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THE RELATIONSHIP OF W. M. THACKERAY
TO HENRY FIELDING

The relationship of W. M. Thackeray to his great predecessor Henry Fielding poses a stimulating problem in English literary history which has been in the centre of interest of Thackeray and Fielding scholars since Thackeray's own lifetime. And it is not only the natural interest in the relationship between two great realistic novelists who appeared in two successive centuries in the same country which makes this problem so attractive. In Thackeray's attitude to Fielding lies the following paradox which made the search for solution even more exciting: in the early years of his literary career Thackeray openly claimed Fielding as his model and teacher, while in his later years his admiration and even his indebtedness to Fielding were considerably weakened and in some of his judgments he was openly unjust to his former master. There have been several attempts on the part of English and American scholars to evaluate Thackeray's relationship to Fielding as a whole and to explain the surprising change which took place in it in the 1850s. These attempts were successively made by Frederic S. Dickson in his article „William Makepeace Thackeray and Henry Fielding“,¹ Prof. Wilbur Cross in his classic work *The History of Henry Fielding*,² Eva Beach Touster in her article „The Literary Relationship of Fielding and Thackeray“,³ and Rauph Wilson Rader in his study „Thackeray's Injustice to Fielding.“⁴ The results of the research of these scholars are noteworthy but we do not find them entirely satisfactory, especially as far as the motives of the change in Thackeray's attitude are concerned. The first Thackerayan scholar who arrived at conclusions with which we can find ourselves in agreement was the Soviet literary historian Prof. V. V. Ivasheva in her book *Thackeray the Satirist*.⁵ But as she could pay but small attention to this problem while concentrating upon the whole development of Thackeray's personality and art, we are convinced that its fuller and separate treatment is still desirable.

I.

Before attempting to ascertain the reasons for Thackeray's altered attitude to Fielding in his later years, it is necessary to outline the whole development of the relationship of the creator of *Vanity Fair* to the father of Tom Jones from the very beginnings. In the following we shall be predominantly interested in Thackeray's critical opinions of Fielding and not in Thackeray's indebtedness to Fielding as a novelist, though we shall pay attention also to the latter aspect of the relationship, if only cursorily.

The exact date when Thackeray began to read the novels of his great predecessor is not known but we have evidence, in one of his later remarks, that he had not read Fielding before he was ten years old and that he regretted this, being convinced that his English would have been much better if he had.⁶ It seems probable that his first acquaintance with Fielding's works might have taken place while he was at Charterhouse and that the first novel he read might have been *Joseph Andrews* but for this we have no reliable evidence.⁷ Whereas our information about books read by Thackeray at Charterhouse is scarce, we know that during his university studies at Cambridge the 18th century novelists became his favourites. As prof. Dr. William H. Thompson informs us, in the students' literary club Thackeray „chanted the praises of the old English novelists, especially his model, Fielding“.⁸ As follows from the above, the evidence we possess about Thackeray's knowledge of Fielding's works in these early years is only indirect: there are no references to them in his early correspondence and diaries, nor in his earliest works written up to the middle of the 1830s. This lack of direct evidence, however, should not precipitate us to the conclusion that the influence of Fielding upon Thackeray in this period was non-existent. At the end of the 1820s and at the beginning of the following decade Thackeray's aesthetic views began to develop and his very first literary judgments bear unmistakable traces of his having learned in the school of the founder and the first theoretician of the English realistic novel. His early diaries show that he preferred realistic fiction (both of the past and the present) to romanticism in every shape and form. His earliest contributions bear witness that Thackeray, like Fielding, from the beginning of his literary career, adhered to the realistic conception of literature as „imitation“ of „nature“ and that he revolted, like his predecessor, whenever he met with any idealization and distortion of reality in literary works or in works of art. In the middle of the 1830s he began his sharp and uncompromising struggle for realism in literature and art — both as a critic and as a writer — and, again like Fielding, as his most effective weapons used burlesque and parody.

In the period of Thackeray's polemic struggles with the representatives of anti-realistic literature of his time his references to Fielding considerably increase in number. His first direct references to Fielding may be found in his contributions to *The Constitutional and Public Ledger* (1836—7) in which he several times mentions with admiration Fielding's character of Jonathan Wild and appreciates the vividness of his satirical portrait of Thwackum by comparing this character to the French politicians of the reactionary July Monarchy.⁹ More significant, however, are his frequent allusions to his great predecessor in his reviews of contemporary anti-realistic fiction published in the *Times* and *Fraser's Magazine* between 1837 and 1840. They all bear witness to his great admiration of Fielding's novels, which he recommends to the second-rate novelists as models to imitate. Thus for instance in his review of Bulwer's novel *Ernest Maltravers* (*The Times*, p. 5, Sept. 30, 1837) he takes the reviewed author to task for the egotism and vanity with which he inflicts his personal grievances and merits upon his readers, and adds:

„How little in the works of Fielding, of Scott, of Cervantes, does the author intrude upon the reader, and yet each had his woes, and wounded vanities, and his literary wrongs“.¹⁰

In his reviews of the so-called Newgate fiction and his polemic work *Catherine*, published at the close of the 1830s,¹¹ Thackeray measures the artistic value of the

figures of historical criminals in the works of Bulwer and Ainsworth by confronting them with Fielding's masterly portrait of Jonathan Wild, and thus reveals the abysmal differences between Fielding's art of characterization and that of the two second-rate novelists.⁴² He also uses Fielding's art as his critical standard when evaluating some other aspects of the Newgate fiction. He castigates the popular novelists, in the first place, for their lack of knowledge of the sphere of life and characters they choose for their depiction, and extols Fielding as a model to imitate in this respect:

„Fielding, now, *had* some experience about such characters; and oh! with what a difference of Humour and perception did he view and write about them“.⁴³

In the second place he rebukes the Newgate novelists for the faulty moral of their works, for their celebration and idealization of criminal characters, and highly appreciates Fielding as a novelist who knew how to handle the chosen milieu and personages:

„In the dreadful satire of *Jonathan Wild*, no reader is so dull as to make the mistake of admiring and can overlook the grand and hearty contempt of the author for the character he has described...“⁴⁴

The above quoted tribute to Fielding's art along with others which we cannot quote for lack of space⁴⁵ clearly shows that it was especially Fielding's satirical mastery and the power of his irony that was admired by Thackeray in this early period. That he laid so much stress upon Fielding's *Jonathan Wild* in these years and did not pay much attention to his other great works, was of course partly due to the special direction of Thackeray's interest at the close of the 1830s when his struggle against the Newgate fiction was at white heat. Nevertheless the fact remains, that he deeply admired the creative approach used by Fielding in this novel and that he regarded its titular hero as an immortal literary character.

