

AN ANALYSIS OF THE CRITICISM IN BLACKWOOD'S
EDINBURGH MAGAZINE ON THE EIGHTEENTH
CENTURY NOVEL

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Reverend Roger A. Emmert

Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
University of Dayton
Dayton, Ohio

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APPROVED BY:

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INTRODUCTION

The periodical publications of the eighteenth century served many purposes. They were used as chronicles, or records, or registers of past events, which conveyed information and opened their pages to original contributions of poetry and prose. Such periodical publications failed, however, because they began to promote sectional and party objectives - High Church, Evangelical, Tory, Whig and Extremist. "No periodical in the eighteenth century achieved an authoritative position in the estimation of the general public."¹

During the nineteenth century periodical literature underwent a great change. There grew a very real distinction between the review and the magazine, although there was always a tendency on the part of each to borrow the special characteristics of the other. The review discussed works of literature, art and science, and also considered national policy and public events. The magazine, on the other hand, was a miscellany. It did not confine itself to reviewing. It analyzed and criticized the works and doings of others; it awarded praise and censure to authors and statesmen. To its pages, authors and poets sent original contributions. Thus, much valuable and permanent literary matter first came before the public through the instrumentality of the magazine.

¹A. W. Ward and A. R. Waller (eds), The Cambridge History of English Literature, Volume XII, The Nineteenth Century (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1949), p.140.

An excellent example of the nineteenth century magazine is William Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine which appeared in 1817. "Its appearance was hailed as an event in English letters." Such adjectives as "great" and "brilliant" were used to describe it.² The tone of this magazine was generally flippant and satiric. It maintained a Tory flavoring. To our knowledge no general index exists for this magazine. Certainly such a publication warrants one. It contains a vast amount of very excellent and useful information covering a great number of interesting topics.

Undoubtedly one topic of interest to the nineteenth century reader was the novel, and to be more precise, its origin and early productions. Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine tells us:

The modern English novel, which is in everybody's hands nowadays; which gives employment to crowds of workpeople, almost qualifying itself to rank among the great industries of the day; which keeps paper-mills going, and printing machines, and has its own army of dependents and retainers, as if it were cotton or capital, - the English novel, we say, arose, not with any gush, as from a fountain, but in a certain serene pellucid pool, where a group of pretty smiling eighteenth-century faces, with elaborate 'heads,' and powder and patches were wont to mirror themselves in the middle of George II's reign.³

Our concern in this thesis is with this "group of pretty smiling eighteenth-century faces, with elaborate 'heads'" as they are pictured on the pages of Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine.

²Edwin Emerson, A History of the Nineteenth Century (New York: P. F. Collier and Son, 1950), p.625.

³"Historical Sketches of the Reign of George II. No. X. The Novelist," Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, CV (March, 1869, p. 253.

There are thirteen pictures, some more complete than others.

They are indexed according to year in the following schema:

- 1819 - "DeFoe On Apparitions"
Vol. XI, November, pp.201-207.
- 1848 - "A Few Words About Novels - A Dialogue, In A Letter
To Eusebius" Vol. LXIV, October, pp.459-474.
- 1852 - "Miss Mitford's Recollections" (Richardson mentioned
briefly) Vol. LXXIV, March, p.271.
- 1852 - "Jeffrey - Part II"
(Sterne mentioned briefly)
Vol. LXXV, October, p. 471.
- 1856 - "The Scot Abroad"
(Defoe's Memoirs of a Cavalier
mentioned briefly)
Vol. LXXIX, May, pp. 583-584.
- 1858 - "The Soldier and the Surgeon"
(Defoe mentioned briefly)
Vol. LXXXIV, July, p.23.
- 1860 - "A Word About Tom Jones"
Vol. LXXXVII, March, pp.331-341.
- 1861 - "Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy"
(Sterne's Tristram Shandy mentioned briefly)
Vol. LXXXVII, July, p.325.
- 1862 - "Life, Literature, and Manners. - Part V.
No. VIII. - On Style and Diction"
(Sterne mentioned)
Vol. XCI, June, pp.703-704.
- 1863 - "Life, Literature, and Manners. - Part XIX.
No. IX. - On The Novel"
(Eighteen-century novels in general)
Vol. XCIV, September, pp.270-271.
- 1865 - "Life of Sterne"
Vol. XCVII, May, pp.540-555.
- 1869 - "Historical Sketches of The Reign of George II.
No. X. - The Novelist"
(On Richardson)
Vol. CV, March, pp.253-269.
- 1869 - "A Great Whig Journalist"
Vol. CVI, October, pp.457-487.

To facilitate our examination of these pictures, this thesis will be divided into five chapters. Chapter I will deal with the eighteenth-century novel in general. Chapters II, III, IV and V will treat the four leading novelists of the eighteenth century: Defoe, Richardson, Fielding, and Sterne. The subject matter of this work will be limited to the articles indexed above. It is hoped that such a study will give the reader an insight into the way the nineteenth century viewed the novels of the eighteenth century. Our findings will be summarized at the end of this investigation.

All art is necessarily about life. The eighteenth century novelists viewed the life of their day very realistically. According to their own ability, they portrayed life as they saw it. Such portraits were the subject of much criticism in the nineteenth century. We ask the reader to join us as we begin to investigate a section of these criticisms.

