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THE "NEWGATE SCHOOL" OF ROMANCE AND ITS PLACE IN THE ENGLISH LITERATURE OF THE EIGHTEEN-THIRTIES

The eighteen-thirties are a remarkable and stimulating period in the social, political and literary development of England, to which, however, relatively small attention has been so far paid. The social and political background of this decade is characterized by the political victory of the English bourgeoisie in 1832, the instalment of the supreme rule of capital with all the accompanying phenomena and contrasts, culminating in the storm of the revolutionary events of Chartism at the close of the decade. The specific character of the decade as the seed-time of the events to come finds also a specific reflection in the literature of the immediate time — in the development of the English literature of the 19th century, especially of fiction, the eighteen-thirties represent a period of transition.

Sir Walter Scott, who for seventeen years had supremely ruled in the field of fiction, died in 1832, and his two last novels, published before his death, bear evidence of the decline of his creative genius. (1) A new development in the genre of the novel, which would reflect and give artistic expression to the contemporary life and struggles of the English people, did not begin to appear till the second half of the decade (the first novel to break new ground was Dickens' *Oliver Twist*, published in 1837—1838). A temporary lull in literary development, a large reading public nursed on the novels of Walter Scott, and enterprising publishers who made use of this tempting opportunity by publishing any new novels that were offered — such a situation was extremely favourable for the appearance and wide popularity of literary trash, such as the novels of crime, the fashionable novels of the Silver-Fork School, historical novels imitating Scott, etc. (2).

One of the most popular types of this kind of fiction were the "Newgate novels", so called after their source of inspiration, the *Newgate Calendar*. For their ephemeral value and imitative character they would not be worthy of critical interest but for the fact that in the 'thirties they stood out above the level of the "penny dreadfuls", gained an enormous popularity and even eclipsed for a time in this respect the early works of Charles Dickens. Owing to this specific situation the "Newgate novels" deserve our attention — so far as we see them in a proper perspective, in relation to the arising great literature of critical realism and to its representatives writing at that time, Dickens and Thackeray.

I.

The "Newgate novelists" of the 'thirties (Edward Bulwer, W. H. Ainsworth, and Charles Whitehead) represent a literary school, which is generally called "the Newgate School" or "Bulwer's school". Their acknowledged literary leader was Edward Bulwer, who initiated the tradition with his criminal novel *Paul Clifford* (1830), continued with *Eugene Aram* (1832) and was imitated by Ainsworth in *Rookwood* (1834) and *Jack Sheppard* (1839). (Charles Whitehead wrote two works of this kind in the 'thirties, but they were not so widely popular as the above-mentioned novels.). The school also had its manifesto, its theoretical programme, which Bulwer summed up in his essay "On Art in Fiction"(3), in the chapter dealing with the creation of characters, and developed in his prefaces to the above criminal novels. The prefaces are of a later date and are first and foremost defences against the sharp critical attacks of the editorial staff of *Fraser's Magazine*, especially of W. M. Thackeray.

Bulwer's conception of literature is romantic, though he criticizes some aspects of the creative method of Walter Scott and of the Gothic novelists. Literature should not, he insists, "imitate" nature, but "exalt" it, should realize "the Ideal", approach the Sublime. About Bulwer's Ideal we do not learn much, but it ought to embody, as he emphasizes, "what we can imagine"(4). In harmony with his romantic conception of the aims and tasks of literature Bulwer pays great attention to the delineation of evil and criminal characters. Here, in his opinion, lies the widest scope for the novelist. His conception of the portraiture of criminal characters as a whole — with the stress laid upon the necessity of evoking the reader's sympathy for the outcast, of showing the motives and influences under which the criminal character has been formed and thus pointing out "the vicious influences of any peculiar error in the social system"(5) — clearly shows that Bulwer attempted to follow in the steps of the great representatives of the English pre-romantic and romantic period, especially of William Godwin and Lord Byron (W. H. Ainsworth, on the other hand, tries to imitate chiefly Walter Scott and the Gothic novelists). Bulwer's theoretical views are, however, merely empty and pompous words, which lose much of their loftiness when translated into his pictures.

One of the most characteristic features of the creative method of Bulwer and Ainsworth is their small interest in contemporary reality (although Bulwer intends to show some of its darker aspects). They draw their subject-matter from the past, pore over the pages of the *Newgate Calendar* to discover materials worthy "of elevated fiction"(6) and find them in the sensational exploits of the notorious criminals of the preceding century, Eugene Aram, Dick Turpin, Jack Sheppard, and Jonathan Wild (Paul Clifford is a fictitious character, also, however, placed in the England of the latter half of the eighteenth century). Thus they return to the historical events and persons which attracted the attention of the realistic writers of that time. It is familiar ground that Henry Fielding borrowed the name of the "famous" thief-taker Jonathan Wild (who is a subsidiary character in Ainsworth's *Jack Sheppard*) for the central hero of his powerful satire *The History of the Life of the Late Mr. Jonathan Wild the Great*, published in 1743. But his interest is not concentrated upon the sensational fortunes and exploits of the historical Wild for their own sake (like the interest of Ainsworth), indeed, his "hero" has scarcely any connection — except his name, utter wickedness, and "profession" — with the prototype. Fielding's intention was to reveal the essential similarity between Wild, the "great man" of the underworld, and the "great men" of contemporary political and social life, especi-

ally Walpole, and thus, by the method of relentless and sustained irony, he succeeded in making an attack upon the very foundations of bourgeois society. A different approach to the rendering of the life of that notorious criminal may be found in Daniel Defoe's pamphlet *The True and Genuine Account of the Life and Actions of the late Jonathan Wild. (Not made up of Fiction and Fable, but taken from his Own Mouth and collected from Papers of his Own Writing)*, published in 1725, the year of Wild's execution. The subtitle clearly shows the aim of the pamphlet: to serve as a counterbalance against "the several absurd and ridiculous accounts"(7) of Wild's life published in his lifetime. The pamphlet is written, as Defoe emphasizes, "in a method agreeable to the Fact"(8), in a matter-of-fact journalistic style, and is characterized, as are all the works of the author, by the air of verisimilitude and closeness to life (9). The same holds good for Defoe's two pamphlets giving the account of the life of Jack Sheppard (the central figure of Ainsworth's novel) (10), both published in 1724.

