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Social Purpose in the Picaresque Novels of Bulwer Lytton

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SOCIAL PURPOSE IN THE PICARESQUE NOVELS
OF BULWER LYTTON

By
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the Requirements for the Degree of Master
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CHAPTER I

A BACKWARD GLANCE AT THE PICARESQUE NOVEL
NOTING ITS INFLUENCE ON LYTON'S WORKS

Bulwer Lytton, the nineteenth-century novelist whose versatile powers brought him popularity and gold, cannot be studied in the light of his mighty past and forgotten present without some slight tracing of the picaresque genre through its birth and fruition in Spain, its adaptations in France, its growth in Germany and finally its story in England.

From the Renaissance revival in learning made possible in a special sense by the invention of the printing press, and the contagious spirit of adventure, the picaresque form went through many changes until it found itself in a literature written in the main for the people and reflecting the social problems of a complex era, such as the one in which Bulwer Lytton and his contemporaries lived.

The "social reform theme" is hinted at and is employed too often by Bulwer Lytton to disregard merely the author's intentions in writing in the picaresque style during what is called his experimental period of productivity. A study of his life will indicate the need for financial returns from these early works and it is with this solitary knowledge that many critics have labeled Bulwer Lytton as the "dandy" and "coxeomb" Byronic writer who catered to the public taste simply and solely for its monetary returns. A more thorough search into the
life and literary remains of this man will bring to light long-years of parliamentary oratory aimed at reaching the ears of those opposed to necessary reform in the England of the early nineteenth century. The large output of novels did reach many who would otherwise never have been conscious of the great need for penal reform or for the reform necessary to prevent the output of "victims of circumstances" criminal type.

Michael Sadlier\(^1\) in the early chapters of his work, *Bulwer: A Panorama*, indicates perhaps the first contacts that the novelist as a precocious child had with the works of imagination and chivalry, where one finds the picaro roaming freely. His grandfather's library, which his mother inherited, indicated from the old gentleman's preferences, a characteristic remoteness for romances of old French and Spanish which he could read in the original and doubtless contrast sarcastically with the home products of the Gothic school.

The old Spanish works which young Bulwer handled were those spoken of by Hume\(^2\) as the "picaro," coming from the Oriental apologue or short story, written to enforce a moral lesson. This type came to Spain under the influence of Boccaccio and the Italian Renaissance. In Spain it had soon degenerated through narratives of heroic adventure where humor was


missing and yet the Spaniards were in their very nature more apt to satirize by ridicule than any other people in Europe. This racial trait of humor could not be hid long and was to assert itself in the romance of wandering knights.

The "knight of the road" which are a vital part of the progression of Paul Clifford and Eugene Aram are a very different type from those mentioned above, in that the chivalric actions are replaced by those of the gentle highwayman. It is hoped that the detailed study of these two novels, to be handled in a later chapter, will illustrate the change and perhaps justify the necessity for it.

Hume points out that up to the fourteenth century, no one had learned to present a complete, connected, long story in prose. However, in the middle of the same century mentioned, Juan Ruiz was spinning facile verse, lashing the vices and wickednesses of his countrymen and showing himself suspiciously familiar with the dissolute life he pretended to condemn. Continuing, we also note that in 1499, a few years before the first printing of Amadis of Gaul, there was printed an anonymous book, La Comedia de Calista y Melibea. This was a dramatic dialogue of twenty-one acts, and otherwise impossible of presentation as a drama. Crude as it was, it claims to be the first connected long story with a complete plot, written in modern literature.


5 Hume, op. cit., p. 126.
La Comedia de Calista or Celestina as it is better known, was translated into many languages and came to England from the French. According to Mabbe it fulfills Aristotle's definition of art and "anticipates the fusion of the real and the ideal after which the novel groped so long in vain, so that as a work of art it foreshadows many other Spanish titles." Before the end of the sixteenth century, Celestina was in the hands of many readers. The infamous old woman and the crowd of immoral rogues that surround her are taken straight from the low quarters of a Spanish city. Vice is presented as it is and its evil consequences naturally brought out the development of the story. When the artificial romance of chivalry was at its seemingly highest vogue, this realistic writing arrived, in which the habits of low life and vicious people were set down as they existed without any heroism at all.

Hume shows that tales of beggar life were not uncommon in the sixteenth century all over Europe; giving accounts of ways and subterfuges of vagabonds, their slang, and their haunts. But none of these were connected tales, nor was any attempt made in them to develop character or analyze motives. They were simply the classical stories of rogues' tricks, the deceits of servants, and the practical jokes of

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7 Loc. cit.

8 Hume, op. cit., p. 129.
court jesters collected together and threaded upon the string of a notorious name. It follows, therefore, that *Celestina* was the framework of the rogue novel.

In keeping with the Spanish picaresque type, Bulwer Lytton's, *Paul Clifford* satirizes those in authority to push the Reform Bill. His characters are caricatures--Gentleman George representing the King, Fighting Attie does well as the Duke of Wellington, Old Bags depicts Lord Eldon, Long NEd does nobly as Lord Ellenborough, Augustus Tomlinson could hardly do better in his role portraying the Whigs, and finally Peter MacGrawler does his part to show Bulwer's hatred for the Scots, particularly Lockhart and the publication spoken of as the "Asinaeum." Bulwer in speaking of this magazine and its editor says, "Mr. Peter MacGrawler was editor of the magnificent periodical entitled, 'Asinaeum' which was written to prove that whatever is popular is necessarily bad."9 A description of the editor's attire and the furnishings of his apartment point out the rogue in the method of the satirist. The Scot's traditional pecuniary closeness is ironically displayed in the speech of the editor whereby he says that "no one who writes for the "Asinaeum" receives more than three shillings per article."10

The first book of the "rogue novel" classification to gain popularity is *Lazarillo de Tormes*, generally ascribed to Don Diego Hurtado de Mendoza, an ambassador in Venice and a representative at the

9 *Lytton, Paul Clifford*, p. 13.
10 Ibid., p. 60.
Council of Trent in 1546. It was first published in 1554; the only copy of the first edition known is now in the Duke of Devonshire's library at Chatsworth.  

Fonger De Haan, in speaking of this book says,  

Lazarillo is a 'picaro', a person of the lowest class, ragged and dirty, employed in low work. A picaro is a member of a class that bore a bad reputation, who did not work for a living, spent what he could get on eating and drinking and did not concern himself about honor.  

The same scholar proposes the question, "What is a 'novella picaresca'?" and in answer tells us,  

It is the prose autobiography of a person, real or imaginary who strives by fair means and by foul to make a living and in relating his experiences in various classes of society points out the evils which come under its observation. This definition applies only to the most typical novels of the class. Later autobiographical form was not considered necessary and sometimes satirical intent is absent. But in the latter case we find a state of society which though accepted by the author is so bad, that the careful portrayal of it, is a sufficient hint as to what needs correction and thus perhaps unintentionally, the author writes a satire upon this society and upon himself.

Fonger De Haan calls Lazarillo, the severest satire upon existing conditions of society. It narrates the adventures of a boy, who in the various classes with whom he had associated always suffered from want of food so that he could satisfy the cravings of his stomach only

11 Hume, op. cit., p. 135.


13 Ibid., p. 8.

14 Ibid., pp. 9-12.
by theft and trickery. The keynote is the everlasting and ever-present hunger that filled Spain from end to end with famished people; and those who possessed some property guarded it as their very life, denying themselves almost the necessities of sustenance in order to accumulate a little hoard of wealth. It enabled, in other words, the author to portray in the person of Lazarillo the various types of employment and employees that went to make up the Spanish society of the day.

Cervantes became popular through his short novels called, *The Exemplary Novels*. These were in all essentials of form extended apologues without the moral. Some of them were written in all probability before *Don Quixote*, the work which in its first inception was to have been another short story in the comic vein like them. The thought was again, like so many others, to show up the absurdities of the chivalric romances. The subject was crying aloud for mockery.15 In the meantime, the native Spanish mocking humor was once more asserting itself. Miguel Cervantes, unconscious that he was beginning a masterpiece wrote the first line of what he thought was going to be a slight skit on the already waning craze of chivalry. The romances of chivalry had depended, like the subsequent romances of roguery, upon the continental movement of the hero and his encounter with various adventures and persons on the way. This form encouraged continuation because there was practically no reason, except the death of the hero, why it should stop. In any case, *Don Quixote* was carried on from adventure to adventure, from one fancy

to another until, instead of a short novel, one of the great books of the world came to be written and the chivalric romance was silenced forever by universal shouts of laughter. 16

Hume 17 is again recalled for the answer to why Don Quixote attracted so much triumphant popularity in countries like England where the chivalric romance had not any hold upon the public mind for centuries before and where one would think that its satire would have no appeal. The answer to this, he says, is that, "it is not read for its satire but because it touched the primitive springs of human feeling, because its humor was universal and for all time just as Shakespeare's philosophy is." By this time, the "picaro" is so firmly established in literature that we can hardly open a book but we find him. Everybody had experiences of a picaresque nature.

Before noting more carefully Bulwer Lytton's use of the picaresque novel for the purpose of social reform, we shall give another step in the history of the genre. Hume 18 says that up to the writing of the Lazarillo, English fiction consisted mainly of the Arthurian romances, Malory's Morte d' Arthur and adaptations from the Italian and the French short stories, some in prose and some in verse; such as, Chaucer's Canterbury Tales. The stories of Bandello and other Italian writers, especially, were translated and furnished plots for the playwrights of Elizabeth's

16 Hume, loc. cit.
17 Hume, ibid., p. 154.
18 Ibid., p. 159.
reign. In addition, there was a fugitive form of fiction suddenly becom­ing popular in England about ten or twelve years after Lazarillo was published in Spain.

The stories of smart answers, practical jokes clustered around the name of any droll personage known to the public were also popular. These were collected by a poor but learned person named Skoggin, a Master of Arts at Oxford and jester to Edward IV. In the arrangement of these practical jokes, published in 1565, a regular chronological sequence is followed for the first time, and the book assumes the form of a roguish biography of its hero. Hume\(^{19}\) regards this as the first manifestation in England of the picaresque taste in fiction. The success of this edition of Skoggin led to the publication in 1566 of Skelton's Tales. Paul Clifford and Eugene Aram of the same titled novels are rogues in a special sense and each in a different manner is an example of the picaresque biography, both being what they are because of circumstances.

Before passing to the consideration of the full development of the novel in England, it might be well to include a novel which had an extraordinary popularity and marked effect upon the fashion in language in England. It is sometimes called the first attempt at a modern novel—its name is Euphues by John Lyly. The first part was published in 1579 and it merits attention because its affected preciosity of language and far-fetched imagery was copied from the Spanish style of Guevara and because Lyly adopted the framework of travel upon which to hang his

\(^{19}\) Ibid., p. 159.
satires and criticisms of society. Traces of "Euphuism" are noticeable throughout Lyttton's novels especially in the first few paragraphs of most chapters, as well as sizeable quantities found in paragraphs preceding dialogues in the picaresque cant.

According to the investigations of Hume,\(^{20}\) Jack Wilton by Thomas Nash is in chronological sequence the first real "peripatetic" novel in England, inspired by Lazarillo de Tormes and his school. This brilliant young satirist was a follower of Greene who knew Spanish literature well and who took many of his dramatic plots from Spanish sources. It is interesting to note the difference in the two picaresque forms. Lazarillo was a ragamuffin, and so were all the Spanish types; not so, however, is Jack Wilton. He is represented, it is true, by being very poor at first but a gentleman by birth and a page at the court of Henry VIII. He starts his autobiography when he is a boy, carrying his adventures down to the time when he has gained fame, fortune, and a beautiful wife. The scenes are not generally sordid and squalid, but there is all through the book the effort to show how keen-witted and smart Jack Wilton is. This is a true realistic novel of movement but this and other similar novels in England approximate more to Gil Blas than to Lazarillo because both in France and in England the violent reaction against the romances of chivalry was not felt and the sordidness of the anti-hero and his surroundings was not needed. The same critic considers Jack Wilton the

\(^{20}\) Hume, loc. cit.

\(^{21}\) Ibid., p. 167.
best picaresque tale in England until Defoe wrote *Moll Flanders* and *Colonel Jack*.

The German jest books, Murner's *Til Eulenspiegel* had a considerable vogue in England about 1528 and prepared the way for the rogue pamphlets of Greene and his school. The German *Liber Vagatorum* prepared the way for Harman's and Awdeley's *Beggar Books*, consisting of a brief study of thieves' and beggars' slang and an exposure of their tricks and impostures undertaken with the extremely practical purpose of putting honest men, especially magistrates, on their guard against them. According to Mabbe these abounded in amusing anecdotes and needed only a little working up and setting in novel form to produce the picaresque novel proper. Later writers took full advantage of their possibilities in this respect.

