

Four wheels of the Chariot: A Critical study of Selected English Novels

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Abstract

The chief literary contribution of the eighteenth century was the invention of the fashionable novel, that at this time is that the most generally scan and potent form of literature. The present paper aims to focus on the pioneers of the novel were Richardson, Fielding, Smollett, and Sterne. Novel established as a major literary genre in the hands of four major novelists of 18th century. Fielding's Joseph Andrews compiles with Fielding's theory of the comic epic in prose. Samuel Richardson's Pamela one of the first great epistolary novels is a peculiar collection of letters. Tristram Shandy by Laurence Sterne was considered as anti novel. The Adventures of Roderick Random considered as a picaresque novel by Smollett. This paper makes an attempt to analyze the four different categories of novel such as Comic epic in prose, Epistolary novel, Picaresque novel, and Anti novel with selected works of eminent novelists. Men of genius as Richardson, Fielding, Smollett and Sterne, they are the four wheels of the English Novel Chariot, who by their joints efforts bought this new genre to such maturity.

KEYWORDS: Modern novel, Comic epic in prose, Epistolary novel, Picaresque novel, and Anti novel

Introduction

The eighteenth century--"our glorious and indispensable eighteenth century"- is well-known within the history of English literature significantly for the birth and development of the novel. The 18th century was the golden age of the English novel. The English novel developed throughout the eighteenth century, partly in response to an expansion of the middle-class reading public. There was a public demand for the novel. With the enlargement of the center category, more people could read and they had money to spend on literature. There was already a high interest in biography, biography, journals, diaries, memoirs. The rise of the novel in 1740 marks the top of prose fiction designed entirely for amusement and diversion. The important nature of the new sort is sort of continually apparent from this date, and usually there is a well-defined purpose clearly expressed in the author's preface. The theme of the eighteenth-century novel is that the history of persons, regarded as moral beings, and treated in relation to each other and to society. The second and third quarters of the eighteenth century were years significantly watchful and demanding all told matters poignant the non secular, moral, social, and political conditions of the times. **Professor Saintsbury** designates Tobias George Smollet (1721-1771), Laurence Sterne (1715-1768), Samuel Richardson (1689-1761) and Henry Fielding (1707-1754), as the "Four Wheels of the Wain" of the English Novel in the eighteenth century. Sir Walter Scott called Fielding "the father of English Novel". He said that Fielding had "high notions of the dignity of art which he may be considered as having founded.

Henry Fielding- Joseph Andrews as a Comic Epic Novel

The comic epic poem in prose is a work of prose fiction with elements of comedy, epic, and romance. Henry Fielding is regarded as one of the greatest writers among English novelists of the Eighteenth century and was determinant in the emergence of the novel as a respected literary form. He is the first novelist to analyze the nature of his art and lay down its rules. Fielding created the “comic epic novel”. *Joseph Andrews*, is in literary history a work of great importance. In the evolution of the kind of literature – the Novel, it is a hallmark. The novel *Joseph Andrews* came out in 1742 Fielding thought he had hit upon a new genre of literature and it was his prerogative as well as his duty to explore its possibilities. He called ‘*Joseph Andrews*’ a ‘comic epic in prose’.

Fielding’s use of epic similes lends a flavor of its own to the novel. When Mrs. Slipslop tries to make a moral assault on Joseph, Fielding writes, “As when a hungry tigress who long has traversed woods in fruitless search sees within the reach of her claws a lamb, she prepares, leaps on her prey so did Mrs. Slipslop prepare to lay her violent amorous hands on poor Joseph.” A heroic epic has a towering hero, grand theme, a continuous action, a journey to underworld, wars, digressions, discovery, high seriousness, a high ethical lesson and declamatory diction in it and in “*Joseph Andrews*” there is a normal hero, a journey from one place to another place, mock-wars, digressions, discovery, humour, a high moral and a bombastic diction in it. The element of wars and conflicts is extremely vital in an epic and it’s no exception in “*Joseph Andrews*”. First of all, there is a conflict between lusty advances of lady Booby and Mrs. Slipslop and chastity of Joseph. Also there is a conflict between generosity of Parson Adams and miserly Parson Trulliber and Mrs. Tow-Wouse. Then we see some real action in the form of a war in an inn where Joseph was insulted by the host. Parson Adams was annoyed and challenged the host. There started the primary war between each the parties. The funny situation of the bloody fight in which Parson Adams gets doused in hog’s blood is described in Homeric terms. Then Parson Adams rescues Fanny from a ruffian and then, a squire attacks Parson Adams with his hounds and a fierce battle is fought between hunter’s hounds and parson Adams. Joseph’s encounter with the dogs let loose on Parson Adams is delineated in epic-style.