Besides Thackeray's occasional remarks scattered in his critical writings of the 1830s, we possess an even more convincing document of his admiration of Fielding the satirist at the dawn of his literary career. In his polemic work *Catherine*, written with the intention of ridiculing the prevailing Newgate fashion, Thackeray attempted to imitate the devastating irony of Fielding's *Jonathan Wild* by realistically depicting his rogues and criminals in all their brutality and hideousness and by expressing clearly the horror and distaste they excited in him. It is a familiar fact upon which all Thackerayan scholars agree that he did not succeed in achieving the strength and sharpness of his teacher's satire and that this work bears many traces of the immaturity of his art. Nevertheless, it stands among his works as an indubitable evidence of his early indebtedness to Fielding, of which he was himself well aware at the time of the composition of the work. In a letter to his mother he compared the „grotesque humour“ of *Catherine* to the humour of Rabelais and Fielding, and added:

„I don't mean to compare myself to one or the other mind — but the style of humour is the same.“⁴⁶

Since Thackeray's whole aesthetic creed and his method of creation had their roots in those of Fielding (though with modifications conditioned by the changed social climate) it is obvious that his indebtedness to his predecessor in the earliest

stage of his literary career was not limited only to his *Catherine* but that all his other works written in the 1830s bear traces of it. Eva Beach Touster points out that the broad humour of *The Yellowplush Correspondence* resembles the humour of Fielding „in combining the blatantly burlesque and the delicately ironical“ and repeats the correct observation of Prof. Baker that Thackeray's ironical humour in the conclusion of „Deuceace in Paris“ has much in common with that of the author of *Jonathan Wild*.¹⁷

From our short summary of Thackeray's attitude to Fielding in the 1830s it is fairly obvious that his interest in the works of his predecessor was uncommonly strong, his admiration deep and his indebtedness great. We cannot therefore agree with the statement of Prof. Cross that Fielding meant little to Thackeray up to 1840 and that his review of Fielding's works, published in that year, is the first convincing document of his admiration of the 18th century novelist.¹⁸ There is no doubt, however, that this review represents an important landmark in Thackeray's relationship to Fielding. For the first time he deals in it with the work of his teacher as a whole, even if he pays only slight attention to Fielding's dramas (which he condemns as „irretrievably immoral“)¹⁹ and devotes too much space to *Amelia*, too little to *Tom Jones* and almost none to *Joseph Andrews*, so that his evaluation is by no means exhaustive. In spite of these limitations, however, Thackeray succeeded in pointing out in his review the real and lasting values of Fielding's art. He highly appreciates the novels of his predecessor for presenting to the reader „a strong, real picture of human life“ and endeavouring to tell him „the whole truth about human nature“.²⁰ He finds eloquent words of praise for the plot construction of *Tom Jones*, in which he sees a marvel of ingenuity and craftsmanship.²¹ The reviewer pays much attention, too, to the moral principles embodied in Fielding's characters and in this respect his evaluation differs considerably from his later attitude. In 1840 he finds in Fielding's novels many positive moral values, a fair proportion of „wise and practical“ virtues which shine out against the dark background of the depicted vices all the more convincingly. Worth noticing, too, is the way in which the reviewer tries to grapple with the strictures of immorality levelled at Fielding's novels by Victorian bourgeois society. His polemic words clearly show that he preferred the „coarse truth“ of life depicted by Fielding to the polished and falsely „modest“ picture of reality presented by the second-rate sentimental novels popular in fashionable society.²² He comes to the correct conclusion that the strictures of immorality should be levelled at Fielding's time and society rather than at his novels and accuses the Victorian reading public of hypocrisy.²³ Although he does partly identify himself with the society of his own time by praising the wisdom of its prudery, his identification is not at this time of his life so complete as Kathleen Tillotson suggests.²⁴ Besides the conclusion of the often quoted passage from his review, in which his attitude is expressed, we have much evidence, early and later, that he regretted the restraint imposed by the excessive squeamishness of the bourgeois readers upon the writers of his time. Very convincing is for instance the following quotation from his *Shabby Genteel Story*, written in the same year as his review, in which he meditates on the young men-about-town and their love-affairs:

„This point is, to be sure, a very delicate one to treat, — for in words, at least, the age has grown to be wonderfully moral, and refuses to hear discourses upon such subjects. But human nature, as far as I am able to learn, has not much changed since the time when Ri-

chardson wrote and Hogarth painted, a century ago. There are wicked Lovelaces abroad, ladies, now, as then, when it was considered no shame to expose the rogues, and pardon us, therefore, for hinting that such there be."²⁵

Much space in Thackeray's review of Fielding's works is devoted to the assessment of the personal character of the novelist and in this respect — though not deliberately — Thackeray is not entirely just to his master. As Prof. Cross points out,²⁶ the reviewer allowed himself to be influenced by the biographical introduction to the edition he reviewed, written by the editor Thomas Roscoe, accepted it as a genuine authority and painted a fictitious portrait of Fielding as a young man with „very loose morals indeed“, who „led a sad, riotous life, and mixed with many a bad woman in his time“.²⁷ Thackeray is not so ungenerous, however, as not to be able to find many positive traits in Fielding's character which amply redeem these alleged weaknesses in his eyes: especially Fielding's personal honesty, sincere and manful philosophy, devotion to his family and the courage with which he struggled against adverse circumstances.²⁸

After his review of Fielding's works, up to the end of the 1840s, Thackeray paid attention to Fielding only in occasional remarks, scattered through his newspaper contributions and other writings of that decade. But there is a fair number of these and all deal exclusively with Fielding's works, not with his personal character. Taken as a whole, they bear witness to Thackeray's sincere and whole-hearted admiration for the great art of his predecessor. In several of his remarks Thackeray highly appreciates the faithfulness of Fielding's picture of life and society and includes him among those masters of pen whose works give to the reader „a better idea of the state and ways of the people, than one could gather from any more pompous or authentic histories“.²⁹ While in the preceding decade Thackeray was more concerned with Fielding's character of Jonathan Wild than with the other great characters created by him, in the 1840s he devotes much more attention to Fielding's remarkable ability for vivid characterization in general. In his works of this decade we find several passages, very similar to each other, in which he compares Fielding's characters to historical personages and expresses his conviction that the former are more real than the latter. He was so strongly convinced of the reality of the personages created by his predecessor that he was able to call them up in his imagination as human beings who once really existed and even to people with them the streets of historical London and evoke the long vanished milieu in which their creator had situated them.³⁰

