NO. 120 FALL 2011

Victorians

A JOURNAL OF CULTURE AND LITERATURE

(formerly *The Victorian Newsletter)*

Victorians. A Journal of Culture and Literature publishes scholarly articles by many of the most prominent Victorian academics of the last half century. As such, *VCL* reflects the genesis and development of contemporary Victorian studies. *VCL* is a refereed publication featuring analyses of Victorian culture and literature. The editor welcomes book announcements, review copies, and book reviews, along with announcements of interest to the Victorian academic community.

Tables of Contents for *The Victorian Newsletter* from 1952 through 2011 *and*
Full texts of issues 1 (1952) through 80 (1991) *and*
Annotated indices are available at
www.wku.edu/victorian

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Manuscript submissions: MLA formatting and documentation sent as: one hard-copy and electronic e-mail attachment (MS Word doc or RTF).

Subscription Rates: United States, $15.00 per year; foreign rates, including Canada, $17.00 (USD) per year. Please address checks to *The Victorian Newsletter.*

Victorians. A Journal of Culture and Literature is sponsored for the Victorian Group of the Modern Language Association by Western Kentucky University and is published twice yearly.

 ISSN 0042-5192.

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Journal of Culture and Literature

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Victorians Journal of Culture and Literature
Fall 2011, Special Edition
William Makepeace Thackeray, 1811-2011

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Greetings from the Editor

Victorians Journal of Culture and Literature, Fall 2011, #120 marks sixty continuous years of twice-yearly publication, beginning with *The Victorian Newsletter* in 1952 and continuing today under a new format and name. To celebrate this significant anniversary, we offer a special edition featuring new work on William Makepeace Thackeray, in honor of the bicentenary of his birth. The volume is separated into two sections, the first addressing Thackeray's periodicals writing and serialized novels, other than *Vanity Fair*. The second section is entirely devoted to *Vanity Fair*, attesting to that novel's enduring popularity and critical fascination. I'm pleased and excited to offer such a wealth of scholarly material on lesser-known Thackeray works as well as on a perennial favorite.

We begin with From Paris to *Punch*: William Makepeace Thackeray and a New Era in Social Satire, co-authored by Clare Horrocks and Gary Simons. After establishing Thackeray's role as a "French-English cultural intermediary and conceptual shaper of *Punch*," the article presents new research, based on the scholars' study of *Punch*'s contributor and editorial ledgers held at the British Library, in which heretofore unidentified Thackeray articles and illustrations are detected, dated, and analyzed. This highly significant work offers truly original, valuable, and innovative contributions to the well-established Thackeray scholarship of the last century-and-a-half, promising to enhance our understanding of an author whose work continues to bear revisiting and reanalyzing.

Carolyn Jacobson's "Great and Undeniable Likeness": Portraiture, Legitimacy, and Realism in Thackeray's *The History of Henry Esmond* studies the fictional Castlewood family in the context of an actual historical event—one of many plots to restore James "the Pretender" to the English throne. A consideration of realism versus appearance takes shape in this comparative study of the glorification of the imperial body (as in Rigaud) and Thackeray's characteristically shrewd satirization of the humiliating reality behind the dignified façade. Where Jacobson looks at questions of imperial and aristocratic legitimacy, Susan Ray, in Thackeray and India: Re-examining England's Narrative of its Indian Empire, investigates the personal and public ramifications of racial legitimacy through Victorian attitudes toward miscegenation. This article aligns Thackeray's personal experience (his Eurasian half-sister and "black niece") with texts addressing broader social attitudes on the issue. His fictions—*The Tremendous Adventures of Major Gahagan*, *Vanity Fair*, and *The Newcomes*—directly address a prominent aspect of colonial life "often overlooked in England's celebrated national narrative of empire."

Bildung by Numbers: Serialization, Readership, and Narrative Form in Thackeray's Pendennis Novels by Alice Crossley considers the impact on readers of the three Pendennis novels, published serially over a period of fourteen years, in terms of the *Bildungsroman* each develops and the "real-time" parallel readers themselves experience as they mature. Far from fragmentation occasioned by the passage of time between installments, Crossley argues, the advertisements of both commodity culture and literary works interspersed throughout each installment were not interruptive but rather established a strong narrative continuity with which readers powerfully identified.

The section on *Vanity Fair* begins with The Green Silk Purse and Little Rawdon's Shirt: Sartorial Literacy and Domestic Performance in *Vanity Fair* by Stephanie Womick, an analysis of the performative qualities of Victorian domesticity and of "sartorial literacy," the deliberate manipulation of clothing and self-presentation to achieve material ends. This comparative study of Amelia and Becky reveals the centrality of one's awareness that these performances, and their role in commodities exchange (here, the marriage-market and sexuality), permits female empowerment; however, such "subversion is only possible...when the woman in question recognizes the value of her performance." Sean O'Brien's "in company let us hope with better qualities": Invoked Readers in *Vanity Fair* offers an insightful alternative to analyses of *implied readers* (hypothetical) and *actual readers* (real) by focusing on *invoked readers*. Thackeray is notorious for the inventive ways he implicates readers in social judgments, ultimately compelling them to self-scrutiny, and it is this idiosyncratic quality that O'Brien investigates through the author's endlessly entertaining invocations to readers.

Jennifer Sattaur's Furniture and Domesticity in *Vanity Fair* is a cultural studies examination of such commodity objects as Becky's davenport (in which she conceals other men's gifts from Rawdon) and Amelia's piano (a symbol of social ascendancy and her own frustratingly enduring ignorance). Nikole King shifts the focus from the women to the men characters, in effect scrutinizing the "sartorial illiteracy" of Thackeray's three primary protagonists. The Male Body and Heroic Manhood in Thackeray's *Vanity Fair: A Novel without a Hero* investigates the novel's lack of heroic figures through Victorian concepts of proper masculinity, concluding that the hapless Dobbin is the only viable hero, "flawed but admirable" as he is.

Julia Bninski's *Vanity Fair's* Ethic of Readerly Emotion echoes the concept of *invoked readers* by positing that Thackeray deliberately evokes the significance of emotions and ethical judgments, thus implicating readers in the relationships shared by "author, reader, text, and reality." And finally, Cheryl Wilson's 'Twas the Night before Waterloo: Narrating the Nation in *Vanity Fair* studies compelling analogies between dance (social) and the military (politics) through the Waterloo Ball episode, an historical event, like the battle, that Thackeray weaves into his fiction. Here, dance "provides a theatrical and performative counterpoint to the novel's use of military metaphors and language." This article considers the implications of the author's privileging an account of the ball over that of the battle, thus also privileging the personal affairs of his characters over world events.

As editor, my thanks extend first to the authors featured in this number, whose excellent scholarship I am very proud to present. At Western Kentucky University, I thank assistant editor Cassie Bergman; office associate Laura Wagner; and cover designer Tom Meacham. *Victorians Journal*'s support system includes English Department Head Karen Schneider; Potter College Dean David Lee; and Provost Gordon Emslie. Finally, as always, many thanks to Zack Adams for his technical assistance and to Gerald Ajam for the *Victorian Web* Thackeray image (p. 66).

Deborah Logan
Bowling Green, 2011

From Paris to *Punch*: William Makepeace Thackeray and a New Era in Social Satire

by Clare Horrocks and Gary Simons

William Makepeace Thackeray's contributions to the Victorian satirical weekly *Punch* are not only among the most culturally significant aspects of his literary legacy: they are also crucial for understanding the form and tone of the magazine itself. Scholars have recognized that *Punch*'s formulation of "graphic satire" was patterned on that of a Parisian predecessor, *Le Charivari*. However, Thackeray's knowledge of and writings about Parisian culture and satire have not previously been identified as constructive influences on the successful style and structure of the English magazine. Further, previous treatments of Thackeray's *Punch* contributions, such as the overview study by Andrew Sanders or the recent critical edition by Edgar Harden, have emphasized major series such as *The Snobs of England*. Yet Thackeray's many one-off occasional articles—whose attribution is heavily based on unpublished and rarely examined *Punch Contributor Ledgers*—may better typify the stylistic nature and cultural content of the magazine. Accordingly, this essay first establishes and clarifies Thackeray's role as a French-English cultural intermediary and conceptual shaper of *Punch* through a consideration of his letters, diaries, and, most specifically, his 1839 article on "Parisian Caricatures" (subsequently incorporated into *The Paris Sketch Book*). A second aim is to examine the nature and limitations of the *Punch* contributor ledger books and to identify two previously unattributed articles as Thackeray's. Our third and final purpose is to analyze several of Thackeray's occasional articles with regard to such factors as cultural content, modes of graphic satire, French influences and associations, and relationships to the social satire and style of Thackeray's later work.

I. Thackeray and the French Progenitors of *Punch*'s Graphic Satire

The range of rhetorical strategies present in *Punch*'s satire and its variety of verbal and visual iconography can be traced through the rich and diverse history of print culture in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. However, the context of the term "satire" is itself problematic as it encompasses both British and European traditions. A progressive relationship between satire, the mass media, and the rise of popular culture across the long nineteenth century must be considered. According to Mark Bills, graphic satire was essentially an urban phenomenon, developed in London and combining the high art traditions of anatomy (guided rules and theories on drawing the human subject) and the lower art form of satire (13). Certainly the 1840s was a formative decade for the evolution of graphic satire, but many of its traditions also came from the Continent, not just London. Metropolitan in its outlook, *Punch*, or the "London Charivari" as it was subtitled, was clearly influenced by Parisian and Continental culture. From both of these origins came popular emblems and symbolic references which recurred across the pages of *Punch*. However, *Punch* personalized the graphic satirical art form, with main cut (i.e. graphic) sketches on topical issues which came to be coined "cartoons" in 1843.

Unlike the comparatively short-lived success of many other contemporary periodicals, *Punch* secured a long-lasting niche in the burgeoning market of increasingly literate readers. The magazine offered a breadth and range of verbal and visual iconography that distinguished it from its contemporaries. For it was not just the main cuts that contributed to the character of *Punch*, but all of the regular features—the small cuts, the social cuts, the initial letters and the one-line quips, the integration of text and graphics—that are central to Thackeray's contributions to the magazine, as he illustrated much of his own work. But Thackeray did not work alone, and an argument needs to be made for how influential his role was in the distinctive *Punch* Brotherhood of artists and writers that contributed to the magazine's success.

Robert Martin observes that "one of the factors setting *Punch*'s tone was the personality of its staff" (219). The impact of this "brotherhood" has recently been explored by Patrick Leary in the acclaimed *The Punch Brotherhood: Table Talk and Print Culture in Mid-Victorian London*. As Leary declares, it was "the solidarity and exclusiveness of the staff as a whole, and their collective commitment to the magazine" that contributed to its success (13). However, according to Martin, Thackeray became "the reigning literary lion," bringing a "grand cultural perspective, an expansiveness, a sometimes mordant wit, and an abiding fascination with social pretension in its myriad forms" to his work (220). The magazine's change of direction and focus after 1843, which has previously been credited to the change of ownership and the influence of Bradbury and Evans, is perhaps more likely due to Thackeray's influence. And the source of Thackeray's expansive perspective and subsequent influence on *Punch*'s style from 1843 dates from the time he spent in Paris during the 1830s and 1840s.

According to Richard Pearson, "Paris is a symbolic place of value to Thackeray's sense of self identity, and his notion of the writer in the modern-age" (98). In 1829 and 1830 Thackeray holidayed in France, visiting again in 1831; in 1833, as the *National Standard*'s Paris correspondent, he began to study the city's art and artists. In the autumn of 1834, Thackeray settled in Paris as an art student (Buchanan-Brown 10); following his marriage to Isabella Shawe on August 20, 1836, he was appointed Paris correspondent of *The Constitutional*. Frequently in his letters Thackeray referred to Paris as a source of inspiration for his writing.[1] In February 1849, writing from Meurice's Hotel in Rivoli Street, Paris to Mrs. Brookfield, he declared "I am undergoing the quarantine of family dinners with the most angelic patience . . . it will give me a subject for at least six weeks in *Punch*, of which I was getting so weary that I thought I must have done with it" (Brookfield 38-39). That France, and particularly its capital, had been a source of inspiration for *Punch* was evident from *Punch*'s subtitle, the "London Charivari"—an homage to Charles Philipon's Parisian *Le Charivari*, begun in the 1830s when Thackeray was working and studying in Paris.

Though it has been acknowledged by scholars that *Punch* was inspired by *Le Charivari*, little attention has been paid to the form or context of that paper. The style and content of the French newspaper provides a key to locating the distinctive "social voice" that *Punch* also wished to create. As Altick notes:

[1] For a detailed analysis of Thackeray's relationship with France, see Pearson's *W. M. Thackeray and the Mediated Text*, specifically Chapter 5 (97-122).

> [*Le Charivari*'s] most innovative move was to reach outside the narrow conventions of the little-regarded comic genre to which it belonged. Philipon had shown the way, when to compensate for *Le Charivari*'s loss of political verve when censorship was imposed, he added small illustrations, rubrics and marginal ornaments. *Punch* followed his example, and it was this widening of visual appeal, as much as the textual contents and the trenchant yet modulated political cartoons that won it the cultivated readership no other English comic periodical had ever enjoyed. (150)

However, *Le Charivari* was not Philipon's only satirical publication: his name was actually established in 1830 with the publication *La Caricature*, created in response to the July Monarchy's declaration of liberty for the press. The size of a modern tabloid newspaper, the journal aspired to be "moral, religious, literary and scenic," and adopted the motto "*castigat ridendo mores*" (one chastises character [or habits] by laughing) (Forbes xiii). Like *Punch*, *La Caricature* was a weekly publication able to be more current and topical than monthly periodicals. The daily newspaper *Le Charivari*, in contrast, started in 1832 while Philipon was in prison, frequently relied on a stockpile of prints published in advance. France's monarch Louis-Philippe endured a turbulent relationship with the press despite his declaration of liberty in 1830. Following a period of turmoil when caricature was used to wield power and to "call political and social superiors to task," an outright ban on political satire in 1835 significantly affected Philipon's publications (xv). In the same year, *La Caricature* ceased production and Philipon continued to publish *Le Charivari*, though with a distinct change of style and approach.

As Thackeray noted in *The Paris Sketch Book*, the French had always enjoyed a superior appreciation of art in all its forms; however, with the July 1830 Revolution came a series of caricatures and "fierce epigrams" aimed at the monarch and the state which changed the role of the visual. These traditions endured after the imposition of censorship in 1835, for "there is always food for satire; and the French caricaturists, being no longer allowed to hold up to ridicule and reprobation the King and the deputies, have found no lack of subjects for the pencil in the ridicules and rascalities of common-life" (*Paris Sketch Book* 170). This was the real source of the *Charivari* style, the "popular politics of satire in public space," the satire of "the streets" (Forbes 177) that Thackeray and others promulgated as a "blueprint" for *Punch*. The Parisian satire that inspired the creation of *Punch* should not only be associated with *Le Charivari*, but also with the broader circumstances that surrounded the latter's creation, including the publication of *La Caricature*. As Forbes has asserted in *The Satiric Decade*, satire is not a fixed rhetoric of exaggeration but rather is enmeshed in a specific socio-cultural context. The context of Philipon's work was one that had to be appreciated by those who lived and worked in France during that period, as Thackeray had done; only then could it successfully be adapted in England.

Although an illustrated press had existed in France before Philipon, his newspapers

> were the first into whose design the caricatures were fully integrated and in which they performed an essential function. The prints in his newspapers did not simply illustrate the articles, nor were the articles written simply to introduce or explain the prints; text and lithographs collaborated on a common project, sharing the aims and tactics imposed upon them by Philipon's active direction. (Kerr 5)

Philipon's work demonstrated the changing dynamic between verbal and visual rhetoric at the beginning of the nineteenth century which was further developed by *Punch*. It was a form of satire in which the visual could exist independently of the verbal, while still "sharing the aims and tactics" of the "common project." Philipon's success was also due in part to the network of young artists he appointed to work with him on both publications, most notably Daumier, Monnier and Gavarni. Daumier, like Philipon, had also been sent to prison for his part in creating satirical prints of the monarch. His work was influential in the style and form of *Le Charivari* and was a source of inspiration to Thackeray, who dedicated an entire chapter to "Caricatures and Lithography in Paris" in *The Paris Sketch Book*.[2] In this chapter he clearly identifies with Daumier, arguing that the imperfections of the sketch are nothing as long as the sentiment is sincere, "though he executes very carelessly, knows very well what he would express, indicates perfectly the attitude and identity of his figure, and is quite aware beforehand of the effect which he intends to produce" (*Paris* 186).[3] Indeed comic effect was central to Thackeray's orientation and became central to *Punch*; as Henkle notes, Thackeray's "enjoyment [was] in the comic production itself" (105). The social nature of the subject matter and the richness of street culture as a source for caricature fascinated Thackeray and inspired him, along with a group of like-minded colleagues, to propose a "London Charivari" (Spielmann, *History* 15-16). Although Thackeray withdrew from the initial *Punch* proposal due to financial considerations, he contributed in 1842 as a free-lancer and, from 1844, as a regular staff member. Drawing upon his understanding of Philipon's publications, Thackeray influenced the early concept behind *Punch* and shaped the magazine into an enduring satiric vehicle during the key mid-1840s.

II. Identifying Thackeray's Contributions to *Punch*: the *Punch Contributor Ledgers*[4]

Thackeray's shorter *Punch* pieces (half column to one or two columns) are unfortunately often overlooked by scholars; and yet these archetypal and culturally revealing articles are closest to the issues of their times and arguably best demonstrate Thackeray's topical wit. But for several decades after Thackeray's death, attribution uncertainties hindered identification and analysis of these works. Spielmann, relying on a ledger book of contributions to *Punch* from February 11, 1843 through September 30, 1848,[5] published in 1899 a bibliography and summary analysis of many of these "lost" occasional articles, claiming his work was "a complete and authoritative [Thackeray—*Punch*] Bibliography from 1843 to 1848" (*Hitherto* title page). Half-a-century later, Gordon Ray uncovered a *Punch* ledger book for October 21, 1848 to August 11, 1855 and published "a final bibliography" of Thackeray's *Punch* writings ("Thackeray and 'Punch'"). Nevertheless, Thackeray's current *Punch* bibliography is demonstrably incomplete and, perhaps, not final (see Harden, *Checklist*). The following discussion explores the nature and limitations of the *Punch Contributor Ledgers*, addresses the gaps in Thackeray's *Punch* bibliography, and identifies two additional *Punch* pieces which have heretofore not been attributed to Thackeray.

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[2] First printed in *The London and Westminster Review* under the title "Parisian Caricatures" 32 (April 1839): 282-305.

[3] A similar sentiment was expressed about Thackeray's work by his contemporary, Anthony Trollope: "He did illustrate his own books, and everyone knows how incorrect were his delineations but as illustrations they were excellent....Like Hogarth, he could always make his picture tell his story, though, unlike Hogarth, he had not learned to draw" (7, 30).

[4] Portions of this section of the essay are taken from Gary Simons' dissertation, "A Pecuniary Explication of William Makepeace Thackeray's Critical Journalism."

[5] The bound ledger book currently in the British Library contains only pages from March 4, 1843 onward.

A typical issue of *Punch* in the 1840s consisted of ten pages: a full-page "center cut" graphic, its blank inverse, and eight pages of largely two-column text and graphics. Thus, in addition to the center cut, editor Mark Lemon needed sixteen column equivalents of mixed text and graphics for each issue. To meet that need, a combination of articles—some taking up as much as one or two pages and others as short as a few lines of filler—were employed. Every item, however large or small, had an identifying headline or title. For example, *Punch* issue #234 (published January 3, 1846) was comprised of thirty separate articles in addition to the center cut. The two smallest articles were each two lines of text and a title; the largest article took a little less than one page (or equivalently a little less than two columns). Similarly, the next number, issue #235, had twenty-nine distinct articles. Most large articles were partially graphical; some articles were entirely graphic in nature. To fill the sixteen columns, Mark Lemon primarily drew upon the resources of a small group of staff writers. The first recorded group in the *Punch Contributor Ledgers* for issue #86 (March 4, 1843) includes Douglas Jerrold, Albert Smith, Gilbert à Beckett, Percival Leigh, and Kenny Meadows. Additionally, some articles were designated in Lemon's records as "Editor's" or "Editor's Copy," meaning that they were supplied by Mark Lemon either directly or indirectly through the contributions of non-staff contributors. Because Thackeray began writing for *Punch* before the start date of the first of the recovered ledger books, his earliest contributions were not documented. Further, during 1843 Thackeray wrote as a free-lance contributor—one whose contributions would be included under the "Editor's Copy" section of the ledger book and whose name might or might not have been "attached" to a contribution.

The handwritten contribution ledger books used as primary sources by Spielmann and Ray, now available as part of the *Punch* archive at the British Library, contain individual record pages for each separate weekly number or issue of *Punch*. These pages list the name of each primary staff member, followed by his contributions (by title and, usually, by column length to the nearest quarter column) to that issue; the right side of the ledger indicates the total number of columns in that issue for that writer. The number of graphics ("cuts") to be inserted into an author's contributions was sometimes also indicated, but it is clear from a perusal of these manuscript account books and issues of the magazine that the column lengths shown are approximate measures of text length only. At the bottom of each page, a similar section lists the editor's copy articles for that issue; infrequently, the name of a non-staff contributor was also shown, but generally the source of an editor's copy article was not specified.

The first of these ledger books also contains monthly summary pages, recording and summarizing the total number of textual columns each staff member provided for each issue. Volume summary pages similarly accumulated the monthly totals for staff members. Addition errors appear in these ledgers; consequently, the totals Spielmann and Ray took from the ledger summary pages are sometimes incorrect. More significantly, the ledgers are not always complete. Sometimes one or more articles published in a given issue of *Punch* are simply not included in the listing on that issue's contribution ledger page, and there is no obvious pattern as to the size (or nature or likely authorship) of the omitted articles. Possibly these omissions were inadvertent, or perhaps they reflect late additions or last-minute copy changes. In any event, these omissions problematize the completeness of any bibliography drawn from these ledgers—several articles

now thought to be written by Thackeray are, in fact, articles that are not listed in the ledgers[6]—and it is certainly possible that other still untraced Thackeray articles are also among the missing. Moreover, one should remember that there is a ledger "gap"—the *Punch* issues of October 7 and October 14, 1848—that are not covered in either ledger.

Finally, the editor's ledger books do not directly address the source of drawings, which thus often remains an unsolved bibliographic puzzle and raises complex issues about composite intent and meaning. Thackeray, of course, was both a writer and an illustrator; sometimes he supplied illustrations to support his own articles, sometimes he did not, and sometimes he provided illustrations for articles written by others. Some of Thackeray's illustrations are "signed" with an image of a pair of spectacles, but again many are not. As Edgar Harden writes, "The unsigned drawings accompanying Thackeray's own contributions to *Punch*...require notice but often cannot positively be attributed to him" (Harden, *Checklist* 10).

One can specify with some certainty Thackeray's first contribution to *Punch*. Although Arthur Prager reports Athol Mayhew's assertion that Thackeray wrote the July 1841 article, "A Fair Offer" (96), Spielmann—based on stylistic considerations—instead suggests that Thackeray's first *Punch* article was in June, 1842, "The Legend of Jawbrahim Heraudee" (*Contributions* 16). Thackeray's collected letters (published by Gordon Ray in 1945-46 and supplemented by Edgar Harden in 1995) shed light on this issue. Drawing on his culturally expansive knowledge of French literature, Thackeray noted in his diary for February 2, 1842, that "Jawbrahim Heraudee" was a good subject in a French tale for a possible story (Ray, *Letters* 2:829). On June 11, 1842, one week before the publication of "The Legend of Jawbrahim Heraudee," Thackeray wrote to his mother that he was writing for the *Foreign Quarterly Review* and for *Punch* (2:51-55). In a September 19, 1842 letter to *Punch* publishers Bradbury and Evans, Thackeray stated that he had been writing for them for nearly three months (Harden, *Letters* 1:122). The confluence of these comments strongly supports Spielmann's assessment that "The Legend of Jawbrahim Heraudee" was Thackeray's first contribution.

Thackeray's first series for *Punch* was the eleven "Miss Tickletoby Lectures on English History," published between July and October of 1842. However, in this case as for other Thackeray articles in *Punch*, it is not clear if Thackeray himself drew the twenty-four unsigned supporting illustrations. Once again, Thackeray's letters, in concert with the *Punch* ledger, provide useful guidance. The September 19, 1842 letter referenced above makes clear that Thackeray's agreed rate of pay as a free-lance contributor was two guineas per page or one guinea per column. The eleven Tickletoby articles collectively include approximately twenty-six and one-half columns of text; at one guinea per column, this comes to roughly £28. This figure is in substantive agreement with the twenty-five pounds Thackeray acknowledged receiving by September 27, 1842 (Ray, *Letters* 2:84); that remuneration might not have included payment for the last article, which was not published until early October. However, the Tickletoby article illustrations occupy nearly an additional seven (6.7) columns; although their provenance has not previously been established, this analysis shows that Thackeray was not paid for these illustrations. Nor indeed was this series deemed to be successful at the time of publication. In a letter to Bradbury and Evans (September 27, 1842), Thackeray wrote that he was sorry to learn

[6] As examples of accepted Thackeray articles which are not in the *Punch* contribution ledger, see "Mr. Maloney's Account" (August 3, 1850) and "No News from Paris" (February 8, 1851).

that they were dissatisfied with his contributions and that he "shall gladly cease Mrs Tickletoby's lectures." Thackeray's solution was to return to France: he closed the letter stating, "I shall pass the winter in Paris or in London where very probably I may find some matter more suitable to the paper, in wh. case I shall make another attempt upon 'Punch'" (MS 88937/4/79 British Library Collection). The results of this "search for inspiration" can be identified in the ledgers from December 1843.

Thackeray became a full-time staff member of *Punch* in late December 1843 upon the resignation of Albert Smith, (who, ironically, was dismissed for plagiarizing French satires) (Adrian 37); but he was not individually listed in the *Punch* editor's record book as a regular contributor until issue #131 (January 13, 1844). Thackeray bibliographers from Marion Spielmann to Edgar Harden have credited Thackeray with contributing only a single half-column article to the previous issue (#130, January 6, 1844) (Spielmann, *Contributions* 320; Harden, *Checklist* 30). But the detailed ledger page for *Punch* #130 (fig. 1), contains new and unanalyzed information.[7] As previously explained, the category "Editor's" details contributions made by the editor or by free-lance contributors; for example, the second article, "Reflections on New Year's Day," was written by Thomas Hood and occupied half a column. The reference to a Thackeray contribution which has been caught by previous bibliographers is "Important Promotions (Thackeray's) ½," referring to the half-column article entitled "Important Promotion! Merit Rewarded" (fig. 7). But the following words, "A Christmas Game (Ditto) ¾. Shirt Question (Ditto) ¼. Regarding the Royal Billiard Table (Ditto) 1 ½.," are also important—indicating the ledger writer believed that these three articles, which would have brought Thackeray's contributions to that issue of *Punch* up to exactly three columns, were also by Thackeray. The "Ditto" comment for "A Christmas Game" was subsequently crossed out and replaced with a reference to John Oxenford, but the provenance of "Another Word on the Shirt Question," and "Regarding the Royal George Billiard Table" remains at issue.

Punch's ledger book also included monthly summary totals for all staff contributors; the monthly summary for the period December 16, 1843—January 6, 1844 (excluding the almanac issue published on December 30) explicitly states that Thackeray contributed three columns of material for the third week, *Punch* issue #130 (January 6, 1844) (fig. 2). The summary ledger for the first half of 1844 similarly reflects a large Thackeray contribution to issue #130, and limits John Oxenford's contribution to one column. Thus, the combination of the detailed January 6 ledger page and the summary ledger pages indicate that "Another Word on the Shirt Question" and "Regarding the Royal George Billiard Table" should be regarded as new additions to Thackeray's *Punch* bibliography.

Indeed, *Punch* itself published indirect confirmation that the article entitled "Another Word on the Shirt Question" and signed Philodicky was by Thackeray. In the following (January 13, 1844) issue of *Punch*, the article "The Ducal Hat for Jenkins," which is with certainty attributed to Thackeray, includes the following unusual integrated footnote:

> It has been said that *Punch* has not been grave enough on all occasions in the conduct of this miscellany, and therefore, ever anxious to please the public, *Mr. Punch* has engaged, at an immense expense, A MORAL YOUNG MAN of good parts and eloquence, and who has been, according to his own statement, connected with the *Observer* and the *Morning Herald* newspapers. He will be employed to write upon all great public questions, and is, in fact, the author of the letter signed Philodicky, which appeared in our last.

[7] It should be noted that this ledger page is somewhat atypical, as normally the great bulk of contributions were made by regular staff members.

This tongue-in-cheek announcement was apparently Thackeray's way of introducing himself to *Punch's* readership. Thackeray was, of course, not hired "at an immense expense"—as a permanent staff member he was now earning perhaps three guineas per column.[8] And there is no indication he was ever employed by the anti-Radical *Observer* or the Tory *Morning Herald*, newspapers which were often targets of *Punch*'s ridicule (Altick 79). The "moral young man" comment, printed for emphasis in small capitals, perfectly captures Thackeray's characteristic self-mockery, both in its false pretentiousness regarding his morality and in its substitution of moral value for literary skill. The "moral young man" descriptor is employed in other Thackeray articles in *Punch,* such as the January 20, 1844 "Leaves from the Lives of the Lords of Literature." Spielmann thought the "moral young man" phrase in that article was intended to skewer James Grant (*Contributions* 38-39*)*; but, considering the linkage to Philodicky and Thackeray's propensity to use self-mocking personas such as Titmarsh or Fitz-Boodle, it is evident that he intended the phrase to apply to himself. Although by mid-1844 Thackeray's *Punch* persona had become "the fat contributor," his earliest *nom de plume* was "the moral young man."

The problem of categorically identifying the artists for individual images remains, although the *Punch Contributor Ledgers* provide the data to begin to identify a system for understanding how this role was organized amongst the salaried staff, reinforcing the value of the ledgers and how much work remains to be undertaken on them. It can be argued, for example, that the *Punch Contributor Ledgers* do facilitate identification of the artists of the smaller illustrations. Each staff member's contributions are either recorded in the "Cuts" or "Column" section. For the January 6 issue, aside from the main cut, "12 Twelve Night Characters" by Leech, there is one small "cut" recorded for A'Beckett, one for Leigh, and one large and eleven small under Editor's copy. As has been noted, this was an unusual issue with so large an editor's contribution; however, it suffices to demonstrate a method for attributing illustrations. Leigh, for example, contributed only two pieces, "Bold Speculation" and "President's Message," the latter an epistolary narrative filling just over one full column with no illustration. The former occupied almost two columns, complete with an illustrated letter "v"—that is, one "small" cut. A "small" cut, through this method, can thus be identified as an illustrative letter, whereas a "large" cut is marked out as distinct from the "main cut" that was created by artists like Leech and Doyle. For the purposes of this article though, it is important to assert how prolific Thackeray was at contributing both text

[8] *Punch* editor Mark Lemon paid staffers a salary and allocated them a specified number of columns to fill. Undated surviving letters from Thackeray to Bradbury and Evans requesting payments for the "Punch Quarter" suggest that Thackeray also was ultimately salaried (Ray, *Letters* 4:325). One of these letters specifies the quarterly payment to be £70, and Thackeray's records document that he did in fact receive £70 from Bradbury and Evans in the first quarter of 1844 (2:840-42). An annual total of £280 would be very much in line with the reported annual compensation levels of £275 for Shirley Brooks (Layard 135), £325 for Henry Silver (Spielmann 258*)*, and £300 (plus a thirty shilling addition for each of the popular "Mrs. Caudle's Curtain Lectures" articles) for Douglas Jerrold (Price 104). This compensation was to cover a projected level of work; Spielmann states that Thackeray's allocation was forty-six columns per volume or ninety-two columns per year. An annual target of ninety-two columns and an annual salary of £280 imply an effective rate of three guineas per column.

and graphics. Once Thackeray began contributing on a regular basis to the magazine, the ledgers demonstrate the high percentage of "cuts" to "columns" which he contributed, often with two or three "small cuts" to each single piece that he worked on. Thus, an extended examination of the *Punch Contributor Ledgers* serves to identify individual contributors' work as well as facilitating an understanding of the magazine's larger verbal-visual interplay.

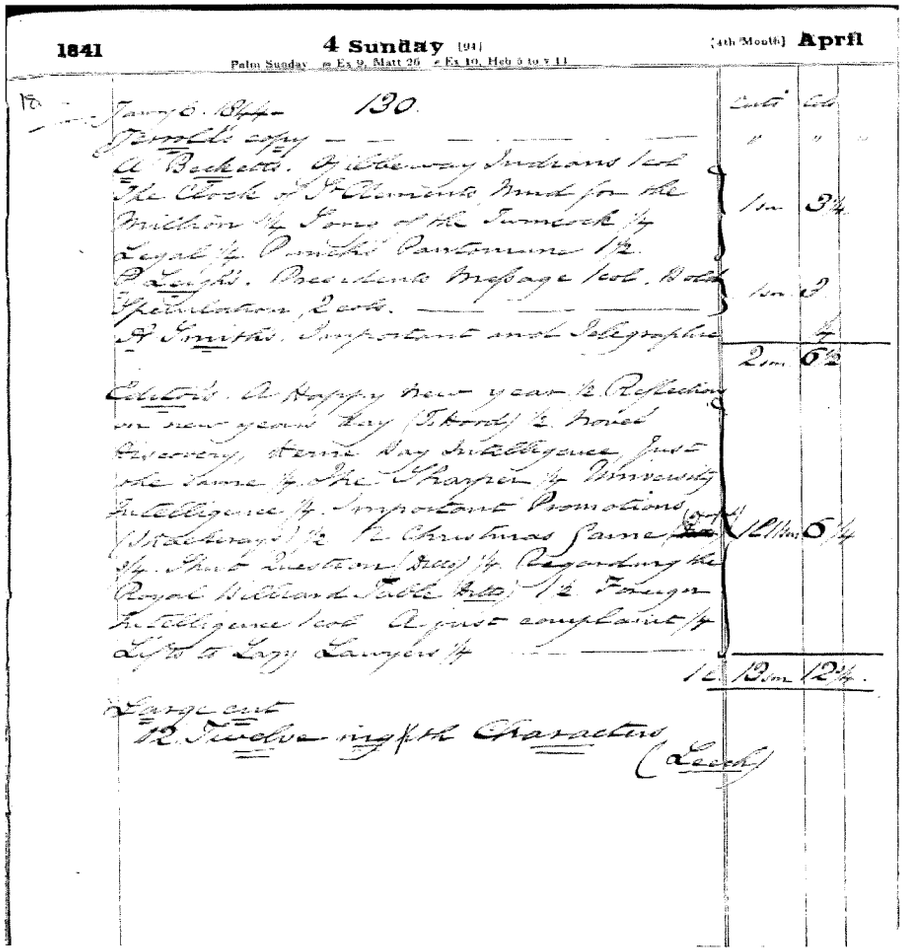


Fig.1. *Punch* Editor's Ledger, #130, Jan. 6, 1844.

