



## CHAPTER I

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ENGLISH NOVEL TO FIELDING

Although the English novel was truly defined in the eighteenth century, it had its roots in earlier times. The first source of the novel came from the Spanish picaresque tales which were prominent in the fifteenth century and quickly spread to France and England. The picaro or rogue was a social outcast; the stories are concerned with feudal society and its morality. Cervantes' Don Quixote, which followed the picaresque tradition, had great influence on the English novelists, especially Fielding.

The original English novels copied the French "heroic romances." They were exaggerated and artificial, but had contemporary settings and references to well-known persons. The artificialities of Lyly and Sidney were stimulated by the pastoral romance from Hellenistic convention. Then came the adventure romance and the romance of love. The modern novel has its roots in the medieval romances, such as Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, dealing with the legends of King Arthur and his knights. The fictions of Malory and Mandeville telling about adventurous actions stimulated the imaginary narratives of later writers. Besides, the domestic literature of roguery emphasized the picaresque influence and provided a lively narrative of low life.

Thomas Deloney with his bourgeois fictions might have been the originator of the novel if his tradition had been maintained. The sketches of characters by Sir Thomas Overbury and John Earle influenced the revelation of character in the later novel. The

English essay, such as in the Sir Roger de Coverley papers, often provided fiction that needed only a tight plot to approach the short story or novel. Allegories, such as Pilgrim's Progress, presented fiction with a forcing seriousness, imaginative ingenuity and realism. In addition to these, there were other lesser domestic sources: the jest books and chapbooks of unprofessional writers and the collections of ballads telling the adventures of popular heroes of the type of Robin Hood. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the true novel started to take shape. The familiar types were love and adventurous romances, domestic and bourgeois tales, stories of horror and the underworld. Plots were incoherent or improbable; backgrounds were vague and psychological characterization was insufficient. To form the true novel, writers would have to produce a unified and reasonable plot structure, individualized and believable characters and especially an illusion of reality. The social conditions of the eighteenth century provided the atmosphere to achieve these qualities.

The novel presents the literary medium for a bourgeois society. In the eighteenth century, there was a widely increased reading public which was mainly middle class people. These people wanted to read stories related to them and which were written in the language they used everyday. They liked the stories to end with financial and domestic rewards which were their main goals in life; for example, most novels end with the happy marriage or reunion of the hero and heroine. The novel also helped mankind understand the position of the individual in the larger social

organism. In the eighteenth century, there was an expansion of cities, a great mobility of population from town to city, an increase in trade, and a greater individual and social self-consciousness. Man met more people than before and he came to realize the relationships between himself and other people in society.

The novel is a unified picture of man and society. Since the eighteenth century was an age in which intellectual people were most interested in analysis and synthesis, so the novel adopted this quality. It presented a world which seemed to be real in plot, background, and atmosphere. Besides, the novel is a rationalistic examination of human personality. The scientific rationalism in the eighteenth century also had a great influence on fiction writing. Most of the eighteenth century novelists analyzed man's nature and action by using the scientific method. Most novels are addressed in the second person to the reader. This results from the eighteenth century polite conversational and personal appeal, such as the "dear reader" approach. In addition to these, the novel emphasizes that man must be his own hero and bear his own burdens. Experience in the eighteenth century taught man to fight for his own stability in the world. The novel essentially deals with a man's search for love and happiness, and a man's fight in order to earn his living in a competitive society.

The nearest resemblance to the novel was Nashe's The Unfortunate Traveler. It was perhaps the most outstanding picaresque novel in English. It is realistic about the eighteenth century world but it has no informing plan and consistent moral attitude. Modern prose did not begin until the time of Dryden and it was Defoe who made the first important contributions towards the development of a novel in his tales of adventure and pseudo-autobiographies. The important eighteenth-century novelists were Daniel Defoe, Samuel Richardson and Henry Fielding. Their works provided the characteristics of the eighteenth-century novel.