CHAPTER I

THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY NOVEL

Any reading experience is a collaboration between the reader and the writer. The reader's mind and senses and feelings have to be receptive. He must surrender himself to the writer and be open or alert to his offerings. Criticism, of course, is inevitably subjective and partial. The reader will respond to one novel and not to another; he will admire one grudgingly and another wholeheartedly.

Did the nineteenth century reader and critic collaborate with the novelists of the eighteenth century? Did he respond, favorably or not, to their novels? We hope to give an insight into the answers of these questions by examining two articles from Blackwood's Edinburgh Review which discuss briefly the leading novels of the eighteenth century. The articles are:

- I. "A Few Words About Novels - A Dialogue, In A Letter to Eusebius" (October, 1848)
- II. "Life, Literature, and Manners - Part XIX: Caxtoniana" (September, 1863)

A

"A Few Words About Novels - A Dialogue, In
A Letter To Eusebius"
(October, 1848)

Let me, Eusebius, use the dialogue form, as in some former letters: suffice it only to tell you previously,

that I took the Curate's advice and refreshed myself by country-air exercise.⁴

Thus, Aquilius begins a letter to his close friend Eusebius. The letter is in dialogue form; the speakers are Aquilius and the unnamed Curate. The subject of this dialogue is the novel: "I took the Curate's advice and invitation, and for a time did my best to throw off every ailment . . . in the society of the happy Curate and his wife. And here we read novels."⁵

Eusebius makes it quite clear that he reads novels at a Curate's home. It seems that reading novels needs some justification.

Even at the Curate's house did we read novels - those "Satan's books," as a large body of Puritans call them whilst they read them privately; or, if seen, ostensibly that they may point out the wickedness in them, and thus forbid the use of them; as an elder of the demure sect excused himself when detected at a theatre, that he 'came to see if any young folk were there.' How often do people do what is right, and defend it as if it was a wrong, and apologise for what gives them no shame! Thus the Curate commenced the defense of novel-reading.⁶

The Curate opens his defense of the novel by asking pointedly the meaning of the absurd cry against works of fiction.

He then gives several reasons for valuing fiction:

1. Fiction is the proper study of mankind.

⁴"A Few Words About Novels - A Dialogue, In A Letter To Eusebius," Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, LXIV (October, 1848), p. 459.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

2. It is wise to foresee, as fiction does, life under all its possible contingencies. Fiction arms us for coming events.
3. Fiction is the food to natural curiosity.
4. Fiction speeds the learning process and completes education.⁷

Aquilius comments on this reasoning: "Your literary men are as fierce combatants as ever sprang from the dragon's teeth, and have as strong a propensity to slaughter each other."⁸

Aquilius has now given the Curate an opportunity to discuss the conflict of authors, which he agrees does exist.

They write now as much against each other as formerly. Fielding proposed to himself to write down Richardson; and religious novelists of our days take the field against real or imaginary opponents. Richardson, able as he was, very cunningly set about his work - his Clarissa.⁹

The Curate sees Richardson as "contriving to render popular among prudes a most indecent work."¹⁰ He considers this book was actually put into the hands of young people as an antidote to novels in general. But, this appeared to Fielding as abominable hypocrisy, corrupting under disguise. Personally he did not like Pamela, but admired Clarissa. "And to this honest indignation are we indebted to him for his Joseph Andrews, the antidote to the very questionable morality, and unquestionable moral, of the virtue-rewarding Pamela."¹¹

⁷Ibid., p. 460.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid.

Aquilius uses a recent experience to comment on

Pamela:

I was told the other day by a lady, that there are few kitchens in which Pamela is not to be found. She detected her own maid reading it, and was obliged to part with her, for setting her cap at her son, a youth just entered at College. The girl defended her conduct as a laudable and virtuous ambition, which the good author encouraged, - was not the title *Virtue Rewarded*?¹²

So much for *Pamela*. Aquilius immediately turns to the novel-writing system of nearly half a century ago - "the sickly sentimentalities of the 'All for Love' school - the restless progeny not allowed to rest on circulating library shelves till their rest was final - whose tendency was to make young persons of either sex nothing but fools."¹³

After discussing some specific examples of this "sickly sentimentality," Aquilius returns to the discussion of novels in general.

Novels are not objected to as they were; now that every sect in politics and religion have found their efficacy as a means, the form is adopted by all. And with a more vigorous health do each embody their principle. The sickly sentimentality school is sponged out - or nearly so. The novel now represents the mind of a country in all its phases, and, if not the only, is nearly the best of its literature. It assumes to teach as well as to amuse.¹⁴

Aquilius characteristically concludes his statements with

¹²Ibid., p.461.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid., p.462.

a statement which will provoke the Curate's thoughts. Aquilius here wishes that the novel, in its development, "had not taken the drama by the neck, and held it under water to the drowning."¹⁵

The Curate vehemently objects to this statement. "You are wrong. The novel has not drowned the drama. It is the goody, the Puritan school, had done the work."¹⁶ The Curate classes the play and the novel together, under "works of fiction." In an aside he asks this question:

Why, by the way, did the self-styled religious world that set up a crusade against novelists show such peculiar favor to John Bunyan, and his Pilgrim's Progress - the most daring fiction? I believe that very imaginative, nay, very powerful work, has gone through more editions than any other in our language: a proof at least that there is something innate in us all, - a natural power of curiosity to see and hear more than actual life presents to us - that sends all, from infancy to age, in every stage of life, either openly or secretly to the reading of tales of fiction. We all like to see Nature herself with a difference; and, loving 'to hold the mirror up to nature,' we prefer that the glass should be coloured and love the image more than the thing.¹⁷

Toward the end of this dialogue, while discussing the category of light-reading, Aquilius turns from nineteenth century examples to the novels of Fielding.

