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A STUDY OF THE EVOLUTION
OF PLOT STRUCTURE IN THE ENGLISH NOVEL FROM
APPROXIMATELY 1580 TO 1820

by
Frieda Elaine Penninger

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INTRODUCTION

The novel did not come suddenly into being in its present form as a specialized type of prose narrative; like all other art forms it was at first crude and shapeless. It developed slowly over a period of centuries, under the hands of many writers, into a particularized fiction type. There are a number of elements in the structure of the novel -- plot, setting, character portrayal, narrative style, subject matter -- but this paper will deal with only one of these: the evolution of plot structure. It is impossible, of course, to isolate plot construction completely, for it is dependent to some extent upon the other elements of the novel. Character portrayal is especially bound in with plotting, since it is now generally conceded that the action of the plot should be the outgrowth of character.

The earliest sources of the novel are found in the simple, unwritten stories told by primitive man. Although examples of prose narrative, such as the Book of Ruth and the Greek pastoral romances, exist, the early development of story-telling, which is in one sense plotting, was carried on mainly through poetry, especially through the epics, and through the drama, rather than through prose. In the late sixteenth century, a great many volumes of unformed prose fiction, each containing a thread, or perhaps several threads, of narrative, or story, were published. In these books and pamphlets the novel began to take on a distinct character. The plot has not developed continuously and unbrokenly; it is the outgrowth of the contributions of many men and women writing experimentally. Some

authors have made significant developments in the technique of plot construction. Others seem to have added nothing to the form of the novel. A few, even after centuries of development and improvement in plotting techniques, have fallen back on the most elemental forms introduced by the sixteenth century; even among men who have added much to the structure of the novel as a whole are found those whose plots are formless.

The science of plot technique is still developing; innovations and variations are still being made. In the early nineteenth century, however, with the work of Jane Austen, plot construction reached a high degree of formality. It is with Miss Austen, therefore, that I shall end my discussion of plot.

It has not been possible in this study to include every author; even some of the fairly important ones have been omitted. I have selected representative writers from each stage of the development of the novel and analyzed one or more of either his best or his most representative works. I have limited my study to the English novelists with one exception: the influence of French seventeenth century writers is indicated briefly. The novels that I have touched upon in this study are, in the order in which I have used them:

Sixteenth Century:

*Sir Philip Sydney, The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia, 1590.

*John Lyly, Complete Works: Euphues, the Anatomie of Wit, 1578,
Euphues and His England, 1590.

Robert Greene, Pandosta, 1588.

"The Repentance of Robert Greene," 1592.

Thomas Lodge, Rosalynde, Euphues Golden Legacie, 1590.

Thomas Nashe, The Unfortunate Traveler; or the Life of Jacke Wilton, 1594.

Thomas Deloney, Jack of Newberie, 1597.

Thomas of Reading, 1600.

Seventeenth Century:

*John Bunyan, Pilgrim's Progress, 1678

Mrs. Aphra Behn, Oroonoko, The Royal Slave, 1688.

William Congreve, Preface to Incognito, 1692.

Mrs. Eliza Heywood, The Female Spectator, 1744-1746

Eighteenth Century:

Daniel Defoe, Robinson Crusoe, 1719

The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders, 1722.

Roxana, the Fortunate Mistress, 1724.

Samuel Richardson, Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded, 1740.

Clarissa, or the History of a Young Lady, 1748.

Henry Fielding, The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews and his Friend Mr. Abraham Adams, 1742.

The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling, 1749.

Tobias Smollett, Roderick Random, 1748.

*Laurence Sterne, The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, 1760-67.

Nineteenth Century:

Jane Austen, Sense and Sensibility, 1811.

Pride and Prejudice, 1813.

Northanger Abbey, 1803.

Mansfield Park, 1814.

Persuasion, 1817.

Plot technique is the art of giving coherent expression to a narrative. Beyond some such simple statement as this, the exact ramifications of plot cannot be established, for many variations are

* Read only in part.

possible. However, there are several criteria by which plot technique is judged. There must be unity or continuity of incidents. Every event must have some bearing on the central movement of the book, even though it be indirectly, as in the development of a related subplot. There must be complexity; that is, many forces must act upon the protagonist in the development of the action.

In general, the plot of a novel is centered around a conflict in which several contending forces act upon a protagonist. The movement of the typical plot has several distinct divisions. It opens with a state of relative equilibrium or a status quo which is disrupted early in the story by an incident, generally designated the incitement. After the incitement the story takes on dramatic intensity and complexity, and through the rising action moves toward a crisis or climax in the affairs of the principal characters. The climax as a rule forms the turning point of the plot. After it is reached, the story moves into the falling action, in which events are unraveled and reweven so as to form some conclusion or denouement, thus ending the dramatic conflict satisfactorily. After the denouement, the plot subsides again into a state of equilibrium, forming relatively a new status quo. The author must plan and correlate his incidents so as to have them lead easily and logically toward first the climax, then the denouement. He must make a selection of events, so as to give the flavor of realism to his story. And he must, according to present standards, eliminate the deus ex machina to as large a degree as possible, making events the outcome of character rather than of chance.

In this paper I have endeavored to show how the concept of plotting has evolved, and is evolving, through the centuries. The first

prose fiction is largely formless, and yet in it are found the beginnings of plot. I have pointed out these first indications of, as well as the many factors in early prose narrative which detract from, structure. The slow development of a sense of form is traced, albeit inadequately, through the major fiction writers from about 1580 to 1820, and the gradual movement toward more and more unified plots is pointed out.

In order to make the paper intelligible to the reader unacquainted with the books mentioned, a brief resume of the plot of a large part of them, especially of the earlier and less well-known ones, is made.

To select the significant books of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and to evaluate them I found it necessary to refer to various critical works as well as to the fiction of the period. Among the later authors, however, I have relied almost completely on the novels themselves.

II

EARLY FICTION

For many centuries important English literature was written in the form either of poetry or of drama. It was not until the late sixteenth century, during the reign of Elizabeth, that prose fiction came to be of great value. The earliest attempts at prose narrative are more significant for their revelation of the developing sense of structure and of the gradual growth of plot complexity and form than for the stories they tell; for the stiltedness of the style, the difficulty of the language, and the incongruities of the incidents prevent their being much read for pleasure. Elizabethan fiction falls into three principal categories: the idealistic, pastoral romance set in Arcadian surroundings and dealing with romantic, unreal situations; the novel of manners, which purposes to portray courtly life in its splendor and correctness; and the picaresque tale, a series of exciting, gory adventures unified only by the continuation of one central character throughout the story, and depicting realistically lives of crime and wickedness.¹ A fourth type, generally neglected and less well-known, is the story dealing realistically with the lives of the ordinary people and written for the general public rather than for the narrow audience of the court and extreme upper classes.

1. Robert Morss Lovett and Helen Sard Hughes, The History of the Novel in England, Boston, New York, etc., Houghton Mifflin Company, 1932, p. 15.

The plots of these early fiction works, hardly developed enough to be called novels, are confused rather than complex. Incredible events, irreconcilable occurrences, irrelevant stories, are heaped upon the main theme so as to submerge it almost completely. Character motivation is not developed; transitional passages to mark change of time or scene are omitted; the stark statement of an event's having occurred must be accepted on the author's word, for no proof is offered. Through these wildernesses of confusion, however, there run threads of the fiction form later to be developed into the true novel. The beginnings of plot complexity, of character revelation, of the use of historical material, of social purpose, of realism, are to be found in them.

The best of the pastoral romances is that written by Sir Philip Sydney, The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia, (1590)¹ which influenced fiction directly for many years and which has had some bearing on the novel writing of subsequent generations. Mr. Jusserand states: "It is not unimportant to note that its influence lasted until and even beyond the time of Richardson."² Gordon H. Gerould goes so far as to say: "Sidney deserves far more than Lyly to be called a forerunner of the British novelists who were to come."³ The Plot is devoid of

1. This is the date of the first publication of Arcadia, four years after Sydney's death. I have not observed exact chronology here, for it seems to me that the pastoral romance, and especially Arcadia, is the most significant fiction of this period and should be discussed first.

2. J. J. Jusserand, The English Novel in the Time of Shakespeare, London, T. Fisher Unwin, 1908, p. 235.

3. Gordon Hall Gerould, The Patterns of English and American Fiction, Boston, Little, Brown, and Company, 1942, p. 27.

order and unity; credibility and logic are almost completely disregarded; character-motivation is dispensed with without qualm. The lack of plan in the writing of the book is evident to the reader, but Sydney himself gives concrete evidence of the manner in which it was composed. In a letter to his sister, the Countess of Pembroke, for whom the story was written, he says, "Your dear self can best witness the manner of its writing, being done in loose sheets of paper, most of it in your presence, the rest by sheets sent you as fast as they were done."

The story rambles along pleasantly enough, telling incident after incident as each occurs to the author, who makes no attempt to organize his plot, reconcile incredible events, justify the actions of his characters, or unify his story.¹ The basic theme centers around two characters, Musidores and Pyrocles, and the story of their loves for Pamela and Philocea. The principal events in the development of the plot are those involved in the fulfillment of an oracle:

Thy elder care shall from thy careful face
By princely mean be stolen, and yet not lost;
Thy younger shall with nature's bliss embrace
An uncouth love, which nature hateth most;
Both they themselves unto such two shall wed,
Who at thy bier, as at a bar shall plead;
Why thee, a living man, they have made dead.
In thy own seat a foreign state shall sit;
And ere that all these blows thy head do hit,
Thou with thy wife adultery shall commit.

The book opens with the shipwreck of Pyrocles and Musidores, who, after being providentially rescued from the sea, discover the King of Arcadia, Basilius, and his daughters, Pamela and Philoclea, living in seclusion. Musidores falls in love with Pamela and Pyrocles with

1. Lovett and Hughes, *op. cit.*, p. 7, "The plot of the whole admittedly lacks unity, and is full of incredible complications."

Philoclea. In order to be near the young princesses the two adventurers assume disguises, Musidores as a shepherd, Pyrocles as an Amazon. The elopement of Musidores and Pamela fulfills the first part of the oracle; the love of Philoclea for the supposed Amazon the second. Gynecia, the queen, prepares a love potion for Pyrocles, of whom she has become enamored, only to have it drunk by Basilius, who faints and appears dead. The trial which takes place at his bier fulfills that part of the prophecy. The marriages of the two young couples placed "a foreign state" on Basilius's throne, and the last part of the oracle is fulfilled through the confusion caused by both Basilius and Gynecia loving the disguised Pyrocles.¹

This is only a bare and simplified summary of the plot. The romances of the two couples are complicated to the extreme by jealousies, disguises, and misdirected affections. Additional confusion comes from the episodes of the shepherds, who do very little to further the plot, but take up many pages with their comic activities. The elaborate and somewhat incredible disguises assumed by these gallant and worthy young men add to the general confusion, especially when Pyrocles is so unfortunate as to have both the father and the mother of Philoclea, his beloved, become wildly infatuated with him. Instantaneous and faithful love characterizes the emotions of the chief characters. A picture, a fleeting glimpse, a few words, are sufficient for a complete understanding of one character by another, and usually lead to undying, unflinching love. In the case of Queen Gynecia, a

1. I am indebted for this plot summary to Ernest A. Baker, The History of the English Novel, London, H. F. & G. Witherby LTD., 1937, pp.79-82.

brief acquaintance with Pyrocles, notwithstanding a disguise which is completely deceptive to all others except his dearest friend, is able to transform her from a chaste wife and affectionate mother into a scheming, jealous, passionate woman. Pirates, storms at sea, and political schemes are accessory incidents used in weaving the plot. That Musidores suffers shipwreck, is almost drowned but is providentially rescued by shepherds, returns in search of his friend Pyrocles, who has in the meantime floated about in the ocean, almost saves Pyrocles, only to have a pirate ship appear and carry him away, must be accepted in good faith. That a second pirate ship is instrumental in freeing Pyrocles and that he is restored to Musidores within the first few pages of the book, illustrates further the incredibleness of the plot. Sydney's story is like that of a child, rambling along, sometimes rapidly, sometimes slowly, letting events fall out as they may, accounting for some unbelievable incidents by equally unbelievable explanations and simply leaving others unexplained.

Sydney, in imitation of the Italian novelle, places his story in a pastoral setting, but he adds the element of chivalry, using tournaments and passages at arms to give color to his story, to display the valour of his heroes, and to lend high excitement to the tale.