Besides paying generous tribute to Fielding's remarkable power of creating life-like characters, Thackeray also highly appreciates his sterling humour pervaded with warm sympathy for mankind and ranges him among the greatest creators of comic figures, along with Shakespeare, Cervantes and Dickens.³¹ He finds warm words of praise, too, for Fielding's simple and manly style and, in one instance, gives proof of his intimate acquaintance with it. In his review of an anonymous book for children, *History of Tom Hickathrift*, he shows considerable clear-sightedness in divining its authorship by comparing the „strong“ style of the author to that of the creator of *Joseph Andrews*.³²

One of the most important aspects of Thackeray's attitude to Fielding in the 1840s is that he continues to assess highly the strength and sharpness of Fielding's satire. Thus for instance in his article about the Queen's *bal poudré* (*Punch*, 1845), he expresses his regrets that Fielding and Hogarth cannot rise from their graves, for only they, as he is convinced, could write a sharp and effective satire

upon the frivolity and bad taste of the royal court of his time.³³ It is not in such marginal notes, however, that we find the most convincing proof of Thackeray's deep reverence for his predecessor's satirical mastery in the period discussed. A more imposing document is his first novel *Barry Lyndon*, written, like *Catherine* in the preceding decade, intentionally in imitation of Fielding's *Jonathan Wild*. That the imitation was conscious and deliberate is obvious not only from the chosen theme and its handling but also from Thackeray's aside to the reader in the conclusion of the novel in which he explains his creative intentions and aims, protests once more against the sentimentalized depiction of life in popular romances and again uses Fielding's works as his critical measure of literary excellence.³⁴ In *Barry Lyndon* Thackeray originally intended to provide an effective conclusion to his polemic exchanges with the Newgate novelists by satirizing both the rascal whom he chose for his titular figure and the criminal novels which idealized him. Thus he actually attempted to do the same thing as Fielding had done in his *Jonathan Wild*. But Thackeray's novel, like that of his master, outgrew the boundaries of a polemic work: the novelist not only presented an effective contrast to the romantic criminals then in vogue in his truthful picture of a cynical adventurer, he also realistically depicted the historical conditions in which his anti-hero lived. In depicting his titular character, Thackeray attempted to imitate Fielding's ironical approach, but he toned it down and did not adhere to it consistently. This was one of the reasons why he did not achieve that intense and venomous bitterness which renders his master's *Jonathan Wild* a grim satirical picture of Swiftian greatness, revealing the rule of wrong, greed and oppression which operates throughout bourgeois society. The modification of his irony is not, however, the only reason for Thackeray's partial success, as most Thackerayan scholars believe. Prof. Ivasheva convincingly demonstrates that the causes of the comparative weakness of Thackeray's satire must be sought for in the different degree to which the two novelists successfully revealed the social relationships and contradictions of the given period and intertwined the fortunes of their heroes with those of great historical personages and with momentous historical events.³⁵

Since we are interested rather in Thackeray's criticism of Fielding than in his indebtedness to Fielding's art, we shall not discuss in detail all the traces of Fieldingesque realism which may be found in Thackeray's works written in the 1840s. We need not particularly stress that it is especially the gallery of satirical portraits in *The Book of Snobs* and the satirical pictures in *Vanity Fair* which clearly show in which school Thackeray learned his satirical mastery. The indebtedness of Thackeray to Fielding in *Vanity Fair* and other great novels is discussed in detail by Eva Beach Touster who summarizes the relationship in the following words:

„In the practice of the novel as well as in its theory, Thackeray owed something to Fielding. Epical structure, with its element of the picaresque and its frequent digressions; Quixotic humour; intellectual realism, with its satire on vanity and hypocrisy; and (in *The Virginians*) the depiction of a genuinely eighteenth-century atmosphere — these are the characteristics which Thackeray's mature novels have in common with those of Fielding.“³⁶

From the above outline of Thackeray's relationship to Fielding in the 1830s and 1840s it is fairly obvious that it was predominantly the relationship of a sincere admirer and a more or less avowed disciple. All the more surprising, then, may seem the remarkable change which took place in the 1850s and which

was already signalled in some of Thackeray's statements pronounced or written at the close of the preceding decade. The following quotations from his letter to Mrs. Brookfield of August 1848 clearly show how far Thackeray had retreated from his youthful admiration of Fielding by that time. He writes about *Amelia* and praises the heroine as „the most delightful portrait of a woman that surely ever was painted“ but *Joseph Andrews*, one of his earliest favourites, seems to him „both coarse and careless“. He is also irritated at Fielding's making „an absurd brag of his twopenny learning upon which he values himself evidently more than upon the best of his own qualities“.³⁷ As time progresses, Thackeray's judgments about Fielding's art come to contain more and more serious critical strictures upon some aspects of his creative method, which are expressed much more sharply than ever before. It is worth noticing, however, that in spite of his grave reservations which we shall discuss below, Thackeray does not come, even in this period, to a completely negative attitude to his former master. He continues to praise the truthfulness of Fielding's novels and his excellent art of characterization and composition and sometimes does so in very eloquent and enthusiastic words, for instance in the often-quoted passage from his lecture on Fielding („What a wonderful art! . . .).³⁸ These occasional warm tributes cannot counterbalance, however, the more frequent and conspicuous proofs of Thackeray's altered attitude to Fielding.