Another epic convention is the use of digression. There are two major digressions in “*Joseph Andrews*”. There are, seemingly, moot stories of Leonara and Mr. Wilson. Epic writers considered them as embellishments. Fielding, however, makes the interpolations thematically relevant. For, these are not irrelevant in reality. The formula of discovery, as described by Aristotle, an essential element of an epic, has also been used by Fielding. In the end of the novel, we see that Joseph is recognized to be Mr. Wilson’s child and Fanny as the sister of virtuous Pamela. High seriousness is an important element in epic. But in “*Joseph Andrews*” there's an excellent deal of comedy and humour, because it is a comic epic novel; indeed in *Joseph Andrews* the comic point of view is sustained throughout the novel. But behind this comedy, there lies a serious purpose of reformation. We have a gamut of vain and hypocritical characters in Parson Trulliber, Parson Barnabas, passengers in the stage-coach, Mr. Tow-wouse, Mrs. Slipslop, Peter Pounce and the various Squires. The surgeon and the lawyer and the magistrate are also some other example of hypocrisy and vanity. Each of those characters provides an excellent deal of humour and amusement beneath a heavy purpose. Every epic encompasses a ethical

lesson in it and this is often no exception with a comic book epic. Fielding's views on morality are sensible, choked with logic and tolerance, liberal, versatile and a lot of realistic.

Samuel Richardson Pamela as a Epistolary Novel

Epistolary novel, a novel told through the medium of letters written by one or more of the characters. The first "true" novel is usually said to be "Pamela" by Samuel Richardson. In Richardson's novels the reader begins to think about the characters as real individuals.. In his novel "Pamela" the story is told through a series of letters. Because we are reading someone's letters, we feel that person is much more real, and really does exist. It makes Richardson's characters more complete and complex. His major works are: Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded (1740-1) Clarissa (1747-8) the novels of Samuel Richardson are concerning real individuals and are told as ethical lessons. Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded is an epistolary novel centering on the connection between a pretty servant girl and her blue blooded master. An epistolary novel is one during which a personality (or characters) tells the story through letters (epistles) sent to a friend, relative, etc., and/or through journal entries. Samuel Richardson began writing Pamela in 1739 and completed and published it in 1740. In Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*, there is a stress on letters and their use. The entire narrative is delivered to us through the use of letters, written by the protagonist herself towards her parents, with a few responses as well. Letters are thus information being departed from Pamela towards her family and to us as well. Yet, another character is additionally aware of great deal of this information; the male Master of the household in which she serves. He intercepts her very first letter and urges her to continue writing, all the while hinting at a narrow allowance of subject coverage. "...you ought to be wary what tales you send out of a family. Be faithful and diligent; and do as you should do, and I will like you the better for this." (44).

However, Pamela's journal-writing - imaginative and powerful as it may be - does not always allow her to escape her material reality, and the relationship between her act of writing and her anguish becomes more and more clear. Soon we realize, for example, that the act of writing journals helps her deal with (and forget about) her daily sorrows. Furthermore, the revelation of Pamela's troublesome feelings is in a sense dependent upon her private journals. Yet writing does not necessarily ease her suffering; rather, the anguish seems to have an existence of its own and it appears to grow more and more intense as she writes. For example, the first letter of v. I opens, "I have great trouble" (p. 43). Later she writes, "O my dear mother, I am miserable! truly miserable!" (p. 53) and "All the next day I was very sad, and began my long letter" (p. 58). Her "careful but loving" parents also write on her pain, stating that "[their] hearts bleed for [her] distress" (p. 59).

Richardson enjoys hinting to his reader that Pamela's thirty-two letters and dozens of journals, somehow, have a life of their own. Likewise, Pamela's correspondences (letters and journals) invite the reader to sit next to her as she puts pen to paper. As Roussel points out in his study, "Reflections on the letter: the reconciliation of distance and presence in *Pamela*" (1987), this technique decreases the narrative distance between author and reader and creates a very close and immediate relationship between the two (Roussel, p. 101). For example, Pamela writes:

"But I am forced to break off [from writing]. Here comes Mrs Jervis" (p. 77);

"I must write on, though I shall come so soon; for now I have hardly any thing else to do" (p. 108); and "I will now, my honoured parents, proceed with my journal" (p. 491).