The story of Eugene Aram attracted the attention of William Godwin, who confessed to Bulwer after the publication of the latter's novel that he "had always thought the story of Eugene Aram peculiarly adapted for fiction and... had more than once entertained the notion of making it the foundation of a novel" (11). Bulwer adds with false modesty (for in the preface to the ensuing edition of his novel he calls it one of the best of his fictions) that he "can well conceive what depth and power that gloomy record would have taken from the dark and inquiring genius of the author of *Caleb Williams*" (12).

The approach of Bulwer and Ainsworth to the rendering of the life of the above-mentioned historical criminals is essentially different. They uproot them from the soil of the historical and social conditions which gave birth to their criminality and corrupted their moral character, "exalt" them into positive "heroes" by idealizing them out of knowledge, and "adapt" accordingly the available historical data. Thus in Ainsworth's depiction Dick Turpin (the "hero" of *Rookwood*), a cattle-lifter, horse-thief and murderer, becomes a gallant fellow, a choice companion, and a superb rider. Ainsworth's account of Turpin's "famous" ride to York, on which the enormous popularity of the romance in its time chiefly rested, is, as far as the actual criminal is concerned, pure fiction. (The novel, or "romance", as the author calls it, was intentionally written in the style of Mrs. Radcliffe, and Turpin, as the author emphasizes in the preface, is a substitution for her Italian brigand.)

Even more cavalier is Ainsworth's treatment of historical facts in *Jack Sheppard*, which reaches the lowest level of this kind of literature, but was the most popular of all these books, was even dramatized and played in four theatres at a time, as Thackeray informs us (13). The handsome and brave "hero" of the novel, the son of a notorious criminal and a woman of mysterious origin, who is not responsible for his criminal deeds because from his very birth he is predestined to a criminal career, and who becomes a glorified saint when marching to the gallows, has nothing in common with the historical person, a young apprentice, the son of an honest carpenter, who became a thief after being orphaned. Jonathan Wild is in Ainsworth's depiction the evil incarnate, a devil with "blood-thirsty eyes" and "diabolical grins", and the actual rôle he played in the life of the historical Sheppard is overemphasized. It is not surprising that this work aroused the deepest indignation of Thackeray, who pronounced his judgment upon it in *Catherine* (14).

Bulwer's Eugene Aram, the pale scholar of delicate health and "thoughtful stoop" (15) makes, in the garb of the idealized "hero", an especially absurd figure. His story is indeed unique in the annals of crime, for the murder he committed for money (in order to acquire the means for scientific research) was not discovered until after

a period of fourteen years. Bulwer tries to show the motives of his crime and to lay the guilt upon the social conditions which did not open this talented man another road to science; but in fact he is more interested in the uniqueness of the case and revels in the thoughts and pangs of conscience of his "hero" in the period between his crime and his arrest. The original edition of the book must have abounded even more in romantic excesses, for Bulwer, as Gordon N. Ray informs us, after Thackeray's relentless parody of his "hero" in *Novels by Eminent Hands* pruned his style of the worst blemishes, left out of the book the scene glorifying the murder, and made the murderer only an accomplice in crime (16).

These absurd and unreal "historical" figures are surrounded by many fictitious subsidiary figures, mostly in some way mysterious, and all linked together by means of improbable coincidences and other surprise effects. The central link of the plot is always based on a mystery (a family mystery or an undiscovered murder). The milieu in which Bulwer's and Ainsworth's atypical figures move, is of course mysterious or at least unusual — the lonely hermitage of Eugene Aram, the haunts of thieves and criminals, prisons "hallowed" by Sheppard's presence and, in *Rookwood*, vaults, churchyards and old mansions. Even nature automatically adapts her moods to the needs of the authors, especially of Ainsworth, who prefers night and raving elements to day and sunshine. (In the exposition of *Jack Sheppard* he uses for his purposes the historical storm of 1703, which was also described by Defoe as an eye-witness) (17).

A special position among the "Newgate novels" is held by Bulwer's *Paul Clifford* which was praised by Charles Dickens, the author's personal friend, as an "admirable and powerful novel" having "wider aims" like Gay's *Beggar's Opera* and therefore, in Dickens' opinion, not so harmful as other works of this type, even if the criminals are in it "represented as leading a life which is rather to be envied than otherwise" (18). The novel was written at a time (1830), when the death penalty for minor offences had not yet been abolished, and people were hanged for petty thefts; Bulwer's aim was to reveal the corrupting influence of this "sanguinary Criminal Code" and " vicious Prison-discipline" (19) upon the central figure. But, again, these are only big words. Paul Clifford is an unreal, improbable and idealized figure gradually developing into an admirable "hero", who could not convince the reader of his moral degradation and still less of the necessity to abolish the laws which caused it.

