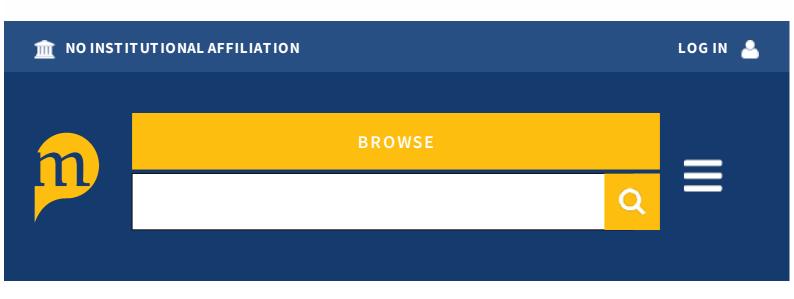
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Mid-century English Quixotism and the Defence of the Novel.



Mid-Century English Quixotism and the Defence of the Novel

Brean S. Hammond

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In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

Mid-Century English Quixotism and the Defence of the Novel Brean S. Hammond In a forthcoming introduction to a collection of articles on the novel in eighteenth-century Britain, Richard Kroll discriminates studies of the subject into three types:1studies that effectively accept Watt's thesis about the rise of the novel in England but seek to qualify or extend its terms;2 others that stress the ancient genealogy of the novel and do not accept the eighteenth century as a new or originary moment;3 and some very recent approaches, stressing that Watt's thesis is itself determined by ideological battles fought in the eighteenth century and won by the nine teenth, about how the novel's history should be represented.4 Feminist literary historians do not all fit comfortably into this typology. For 11 am extremely grateful to Richard Kroll for allowing me to

see his forthcoming introduction to a collection of essays for the Longman Critical Readers volumes on the
eighteenth-century British novel. 2 Primus inter pares are, of course, Michael McKeon, The Origins of the
English Novel, 16001740 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987) and J. Paul Hunter, Before Novels:
The Cultural Contexts of Eighteenth-Century Fiction (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 1990). 3 Principally
Margaret Anne Doody, The True Story of the Novel (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1996). Doody's
account is closer than is Ian Watt's to the story as it would have been told in the eighteenth century itself by,
for example, Clara Reeve. 4 See, for example, Homer Brown, "The Institution of the English Novel: Defoe's
Contribution," Novel 29 (1995-96), 299-318; William B. Warner, "The Elevation of the Novel in England:
Hegemony and Literary History," English Literary History 59 (1992), 577-96; Warner, "Licensing Pleasure:
Literary History and the Novel in Early Modern Britain" in Columbia History EIG HTEENTH-CENTURY FICTION,
Volume 10, Number 3, April 1998 248 EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY FICTION more than a decade, they have
ende avoured to show us what Wattoccluded: large volumes of imaginative writing by British women writers.
Although there is some reluctance to accept the "rise" metaphor, the effect of much of this work is to
construct an alternative female tradition that is, perhaps, just as fictive in its linearity as is its brother.5 In this
respect, those who belong to Kroll's third group regard themselves as more radical. "The linear history of
the novel," Homer Brown has recently written, "as having an 'origin' and 'rise,' the history we have been
broughtupon, withitsgenealogies, linesofdescentandinfluence, familyresemblances, isitselfafictionalalternative and all of the contractions of the contraction of the cont
narrative—a kind of novelabout the novel."6 The novel was constituted as a category, Brown would argue,
not by any set ofperformances in that category (novels by Fielding or Richardson, for example), but by the
institutionalizing activities of major publishers and editors. Thus, as Alan Downie concludes a recent article
entitled "The Making the English Novel," "what I suspect we are witnessing is not a market driven by readers
so much as a market driven by publishers such as Noble and Ballantyne and critics such as Scott."7 Such an
approach is cognate at various points with the debate over the formation of the English canon, in that the
novel is said not to exist before there are instruments of transmission and institutions of reofthe British
Novel, ed. John Richetti, John Bender, Deirdre David, and Michael Seidel (New York: Columbia University
Press, 1994), pp. 1-22; J.A. Downie, "The Making of the English Novel," Eighteenth-Century Fiction 9 (April
1997), 249-66. I have not been able to read Homer Brown's book Institutions of the English Novel from Defoe
to Scott (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), which, as I write, has not yet appeared in
Britain. Much of my understanding of Brown depends on Kroll. 5 One would include here, inter alia: John
Richetti, Popular Fiction before Richardson: Narrative Patterns, 1700-1739 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969),
a pione ering work even if it does not have the same ideological persuasion as later items in the list; Ruth
Perry, Women, Letters and the Novel (New York: AMS

Mid-Century English Quixotism and the Defence of the Novel

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In a forthcoming introduction to a collection of articles on the novel in eighteenth-century Britain, Richard Kroll discriminates studies of the subject into three types: studies that effectively accept Watt's thesis about the use of the novel in England but seek to qualify or extend its terms; the terms that stress the ancient genealogy of the novel and do not accept the eighteenth century as a new or originary moment; and some very recent approaches, stressing that Watt's thesis is itself determined by idenlogical battles fought in the eighteenth century and won by the nineteenth, about how the novel's history should be represented. Feminist literary historians do not all fit comfortably into this typology. For

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- 3 Principally Margaret Anne Doody, 706 True Surry of the Annel (New Brunswick: Rutests Carverstry Press, 90A; Doody's account is door than Is fan Wire's to the story as It would have been feld in the egitscenft conjury usefully, for comple, Clara Reeve.
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