Defoe may be called the first English novelist because his stories had a dominant unifying theme with convincing realism achieved by first-person narrative and the middle-class viewpoint. But some writers, such as Grebanier in his English Literature, comment that Defoe's Robinson Crusoe and Moll Flanders were actually collections of loosely connected episodes, written in the style of the picaresque romances of Spain which narrated the adventures of a rogue. What his stories lack in order to be classified as novels is a unified plot. The plots are not steady; and his fiction is better classified as romance or narrative stories.

However, Defoe's characterization is excellent. Moll is made remarkably real and alive by the first person point of view. The excellent things in his books are descriptions of actions, sense of solidity and their painstaking but vital sense of reality.

Defoe's novels are the proper study of mankind; there is a kind of pattern of a man or woman's life which is different from the early rogue novels. Robinson Crusoe is in one sense a story praising the bourgeois virtues of individualism and private undertaking but, in another more important sense, it demonstrates the necessity of social living and the struggle of mankind through work against nature. Crusoe is characterized by middle-class English virtues - he is industrious, practical, pious, shrewd, and is the idealization of middle - class solid endurance. Rousseau considered Robinson Crusoe "the finest of treatises on education according to nature." The impressiveness of the book lies in its detailed realism.

Moll is the most famous female picaroon in English literature. There is no melodramatic scene and the story is mostly imaginary. The autobiographical method provides a true confession form; it is so well suited to reflect the tension between the inner and the outer world; however, it lacks perspective. Moll is a characteristic product of modern individualism in that she feels she owes it to herself to achieve the highest economic and social rewards. In contrast to the picaresque stories, the author and reader take her and her problems much more seriously. Defoe's concentration on isolated individuals is close to the view of life held by many writers today. The moral point of view is ambiguous and there is no moral discovery in Moll Flanders, for all the moral talk. The only moral significance springs directly from the moral consciousness of the heroine.

In Defoe's novel, sexual and personal relationships are less important than economic security. The minuteness is about things, not persons or sentiments. His story is simple and positive; although the picture has its selfish and sordid aspects, such as New-Gate Prison. His skilful handling of the episode outweighs his weakness of construction, lack of detail, moral or formal pattern. Defoe is the master illusionist and this almost makes him the founder of the new form.

As Defoe established the novel or romance of incident, Richardson established the novel of character. His type of novel is well-known for its closely psychological characterization. He wrote genuine novels in the epistolary form and created different types of novel. He started the novel of personality in his vivid presentation of a human being struggling for self-realization. Defoe's characters seem to be animals fighting against the traps of environment in order to survive; but Richardson's characters appear for the first time in English prose fiction as complete and complex human beings. He portrays the inner conflicts of human minds. Richardson also created the novel of sensibility which is characterized by its quality and intensity of feeling. He presented the sentimental pattern - a story of love and grief which brings out the virtues of purity, innocence, delicacy, devotion, generosity, faithfulness and especially prudence.

Richardson established the novel of moral conflict in society as well. His novels concern themselves with a terrible conflict

between a general theoretical principle and a special problem of an individual. The special problems in his novels are rather extreme and incredible to the modern reader. However, his presentation of human problems, which differs from Defoe's presentation of basically animalistic problems, makes him a true father of the English novel. Richardson's novel also has a concentrated unity. He chooses a crisis emotionally related to only some individuals. Defoe summarizes the conflict in a few pages but Richardson enlarges it by moving the emotion back and forth. As a result, Richardson changes English fiction from a series of narrated or described events into a concentrated psychological analysis. Moreover, Richardson also began the novel of tragic intensity. In the eighteenth century, the tragic drama was considered the highest literary achievement but there was in fact no really outstanding dramatic tragedy produced. In Clarissa, Richardson created a successful bourgeois tragedy which can be compared with the world's great tragedies. Although his tragic method is not directly followed by other novelists after him, he started a new idea which leads to the presentation of the tragic view of life in later novels.

