

Title	Is Oliver Twist a Newgate Novel? : On the Feature and Reason of Charles Dickens's Depiction of Crime
Author(s)	CHIN, Sei
Citation	歴史文化社会論講座紀要 (2012), 9: 63-75
Issue Date	2012-01
URL	http://hdl.handle.net/2433/154831
Right	
Type	Departmental Bulletin Paper
Textversion	publisher

Is *Oliver Twist* a Newgate Novel?

— On the Feature and Reason of Charles Dickens's Depiction of Crime —

CHIN Sei

Introduction

Presumably there was no other novelist in Victoria era that had such a strong concern about crime, and incorporated so much description of crime in his works as Charles Dickens (1812-1870) did. *Oliver Twist* was the second novel of Dickens published in a serial form in a magazine titled *Bentley's Miscellany* run by himself from February 1837 to April 1839 when Dickens was still a journalist. In England, from the 1830s to the 1840s, a large amount of crime novels were published. Since these novels reminded the readers of London's Newgate prison, they were considered to constitute a group and were given the generic name "Newgate novels". *Oliver Twist* was written just during that period. Since some of the main characters in it were criminals, it was considered to be a Newgate novel at the time. Even nowadays, *Oliver Twist* can still be found in every kind of chronology of Newgate novels.¹⁾ This paper attempts to clarify the reasons behind Dickens's deep concern about crime in *Oliver Twist* through the study of his depiction of crimes. It also attempts to argue that *Oliver Twist* is more than a Newgate novel.

I. Critical History of *Oliver Twist*

In this chapter I would like to introduce some main criticism on this novel in chronological order.

1. Early critical reception

Most critics and book reviewers of Dickens's lifetime based their reviews of *Oliver Twist* on one standard: how realistic this novel was. Especially, descriptions of a gang of criminals in London in this novel attracted attention and were the appealing point for a long time. John Forster, one of the lifetime friends of the author, highly estimated the authentic elements in this

novel, and many other critics and researchers of Dickens's time gave favorable comments on this point. The magazine *Spectator* commented "...the thieves, their comates, and the Londoners of Boz (Dickens's penname), are flesh and blood-living creatures." (Collins 43)

However, the opposite opinions also existed. As the only female of the gang of criminal in this novel, Nancy might be the most controversial character. She is a prostitute and assists other criminals, but she turns out to be the key figure in helping Oliver out of the criminal world. When she is given a chance to get rid of the dark world and to have a better life, she refuses it just because she loves the devilish housebreaker Sikes. Her kindness and love were doubted by many literati. Thackeray thought that "Miss Nancy is the most unreal fantastical personage possible...He [Dickens] dare not tell the truth concerning such young ladies." (Collins 407-09) The magazine *Punch* criticized the mannerism of the whole story severely and in a roundabout way by calling *Oliver Twist* "a startling romance" made by literary cookery:

Take a small boy...as occasion may serve...boil him in a cauldron of crime and improbabilities. Season equally with good and bad qualities ... Stew down a mad mother-- a gang of robbers -- several pistols-- a bloody knife. Serve up with a couple of murders -- and season with a hanging-match.--Strongly recommended for weak stomachs. (Collins 46)

In order to defend against this kind of comments, Dickens justified himself in the preface of *Oliver Twist's* third edition in 1841, insisting that "it is useless to discuss whether the conduct and character of the girl seems natural or unnatural...IT IS TRUE. Every man who has watched these melancholy shades of life knows it to be so." (Dickens 3)

2. Modern Criticism

After the beginning of the 20th century, criticism of *Oliver Twist* came to be concerned with Dickens's morality as a writer. Many critics took this novel as the spokesman of the author's view towards the Victorian London. To quote Chesterton:

The interest of the book lays not so much in its revelation of Dickens' literary genius as in its revelation of those moral, personal instincts which were the make-up of his character and the permanent support of that literary genius. It is by far the most depressing of all his books; it is in some ways the most irritating; yet its ugliness gives the last touch of honesty to all that spontaneous and splendid output. (Chesterton 22-27)

Not by giving moral lesson directly by teaching people how to behave in the right way, but by

creating a dark world and a gang of criminals, Dickens expressed his morality with descriptions of ugliness and crimes. People who read about those wrongs and crimes were able to know what was right and honest.