The most significant aspect of this change, which is almost completely ignored by English and American research workers and which was duly stressed only by Prof. Ivasheva, is Thackeray's tendency to present Fielding exclusively as a humourist and to ignore the other important and inseparable aspect of his creative approach, his satire. Whereas in the earlier decades Thackeray highly valued Fielding's satirical mastery, the Fielding who emerges from his lectures and individual statements of the 1850s and 1860s is predominantly a genial humourist in whom he admires above all the qualities of mercifulness, pity, kindness and benevolence.³⁹ It is true that Thackeray does appreciate once more Fielding's novel *Jonathan Wild* as a „wonderful satire“ and praises his „admirable natural love of truth, the keenest instinctive antipathy to hypocrisy, the happiest satirical gift of laughing it to scorn“.⁴⁰ But these rare remarks cannot substantially affect the general impression of Fielding we get from Thackeray's later judgments. As Prof. Ivasheva points out, „the creator of „Jonathan Wild the Great“ and of satirical comedies, from whom Thackeray learned his satirical mastery, is forgotten in the sketch of 1851 (i. e. his lecture on Fielding — L. P.). The satirist Fielding disappears behind a fictitious portrait of a kind-hearted and humane, even if dissipated Fielding“.⁴¹

As we have suggested above, the Thackerayan scholars who have so far dealt with our problem concentrate their attention upon some other aspects of Thackeray's altered attitude to Fielding, rather than upon his underestimation of his predecessor's satirical mastery. The aspects they are interested in are, however, also highly symptomatic and worth noticing. The most significant is Thackeray's severe criticism of the moral tendency of Fielding's novels. Whereas in his review of 1840 and his other early statements Thackeray did not find much amiss with Fielding's depiction of virtue and vice, in his lecture of 1851 he strictly condemns the moral principles embodied in some characters created by his former teacher. It is true that in the 1850s and even in the 1860s he continues complaining of the squeamishness of Victorian society which regards Fielding's novels as immoral

and corrupting,⁴² but objectively he identifies himself with his milieu, praises his society for its decency and moral purity and accuses Fielding of a „lax morality in many a vital point“.⁴³ It is especially the character of Tom Jones that irritates him and excites his anger. Whereas in 1840 he was still able to appreciate the positive moral values embodied in this personage and to realize that his foibles were a faithful reproduction of the morality of Fielding's time and society, in his lecture he condemns both Tom Jones and his creator for their „immorality“:

„I can't say that I think Mr. Jones a virtuous character; I can't say but that I think Fielding's evident liking and admiration for Mr. Jones, shows that the great humourist's moral sense was blunted by his life, and that here in Art and Ethics, there is a great error“.⁴⁴

Thackeray's protest against the moral laxity of Tom Jones (especially his erotic adventures with Molly Seagrim and Lady Bellaston) shows more than convincingly how far his identification with the hypocritical Victorian bourgeois society has gone by this time. What is more serious, however, is that Thackeray's irritation leads him to endow this character with many negative traits which are entirely of his own invention. By means of a detailed confrontation of Thackeray's fictitious portrait of Tom Jones and Fielding's hero, Prof. Cross demonstrates that Thackeray's portrait is a composite one, consisting of some traits of the actual hero, enlarged by those of Fielding, Captain Booth and Thackeray himself, and adds the comment that by these little fabrications „Thackeray really did more than any other man has ever done to stain the memory of Fielding“.⁴⁵ Thackeray's biased and unjust opinion of Tom Jones leads him also to deny him the right of holding the rank of hero. It is obvious that by the term „hero“ Thackeray understood rather a character who is the bearer of positive values than a dominant figure that merely fulfils the structural function of connecting the individual episodes of the plot into a coherent whole. Completely failing to realize that Tom Jones for all his foibles and sins did embody a definite and clearly expressed moral theory, namely that a good heart will redeem all sins, and that he also reflected positive social values,⁴⁶ he gives vent to this vehement protest:

„If it is right to have a hero whom we may admire, let us at least take care that he is admirable: . . . But a hero with a flawed reputation; a hero spunging for a guinea; a hero who can't pay his landlady, and is obliged to let his honour out to hire, is absurd, and his claim to heroic rank untenable. I protest against Mr. Thomas Jones holding such rank at all.“⁴⁷

Besides undervaluing Fielding's satire and condemning the moral tendency of his novels, Thackeray continues in his attacks upon Fielding's personal character. The portrait of Fielding the man that emerges from his writings of this period is considerably blacker than that which we know from his review of 1840. He depicts his great predecessor as a man who brutalized his life by associating with bad women, undermined his health by heavy drinking bouts after which he often „reeled home to chambers on the shoulders of the watchman“ and was dishonest about money.⁴⁸ But for all these unjust strictures on Fielding's person Thackeray is still able to appreciate Fielding's positive human qualities, and is inclined to forgive him for his „wild life“ on account of his Christian repentance, his generous heart and his respect for „female innocence and infantine tenderness“. He retains, too, his former warm sympathy for the courage with which Fielding bore all the hardships that were in store for him.⁴⁹

One of the most important aspects of Thackeray's altered attitude to Fielding is also the perceptible weakening of his indebtedness to his predecessor in his

works written in the second half of the 1850s and in the 1860s. Eva Beach Touster finds many traces of this indebtedness especially in *Vanity Fair*, *Pendennis* and *The Newcomes*, but obviously has considerable difficulty in tracing it in Thackeray's later works, since among them she mentions only *The Virginians*.

II.

In the above outline of Thackeray's attitude to Fielding and its development from his first acquaintance with the works of his predecessor up to the end of his life, we have attempted to point out those aspects in which it changed and those in which it remained essentially unchanged and to underline those changes which were so far neglected by English and American scholars. What remains now is to find out the causes of Thackeray's altered attitude, for the explanations so far offered seem to us inadequate, with the exception of those suggested by Prof. Ivasheva. Ralph Wilson Rader, who was the latest Western European scholar to write on this problem, also expresses his dissatisfaction with the results of research to date, and comes to the conclusion that the scholars who dealt with this problem either ignored the motive of the change altogether (Dickson, Cross) or did not succeed in finding out the correct one (Blanchard), or undervalued the change (Touster). Rader himself finds the cause of Thackeray's changed attitude in his personal life. According to his opinion, Thackeray's review of 1840 is an apology for Fielding's supposed misconduct on the grounds of „the basic purity of his relationship with his wife“⁵⁰ and at the same time an apology based on his own great love for his wife for Thackeray's own „wild“ life and his marital shortcomings. Rader finds confirmation of his opinion in one of Thackeray's later statements, in which the novelist recalls the circumstances under which his review of Fielding's works was written (the beginning of his wife's mental illness) and adds: „Doesn't the apology for Fielding read like an apology for somebody else too?“⁵¹ As Rader further demonstrates, after the disaster in his family Thackeray developed feelings of personal guilt concerning his way of life in the years preceding his wife's illness and endeavoured to palliate them by condemning similar foibles in Fielding's heroes in whom he saw „the image of his own youth and his own errors“.⁵² In spite of the pains taken by Rader to make his conclusions convincing we do not feel, as he does, that Thackeray's pangs of conscience account for his altered attitude „almost entirely“. Certainly we cannot underrate the influence of the private life of the author upon his work, but we must at the same time bear in mind that this influence is only one of the numerous and various factors that determine the development of his personality. There is no doubt that the illness of Thackeray's wife and the resulting tragic loss of his family happiness were hard blows to the novelist and left indelible traces in his mind and work, but these circumstances of his personal life do not explain all the tendencies and changes in his development in later years, as some Western scholars are apt to think. If we want to find an adequate explanation of the problem, we must see it in a wider perspective and take all the existing factors into account, not only one of them.