Moving on to the second type of sixteenth century fiction mentioned, we come to the novel of manners. John Lyly is generally credited with having written the first novels of manners, Euphues, the Anatomie of Wit (1578) and Euphues and His England (1580).¹ Although his

1. Jusserand, op. cit., 134, gives Lyly credit for having written the first novel of manners. "From the particular point of view of the historian of the English novel, Lyly with all his absurdities had yet one merit which must be taken into account. With him we leave the epic and chivalrous stories and approach the novel of manners."

characters come from the noble class in the main, they are not principally princes and kings and queens, but lesser gentle folk. He attempts realism in his books, but the ponderous "Euphuistic" style and the stilted manners of the characters deprive it of naturalness. It is Lyly's purpose to portray life in order to reform it.¹ Most of the needed reforms are carefully pointed out by Euphues in his complex, sermonizing monologues and in his letters, which resemble in their moral reflections those found in Pamela, written over a century and a half later. In contrast with the rich descriptions and the stress upon setting found in Arcadia, Euphues is bare of description. The plot of Euphues, however, is more carefully developed than is that of Sydney's story. Amid all the sermons, moralizings, lectures, and interpolated fables, is the triangular plot involving Euphues, Philatus, and Lucilla.² Euphues is a highly educated young Athenian who visits Naples and meets there another young man, Philautus.

Baker, op. cit., refutes this idea. "Euphues is a work of considerable importance in literary history; but the degree of its importance requires very careful evaluation. It is often described as the first English novel, or as the first novel of manners. If this be taken as meaning that it is the first work that can be regarded as falling within a loose definition of the novel, or as the first to combine a thread of narrative with a view of life and manners, the description may be accepted for what it is worth. But if it implies that Euphues was the pattern and starting point from which the English novel proceeded to develop, it is far from true . . . In certain ways it was a forerunner of the novel of manners which came into being a century and a half later; but the novelists of manners hardly knew of its existence, and probably learned nothing from it either directly or indirectly."

Gerould, op. cit., p. 21, also qualifies Lyly's achievement. "The statement, so often reiterated, that Euphues was a forerunner of the modern novel has little support in fact, if most essential qualities are considered . . . He may perhaps be designated with some justice, in respect of (the substance of his story), a collateral ancestor of novelists to come, but only on this account.

1. Lovett and Hughes, op. cit., p. 10.

2. Ibid., p. 12.

The two vow eternal friendship, and the trusting Philautus introduces Euphues to Lucilla, with whom he is in love. Euphues does not let his exalted views on friendship prevent his wooing Lucilla himself, but he receives his reward when she jilts him, too. In Euphues and His England the young gentlemen have resumed their friendship and go to England, where Philautus is at last successful in love, after which Euphues retires to a life of meditation at Silixedra.¹ This chief theme is frequently hidden under many complications and added stories, but it prevails throughout the two volumes. The very style of the language and the sentence structure offer proof that this book has been subject to more careful construction than Sydney's Arcadia.

The immediate and tremendous effect of Lyly's fiction works is shown in the numbers of books which adopted the "Euphuistic" style, and, in many cases, the name "Euphues." The most prominent of Lyly's disciples are Thomas Lodge² and Robert Greene. Lodge entitles his most famous fiction piece Rosalynde, Euphues Golden Legacie (1590)³ and introduces it as a story written down by Euphues in his cell on an island in the Atlantic for the instruction of the sons of his friend Philautus, and discovered by Lodge, who brings it to England for publication. The book resembles the "frame" story in that the opening situation is again called to the reader's attention in the

1. Baker, op. cit., pp. 58-59.

2. Jusserand, op. cit., speaks of Lodge as "a direct legatee of Lyly."

3. Lodge himself does not take this idea seriously, for in his dedication he speaks at length of the manner in which he composed the story.

concluding paragraph, in which Lodge says, "If you gather any fruits by this Legacy, speak well of Euphues for writing it, and me for fetching it."¹

Rosalynde conforms to the requirements of plot in one respect: it has unity. The entire story deals with the affairs of Rosalynde and those other persons absolutely necessary to the development of her story. The personal stories of the other characters form subplots running consecutively with the main plot and bound in with it, rather than comprising mere superfluous tales, as do most of those in Sydney's and in Lyly's works. The story moves rapidly from scene to scene, omitting all transitional paragraphs showing passage of time or change of scene. Geography places no restrictions on Lodge -- lions roar and lemons grow in the English Forest of Arden, which seems to be located in a sort of Arcadian country.² Character motivation is slight; a few days in prison bring about a remarkable and apparently permanent change in Saladyne, the deep-dyed villian; forgiveness is readily extended to him upon his profession of reform; and his belated goodness stamps itself so clearly on his features that Alinda is able to recognize his nobility as soon as she meets him, and, following the romantic pattern, fall in love with him.

It has already been mentioned that Lodge followed the pattern set by Lyly. He also drew upon the experience of Sydney for ideas,

1. The plot of Rosalynde is almost exactly that of Shakespeare's As You Like It, for Shakespeare took the idea for his play from Lodge with very little change.

2. Jusserand, op. cit., p. 205, "Probability, geography, and chronology are not Lodge's strong points."

for he writes a pastoral romance, using the traditional kings and lords for characters and the idealized shepherd's life as a setting. Disguises, impulsive but deep-seated love, and ideal friendships, are a part of Lodge's story, as they are of Sydney's.

Greene proved a more versatile imitator of Lyly. His "non-dramatic works are the largest contribution left by any Elizabethan writer to the novel literature of the day. There are of four sorts: his novels proper or romantic love stories, which he called his love pamphlets; his patriotic pamphlets; his conny-catching writings, in which he depicts actual fact, and tells of real life foreshadowing in some degree Defoe's manner; lastly, his Repentances."¹ In what is perhaps his best romance, Pandosta (1588), which, like Rosalynde, shows Sydney's influence as well as Lyly's, Greene writes a typical pastoral story of noblemen and extraordinary shepherds thrown together by a sort of fate. He uses two classical devices, the prophecies of the Oracle and the personification of Fortune. The dominant characteristic of Green's style is his frugality of detail. The reader is forced to accept the bare record of a change of attitude or belief, of an unusual action, or of a method of thinking; Greene offers no motivation, no proof, no reason for any unusual turn in the plot.²

Each of the various types of fiction produced by Greene -- romantic tales, conny-catching pamphlets, and repentances -- makes

1. Jusserand, op. cit., p. 167.

2. Jusserand, op. cit., p. 179.

some individual contribution to the development of prose fiction.¹ Pandosta is free of irrelevant stories, perhaps more because the author did not wish to take time to invent additional characters and tales than because he realized the artistic value of unity. His conny-catching pamphlets are factual statements or criminal practices. Although they are not fiction and contain no plot, they influenced some fictional works in later years. The description of pick-pocketing in Defore's Moll Flanders, for example, savors strongly of Greene's manner and material. In his Repentances he develops more fully the emotions and thoughts of the character, for repentance is essentially an emotional experience. A combination of the plot of Pandosta, the realism of the conny-catching pamphlets, and the emotional development of the Repentances would approach very nearly

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1. Ibid., pp. 167-168, gives the following note and lists the works of Greene in their various categories: "The 'Life and Complete Works' of Greene have been published by Dr. Grosart, London, 1881, 15 vols., 4ts. His principal non-dramatic writings may be classified as follows:
1. Romantic novels, or "love pamphlets": "Mamillia," 1583; "The second part," 1583; "Myrror of Modestie," 1584; "Card of fancie," 1584 (?); "Arbasto," 1584 (?); "Plantomachia," 1585; "Morando, the Tritameron of love," 1586 (?) "Second part," 1587; "Debate betweene follie and love," 1587; "Penelopes web," 1587; "Euphues his censure to Philautus," 1588; "Alcide," 1588 (?) "Menophon," 1589; "Ciceronis amor," 1587; "Orpharion," 1590 (?); "Philomela," 1592.
 2. Civic and patriotic pamphlets: "Spanish Masquerado," 1589; "Royal Exchange," 1590; "Quip for an upstart courtier," 1592.
 3. Conny-catching pamphlets: "A notable discovery of coosnage," 1591; "Second part of Conny-catching," 1591; "Third and last part," 1592; "Disputation betweene a Hee conny-catcher and a Shee conny-catcher," 1592 (attributed to Greene); "The Blacke bookes messenger" (i.e. "Life of Ned Brown"), 1592.
 4. Repentances: "Greenes mourning garment," 1590 (?); "Greene's never too late to mend," 1590; "Francescos fortune or the second part of Greenes never too late," 1590 (these two last belong also to Group I); "Farewell to follie," 1591 (entered 1587); "Greenes Groats-worth of wit," 1592; "The Repentance of Robert Greene," 1592.

the true novel.

Greene has two imitators worthy of mention, but not of discussion, for they contributed little original material to the novel -- Emmanuel Ford and Nicolas Breton.¹

Almost a decade passed after the appearance of the novel of manners before the picaresque tale was introduced into English literature through Thomas Nashe's The Unfortunate Traveler; or the Life of Jacke Wilton (1594). This book, Nashe's only prose fiction work, consists of a series of episodes loosely bound together by the fact that they are all experienced by the narrator, Jacke Wilton. The book is written in the form of a rambling fireside talk in which Jacke relates casually the important incidents of his life. The inserting of aside remarks relating to the inn in which Jacke and his audience sit, rather than to the adventures being discussed, contributes to the illusion that the story is the tale of a loquacious traveler. Jacke begins by relating several rather low tricks he had played on acquaintances whom he disliked. These first events had occurred while Jacke was in the English army stationed on the continent. The real plot of the tale gets under way after his return to England. Jacke tells his listeners that he entered the service of the Earl of Surrey, with whom he went to Rotterdam and Wittenberg. On the way back to England they exchanged positions, Jacke assuming the appearance and manners of an earl. He acquired a mistress, Diamante, during one of his confinements to prison. Shortly after meeting Diamante he resumed his correct

1. Jusserand, *op. cit.*, p. 192, "He (Greene) had, therefore many rivals and imitators who were thus only second-hand disciples of Lyly. Among these Nicholas Breton and Emmanuel Ford may be taken as examples."

identity and went to Italy, where he had the misfortune of being sold to a physician for dissection. Having escaped this fate, Jacke joined Diamante again and the two fled to Bologna, where the forceful example of the execution of several criminals turned Jacke into the path of virtue. He married Diamante, repented of his sins, and changed the manner of his living. The Earl of Surrey's love story is told briefly, but it has little bearing on the main plot. The episodic nature of the narrative is evident from this brief summary of the plot; it is this headlong rush of the protagonist from one adventure into another which makes the picaresque tale of distinct type of fiction.¹ The bareness of detail and lack of description are also typical of the picaresque.

The Unfortunate Traveler is more than a picaresque tale, however; it also contains the germ of the historical novel. Brett-Smith says of Nashe: "Whether or no he was our first true picaresque writer, he certainly founded our historical novel. To him belongs the credit of placing an imaginary hero among real personages of the past, and it is no such long way from the Earl of Surrey and Geraldine, Jack Wilton and Cornelius Agrippa, to the Earl of Leicester and Amy Robsart, Sir Richard Varney and Alasco."² Ernest Rhys also makes note of the historical element. He says: "It (The Unfortunate Traveller) makes use of an historical background from Lanquet, Sleidan, and Holinshed, introducing the Earl of Surrey and well-known figures from Henry VIII's

1. Throughout this paper I use picaresque in reference to form rather than to low-life characters.

2. H. F. B. Brett-Smith, The Unfortunate Traveler, "Introduction," Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1927, p. xii.

period."¹

The extreme simplicity of the form with its corresponding lack of plot complexity, the episodic nature of the narrative, the deficiency of causal relationships between incidents, prevent The Unfortunate Traveller from being a novel. Some of these deficiencies in plotting are overcome in the novels of Thomas Deloney, even though the picaresque influence is evident in his writing.

The two greatest contributions of Deloney to the novel are his realism and his bringing the novel to the common people. Mr. Rhys pays him the high compliment of saying: "The novels of Thomas Deloney represent the first consistent attempt in English literature at drawing material for fiction from the everyday life of ordinary people. They are the first step towards the novel as we know it today Unconsciously, he achieved a triumph of realism, his dramatic restraint and sureness of touch being unsurpassed by any other contemporary novelist."² A large part of the realism of Deloney's stories is the natural result of his writing about the common people, for he is freed from the temptation of romanticizing and idealizing his characters. However, even Deloney does not write of the lowly people; his characters are men of wealth and power who associate with the nobility and differ from them only in the lack of a title. Deloney himself makes a pointed dedication of his work to this class, saying in his preface to Jack of Newberie (1597):

1. Ernest Rhys (editor), The Shorter Novels, London, J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd., New York, E. P. Dutton and Co., Inc., 1943, p. xx.