On Dickens's purpose of writing *Oliver Twist*, Gissing commented that he had a twofold moral purpose: to exhibit the vicious working of the Poor Law Amendment Act 1834; to give a faithful picture of the life of thieves in London. (Gissing 10) Actually, these two purposes can be taken as a pair with causal relationship. Dickens hated crimes but he blamed them not on those criminals but on the social system, especially the Poor Law Amendment Act which did not relieve the poor but resulted in increasing crimes in Victorian London.

Criticism during mid-20th century can be roughly divided into three groups: psychoanalytical criticism, criticism taking biographical facts and social backgrounds into consideration and New Criticism.

Steven Marcus was the one who adopted psychoanalytical criticism. He took a biographical and psychoanalytical approach to the character of Fagin, the old Jew. Marcus discovered that this character was named after Bob Fagin, a kindly boy who worked with Dickens at the blacking factory. He was responsible for teaching Dickens factory work when the latter arrived. But in the novel, Fagin was the horrible leader of a gang of criminals and trained little boys to be pickpockets. Marcus's theory is that the name Fagin was transferred to the villain of *Oliver Twist* to purge some of the resentment Dickens felt at his life in the blacking factory and the near exposure of his shame. Dickens refused to admit Bob Fagin's kindness because this is connected with the admitting of his life in the blacking factory. He attributed the most devilish character to the name Fagin and tried to deny those great hardships of his childhood.

Humphrey House wrote books and essays aiming at connecting Dickens's writings with author's real experiences and biographical facts and social backgrounds of Victorian era, especially with Poor Law Amendment Act. Those facts explained the imaginative vividness of criminals and outsiders in *Oliver Twist*. Also, Phillip Collins titled his research book *Dickens and Crime* (1962) and in this book, he collected historical materials and confirmed authenticity of this novel.

When New Criticism was introduced to Europe from America, *Oliver Twist* inevitably became the subject of this theory. Just opposite to the Humphrey House's way, New Criticism emphasized close reading to discover how the novel functioned as a self-contained, self-referential aesthetic object with no regard to the reader's response, author's intention, or historical and cultural context. By this method, two worlds which were in a state of confrontation had been marked out: the bright world represented by Mr. Brownlow and the dark world represented by Fagin.

II. Newgate novels

In this chapter I would like to provide an overview of process of the development of crime writings in Victorian era and make an introduction to the conception of Newgate novels and their main features.

1. Victorian novels and crime

From the end of the 18th century to the beginning of the 19th century, London was a metropolis with a high crime rate. From 1745 to 1820, there were 115,000 people who made their living by burglary, prostitution, swindle and other criminal acts. It is horrible when we know that the total population of London at that time was just 960,000. (Saijo 3)

In order to prevent crimes, harsh laws and severe punishments were introduced. Even with some minor offence such as defacing Westminster Bridge and cutting a hop-bind in a hop plantation, the law-breaker would be sentenced to death (Briggs 73). Consequently, it was very easy for London citizens to watch the scene of those criminals being hanged and this even became a kind of "show" and one form of entertainment for them. With the coming of the Victorian era, there was no change in this tradition.

Also, the development of the print culture in the Victorian era may be another big background. The 1830s saw remarkable development of the technology of printing. Before that, with high selling price, novels could not be afforded by laboring people. High stamp duty taxes were levied on those formal newspapers and magazines such as *The Times*, so not every ordinary citizen could afford them. Some other down-market publications, such as "blue covers", which centered on crime themes, became the major reading materials for ordinary citizens of London. (Saijo 15)

With the advent of the Victorian era, with the high progress in industry and printing technology, the prices of novels and other formal publications began to be slashed. Working as a journalist, though, Dickens introduced a new way of novel publishing, the magazine serials. By this means, readership of novels conspicuously increased and novels became one of the important recreations of ordinary citizens. A lot of novels in this period began to reflect the tradition of the former era and social-themed novels came out and those with crime themes, which were the main topic of those down-market publications of the former era.

2. Newgate novels

In England from the 1830s to the 1840s, large amount of crime novels were published. Since these novels reminded the readers of London's Newgate prison, they were considered as a whole

and were given the generic name “Newgate novels” which was a sub-genre of the literature of crime. Newgate novels gained reputation among their readers and stimulated lively controversy at the time. Newgate novels in some cases were historical novels, which chronicled the “adventures and escapes of independent, courageous criminals, often legendary 18th century robbers and highwaymen” (Pykett 19).