- notice Fielding's admirable English? Our best writers have had a short vocabulary, and such was the case with Fielding; but he is the perfect master of it. The manners he portrays

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid.

are gone by. Some of the characters it would be impossible to reproduce, and yet we know at a glance that they were drawn from life.¹⁸

The mirror which the novel holds up to nature seems to be possessed only by a privileged few of the upper class. Symbolized in the persons of Eugenius and the Curate, these few are able to grasp the initiative nature of the novel. The novel centers properly on nature. It reflects nature and teaches by its example. Through its knowledge of nature the novel is able to entertain. Those who misunderstand the essence of the novel are ignorant of its true value.

B

"Life, Literature, and Manners - Part XIX:
A Series of Essays on Caxtoniana"
(September, 1863)

The tone of this article is set by a description of the literary dictator of England in the latter half of the eighteenth century, Dr. Samuel Johnson. He is highly praised in this article. Almost eight complete columns, or four pages, are devoted to an analysis of his genius. "His knowledge of the world has a more robust character than Pope's, embracing larger views of practical human life."¹⁹ This knowledge of the world is shown in his seizure of catholic truth applicable

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹"Life, Literature, and Manners - Part XIX: Caxtoniana," Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, XCIV (September, 1863), p.270.

to civilized men everywhere. But, "his true genius lay in the masculine strength of his common sense; and in spite of his prejudices, of his dogmatism, of his frequent intolerance and occasional paradox."²⁰ Our author notes that "it is not in capitals that Johnson's works are most esteemed as authoritative but rather in the sequestered homes of rural book-readers."²¹

Continuing to speak of the eighteenth century, the present article turns to the novel of manners.

Within the period of which I speak, rose in England the Novel of Manners - a class of composition which necessitates a considerable amount of knowledge of the world. Richardson, Fielding, Smollett and Sterne, not only laid the vast foundations, but raised thereon the able structures, of an art new to the literature of our country. All four of the writers named exhibit knowledge of the world in very high degree.²²

In Fielding, this knowledge of the world is most apparent from the astonishing vigor with which his characters are depicted and his conceptions expressed. He is superior to Smollett. Nevertheless, Smollett is a great novelist because of his graphical treatment and dignified conception of narrative art.

"Fielding's one defect is his too frequent preference of conventional particulars in the selection of types of characters."²³ Therefore, he is rather national than cosmopolitan^{tan} and has no perceptible influence on the higher forms of

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid., p. 271.

fiction in foreign countries."24 Our essayist illustrates these defects by comparing Fielding to Sir Walter Scott. He concludes that, even though Fielding's characters are narrow, they are of considerable value for they give us a good picture of the characters and manners of the eighteenth century..

"These defects cannot be said of Richardson and Sterne."25 Richardson has had, and still retains, an extraordinary influence over the imaginative literature of France; Sterne an influence no less effective on that of Germany. "Goethe has attested to the fact that he owed much to Sterne. . . indeed the influence of Sterne may be visibly traced in German literature to this day."26

These four eighteenth century novelists are very briefly, but exactly, compared.

The fact is, that while, in the production of a story, not only Sterne, but even Richardson never have sight of mental development. In this they are many degrees inferior to Fielding and Smollett. Yet, in conception of character and delicacy of treatment we recognize in the former two a finer order of art."27

The conceptions of character in Clarissa are founded in the preferences of generals to particulars; that is, "they are enduring types of great subdivisions in the human family, wholly irrespective of mutations in scene and manners."28 The knowledge

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid.

of the world manifested in the creation and completion of such characters is "subtler and deeper than even Fielding exhibits in his lusty heroes and buxom heroines."²⁹

Clarissa is also praised for its simplicity and "naiveté." Despite the weary tediousness of Richardson's style, "the beauties which relive it are of a kind that bear translation or paraphrase into foreign languages with a facility, which is perhaps the surest test of the inherent substance and cosmopolitan spirit of imaginative writings."³⁰

Of the four novelists mentioned in this article Sterne is the most harshly criticized. His characters are called "lavish and exquisite" but condemned as "mere sketches and outlines."

Though his [Sterne] finest passages in composition are marred and blurred by wanton conceit, abrupt impertinence, audacious levity, ribald indecorum, - still how the lively enchanter enforces and fascinates our reluctant admiration! Observe how little he is conventional, how indifferent he is to the minute study of particulars, how typical of large generals his sketches of human character are.³¹

Sterne is complimented, however, for his surprising knowledge of the world in Tristram Shandy, "the boundless world of men, in town or country alike - that world which has no special capital."³²

This article is much more specific than the first article

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid., p.272.

³²Ibid.

examined in this chapter. Here authors are praised and criticized for their ability to create characters true to life. In the first article, "A Few Words About Novels - A Dialogue . . .," the author is interested with the threefold work of the novel: to imitate nature, to teach manners, and to entertain. The ordinary, middle-class reader, and the ignorant lower-class admirer of the novel are portrayed as misusing and misunderstanding the objectives of the novel in this article. The present article seems to exonerate such readers for their esteem of the novel as matter to be considered authoritative.

