



Три литературные ипостаси Анны Изабеллы Теккерей

Бурова Ирина Игоревна

Санкт-Петербургский государственный университет (СПбГУ), Санкт-Петербург,
Россия

Three guises of A. Thackeray, Lady Ritchie: a writer, literary critic and a prototype of two heroines of novels

Burova Irina

Saint Petersburg State University (SPSU), St.Petersburg, Russia

Аннотация

Цель статьи заключается в создании общего представления о творчестве Э. Теккерей и ее литературных ипостасях как автора эссе, художественной прозы и историка литературы. Особое внимание уделяется ее наиболее важным произведениям, «Истории Элизабет», «Вдали от света», «Мисс Ангел» и «Книге сивилл».

Abstract

The purpose of the article is to give an overview of A. Thackeray's oeuvre and show her in her literary guises an essayist, author of fiction and a historian of literature. Special attention is paid to her major works, "The Story of Elizabeth," "Out of the World," "Miss Angel," and "A Book of Sybils."

Ключевые слова: история английской литературы, Энн Изабелла Теккерей,

викторианская проза, женская литература, гинокритика

Keywords: history of English literature, Anne Isabella Thackeray, Victorian prose, women's literature, gynocriticism

(1) It is no doubt Anne Isabella Thackeray Ritchie (1837–1919) was a gifted author but it would be unfair to put her on a par with both of her relatives, W.M. Thackeray and V. Wolfe. That being said, she deserved to be regarded as an original thinker and a survey of her work brings us to the conclusion that the writer should be paid a tribute as an early historian of the female literary tradition whose work might be an inspiration for the 20th-century feminism.

(2) Up to the end of the 20th century A. Thackeray excited little interest even in historians of literature who tended to regard her as a source of information about her father W.M. Thackeray and a contributor to the Dictionary of National Biography. It is not by chance some



scholarship to represent Anne's own works as bridging Victorian and Modernist literature: she became a prototype of Theo Lambert in her father's novel "The Virginians" and her widowed brother-in-law L. Steven's daughter V. Woolf also depicted her as Mrs. Hilbery in "Night and Day." At the same time we should realize A. Thackeray's place in the history of British literature has not yet been established properly.

(3) If we compare the young A. Thackeray to her fictional coeval Theo, the main difference between them will be Anne's independent thinking and ambitions for becoming a useful member of the society. At the age of eighteen Anne regretted she had been born a woman which deprived her of any possibility to influence social issues amendment. [1, p. 43–44] W.M. Thackeray was aware of her literary work [6, vol. 1, p. 240; vol. 3, p. 251] and in 1860 he facilitated her first publication in "The Cornhill Magazine" [3, p. 115].

(4) Having started her literary career as an essayist, in 1862 she produced her first work of fiction, "The Story of Elizabeth". Its plotline can be described as a variation of the love story in W.M. Thackeray's "The History of Henry Esmond, Esq." (1852) telling how a widowed mother and her daughter became rivals in love for their young cousin. The love triangle results in the mother's triumph while the daughter in the long run marries a priest. In "The Story of Elizabeth," mother and daughter trade places. The detailed description of their conflict as well as of Elly's inner evolution can be attested to A. Thackeray's long-term apprenticeship under her father, a renowned master of psychological analysis [2, p. 107–138]. She also attempted to give a minute account of her characters' thoughts and feelings, showing their reactions to what was going on around them. She was also

inclined to use works of art as symbols allowing the readers a better understanding of her dramatis personae. Sufficitoremembera

scene in the Louvre Museum, in which all the pictures mentioned are allusions. A kneeling abbess by Philip of Champagne correlates with the account of Elly's illness and recovery. The Gioconda, or "the green pale wicked woman" [5, p. 510], triggers associations with Shakespeare's definition of jealousy as a green-eyed monster and also reminds of Elly's jealous mother. "The Wedding at Cana" by Veronese resonates with Elly's love for pleasures and hints at her nearing marriage. Finally, Raphael's "St. Michael Vanquishing Satan" presents an allegory of a condition for it: Elly is to overcome her weaknesses and strengthen her virtues.

(5) The story of Elly's mother's second marriage brought up a question whether a woman is capable of self-denial. That was a woman who made a precipitate marriage and who found herself therefore in an alien environment. Anne went on exploring the problem in her next stories. In "Out of the World" (1863), a young pleasure seeker marries a respectable doctor whose social contacts were limited to his practice, and both the spouses quickly fall into disenchantment with their family life. Resembling Elly in her pursuit of entertainment, Horatia is also Caroline's clone who nevertheless gets a chance to repair her mistake. While a married woman was supposed to adopt her husband's life style, A. Thackeray believed personality patterns cannot be altered in a radical way, which made her feel skeptical about marriage as a guarantee for a woman's happiness. This feminist concept of marriage was also manifested in "Bluebeard's Keys" (1871) and "Miss Angel" (1875).

(6) "Miss Angel" was based on the biography of a famous painter Angelica



Kaufmann who proved to be nobler and stronger than her husband, who failed to fulfill herself in her family life but was extremely successful as an artist. It was very important for Anne her new heroine was a faithful daughter backed by a loving father. The further the story develops, the more obvious it becomes the writer regarded Kaufmann as her psychological counterpart. Such being the case, it was only natural for Anne to wonder whether it is possible for a woman to replicate Angelica's success in literature.

(7) "Miss Angel," as well as S. Johnson's "Lives of the Poets," and Mrs. Gaskell's "The Life of Charlotte Brönte" prompted A. Thackeray a model for biographies of the 19th-century women writers, thus turning to the creation of the history of women's writing. The idea to collect a number of biographical sketches previously published in "The Cornhill Magazine" in "A Book of Sybils" must have come to Anne through J. Kavanagh who in 1863 published her "English Women of Letters." Like Kavanagh, she also chose M. Edgeworth, Mrs. Opie and J. Austen for her heroines, having added a sketch on Mrs. Barbauld. Almost like Johnson and Kavanagh she lavishly quoted from the letters written by these ladies, which was in tune with the positivist cult of fact. Unlike Kavanagh, she did not try to separate biographies from literary criticism and achieved an admirable effect in representing her heroines as a line of literary women who managed to influence their readers most profitously.

(8) The focused study of women writing is believed to have been developed in the 1970s due to a powerful impact of E. Moers's monograph [4]. "A Book of Sybils," however, shows a century before A. Thackeray had cared for the same problems as Moers did, i.e. the problems of a tradition in women

writing and the reciprocal influence of female authors, their textual communication including. Both the Victorian lady and the pioneer of modern gynocriticism separated women writers from the mainstream of literary history. They also shared the belief women writing depends on personal life experience of female authors.

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