To name just a few of the representative writers of Newgate novels and their authors for reference: Edward George Earle Lytton Bulwer (1803-73) wrote *Paul Clifford* (1830) and *Lucretia* (1846), and William Harrison Ainsworth (1805-82) wrote *Rookwood* (1834) and *Jack Sheppard* (1839).

According to Lyn Pykett and other specialists of crime fiction, Newgate novels share at least four features in common: (1) Those novels are named after the main criminal characters in these works, such as those being mentioned above. (2) The main characters of these novels are criminals, and most of them are based on some real criminals at the time or in the former century. As *Newgate Calendar*, which first appeared in 1773, was widely read during that time and most of characters of Newgate novels were based on real existing criminals recorded in *Newgate Calendar*. (3) Newgate novel writers often romanticized and glamorized crime, criminals and low life, and invited sympathy with criminals rather than with the victims of crime. In these novels, criminals were usually idealized, and even changed into some kind of Savior, using the treasures which were robbed from the rich to help the poor. Newgate novels were written exclusively by male authors. (4) By writing Newgate novels, those authors were trying to attract people’s attention to the defects of the criminal law system of England. (Pykett 20)

III. Is *Oliver Twist* a Newgate novel?

1. Charles Dickens’s depiction of crime in *Oliver Twist*

During the whole adventure of little Oliver, he shuttled back and forth among three different worlds: the workhouse, the world of a gang of thieves and other criminals, and “the heavenly paradise” provided by kindhearted gentleman Mr. Brownlow. Dickens made every effort to create typical characters in each world and his depiction of crime is obviously concentrated in the dark side of London, the world of Fagin, Sikes and other criminals. In this chapter, I would like to pick up some passages about representative characters of criminals, Fagin and Sikes, thereby to find the features and purpose of Dickens’s inclination towards depicting crimes.

1-1 Fagin's part

For the consideration of Dickens’s depiction of crime, Fagin would be the most appropriate

case. An analysis of passages related to “old Jew Fagin” will clarify Dickens’s style of creating criminal roles.

Our first specimen is the scene where little Oliver is brought before Fagin for the first time. His first experience of Fagin is depicted from Oliver’s own point of view:

...with a toasting-fork in his hand, was a very old shrivelled Jew, whose villainous-looking and repulsive face was obscured by a quantity of matted red hair. (Dickens 65)

Unlike the stereotype of Jew with black hair, Fagin would not be recognized as a Jew till the narrator told us. Oliver’s first experience of Fagin is full of curiosity and complexity. Having never seen such people before, Oliver is filled with astonishment and not a little disturbed. What will be going on then? That question will come out not only from Oliver himself, but from those readers who have never had any experience of London’s criminal world. The curiosity is sustained by way of the monthly serial form which Dickens introduced into novel writing. This scene was placed close to the end of the fourth installment in May 1837. It was necessary for him to succeed in attracting readers’ attentions from the beginning.

Criminal mentality in *Oliver Twist* can be mainly shown in two kinds of scenes: one is the scene in which the crime is committed, and the other is the scene after being arrested. Crafty Fagin never perpetrates crime personally but instigates his underlings. Therefore, the very scenes in which he voices his aspirations would be his trial scene and his last night. First, here is Fagin’s trial scene. Having committed flagrant crimes, as well as knowing that there will be no chance for him to be free again, Fagin still has slight hope for a lucky escape from death and refuses to mend his criminal way. Dickens makes detailed depiction of Fagin’s every movement.

He stood there, in all this glare of living light, with one hand resting on the wooden slab before him, the other held to his ear, and his head thrust forward to enable him to catch with greater distinctness every word that fell from the presiding judge, who was delivering his charge to the jury. At times, he turned his eyes sharply upon them to observe the effect of the slightest featherweight in his favor; and when the points against him were stated with terrible distinctness, looked towards his counsel, in mute appeal that he would, even then, urge something in his behalf. Beyond these manifestations of anxiety, he stirred not hand or foot. He had scarcely moved since the trial began; and now that the judge ceased to speak, he still remained in the same strained attitude of close attention, with his gaze bent on him, as though he listened still. (Dickens 350)

Though without much physical movements, Fagin tries his best to keep his concentration on all the charges on him, even holding some extravagant hope to get any information in his favor. Through it, the character of Fagin becomes much more real than before and Fagin's image as a criminal is driven into reader's mind. He has no feeling of guilty and repentance about what he has done to hit her, but he actually know what he has done will not be forgiven. Even in the court, Fagin never forgets to be cautious and trying to do every effort to guard himself. In addition, this is the only scene of court judgment. For readers who merely had chance to listen to the proceedings, Dickens's depiction of judgment scene again satisfies their curiosities.

