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**PECULIARITIES OF AUTHORIAL MASKS USED BY W.M. THACKERAY IN HIS WORKS****NATALLIA SHYSHKOVA, DENIS KONDAKOV**  
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*In this article authorial masks used by W.M. Thackeray in some of his works are considered. The main functions of authorial mask are mentioned. Some peculiarities of authorial masks worn by W.M. Thackeray are analyzed and examples are provided.*

Authorial mask, as any other kind of mask, is used either to reveal or hide the real face of its bearer. Masks, worn by W.M. Thackeray in his works, are plentiful and diverse but they all serve one main purpose - to show life as it is, without any flattering and painting in bright colours or, vice versa, maligning or blackening. His masks are always carefully chosen and give a reader the unique chance to observe described events from different angles, to get in every nook and, in his later and more psychological novels, to get to know innermost thoughts of the heroes. Thackeray hides his face behind the masks of Mr. Snob, the footman Yellowplush, the Manager of the performance but these masks at the same time reveal and make clear the author's attitude toward represented scenes, his sorrow for and anxiety about greed, selfishness, and hypocrisy spreading out in the contemporary society.

The truth in showing people's characters, emotions, motives, etc. was the principle W.M. Thackeray always stood to in his works. He was sure that the author has to be always honest while writing "...unless the painter paints him fairly, I hold he has no right to show him at all" [1, c.9]. He called a writer who misrepresented the reality "a quack, who shams sentiment, or mouths for effect" [1, c.8], who "seek popularity by clap-traps or other arts" [1, c.8].

Because of this principle, we cannot find in his works neither absolutely positive characters, nor undoubtedly negative ones. All people around have some weaknesses, sins, prejudices... Everybody can sometimes be accused of vanity, snobbery, disingenuity, boasting...

Very often people wear masks. And in order to tear the masks off his heroes Thackeray himself puts different masks on. His masks are never chosen by chance. They are always accurately planned and created in order to provide the reader with the opportunity to see what happens here, at this very moment, when there are plenty of people around, and at the same time what happens when the carriage turns round the corner or when all the doors are closed and only an old maid is the eyewitness of real appearance and manners of her master, the baronet.

In "The Yellowplush Papers" Thackeray puts on the mask of a servant Yellowplush. As servants always know everything about their masters a reader also obtains a rare possibility to learn about the true state of things in the life of the young man, "honorable" Percy Deuceace. "...there wasn't a paper in Deuceace's desk or drawer, not a bill, a note, or mimerandum, which I hadn't read as well as he...", "We had keys to all the cubbards - we pipped into all the letters that kem and went - we pored over all the bill-files..." [2, c. 324].

In "The Book of Snobs" W.M. Thackeray puts on the mask of Mr. Snob. This mask is complex and includes two characters: Frank Snob and the young fellow with pleasant appearance, we even don't know his name.

Frank Snob is the "positive" snob: "I mean by positive, such persons as are Snobs everywhere, in all companies, from morning till night, from youth to the grave, being by Nature endowed with Snobbishness... [3, c. 5]. These snobs often even don't realize that they are snobs they consider themselves to be absolutely innocent, highly moral people and angrily look down at crowds of "snobs" around them. For example, Lady Susan Scrapper "sets that prodigious value upon herself, upon her name, upon her outward appearance, and indulges in that intolerable pomposity; as long as she goes parading abroad, like Solomon in all his glory; as long as she goes to bed - as I believe she does - with a turban and a bird of paradise in it, and a court train to her night-gown; as long as she is so insufferably virtuous and condescending" but at the same time "O stars and garters! how she would start if she heard that she - she, as solemn as Minerva - she, as chaste as Diana (without that heathen goddess's unladylike propensity for field-sports) - that she too was a Snob!" [3, c. 29].

The second character belongs to the category of "relative" snobs: "...who are Snobs only in certain circumstances and relations of life" [3, c. 5]. These two characters have the same surname "Snob" and visit the same places and meet the same people. This complex mask helps to show the problem of snobbery from two opposite points of view, from inside and outside.

In "Vanity Fair" the mask of the Manager of the performance gives the author really unlimited opportunities in describing not only events and life situations but also feelings, thoughts, motives and emotions often hidden behind external decorum. Every character in this novel wears a mask and hides his or her true face and true thoughts. For example Rebecca Sharp in her letter to Amelia wrote that she had passed the fatal night in which

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she had separated from Amelia in tears and sadness but in reality she concluded the operation of wiping her eyes with her handkerchief the very moment the carriage had turned round the corner of the street. Amelia Sedley who was very charming, good-natured, kind and naïve insisted upon Rebecca accepting muslin dress but only because it was too small for Amelia herself and she wanted to present Rebecca white cashmere shawl but only because her brother had just brought her two from India. The reader gets to know all this due to masterfully chosen authorial mask that opens all the doors and breaks cover.

As it has been mentioned above, masks can also help to reveal the face of their owner. So, in "The Yellowplush Papers" the figure of the footman Yellowplush, chosen by Thackeray as his authorial mask, is extremely far from the real author, it is diametrically opposite in every detail. While reading the story we clearly understand that illiterate speech of the footman, his way of thinking, his life style, his lackey understanding of morality and honesty is absolutely alien to W. Thackeray and the distance between the narrator and the author is enormous.

In "The Book of Snobs" the figure of the young Snob is slightly autobiographical: (this young man works for Punch, his wife's name is Bessy) and we may assume that this young man's point of view on snobbery and snobs is approved and shared by W. Thackeray and is opposed to the second opinion expressed by the "positive" snob Frank Snob.

In "Vanity Fair" the Manager of the performance addresses to the audience before the curtain, then at the end of the performance and also makes different statements, expresses his thoughts and shares opinions in the course of the narrative. The position of the author and his attitude towards events and characters described is clearly seen and understood in this novel. Bertil Romberg even thinks that in this novel W. Thackeray speaks directly to the reader and that his messages are delivered unmediated by any fictional stance, like narrator or authorial mask. "I" of Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, as being quite separate from the fiction, standing "to one side of it, or rather above it" [4, c. 28].

Authorial masks masterfully chosen by W.M. Thackeray perfectly serve the realization of his literary principle – to provide only true and fair description of the society and life. These masks enable readers to observe presented events from different points of view, from inside and outside and to draw their own conclusions taking into account all the details provided by the author. In addition they also get to know the author's personal attitude toward questions and problems raised, as authorial masks used by W.M. Thackeray not only hide the face of the writer, but also reveal it.

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