In the story thus far, of the development of the picaresque novel, none was perhaps so familiar to Bulwer Lytton as Le Sage's *Gil Blas*. It was such that there was no limit to its satirical machinery. Every rank and person might be scourged if magic were called in to expose the innermost secrets of their hearts. Hume calls this novel the best of all; it is Spanish in tone and feeling with the added lucidity of the French mind. It was *Gil Blas* that made the peripatetic adventure a permanent feature in English fiction. At least four references to *Gil Blas* are made in Eugene Aram and three in Paul Clifford. One reference

22 Mabbe, *op. cit.*, lviii.

to the Spanish classic was made when Clifford speaks of Mauleverer saying, "Mauleverer had an excellent valet, who hoped to play the part enacted by Gil Blas toward honest Licentiate and to nurse a legacy while nursing her master." St. Robert's Cave in Eugene Aram where the murder is supposed to have taken place and the Red Cave where Paul Clifford and the remnant of his rogues are betrayed by MacGrawler, concerning whom Paul said, "I knew him to be a knave, but never thought the sage, a traitor," are settings that, no doubt, were borrowed from Gil Blas.

Mabbe notes that in England as in France, the first years of the eighteenth century were marked by a revival of interest in the Spanish picaresque novel. Many translations were again made. However, they are important only as showing the tendency of the reading public to demand from books a faithful representation of life. Daniel Defoe found himself at this time, after years of political agitation and pamphleteering, practically dependent on his pen for his own livelihood and the maintenance of his wife and children. The age of patronage was over, however, Defoe's patron was the public and he endeavored both as a journalist and novelist to appeal to the widest possible circle of readers, and the great majority of English readers demanded exactly what he could give them. The polite society which had revelled in the "roman hercique" found its imagination growing jaded with the high soaring flights of

24 Lytton, Paul Clifford, p. 287
25 Ibid., p. 112.
26 Mabbe, op. cit., p. lxix.
heroic absurdity, and was learning from the Tatler and Spectator that the world it lived in was not entirely devoid of literary interest. Beyond these, was the class which was content to spell out laboriously the criminal pamphlets that put no great strain on its uneducated imagination. All these classes were alike in one thing—they wanted to read of life as it was. It was this semblance of material truth that Defoe excelled in, producing his capacity for dressing up fiction to resemble fact.

Defoe seems to have worked up the adventures of Cartouche, the famous French criminal, and is said to have accompanied John Sheppard to his execution. He, according to tradition, said that the great prison-breaker, when on the scaffold, should in the sight of a vast concourse of spectators, hand to him or to Applebee, his publisher, a pamphlet purporting to be Sheppard's autobiography. The next day, to continue the tale, A Narrative of All the Robberies, Escapes, etc., of John Sheppard was published, and thanks to this unpleasant advertisement, it ran through eight editions in a year. Bulwer's Eugene Aram was likewise the account of a prisoner's life as taken from the Newgate Calendar, as well as from the sort of autobiographical letter left to posterity just before Aram took his life.

Frequent allusions by Lytton are made to Moll Flanders, usually considered Defoe's real contribution to picaresque literature. This work was published in 1721 and is an essay in criminal psychology. The author is continually asking himself, what would a woman like Moll feel and do under the circumstances in which he places her. That he fails
sometimes to answer this question correctly and that his creation is psychologically convincing, must be put down partly to the nature of the man and partly to the time in which he lived. He at least made the attempt and pointed out the direction that the novel was to take. Defoe's advance was not in artistry, for his novels suffered from the pressure under which they were produced, but in the point that he ruthlessly eliminated all subordinate incidents and characters and keeps Moll in the center of the stage.

In point of chronology, it is interesting to note that Morris Speare classifies Robinson Crusoe as the first realistic "purpose" novel in England.

Living on an island, out of the pole of man's law, the hero never forgets that he is responsible to a God above for his manifold blessings. He is always aware that he cannot escape from his own conscience, and he attains the full dignity of manhood only after he has beaten Friday at his theological sophistries and converted him to a belief in an omnipotent God.28

In the same vein, yet not so convincingly, Speare refers to Defoe's didactic purpose as stated in the preface of Moll Flanders:

... as we follow the history of this extraordinary creature we are not only introduced to the miseries and misfortunes which beset youth in a great metropolitan center but we watch the infinite misery of a sinner who after arriving at Newgate, gets no satisfaction from repentance when she knows that it has come after the power of sinning further has already been removed from her.29

29 Loc. cit.
Dame Lobkins in Paul Clifford and the "old hag" in Eugène Aram are "she rogues," taken directly from the stories of the "molls" preserved in the Newgate chronicles. Piggy Lobkins had named Paul after her grandfather, who "was three times transported, and twice hanged (at first occurrence of latter description he had been restored by the surgeons much to the chagrin of a young anatomist who was to have the honor of cutting him up)."30

In Richardson and Fielding, the moral fervor of their works clothes itself in other means but serves an end no less significant than that of their contemporaries. In the dedication for Tom Jones, we read a "simple endeavor had been made to recommend Goodness and Innocence."31

In the preface of Roderick Random (1748), Smollett says,

I have attempted to represent modest merit struggling with every difficulty to which a friendless orphan is exposed, from his own want of experience as well as from the selfishness, envy, malice and base indifference of mankind.32

In painting the misfortunes of his characters and the abuses of society which these reveal, Smollett exposes the evils then existing, especially in the navy. Speare33 adds that abuses of a different sort, such as Charles Reade exposed almost a century later in It's Never Too Late to Mend, appear in the Vicar of Wakefield in 1766. If Goldsmith borrows much Richardsonian sentiment wherewith to fortify his eighteenth

30 Lytton, Paul Clifford, p. 11.
31 Speare, op. cit., p. 350.
32 Ibid., p. 361
33 Loc. cit.
century lessons, the graphic portion of the work which teaches the world what untold misery is heaped on the debtors who must live in English jails, is the peculiar product of his own experiences.

Chandler\textsuperscript{34} observes that even Richardson who was laughed at by Fielding as an idealist won success by his bourgeois realism and owed a debt to the observational studies of the picaresque tale. Where the picaresque writers had tried to hold the mirror up to nature, he used a microscope; and shutting up his characters in a "hot bed" of sentiment, studied just those details of thought and feeling which usually escape observation. There were some suggestions of the picaresque in \textit{Pamela} (1740), in its attention to detail and the humble position of its heroine.

\textit{Pamela} produced \textbf{Joseph Andrews} in 1742 and \textbf{Tom Jones} in 1749. Henry Fielding loved \textit{Don Quixote} and understood it as none of Cervantes' previous imitators had done; his comprehension of the divine in man, his sympathy with human failings, and his earnest love of truth—the qualities of the greatest humorists—fitted him to follow in Cervantes' footsteps. \textbf{Tom Jones}, with its admirably elaborate plot, its artistic truth, and living characters, is a worthy expression of Cervantes' spirit. Fielding, though he took his experience from the common stock of humanity, set it in artistic order and behind all his work lies some implied philosophical conception, one that Mabbe\textsuperscript{35} says is present in all great works of art.

\textsuperscript{35} Mabbe, \textit{op. cit.}, p. lxxiv.
While Defoe's influence on the novel was essentially English and Fielding acknowledged Cervantes as his master, Smollett was engaged in naturalizing the picaresque novel as exemplified in Gil Blas. Roderick Random, Peregrine Pickle, and a translation of Gil Blas are Smollett's chief contributions to the picaresque novel, and they sufficed to establish it permanently as a recognized form of English fiction. In Lytton's Paul Clifford the hero speaks of leaving Dame Lobkins altogether:

... and seek his fortunes alone, after the manner of the ingenious Gil Blas, or the enterprising Roderick Random; and this idea, though conquered and reconquered ... among these projects of enterprise, the reader will notice that an early vision of the Green Forest Cave, in which Turpin was accustomed, with a friend, a ham and a wife to conceal himself, flitted across his mind.36

Tompkins37 tells us that in 1771 one could see Tom Jones and Roderick Random stuck up on the bacon racks in farm houses and country cottages. The "novel" went everywhere and the reading public grew after the American War. At the time, single volumes could be hired for two pence, but novels were never less than two volumes, and toward the end of the century ran into four or five, so that pastime was not a cheap one.

To continue the story, Tompkins says that the works of Fielding and Smollett were seen as the culmination of a development and not the starting point of the novel. As late as 1790, the Monthly Review

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36 Lytton, Paul Clifford, p. 43.

spleenetically blind to the signs of new life grumbled that:

The manufacture of novels has been so long established that in general they have arrived at mediocrity. . . . We are indeed so sickened with these worn out species of composition that we have lost all relish for it.38

The influence of Rousseau and of the teachings of the French Revolution fell potently upon the English Revolutionist, William Godwin. His preface to Things As They Are; The Adventures of Caleb Williams (1794) prepare us for "a general review of the modes of domestic and unrecorded despotism by which man becomes the destroyer of man."39 In his polemical work, the author shows off the "corruption of the aristocrats," the "ingrained cowardice of an over-governed mankind," "the rottenness of the English penal methods." This was deliberately intended as a vehicle for propaganda; as a means for preaching a sermon on public matters.40 In a later study of Eugene Aram, it will be pointed out how picaresque form was combined with the purpose theme showing Lytton's keen power of sensing the public taste and using the gift to bring before the same public the reforms necessary for well-ordered states.

To make the necessary connection between the history of the picaresque novel and the use of it, a few more explorations into Bulwer's life seem apropos. Sadlier41 says that when the youthful and precocious Bulwer came in contact with his grandfather's library, he saw that the

38 Ibid., pp. 2-5.
40 Speare, op. cit., p. 362.
41 Sadlier, op. cit., p. 53.
old gentleman, though he never would have admitted it, was merely another victim of the fad of his age. It was one which had seized upon all lettered persons to fill their library shelves with books on knight errantry, witchcraft, and the ghostly legends of the past. Therefore, it is not difficult to see Richard Warburton Lytton engrossed in Don Quixote. He supplemented this with books in Greek, Latin, Hebrew, Arabic, Chinese, scientific treatises, and works in theology. In the dining room and on the stairs, crowded the indiscretions of the old man's last romantic years; and in the midst of them, the eight year old Edward was left to roam. Whether he had more of benefit or of disadvantage from this period of intense dabbling in things he could not really understand, is open to question. Certainly something of the old scholar's tendency to useless learning was handed down through the books to their childish student.

The overloading of the story with sheer knowledge, sort of a euphuistic heirloom, became one of the besetting sins of Bulwer. He also seemed to rise directly from the power, acquired instinctively during the months of premature bookishness, to discover and memorize unnecessary facts. On the other hand, the boy came early to one of the realizations most valuable to a thinking man, that most ideas have been conceived and discovered by persons long dead; that there is nothing particularly exciting about one's own time or one's own achievements, unless they be regarded as a product of the past and judged in relation to what has gone before. Undoubtedly, this lesson learned unconsciously in youth had a profound influence on the nature of Bulwer. It gave to his mind a dignity and loftiness which set it apart from most of those of his contemporaries.
It brought him personal unpopularity, for no quality in man is more distasteful to his fellows than that of conscious intellectual superiority. It enabled him to control his own mental forces to an extra degree, to direct them along this channel or that according as he felt an impulse to examine a new branch of specialized knowledge, or to excel in some fresh field of activity.

Of minor importance, but of more obvious effect, was the influence on his method and capacity as a novelist, of the contents of his grandfather's romances of chivalry. He was aware of this influence which served him later, both as inspiration and discipline. He describes, in an undated letter printed by Owen Meredith, his eager reading of Southey's *Amadis of Gaul* and how the adventures and fabulous triumphs of the hero impressed his mind. Then came the *Faerie Queene*, of which the sense was nothing but the lovely wording, which carried young Bulwer on a sort of magic carpet of rhythm and half-comprehended excitement. His mother would recite old ballads and tell him long stories of the romantic past. The boy's imagination so forcibly stimulated that, when he grew up and began to write tales of adventure, he found it so easy to think reality into his own unreality that he is credited with the double purpose in his writings of using the adventures of the past, since they did satisfy the readers, and using them also for vehicles of reform. Howsoever great or small is this second purpose is perhaps only known to the mind of God.
CHAPTER II

INFLUENCE OF THE SOCIAL CONDITIONS
OF ENGLAND ON BULWER'S PUBLICATIONS

E. G. Bell, who has done a considerable amount in the study of Bulwer Lytton's age, his life, and his novels, gives us in panorama, the following germinal ideas. We see the experiences and reflections of one whose faculties and powers were developed and strengthened by a life divided between varied action and comprehensive study of early nineteenth-century people and the need of reform. All of his works, in addition to their structural and artistic qualities, have a definite applicability to conditions and ideas prevalent at the time of their production. Each sought to draw some lesson from the past, to effect some beneficial social amendment or to elevate the character of his countrymen, and thus augment the honor and influence of his England.

His position, education, and the circumstances of his life, up to the time of his calamitous marriage to Rosina Wheeler, were unusually advantageous. Born a member of an old and well-to-do family, associating from childhood with the high and eminent, an extensive traveler, a systematic reader, master of Latin, Greek, French, German, and Italian languages, deeply informed concerning the literature of other lands, and familiar with that of his own, his equipment for writing was enlarged by

\footnote{E. G. Bell, Introduction to the Prose Romances of Bulwer Lytton (Chicago: Walter M. Hill, 1914), p. 61.}
active participation in civic affairs. Every department of human knowledge, except the rigorously scientific, interested him. He was versed in art, learned in philosophy, and not a disciple of any one system; independent in his judgment, shrewd in criticism, acute in observation; and all his knowledge was applied to the study of man and his destiny.