2. Ibid., p. xv.

"Wherefore to you, most worthy clothiers, do I dedicate this my rude work, which hath raised out of the dust of forgetfulness a most famous and worthy man, whose name was John Winchcombe, alias Jack of Newberie, of whose life and love I have briefly written, and in a plaine and humble manner that it may be the better understood of those for whose sake I took pains to compile it, that is, for the well minded Clothiers." His sketches of the poverty-stricken masses, while they are sympathetic, reflecting the feeling that Deloney poured into his ballads, are brief. His short passages dealing with the popular evils of the day do point toward the novel of purpose, however, for Deloney makes positive suggestions for social betterment. Deloney contributes, too, to the historical novel, introducing kings and noblemen of note into his stories and fictionalizing history as best suits his purposes.

It has already been mentioned that Deloney's plots mark an advance over earlier attempts. His books follow the pattern set by the picaresque tale rather than that of the romance in that each of them involves a series of adventures experienced by one character and excludes irrelevant material. However, a greater number of important characters whose lives have a direct and significant bearing on that of the protagonist is developed than in the true picaresque tale; and the story is more closely unified, making some use of causal relationships. Plot foreshadowing is introduced by Deloney. For example, in Thomas of Reading he says: "And it was Coles custome to deliver his money to the gudwife of the house to keepe it till morning, which in the end turned to his utter destruction, as hereafter shall be shewed." This passage is also significant in that it illustrates the use of suspense in the novel; the reader is made to anticipate with anxiety coming events. But bareness of detail, headlong succession of events, and

inconsistency, are characteristic of Deloney's books, just as of many other Elizabethan stories. Deloney makes little attempt to vary the density of the incident; action moves at a rate arbitrarily decided by the author with no regard to its relative importance in the story -- the amassing of a fortune many occupy no more space than the description of the trappings of a horse. In Jack of Newberie, however, Deloney does condense the background material into one hasty chapter before moving on to his story proper.

These men of the sixteenth century were innovators and adventurers. They worked in a field scarcely known prior to their writing. It is true that in many respects their work is crude and ponderous and unformed, for they had to develop for themselves a style and a structure; from the past they could learn little. Yet in their books are found the beginnings of the major types of fiction which are now current.

III

THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

Many of the achievements of the early fictionists were neglected by the writers of the next hundred years. French romances, translated into English and widely read, influenced the prose narrative of the seventeenth century perhaps more than any other type of fiction. These romances, drawing heavily on the Greek pastoral romance¹ for their principal themes -- love, intrigue, and unbelievable devotion -- and for their structure, add two new elements to the development of the plot: "first, the introduction of the historical interest . . . ; and secondly, the peculiar structure of the main plot. For the story which begins on the first page is often simple enough in itself, were it not that every character introduced has also a story of his own to unfold, which story again may contain characters equally interesting and equally desirous of relating the whole of their romantic adventures. Thus the introduction of a new character is a thing the reader learns to fear; it will probably delay the main action for a book or two."²

The most important romance in the French style written in English is the Parthenissa (1654-55) of Roger Boyle, Earl of Orrery.³ The principal, or at least the opening, theme of Parthenissa is the love

1. Gerould, op. cit., p. 44, says: "They have the same cumbrous structure, borrowed from Greek romance, that Sidney had adopted, with multiple plots carried forward through the device of letting various characters relate their stories at length."

2. Walter Raleigh, The English Novel, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907, pp. 90-91. The first part of Mr. Raleigh's statement, however, must be qualified, for the use of historical material is made by Deloney and others.

3. Albert Morten and Percie Hopkins Turner, From Malory to Mrs. Behn, New York, Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1930, p. 306.

of Artabanus, a prince, for Parthenissa, a young lady of remarkable beauty as are all romantic heroines. The tournament at which Artabanus defends Parthenissa's unequalled beauty against that which Ambixules, a knight, claims for his lady, savours of the scenes of Arcadia. Parthenissa is so exceedingly fair, however, that Ambixules himself falls victim to her charms and dies with the praise of her beauty on his tongue. After sundry travellers and adventurers drift into the story and relate their histories at great length, Boyle grows weary of the tale and leaves it, with eight hundred pages written and no progress made in the principal story.¹

Fortunately, not all the fiction of this century follows the French school. Shortly after the middle of the seventeenth century realism begins to take the ascendancy over romanticism and absurdity. "Characters," or short sketches of various types of people -- drunkards, children, dissolute country gentlemen, hypocrites -- such as those written by Bishop Hall, Sir Thomas Overbury, and John Earle, while they are not developed into stories and have no plot, yet contribute significantly to the novel in that they show the developing sense of realism among both authors and readers. Addison and Steele developed the character to its highest point in the Spectator Papers and were imitated, with questionable success, by Mrs. Eliza Heywood in The Female Spectator.²

1. Morten and Turner, op. cit., p. 307.

2. Morten and Turner, op. cit., p. 9, say: "One other realistic literary form much cultivated in the seventeenth century, the character, is akin to the novel . . . The character reached the height of its development after 1700 in the hands of Addison and Steele, at which time it could go no further without merging in the novel."

The most notable progress made in the seventeenth century is found in the novels of Mrs. Aphra Behn, the first English woman novelist actually to earn a livelihood by writing. Her novels are an intermediate form, romantic in subject matter, realistic in method of presentation. They look back to Roger Boyle and forward to Defoe.

Oroonoko, The Royal Slave (1688) is perhaps the best of her works, especially from the standpoint of structure. It deals with a negro, Oroonoko, who is royal not only in his lineage, for he is crown prince of his tribe, but also in his physical, mental, and social development. In appearance he is not negroid, but is rather a gigantic black specimen of the finest Anglican features. Furthermore, "the most illustrious Courts could not have produced a braver Man, both for Greatness of Courage and Mind, a Judgment more solid, a Wit more quick, and a conversation more sweet and diverting. He knew about as much as if he had read much." Oroonoko is a model of idealistic, faithful love, devotion, and chastity. Mrs. Behn's concept of the scope and nobility of his intellect is shown through his conduct in addressing his fellow-slaves. The plot reflects the picaresque form, for it relates the life's adventures of a central character as he travels, albeit unwillingly, from continent to continent. The plot of Oroonoko is significant enough to justify a brief summary. The situation is this: Oroonoko having incurred the hatred of his jealous grandfather by Oroonoko's winning the love of a beautiful woman is sent to America, where he is sold as a slave to a family with which Mrs. Behn professes to be acquainted. His nobility of character wins the respect of his masters, and he is allowed many privileges. Realizing his inferior position in spite of this kind treatment,

Oroonoko leads a rebellion, which is unsuccessful; he does win his freedom, however, through the kind offices of Mrs. Behn, and returns to his native country. The plot has more continuity than the early picaresque tales, more form than the romances. One event develops out of another (causal relationship); for example, Oroonoko's being sold into slavery is a result of his grandfather's jealousy. The plot is the outcome of character rather than of chance; it is Oroonoko's noble character and intelligence, the grandfather's passionate nature, the servile attitude of the mass of the slaves, which cause the various events of the story to turn out as they do. Oroonoko marks a decided advance in plot technique.

The story is not told by the protagonist, but by the author-narrator, who enters the story personally and serves to give the semblance of fact to the account. Mrs. Behn uses other devices, too, for making her book appear to be true biography -- she refers to her stay in Surinam, relates conversations with Oroonoko, explains carefully how she came to know facts concerning his life in Africa. She cannot, however, refrain from indulging in certain romantic exaggerations, such as the description of "a leaf of a tree, called a Sarumbo leaf, of six yards long" and the story of the "Numb-Eel" which paralyzes the fisherman who catches it by means of the intense cold within its body. These deviations from fact make the reader question the reality of the rest of the book, accurate though it may be.

Oroonoko has many times been called the first emancipation novel. But Mrs. Behn's concern seems not to have been slavery as a general evil; it is only against slavery for such noblemen of nature of Oroonoko that she declaims.

The other novels of Mrs. Behn -- among them The Fair Jilt (1688), The Nun, or, the Perjured Beauty (1689), The Unfortunate Happy Lady:

a True History (1696) -- are of less significance in a study of plot structure, for in them she writes completely in the manner of the romance. Her theme is always love, a subject which she handles none too delicately. Her books were popular, for her subject has a universal appeal, but they are not outstanding literature.¹

Some theory of the form and of the purpose of the novel had developed by the end of the century, as is shown by the statement of William Congreve, who is more worthy of remembrance for his definition of the novel, which he gives in his preface to Incognito, or Love and Duty (1692), than for his actual prose fiction. As a dramatist he believes in transferring the idea of the dramatic unities to the novel. His preface says, in part:

Romances are generally composed of the
Constant Loves and invincible Courages of Hero's,
Heroins, Kings and Queens, Mortals of the First
Rank, and so forth; where lofty Performance,
elevate and surprize the Reader into a giddy
Delight, which leaves him flat upon the Ground
whenever he gives of, and vexes him to think
how he has suffer'd himself to be pleased and
transported, concern'd and afflicted at the
several Passages which he has Read, viz.,
these Knights Success to their Damosels Misfortune,
and such like, when he is forced to be very
well convinced that 'tis all a lye. Novels
are of a more familiar nature; Come near us, and
represent to us Intrigues in practice, delight us
with Accidents and odd Events, but not such as

1. Gerould, *op. cit.*, p. 57, says: "Since she had no real originality, she harked back to the outmoded but still popular heroic romance in the technique of her story-telling." Ernest A. Baker (editor), The Novels of Mrs. Aphra Behn, London, George Routledge and Sons, Limited, New York, E. P. Dutton and Company, n.d., p. xxvii, states that: "It must be confessed that, apart from Oroonoko, Mrs. Behn's fiction is of very little importance in the history of our literature." Mr. Baker credits her with plotting ability, however. On page xxvi, in speaking of The Fair Jilt he says: "The plot is worked out with great ingenuity in this story."

are wholly unusual or unrepresented, such which not being so distant from our Belief bring also the pleasure nearer us. Romances give more of Wonder, Novels more Delight

Since all Traditions must indisputably give place to the Drama, and since there is no possibility of giving that life to the Writing or Repetition of a Story which it has in the action, I resolved in another beauty to imitate Dramatick Writing, namely, in the Design, Contexture and Result of the Plot . . . How many probable Casualties intervene in opposition to the main design (of Incognita) . . . I leave the Reader at his leisure to consider: As also whether every Obstacle does not in the progress of the Story Act as subservient to that purpose, which at first it seems to oppose. In a comedy this would be called the Unity of Action; here it may pretend to no more than an Unity of Contrivance.

A real novel has not yet been written, but in Congreve we find a clear understanding of the direction that the plot of the novel is to take.

Not all the contributions to the novel form were made by those who considered themselves novelists. John Bunyan wrote for the moral and religious edification of the common people with no intention of adding to the development of a new art form; nevertheless, "Bunyan anticipates the triumph of the eighteenth century in fiction."¹ His simple, direct language, his completely natural dialogue,² and his ability to give the semblance of reality to an obviously allegorical tale,³ give him an important place among the the indirect contributors to the development of the novel. In Pilgrim's Progress (1678) he uses

1. Gerould, op. cit., p. 53.

2. Ibid., p. 52, states: "Since he imagined his characters and scenes so clearly, he was able to report conversations in such a familiar, homely way that the reader is not conscious of any artifice."

3. Ibid., p. 53, says: "Everything is plausible, because wonders are taken for granted in the vision and are treated precisely like the most commonplace things."

a form seldom attempted -- the entire story is told as being a dream or vision which the narrator experiences and relates in the first person. Pilgrim's Progress has fully developed characters and a plot of the picaresque type. The story is unified because Christian's journey toward the Celestial City is the prevailing theme and also because only characters and events directly influencing Christian, the protagonist, are included.

Unfortunately, many of the books published during this period do not rise to the level of Pilgrim's Progress. Mrs. Eliza Heywood, for example, tells a great number of shoddy little stories dealing tritely with the universal subjects of love, disappointment, and seduction. Her stories are bare accounts of the principal facts of the story, naked of all description and motivation. She evades giving details by remarking: "It would be vain to go about to describe what it was she felt: her grief and her despair were above all representations." Mrs. Heywood, writing primarily for mercenary reasons, produced the type of fiction that sells, rather than great literature. The picaresque tale, for which there was a wide market, was also kept alive, by Richard Head and Francis Kirkman, who published The English Rogue (1665-71), and by other authors even less worthy of note. Nothing progressive is done in these tales, however, for even the incidents of many of them are taken directly from earlier books. There is little in the work of the seventeenth century to point toward the phenomenal progress that the next few years were to make.