Bulwer's protest against some "errors", as he calls them, of bourgeois society, which had its roots in his reforming zeal at that time, remained — owing to the non-typical nature of his figures — romantic, abstract and inapplicable to real life. The absurdity of his two criminal "heroes" are considerably strengthened by Bulwer's language, full of pompous expressions, bombastic phrases, quotations from Latin and Greek, vocative appeals (O Beautiful Evening! O thou divine spirit! etc.) and the like.

It is, we hope, sufficiently clear from the above that the "Newgate novels" of Bulwer's school are literary works of the lowest order, treating in a barbaric way the heritage of the preromantic and romantic novelists, degrading the hero of the Byronic type to absurdity in the ridiculous figures of glorified common criminals and trying to revive artificially the "fluttering and feeble pulses" of "old Romance", as Ainsworth expressed it (20), in the essentially changed social conditions of the eighteen-thirties. The social function which the school fulfilled in its time, is now also clear — it is in its essence a literature of an escapist character (in spite of all Bulwer's pretensions), leading the attention of the readers away from contemporary reality

into a non-existent romantic criminal underworld. In this way it effectively served the needs and aims of the English bourgeoisie and served as a precedent to the escapist literature of the following decades, especially the literature of sensation represented by Wilkie Collins.

II.

It was the antirealistic character of the "Newgate novels" of Bulwer's school combined with their wide popularity which aroused the indignation of the two critical realists who wrote in the 'thirties, Dickens and Thackeray, especially of the latter. The aesthetic views and creative principles of the two great writers, rooted in the realistic literature of the preceding century and slowly ripening in the gloomy and unsettled 'thirties, necessarily clashed with those of Bulwer and his followers in sharp polemic exchanges. "The struggle against romantic illusions", as J. A. Gaziyev emphasizes, "was one of the historical tasks of the realistic aesthetic theory of the founders of the English realistic novel of the nineteenth century, Dickens and Thackeray." (21).

The protest of W. M. Thackeray is of an early date: since the very beginning of his acquaintance with Bulwer's works (i. e. since the beginning of the 'thirties) he found himself "competing with him"(22). His negative attitude to Bulwer's creative method took definite form about the time of his first regular contributions to *Fraser's Magazine* (in 1837). The history of Thackeray's attack upon Bulwer, the various forms which it assumed, the reaction of Bulwer, and the deeply contrasting evaluations of the polemic exchange by bourgeois literary historians, which have more or less continued till the present time, are familiar ground (23). Our aim here is to give a general evaluation of Thackeray's criticism of the "Newgate school" and to show how far it helped in the formation of his aesthetic views.

By most of the English and American literary historians W. M. Thackeray is usually characterized as a mere harmless moralist, a cynic or sentimentalist etc., and considerably underestimated as a critic of bourgeois society. This also holds good for the now current evaluation of his criticism of the "Newgate school", the most important aspect of which is generally seen in its moralistic tendency. Thus for example Professor Mario Praz, in his stimulating and richly documented study *The Hero in Eclipse in Victorian Fiction*, calls Thackeray "an incarnation of the bourgeois reaction against the portrayal of the honourable bandit" and his protest a "moralistic satire" (24). But, surely, the moralistic tendency was only one of the aspects of Thackeray's protest. Thackeray indeed "remains always a gentleman"(25), as Mario Praz insists, a writer closely connected with the English bourgeoisie by his origin, education, and social position, a man unable to free himself from the rigid rules of the Victorian conventional morality. It is also true that he protested against the "juggling and thimblerigging with virtue and vice" (26), which bewildered the reader in the criminal romances, he wished to see vice and virtue in literature called by their names and the criminals not "whiter" than they really were. But in this protest he was influenced not only by contemporary moral conventions; he continued in the tradition of his great teachers, the realists of the eighteenth century, who were also persuaded (as all great writers must be) that the task of literature is not to tempt the reader to vice, but to educate him to virtue and goodness. It is also familiar that Thackeray strongly felt the restraint put upon him by the rules of conventional morality and rebelled, though he had to level his criticism also at himself (27).

In our opinion, the most important features of Thackeray's criticism of the "Newgate novels" are not in his attacks upon the corrupting influence of these works, whether he sees it in their corruption of moral character, or in their corruption of the literary taste of the readers. Rather than in the influence of the "Newgate novels" upon the readers Thackeray is interested in their relation to reality, in the relation of the picture to the depicted. Viewed from the wider perspective including his critici m of all antirealistic literary works of that time (the fashionable novels of the Silver-Fork School, illustrated annuals etc.), his criticism of the "Newgate novels" is first and foremost an attack levelled at the untruthfulness of their picture of criminal underworld, at the falsely idealized figures of criminals. He insists that Bulwer and Ainsworth (and also Dickens in *Oliver Twist*) cannot or dare not paint their criminals as they are, dare not "tell the *whole* truth concerning them"(28) and therefore they had better not paint them at all. In his striving for a truthful representing of the life of the criminals — when writing his "remedy" *Catherine* which ought to have made the readers throw away all books of this kind — Thackeray consults "nature and history, rather than the prevailing taste and the general manners of authors" (29), follows closely the data provided by the *Newgate Calendar* and sometimes even prefers a newspaper report to an artistic picture. Owing to the immaturity of Thackeray's creative method, the incompleteness of his irony, and the relative haziness of the general conception of the work, *Catherine* was not successful; in his attempt to do away with romantic illusions about criminal world Thackeray was more successful in his later works, *Barry Lyndon* and the relentless parody of the absurdity and unreality of Eugene Aram and of Bulwer's literary style in "George de Barnwell", in *Novels by Eminent Hands*.