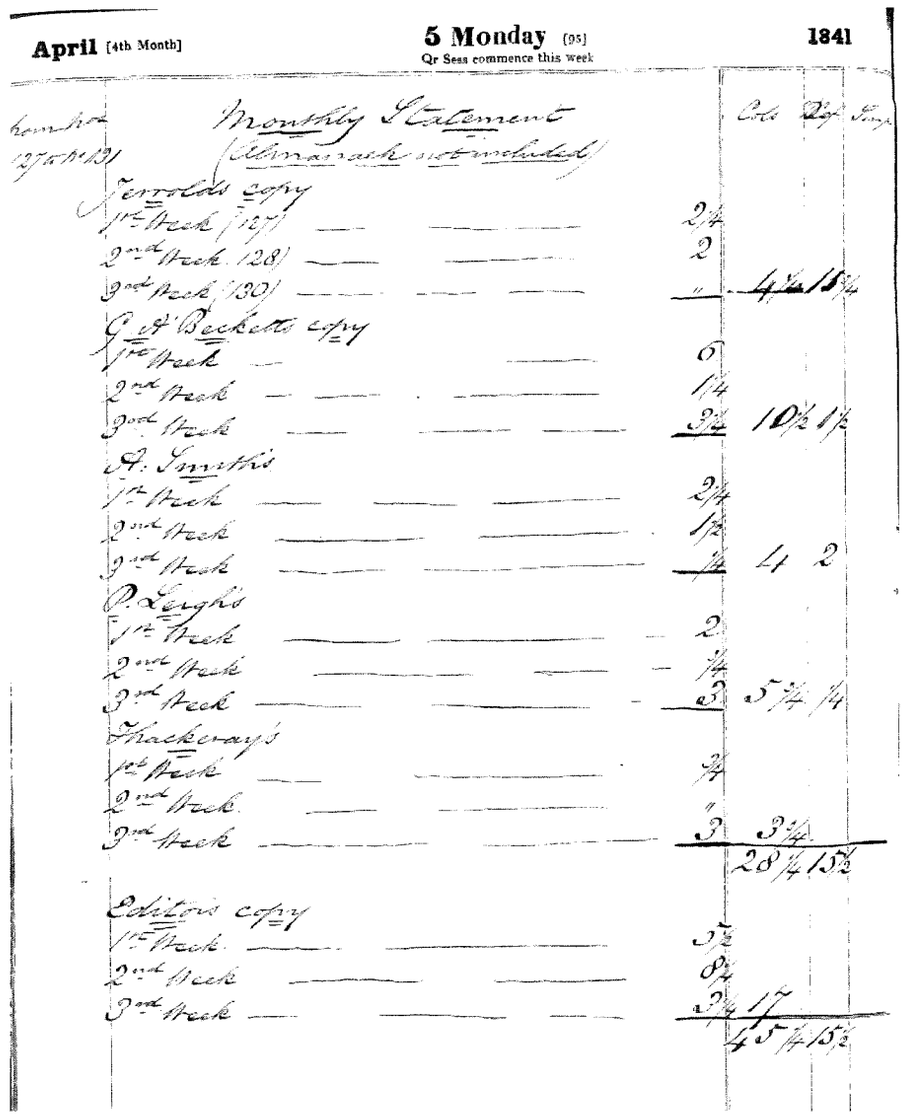
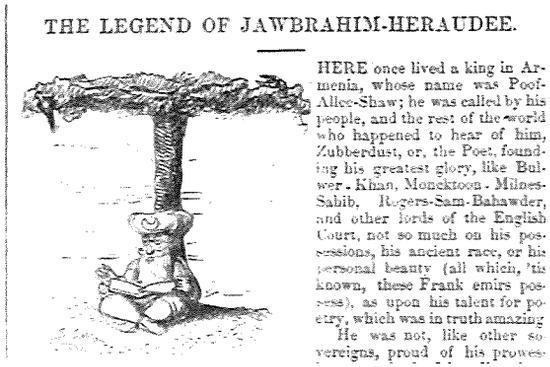


Fig. 2. *Punch Summary Ledger*, #127, 128, & 130 Dec. 16, 1843—Jan. 6, 1844.

III. Visual and Verbal Satire in Thackeray's Occasional *Punch* Articles

Thackeray's first occasional contribution to *Punch,* "The Legend of Jawbrahim Heraudee," opens with an illustrated letter ("T") of a bearded man reading (fig. 3). The story fills almost five full columns of text with an additional three silhouetted vignettes embedded within the narrative. The visual played a crucial role in *Punch* as it had done in *Le Charivari*; however, identifying the artist for each piece is as difficult as locating the author. Frequently Thackeray illustrated his own



THE LEGEND OF JAWBRAHIM-HERAUDEE.

HERE once lived a king in Armenia, whose name was Poof-Allee-Shaw; he was called by his people, and the rest of the world who happened to hear of him, Zubberdust, or, the Poet, founding his greatest glory, like Bulwer-Khan, Moncktoon-Milnes-Sahib, Rogers-Sam-Bahawder, and other lords of the English Court, not so much on his possessions, his ancient race, or his personal beauty (all which, 'tis known, these Frank emirs possess), as upon his talent for poetry, which was in truth amazing

He was not, like other sovereigns, proud of his prowes-

Fig. 3. *Punch,* June 18, 1842: 254.

work in order to capture the essence of what he was writing about more clearly; this practice carried through to his personal correspondence (fig. 4; Brookfield 61). Thackeray drew on a range of allusions as a form of symbolic shorthand (Kennedy 136); more importantly, as Buchanan-

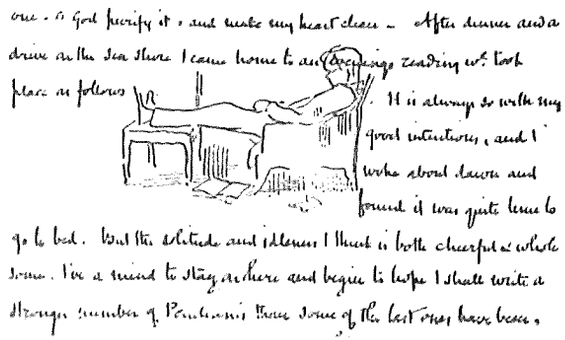


Fig. 4. Letter dated July 13, 1849 from Brighton

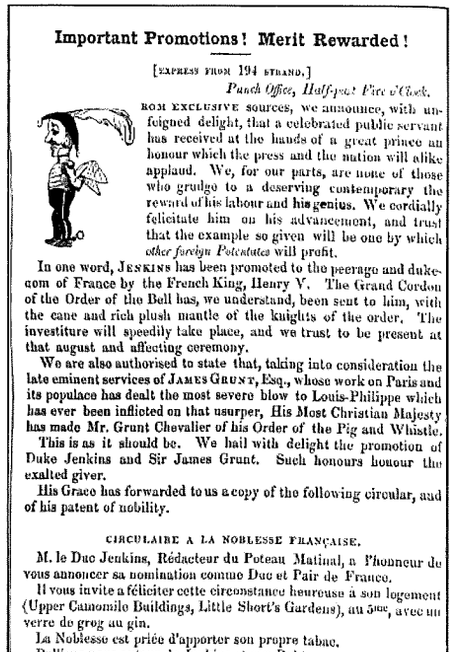
Brown observes, his most endearing characteristic was the ability to laugh at himself (30). From Spielmann's list, the first illustration attributable to Thackeray is "A Turkish Letter concerning the Divertissement 'Les Houris,'" "signed" with an image of a pair of spectacles (fig. 5).

Fig. 5. *Punch,* May 13, 1843: 199.

However, the "sign" of the spectacles emerged much earlier, having been embedded within the image itself in *Le Charivari*, which had so clearly influenced Thackeray. The bespectacled man sitting under the tree in "The Legend of Jawbrahim Heraudee" bears an uncanny resemblance to Thackeray and may be taken as further evidence that this article was indeed his contribution. The tradition of locating the spectacles within the image was continued in 1843 in "Mr. Spec's Remonstrance," where the eponymous character, "Alonzo Spec, Historical Painter," swings a pair of pince-nez spectacles in his hand (fig. 6), the narrative once again alluding to France and "His Majesty Louis-Philippe."

Fig. 6. *Punch,* February 11, 1843: 69.

An analysis of the three articles Thackeray contributed to the January 6, 1844 issue of *Punch* reveals they are typical of his occasional contributions to the magazine. "Important Promotions! Merit Rewarded!" (fig. 7) invokes an ongoing *Punch* trope: Jenkins as a personification of the *Morning Post*, another frequent object of *Punch*'s satire. Spielmann characterizes the article, which "congratulates" Jenkins on his supposed reception of a peerage from King Henry V of France, as "characteristic fooling," and further acclaims the reference to Jenkins as an "aimé domestique" as "a sly stab" (*Contributions* 36-37). However, the article has a political dimension unexamined by Spielmann. In 1844, the King of France was not Henry V but Louis Philippe. The self-described Henry V, better known as the Duke of Bordeaux, was the exiled Bourbon claimant to the throne. On December 13, 1843, the *Times* reprinted a short article from the *Morning Post* which fawningly proclaims Henry as "the illustrious Prince" without any reference to his pretender status ("The Duke de Bordeaux"). The article further notes that "despite the fatigue of 13 successive levees and evening receptions, his Royal Highness continues to enjoy most excellent health." Thackeray, stimulated by the *Morning Post*'s sycophantic behavior in satirizing its relationship with faux royalty, at the same time demonstrated his understanding of Continental culture and politics by coupling the attack on Jenkins with an attack on the author James Grant. Just a month earlier Thackeray had strongly criticized Grant's *Paris and its People* in *Fraser's Magazine* ("Grant in Paris") for its exaggerations, its pretentiousness, and its great "revelation" regarding Louis Philippe, namely that "he is tall and portly in his person. His face partakes of the oval shape, and his cheeks are rather PLUFFY" [*sic*]. This, apparently, is the "severe blow to Louis Philippe" cited in the *Punch* article. It is characteristic of Thackeray to attack his current *bête noire* in multiple venues, and it is characteristic of *Punch's* writers to draw inspiration from articles in the *Times* as well as from across the Channel.



Important Promotions! Merit Rewarded!

[EXPRESS FROM 194 STRAND.]

Punch Office, Half-past Five o'Clock.

FROM EXCLUSIVE sources, we announce, with unfeigned delight, that a celebrated public servant has received at the hands of a great prince an honour which the press and the nation will alike applaud. We, for our parts, are none of those who grudge to a deserving contemporary the reward of his labour and his genius. We cordially felicitate him on his advancement, and trust that the example so given will be one by which *other foreign Potentates* will profit.

In one word, JENKINS has been promoted to the peerage and dukedom of France by the French King, Henry V. The Grand Cordon of the Order of the Bell has, we understand, been sent to him, with the cane and rich plush mantle of the knights of the order. The investiture will speedily take place, and we trust to be present at that august and affecting ceremony.

We are also authorised to state that, taking into consideration the late eminent services of JAMES GRUNT, Esq., whose work on Paris and its populace has dealt the most severe blow to Louis-Philippe which has ever been inflicted on that usurper, His Most Christian Majesty has made Mr. Grunt Chevalier of his Order of the Pig and Whistle.

This is as it should be. We hail with delight the promotion of Duke Jenkins and Sir James Grunt. Such honours honour the exalted giver.

His Grace has forwarded to us a copy of the following circular, and of his patent of nobility.

CIRCULAIRE A LA NOBLESSE FRANÇAISE.

M. le Duc Jenkins, Rédacteur du Poteau Matinal, a l'honneur de vous annoncer sa nomination comme Duc et Pair de France.

Il vous invite a féliciter cette circonstance heureuse à son logement (Upper Camomile Buildings, Little Short's Gardens), au 5me, avec un verre de grog au gin.

La Noblesse est priée d'apporter son propre tabac.

Rallions nous autour de Jenkins et son Roi !

NOUS HENRI ROI DE FRANCE ET DE NAVARRE, A TOUS PRÉSENS SALUT.

Voulant reconnaitre les services de notre fidèle et aimé domestique, Jean Thomas Jennekins, envers nous et notre couronne ; NOMMONS notre dit ami, DUC ET PAIR DE FRANCE et de Navarre, avec les titres de Duc de la Pluche, Marquis de l'Aiguillette, Comte et Seigneur de la Sonnette-de-l'Antichambre.

HENRI.

Par le Roi, Le Secrétaire de l'Office, De la Fleur de Jasmin.

Fig. 7. *Punch*, January 6, 1844: 15

The two newly-attributed Thackeray articles, "Another Word on the Shirt Question" and "Regarding the Royal George Billiard Table," were printed on one page (fig. 8). The "Shirt Question" is Thackeray's follow-up to Thomas Hood's "The Song of the Shirt," a poem on the plight of a poor seamstress whose unceasing labor yields her only "A bed of straw, / A crust of bread—and rags" (published in the Christmas 1843 issue of *Punch*). Indeed, Altick notes that, in its early years, driven by the idealism of major contributor Douglass Jerrold and editor Mark

Lemon, "*Punch* was the first popular English periodical of any lasting consequence to wholeheartedly enlist itself in the humanitarian cause" (186), and the publication of "Song of the Shirt" was one of many pieces advocating social justice for the poor.[9] Thackeray himself was powerfully affected by the poem and shared the humanitarian feelings of his colleagues; in the course of a June 1844 art exhibition review in *Fraser's Magazine*, he referred to the poem as "a song as bitter and manly as it is exquisitely soft and tender, a song of which humour draws tears" ("May Gambols" 704).

Yet Thackeray's "Another Word on the Shirt Question" sidesteps—and arguably minimizes—the issue of social justice. The article takes the form of a letter to Punch by a Thackeray persona, Philodicky. Philodicky skirts the issue of appropriate payment to seamstresses to point out that the cost of laundering shirts exceeds the price paid for creating the garments. However, his argument is not that seamstresses should be paid more (or that laundresses should be paid less); instead, Philodicky's solution—that every Briton should wear shirts of mail which do not need washing—is farcical, as is the false earnestness of his claim that he has documented the five-pence laundering charge by sending Punch "the bill *receipted*." As is often the case in Thackeray's writings, he has made himself or his persona the butt of the joke. The point of the satire is Philodicky's foolishness, his lack of personal hygiene (he might have changed his linen twice a month!), and the overall ridiculousness of his letter. In the introduction to the second edition of *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte Bronte famously called Thackeray the "first social regenerator of the day" (qtd. Ray, *Letters* 2:340); but, as demonstrated by this short article, Thackeray usually avoided taking sides in social issues and instead examined and satirized personal behavior.

To further subvert the character of Philodicky, the article is represented as being sent from the Clarence Club (formerly the Literary Union), thus both characterizing Philodicky and extending the satire to clubmen and writers. But the origin of the Clarence Club was itself mildly scandalous, its predecessor (Literary Union) having admitted a number of disreputable members; the Union was dissolved and the Clarence Club formed from some of its members. Of course, in some circles this was viewed as an object of fun, and the Clarence was derisively known as the "Clearance Club" ("The Clubs of London" 13). Presumably, at least some of *Punch*'s readers were insiders who appreciated the irony of connecting Philodicky with this tarnished institution.

The second new attribution, "Regarding the Royal George Billiard Table," is structured as a letter or petition by the puppet-character Punch, the hypothetical voice and representative of the magazine *Punch*, to Queen Victoria. Amid the fun of the article, Thackeray descends into seriousness, revealing a sense of English history, patriotism, and taste, and paying tribute to his eighteenth-century literary forefathers. In its narrative technique, historicity, and values, this short piece foreshadows the sensibilities and attitudes of such mature Thackeray works as *The Virginians* or "Essays on 18th-Century Humourists." The article addresses the use or misuse of timbers taken from the sunken British battleship, the *Royal George*. At its initial launch in 1756, the *Royal George* was one of the largest warships in the world. After honorably serving in the Seven Years War and the American War of Independence, the ship sank in a tragic accident while anchored at Spithead in 1782 (Spence 16; "London, August 31"). The suddenness of the sinking prevented sailors from escaping; several hundred sailors and visitors were quickly drowned. The

[9] See also Price (19-45).

PUNCH, OR THE LONDON CHARIVARI. 21

ANOTHER WORD ON THE SHIRT QUESTION.

"SHIRT-WEARERS, TO THE RESCUE!"

DEAR PUNCH,

While you are engaging the public attention upon the price paid to sempstresses for the making of shirts, could you not effect a reform, that would not merely advantage a small class of people, viz. the makers, but benefit a vast, I may say considerable majority, of our population, namely, the *wearers* of shirts?

A SHIRT OF MAIL.

I allude, my dear fellow, to the *washing* of the same article. My laundress brought me home mine three weeks since, and I was charged for it FIVEPENCE. Of this I give you my sacred honour: in fact, I forward you the bill *receipted*. Is it just, is it consonant with good feeling, or sound commercial policy, that that should cost fivepence in the washing, which, IN THE ACTUAL MAKING, costs but a fifth part of the sum?

What has been the consequence? The speculatrix has been disappointed in her infernal scheme upon my purse; and I, who might have changed my linen twice, aye, or FOUR TIMES per month, have been now twenty-three days wearing the garment in question. Calling upon every Briton to do likewise,

I have the honour to be, Sir,
Your constant reader,
Clarence Club, January, 1844. PHILODICKY.

REGARDING THE ROYAL GEORGE BILLIARD TABLE.

The humble Petition of Mr. Punch.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR MOST GRACIOUS MAJESTY:

Although of a humble stock, and although my wife, Madam Judy, has not been presented at your Majesty's court, yet we humbly declare that the whole court doth not contain two more loyal and duteous subjects.

May it please your Majesty, we are very old; we have been in the custom of mixing for centuries past with every class of the people of this kingdom, and we are enemies to no manner of sport wherewith they amuse themselves.

Billiards, among others, is a good sport. It has the privilege of uniting many honourable gentlemen daily together of the army, of the universities, and of the swell mob, at the watering-places. It has the eminent merit of leading to the detection of many rogues and swindlers; it keeps many ingenious markers, brandy-merchants, and soda-water venders in honourable maintenance, and is a great aid and patron of the tobacco trade, thereby vastly increasing the revenues of your Majesty's Government.

With that sport then we are far from quarrelling. But there is for this and for all other games a time and place. Thus in the late Mr. Hogarth's facetious print (I knew the gentleman very well) the Beadle is represented as caning "the Idle Apprentice" for playing at marbles—no, not for playing at marbles, but playing on a gravestone during Sunday service. In like manner, were I to set up my show before St. James's Church during service hours, or under your Majesty's triumphal arch at Pimlico, or in the Bishop of London's drawing-room—it is likely, not that the Beadle would cane me, for that I would resist, but that persons in blue habiliments, oil-skin hatted, white-lettered, and pewter-buttoned—policemen in a word, would carry me before one of your Majesty's Justices of the Peace. My crime would be, not the performance of my tragedy of "Punch"—but its performance in an improper manner and time.

Ah, Madam! Take this apologue into your royal consideration, and recollect that as is Punch and Marbles so are BILLIARDS.

They too may be played at a wrong place. If it is wrong to play at marbles on a tombstone, is it just to play at billiards on a coffin—an indifferent coffin—anybody's coffin? Is such a sport quite just, feeling, decorous, and honourable?

Perhaps your Majesty is not aware, what the wreck of the Royal George really is. Sixty years ago its fate made no small sensation. Eight hundred gallant men, your Royal Grandfather's subjects, went down to death in that great ship. The whole realm of England was stirred and terrified by their awful fate—the clergy spoke of it from their pulpits—the greatest poet then alive wrote one of the noblest ballads in our language, which as long as the language will endure, shall perpetuate the melancholy story. Would your Majesty wish Mr. Thomas Campbell to continue the work of Mr. William Cowper, and tell what has now become of the wreck? Lo! it is a billiard-table, over which his Royal Highness the Prince de Joinville may be knocking about red balls and yellow—or his Serenity, the Prince of Hohenzollen Sigmaringen may be caramboling with his coat off. Ah, Madame! may your royal fingers never touch a cue; it is a losing hazard that you will play at that board.

The papers say there is somewhere engraved in copper on the table, a "suitable inscription." What is it? I fancy it might run thus:—

"THIS BILLIARD TABLE IS FORMED OF PART OF THE TIMBERS
OF THE ROYAL GEORGE MAN OF WAR, OF 100 GUNS,
WHICH WENT DOWN ON THE 29TH AUGUST 1782.
EIGHT HUNDRED SEAMEN PERISHED ON BOARD,
IN THE SERVICE OF THEIR COUNTRY AND THEIR KING.
HONOUR BE TO THE BRAVE WHO DIE IN SUCH A SERVICE.
AS A FITTING MARK OF HER SENSE OF THESE BRAVE MEN'S MISFORTUNES,
AS A TESTIMONY OF SYMPATHY FOR THEIR FATE,
AS AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO ENGLISHMEN
TO BRAVE THEIR LIVES IN SIMILAR PERILS,
IN HOPES THAT FUTURE SOVEREIGNS
MAY AWARD THEM SIMILAR DELICATE SYMPATHY;
ABOVE ALL, AS A STERN MONUMENT
OF THE VANITY OF NAVAL GLORY,
THE USELESSNESS OF AMBITION,
AND THE FOLLY OF FIDELITY,
WHICH EXPECTS ANY REWARD BUT ITSELF,
Her Majesty, Queen Victoria,
HAS GRACIOUSLY CAUSED THIS PLAY-TABLE TO BE MADE
FROM THE TIMBERS OF
THE FAITHFUL, USELESS, WORN-OUT OLD VESSEL."

Should your Majesty still wish to amuse yourself at your royal table, your petitioners would suggest, that there are numberless foolish relics throughout the country that might by an economic and ingenious person be made available for purposes of sport.

Thus—the mainmast of the *Victory* immediately offers itself, standing as it does quite convenient at Windsor, and supporting the bust of a person by the name of Nelson. This great, rough, ugly mast might be made into neat cues to play at the *Royal George* billiard-table, and the bust might be turned into marbles for his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales. Whether for matches, hummingtops, draught or chess-men, Marlborough's baton would be excellently suitable. The Black Prince's helmet would furnish some admirable tenpenny nails, and the whole nursery might be provided with masqueradery materials by cutting up a very few Waterloo flags.

If these changes tend to your Majesty's pleasure, why not effect them? The country will look on with approbation; the newspapers will applaud with respectful paragraphs; and your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

Punch.
Judy.

We stop the press, to announce that the billiard-table out of the *Royal George* has been countermanded, and that the remaining cartloads of timber have been purchased to decorate the new chapel at Windsor Castle.

Fig. 8. *Punch*, January 6, 1844: 21.

accident, widely regarded as a national tragedy, was broadly discussed in the press and commemorated by the poet William Cowper in "The Loss of the Royal George." The wreckage impeded shipping channels and, from 1839 to 1843, extensive efforts were made to recover cannon and timbers from the wreck and to destroy the ship's superstructure. The latter stages of these efforts were closely followed by the *Times*,[10] which reported that the Queen had commanded that salvage timbers from the *Royal George* be employed to construct a billiard-table, noting that "The most beautiful of the wood has been selected, and a superb table, highly creditable to the manufacturer, and worthy the regal splendor of Windsor Castle, has been put up within these few days" ("The Queen's Billiard-Table," Dec. 21, 1843).

Presumably reacting to the *Times* article, Thackeray attacked what he saw as an abuse of taste and a failure of patriotic deference. Using the voice of the *Punch* persona, which he artfully presents as an "everyman" independent of class or party, Thackeray engages in what might best be described as "respectful ridicule": he satirizes the act while respectfully appealing to the Queen. In this way he continued the traditions of Philipon's *La Caricature* which had employed humor to exercise public opinion, and called on readers to use ridicule to redefine themselves as active citizens (Forbes xv). Thackeray's article assumes the form of a gentle history lesson; with references to English eighteenth-century humorists Hogarth and Cowper and reflections on the icons of English national history, he reminds readers of their heritage. The article is both humorous and persuasive; it cajoles rather than bludgeons; and, arguably, it would have had a very different tone had it been written by a more activist writer like Douglas Jerrold. However, it was still crucial to defining the *Charivari* style that was to make *Punch* so enduringly popular.

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The articles discussed in this paper typify Thackeray's many occasional contributions to *Punch* and demonstrate the variety of his defining qualities as a writer: sharply satirized foolishness (as in his references to James Grant and the *Morning Post*); an awareness of human vanity—his incessant *vanitas vanitatum*—with particular applicability to himself (as in Philodicky); respect for England's cultural and national history (as in the *Royal George* article); allusive references to current social events and institutions; a tendency to speak through carefully constructed narrative personas; and the gift for incisive phrase-making combining humor and nuance. Thackeray played a prominent role in promulgating the complex socio-cultural traditions of "graphic satire" that were emerging in the 1840s, contributing to a new era in social satire that was to be made famous in *Vanity Fair* but which must be understood as having emerged from the pages of *Punch*. To understand this matrix of verbal and visual wit and allusion is to understand the enduring success of *Punch*.

Liverpool John Moores University (Horrocks)
University of South Florida (Simons)

[10] See *Times* [London] articles on June 10 and 23, Sept. 25, Oct. 6 and 25, and Dec. 21, 1843.

Acknowledgements

The authors and editor are grateful to the British Library Board for kind permission to reproduce the following images:

Figure 1. *Punch Editor's Ledger*, #130, Jan. 6, 1844.
Figure 2. *Punch Summary Ledger*, #127, 128, & 130. Dec. 16, 1843—Jan. 6, 1844.

In addition, the authors thank Michael St. John McAllister at the British Library for his assistance on working with the *Punch Contributor Ledgers*, particularly in the early stages of the research when the Archive had not been fully catalogued. From January 2012, the first years of the *Punch Contributor Ledgers* will be available on-line as part of the Liverpool John Moores University, Special Collection on *Punch and the Victorian Periodical Press*. Please visit www.ljmu.ac.uk/lea/archives or contact Dr. Clare Horrocks directly for more information.

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"Great and Undeniable Likeness": Portraiture, Legitimacy, and Realism in Thackeray's *The History of Henry Esmond*

by Carolyn Jacobson

Thackeray's *Henry Esmond* begins with Henry's description of the traditional idealization of historical figures and his rejection of such whitewashing: "In a word, I would have History familiar rather than heroic" (46). In order to demonstrate his preference for accuracy, Henry turns to examples of physical description, offering a depiction of "the old French King Lewis the Fourteenth" as "a little wrinkled old man, pock-marked, and with a great periwig and red heels to make him look tall" (45). In contrast to the distorting historians who, he suggests, offer their readers only the wig and the shoes, Henry presents himself as a more trustworthy authority, willing to look behind the mask and trappings of royalty and report what he sees. In its role as Henry's autobiography, *The History of Henry Esmond* itself results from such a probing approach. Regardless of whether Henry stays true to his stated intent to familiarize History in this narrative, Thackeray certainly develops the first paragraph's emphasis on visual elements, and indicts the conventions of portraiture as a key mechanism by which falsehoods are presented as fact and inauthentic values are permitted to dominate.[1] The author asks us to privilege likeness and accuracy over convention; but, in so doing, he overlooks the ways in which novelistic realism is itself a series of conventions.

Henry's depiction of Louis XIV in his red heels would be familiar to his eighteenth-century audience, and to Thackeray's nineteenth-century one, through the portraits of the king by Hyacinthe Rigaud (1659-1743), the famed French court portraitist from the end of Louis XIV's reign. Rigaud is best known for his state portraits of Louis (fig. 1), which depict the king "at his most monarchical, in sumptuous robes and in a palatial setting, amid a proliferation of ermine and fleur-de-lis that reinforce the message that this is the royal ruler of France" (Levey 4). Critics' descriptions of Rigaud's paintings of Louis echo Thackeray's awareness of the stagecraft involved in the elaborate costuming of the royal body. For example, Levey asserts that, in Rigaud's portraits, Louis "is every inch a king; and his inches are increased by high, scarlet-heeled shoes and the revelation of royal legs under the looped-up robes, giving the ageing, vain, faintly simpering figure something of the air of a music-hall star."[2] What Rigaud was doing in his portraits of Louis was not unusual, however. State portraits exist to present a ruler as "every inch a king" (or queen), and within this genre of painting, the physical appearance of the individual under the crown plays a secondary role to the symbolic body of the monarch:

[1] According to Fletcher, Thackeray "sketched caricatures prolifically his whole life, began a career as an artist before turning to literature, served as an art critic for *Fraser's Magazine* and other periodicals, and illustrated much of his own work, including four of his major novels" (379).

[2] For a detailed reading of this portrait, see Burke (33).

> [T]he ruling elite . . . were fallible human beings with bodies that aged and died like any others. But they also held highly visible public roles, and, according to ancient ideas of rule, the physical body of the ruler was symbolically overwhelmed by the powerful nature of the office that they assumed. . . . Portraitists had to engage with the co-existence of both physical and ideal in the body of the monarch; representations of the visages and forms of people who held power needed to signal their authority . . . [so] portraits of rulers continue to emphasize the "effigy," or social role of the individual, over the likeness or personality. (West 72)

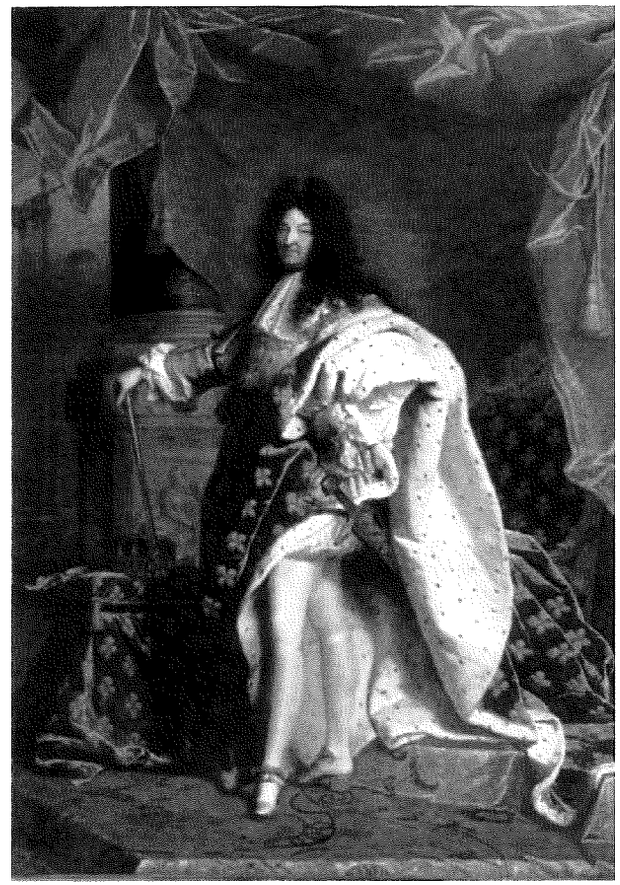

Fig. 1. Hyacinthe Rigaud, *Louis XIV*

Rigaud was hired to do exactly what the critics point to him doing. But Thackeray asks us to look at the royal portrait of the Sun King and crave accuracy instead.

That Thackeray has Rigaud's depiction of Louis in mind in the opening pages of *Henry Esmond* is suggested by his *Paris Sketch Book* (1840), published twelve years before the novel. There, in the context of describing a visit to Versailles, Thackeray provides an illustration titled "An Historical Study" (fig. 2), which graphically separates the majesty from the man. The image consists of three figures: on the left, "Rex," in which the trappings of the monarchy—wig, robes, shoes, and sword—stand upright, minus hands and face; in the middle, "Ludovicus" (Latin for "Louis"), a short, rotund, bald man, stands with the aid of a cane, dressed simply in a frock coat, breeches whose fabric gathers over spindly upper legs, and plain low-heeled shoes; and on the right, "Ludovicus Rex" blends man and materials in a sneering caricature of Rigaud's Louis XIV. To accompany the illustration, Thackeray offers the following:

> The idea of kingly dignity is equally strong in the two outer figures; and you see, at once, that majesty is made out of the wig, the high-heeled shoes, and cloak, all fleurs-de-lis bespangled. As for the little lean, shrivelled, paunchy old man, of five feet two, in a jacket and breeches, there is no majesty in him at any rate; and yet he has just stepped out of that very suit of clothes. Put the wig and shoes on him, and he is six feet high;—the other fripperies, and he stands before you majestic, imperial, and heroic! Thus do barbers and cobblers make the

Fig. 2. Thackeray, "An Historical Study"

> gods that we worship: for do we not all worship him? Yes; though we all know him to be stupid, heartless, short, of doubtful personal courage, worship and admire him we must; and have set up, in our hearts, a grand image of him, endowed with wit, magnanimity, valour, and enormous heroical stature. (*Paris Sketch Book* 404)

In Thackeray's reading, anticipating his remark in *Henry Esmond*, the trappings of majesty obscure the individual; the king's admirers' acceptance of this deception suggests a tacit complicity in the authentication of the inauthentic.

The willingness of observers to believe false depictions is essential to the conclusion of *Henry Esmond*, where Thackeray incorporates Rigaud in his plot. This inclusion links the opening of the novel, with its allusion to Rigaud's Louis XIV, to its climax, where Rigaud plays a critical, if minor, role. The complicated intrigue at the end of *Henry Esmond* is set into motion and facilitated by a fake portrait, said to be of one man but actually depicting another. Henry, the supposed bastard offspring—but actually legitimate heir—of the Castlewood family, caps years of striving for the affections of Beatrix Castlewood, his second cousin, with a final dramatic effort: restoring "the Pretender," James Francis Edward Stuart, to the throne of England.[3] The Castlewoods have espoused the restoration of the Stuarts since the ouster of James II, and although Henry himself is no Jacobite, he hopes to win Beatrix by this feat of devotion to the family cause. As part of an elaborate plan to smuggle the Pretender into the country, Henry brings James's portrait to the London home of Beatrix and her mother Rachel, where it is presented to all visitors as a portrait of Beatrix's brother Frank Castlewood, who has been in Europe for five years. Once everyone associates James's face with Frank's name, the Pretender can enter the country as Frank and reside in the Castlewood's house in relative safety while his supporters work to place him on the throne.

The novel sets the narration of the Castlewood family in a specific historical context in order to make the fictional autobiography appear genuine. Most obviously, Thackeray creates a realistic-seeming eighteenth-century document by referring to or depicting real people and places—for example, the Pretender in the restoration plot, and such figures as the Duke of Marlborough and Jonathan Swift. But Thackeray's gestures extend beyond the immediate narrative. Borrowing from eighteenth-century novel conventions, he supplements his first-person narration with paratexts that lend to it a greater air of authenticity. He offers an introduction by Henry's granddaughter and also occasionally offers footnotes in the text, some by Henry but others signed with the initials of Henry's wife Rachel or his granddaughter. Thackeray also had the novel published in an elaborate first edition that imitated the look of books from the previous century: "Thackeray wanted it to look as much as possible like a genuine eighteenth-century novel, and Smith managed to find an old type-face with the long *s*, and produced it in three handsomely bound octavo volumes" containing "a careful pastiche of eighteenth-century style and spelling" (Peters 202). Even the lack of illustrations (unusual for Thackeray's novels) emphasizes the novel as a work of nonfiction; beginning around 1850, for example, the "tendency to limit or dispense with the illustrations of English history textbook[s]" indicated a growing association of text with veracity and images with entertainment (Mitchell 216).

Thackeray's efforts extend to the restoration plot. The Pretender is a figure from English history, the details of Anne's rule as she draws close to death are plausible, and the painter

[3] James is better known now as the "Old Pretender," but in accordance with the historical setting of the novel, he is simply referred to as "the Pretender" or, by his supporters, as "James the Third" or "the Chevalier de St. George."

publicly credited with the portrait of Frank/James is Hyacinthe Rigaud, whose fame draws many visitors to the Castlewood home to view the portrait. By this point in the novel, Thackeray has already introduced his readers to a host of actual painters from the time period in which the novel is set—Sir Peter Lely has painted a portrait of the Dowager Isabel as Diana (48), Beatrix has her portrait done by Sir Godfrey Kneller (430), and Henry's own portrait is painted by Charles Jervas (342)—references which help create the novel's realistic setting and make the involvement of Rigaud seem credible.