The directness of the narrative is evident, and this immediate structure helps to eliminate the "foreignness" of the letters. An excellent matter indicator that illustrates the facility of Richardson's epistolary format to project the psychological development of Pamela seems towards the end of the novel, when the heroine returns triumphantly to Bedfordshire and stops writing in order to "apply [herself] to the Duties of the Family" (p. 387). The writing of letters in the narrative gives the reader an idea - and this is the only instrument of time that we have - of how many days have passed in Pamela's life, and also when certain events have occurred. Thus, key phrases, especially those that open and close the first thirty-two letters are fundamental clues to figuring out when events happened in relation to others.

"I know my dear parents that you longed to hear from me soon; and I sent to you as soon as I could" (p. 65) "So I will make use of it now, and tell you all that has happened since my last letter" (p. 70)

Laurence Sterne -Tristram Shandy as an Anti Novel

Anti novel is a type of prose fiction in which conventional or traditional novelistic elements are rejected. Laurence Sterne is legendary for only one novel Tristram Shandy. There was no real story. Tristram himself was not created as a "hero". He was the opposite—a kind of "anti-hero" - and by breaking all the principles, "Tristram Shandy" was not a novel, but a type of "anti-novel". The novel has an extraordinary technical virtuosity, and a very modern philosophy of time. It seems to be a chaotic, disorganized "stream of consciousness" The novels of Laurence Sterne are about the importance of life and individuality.

Tristram Shandy, the anti-novel, derives from the fusion of traditional elements and new techniques. The traditional elements are: 1. the picaresque form; 2. the mock-heroic treatment; 3. the cast of characters, both high and low; 4. the biographical structure; 5. authorial digressions. The new techniques are based on: 1. the association of ideas; 2. a new sense of time. Influenced by Locke's theories on time and association of ideas author wrote a novel that aimed to represent however the human mind works. The author was significantly curious about the principle of psychological time: it consists of the succession of ideas that float in our mind without being influenced by human rationality. These ideas are thus connected by chance only. Consequently though author tried to present the reader some written record references that may facilitate him in contextualizing the work, he put chronological time aside focusing on the protagonist's mind. The author tried to represent the precise succession of ideas within Tristram's mind.

The passage is written in the first - person. Tristram itself narrates about the night when he has been conceived. Tristram was conceived in the night between the first Sunday and the first Monday in the month of March of the year 1718. His conception was interrupted by a trivial incident that his mother asked his father in the middle of that important event: Tristram mother asked his father if he had not forgot to wind up

the clock. The question had been caused by the fact that Mr. Shandy, one of the most regular men in everything he did, had made it a rule to wind up a large houseclock and to have sexual intercourse with Mrs. Shandy on the first Sunday night of every month. That is why, by an unhappy association of ideas, his wife could never hear the said clock wound up but the thought of some other things popped into her mind, and viceversa. Hence her question, which, by interrupting what Tristram's parents were about when they begot him, may have negatively affected the formature and temperature of his body, genius and mind and influenced the transfusion of the animal spirit from father to son.

This novel by Laurence Sterne made nonsense of all the "rules" that had been used before. There was hardly any real story, a lot of the story was told backwards, there were pages and pages which had nothing to do with the story, and Tristram was not created as a "hero". He was. In fact, the opposite of a "hero" – he was an "anti-hero" - and by breaking all the rules, "Tristram Shandy" was not a novel, but a kind of "anti-novel". Sterne was a great joker, who delighted in breaking the rules. Using caricature, digressions, absurdly over-done language to describe the most ordinary things, and a collection of quite mad characters, Sterne makes glorious fun of the earlier serious novelists like Samuel Richardson, and even of the more jokey Henry Fielding. But underneath the jokes and nonsensical parts, and underneath what seems to be disorganised chaos, there is a very solid strength of form and story that has made "Tristram Shandy" a lasting and important novel. It tells a very human story, told in loving, even sentimental detail, of the two Shandy brothers-Walter and Toby-and their sometimes philosophical, and sometimes ridiculous ways of dealing with the world around them. Both men are dominated by women: Walter Shandy by his wife, Uncle Toby by the greedy Widow Wadman. Both men see a world that tries to stop them having a good time, and both men refuse to give in to the pressures of the world. The novel has an extraordinary technical virtuosity, and a very modern philosophy of time (it takes the hero four books in which to be born.) It seems to be a chaotic, disorganised "stream of consciousness" (i.e. writing down the ideas in the order in which Tristram thinks about them) but its ideas about the importance of life and individuality give it an emotional sense of completeness.