He seems to have two qualities rarely combined in an individual: clear-sightedness, the ability to perceive policies immediately advantageous; and far-sightedness, the power to discern the ultimate results of new departures and movements and innovations.

Without looking too closely into his life, he can be seen as an observer, investigator, and thinker who utilized his every experience; an active participant in business affairs and statesmanship. He gave his readers a wide range of subjects, an array of characters, varied methods of presentation—showing motives and designs penetrated, consideration of policies, projects, and speculations as well as practical acquaintance with humanity's strengths and weaknesses.

In the early novels of Bulwer Lytton, he was an experimenter, intent on learning the capabilities and limitations of the novel form. Falkland, Pelham, The Disowned, and Devereux are considered in this group. Because of his mother's displeasure over his marriage, his immediate source of income was cut off. This may have been the deciding factor in joining authorship, which he felt was sure to pay, with parliamentary life, regarding the former vocation as the most difficult and the latter that for which he was best fitted.

The works of the second period express the views and record the
investigation of one who was as much a publicist as an author. 

For these nine years, according to Bell, 2 Bulwer’s life was one of increasing literary drudgery, with the added labors of an active member of the last unreformed House of Commons. Paul Clifford, Eugene Aram, Godolphin, Pilgrims of the Rhine, The Last Days of Pompeii, Reinsí, Leila, and Maltravers constitute the novels of this period.

The intense application necessitated by the composition of works, so many and various, would have taxed the strongest of constitutions under the most favorable of circumstances. Bulwer’s health was never robust. His home life was made miserable by what his wife called her “irritability of temper and easily wounded feelings”; and he was assailed and abused outrageously in periodicals and journals. 3

The insolence and personalities indulged in by contributors to the press, at the outset outraged one who saw no reason for disregarding expressions which in other departments of public life would necessitate a hostile meeting, for these were the days of duels. Bulwer became disdainful of the criticism of the day as he learned more and more about its motives. Whole chapters of Paul Clifford are written in defiance of Scott’s son-in-law critic, Lockhart. Bell 4 tells us that much of the journalistic hostility had its origin in a misapprehension of Lytton’s circumstances, which he was too

2 Ibid., p. 32.
3 Loc. cit.
4 Ibid., p. 33.
proud and masculine to attempt to remove. His contemporaries erroneously regarded him as wealthy by inheritance, which was not true at this time, and resented what they considered as unfair competition.

When Lytton adopted literature as a profession, he declined to conform to the slovenly and intemperate usages of most of its followers. He dressed in accordance with his station and after the manner of his class; in fact, it is because of Lytton that the gentleman's formal evening clothes are black. This contrasting the customary negligence of journalists gave occasion for many references to his clothing and the application of the terms fop, exquisite, and dandy. Bell again notes that it was quite natural for the untidy and equivocal to rail at the man of gentle birth who conformed instinctively with the customs of his kind—customs of which they had no knowledge except by observation from afar.

In order to break down the prevalent idea of antipathy regarding Lytton's social purpose in his picaresque novels, it may be well to continue observing the man and his actions toward all. The same critic says he was constant in his friendships, and retained through life the regard of all who were permitted to be more than acquaintances. Those who knew him most intimately say that he was free from envy, and his writings confirm their verdict. Justin McCarthy, the most vicious of his defamers admits that he has "heard too many instances of his frank and

5Ibid., p. 34.

6Loc. cit.
brotherly friendliness to utterly obscure writers, who could be of no service to him or to anybody, not to feel satisfied of his unselfish good nature." 7

Again regarding his wife, neither book nor letter nor accredited report of Bulwer contains a syllable derogatory to his wife. And so desirous was he that only the most considerate interpretation should be put on her actions, that by his will he restricted all access to his papers, which contain the means of refuting the calumnies originating with his wife, to his son and desired that no other person should write any biography of him.

Bell 8 finds that the third period of Bulwer's writing coincides with the years during which he was absent from parliament and followed his experiments in playwriting. An acquaintance with the actor Macready and sympathy with that gentleman's desire to render the theater worthy of the patronage of intelligent human beings caused Bulwer to turn his attention to the stage. He wrote a series of plays of which a few were produced and have retained their popularity. However, Mr. Macready found that the management of a London theater was unprofitable and with his retirement, the author of The Lady of Lyons, Richelieu, and Money, lost all incentive to write for the stage.

In 1838, on the accession of Queen Victoria, Lytton was knighted as a recognition of his contributions to literature. The succeeding

8 Ibid., p. 49.
decade of his life was crowded with sorrows and griefs and disappointments, but it was also the period of his most wonderful productiveness. "From the harsh and painful real, he turned to that world wherein fairer conditions are found and in the abstraction of artistic creation he found refuge from the iron visitation of calamity."9

Bell's10 investigations show that Bulwer had won more successes than are usually obtained by a member unattached to either of the great parties. He was among the earliest of those who objected to taxes on knowledge, and his speeches against the newspaper stamp duties had much to do with their immediate reduction and ultimate repeal. By the Dramatic Author's Act, which he carried, he removed the evils under which the playwrights had labored, putting an end to the wrongful appropriation of their productions without recompense. He advocated changes in the corn laws, but always opposed their repeal. His objections to the Irish Coercion Act were ineffectual, but many of his phrases on the subject are still current. His speech against negro apprenticeship changed sufficient votes to defeat the government and hastened emancipation.

In 1852, he reentered parliament and straightway attained a commanding influence in the House. He could not take part in debate, but he was one of the dozen foremost orators and spoke frequently and effectively though speechmaking taxed his strength severely. Under the excitation it produced, he was energetic, rapid, and forceful; but after the effort

his spare frame trembled. But so resolute and self-compelling was the man that physical disabilities which Disraeli thought were insuperable, deafness which made his voice, once so beautiful, discordant were triumphed over; and by the most critical assembly in the world, he was recognized as an orator. Opulence of information, thorough mastery of the subject and knowledge of mankind characterized all his addresses.

This was likewise the fourth period of romances. The author and legislator are merged, and the works have an intimate bearing on current movements and social conditions. *The Caxtons, My Novel, and What Will He Do With It?* form this group. Emigration as a career for the educated was advocated in *The Caxtons*; the inutility of haste and the unwisdom of class antagonism were enforced in *My Novel*; the ease with which a propensity, not necessarily blameworthy, may be nursed into a vice was shown in *What Will He Do With It?*

The fifth period of Bulwer Lytton's writing followed his retirement from official life, when no longer a participator in events, he records his views of present tendencies, and, looking into the future, describes the potentialities of current theories and new ideas. *A Strange Story, The Coming Race, Kenelm Chillingly, and The Parisians* are the products of this period.

Envious mediocrity continued to decry the man but from other sources honors flowed in upon him. He received the degree of D.C.L. from Oxford University in 1853, was chosen Lord Rector of Edinburgh University in 1854, and Lord Rector of Glasgow University in 1856-1857 and again in 1858. In 1866, he was elevated to the peerage, and for the remainder of
his life he was an onlooker rather than an agent in events. Foreseeing the imminent domination of an imperfectly educated and untrained democracy, witnessing the ferment of partially considered "new ideas" concerning government and social organizations, recognizing the absence of large views in statesmen and the disproportionate esteem conceded to wealth by all classes, he regarded with dismay the future of his native land, and the despondency with which the prospect filled him colors the last group of his writings.

Falkland, Lytton's first novel, was published anonymously by Colburn in 1828. It shows that, when passion is permitted to overmaster duty and impelled to disregard social convention, retributive calamity results; and illustrates the fact by the fates of the sinning characters. As in Fielding's Tom Jones, certain descriptions have a harmful potenti-ality, notwithstanding the unquestionable ethical intent of the whole work. This is one of the novels which Lytton seldom listed and would have been glad to retract.

Pelham, published in 1828, is a precocious delineation of a man of the world, aiming to show that worldly experience need not corrupt a man's heart or debase his ideals. Superficially, Pelham is frivolous, foppish effeminate; underneath, he is a man of principle and high ambition.

The first edition of The Disowned appeared also in 1828, and is a record of observation. It has many characteristics of the current fiction at the time of its production, and is especially shows the influence

of Godwin. The characters—Talbot, Borodaille, Warner, Crawford, Mordaunt, and Wolf—are dominated rather than influenced by their respective characteristics of vanity, pride, ambition, selfishness, philanthropy, and zeal, which are the shaping forces of their careers; and from observation of the results, the value of moderation is learned by the high-spirited Clarence, who is disowned by his father. In the history of Algernon, Mordaunt is the exposition of a theory, seemingly cherished by Lytton, which regards ignorance as identical with vice, knowledge necessarily the way to virtue, and virtue itself so sovereign that it is its own sufficient reward.

The novel, Paul Clifford, has the historic interest which is attached to an important innovation. It is the forerunner of that class of fiction which assails some existing wrong, and by attracting attention thereto is instrumental in effecting reform, and which is generally called the romance of purpose. Paul Clifford, so easily classified in the literature of roguery and termed by its author "a treatise on social wrongs," is a forceful arraignment of the mismanagement of prisons and an expose of the evils consequent upon a too severe criminal code. According to Bell, the book did much toward securing amelioration and amendment of these conditions.

Productions of this class, continues the critic, necessarily lose much of their interest when the evils attacked have passed away; and this work would have shared the usual fate had its purpose been confined to

temporary wrongs. But it also deals with a deeper and sterner problem which is not transient but obtrudes itself into every organized society—namely, the flourishing of individuals who, while keeping within the law, nevertheless contrive by their viciousness to be more harmful than some of those who break the law and do not escape its vengeance.

Circumstances do not invariably make crime, but they may lead to it if there is not constraint as in Paul Clifford's case. Yet, in intent and effect the criminal may be a less dangerous person in a community than he who by design and act wars in secret against all that differentiates civilized life from barbarism, and not only evades the world's condemnation but receives its honors, as in the instance of the lawyer, William Brandon.

Borrow's Celebrated Trials tell us that an usher, Eugene Aram, was arrested at Lynn, in 1759, and charged with a murder committed at Knaresborough fourteen years previously. Those who had any knowledge of the man, whose extreme reserve never permitted intimacy, spoke of him as being kindly and gentle in disposition, and exemplary in conduct. The trial aroused the interest of all England, and the incredulity of the possibility of his guilt was general. The principal testimony against him was that of a confessed accomplice. Aram conducted his own defense. He was found guilty, sentenced to death, and after unsuccessfully attempting suicide, was executed in chains in Knaresborough forest.13

Bulwer Lytton became interested in the fate of this singular man, who had been a tutor in his grandfather's house at Heydon; and the extraordinary phenomenon of a solitary crime utterly at variance with the general life and seemingly void of influence upon the disposition of the perpetrator, combined with the astonishing attainments of the unaided scholar, furnished him with a fascinating problem not without the idea of social reform in the back of his mind. Gathering all the available information about the man and his habits, the surviving gossip and opinions of those who had met or heard of him, as well as the records of the trial, and carefully considering the whole, Bulwer seems to conclude that Aram, keenly desirous of a means to increase his knowledge and hampered by his dire poverty, first envied the misused wealth of another and sophistically persuaded himself that to appropriate some of that wealth and apply it to nobler use would be beneficial rather than wrong; then the attempted robbery was turned into murder by the resistance of his victim.

Money, a well-known comedy written by Bulwer Lytton, satirizes a prevailing form of tolerated despicability, by displaying the quackeries of one of the successful practitioners while ridiculing certain fashionable affectations by exposing the inferiority of the adopters in comparison with others who are naturally unpretentious and unselfish. Sir John Vesey is a typical product of nineteenth-century political society, and the evidence of the power of a title to shield rascality from its deserts. L'Avares and Tartuffes are neither so numerous nor so insidiously corrupting as this specimen of the modern man who has succeeded and who justifies to himself the frauds and meannesses he regards as necessary
incidents in that management by which he deceives a world which otherwise would deny him the station and prominence he has so long usurped.

In Kenelm Chillingly, the insincerity which thus becomes a characteristic of many who engage in serving the public is exemplified in the member of Parliament whose reason approves one line of action but who nevertheless speaks and votes against his belief because his party adopted an unwise measure which his constituents clamor for and because his career would be jeopardized if he manifested any hostility toward the proposed change; the journal-owner whose paper blames everybody to the end that it may have plenty of readers; the reviewer who, disdaining the canons applicable to the literary productions of all time, gives his adherence to some transient fad and appraises the works which come before him in accordance with the degree in which they comply with the methods of the school whose views he serves without believing them.

To evaluate proportionately the effectiveness of a social purpose novel, Cruse has discovered that Bulwer Lytton's grandmother never opened a book except (in later life at least) the Bible. She held book learning in utter contempt. She was extremely lively and fond of fashionable amusements. Once when Bulwer was a very small boy, he lent her the History of Jane Shore, a pamphlet costing sixpence popular with housemaids. It made a great impression on her mind . . . the critic concludes that from these remarks something can be learned about the reading habits of great ladies, housemaids, and small boys.