Chapter I: Conclusion

Fiction is the proper study of mankind; it nourishes natural curiosity; it speeds the learning process and completes education. Fiction is wise for it sees life under all its possible contingencies; it arms the reader for coming events. The author of "A Dialogue . . ." rightly concludes that the reader of novels does not have to justify his actions. A large body of Puritans call novels "Satan's books;" they read privately or justify their reading by saying they read novels to point out the wickedness in them. Their reasoning is faulty. Novels are about life. This life may be pleasant or crude, and to present life as it actually exists is good art.

Literary men are fierce combatants; they write against each other; Fielding and Richardson are excellent examples. Fielding considered Pamela abominable hypocrisy. His Joseph Andrews was an antidote to the very questionable morality of

the virtue rewarding Pamela, which is read by almost all and serves as a justification for improper actions because it was titled "Virtue Rewarded."

Some authors rejected real life and turned to "sickly sentimentality." Such writing was short lived. The eighteenth century quickly returned to life and its views of life are impossible to match or reproduce. The nineteenth century must accept the fact that to read of immorality is not to be immoral.

These same ideas are expressed in another article "Life, Literature and Manners . . ." Novelists such as Richardson, Fielding, Smollett and Sterne showed an exceptional knowledge of human nature. Their works are classified as "novels of manners." Although they all possessed certain defects, their extra-ordinary ability to write a true picture of life endeared them to the world and their influence was wide spread. If the novels of these great men were immoral, their influence would not have endured.

CHAPTER II

DANIEL DEFOE

That Defoe occupies an important place in the development of English prose fiction no writer on the subject denies. With regard to that more complicated thing, the novel, his position is defined in various ways, according to the conceptions of individual critics of what constitutes a novel.

There are those, Jusserand and Professor Saintsbury, for example, who find the novel in existence, if not exactly flourishing, long before Defoe began his longer narratives. Others find in Robinson Crusoe the first English novel. Still a third group reserves the term novel for nothing earlier than Pamela.³³

This diversity of opinion, concerned with externals only, detracts little from the importance of Defoe as a writer, or novelist. Also, the fact that Defoe's name is absent from the two articles quoted in Chapter I, can be easily explained by classifying the authors of these articles in the third group mentioned in the above quote.

An amazing amount of material has been written on the literary energy of Defoe. Defoe was a political writer, a journalist, an editor, world traveler and pamphleteer before he

³³Arthur Wellesley Secord, Studies In The Narrative Method of Defoe (New York: Russell and Russell Inc., 1963), p.11.

turned to writing long narratives in 1719 with the publication of the first part of Robinson Crusoe. We are not surprised to find four articles mentioning Defoe in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine. These articles will be discussed in their chronological order.

A

"Defoe On Apparitions"
(November, 1819)

This very humorous article - humorous mainly because it quotes at length from Defoe's book of essays on apparitions - begins by distinguishing the times of old, with "shirt of mail and red wine and 'hobgoblins' prowling about in all directions," from the present day (1819) of sofas and potatoes and disbelief in apparitions.

Our reader will pardon these distinctions of ours, which would, perhaps, be more in place in the Edinburgh Review, or some such sober and philosophical journal, and are not altogether compatible with the plan of our Magazine, which aims chiefly at lighter and more amusing matter. But, after all, we suspect that mere fun and jocularly may be carried a little too far, and therefore it is that we occasionally seek, as at present, to address ourselves to the gravity of our very gravest readers. Come, then, most grave and gracious friend, and turn over with us a few pages of old Daniel De Foe's Essays on Apparitions.³⁴

Our author, with tongue in cheek, examines first Defoe's

³⁴"De Foe On Apparitions," Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, VI (November, 1819), p.202.

ideas on the devil. Defoe definitely believes the devil exists. But "some people speak as if nothing but seeing the devil could satisfy them . . . there was such a person . . . Satan does not think fit to justify the reality of his being by appearing . . . and telling them 'in full grimace' who he is."³⁵ Holding this opinion, Defoe gives us a very short chapter on the apparition of the devil in human shape. He exposes the extreme absurdity of supposing every spirit that confabulates with mankind on earth "the devil."

Should, however, the devil appear to any of his readers, Defoe advises them "Not to be flurried - not to shun him and fly from him, but to speak 'briefly and clearly' to him."³⁶ Our author perfectly agrees with Defoe's thinking on this matter: "an extempore address of a few pithy words is, in such cases, infinitely preferable to a long set speech. Indeed, we have observed, in all accounts of the devil's appearances, that he is very lame at a reply, and it is the easiest thing in the world to give him a setdown - a complete squabash."³⁷

The worse thing about the devil, according to Defoe, is, "that he does not in general appear in all his formalities and frightfuls, but to-day in one disguise, to-morrow in another - you see him, and you don't see him - you know him and you don't know him, how then to know what to say to him."³⁸ On the whole

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid., p.203.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid.

it would seem that Defoe, though willing to allow some merit to the devil, did not consider him a very formidable character, except from the weakness of his opponents. He also thinks the devil is no prophet.