However, the painting hanging in Rachel's Kensington drawing room is not entirely or even largely by Rigaud. It is a fake not only in that it presents James in Frank's uniform but also in that the majority of the brushstrokes have been painted by Henry. Instead of having Henry commission a portrait of James dressed as Frank, a more likely and straightforward act, Thackeray involves Henry intimately in the creation of the portrait. While visiting Rigaud's studio where Frank is having his portrait painted, Henry discovers and purchases a partially completed painting—consisting of only the head of James—commissioned by one of James's mistresses and then abandoned (450). Henry uses Rigaud's completed portrait of Frank as a model and copies the body, outfitting James in Frank's red uniform. The painting, then, is a dual hybrid: part James/part Frank (the King's head affixed to a soldier's torso) and part Esmond/part Rigaud (the master's head supported by the amateur's body).[4] At the climax of Thackeray's artificially realistic novel, then, is a character that succeeds at a deceptive feat similar to his author's, albeit in a different medium.

The success of Henry's deception depends on the susceptibility of the visitors to Rachel's home, and Rigaud's status surely helps blind them to what is before their eyes. Henry describes the reactions of the observers of the painting: "Many of her ladyship's friends admired the piece beyond measure, and flocked to see it; Bishop Atterbury, Mr Lesly, good old Mr Collier, and others amongst the clergy, were delighted with the performance, and many among the first quality examined and praised it" (450). The visitors marvel at the Rigaud, willing to accept what they see as Frank. Those of the "first quality" would have some idea of what they were supposed to look at when they looked at a portrait. Conventions of portraiture were well established by the eighteenth century in England, where "portraiture became virtually the English art" (Thomson). Rigaud, whose success with Louis XIV stemmed from his skill at determining aspects of posture and dress that could convey what his sitters desired, formalized those elements into standard poses that he could offer noble subjects. Under great pressure to repeat their successes for clamoring clients, Rigaud and other portrait artists found ways to speed up their process. Some painters kept pre-painted canvases, for instance, with blanks where the faces could be inserted, while others hired assistants to paint backgrounds, bodies, or frequently-featured details (Campbell). Rigaud himself wrote about facilitating the process by encouraging his clients to accept poses he was used to painting ("habillement répété") and charging significantly less for these poses than for new ones ("habillement original") (qtd. in Campbell). Peter Lely "had a pattern book of poses that enabled him to focus on the head and require fewer sittings from his aristocratic patrons" (West 11-12), and still others made use of mannequins as substitutes for the

[4] Peter Burke comments similarly about Rigaud's famous portraits of Louis XIV: "Louis was allowed to age discreetly in his portraits. Yet Rigaud has placed this old head on a young body" (33). Thackeray intends the blatant fusion of the Esmond/Rigaud portrait to undermine the idea of authenticity of portraits, but even the more "straightforward" work of portrait artists like Rigaud could be seen as serving a similar purpose.

bodies of sitters absent from the artists' studios (Fay 41). These practices suggest that there were many portraits presenting essentially stock poses and, as a result, constantly reinforcing the viewers' sense of what elements conveyed status and wealth. As Harold Rosenberg has written, "The history of portraiture is a gallery of poses, an array of types and styles which codifies the assumptions, biases, and aspirations of the society" (qtd. in Brilliant, *Portraiture* 90). Someone invited to a drawing-room to view a new Rigaud would draw upon these established codifications in evaluating what he or she saw. These codifications, of which Thackeray, an art critic, was well aware (and with which he plays in 1840 when he presents Louis XIV stripped of his finery), explain why so many visitors were tricked into accepting that the portrait was of Frank, even though many of them knew him personally and might have been expected to detect the ruse.

Portraits are frequently spoken of as having a dual nature. On the one hand, they traditionally (and most obviously) attempt some degree of "physiognomic likeness which is seen to refer to the identity of the living or once-living person"; on the other, portraits rely on symbols and "generalizing visual devices" to convey "universal and ideal qualities" about the subject (Woodall 1-2). As Shearer West puts it, "portraits can be placed on a continuum between the specificity of likeness and the generality of type, showing specific and distinctive aspects of the sitter as well as the more generic qualities valued in the sitter's social milieu" (21). Throughout the long history of portraiture (dating back to antiquity), the valuation of these two aspects have altered, with some periods stressing the emulative talents of portraitists and others favoring the ways in which certain qualities, including class, are expressed. The privileging of certain qualities over aspects of likeness connects the portraits of kings to those of everyone else. Just as the king's symbolic body takes precedence over his actual flesh and blood, the "generalizing visual devices" used by portrait painters in the eighteenth century can eclipse the particularizing details of an individual.[5]

Although the issue of likeness is critical for portraiture, Richard Brilliant explains that "[w]hatever the mimetic quality of a portrait, the work remains a representation of the subject whose value as an approximation is less determined by its descriptive character than by the coincidence of the perceptions shared by the portrait artist and the viewer" (*Portraiture* 26). In other words, people looking at portraits are not paying that much attention to what the portrayed person looks like. They are, instead, looking for certain shared codes and symbols to help them identify what they are seeing.

Significantly, the Castlewoods make no attempt to fool the servants, and all domestics familiar with Frank Castlewood are sent away before the portrait arrives. Perhaps the plotters sense that the servants' exclusion from the shared conventions of portraiture might enable them to look at the face depicted on the canvas rather than the codes at work in the painting. Two visitors to the house also question the likeness. One, Lord Bolingbroke, is intended to be let in on the secret, and the other, Doctor Tusher, who has known Frank from birth, ultimately agrees "that the piece was an excellent likeness" after being convinced "that he knew no more about the Fine Arts than a ploughboy" (450). He seems to have succumbed to the pressure to see the painting as his

[5] According to West, "Portraiture's putative association with copying and imitation has often caused the art form to be dismissed or to suffer from a low status. An emphasis on the need for the creative artist to invent and represent ideal images lingered from Renaissance art theory to the early nineteenth century and served to relegate portraiture to the level of a mechanical exercise, rather than a fine art" (12). Thackeray shared this prejudice, although his dislike seems rooted in an antipathy to the commercialization of portrait painting (see *Contributions* 136, 143)

social superiors have seen it, since he blames his inability to view the portrait "correctly" on his lack of education and class status.

The portrait in the Castlewood home provides a specific distraction from the face it depicts, which keeps its viewers from pondering whether or not it resembles that of the man they know. Thackeray may have criticized depictions of Louis XIV for the way they failed accurately to depict the subject's appearance, but he proves himself skilled at understanding how such a strategy can be put to use. In the case of the James/Frank portrait, the distraction is a striking red uniform, a strong indicator of identity for viewers expecting to see a portrait of a young soldier. Brilliant describes how such markers can ironically cancel other, more personal forms of identity:

> Any society can have many vocational and status categories whose members' appearance, behaviour, and modes of self-representation seem so similar that they look alike, as exotics do to strangers. If we are to go beyond the cultural apparatus that holds each person and his/her constituent role in its grasp and, thus, defines personal identity and its artistic representation, then it is fair to ask whether there can ever be particularity in portraiture, some finite and unique quality that cannot be reduced to a social norm. (*Portraiture* 109)

The outfit makes the man in this case (as in the depictions of Louis XIV), and James takes full advantage of the uniform's power by wearing the same one on his first day in London, helping cement his relationship to the portrait. But how does this crisis of particularity translate to the mode of narrative realism that Thackeray engages in through the writing of his novel? Henry assures us that he will depict history accurately, that he will give us the narrative equivalent of Louis XIV as a "little wrinkled old man," but the success of James's red uniform in fooling its viewers has to give us pause.

Thackeray's use of an inauthentic portrait as a plot device at the end of the novel concludes a gradual undermining of the notion of portraits as accurate depictions of reality and identity. At the start of the novel, early in the life of Henry Esmond, Thackeray provides an example of a portrait that apparently functions according to conventional expectation: depicting its subject accurately enough that familial resemblance is discernable—even when the familial link is unconventional. The moment occurs shortly after the death of Thomas Esmond, the 3rd Viscount Castlewood, when Colonel Francis Esmond, the 4th Viscount, and his family arrive at Castlewood. They take possession of the house and grounds as well as twelve-year-old Henry, whose precise relationship to the family is never discussed openly and who had been living with Thomas and his wife Isabel before Thomas's death.

When Henry is first spotted by Rachel Castlewood (initially a mother figure and later his wife), he is in the portrait gallery at Castlewood. Shearer West describes how these eighteenth-century collections in private homes evolved from the dynastic portrait collections that began to be amassed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by noble families in Europe: "Often such collections would serve as a kind of genealogical tree, to confirm the pedigree of the portraits' owners, or to establish their relationship with the current monarch" (45-46). In *Imagining the Gallery*, Christopher Rovee explains that these ancestral portrait galleries, with their "succession of family pictures," are significant not only for the immediate family whose faces line the walls but for the sense of security of the country as well, serving to "articulate the continuity of family

and of nation" (3, 1).[6] An heir standing in his portrait gallery would be able to trace his lineage and imagine where his own portrait would be placed in due time. And the long line of portraits might bolster his sense of national as well as family pride, since the same scrutiny of blood and legitimacy governed both royal and aristocratic rules of succession.

But Thackeray's novel challenges these governing principles both by examining a period in which the laws of royal succession were hotly debated and by focusing on a family whose story prompts readers to question the conventional system of legitimacy. When the housekeeper, Mrs. Worksop, introduces Henry to Rachel, she looks "significantly towards the late lord's picture, as it now is in the family, noble and severe-looking, with his hand on his sword" (49). Again a servant is posited as able to see the truth in a painting that is shielded from members of the upper class, and again the distinction comes from a perception of the individual in the portrait rather than the conventions of portraiture that the artist has employed. Mrs. Worksop's suggestion catches hold with Rachel, and her reaction indicates her assumption of Henry's illegitimacy: "Seeing the great and undeniable likeness between this portrait and the lad, the new Viscountess, who had still hold of the boy's hand as she looked at the picture, blushed and dropped the hand quickly, and walked down the gallery." The Viscount's military trappings in this case do not successfully distract from his genetically transferable features.

Typically, the term "likeness," when used in conjunction with a portrait, would refer solely to the degree of similarity between the image on the canvas and the actual appearance of the subject. Here, however, the concept of likeness broadens to include consideration of one of the portrait's viewers as well. Henry looks like the late Lord Castlewood in a way he should not, and the painting indicates the truth more explicitly than the housekeeper is willing to do. Henry's specific association with Lord Castlewood as he appears in this portrait also hints at some characteristics of Henry that the novel will reveal: his success in battle, his nobility (stressed repeatedly by members of the family), and ultimately, his rightful place at the head of the family. But at this moment, Henry is in the portrait gallery as an interloper. No one expects that a portrait of him would ever grace its walls, and so the family resemblance is a shocking embarrassment to those who recognize it.

In a way, Rachel reacts inappropriately in her viewing of this type of portrait in this type of space; she sees beyond the symbolic value of the portrait, focusing on individual characteristics instead.[7] Thus, rather than affirm familial or national pride, the scene undermines these institutions by questioning the lines of inheritance. However, the power of this disruption is limited. The connection that Rachel recognizes unsettles her, but the establishment of Henry's legitimacy can only be brought about by the uncovering of the narrative of Henry's parents' past and the acquisition of documents confirming that narrative. Thackeray offers us what seems like a magical moment—a main character seeing beyond the conventions of portraiture—but for the bastard Henry, the conventions of inheritance law still hold. His connection to the portraits in the gallery must be placed in a context of documentation (a marriage license, a will) before anything can change for him. The forward-moving narrative must determine his fate, not the framed portrait on the wall.

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[6] See also Pointon 13-24.

[7] Of Elizabeth Bennett's viewing of Darcy's portrait in Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, Christopher Rovee notes: "[i]n lieu of an abstract, permanent body, she contemplates a real one" (3); see also Bray.

Thackeray suggests a related limitation of portraiture by stressing its static nature in contrast to the alterable nature of the human body. In the gallery scene, Thackeray sets the stage for a further questioning of the documenting capability of portraits by mentioning another portrait, that of the late Viscount's wife, Isabel, painted by Sir Peter Lely.[8] Henry the narrator notes that Isabel has left behind the portrait of her dead husband, choosing instead to take a portrait of herself "represented as a huntress of Diana's court" to her new home near London (48). Isabel's preference for her own portrait indicates a vanity fully exploited in the novel. Thackeray's narrator depicts Isabel, or "the Dowager," as she is more often called, as a ridiculous crone: selfish, mean-spirited, conceited, and, above all, old and ugly. She fanatically and futilely holds on to her youth by dressing like a much younger woman, always with red high-heeled shoes (echoing Rigaud's Louis XIV), and painting her cheeks with increasing amounts of rouge. Eventually Isabel proves to be a protector and supporter of Henry, adopting him and making him her sole heir once she learns the truth of his birth; yet Thackeray mocks the great discrepancy between her current appearance and Sir Lely's rendering of it, and her persistence "in supposing the picture was still like her" (223). When Henry and the 4th Viscount visit her,

> Harry [Henry] laughed at recognizing in the parlor the well-remembered old piece of Sir Peter Lely, wherein his father's widow was represented as a virgin huntress, armed with a gilt bow and arrow, and encumbered only with that small quantity of drapery which it would seem the virgins in King Charles's day were accustomed to wear.
>
> My Lady Dowager had left off this peculiar habit of huntress when she married. But though she was now considerably past sixty years of age, I believe she thought that airy nymph of the picture could still be easily recognized in the venerable personage who gave an audience to Harry and his patron. (143)

As with the portrait Henry brought from France, the portrait of Isabel/Diana is both fantasy and wish fulfillment; it reveals how she views herself—or how she desperately longs to be viewed—but the hanging of the portrait in her house only emphasizes her age and decrepitude. Further, Henry's wry comment that she had "left off this peculiar habit of huntress when she married" points to the conventions of portraiture that have more to do with fashion than fact. Although virgins in King Charles's day did not actually go hunting in minimal "drapery," holding bows and cavorting with dogs, "[v]isual reference to classical prototypes . . .[was] popular as part of a more general appeal to antique authority" in eighteenth-century portraits (Woodall 4). The Dowager prefers the vision of a beautiful huntress and immortal goddess to the realism of her life.

Once again, symbolic and visual devices—in this case mythologizing ones—interfere with a portrait's ability to express a likeness. The mythologizing enacted by the fictionalized Lely places this portrait one further step away from being a faithful representation of Thomas Castlewood's wife. While discussing the idea of likeness in *Hanging the Head*, Marcia Pointon writes about "the rupturing of convention that occurs at a moment of 'originality' with, for example, the invention of a novel portrait composition or the adaptation of a type from one genre in the production of work in another" (83). Her examples are of allegorical eighteenth-century portraits

[8] Peter Lely (1618-80), Dutch artist famous for his portraits of English aristocrats.

similar to Isabel's, and she quotes *The Artist's Repository* (1788), which takes offense at the lack of realism involved in such efforts: "As the intention of a portrait is to preserve to posterity the likeness of a person, it appears . . . to be the effect of a vicious taste, when any one is painted as it were in masquerade. What has the character of Minerva falling through the air to do with a modern lady? Or that of a Gypsy, or Turkish dresses, or any foreign ornament?" (qtd. in Pointon 83). What does the character of Diana have to do with Isabel Castlewood?

More to the point, what does the tinting of Diana's cheek have to do with that of Isabel's? Isabel uses copious amounts of makeup in her efforts to appear young, and she is thus a twice-"painted" woman. In this way the falseness of the portrait is emphasized through its association with the rouge pot and Isabel's efforts to present an artificial self to her viewers. In both cases (rouge and the Lely portrait), the concept of likeness is blurred or erased. No one knows what Isabel looks like, really, because she uses make-up, a practice similar to the use of generalizing visual devices in portraiture, to undercut likeness. Not even Isabel looks like Isabel. Early in the novel, when Rachel temporarily loses her looks to smallpox, her fear of losing her husband as well leads her once, briefly, to experiment with rouge. Unlike Isabel, she quickly removes it, but again through this second female character, Thackeray associates "painting" with a lack of authenticity. Rachel, ever sensitive to likeness, cannot bring herself to give in to artificiality, and she restores the wan truth to her own face.

When Henry describes the damaging physical effects of smallpox on Rachel's face, he uses a painting metaphor that would have reminded readers of the cleaning controversies at the Louvre and the National Gallery in London during the late 1840s and early 1850s: "It was as if a coarse hand had rubbed off the delicate tints of that sweet picture, and brought it, as one has seen unskilful painting-cleaners do, to the dead colour" (124). Here, for a moment, Thackeray acknowledges that paintings, like faces, can be altered, but the narrator's outrage at the damage done to the works of art makes it clear that such alteration represents a violation of something that should remain constant. His phrasing focuses on the changes wrought by the painting-cleaners rather than the effects that time and inhospitable surroundings would have had on the canvases. That paintings did change over time was all too obvious to those paying attention to the cleaning controversies (and Thackeray would certainly have been one of their number), but he fails to mention exactly why the painting-cleaners would have been employed in the first place and instead focuses his readers' attention on the alteration of the paintings as a defiling of "delicate tints" that should not be rubbed off. Thackeray presents Rachel to us at this point in the novel as someone whose beauty should not have faded, who, like a painting, has been cruelly damaged.

The inability of portraits to reflect change lies at the heart of Thackeray's sense of the limitations of the art form. Richard Brilliant addresses how this limitation is tied to the element of likeness in portraiture: "Likeness is never more than a represented approximation that operates conceptually to fix transiency in an inclusive image, when change in spirit and body is the essential characteristic of the human Subject" ("Editor's Statement" 172). George Eliot suggested something similar in a letter she wrote during the time she was writing *Middlemarch*, a novel where portraits and painting also play critical roles: "How can a thing which is always the same be an adequate representation of a living being who is always varying?" (qtd. in Onslow 456).[9] Through the Diana portrait, the novel presents a mockery of human vanity, but it raises a more

[9] See Hollander for a discussion of portraits in *Middlemarch*.

serious point about the vanity implicit in the notion that static portraits can be said to represent their ever-changing subjects.[10]

The limitations of portraits extend beyond their inability to capture anything other than already out-of-date images. Thackeray also demonstrates their ability to misrepresent the future through a portrait made of Beatrix in anticipation of her marriage to the Duke of Hamilton. When Henry arrives at Beatrix's door with news that the Duke has been killed, he considers what her life has been of late. In addition to surrounding herself with expensive objects, she has had her portrait painted: "She must have her picture by Kneller, a duchess not being complete without a portrait, and a noble one he made, and actually sketched in, on a cushion, a coronet which she was about to wear" (430). In this case, the portrait anticipates incorrectly, since Beatrix will never be a duchess nor wear such a coronet; in fact, emphasizing the gap between the portrait and reality, Beatrix fails to marry anyone of noble birth and ends up, instead, the wife of Tom Tusher, the Castlewood clergyman. While Isabel's portrait depicts a past that no longer exists, Beatrix's imagines a future that never will be. Neither comes close to accurately depicting either woman.

These inauthentic portraits provide the backdrop for the complications of the restoration plot at the conclusion of the novel. By the time the Pretender assumes Frank's identity in hopes of retaking the throne, Henry's legitimacy has privately been established in spirit, if not in the eyes of the law. Having been, first, the barely acknowledged bastard and, second, the "adopted" family member, Henry now discovers himself to be the legitimate heir to the family title. As this information gradually spreads, various family members come to acknowledge not only his right to the position held by Frank but also his overwhelming generosity in keeping his status a secret. Thackeray presents Frank's claim to the Castlewood title as a fiction that persists because everyone chooses to go along with it. And we are led to draw connections between this means of establishing legitimacy with that of the crown.

Joanna Woodall describes how the likeness of portraits echoes directly the claims of inheritance within noble families:

> Portraiture also articulated the patriarchal principle of genealogy upon which aristocratic ideology was built. The authorizing relationship between the living model and its imaged likeness was analogous to that between father and son, and processes of emulation presumed identity to be produced through resemblance to a potent prototype. The subject was situated within chains or hierarchies of resemblance leading to the origin of Nature herself: God. (3)

While Thackeray certainly engages with issues of physical likeness in the narrative, he also considers likeness metaphorically in relation to the legitimacy of heirs. While the portrait draws our attention to the similarities between Frank and James, the more striking comparison—one of difference, in this case—is that which Thackeray makes between Henry and James. In terms of decency, honor, and seriousness of purpose, Henry reigns throughout most of the novel. Even before the true nature of his birth is discovered, he has been playing the role of the patriarch of his own family. When Beatrix learns of the plan that Henry is masterminding, she asks him, "[W]hy were you not head of our house? You are the only one fit to raise it" (455). That he has proven

[10] Rather than writing this novel from the viewpoint of the older and more stable Henry Esmond, Thackeray confronts readers with impressions of characters and situations that change as the protagonist ages (see Fletcher 386-88).

himself fit to lead a household has impressed Henry's relatives, but the introduction of the Pretender allows Henry's preeminence to be imagined on another, much grander scale. Once exposed to James's inadequacies, Frank takes his complaints to Henry because, as he says, "I fancy you are like a king" (458). Frank himself is "like" a king—or rather a Pretender—by virtue of a few similar physical attributes. But once the portrait has brought the three men together, Thackeray shifts modes, suggesting a different likeness that could be the criteria by which leaders (of families, of countries) are determined.

Thackeray makes a similar point about the Duke of Berwick, James's "best friend" and bastard half-brother, whom Henry had met while arranging for the restoration plot and whom he found more fit for the role of king than James. Henry comments, "Had Berwick been his father's heir, James the Third had assuredly sat on the English throne. He could dare, endure, strike, speak, be silent" (448). Henry could be describing himself—or, at least, the version of himself depicted in his narrative. The disparity in ability between James and his half-brother parallels Henry's own family situation: Henry is more fit to lead the family than Frank, who takes after his father in fiscal irresponsibility and inattentiveness. Thackeray is working out a metaphorical representation of the family drama on the national stage, which serves to emphasize how the system in place to determine succession overlooks Henry's legitimacy and merit.

In the end, neither Henry nor James rule in any conventional way. The restoration plan backfires, thanks to the debased character of the Pretender, who undermines the plot by running from London in order to chase and seduce Beatrix at exactly the wrong moment. In terms of the resolution of the novel, Thackeray prevents the unworthy candidate from taking the throne, although nothing has changed about the system that would deny worthy men like Henry or the Duke of Berwick. Beatrix's treacherous behavior with James finally kills off the love that Henry has felt for her for years, opening the door for him to marry her mother Rachel instead. The visual similarities in the book do not count for much in the end. Frank and James may resemble one another sufficiently for the portrait ruse to work, but James's conduct ruins his chances of becoming king. Henry's first formal portrait—the faux Rigaud—both succeeds and fails. Its success stems from Henry's keen sense of the conventions of portraiture, which he uses to his advantage in substituting James for Frank. It fails, however, because regardless of whether the Pretender's claim to the throne is legitimate, his behavior proves his illegitimacy—his lack of noble character if not noble blood. Henry may create a successful portrait, but he can't create a successful Pretender; although the portrait fails to capture the truth about James's character, Thackeray's narrative leaves no doubt of what this would-be king looks like stripped of ruffles and periwig.

Henry's face may reveal his legitimate place in the Castlewood family, but he chooses not to capitalize on the connection. While the restoration plot is thwarted, Henry in a sense abdicates, burning the documents that would establish his claims. He gives up more than his claim to his family's title, though. Henry's final gesture in the novel is to leave behind the social world that takes its established kings and the presentation of them seriously. He and Rachel leave for America, where he begins his own reign in "the estate of Castlewood, in Virginia" (37). The monarchy and its related systems remain in place in England, but Henry takes himself to a country that has rejected the Crown in favor of democracy. At the same time, he also gives up portraiture, and turns to a new genre, literature, convinced of its merit with all the enthusiasm of a convert. Here, in this long narrative about his own life, he will move beyond creating a static and

false portrait for someone else's plot and instead develop his genre of choice for his own purposes.

Thackeray suggests a clear hierarchy. That Henry dismisses portraiture, turning instead to a prose narrative, suggests that the lesser arts have been abandoned for the more mature, developed form. This progression echoes choices Thackeray made in his own life, giving up painting as his life's work and turning instead to writing, although never completely giving up illustrating on the side. That his narrative contains portraits as smaller works of art within the novel's whole implies that narratives are bigger, able to contain the more limited genre of portraits. Finally, he presents portraits as flawed because they are static and because they rely heavily on convention that prevents likeness from being either expressed or observed. Certainly his examples paint the limitations clearly. Shearer West offers a critique of portraits that Thackeray might have appreciated: "The particular moment chosen for a portrait cannot be extended in such a way: it represents the individual's appearance at a specific point, and other aspects of his or her life can only be alluded to" (51). Portraits show up in *Henry Esmond* as isolated islands, while the sea of the narrative engulfs them, connecting them, extending their reach.

But sitting in 2011, holding an old copy of *Henry Esmond* in my hand, I am struck by its static nature. Hypertextual narratives made possible by new technologies make Thackeray's criticism feel out of date. His charges against portraiture can all be leveled against the novel as well. The first edition's faux eighteenth-century trappings, along with the inclusion of references to eighteenth-century people or events, create a false impression, similar to the effect of Lely's inclusion of Diana's bow and arrows in his portrait of Isabel. The centuries-long suspicion of novels as containing artificial and misleading words stands against Henry's easy confidence that his work will tell truths not available in portraiture. And in its literary dexterity—such as its stereotyped figure Father Holt, the mysterious and ever-plotting Jesuit priest—Henry's narrative reminds one of Rigaud's stock poses, designed to ensure that the painter's subjects would look, like Louis XIV, every inch a king.

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Acknowledgements

The author and editor are grateful to Réunion des Musées Nationaux / Art Resource, NY for permission to reproduce Figure 1, Hyacinthe Rigaud, *Louis XIV* and also to Grinnell College Libraries for permission to reproduce Figure 2, Thackeray, "An Historical Study."

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Thackeray and India: Re-examining England's Narrative of its Indian Empire

by Susan Ray

Thackeray differed from the majority of nineteenth-century English authors in that he possessed firsthand experience of Anglo-Indian life, a reality that was unromantic and even painful (such as his childhood separation from his mother and first home) or irreconcilable to a "proper" middle-class English existence (such as having a Eurasian half-sister).[1] This article examines how Thackeray, instead of challenging the mission of empire, applies his own experiences and colonial insights to his writings to satirize the exotic and romantic mythologies that defined India and Anglo-Indians in the British imagination. More specifically, Thackeray's fictions about India—*The Tremendous Adventures of Major Gahagan* (1838), *Vanity Fair* (1848) and *The Newcomes* (1852)—reveal aspects of colonial life often overlooked in England's celebrated national narrative of empire, exposing wildly exaggerated accounts of Indian exoticism and challenging the romanticization of British military exploits in Southeast Asia. His fiction, personal correspondence, and illustrations chronicle the raw underbelly of nineteenth-century colonial life, anticipating the mid-century scrutiny of accepted historical and artistic representations of English military and cultural superiority abroad.

Exploring Miscegenation: European-Indian Romances

Thackeray approaches the topic of European-Indian romances with an anxiety deeply rooted in his own family tree, making him one of the few Victorian authors to explore this complicated, generally avoided, issue. Though Thackeray's father, Richmond, died when he was only four-years-old, the author was sorely troubled by his father's pre-marital affair with a native Indian woman, Charlotte Sophia Rudd, and their illegitimate daughter, Sarah, born in 1804.[2] Thackeray was repeatedly reminded of this affair by financial ties to his Indian half-sister and the ultimate arrival of her child, his "dark" niece, on his doorstep in London. His Eurasian relatives represented points of anxiety for Thackeray as he struggled to reconcile his complicated family dynamic with contemporary English perceptions of other races. Therefore, it is unsurprising that while he rarely acknowledges his sister or her family in his correspondence, European-Indian romances are often put under the satirical microscope in his fictions.

[1] Children of English fathers and Indian mothers are referred to as Eurasian. English servicemen, soldiers and their families who served in India were typically referred to as "Indian" by those in England (Colonel Newcome is repeatedly referred to as the Newcome family's "Indian cousin" upon returning to London); however, to avoid confusion, those serving/living abroad will be referred to as Anglo-Indian.

[2] Richmond Thackeray "had gone out to an East India Company post in 1798, and in accordance with the custom of the country had taken a native mistress, Charlotte Sophia Rudd....A child, Sarah, was born in 1804. She married a half-caste, James Blechynden, in 1820, and died in 1841....Richmond died in 1814, leaving a will under whose terms Sarah Redfield received an annuity of one hundred pounds" (Davies 327).

While Thackeray rarely mentions his half-sister, a few references to her in his letters and the repeated theme of miscegenation throughout his fictions indicate that she made a firm imprint on his subconscious.[3] In a diary entry dated June 1832, he notes: "[I] went to Bedford & dined off turtle & cold beef—I wish the turtle had choked me—there is poor Mrs. Blechynden starving in India, whilst I am gorging myself in this unconscionable way. I must write to her" (Ray, *Letters I*: 208). In Spring, 1848, during publication of the final installments of *Vanity Fair*, Sarah's natural daughter (name unknown) appeared in London and apparently stayed at Thackeray's home. This event is only briefly mentioned in letters to his closest friend, Edward Fitzgerald, and his mother. In a letter to Fitzgerald dated March-May 1848, he remarks: "I have got a black niece staying with me: daughter of a natural sister of mine. She was never in Europe before & wrote to my mother the other day as her 'dear Grandmamma.' Fancy the astonishment of that dear majestic old woman!" (*Letters II:* 367). Thackeray's observations about his "natural" niece are not marked with duty or affection but rather discomfiture at her presence and relief at her departure. His letters maintain a sense of duty, obligation, and even guilt when he references Sarah; yet, when confronted with a "black" biological relative, he is eager for her to leave, as her presence is unacceptable in London society. Although Thackeray's Indian connections are relatively suppressed in his personal writings, a clear anxiety about miscegenation is reflected in his professional ones.

One of Thackeray's earliest works, *The Tremendous Adventures of Major Gahagan* (1838), is particularly focused on a romantic entanglement between a European man and an Indian woman.[4] His only work to take place predominantly in India, the novel is narrated by Goliah O'Grady Gahagan, an Irishman serving in the British military during the time of Wellington. In the same vein as Barry Lyndon, Gahagan is a braggart prone to wild exaggeration. Gahagan's infatuation with his commander's part-Indian daughter, Julia Jowler, is described as all-consuming and her beauty as unnatural: "We used to call her the witch—there was magic in her beauty....O lustrous black eyes!—O glossy night-black ringlets!" (6). In contrast to Gahagan's later love interest, the timid, fair-haired, English Belinda, Julia's beauty is described as dark and supernatural, even dangerous. He decides to seek her hand in "spite of" her "half caste mother," who was "born and bred entirely in India...[and] had not...a Christian name, or...quality: she [had] a beard, black teeth...[and] spent most of her time with her native friends" (6-7). Although Mrs. Jowler is a Eurasian (half-English and therefore half-white) raised in India, her "dark" appearance and her native Indian social circle make her horrifically "Other" in the eyes of Gahagan. In contrast, Julia's European mannerisms and lighter-complexion make her Eurasian heritage more acceptable, revealing the blurred and complicated English perception of Eurasian women.

While Julia is heralded by Gahagan and the entire regiment as a great beauty, the Irishman refers disparagingly to Mrs. Jowler—due to her darker countenance and native practices—repeatedly referring to her as an "engaged monkey," a "creature," and "Jowler's rhubarb-colored wife" (6-9). Gahagan's disgust with Mrs. Jowler's appearance and her Indian culture complicates his obsession with her daughter. He characterizes Mrs. Jowler's influence over Julia as poisonous:

[3] "Thackeray was obsessed by thoughts of his needy part-Indian relative, despite the fact that [Sarah] was receiving an evidently adequate annuity" (Davies 327).

[4] Julia Jowler is a light-skinned Eurasian; her grandfather and father are English and her mother half-Indian.

> the spice of the devil in her daughter's composition was most carefully nourished and fed by her. If Julia had been a flirt before, she was a downright jilt now; she set the whole cantonment by the ears; she made wives jealous and husbands miserable; she caused all those duels…such was the fascination of THE WITCH that I still thought her an angel. I made court to the nasty mother in order to be near the daughter. (6)

The "spice of the devil" which Julia possesses is her native Indian heritage—the "black eyes" and "black curls" and distinctly foreign appearance that enchants the entire regiment. Gahagan claims—and laments—that this exotic and seductive feminine power is cultivated and encouraged by her mother. Julia's sexual magnetism is directly ascribed to her Indian blood and the fact that she entices European males is described as both unnatural and potentially dangerous. In *Haunted by Empire*, Anne Laura Stoler notes that for "mixed-blood" citizens such as Julia to be accepted into white, colonized society, "disaffection for one's native culture and native mother were critical gate-keeping criteria for European membership" (2). Julia's apparent attachment to her "native" mother makes her decidedly un-English, therefore complicating her eligibility to marry a European man.

Shortly after Colonel Jowler refuses Gahagan's proposal, due to his low rank and limited financial prospects, their regiment and the Bundelcund Invincibles, a unit of Indian soldiers

> received orders to march….And now arose [a new] perplexity: what must be done with…Julia? [COL Jowler] knew his wife's peculiarities of living, and did not much care to trust his daughter to her keeping; but in vain he tried to find her an asylum among the respectable ladies of his regiment….Julia and her mother must have a house together, and Jowler knew that his wife would fill it with her odious blackamoor friends. (*Tremendous* 7)

The Colonel's anxiety arises from his wife's complete control over their daughter in his absence; he fears Mrs. Jowler will establish Julia in Indian, rather than Anglo-Indian, society. Ian Baucom reminds us of the complicated task of defining and maintaining Englishness in the British colonies. He argues that English citizens of the expanded empire safeguarded their national identity by excluding non-English and non-Europeans from their families and social circles; the prevalent sentiment was that "Englishness could be saved if the nation could be convinced to abandon the spatial model altogether and to enshrine another first principle of Englishness, a racial principle" (5). The Colonel felt he could instill "Englishness" in his daughter by providing her with an acceptable, Anglo-Indian circle replete with English values and influences, thus subduing "native" inclinations and ultimately preparing her for a marriage and permanent station within European, white society. However, the ladies of the regiment refuse the Jowler women entry into their homes because they fear Julia's dark and "native" mother will contaminate their displaced English community.

The Colonel eventually learns that, during the regiment's absence, Mrs. Jowler arranged Julia's marriage to the Maratha warrior, Chowder Loll. When Gahagan later slays Loll in battle, Jowler hurriedly convinces the unknowing Irishman to marry his daughter. Upon their return to Calcutta, Gahagan wanders the streets at night, dreamy-eyed, and peers through a window of the Jowler home. He sees Julia holding "a very dark baby in her arms" and overhears her ask, "Oh, Mamma…what would that fool Gahagan say if he knew all?" Realizing that not only was Julia a mother and a widow, but that her husband was the slain Indian warrior, Gahagan violently bursts into the nursery, the children scream, and "their d-d nurse fell on her knees, gabbling some infernal jargon of Hindustani" (12). The engagement is broken and Julia's secret exposed, leaving the light-skinned beauty forever on the outskirts of Anglo-Indian society.

Thackeray's description of *Major Gahagan*'s Indian characters and European-Indian relationships initially appears xenophobic and stereotypical, leading many critics to view him as supportive of racist ideologies. Mrs. Jowler is monstrous and animal-like, and the dark-skinned children "cursed," "squalling," babbling creatures rather than innocent babes. But such descriptions are complicated by the fact that Gahagan himself is an object of satire and his narrative is not to be trusted. According to Dustin Griffin, "satire [can be] problematic, open-ended, essayistic, ambiguous in its relationship to history, uncertain in its political effect, resistant to formal closure, more in order to ask questions than to provide answers" (5). Throughout *Major Gahagan*, Thackeray not only tests but exposes the problematic and blurred racial boundaries between English/European and Indian/Eurasian.