When Bulwer says of Lord Erpinham in Godolphin, "He was generally considered a sensible man. He had read Blackstone, Montesquieu, Cowper's Poems, and The Rambler and was always heard with great attention in the House of Lords,"\(^{15}\) it is reasonable to suppose that such a course of reading was in those days considered a normal and adequate literary equipment for a second-rate politician.

The same source\(^{16}\) informs us that Macaulay's children read Pepys, Addison, Walpole, Dr. Johnson, and all the standard novels; such as those of Richardson, Miss Burney, Miss Austin, and Lord Lytton. From these few intimations, it is not presumption to say that Lytton, only in a certain sense, catered to the public taste which was, perhaps, hungry for adventure such as he gave them, but he was extremely conscious of the need for social reform, especially in the penal system.

Dudok\(^{16}\) shows the new realm opened for writers of Bulwer's time when he points out that social disturbances which brought on the French Revolution produced a marked effect on these English writers. Its doctrines were eagerly supported and violently opposed, and it was writings like the political and social studies of Thomas Holcroft and especially those of William Godwin, that are of importance in this instance.


\(^{16}\) Op. cit., p. 75

Even Scott's romantic school was an off-shoot of the serious, social, economic, and spiritual disturbances of the middle nineteenth century. The social purpose, as developed in these romantic novels, died out rather quickly and was not revived until Robert Louis Stevenson's works appeared.

With Scott's death comes the Victorian period, an age of great religious and artistic movements, an age of rapid evolution in political, social, spiritual, and intellectual life. The Victorian literature, and especially Bulwer Lytton's, is representative of the time in which it is produced. It reflects and criticizes its manners, tastes, developments. Unfortunate changes were brought about rather by revolution than by evolution; poverty and degradation of no small portion of the population attracted the sympathetic attention of many Victorian writers. It is the individual, the human being, with whom the writer begins to work with and a new element, the emotional, begins to develop. So we have the nineteenth-century novelist realizing that he had an important task to fulfill, that his work was not created merely for the sake of the story but it was rather a sociological and psychological study.

Bulwer Lytton, no less than his friend Dickens, exposed the vices of society, forcing the reading public to recognize evils that were escaping attention. Especially in *Pelham* and *Paul Clifford* and *Eugene Aram* did he try to hold up a truthful picture to posterity of the short-comings and failings of the Victorian era--its conventionalism, its materialism, its want of self-criticism, and last, not least, its self-complacency.
John Cunliffe, in an article called "Blots on Early Victorian Civilization," recalls for us that there was agricultural poverty as well as industrial poverty in England of which Bulwer writes, and that unhealthful houses, dirt, and disease existed in small hamlets and scattered farms as well as in the slums of London and the great manufacturing towns. Continuing, he says that agricultural poverty was desperate in 1832 and poor law relief was ten shillings a head. Condition of the village population was said to be worse than that of West Indian slaves. In 1825, the wages of agricultural laborers were generally nine shillings a week and the price of wheat was about nine shillings a bushel.

In industrial centers, the concentration of poverty had at least this advantage that it forced itself upon public attention by means of crime, disorder, drunkenness, and filth. The Chartist agitation seemed to produce no immediate result beyond presentation of a monster petition to Parliament and the imprisonment of a few of the agitators. A more lasting effect was produced by the writers.

Because conditions in England were bad and certain aims such as Catholic Emancipation and Parliamentary reform were at times apparently hopeless of attainment, the Byronic pose of satiety fitted the circumstances exactly. Consequently, we find high-minded men thwarted in their early idealistic notions turning aside from reform into self-communing.

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solitude. Matthew Rosa shows Bulwer's Godolphin entertaining such a harsh opinion of political life that the characters refuse to enter it at all. He ironically adds that because most are purely conventional figures, it is a little hard sometimes to be sympathetic with these Don Quixotes as they "tilt at windmills."

The fashionable novel, such as Lytton's Pelham, grew out of the eighteenth-century novel of manners, but later borrowings and accretions from the picaresque romance and the German "apprenticeship" novel complicated the story. The intellectual dandy is in essence a picaresque rogue who has substituted a decorous ride on "Rotten Row" for his ancestors' canter on moonlit heaths. The exchange of the rough and hearty Tom Jones for the elegant Mr. Henry Pelham shows how accurately literature reflects life. Wisdom instead of physical adventures became a quest for youth, for often the young German Apprentice to life appeared as a most natural offspring to the picaresque rogue. This is indicative of familiarity with Goethe's Wilhelm Meister.

In the later years of the eighteenth century, prose was reaching out and absorbing the domains of life reserved for essay, poem, and play. People who wished to reform the world, who wished to frighten it, those who wished to satirize it, joined hands with those who merely wished to entertain it. A new feeling for humanity engendered by Richardson and Rousseau received a powerful impetus from the industrialization of England. Reform was the cry everywhere heard by novelists

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who professed no higher aim than to give readers the manners and trifles of the day.20

The shuddering fanatical horror with which Maria Edgeworth looked at London's fashionable world was foreign to the nature of Bulwer. Her novels, although dealing with London society and anticipating the "fashionable" novel (Pelham) in form and content, showed lack of familiarity with higher society, at least when she wrote them. Wishing to satirize the follies of the great, she was forced to set puppet characters, working out unconvincing destinies in an artificial setting.

Bulwer's contacts with laws, lawyers, and their problems made him familiar, no doubt, with Geffray Mynshul's picture of an English jail. From a single reading of Paul Clifford, one can see few of any changes for the bettering of prison's horrors from the eighteenth-century depiction by Mynshul. He says:

A prison is a grave to bury men alive and a place wherein a man for half a years experience may learne more law than he can at Westminster for an hundred pound. It is a place that will learne a young man more villany than he can learne at twenty dicing houses, bowling allies, brothell-houses or ordinaries and an old man more policie than if he had been pupil to Machiavel.21

He continues:

As soon as thou commest before the gate of the prison, doe thou but thinke thou are entering into Hell, and it will extenuate somewhat of thy misery--at the gate stands Cerberus, a man in shew but a dogge in nature fawning, bidding thee welcome--money, money.22

20 Ibid., p. 10


22 Ibid., p. 49.
And again the same writer tells us,

If they perceive thou art like to continue and hast good meanes, thou shalt want no content that prison can yield, but every dram of content will cost thee a pound of silver.23

In Paul Clifford, we note that Paul is sentenced, for no actual crime, "to retire for three months to that country house situated at Bridewell to which the ungrateful functionaries of justice often banish their most active citizens." The lawyer, Brandon, exposes much concerning the state of the prison when he declares:

The rascal had perfectly the "Old Bailey" cut of countenance—that he did not doubt, but if ever he lived to be judge he should also live to pass a very different description of sentence on the offender . . . he was comforted in the remembrance that at all events, he had sent the boy to a place, where let him be ever so innocent at present, he was certain to come out as much inclined to be guilty as his friends could desire . . .24

In the same book, the boy criminal sees Augustus Tomlinson, his gentleman criminal acquaintance,

. . . privately selling in jail little elegant luxuries as tobacco, gin and rations of daintier viands than prisons allowed; for Augustus having more money than the rest managed through the friendship of the turnkey to purchase secretly and resell at four-hundred per-cent such comforts as the prisoners especially coveted.25

The irregularity of penalties was discomforting to Lytton, especially when they had not improved with the nineteenth-century reforms.

23 Ibid., p. 53.

24 Bulwer Lytton, Paul Clifford, p. 93.

25 Ibid., p. 102.
We read in the Newgate Calendar of Robert Ladebroke Trayt, seventeen years of age, executed at Newgate, November 23, 1798, for forgery—his first offence. In the same book, we can read of Joseph Wood and Thomas Underwood, two fourteen year old boys, executed at Newgate, July 6, 1791 for robbing another boy of eighteen years.

In Borrow's Celebrated Trials is related the account of John Sheppard's execution, in 1724, for burglary. Likewise, the story is recorded of the execution in 1725 of Jonathan Wild for receiving stolen goods. The Dick Turpin of storybook fame was executed in 1739 for horse-stealing. Bulwer, in speaking of Paul Clifford's youthful reading habits says, "Nothing could wean him from ominous affection for the history of Richard Turpin. It was a study by day and a dream by night."

Knowledge of this background regarding the Penal Code and observing that nineteenth-century penalty was no better regulated than those of preceding centuries, it is not difficult to find a place for Bulwer's story of Paul Clifford enroute to Bridewell. He says:

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27 Ibid., p. 187.

28 Borrow, op. cit., p. 481.

29 Ibid., p. 502.

30 Bulwer Lytton, Paul Clifford, p. 27.

31 Borrow, op. cit., p. 571.
I was conducted in state to the retreat, together with a little boy, who had been found guilty of sleeping under a colonnade, it being the special beauty of the English law to make no fine drawn and non-sensical shades of difference between vice and misfortune and its peculiar method of protecting the honest, being to make as many rogues as possible in a short period of time.  

Another instance taken from the same work and illustrating a similar abuse, tells of an old woman, who had been committed for seven days to the House of Correction on a charge of disrespectability. In answer to the pleas of her husband, Judge Burnflat says,

... but as your wife, my good fellow, will be out in five days, it will scarcely be worth while to release her now—a fact which occurred in January, 1830. Vide—The Morning Herald.  

Readings from The Early Days of the Nineteenth Century in England, picture the police system of London from 1800-1820, and even after, as "rotten to the core," despite the scathing indictment of it which Doctor Patrick Colquhoun and writers of lesser repute had published at the very threshold of the century. It was notorious that half the watchmen of the metropolis were hand and glove with thieves and that the watchhouses so far from being the terror of villainy were the haunts and resting places of street robbers and the depositories of plunder. Continuing, he says

32Bulwer Lytton, Paul Clifford, p. 93.

33Ibid., p. 91

that it was not until after the first years of the century had passed that it was safe for solitary travelers to dispense with loaded pistols; and the compilers of guide-books still found it necessary to recommend all travelers to use every effort to enter London by daylight. 35

The England of Bulwer's youth was at the termination of the protracted struggle with Napoleon and presented a most distressing aspect. Disbanded soldiers, homeless and penniless, infested the country in all directions. The criminal code was a mass of barbarities, severities, and atrocities, which more or less have been depicted in this chapter. Little material diminution of these offenses was affected during this period. The criminal statutes not only continued in full force, but were augmented by successive measures of legislation so that Sir Samuel Romilly was able to say in 1808, with perfect truth, that while all the necessaries of life had become dearer, the life of man in the contemplation of the Legislature had been growing cheaper. Sydney, 36 as the authority on Romilly shows that practically all crimes, great or small were punishable by death. In 1810, a measure of repeal which was introduced by Romilly encountered the strenuous opposition of the Ministry. In 1811, however, he had the satisfaction of seeing his bill for withdrawing theft from "bleaching grounds," from the list of capital crimes, pass both houses; and another bill regulating the punishment of soldiers and sailors who were caught begging, met with success in 1812. No

35 Ibid., p. 73.

36 Sydney, op. cit., p. 165.
success, however, attended the bill which he introduced in 1813, 1816, and 1818 for the abolition of capital punishment for a theft of five shillings in a shop. 37

Assuredly, it was with hearts oftentimes burning within them that Romilly and his noble band of humane associates in the insuperable task of penal reform pursued their merciful labors in the teeth of the most determined opposition.

In chapter thirty-five of Paul Clifford, Bulwer frankly avows his purpose in writing the novel. It was

... to draw attention to two errors in the English penal institutions: the habit of corrupting the boy by the very punishment that ought to redeem him and then hanging the man, at the first occasion as the easiest way of getting rid of the blunders originally made. 38

The injustice of human law, satire upon the smug complacency toward the many social evils that should have been corrected, and the sympathy which the author would draw from us for the poor and the unfortunate in humanity who have been made so by the selfishness of the wealthy, make Paul Clifford and Eugene Aram an immediate part of Victorian literature devoted to social reform. Speare 39 tells us that two years after their publication the first Reform Act was passed and within the decade, there opened those flood-gates of sentiment which had been provoked by the pauperism induced by the Poor Laws, the economic hardships

37 Sydney, loc. cit.
38 Bulwer Lytton, Paul Clifford, p. 386.
39 Speare, op. cit., p. 367.
which brought on the Chartist rebellion, the poverty and ignorance which came in the opening of great manufacturing centers. The torch was lit, and would perhaps be fed with mightier fuel and trimmed by many hands of various persons.
CHAPTER III

A STUDY OF PAUL CLIFFORD AND EUGENE ARAM

Out of Bulwer Lytton's many and various works, Paul Clifford and Eugene Aram lend themselves to the best advantage for the purpose of social reform study as portrayed in fiction. Through the themes of these two novels, the author shows his interest in the problems of individual and social conduct; and according to Rosa,¹ one sees a reflection of the problem novels of William Godwin, Bage, and Holcroft. The realism displayed in these picaresque "social purpose" novels issues from the concrete tendencies of middle-class thought, from an attention directed toward facts, by a strong utilitarianism, no doubt, further strengthened by moral and religious sentiment.

