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**OPINIONS OF LITERARY CRITICS ABOUT THE EARLY WORK
OF THOMAS MANN**

Abstract

This article has been devoted to the early creative activity of the great German writer Thomas Mann and to the impact of time and society on him, in which he lived. It says that the writer criticizes the bourgeois society in his early stories. The spirit of man and life, funny diseases and banal heath, existence of men-of-letters and bourgeois are opposed to each other in them. It also mentions the reviews of popular literary critics concerning the works of Thomas Mann and quotes numerous views in different literary journals and newspapers.

This article deals also with the understanding of Thomas Mann's early works by German literary critics.

Keywords: *degradation, decadence, review, criticism, creativity*

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**Tomas Mannın ilkin yaradıcılığı haqqında ədəbiyyat
tənqidçilərinin fikirləri**

Xülasə

Məqalə böyük alman yazıçısı Tomas Mannın ilkin yaradıcılığına və onun yaşadığı dövrün və cəmiyyətin təsirinə həsr edilmişdir. Həmçinin qeyd olunur ki, yazıçı ilk hekayələrində insan və həyat ruhunun, gülməli xəstəliklər və bayağı dərdlərin, yazıçılarla burjuaziyanın birgə yaşayışının bir-birinə zidd olduğu burjua cəmiyyətini tənqid edir. Burada, həmçinin Tomas Mannın yaradıcılığı haqqında tanınmış ədəbiyyatşünasların fikirləri qeyd olunur, müxtəlif ədəbi jurnal və qəzetlərdə çoxsaylı fikirlərə istinad edilir.

Məqalədə Tomas Mannın ilk əsərlərinin alman ədəbiyyatşünasları tərəfindən qəbulu da araşdırılır.

Açar sözlər: *degradasiya, tənəzzül, baxış, tənqid, yaradıcılıq*

Introduction

Thomas Mann all the time considered the 19th century the greatest period of the novel genre in Europe. Stendhal and Balzac, Dickens and George Eliot, Gogol and Goncharov, Turgenev and Dostoevsky, Flaubert and Zola having huge works were stricken with surprise which may realistic and naturalistic art of narration can do. Since the time of Goethe not any novelist-writer attracted such a huge attention in Europe like Thomas Mann. Schifter, Keller and Raabe were apprehended and appreciated only within the borders in which the German language was spoken. But the degree of perception of Theodore Fontane began gradually. On such a background Thomas Mann could

confirm that “Buddenbrooks”, in the book of a twenty-five years-old youngster there appeared a demand to the German novel in the capacity of the world gift. It was a break into the world literature. Thomas Mann was born on the 6th of June in 1875 in the town of Lübeck shortly after the foundation of the German Empire by Bismarck. The epoch had a great impact on the writer’s political views; it was the period of “Gründerzeit” distinguished by striking achievements in the sphere of economy, science, and technology. Exactly this epoch gave birth to the idea that the world must be cured from its Germanic essence. Only few intellectuals were engaged in the criticism of these national and nationalistic tendencies (Stammen, 1990: 258). There was not any evidence that Thomas Mann belonged to this group, although he began his creative activity with criticism, which is evident in the collection of essays titled “Frühlingssturm” (vol. XI, p.545), nevertheless, he remained within the frames of complete criticism, in the traditions of romantic bourgeois criticism, which, though, in particular, he finds the whole bourgeois society without any concrete perspective (Kurzke, 2010: 32). Such a manner of writing, which is connected with the anti-bourgeois nationalism, did not come from the pages of politically oriented nationalism, but from the last phase of nationalism, from psychological radicalism (Hansen, 1984: 242). It all has found its expression in his creative activity, in the themes, in which spirit and life, curious disease and banal health, existence of the men-of-letters and bourgeois, are opposed to each other. The events take place in the bourgeois environment and within himself as an individualist, in the idiosyncrasies of the man-of-letters. There is a crisis in the comprehension of art and in the bourgeois society, in the spiritual problems, but not in the social ones, which the young writer Thomas Mann perceives as “the social tension of the time”, but in its final stage. Social problems hardly find their expression in his creative activity. Though there is a boundless criticism of time in his works, but not in the manner, which the society ensures in its stability may allow itself (Kurzke, 2010: 55). The mood of degradation ruling in the art infects Thomas Mann, but for him “degradation is the sufferings of life, renunciation, agnosticism in the meaning of life, sympathy to death, hatred to the bourgeois “capacities”, “psychological perfecting.” Of course, he overcomes the mood of degradation with his irony, which allows him to “support the decadent literature of his time and departs from it “simultaneously” (Hilscher, 1986: 89). The music of R. Wagner and the philosophical writings of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche gained a fundamental importance for Thomas Mann and the development of his style. Those were the personalities who gave him a spiritual orientation, but in his first years in Munich he was in search of his “socio-political orientation and corresponding scales of evaluation and its cost”, which allowed to explain his activity in the “strongly nationalistic-popular and anti-Semitic journal “The Twentieth Century”. The intermezzo (amusing episode) did not remain unnoticed and traceless; it was possible to discern it in the chauvinistic vocabulary of the later Thomas Mann, at the beginning of the World War I (Stammen, 1900: 260). This, in any case, is evidence, a sign of taking root, which has a national element in the thinking of Thomas Mann” (Kurzke, 2010: 58).

