

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ENGLISH REALISTIC NOVEL

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The foundation of early bourgeois realism were laid by Daniel Defo and Jonathan Swift, but their novels, though of a new type and with a new hero, were based on imaginary voyages and adventures supposed to take place far from England. Gradually the readers' tastes changed to find more and more of their own life reflected in literature, that is to say, the everyday life of a bourgeois family with its joys and sorrows. These demands were satisfied when the great novels of Samuel Richardson, Henry Fielding, and Tobias Smollett appeared one after another. They marked a new stage in the development of the art of writing. The greatest merit of these novelists lies in their deep sympathy for the common man, the man in the street, who had become the central figure of the new bourgeois world. The common man is shown in his actual surroundings, which makes him so convincing, believable, and true to life. Besides, we are going to presentate you one of the well-known realistic novelist Henry Fielding. Henry Fielding, the greatest representative of bourgeois realism in the 18th century, was a descendant of an ancient, aristocratic family. He studied at the college old-established boys' school of Eton.

At the age of twenty he started writing for the stage, and his first play 'Love in several Masques' was a great success with the public. The same year he entered the philological faculty of the University at Leyden, but in less than two years he had to drop his studies because he was unable to pay his fees.

From 1728 to 1738, twenty-five plays were written by Henry Fielding. Despite the scandal, Fielding's consistent anti-Jacobitism and support for the Church of England led to his appointment a year later as London's chief magistrate, while his literary career went from strength to strength. Most of his

work concerned London's criminal population of thieves, informers, gamblers and prostitutes. Though living in a corrupt and callous society, he became noted for impartial judgements, incorruptibility and compassion for those whom social inequities led into crime. The income from his office ("the dirtiest money upon earth") dwindled as he refused to take money from the very poor. Joined by his younger half-brother John, he helped found what some call London's first police force, the Bow Street Runners, in 1749.

According to the historian G. M. Trevelyan, the Fieldings were two of the best magistrates in 18th-century London, who did much to enhance judicial reform and improve prison conditions. Fielding's influential pamphlets and enquiries included a proposal for abolishing public hangings. This did not, however, imply opposition to capital punishment as such – as is evident, for example, in his presiding in 1751 over the trial of the notorious criminal James Field, finding him guilty in a robbery and sentencing him to hang. John Fielding, despite being blind by then, succeeded his older brother as chief magistrate, becoming known as the "Blind Beak of Bow Street" for his ability to recognise criminals by their voices alone.

Fielding then published *Examples of the Interposition of Providence in the Detection and Punishment of Murder*, a treatise rejecting deistic and materialistic visions of the world in favour of belief in God's presence and divine judgement, arguing that the murder rate was rising due to neglect of the Christian religion. In 1753 he wrote *Proposals for Making an Effectual Provision for the Poor*.

Fielding's humanitarian commitment to justice in the 1750s (for instance in support of Elizabeth Canning) coincided with rapid deterioration in his health. Gout, asthma and cirrhosis of the liver left him on crutches, and with other afflictions sent him to Portugal in 1754 to seek a cure, only to die two months later in Lisbon, reportedly in pain and mental distress. His tomb there is in the British Cemetery (Cemitério Inglês), the graveyard of St. George's Church, Lisbon.

The four propositions of realism are as follows.

- State-centrism: States are the most important actors.
- Anarchy: The international system is anarchic.
- Egoism: All states within the system pursue narrow self-interests.
- Power politics: The primary concern of all states is power and security.

Realism discourages rote learning and bookish knowledge and prefers hands-on experience for the purpose of learning. It gives importance on field trips which facilitate learners to correlate classroom learning with reality.

References:

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