Tobias Smollett- The Adventures of Roderick Random as a picaresque novel

The picaresque novel (Spanish: picaresca, from pícaro, for "rogue" or "rascal") is a genre of prose fiction that depicts the adventures of a roguish, but "appealing hero", of low social class, who lives by his wits in a corrupt society. Tobias George Smollett was a Scottish poet and author. He was best noted for his picaresque novels, like *The Adventures of Roderick Random* and also the *The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle*. They are stories of affection and adventures in war – with some special details regarding sailors within the Navy (based on his Smollett's own experiences). They give a "real" portrait of eighteenth Century English life (especially the stories of the sailors, the Navy, doctors, etc.) The novels of Smollett are excellent examples of the "picaresque" style. For Smollett, the picaresque form offered the opportunity to expose a noble hero to the corrupt influences of the world. The hero's ability to resist temptation proved him worthy.

The Adventures of Roderick Random is a picaresque novel by Tobias Smollett, first published in 1748. It is partially based on Smollett's experience as a naval-surgeon's mate in the British Navy, In the preface, Smollett acknowledges the connections of

his novel to the two satirical picaresque works he translated into English: *Gil Blas*, *Don Quixote*. The novel is set in the 1730s and 1740s and tells the life story (in the first person) of Roderick "Rory" Random, who was born to a Scottish gentleman and a lower-class woman and is thus shunned by his father's family. Smollett offers a vicious portrayal of the hypocrisy, greed, deceit and snobbery peculiar to the times, especially among the upper and middle classes. He exposes the brutality, incompetence and injustice of the Royal Navy. *The Adventures of Roderick Random* technically modeled on Lesage's *Gil Blas* and so belongs to the older picaresque tradition. A series of episodes, told with vigour and vividness, are linked together in the life of the selfish and unprincipled hero who relates them. Smollett ushers us into a disagreeable world in which the commonest emotions spring from malice, envy, spite and cruelty, while mutual derision forms the basis of most acquaintance ships. Smollett assigns a moral purpose to the novel, which is to rouse "that generous indignation which ought to animate the reader against the sordid and vicious disposition of the world. The picture of life which he presents in his novels is not a pleasing one." He depicts a world of spite and ill-natured, envy and conceit. Mutual suspicion exists even between friends, Roderick Random he sets out to, In the preface of *Roderick Random* (1748), Smollett says,

"I have attempted to represent modest merit struggling with every difficulty to which a friendless orphan is exposed from his own want of experience, as well as from the selfishness, envy, malice and base indifference of mankind."

Roderick Random in the story a poor, penniless boy who, having been forsaken successively by his father and uncle, is left to find for himself, After a number of mishaps and adventures he is appointed surgeon's mate on a man-of-war. He has horrible experiences on board the warship, his ship wrecked, robbed by his mates and left naked on the shore. Dogged persistently by malice and misfortune he is at last arrested and cast into prison. But now his uncle hunts him out, secures his release and takes him aboard on a trading voyage. Finally he meets his father who has become fabulously rich. He now goes to marry Narcissa, the beautiful girl with whom he had fallen in love. Roderick, a young Scottish man, is left with no money and no parents. His uncle, Lieutenant Tom Bowling of the British Navy, helps him. Roderick comes to London with his old school-friend, Trap, and gets a job as a surgeon. He is cheated and tricked, and forced on a warship, fighting some sea battles. He returns to London, gets a job as a footman, falls in love with a girl called Narcissa, but is again tricked and kidnapped and taken to France where he joins the French Army. He is rescued by his uncle, Tom Bowling, and his friend, Trap. He returns to England, but gets into trouble and is put in jail. He tries to marry a very rich woman because he needs the money. He then meets Narcissa again, but cannot marry her because he has no money. He takes another job on a ship and meets a very wealthy merchant, Don Roderigo. He discovered that Don Roderigo is his own, long lost father. Roderick now is rich, happy and returns to marry Narcissa. His friend, Trap, marries Narcissa's maid. They face a happy future.

Conclusion

Novel is a modern form of literature. It is born as a result of print that could be a mechanical invention. Novels might reach a bigger audience as a result of print. Novels began to be written from the seventeenth century and flourished within the eighteenth century. New teams of lower-middle-class; alongside the standard noble

and refined categories in England and France fashioned the new audience of novels. With the growing readership, the earnings of authors increased. This made them free from financial dependence on patronage of aristocrats. They became freelance to experiment with completely different literary designs. During the 18th century, it was treated with a lot of contempt by the literary establishment. It was the era of novels. Different categories of novel with selected works of eminent novelists Richardson, Fielding, Smollett and Sterne appreciated. The work of this foursome is of monumental significance, particularly because they were not only our first novelists but some of our best.

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