Taking leave of the devil, our author discusses Defoe's ideas on "unembodied spirits." Such spirits inhabit the planets. "The inhabitants of Saturne," Defoe remarks, "must live without eyes, for what is the use of light where there is no light? or be so illuminated from their own internal heat or light, that they can see sufficiently from their own beams."³⁹

We turn to a third type of spirit, the "nowhere spirit of unbounded space." Defoe plainly remarks: "This is indeed a plausible and satisfactory theory."⁴⁰ Several very good stories are interspersed through the volume. The stories have an air of truth about them that almost dares the reader to question them.

Our author recommends this volume for delightful and enjoyable reading. The warnings it contains will prove to be profitable to all. But, it is also profitable for another reason. "Defoe On Apparitions" gives us an insight into the moral problem Defoe faces in some of his novels. Robinson Crusoe is aware of the physical presence of good and evil as a young man rebelling against authority, and as a lonely psychotic

³⁹Ibid., p.204.

⁴⁰Ibid.

on a desert island feverishly striving to accept God. Moll Flanders and Roxana turned from their immoral ways and died repentant sinners when they realized the presence of good. Defoe acknowledges the existence of good and evil but seems unable to cope adequately with them. He was unable to understand that evil is found in things in the world, just as inequality is found there. Things as such are good. Hence, the subject of evil is good. Evil destroys good in the precise point in which it negates good. The evil of sickness destroys health, but not the possibility of recovery by medical cure or by miracles.

B

"The Scot Abroad"
(May, 1856)

In no way, perhaps, can a better general idea of the importance of the Scottish troops in the wars of Gustavus be formed than by a perusal of the 'Memoirs of a Cavalier,' attributed in the critical world by a sort of acclamation to De Foe.⁴¹

Some have maintained that Memoirs of a Cavalier must have been printed off from the actual diary of memorandum-book of an English gentleman volunteer. "If this be the case, only De Foe's pen could have given it so searching and specific an individuality. Only De Foe could have so decorated it for the press."⁴²

The Scottish contingent hold the first place throughout

⁴¹"The Scot Abroad," Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine,
LXXIX (May, 1856), p. 583.

⁴²Ibid.

the narrative. Defoe was not a friend of the Scottish people. Our essayist concludes that his people, the Scott, must have rendered outstanding services to merit such a solitary praise from Defoe. He gives Defoe the title of an "ingenious author, able to stand the test of investigation."⁴³ This article not only shows the wide range of Defoe's interest, but also that he wrote with firmness and conviction. Our author uses Defoe as an authority to prove his thesis.

C

"The Soldier and the Surgeon"
(July, 1858)

His poverty makes men soldiers, and drives cowards into the armies: and the difficulty to get Englishmen to list is because they live in plenty and ease.⁴⁴

This is an incidental reference in a longer article and Defoe's wide range of interest is again manifested. His brief words are used as an authoritative statement. He is described as "the sagacious Defoe;" his style is termed "rough;" his truth is labeled "sound."

D

"A Great Whig Journalist"
(October, 1869)

"Let us describe him more particularly; for he was a

⁴³Ibid., p.584

⁴⁴"The Soldier and the Surgeon," Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, LXXXIV (July, 1858), p.23

man destined to play an important part in the political and literary history of his time, and to leave a great name behind him." The man is Daniel Defoe, "better known to our age as the author of Robinson Crusoe, the most popular book in the English language."⁴⁵

This outstanding article on Defoe as journalist is objectively written. Its author has written with understanding and sympathy about this tragic life:

Seldom, in any age, has a man of robuster intellect appeared. Without fortune or position; born in humble rank; without much education . . . with little to aid him in the upward struggle but a stout heart, a strong constitution, a clear and logical mind, a tenacity of purpose, and a firm faith in the opinions he held and the principles he advocated, - he fought for nearly fifty years with either sword or pen . . . for the civil and religious liberty of Great Britain. Though he suffered fine, imprisonment, bankruptcy, the pillory, and the scorn of men, yet, like Milton before him, he never bated one jot of heart or hoped in any difficulty, however great or apparently overwhelming.⁴⁶

The first section of this essay mentions many important facts about the writings of Defoe.

Though now almost wholly known as a novelist, it was not as a writer of fiction that his influence was mainly felt by his contemporaries. His great work was to write the political pamphlets that, in default of newspaper articles, directed public opinion at that critical period in English history. He was beyond question the ablest and most active pamphleteer of his time.⁴⁷

⁴⁵"A Great Whig Journalist," Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, CVI, (October, 1869), p.457.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Ibid., p.458.

Continuing this discussion, our author investigates the custom of representing Defoe as a consummate master of the English language. "Yet he scarcely deserves such high praise. He writes as a writer of plain, easy, unadorned, simple, colloquial English; his style, somewhat of the driest; he lacked poetic touch and warmth."⁴⁸

Defoe's great characteristic was the singular power which he possessed of putting himself so thoroughly into his works. "He put himself so completely in place of the fictitious personages whom he invented, as to make fiction look more like truth than truth itself. His 'Robinson Crusoe' and his 'Journal of the Plague of London' are in this respect unrivalled. Upon these two books his fame will always rest."⁴⁹

After a lengthy and complete survey of Defoe's life as a whig journalist, the article concludes with a sympathetic note.