1. Gerould, op. cit., p. 46.

DEFOE'S WORK - AN INTERMEDIARY FORM

The work of Daniel Defoe bridges the last gap between the early fictional narratives and the novel proper. His books strike a mean between the romance, which tells a series of involved stories having very little bearing on each other and concerned with numerous unrelated characters, and the picaresque tale, which presents the bare story of the events of a single person's life, almost devoid of description and detail. Defoe's stories are in no way as involved as the romance, for they concentrate completely on the story of one person and introduce no superfluous characters and incidents. They are in a sense picaresque tales, for they deal with the life of a central character passing through a series of adventures; but the lives of his heroes and heroines are more complex, the adventures more inter-dependent, than in Jack Wilton and Thomas of Reading. Robinson Crusoe (1719) relates a series of adventures experienced by the titular hero, but it has more complete development of plot than the pure picaresque. Some elementary variation of the density of the incident is made in that the first pages are taken up with relating events of very little interest or importance except that they supply background material, give the general atmosphere of the seas, establish Crusoe's character, and foreshadow future developments. With Robinson's final shipwreck the structure of the plot becomes tighter. Yet not all the adventures occurring during Robinson's isolation on "the Island of Despair" are of equal importance. Two incidents stand out as particularly significant: his sickness and repentance, and his discovery of Friday. This latter incident forms something of a climax for the book, for it is carefully prepared for, even as early as the escape from the Moors in the first pages, for here

Crusoe shows how great his fear of savages is. After the peak of the excitement is passed, the companionship with the unlettered Indian is shown as it develops, thus letting the reader descend gradually into a state of equilibrium of emotion after a crisis. After the discovery of Friday, events begin to point toward the denouement, Robinson's return to civilization. The plot is unified not only by the fact that it deals with one central character and his experiences, but also by the fact that all Crusoe's adventures lead ultimately to the change in his outlook on life and his return to London to end his life quietly, "having lived a life of infinite variety seventy-two years, and having learned sufficiently to know the value of retirement."

Defoe's use of plot foreshadowing has already been mentioned. Perhaps the most significant example of this technique is to be found in the very beginning of Robinson Crusoe. The lecture which Robinson's father delivers to advise him against going to sea sets the mood for the entire story and prophesies Robinson's fate.

Character comes to have a greater bearing on plot in Robinson Crusoe, also. Early in the book Robinson's resourcefulness and his tendency to ponder over problems are displayed. After he is marooned his ability to take care of himself makes possible his survival, and his meditations bring about the change in his spiritual life.

Like Robinson Crusoe, Moll Flanders (1722) is a story written in form of autobiography and tracing the life of a single person from her early years, in which character is formed, through a series of inter-related adventures, to a final repentance and retirement after worldly success has been attained. The plot is simple, for there is no interweaving of plot and subplot, no introduction of complexities, no rising and falling action. Moll Flanders begins life as the daughter of a

transported prisoner, enters the service of a gentlewoman, is seduced by a son of this lady and turned out of the house. Her destitution forces her to fall in with evil companions, and she enters a life of crime, sustaining herself principally by picking pockets, which Moll makes a highly developed art. She marries a series of husbands, none of whom enables her to better her condition. Upon being apprehended for her crimes she is transported to America, where she discovers her mother, but also has the misery to learn that she had been married to her own brother. She repents her sins, and, deceiving her present husband as a large part of her past, finishes her life in comfortable remorse on a Carolina plantation. The narrative is bound together by the occasional reappearance of former husbands and, in a very superficial manner, by the discovery of Moll's aged mother, who had been transported many years before, as the early pages of the book inform the reader. This story is more closely related to the picaresque than Robinson Crusoe, for the events are more episodic, the interweaving of incidents through causal relationship less well-developed, and the climax less well marked. Almost no progress in the matter of plotting is made in this book.

Roxana (1724), however, makes a significant forward step in plot complexity. It has what Charlotte Morgan, in The Rise of the Novel of Manners, has called a "circular plot." The book opens with Roxana suffering from great poverty, traces her parallel rise in fortune and decline in morals, and finally leaves her again in circumstances of poverty similar to those in which she was first seen. It is one of the children whom Roxana is forced to abandon in her first distresses who is instrumental in bringing about her desolation toward the end of her life. The incidents of the plot are not altogether

independent adventures, but rest upon past occurrences for their significance, thus making the plot more close-knit. Roxana's character in her early years is described; the circumstances and causes of her degradation are presented; one downward step follows another; each crime becomes more voluntary and less necessary than those preceding it. She is not portrayed as a complete villain; some remorse accompanies her sin. By frequent hints of the importance that some scene will have on Roxana's future status, Defoe interweaves the story and keeps the reader interested in and expectant of more and more events. For example, early in the book Roxana, in speaking of her maid says: "She would not leave me; nay, and as long as she had any money when I had none, she would help me out of her own; for which, though I acknowledged her kindness and fidelity, yet it was but a bad coin that she was paid in at last, as will appear in its place." A secondary theme running through the entire book concerns this deterioration of the standards of Amy, the maid, finally culminating in murder, which even her mistress cannot sanction. Nearly all the characters introduced into the story have significance in more than one event. They appear again and again to assist in bringing about Roxana's good fortune and her ultimate ruin as a result of it. Just what great woes befall Roxana in her later years is not made entirely clear. The author seems to have exhausted his enthusiasm for the story and therefore to have left the ending somewhat vague.

One of the outstanding contributions of Defoe to plot structure is the fact that he accounts for the passage of time. Robinson Crusoe keeps a calendar while he is on the island. From time to time he includes such information as the statement that he is "now in the eleventh year of (his) residence," and at the end of the book he declares that he has

"been absent from England ten years and nine months." Roxana from time to time reveals her approximate age.

Realism, too, becomes increasingly important in Defoe. His experience in journalism, with its emphasis on fact and detail, made him conscious of the necessity for writing vivid, seemingly true, accounts. Robinson Crusoe, Moll Flanders, and Roxana profess to be memoirs or diaries, and are written in the first person. In Moll Flanders Defoe makes a gesture toward convincing the reader that his story is a true autobiography by commenting in his preface that "The world is so taken up of late with novels and romances that it will be hard for a private history to be taken for genuine, where the names and other circumstances of the person are concealed; and on this account we must be content to leave the reader to pass his own opinion upon the ensuing sheets, and take it just as he pleases." Details of daily life are included to make a complete visualization of the scene possible for the reader. Little incidents from everyday experience are recorded -- "The weather was hot to extremity," "The wind blew from N.N.E." Robinson Crusoe has geographical exactness, mentioning specific places, such as Yarmouth Roads and the Canary Islands, thus giving the impression that the book is truly a record of fact. The selection of details is in many ways commendable, but it shows a certain amateurishness, a lack of experience. Too many little items are enumerated; for example, the record of Robinson's plunder from the ship begins to resemble a salvage company's report more than a novel, and annoys the reader.

More complete realization of character is found in Defoe's stories than in those of authors who preceded him. Robinson Crusoe's motives for going to sea and for his repentance are given in some detail. Roxana's gradual decline into a life of complete sin is traced by

stages. For Moll Flanders, too, the reasons for her actions are given. The picture of her childhood and of her development as a criminal is convincing. Moll fails to be a complete character drawing, however. She is more a type than an individual. In her story incident is more interesting than personality. Defoe himself seems to realize the incredibleness of Moll's reform, for in his preface he remarks on "the copy which came first to hand (the first manuscript he, the supposed editor, received of the story) having been written in language more like one still in Newgate than one grown penitent and humble as she afterwards pretends to be."

Unity and complexity of plot, realism, progress in character drawing, and rapid development of incident make Defoe's stories very nearly novels; indeed, many critics consider Robinson Crusoe the first English novel. It was, therefore, no difficult step from Roxana to Pamela, which appeared less than twenty years after Defoe's work, and which is undeniably a novel.

THE FIRST TRUE NOVELS

The first real novel came into being rather unexpectedly in 1740, for a work begun as a letter-writing guide for serving girls took on, through the interest of its author in the ways of men and women, a plot and characters and became a novel. Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded, Samuel Richardson's first real fiction work, is composed of a series of letters written by a little servant girl of remarkable virtue, Pamela Andrews, to her aged and deserving parents, relating her experiences with the young master of the house in which she is employed. The parents reply, offering advice, praise, and consolation. After a series of intrigues and improbable incidents, Pamela emerges with her honor untainted and receives the dubious reward of marriage with the man who has taxed her virtue so severely. The entire story is told through letters, some of which, toward the end of the book, take on largely the form of a diary accounts. The narrative runs on in a continual strain, the thread of the story not being broken from letter to letter, but moving progressively forward from related incident to incident. The story begins on a plane of equilibrium; Pamela is serenely happy in her employment. The interest and attention of Mr. B bring great conflict and disturbance into her placid life. The emotional intensity becomes greater and greater until it reaches a peak just before Mr. B.'s proposal of marriage. Another plane of contentment extends through her engagement and wedding. A minor crisis accompanies her adjustment to the social scale, for she must reconcile her former status of servant girl with her present one of wife and mistress of the very household in which she has been recently a menial. With the last adjustments made, the book subsides into a final calm and even mood at the conclusion.

The rise and fall of emotion is reflected through the letters. The early ones clarify Pamela's background, her character, her status in the family in which she lives as a servant. The style is leisurely and calm. After her mistress's death the letters reveal step by step Pamela's growing realization of the wretched situation in which she has inadvertently been placed. The skillfulness of the author is shown by the unobtrusive manner in which he makes the reader aware through Pamela's letters of the real danger of her situation before she, in her innocence, realizes her peril. The plot becomes more compact and more intense as the story progresses. In the early pages Pamela's epistles are designated merely as Letter I, Letter II. Soon after her abduction the day of the writing is given; the frequency of the letters becomes greater; they are longer and more detailed, for every incident in the day has now become important, whereas in the beginning only the infrequent contacts with Mr. B were of much significance. After her imprisonment Pamela receives no more letters from her parents; she is confined too closely for any but very secret and important communications, transcripts of which she includes in her letters, to reach her. Because all the narrative is written by one person, it becomes unified. The letters written to Pamela serve mainly to describe her character as it is seen by others; after her integrity is absolutely established these letters become no longer necessary; the reader's interest lies in discovering whether she will be able to preserve her character. Outside opinions and interpretations do not influence Pamela's emotions, meditations, and decisions. At the peak of her desperation the letters are marked "Thursday, six o'clock in the morning," "half an hour past eight o'clock." After her final victory in the preservation of her honor and her marriage to Mr. B the letters again become less frequent and less intense.

This book is the beginning of the true novel as an art form. It has plot complexity, unity of incident, realism, and character development, although in this last point Richardson is inferior to some of his predecessors. The central story is not encumbered with divers unrelated stories as the romance is. Neither is it picaresque, for it concerns only one great event in a woman's life, supported by incidents leading to and developing from that event, rather than being a steady flow of adventures each independent of the others and each of the same importance. Pamela is constructed from a compact series of incidents leading to a definite climax and followed by a conclusion which necessarily develops from this climax. Every incident contributes to the main action; every character affects in some way the life of the chief character. The emotional sweep is heightened by the greater and greater attention to and detailed description of the progressively more intense scenes, followed by a decline in the density of incident after the crisis is past.

Pamela is important, too, as a novel of manners, for its professed purpose is to show what sort of letters ought to be written by girls in service and what conduct is expected of chaste maidens in difficult circumstances. The book also attempts a psychological analysis of the feminine heart, a subject on which Mr. Richardson sets himself up to be something of an authority. Richardson's books contain a certain type of realism. Scenes are minutely and accurately described for special effect. Emotion is made of greater importance than scene and surroundings, however.

Richardson grew as a novelist. His second book, Clarissa, Or the History of a Young Lady (1748) has a more developed plot than Pamela.