Therefore, when considering the characterizations of Julia and other Indian characters, one must remember that Gahagan is firmly established as an Irish buffoon with delusions of grandeur. Similar to Maria Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent* (1800), which Thackeray greatly admired, the (presumably) English editor interjects to remind readers that the account they read is dubious. For example, during Gahagan's description of his return to the English fort, after successfully infiltrating the Indian encampment disguised as a Maratha warrior, the narrator interrupts with a footnote: "The Major's description of this meeting, which lasted at the very most not ten seconds, occupies thirteen pages of writing. We have been compelled to dock off twelve-and-a-half; for the whole passage, though highly creditable to his feelings, might possibly be tedious to the reader" (54). This humorous disruption reminds the audience of the narrator's pattern of absurd exaggeration and self-glorification. Through Gahagan's narrative, Thackeray mocks traditional narratives of empire which, as Kitzan notes, typically "romanticized versions of events" and intentionally crafted "pictures of the conquering Anglo-Saxons" (6). Thus, the primary object of satire in *The Tremendous Adventures of Major Gahagan* is not the Indian characters but rather Gahagan himself, who satirizes the traditional image of the conquering European hero, calling into question not only his reports but his judgments and beliefs regarding Indians and Eurasians.

Significantly, as the narrator depicting Indian natives and culture, Gahagan is an untrustworthy Irishman; himself a "monstrous" character, he describes Mrs. Jowler in flat stereotypes, casts Julia as an un-marry-able coquette, and condemns the "corrupt Indian-nature" of mother and daughter. While Gahagan demonizes poor Julia Jowler, it remains apparent that she is merely a pawn of her mother's machinations, her father's ambition, the attentions of both Indian and European suitors, and her own dual-heritage. Thackeray leaves the biracial Julia in an impossible position; her Eurasian child, now without his Indian father and destined to grow-up in his English grandfather's household, will likewise be pulled between the two incongruous spheres of native Indian and Anglo-Indian societies.

Just as European-Indian relations in India are explored in *The Tremendous Adventures of Major Gahagan*, so too does Thackeray explore a native Indian character in London in his later novel, *The Newcomes* (1852). The presence of an Indian merchant at his sister-in-law's home unnerves Colonel Newcome, who has spent the better part of his career in Bengal. Furthermore,

the mere suggestion of an Indian man seducing a white Englishwoman horrifies him. When he returns to London after a thirty-five-year absence, he is invited to Mrs. Newcome's pretentious dinner party:

> Mrs. Newcome [walked]...with Rummun Loll, the celebrated Indian merchant...otherwise his Highness Rummun Loll...with a claim of three millions and a-half upon the East India Company....having promenaded him and his turban, and his shawls, and his kincab pelisse, and his lacquered moustache, and keen brown face...through her rooms, the hostess [returned]. As soon as [Loll] saw the Colonel...his Highness's princely air was exchanged for...humility. (77)

Later, when Mrs. Newcome remarks that she "wished she could have had room for him at dinner!...The Indian Prince was so intelligent!" the Colonel gasps: "'The Indian what?' The heathen gentleman...was seated by one of the handsomest young women in the room, whose fair face was turned towards him, whose blond ringlets touched his shoulder, and who was listening to him as eagerly as Desdemona listened to Othello" (77-78).

Firstly, Loll (an Indian surname first attached to the warrior in Thackeray's *Tremendous Adventures of Major Gahagan*) is stricken when he recognizes Colonel Newcome from Calcutta society. Much like Jos Sedley, who reinvents himself as a war-hero upon his return from Brussels to Boggley-Wallah, Loll uses the distance between England and India to his own advantage. Extremely wealthy, the merchant adorns himself with luxurious, traditionally Indian, adornments; he then plays upon the ignorance—and vanity—of upper class English society by claiming to be an Indian prince. As David Cannadine notes, "insofar as [the English] regarded their empire as 'one vast interconnected world,' they did not necessarily do so in disadvantaged or critical contrast to the way they perceived their own metropolitan society. Rather they were at least as likely to envisage the social structure of their empire" (5). Therefore, "princes in one society were analogous to princes in another, and so on and so on, all the way down these two parallel social ladders" (8).

In the passage describing the London dinner party, Thackeray mocks English pretensions through Mrs. Newcome—who desires to surround herself with the rich and fashionable regardless of their character or heritage—as much as he villainizes the deceptive Loll. Loll is able to renegotiate his typically subordinate social position, due to his race, by displaying his wealth and declaring a royal lineage, a form of hierarchy of utmost importance to the English society he traverses. Colonel Newcome is first shaken by Loll's false claims to nobility, but he is especially offended by the apparent sexual tension between Loll and the Englishwoman with whom he converses. Thackeray intentionally contrasts her "fair face" and "blonde ringlets" with Loll's "brown face" and foreign garb, as his contemporary English readership would find the pairing unnatural. Barnes Newcome later remarks of Loll:

> "How the girls crowd round him! By Gad, a fellow who's rich in London may have the pick of any gal...I mean in society, you know....I've seen the old dowagers crowding round that fellow, and the girls snuggling up to his India-rubber face. He's known to have two wives already in India; but, by Gad, for a settlement, I believe some of 'em here would marry—I mean of the girls in society." (79)

Barnes repeatedly clarifies that it is not just any English group that would welcome Loll but the upper class London society that so valued wealth and nobility. While most English citizens would apply contemporary racial prejudices, shunning Loll's "India-rubber face" from their social circles, Barnes points out that socialites readily overlook these racial differences and would even marry their daughters to foreign polygamists for the promise of wealth and a title. The social criticism to be teased out of Thackeray's satirical representation of Mrs. Newcome and her company's homage to a fake Indian prince is the vanity of upper-class circles who place wealth and nobility above contemporary racial boundaries; this snobbery allows Mrs. Newcome's social circle to be defrauded, even to the point of compromising the virtue of a young Englishwoman at the hands of the dark interloper.

Without benefit of nobility and great wealth (as in the cases of Rummun Loll or *Vanity Fair*'s Rhoda Swartz), English-Indian marriages were typically scorned in England.[5] In *Vanity Fair*, when Mrs. Sedley voices her dissatisfaction about the governess Becky Sharpe potentially marrying her son, Mr. Sedley remarks: "Let Jos marry whom he likes...Better she, my dear, than a black Mrs. Sedley, and a dozen of mahogany grandchildren" (22). While Jos's hypothetical "mahogany children" might have been tolerated in turn-of-the-century Anglo-Indian circles (although a nineteenth-century marriage between a distinguished Company serviceman and Indian woman would have been highly unlikely), they would be perpetual outsiders in white-English society within the borders of England, a problematic schism of which Thackeray was keenly aware. Through Mr. Sedley, Thackeray reminds us of the irreconcilability of European-Indian affairs, and their resulting children, to "respectable" English life.

Both Thackeray's personal writings and fictions document his uncomfortable position as a notable Englishman whose family tree included native Indians. Thackeray's ties to his Indian half-sister, Sarah Blechynden, left him torn between two worlds: an Anglo-Indian society, which initially tolerated then condemned interracial pairings, and an English one which viewed other races (particularly Africans and Indians) as inferior. As Julia Wright notes, "Literary responses to the imperial project might sometimes represent colonial experience or events of imperial history, but they also include thematic investigations of ethical questions, alternatives to current imperial strategies, [and] imaginative accounts of possible consequences" (2). In his fictions, Thackeray explores the nature of white/English and black/Indian attachments, the forces driving them, and social condemnation of such pairings. However, he offers no absolute conclusions, much less solutions, to their ambivalent nature; instead he exposes the hypocrisy surrounding the rare social acceptances of miscegenation and reveals the complicated social position of Eurasian offspring. Due to the irreconcilability of Anglo-Indian romances and their Eurasian progeny with the mores of middle and upper-class London society, Thackeray widely ignored his own Indian connections until guilt, or even a "natural" relative, came knocking on his door. Instead of offering terminal judgment or even solutions, he simply grants miscegenation—a product of colonialism often overlooked in narratives of empire and nineteenth-century fictions in general—a place in his fictional panorama of empire, thus acknowledging the complications it created.

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[5] When John Sedley is bankrupt, Mr. Osborne demands that his son, George, sever his engagement to Amelia Sedley and promotes Miss Rhoda Swartz, a "mulatto" West Indian heiress, as a potential wife solely because she is an heiress.

Exaggerated Exoticisms

In his influential work *Orientalism*, Said observes: "The Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences" (1). Said's critique is entirely supported by the analysis of a mid-nineteenth-century British soldier serving in India, Captain F.B. Doveton. In his essay, "A Last Look at India," Doveton notes that his was a "time…when *The Arabian Nights* and Orme's noted works were our main sources of information relative to those interesting regions" (427). In keeping with Said's claims, Doveton concurs that *The Arabian Nights*—the medieval collection of folk tales also known as *A Thousand and One Nights*—and British historian Robert Orme's pro-imperialist works—*History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan from 1745* (1778) (often referred to as "Orme's History") and *Historical Fragments of the Mogul Empire, the Morattoes and English Concerns in Indostan from 1659* (1782)—were central to the English conception of India. Thackeray also establishes this connection in his fictions as both of his characters bent on military careers in India, William Dobbin of *Vanity Fair* and Thomas Newcome of *The Newcomes*, are invested in these books. Thackeray expands on these connections, using his satire to demonstrate the skewed and ridiculous conceptions of India that resulted from such limited and fantastical perceptions of Southeast Asia.

It is telling that nineteenth-century English comprehension of India was largely colored by magical and exotic images from a collection of tales dating back to the ninth century and comprised of not only Indian but Turkish, Egyptian, and Arab folklore. Despite the clearly magical, and therefore impossible, nature of such stories, they still contributed to the foundation of the English conception of India. Thackeray identifies this connection in *The Newcomes*: when Clive meets his father—who has spent the whole of his career in India—for the first time since early childhood, the boy remarks: "when I first saw you, I had been reading the *Arabian Nights* at school—and you came in in a bright dress of shot silk, amber, and blue—and I thought you were like that fairy-princess who came out of the crystal box" (476). Similarly, when young William Dobbin, a grocer's son, finds himself an outcast at Dr. Swishtail's academy, he is described "lying under a tree in the playground, spelling over a favorite copy of the *Arabian Nights*" (50), a text foreshadowing his future attraction to India.

By twenty-first century standards, Robert Orme's characterization of natives is clearly racist, and modern-day readers recognize the English conceptualization an entire culture based on one Company serviceman's perceptions as highly problematic. Thackeray's fictions, however, simply acknowledge Orme's influence and periodically challenge the constant romanticization of the British conqueror in India, a motif firmly established in Orme's writings. For example, just as young William Dobbin was immersed in the *Arabian Nights*, young Thomas Newcome was imaginatively attached to Orme's *History of India*. Late in Thackeray's novel, Madame de Florac, Colonel Newcome's lost love, remarks that as a young man he obsessively read Orme's first book: "How military glory was his boyish passion, and he was forever talking about India. His favorite book was…the 'History' of Orme" (743). Orme's writings inspired Thomas Newcome to experience the "exotic" and aspire to the heroic as an English soldier serving in India. However, as is further examined in the following pages, the only event specifically recalled from the colonel's career in India is his awkward fleeing from the Battle of Aseer-Ghur in tight, showy

leather breeches. The reality he experiences falls short of the heroic exploits promised in Orme's narratives.

Recognizing the limited foundations of the English understanding of India, which were centered on fantastical, pro-colonial tenets, Thackeray uses satire to point out the absurdity of common misconceptions regarding Southeast Asia. For example, *The Tremendous Adventures of Major Gahagan* is modeled on popular histories and biographies penned by English soldiers; in such testimonials, "The boundaries between fact and fiction became blurred as romanticism came to influence British aesthetic, historical and scientific encounters with India" (Peers 157). Thackeray uses Gahagan, his unreliable narrator, to expose the absurd nature of the exotic perceptions of India stemming from fictions such as *Arabian Nights* and the potentially romanticized and exaggerated accounts of British soldiers and historians.

For example, a nineteenth-century English reader readily would have recognized the absurdity of Gahagan's successful infiltration of the camp of Maratha rebels: he simply confiscates the warrior Bobbachy Bahawder's garments and assumes his identity by "blackening" his face and relying on his "command of all the Eastern dialects and languages, from Burmah to Afghanistan" (38). Even more absurd is his account of the Indian encampment:

> Towards the spot which the golden fish and royal purdahs, floating in the wind, designated as the tent of Holkar, led an immense avenue—of elephants!....Each of the monstrous animals had a castle on its back, armed with Mauritanian archers and the celebrated Persian matchlock-men….containing sleeping and eating rooms for the twelve men that formed its garrison…each roof bearing a flagstaff twenty feet long on its top, the crescent glittering with a thousand gems. (40-41)

Though most of Thackeray's contemporary English readers would have never seen an elephant, they would have recognized the illogicality of nearly four hundred elephants perfectly aligned, each with a giant, two-storied structure on its back. Furthermore, in addition to exaggerating the number and size of both the elephants and their "mobile castles," Thackeray further complicates the soldier's account with images of Indian wealth so vast that the top of each tent is adorned with "a thousand glittering gems."

Gahagan adds that after meeting the Maratha commander, Jaswant Rao Holkar, he retires to Bahawder's quarters, where "an attendant came to tell me that my supper was prepared in the inner apartment of the tent (I suppose that the reader, if he be possessed of the commonest intelligence, knows that the tents of the Indian grandees are made of the finest Cashmere Shawls, and contain a dozen rooms at least, with carpets, chimneys, and sash-windows complete)" (46). Gahagan addresses the reader personally, calling upon his assumed conceptions of Indian exoticism; but by recognizing the absurd nature of his narrative and the implausibility of twelve-room tents with working chimneys resting on the backs of moving mammals, the English reader confronts the absurdity of his own preconceptions. Gahagan's ludicrous claims compel readers to reexamine their own fallacious mental images of Indian culture.

Similarly, in *Vanity Fair* Thackeray exposes the questionable firsthand accounts of British heroism and Indian exoticism through Jos Sedley, a foolish, gluttonous, and socially awkward character. During his brief flirtation with Becky, he tells (and retells) the story of his tiger-hunt in India: "he described a tiger-hunt, and the manner in which the mahout of his elephant had been pulled off his seat by one of the infuriated animals….How frightened she was at the story….'for

the sake of all your friends, promise *never* to go on one of those horrid expeditions.' 'Pooh, pooh, Miss Sharp,...the danger makes the sport only the pleasanter'" (40). But the narrator's version is more in keeping with Jos's established persona: "He had never been but once at a tiger-hunt, when the accident in question occurred, and when he was half killed—not by the tiger, but by the fright." Jos's distorted version of the expedition exemplifies how "fact and fiction became blurred" (Peers 157); as Joseph Sramek points out:

> Tigers...represented for the British all that was wild and untamed in the Indian natural world....[And tiger-hunting became]...an important symbol of the construction of British imperial and masculine identities during the nineteenth century....[It] represented a struggle with fearsome nature that needed to be resolutely faced, 'liked a Briton,' as [British Army officer Walter] Campbell put it. (659)

Jos is clearly familiar with the established mythos of the Indian tiger-hunt and the expectation of British valor abroad. Unable or unwilling to meet such expectations, he simply lies and incorporates himself in an impressive tale about tiger-hunting that he repeatedly tells throughout the novel, establishing himself within that romanticized narrative. Through Jos's easy deceit, Thackeray casts a questionable light on similar stories related by British colonizers as well as the audiences who eagerly believed them.

Later in the novel, after Jos returned to Boggley-Wallah and his father lost his fortune, the family's goods are being auctioned off in London. "How Captain Dobbin Bought a Piano" features the image of a painting of Jos astride an elephant (fig.1), offered up for bidding. Though

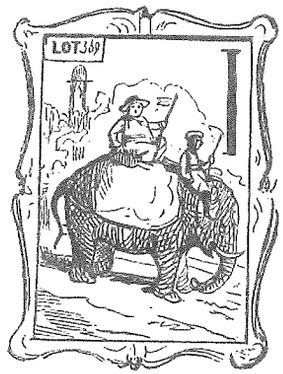

Fig. 1. Thackeray, Jos on an Elephant

a miniature, the reader immediately interprets the comic nature of the picture. Jos's girth reflects that of the elephant, making the likeness absurd rather than heroic; his figure is entirely at odds with the romantic ideal of an adventurous British colonizer. Jos's character highlights the fallacy behind the image of the "conquering European," the narrative of Empire inherent in the portrait. "An Elephant for Sale" features Dobbin gazing at the portrait and Becky, one of the bidders, smirking in the background (fig. 2):

> "No. 369," roared Mr. Hammerdown. "Portrait of a gentleman on an elephant. Who'll bid for the gentleman on the elephant? Lift up the picture, Blowman, and let the company examine this lot." A long, pale, military-looking gentleman...could not help grinning as this valuable lot was shown by Mr. Blowman. "Turn the elephant to the Captain, Blowman. What shall we say, sir, for the elephant?" but the Captain, blushing in a very hurried and discomfited manner, turned away his head. (202)

Fig. 2. Thackeray, "An Elephant for Sale"

Here, the focus is not Jos's portrait but Dobbin's reaction to it. At first he "grins," recognizing the caricature as absurd and entirely at odds with the lazy, skittish gourmand he knew so well. When the auctioneer mistakes Dobbin's amusement for interest and encourages him to buy the portrait, the Captain's reaction is one of surprise and mortification, at which Becky knowingly sneers in the background. Judith Fisher notes that "The 'eye of sympathy' that modifies our reading by giving us a sudden understanding of how a character sees, giving us that character's perspective, can suddenly reverse our involvement with the character and thrust us out of the text" (62). The combination of the two illustrations, first introducing the reader to Jos's portrait and then showing him Dobbin's embarrassed reaction, as Fisher notes, not only "reinforces the text" but "thrusts us out of" it. The reader, like Dobbin, is acutely aware of Jos's mistruths and his true nature; through the illustrations he is invited to perceive the painting through Dobbin's eyes and thus not only appreciate the Captain's discomfiture but recognize that other artistic (and literary) representations of British colonizers abroad are potentially romanticized, exaggerated, and even absurd.

Said makes it clear that "nearly every nineteenth-century writer...was extraordinarily well aware of the fact of empire [and] it will not take a modern Victorian specialist long to admit that liberal cultural heroes like John Stuart Mill, Arnold, Carlyle,...Ruskin, George Eliot, and even Dickens had definite views on race and imperialism, which are quite easily to be found at work in their writing" (14). While Thackeray is not listed among the Victorian liberal thinkers to which

Said alludes, it is obvious that British imperialism pervades his fictions, perhaps more so than the works of his contemporaries. Not only did Thackeray avoid the fallacy of exoticizing and romanticizing "the Orient": he artfully mocks and exposes the simplicity of Englishmen and women who conceptualized the East in such a manner. Through Thackeray's writings, we discover a realist author fully aware of the national propaganda and fairy-tale imaginings of India that flooded the popular media, an author determined to provoke readers into questioning their flawed conceptions of British India.

Challenging the Romanticization of the British Military in India

As Douglas M. Peers and David Arnold identified, it was standard for the English to celebrate and even glorify their military conquests in India. While soldiers writing about such events mythologized battles against native forces, artists and writers at home idealized the exploits of their soldiers abroad. In this vein, Thackeray writes *The Tremendous Adventures of Major Gahagan*, directing his satire at the grandiose characterization of the military which, as Peers notes, infiltrated both factual and fictional accounts about British India: "[The] potent combination of romanticism and medievalism, so visible in much of the imaginative literature produced by military officers, equally informed, albeit indirectly, the empirical and historical research that they undertook, thereby blurring still further the distinction between fact and fiction" (160). By having a soldier, Goliah Gahagan, narrate the history of his own experiences in India, Thackeray demonstrates the potential absurdity of the many glorified accounts of British military heroism eagerly received in England.

For example, at the end of the novel, Gahagan commands a small number of British soldiers defending a predominantly civilian fort when they are attacked by Holkar and his massive army of Maratha warriors. Despite being out-numbered, Gahagan, with only one cannon-ball at his disposal, defends the fort by expertly firing at the line of elephants. He explains the physics behind the trajectory of his magnificent shot:

> what then is x? x is the line taken by the ball fired from G, which took off ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-FOUR ELEPHANTS' TRUNKS, and only spent itself in the tusk of a very old animal, that stood the hundred and thirty-fifth! I say that such a shot was never fired before or since....Suppose I had been a common man, and contented myself with firing bang at the head of the first animal? An ass would have done it, prided himself had he hit his mark, and what would have been the consequence? (62)

The reader immediately recognizes the improbability of a single cannon-ball tearing the trunks off all those elephants. Gahagan further detracts from his accountability by asserting supernatural abilities; he explains that, while a "common man" would have simply fired at one animal, only a soldier of his caliber would have even attempted, much less executed, such a shot. Such illogical claims repeatedly punctuating Gahagan's narrative subtly challenge the persistent mythologizing of the British military abroad.

In his examination of fictions of empire, Kitzan writes that "Facing *apparently* hopeless odds and *apparently* certain death was [an]...attractive proposition for authors, for it created an opportunity to display what the authors considered to be true British character" (139). Thackeray challenges another standard tenet of nineteenth-century imperial fictions and military accounts by

presenting readers with a satiric rendition of the Gahgan's near-death experience. Though in the hands of enemies who threaten to "rip out his teeth," "nails," and "eyes" and to "flay" and "burn him alive," Gahagan refuses to renounce his religion and marry a woman of Commander Holkar's choosing in exchange for his life (68-69). In the face of death, bound and helpless, Gahagan espouses:

> "I am an Irishman, and a Catholic....unbelieving dogs!...Do you think to pervert a Christian gentleman from his faith and honor? Ruffian blackamoors!...heap tortures on this body...Tear me to pieces...if each torture could last a life, if each limb were to feel the agonies of a whole body, what then? I would bear all—all—all—all—all—ALL!" My breast heaved—my form dilated—my eye flashed as I spoke these words. "Tyrants!" said I, "dulce et decorum est pro patria mori." Having thus clinched the argument, I was silent. (69)

The scene reflects a compilation of stereotypes regarding native Indian barbarity (perpetuated by such fictions as *Arabian Nights*) and the established conception of English military valor. The inflated ferociousness of his captors, the remarkable eloquence of Gahagan's speech, and the sheer melodramatic nature of the scene serve to expose the unnatural and problematic formula of such tales. John Kucich recognizes that death and sacrifice were inherent to the accepted grand narrative of military gallantry: "British imperialism may have fostered countless narratives of conquest, and it may have celebrated heroes like Wellington...or great triumphs like Waterloo.... The arrogance of the British abroad was legendary...and often a source of perverse national pride. But British imperialism also generated a remarkable preoccupation with suffering [and] sacrifice" (4). Just as popular colonial narratives were rife with tales of English heroism, they showcased examples of personal loss and sacrifice in the name of God and country, earning the commendation and admiration of English readers. Thackeray artfully brings his audience to reflect on the unrealistic circumstances and the contrived eloquence of Gahagan's speech, going so far as to tell his captives, in Latin, that "It is sweet and honorable to die for one's country," a phrase included solely for the benefit of his readers as his Indian enemies would not have understood it. Through Gahagan, Thackeray has magnified this trope of English sacrifice to showcase its potential absurdity.

Furthermore, in an era of such jingoistic sentiments and at the peak of the British Empire, Thackeray's serially published-novella would potentially have been ill-received if the narrator himself was an English Protestant (as were the majority of his readers). By casting Gahagan as an Irish Catholic, Thackeray removes himself from the satire. Seidel notes, that in such instances, the satirist may work "to distance himself from the debasing...and contaminating nature of his subjects by placing surrogate figures into his fictions. He literally invents expendable versions of himself (with whom he is only partially identified) to do his dirty work" (14). Gahagan is a soldier in the British army, but he is Irish, not truly English, and perceived as racially and culturally inferior. Gahagan refuses to denounce his religion in order to be spared, but his religion differs from that of his English audience; nineteenth-century English-Protestants tended to stereotype Catholics as superstitious and unduly deferential to an unworthy clergy. By establishing a braggart Irish Catholic as his narrator, Thackeray can critique the contemporary romanticization of the British military, in this case in India, without offending or ostracizing his English readers.

And just as the British military abroad was glorified and romanticized in fictions and written accounts of its exploits, it was also mythologized through works of art. In her consideration of Thackeray's representation of the Battle of Waterloo in *Vanity Fair,* Joan Stevens points out the historical controversy surrounding sculptor Matthew Wyatt's 60-ton bronze statue of the Duke of Wellington, unveiled in Hyde Park in 1846. *Punch Magazine*, to which Thackeray contributed in the 1840s and 1850s, was quick to ridicule the pretentious nature of the monument; it ran jokes concerning the statue which "continued several to an issue until the very end of 1847, to such an extent that *Punch* was finally forced to publish a public appeal to stem the flood" (Stevens 20). The sheer multitude of contributions from readers indicates that the public was beginning to question, and even resent, such grand representations of British gallantry, seeing them as contrived and even excessive.

Thackeray artfully exposes the unromantic realities of the British military presence in India lurking behind the grandiose renditions of its exploits. According to James Mill, the Battle of Asseer-Ghur (Sept. 24, 1803) took place the day following the Battle of Assaye as Wellesley's forces chased down the remaining Maratha Army. When Clive Newcombe encounters his cousin Ethel in Rome and she shirks his advances, he tells his fellow artist, J. J. Ridley, that he should approach his passion for Ethel as his father handled the Battle of Asseer-Ghur:

> Lieutenant Newcome, who has very neat legs…had put on a new pair of leather breeches, for he likes to go handsomely dressed into action. His horse was shot, the enemy were upon him, and [he] had to choose between death and retreat. I have heard his brother-officers say that my dear old father was the bravest man they ever knew….What do you think it was Lieutenant Newcome's duty to do under these circumstances? To remain alone as he was, his troop having turned about, and to be cut down by the Mahratta horsemen—to perish or to run, sir?...His brand-new leather breeches were exceedingly tight, and greatly incommoded the rapidity of his retreating movement, but he ran away, sir, and afterwards begot your obedient servant. That is the history of the battle of Asseer-Ghur. (299)

Like his father, Clive has opted to retreat when confronted with the insurmountable. What this anecdote also reveals is an unromantic and humorous reality behind a typically proud moment in British history. Clive posits that there was no cowardice in his father's retreat—his fellow troops having already "turned about"—and Ridley contends that he would have done the same. However, his father's vain choice of clothing not only impaired his escape but conjures comical images entirely at odds with traditional conceptions of British military heroism, as captured in Clive's painting of Assaye. By concluding his story with "that is the history of the battle," Clive confirms that this is the reality of events, rather than any grandiose and potentially fictional constructions of what his father's regiment experienced that day.

While Thomas Newcome is established as a humble and honest character, he is troubled by Fred Bayham's embellished description of his part in the battle when the Colonel is running against his nephew, Barnes Newcome, for a seat in Parliament. On polling-day, Bayham convinces the Colonel to ride in "an open barouche, covered all over with ribbon, and…profusely decorated with the Colonel's colors," with Bayham and the elderly Mrs. Mason, the Colonel's former nurse (to whom he thoughtfully sent an annuity from India) riding alongside him. As they

passed through the town of Newcome, a brass band played "See the Conquering Hero Come" as Bayham capitalized on the public's admiration of those who served in British India (685). Upon stopping and gathering a respectable audience, Bayham makes a speech:

> Good old unconscious Mrs. Mason was the theme of it…"She was his father's old friend….when he was away in India, heroically fighting the battles of his country, when he was distinguishing himself at Assaye, and—and—Mulligatawny, and Seringapatam, in the hottest of the fight and the fiercest of the danger, in the most terrible moment of the conflict…the kind old Colonel,—why should he say Colonel? why should he not say Old Tom at once? [he] always remembered his dear old nurse....Look at that shawl, boys, which she has got on! My belief is that Colonel Newcome took that shawl in single combat…from the prime minister of Tippoo Sahib….Look at that broach [she] wears!...What if I were to tell you that he cut that broach from the throat of an Indian rajah? He's man enough to do it." (685)

Perhaps not least because Mulligatawny is not a battle but a soup, the Colonel blushes as Bayham speaks; upon winning the election, the narrator reveals that "the contest saddened and mortified him; he felt that he was using wrong means to obtain an end that perhaps was not right (for so his secret conscience may have told him)" (687). As with Jos's painting, Thackeray offers readers insight into the character's past that the unnamed voters do not possess. We immediately recognize the cause of the Colonel's shame: while Bayham is celebrating him as a hero with abundant fanfare, extolling his victories in Wellington's campaign, he actually ran from the battlefield in tight britches. Though Thomas Newcome is undoubtedly an admirable character, his reality cannot match the fantastical narrative Bayham weaves of a soldier who tore shawls and cut broaches from the throats of enemy leaders. Knowing that the Colonel is an honest man, and Bayham, though eccentric, is not a villain out to intentionally deceive, Thackeray demonstrates how soldiers and civilians are inadvertently swept up in an inflated narrative of empire.

In his fictional considerations of the British military presence in India, Thackeray's criticisms are not necessarily politicized: he does not call into question the morality of empire or even the military campaigns in Southeast Asia. Instead, he subtly draws our attentions to the faulty narrative of Indian Empire that has become foundational to the majority of writings and artworks representing colonized India, one that his contemporary, mid-nineteenth-century audience was also beginning to re-examine. Throughout his fictions, Thackeray does not challenge the morality of the British Empire: this is problematic for current theorists who measure his work against twenty-first century sensibilities regarding racism and imperialism. By forcing Thackeray into the mold of either anti- or pro-imperialist, recent criticism has overlooked this author's subtle and powerful observations into the manner in which national propaganda and exaggerated exoticisms of the "Orient" permeated the media, the arts, and the English imagination. Close consideration of Thackeray's personal connections to colonized India and his fictional portrayals of Indian characters and locales provide new insight into the complexities of nineteenth-century English-Indian relations and into the ways the British viewed their intercontinental empire.

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Bildung by Numbers: Serialization, Readership, and Narrative Form in Thackeray's Pendennis Novels

By Alice Crossley

The complex and vivid world that William Makepeace Thackeray created in his novels provided a vicarious community for contemporary readers. This is particularly true of *Pendennis* (1848-50), *The Newcomes* (1853-55), and *The Adventures of Philip* (1861-62), three novels shaping a tripartite narrative of a fictional world stitched together with increasing dedication. In this world, both author and readers appear communally invested, even as a re-evaluation of generic form simultaneously emerges as a broader textual project throughout the books. In this framework, each novel of masculine development encapsulates its own story, while all three are inherently connected; Thackeray thus outlines and reiterates an increasingly complex representation of individual male experience reflected in the framework of these texts.

The temporal elongation applied to each serialized text inevitably creates additional tension on the plot and structure of each, as both the process of writing and the experience of reading extend to several months.[1] This tension creates vital opportunities for a deeper sense of community to develop between text, narrator, and reader, despite a striking feature of the popular press: advertising. The serial reader is simultaneously reminded of the self-conscious fictionality of these novels by means of advertisements surrounding the letterpress, thereby interrupting the textual cohesion of the narrative with commodities from the real world.

The three narratives under consideration isolate and then complicate the development of Arthur Pendennis, Clive Newcome, and Philip Firmin as each matures and adapts to society according to the literary tradition of Bildungsroman. While the novels undoubtedly share elements frequently associated with *bildung*, and the discussion of male experience in the texts may be seen to forge a happy relationship between literary form and cultural content in this context, the term itself is difficult to define. "As soon as one takes a serious look at the notion of the *Bildungsroman*," Marc Redfield has noted, "it begins to unfold such extravagant aesthetic promises that few if any novels can be said to achieve the right to be so defined" (40). There remains in nineteenth-century Bildungsroman in particular, however, an acceptance of the desirability that an end result of development be achieved. There ought, after all, to be an ideal state towards which the protagonist is striving or, at least, to measure his progress against. According to Wulf Koepke, most Bildungsromane "do not seem to believe in perfectibility. This involves a contradiction: *Bildung* is a process, and there should be an end, a goal, a *telos* to such a process, which these novels deny as much as they point to it" (141). One of the most essentially problematic aspects of the Bildungsroman is therefore the question of the ending, for if the

[1] See Jennifer Hayward, *Consuming Pleasures* (1997); Linda K. Hughes and Michael Lund, *The Victorian Serial* (1991); and Sara Thornton, *Advertising, Subjectivity and the Nineteenth-Century Novel* (2009).

apparent "goal" of *bildung* has not been achieved, this suggests failure on the part of the individual concerned.

At the root of this concern lies a tension between the Bildungsroman as a process of realizing potential and the text as an exercise in disillusionment. These three novels offer a balance between the two possibilities. The young hero of *Pendennis* appears at one moment to have a host of unnamed experiences before him and an array of opportunities to embrace:

> He has left the home-nest in which he has been chafing, and whither, after his very first flight, he returned bleeding and wounded; he is eager to go forth again, and try his restless wings....The young man's life is just beginning: the boy's leading-strings are cut, and he has all the novel delights and dignities of freedom. (199-200)

Such a description isolates the inherent potential of the Bildungsroman protagonist, whose entry into society was recently attempted and whose "life is just beginning"; the possibilities appear endless for Pen at this stage in his development. Later, however, this potential becomes more constrained by means of Pen's trajectory and the choices that he has already made, and the conclusion of the novel—in which Pen marries his mother's ward, Laura Bell—fails to convince readers of Pen's maturity or of any significant achievement in his life.

The problem of the unfulfilling ending of this Bildungsroman is compounded by the existence of the two subsequent Pendennis novels. The finality of *Pendennis* is implicitly undermined by the continuation of Pen's own story through glimpses into his life in his narration of *The Newcomes* and *The Adventures of Philip*. Pen's narration may be reviewed as an extension of the depiction of his character, so that Clive and Colonel Newcome's first visit to Pen and Warrington's rooms in *The Newcomes*, for example, reveals as much about Pen as it does about Clive and his father. We are reminded of Pen's vanity in this instance, as Clive "artlessly" comments, "I say, Pendennis,...I thought you were a great swell"; and, while the Colonel's evident admiration for Dr. Johnson intimates much about his own character, it may be assumed that his claim—"A man of letters follows the noblest calling which any man can pursue"—provides Pen with a great deal of gratification, as the company had just been discussing his own book *Walter Lorraine*, which Pen modestly describes as a "work of modern genius" (*Newcomes* 48, 47). The finality of *The Newcomes*, in an even more pointed manner than the ending of *Pendennis*, is frustratingly inadequate, although the decisiveness of death is tempered by a suggestion of familial reconciliation and hope:

> Among the announcements of Births was printed, "On the 28th, in Howland Street, Mrs. Clive Newcome of a son, still-born." And a little lower, in the third division of the same column, appeared the words, "On the 29th, in Howland Street, aged 26, Rosa, wife of Clive Newcome, Esq." So one day, shall the names of all of us be written there; to be deplored by how many?—to be remembered how long? (2002-003)

After the death of Rosa and her child, Clive and his son bond, but then Colonel Newcome dies. This cycle of life and death, magnified by Pendennis's musings on Rosa's obituary in the newspaper, encapsulate the cyclical nature and the frustration of endings in the three Pendennis novels. As Bildungsromane, in which the journey of *bildung* is supposedly recounted, the lack of certainty and finality evidenced in the closing paragraphs of each text is deliberately unsettling.