Having been sentenced to death, Fagin spends his last night in the cell. Fagin, who is always sober-minded, steady and calm, unavoidably begins to reminisce about the past. He betrayed countless criminal companions and sent them to jail and to death. Recalling the scene in which he watched those companions being executed by gallows, he begins to have fear of death:

As it came on very dark, he began to think of all the men he had known who had died upon the scaffold; some of them through his means. They rose up, in such quick succession, that he could hardly count them. He had seen some of them die,—and had joked too, because they died with prayers upon their lips. Some of them might have inhabited that very cell—sat upon that very spot. It was very dark; why didn't they bring a light? The cell had been built for many years. Scores of men must have passed their last hours there. It was like sitting in a vault strewn with dead bodies—the cap, the noose, the pinioned arms, the faces that he knew, even beneath that hideous veil.—Light, light! (Dickens 352-53)

To criminals, the dark cell is just likes a direful cemetery. To this scene Dickens adds an irony: this gives the reader a blood-chilling glimpse into the psychology of a criminal at bay. When Fagin was still in his own house, he preferred to live in a lightless place for fear of self-exposure. But on the margin of death, even Fagin, though he is accustomed to darkness, cries for light in the dark in an unbearable fear of death.

1-2 Bill Sikes's Part

There is no doubt but that Dickens made special effort to depict Sikes, another leading character in the criminals' world of London. Even after finishing this novel, Dickens picked up some scenes about Sikes and the girl Nancy who is always associated with him, revised those passages and brought them into his public reading activity, with the title like "Sikes and Nancy". (Dickens 384) In the novel, Sikes is a complicated character that shows multiple aspects of psychology of human beings, especially of criminals.

Dickens was skilled in portraying a character through the description of details including this depiction of Sikes's first appearance. Bill Sikes makes his first entrance in old Fagin's hidden refuge:

The man...was a stoutly-built fellow of about five-and-thirty, in a black velveteen coat, very soiled drab breeches, lace-up half boots, and grey cotton stockings, which inclosed a bulky pair of legs, with large swelling calves; -- the kind of legs, which in such costume, always look in an unfinished and incomplete state without a set of fetters to garnish them. He had a brown hat on his head, and a dirty belcher handkerchief round his neck: with the long frayed ends of which he smeared the beer from his face as he spoke; disclosing, when he had done so, a broad heavy countenance with a beard of three days' growth, and two scowling eyes; one of which displayed various parti-coloured symptoms of having been recently damaged by a blow. (Dickens 90)

It seems as if a dreadful middle-aged brutal man with muscular physique were standing in front of the reader, so vivid and even generating the reader's fear. His clothes and accessories are filthy and ragged, which are dark ("black" and "gray"), symbolic of the unlit side of London where he and Fagin live. Unlike those idealized criminals in Newgate novels, Sikes is living a lower life, with no enviable treasures, finery and reputation but wearing bumps and wounds. This true-to-life depiction inputs a stereotype of violent mobster into readers' impression, which laid the groundwork for showing Sikes's cruel acting, such as gunning down innocent Oliver, beating his lover Nancy to death, and his rough treatment of his dog.

Sikes's murder of Nancy might be the bloodiest scene in the whole novel. He finds that Nancy is trying to help Mr. Brownlow save poor Oliver out of the hand of Fagin. Fearing her betrayal, he decides to kill her to prevent divulgence. When he comes back to his dwelling place, Nancy is waken up by the noise of closing the door. While she is willing to serve some drink for him, Sikes started his murder:

The robber sat regarding her, for a few seconds, with dilated nostrils and heaving breast; and then, grasping her by the head and throat, dragged her into the middle of the room, and looking once towards the door, placed his heavy hand upon her mouth...