The complexity is greater; more complications are introduced into the lives of both heroine and villain; emotion is given freer range; character is developed more fully. Even when one excludes the superfluous material which merely reiterates what is already known to the reader, it is a lengthy and detailed book. In spite of its length, however, it does not ramble away from the central theme, but rather includes all possible concepts of Clarissa's plight. This novel has one important advantage over Pamela. In Pamela all the important narrative is set down by one person. Her thoughts, emotions and motives can be positively stated; but those of other characters, especially of Mr. B, can be shown only as Pamela interprets them. She is limited to saying what she thinks Mr. B thinks. Because Pamela's virtue must be described in the first person if at all, she appears, contrary to the author's purpose, somewhat vain and self-righteous. In Clarissa both Clarissa and Mr. Lovelace are provided with intimate friends with whom they correspond continuously and in whom they confide every thought, every scheme, every interpretation of another's actions. Furthermore, Clarissa's correspondent, Miss Howe, is acquainted with both the forces with whom Clarissa clashes, the Harlowe family and Mr. Lovelace, and is able to supply information and advice. Thus the reader is enabled to see the story in several perspectives and to interpret the characters and motives more correctly. The fact that the villain is given a name, rather than merely an initial, contributes to the realism and the readableness of the story.

There are several advantages in the epistolary form used by Richardson. Through it the thoughts and motives of each character can be revealed as he writes to intimate friends. Several views of an event can be given as it is interpreted by the various characters in

their letters. Finally, there is a certain realistic touch inherent in the style, even though the language of Mr. Richardson's letters is stilted.

Disgust with what he felt was sentimentality, melodrama, and false morality in Richardson's work brought Henry Fielding, one of the most important English writers, to produce his first novel, The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews, and His Friend Mr. Abraham Adams (1742), which was begun as a parody on Pamela.¹ The first chapters of Joseph Andrews are devoted to satire on Richardson's novel, but the satire is soon dropped and the story continued for its own sake, Fielding having recognized the potentialities of his plot as a novel. Toward the end, presumably for consistency, Pamela is made to appear in the story and is presented as proud and grasping. While her scenes do serve to show Fielding's scorn of Richardson, they weaken the effectiveness of the story as a novel in its own right.

With Fielding the novel is given dignity and purpose. In his significant preface to Joseph Andrews Fielding states his concept of the novel as a

comic epic poem in prose; differing from comedy, as the serious epic from tragedy; its action being more extended and comprehensive; containing a much larger circle of incidents, and introducing a greater variety of characters. It differs from the serious romance in its fable and action, in this; that as in the one these are grave and solemn, so in the other they are light and ridiculous: it differs in its characters by introducing persons of inferior rank, and consequently, of inferior manners, whereas the grave romance sets the highest before us; lastly, in its sentiments and diction, I think

1. Fielding, prior to this work, had written a pamphlet, An Apology for the Life of Mrs. Shamela Andrews, in which he makes sport of Richardson's story.

burlesque itself may be sometimes admitted; of which many instances will occur in this work, as in the description of the battles, and some other places, not necessary to be pointed out the classical reader, for whose entertainment those parodies or burlesque imitations are chief calculated.

He further promulgates the idea that the comic is to be found in the ridiculous, which in turn has its source in the affectations and hypocrisy of the vain. Fielding sets the novel above history as a revelation of life, for he believes that whereas history deals with facts which may be mistaken or distorted, the novel deals with people, who are universally and eternally the same. What Hogarth is to art, the novel is to be to literature.

The early pages of Joseph Andrews, carrying out Fielding's intention of satirizing Pamela, do not rise to the standards he sets for the novel. Joseph is introduced as Pamela's brother, a young man of virtue similar to that of his sister and living in comparable circumstances, a footman in the family of Sir Thomas Booby.¹ After Sir Thomas dies, his wife makes attacks on Joseph's virtue, which are repulsed. Following the example set by Richardson still further, Fielding has his hero write a letter which is a satire on those written by Pamela. The author's satiric intention in the letter is made obvious by his use of a phrase almost directly from Pamela: "Don't tell anybody what I write, because I should not care to have folks say I discover what passes in our family." Early in the novel, however, Fielding drops his parody and concentrates on an original story.

Traces of older prose forms are evident in Fielding's work.

1. The name is obviously derived from Richardson's Mr. B.

Joseph Andrews has definite picaresque traits. It is a story of adventure centered around one character who journeys from place to place. Joseph, however, has a definite purpose in his travels and ventures to less romantic spots than the true picaresque adventurer does. His personal experiences and trials have a cause and effect relationship which is lacking in the early tales. The latter part of the book ceases to follow the pattern of the picaresque and takes on a plot complexity of superior quality. Many complications concerning the parentage of Joseph and Fanny are introduced, making it appear for a time that, after their many trials and long faithfulness to each other, because they are brother and sister, they will not be able to marry. A tale of kidnapping by gypsies, which proves that Joseph is not the son of the people who reared him is introduced, and the two are happily married. Although this complexity marks an advance in plotting, the dependence on chance rather than on character for the outcome of the story is an artistic weakness, for it is too obviously a device for delaying the denouement.

There is a resemblance to the romance, too, in at least one respect: there are incidents and characters introduced that have little bearing on the main plot. For example, "the history of Betty the Chambermaid" and Mrs. Towhouse, the innkeeper's wife, is related not for any profound effect the event has on Joseph, but simply because the author wishes to tell the story. Two chapters are devoted to "the history of Leonora, or the unfortunate jilt," although Leonora makes no appearance in the book except in that her story is related by a character who has been acquainted with her. The novel, on the whole, is not loosely constructed, however.

Fielding makes extended use of the subplot, a minor theme dealing with a character closely allied to the protagonist and developing co-incidentally with that of the main character. The character, adventures, and tribulations of the worthy Parson Adams make up the important subplot of Joseph Andrews. The distinction between an extraneous story and a functional subplot is a rather fine one. The irrelevant story is usually told in one consecutive narrative; it is introduced, developed, and concluded without a break. The subplot runs through a large portion of the story and develops gradually in some definite relation to the main theme. This addition of the subplot increases the complexity of the plot.

In the matter of external form Fielding makes a notable contribution to the structure of the novel. In the fiction produced up to the time of Daniel Defoe the narrative is told as one unbroken essay. Defoe divides Robinson Crusoe into sections, but these sections have no headings; they are not even numbered. Moll Flanders and Roxana are not divided in any way. In Richardson's works the story is divided into many parts, each letter forming a section, although not a chapter proper. The letters are marked by dates, but no information as to content is given. In Joseph Andrews the story is divided into four books of approximately equal length, the first three of which are opened by informal essays stating more of Fielding's opinions on novel writing. Each book contains several chapters, each of which has a heading giving information as to the content of the chapter or making a statement so phrased as to arouse the reader's curiosity about what is to follow. The structure of The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling (1749) is similar to that of Joseph Andrews, but it is more highly developed and more complex. Tom Jones, which is in fourteen books,

shows Fielding's realization of the artistic need for varying the density of the incident.¹ The first and second books summarize briefly Tom's first fourteen years, showing what sort of environment, training, and character he has; they give the necessary background information, reveal the various situations of the principal characters, and set the tone of the story. The third book is devoted to Tom's adolescence, bringing him up to the age of nineteen, when his story becomes of real interest. The fourth covers the time of only one year. Thus the story becomes progressively more detailed and more compact until in Book Ten the time covers only twelve hours. After the climax is passed in Book Ten, the time span becomes slightly longer again. And not only does the time covered in each book become shorter, but the books themselves become longer as the action increases in importance. Another significant development in structure is to be found in Chapter III of Book IV, "Wherein the history goes back to commemorate a trifling incident that happened some years since; but which, trifling as it was,

1. The titles of each of the eighteen books, with the exception of the first, indicates the space of time contained in the book and shows Fielding's consciousness of the dramatic necessity for varying the density of the incident.

Book I "Containing as Much of the Birth of the Foundling as is Necessary or Proper to Acquaint the Reader with in the Beginning of This History."

This book contains eighteen chapters, thirty-seven pages.

Book II "Containing scenes of Matrimonial Felicity in Different Degrees of life; and Various Other Transactions During the First Two Years After the Marriage Between Captain Blifil and Miss Bridget Allworthy."

This book has nine chapters, fifty-three pages.

Book III "Containing the Most Memorable Transactions Which Passed in the Family of Mr. Allworthy from the Time When Tommy Jones Arrived at the Age of Fourteen, Till he Attained the Age of Nineteen. . (Five Years)

This book contains ten chapters, thirty-three pages.

Book IV "Containing the Time of a Year."

This book contains fourteen chapters, forty-nine pages.

had some future consequences," and again in Book XI, Chapter VIII, "In which the history goes backward." Fielding introduces the flash-back, although he would not have designated it so, in which chronology is departed from and incidents produced at the time when they are most pertinent to the plot, rather than at the moment of occurrence.

Like Richardson's, Fielding's ability in plot construction developed as he wrote. Tom Jones is a longer, a more complex, and a more entertaining novel than Joseph Andrews. It sets out to be a novel and is not held back in the beginning by the satiric intention that hinders the development of Joseph Andrews. The plot centers around the life of Tom Jones, an unidentified foundling, who grows up to be

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- Book VI "Containing About Three Weeks."
This book contains fourteen chapters, fifty-four pages.
- Book VII "Containing Three Days."
This book contains fifteen chapters, sixty-four pages.
- Book VIII "Containing About Two Days."
This book contains fifteen chapters, eight pages.
- Book IX "Containing Twelve Hours."
This book contains seven chapters, thirty-five pages.
- Book X "In which the History Goes Forward About Twelve Hours."
This book contains nine chapters, thirty-eight pages.
- Book XI "Containing About Three Days."
This book contains ten chapters, fifty-three pages.
- Book XII "Containing the Same Individual Time with the Former."
(That is, three days.)
This book contains fourteen chapters, sixty-one pages.
- Book XIII "Containing the Space of Twelve Days."
This book contains twelve chapters, fifty-two pages.
- Book XIV "Containing Two Days."
This book contains ten chapters, forty-three pages.
- Book XV "In Which the History Advances About Two Days."
This book contains twelve chapters, forty-six pages.
- Book XVI "Containing the Space of Five Days."
This book contains ten chapters, forty-two pages.
- Book XVII "Containing Three Days."
This book contains nine chapters, thirty-six pages.
- Book XVIII "Containing About Six Days."
This book contains thirteen chapters, ninety-eight pages.

an attractive young man, good-natured and lovable, but of questionable moral standards; survives a series of intrigues and adventures, narrowly escaping hanging; at length realizes the true standards of values; marries the ideal heroine, Sophia Western; and ostensibly settles down for a sober married life. Each character, however minor, is made complete and interesting, with the possible exceptions of Blifil, who is too wicked, and Mr. Allworthy, who is too noble to be entirely credible. The subplots are connected with and partake of the same general nature as the main plot. For example, Mr. Nightingale is, like Tom, a young man who has fallen from virtue, repents, loves, and marries under parental protest, although the circumstances are sufficiently different from those surround Tom's problems to make the story interesting rather than monotonous.

This novel combines elements of the fictional biography, such as Moll Flanders, and the picaresque tale. The story is biographical, for it relates the story of a man's life through a period of twenty-one years. All the information, as all incidents is a true novel must, leads to the climax of the book. It is a planned biographical sketch; the author selects carefully the details and events that he will include, weighing the value of each in relation to his purpose. As a record of the adventures of a central character, during a large part of which he is traveling, the story is superficially picaresque. Because the adventures build up to a climax and because there is a causal relation between them, however, it is a novel of plot.

A BRIEF LAPSE IN PLOT DEVELOPMENT

Not all novelists of the eighteenth century made notable progress in plotting, however. Tobias Smollett and Laurence Sterne were contemporaries of the two authors just discussed, but they produced novels much inferior, at least from the standpoint of plot structure and form, to those of Richardson and Fielding.¹ In the evolution of the novel Smollett represents a 'throwback,' for he reverts to the simplicity of the picaresque tale for the form of his novels, relating at length the roving adventures of the titular hero and narrator. Unlike the picaresque tale, however, his novels are divided into chapters, each of which is furnished with a heading which serves

1. The chronology of the publication of the books of Richardson, Fielding, Smollett, and Sterne shows how closely contemporary they were. Sterne's work does not begin until that of Richardson and Fielding is done, but it overlaps the publication of the later novels of Smollett.

