novelist aims at the production of what purports to be an authentic account of the actual experiences of individuals.

* + Also, in novels language functions as more referential than in other literary forms; **the genre itself works by exhaustive presentation rather than by elegant concentration.**
* Economic individualism: All Defoe’s characters pursue money, methodically with bookkeeping Profit & Loss which characterizes modern capitalism
* Moll is a characteristic product of **modern individualism in her assumption that she owes it to herself to achieve the highest economic and social rewards, and in using every available method to carry out her resolve**.
  + Moll has few real emotional ties—personal relationships useful primarily in economic or practical terms
    - Sees partners in crime as *functional*, useful to her, not so much as valued for friendship, etc.

Watt: Defoe does not so much portray his heroine's character as assume its reality in every action and carry his reader with him. He does not, as later novelists would, demonstrate psychological understanding through development of the character's personality through actions or by specific analysis of the character’s various states of mind. This deficiency is especially notable in Defoe's treatment of relationships (sexual and as mother), (which deficiency may be somewhat mitigated by the inherent shallowness of most all personal contacts in the criminal milieu, much the same as with Crusoe's economic individualism). Both Moll and Crusoe are essentially solitary; they take a severely functional view of their fellows.

Percy Lubbock, *The Craft of Fiction* (1921): Chapter 8 recaps the difference between **panoramic or pictorial** and **scenic or dramatic narration.** Pictorial is where the reader faces the author as he or she presents memory or exploration of a character, for instance in Flaubert. Scenic is like drama onstage—the reader turns to face the actors themselves, and the author is generally in the background (as in Maupassant as opposed to Thackeray).

**Watt declares *Moll* not fully a novel:**

* “Defoe's strength was his ability to create brilliant episodes, but the fact is that Defoe's novels lack both the consistency in matters of detail of which many lesser writers are capable, **and the larger coherences found in the greatest literature**.
* Defoe is the master illusionist, and this almost makes him the founder of the new form. Almost, but not quite: the novel could be considered established only when realistic narrative was organized into a plot which, while retaining Defoe's lifelikeness, also had an intrinsic coherence; when the novelist's eye was focused on character and personal relationships as essential elements in the total structure, and not merely as subordinate instruments for furthering the verisimilitude of the actions described; and when all these were related to a controlling moral intention. It was [Samuel] Richardson who took these further steps. . . .

Watt says plot contradicts stated moral purpose: Moll's penitence seems unconvincing, or at least it's never really put to the test of sacrificing material for moral good. Her final prosperity seems ultimately based on her criminal career.