Henry Fielding between Satire and Sentiment

Politeness and Masculinity in Eighteenth-Century Britain

Dita Hochmanová

MASARYK UNIVERSITY PRESS

#**531**

OPERA FACULTATIS PHILOSOPHICAE
UNIVERSITATIS MASARYKIANAE

SPISY FILOZOFICKÉ FAKULTY
MASARYKOVY UNIVERZITY

MUNI
ARTS

Henry Fielding between Satire and Sentiment

Politeness and Masculinity in Eighteenth-Century Britain

Dita Hochmanová

MASARYK
UNIVERSITY
PRESS

BRNO 2023

KATALOGIZACE V KNIZE – NÁRODNÍ KNIHOVNA ČR

Hochmanová, Dita
Henry Fielding between satire and sentiment : politeness and masculinity in eighteenth-century Britain / Dita Hochmanová. – First published, electronic. – Brno : Masaryk University Press, 2023. – 1 online zdroj. – (Opera Facultatis philosophicae Universitatis Masarykianae = Spisy Filozofické fakulty Masarykovy univerzity, ISSN 2787-9291 ; 531)
České resumé
Obsahuje bibliografii a bibliografické odkazy

ISBN 978-80-280-0404-0 (online ; pdf)

* 821.111-31 * 82:316.3 * 159.922.1-055.1 * 177.1 * 316.613.42 * 82-7 * 808.543-027.21 * 82.07 * 82.09 * (410.1) * (048.8)
– Fielding, Henry, 1707-1754
– anglický román – 18. století
– literatura a společnost – Anglie – 18. století
– maskulinita
– zdvořilost
– empatie
– satira
– naratologie
– interpretace a přijetí literárního díla
– literárněvědné rozbory
– monografie

821.111.09 - Anglická literatura, anglicky psaná (o ní) [11]

Reviewed by PhDr. Soňa Nováková, CSc., MA (Charles University, Prague)
Stephen Paul Hardy, Ph.D. (Masaryk University, Brno)

The book cover background illustration: *Musei Wormiani Historia 1655* [engraving reproduction]. [online]. Available from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cabinet_of_curiosities#/media/File: Museum_Wormiani_Historia_1655_Wellcome_L0000128.jpg, (accessed 6 October 2023). Licenced by CC-BY, licence terms available from: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/, and a photograph: Pryce, W. The drawing room, alive with a 1760s richness of detail [in colour]. *Country Life Magazine* [online]. Available from: https://www.countrylife.co.uk/architecture/the-strangest-museum-in-london-dennis-severs-house-is-art-installation-theatre-set-and-18th-century-throwback-252271, (accessed 6 October 2023).

© 2023 Masaryk University, Dita Hochmanová

ISBN 978-80-280-0404-0
ISBN 978-80-280-0403-3 (paperback)
ISSN 1211-3034 (print)
ISSN 2787-9291 (online)
https://doi.org/10.5817/CZ.MUNI.M280-0404-2023

Table of Contents

1 Introduction 7

2 *Joseph Andrews* and the Problem of Decorum 17

3 *Tom Jones* and the Right Measure of Self-Interest 35

4 *Amelia* and the Limits of Empathy 61

5 Conclusion 87

Resumé 91

References 95

1 INTRODUCTION

In the long eighteenth century, the work of Henry Fielding represents a milestone between the era of the Ancients and the era of separation from the old values ushered in by the Moderns. His unique position between the two modes of thinking reflects pieces of both worlds – the fading world of the Ancients, which Fielding admired but could no longer belong to, and the developing space of the Moderns, who desired to depart from the old traditions and create their own values representative of the newly forming middle class. Even though Fielding was largely indebted to the satirical tradition of his predecessors, he managed to adapt to the new literary trends of his time and incorporate them into his writings. While experimenting with various forms of prose, he laid the foundation of the genre of the novel, a process which has been mapped in a great number of key studies, among others Ian Watt's *The Rise of the Novel*, Michael McKeon's *The Origins of the English Novel*, J. Paul Hunter's *Occasional Form* and Frederick Olds Bissell's *Fielding's Theory of the Novel.* The author's ability to blend various traditions – ranging from ancient models like Virgil or Milton, to foreign traditions in the works of Cervantes and Scarron, to the Augustans (especially John Gay and Jonathan Swift), to his contemporaries (especially Samuel Richardson, but also Addison and Steele) – shows not only his genius, but also the rich mixture of influences which was present at that time.

Fielding used these aesthetic traditions to enter a debate over one of the key social issues of the eighteenth century, taken up by many other thinkers and artists in this period – the struggle for social refinement in the form of politeness.[1] Although eighteenth-century definitions of what exactly is 'polite' may differ in details, Philip Carter identifies three essential principles on which eighteenth-cen-

1 P. Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society*, Harlow, Longman, 2001, p. 21.

tury commentators focused when defining politeness: propriety or decorum; elegance of manners (that is, behaving with elegant complaisance); and the display of generosity and accommodation to one's companions. As Carter says, the call for improved standards of behaviour was reflected especially in the work of 'the most influential early eighteenth century polite theorists, among them Anthony Ashley Cooper, third earl of Shaftesbury, and later the periodical essayists Joseph Addison and Richard Steele'.[2] Karen Harvey further explains the crucial connection between masculinity and politeness in that period and explains the difference between Addison and Steele's social-oriented mode of politeness and Shaftesbury's more intellectual approach to the subject.[3]

This great social project was also pursued by the painter William Hogarth and the writer Samuel Richardson, who contributed to the overall discussion about, and formation of, the new personal and social virtues, and who had a major influence on Fielding. This endeavour to reform manners and break free from the old patterns and values of the preceding generations became an opportunity for the thinkers and artists of the time to have a say in forming the future system of moralities, and to create models of behaviour against which people could be judged. Since the men and women of the emerging middle class were sufficiently financially secure and in dire need of new models of virtue which would define their identity, they became the target audiences for most writers. Reading novels and magazines became a common practice for them as well as an emblem of their social status. Erin Mackie's study 'The Commerce of Everyday Life' reveals that the largest portion of the new literate group interested in magazines 'came from Britain's professional bureaucracy and its commercial and financial classes'.[4] This group of people was the main and intended audience for the educational project supported by Steele and Addison, who published the magazines *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*. As Mackie explains, 'the task the papers set themselves is to reform sensibilities – aesthetic, sartorial, social, and sexual – of each man and woman in the reading audience so that he or she, guided by the principles of good sense, decorum and benevolence, would then do, say, like, and buy the right thing'.[5] The period magazines were, therefore, a major venue for the global propaganda of new values and moral standards.

Even though magazines, along with more traditional forms of moral-forming sources like religious texts and conduct books, were the most frequent type of reading for London citizens, the newly created audiences were also exposed to more enjoyable sorts of texts like novels, which became an important source

2 Ibid., p. 24.

3 K. Harvey, 'The History of Masculinity', *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 44, no. 2, 2005, p. 306.

4 E. Mackie (ed.), *The Commerce of Everyday Life*, Boston, Bedford/St. Martin's, 1998, p. 6.

5 Ibid., p. 2.