1740	-- <u>Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded,</u>	Richardson
1742	-- <u>Joseph Andrews,</u>	Fielding
1743	-- <u>Jonathan Wild the Great,</u>	Fielding
1748	-- <u>Clarissa,</u>	Richardson
	<u>Roderick Random,</u>	Smollett
1749	-- <u>Tom Jones,</u>	Fielding
1751	-- <u>Amelia,</u>	Fielding
	<u>Peregrine Pickle,</u>	Smollett
1753	-- <u>Sir Charles Grandison,</u>	Richardson
	<u>Ferdinand Count Fathom,</u>	Smollett
1760	-- first of the volumes of <u>The</u>	
	<u>Life and Opinions of Tristram</u>	
	<u>Shandy, Gent.,</u>	Sterne
1762	-- <u>Sir Launcelot Greaves,</u>	Smollett
1767	-- last volume of <u>Tristram</u>	
	<u>Shandy,</u>	Sterne
	(This book was published in	
	four volumes over a period of	
	eight years -- 1760-1767.)	
1768	-- <u>Sentimental Journey,</u>	Sterne
1771	-- <u>The Expedition of Humphrey</u>	
	<u>Clinker,</u>	Smollett

almost as an outline of the chapter. For example, The Adventures of Roderick Random, chapter two, is entitled:

I grow up - Am hated by my Relations - Sent to School -
Neglected by my Grandfather - Maltreated by my Master -
Seasoned to Adversity - I form Cabals against the Pendant -
Am debarred access to my Grandfather - Hunted by his Heir -
I demolish the Teeth of his Tutor.

All this is the title of a chapter only a little over three pages in length. It would be easily possible to follow the general thread of the story by reading only chapter heads.

Besides being divided into chapters, Smollett's novels are developed beyond the picaresque in that they contain some semblance of causal relationships. In Roderick Random Smollett takes up a second time, towards the end of the book, two characters introduced earlier in the story and then temporarily dropped, Roderick's uncle, Tom Bowling, and Strap, a barber and Roderick's school fellow.¹ But the re-appearance of these characters is not made inevitable, or even necessary by the development of the plot; they are utilized a second time primarily because characters of their general nature are needed, and these, having been already created, are convenient.

The plot in general rambles along from adventure to adventure with no variation in the density of incident, no significant marking of the passage of time, little cause and effect in events. In the first chapter the scene is set; the disfavour of Roderick's parents with his paternal grandfather, Roderick's birth, the death of his mother and the disappearance of his father, and his establishment

1. Strap, Roderick's companion, resembles Patridge of Tom Jones. Both characters possibly owe their origin to Sancho in Cervantes' Don Quixote.

in his grandfather's house are related briefly. Roderick is cruelly mistreated in his youth, both in his grandfather's house and in the school to which he is sent, is rescued from this barbarous care by his uncle, Tom Bowling. Following his uncle's example he goes to sea; and after a series of misadventures, including the traditional shipwrecks in far away places, he returns to England. Here additional misfortunes await him; in desparation he joins the army and is sent to Germany. There his former companion, Strap, re-appears with his customary timely financial aid, through which Roderick is able to return to England. He endeavors to win favor with several young ladies, but has little success. Only one returns his love, and she is prevented from marrying him by the intervention of her brother. Heart-broken, Roderick sails for Jamaica in a vessel commanded by his uncle, who has providentially returned to the scene a prosperous sea captain. In Jamaica he discovers his father,¹ also grown wealthy, and returns to England to marry Narcissa, who has been faithfully awaiting his return. Through no endeavor of his own he is able to reward Strap for his friendship. There is no climax or turning point; chance, assisted slightly by Roderick's unstable character, is the sole guide of events. The plot has no true denouement; the story simply reaches a point where each of the principal characters is suitably situated and ends.

The book is entertaining as a tale, but not as a novel, for the emphasis lies in unrelated adventures and in ridiculous caricatures, not in complexity of plot.

1. This discovery of a long lost parent in the New World calls to mind Moll Flanders's discovery of her mother living in America.

Roderick Random is, in part, a novel of purpose, for it sets forth the governmental frauds, the cruelties, and the unbearable conditions of common sailors that characterized the naval service. Smollett speaks of the treatment of the sick and of the lower officers of the navy with real earnestness of purpose; he knew and sympathized with the lot of the English sailor; and he arouses a horror in the reader which might conceivably lead to an effort to remedy these undesirable circumstances. It is only a small part of his novel which is written with such feeling, however. For the most part he is concerned only with the haphazard adventures of an irresponsible young man.

To the reading pleasure of the English people Tobias Smollett contributed five books; to the developing skill in the plotting of novels -- little. His real contribution to the English novel lies in other realms.

There is even less plot complexity with unity in the books of Laurence Sterne than in those of Smollett, for Sterne writes a coarse, involved story of not one, but many characters, in his novel The Life and Adventures of Tristram Shandy, Gent.¹ The fact that the novel was written over a period of almost a decade and published spasmodically in four parts indicates that the story is not well-planned and carefully constructed. Sterne writes to amuse, not to instruct; the rules of the novelist do not bind him; if an incident is humorous he includes it, whether it is relevant to the story or not. His characters are cleverly drawn, especially Uncle Toby and Corporal Trim, and more

1. It is necessary to distinguish complexity of plot, which means the introduction of complications and obstacles into the story so as to hinder, but at the same time develop, the plot, incidentally emphasizing the principal theme, from the mere heterogeneous maze of incidents which only hinders the development by preventing the author from going on with his central theme and which contributes nothing to that theme. Tristram Shandy abounds in complication of the latter sort.

effort is made to give them an opportunity to be ridiculous than to make the story logical. The book is entertaining, but of unity of action and plot it has nothing except such form as incidentally falls upon it from having the story deal biographically with a series of characters. It is impossible to make a synoptic statement of the plot, for the nine books touch on almost every incident, important and minor, in Tristram's life, as well as in the lives of sundry other characters, with complete disregard for order. The incidents are not chronological -- Tristram Shandy relates an event in connection with the story of his own birth, and then remarks that this happened when he was ten years old. Tristram does not actually enter the story until well over in the third book, where, after two hundred pages of digression, he is born, even though he narrates the entire tale, using direct quotations of dialogue spoken before he has entered the world.

The work is divided into nine books, each of which contains a number of chapters varying in length from a sentence or so to several pages. The divisions are made at the author's whim rather than because of any break in the narrative, however; one conversation may run through a number of chapters. Sterne, like Congreve and Fielding, sets down his ideas on the writing of prose fiction, not in a preface as the others had done, but as a part of the heterogeneous material that forms the body of his book. He says:

. . . . when a man sits down to write a history, -- tho' it be but the history of Jack Hickathrift or Tom Thumb, he knows no more than his heels what lets and confounded hindrances he is to meet with in his way, -- or what a dance he may be led, by one excursion or another, before all is over. Could a historiographer drive on his history, as a muleteer drives on his mule, -- straight forward; ---- for instance, from Rome all the way to Loretto, without ever once turning his head aside either to the right hand

or to the left, --- he might venture to foretell you to an hour when he should get to his journey's end; ---- but the thing is, morally speaking, impossible: For, if he is a man of the least spirit, he will have fifty deviations from a straight line to make with this or that party as he goes along, which he can no ways avoid. He will have views and prospects to himself perpetually soliciting his eye, which he can no more help standing still to look at than he can fly; he will moreover have various

Accounts to reconcile:

Anecdotes to pick up:

Inscriptions to make out;

Stories to weave in:

Traditions to sife:

Personages to call upon:

Panegyrics to paste up at this door:

Pasquinades at that: -----All which

both the man and his mule are quite exempt from.

To sum up all; there are archives at every stage to be look'd into, and rolls, records, documents, and endless genealogies, which justice ever and anon calls him back to stay the reading of: ---- In short, there is no end of it; ----- for my own part, I declare I have been at it these six weeks, making all the speed I possibly could, -- and am not yet born: -- I have just been able, and that's all, to tell you when it happen'd, but not how; so that you see the thing is yet far from being accomplished.

These unforeseen stoppages, which I own I had no conception of when I first set out; -- but which, I am convinced now, will rather increase than diminish as I advance, -- have struck out a hint which I am resolved to follow; -- and that is, -- not to be in a hurry; -- out to go on leisurely, writing and publishing two volumes of my life every year; -- which, if I am suffered to go on quietly, and can make a tolerable bargain with my bookseller, I shall continue to do as long as I live.

The passage just quoted illustrates, as well as declares, Sterne's style, for it shows his lack of plan, his rambling manner, his original sentence structure, his lack of paragraph unity, and his heedless punctuation, all of which are necessary to make the book the easy-going, humorous story which Sterne wanted to write. This erratic cleryman wrote with deliberate disorder, not attempting to make his work conform to the standards set for a novel.

Sterne wrote only nine of the books which he proposed to do concerning Tristram Shandy, but he published Sentimental Journey in 1768 and two volumes, called the Sermons of Mr. Yorrick, which are made up

of the unorthodox and amusing sermons preached by Sterne.

The contrast between Richardson and Fielding and Smollett and Sterne is astounding; that between these latter two and Miss Jane Austen, even more striking.

JANE AUSTEN AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FORMAL PLOT

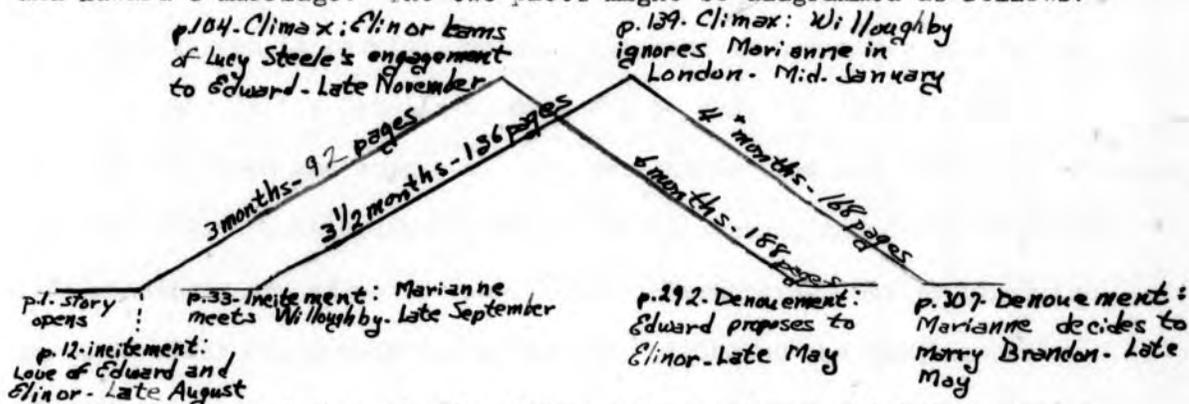
The six novels of Jane Austen are of particular interest, both as to subject matter and as to plot technique. Her books are, although unobtrusively so, novels of social purpose. The French Revolution, an event contemporary with Miss Austen's life, concerned her a great deal, since it brought about in France the destruction of the very class of which she was a member: the refined, substantial, country gentry, whom Miss Austen considered the principal preservers of English culture and learning. Although the purpose of her books is not made obvious, as is, for example, that of Richardson's Pamela, by a direct statement of the author's, they are written primarily to point out the necessity for maintaining this class of educated, polished gentlemen and women, who live calm, happy lives, without degrading themselves by physical labour, low companions, or unseemly conduct. By example and contrast Miss Austen proves the advantages of such living and the obligation of the class for self-preservation. She advocates particularly correct marriages, the only means by which the class can be maintained and propagated. Each of her heroines considers carefully the financial status of her suitor before marrying -- not because of any base pecuniary motives, but rather because of her good sense in realizing the necessity for having sufficient income to maintain her established place in the social order. Failure to marry at all is more to be desired than marriage leading to poverty. Only the rash and foolish girls in her stories make hasty and ill-considered marriages; and these are properly punished by suffering social ostracism and pecuniary difficulties in addition to bringing distress to their families. In Mansfield Park the lesson Miss Austen wishes to teach is made particularly clear by the contrast between the pleasant home life

of the Bertrams at Mansfield and the sordid and unhappy existence of the family of Lady Bertram's sister, Mrs. Price, who "married to disoblige her family."

Miss Austen restrains herself from writing on any subject and of any class of people except those with which she has intimate personal acquaintance. She does not probe into profound questions; she does not arouse either deep sympathy with the oppressed or a desire to correct an evil situation; she does not even preach directly on the one subject with which she is deeply concerned -- proper marriages to preserve the status of the upper social circles and the English culture -- but rather chooses to develop her moral by indirection. Nevertheless, each of her six plots deals with some aspect of this problem which she believed all important to the continued well-being of England.