Thus lived and died the great Defoe - so great, that he might have been considered good, had it not been for the personal treachery towards his political opponents . . . let us cast no stone on his memory. The world knows his sins. All that can be pleaded in extenuation of his divergence from the right line is, that he valued his party above his own honour, and thought he was doing the State true service.⁵⁰

There was no attempt in this article to relate Defoe's

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Ibid., p.459.

⁵⁰Ibid., p.511.

politics or other journalistic writing with his novels. Our author seems to imply, from his description of Defoe's style, that Defoe was popular but not with the upper-class. His writings, including novels, were attractive to those of incomplete education because they were easily read.

Chapter II: Conclusion

A practical journalist and editor, Daniel Defoe wrote on politics, commerce, religion, and published pamphlets. He turned to longer, narrative writing when he was past fifty. because there was a much larger public for narrative than for political articles.

Though his works of fiction fill sixteen solid volumes, to the world at large he is simply the author of Robinson Crusoe. The rays of that blinding sun have quite extinguished even such brilliant stars as Moll Flanders and Roxana and A Journal of the Plague Year. The essayist cited in section four of this chapter would include A Journal of the Plague Year with Robinson Crusoe. However, the fact remains the same: Defoe's works of fiction are, for the general public, not remembered.

CHAPTER III

SAMUEL RICHARDSON

Our seventh article from Blackwood's Magazine, "The Novelist," shows that Samuel Richardson performed an invaluable service for his contemporaries: "he fixed attention on the immediate texture of social living and of inner emotional reaction to it, while at the same time extracting from the material a scale of value which were acceptable and welcome to contemporary sensitivities."⁵¹

Richardson's personal history is of a unique kind in literature. He had lived half a century in the commonplace world before anyone suspected him of possessing genius:

He spent much of his life printing and publishing the much rubbish of other people's, with the greatest patience, and had the appearance of occupying his own life without any thought of producing its mysteries for the edification of others. One of Fielding's biographers declares contemptuously that Richardson 'had never known the want of a guinea, or committed an act which the most rigid moralist could censure'."⁵²

⁵¹Elizabeth Drew, The Novel (New York: The Dell Publishing Co., 1963), p.39.

⁵²"Historical Sketches Of The Reign of George II. No. X - The Novelist," Blackwood's Edinburgh Review, CXLI (March, 1869), p.254.

vulgar artifice of the ordinary novelist, rendered more effective than usual by an unusual audacity and animation. Its character-pointing is admirable for its kind, but the kind is not high. It fails in portraying characters of any depth or variety. Its knowledge of human nature is by no means profound. Its humor is coarse, but abundant. Its irony keeps the reader in uninterrupted amusement. Its merit as a picture of manners is unsurpassed.

This article earnestly suggests to all really independent critics, that, instead of echoing their own or other men's verdicts on Tom Jones, they should re-read it with impartiality. The only point which admits of something like demonstration is that on which the critics have hitherto been most nearly unanimous - namely the construction of Tom Jones; and on this point our author believes it may be said that he has proved them wrong.

In our opinion this is the most scholarly article used in this thesis. It mentions again the question of the novel and morality, and admits that some novels seem coarse and in bad taste. Perhaps this is due to a defect in the author's presentation of life, it must necessarily delve into the immoral. In Tom Jones immoral acts are presented as fitting in with the characters and developing the story. It is only through an inclusion of such acts that Fielding was able to create the true picture of life that is presented in Tom Jones.

CHAPTER V

LAWRENCE STERNE

By the end of the eighteenth century the novel had been established as a popular, if not the most popular, literary form. The seeds of the novel's later developments had been planted. "Defoe and Fielding stressed realistic social satire and comedy; Richardson reveled in sensation, sentiment, psychological revelation and, as he saw it, tragedy. Sterne is the forerunner of all the later novelists who have created worlds of their own."⁷⁹ Sterne exploited the interplay of external and internal time. He was unique in his own day, and unlike any other major novelist since, in making no pretensions to be doing something but enjoying himself and entertaining his readers.

Until the publication of the first two volumes of The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, when he was forty-seven, he was entirely unknown. But Tristram Shandy quickly brought Sterne before the public who have never ceased reacting to his unusual world. Continuing our investigation of the nineteenth century reaction to such early novelists, we find

⁷⁹Lionel Stevenson, The English Novel (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1960), p.143.

that Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine has four articles on Sterne. These articles give a very excellent picture of the mixed reaction to Sterne's publications.

A

"Jeffrey. - Part II."
(October, 1852)

In the criticisms of Lord Jeffrey there is a casual notice of Lawrence Sterne. Jeffrey speaks of "the paltry flippancy and disgusting affection of Sterne."⁸⁰ Our author remarks that we should not so willingly renounce Sterne's cause.

Jeffrey's remarks are very brief, and they are said 'en passant,' in one of his reviews of Madame de Stael. But it startled us, we confess. A spice of affection, and of something worse than affection, cannot be allowed to throw into oblivion the genius that delineated our uncle Toby, and corporal Trim, or even our father Shandy, who, amidst all his crotchets, is still a genuine specimen of human nature.⁸¹

Jeffrey's attitude is a fairly common one and is echoed by Thackeray who most bitterly describes Lawrence Sterne as "insulting and vulgar."

⁸⁰"Jeffrey. - Part II.," Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, LXXI (October, 1852),

⁸¹Ibid.