For that purpose it is necessary to view the development of Thackeray's personality and art as a whole, paying due attention to the social milieu and climate which conditioned it. If we do this, we can clearly observe that Thackeray's

altered attitude to Fielding was not the only change which took place in his mind in the later period of his literary career. Beginning with 1848, and increasingly in the 1850s, significant changes took place in his political beliefs, views of human nature, creative principles, aesthetic creed and critical standards. These changes were certainly not a direct outcome of the disastrous happenings in his personal life which took place several years before, nor can they be accounted for entirely by the ensuing great personal unhappiness and loneliness of the great novelist. The most important factor of those which conditioned his altered attitude to life was the change of the whole political and social climate in England after 1848 due to the defeat of the revolution on the Continent and Chartism in England. The 1850s in England are characterized by the general atmosphere of compromise in political and social life, which was the outcome of the economic flowering of England after 1848 and the ensuing wide diffusion of illusions about the progressive character of the capitalist social order. Even if Thackeray might not have been conscious of it, the general climate of this period exercised its impact upon his views and opinions, upon his whole attitude to reality. Influenced by his growing fear of any revolutionary changes in the society in which he had at last secured for himself, by hard work, the place which belonged to him by his birth and education, influenced, too, by his infirm health, continuous loneliness and premature old age, Thackeray was gradually succumbing to the wide-spread feelings of satisfaction with the existing affairs and was more and more inclined towards reconciliation to the bourgeois society of his time and place. This change was not instantaneous but slow and gradual, for even in his later years he occasionally pronounced statements showing that his desire for some progressive political drive was still alive and his attitude to English society still sharply critical.⁵³ Adequate proof of the longevity of his former radicalism may be found also in the novels published in the first half of the 1850s, especially in *The Newcomes*. But these progressive tendencies in Thackeray become rarer with the advance of time and finally are drowned in the general trend towards compromise.

On the other hand, we have ample evidence, too, for the gradual strengthening of the backward tendencies in Thackeray's development after 1848. As early as March 1849 the novelist defended the necessity of maintaining class divisions in society,⁵⁴ while in 1857 he already openly declared that he belonged to the English bourgeoisie:

„I do not hold any dangerous revolutionary opinions. . . I belong to the class that I see around me here, the class of lawyers, and merchants, and scholars, and men who are striving on in the world, of men of the educated middle classes of this country. And, belonging to them, my sympathies and my desires are with them.“⁵⁵

Thus the great satirist and merciless critic of the English ruling classes gradually came to an almost complete identification with the English bourgeoisie, seeing it as the class which guaranteed the safety and hope of his country, and thence arrived at a conciliatory attitude to the social order maintained by that class (his former hostile attitude to the English aristocracy did not undergo such radical changes, but even here there were some later modifications).

Gradually drifting into a compromise with the bourgeois society of his time and place, Thackeray begins to find positive aspects and values in that fair of vanities which he formerly so fiercely indicted in his scorching satirical pictures. Subjectively he was convinced that he found these new qualities in „human na-

ture" in general, but since he depicted exclusively the ruling classes and knew the working class life and milieu only from hearsay and not from his personal experience, his more lenient attitude to „human nature“ objectively refers to the English bourgeoisie and aristocracy. The signals of this change appear much earlier in his correspondence than in his works, the first of them as early as in January 1847 in his letter to Mrs. Procter.⁵⁶ The following quotations from his letters of 1848 and 1849 convincingly demonstrate how his more tolerant views were gradually gaining ground in his mind:

„The world is much kinder and better world than some bilious-covered satirists have painted it — I must give up the yellow cover I think and come out in a fresher tone . . .“

„Every day I get more ashamed of my yellow cover and former misanthropical turn. The world is a great deal better than some satirists have painted it — . . .“⁵⁷

Thackeray's altering relationship to the English bourgeois as an individual and as a member of society found due reflection in his aesthetic views and creative method. During his whole literary career Thackeray described himself as an imitator of „nature“ and follower of „truth“, as a writer who honestly endeavours to tell his reader „the whole truth“ about the depicted reality. In the 1830s and 1840s he consciously and consistently adhered to these principles of realistic aesthetics, endeavouring to depict in his works the strict truth of life as he saw it around him, even if he did not find it to be a pleasant one. Embodied in his pictures this truth appeared as a realistic depiction of bourgeois society as a fair of vanities where everything may be bought and sold for money and all human relationships are changed into money relationships. Although Thackeray even in the 1850s and 1860s continued to call himself a novelist who strived after a truthful depiction of life, in his conception of this „truth“, and in his creative approach to reality, considerable changes took place after 1848. To his former postulate of „the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth“ which he demanded from literature, he gradually began to add new aspects and to stress especially „kindness and love“ as the necessary aspects of the writer's approach to the depicted reality. There is ample evidence for this characteristic change of his aesthetic creed which we cannot discuss here as fully as it would deserve (one of its aspects which would be worth noticing separately is for instance the strong influence of Christian ethics upon Thackeray's literary theory and practice in his later years). Closely connected with this conspicuous alteration in the basic principles of Thackeray's literary theory is his changed attitude towards satire and humour. Having identified himself with the society in which he lived, Thackeray gradually came to feel distaste for sharp, uncompromising social satire, and began to prefer genial and loving humour. Among his many statements upon this subject one of the most illustrative is the following quotation from his letter to James Hannay, written in August 1854:

„I hate Juvenal, I mean I think him a truculent brute, and I love Horace better than you do, and rate Churchill much lower; and as for Swift, you haven't made me alter my opinion. I admire, or rather admit, his power as much as you do; but I don't admire that kind of power so much as I did fifteen years ago, or twenty shall we say. Love is a higher intellectual exercise than Hatred; and when you get one or two more of those young ones you write so pleasantly about, you'll come over to the side of the kind wags, I think, rather than the cruel ones.“⁵⁸

Having thus dissociated himself from the most essential aspects of satire — indignation, anger and hatred — Thackeray came to identify it with humour alto-

gether. This substitution of the conception of humour for the conception of satire is for the first time conspicuous in his well-known definition of humour in the lectures on *The English Humourists of the 18th Century*,⁵⁹ which he uses as his critical standard for evaluating, *inter alia*, also Fielding's art.