From the publication of these novels, Bulwer has been misrepresented as advocating the repeal of capital punishment. A study of his life and of the social conditions indicates that he only aimed in common with Dickens and Thackeray at abolishing public executions and at rendering more awful by its rareness the shedding of man's blood which social reformers of the time had pronounced as a sure preventative of offenses that no substitute for it could be suggested or was even conceivable by the mind of man. Seemingly from the records of felons, indiscriminate hanging had robbed the death penalty of its disgrace. Bulwer's argument,

¹ Rosa, op. cit., p. 58.
stated frequently, implied that prisons and houses of correction had become felony manufactories when, without any thought of moral amelioration or difference in degree of guilt, offenders of every variety of age work out their sentence together.

Another argument boldly displayed in Paul Clifford is not only the possibility but the expediency of reforming the criminal as well as punishing in a way that deters the offender without degrading him. There are degrees of depravity existing among all criminals and there is indicated a stage with all of them in which the felon, actual or potential, may be redeemed and kept from becoming a burden to the state, and be converted into a capable, if not, as proved by the destiny of Paul Clifford, a beneficent citizen. Continuing Bulwer Lytton's philosophy regarding this social problem, it is seen that human nature is an affair not less complex in habitual rebels against law than its most obedient subjects. Elements of good can be found in an atmosphere of moral poison. The State's first duty, he reiterates, is that, instead of denouncing or ignoring those born and nurtured in hovels and dens of infamy, our rulers should think at least as much of redeeming and improving life as of destroying it.

In the preface to the 1848 edition of Paul Clifford,² Bulwer Lytton tells his readers what critics are denying in his purpose. He says that most men who examine the mysteries of the social problems of that period in England will pass through a state of self-education. In

²Lytton, Paul Clifford, op. cit., p. ix.
doing so, he says that he composed the novel. He calls attention to the masses of fellow creatures—the victims of circumstances over which they had no control. They were contaminated in infancy by parents' example, their intelligence either extinguished or turned against them, according as the conscience stifled in ignorance or perverted to apologies for vice. The rest of this preface, though names are not given, is easily recognized as a paraphrase on the theme of the novel itself. He speaks of a child who is cradled in ignominy; whose schoolmaster is a felon; whose academy is the House of Correction; who breathes an atmosphere in which virtue is poisoned, to which religion does not pierce, and therefore becomes less a responsible and reasoning human being than a wild beast which one suffers to range in the wilderness until it prowls near one's home and it is killed in self-defense. In this respect, Paul Clifford is an appeal from Humanity to Law.

In the same preface, Lytton states that the ostensible object of Paul Clifford was "to draw attention to two errors in our penal institutions, viz., a vicious Prison Discipline and a sanguinary Penal Code." It was to Louis Blanc and other French philanthropists that this statement was made. His objection again was directed toward the promiscuous application of capital punishment coupled with a total neglect of the most elementary principles of prison discipline, some of which have already been noted. And to this he was objecting for the same reason which made him in all things a conservative reformer on the broad ground that destruction is irrational in every case where improvement has a balance of practical advantages in its favor.
Chandler points out Bulwer's confession of William Godwin's inspiration in selecting the theme of Paul Clifford in 1830. He further explains his resort to the novel of purpose by pointing to the social demand of the moment. Poetry had fallen from fashion; the middle classes were asking instruction; he would demonstrate the errors of criminal law, and at the same time entertain. This psychological move no doubt was made, knowing that the lessons revealed in the novel would reach more people than if the picaresque vein was omitted. Every step of the characters in Paul Clifford faithfully illustrates not only the influence of criminal environment upon the innocent but also shows the inadequacy of a law which punished the criminal it has created, yet allows those who live within its pale to be as those without.

The novel, Paul Clifford, opens with Paul, a lad of three watching his mother die in a miserable hovel at the back of a tavern. An air of mystery is created immediately when an old man in tattered clothes, swears to the dying woman, on what she thinks is a Bible, to tell no one what he knows of her or of Paul. The boy makes his home with Piggy Lobkins, proprietor of the inn, who is always under the influence of liquor, to "drown the misery of her surroundings." The men who gather around the bar room tables nightly are the picaros or rogues who make their living picking pockets or robbing on the highways. They have a moral code of their own which would lower them to the state of being villains if they robbed homes or killed to get what they desired.

3Chandler, op. cit., p. 182.
There is no repentance or remorse, even a consideration on the part of these rogues, of their profession being wrong because the implication is that they are only taking back what in justice belongs to them. A reader cannot help seeing the need for social reform as he listens to the cant of these characters.

Little Paul, in forlorn childhood, receives an education superior to his surroundings. Like most ignorant persons of the time, Mrs. Lobkins attributes too great advantage to book learning. She conceives that "in order to live as decorously as the parson of the parish it was only necessary to know as much Latin." Her advice to Paul sounded somewhat like this:

"Paul watch that ye be not scragged—mind thy Kittychism—reverence old age. Never steal especially when anyone be in the way. Never go snacks with them as be older than you—'cause why? The older a cove be, the more he cares for himself and the less for his partner."

Paul's tutors are rogues. Mrs. Lobkins, upon seeing that his reading included The Life and Adventures of Richard Turpin, says, "I do not think the books he gets hold of will teach him to grow old. I would send him to school but you know as how the boys only corrupt one another."

Disgust drives Paul from the tavern into no better place than the London slums where he learns to pick pockets, gamble; and under the spell of Augustus Tomlinson, a philosophic scamp, he becomes a gentleman.

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4 Lytton, Paul Clifford, op. cit., p. 12.
5 Ibid., p. 17.
6 Ibid., p. 22.
of three outs: "out of pocket, out of elbows and out of credit." This rogue's room reveals much concerning the "gentleman highwayman" and is satirical of the times. In it we note, "boxing gloves, fencing foils, cremona and flageolet, Covent Garden Magazine, Burn's Justice, a pocket Horace, a prayerbook, Exerpta Ex Tacito, volumes of plays, Philosophy Made Easy and The Key To All Knowledge.

For a while, Paul tries to gain an honest livelihood through journalism; but being cheated here and clapped into Bridewell for a theft of which he is innocent, Paul succumbs to fate. An acquaintance, better designated as Long Ned, a genteel highwayman, loses no time in winning Paul by ridiculing his clothes and showing him that though hanging is a bad fate, starving is worse. One day Paul and his companion Long Ned silently, and each with a different motive, follow the heroine Lucy and her uncle, Lawyer Brandon. Long Ned after taking a watch from the Lawyer leaves Paul to shift for himself. After being interned for a time, Paul escapes with Tomlinson, joins a band of highwaymen and before long becomes Captain Clifford. While escorting home the parson whom his accomplices have robbed, Paul meets and is fascinated by Lucy Brandon. Lytton here exposes the clergyman as really going to use the money given to him for the poor, to purchase a new supply of madeira and a topaz cross for his wife. After listening to a speech from Paul, in disguise, regarding the robbery he has been subjected to, the parson says, "It all comes from

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7Ibid., p. 41.

8Ibid., p. 51.
educating the poor. The moment they pretend to judge the conduct of their betters there is an end to all order. They see nothing sacred in law, though we hang the dogs ever so fast."^9

Later at Bath, where Clifford and the rest go to masquerade as fine gentlemen, he saves her from the clutches of his band, which had attended uninvited, the ball given by a rival. Then, though he knows that the gratitude of Lucy's father will prompt him to allow the suit for her hand, Clifford ashamed of his heritage magnanimously withdraws. In the meantime, Lucy's father dies and she becomes the ward of her uncle, whose history has revealed him to be a villain. In this instance, he is willing to sell his niece for his own ambition to Lord Mauleverer, whose inward villainous life has been bared. Lord Mauleverer loses his suit and shortly afterward suffers robbery from Paul and his men, who then go to their cave. When the band is surprised here by MacGrawler's treachery, Paul alone eludes arrest; and though free to seek his fortune by honest means, he resolves to make a final effort for the rescue of his friends. It succeeds, but he is taken. When brought to the bar, his judge proves to be Lucy's uncle, the very man through whose accusation he was first wrongfully imprisoned and who at the close of the trial receives knowledge that the prisoner is his only son by a secret marriage. Brandon had wrecked the life of Paul's mother, alluring her years before to elope with Mauleverer in order to ruin her and she in turn (through the old man in tattered clothes at her dying bed-side) had stolen away little Paul.

^9 Ibid., p. 161.
In conclusion, Chandler\textsuperscript{10} points to the wheel coming to a full circle and William Brandon, the judge, the villain approved by society, at the complaint of Mauleverer his accomplice must determine the fate of his own child for whose criminal life he is responsible and upon whose discovery he has staked all his hopes. He pronounces death but he himself succumbs enroute from the trial. As for Paul, his sentence is relaxed to transportation, from which he escapes. He is joined by Lucy, and live perhaps in America, where they lead an honest life.

The thesis of Paul Clifford is elaborated in the plea before the court, a diatribe against the injustice of the laws. Bulwer had sought local color in visits to the prisons of London. Lytton, the dramatist, is recognized in Paul's speech, "Your laws are but two classes: the one makes criminals, the other punishes them. I have suffered by the one--I am about to perish by the other."\textsuperscript{11} Godwin's revolutionary voice is heard also in an attack upon the permitted duplicity of trade. Clifford facing Brandon says, "Is there honesty in the bread you eat, in a single necessity which clothes, or feeds, or warms you? Let those whom the law protects consider it a protector. When did it ever protect me?"\textsuperscript{12}

Chandler tells us that Tomlinson among other sage reflections echoes Fielding, by saying:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{10} Chandler, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 372.
\item \textsuperscript{11} Lytton, Paul Clifford, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 242.
\item \textsuperscript{12} Ibid., p. 243.
\end{itemize}
Whenever you read the life of a great man, I mean a man *eminently successful, you will perceive all the qualities given to him are the qualities necessary even to a mediocre rogue; . . . wherefore if luck cast him in humble life, assiduously study the biography of the great in order to accomplish you as a rogue; if in the more elevated range of society, be thoroughly versed in the lives of the rogueish—so shall you fit yourself to be eminent. 15

The same scholar 14 notes that the influence of Paul Clifford was considerable. A second edition appeared in three months and the demand for new issues incited piracies. The reform of criminal law itself seems to have been partially effected through Paul Clifford. The number of crimes punishable by death were reduced and prison regime was modified by enactments traceable to the fiction. Professor Cazamian 15 finds in the novel something far different from and superior to that which current criticism judged it attained. He sees it not as an example of Newgate fiction, but he sees in it the beginning of "roman social en Angleterre." Baker 16 commends Lytton for writing Paul Clifford as striking out an exalted and very different line which he saw was the result of the mutual impact of his mind and Godwin’s. Lytton, he shows, revered the author of Caleb Williams as a champion of human rights who had his say on social

13 Chandler, op. cit., p. 373.

14 Loc. cit.


injustices and would be at one with him in the condemnation of the existing penal code and the demoralizing effects of "a vicious prison discipline."

Sadlier tells of an article in the daily paper of March 13, 1829. It stated:

At Chelmsford Assizes, Leigh Domville Holstead was charged with stealing a mare of E. B. Lytton, a widow, on December 16. Evidence having been given the jury returned a verdict of guilty and his lordship directed that the sentence of death should be recorded against the accused.17

This coincidence is curious, seeing that almost at the moment of the defendant's conviction, the plaintiff's son was starting the work on Paul Clifford.

C. Kegan Paul published a life of Godwin in which can be seen a portion of a letter to Bulwer Lytton concerning Paul Clifford.

May 13, 1830.

... I have this moment finished the perusal of Paul Clifford. I know that you are not wrapped up in self-confidence as not to feel a real pleasure in the approbation of others. And I regard it as a duty not to withhold my approbation when I am morally certain that it will be received as it is intended ... 18

Michael Sadlier19 feels that the theme and readability of Paul Clifford were from the beginning four-fifths of its popularity and nine-tenths of its influence. The entertainment quality of it is undeniable

17 Sadlier, op. cit., p. 224.


19 Sadlier, op. cit., p. 226.
and is perhaps due in a large degree to the gusto and enjoyment with which it was evidently written. One familiar with Bulwer's domestic life will remember that it was still running smoothly. This calm is reflected in the carefree surface of the novel. It is the last of Bulwer Lytton's stories to possess a genuine light-heartedness.

The same critic reminds us that the contemporary political satire is now of rather academic interest. But when it was written it attracted much attention, luring critics of strong party views to heated debates among themselves. To the publisher concerned with publicity value, this feature loomed larger than any other. To Bulwer's Tory critics, it was grave provocation and undoubtedly encouraged them to exaggerate their indignation at the novel's moral which they calculated would prove more readily acceptable to the public than party hostility.

