



THE ORIGINALITY AND ROLE OF SAMUEL RICHARDSON'S NOVELS IN THE LITERATURE OF THE 18TH CENTURY

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ANNOTATION

Hereby article is devoted to the study of the peculiarities of the language and style of the English Enlightenment writer Samuel Richardson, the founder of English Sentimental school and master of English epistolary novel.

KEY WORDS: *Sentimentalism, epistolary novel, moral and ethic*

INTRODUCTION

A novel, as a literary genre flourished and reached the highest level of glory in the 18th century. According to The Shorter Oxford Dictionary, novel is “a fictitious prose narrative of considerable length in which characters and actions representative of real life are portrayed in a plot of more or less complexity” (cited in Rees, 1973, p.106).

Though English novel, as a literary genre gained popularity in the eighteenth century, its beginning can be traced back to 612 BC when world's oldest literature Epic of Gilgamesh was written. Homer, who lived in 700 or 800 BC, was the first notable poet or a literary pioneer who wrote the famous Greek epics, The Iliad and The Odyssey. He established the tradition of epic which had particular structure and subject matter.

The word novel is considered to have been derived from the Latin word “novellus”, Italian word “novella” (which meant a little new thing) and French word “novella”. The term “novella storia” (short tale in prose) was first used by Italian writer and poet Boccaccio, who was first to experiment writing prose. Boccaccio popularized the vogue of collections of novella with his collection of ten short stories titled Decameron in fourteenth century.

Majority of the literary critics attribute 18th century as the time period in which novel took its birth, subsequent growth and development. With adequate literary predecessors such as Bunyan, Behn, Chaucer, Malory, Cervantes, Boccaccio and numerous other writers of the 17th century, the 18th century writers availed opportunities to further experiment and produce novel as a literary genre.

THE ORIGINALITY AND WRITING STYLE OF SAMUEL RICHARDSON'S NOVEL

Samuel Richardson was born in 1689 in Derbyshire in London. He worked as a printer of the Journals of the House of Commons and Law Printer to the King. During his youthful stage he had experiences of writing love letter for three girls through which he understood the ways of femininity and utilized the same knowledge in his epistolary novel Pamela or Virtue Rewarded. Richardson believed that the novelist had dual purpose of writing novels; to inform the readers and impart morality.

Richardson had enormous influence on the development of the novel. His epistolary works transposed the details of ordinary life into high dramas of moral decision-making. In Richardson's novels, his characters reveal the minutiae of their thoughts, their emotional responses to social conflict and their efforts to understand themselves. This innovative approach to literary form, which Richardson called ‘writing to the moment’, would spur later novelists to attempt to bring fictional narrative even closer to everyday life.

Samuel Richardson created a family-household psychological novel, which depicted the daily life of a bourgeois family. He depicted people in the everyday atmosphere of the family and household. Richardson glorifies bourgeois virtues, but at the same time shows both the cruelty and inhumanity of existing mores. He was the first to give the description of private life in a deep drama, the first English novelist who tried to penetrate into the world of thoughts and feelings of his characters. He was interested in their manners and ethical ideas. This explains the emergence of the



epistolary novel genre. The lengthy and detailed letters of the heroes make it possible to judge their psychology, their inherent individual characteristics of the perception of others. Letters convey the emotional tension of the narrator, the world of his feelings.

The main feature of Richardson's novels, which made them popular is "sensibility". To read Richardson is to enter a moral universe in which the terms "virtue" and "honesty" are used, unironically, as synonyms for virginity. Richardson's puritanism was extreme even for his period. Richardson's wit and ability to conceive characters who feel "natural"—as he rather immodestly put it in the book's original introduction—enable the novel to outpace his own didactic intentions, to become something far more lifelike and original than a morality tale.

Richardson's three novels consistently describe the life of the lower, middle and upper class of society. The long works, on which his reputation rests; "Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded" (1740), "Clarissa; or, the History of a Young Lady" (1748) and "The History of Sir Charles Grandison" (1754), in which the inner world of the character is shown. In his novels Richardson glorifies middle-class virtues as opposed to the immorality of the aristocracy. He makes his readers sympathize with his heroes. In each instance, the central story is a simple one.

Samuel Richardson published his masterpiece Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded in 1740. The publication of Pamela marked a defining moment in the literary history, the novel was not only a love story, but also a great masterpiece with a perfect layout, a study of ethics, female's psychology and as a case of depicting and recording the life and affection of ordinary people by delineating a lavish presentation of Pamela's private emotion and conditions of her everyday life.

The story is told in a series of letters from the heroine, Pamela Andrews. Pamela is a 15 year-old maid, her young master, the squire Mr.B takes a dishonorable advantage of her position, pursues her unremittingly. However, Pamela refuses him resolutely. She even leaves the estate. But Mr.B continuously aspires her, Pamela only has to escape from his stratagems and snares by resorting to her innocence and virtue. Finally, Mr.B was touched by her kindness and virtuous heart, he decides to marry her. After their wedding, Pamela suffers her married life with the burden of a profligate husband. Then, she behaved herself with honor pleasantness and humility that she made herself beloved of everybody including her husband's relatives who at first despised her. By rendering the struggle over Pamela's virtue in her own humble idiom, Richardson expresses his moral and aesthetic claim that the soul of a servant-girl is as important as that of the princess. The combination of a high moral tone with an elaborate

analysis of the heroine's emotions and state of mind made it irresistible to readers.