Viewed from this angle, Thackeray's criticism of the "Newgate novels" can hardly be called a bourgeois protest, since striving and fighting for literature true to life in the social conditions of that time inevitably meant including in this "truth" the darker sides of bourgeois society (as Thackeray amply proved in his later works, especially in *Vanity Fair*). Thackeray's call for "truth" and "nature" in literature, as shown in his criticism of the antirealistic literature of the time, the confrontation of such literary works with reality itself, considerably helped him in the maturing of his aesthetic views and in finding his own true vein of artistic expression.

Charles Dickens, who was first and foremost a creative artist and paid relatively small attention to the theoretical problems of literature and art, did not take part in the open polemics with Bulwer and his followers (one of the reasons was Dickens' personal friendship with Bulwer which was responsible for some errors in his evaluation of that author, as we hinted above). But he protested against the falsely idealized figures of the criminals in the novels of Bulwer's school (and thus also against Bulwer's *Paul Clifford*, even though he praised the latter) by his pictures of the London underworld in *Oliver Twist* (1837—1838). The value of his protest in its time, the social function it fulfilled, and its impact upon the contemporary reader, nursed on the current literary fashion of the "Newgate novels", deserve our attention.

Dickens did not explain the chief "aim and object" (30) he had in view when writing *Oliver Twist* until later, in his preface to the third edition of the novel in 1841; the preface is also his defence against the adverse criticism of the book. His main intention was, he explains, "to show, in little Oliver, the principle of Good surviving through every adverse circumstance, and triumphing at last" (31). When he sought in contemporary reality for the "vilest evil" (32), the darkest vice which could serve as a contrast to the Good and Virtue embodied in his hero, he naturally

found it in the most morally degraded members of the society — the criminals and prostitutes. Only on more mature consideration he realized what a splendid opportunity such characters and milieu offered for a protest against the idealized pictures of the same reality in the "Newgate novels":

> When I came to discuss the subject more maturely with myself, I saw many strong reasons for pursuing the course to which I was inclined. I had read of thieves by scores — seductive fellows (amiable for the most part), faultless in dress, plump in pocket, choice in horseflesh, bold in bearing, fortunate in gallantry, great at a song, a bottle, pack of cards or dice-box, and fit companions for the bravest. But I had never met (except in HOGARTH) with the miserable reality. It appeared to me that to draw a knot of such associates in crime as really do exist; to paint them in all their deformity, in all their wretchedness, in all the squalid poverty of their lives; to show them as they really are, for ever skulking uneasily through the dirtiest paths of life, with the great, black, ghastly gallows closing up their prospect, turn them where they may; it appeared to me that to do this, would be to attempt a something which was greatly needed, and which would be a service to society. And therefore I did it as I best could" (33).

Dickens' approach to the depicted reality, as the above original conception of the novel shows, is widely different from that of the novelists of Bulwer's school. Besides Hogarth, he claims as his teachers, "examples" and "precedents", the realistic writers of the eighteenth century, especially Fielding and Defoe, and concludes:

> "It was my attempt, in my humble and far-distant sphere, to dim the false glitter surrounding something which really did exist, by showing it in its unattractive and repulsive truth" (34).

His picture of the London underworld, however, failed to convince all of his readers of his intention to show up the faults of the "Newgate novels", as we learn from George H. Ford's helpful book *Dickens and His Readers* (35). Whereas the response of his readers to his description of the condition and sufferings of the London poor was upon the whole positive (the most outstanding example of adverse criticism may be found in the Tory magazine *The Quarterly Review*) (36) and the novel as a whole was, as Ford emphasizes, "royally... greeted by the majority of readers" (37), the response to Dickens' description of the London underworld was not unanimous. It was indeed so "mixed" that it is not easy to trace the basic lines it followed. One of the various types of protest may be found in the response of fastidious bourgeois readers who preferred the "noble" criminals of Bulwer's school, dressed in "green velvet" or in "short petticoats and a fancy dress", as Dickens writes in the preface, to Dickens' truthful criminal characters. With this sort of reader Dickens did not identify himself. He had, as he emphasizes, "no respect for their opinion, good or bad; did not covet their approval; and did not write for their amusement"(38). The protest of these "delicate" readers is, of course, rooted in the relation of the English bourgeoisie to the depicted social evil — criminality and prostitution — which they ignored and tried to cover up with an outward crust of prosperity, respectability and hypocritical morality. Grasping the difference between the unreal criminals of the "Newgate novels", who were harmless, and Dickens' live and true criminals and prostitutes, who threatened to break through the crust, bourgeois readers raised their voice in protest, veiled generally in moral indignation at "that low, debasing style" not tending "to raise morals" (Lord Melbourne) (39). Some of the protests were more open: "I know there are such unfortunate beings as pick-pockets and street walkers... but I own I do not much wish to hear what they say to one another" (Lady Carlisle) (40).