The reader is in some measure forced to reappraise the supposedly simple, linear structure of the Bildungsroman and to acknowledge that the trajectory of *bildung* can be misleading; Thackeray disproves the assumption of a goal or finishing-post for such development in these novels and destabilizes the apparent coherence of the protagonists' progress.

The inclusion of married life as an increasingly central theme in these three Bildungsromane might be perceived as tending towards an acceptance of linear narrative structure. The simplicity of such a straightforward domestic trajectory, however, continues to be frustrated. While acknowledging that marriage is for the most part an irrevocable choice, both *The Newcomes* and *Philip* circumnavigate such certainties by showing that marriage is not necessarily a choice that closes a man off from other possibilities; this is revealed by the noncommittal Clive at the conclusion of *The Newcomes* and in the revelation that Mr. Firmin's remarriage to a wealthy American widow in *Philip* is the third such alliance he has made. At the same time, however, marriage is also displayed as a comfortable and permanent state. Pen's own marriage for example, despite its shaky beginnings in *Pendennis*, provides a fixed point in the developing narratives of the subsequent two novels. Family and marriage and friendship also provide the final note for *Philip*, as Pen notes that:

> The mothers in Philip's household and mine have already made a match between our children. We had a great gathering the other day at Roehampton, at the house of our friend Mr. Clive Newcome (whose tall boy, my wife says, was very attentive to our Helen), and, having been educated at the same school, we sat ever so long at dessert telling old stories, while the children danced to piano music on the lawn. (267)

Marriage, in each of these novels, offers stability and provides an opportunity for the affirmation of male friendships. At the same time, it allows for the creation of new alliances and, with a cyclical twist, enables both the continuance of a family name (such as Newcome or Helen) and ensures the procreation of a new generation. While "the night will fall: the stories must end: and the best friends must part," the reader of *The Newcomes* will also remember that all stories may be claimed as old stories; while the narrative of a young man's *bildung* allows for a certain repetition of experience and retrospective nostalgia towards remembered history, each narrative claims to provide linear structure and to culminate with a sense of individual achievement. While this sense of comfortable finality is typically arrived at by means of marriage, in these three texts Thackeray confuses the supposition that marriage in the domestic literary tradition provides a conclusion to young men's development. In doing so, he engages in the reconstruction of the parameters of Victorian male experience.

As the narrator of both *The Newcomes* and *Philip*, and as a friend to both Clive Newcome and Philip Firmin, Pen occupies the self-consciously adopted role of narrator as well as a kind of hero in both texts. In the closing lines of *The Newcomes*, he is deliberately brought before the reader as a culpable yet likeable narrator: "Before taking leave of Mr. Pendennis, might he not have told us whether Miss Ethel married anybody finally? It was provoking that he should retire to the shades without answering that sentimental question" (1007). The reader's attention is thus drawn to Pen's narrative presence throughout the text, while such questions as—"How could Pendennis have got all those private letters, &c., but that the colonel kept them in a teak box, which Clive inherited and made over to his friend?"—invite reflection and speculation on Pen's position in the story (1008). The fictionality of the novel is asserted here while, at the same

moment, a bid is made to retain the interest of the readers indefinitely so as to continue their interaction with the text, and their interest in the characters and Pen in particular, as the lynchpin of the unfolding story.

For Thackeray's readership, the lack of a concrete conclusion to each text—or, in the case of *Philip*, an obviously contrived ending—can be aggravating. The sense of disillusionment that prevails in these novels, as both the heroes and the readers are forced to confront the fictional character of the text, the imperfections of themselves and their society, and the increasingly unlikely "happy" fairytale endings (and this is particularly true of *The Newcomes*), all lead to a notional retreat from the world of fiction. As Koepke has suggested, a realization that many ideals are unattainable in the Bildungsroman forces the reader to acknowledge that "we, the readers, are left with the ambiguous question of whether they were an immature illusion to begin with" (134). Thus the allegorical realism of the text is exposed as only partially escapist, and Thackeray's Bildungsromane also function didactically. They educate the reader by providing examples of individual development and progress, although such examples remain safely removed from reality in their deliberate fictiveness, and so inevitably fail to provide real answers. While readers are encouraged to sympathize with Thackeray's young heroes and can identify with some key decisions made as each young man matures, the contrived yet frustrating endings of the novels thwart attempts to apply such *bildung* to their own lives. On the other hand, however, the original reader does experience his or her own development while engaged in the reading of these novels from 1848 to 1862, although that development may not be a direct reflection of Pen's, Clive's, or Philip's *bildung*. The reader's engagement with the text encompasses the development of both story and reader, as Martin Swales suggests: "The story, then, becomes the guarantor that one is living. Obliteration of the story may seem to promise the realization of human wholeness, but ultimately it is a wholeness bought at the unacceptable price of stasis, bloodlessness, death" (33). What Swales proposes here indicates the significance of the conclusion of the Bildungsroman, and it also goes some way to offering an explanation for the lack of finality evident in Thackeray's novels. The reader is encouraged to continue to reflect on the story even after its narration has been completed; thus, rather than simply being frustrated, the reader is able to reflect on the text as a process of affirmation.

The ability of the reader to identify with the text is crucial in Thackeray's Bildungsromane; each novel provides a history of its hero, making its retrospective point of view inevitable. As part of the Bildungsroman narrative tradition during this period of literary history, the discussion of male personal experience and memory in relation to the form is particularly significant:

> Look back, good friend, at your own youth, and ask how was that? I like to think of a well-nurtured boy, brave and gentle, warm-hearted and loving, and looking the world in the face with kind honest eyes. What bright colours it wore then, and how you enjoyed it! A man has not many years of such time. He does not know them whilst they are with him. (*Pendennis* 29)

This passage encapsulates the tone that all three novels' narrators adopt at various points. By appealing to the reader to "look back...at your own youth," Thackeray assumes that aging is a collective experience. The retrospective stories and narratorial asides establish connections between the protagonist and the reader. While acknowledging the follies and impetuosities of youth, such reminiscence is nostalgic without being entirely sentimental. The readers are

encouraged to reflect on their own youthful experiences to corroborate or validate the story, or the emotions of young Pen. This style of "armchair" writing was one used frequently by Thackeray, and it is particularly suitable for his Bildungsromane. Implicit in the aside to the reader is the simple fact of the survival of youth. Looking back on the stories of each protagonist retrospectively offers assurance of their successful negotiation of adolescence.

The stock Bildungsroman tends to involve the simple recreation of a single history, and so it adheres to a narrative of linear development with an implied conclusion or resolution. These three novels, however, disrupt the typical masculine narrative to create a more cyclical mode of development, in which the repetition of experience and sustained reflection lend a less obvious cast to the exploration of the processes of growth. By intersecting the development and experience of male youth with the narrative structure of the Bildungsroman, while triplicating and thus distorting that structure over three novels, Thackeray creates a new platform from which any assumptions about the development of manliness, the maturation of the individual in relation to society, and the conventions of narrative strategy become intrinsically connected, fractured, and destabilized. Thus Thackeray appears to question whether *bildung* or the Bildungsroman can ever be fully completed, as the emphasis on reflection also suggests *re*formation, *re*habilitation, and *re*turn, so that even the progress of the protagonist has an element of cyclical repetition throughout his development. The three connected Pendennis novels suggest an attempt to circumnavigate away from definite endings or resolutions, indicating a willingness on both Thackeray's part (and also, perhaps, on his readers') to engage with the problems posed by the narrative of male experience, rather than relying on the reassuring conventions of the classical Bildungsroman to provide solutions or conclusions.

The structured form of the Bildungsroman is mirrored by the textual conditions of publication, allowing the initial audience to experience its own development alongside the progress of Pen, Clive, and Philip. This relationship is cemented by the continuity of characters from one text to the next, so that the relationship between character and reader is heightened and the fictional world becomes part of readers' lives on a regular, if intermittent, basis. The cyclical aspect of these three novels provides the author with a recurrent theme:

> What stories are new?....With the very first page of the human story do not love and lies too begin?....There may be nothing new under and including the sun; but it looks fresh every morning, and we rise with it to toil, hope, scheme, laugh, struggle, love, suffer, until the night comes and quiet. (*Newcomes* 5)

By employing a flexible but uniquely tailored template of the Bildungsroman in each of these novels, Thackeray self-consciously renews an old story, acknowledging that, while there may be "nothing new under and including the sun," old stories may be looked at afresh. In *Pendennis*, *The Newcomes* and *Philip*, Thackeray tries to capture and embellish in his own "pages[s]...the human story...[in which] love and lies too begin." This repetition, rather than creating a rigid structure wherein each text must be contained and defined from the "first page," enables Thackeray to engage in a narrative experiment that expands and questions the boundaries of the Bildungsroman form. Serialization over many months complements such narrative evolutions.

Repetitions foregrounding questions of form, literary convention, and publishing processes provide readers frequent opportunities to reflect on their roles as readers and consumers; but such deliberations also raise enquiries about the boundaries between real life (in which the material

text and historical reader are situated) and the fictional world. Contemporary reviews of Thackeray's work suggest that his characters played a sustained role in readers' lives even when the act of reading was discontinued. As late as 1900, one reader justified the pleasure he had found in Thackeray's works:

> I take it that if a "young man" can so much as read Thackeray with delight, he is more than half-way on the road to all that is best in modern English literature....we revere him as introducing to us men and women who we feel will prove our lifelong friends. (Silver 388)

As testimony to Thackeray's skill and design, the dynamic involving "men and women who we feel will prove lifelong friends" is facilitated by repeated use of the same characters and fictional spaces in his texts. The efficacy of using recognizable and well-received characters to people his novels proved to be a shrewd decision, creating a sense of familiarity between reader and text:

> Most of the characters as yet introduced to the reader are old acquaintances, and everybody will of course be pleased to find that Major Pendennis is as frivolous and worldly, Mr. Arthur as conceited and foppish, and good Mrs. P. as absurdly inconsequential, as ever. ("The Magazines" 813)

This critic, responding to the first installment of *Philip*, assumes that, like himself, readers are already familiar with characters from the first Pendennis novel; the recognizable figures of Major Pendennis, Pen, and Laura, provide a level of comfort with Thackeray's new work. The ease with which readers were therefore able to engage with Thackeray's novels, initiated by the reintroduction of characters from *Pendennis* in both *The Newcomes* and *Philip*, was also fostered by the serial format in which they were published. The month between each new number offered serial readers the opportunity to digest and reflect at some length on the contents of the previous installment.

Recently, much critical work has been done to establish the serial novel as worthy of attention for what it reveals about methods of writing, publishing, printing, and other aspects of the material processes of constructing a text. A related issue is what such studies can tell us about the reception of serial fiction, and the relationships between readers and the imaginative content of such works. Serialization, applied here to the primary form of Thackeray's novels, may be loosely described as a narrative offered to the public over a period of several months, in different numbers and with enforced spaces during which the narrative is suspended. Jennifer Hayward suggests that broad attempts to define the serial may be supplemented with a shared set of characteristics, including "the refusal of closure; intertwined subplots; large casts of characters...; interaction with current political, social or cultural issues; dependence on profit; and acknowledgement of audience response" (3). These additional elements of the form raise significant issues for the study of Thackeray's Bildungsromane: each of these three novels explicitly invites readers to involve themselves in the narrative. Requests that the reader "Look back, good friend, at your own youth, and ask how was that?" suppose that a definite relationship, by virtue of comparison within and beyond the novel, can and should evolve between text and audience (*Pendennis* 29). The intermittent publication of each text provides the reader with time and opportunity to take the narrative's advice. The "real reader" may become the "actual reader," to borrow Wolfgang Iser's useful terms, as the combination of serial format and a call for reflection encourage the audience to look back at their own experiences in youth, in order to

corroborate the claims of the text.[2] Further opportunity for the "acknowledgement of audience response" that, as Hayward suggests, is an intrinsic part of serial fiction may be found in early reviewers' opinions on Thackeray's works before the narratives had been fully published (3). One reviewer of Thackeray's work, referring to *The Newcomes* during its serial run, was explicit in his recognition that the novel was incomplete:

> We flatter ourselves that, in twenty years experience of novel-reading, we have attained to as clear a prescience of a *denouement* as most people; but Mr. Thackeray, with his tantalising interviews, and all his hints of the future, puzzles and outwits our ordinary penetration. While the conclusion is not as yet, and everything is possible, we do not even find ourselves in a position to advise Mr. Thackeray; we can but assure him honestly, that we see no outlet for him, though we expect he is to make himself a brilliant one. ("Mr. Thackeray" 93)

This critic draws attention to readers' potential to affect author's choices during writing. Charles Dickens's continuation of the popular Sam Weller character in *Pickwick Papers* (1836-37) exemplifies readers' participation in the creation of a text, an interaction made possible by serial publication. Similarly, in the concluding epigraph of *The Newcomes*, Pendennis must take responsibility for narrative anomalies, while Thackeray allows readers the illusion of a happy ending between Clive and Ethel.

Readers of Victorian serial novels developed a consciousness of their own abilities to participate in the creation of a text, adding to their investment in the lives and experiences of adolescent heroes. Bill Bell suggests that such occurrences subvert the linear process of writing: "In the case of 'writing by numbers'...the linearity of the productive mode is repeatedly disrupted by a kind of simultaneous production and consumption" (129). This highlights the immediacy of serialization; as long as the conclusion is delayed and "everything is possible," a close relationship between reader, text, protagonist, and writer is cultivated ("Mr. Thackeray" 93). According to Linda Hughes and Michael Lund, "Much of what made literature meaningful to the nineteenth century occurred during the reading of a work, before its ending had been reached, just as we all assess the importance of events in our personal lives and in the world without knowing how it will all turn out" (12). This emphasizes the effect of time in relation to the reading experience and the interpretation of a text as it progresses.

The serial novel is linked to an awareness of time, for both reader and writer. Thackeray's serial fiction refers both to individual past experience and shared history, showing a conscious consideration of reading-time and writing-time. It gestures toward the future, as the story unfolds, and to the present, in which the reader is living, demonstrating a multiple awareness of temporality. Serialization also demonstrates awareness of progress—of the weighty movements of society, of shifting ideologies, and of individual progress in the maturation of Pen, Clive, and Philip; thus, Thackeray's choice of Bildungsroman is particularly and deliberately pertinent to the quirks of serial publication. The time that elapses during each protagonist's *bildung* affords increased opportunities for readers' identification with and sympathy for the characters' growth. Each novel's retrospective narration in part counters the anticipation serialization inspires,

[2] See Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading* (1980).

fostering future anticipation with previous continuity.[3] References to previous memorable events strengthen that continuity; for instance, the second number of *Pendennis* concludes by explaining Pen's desire to marry an actress ten years his senior: "'Send for the Major? with all my heart,' said Arthur....And the colloquy terminated by the writing of those two letters which were laid on Major Pendennis's breakfast-table, in London, at the commencement of Prince Arthur's most veracious history" (83). The passage reminds readers of the very first pages of the text, in which the Major reads the two letters while breakfasting at his club, and so also invites the recollection of responses and reactions to that first number. Hughes and Lund emphasize that the linearity of serial fiction follows a slowly evolving pattern of development that "matched significant patterns in Victorian life," as society "subscribed to a notion of personal development running from infancy through maturity and ending in old age" (5):

> A serial literary work...grew from simpler to more complex order, from a single initial fragment to an accreting and diversifying collocation of characters and plot lines....[S]erials also grew in a strict chronological sequence...determined by publishing schedule and reinforced by the linear narrative technique associated with literary realism. (7)

This suggests that patterns of serial publication followed "a strict chronological sequence" and so enabled a move towards a mimetic evaluation of individual growth. But Thackeray's repetitious structure complicates the ways serialized Bildungsroman reflects the forward-moving trajectory of the novels' protagonists as they mature. The inconclusive endings of *Philip*, *The Newcomes* and *Pendennis*, and the succession of narrative similarities in these Bildungsromane, thwart the attempts of both character and reader to find resolution in the text.

Serialization, rather than imposing a linear structure, subtly reinforces the cyclical movement in the novels both through their own retrospective narration and external influences. Readers would have been aware that these novels represented a popular publishing genre, and so were far from unique. Advertisements for other serial novels surrounded the letterpress of both *Pendennis* and *The Newcomes*. In Number VII (May 1849) of *Pendennis*, readers are informed of the availability of a "New Work by Mr. Charles Dickens":

> This day is published, price One Shilling, the First Number of The Personal History, Adventures, Experiences, and Observations of David Copperfield the Younger, of Blunderstone Rookery (Which He never meant to be Published on any Account)....To be completed in Twenty Monthly Numbers.[4]

Such notices reinforce readers' awareness of Thackeray's prominence in the serial-publishing market. Accordingly, *The Newcomes* advertises new serial publications (see fig. 1), while *The Newcomes* is itself advertised in other serial works, like *Bleak House*: "Messers BRADBURY & EVANS have the pleasure to announce that a NEW SERIAL by Mr. W.M. THACKERAY is in preparation, the publication of Which will be commenced in the course of the ensuing Autumn."[5]

Many popular serial novels included advertisements for ongoing or forthcoming serial works, both by other writers and by the author of the work in question. The "*Pendennis* Advertiser" for Number VI contains an advertisement for the final part of *Old London Bridge* by G. Herbert Podwell, for example, as well as Thackeray's own *The History of Samuel Titmarsh and the Great Hoggarty Diamond.* This multiplicity of references to serial publications, and spatial inclusion and exchange between part-issue books and their publishers in the pages of Advertisers for different novels, emphasizes the cyclical trajectory of serial fiction in the market. Such proliferation undermines the apparently linear structure of serials as it is impossible to have experienced a serial text in complete isolation from other printed matter. The same holds true for *The Adventures of Philip*, the serialization of which occurred alongside such serial texts as Anthony Trollope's *The Struggles of Brown, Jones and Robinson*, George Eliot's *Romola*, Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Agnes of Sorrento*, and Trollope's *The Small House at Allington*. *Philip* was also part of issues containing other work by Thackeray, his "Roundabout Papers," as well as articles on subjects pertinent to the Bildungsroman and individual development, such as "Gentlemen" (V.27, March 1862) and "On Growing Old" (V.28, April 1862), emphasizing the relationship between serial fiction and the periodical press.

The effect of the accompanying illustrations in Thackeray's serial work also neutralizes claims for linearity as a result of "strict chronological sequence" (Hughes and Lund 7). As Leighton and Surridge have recently noted, "both illustrations and chapter initials complicate the linear development of plot in serial novels" (67). In *Philip*, only in the final lines of chapter XXVIII, which closes the installment for January 1862, does Madame Smolensk offer Philip money after his father has used all of his income. The illustration "The poor helping the poor" is situated before chapter XXVII at the start of the number, anticipating, and prompting readers to anticipate, the event. Placed separately from the actual text, such illustrations could be easily referred back to by readers after concluding the number, prompting further the re-evaluation of assumptions, expectations, and the creation of a memory of the installment.

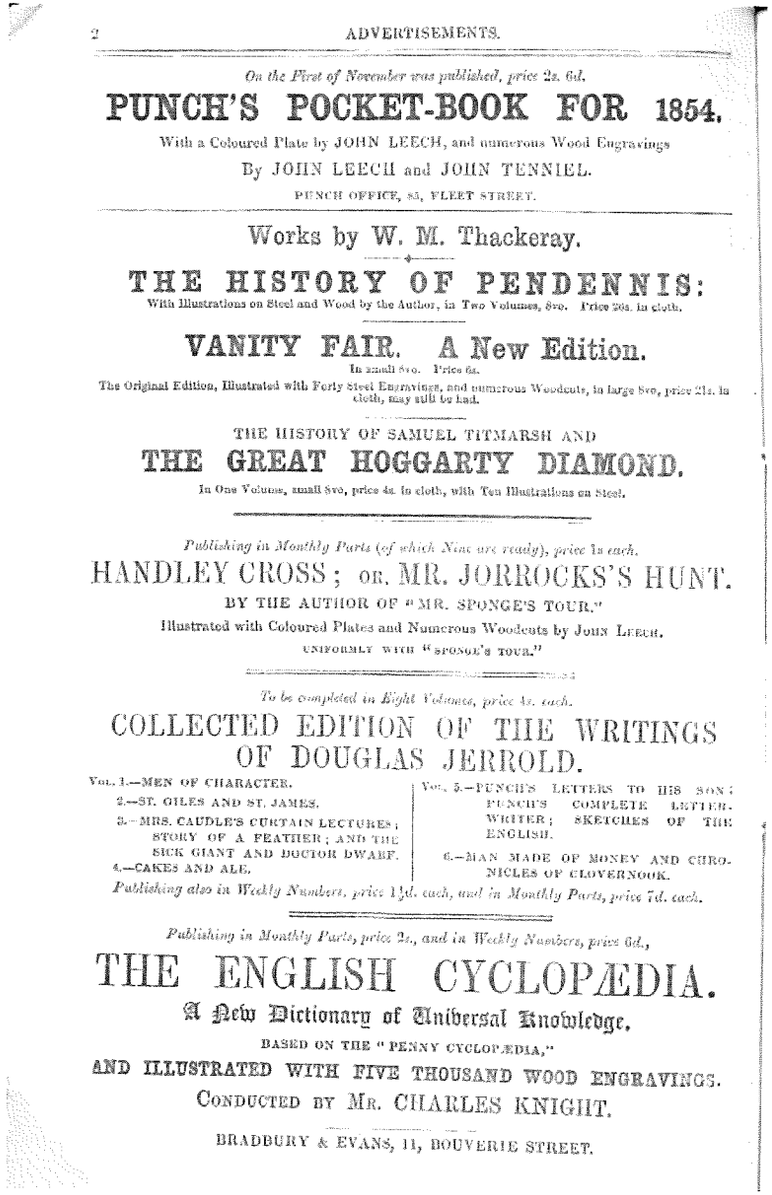
"The refusal of closure" identified by Hayward as characteristic of the serial is also one of the more problematic aspects of the Bildungsroman, a genre that implies resolution but, as we have seen in these three novels, simultaneously resists such conclusions in favor of a disillusioned insistence of a reality beyond the text (3). The inclusion of advertisements is one way in which *Pendennis* and *The Newcomes*, as part-issue serialized Bildungsromane, remind the reader of the texts' self-conscious fictionality, by intruding into the carefully-sustained fictional world of the novels. The commodities advertised around the letterpress of the serial numbers disrupt the continuity of *bildung* by insisting that readers attend to the real world at the very moment that the text itself implies a removal from that world. In this way, adverts help to prevent closure or resolution for the readers of these serials, by framing and implicitly interrupting the narrative.

Bound inside the yellow wrappers of the part-issue numbers of *Pendennis* and *The Newcomes*, the customized, named Advertisers must be considered as part of the original text, despite the practice of stripping away wrappers and adverts to bind the novel into volume form;

[3] In the case of *Pendennis*, this stability was undermined by a protracted hiatus between Sept. 1849 and Jan. 1850 due to Thackeray's illness (see the advertisement for *Rebecca and Rowena* below). In the case of *The Adventures of Philip*, an arguably less-significant change occurred in the pattern of its publication, as from July 1862 George Eliot's *Romola* replaced *Philip* as the leading piece of fiction for the *Cornhill*.

[4] "*Pendennis* [Rear] Advertiser," No. VII, May 1849. From the copies held at the English Faculty Library, University of Oxford, and the Berg Collection, New York Public Library.

[5] "*Bleak House* Advertiser," No. XVII, July 1853 (p. 1). From the copy held at the Rare Books Collection, Bodleian Library. Number I of *The Newcomes* was published by Bradbury & Evans in October 1853.



2 ADVERTISEMENTS.

On the First of November was published, price 2s. 6d.

PUNCH'S POCKET-BOOK FOR 1854.

With a Coloured Plate by JOHN LEECH, and numerous Wood Engravings
By JOHN LEECH and JOHN TENNIEL.
PUNCH OFFICE, 85, FLEET STREET.

Works by W. M. Thackeray.

THE HISTORY OF PENDENNIS:
With Illustrations on Steel and Wood by the Author, in Two Volumes, 8vo. Price 30s. in cloth.

VANITY FAIR. A New Edition.
In small 8vo. Price 6s.
The Original Edition, Illustrated with Forty Steel Engravings, and numerous Woodcuts, in large 8vo, price 21s. in cloth, may still be had.

THE HISTORY OF SAMUEL TITMARSH AND
THE GREAT HOGGARTY DIAMOND.
In One Volume, small 8vo, price 4s. in cloth, with Ten Illustrations on Steel.

Publishing in Monthly Parts (of which Nine are ready), price 1s each.
HANDLEY CROSS; OR, MR. JORROCKS'S HUNT.
BY THE AUTHOR OF "MR. SPONGE'S TOUR."
Illustrated with Coloured Plates and Numerous Woodcuts by JOHN LEECH.
UNIFORMLY WITH "SPONGE'S TOUR."

To be completed in Eight Volumes, price 5s. each.
COLLECTED EDITION OF THE WRITINGS OF DOUGLAS JERROLD.

Vol. 1.—MEN OF CHARACTER.
2.—ST. GILES AND ST. JAMES.
3.—MRS. CAUDLE'S CURTAIN LECTURES; STORY OF A FEATHER; AND THE SICK GIANT AND DOCTOR DWARF.
4.—CAKES AND ALE.
Vol. 5.—PUNCH'S LETTERS TO HIS SON; PUNCH'S COMPLETE LETTER-WRITER; SKETCHES OF THE ENGLISH.
6.—MAN MADE OF MONEY AND CHRONICLES OF CLOVERNOOK.
Publishing also in Weekly Numbers, price 1½d. each, and in Monthly Parts, price 7d. each.

Publishing in Monthly Parts, price 2s., and in Weekly Numbers, price 6d.,
THE ENGLISH CYCLOPÆDIA.
A New Dictionary of Universal Knowledge,
BASED ON THE "PENNY CYCLOPÆDIA,"
AND ILLUSTRATED WITH FIVE THOUSAND WOOD ENGRAVINGS.
CONDUCTED BY MR. CHARLES KNIGHT.

BRADBURY & EVANS, 11, BOUVERIE STREET.

Fig. 1. *The Newcomes* Advertiser II (Nov. 1853): 2.

the same is true of the predominantly literary advertisements surrounding *Philip* in the *Cornhill* magazine. The apparent ephemerality of serialized novels in their original form serves as a reminder to readers of the vagaries and demands of a consumer-based culture and publishing

industry. The visual, material, explanatory, and narrative nature of these promotional advertisements can themselves be considered text and thus analogous to the fictional narrative of development that lies alongside them.[6] In Thackeray's serial novels, adverts do play a significant role in the way that the texts were experienced and interpreted. Certain events in different installments will resonate particularly strongly for readers when those events bring forward commodities that happen to be listed in the Advertiser for that number. In all numbers of *Pendennis*, for example, the back wrapper holds an advertisement for Nicoll's, a maker of "The Nicoll Paletot or Outer Coat" and the "Registered Paletot," which forms a persistent reminder of the dandified costumes of Pen and of Warrington's manly jacket; in many numbers of *Pendennis* and *The Newcomes*, the recurrence of an advert for "Eagland's Invisible Spine Support" and the "Gorget Patent Self Adjusting Shirt," brings to mind Major Pendennis's corsetry and self-consciously elegant dress (fig. 2).

Such examples demonstrate some of the connections and associations implicitly created between these serial novels and their Advertisers. A concern with commodities, from medicines and coffee, to wigs, corsets, and umbrellas, to printing presses, new books, and silverware, reverberates throughout the novels, heightening the awareness of their role in the society of the text and also in commercial reality. These commodities speak to anxieties about respectability and social status and are frequently advertised as objects endowed with the capacity to improve the consumer's quality of life and place in the world. This aspirational aspect of advertising strikes a chord with the concerns of Thackeray's Bildungsromane. Items that promise an easier life, more luxuriant hair, a better figure, the most flavorsome tea and chocolate, the highest dividends, or the most authentic accounts of travel accord with the focus on improvement and development in *bildung*, and such commodities also remind the individual of one's place in society, a key concern of *bildung*. The use of advertising to promote desirable commodities and new works of fiction highlights the cultural acceptance of particular names, brands—and authors. For example, Holloway's Ointment and Sangster Umbrellas (figs. 2 & 3) become familiar items to Thackeray's serial readers as they feature frequently in the Advertisers. This emphasizes the cultural power of brand names, as well as indicating an anxiety about imitation. Thackeray's own reputation, however, may also be considered in light of this emphasis, as a popular author, literary celebrity, and the renowned editor and founder of the *Cornhill Magazine*. Judith Fisher and Ann Horn have both commented on the integral role that Thackeray played in the formation and success of the *Cornhill*.[7] Smith and Elder, the magazine's publisher, allegedly spent £5000 on advertising.[8] They created advance awareness of the magazine by inserting notices in other periodicals, such as "The CORNHILL MAGAZINE. Edited by W. M. THACKERAY. With whom will be associated some of the most distinguished Writers in every department of literature," a notice which appeared in the *Athenaeum* in November 1859.[9] Thackeray's name and association were key to the success of the venture, and the author was conscious of his own

[6] See Richard Simon, "Advertising as Literature: The Utopian Fiction of the American Marketplace," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 22. 2 (1980): 154-74; and Jennifer Wicke, *Advertising Fictions: Literature, Advertisement, & Social Reading* (New York: Columbia UP, 1988).

[7] Judith L. Fisher, "Thackeray as Editor and Author: *The Adventures of Philip* and the Inauguration of the *Cornhill Magazine*." *Victorian Periodicals Review* 33.1 (2000): 2-21; Ann Horn, "Theater, Journalism, and Thackeray's 'Man of the World Magazine,'" *Victorian Periodicals Review* 32.3 (1999): 223-28.

[8] Andrew Maunder, "'Discourses of Distinction': The Reception of the *Cornhill Magazine*, 1859-60." *Victorian Periodicals Review* 32.3 (1999): 239-58 (p. 244).

[9] [Advertisement], *Athenaeum* 1673 (19 Nov., 1859): 679.

reputation as a valuable commodity. This may be seen in an insertion written by Thackeray himself to advertise his new Christmas work, *Rebecca and Rowena* (1849), in the Advertiser for *David Copperfield*:

> Passing many hours on the sofa of late, recovering from a fever, and ordered by DR. ELLIOTSON (whose skill and friendship rescued me from it) ON NO ACCOUNT to put pen to paper, I, of course, wished to write immediately, for which I humbly ask the Doctor's pardon....M. A. TITMARSH.[10]

Thackeray (writing under the name of Michael Angelo Titmarsh, although this alias had already been publicly identified) candidly appeals to his "gentle readers" and, by referring to his audience directly, draws them in to participate in the text. His personal explanation of the private circumstances surrounding the preparation of *Rebecca and Rowena*, his recovery from "a fever," reminds readers that the author is a regular person like themselves. His gratitude for "DR. [John] ELLIOTSON," his physician, acts as a further advertisement for his friend, while advertising his new book.

Thackeray himself, then, may be seen as an astute participant in the material, commodified culture of the publishing industry in which he operated. His serial novels are heavily intertextual, drawing on one another by means of self-referentiality, and creating "odious [but necessary] comparisons" with other texts. The position of advertisements alongside the letterpress of the Pendennis novels affects the serial reader's response to the narratives by situating them in a network of textual and visual material, placing them firmly in the world of commodities and writing as a business on the one hand, and creating a sustained fictional world throughout the texts on the other.

In their original serial form, *The History of Pendennis*, *The Newcomes* and *The Adventures of Philip* highlight but also complicate their status as Bildungsromane. On the one hand each novel literally exemplifies a young man's growth or development in the narrative, which is mirrored by its protracted publication. The maturing of Pen, Clive, and Philip also becomes an opportunity for readers themselves to develop, and the texts frequently invite readers to reflect on their own experiences to intensify the significance of *bildung*, in the text and in the reader's own life. The extended time-period over which these novels were serialized meant that a sustained, intimate relationship could form between reader, text, and narrator. Each novel refutes the supposed linearity of *bildung* and, to some extent, the consistent forward-momentum of reading. Development becomes cyclical and, while monthly serial installments might seem to reassert a linear, chronological sense of time and movement, serial publication emphasizes the difference in Thackeray's Bildungsromane.

In conclusion, the three connected Pendennis novels encourage reflection, reformation, and community through their retrospective narratives and the repetition of characters and plot developments. Moreover, the persistent interruption of the real world into the fictional world of the novels forces serial readers to recognize their own status *as* readers. This is affected primarily by advertisements, which insist on drawing readers' attention to the situation of the text in a wider commodity culture, but also by an inevitable awareness of the textual multiplicity around

[10] "*David Copperfield* Advertiser," No. VIII, Dec. 1849, p. 4. From the copy held at the Rare Books Collection, Bodleian Library.

8 ADVERTISEMENTS.

THE
ELLIPTIC COLLAR,
TO FASTEN AT THE BACK.

With Patent Elastic Fastening.

THE GORGET combines novelty with perfection of Fit, is acknowledged by all to be the easiest fitting Shirt yet made, and, by a simple invention of the Patentees, adjusts itself to all movements of the body, either walking, sitting, or riding. Price, including the Registered Elliptic Wristband, 42s. the half-dozen.

The Elliptic 3-fold Collar, quite unique, in all shapes, with Patent Elastic Fastening, 12s. the dozen. The Patent Elastic Collar Fastening can be attached to any Collar, opening back or front. Six sent by Post on receipt of 13 Postage Stamps.

THE GORGET PATENT SELF ADJUSTING SHIRT

THE
ELLIPTIC COLLAR,
TO FASTEN IN FRONT.

With Patent Elastic Fastening.

Directions for Measurement.

1. Round the Chest, over the Shirt.
2. Round the Waist, over the Shirt.
3. Round the Neck, middle of Throat.
4. Round the Wrist.
5. Length of Coat Sleeve, from centre of Back, down seam of Sleeve, to bottom of Cuff.
6. Length of Shirt at back.

The first four measures must be taken *tight*.

Say if the Shirts are to open back or front.

If with Collars attached (3s. the half-dozen extra.)

If Buttons or Studs in Front.
If Buttons or Studs at Wrist.

Sample Shirt forwarded upon receipt of a Post Office Order for 8s. 6d.

PATENTEES,
COOPER AND FRYER,
NEXT DOOR TO THE
HAYMARKET THEATRE.

UMBRELLAS.

THE PARAGON,
MADE ON FOX'S PATENT FRAMES,

Is the only Umbrella that combines strength with extraordinary lightness, weighing only 9 to 10 ounces.