These modifications of Thackeray's literary and aesthetic views were duly reflected in all his works written after *Vanity Fair*, though of course it was not an instantaneous change but a whole process which culminated in the second half of the 1850s and in the 1860s. Since an adequate treatment of these momentous changes would require nothing less than a full-length study, we shall only point out some of the most conspicuous tendencies in Thackeray's creative method in the period in question. First and foremost it is his endeavour to find a positive hero in the bourgeois milieu: this is a process which has its beginnings as early as *Pendennis* but which culminates in *The Newcomes*. This development is closely connected with Thackeray's later tendency to envelop his stories and personages in an all-pervading atmosphere of mellow tolerance, sentimentality and compromise by means of authorial commentaries full of tedious moralizings, thus blurring the hard edges of all his later critical pictures of English society. This development shows how far he had retreated from the path opened up by his great predecessor and former model, Henry Fielding.

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Although the above general outline of some of the most significant changes in Thackeray's later development is of necessity cursory, we suggest that it provides sufficient grounds for the conclusion that Thackeray's altered attitude to Fielding is closely related to the whole development of his political views, aesthetic creed and creative principles in the later period of his literary career. Having reached a compromise with the existing social order and changing accordingly his attitude both to the reality he depicted and to literature and art in general, Thackeray could not accept Fielding as whole-heartedly as he did previously. To be able to accept him at all, he had to forget Fielding's sharp social satire and present him exclusively as an „infinitely merciful, pitiful and tender“ humorist⁶⁰ who in his works intended to do no harm to anybody. Looking at Fielding's works through the eyes of his own society, he revolted from the ethical principles embodied in them and severely condemned them. And, having identified the morals of Fielding's characters with those of their creator, he presented to this listeners and readers without any compunction a very vivid but almost completely conjectural portrait of the wine-stained and dissipated novelist, which did considerable damage to Fielding's reputation in Thackeray's time and in the succeeding generations.

NOTES

¹ *North American Review*, CXCVII, 1913, pp. 522—537.

² *New Haven* 1918, vol. III, pp. 213—225.

³ *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, XLVI, 1947, pp. 383—394.

⁴ *Ibid.*, LVI, 1957, pp. 203—212.

⁵ *Izdatelstvo Moskovskogo Universiteta*, 1958.

⁶ See Lewis Melville, *William Makepeace Thackeray*, 2 vols, John Lane, The Bodley Head, London, 1910, p. 27.

⁷ See Joseph Grego, *Thackerayana*, A New Edition, London, Chatto and Windus, pp. 77 ff. The author names *Joseph Andrews* among Thackeray's early favourites and reprints his graphic illustrations of this novel found in the copy he had in his library.

⁸ *Memorials*, pp. 347—348, quoted in *The Letters and Private Papers of William Makepeace Thackeray*, 4 vols, London, Oxford University Press, 1945, I, pp. 107—108n. Cited hereafter as *Letters*.

⁹ See Harold Strong Gulliver, *Thackeray's Literary Apprenticeship*, Valdosta, Georgia, 1934, p. 58.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 203—204.

¹¹ „*Horae Catnachianae*“, *Fraser's Magazine*, vol. XIX, January to June, 1839; „*William Ainsworth and Jack Sheppard*“, *ibid.*, vol. XXI, January to June, 1840; *Catherine*, *ibid.*, May 1839—February 1840, rptd. in *Works* III.

¹² See *Fraser's Magazine*, vol. XXI, January to June, 1840, p. 232 and elsewhere.

¹³ *Fraser's Magazine*, vol. XIX, January to June, 1839, pp. 408—409.

¹⁴ *The Oxford Thackeray*, ed. George Saintsbury, 17 volumes, Oxford, 1908, III, p. 186.

Cited hereafter as *Works*.

¹⁵ See e. g. *Works* V, 471.

¹⁶ *Letters* I, p. 412, 18 January 1840.

¹⁷ Touster, *op. cit.*, p. 389.

¹⁸ See Wilbur L. Cross, *op. cit.*, p. 213.

¹⁹ *Works* III, p. 386.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 385, 386.

²¹ See *Works* III, pp. 385, 386, 388, 389.

²² See *Works* III, pp. 383, 384, 390 and *Works* V, p. 471.

²³ See *Works* III, p. 385.

²⁴ See Kathleen Tillotson, *Novels of the Eighteen-Forties*, Oxford, At the Clarendon Press, 1954, p. 66n.

²⁵ *Works* III, p. 324

²⁶ See Wilbur L. Cross, *op. cit.* III, p. 213.

²⁷ *Works* III, pp. 386, 387.

²⁸ See *Works* III, pp. 387, 392—393.

²⁹ *Works* II, p. 98; see also *ibid.*, p. 182 and *Works* VI, pp. 340—341.

³⁰ See *Works* II, pp. 183—184, VI, p. 413, VIII, p. 184.

³¹ See *Works* III, p. 383, VI, 606—607 and *Letters* II, p. 249.

³² See *Works* VI, p. 575. Prof. Cross includes this work among Fielding's works of uncertain authorship.

³³ See M. H. Spielmann, *The Hitherto Unidentified Contributions of W. M. Thackeray to „Punch“*, London and New York, Harper & Brothers, 1899, p. 121.

³⁴ See *Works* VI, pp. 310—311.

³⁵ See Ivasheva, *op. cit.*, pp. 111—113.

³⁶ Touster, *op. cit.*, p. 391. For the whole analysis see pp. 389—394.

³⁷ *Letters* II, p. 416.

³⁸ See *Works* XIII, pp. 14, 646, 651, 652—653, 731, XVII, pp. 598, 600, Melville, *op. cit.*, II, p. 69. See also Preface to *Pendennis and Charity and Humour*.