...The housebreaker freed one arm, and grasped his pistol. The certainty of immediate detection if he fired, flashed across his mind even in the midst of his fury; and he beat it twice with all the force he could summon, upon the upturned face that almost touched his own. (Dickens 316)

A series of verbs (sat, regarding, grasping, dragged, looking, placed, freed-beat) are used here to express the detail of the process of Sikes's murder of Nancy. The cruelty of this scene is enhanced by his calm discreetness in not firing the pistol, because the gunfire would draw neighbors' attention so that his crime would be found out. Even in sheer exasperation, Sikes, a habitual criminal, can keep calm and choose the right activity in order to protect himself. Indeed, Sikes's violence is contrasted with Nancy's pleading for mercy. Nancy says she loves him and will never betray him. However, her words fail to move this heartless man. Even being face to face with the woman who has been taking care of him for such a long time, this selfish man cares nothing except himself. The contrast between Nancy's pleading and Sikes's violence emphasizes the murder's savagery in a dramatic way. In addition, another point deserves attention here. When the narrator called Sikes, he uses number of different nouns: robber, housebreaker and ruffian. These words which represent different types of criminals are applied to one single man, so that his flagrant guilt is easily grasped conspicuously by the readers.

After beating Nancy to death, he escapes forthwith out of London. He makes a hurried flight without stop for three days. When killing Nancy, Sikes is free from any sense of fear and guilt. However, after murdering Nancy, delusion freaks him out. He is far from his house, the locale of his murdering, but he still cannot get rid of the vision of Nancy's eyes:

For now, a vision came before him, as constant and more terrible than that from which he had escaped. Those widely staring eyes, so lusterless and so glassy, that he had better borne to see them than think upon them, appeared in the midst of the darkness; light in themselves, but giving light to nothing. There were but two, but they were everywhere. ...He got up, and rushed into the field without. The figure was behind him. He re-entered the shed, and shrunk down once more. The eyes were there, before he had laid himself along. (Dickens 322)

In Sikes's vision, Nancy's dead eyes are "staring", "lusterless" and "glassy". Even a man as heartless as Sikes may be seized with remorse. We cannot be certain whether Sikes's feeling was guilt or love. Actually, it is more like a complex feeling, mixture of both of the two. Nancy is dead. If being arrested, he will also die at the end. He still remembers the miserable scene of Nancy's death. His memory of the horrible bloody looking of dead Nancy made him to imaging the misery of his own death. This generated his fear of death which resembles that of old Fagin waiting for death in the Newgate Prison. Dickens's skillful depiction of criminals' mental activities shows his great enthusiasm in psychological analysis of human beings, especially of criminals.

2. *Oliver Twist* is more than a Newgate novel

2-1. Comparison with other Newgate novels

Newgate novels have four common features as suggested by Pykett and others: in titling the work after the main character, use of the real criminals as sources, romanticizing of crime and criminals, and emphasis on the defects of the criminal law system. After reading *Oliver Twist*, however, we can find that none of these features can be rightly applied to it.

First, the title of this novel is just the name of the hero of the work. Oliver is actually, a victim, not a criminal as in Newgate novels. Neither is Fagin nor Sikes based on any real existing criminals. Moreover, Dickens takes a critical attitude towards crime and criminals throughout the whole work. Fagin and Sikes are not wearing richly ornamented finery like some fine gentleman and Dickens is just aiming "to show them as they really are, for ever skulking uneasily through the dirtiest paths of life, with the great, black, ghastly gallows closing up their prospect, turn them where they may." (Dickens 4) On Fagin and Sikes's death, readers are not to meant to sympathize with them, but to be clapping and cheering.

Dickens disclosed his motive of writing this novel often in his letters to his friends and in the prefaces to different version of this novel. The Poor Law Amendment Act was introduced in 1834, and this new act made living conditions for the poor even worse than before. As a journalist, Dickens must have wanted to raise people's attention about this social problem by his pen. *Oliver Twist* was born in this social background, so Dickens's target was not the criminal law itself but the social problems such as crime, juvenile delinquency, abandoned children: which were caused by poverty and the failure of the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834. In the 3rd version of the author's preface, Dickens mentioned that before writing this novel, he had read a lot of crime novels which were likely to idealize the criminal heroes. These works stimulated him to write a new type of work, which was defined as "the real" by the author himself. (Dickens 3) *Newgate Calendar* had never been mentioned in any kind of articles where the author referred to this novel.