At present, however, the structure of Miss Austen's novels is of greater interest than her social purpose, for she is the unexcelled master of formal plot construction. An examination of her books, especially of Sense and Sensibility and of Pride and Prejudice, shows how painstakingly she has constructed her work so that the two major divisions of the story -- the rising action, leading up to the climax, and the falling action, leading from the climax to the denouement -- are balanced in event, in time, and in the amount of space devoted to the development. In Sense and Sensibility, which has a dual plot, the first concerned with the affairs of Elinor Dashwood and Edward Ferrars, the second with Marianne Dashwood and John Willoughby, the incitement of the first plot comes with the first notice of the love affair of Edward and Elinor, occurring in Chapter 3. The time of this event is late August. The second plot gets under way in Chapter 9, with Marianne's meeting Willoughby in late September. For Elinor's story the climax comes late in November, slightly less than half way through the time of

the entire book, with the announcement of Miss Lucy Steele's engagement to Edward Ferrars. For Marianne's story the climax falls about mid-January, when she, after being ignored by Willoughby at a ball, comes to a realization of the futility of her love and is thrown into the sloughs of despondency, shame, and despair. She suffers all the agony of a naturally buoyant nature exposed to public sympathy and criticism. The most significant event in the declining action is Mrs. Ferrar's disinheriting Edward, which occurs in mid-March. This incident is cleverly constructed so as to give first the impression that Edward is completely lost to Elinor, because he appears steadfastly resolved to go through with his engagement, but ultimately it leads to Elinor and Edward's marriage. The two plots might be diagrammed as follows:



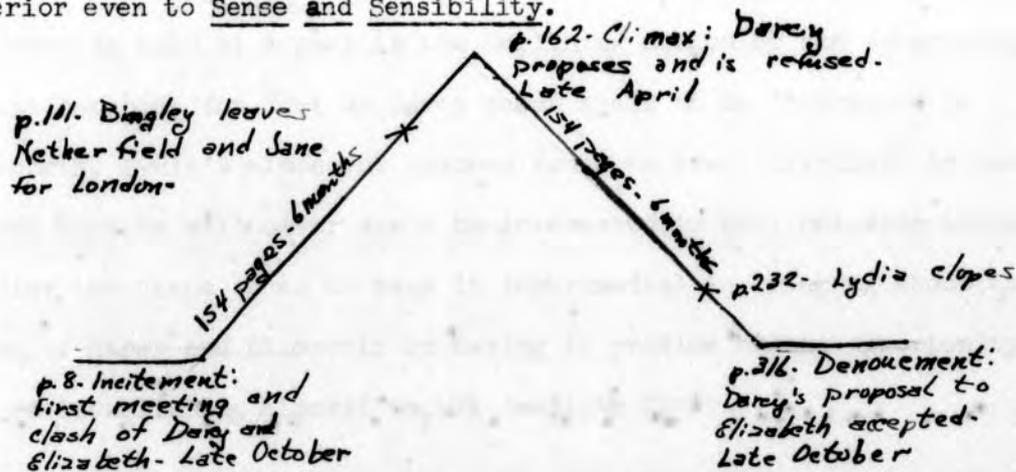
It will be noticed that the declining action takes a slightly greater space and a longer time than the rising action of this story.

The two parallel plots develop at an almost consistent distance from each other, coming somewhat closer together at the end of the story. They are laced together by several devices: the chief characters are sisters and are naturally interested in each other. Their constant companionship makes their affairs even more entwined, especially since Marianne is almost completely dependent on Elinor's judgment. The similarity of the two plots, each involving a girl who falls in love, reaching its climax in the realization of the girl that she will not be able to marry the man she loves, and ending with the happy reconciliation

of circumstances, also serves as an apparent, though not intrinsic, link between them. The differences in the characters of the two sisters, the contrast in their responses to adverse circumstances, and the difference in the solutions of their problems, keep the plots from becoming annoyingly similar. Although the two plots are hinged together by many circumstances, still they are separate in that they are not interdependent; the action of each is developed without utilizing events from the other. True interweaving of plot occurs only twice; first when Captain Brandon, who later becomes Marianne's husband, gives Edward the "living" which enables him to marry Elinor, and again when Elinor hears Willoughby's confession of his love for Marianne and his sorrow at having treated her so badly.

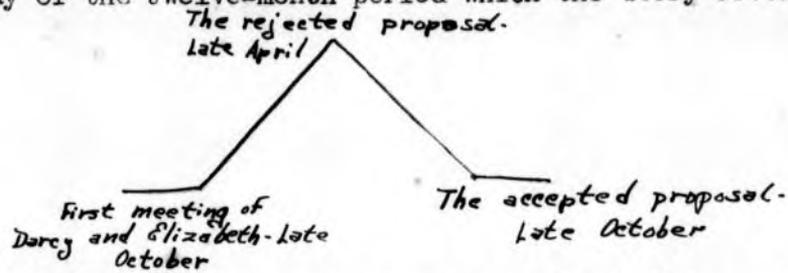
Miss Austen is careful, both in this and in her other novels, to give the many little details which serve to make the fabric of her story close-woven and complete. She designates time and place specifically. Age, personal characteristics, exact social status, and definite financial condition are given for each of her characters. Her settings too, are made clear and complete, and have a bearing on the development of the plot.

Pride and Prejudice as an illustration of plotting and form is superior even to Sense and Sensibility.



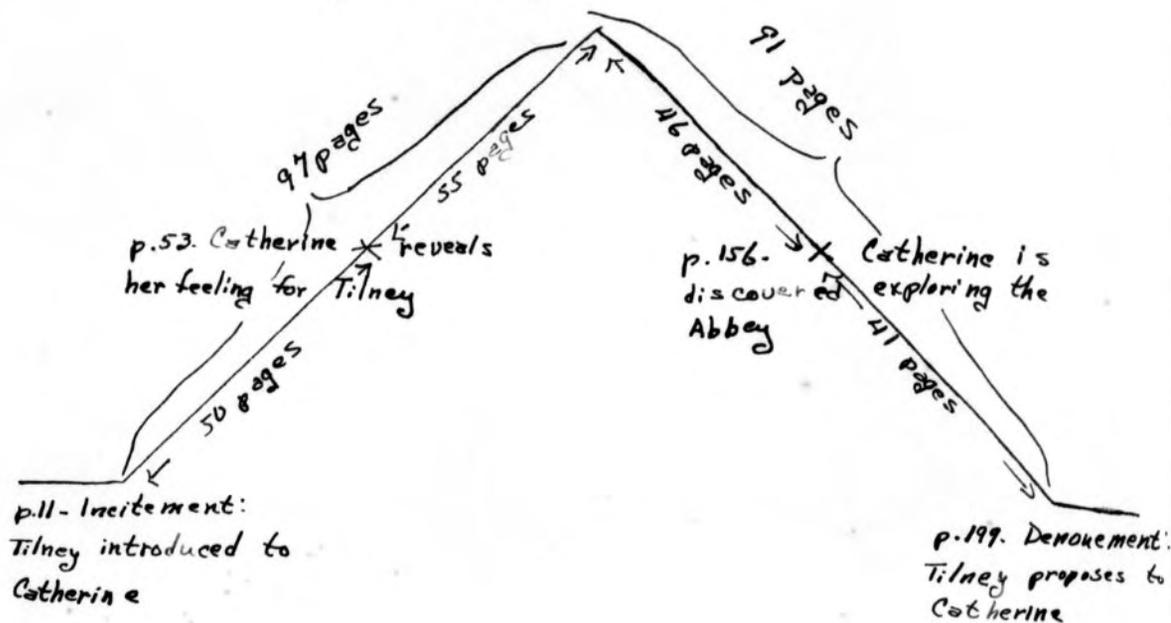
The central action of the story, which concerns Fitzwilliam Darcy and Elizabeth Bennett, begins on page eight, when Darcy in his prejudice against the people of the community insults Elizabeth and her pride forces her to be disdainful of him. The climax falls exactly 154 pages later, in the scene in which Darcy's arrogant proposal is scornfully rejected by Elizabeth, and the denouement 154 pages after the climax, at which time Elizabeth becomes engaged to Darcy. Approximately two-thirds of the way through both the rising and the falling actions events of significance occur. In the rising action it is the departure of Bingley for London, which seems to end Jane's (Jane is Elizabeth's sister; Bingley, Darcy's friend) prospect of marriage and makes Elizabeth angry with Darcy, whom she believes to have some part in the affair; in the declining action it is the elopement of Lydia, which Elizabeth fears will completely estrange her from Darcy, but which ends in bringing them together. The plot is thus carefully blocked out. The important incidents in the rising action are carefully balanced against those in the falling action: Darcy's rudeness to Elizabeth by his graciousness to her and the Gardiners at Pemberly; Wickham's story of Darcy by the housekeeper's and by a revelation of the true situation between Darcy and Wickham; Darcy's hindrance of Jane's affairs by his later furthering of them and of Lydia's welfare. Interest is held at a peak in the declining action by the uncertainty of the outcome, for just as Darcy seems again to be interested in Elizabeth, Lydia's elopement becomes known to him. Elizabeth is convinced that he will never again be interested in her, but Miss Austen handles the scene so as to make it instrumental in bringing about the union of Darcy and Elizabeth by having it provide him an opportunity for re-establishing himself in the family's favor.

The time is planned so that the climax of the principal plot comes exactly midway of the twelve-month period which the story covers:



In Sense and Sensibility there are two parallel plots, equal in interest and importance; each plot is necessary to the theme of the story, for Elinor personifies sense as it is contrasted to Marianne's sensibility, or open display of emotion. Miss Austen advocates the way of sense, which leads to contentment, as opposed to sensibility, which causes public humiliation to Marianne and can end in happiness only after she alters her views. In Pride and Prejudice the two traits of character are possessed by the protagonists of the same plot: Elizabeth stands for pride, Darcy for prejudice, although each of them has also a share of the trait dominant in the other. The central action is carried on entirely within this one plot, for none of the other stories, not even that of Jane and Bingley, equals it. The main plot and the subplots of Pride and Prejudice form more of an integral whole than those of Sense and Sensibility, however, for the stories of Elizabeth, Jane, and Lydia are mutually interdependent, whereas those of Elinor and Marianne, while closely united and developed simultaneously, are bound together by artificial means rather than by internal elements of the plot. It is because of Bingley that Elizabeth meets Darcy, because of Darcy that Bingley leaves Jane to go to London, and finally because of Darcy's contrivance that Bingley proposes to and marries her. The story of Lydia and Wickham's elopement is also both a plot in itself and a part of the main plot, for Wickham is instrumental in giving Darcy a bad character and influencing Elizabeth against him; Darcy in turn is

p.108. Climax: the invitation to visit Northanger



the agent for revealing the true character of Lydia's husband and for saving her from complete disgrace. Lydia's escapade is the peak of interest in the declining action, for it seems to provide an insuperable barrier between Darcy and Elizabeth, but is turned into a welding force between them. The plot and subplots of Pride and Prejudice form one intergral whole, each being indispensable to the others.

The plot of Northanger Abbey is a simple one: Catherine Morland, an attractive girl of seventeen, is invited to go with family friends for a six-weeks stay in Bath, where she meets and is attracted to Henry Tilney. She also has the good fortune of becoming a friend of Mr. Tilney's sister, Eleanor, who urges her to come for a visit at Northanger Abbey, the Tilney home. Mr. Henry Tilney is evidently becoming seriously interested in Catherine when his father rudely sends her home again, having learned her fortune to be small, whereas he had believed it quite large. Tilney is not so readily discouraged, however, and at last the subplot, dealing with the unfortunate infatuation of Catherine's brother, James Morland, with Miss Isabella Thorpe. This subplot is interwoven with the principal plot by the facts that James is Catherine's brother, that Isabella is one of the few acquaintances she makes at Bath, and that Captain Fredrick Tilney, a brother of Eleanor and Henry, is the cause of the break between James and Isabella. From the accompanying diagram it may be seen that the plot is blocked in thus:

Incitement: Catherine's first meeting with Henry, page 11,
Chapter 3.

Climax: The invitation to visit Northanger, page 109,
Chapter 17.

Denouement: Henry's proposal to Catherine, page 203,
Chapter 30.

Ninty-eight pages or fourteen chapters are covered from the incitement

to the climax; from the climax to the denouement, ninety-four pages or twelve chapters. Only careful planning and construction could secure such precise balance of plot.

In Northanger Abbey, however, Miss Austen is less completely concerned with structural perfection and assumes a lighter attitude toward the responsibilities of a fiction writer. In her first chapter she makes sport of the formal stereotyped heroine, and introduces Catherine Morland as a girl most unlikely to be a heroine, since she has none of the usual heroine's personal attributes or abilities; furthermore:

There was not one lord in the neighborhood; no, not even a baronet. There was not one family among their acquaintance who has reared and supported a boy accidentally found at their door; not one young man whose origin was unknown. Her father had no ward, and the squire of the parish no children.

But when a young lady is to be a heroine, the perverseness of forty surrounding families cannot prevent her. Something must and will happen to throw a hero in her way.

And when Mrs. Morland gives her parting advice to Catherine, about to leave for Bath, she neglects to be properly distressed about possible insults that may be made by the strange young men Catherine will meet.