The response of this sort of reader cannot be identified with that of Thackeray. Thackeray highly appreciated Dickens as a novelist, admired his creative talent,

and praised the workhouse scenes in *Oliver Twist* as "genuine and pure" (41). Dickens' pictures of Fagin's gang, however, did not find mercy in his eyes, he condemned them as not true to life, as idealized. In his opinion these characters descend in direct line from the idealized criminal "heroes" of the "Newgate Novels" because they, too, excite the breathless interest, tender feelings, and sympathy of the reader. Though the moralistic colouring of Thackeray's criticism cannot be ignored, he again lays stress on the relation of Dickens' criminal characters to reality. In 1840, when Thackeray found himself in the midst of the crowd assembled to see the execution of Courvoisier, he observed two poor girls, one of whom, "a young thief's mistress", might have been, he insists, a prototype for Boz's Nancy:

> "I was curious to look at them, having, in late fashionable novels, read many accounts of such personages. Bah! What figments these novelists tell us! Boz, who knows life well, knows that his Miss Nancy is the most unreal fantastical personage possible; no more like a thief's mistress than one of Gessner's shepherdesses resembles a real country wench. He dare not tell the truth concerning such young ladies." (42).

Thus far Thackeray is right, Dickens' Nancy is not a genuine prostitute of her time (especially as her language and the actions, which would reveal her way of life, are concerned). But we must bear in mind that Dickens was breaking new ground and that — in his attempt to represent the London underworld truthfully — he was considerably limited by contemporary conventions, of which he was aware, as his preface shows (43). In spite of the above limitation, Dickens' criminal characters were, however, so true to life and convincing that all readers recognized in them their very contemporaries, whether they protested against them or praised them, and in their criminality or prostitution a contemporary social evil. The social function which these characters fulfilled at the time was even wider than this, for they told at least some of Dickens' readers more than the author himself wanted to say. Dickens' view upon criminality as a social phenomenon was considerably limited owing to the contrasts typical of his outlook upon contemporary reality: he saw in criminality an inevitable social evil, which he placed, in his novel, into contrast with the Good which was to triumph at last. But his criminal characters set in the wide canvas of his novel, including the paupers in the workhouses and the poor in the slums, assumed a wider meaning: they showed, to at least some of the contemporary readers, the very social roots of their criminality. This objective meaning of Dickens' pictures of Fagin's gang of thieves could not be grasped by Thackeray, who moved within the same vicious circle as Dickens as regards his explanation of criminality as a social phenomenon (44). But it was clearly understood as early as 1844 by the Russian critic Belinsky: "As a true artist Dickens truthfully represents criminal and evil characters as the victims of a bad social order; but as a true-born Englishman he never admits it even to himself." (45). From what we suggested above it follows, we hope, that Dickens' criminal characters — Nancy, Bates, Dodger and even the hardened criminals Fagin and Sikes, all realistic and convincing characters, cannot be in any way compared to the absurd figures of Bulwer and Ainsworth.

There are, however, some aspects of Dickens' creative method in *Oliver Twist*, which might confirm the opinion of Thackeray (and, most recently, also the opinion of Mario Praz) that Dickens had succumbed to the current taste of the Newgate school. One of the possible links between the "Newgate novels" and *Oliver Twist* might be seen in the romantic character of Monks, *l'homme fatal* in the fortunes of Oliver. This character was not noticed by Thackeray; Mario Praz, however, criticizes it sharply as a theatrical figure surrounded with stage effects. (46) An echo of the current literary fashion might be seen also in some of the more drastic scenes, such

as Nancy's murder (Thackeray condemns the scene as "brutal and bloody" (47) and Mario Praz calls it "a ferocious episode") (48) and the suicide of Sikes (from which Mario Praz recoils in horror). In our opinion, however, the roots from which the character of Monks grew up, must be sought for rather in the contrasts within Dickens' mind, and between it and reality, than in the literary fashion. Dickens could not grasp the laws of development of the reality he realistically depicted and offered his own, idealistic explanation of them. This contrast shows itself in the basic line of the plot — the fight of Good against Evil. Wishing to prove the inevitable final victory of Good over Evil (which could not be proved in the given social conditions) he had to adapt the two characters representing the opposing sides of the conflict accordingly by idealizing the hero and by making his enemy, Monks, the incarnation of evil. The same holds good for the conclusion of the novel which brings reward to all "good" characters, and punishment, mostly relentless, to all "evil".

In executing the basic idea of the novel Dickens uses the conventional devices of plot, indeed very similar to those used by the authors of the Newgate novels (the mysterious origin of the hero, coincidences bringing Oliver and his relatives together etc.). Therefore, if we investigate the bare outline of the plot, as Professor Mario Praz does, we may perhaps come to the conclusion that it "contains all the classic elements of the sensational novel" (49). But Dickens, like his great teachers Fielding and Smollett, who had used similar devices, never used the conventional mechanism of plot for its own sake. The comparison of the exposition of Bulwer's *Paul Clifford* to that of *Oliver Twist*, in which the authors depict the circumstances of the hero's birth and lay the foundation of the basic line of the plot (family mystery: a nameless young mother of unknown origin dies and leaves a small child behind) is *inter alia* a sufficiently convincing proof. Whereas Bulwer's description of the tragic scene abounds in melodrama and stage effects, in the ravings of the dying woman and the violent gusts of wind outside, which serve to heighten the atmosphere of mystery, Dickens uses the mystery surrounding the nameless woman to express what is most characteristic and essential in the early death of the forsaken young mother:

> "She was brought here last night," replied the old woman, "by the overseer's order. She was found lying in the street. She had walked some distance, for her shoes were worn to pieces; but where she came from, or where she was going to, nobody knows."
>
> The surgeon leaned over the body, and raised the left hand. "The old story," he said, shaking his head: "no wedding-ring, I see. Ah! Good night!" (50)

For Dickens' treatment of the mysterious origin of Oliver and for what he considered most important in Oliver's early childhood, the following passage is most characteristic:

> "What an excellent example of the power of dress, young Oliver Twist was! Wrapped in the blanket which had hitherto formed his only covering, he might have been the child of a nobleman or a beggar; it would have been hard for the haughtiest stranger to have assigned him his proper station in society. But now that he was enveloped in the old calico robes which had grown yellow in the same service, he was badged and ticketed, and fell into his place at once — a parish child — the orphan of a workhouse — the humble, half-starved drudge — to be cuffed and buffeted through the world — despised by all, and pitied by none.
>
> Oliver cried lustily. If he could have known that he was an orphan, left to the tender mercies of churchwardens and overseers, perhaps he would have cried the louder." (51)

From what we have tried to suggest (some of the problems suggested would deserve separate and fuller treatment) it appears that the so-called Newgate part of *Oliver Twist* (as Thackeray called it), with all the limitations discussed above,

cannot be in any case put on the same level as the criminal novels of Bulwer's school. It is hardly fair to overemphasize "the sensational side" of the novel, as Mario Praz does, without doing ample justice to Dickens' true and convincing pictures of the general social background, and to such live characters (even though often verging on the grotesque) as are the members of Fagin's gang, Mr. and Mrs. Bumble, Noah Claypole and Charlotte, etc. Posterity corrected the attempts of the critics of the nineteenth century to put Bulwer on the same level as Dickens and pronounced a final judgment: Bulwer's and Ainsworth's works are nowadays only dusty volumes upon dusty shelves, whereas Dickens' *Oliver Twist* will amuse, excite, and move the generations to come, will remain an ever living picture of the England of the' thirties.

Viewing the place of Bulwer's school of criminal novels in the literature of the eighteen-thirties from the perspective suggested above, we come to the conclusion, that though it was a literary fashion in its time widely popular, the only positive rôle which it played in the development of the English novel in the nineteenth century may be seen in its becoming a target for the sharp criticism of W. M. Thackeray and serving as one of the stimuli to Charles Dickens in writing *Oliver Twist*. Thus it actually helped — by way of contrast — in the formation of the aesthetic views of the two great authors, as they ripened under the pressure of the social conditions and contrasts of the 'thirties.

NOTES

(1) *Castle Dangerous* (1832) and *Count Robert of Paris* (1832).

(2) For the evaluation of the "Newgate novels" and the novels of the Silver-Fork School in the 'forties, see Kathleen Tillotson, *Novels of the Eighteen-Forties*, Oxford, At the Clarendon Press, 1954. For the general critical assessment of the English literature of roguery and crime in the nineteenth century see F. W. Chandler' s classic study *The literature of Roguery*, Boston and New York 1907, Ch. VIII ff.

(3) Published in 1838 in *The Monthly Chronicle*. For a detailed evaluation of Bulwer's theory of fiction see Watts, H. H., Lytton's Theories of Prose Fiction. PMLA, L, 1935.

(4) Lord Lytton, *Pamphlets and Sketches*, London, The Knebworth Edition, 1875, p. 319.

(5) Ibid., p. 328.

(6) Preface to the edition of *Eugene Aram* (1840), The Knebworth Edition, p. xi.

(7) The Shakespeare Head Edition of the Novels and Selected Writings of Daniel Defoe, *Colonel Jack*, vol. II, preface to the pamphlet.

(8) Ibid.

(9) The actual Jonathan Wild probably served as a prototype for Peachum in Gay's *Beggar's Opera* (see Elizabeth Jenkins, *Henry Fielding*, the English Novelists Series, London, 1947 p. 51). Macheath might have been founded on the historical Sheppard.

(10) *The History of the remarkable Life of John Sheppard containing a particular account of his many Robberies and Escapes, & c.*, and *A Narrative of all the Robberies, Escapes, &c. of John Sheppard*, both published in 1724 (The Shakespeare Head Edition of the Novels and Selected Writings of Daniel Defoe, The Fortunate Mistress, vol. II).

(11) Preface to the edition of *Eugene Aram* (1840), p. xi. See also Thomas Hood, *The Dream of Eugene Aram, The Murderer* (1829).

(12) Preface to the edition of *Eugene Aram* (1840, p. xi).

(13) *The Oxford Thackeray*, vol. III, p. 166, *The Letters and Private Papers of William Makepeace Thackeray*. Collected and edited by Gordon N. Ray, London, Oxford University Press, 1945, I, p. 395. (Further to be denoted as *Letters*.)

(14) *The Oxford Thackeray*, vol. III, pp. 186—187.

(15) Preface to the edition of *Eugene Aram* (1840), p. x.

(16) Gordon N. Ray, *Thackeray: The Uses of Adversity* (1811—1846), Geoffrey Cumberlege, Oxford University Press, London, 1955, p. 393.

(17) *The Storm: Or, a collection of the most Remarkable Casualties and Disasters Which happen'd in the Late Dreadful Tempest, both by Sea and Land (1703);* Bohn's British Classics. De Foe's Works, vol. V.

(18) Charles Dickens, *The Adventures of Oliver Twist*, A reprint of the first edition, with the illustrations, and an introduction, biographical and bibliographical, by Charles Dickens the Younger, London and New York, Macmillan and Co., 1892, preface xviii. (Further to be denoted as *Preface to Oliver Twist*.)

(19) Preface to the edition of *Paul Clifford*, the Knebworth Edition, p. vii.

(20) W. H. Ainsworth, *Rookwood*, preface, p. 7. Everyman's Library, London, 1931.