From the experience of the last 12 months, during which time several thousands have been sold,

W. & J. SANGSTER

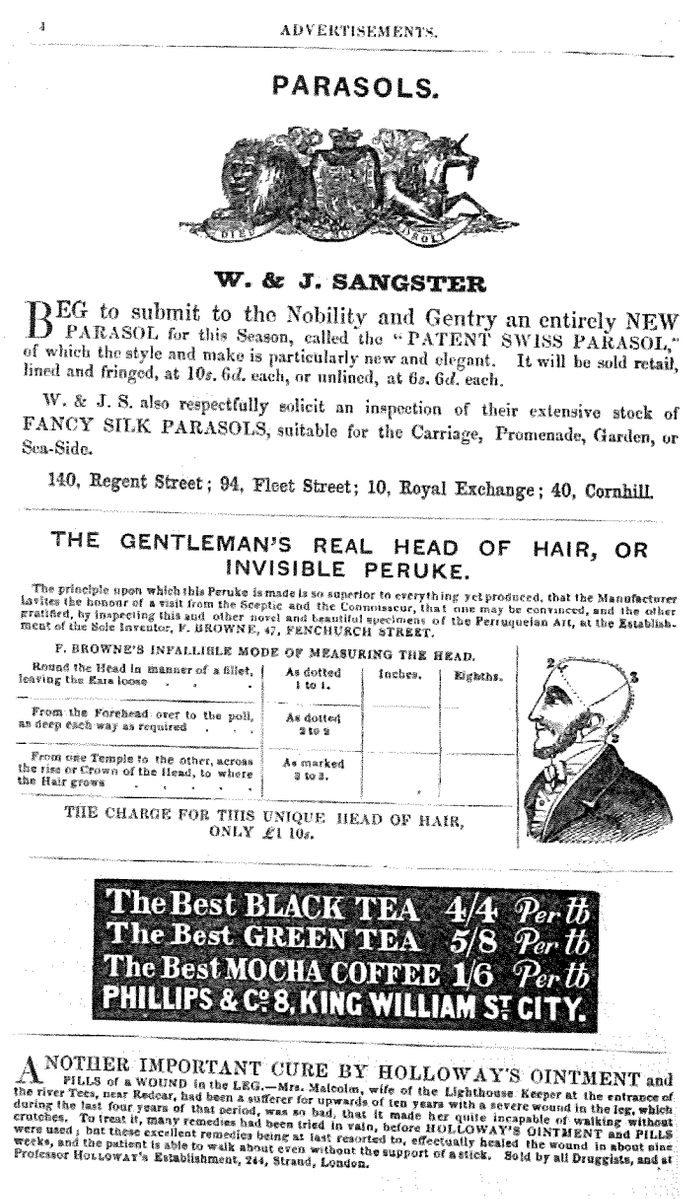
have such confidence in its merits, that they will undertake to keep in repair for a period of two years, all that may be bought at either of their establishments.

To gentlemen going to India and other hot climates, as also to Tourists, the "Paragon," as a sun-shade, will be found invaluable.

W. & J. SANGSTER beg likewise to call attention to their Alpaca Umbrellas, which on account of their durability and cheapness, continue to be so largely patronised.

W. AND J. SANGSTER,
140, Regent Street. **10, Royal Exchange.**
94, Fleet Street. **75, Cheapside.**
SHIPPERS AND DEALERS SUPPLIED.

Fig. 2. *The Newcomes* Advertiser II (Nov. 1843): 8.



4 ADVERTISEMENTS.

PARASOLS.

W. & J. SANGSTER

BEG to submit to the Nobility and Gentry an entirely NEW PARASOL for this Season, called the "PATENT SWISS PARASOL," of which the style and make is particularly new and elegant. It will be sold retail, lined and fringed, at 10*s.* 6*d.* each, or unlined, at 6*s.* 6*d.* each.

W. & J. S. also respectfully solicit an inspection of their extensive stock of FANCY SILK PARASOLS, suitable for the Carriage, Promenade, Garden, or Sea-Side.

140, Regent Street; 94, Fleet Street; 10, Royal Exchange; 40, Cornhill.

THE GENTLEMAN'S REAL HEAD OF HAIR, OR INVISIBLE PERUKE.

The principle upon which this Peruke is made is so superior to everything yet produced, that the Manufacturer invites the honour of a visit from the Sceptic and the Connoisseur, that one may be convinced, and the other gratified, by inspecting this and other novel and beautiful specimens of the Perruquean Art, at the Establishment of the Sole Inventor, F. BROWNE, 47, FENCHURCH STREET.

F. BROWNE'S INFALLIBLE MODE OF MEASURING THE HEAD.

Round the Head in manner of a fillet, leaving the Ears loose	As dotted 1 to 1.	Inches.	Eighths.
From the Forehead over to the poll, as deep each way as required	As dotted 2 to 2		
From one Temple to the other, across the rise or Crown of the Head, to where the Hair grows	As marked 3 to 3.		

THE CHARGE FOR THIS UNIQUE HEAD OF HAIR, ONLY £1 10*s.*

The Best BLACK TEA 4/4 Per lb
The Best GREEN TEA 5/8 Per lb
The Best MOCHA COFFEE 1/6 Per lb
PHILLIPS & Co 8, KING WILLIAM St CITY.

ANOTHER IMPORTANT CURE BY HOLLOWAY'S OINTMENT and PILLS of a WOUND in the LEG.—Mrs. Malcolm, wife of the Lighthouse Keeper at the entrance of the river Tees, near Redcar, had been a sufferer for upwards of ten years with a severe wound in the leg, which during the last four years of that period, was so bad, that it made her quite incapable of walking without crutches. To treat it, many remedies had been tried in vain, before HOLLOWAY'S OINTMENT and PILLS were used; but these excellent remedies being at last resorted to, effectually healed the wound in about nine weeks, and the patient is able to walk about even without the support of a stick. Sold by all Druggists, and at Professor HOLLOWAY'S Establishment, 244, Strand, London.

Fig. 3. *Pendennis* Advertiser VII (May 1849): 4.

them. Letters, newspaper extracts, and metafictional narratives such as Philip's work for the *Pall Mall Gazette* or Pen's novel *Walter Lorraine* form part of this textual diversity in the novels, but the reader of each installment is also conscious of notices for recent books, concurrent serial novels, and a plethora of articles and news in magazines and newspapers. The extent to which certain forms of identity can invest power and authority is also indicated with reference to Thackeray's own name and literary reputation, so that opportunities for self-advertisement may be considered alongside self-development and maturation. Serialization here further distorts the unusual structure of Thackeray's Bildungsroman by simultaneously extending the temporal aspects of each text, and by interrupting and constantly reviewing the momentum and coherence of narrative development in these novels.

University of Leeds

Acknowledgements

The author and editor are grateful to the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, for kind permission to reproduce the following images:
Figure 1. *The Newcomes* Advertiser II (Nov. 1853): 2.
Figure 2. *The Newcomes* Advertiser II (Nov. 1843): 8.
Figure 3. *Pendennis* Advertiser VII (May 1849): 4.

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Vanity Fair:

Pen and Pencil Sketches of English Society

—and—

A Novel without a Hero

The Green Silk Purse and Little Rawdon's Shirt: Sartorial Literacy and Domestic Performance in *Vanity Fair*

by Stephanie Womick

In a letter to his wife, William Makepeace Thackeray consoled her hurt feelings:

> When I said you were frivolous I meant no harm, all women are so I think from their education, and I want my wife to be better than all women....[A] woman who occupies herself all day with her house and servants is frivolous, ditto she who does nothing but poonah-painting and piano forte, also the woman who piddles about prayer-meetings and teaches Sunday schools. (qtd. in Clarke 88)

While Thackeray's commentary is a gentle indictment of the Victorian deployment of conventional ideals of femininity, his novel *Vanity Fair*, written a decade after his marriage to Isabella Shawe, is a far more biting and complex satire. Although the novel exposes and reviles a number of Victorian (and, indeed, universally human) foibles, from the stingy avarice of the rich to the vanity of imposter military men, his broadest critique is of middle-class domestic femininity.

The novel provides two central female characters to represent and interrogate this domestic ideal. Amelia and Becky could easily be reduced to types—the good woman and the bad, the Madonna and the whore, the bore and the adventurer. But more complex than mere binaries, these characters indicate two different methods of approaching the onus of domesticity, each with its own successes and failures, rewards and punishments. By consciously performing and subverting markers of ideal domesticity, Becky uses them to her own benefit, employing female accomplishments and postures in her arsenal of strategies to seduce, entrap, and manipulate. Becky's power to perform domesticity for subversive ends renders her both dangerous and fascinating, enabling her to make her way in the world and to cross social borders; as Mrs. Sedley quips in Mina Nair's film adaptation of the novel, "I thought her a mere social climber, but now I see she's a mountaineer." It is Becky's shocking mobility that makes her a compelling character, as well as the fact that she uses society's own rules and conventions to perforate its boundaries.

Ironically, Amelia is ostensibly closer to the Victorian conventional ideal, but her ability meaningfully to employ her education pales in comparison with Becky's; Amelia does not realize that there is a performance implied in domestic middle-class femininity. By inverting these characters and characteristics, Thackeray re-imagines female education, domesticity, and accomplishments as elements of both performance and exchange that allows for female power and subjectivity. This subversion is only possible, however, when the woman in question recognizes the value of her performance of the ideal within the sexual exchange of Vanity Fair.

In investigating the "frivolity" of femininity as manifested through Victorian education and gender ideals, Thackeray employs what Jane Austen's narrator in *Northanger Abbey* calls a

"frivolous distinction"—dress (52). Becky and Amelia use clothing in different though parallel ways, their sartorial performances corresponding to their domestic performances. Both performances have commercial implications in the satirical universe of Vanity Fair, which features both marketplace and stage. The success of each character depends on what I call sartorial literacy—the ability to read correctly the social context of clothing and author a text in dress that effectively serves her purposes.

Like many contemporary analyses of *Vanity Fair*, my work delves into the issue of performed identities, specifically domestic femininity, and extends the conversation by examining how identity is constituted and performed in the novel through clothing. My argument emphasizes the intersections between Thackeray's critique of middle-class consumerism and the ambiguous gender relations presented in the novel by examining how dress represents differing approaches to Victorian conventions. This essay investigates the resulting implications for domestic ideals, feminine performance, and sartorial codes in the novel. By exposing the calculated deployment of domestic sexuality as performed by Becky and the naïve domestic and sartorial illiteracy demonstrated by Amelia, Thackeray condemns both extremes of contemporary gender ideals and middle-class femininity. As a result, he highlights the sources of such skewed self-representations: a punishing marriage market system, no sanctioned outlets for female agency, and a gap in female education that exposes its pupils to accusations of frivolity.

The Marketplace and the Stage

Thackeray's Vanity Fair is both a stage and a marketplace, and the action and characters of the novel may be interpreted in terms of performance and props or commodities and exchange. On the marketplace side, Thackeray satirizes a culture obsessed with owning objects in hopes that their social position will rise with the quality of items they possess. Andrew Miller sees this "longing for sleeve buttons" as a testimony to the "instability of all social categories, including those of gender and class"; in *Vanity Fair*, human relationships are subservient to things, and "distinctions among objects and people become uncertain" (17).[1] On the side of performance, Maria DiBattista has written about the use of charades and theatricality in the novel to reveal subversive ideas, "to present history as an extended sequence of performances ('puppet shows') enacting a moral so dark that to illuminate it fully might be politically or spiritually perilous" (828). DiBattista argues that the performances constitute a coded message to the audience, revealing the author's attitudes toward his characters, toward women, and toward Victorian society.

The novel bookends two parallel scenes highlighting the connection between marketplace and stage, initially presenting Vanity Fair as a stage in "Before the Curtain":

> The famous little Becky Puppet has been pronounced to be uncommonly flexible in the joints and lively on the wire: the Amelia Doll, though it has a smaller circle of admirers, has yet been carved and dressed with the greatest care by the artist: the Dobbin Figure, though apparently clumsy, yet dances in a very amusing and natural manner....and please to remark the richly dressed figure of the Wicked Nobleman, on which no expense has been spared, and which Old Nick will fetch away at the end of this singular performance. (xvi)

[1] According to Miller, Thackeray had an ambiguous attitude toward commodities—fearing the dehumanizing work their acquisition requires while intensely desiring them nevertheless.

In this paradigm, the novel is envisioned as a performance in which the characters play out the story, their movements more or less manipulated by the unseen (or partially seen) hand of the narrator (manager? artist? the terms used to describe the driving force behind the novel are quite convoluted). Here Becky is imagined as "uncommonly flexible" and Amelia as a passive doll, whose appearance is the greatest concern—she has been carefully dressed. Dobbin gets equal billing and is pronounced "natural,"[2] an unusual term considering the emphasis on the artificiality of the characters and their stories. In contrast, the novel concludes with Thackeray's illustration of Becky selling wares at a charity bazaar. According to Gary R. Dyer, English readers would have had strong and conflicting feelings about the scene of the bazaar. Introduced in 1816 by John Trotter, the first English bazaars were warehouses in which owners rented out booths to respectable, middle-class women, who were often widows of the Napoleonic Wars, so they could sell items they had made. Although every effort was made to enshrine the affair with irreproachable respectability, the combination of women openly selling goods in a public marketplace (and associations with prostitution this implied) and the exoticism of the term *bazaar* rendered the markets suspect, a possible site of feminine corruption and sexual impropriety. In an 1816 print titled *A Bazaar*, George Cruikshank captured what was popularly imagined as the true trade at the bazaars (fig. 1). In the far right corner, a woman behind a booth displays a good deal of leg as well as some hand-made wares while telling an indecently seated dandy, "admire this Article you shall have it uncommonly cheap," to which another man adds, "I dare say, for I'm sure it's second hand, & common enough." Other figures plan an assignation and coolly pass billet-doux under the covers of a book titled *Innocent Adultery*. In the 1820s, bazaars were

Fig. 1. George Cruikshank, *A Bazaar*

[2] "Natural" is a complex term in this novel; when applied to male characters, especially Dobbin, it is high praise indeed. When applied, as it frequently is, to Amelia, there is a tone of condescension, indicating that her naturalness is less conscious virtue than naïveté.

appropriated by evangelical organizations as charitable events to raise money for the poor. Despite (or perhaps because of) the union of commerce and faith, however, bazaars or fancy fairs were still seen as a site for female display and sexual exchange. It is into this sexually charged market with its thin veneer of respectability that Becky is cast in the final scene of the novel:

> She is always having stalls at Fancy Fairs for the benefit of...hapless beings. Emmy, her children, and the Colonel, coming to London sometime back, found themselves suddenly before her at one of these fairs. She cast down her eyes demurely and smiled as they started away from her; Emmy skurrying off on the arm of George, (now grown a dashing young gentleman), and the Colonel seizing up his little Janey, of whom he is fonder than of anything in the world. (689)

In the drawing depicting this scene, the dynamics of the exchange are more pronounced, or, at least, more visible (fig. 2). Becky is not merely at the fair but in a booth selling her wares, including pictures (one of a female figure), some textiles, and a doll—representing perhaps an Amelia Doll or even Becky herself, who is in the business of selling herself one way or another.

Fig. 2. Thackeray, *Virtue Rewarded; a Booth at Vanity Fair*

Thus, the items Becky sells form a triumvirate of female representation, performance, and dress. Perhaps indicating their attitudes toward Becky and her goods, both Dobbin and George face the beguiling Becky; Amelia turns her back on her former friend, and curious little Janey looks up at

her father while fingering one of the items. In *Corrupt Relations*, Richard Barickman, Susan McDonald, and Myra Stark make clear what that marketplace is trading:

> That Vanity Fair is primarily a place where sexual wares are sold—either openly as Old Osborne attempts to do in his lust to secure the money of Miss Swartz or more subtly as Becky does on her various intrigues—becomes abundantly clear in the novel. The pursuit of money, place, security, power always comes down in the novel's development of plot and theme, to fundamental sexual issues. (173)

If Vanity Fair is a marketplace, its primary commodity is sex.[3]

The illustration of Becky's booth literally depicts the type of sexual exchange Nancy Armstrong discusses in *Desire and Domestic Fiction*. In this paradigm, women gain power by exchanging political authority for domestic license, effectually exchanging the sexual body for power (41). In my reading, domestic heroines certainly gain power through this type of exchange, but their empowerment is also the result of manipulating the conventions of domestic discourse before a receptive audience. By imagining domesticity as sexual exchange and as performance, the novel neatly intersects the stage of Vanity Fair with the market of Vanity Fair. Both are arenas of display and spectatorship, and both reflect with carnivalesque exaggeration Thackeray's own society.

While the shifting emphasis on Vanity Fair as marketplace or as stage allows Thackeray skillfully to complicate his satire, the novel also provides an interesting intersection of the two. Among the objects and commodities that are catalogued in the novel, items of dress are perhaps the most frequent and the most symbolically laden. These items shift ownership up and down the social scale as tokens of love (or lust) and causes of envy. Aside from their role as portable goods, however, clothes are also important props on the stage, allowing the puppets and dolls that the narrator manipulates to act their parts convincingly (or not). Thus, Thackeray makes clothing central to the work of the novel, where it acts as both prop and commodity in the deployment of domestic femininity.

Dress as Prop, Dress as Commodity

If Thackeray's project examines dress as a means to expose the foibles of Victorian femininity and domesticity, it also illustrates the problems of Victorian masculinity. The uncontested clothes-horse of the novel is Joseph Sedley, whose clothes serve as a kind of shorthand for his identity; indeed, characters are introduced in tandem with an item from their wardrobe: the coachman has "'a new red waist-coat,'" George almost knocks down a "gentleman in top-boots" at Vauxhall, a party catastrophe was caused by the unfortunate Mrs. Flamingo's "'crimson silk gown'" (1, 58, 46). More important characters are often associated with a particular item of dress that is incessantly repeated and remarked upon, like Jos's hessian boots. The first description of Jos is unforgiving: "A very stout puffy man, in buckskins and hessian boots with several immense neckcloths that rose almost to his nose, with a red striped waistcoat and an apple green coat with steel buttons almost as large as crown pieces (it was the morning costume of a dandy or blood of those days" (18). The narrative makes clear that Jos is a ridiculous figure, despite his dedication to fashion:

[3] Barickman et. al. note that, despite an emphasis on money and monetary gain, the primary commodity is sex (173).

> He never was well-dressed: but he took the hugest pains to adorn his big person: and passed many hours daily in that occupation. His valet made a fortune out of his wardrobe. His toilet-table was covered with as many pomatums and essences as ever were employed by an old beauty: he had tried, in order to give himself a waist, every girth, stay, and waist-band then invented. Like most fat men he *would* have his clothes made too tight and took care they should be of the most brilliant colours and youthful cut. (21)

The excessive time spent on fashion, the employment of stays and girdles, and the attention to cut and color mark Jos as effeminate, an opinion echoed by the other characters. When George Osborne recounts cutting the tassels off Joseph's boots as a child, the disfigurement of Jos's identifying clothing reads like a type of castration. Jos attempts to forge a masculine identity by donning the clothing of dandies and bloods, in the style of Beau Brummell; but this attempt backfires, and the effect is feminizing. Joseph Litvak evaluates Jos's character as a homophobic stereotype of the fashionable male consumer, terming him a "sadly obtuse style queen" whose portrayal masks anxieties about sexuality as anxieties about class (224). Sarah Rose Cole expands on this theme, arguing that Thackeray often deploys male characters like Jos who defy Victorian middle-class ideals of masculinity due to a (feminine) obsession with appearance; such bourgeois dandies are "generally in pursuit of an admiring gaze—often a male [aristocratic] gaze—that will validate their own fantasies of a Brummell-like physical perfection and social ascent" (138). The consensus implies that Thackeray uses Jos to represent the disfigurement that clothes-consciousness may have on the middle-class male, rendering him effeminate, possibly homosexual, with a sad case of lust for—both to be seen by and to become a member of—the aristocracy.

Seeking to cultivate a more masculine appearance, Jos makes an almost deadly mistake. He certainly recognizes that clothes are commodities, and he also recognizes their importance as props. With the increasing military ardor surrounding the ensuing Napoleonic Wars, the civilian ex-collector of Boggley Wallah begins to cultivate a more martial air in his dress. He "ceased shaving his upper lip" in order to nurture a soldierly mustache, and "made his appearance in a braided frock-coat and duck trowsers, with a foraging cap ornamented with a smart gold band" (271-72). So successful is his attempt at creating a new identity by his dress that "folks mistook him for a great personage, a commissary-general, or a government courier at the very least." Although Jos is delighted to be mistaken for a military man when there is no danger, he regrets his martial air at the rumors of Wellington's defeat.[4] Heeding his valet's warning that "'Milor had better not wear that military coat…the Frenchmen have sworn not to give quarter to a single British soldier'" (305), Joseph makes haste to shed his soldierly attire: "Isidor swept off the mustachios in no time with the razor….Jos selected a plain black coat and waistcoat from his stock, and put on a large white neckcloth, and a plain beaver. If he could have got a shovel-hat he would have worn it. As it was, you would have fancied he was a flourishing, large parson of the

[4] Thackeray's narrator does not make the same mistake as Jos: "We do not claim to rank among the military novelists. Our place is with the non-combatants….We shall go no farther with the ___th than to the city gate: and leaving Major O'Dowd to his duty, come back to the Major's wife, and the ladies and the baggage" (293). While this contrasts with Jos's appropriation of military attire, it also indicates the direction of the narrative's interest—with the women and the baggage, underscoring the novel's domestic and sartorial inclinations.

Church of England" (318). The narrative mocks Jos's cowardly use of dress, affecting a military style when it will earn him admiration and rejecting it when it might get him killed. The incident illustrates the importance of clothing in fashioning identity, even a false identity. Jos seeks to enact ideal Victorian masculinity by appearing as a soldier, which is as easy as changing his coat.

While Joseph's character is Thackeray's vehicle for lampooning Victorian masculinity, he uses both Amelia and Becky extensively to explore idealized femininity, particularly as it is aligned with middle-class domesticity. Their dress provides keys to understanding how each recognizes the performance and exchange implicit in domestic ideology. Amelia is described repeatedly as "natural"; she is artless, and she does not know what she is doing. Rather than considering how her dress constitutes her identity, ascertaining that she is properly dressed is the extent of her clothes-consciousness, although she has a stereotypically feminine interest in clothes. In describing the newly married Mrs. Osborne, the narrator declares: "Nor was Mrs. Amelia at all above the pleasure of shopping, and bargaining, and seeing and buying pretty things. (Would any man, the most philosophic, give twopence for a woman who was?)" (263). The rhetorical question ironically suggests that pleasure in shopping is a normal, even desirable, quality in a woman—or, perhaps just unavoidable. And although Amelia delights in "pretty things," she does not consider what those pretty things may mean. Taking pleasure in shopping and understanding proper dress are likely all any comfortable middle-class woman need possess.

Amelia's sartorial illiteracy renders her unable to recognize any empowering uses of clothing, and Thackeray's narrator is at pains to represent her naïve innocence. Early in the novel, she appears in "a white muslin frock prepared for conquest at Vauxhall, singing like a lark, and as fresh as a rose" (47). The aggressive "conquest" typifies the satirical language that Thackeray uses to describe the movements of Amelia—she later, for example, "invades the low countries." But rather than painting her as bold and warrior-like, the diction has the opposite effect of highlighting her excessively passive behavior. Had she known of Captain Dobbin's presence, she "would never have been so bold as to come singing into the room" (48). Nevertheless, this is the moment of her triumph: Dobbin is won over, although Amelia remains completely unaware of his attraction for years. Her naiveté builds a thick cocoon around her, her self-involved fantasy becoming indistinguishable from reality.

Although Becky wears nothing that is not meant to attract and manipulate, her dress, ironically, is nearly identical to Amelia's. On her first night at the Sedley's, "she was dressed in white, with bare shoulders as white as snow—the picture of gentle unprotected innocence, and humble virgin simplicity" (22).[5] Thackeray's description emphasizes the *appearance* of innocence and virginity that Becky's costume displays, an emphasis that is not necessary with the description of Amelia. Just as he uses aggressive language to highlight Amelia's non-aggressive nature, the author stresses the purity of Becky's appearance, which, to the reader, implies her lack of purity. In fact, the line immediately following this description details Becky's scheme: "'I must be very quiet,' thought Rebecca, 'and very much interested about India.'" Her plans for seducing Jos revolve around her ability to appear innocent and virginal, to appear quietly submissive but also admiringly interested. Her intentional manipulation of appearance and behavior indicate that

[5] This costume is a favorite of Becky's; after her marriage, she is described in almost exactly the same terms: "She had put on the neatest and freshest white frock imaginable, and with bare shoulders and a little necklace, and a light blue sash, she looked the image of youthful innocence and girlish happiness" (243). Before and after marriage, the costume highlights the powerful image of youth and innocence and the ease with which it is imitated.

she is, in fact, none of these things. Becky and Amelia appear in nearly the same dress—white muslin, which was exactly proper and fashionable at the time, associated both with purity and India. However, each wears it with a difference—Amelia with unconscious, artless charm, Becky with bigger plans and ambitions.

If Amelia fails to recognize dress as a prop on the stage of Vanity Fair, she also fails to recognize it as a commodity, particularly in the domestic/marriage market of sexual exchange. In fact, Amelia is rather bewildered by the sexual exchange altogether. Once married, she cannot help but compare her new existence to her previous one. On a visit to her parents' house,

> She looked at the little white bed, which had been hers a few days before, and thought she would like to sleep in it that night, and wake, as formerly, with her mother smiling over her in the morning. Then she thought with terror of the great funereal damask pavilion in the vast and dingy state bed-room, which was awaiting her at the grand hotel in Cavendish Square. (262)

Her love for George notwithstanding, Amelia's desire for the virginal white bed and terror of the marriage bed clearly indicates her discomfort with the sexual exchange. Hers has been a sentimental education in which marriage is the idealized union of love; she does not see it as the exchange of rights and powers and goods that Nancy Armstrong has described.

Becky, on the other hand, is entirely conscious of the market in which she is purveyor, consumer, and commodity. She recognizes that, within her society, marriage is the only stable means of upward social mobility for women. Lacking the financial backing and doting family that Amelia possesses, Becky's opportunities and understanding are quite different. Bound as an articled pupil at Miss Pinkerton's by her dissipated, indebted, and dying father, Becky is separated from the school's petted darlings by her menial servitude. But she is nothing, if not aspiring:

> She determined at any rate to get free from the prison in which she found herself, and now began to act for herself, and for the first time to make connected plans for the future.
>
> She took advantage therefore of the means of study the place offered her: and as she was already a musician and linguist, she speedily went through the little course of study which was considered necessary for ladies in those days. (14)

Becky's ostensible purpose in gleaning these subjects is to put them to use as a governess, but it is clear that she intends by all means possible to secure a husband and economic security before she ever has to do anything as tiresome as teaching small children. At Miss Pinkerton's, she makes an early and aborted attempt at matrimonial ensnarement; when the Reverend Mr. Crisp is struck by Becky's piercing glance, there was "a great flutter in the breast of Miss Pinkerton," whose Chiswickean sense of propriety has been outraged (12). The infatuated Mr. Crisp is hauled off by his mamma, and Becky is denoted "an eagle in the Chiswick dovecot." The episode anticipates subsequent confrontations shaped by Becky's determination to improve her situation and her reception—by men (her prey) with admiration and by women (her rivals) with suspicion. Becky is dangerous because she targets infatuated young men and exploits domestic ideology in order to move up in social class.

Even as Becky understands that she is dealing in a market of sexual exchange, she also recognizes that dress is a primary currency in that trade. The more pretty clothes she owns, the more attention she attracts; the more attention she attracts, the more pretty clothes she is likely to be given. Because Becky's clothing is both an inducement to her activities and the tools she uses, the narrative aligns her with contemporary ideas of prostitution; when Dr. William Acton sought to account for female prostitution, he concluded that it was the love of dress that enticed women into the business, where wearing fancy clothes is all part of the trade (Valverde 175).

Becky is clever enough to sanctify her bartering with matrimony (initially, at least); having secured Rawdon Crawley, she boldly accepts his gifts: "As for shawls, kid gloves, silk stockings, gold French watches, bracelets and perfumery, he sent them in with the profusion of blind love and unbounded credit" (162). She also accepts gifts from the General of Rawdon's company, "many very handsome presents in the shape of cashmere shawls bought at the auction of a bankrupt French general's lady, and numerous tributes from the jewellers' shops, all of which betokened her admirer's taste and wealth" (298). And George Osborne gives her watches: "a little bijou marked Leroy, with a chain and cover charmingly set with turquoises, and another signed Breguet, which was covered with pearls, and yet scarcely bigger than a half-crown"—trinkets that would seem to reflect poorly on the patriotism of these gallants, who offer French timepieces (her own watch "was of English workmanship, and went ill"). As often happens in Vanity Fair, Becky's acquisitiveness, with its brand-consciousness, comes at the expense of another woman; in this case, the "bankrupt French general's lady" whose goods are auctioned off, and Amelia, who "had no watch" (299). George's attentions to Becky while neglecting his wife reinforces the sexual exchange at work; he is clearly attempting to start an affair with his wife's friend the night of the ball, and the watch is his opening bid.

Domestic Performances and Homely Goods

The ways each heroine handles sartorial performance parallels the ways she will handle domestic performance. While middle-class domesticity is generally considered in terms of private space and associated with marriage, alternative avenues to its acquisition include publicly performing domesticity as a role. Thus, the skills that are taught as part of "frivolous" feminine education, although intended to serve a *space*, are actually well-adapted to a *performance*. These accomplishments are ornamental, designed to display a female as performer (music or dancing) or as a producer of the ornamental (embroidery and needlework), all of which underscores the spectacle-driven view of the Victorian woman as the object of the male gaze. Although Amelia and Becky are taught embroidery and music with an eye toward becoming useful wives, the ornamental element of these tasks underscores their limitations; such talents are useful for acquiring a domestic establishment but not for maintaining one. As an actress and the daughter of an actress, Becky recognizes the value of performance; adept at the small cons and petty flatteries which save her from duns and ingratiate her with powerful allies, Becky cultivates skills designed to produce a repertoire of useful illusions.

Amelia, in contrast to Becky, does not recognize that her accomplishments and domesticity entail any acting at all; in her simple faith in her education, she earnestly believes that she has been taught valuable skills that will serve her and her future family well. The most pathetic example of this misguided belief is her fruitless attempts to earn income by her talents. Having become quite poor and desperate not to lose her son, Amelia considers her marketable skills:

"Can she give lessons in anything? paint card-racks? do fine work? She finds that women are working hard, and better than she can, for twopence a-day" (491). The shop-owners to whom she peddles her screens sneer at her work, and she finds she has merely lost money on the materials. The cards advertising her educational qualifications grow dusty on shop shelves; no one, it seems, believes Amelia's performance, including Amelia herself—who, in fact, is not performing. The novel's staged performance requires a self-aware recognition that distances the actor from the act. Amelia can see no distance, and she is charmingly and frustratingly unself-aware; her faith in her education is tantamount to a faith in the rules and conventions of domesticity. She accepts her education at face value, believing she has made a fair exchange of political for domestic power. What she fails to realize is that power is not gained by following the rules but by subverting them.

Becky, of course, realizes that one paints screens only if one intends to give them to a rich gentleman who will be so touched by the humble artist that he will offer to pay her debts; one agrees to teach young children only as a means to marry their papa or older brother. Amelia, unlike Becky, fails to see the sexual exchange inherent in acts of domesticity and accomplishment, believing in the intrinsic value of her talents, poor though they are. Becky performs domesticity, whereas Amelia only enacts it, caught in its rules and conventions. Becky skewers those conventions by self-conscious performance, while Amelia tries to be a domestic heroine in a realist novel. Just as the satirical novel manipulates the rules of realism, Becky appropriates performance and exaggeration within the rules of convention; Amelia seems to survive her circumstances by sheer luck.

Becky does not need to rely on luck, as she has both talent and self-awareness. Just as her sartorial performance allowed her to manipulate the perception of her identity, so too does her domestic performance. Interestingly, Becky's performances intersect, the sartorial becoming a prop for the domestic in her aim to conquer the class structure. Jos Sedley is, if not Becky's first conquest, her last recorded one; her ammunition is the very skills that she learned at Miss Pinkerton's, skills designed to convey the veneer of respectability. Rebecca's green silk purse merits a chapter title in the novel, as it proves to be nearly the undoing of Jos Sedley. It is during the process of knitting the green silk purse that Becky and Jos first broach the subject of marriage: "When two unmarried persons get together, and talk upon such delicate subjects as the present a great deal of confidence and intimacy is presently established between them" (31). Becky's skeins are not aimed merely at facilitating conversational goals, however. Before long, "Mr. Joseph Sedley, of the East India Company's service, was actually seated *tête-à-tête* with a young lady, looking at her with a most killing expression; his arms stretched out before her in an imploring attitude, and his hands bound in a web of green silk, which she was unwinding" (36). Jos finds himself bound in Becky's web, a trap far more sinister than that of green silk. He is to be enchanted by her domesticity, awed by her industry, and compelled, because already positioned in the proper posture, to propose marriage on the spot. The telling symbolism of the empty purse need hardly be mentioned: Becky no doubt hopes that Jos will not only take her purse, but fill it up for her as well.

This scheme is not the only example of Becky putting her needlework to good use by combining sartorial and domestic performances. Whether blushing maiden or doting mother, Becky's roles have similar recourse to needles; and she finds that she can render herself charming and maternal by hemming little Rawdon's shirt: "Whenever Mrs. Rawdon wished to be particularly humble and virtuous, this little shirt used to come out of her work-box. It had got to

be too small for Rawdon long before it was finished" (441). Becky clearly understands that the needlework she was taught at Miss Pinkerton's has uses beyond that prescribed. While to such paragons of female education it no doubt represented industry and artistic taste, Becky recognizes that stitchery may also seduce. As a useful prop for acting a part, it is the appearance of domesticity that Becky's admirers find charming, not the actual product.

Both of these instances rely on Becky's realization that, in performing domesticity, she makes herself an object for the male gaze. Performance is a two-fold relationship, and the performer must recognize that she is performing *for* someone who will watch her and ultimately objectify her. Becky considers long and hard the picture she will present to various male eyes. For Lord Steyne, she always takes considerable pains: "Whenever the dear girl expected his lordship, her toilette was prepared, her hair in perfect order, her mouchoirs [handkerchief], aprons, scarfs, little morocco slippers, and other female gimcracks arranged, and she seated [herself] in some artless and agreeable posture ready to receive him" (479). Becky draws about herself the accoutrements of domestic and sartorial femininity, carefully staging the tableau.

Lord Steyne recognizes Becky as a performer and, while amused, he calls her out on her little pretenses. When Becky explains her delayed entrance by saying she was in the kitchen making a pudding, Steyne charges: "'You silly little fibster! I heard you in your room over head, where I have no doubt you were putting a little rouge on'" (480). The episode illustrates Kit Dobson's claim that "characters who attempt to perform what they perceive as an acceptable identity are undercut by others who recognize and denounce their performances as such, and thereby negate their supposed naturalness" (1). Becky's social success depends on the assumed "naturalness" of her role as wife and mother; if she willingly objectifies herself by pandering to the male gaze, her undoing is the fact that Steyne not only recognizes this, but actively encourages it. Barickman argues that Lord Steyne is sadistic in his treatment of his wife and daughters-in-law, a quality that might extend to objectifying Becky and controlling her with his gaze (179). The two must eventually come to a contest, however, because they cannot both gain power from the same act. Becky gains power over men by objectifying herself, and Steyne gains power over women by objectifying them. As object, Becky cannot empower them both for long.

Becky demonstrates that, if the male gaze can be controlled by the female object, then her performance is a risky but empowering maneuver, and perhaps the only way that domestic performance can be successful in Vanity Fair. Becky's productive performance is in stark contrast to that of other females in the novel, such as Miss Osborne. Jane Osborne possesses and enacts every conventionally domestic feminine trait: managing her father's house, scolding servants, making visits, knitting worsted, and playing piano. But despite her busy round of activities, her depressing existence is spent alone, in a large empty house, listening to the clock tick and the echoes of the piano dying away. The real difference between Becky and Jane Osborne is the issue of performance. Becky's work reveals the performative quality of female education, accomplishment, and domesticity. Miss Osborne's tragedy is not in her failure to acquire the necessary qualities but, rather, the necessary audience. As a spinster, Jane has no one to appreciate her playing and no child on whom to thrust her worsted (or hem shirts for); her father's self-absorption and constant absence renders him an unfit audience for her household management. Because she cannot perform for an audience, her domestic accomplishment is barren and ultimately void. She is the object of no one's gaze.