Her cautions were confined to the following points: "I beg, Catherine, you will always wrap yourself up very warm about the throat when you come from the Rooms at night; and I wish you would try to keep some account of the money you spend; I will give you this little book on purpose!"

Miss Austen makes light, too, of the Gothic novel, at that particular time a popular form of entertainment, by showing how completely the young ladies, including the sensible Catherine Morland, were carried away with it, and by illustrating pointedly what false impressions such books give. Catherine, absorbed in the mysteries and crimes of Udolpho, supposes the elder Mr. Tilney, who is somewhat gruff and odd, to have

disposed of his wife by foul means, and while exploring the house for evidence of his guilt is discovered by Henry Tilney, who guesses her suspicions and makes her thoroughly ashamed of herself.

Miss Austen's most direct fling at the practices of fiction writers occurs in the final chapter, where, having mentioned Eleanor Tilney's marriage, she explains,

Concerning the one in question (Eleanor's husband) therefore, I have only to add (aware that the rules of composition forbid the introduction of a character not connected with my fable) that this was the very gentleman whose negligent servant left behind him that collection of washing-bills resulting from a long visit at Northanger, by which my heroine was involved in one of her most alarming adventures.

Miss Austen not only presents a new character late in her story, but she also enters it herself to make a comment, just as Richardson, Fielding, and Smollett write their personal observations into the text of their stories, even though the practice is frowned upon as a weakness in plot technique.

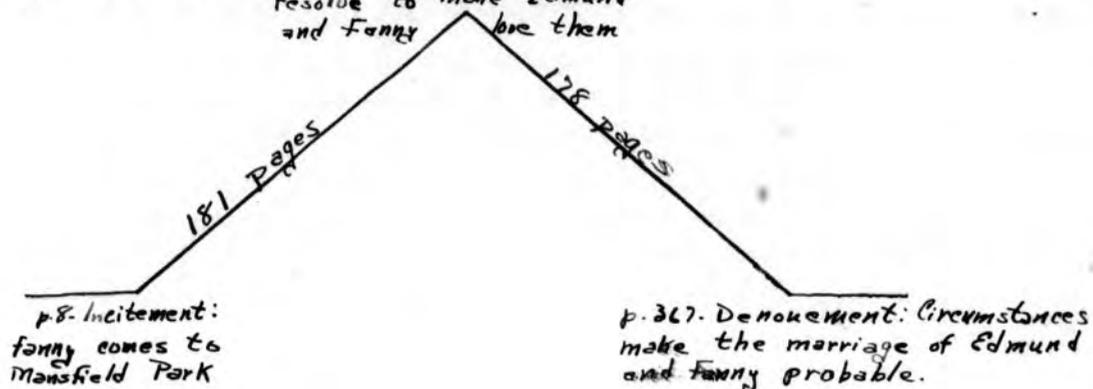
The three novels written after Northanger Abbey -- Emma, Mansfield Park, and Persuasion -- though by no means carelessly or loosely constructed, show something more of Miss Austen's departure from her former absolute adherence to the rules of composition.

Mansfield Park¹ concerns the rearing of Fanny Price, and indigent niece of Lady Bertram, in the Bertram household at Mansfield Park. It tells of Fanny's development into an attractive, sincere young lady and of her marriage to Edmund Bertram, a union which comes about only after many obstacles are overcome. In this story the balance of

1. A discussion of Emma is omitted because of lack of time for a careful study of the novel.

actual pages is carefully worked out:

p. 189 - Climax: Mary and Henry Crawford resolve to make Edmund and Fanny love them



Incitement: Fanny Price becomes a member of the Mansfield Park family, page 8.

Climax: Mary Crawford resolves to receive Edmund Bertram's attentions, but not to think seriously about him; Henry Crawford resolves to make Fanny Price love him, page 189.

Denouement: The Henry Crawford-Maria Bertram Rushworth escapade ends the attraction of Edmund for Henry's sister, Mary, and Henry's attentions to Fanny, thus making the marriage of Edmund and Fanny a probability, page 367.

The time-element, however is far less meticulously reckoned than in Miss Austen's earlier novels; she makes as frequent mention of the date, but the months are not so equally balanced between the major sections of the story. Between pages eight, marking the incitement, and thirty-two, the point at which the Crawfords arrive at the Mansfield parsonage, ten years elapse. Since five months are taken up on the rising subsequent to the arrival of the Crawfords, and four in the falling action, the principal part of the story is balanced in time in spite of the long period at the beginning, How much time passes between

Edmund's abandoning the idea of marrying Marry Crawford and his decision to choose Fanny for his wife, is left unknown, for

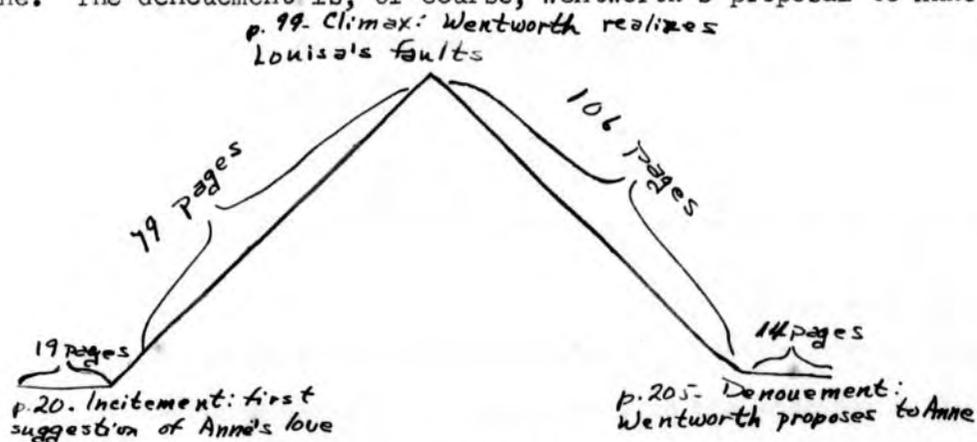
I purposefully abstain from dates on this occasion, that every one may be at liberty to fix their own, aware that the cure of unconquerable passions, and the transfer of unchanging attachments, must vary much as to time in different people. I only intreat everybody to believe exactly at the time when it was quite natural that it should be so, and not a week earlier, Edmund did cease to care about Miss Crawford, and became as anxious to marry Fanny as Fanny could desire.

A large number of characters of secondary importance are introduced: the numerous younger Price children and the Prices' maid, Rebecca, Mr. Price's naval acquaintances, the scene painter, the coachman, Mrs. Norris's 'Nanny.' These people make the scene alive, but they are not useful to the extent to which similar persons -- the Allens and the Thorpes in Northanger Abbey, for example -- are in the forwarding of the plot. Other characters are developed at length and given complete personalities without proving useful to the plot. Fanny's favorite brother, William, is portrayed as an able and deserving young man, but he has no valuable function in the story except as the recipient of a favor from Mr. Crawford, who is attempting to ingratiate himself with Fanny. On the other hand, some relatively important characters are barely described: the Mr. Yates with whom Julia, the younger Bertram daughter, unexpectedly elopes is only described briefly, in contrast with the full character given Wickham, who elopes with Lydia Bennett in Pride and Prejudice.

These departures from absolute adherence to the rules she has set for herself seem to be not weaknesses in style, but rather an indication that Miss Austen grows in her power as a writer, and that as plot construction becomes increasingly easier for her, she does not labor

over her story as much as at first, departing from the absolute, formal plot fully conscious that she will still be able to produce a plausible, entertaining story.

Persuasion, like Miss Austen's other novels, is an artistically constructed story of love and mating, in which Anne Elliot, who has allowed herself to be persuaded not to marry the young man with whom she is in love, learns that he is to return to the community. The incitement comes on page twenty, where Anne meditates on the possibility of seeing Captain Wentworth again. When Wentworth does come back he pays little attention to Anne, but endeavors to convince himself that he is in love with the headstrong Louisa Musgrove, a much younger girl than Anne. The story reaches its climax on page ninety-nine, chapter twelve; Louisa, because of her self-will, is seriously hurt in a fall. Captain Wentworth appears to be very concerned by her illness, but this is the occasion of his beginning to realize Louisa's inferiority to Anne. The denouement is, of course, Wentworth's proposal to Anne.



The rising action occupies a shorter space than the falling, which may be accounted for, in part at least, by the fact that although the climax is reached on page ninety-nine several pages following are necessary to the completion of the effect of the accident on Wentworth's affections, thus spreading the climax over about ten pages.

In Persuasion the one physically violent scene in all Miss Austen's novels occurs: Louisa's fall. Miss Austen studiously avoids scenes involving a great deal of motion, dancing being about the limit of the activity portrayed in her stories. The later books, as has already been mentioned, do indicate a gradual shift from her exact observance of certain rules; this scene in Persuasion illustrates her more relaxed, natural style.

The first chapters of each of Miss Austen's novels are significant in the development of the plot, and in the development of plot in general. These introductory chapters serve, as do all good opening chapters, to set the scene for the book, to introduce the majority of the important characters, and to establish in the reader's mind an attitude concerning the type of book that the particular volume is. Often, however, the first chapter of a book stands out noticeably as the author's attempt to relate the necessary foundation material. Roderick Random, for example, opens with an enumeration of the events of Roderick's birth and early youth. Tom Jones develops more subtly, but several chapters are taken up with setting forth Tom's heritage and character so as to make the information seem to be revealed in the course of the story. Miss Austen presents her introduction in such a manner as to make it a part of the story proper. Pride and Prejudice begins with a conversation in which Mrs. Bennet discusses the arrival of Bingley in the neighborhood in connection with the possible effect he may have on the marital status of her daughters. Very quickly the number and qualifications of the Bennet girls are set forth, in the most natural manner. In Sense and Sensibility the same concise treatment is given the introduction of the Dashwood family and the revelation of the financial condition of the various members. Northanger Abbey, the most fanciful of the six novels, does open in a purposefully

artificial manner, for Miss Austen, with quick satire, makes a point of comparing her heroine, Catherine Morland, with the typical story-book characters. One tool which Miss Austen uses in making her first chapters effective is having the opening scene deal with her characters only a few days or months before the time of the incitement of the plot. Only in one instance are the hero and heroine introduced as children. In the other stories events of earlier years are related in retrospect. A second tool she employs is dialogue, which makes the beginning seem natural. Then too, characters are not only introduced in these first chapters; they are also characterized: Catherine Morland's sincerity and naivete, Mrs. Bennett's complete absorption in match-making, Elinor Dashwood's solid good sense, are presented early in the story, so that the reader is prepared for their subsequent conduct.

By concise, purposeful introductions, then, Miss Austen gets her novels under weigh.

Another development in plotting to be found in Miss Austen is the elimination of chance as a principal factor in plot development. Fielding employs the deus ex machina as a determining factor in his stories. In Joseph Andrews the question of the brother-and-sistership of Joseph and Fanny is solved by an elaborate story of gypsy kidnapping, the whole episode being obviously a contrivance for delaying the denouement. In Roderick Random, as in the typical picaresque tale, over which Smollett makes very few advances, the flagrant use of chance as an agent in plot development is illustrated by the providential appearances of Strap, Tom Bowling, and Roderick's father at moments when that hero is in direct need of financial assistance. Jane Austen's plots are almost completely the outcome of character. Elinor Dashwood's

good sense, Edmund Bertram's high principles, direct the courses of the stories in which they are involved. Even Louisa Musgrove's fall is a result of her self-will.

With Jane Austen plotting of a certain type reached its peak. Her plots are formal and yet somewhat flexible; she achieves unity, balance, and complexity through a carefully planned revelation of the inter-action of a series of related events; subplots have a distinct bearing on the main plot; irrelevant episodes are excluded. And yet hers is not the only form of plot. Scott with his artistic combination of realism and romanticism set against a historical background, Dickens with his panorama of London life and his concrete revelations of character as it controls plot, Hardy with his creation of the brooding atmosphere of English heath country as a back-drop for an impelling story of the clash of man against some great force -- these men carry the technique of plotting on to richer and fuller developments.

Thus over the centuries the novel has developed, out of a heterogeneous mass of episodes and tales in which only traces of a plot scheme are to be found, into a compact series of actions leading to a definite outcome and portraying life with at least the semblance of actuality. I regret that the limitations of time compel me to leave this rather hasty survey of the evolution of plot structure just as the period of greatest development has been reached.

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*Read only in part

Approved by:

Leonard B. Hurley

Director

Myself
Gaynell Callaway
Leonard B. Hurley

Examining Committee