2-2. Reasons behind Dickens's inclination towards crime depiction

Dickens inserted a lot of crime-related elements in his works as the case of *Oliver Twist* shows. *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843) is another case. He threw old Fagin into the Newgate prison, but he was not just willing to complete this work to be a normal Newgate novel. We can propose four probable reasons behind his inclination towards crime depiction.

1. To make a selling point of his works and to meet the readers' demands and preference. As mentioned above, the novel readers of the early and middle Victorian era had an inclination

towards crime-themed writings. (Saijo 15) With the intention of increasing the sales of his own works, Dickens intentionally introduced description of crimes to satisfy the readers' curiosity about the criminal world.

2. To search out the causes of social conflicts, and deliver social criticism. As a writer with a sense of social responsibility, Dickens took his works as the platform of his opinions on the Victorian society. This novel came out against the background of Poor Law Act released in 1834. He believed that poverty was connected to crime. Problems in the social system led to poverty, and poverty, in turn, would be the root cause of crime. Through those crime descriptions, Dickens also intended to call people's attention on other social problems, such as juvenile delinquency and abandoned children. As he mentioned in Preface to the third edition, showing a real image of those outsiders of London is one of his purpose:

It appeared to me that to draw a knot of such associates in crime as really do exist; to paint them in all their deformity, in all their wretchedness, in all the squalid poverty of their lives; to show them as they really are, for ever skulking uneasily through the dirtiest paths of life, with the great, black, ghastly gallows closing up their prospect, turn them where they may; it appeared to me that to do this, would be to attempt a something which was greatly needed, and which would be a service to society. And therefore I did it as I best could. (Dickens 4)

3. To conduct psychological analysis of criminals and those who aid criminals. Dickens usually provided detailed descriptions of those criminals' psychology, motives and their confession when they are committing crimes and after being arrested. Fagin and Sikes in *Oliver Twist*, Will Fern in *The Chimes* (1844) are typical cases of this type of psychological description. Through these descriptions, we can surmise that he wanted to seek out the real problem of the society. He asked what were the real motives of these criminals behind the apparent ones— what did they really pursue at the risk of their lives?

4. To teach moral lessons by negative example. Dickens not only preaches people how to act kindly and rightly, but also shows his readers the dark side of the world and the pernicious consequences of wicked conducts. Readers naturally got to know how to act right and kindly. He said: "I confess I have yet to learn that a lesson of the purest good may not be drawn from the vilest evil, I have always believed this to be a recognized and established truth, laid down by the greatest men the world has ever seen, constantly acted upon by the best and wisest natures, and confirmed by the reason and experience of every thinking mind." (Dickens 3) Even shuffles between the dark side and the bright side of London, being trained to be a pickpocket by Fagin,

little Oliver keeps his purity and kindness from the beginning to the end. Some critics think it is unnatural, but since Dickens has an optimistic belief that good will never be beaten down by evil, Oliver is the very spokesman for him.

Conclusion

Oliver Twist was considered to be a Newgate novel at its publishing time and still can be found in every kind of chronology of Newgate novels. However, common features of Newgate novels cannot be found in this novel. Dickens neither used the criminal's name to be the title of the novel nor idealized the criminal characters in this novel. Those poverty-related social problems, but not the criminal law system per se triggered his writing. Though he read many picaresque novels when he was young, there is no evidence to prove the relevance among *Oliver Twist* Newgate Calender, and the reality of those criminal characters of this novel. Dickens made effort to provide details of criminal scenes and psychological descriptions of criminal characters in order to complete his original motivation of novel writing, such as teaching moral lesson, helping the selling of his works and doing social critics , calling people's attention to social problems in England of the author's time.

Not only *Oliver Twist*, but all Dickens's novels were published in the serial form in magazines. Later readers who read them as a whole sometimes feel that those novels lack proper proportion or think that it is too long. Nevertheless, the author's skill at detailed depictions is undeniable. Readers at the time might have been attracted by his skill and have been waiting for the next issue of the magazine series every month. Shifting the career from a journalist to a creative writer, it is natural for Dickens to try to secure his regular readership by exerting much effort on creating vivid description of characters.

Dickens's effort on criminal depiction was not only made for the purpose of reenacting crime scenes to satisfy readers' curiosity, but also made for the purpose of psychological description of criminals. With interests in psychological analysis, he intentionally avoided presenting his novels as a generalized Newgate novel but to provide his readers a meaningful way for entertainment.