Two notable instances of genuine character are shown in Paul Clifford. William Brandon, the suave, ambitious lawyer is a living personality consistently true to form, a whitened sepulcher. Lord Mauleverer, the sly but courteous voluptuary, is skilfully drawn. Lucy seems to hold claim to be one of Bulwer Lytton's most successful heroines. The character MacGrawler appears to be overdrawn perhaps in retribution for the novelist's suffering from the magazine editors and critics. MacGrawler is represented as a dishonest "penny-a-liner," who from writing venal spiteful criticism for a paper called by Lytton Asinaeum sinks by

20 Sadler, loc. cit.
drink to picking pockets and in the end betrays to justice the highwaymen who alone "befriend" him.

In conclusion, Lytton has, in this novel, given his readers a bit of romance akin to the old style picaresque in the gusto and unction of the scene in which the hero robs Lord Mauleverer, with its stage business of Paul's coolness when his lordship tries to shoot him with a gun from which it later transpires that the outlaw has had the adroitness to remove the bullets. There is humorous retaliation when Paul threatens his victim Mauleverer with the entire contents of the pill box which the carriage boy carries for the distemper evident in the old man's attempt at murder. The prosaic and serious side of the novel was to enforce the paradox mentioned earlier "that, make what laws we please, the man who lives within the pale may be quite as bad as he who lives without."

Phillips puts this in strong language when he says:

Paul the victim of social tyranny is brought before the bar by the wretch who cast off his mother; and the real villain protected by his office and the approbation of the society that demands the victim's death, sits in judgment on the son whom his heartlessness has made criminal. 21

Archie Bangs 22 calls attention to the preface to the 1884 edition of Paul Clifford. It states that after having described the errors in society in this novel


it was almost the natural progress of reflection to pass to those which swell to crime in the solitary heart--from the bold and open evils that spring from ignorance and experience--to track those that lie coiled in the entanglements of refining knowledge and solitary pride.

The progress is exhibited in *Eugene Aram* who, he notes, was not ambitious for his own aggrandizement but to serve others.

Chandler states that in *Eugene Aram*, Bulwer turned to account the records of an actual so-called criminal concerning whom Scott and Godwin had projected romances. Hood, he also notes, in his popular "Dream of Eugene Aram" versified the theme. Bulwer produced upon it two acts of a poetic tragedy and it was further dramatized by Moncrieff and by Wells.

In the opening of *Eugene Aram* we find Aram living in scholarly seclusion at a place called Grassdale. Here he has fallen in love with the Squire's daughter Madeline. His disappointed rival is her cousin Walter, who rides away to an unknown destination in order to forget and cool his enraged passions. He, by chance, comes across a trace of his long lost father. This clue proves that his father had been murdered. Clue after clue is followed up until Walter meets a rascal in Yorkshire who, being charged with the crime, fastens it on Aram. In the meantime, Aram has been visited at Grassdale by this Houseman, submitting large sums of money under threat of exposure but finally arranging on the promise of an annuity that the blackmailer shall go to France and remain there. Only the death-bed summons of Houseman's young daughter prevents

23 Chandler, op. cit., p. 182.
the fulfillment of this plan. We hear him, dazed with grief at her
death, let slip the secret so long concealed and then to save himself,
shifts the blame of the deed to his accomplice. Aram, except for this
act, has led an upright life. He is arrested on his wedding day.
Madeline dies, and although Aram has artfully maintained his innocence,
he leaves a letter to Walter confessing his part in the crime and dies
of wounds inflicted on himself before the scheduled execution.

The interest of this story depends on two things: the plot as it
draws the net closer around Aram, and the study of Aram's mind and feel-
ings as he sees the ghost of his past rise up to destroy his present and
future. He is not a careless rogue but a desponding sufferer for a
wicked deed, wrongly inspired in his youth by the yearning for knowledge
which he could not materially afford and yet with which he thought he
might bless the world. When he negotiates or truckles with his more
guilty accomplice, it is only to be left alone to live his life to nobler
ends.

In the journey of Walter Lester, comedy contrasts with sadness
and gloom of the central plot. Here the influence of Gil Blas emerges
in a few adventures and types of characters as well as in the satire
upon physicians. Chandler24 sees in Corporal Bunting, Walter’s Sancho
Panza in the expedition from home, a direct descendant from Tristam
Shandy; and he notes that Scott to whom the novel was dedicated may be
responsible for Dame Darkmans, Peter Dealtry, the innkeeper, and Bess

24 Chandler, op. cit., p. 294.
Airlie, the gypsy. Houseman exemplifies a professional criminal. At first, he is a philosophic rascal of the Tomlinson type who later proves to be the ordinary rogue. He robs on the highway, associating with a gang, two of whose members attempt a burglary at the house of the Squire. In a fire-lit cave, he figures as the theatric villain proposing terms to Aram and a glimpse of him is had in his London haunts. No reader would have the slightest danger of feeling sympathy with Houseman.

Phillips differentiated Bulwer Lytton's *Eugene Aram* from the current variety of Newgate novel by publicizing the Preface of the 1832 edition.

The guilt of Aram is not that of the vulgar ruffian. It leads to views and considerations wholly distinct from those with which profligate knavery and brutal cruelty revolt and displease the hulks. His crime does, in fact, belong to those startling paradoxes which the poetry of all countries and especially of our own, has always delighted to contemplate and examine. Whenever a crime appears the aberration and the monstrous product of a great intellect, or of a nature ordinarily virtuous, it becomes not only the subject of genius which deals with passion, to describe; but a problem for philosophy which deals with actions to investigate and solve—hence, the Macbeths, and Richards, the Iagos, and Othellos.25

The same critic, in a study of *Eugene Aram*, sees that the nature of the tragedy Bulwer Lytton aimed at is more explicitly stated in the Preface of 1847.

The moral consisted in showing more than mere legal punishment at the close. It was, no doubt, to show how the consciousness of the deed was to exclude whatever humanity of character preceded and belied it from all active exercise, all social confidence; how the knowledge of the barrier between the minds

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of others and his own deprived the criminal of all motives to
ambition and blighted knowledge of all fruit. Miserable in
his affection, barren in his intellect, clinging to solitude
yet accursed in it, dreading as a danger the fame that he had
once coveted, obscure in spite of learning, hopeless in spite
of love, fruitless and joyless in life, calamitous and shame-
ful in his end--surely such is no palliative of crime, no
dalliance and toyng with the grimness of evil! And surely
to any ordinary comprehension and candid mind, such is the
moral conveyed by Eugene Aram.26

Lord Ernle27 sees Eugene Aram as stating a moral problem. The
crafts of the story were well known, a report of the real trial had often
been reprinted and had been found in chap-books and broadsheets. Lytton's
interest was intensified by hearing that Aram had formerly given lessons
to Bulwer's family in his grandfather's house at Heydon.

C. Kegan Paul28 has made some interesting notations regarding
Bulwer Lytton's associations with William Godwin. He mentions that Godwin
made one new acquaintance in 1830, the last of a long series of younger
friends. He came, says the critic, in the vigor of his youthful power
and growing fame to sit at the feet of the writer of Caleb Williams. He
was introduced to Godwin by Lady Caroline Lamb. A paper in Godwin's
writing seems to throw some light on one of the intellectual consequences
of this intimacy. Godwin seemingly had intended to write a romance on
the story of Eugene Aram and drew up some notes on the subject. They are

26Phillips, op. cit., p. 171.


undated, but Kegan Paul has deduced from the character of the writing and the correspondence of paper on which they are written with that which Godwin was then using that it evidently belonged to the years 1828-1830. These notes are said to be in form and arrangement precisely like the drafts which Godwin made and left behind him of other books which were afterwards completed; and it is more than probable that finding how unlikely it became that he should himself write the romance he projected, he gave his subject and material to his younger and more vigorous friend.

Some of the notes on **Eugene Aram** read,

> Let there be an Act of Parliament that after a lapse of ten years whoever shall be found to have spent that period blamelessly and in labor conducive to the welfare of mankind shall be absolved.

Another note reflecting **Eugene Aram** in embryo says:

> No man shall die respecting whom it can reasonably be concluded that if his life were spared, it would be spent blamelessly, honourably and usefully.

In concluding the analysis of **Eugene Aram**, a review of the seventh chapter of the fifth book seems to satisfy one who wishes to show the strong social propensities in contrast to the usual disparaging criticism of the book.

This chapter, dealing with Aram’s confession and fate, includes thought-provoking and satisfying notations as the key to his unusual

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29 Ibid., p. 304.
30 Ibid., p. 305.
31 Loc. cit.
love and knowledge of nature. "My father resided on a small farm and was especially skilfull in horticulture, a taste I derived from him."\(^{32}\)

Another problem of the reader is solved by the reference to Aram's early life:

When I was thirteen, the deep and intense passion that has made the demon of my life, first stirred palpably within me. I had always been of a solitary disposition and inclined to reverie and musing; these traits of character heralded the love that now seized me--the love of knowledge. . . . I became gradually more and more rapt and solitary in my habits . . . The world, the creation, all things that lived, moved and were, became to me objects contributing to one passionate, and I fancied, one exalted end. . . . My parents died, and I was an orphan. I had no home, no wealth. . . . I became haunted with the ambition to enlighten and instruct my race. At first, I loved knowledge solely for itself; I now saw afar an object grander than knowledge.\(^{33}\)

Aram's confession then includes sorrow over his exhausting learning within his reach. It was the question, "Where with my appetite excited, not slaked, was I destitute and penniless, to search for more?" that together with Houseman's jibes concerning Aram's poverty that finally drove him in desperation to accompany Houseman in his robbery plot against Clarke. This victim's money was shown as being used for vile purposes while Aram was beside himself with thoughts like these:

For suddenly as I pored over my scanty books, a gigantic discovery in science gleamed across me. I saw the means of effecting a vast new conquest to that only empire which no fate can overthrow, and no time wear away. And in this discovery I was stopped by the total inadequacy of my means.

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\(^{32}\) Lytton, Eugene Aram, p. 455.

\(^{33}\) Ibid., p. 456.
The books and implements I required were not within my reach—a handful of gold would buy them—I had not wherewithal to buy bread for morrow's meal.\(^{34}\)

Houseman's character is well defined by Aram when he says that Clarke's vices revolted him more than Houseman's villainy. Houseman, he recalls, possessed a few advantages of education; he was a "plain, blunt, coarse wretch, and his sense threw something respectable around his vices."\(^{35}\) But in Clarke, one sees traces of education and better opportunities; it was in him not the coarseness of manner that displeased, but the lowness of sentiment. Had Houseman money in his purse, he would have paid a debt and relieved a friend, but Aram does not feel the same for the other. Aram's words are strong regarding Clarke when he says:

Had Clarke been overflowing with wealth, he would have slipped from the creditor and duped a friend; there was a pitiful cunning in his nature, which made him regard the lowest meanness as the subtlest wit.\(^{36}\)

The confession ends with the trio, Aram, Houseman, and Clarke, setting out on an evil mission to relieve Clarke of his money. Upon the discovery (fourteen years later) of what was an unpremeditated murder Aram states that Houseman put the blame on him for striking the blow which killed Clarke. He vehemently denies his guilt. But the deed was done and the robber's comrade in the eyes of the laws of England of that time, was the murderer's accomplice and so shared in his punishment.

\(^{34}\) Ibid., p. 459.

\(^{35}\) Ibid., p. 461

\(^{36}\) Loc. cit.
These two novels, Paul Clifford and Eugene Aram, leave one who has studied in detail the life of their author and these two works in particular, with a feeling of pity for the man who knew human nature so well, yet who missed the true moral aspects of Christianity. A man with Lytton's powers combined with sound Christian principles might have lived in glory even until today.
CHAPTER IV

A COMPARISON OF BULWER LYTTON'S PICARESQUE NOVELS

WITH THOSE OF HIS CONTEMPORARIES

A study such as the title of this chapter suggests is necessarily limited and so with this in mind the author chooses to employ some of the picaresque novels of the more familiar writers of Bulwer Lytton's time. Ainsworth, Reade, Trollope, Godwin, Marryat, Wilkie Collins, Dickens, and Thackeray are names more or less synonymous with nineteenth century literature of roguery.

When these men began their careers, the orthodox picaresque type had been exploited so fully that many novels of roguery were forced as a rule to abandon it. Some retained only its humor and irony; some, its shifts of condition in service of masters; some, its zest for adventure; and others, its scenes of low-life. Many of the rogues which the genre depicted were traditional, merry, carefree, and with deep malice, yet lack the saving grace of the Spaniards; the satire upon current abuses concealed beneath mere surface rogueries.

Chandler\(^1\) says that it was most likely the ethical and professional character that most nearly approached the early rogue literature. The ethical afforded a rare list of vices and the vicious to be vitalized by the novel. The character of place gave scope to picturesque

\(^1\) Chandler, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 78.
realism in describing the haunts of rogues.

The Gothic romance, as cultivated by Horace Walpole, Clara Reeve, Ann Radcliffe, and Lewis, employed villains rather than rogues and therefore do not really fit into the early classification of the picaresque type. Few could boast with justice of humanitarian motives, and not until perhaps the second decade of the nineteenth century did the scientific and philanthropic view of criminal life prevail. The young philanthropist of Henry Brooke's *Fool of Quality* examines prisons and slums from humanitarian motives. Studies of manners and character by Fanny Burney and Jane Austen show little or no roguery. It seems that it was only in the "novel of purpose" that picaresque elements survived.