On the whole, one can make an inference about the political thinking of the writer from his works “the said political, public and economic reality of the Empire of William became problematic for him till the World War I, but not in any case neither from the point of view of their structure and the institutions of distribution of power and ruling, nor from the point of view of their specific forms of political substantiation – general political order” (Stammen, 1990: 262). As an evidence of the conservative position of Thomas Mann, for instance, we may consider his story “Das Eisenbahnglück”, in which he ironically presents William II in the capacity of the subject and in the capacity of the state - “the father”. By doing so Mann knew how to distinguish “the idea and the external sign of the conservative structure of the state”, as he described in the form of a caricature the negative examples as he did not like William II completely; nevertheless, Mann never had doubts about William’s Empire as a state and his lawful authority (Kurzke, 2010: 61), the writer agreed with him as a whole (Koopman, 1990: 302). Only during the reign of “His Royal Highness” he turns a little aside from “the course of the conservative thinking”, but not completely and not forever (Dedner, 1974: 157). It is impossible to interpret the novel democratically, because the

solution of the described crisis depends on the rule and on the ruler. The comprehension of the country by Thomas Mann is in keeping with the model of the enlightened absolutism: “the unity of the power and spirit must be above all, and then everything may be regulated” (Kurzke, 2010: 62). All this, of course, was not comprehended; the writer simply accepted the existing order without understanding its essence.

When the first collection of stories was printed by S.Fischer in 1898 with Mann’s “Little Mr. Friedemann”, the author was not so much popular among the readers, but he could already establish important contacts in the “Munich Boheme” and became popular with small publications, such as in Richard Demel (Schröter, 1969: 556). In 1894 his stories entitled “Gefallen” were published in the magazine “Die Gesellschaft”, his “Der Wille zum Glück” in 1897 and his “Der Tod” in 1897 in the magazine “Simplicissimus”; a break-through in his creative activity began with the publication of “Little Mr. Friedemann” in “Neuere Deutsche Rundschau” at S. Fischer in 1897, which were followed in the same year by “Der Bayazzo” and finally by “Tobias Minder nickel” in 1889.

It is not surprising that there were very few reviews concerning his early works. The reviews by Peter de Mendelssohn and Hans Rudolf Vaget are to be mentioned (Mendelssohn, 1998: 497). After the publication of “Buddenbrooks” the collection of stories were received positively by the readers. All the reviews were positive about it, it could not be otherwise, and the unknown author began to be discussed in much broader circles. His works were more on literary themes than on political issues. The collaboration of Thomas Mann with the magazine “The Twentieth Century” was not known, later it was not even mentioned, only in 1964 it was discovered by Klaus Schröter, it was limited only with reviews and concerned the programming of the magazine. In the works of Thomas Mann there was nothing about politics. Because of that they did not contain any political recipes.

His short stories were recommended to the magazine “Gesellschaft” by the organization of naturalists of Richard Schaukal, when he was already a recognized author of the “literature of decadence” (Schaukal, 1898).

“They are the best German stories since the Saarland stories. Honestly, I can even say with a solemn clarity, completely not with a youngster’s touching delight to his stories written by an exceedingly sober-minded writer for his own pleasure. In a peculiar, unordinary, conscious German language they come to inform and to win, they entertain, they fascinate; they are full of beauty, truth, vital overcoming and entertaining sorrow. Not any book since the first publication of De Annuntsio, Nansen and Chekov has made such an impression on me. Here it is necessary to note the author: he is a real, assured, experienced man of art”.

Arthur Eloesser, the literary critic of “Neuere Deutsche Rundschau“ and of “Vossische Zeitung“ writes of his „unordinary purely polished, truly toned up, impressive researches (Eloesser, 1899) Otto Grautoff, a school friend of Heinrich Mann writes in the journal “Der Bote für deutsche Literatur” that the writer demonstrates “an original and strong personality” and recommends to them “a stylistically freely written book for reading in the hours of entertainment” (Grautoff, 1899). There appeared reviews in the newspapers about the collection of short stories, for instance, in the “Allgemeine Zeitung” - Munich (Mendelssohn, 1996: 301). In the “Hamburger Fremdenblatt” he was mentioned and highly appreciated. He was even positively discussed in the “Neue Badische Landeszeitung” (Vaget, 1998: 278), along with his technical maturity it stressed that one does not speak about “escapism”, but about how “one may feel free as far as it depends on our own will”. Now and then criticism touched upon Mann’s choice of his main heroes and his style, as for instance, in Ludvig Evers, where a man from Lubeck, who looks like to Grautoff, a school friend of Heinrich Mann, who accuses Thomas Mann in the “Bonner Zeitung” (Ewers, 1898) in youthful pessimism and writes about “school of children literature”. He utters the followings about “The Clown”: “Had this young man found a suitable job in some enterprise, it would have been a real misfortune, undoubtedly, his moral bankruptcy, philosophy of his suicide would have not taken place.”