Richardson's Pamela makes a great step forward in the history of the English novel. The subject was mainly the single love episode found in previous short novels, but its treatment was much closer to that of a romance. The unique literary quality which Pamela brought into fiction was a detailed presentation of personal relationships. The reader gets inside the minds of Richardson's characters as well as inside their houses. The minuteness was about

persons and sentiments. George Saintsbury concludes that Pamela is really the first novel because there are no characters in literature before Pamela whose daily thoughts and feelings we know so intimately.<sup>1</sup> This stress on the importance of personal relationships and individualism is characteristic of modern society and novels.

Pamela is the first great character creation of English prose fiction. The minor characters are mostly caricatures. The plot is very simple but its heavy sentimentality assures its success. The book is very long because the epistolary method causes repetitions and the plots have little complexity and are slow in development. Richardson had a moral purpose in this book; the heroine married her master and lived happily as a reward for her virtue. But there was some doubt about Richardson's moral. Fielding interpreted Richardson's heroine as a hypocrite who employed her feminine role to trap a rich booby into marriage. Arnold Kettle commented about Pamela, "We are asked to admire actions and characters whose moral basis is quite unadmirable." Ian Watt said, "Pamela: a work that gratifies the reading public with the combined attractions of a sermon and a strip-tease."<sup>2</sup>

Clarissa is probably the longest novel in English literature. Its plot is more complicated and dramatic than Pamela. Like Pamela, it reveals Richardson's unusual knowledge of female psychology and had great influence on Rousseau's novel, La Nouvelle Héloïse; Rousseau wrote in the Lettre à d'Alembert that



"no one, in any language, has ever written a novel that equals or even approaches Clarissa." <sup>3</sup> Clarissa shows his characterization at its best; many of the minor characters are well drawn, with his usual attention to minute psychological analysis. The story is very emotional and has an inevitable tragic ending. It is so powerful that the readers are closely involved. There is a horrible sense of being trapped and being unable to avoid misunderstanding, hatred and jealousy. This makes Richardson the first tragic novelist. Arnold Kettle commented that "We shall not enjoy Clarissa unless we approach it sympathetically, through history. But if we approach it only through history we shall not enjoy it either. The past and the present are at once different and inseparable. It is precisely because he stumbled on one of the real contemporary dilemmas of his own time that Richardson achieved an art which has relevance to ours." <sup>4</sup>

The conflict of Clarissa - love versus money - is one of the important recurring conflicts of the modern novel. In this novel, Richardson deals with two difficult problems. One is the hero-villain, a libertine of disgusting nature who is able to charm the pure, intelligent Clarissa and also the reader. The other one is about his heroine who rebels against parental authority and decides to choose her husband herself. Clarissa represents the charity of soul: although she is seduced by her lover and suffers from her family authority, she nobly forgives all who injured her and leaves God to judge them. Clarissa is interesting not because of a quality of sentiment or analysis but of the presentation and

examination of a real and concrete human problem. Dr. Johnson called Richardson "the greatest genius that had shed its lustre on this path of literature," and considered Clarissa "the first book in the world for the knowledge it displays of the human heart."<sup>5</sup> Ian Watt fairly judged Clarissa as well; "The epistolary method, it is true, lacks the pace and crispness of Defoe's narrative manner, but Clarissa is what Moll Flanders is not, a work of serious and coherent literary art, and one which, by the almost unanimous consent of his contemporaries at home and abroad, was the greatest example of the genre ever written."<sup>6</sup>

Both Richardson and Fielding saw themselves as founders of a new kind of writing: the novel. As a novelist, Fielding wrote three important novels: Joseph Andrews, Tom Jones and Amelia. He also wrote pamphlets like Shamela and Jonathan Wild. In his novel writing, there are some differences from that of Richardson such as characterization, theme, moral attitude and narrative point of view. However, the differences between them are by no means manifestations of two opposite and irreconcilable kinds of novel, but rather contrary solutions of problems which spread through the whole tradition of the novel.