Chandler claims that it was William Godwin, chief of the English revolutionary circle who made the most striking use of roguish material to further a special purpose. This was done in his novel *Things As They Are* or *The Adventures of Caleb Williams*, "a review of the mode of domestic and unrecorded despotism by which man becomes a destroyer of man." This is not a novel of intrigue, adventure, or manners. The attack upon social conditions and the study of character are its aims. But in the account of Caleb's incarceration, his escape, his life among thieves, and his later shifts, the incidents of the picaresque novel are drawn upon.

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2 Chandler, op. cit., p. 337.

3 Loc. cit.
Lytton must have been mindful that amid the crowd of imitative writers content, during the last decade of the eighteenth century, to follow blindly the procedure of native and foreign masters of the picaresque narrative, there had appeared but few innovators. If the great majority looked to the past, Mrs. Inchbald and Godwin faced the future. Chandler says of these two writers:

Mrs. Inchbald's verve and power of observation, together with her properly theatrical gifts, are by no means indifferent in their appeal, sets out to plead the cause of penitentiary reform, or of that essential goodness of heart opposed to the corruptive influence of society, which after Rousseau found a defense in the teaching of Godwin. Their influence is especially to be discerned in such a rogue novel as Bulwer Lytton's Paul Clifford.4

It was no part of the service of Scott to rehabilitate the picaresque novel. He sought rather to temper the raw realism and crude melodrama of the eighteenth century with the spirit of romance. Cervantes, according to an authoritative critic,5 had modified, almost two hundred years earlier, the romantic realism with picaresque realism in Don Quixote. Scott reversed the procedure in the Waverly Novels. He gives no indication of having been influenced by change in matters political and intellectual about 1815. He retains his opinions, his temperament, and natural bent of imagination. Scott is different from Bulwer in that neither fashion or changes of taste have had any serious effect on his novels. In the Waverly Novels, Scott restored to fiction its lost balance and what had been false and hysterical in the Otrantos and Udolphos


5 Ibid., p. 343.
was reduced to probability, while what had been mean and low in Peregrine Pickles and John Junipers was raised to the plane of art. Among the diverse elements brought together in the works of Scott, it is the realism which undoubtedly, after the history, proves the greatest force of attraction.

When Bulwer Lytton made use of criminal biography, he was notoriously ridiculed; yet it is not unknown that this type exerted no inconsiderable influence in the shaping of modern fiction. Scott in Rob Roy and Heart of Midlothian made use of criminal pamphlets. Besides using the account of Aram, Bulwer Lytton in Lucretia or Children of the Night introduced the deeds of Thomas Griffiths Wainewright, the notorious insurance swindler, celebrated also as the anti-hero in Dickens' Hunted Down. Dickens has Fagin present Oliver Twist with a copy of Newgate Calendar. Thackeray's Catherine is simply an extended and imaginative criminal chronicle based in its facts upon actual pamphlets and upon later issues of the Newgate Calendar. Charles Reade's It's Never Too To Mend introduces the criminal biography as a salutary occupation for convicts.

Two followers of Scott show that romanticism and roguery are not incompatible. Bulwer Lytton used picaresque matter for serious ends but William Harrison Ainsworth employed it merely for entertainment. Chandler notes that the first of Ainsworth's novels combined Gothic romance with picaresque fiction as Smollett had done in Ferdinand

6 Ibid., p. 365.
Count Fathom. Ainsworth's fiction was really romantic. As based on reading rather than observation, it betrays indebtedness to many sources. The tone of burlesque derived from Spanish picaresque fiction and from English criminal pamphlets provided a long encomium upon highwaymen. The seventeen picaresque ballads of Rookwood hark back to the lyrics of the Beggar's Opera.

The greatest of Bulwer Lytton's contemporaries in the use of rogue material was, of course, Dickens. According to Ley, he sprang into fame at twenty-four, as the author of Pickwick Sketches by Boz, appearing in the Morning Chronicle. Ainsworth indentified Boz and advised him to publish it in book form and introduced him to the publisher Macrone and the illustrator Cruikshank. He also acquainted him with John Forster, and yet Ainsworth has no prominent place in the biography of Dickens. Ainsworth, he continues to say, had not those solid qualities of friendship that Dickens required. But in early manhood, he must have been a striking and attractive personality. He was the first prominent literary man with whom Dickens associated on level terms. Ainsworth was a novelist, a sensational novelist according to the same critic, "who took the towns by storm with Rookwood and the glorious description of Dick Turpin's ride to York." At seventy, he was neglected and forgotten. In the first years of this friendship, the three were devoted to horse exercise

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8 Loc. cit.
and Dickens and Forster would ride out from Kensal Lodge and pick up Ainsworth. Ley has recorded that referring to Ainsworth, Dickens says "many of the pleasures of later years were due to him who had sympathies in tastes and pursuits, accomplishments in literatures; open-hearted generous ways and cordial hospitality." There was real danger of a rupture between the two novelists arising out of Dickens' dispute with Bentley in 1839 which led to Ainsworth's succeeding Dickens as editor of Bentley's Miscellany. Happily, the affair ended amicably. In 1842, Ainsworth was one of a party gathered to welcome Dickens home from America. After that, references are few. In 1849, he was godfather for Dickens' sixth son. Four years later, Ainsworth gave up Kensal Manor House and reunions were once for all ended. This fragment of biography is inserted to establish additional sidelights particularly of Ainsworth who is seldom depicted except as the imitator of Bulwer and the so-called "sensational" school of writers without the sociological or philanthropic motive.

After noting Chandler's earlier views regarding Dickens and Ainsworth, it is slightly surprising to note statements such as these:

The rage for housebreakers has become immense and the fortunes of the most notorious and the most successful of thieves have been made the subject of entertainment at no fewer than six of the London theaters. Against such tendencies the forces of literature rose in revolt. Dickens wrote Oliver Twist and Thackeray composed Catherine to counteract them. Bulwer sought to excuse the presentation of rascality on the plea of social

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9 Ley, loc. cit.
or psychological intention. Both Ainsworth and Dickens were stimulated by Bulwer's success in the field, the one turned to experiments in romantic roguery, the other to a humanitarian adaptation of picaresque fiction.

The diatribe against Bulwer Lytton's subject matter in the picaresque field loses great weight when one recalls that Thackeray's Catherine was a biography of the criminal Catherine Hayes. In purpose, it does not seem very different from what it derides. The same thought comes to mind when Chandler, in speaking of Dicken's works says,

It is Dickens who inherited the picaresque tradition of Smollett and profiting by the reformatory purpose of Godwin and Bulwer, first combined the two tendencies studying rogues as individuals and also as social phenomenon. Dickens' predilection for depicting low-life was manifest in his earliest work--Sketches by Boz and The Drunkard's Death, a temperance tract.

In Pickwick such sordid, moralized scenes give way to humorous roguery. Pickwick is of the race of Don Quixote, a lovable sufferer from the jests and wiles of others issuing from every situation with dignity unimpaired and with faith in human goodness unshaken. Sam Weller possesses the sense, cunning and humor of the picaro descended from such comic servants of literature as Guzman, Gil Blas and Sancho Panza. A whole series of picaresque scenes is displayed in the chapter dealing with Pickwick's voluntary incarceration in the Fleet. Here the easy vagabonds who drink and smoke, roar and play are exhibited in their dirty coffee room. Listless debtors loiter about the court, rascals look in at the whistling-shop a mart for whiskey, kept by the favored prisoners with the connivance of the turnkeys. The characters of the Fleet prisoners are no less graphically given.

Dickens, like the whole Spanish school, professes to set up a beacon of life and to warn by a frightful example. This, no doubt, is the answer to his use of caricature as well as his use of the Gothic in

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10Chandler, op. cit., p. 370.

11Ibid., p. 414.
Fagin and the use of hags in the workhouse. Fagin, the crafty Jew in *Oliver Twist*, compares with the actual Jonathan Wild and shares most of his habits. The characteristic figures and scenes of *Oliver Twist* are those of low-life and its humor, pathos, and interest center in roguery.

Chandler notes that Quevedo's burlesque novel is followed again in *Nicholas Nickleby* where the Dorkleboys Hall is as much a place of torment as the school of Dr. Cabra attended by Don Pablos. But Dickens' earnestness of purpose and special plea for educational reform, if they favor overemphasis are in contrast with the rollicking travesty of the Spaniard. He also notes that equally liberal in its use of roguery was *The Old Curiosity Shop*. *Barnaby Rudge* deals with riot and crime rather than roguery. But in *Martin Chuzzlewit*, amusing rascality reappears with Montague Tigg, the soldier of fortune as a true picaro. Low-life interiors figure in *Little Dorrit*, whose story opens in the prisons at Marseilles and continues to unfold through many chapters within the London Marshalsea. Edward Dorrit, the "ne'er-do-well" serves as many masters as a Spanish picaro. Where *Little Dorrit* attacks the debtor's prisons and the hopeless delays and red-tape of the "Circumlocution Office," *Bleak House* and *Hard Times* assail respectively the Court of Chancery and the spirit of rank commercialism. In the *Tale of Two Cities* Sydney Carton is a sentimentalized picaro. *Our Mutual Friend* swarms with rascals--fashionable fortune-hunters who like the pair in Cervantes'...

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12 Ibid., p. 423.
novel have married for wealth, each to discover in the other a defeated imposter. Here also is Headstone, the jealous schoolmaster, the subject of a psychological study in crime that recalls Bulwer Lytton's Eugene Aram. Hunted Down recalls the criminal biography for it is a fictional adaptation of the career of Thomas Wainewright, the insurance swindler, already used by Bulwer Lytton. Dickens seemingly has touched every aspect of the literature of rougery from beggar-book to detective tale. Chandler in the following excerpt makes a broad summary.

Dickens' novels teem with low life. They are realistic in manner and romantic in treatment. Now he laughs at rascality with the humorist's tolerance and now he assails it with the wrath of a Puritan zealot. Yet his presentation never disgusts like Thackeray's and never unduly allures like Ainsworth's. Although Dickens fails to conform to the Spanish and French picaresque formula and although he does not once employ a rogue for a central figure his novels afford the broadest view of rogues in their social environment and a portrait gallery unparalleled in the richness and variety of character types. 13

Another remarkable contemporary of Lytton, Charles Reade, chanced upon picaresque fiction. Few before Reade had contributed to the literature of rougery so seriously. Lytton had agitated reforms touching criminals and the Criminal Code. Reade took up the cudgels for prison reform in the spirit of Dickens, writing a "novel of purpose" which, in its realism and sober message to the unfortunate, recalls the picaresque tale of Defoe. Herbert Paul speaks of Reade's novels as being "in every respect benevolent and praiseworthy," 14 as far as "purpose goes." In


It's Never Too Late To Mend, he exposed the cruelty which prevailed in prisons. Hard Cash was designed to effect the reform of lunatic asylums. Regarding the means to achieve the ends, Herbert says, "He carried sensationalism to the verge of vulgarity and he was no purist." Cloister and Hearth indicates scholarship and an acquaintance with the Colloquies of Erasmus, together with a warm sympathy with the spirit of Renaissance. Reade seems to have fallen into oblivion along with two of his contemporaries, Melville and Wilkie Collins.

Herbert in speaking of Wilkie Collins says that he wrote of crime and their perpetrators from the detective's point of view and therefore fell into a rather tiresome trick of putting his characters into the witness box. It is strange, according to notes from the same critic, that a man of letters should try to make his books resemble police reports. The implication is that Wilkie not being able to serve "God and Mammon" was forced to take the consequences.

Phillips notes a point of similarity between the roguery of Bulwer Lytton and Wilkie Collins.

No Victorian perhaps had a better right to the distinction which Bulwer liked to claim—that of interesting through a constant studied variety of picaresque material—than Collins. Like Bulwer his themes were a constant experimentation.

1. Basil—man's marriage to an unworthy woman.
2. Hide and Seek—exploited deaf-mute heroine.
3. The New Magdalen—portrayal of a wronged woman.

15 Herbert Paul, Loc. cit.

16 Ibid., p. 146

Ley\textsuperscript{18} states that a great friend of Dickens' later years was Wilkie Collins. Dickens came under his spell to a remarkable degree, and one of the most astonishing literary facts is the influence which the younger man exercised over the art of the one who was famous and acknowledged first of the living novelists before he had left school. In conclusion to his remarks regarding Wilkie Collins and Dickens, Ley\textsuperscript{19} says that in so far as Dickens owed anything to anyone he was chiefly indebted to Fielding and Smollett; but as he drew close to the end of his life, the influence of those two masters gave way to that of a younger writer named Collins, who was the inferior in every respect except one and who never succeeded in crossing the line "which divides great writers from first class writers." Dickens recognized Collins' skill at plot construction and magnified its value and importance. It was perhaps the spell of Collins that prompted him to endeavor in Edwin Drood to prove himself an expert mystery unraveller.