(21) *Istoriya angliyskoy literatury*, vol. II, part 1, 1953. Quoted according to the Czech translation by K. Štěpaník, published in 1955 (SPN, Prague), p. 346.

(22) *Letters*, I., p. 198; see also pp. 95, 98, 228.

(23) For the recent evaluation of Thackeray's polemics with Bulwer see Gordon N. Ray, op. cit. pp. 240—244.

(24) Mario Praz, *The Hero in Eclipse in Victorian Fiction*. Translated from the Italian by Angus Davidson, London, Geoffrey Cumberlege: Oxford University Press, 1956, pp. 478. (La Crisi dell'Eroe nel Romanzo Vittoriano. Firenze: Sansoni, 1952), p. 161. Reviewed in *Philologica*, Supplement to the *Časopis pro moderní filologii*, IX (1957), No. 2—3: Ian Milner: *An Italian View of the Victorian Novel*, pp. 33—36.

(25) Ibid., p. 207.

(26) *The Oxford Thackeray, vol. III, p. 31.*

(27) Ibid., pp. 385, 390. (See also Thackeray's celebrated preface to *Pendennis.*)

(28) Ibid., p. 186.

(29) Ibid., p. 31.

(30) *Preface to Oliver Twist*, p. xvii.

(31) Ibid.

(32) Ibid.

(33) Ibid., pp. xvii—xviii.

(34) Ibid. p. xx.

(35) George H. Ford, *Dickens and His Readers*. Aspects of Novel-Criticism since 1836. Published for the University of Cincinnati by Princeton University Press, 1955.

(36) *Quarterly Review*, LXIV (June 1839), pp. 83—102. See Ford, op. cit. p. 42 and *Preface to Oliver Twist*, p. xxi (the evaluation of the review by Charles Dickens the Younger).

(37) Ford, op. cit. p. 41.

(38) *Preface to Oliver Twist*, p. xix.

(39) Ford, op. cit., p. 40.

(40) Ibid., p. 41.

(41) *The Oxford Thackeray*, vol. III, p. 187.

(42) Ibid., p. 198.

(43) See *Preface to Oliver Twist*, pp. xvii, xx.

(44) See *The Oxford Thackeray*, vol. III, pp. 98—99, 102—103.

(45) V. G. Belinsky, *Sobr. soch.* v trekh tomakh, vol. II, p. 645, 1848. For the evaluation of Dickens' pictures of Fagin's gang see also I. M. Katarsky, Dickens, *Istoriya angliyskoy literatury*, tom II, vypusk vtoroy, Moskva 1955, pp. 191—192 and V. V. Ivasheva, *Anglická literatura* XIX. století (Světské hodnocení britské a americké literatury, díl III), Praha 1954, pp. 136—138.

(46) See Mario Praz, op. cit., p. 390, note 35; Katarsky, op. cit., pp. 201—202.

(47) *The Oxford Thackeray*, vol. III, p. 166.

(48) Mario Praz, op. cit., p. 138.

(49) Ibid., p. 157.

(50) Charles Dickens, *The Adventures of Oliver Twist*, The Oxford India Paper Dickens, Complete Edition (in seventeen volumes), p. 21.

(51) Ibid.

VÝTAH

„Newgateská škola" a její místo v anglické literatuře třicátých let 19. století

V úvodu článku autorka podává celkovou charakteristiku třicátých let 19. století ve společenském, politickém a literárním vývoji Anglie. Zdůrazňuje, že zostřené společenské rozpory zrající k revolučnímu výbuchu chartistického hnutí nenalezly v románové literatuře tohoto desítiletí okamžitý odraz; první polovinu třicátých let lze považovat za období dočasného klidu. Autorka poukazuje na specifické okolnosti, jež byly příznivé pro zrod podřadné románové literatury v tomto mezidobí a jako typický jev třicátých let označuje kriminální romány tzv. „Newgateské školy", jež dosáhly značné popularity a dočasně zastínily i raná díla Charlese Dickense. Pro toto specifické postavení v uvedeném desítiletí a kritický ohlas, jejž vyvolaly u představitelů rodící se literatury kritického realismu, zaslouží romány „Newgateské školy" kritické pozornosti.

Autorka podrobněji zkoumá základní příbuzné rysy tvůrčí metody autorů „Newgateské školy", Edwarda Bulwera a W. H. Ainsworthe, a osvětluje základní rozdíl mezi přístupem těchto autorů a realistů 18. století, Fieldinga a Defoea, k identickému životnímu materiálu na rozboru stavby charakterů, komposice a jazyka čtyř nejpopulárnějších kriminálních románů třicátých let. Dochází k závěru, že jsou to díla nízké umělecké úrovně, lživě idealisující danou realitu; literární díla únikového charakteru, která prokázala ve své době dobrou službu potřebám a zájmům anglické buržoasie a posloužila i jako precedent únikové literatuře následujících desítiletí.

V hlavní části článku autorka rozebírá kritický ohlas, jejž tato literatura nalezla u dvou představitelů kritického realismu, píšících v třicátých letech, W. M. Thackerayho a Charlese Dickense. Podává celkové hodnocení Thackerayovy kritiky „Newgateské školy" a ukazuje, že její nejdůležitější aspekt je třeba vidět nikoli v Thackerayově útoku na zhoubný vliv této literatury na morálku a literární vkus čtenářů, nýbrž v jeho zkoumání vztahu uvedených děl k realitě. Thackerayův protest proti nepravdivosti a lživé idealisaci zločineckého prostředí v románech „Newgateské školy" a konfrontace zkresleného obrazu se samou skutečností sehrály nikoli nevýznamnou úlohu ve zrání jeho estetických názorů.

