My study attempts to illustrate the generic development of the family novel in the second half of the twentieth century. At its beginning stands a preliminary classification of the various types of family fiction as they are referred to in secondary literature, which is then followed by a definition of the family novel proper. With its microscopic approach to novels featuring the American family and its (post-)postmodern variations, my study marks a first step into as yet uncharted territory. Assuming that the family novel has emerged as a result of the twentieth century's emphasis on the modern nuclear family, focuses on the family as a gestalt rather than on a single protagonist, and is concerned with issues of social and cultural significance, this study examines how the family novel's forms and its conflicts are functionalized for the respective author's cultural critique. From post-war to postmillenium, family novelists have sketched the American family in various precarious conditions, and their texts are critical assessments of contemporary socioeconomic and cultural conditions. My close reading of John Cheever's The Wapshot Chronicle (1957), Don DeLillo's White Noise (1985) and Jonathan Franzen's The Corrections (2001) intends to reveal, shared values as well as significant differences on a formal as well as on a thematic level. As my examination of the respective novel shows, authors react to social and cultural change with new functionalizations of the family in fiction. Unlike the general assumption of literary criticism, family novels do not approach new cultural developments in a conventional or even traditionalist manner. A comparison of White Noise with The Wapshot Chronicle demonstrates that DeLillo's postmodern family novel transcends the rather nostalgic perspective of Cheever's 1950s work. Similarly, Jonathan Franzen's fin de millennium family novel The Corrections holds a post-postmodern position, which can be aptly described by Franzen's own term 'tragical realism'. The significant changes and developments of the family novel in the past five decades demonstrate the need for a continuous reassessment of the genre, and in this respect, my study is merely a beginning.


**Metadata**

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The novel touches on the issues of finding faith after World War II, even when religion appears to be incompatible with postmodern life. As an atheist, I didn’t find the religious aspect of the book too obnoxious. On the contrary, it was approached from a deeply humanist perspective with a compassionate attitude towards human flaws and questioning mind. One day, the oldest son (Teddy) and his wife (Ruth) arrive unannounced in the family house from America after nine years of estrangement. Ruth becomes the centre of attention and power struggles, which results in some disconcerting and weird scenes. The novel tells the story of a very dysfunctional family. It starts off with a rape of the ill mother by the father, which results in the conception of twins. The form and genre of postmodernism is mainly the novel with elements of different genres and forms. E.g.: Graham Swift, “Out Of This World” the novel says that human nature is very complicated, unpredictable, complex. And no one has the right to be the judge of another person. This book is a story of a grandfather, father and his daughter. Indeterminacy affects the form of contemporary literature, too. Postmodernist authors tend to combine elements of various genres and forms of writing. Fiction can go hand-in-hand with documentary material, and historical facts; philosophy can intermingle with detective episodes or elements of horror stories. Thus, the traditional borderline between high and mass culture has been eliminated. In a word, “anything goes”, as one critic put it. The post-Civil War transition to industrial strength and expansion left New England’s shipping industry and economy weakened, signaling the end of America’s cycle of origination and settlement. Immigrant and African American experiences narrated in novels of the 1920’s showed aspects of the American Dream that Alger overlooked in his optimistic portrayal of opportunity for most whites. However, McKay’s cynical Ray and Cather’s optimistic Alexandra still strove to enter the mainstream. Discusses recurring themes in the American novel, including alienation, death, family, immigrant life, race, nature, and the search for identity. Features excerpts from novels of all literary periods that exemplify these themes. Bradbury, Malcolm.