Collins brought into fashion the sensational tale, in which the mechanical plotting of a crime is ingeniously and elaborately worked out. He combines the feeling of terror and the art of creating an atmosphere of intense imaginary anguish, with a meticulous care in the manipulation of his facts and an accurate use of his technical knowledge. The revival of adventure in all its forms and the singular success of the contemporary detective novel are thus adumbrated, but no less apparent is an ever

\textsuperscript{18}Ley, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 286.

\textsuperscript{19}Loc. cit.
bolder search for literary effects in violent aspects of reality and in the emotional appeal of life's untold possibilities. A certain kind of the supernatural which finds its source in the exceptional accidents of human experiences and sets the whole nervous system on edge, completes and crowns the efforts of realism while leaving it behind and even including its contradictions. Collins is thus portrayed as inferior in the choice of theme, plot, character portrayal, and all that makes for a moral and artistic piece of literature as compared with Lytton when he is called "the sensational novelist."

Lytton and Dickens have many points in common regarding their early novels of roguery. When they began to write, public affairs were on a rather low level and were conducted on a small scale. Their early works were a more or less conscious revolt against fashionable lethargy and conventional shams. Their novels, unlike Thackeray's, were in a sense a part of politics. They were meant to affect, and they did affect, the political temper of the nation. Their immense and almost unparalleled popularity has, as was inevitable, suffered great diminution. One great reason for this, among many others, is perhaps because the social abuses which he satirized are for the most part extinct. The social habits which they chronicled have largely disappeared.

Dickens as a master of rogue literature differed from Lytton in that he discovered the literary significance of the individuals who people the streets. Thus, he combined imagination with observation and so created a type of fiction somewhere between the imaginative stories of Swift and Cervantes and the actuality of the twentieth century.
Holdsworth finds amidst the roguery of Dickens, . . . a valuable addition to our authorities, a source of illustration without which the student's knowledge of English barristers and jurisprudence is incomplete. So he draws on Dickens' descriptions and scenes to explain the external conditions of the law, the types of lawyers, the procedure of the court of chancery and common law.

It seems apropos to recall the Newgate novel which was held in disrepute and with which genre Lytton's name is frequently associated. From about 1831 to 1840 already mundane enough, according to Phillips, is revealed a triviality in the narrative presentation of crime arising in part from deference to a popular decaying romanticism, in part from satisfactory models and a serious object. It fed an unwholesome taste which the times made rampant by a reliance upon a decadent tradition and minimized the axiom as to the wages of sin.

Phillips as a student of sensationalism sees in Oliver Twist with its Fagin, Nancy and Bill Sikes, in Barnaby Rudge with the episode of the hunted murderer, in Wilkie Collins' Basil, with its diabolical Mannion and in It's Never Too Late To Mend with its entire narrative of Tom Robinson, the pick-pocket, the indebtedness of the Dickens' group in their early successes to the story of crime. That Dickens or his followers owed anything considerable to so despicable a set of fiction as they would have felt the Newgate novels to be, they would probably have denied vehemently; but the Newgate novel as the descendant of the

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22 Ibid., p. 179.
diabolical in earlier romance encouraged and perpetuated a narrative method--the melodramatic method of terrific effects consciously wrought for their own sake. It was a way of telling a story of adventure, no matter whether the settings were the wretched garret of Fagin or the King's Highway. To whatever extent of guilt Lytton is accused of regarding his use of the Newgate fashion, there is ample assurance of its adoption for sincere reform purposes. One should consider that neither does trade phenomena explain completely Lytton's use of sensationalism. It must be remembered that beyond local and temporary conditions of trade and of the public are further matters of temperament and of literary tradition--of innate love for the theatrical whether behind the footlights or between the covers of a book. Lytton's success as a drama writer may place him in the above category and help to nullify the opprobrium heaped upon his name. The mere fact that Lytton was acclaimed as a popular writer of fiction militated against his acceptance by the serious critics of the day. The prejudice against the novel as a literary form still persisted in the thirties. Though more humanitarian than most of the rogue novels, Oliver Twist was generally thought of as belonging to the novels of criminal and low-life class. That was the general view until the middle of the century. Phillips does not put the blame for so-called corruption on the originators of the sensation novel. He says,

Sensationalism or the sensation novel as the Victorian reviewers dubbed it had a definite meaning and a long literary tradition. It was the romance of the present consciously adapted to new conditions and to new public and found materials in records of crime and villainy. Great exponents were Dickens, Reade and Collins, and numerous imitators lacking facility and
power and quite destitute of their sense of the responsibili-
lities of the artist. In the hands of these it became the
reproach and abomination of Victorian popular literature. 23

Disraeli, who was a good friend of Bulwer Lytton is remembered
for the value of his novels as vehicles of political criticism rather
than for their rogue characters. Paul 24 makes one recall Lytton when he
mentions that Trollope was in his lifetime more popular than any of his
contemporaries. Why was he popular and why has he ceased to be so?
These two questions come to mind immediately when reading Lytton's life.
In regard to Trollope, the same critic 25 says that his popularity was
due partly to his cleverness, liveliness, and high spirits; and partly
to his never taxing the brains of his readers if he ever taxed them at
all. He stimulated the taste for which he catered and created the demand
which he supplied. The main part of Trollope's work is a series of nov-
els limited in scope, which treat of a small provincial town and of the
ecclesiastical world in the shadow of its cathedral, as well as glimpses
of the fuller social life of the surroundings. Cazamian's notion of
Trollope's field is as follows:

All this is described with precision and piquancy in a rather
uniform coloring by a writer who is at once painstaking and
methodical and who prides himself on the possession of such qual-
ities. And yet his portraits are in reality the result of in-
tuition and conjecture rather than photographic reproduction of

23 Ibid., p. 13.
25 Ibid., p. 143.
what he saw. He possessed the essence of realism which consists in the inner intention of the artist first and concerns his technique only in the second instance.²⁶

Charles Reade by comparison comes to mind as being different. Not only was he a realist by temperament but also by method. Cazamian goes so far as to say that he was a realist "to a degree of conscientiousness and system that had as yet been unequaled in England."²⁷ Both of these criticisms sound "too superlative" to bear much weight. The same critic adds,²⁸ however, that Reade's philanthropic arguments leave one indifferent; aiming as they do at very particular cases of abuse, they become too documentary and loaded with circumstantial detail to rouse emotion. They convince but lack that stimulating warmth of feeling which Dickens, whose arguments are less solid, knew better how to suggest. Dickens remembered perhaps the type of characters used by Sterne, all originally possessing an oddity allied to a naturalness and gifted with an inner vitality that overcomes the resistance of judgment and imposes the feeling of reality through the saving grace of sympathy.

Now that the types and methods of Lytton's contemporaries have been indicated, a few words may be added to what has been previously said concerning Lytton's works. More important or significant than Eugene Aram's genesis is its position with regard to the genre. It does represent a departure from the light-hearted romance of roguery to the study

²⁷ Ibid., p. 1248.
²⁸Loc. cit.
of sin. Although Nathaniel Hawthorne was too much of an idealist to indulge in picaresque writing, he acknowledged its influence in The House of Seven Gables. He is also considered a "master" in the study of sin as portrayed by Lytton. Bulwer Lytton like all novelists entered the nineteenth century with no very enviable reputation. Literary society in general was inclined to look askance at prose fiction and some unlettered people regarded it as a little short of diabolical. If an author chose, like Bulwer Lytton in Paul Clifford, to expound the workings of a brutal criminal law, he had to delete vital details of his demonstration. Hampered thus by a public which shrank from the presentation of the truth yet found keen delight in Rockwood and its kind, it is not strange that Thackeray waited long to be heard. Yet underneath this superficial manifestation of taste which results from the enfranchisement of the many, it was a period of liberation. It is here that Lytton steps in as a leader making use of the picaresque to encourage and finally bring about prison reform. Phillips says,

Dickens esteemed himself with Collins not only entertainers but leaders and makers of popular opinion. Their sensationalism was seriously applied to questions of wide-spread interest in contemporary life. Their belief in "publicity" was unbounded and they accordingly not only made an avowedly popular appeal but prided themselves upon doing so.²⁹

The same author points out a similar seriousness in a letter written by Reade to one of his correspondents, stirred up by It's Never Too To Mend. This is the novel in which Reade applied the sensational method to prison regimen.

²⁹Phillips, op. cit., p. 97.
... those black facts (inhuman governors and fatally brutal methods of discipline) have been before the public before I ever handled them; they have been told and tolerably well told, by many chronicles. But it is my business, my art, and my duty to make you REALIZE things which the chronicler presents to you in his dim, stolid and shadowy way and so they pass over your mind like idle wind.  

Baker 31 from his study of Lytton's life and works says that his novel Eugene Aram was a philosophic study of the victim's case. He feels that the novel was far from being a plain realistic account because Lytton was too sensible of the solemnity and dignity proper to such a serious subject. He maintains this as the reason why the chief characters and others talk "like a book of elegant extracts."

In the introduction to Bulwer Lytton's Letters to Macready, Brander Matthews 32 makes rather welcome statements regarding the novelist's powers and the implication includes his power with the "picaro." He tells us that Bulwer is a born story-teller having the ability to present interesting characters in interesting situations. The characters, he recalls, might be forced or they might be flimsy, but the situations were ingenious, unexpected, and effective. He sought to arouse the emotions of surprise rather than the emotion of recognition. "When we recall one of Lytton's novels," Matthews says, "we find ourselves remembering what his characters do rather than what they are."

30 Phillips, loc. cit.
Before concluding this chapter concerning Bulwer Lytton's contemporaries who were engaged in writing in the picaresque style, a few generalizations from Cross seem to contain a precious summary. He stresses the idea that changes in literature, such as have been pointed out, have a psychological basis. That we are by nature both realists and idealists delighting about equality in the representation of life somewhat as it is and as it is dreamed to be, is also pointed out by the author. In one period, the ideal is in the ascendancy and in another, the real. Idealism, in the course of time, falls into unendurable exhortancies; realism likewise offends by its brutality and cynicism. In either case, there is a recoil often accomplished by unreasonable criticism even by parody and burlesque. The reaction of the public is taken advantage of by a writer; it is enforced by him and may be led by him. A man with a reactionary creed reverts to some earlier form or method, modifies and develops it, varying the type. For illustration, we see that Fielding set the Spanish rogue story over against Richardson, and Thackeray professedly took Fielding as his model in his reaction against Bulwer Lytton and Dickens. Both are realists but their works are very different. No one would confuse the authorship of Tom Jones with Vanity Fair. For realism, Fielding had behind him only picaresque fiction and the comedy of manners. Thackeray had behind him not only Fielding but a line of succeeding novelists, romancers, and realists.

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Between Fielding and Thackeray is Scott. The result may be computed by stating that there is no history in Tom Jones. If Vanity Fair does not have a background in actual incident, it has at least a show of history. There is never a full return to the past, romance learns from realism and realism from romance. Literature is always moving, and to something never predicted. Romance, for the people in the Victorian manner of speaking, was truly the sensational novel developed in various degrees. It affected particularly contemporariety and depended primarily on the appeal to fear. It was a narrative of villainous violence, of crime; a delineation of the abnormal, the terrible, and the hideous in some measure for their own sake. To this, Dickens added what was believed to be a scrupulous dependence on fact and sought to achieve a refinement in method by adapting the mode of expression necessary for the play. Sensation novelists favored unusual reliance on incident and dialogue, and revealed characteristic emphasis on the number and intensity of climaxes, and the avoidance of psychological exposition. Such a story assumes priority of incident, situation, and plot over character and humor. This brought them into sharp and resolute contrast with the realists. Reade and George Eliot represent extremes.

Phillips\(^\text{34}\) has found Thackeray to have listed Oliver Twist "among the Newgate novels of Bulwer and Ainsworth." Ruskin, too, he says, cited Barnaby Rudge, Bleak House, and Nicholas Nickleby as "foul fiction." Trollope, he notes, "quite representatively of a large part of the public,

\(^{34}\)Phillips, op. cit., p. 101.
thought that Reade's reform story novels exaggerated and falsified the object of attack. These additional points of criticism help in formulating the idea that Bulwer Lytton's works were surely no worse than any of his contemporaries; while in many respects based on a biographical study, his reform movement was dominant whenever he applied the picaresque method.

Literature was to Dickens a noble calling, says Ley; and in this he and Lytton were in complete sympathy. Of him he was able to say,

In the path we both tread, I have found him (uniformly) from the first, the most generous of men; quick to encourage, slow to disparage, ever anxious to assert the order of which he is so great an ornament.

One is therefore inclined to accept an estimate of Lytton such as Dickens has given to us, together with the many other similar opinions as a fairly good tag with which to summarize one's own critical estimate of Bulwer Lytton, the man, and Lytton, the picaresque romancer. From this, it is only a small step to conclude that his works fall in line with the defects caused by domestic circumstances in his life, and are superior because of motivation derived from education, a sympathetic nature, and a keen perception of the needs of his fellowmen.

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35 Phillips, loc. cit.

36 Ley, op. cit., p. 181
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APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Sister Mary Therese Norine (Solon), B.V.M. has been read and approved by three members of the Department of English.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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Signature of Adviser: James O. Young