Clarissa Harlowe is, unquestionably, Richardson's most perfect book and among the greatest universal literary works. This realistic, sensitive, analytical, sentimental and social novel was admired by all European intellectuals. The combination of sensitive and sentimental elements, the practice of virtue and social justice, the character analysis and the reality of life in that period, is what makes this work unique. With regard to the epistolary genre, the work signified a considerable improvement on the previous novel. It tells the tragic story of a young woman, Clarissa Harlowe, whose quest for virtue is continually thwarted by her family. The Harlowes are a recently wealthy family whose preoccupation with increasing their standing in society leads to obsessive control of their daughter.

The novel was a huge success. People were absorbed in it, they pleaded Richardson not to let Clarissa die and, like Pamela, live happily ever after. However, the greatest impression on the audience made a demonic image of Lovelace. According to some estimates, Lovelace as a character is brighter than Clarissa.

"Clarissa" is a masterpiece of psychological prose. Moral duty in Clarissa's face was opposed to unprincipled Lovelace. Clarissa was good and moral, Lovelace was cynical and selfish. She was a victim, he was a predator. They are the opposite concepts of a person.

The third novel "The History of Sir Charles Grandison", undoubtedly the least accepted of Richardson's novels, despite enjoying the admiration of select minority circles, made a difficult appearance in England. Commonly called *Sir Charles Grandison*, first published in February 1753. The book was a response to Henry Fielding's *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling*, which parodied the morals presented in Richardson's previous novels. The novel follows the story of Harriet Byron who is pursued by Sir Hargrave Pollexfen. After she rejects Pollexfen, he kidnaps her, and she is only freed when Sir Charles Grandison comes to her rescue. After his appearance, the novel focuses on his history and life, and he becomes its central figure.

The "History of Sir Charles Grandison" is interesting mainly as an artistic reflection of the positive concept of the moderate democratic wing in the English Enlightenment to which Richardson belonged. His hero, Sir Charles, rejects the aristocratic code of honor in the name of new, bourgeois ideals, professes the principles of enlightened tolerance for non-believers and foreigners, encourages the development of trade and manufactures, engages in philanthropy and carries out a number of bourgeois reforms in his family estates.

Sir Charles Grandison is the first ideal male image created by the novelist, which embodied the new social ideal



of the gentleman. Richardson here followed the views of contemporary liberal philosophers and theologians, especially Shaftesbury, with his idea of altruism inherent in human nature.

In the novel Sir Charles Grandison is presented as a handsome and intelligent man of his time not only externally, but also internally.

We can clearly see it in the following phrases, where the protagonist of the novel, Sir Charles Grandison, is described by the heroine of the novel, Miss Byron, in a letter to her friend Miss Selby:

“Sir Charles Grandison, in his person, is really a very fine man. He is tall; rather slender than full; his face in shape is a fine oval: he seems to have florid health; health confirmed by exercise.

His complexion seems to have been naturally too fine for a man: but as if he were above being regardful of it, his face is overspread with a manly sunniness that shews he has been in warmer climates than England: and so it seems he has; since the tour of Europe has not contented him. He has visited some parts of Asia, and even of Africa, Egypt particularly...I wonder what business for a man has for such fine teeth, and so fine a mouth, as Sir Charles Grandison might boast of, were he vain. In his aspect there is something great and noble, that shews him to be of rank, were kings to be chosen for beauty and majesty of person, Sir Charles Grandison would have few competitors”

In this work, the author shows the main hero from the other side. In one of the passages, we can see Sir Charles's careful attitude not only towards people, but also towards animals, such kind of character representation cannot leave the reader indifferent :

“His equipage is perfectly in taste, though not so much to the glare of taste, as if he aimed either to inspire or shew emulation. He seldom travels without a set, and suitable attend-ants; and, what I think seems a little to savour of singularity, his horses are not docked: their tails are only tied up when they are on the road. This I took notice of when we came to town.

But if he be of opinion that the tails of these noble animals are not only a natural ornament, but are of real use to defend them from the vexatious insects that in summer are so apt to annoy them.”²

CONCLUSION

Richardson is interested not only in the actions of people, but also innumerable hidden, barely perceptible movements of thought and feeling, indirectly manifested in action. He draws such a thin thread between the inner and outer worlds of the characters, his smooth transitions from one action to another give his works an increasingly strict

character. In the everyday, private existence of ordinary people of his time, Richardson reveals feelings of such extraordinary depth, spiritual experiences of such subtlety and complexity, which until recently seemed to be the exclusive privilege of the "high" heroes of chivalric pastoral novels and tragedies of classicism.

Richardson learned to know his characters, so intimately, so thoroughly, as to triumph over his prolixity, repetitiveness, moralizing, and sentimentality. Equally important was his development of the epistolary novel. Other writers had used letters as a storytelling device, but few if any of Richardson's predecessors had approximated his skill in recording the external events and incidents of a narrative along with the intimate and instant revelation of a character's thought and emotions in the process of their taking place, a method so flowing, so fluid, so flexible, as almost to anticipate the modern technique of stream of consciousness. Richardson's works, along with those of his three great contemporaries—Henry Fielding, Tobias Smollett, and Laurence Sterne—prepared the way for the great achievements of the nineteenth century English novel.

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