Amelia, on the other hand, is in a curious position. Certainly, she is watched vicariously: Dobbin devotes his life to the image of Amelia Sedley, from cherishing the memory of her singing to the picture he has pasted in his desk because he thinks it resembles her. Each of these representations, however, only underscores Amelia's role as an image; she cannot perform as Becky does and so is rendered passive, almost as lifeless as the Amelia doll. As Mark Spilka notes, despite Amelia's important role in the novel, she hardly seems present for most of it (202). While much of the narrative is devoted to describing Becky's actions and words and character, precious little is said about Amelia. Often, words seem to fail the narrator himself, and he must appeal to the reader's imagination to supply his deficiencies because she is "quite impossible to describe in print" (266). The result is that Amelia is often rendered through indirect discourse; her presence resides in her effect on other characters rather than on the actions which produce the effect. For example, upon her admission to the regiment,

> It became the fashion, indeed among all the honest young fellows of the ___th, to adore and admire Mrs Osborne. Her simple artless behaviour and modest kindness of demeanour, won all their unsophisticated hearts; all which simplicity and sweetness are quite impossible to describe in print. But who has not beheld these among women, and recognised the presence of all sorts of qualities in them, even though they say no more to you than that they are engaged to dance the next quadrille, or that it is very hot weather? (265-66)

Perhaps Amelia is impossible to describe because she has so little substance. Her interactions with the other characters follow the same pattern of propriety that any reader would have been familiar with, indeed that Thackeray expects them to be familiar with—"but who has not beheld these among women?" If successful manipulation of the rules and conventions of domesticity require that a woman gain an audience for her performance, Amelia has failed because no one is watching her, neither the narrator nor the reader. Not even, apparently, her husband and son who, in the final drawing depicting the encounter with Becky at the fair, have turned their eyes on the indomitable Miss Sharp.

Ultimately, Thackeray leaves his non-heroines in ambiguous territory. Amelia's sartorial illiteracy, her naïve enactments of conventional domesticity, her unquestioning fidelity to her middle-class feminine education, must undermine the apparent domestic security she achieves at the end of the novel. Becky, too, is left vulnerable—her sartorial literacy does not secure her from possible recognition by other characters who may expose her for the performer that she is, who may, along with Sir Pitt Crawley, condemn her "play-acting and fancy dressing, as highly unbecoming a British female" (526). Stable identities are threatened in the Victorian domestic arena, in Becky's case because she may be recognized and in Amelia's because she may be ignored. Thus, Thackeray's early complaints about feminine frivolity seem countermanded by this novel, which highlights domesticity as a performance easily exploited for alternative ends. We have been duly warned about the frivolity of taking this performance at face value and the foolishness of ignoring the strings by which we are manipulated on the stage of Vanity Fair.

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Acknowledgements

The author and editor are grateful to the Trustees of the British Museum, London for kind permission to reproduce the following image: Figure 1.George Cruikshank, *A Bazaar* (1816). Thanks also to Gerald Ajam for Thackeray, *Virtue Rewarded; a Booth at Vanity Fair* (1861). Scanned by Gerald Ajam for *Victorian Web*.

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"in company let us hope with better qualities": Invoked Readers in *Vanity Fair*

by Sean P. O'Brien

The narrator of Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* spends a great deal of time talking to and about implied readers, who are addressed in contradictory yet meaningful ways. Excellent analyses have been performed on *Vanity Fair*'s thematization of readers and reading. Stressing the importance of readers in Thackeray's works, Jack P. Rawlins observes, "Thackeray throughout his career describes the relationship between reader and text that he seeks by the phrase *de te fabula*, meaning that the reader is the subject of the tale....the novel begins to look like a grand rhetorical machine to bring the reader unawares face to face with himself" (13). Wolfgang Iser asserts that *Vanity Fair*'s "true form will only be revealed when the world it presents has...been refracted and converted by the mind of the reader. *Vanity Fair* aims not at presenting social reality, but at presenting the way in which such reality can be experienced" ("The Reader" 771). Kate Flint, addressing many forms of thematized reading in *Vanity Fair*, such as the reading done by characters, argues, "*Vanity Fair* is a novel which persistently draws attention to the process of reading itself" (247).

Close analysis of invoked readers in *Vanity Fair* can significantly contribute to our understanding of Thackeray's novel. Invoked readers are the readers (real and/or hypothetical) explicitly named, described, or addressed in a text. In contrast, Iser's *implied reader* is the hypothetical reader who "embodies all those predispositions necessary for a literary work to exercise its effect—predispositions laid down, not by an empirical outside reality, but by the text itself," and *actual (or real) readers* are real individuals who read a given text ("Readers" 145); these categories can overlap but need not be coterminous. Thackeray varies the relationships between invoked and implied readers, sometimes mocking or responding to the former for the benefit of the latter, sometimes making the former a subsection of the latter, and sometimes leaving the relationship between the two ambiguous. This essay will focus on invoked readers, an under analyzed rhetorical technique that contributes to and deepens *Vanity Fair*'s larger projects. Iser gestures briefly toward such an analysis, noting the frequency in *Vanity Fair* of "remarks relating directly to the expectations and supposed habits of the novel-reader....[T]he reader is... stylized to a certain degree, being given attributes which he may either accept or reject. Whatever happens he will be forced to react to those ready-made qualities ascribed to him" ("The Reader" 772). Iser's "accept or reject" claim is upheld by analysis of Thackeray's invocations but does not fully account for the ways in which the diversity of *Vanity Fair*'s invoked readers encourages empathic reading and partial transcendence of the limitations of a reader's original reading position. By prompting readers to experience multiple points of view, each with their own strengths and weaknesses, Thackeray develops real readers' ability to knowledgeably decide which reader attributes to accept and reject rather than simply prompting them to do so. A letter

by Thackeray written around the same time as *Vanity Fair* suggests such a method: "Good God dont I see (in that may-be cracked and warped looking glass in which I am always looking) my own weaknesses wickednesses lusts follies shortcomings? in company let us hope with better qualities" (qtd. in Clarke 73-74).

Vanity Fair's invoked readers offer plenty of company. Thackeray's narrator invokes different sub-groups of readers (gender, age, nationality, economic and class status), different relationships with readers, and different levels of specificity of readers, employing both friendly and critical tones in the process. He invokes readers across a spectrum of reality from conceivably actual readers to obviously fictitious representative readers, and he often leaves it unclear whom his "we" includes. As a consequence of this variety, actual readers will find their relationships to the narrator fluctuating from inclusion to exclusion throughout the text, often experiencing both at once (if, for example, a reader is male but does not have the money to employ servants, when both maleness and having servants are invoked). Sometimes, a reader's sense of inclusion may be abruptly disrupted by an exclusionary invocation. Some categories (such as gender) are generally invoked divisively, others (such as class) are generally invoked in an inclusive or "centering" way, and some invocations are ambiguous or fluctuate between divisiveness and occasional centering. The range of invocations and their shifting degrees of certainty increasingly suggest the question, "Is he talking to me?" Thackeray allows for no easy answer, but exploration of the question provides insight into how the novel's engagement with readers supports *Vanity Fair*'s larger projects. In fact, the variety of invocations is an integral part of Thackeray's use of this rhetorical technique, as it increases the likelihood that readers will notice and respond to reader invocations. Even if, for example, a given male reader tends not to respond to gender invocations, he might respond to invocations of class or nationality, and if being excluded by divisive invocations fails to cause a reader to reflect, perhaps centering, ambiguous, or fluctuating patterns of invocation may succeed at getting that reader's attention.[1]

In addition to being internally varied, Thackeray's invoked readers exist as part of a larger field of relationships between diverse invoked, implied, and actual readers. By highlighting diverse invoked readers and diverse relationships between invoked and implied readers, Thackeray places readers and reader positions under scrutiny. Readers of *Vanity Fair* cannot always trust that the narrator is speaking to the readers he invokes and so must consistently ask to whom he is actually speaking and whether or not they are included in that group. These self-reflective questions bring actual readers' reader positions into consideration as well. I argue that, as a result of Thackeray's manipulation of invoked reader positions, *Vanity Fair* emphasizes the subjectivity and partiality of all reader positions and worldviews in order to encourage readers to read empathetically and consider other points of view on texts—and on the world. As Tzvetan Todorov asserts, "there does not seem to be a big difference between construction [of a fictional world] based on a literary text and construction [of the real world] based on a referential but nonliterary text....'Fiction' is not constructed any differently from 'reality'" (270). *Vanity Fair*'s emphasis on the uses and drawbacks of multiple reader positions encourages active reader reflection on how one views the real world, too. This consideration of multiple interpretive positions is a larger project of the novel supported by Thackeray's use of content and of his

[1] Elaine Scarry highlights similar variation in Thackeray's patterns of use of contradictory details in *Henry Esmond* to "undermine our stable participation in the narrative" (17).

narrator as well as of invoked readers.[2] *Vanity Fair*'s narrator is as complex and self-contradictory as the novel's invoked readers, ambivalent or ambiguous in terms of omniscience, sources of knowledge, and relationships to morality, social conventions, other characters, and, of course, readers. The content of the novel likewise questions the universal applicability of any social conventions or attitudes. Especially when placed alongside *Vanity Fair*'s treatment of reader positions, these uses of narrator and content push readers to extend the novel's exploration of the inevitably biased and imperfect nature of human perspectives to their own lives and worldviews.[3]

For actual readers of *Vanity Fair*, consideration of reader positions is likely to begin with the readers explicitly invoked by Thackeray's narrator. As Table 1 indicates, there are at least 101 instances in *Vanity Fair* in which readers are explicitly invoked, ranging in length from a word or two to several lines. These invocations highlight multiple aspects of reader positioning and can be roughly characterized along a spectrum between those that divide readers by shifting attention from one group to another and those that seem to center readers by maintaining a consistent focus on one "inclusive" group. By far the most frequently invoked aspects are gender (thirty-two invocations, divisive) and what I have categorized as class/finances/lifestyle (thirty-one invocations, centering).[4] I will begin my analysis with gender and other divisive types of invocation.

Thackeray's narrator specifies gender with a range of explicitness. On the subtle end of this spectrum is the narrator's frequent use of male pronouns to designate readers and occasional use of third-person female pronouns that exclude women from the group of invoked readers.[5] For example, the narrator addresses male readers when he says, "let us be thankful that the darlings [women] are like the beasts of the field, and don't know their own power. They would overcome us entirely if they did" (27); he again refers to women as "them" a few pages later (32). He occasionally directly addresses the reader while using male pronouns: "My beloved reader has no doubt in the course of his experience" (198). The narrator's invocation of gendered readers is sometimes quite emphatic, as when he addresses female readers directly as "ladies" or as

[2] Lionel Stevenson's analysis of Thackeray's dramatic monologues asserts the use of that rhetorical technique to support just such a project, in keeping with "the recognition of the relativity of truth that [was] coming to dominate the modern mind" (156). In *The Snobs of England*, for instance, Stevenson holds that by making the "author" "'One of Them'," Thackeray raises the question, "If even the author were not free of blame, how could the reader remain smugly immune? The necessary condition of multiple vision was established, so that the reader with new ambivalence reconsidered his environment, the author, and himself" (154).

[3] Wayne C. Booth argues, "some of the most powerful literature is based on a successful reversal of what many readers would 'naturally' think of as a proper response" (*Rhetoric of Fiction* 115). I see *Vanity Fair* as participating in this larger tendency, though Thackeray's use of invoked readers does not reverse so much as (partially) transcend "natural" reader responses or positions: a young, male, English reader thinking about how an older, female, or French reader might respond to the novel is not a simple "reversal."

[4] Booth's *A Rhetoric of Irony* is relevant here: "Since every reader carries a great load of prejudgments, since in fact he could not read anything without relying on them, one cannot exhort simply to read with an 'open mind'.... the only true shield from [the drawbacks of such prejudgments]...is a healthy tentativeness about oneself and one's responses, until compared with those of other readers who seem not to be especially disqualified. Needless to say, those prejudices are most destructive that carry the strongest emotional load" (225-26).

[5] It is in part these invocations that lead Flint to conclude that the narrator and Thackeray condescend to and distrust women more than men (247-51). Flint sees Thackeray as generally favoring male readers and reading practices: "to read well, for Thackeray, was to read as a man" (262). James Phelan, on the other hand, does not see Thackeray as assuming that "men could see the full critique but women couldn't" (142): "[t]he vision of women in society that emerges is...sometimes compatible with and sometimes antithetical to the view offered from a consistently feminist perspective" (132). I tend to follow Phelan and see Thackeray as questioning the essentializing gendering of reading practices while encouraging all readers to expand the ways in (and positions from) which they read.

"Madam" (19, 42, 52, 116, 637, etc.), and men as "son" or "brother" (221, 262, 362, etc.). It seems clear, therefore, that specifying a consistently single-gender audience is not the narrator's purpose in invoking reader gender.

This fluctuation between explicit male and female addressees causes readers of either gender to find themselves included in the narrator's address one moment and excluded the next. Excluded readers can assume that they are not supposed to be reading the exclusionary sections, that they are being allowed to "read over the shoulder" of the intended readers, or that the exclusion is meant as food for thought rather than as a directive. Any of these conclusions might prompt readers to wonder what about the exclusionary segment is gender-specific. Are "ladies" more likely than men to blame Becky Sharp for husband hunting or to label a handsome woman a fool (19, 391)? Is the female reader to feel excluded when the narrator expresses the hope that "every man who reads this, have a wholesome portion of [roast-beef] through life," welcomes the reader to a fashionable party scene using the male pronoun, or tells his "friend and brother"[6] to remember childhood selfishness and not feel "too confident of your own fine feelings" (501, 559)? Each time readers construct a rationale for the narrator's gender specification—whether they accept or reject that rationale—they will have been coaxed (by the author, if not the narrator) into comparing at least two gendered perspectives on the narrative content.

Reader age is invoked in a similarly divisive manner. Sometimes the narrator invokes young audiences, but often his audience is middle-aged.[7] The narration of Waterloo gets the most age-specific, invoking "you and I, who were children when the great battle was won and lost" (326), placing readers' births somewhere between 1795 and 1815, making them between thirty-one and fifty-two years old when *Vanity Fair* began serial publication (Thackeray himself was born in 1811). Two later references to the years immediately surrounding Waterloo support this positioning of readers' ages (351-52, 368). "Old" readers are only invoked once, and then not to the exclusion of younger readers: "And if you are old, as some reader of this may be or shall be" (604). As with gender, the shifting invocations give each age cohort of readers moments of inclusion and of exclusion that emphasize the distinctive perspectives of their own and other age positions.

Readers' growing awareness of multiple perspectives on narrative content is developed further by the narrator's seventeen invocations of narrator-reader relationships. The narrator's use of "brother" and "son" to address readers divides readers according to gender but also specifies a relationship between the narrator and his emphasized male sub-audience (221, 262, etc.).[8] This potentially forces even male readers to read these sections "doubly": whereas a male reader could perhaps read past being addressed as male without noting the gendering, questions of age, intimacy, power, and situation that arise with "son" or "brother." To the extent that readers take this construction personally rather than rhetorically, an older male reader might object to being

[6] While specifying gender, this form of address "is also simultaneously using the recognizable liberal rhetoric of the abolitionists, and reminding one, with a slightly satiric ring, that his position resembles that of a preacher in a pulpit" (Flint 248).

[7] Invocations of young readers: "let all young persons take their choice" (11), "oh fair young reader" (141), "My dear Miss Bullock....You are a strong-minded young woman" (182), "young ladies" (182, 674), "to the attention of persons commencing the world" (188). Less succinct invocations of middle-aged readers occur on 74 and 385.

[8] Notably, the narrator never addresses the audience as "sister" or "daughter"; see also note four.

addressed as "son," and even a younger reader might balk at the implied power dynamics. "Brother" implies a more equal relationship but also an intimacy some readers might reject.[9]

Three instances of relational address position readers in particularly emphatic ways. During a long rumination on "Life, Death, and Vanity," the narrator addresses the reader as "my friend in motley" (604). Along with similar suggestions in Thackeray's illustrations (discussed later), this challenges readers to consider the vanity of their attitudes toward mortality and other issues more directly than could content alone. The narrator makes a similar move three chapters later: "The actions of very vain, heartless, pleasure-seeking people are very often improper (as are many of yours, my friend with the grave face and spotless reputation;—but that is merely by the way)" (638). Here, too, the narrator's direct address implicates readers in a vanity that they otherwise might not have claimed, prompting a reconsideration of the immediately preceding critique of that vanity. Finally, the closing line of the novel repositions all readers one last time: "Come children, let us shut up the box and the puppets, for our play is played out" (689). Accompanied by an illustration of two (female?) children and a box of dolls, this line prompts readers to reconsider the maturity and viability of their reactions to the novel as a whole by suggesting that our responses might be similar to children's play (role play?) or be characterized by a childlike immature or limited perspective. The narrator does not, however, clearly posit an "adult" perspective or even the possibility of one; if anything, he includes himself among the children through his use of "us" and "our."

The multiplicity and limited nature of all reader perspectives on the narrative are also developed by the narrator's rapid shifts in the narrative person used to designate readers. For instance: "O my dear brethren and fellow-sojourners in Vanity Fair, which among *you* does not know and suffer under such benevolent despots? It is in vain *you* say to them, 'Dear Madam, I took Podger's specific at your orders last year…'…the recusant finds *himself*, at the end of the contest, taking down the bolus" (334; emphases added). Here, the second person plural switches in the final line to third person singular, signaling the reader to step back out of the role and see it from a third-person perspective. Elsewhere, the narrator startles readers by shifting narrative persons to place them *in* the scenario under consideration: "Some people ought to have mutes for servants in Vanity Fair….If you are guilty: tremble….If you are not guilty have a care of appearances" (445). At other times the fluctuations are more complex, as in the famous "Becky-as-siren" passage in chapter sixty-four. The narrator begins by referring to "things we do and know perfectly well in Vanity Fair," before shifting his attention to "a polite public" that he was obligated to consider while writing *Vanity Fair*; in the next sentence, the reader is addressed as "Madam" and then as a plural "you" (637). In the space of two sentences, the reader has been forced to grapple with first person plural, third person plural, second (or, if male, third) person singular, and second person plural. In each case, these quick variations of the narrative person applied to the reader drive readers to consider the same situation from multiple perspectives.

Perhaps the most extreme version of the narrator's multi-front campaign to force readers to reflect on both their accustomed and their alternative reading positions is his invocation of

[9] Other forms of relational address used by the narrator, such as "Friend," "companion," and "brethren," are less likely to suggest multiple reader positions/perspectives, but could conceivably suggest an alternative way of reading (as a "friend"—therefore complicit and sympathetic?). See pages 84, 190, 334, 467, 605, etc.

individual readers. Such is the first[10] reader invocation in *Vanity Fair*: "All which details, I have no doubt JONES[11] who reads this book at his club, will pronounce to be excessively foolish trivial twaddling and ultra-sentimental….Well he is a lofty man of genius, and admires the great and heroic in life and novels, and so had better take warning and go elsewhere" (6). This first invocation addresses one reader exclusively only to dismiss him from the book. Other readers are thus called upon to consider Jones's "unsentimental" reading style and decide whether to adopt it (and abandon *Vanity Fair*) or join in its rejection and ridicule (and continue reading the novel at hand). By offering this "individual" reader as a representation of a type, the narrator encourages reader consideration of reading positions and styles right from the start—and suggests that some reader positions are more welcome than others.

Five other invocations of individual readers follow the "Jones" pattern. The narrator turns to consideration of Amelia by quoting a purported[12] actual reader—"'We don't care a fig for her,' writes some unknown correspondent with a pretty little hand-writing and a pink seal to her note"—before critiquing her opinion by holding her derogatory evaluation up as evidence of Amelia's praiseworthiness (115). A page later, the narrator similarly rebuts "some carping reader" (also referred to as "My dear Sir") (116-17). In order to further contest such criticisms, in between these two instances he refers in passing to yet another individual ("my dear Madam," possibly meant as a reader) critical of women like Amelia (116). The narrator later defends Amelia from both "you" and the generic "Dives": "'There must be classes—there must be rich and poor,' Dives says, smacking his claret," in a rather complacent interpretation of scripture (569). It is unclear whether "you" is singular or plural, and Dives is presented in third person, but the two forms of address are in close enough proximity that readers might consider Dives to be representing the "you" position as another criticized individual reader. A character, Dobbin's sister Ann, is similarly subjected to direct censure. In response to Ann's criticism of Dobbin, the narrator addresses her directly: "Ah! Miss Ann, did it not strike you that it was not *you* whom the Major wanted to marry?" (600). This narrator-character interaction fits the pattern of previous individual invocations closely: Amelia (or Dobbin's attentions to Amelia) is criticized by an individual observer, and the narrator seeks to discredit the individual's criticism. As with the other individual invocations, actual readers are excluded from the narrator's (if not the author's) immediate attention or good graces and are forced to read with an outsider's awareness that they are not the person (or are not adopting the attitude) for whom these lines are written. Regardless of the nature of their own position, this "doubled" sense of reading positions lets readers evade direct criticism while considering whether the criticism applies to their reading position, too.

Three invocations of individual readers disrupt this pattern in various ways. The narrator invokes two female individual readers in contrast with Amelia, not in order to refute their positions vis-à-vis Amelia, but to claim instead that not all women (including Amelia) can be as admirable as these two (representative) readers, Miss Bullock and Miss Smith (182, 245). Seeing fellow readers repudiated in this manner could cause actual readers to consider subjecting their

[10] Excluding invocations in "Before the Curtain," the preface added when the text was republished as a complete novel after the end of its serialized release.

[11] Shillingsburg notes that "Jones" could refer to a generic placeholder for "snob" and/or to an actual snob "target," George Jones.

[12] This quote comes from Number 4, published three months after the first installment of *Vanity Fair*. The possibility that this is (or is based on) a comment from an actual reader cannot be ruled out (or upheld) without further evidence; as Tillotson notes, "Thackeray received complaints that *Vanity Fair* contained too much Amelia" (34).

own evaluations to more scrutiny for fear of holding equally discreditable or compassionless (unsentimental?) opinions of the text and characters. Finally, while discussing Becky and Rawdon's ability to maintain a comfortable lifestyle despite their lack of income, the narrator observes, "My son,—I would say, were I blessed with a child—you may by deep inquiry and constant intercourse with [Rawdon], learn how a man lives comfortably on nothing a-year" (362). Here the narrator invokes a doubly fictional reader (or listener), as not only is his son confined to the diegetic world, but, we are told, he is even there only a figment of the narrator's imagination. In effect, no reader is included in this address; therefore, every reader is challenged to read from the position of someone they are not.

In some cases, however, it is not nearly so clear when (and which) readers are being included in or excluded from the narrator's invocations; sometimes it is unclear if readers are being invoked at all. Sometimes this is the result of the narrator's usage of the first person plural: "*We* are Turks with the affections of *our* women," "Let *us* hope she was wrong" (179, 594, emphases added; see also 427 and 590, etc.).[13] Sometimes the third person is similarly employed, alone or in tandem with first person: "Indeed every good economist and manager of a household must know how cheap and yet how amiable these professions are," or "One must do her that justice. But…one has not the time…and we march on" (187, 613; see also 586). Reading for ambiguity, we can even question the final line, "Come children, let us shut up the box and the puppets, for our play is played out," asking whether these children necessarily include the reader after all (689). It is my opinion that the reader *is* included in this instance (and the others), but reconsideration of the line makes the point that many instances of reader invocation addressed here could be considered ambiguous to varying degrees.

In at least four instances, the fact of reader invocation is more certain, but *which* readers are being addressed and included remains ambiguous. When the narrator asserts, "[Rich people] take needy people's services as their due. Nor have you, O poor parasite and humble hanger-on, much reason to complain! Your friendship for Dives is about sincere as the return which it usually gets," readers so inclined have sufficient wiggle room to evade this unflattering invocation—but not, perhaps, to evade asking themselves if the invocation applies (144). When the narrator asks, "Who amongst us is there that does not recollect similar hours of bitter, bitter childish grief?" the question seems to be rhetorical and thus applicable to all readers, but this question is followed by a more challenging inquiry: "and how many of those gentle souls do you degrade, estrange, torture, for the sake of a little loose arithmetic and miserable dog-latin?" (39). In considering this second question, readers may ask whether the narrator considers this question to be, like the first, applicable to all readers, or whether he has shifted his attention to a "bad" minority of bully readers. Certainly the wording indicates a universal applicability—the narrator does not ask "who has bullied" but "how many have you bullied." And yet I suspect that, because this accusation of bullying neatly reverses the role of "childhood griever" in which the narrator had previously placed readers in favor of a less admirable role, some readers will resist accepting bully status, instead wondering if this question is really intended for all readers (i.e., for them), and as a result reflecting on their relationship to bullying more than they otherwise might.

[13] There are certainly more relatively innocuous "common usage" cases like "Let us hope" than I have listed, but I find the "common usage" examples in Table 1 sufficiently representative of the whole.

The narrator raises another "all readers or bad sub-group" question, saying "Pity the fallen gentleman: you to whom money and fair repute are the chiefest good; and so, surely, are they in Vanity Fair" (201). With "you to whom," the narrator allows readers to escape the accusation of greed and vanity while still challenging them to consider the possibility that they, and perhaps all readers, love money and praise. A similar challenge is posed during the siren discussion, prompting reflection on readers' implication in the narrator's critique of the hypocrisy of shunning the *naming* of things whose *presence* is readily accepted (637). In these cases, instead of readers being plainly divided into included and excluded groups (e.g., male and female, young and old), a dividing line is suggested but left unclear.[14] Both ambiguous and clear reader divisions, however, urge readers to reflect on their reading position and on alternative positions. Thackeray's different techniques for effecting such reader reflection confront different aspects of reader positioning. Clear dividing lines emphasize (relatively) clear aspects of identity such as gender, while clear relational positioning ("my friend and brother," "my son") forces readers to decide which relationships with the narrator they will accept. Further, the ambiguous division of readers into bullies-or-not, greedy-or-not, and hypocritically-polite-or-not urges readers to reflect on the kind of person (and reader) they already are—and on how that influences their reading. By bringing multiple approaches to bear, Thackeray coaxes readers into surprisingly comprehensive self-examinations that consistently draw attention to multiple possible ways of being and reading.

Having considered Thackeray's (narrator's) invocations that challenge readers by dividing potential reader positions, I now turn to invocations that emphasize commonalities "assumed" to apply to all (or most) readers. These homogenizing invocations could simply demonstrate assumptions (warranted or not) that Thackeray was making about his readership. The frequency, range, and nature of these "centering" invocations, however, especially considered alongside the "dividing" invocations, suggest that they subtly remind readers of ways in which their reader positions are limited and non-universal, even when a given invocation applies to most or all readers of the text at hand. Centering invocations in *Vanity Fair* are most prominently employed to highlight class, reader aptitude, nationality, and—briefly—age (otherwise somewhat divisive), and to establish a generally friendly relationship between narrator and readers. Of these, class/finances/lifestyle is by far the most commonly invoked homogenizing category, with thirty-one invocations positioning the narrator's readers firmly in the middle class. For example, three invocations refer to the reader's servants (303-04, 445, 642), four to reasonably well-to-do lodgings (91, 417, 603, 604), and two to public school education (39, 42). Ten more refer to middle class financial situations, connections, and practices, such as attending to books and business at home (xv), writing letters to friends (353), frivolous and surreptitious clothing expenditures (477), fashionable (but non-noble) friends (361-62, 621-22), and inhabiting roughly the same stratum as the (pre-decline) Sedleys (198, 385, 569).[15] At one point, shortly after

[14] A fourth instance in which the extent of reader invocation is unclear is entirely more confusing, while still inducing readers to reflect on their positioning: "How does Jenkins balance his income? I say, as every friend of his must say.…'I' is here introduced to personify the world in general—the Mrs. Grundy [social censor type, as Shillingsburg notes] of each respected reader's private circle—every one of whom can point to some families of his acquaintance who live nobody knows how. Many a glass of wine have we all of us drunk…wondering how the deuce he paid for it" (361-62). "I" is prominently, and oddly, defined as representing "the world in general," which would seem to include the reader, yet a moment later it is *re*defined as the reader's social censor friend. This confusion of roles, inclusions, and exclusions is almost certain to cause readers to stumble and question where the narrator is positioning them with respect to "I," Mrs. Grundy, and the Crawley-like rogues being discussed.

[15] Miscellaneous class invocations appear on pages 373 and 501 as well.

invoking the reader ("You yourself, dear Sir") and attributing similar greed for (aunts') inheritances to both the reader and himself, the narrator invokes an unusual muse: "I appeal to the middle classes—ah Gracious powers! I wish you would send me an old aunt" (91).

Thackeray's narrator also positions his readers in the middle class by referring to class positions they do not hold. He notes readers' social distance from Bohemians, greengrocers, and especially commoners, "whom we will leave to grumble anonymously" (85).[16] Readers' non-nobility is established by narratorial comments on readers' exclusion from the "august portals" of nobles and from "Court or ball," which the reader can only glimpse from "outside gazing over the policemen's shoulders," as well as by more direct references to non-nobility: "let us, my brethren, who have not our names in the Red Book [of British nobility], console ourselves by thinking comfortably how miserable our betters may be" (500, 508, 467). Readers' middle class status is presumed to entail upward financial and social ambitions characterized by sycophantic, greedy, or hypocritical habits (144, 201, 473).

These class invocations are rarely characterized by the contradictory positions that typify invocations of gender, relationships, and individual readers. On two occasions, readers are positioned as "poor," but only in contrast with "rich people" or in terms of the "little patrimony" they have to bequeath rather than in terms of true poverty (427, 467-68). On another occasion, the narrator addresses two groups of readers, "old and rich, or old and poor," but again, this seems to stay within the bounds of the middle class, with "rich" and "poor" defined in terms of patrimony rather than destitution or luxury (604). At no point are readers outside the bounds of the middle class invoked.[17] This has two consequences in terms of reader awareness of multiple reading positions. First, readers not from the middle class are likely to be acutely aware that their position is *constantly* excluded, unlike, for example, male or female gender positions. Such readers would thus be more consistently aware of doubled reading positions (theirs and that of the invoked middle class reader). Second, middle class readers' experience of class invocation would differ from their experience of gender invocation in that their class position would be emphasized but never excluded by the narrator's invocations. Thus, middle class readers' awareness of other reading positions would be occasionally encouraged but never forced.

Invocation of readers' nationality focuses on a similarly homogenous English reader position.[18] Readers are exclusively English: "All of us have read of what occurred during that interval [at Waterloo]. The tale is in every Englishman's mouth; and you and I...are never tired of hearing and recounting the history of that famous action" (326). The narrator contrasts the Englishness of his invoked readers with alternative (European) positions, saying, "if such an interest could be felt in our country, and about a battle where but twenty thousand of our people were engaged, think of the condition of Europe for twenty years before, where people were

[16] This "we" could refer to the narrator and reader or, more ornamentally, to the narrator alone; either way, the passage clearly indicates the narrator's belief that commoners are not of interest to *Vanity Fair*'s readers.

[17] This limitation to the invoked readers runs counter to the fact that the serial publication of *Vanity Fair* and other novels of the 1840s "greatly extend[ed] the novel-reading public, by the simple device of spreading and lowering the cost," fostering a less affluent readership of which Thackeray could not have been wholly unaware (Tillotson 25). Brantlinger argues, "The British novel in general, between the 1790s and 1900, is pervaded by the question of the moral and political effects of mass literacy, of reading, and above all of reading novels," as a result of questions about the morality of the novel form and about new "mass" (less affluent and educated) readerships (130); Brantlinger also notes Thackeray's awareness of these debates (121-22).

[18] Readers share, for instance, "our late monarch George III" (42), "our rascals...[and] countrymen of our own" (368), and "our Indian empire" (430).

fighting, not by thousands, but by millions" (351-52). As with class, national heterogeneity is examined from the comfort of an unchallenged (British) reading position. Unchallenged, however, is not the same as unproblematized; even the suggestion of other perspectives implies insights or opinions less easily (or un-)obtainable from one's own position.[19]

The narrator's treatment of readers *as* readers defies simple categorization as either divisive or centering. Sometimes the narrator invokes readers by noting, "it is only a comedy that the reader pays his money to witness" (190) or by remarking that the reader must be "astonished" to find himself (and the narrative) now in India (430); elsewhere, he discusses the difficulties of accommodating the hypocritical mores of "a polite public" who don't like unpleasant realities to be mentioned (637). He also invokes potential sub-groups of readers as readers, such as "[t]hose who like to lay down the History-book, and to speculate upon what *might* have happened in the world" (277), "a philosophical frequenter of Vanity Fair" (278), and "[t]hose who like [to] peep down under waves" that mask the unpleasant realities alluded to above (637). Because reading habits are not inherent aspects of identity like biology, place of birth, or age, these invocations press readers not only to reflect on but also sometimes to *choose* what kind of readers they are and will be. While readers either were or weren't "astonished" when the narrative shifted briefly to India, a reader can choose to read more or less philosophically, to peer under the waves or not, to tolerate non-comedy as well as comedy, or even to begin asking "what if" questions about history. The self-reflection fostered by other invocations of reader positioning become metacognitive when applied to reading processes rather than to relative static aspects of identity. In the 1848 preface, "Before the Curtain," the narrator explicitly suggests a kind of reader (and reading) he hopes to encourage: "A man with a reflective turn of mind," tolerant of hilarity but capable of "a sober, contemplative, not uncharitable frame of mind" who does not "consider Fairs immoral altogether" and may be "of a lazy, or a benevolent, or a sarcastic mood" (xv).

The most frequently invoked category of readers as readers (at seven instances)—that of "the ingenious reader"—is subtly critical of readers' abilities even as it maintains a superficially complimentary tone. These invocations consistently announce that some fact or conclusion has, for instance, "been indicated sufficiently for an ingenious reader by the conversation in the last page," before proceeding to explicitly state that fact or conclusion (48). While invoking only the reader savvy enough to already understand what's going on, this practice of spelling things out is divisive because it implies readers who weren't ingenious enough on their own. When the narrator asserts, "I trust there is no reader of this little story who has not discernment enough to perceive that...Miss Eliza Styles...was indeed no other than Captain Rawdon Crawley," he in fact implies that some readers need his explanation (160).[20] Even when asking, "Which, I wonder, brother reader, is the better lot, to die prosperous and famous, or poor and disappointed?," the narrator does not trust readers alone with the topic, instead proffering his conclusion that an impoverished and thus humble end "will be the better ending of the two, after all," before putting the question to the reader again (606).

[19] Also centered on one position is the most innocuous category of invocation: that of a friendly or wholly undefined reader. Invocations like "dear friends" (84), "[t]he kind reader" (327), "the reader" (467), or even simple inclusion in pronouns like "we" and "us" are unlikely to catch readers' attention or, if they do, to suggest alternative reading positions to any but the most antagonistic readers eager to buck the labels "kind" or "friend" (190, 590, 594).

[20] See pages 96, 128, 223, 391 and 571 for further examples.

The contrast implied by these invocations urges actual readers to mimic the narrator's characterizations of the intelligent reader position by attending to subtext, recalling earlier points in the narrative, drawing textually supported conclusions, and asking and answering insightful questions about the topics at hand by calling upon their knowledge of "at once, how credulous we are, and how sceptical, how soft and how obstinate, how firm for others and how diffident about ourselves" (223). In other words, by invoking and advocating certain reading habits, Thackeray (if not necessarily the narrator) again pushes readers to acknowledge and work to transcend their limitations as observer-interpreters, as he also does, for example, by focusing readers' attention on various gender, age, and national identity positions. The simultaneous opposites cited by the narrator (credulous, skeptical) resonate with his treatment of other reading positions: a reader may not be able to *be* at once male and female, young and old, British and French, but by consistently highlighting multiple (and often opposed) reading positions, *Vanity Fair* is designed to help him or her read with contrasting positions and attitudes in mind.