Notes

- 1) To name just a few, Lyn Pykett mentions *Oliver Twist* in an article titled "The Newgate Novel and Sensation fiction (1830-1860)", and Martin Priesman lists *Oliver Twist* in the chronological table of newgate novels.

Bibliography

- Briggs, John. *Crime and Punishment in England, An Introductory History*. London: UCL Press, 1996.
- Brown, Julia Prewitt. *A Reader's Guide to the Nineteenth-Century English Novel*. London: Collier Macmillan, 1985.
- Chesterton, George K. *Appreciations and Criticisms of the Works of Charles Dickens*. London: J.M.Dent, 1911.
- Collins, Phillip. *Dickens: the Critical Heritage*. London: Routledge, 1971.
- Collins, Philip. *Dickens and Crime*. 3rd ed. London: Macmillan, 1994.
- Dickens, Charles. *Oliver Twist: A Norton Critical Edition*. London: Norton, 1993.
- Ford, George H. *Dickens and His Readers: Aspects of Novel-criticism Since 1836*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955.
- Gissing, George. *The Immortal Dickens*. 1925; rpt. London: Kessinger, 2004.
- Hojo, Fumio. *Newgate Novel: Aru Hanzai Shosetsu-gun* [Newgate Novels as a Class of Crime Novels]. Tokyo: Kenkyusha, 1981.
- House, Humphry. *The Dickens World*. London: Oxford UP, 1960.
- John, Juliet ed. *Charles Dickens's Oliver Twist: A Sourcebook*. London and N.Y.: Routledge, 2006.
- Koike, Shigeru. *London: Honno Hyaku-nen Mae No Monogatari* [London: A Story of a Hundred Years Before]. Tokyo: Chuokoronshinsha, 1978.
- Matsumura, Masaie. *19-seki London no Hikari to Kage* [Brightness and Darkness of 19c London, From the Time of Regency to Dickens]. Kyoto:Seikaishisosha, 2003.
- Priestman, Martin. *The Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction*. London: Cambridge UP, 2003.
- Pykett, Lyn. *Victorian Sensations: Essays on a Scandalous Genre*. Ohio State UP, 2006.
- Saijo, Takao ed. *Victoria Shosetsu to Hanzai* [Victorian Novels and Crime]. Tokyo: Otowatsurumi, 2002.
- Saijo, Takao ed. *Dikens Kansho Dai-jiten*[An Encyclopedia of Dickens Appreciation]. Tokyo: Nanundo, 2007.
- Wall, Stephen. *Charles Dickens: A Critical Anthology*, London: Penguin, 1970.

Probably the most famous of Charles Dickens's novels, *Oliver Twist* is Dickens's second published novel. The first was *The Pickwick Papers*, published in 1836, and after its. They are widely read, turned into plays, and adapted for the screen. There is no year that goes by without a new major Dickens serial on British television, as well as at least one or two films. *A Christmas Carol* is regularly and routinely shown on television and in cinemas all around the world at Christmas time. Dickens's interest in such things as child poverty and child exploitation, in crime and justice, and prison conditions, all of which were major features of Victorian England, led him to campaign on those issues in his journalism and public statements. He also chose those themes for *Oliver Twist*, Dickens chose as his subject matter London's criminal underbelly, filling the novel with pick-pockets, prostitutes, murderers and house-breakers -thus horrifying many of his readers. The rawness of the novel didn't appeal to the Prime Minister, Lord Melbourne, for instance "as recorded in the young Queen Victoria's diary: "It's all among Workhouses, and Coffin Makers, and Pickpockets", he grumbled." Letters written by Charles Dickens to his wife, following a visit to London's Newgate Prison in 1835. The appetite for images and narratives of crime, corruption and violence has deep roots " which Dickens explores in *Oliver Twist* " but Egan and *The Stranger's* Guide offer sanitized, wishful versions of something Dickens recognised was dark and ugly. Images. *Oliver Twist*; or, the Parish Boy's Progress is Charles Dickens's second novel, and was published as a serial from 1837 to 1839 and released as a three-volume book in 1838, before the serialisation ended. The story centres on orphan *Oliver Twist*, born in a workhouse and sold into apprenticeship with an undertaker. After escaping, *Oliver* travels to London, where he meets the "Artful Dodger", a member of a gang of juvenile pickpockets led by the elderly criminal Fagin.