Some useful critical terms

The novel may be described in terms of many literary genres. Here are some of them, with definitions:

1. **Satire**: a poem or in more modern usage, a prose work, in which vices or follies are held up to ridicule. This may be individual, or a section of society. There is a strong English tradition, running from Chaucer in the 15th Century, through Dryden and Pope in the so-called Augustan Period (early- mid 18th century). In the 20th century, it was found in prose works, novels, short stories and newspaper features, and was strongly developed in television comedy, which would satirise politicians and public services, as well as individuals. Its purpose is to hold up a mirror to vice or folly, with the intent to improve. It has been described as cutting off a man’s head with a sword, but leaving it still poised on his shoulders- in other words, subtle and deadly! Jonathan Swift: *Satire is a sort of glass, wherein beholders do generally discover everybody’s face but their own.*

2. **Comedy of manners**: satirical comedy dealing with the manners or fashions of a particular class. Most often used of drama, where the behaviour of people, rather than situation, provides the comedy. The audience comes to expect certain characters to behave in set ways peculiar to them.

3. **Tragi-comedy**: a mixture of two genres, with the lightness of touch and humour we would expect from comedy (which may also end with a wedding), combined with the more serious vein of human disaster and death to be found in tragedy. There may be an element of inevitability in the way the disaster unfolds. In this novel, some of the comic elements can also be seen as near farce with ridiculous situations and inappropriate actions.

4. **Domestic comedy**: relying on the background details of one particular home/ family to provide humour.