B

"Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy"
(September, 1861)

Many have borrowed from Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy; many have "escaped the notice of posterity because the stolen property has passed into oblivion with the rest of their works: the only thief who appears to have been convicted and executed is Sterne."⁸² Among all the admirers of Tristram Shandy not one seems to have recognised "the borrowed feathers of wit and fancy which the writer so unblushingly paraded."⁸³ The reading world of Sterne's time had little acquaintance with this remarkable work of Burton.

It seems to a reader of the present day almost incomprehensible that one who possesses such remarkable original powers as Sterne did should have ventured to risk his reputation as an author by such bold plagiarisms as those, for instance, as Mr. Shandy's letter to Uncle Toby, with its obsolete medical practices. Nothing can satisfactorily explain it, but an imprudent confidence that the men of his day, who delighted in his clever 'double-entendres,' and took out their scented handkerchiefs at his tinsel sentiment, would have only sneered at the officious book-worm who should be so troublesome as to refer them to an old musty folio for the source of some of their favorite's originality.⁸⁴

⁸²"Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy, Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, XC (September, 1861), p.325.

⁸³Ibid.

⁸⁴Ibid.

C

"Life, Literature, and Manners - Part V:
Style and Diction."
(June, 1862)

Today there is far more serious criticism of the works of art than ever before. Sterne said he wanted an uncritical reader who would "be pleased he knows not why, and cares not wherefore."⁸⁵ His early readers did just that: they accepted the book as a whimsical chaos and took Tristram's own remarks at their face value: "I begin with the first sentence, - trusting to Almighty God for the second"; or "ask my pen, - it governs me, - I govern not it."⁸⁶

Now Tristram Shandy is argued about lengthily; few people seem to agree about its plan, if it has one; and any new reader finds himself in very peculiar surroundings, and is, to say the least, confused. Such must have been the case with nineteenth century readers who were subjected frequently to comments such as the following, taken from our current article: "But I should have small respect for the critic who advised the youthful author to emulate the style of Tristram Shandy. Only writers of the most practised style could safely venture an occasional, restrained, imitation of his frolicsome zoneless graces."⁸⁷

⁸⁵Lawrence Sterne, The Life and Times of Tristram Shandy: Gentleman (New York: The Modern Library), Introduction.

⁸⁶Ibid.

⁸⁷"Life, Literature, and Manners - Part V: Style and Diction," Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, XCI (June, 1862), p.704

D

"Life of Sterne"
(May, 1865)

We mean to limit ourselves to the life of Sterne, to some account of the man himself, who gave to English literature the incomparable creations of Tristram Shandy.⁸⁸

In this review of The Life of Lawrence Sterne by Percy Fitzgerald, much praise is given to the biographer "who has compiled and prepared the way for some more fortunate successor. Certainly it is a curious fact that there has been hitherto no biography of Sterne."⁸⁹ Although the author intends a review, and not a criticism, much critical information is presented.

The few facts that were known before Fitzgerald's work easily bare an unfavorable construction.

Mr. Thackeray, in one of his pleasant, stinging papers, left poor Sterne writhing before us as the clever, grinning, whining 'montebank' whom he, for his part, would have decorated with laurel and put in a pillory at the same moment.⁹⁰

In reply to this criticism, our author frankly states that Thackeray was unjust. "Thackeray is merciless to Sterne. Perhaps he was irritated by a false ring in the sentimentality of the 'Sentimental Journey' - but if he was just as a literary

⁸⁸"Life of Sterne," Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, (May, 1865), p.540.

⁸⁹Ibid.

⁹⁰Ibid., p.541

critic, he was unjust when dealing with the man Sterne."⁹¹

When Fielding and Smollett are compared with Sterne, Sterne comes out on top. "Fielding and Smollett write like carpenters: they cut and hammer and nail you up a box, with fit partitions, that holds well enough what they have to stow away in it. Sterne alone is the artist in language, and carves where the other cut."⁹²

Plagiarism is mentioned in this article with the same reaction as expressed in section II of this chapter where it was previously discussed.

In Sterne's writings it is clearly shown that he, whose manner and style was so long considered original, was, in fact, the most unhesitating plagiarist that ever cribbed from his predecessors in order to garnish his own pages.⁹³

However, a few such instances cannot deprive Sterne of his claim to originality. Could anyone prove that Sterne's manner and style were not original? "Is there any book in the English language that, to this day, stands out so distinct and solitary as 'Tristram Shandy.' "⁹⁴

Chapter V: Conclusion

For the first time plagiarism occurs as a criticism. Sufficient reasons are given for it so that Sterne's originality seems unaffected. Sterne has created a new world--his own

⁹¹Ibid., p.542

⁹²Ibid.

⁹³Ibid., p.553

⁹⁴Ibid., p.554.

personal world - with his own special time. He did not expect criticism because he wrote for enjoyment and entertainment. The essayists quoted in this chapter react in favor of Sterne when he is sharply criticized.

Sterne's genius was the genius of a humorist. He remained always true to his genius. The difficulty of grasping such genius is the reader's inability to grasp the structure of the novel and enter its world. This is not always the reader's fault. An understanding of Sterne's wit depends to a considerable degree upon slang and "double entendre" couched in terms whose secondary meanings are evanescent. The modern reader frequently misses Sterne's point and finds merely meaningless what once was ribald.