Thomas Mann had to avoid some “stylistic tricks”, because he had already created “good preconditions for a short story-writer” It was also noted in the newspaper “Münchene Neuesten

Nachrichten" (Vaget, 1998: 282). The newspaper mentioned his "remarkable observation capacity" and called "the collection wholly very interesting, despite some critical remarks", and he noted that the author "unfortunately loved morbid heroes, who somewhere or some time had received a breach: they are bent, frozen people, who commit a fiasco in their world outlooks, then become wanderers, underdeveloped creatures, who have lost half of their will and strength. He enlightens them clearly and thrillingly" (Gumpfenberg, 1901). What is remarkable is that after the publication of the collection and in the time of its formation it has been enlightened in literature-oriented journals open to the world and later in liberal-national newspapers like the "Münchene Neuesten Nachrichten" and the "Bonner Zeitung", which did not suffer from the personalities of the decadent literature so much.

In 1901 when there appeared "Buddenbrooks", the first novel of Thomas Mann, the writer became popular all of a sudden, he himself "appeared as mature man-of-art in the eyes of the public", and he felt his own self in the same capacity". He won a good readership when the novel was republished in 1903. Reviews dedicated to the novel were considerably more, which partially covered his previous works as well and continued to be published for several years. Nevertheless, they were not in overwhelming majority, as "the reviewers were afraid of the gigantic novel of the unknown novice, and only his respectful name as well as the friends of the writer demanded them to write reviews". "It is to the point to say that the writer worked together with them. For instance, he instructed Otto Grautoff how he had to review the novel" Grautoff, 1903: 102-103). There was not unanimity in the reviews concerning "Buddenbrooks"; there were probably equal number of positive and negative ones. Thus, as it is confirmed by Klaus Schröter, the novel was received with an aesthetic understanding and unanimous benevolence" (Hartmann, 1901: 348).

When unlimited praises showered, they mainly concerned the choice and masterly use of the language and form of the novel. There was not politics in this context; one could find only ideas concerning art. So that Karl Hartmann calls this novel "the rebirth of all the ideals of the past and future novels" in "Literate". The reader "has the masterpiece of the great writer at his disposal". Otto Grautoff writes about "the character inherent to the nobility" and about "the real art which contains a deep meaning" in that remarkable novel in the journal "Gegenwart" (Grautoff, 1903: 102-103).

Further, in the newspaper "Münchener Neuesten Nachrichten" he reviewed then novel as he was instructed by Thomas Mann, in which he compared the nihilistic arrangement and real humor, and also laid a particular stress on the German language used in "Buddubrooks". Elisabeth Nemenzo in her article "Erstes Willen" mentions Thomas Mann as "Epiker par excellence", while Samuel Lublinskiy calls the novel "something superb" and writes the following about it in the journal "Berliner Tageblatt": "it is namely like that, because in "Buddenbrooks" sincerity is linked with the past and deeply felt feelings with the conscious art, therefore this novel remains as an inviolable book. It will grow with the time and be read by many generations: it is one of the masterpieces, which really is raising high above the day and epoch, which fascinates not by a storm, but possesses it gradually, and insuperably prevails over with a careful conviction (Lublinski, 1902)".

Conclusion

Thomas Mann was glorified by one more person, who was Rainer Maria Rilke, who wrote in "Bremer Tageblatt und General-Anzeiger" like this: "This name must be noticed by all means. Thomas Mann with his novel in one thousand and one hundred pages proved his efficiency and the ability which are impossible to notice... And along with his colossal work and writer's vision this noble objectivity must be praised; without any exaggeration this book belongs to a mature writer. It is an action of great respect to the life, which is fine and fair, in which all this takes place (Rilke, 1902).

Praises also poured from the newspaper "Bonner Zeitung" (Anon., 1902) for "the noble style" of Thomas Mann, which sometimes seemed to be a little discreet and objective in nature. There was also an anonymous review in "Neue Hamburger Zeitung" (Anon., 1903), which showered him with

positive praises and wished “a happy and grateful topic” for the next work of the author. And an identical review also appeared in the journal “Der Tag”. It praised such “beginners” as in the old times, which suggested to the reviewer the idea of “an unordinary confidence” and “serious respect” but: “Only with persistent and insistent predilection towards abnormal, with an irritatingly directed view to the forms of fall of morals, undoubtedly one may easily fall into artistic decadence (degradation)... Besides, Mann loves to pile into a heap the details in the lower German dialect, but there is a vigor of clarity in them. I see people who walk and live their daily life as their holiday; and, perhaps, the present humor of Mann will be celebrated later. All in all, I bow to such a work of a novice (Schönhoff, 1902).

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