

The Country House in the English Novel

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In this colloquium, we will discuss the importance and meaning of the country house in the English novel. From Jane Austen to Ian McEwan, novelists have imagined the country house in various ways: sometimes it is merely setting for plot and development of character, but at other times it can assume richer significance as, for example, an emblem of rural and social harmony, a monument to the political and cultural power of its inhabitants, or a crucial aspect of English national identity. Our emphasis will be upon the twentieth-century novel as we place our readings in the context of imperial decline, World War II and shifting ideas about social class and gender. We will also talk about the growth of the British Heritage Industry in the 1980s, the popularity of Masterpiece Theatre, the enduring popularity of "Country Life" magazine, and visits to country houses organized by the National Trust.

Thursdays

January 21 Jane Austen, Pride and Prejudice (1813) (Penguin)

February 4 E.M. Forster, Howards End (1910) (Penguin)

February 18 Virginia Woolf, Between the Acts (1941) (Harvest)

March 4 Evelyn Waugh, Brideshead Revisited (1945) (Back Bay Books)

March 25 Kazuo Ishiguro, The Remains of the Day (1989) (Vintage)

April 15 Ian McEwan, Atonement (2001) (Doubleday)

April 22 (Make-up)