The English novel, destined to become the most popular and prolific of all literary forms, first fully emerged in the eighteenth century. During this century the English novel grew quietly to its full stature. "The Elizabethans toyed with romance and with realism, Bunyan had made a story out of his religious convictions, Addison and Steele had expressed common beliefs and sentiments in essays with a touch of fiction, Defoe had given to homely fact an imaginative appeal. The way for the modern novel was thus fully prepared."¹

The century witnessed the growth, of course, in varying proportions, of several novelistic genres - the epistolary novel, the novel of sensibility, the picaresque novel, the Gothic novel, the doctrinaire novel, the novel of manners, the psychological novel, the stream of consciousness novel, and the sea-novel - and their contribution to the enrichment and advance of the novel is immense indeed. The picaresque novel, a prominent novelistic genre flowering in the eighteenth century, reaches its highest point of development in the hands of various novelists, particularly Defoe, Fielding, and Smollett. Defoe's novels - Captain Singleton, Moll Flanders, Colonel Jack and Roxana - are all picaresque in matter and form Fielding's novels Joseph Andrews, Jonathan Wild and Tom Jones -are all written in the picaresque tradition. Smollett's best

novels-Roderick Random, Peregrine Pickle, and Humphry Clinker—all belong to the picaresque tradition.

The present thesis attempts a probing and penetrating, and enlightening and illuminating analysis of the picaresque novel in the eighteenth century, rather an unexplored area in the English studies and research. It highlights its chief characteristics and practitioners, thus studying and examining both its theory and practice in the century. It also investigates its contribution to the growth of the various novelistic genres, and also its influence on the subsequent course of the English novel. I am sure that it will certainly lead to a better understanding of the growth of the picaresque novel in the eighteenth century.

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