Bawdiness is the one phase of Tristram Shandy in which many readers consider Sterne's good taste to be lacking, but which, nevertheless, moved his contemporaries to quenchless laughter. This feature of his work was deplored by the Victorian critics as inartistic, because indecent. With a greater tolerance today we may regret it as ineffective because so much of it is not understood. This is not to say that Sterne never delighted in a dubious jest or a shocking story for its own sake. We can only say his unusual delight gave something new to the novel.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The souls of now two thousand years
Have laid up here their toils and fears,
And all the earnings of their pain -
Ah yet consider it again!⁹⁵

A bitter reflection by a man whose own life seemed wasted: twenty years of struggle, a thin volume of poetry and letters, and an almost forgotten gravestone in the Protestant Cemetery of Florence. All that is left of Arthur Hugh Clough is a reflection that the world was indifferent alike to the old thought and the new. A similar idea with a much different tone is expressed by William Makepeace Thackeray. In the Preface to Pendennis he complains that

since the author of Tom Jones was buried, no writer of fiction among us has been permitted to depict to his utmost power a MAN. We must shape him, and give him a conventional simper. Society will not tolerate the Natural in our art . . . Even the gentlemen of our age we cannot show as they are, with the notorious foibles and selfishness of their lives and their education. You will not hear what moves in the real world, what passes in society, in the clubs, colleges, mess-rooms, - what is the life and talk of your sons.⁹⁶

⁹⁵Walter E. Houghton, The Poetry of Clough (London: Yale University Press, 1963), p.41.

⁹⁶William Makepeace Thackeray, Pendennis (London: Macmillan and Co., 1926), Introduction.

Thackeray's more critical spirit felt itself cramped in telling the truth as he saw it. "His satirical genius was greatly hampered by the conventions of the Victorian Era."⁹⁷ He longed for the freedom to choose one's own topic of conversation.

Thackeray is most bitter in his criticism. For example, he described Sterne as "a wretched worn-out old scamp." Elizabeth Drew is one of many who thinks that such bitterness set the tone for the reputation of the eighteenth century novelist among the Victorians.⁹⁸ We feel however, that just the opposite exists. The Victorians were far from bitter. From the many critical articles just quoted, we can readily discover the attitude of the nineteenth century. They held the writings of Defoe, Fielding, Richardson, and Sterne in high esteem. They objectively acknowledged their defects. They seemed to be always on the defensive, and would not let the satirical remarks of Macaulay and Thackeray pass unnoticed.

The main point of praise was "knowledge of nature." Past writers seemed to be venerated for their truth and honesty, for their real presentation of the actual facts. Some few puritanical Victorians called such reality sinful; the essayists of Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine considered it good art.

⁹⁷John W. Cuncliffe, Leaders of the Victorian Revolution (New York: Russell and Russell, 1963), p.93.

⁹⁸Elizabeth Drew, The Novel, p.77.

Here we verge on the inescapable matter of individual taste. "Though the end of art be to please legitimately,"⁹⁹ not all art is going to please everybody. A reader may simply not like a certain book or type of books, but that will be no guarantee that the book is not art. As long as it can be pointed out that the novel contains elements of real truth and beauty, the novel will be, objectively, a work of art, whether the individual reader thinks so or not.

Art deals with the very stuff of life, takes up some incident from it, and makes explicit the end and the principles inherent in that incident by excluding the uncertainty and incompleteness which envelops it in real life. We are shown rather what men 'ought' to be than what they actually are.¹⁰⁰

In the eighteenth century novels mentioned above it is quite clear to see that the reader is told, not only what life is actually, but what life ought to be. For example, Robinson Crusoe's tempestuous voyage left him shipwrecked on an unknown island off the northeast coast of South America. After twenty-eight years, two months and nineteen days, Robinson left this island and returned to England where he began to live the peaceful life of his dreams. In Tom Jones, Henry Fielding writes: "I declare that to recommend goodness

⁹⁹Harold C. Gardiner, S.J., Norms For The Novel (New York: Hanover House, 1960), p.231.

¹⁰⁰Dom Ralph Russell, O. S.B. (ed), Essays In Reconstruction, "Catholicism and English Literature." (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1959), p.107.

and innocense hath been my sincere endeavour in this history."¹⁰¹
 Fielding's robust humor and objective method guarantee a fresh and realistic approach to the unmasking of Tom's identity and his restoration as rightful heir to the Allworthy fortune.

We admire the eighteenth century novel for its work of understanding life as it is and ought to be. This understanding stirs the reader's emotions and imagination to a realization that there is some heroism in the weakest of men. Yes, and some weakness in the most heroic. Then, with such a vision, the reader sees men as God sees them and the gap of ignorance that separates mankind can be bridged with charity and understanding. The eighteenth century novel began to build this bridge by revealing the similarities, the common interests, the common destinies and the kinship of mankind. "It yields to the sympathetic reader glimpses into persons and customs other than his own and gives an inspirational insight into an alien way of life profitable for himself and others."¹⁰²

¹⁰¹Henry Fielding, Tom Jones (New York: New American Library, 1960), p.2.

¹⁰²Howard Mumford Jones, "Literature As an Aid to Intercultural Understanding," Institute for Religious and Social Studies at Columbia University, 1960.

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