Protestem Charlese Dickense proti románům „Newgateské školy" byly jeho obrazy londýnského podsvětí v románě *Oliver Twist*. Rozborem některých aspektů Dickensovy tvůrčí metody při zobrazování zločineckého prostředí autorka osvětluje zásadní rozdíl mezi přístupem velkého kritického realisty a romanopisců „Newgateské školy" k zobrazované realitě. Hodnotí ohlas Dickensových obrazů u současných čtenářů a W. M. Thackerayho a významnou společenskou funkci, kterou přes všechna omezení Dickensovy tvůrčí metody splnily ve své době. Uzavírá, že Dickensův realistický obraz londýnského podsvětí, přes všechny jeho nedostatky vyplývající z omezených hranic Dickensova pohledu na skutečnost, nelze klást na stejnou úroveň s romány „Newgateské školy", jak soudil Thackeray v Dickensově době a jak tvrdí někteří buržoasní literární vědci i dnes.

Prozkoumáním postavení románů „Newgateské školy" v anglické literatuře třicátých let z naznačené perspektivy autorka dochází k závěru, že jediný přínos této literatury k vývoji anglického románu 19. století lze vidět v té skutečnosti, že se stala terčem ostré kritiky W. M. Thackerayho a jedním z podnětů k vytvoření Dickensova *Olivera Twista*. Tím přispěla k procesu utváření estetických názorů a tvůrčích principů těchto velkých představitelů kritického realismu, které vyrůstaly z kořenů realistické literatury 18. století a dozrávaly pod tlakem společenských podmínek a protikladů třicátých let.

РЕЗЮМЕ

Роль школы Нью-гейт в английской литературе 30-х годов 19 века

В вводной части статьи автор дает общую характеристику Англии 30-х гг. 19 века в общественном, политическом и литературном отношениях. Она подчеркивает, что обострение социальные противоречия, назревающие для революционного подъема чартистского движения, не нашли сразу своего отражения в романе того времени, и что, следовательно, первую половину 30-х гг. в литературе можно рассматривать как период временного спокойствия. Автор указывает на специфические обстоятельства, способствовавшие возникновению малохудожественного романа в указанном промежутке времени. Типичным явлением 30-х годов являлись криминалистические романы т. наз. школы Нью-гейт, достигшие большой популярности, и, на время, заслонившие даже ранние произведения Чарлз Диккенса. Романы школы Нью-гейт, ввиду своего специфического положения в указанном периоде и ввиду вызванного ими критического отзыва со стороны молодых литераторов-реалистов, заслуживают критического внимания.

Автор более подробно рассматривает главные, близкие друг другу, приемы художественного творчества двух авторов школы Нью-гейт, а именно Эдуарда Булвера и В. Т. Эйнсворта, и, сопоставляя их с писателями-реалистами 18 века — Филдингом и Дефо —, она раскрывает существенную разницу в их подходе к изображению тождественных явлений материальной действительности на основании анализа композиции, характеров и языка четырех самых популярных криминалистических романов 30-х гг. Автор приходит к выводу, что рассматриваемые романы школы Нью-гейт являются малохудожественными, искажающими действительность, уходящими от жизни произведениями , которые в свое время послужили интересам и целям английской буржуазии и стали одновременно предшественниками уходящей от действительности литературы следующих десятилетий.

В главной части настоящей статьи автор анализирует критический отзыв, вызванный этой литературой, со стороны двух представителей „критического реализма" 30-х гг. — У. М. Теккерей и Чарлз Диккенса. Дается общая оценка критического выступления Теккерей против школы Нью-гейт, и указывается, что ценнейшей ее чертой является не осуждение вредного влияния литературы такого рода на мораль и литературные вкусы читателей, а исследование ее отношений к действительности. Протест против неверной и ложной идеализации злодейской среды в романах школы Нью-гейт и сопоставление искаженной картины с действительностью сыграли не малую роль в процессе сложения эстетических взглядов Теккерей.

В качестве протеста против романов школы Нью-гейт появились образы Чарлз Диккенса лондонских общественных низов в романе Оливер Твист. Анализируя отдельные черты художественного метода Диккенса при изображении преступного мира, автор освещает принципиальную разницу между великим реалистом с одной стороны и романтистами школы Нью-гейт с другой стороны в подходе к изображаемой действительности. В дальнейшем оценивается отклик произведений Диккенса у современной читающей публики и у Теккерей, и подчеркивается крупная общественная функция, которую — несмотря на ограниченность творческого метода Диккенса — они выполняли в свое время. Реалистическую картину лондонского преступного мира в произведении Диккенса, хотя в ней много недостатков, вытекающих из ограниченного взгляда на действи-

тельность, отнюдь нельзя ставить на уровень романов школы Нью-гейт, как это делал Теккерей и как ее до сих пор оценивают некоторые буржуазные литературоведы.

Определяя с указанной перспективы место романов школы Нью-гейт в английской литературе 30-х гг., автор приходит к заключению, что единственным вкладом, внесенным этой литературой в развитие английского романа, является тот факт, что она вызвала резкую критику У. М. Теккерей и дала импульс к созданию Оливера Твиста Диккенса. Тем самым она содействовала образованию эстетических взглядов и художественных принципов двух великих представителей реализма, воззрения которых, вытекая из реалистических тенденций литературы 18 века, складывались под давлением преисполненной противоречий социальной обстановки 30-х годов.

Перевод: В. Влашинова