³⁹ See *Works* XIII, pp. 646, 653, X, p. 615 and elsewhere.

⁴⁰ *Works* XIII, pp. 621, 646. See also X, p. 622.

⁴¹ Ivasheva, *op. cit.*, p. 298.

⁴² See *Works* XIII, p. 772, XV, pp. 240, 273, 424—425, 562, 738, XVII, pp. 400—401.

⁴³ *Works* X, p. 622.

⁴⁴ *Works* XIII, p. 649.

⁴⁵ Wilbur L. Cross, *op. cit.*, p. 225. See also Rader, *op. cit.*, pp. 203, 212.

⁴⁶ For a summary of these see Ian Milner, „The Nature of the Hero in Dickens and the Eighteenth Century Tradition“, *Philologica*, IX, 1957, 5, p. 58.

⁴⁷ *Works* XIII, pp. 649—650.

⁴⁸ See *Letters* III, p. 304, IV, p. 186, *Works* XII, p. 367, XIII, pp. 646, 647.

⁴⁹ See *Works* XIII, pp. 646, 655, 679, XVII, p. 471, *Letters* IV, p. 186.

⁵⁰ Rader, *op. cit.*, p. 206.

⁵¹ *Letters* II, p. 462, to Mrs. Brookfield. December 1848.

⁵² Rader, *op. cit.*, p. 211.

⁵³ See *Letters* II, pp. 761—762, 823, 824, III, p. 429.

⁵⁴ See *Works* VIII, pp. 261, 275.

⁵⁵ *Letters* IV, p. 205n., quoted from *The Times*, April 4, 1857. See also Melville, op. cit., II, p. 87 and *Works* XIII, p. 761.

⁵⁶ See *Letters* II, p. 269.

⁵⁷ *Letters* II, p. 421, 20 August 1848 and *ibid.*, p. 534, 6 May 1849.

⁵⁸ *Letters* II, p. 553n.

⁵⁹ See *Works* XIII, pp. 469—470. As Prof. Ivasheva points out, this definition of humour might well have been written by Dickens, and by Dickens in the early years of his literary career, „than by the author of the angry and venomous pages of „*Barry Lyndon*“ and „*The Book of Snobs*“. Op. cit., p. 296.

⁶⁰ *Works* XIII, p. 646.

VZTAH W. M. THACKERAYHO K FIELDINGOVI

V hlavní části článku autorka rozebírá Thackerayovy kritické názory na Fieldingovu tvorbu od jeho prvních čtenářských zkušeností do konce literární dráhy a okrajově si všímá i závislosti velkého kritického realisty 19. století na Fieldingovi jako literárním vzoru. Podrobněji se pak zabývá vztahem Thackerayho k jeho velkému předchůdci v období polemického boje proti představitelům anti-realistické literatury a v údobí umělecké zralosti, tj. ve třicátých a čtyřicátých letech minulého století. Na rozbor Thackerayových recenzí podřadné literatury třicátých let autorka ukazuje, že Thackeray jako kritik používal Fieldingova umění jako kritického měřítka a předkládal je recenzovaným autorům jako vzor hodný napodobení. Jak autorka podrobně dovozuje, Thackerayovy rané kritické statě, jeho recenze Fieldingových děl z r. 1840, polemické dílo *Catherine*, v němž se po prvé pokusil napodobit tvůrčí postup autora *Jonathana Wilda* a konečně celá jeho tvorba třicátých let nepochybně svědčí o jeho hlubokém obdivu k Fieldingově umění, především k jeho velkému satirickému mistrovství. Ve svém rozboru Thackerayovy recenze Fieldingových děl autorka podtrhává ty aspekty recenzentova hodnocení, které se podstatně liší od jeho pozdějšího postoje a které nasvědčují, že se Thackeray v této době ještě zcela neztotožňoval se stanoviskem buržoasní společnosti své doby.

Jak autorka dovozuje na podrobném rozboru Thackerayových příležitostných výroků o Fieldingově tvorbě z let čtyřicátých, ani v tomto desetiletí velký romanopisec svůj názor na tvorbu svého předchůdce podstatně nekorigoval: vysoce hodnotil životní pravdivost Fieldingových děl, jeho skvělé umění charakterizační, ryzí humor a útočnou ostrost jeho satiry. Autorka zdůrazňuje, že také v tomto období najdeme nejpřesvědčivější doklady o Thackerayově obdivu k satirickému mistrovství Fieldingově v jeho vlastní umělecké tvorbě. Thackerayův román *Barry Lyndon*, v němž se znovu pokusil napodobit Fieldingovu ironii, jeho *Kniha snobů* a především skvělá satirická zevšobecnění *Trhu marnosti* jasně dokazují, u koho se Thackeray učil svému satiristickému mistrovství.

Značnou pozornost věnuje autorka změnám, ke kterým došlo v Thackerayově postoji k Fieldingovi v letech padesátých. Za nejvýznamnější aspekt této změny, který byl doposud ignorován západními vědci a byl patřičně zdůrazněn jen V. V. Ivaševovou, považuje autorka jednostranné hodnocení Fieldinga jako dobrosrdečného humoristy na úkor Fieldinga — satirika. Všimá si také ostatních aspektů Thackerayova změněného postoje: příkrého odsouzení morálních hodnot Fieldingových děl a negativního portrétu Fieldinga jako člověka, které svědčí o tom, že se Thackeray v této době již plně ztotožnil se stanoviskem viktoriánské buržoasní společnosti. Autorka také upozorňuje na zřetelné uvolnění umělecké závislosti Thackerayho na Fieldingovi, které se projevuje v jeho pozdějších románech.

V závěrečné části studie se autorka pokouší najít důvody, které podminily tuto překvapivou změnu v Thackerayově vztahu k Fieldingovi. Na rozdíl od R. W. Radera, který hledal motivy této změny výlučně v Thackerayově soukromém životě, se autorka snaží zkoumat tento problém v širších souvislostech: hledá odpověď v ideovém a tvůrčím vývoji Thackerayho po r. 1848 a ve společenské a politické atmosféře, která jej podminila. Ukazuje, že všeobecná atmosféra kompromisu a falešných iluzí o pokrokovém charakteru kapitalistického řádu, která se rozšířila v Anglii po porážce chartismu, rozdrčení revoluce v Evropě a následujícím hospodářským rozmachu, ovlivnila také velkého romanopisce, který se postupně stál více příkláněl ke kompromisu s buržoasní společností své doby. S touto základní změnou Thackerayova postoje ke skutečnosti těsně souvisely změny jeho estetických názorů a uměleckých i kritických zásad. Na základě jejich rozboru dochází autorka k závěru, že změna Thackerayova vztahu k Fieldingovi je v naprostém souladu s jeho celkovým vývojem v le-

tech padesátých a šedesátých. Thackeray, který se s postupem času stále více ztotožňoval s anglickou buržoazií, dospíval současně, jako kritik i autor, k zápornému postoji k ostré společenské satirě, kterou nakonec zcela ztotožnil s humorem. Nutným důsledkem tohoto vývoje bylo zeslabení jeho dřívějšího obdivu k Fieldingovi jako romanopisci, kterého v pozdějších letech začal hodnotit jednostranně jako laskavého humoristu, zcela opomíjeje Fieldinga jako satirika. V souladu s tímto vývojem je také Thackerayovo záporné stanovisko k etickým principům ztělesněným ve Fieldingových dílech, jejich ztotožnění s morálními vlastnostmi romanopisce a jeho fiktivní portrét prostopášího Fieldinga, který značně uškodil pověsti tvůrce *Toma Jonese* v Thackerayově době i u generací následujících.

ОТНОШЕНИЕ В. М. ТЕККЕРЕЯ К ФИЛЬДИНГУ

V основной части статьи автор подвергает анализу критические взгляды Теккерея на творчество Фильдинга, а именно — от его начального опыта как читателя до конца его литературного пути; автор также говорит о влиянии Фильдинга на великого критического реалиста XIX века. Для Теккерея Фильдинг был примером творческой личности. Более подробно занимается автор отношением Теккерея к великому предшественнику в период его полемической и критической борьбы против представителей антиреалистической литературы и в период его художественной зрелости, т. е. в 30-х и 40-х годах прошлого века.

На анализе рецензий Теккерея касающихся второразрядной литературы 30-х годов показывает автор, что Теккерей как критик использовал искусство Фильдинга в качестве критерия; он показывал это искусство авторам, произведения которых он рецензировал, как пример для подражания. Автор подробно доказывает на основе ране критических статей Теккерея, его рецензий на произведения Фильдинга 1840 г., на основе полемического произведения Теккерея „Кэтрин“, в котором он впервые попробовал подражать творческому методу автора „Джонатана Уайльда“, и наконец на основе всего творчества 30-х годов, что все это свидетельствует несомненно о глубоком восхищении Теккерея искусством Фильдинга, именно его великим сатирическим мастерством.

Анализируя рецензии Теккерея на произведения Фильдинга, автор подчеркивает те точки зрения рецензента, которые существенным образом отличаются от его более поздних взглядов, — именно его положительная оценка морального направления романов Фильдинга — и которые подтверждают, что Теккерей в этот период еще не вполне был согласен со взглядами буржуазного общества своего времени.

Автор показывает на подробном анализе случайных изречений Теккерея о творчестве Фильдинга 40-х годов, что даже в это десятилетие великий романист не изменил существенным образом своих мнений о творчестве своего предшественника: он высоко оценивал жизненную правдивость произведений Фильдинга, его блестящее искусство характеристики, самородный юмор и агрессивную резкость его сатиры. Автор подчеркивает, что тоже и в этот период можно найти в художественных произведениях самого Теккерея самые убедительные доказательства его восхищения сатирическим мастерством Фильдинга.

Роман Теккерея „Барри Линдон“, в котором он снова попытался подражать иронии Фильдинга, его „Книга снобов“ и прежде всего блестящее сатирическое обобщение в „Армарке Тисеславия“ ясно подтверждают, у кого Теккерей учился сатирическому мастерству. Особое внимание автор статьи уделяет изменениям, которые произошли в отношении Теккерея к Фильдингу в 50-х годах. Самым значительным моментом изменения, который был игнорирован до сих пор западными учеными (это было подчеркнуто только В. В. Ивашевой — СССР), считает автор одностороннюю оценку Фильдинга — а именно как добросердечного юмориста за счет Фильдинга сатирика. Далее автор обращает внимание на те моменты, в которых выразилось изменение отношения Теккерея к Фильдингу: резкое осуждение моральных ценностей произведений Фильдинга и отрицательный портрет Фильдинга как человека — все это свидетельствует, что Теккерей в этот период перешел окончательно на позиции викторианского буржуазного общества. Автор отмечает также четкое ослабление зависимости Теккерея художника от Фильдинга, проявившееся в его позднейших романах.

В заключительной части статьи автор пытается найти причины столь поразительной перемены в отношении Теккерея к Фильдингу. В отличие от Р. В. Рейдера, искавшего мотивы этого изменения в личной жизни Теккерея, автор статьи стремится разобрать эту проблему учитывая более широкие взаимосвязи: она ищет ответ в идейном и творческом развитии Теккерея после 1848 г. и в общественно-политической атмосфере обусловившей

это развитие. Показывает, что общая атмосфера компромиссов и обманчивых иллюзий о прогрессивном характере капиталистического строя, распространившаяся в Англии после сокрушения хартизма, разгрома революции в Европе и последующего экономического подъема, оказала влияние тоже на великого романиста, склонявшегося постепенно все более и более к компромиссу с буржуазным обществом своей эпохи. С этим основным изменением отношения Теккерея к действительности были тесно связаны изменения его эстетических и художественных взглядов и критических принципов. На основе их анализа автор статьи приходит к выводу, что перемена отношения Теккерея к Фильдингу находится в полном согласии с его общим развитием в 50-х и 60-х годах. Теккерей отождествлявшийся в течение времени все более и более с английской буржуазией одновременно приходил — как критик и художник — к отрицательному отношению к резкой общественной критике, которую наконец отождествил с юмором. Необходимым следствием этого развития являлось ослабление его прежнего восхищения Фильдингом-романистом. Он его позже оценивал односторонне как милого юмориста, совершенно забывая о Фильдинге-сатирике.

В согласии с этим развитием понятно тоже отрицательное отношение Теккерея к этическим принципам воплощенным в произведениях Фильдинга, их отождествление с моральными качествами романиста и его вымышленный портрет — Фильдинг пьяница и распутник —, который очень отрицательно повлиял на отношение к автору „Тома Джонса“ поколения Теккерея и последующего поколения.

Перевели М. Кргоун и Л. С. Языкова.