Though the narrator's invocation of "sentimental" readers initially appears to be simple "centering," it is in fact a more complex and ambivalent case. Reader sentimentality is only invoked three times but the placement and vehemence of the invocations demand attention. Sentimentality is at the heart of the novel's first invocation, in which the reader "Jones" is advised to "take warning and go elsewhere" if he feels inclined to dismiss *Vanity Fair* as "excessively foolish trivial twaddling and ultra-sentimental" (6). As both the first and also an unusually extended invocation, this evisceration of unsentimental readers is heavily emphasized while readers are still adjusting to the demands of Thackeray's narrative. The second sentimentality invocation is similarly strong: "Every reader of a sentimental turn (and we desire no other) must have been pleased with the *tableau* with which the last act of our little drama concluded; for what can be prettier than an image of Love on his knees before Beauty?" (153). The final invocation of sentimental readers ("How…mother and daughter wept…may readily be imagined by every reader who possesses the least sentimental turn") does nothing to dispel the impression that sentimentality is being invoked as a centered reading position (259).

Yet closer inspection of the context of the second example complicates things. Though the narrator professes that the only readers he cares for—sentimental readers—must have loved the preceding tableau, the opposite seems likely to be true. The tableau in question is the elderly, uncouth, lecherous Sir Pitt proposing to the ambitious and duplicitous Becky. "Love" hardly seems an appropriate moniker for the former and, while "Beauty" might fit Becky, it is scarcely the first description of her that would come to most readers' minds. Thus, it is highly unlikely that the universal reaction of readers to this scene would be sentimental delight, as the proposed union is not sentimental for either party and has not heretofore been narrated in sentimental terms. This severely undercuts the sincerity of the narrator's invocation of the presumed reaction of privileged sentimental readers, throwing a much more ambiguous light on the overall treatment of reader sentimentality—in retrospect, the narrator's claim that he wants only sentimental readers could easily be just as sarcastic as his treatment of Jones. Considering this in conjunction with the narrator's treatment of reader mindsets and aptitude discussed above, I argue that invocations of sentimental readers lean toward satire while the overall attitude displayed toward reader sentimentality is ambivalence, mirroring the narrator's vacillations between irony and sincerity and the narrative's overall fluctuations in tone (which include some sentimental passages). Taken together with the narrator's overall tone, these invocations suggest that sentimental reading of *Vanity Fair* is only sometimes appropriate and welcome.

Though subtle about fostering "ingenious" readers and ambivalent about sentimental reading, *Vanity Fair*'s narrator bluntly criticizes or directs other aspects of invoked readers' thinking. He is particularly critical of invoked readers' social attitudes and behavior, censuring bullying (39), lack of sympathy for members of the middle class whose finances have deteriorated (201, 569, 613), hypocrisy (473, 637), women's attitudes toward single women and nurses (391, 406), and other social faults (559, 638). But when criticizing misinterpretations of the content of *Vanity Fair*, the narrator finds fault with individuals rather than criticizing readers as a group (see 115 and 116, discussed earlier). Taken together with the narrator's careful cultivation of ingenious reading habits, this suggests a concerted campaign on Thackeray's part to improve reading habits without directly criticizing readers' existing habits.

Nevertheless, Thackeray's narrator is sometimes defensive about his text and occasionally willing to give direct commands on how (or what) to read, though these lack the biting character of his attacks on individual readers. In an authorial footnote, he refers readers skeptical of his portrayal of "a noble and influential class of persons" to "contemporaneous histories" (113), he defends (from ladies) his choice to describe thirty-year-old Amelia as "a young woman" (570), and he "def[ies] any one to say that our Becky, who has certainly some vices, has not been presented to the public in a perfectly genteel and inoffensive manner" (637). As for commands, he "warn[s] the public against believing one-tenth of the stories against [Becky]" (507),[21] asserts that "we had best not examine" sirens like Becky once they "sink into their native element" (638), and, with reference to Becky and her oft-mentioned absent luggage, exhorts, "my son, beware of that [kind of] traveller!" (675). In none of these cases, however, does the narrator criticize a reading mistake the invoked reader has already made, instead preventing future errors or defending himself against apparently reasonable skepticism or contrasting views. This too, indicates the narrator's reluctance directly to criticize real readers' reading habits.[22]

So far this analysis has surveyed categories and patterns of reader invocation in isolation, but it should come as no surprise that, in many cases, multiple categories and/or patterns are invoked simultaneously. The narrator's discussion of Waterloo, by invoking "every Englishman," excludes foreigners and possibly women before also excluding those who weren't "children when the great battle was won and lost" and perhaps those who are in fact "tired of hearing and recounting the history of that famous action" (326). When the story moves to India, the narrator's assumption that readers are astonished might exclude those who aren't astonished because they're familiar with India, women (because of masculine pronouns) and, again, foreigners ("our Indian empire") (430). As these examples demonstrate, sometimes divisive and centering patterns of invocation are employed together. Thus, while my individual analyses have developed the argument that Thackeray's narrator is encouraging readers' awareness of multiple positions

[21] Stories that his warning ironically introduces.

[22] The novel's invocations of readers are sometimes ironic, but this irony is largely directed at fictitious individuals or society in general rather than at readers as readers. The greedy, socially ambitious, and hypocritically proper mindsets criticized elsewhere are also ironized, as when the narrator "hope[s] the reader has much too good an opinion of Captain and Mrs. Crawley to suppose that they ever would have dreamed of paying a visit…[to anyone who] could be serviceable to them in no possible manner" or when he evaluates Dobbin's visit to Amelia before he's seen his own family as "a remissness for which I am sure every well-regulated person will blame the Major" (174, 586). The use of irony in reader invocations neither differs significantly from the novel's overall use of irony nor undermines the patterns of reader invocation already discussed.

within any given category of invocation, in practice, readers are being faced with a staggering multitude of possible positions (female, British, middle-aged, middle class; male, French, young, nobility; etc.). This is more than any reader could grasp while reading, but even if readers only recognize positions as categories or think of only a few of the possibilities raised by Thackeray's invocations, the overall effect is likely to be an enhanced awareness of the subjective and limited nature of the reader's own reading position and thus of the reading experiences available to someone thinking only of or from that position.

Based on this analysis of the reader invocations of *Vanity Fair*'s narrator, I argue that a major project of Thackeray's novel is to stress the limited nature of all worldviews and perspectives realistically available to his readers and encourage them to think of and through other positions. *Vanity Fair*'s actual readers consistently read invocations of readers who, as a result of both fixed and malleable aspects of their identity, inhabit reader positions that suggest different interpretations of text and world. The resulting heightened awareness of the limitations of one's own perspective and reading experiences fosters consideration of *Vanity Fair*—and other interpretable texts and situations more generally—from multiple perspectives, with one eye to the inevitability of bias and limitation and the other to the possibility of overcoming at least some of one's perspectival biases and limitations.[23]

I hope that this analysis has demonstrated not only the richness and significance of the use of invoked readers in *Vanity Fair* but also the value of analysis of the category of invoked readers more generally. Implied and actual readers have long been subjects of rhetorical and reader-response literary criticism, but invoked readers have received far less attention. Invoked readers, though not ubiquitous in literature like implied and actual readers, can add to our understanding of texts in which they are employed. *Vanity Fair*, whose original subtitle during serialization was "Pen and Pencil Sketches of English Society," has been analyzed from many angles as a complex social critique in which it is not always simple to determine the dividing line between sincerity and irony, recommendation and critique. I contend that through its unusually strong emphasis on invoked readers, *Vanity Fair* extends its project from the critique of society to the promotion in readers of self-analysis, fostering awareness and critique of one's own inevitable limitations and biases and promoting attentiveness to other reading (and interpreting) positions. Though the original subtitle stresses society, the author-illustrated covers of the serial and book formats of *Vanity Fair* suggest the inclusion of the more introspective project. As Thackeray's narrator notes, the cover of each serial installment of *Vanity Fair* (except the last) features the fool moralizing to other fools, thus highlighting the ubiquity of blind spots from any individual's perspective. And the cover of the last serial installment, also used as the title page of the complete book, focuses tightly on an image of self-reflection, depicting the solitary, melancholy-looking narrator or Manager of the Performance looking at himself in a hand mirror. *Vanity Fair* is by all accounts an adroit social critique, but it is equally or more so a vehicle for encouraging readers to

[23] Clarke asserts, "[i]n *Vanity Fair*, Thackeray set out to write a 'sermon'…that would do justice to the complexity of ethical issues involved in living in society, but that would preach without self-righteousness and remain intellectually open without moral relativism or skepticism" (72). Clarke cites two of Thackeray's letters roughly contemporaneous with *Vanity Fair*, one of which ("in company let us hope with better qualities") has already been cited. The other professes Thackeray's belief that "Satirical-Moralists" such as himself must "not only amuse but teach" (*Letters* 2: 282, qtd. in Clarke 73). The "sermon" of *Vanity Fair*, designed to make readers dissatisfied with their existing understandings of themselves and their world, is also, through its reader invocations, constructed so as to teach readers ways to expand their self-understanding and limited perspectives on texts and the world (and to amuse, of course).

consider—and attempt to overcome—the vanity of ignoring or complacently accepting one's own limitations, weaknesses, and blindnesses as a reader and as a member of society.

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Table 1
A Categorization of Instances of Invocation of Readers in *Vanity Fair*

Category	Page numbers of related invocations	Total related invocations
Gender	11, 19, 27, 42, 52, 115, 116, 128, 179, 182-83, 198, 221, 262, 334, 353, 385, 391, 406, 430, 467-68, 477, 489, 501, 508, 559, 570, 570, 575, 604, 606-07, 637, 674	32
Class/finances/ lifestyle	xv, 39, 42, 85, 91, 91, 144, 187, 198, 201, 303-04, 353, 361-62, 373, 385, 417, 427, 445, 467, 467-68, 473, 477, 500, 501, 508, 569, 603, 604, 621-22, 642, 645	31
Relationships (son, brother)	84, 84, 190, 221, 262, 334, 362, 385, 467, 500, 559, 570, 604, 605, 606-07, 638, 675, 689	18
Reading aptitude & mindset	xv, xv, 48, 96, 128, 160, 190, 223, 277, 278, 391, 430, 507 571, 606-07, 637, 637	17
Pronoun person shifts	11, 182, 198, 245, 334, 368, 391, 406, 445, 467-68, 501, 569, 604, 637, 638	15
Critical	39, 115, 116-17, 201, 391, 406, 473, 559, 569, 613, 637, 638	12
Age	11, 74, 141-42, 182, 182-83, 188, 326, 351-52, 368, 385, 604, 674	12
Exclusionary	27(& 32), 85, 115, 182-83, 198, 326, 430, 467, 603, 642, 645	11
Individual	6, 115, 116, 116-17, 182, 182, 245, 362, 569, 600 (character)	10
Ambiguous reference to readers	144, 179, 187, 427, 475, 586, 590, 594, 613, 689	10
General/friendly	84, 84, 190, 327, 467, 571, 590, 594	8
Ironic criticism /mockery	6, 153, 174, 182-83, 245, 586	6
Defensive /Commanding	113, 507, 570, 637, 638, 675	6
Family situation	42, 74, 91, 115, 575, 604	6
Mood/morals	xv, 174, 326, 508, 570	5
Nationality	42, 326, 351-52, 368, 430	5
Reading moment	6, 417, 445, 603, 621-22	5
Ambiguous sub-group	39, 201, 361-62, 637	4
Sentimentality (or not)	6, 153, 259	3
Allusions	6, 84, 651	3
Purchaser of *Vanity Fair*	128, 190, 285	3

Total Instances of Invocation: 101

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Furniture and Domesticity in *Vanity Fair*

By Jennifer Sattaur

J. B. Brown's 1884 sermon asserts that "love lies at the root of the home; love is its noblest and most perfect form; that love which is the image on earth of the love which redeems and saves on high" (3). The relationship between home and heaven was recognized as a prevalent theme in Victorian domestic discourse; as writers on Victorian design and culture note, the home was, for middle-class and well-to-do Victorians, a space of domestic bliss offering sanctuary from the sordid outside world. Domestic space was a creation comprised of carefully designed, selected, and positioned commodities, as reflected both in Victorian literature and society.

Thackeray is prominent among those Victorian novelists concerned with the commodity culture of his society and its effects on human nature and morals, a dynamic Robert Gilmore associates with class-conflict: "He was the first novelist of real stature to seize on the fictional possibilities of the conflict between the aristocracy and the middle classes in the early Victorian years" (37). Although class conflict is not the only motivator behind the intrigues of *Vanity Fair*, it is certainly one of the most important, as Thackeray's contemporaries were well aware; according to the *Times*, "There is fashion everywhere, and as many shades of it as divisions in the social ranks. The aristocracy being at the head are of course more marked; but they have not more pride (perhaps they have less) than their inferiors" ("Aristocracy of Society" 5F). This suggests a concern with the flexibility of social status as the aspiring middle-classes found ways to relate to a "natural" aristocracy through the acquisition of "new" money and commodities. In *Vanity Fair*, the conflict between the aristocracy's established wealth and the new commodity-based wealth of the middle-classes is exploited by Thackeray's satirization of home and domesticity to reveal class anxieties. An examination of Thackeray's use of commodity objects and the discourse surrounding them, both to formulate and satirize the homes of *Vanity Fair*, reveals intriguing links between his two (anti)heroines, Amelia Sedley Osborn and Becky Sharp Crawley. My discussion features two enormously popular pieces of domestic furniture—the ladies' davenport or desk, and the parlor piano—as vehicles through which the author critiques Victorian domesticity.

One of the most suggestive pieces of furniture in the household of Becky Crawley is the little desk which is, in the end, the source of her downfall and disgrace. Readers are first introduced to the desk more than four-hundred pages into the novel, upon the occasion of Becky's presentation at court:

> The diamonds, which had created Rawdon's admiration, never went back to Mr. Polonius, of Coventry Street, and that gentleman never applied for their restoration; but they retired into a little private repository, in an old desk, which Amelia Sedley had given her years and years ago, and in which Becky kept a number of useful, and, perhaps, valuable things, about which her husband knew nothing. (462)

The davenport, compared to the more massive and imposing form of the masculine writing desk, is comprised of a series of hidden spaces and tucked-away corners, all of which were squeezed into a compact and easily-sequestered form. One writer on Victorian furniture design describes

how the desk had a particular function when applied to the female domestic setting: "The davenport took up very little room and was designed to encourage tidiness, for it has several drawers and ample space below the sloping desk" (Gloag 91). In the case of Thackeray's Becky, however, we are led, from the moment we first encounter the desk, to notice how tidiness and utility can be turned to devious and selfish ends. The "little private repository" stresses the privacy which was so prized in domestic terms, used here not to keep the public world at bay but rather to conceal "a number of useful, and, perhaps, valuable things, about which her husband knew nothing." The emphasis is thus on her husband's ignorance and on her appropriation of the household funds for non-domestic purposes. In the sense that Becky's desk is an object of deceptive innocence and functionality, it can be seen as mirroring the personality and perhaps even the body of Becky herself. As Thackeray notes, "To know nothing, or little, is in the nature of some husbands. To hide, in the nature of how many women?" (462). Becky is like a magpie, with a fatal attraction to shiny things and an instinct to hide and hoard; the desk becomes her metaphorical nest and, unlike the proverbial domestic and homely bird's nest, Becky's nest excludes her husband and denies to him the comforts and commodities she enjoys.

For his part, Rawdon's attitude towards the "business" of marriage is as problematic as his wife's. If Becky's instinct is to hoard, it is perhaps an understandable reaction to the equally disreputable instinct to spend that characterizes Rawdon: "He lived comfortably on credit. He had a large capital of debts, which laid out judiciously, will carry a man along for many years, and on which certain men about town contrive to live a hundred times better than even men with ready money can do" (156). Rawdon's dependence on credit, in place of a steady, earned income, places his supposedly dependant wife in a difficult situation in both domestic and personal terms. Thackeray emphasizes the precariousness of this policy for marital stability: "There are gentlemen of very good blood and fashion in this city, who never have entered a lady's drawing-room; so that though Rawdon Crawley's marriage might be talked about in his county, where, of course, Mrs. Bute had spread the news, in London it was doubted, or not heeded, or not talked about at all." In this context, Becky is herself relegated to the same status and dubiousness as Rawdon's debts; she is one more commodity he cannot afford and is therefore of doubtful propriety. Becky is fundamentally a pragmatist, and if her desk reveals the extent to which she is willing to betray the bonds of marriage, then it also reveals her independence and security from her husband's excesses. The domestic politics of commodity, therefore, are complicated in the novel through the portrayal of Becky's appropriation and utilization of the seemingly innocent and respectable davenport desk. Just as Becky conceals her selfishness and a tendency toward the disreputable, she conceals in her desk (itself appropriated from those more reputable than herself) the evidence of her duplicity towards her husband, and the means by which she attempts to preserve her independence from the man she has used as a social step-ladder.

The desk, then, is used by Thackeray to undermine ideas about appropriate feminine domestic commodity culture. Jenni Calder explains how, in Victorian society, expenditure and marriage were intimately linked:

> husbands were expected to keep their wives not just in the style to which they were accustomed, but often in the style to which they aspired, which was a major reason why most middle and upper-class men married relatively late. They needed a good income before marriage was possible. It was considered to be not only risky to marry without a suitable income, but immoral. Young people were warned that love was not enough. For most people marriage did not suggest the consummation of a love match, but the setting up of an establishment. (29)

This is a situation which occurs repeatedly in contemporary literary works and fine art. Writers of the nineteenth-century and particularly the Victorian era often juxtapose marriage and financial gain or security, with greater or lesser degrees of success for the resulting couple. For Thackeray's Becky, there seems to be no distinction between a "love match" and a financial arrangement; it is telling that her regret at having married Rawdon shows itself in "some of the most genuine tears that ever fell from her eyes" (133) when she realizes she has, by her own actions, deprived herself of the more settled fortune and social position of the elder Crawley.

Becky's desire for wealth and society, symbolized by the secret, locked desk, makes it impossible for her to be a "real" wife, in Mrs. Ellis's sense of the term: "Of all the passions which take possession of the female breast, a passion for society is one of the most inimical to domestic enjoyment" (209). Thackeray echoes this sentiment by mocking Becky's social-climbing: "You hear how pitilessly many ladies of seeming rank and wealth are excluded from this 'society'" (357); that he qualifies "rank and wealth" with "seemingly" places Becky in the position of a false aristocrat or "nouveau riche." His mock sympathy for her difficulties strips some of the pride and self-assurance from her character: "The frantic efforts which they make to enter this circle, the meannesses to which they submit, the insults which they undergo, are matters of wonder to those who take human or womankind for a study." Thackeray's self-mockery implicates readers in the fascination with society he ridicules in women like Becky: "[T]he pursuit of fashion under difficulties would be a fine theme for any very great person who had the wit, the leisure, and the knowledge of the English language necessary for the compiling of such a history." Becky has no illusions about the need to resort to self-debasement and illicit means to get what she wants: "'When Lady Jane comes,' thought she, 'she shall be my sponsor in London society; and as for the women! bah! the women will ask me when they find the men want to see me'" (359). Anticipating future infidelity, Becky's desire for upward social mobility blinds her to her domestic role as the wife of Rawdon Crawley; her appropriation of the davenport from a symbol of respectability to one of deception and disloyalty reflects the perversion of domesticity represented by both parties in this marriage. The locked desk is of significance not only because Becky chooses to conceal her secrets within it but also because Rawdon has the mistaken faith or lack of perspicacity which prevents him from breaking into it and reasserting his mastery of the household. Delicate and feminine, demure and slightly teasing with its concealed chambers, the desk mocks Rawdon's masculine simplicity regarding marriage and his naïve admiration for Becky. According to Thad Logan, "the affiliation of excessive ornament, guilty sexuality, and femininity has a long history in the West" (89), and this is certainly the case for Becky, as Rawdon discovers. That the desk was originally a gift from Amelia draws an instructive parallel between the two women; at least initially, Amelia had wealth and love in excess, while Becky was compelled to be far more resourceful.

The domestic life of Becky and Rawdon Crawley is clearly far from ideal, the locked desk highlighting the flaws in their expectations; greed and secrecy on Becky's part is matched by impermanency and unassertiveness on Rawdon's. Like the borrowed diamonds and hidden bank-notes, there is much in their home indicating a superficial and mercenary relationship. Jenni

Calder notes, "Marriage without a home was not acceptable. Marriage in digs, or rented rooms, anywhere that the objects of permanency could not be set up, where the symbols of comfort and status could find no place, was bound to be dubious" (10). For Thackeray, part of the immorality in the Becky-Rawdon match comes from the fact that they sought to acquire "the symbols of comfort and status" without the social respectability of an established home. The couple wander from place to place, always living close to the bone but in opulence and luxury, leaving a trail of debt and ruin (both their own and other people's) behind them. When they arrive in London, after escaping their debtors in France and England, they continue living beyond their means:

> In the first place, and as a matter of the greatest necessity, we are bound to describe how a house may be got for nothing a-year. These mansions are to be had either unfurnished, where, if you have credit with Messrs. Gillows or Bantings, you can get them splendidly *montées* and decorated entirely according to your own fancy; or they are to be let furnished; a less troublesome and complicated arrangement to most parties. It was so that Crawley and his wife preferred to hire their house. (353)

This directly challenges the advice offered to aspiring young housewives in popular periodicals of the time, like *The Ladies Treasury,* which offered "Comforts for Small Incomes....useful recipes...instructions for cooking and for household management....It will be found an admirable companion book to 'How I Managed My House on £200 a-Year'" (123). Becky and Rawdon's approach to housekeeping not only precludes domestic happiness in their family circle but also corrupts that of those with whom they are involved, like Mr. Raggles, who

> had to pay taxes and rates, and the interest of the mortgage to the brother butler; and the insurance of his life; and the charges for his children at school; and the value of the meat and drink which his own family—and for a time that of Colonel Crawley too—consumed; and though the poor wretch was utterly ruined by the transaction, his children being flung on the streets, and himself driven into the Fleet Prison: yet somebody must pay even for gentlemen who live for nothing a-year. (355)

Raggles is the honest, hard-working, and socially aspirant family man of whom Victorian society thoroughly approved, and Thackeray emphasizes the social and domestic duties which fall heavily on his shoulders. His story should have been one of perfect harmony beginning with the inner family circle (where his children are housed, fed, and educated) and radiating out into society (to which he pays taxes and insurance). His exploitation by the Crawleys ruins his social and domestic liquidity, even as it props up the illusion of Rawdon's, whose

> drawing-rooms were the prettiest, little, modest salons conceivable: they were decorated with the greatest taste, and a thousand knick-knacks from Paris, by Rebecca: and when she sate at her piano trilling songs with a lightsome heart, the stranger voted himself in a little paradise of domestic comfort, and agreed that if the husband was rather stupid, the wife was charming, and the dinners the pleasantest in the world. (356)

In the Crawley household, the combination of Rawdon's swindling and Becky's cunning keeps the couple, and their illusions of propriety, afloat. It is indeed Becky who manages the delicate business of eliciting money and favors from men such as Pitt Crawley and Lord Steyne, a circumstance that affords Thackeray much scope for ironic commentary. Clearly, the role-inversion of Becky's flirtation with Pitt Crawley is both practical and destructive of the marriage: "Becky made Rawdon dine out once or twice on business, while Pitt stayed with them, and the Baronet passed the happy evening alone with her and Briggs" (425). Rawdon is shown to be master of neither his home nor his wife, much less his finances; he is banished from the family circle while his wife solicits the protection and patronage of his brother, receiving the benefits of a fortune that should have been Rawdon's in the first place. Pitt is not wholly unaware of the duplicity of the situation; there is irony in Becky's assertion that "'A poor man's wife...must make herself useful, you know,'" but there is even more in Pitt's reply that "'she was fit to be the wife of an emperor.'" Her efforts to secure material support highlight not only her domestic failings but those of Rawdon, an inept provider, to say the least.

A good housewife manages the income and expenditure of the household; in the absence of a husband's income, Becky's management, symbolized by the desk, challenges this idea. It is not a piece of furniture chosen for the furnishing of a new establishment but a gift from Amelia. If Becky's character imparts an air of duplicity to the desk, however, it is equally true that the ownership of such a desk works its own influence on the development of Becky's character. The desk can be seen to represent the many social inequalities which structure the relationships of the novel. The socio-economic difference between Amelia and Becky leads to the gift of the desk in the first place, bestowed by a wealthy girl upon her less fortunate friend. There is innocence but also a certain smug assertion of superiority—and lack of tact—in the display Becky is subjected to when she first stays with Amelia: "You may be sure she showed Rebecca over every room of the house, and everything in every one of her drawers; and her books, and her piano, and her dresses, and all her necklaces, brooches, laces, and gimcracks" (13). This is followed closely by a series of gifts which could, conceivably, be read as naïve and generous bestowals, but which are also presented in the light of charitable cast-offs:

> She insisted upon Rebecca accepting the white cornelian and the turquoise rings, and a sweet sprigged muslin, which was too small for her now, though it would fit her friend to a nicety; and she determined in her heart to ask her mother's permission to present her white Cashmere shawl to her friend. Could she not spare it? and had not her brother Joseph just brought her two from India?

In later scenes, describing Pitt's treatment of his brother Crawley, Thackeray makes his case with regard to charity more clearly, revealing its essentially selfish motives:

> To part with money is a sacrifice beyond most men endowed with a sense of order. There is scarcely any man alive who does not think himself meritorious for giving his neighbour five pounds. Thriftless gives, not from a beneficent pleasure in giving, but from a lazy delight in spending. He would not deny himself one enjoyment; not his opera-stall, not his horse, not his dinner, not even the pleasure of giving Lazarus the five pounds. Thrifty, who is good, wise, just, and owes no man a penny, turns from a beggar, haggles with a hackney-coachman,

> or denies a poor relation, and I doubt which is the most selfish of the two. (427)

In this respect, Amelia is no different in her treatment of Becky than Pitt himself, presenting her friend only with items for which she has no further use and which she will not miss, implicitly demanding in return a flattering recognition of virtue. It is, ironically, Becky who comes across as the more honest in such exchanges: "she was not a woman who expected too much from the generosity of her neighbours, and so was quite content with all that Pitt Crawley had done for her" (427). Such easy self-assurance and near-thoughtless charity is the motivator behind Becky's desperately grasping nature, the disdain with which she views her betters as fair game for exploitation, and to a certain extent the reason characters such as Amelia and Rawdon are so easy for her to manipulate. The possession of the davenport not only provides Becky with opportunity for exploitation: it also serves as a constant reminder to her of the necessity and desire on her part for such behavior.

For Thackeray, objects work as a link between a commodity society and moral character in a vicious cycle whereby the objects one handles, or buys, or owns reflect individual flaws and facilitate moral and social poverty. Significantly, Becky's desk not only symbolizes and results from her grasping nature: it is also the object which contributes predominantly to her downfall—even more so than the evidence of her supposed infidelity. The unexpected revelation for Rawdon is an expected revelation for the reader: "Rebecca gave him all the keys but one: and she was in hopes that he would not remark the absence of that. It belonged to the little desk which Amelia had given her in early days, and which she kept in a secret place" (516). Here the desk's innocent domestic and homely appearance is called upon, but it ultimately fails to protect Becky from discovery: "But Rawdon flung open boxes and wardrobes, throwing the multifarious trumpery of their contents here and there, and at last he found the desk. The woman was forced to open it." The sense of the inevitable is clear in this passage as Rawdon's years of faithful devotion are revealed to have been a farce; that Becky will be disgraced is signaled by her demotion from "Rebecca" to "the woman." Thackeray gives us a moment's insight into the possibility of a softer, more feminine Becky: "It contained papers, love-letters many years old—all sorts of small trinkets and woman's memoranda." This side of her is given no chance to impress itself upon the reader, however, any more than it was given a chance to exert itself in her life, and we are shown along with Rawdon how her greed and ambition have overshadowed what compassion she may have had: "And it contained a pocket-book with bank-notes. Some of these were dated ten years back, too, and one was quite a fresh one—a note for a thousand pounds which Lord Steyne had given her" (516-17). It is at this moment that we see the flimsy façade of Becky and Rawdon's domesticity collapse. With the unlocking of the desk, Thackeray symbolically unlocks these two characters as well, exposing the desires that make them tick.

Amelia Sedley, although she cannot be described as a heroine, is nevertheless the foil to Becky's forthright selfishness. Thackeray seems to be even more critical of Amelia than he is of Becky, as Amelia's selfishness is hidden, disguising itself as modesty, fidelity, and gentleness. That Becky uses such semblances of idealized femininity willfully, to get what she wants, inclines a reader to admire her somewhat; but the picture of Amelia is one of weak and pathetic selfishness, and no object in her story demonstrates this better than her piano and its history.

Mrs. Haweis, in *The Art of Decoration* (1889), wrote: "There is nothing in the whole family of furniture so unmanageable as the modern pianoforte, and yet in every house where all-round

culture is appreciated, a piano must be" (318). The reason for this is that the piano was a symbol not only of culture but feminine accomplishments; like marriage, Amelia will find it to be both indispensable and burdensome. Newton describes the importance of the pianoforte in the Victorian household:

> [U]pright pianos are a 19th-century development. They became so popular that by the end of the 19th century virtually every respectable household had one. The large size and unconventional shape of the case meant that it was often the most prominent piece of furniture in the room. Socially, it was important as it was used for entertaining guests as well as the family; playing the piano was a polite accomplishment, especially for the daughters of the household. (24)

The upright piano was designed to be both a delicate and "feminine" piece of furniture and an ideal pedestal upon which to display the body, as well as the talent, of the young woman playing it. Throughout the novel, from the hideous playing of Mrs. Bute Crawley's daughters to the excellence of Becky's playing at school, Thackeray uses the piano to comment on the inherent natures of his female characters. From the very beginning of the friendship between the two girls, the piano is a tool in the competition for a husband: "'Let us have some music, Miss Sedley—Amelia,' said George...They went off to the piano, which was situated, as pianos usually are, in the back drawing-room; and as it was rather dark, Miss Amelia, in the most unaffected way in the world, put her hand into Mr. Osborne's, who, of course, could see the way among the chairs and ottomans a great deal better than she could" (29). Amelia, perhaps, may not be as innocent and demure as she at first appears when compared to Becky; she too uses her femininity to play upon the men in her company, although perhaps more subtly than Becky. As she is already engaged to George, there is little reason for her to be competing at all, and yet "Having expended her little store of songs, or having stayed long enough in the back drawing-room, it now appeared proper to Miss Amelia to ask her friend to sing" (31). Since Becky is the more accomplished player, Amelia is careful to give herself this particular social advantage.

Design historian J. Gloag describes the piano as a status symbol requiring leisure for both practice and enjoyment: "Every young lady was taught to read music and to play the piano....Good manners demanded that the performance should be at least plausible, and this meant hours of practice" (205). Amelia's piano embodies her selfishness in love and marriage as well as her social worth and status: "Of all the other articles which Mr. Hammerdown had the honor to offer for public competition that day, it is not our purpose to make mention, save of one only, a little square piano, which came down from the upper regions of the house (the state grand piano having been disposed of previously)" (152). Thackeray seems to be drawing our attention to the piano's affinity to Amelia herself, now as worthless in the marriage market as the sentimental object on sale. When Dobbin purchases it for her, he attempts to lay claim to a possession which has been rejected on financial grounds, and which he hopes may now be available to him through non-commercial channels. However, even he is unable to break away from the language of commodity and sale when he thinks of Amelia, and just as he attempts to secure her affection through the purchase of the piano, he later cannot help speaking of his life-long courtship in terms of commodity:

> I know what your heart is capable of: it can cling faithfully to a recollection, and cherish a fancy; but it can't feel such an attachment as

> mine deserves to mate with, and such as I would have *won* from a woman more *generous* than you. No, you are not worthy of the love which I have devoted to you. I knew all along that the *prize* I had set my life on was not *worth the winning*; that I was a fool, with fond fancies, too, *bartering away* my all of truth and ardour against your little feeble remnant of love. I will *bargain* no more: I withdraw. (654; emphases added)

Unable to exempt Amelia from the bonds of commodity exchange which have held her all her life, he is equally unable to trade for her upon such terms. It is for this reason that the purchase history of the piano seems unable to make space for him in its records, substituting in his place the man for whom such a transaction would have been plausible—who did, indeed, succeed in purchasing Amelia as a wife. The idea of the piano as a prop for advertising marketable women is underlined by Becky's attempt to purchase it for herself, bidding against Captain Dobbin:

> I suppose Becky was discontented with the new piano her husband had hired for her, or perhaps the proprietors of that instrument had fetched it away, declining farther credit, or perhaps she had a particular attachment for the one which she had first tried to purchase, recollecting it in old days, when she used to play upon it, in the little sitting-room of our dear Amelia Sedley. (153)

Despite the sentimental terms in which this description is offered, the reader is certain to remember that from the moment she entered the Sedley household (and perhaps before), Becky was intent on the capture of Jos, and that her piano playing had been utilized to this end.

In *The Daughters of England*, Mrs. Ellis wrote:

> [T]he female character, though invested with high intellectual endowments, must ever fail to charm, without at least a taste for music, painting or poetry... Surely it [music] ought not to be cultivated as the medium of display, so much as the means of home enjoyment; not so much as a spell to charm the stranger, or one who has no other link of sympathy with us, as a solace to those we love and a tribute of gratitude and affection to those who love us. (99-101)

The piano is both a status symbol and a potentially exhibitionist article, prompting Mrs. Ellis's warning that it should *not* be used as a method for entrapment but as a domestic item to strengthen family bonds. But at no time in its history is Amelia's piano put to this use. It is Captain Dobbin who, through unrequited love, repurchases the piano for Amelia: "[W]ith respect to the piano, as it had been Amelia's, and as she might miss it and want one now, and as Captain William Dobbin could no more play upon it than he could dance on the tight-rope, it is probable that he did not purchase the instrument for his own use" (153). However, the piano is put to use not for the entertainment of this old friend but for the dual purpose of entertaining her fiancée and as a panacea for her own distress: "[I]t did his heart good to see how Amelia had grown young again—how she laughed, and chirped, and sang old familiar songs at the piano" (187). Andrew Miller describes how such auctions recycle not only the goods themselves but also the sentimental associations they carry:

> The auction, a public institution devoted to the display and distribution of private objects, recycles not merely wealth, but significance; in this highly visible theatre of competing desires, the meanings of goods are developed and reinforced as their purely monetary value is recreated and calculated anew. (20)

Dobbin, by purchasing the piano, gives it a new—and more genuine—sentimental status, but it is one the inherently selfish Amelia cannot see. For Amelia, the piano represents her past desirability and social worth, and the happiness associated with her engagement to George: "her piano—that little old piano which had now passed into a plaintive jingling old age, but which she loved for reasons of her own" (577). But it has not been returned to her through the consumerist modes of distribution which first acquired it for her: "'Five-and-twenty guineas was monstrous dear for that little piano. We chose it at Broadwood's for Amelia, when she came from school. It only cost five-and-thirty then'" (157).[1] Here the piano has been assigned a position as a surrogate lover; it is also asked to stand in for memory, and through it Amelia relives the days when her social worth was recognized and acknowledged: "She was a child when first she played on it: and her parents gave it her. It had been given to her again since, as the reader may remember, when her father's house was gone to ruin, and the instrument was recovered out of the wreck" (577). That Dobbin's purchase of the piano for her removes it from the consumerist cycle of commodities and endows it with real sentimental worth is not recognized by Amelia until a very late stage in the story. Indeed, when she first learns the truth, she is horrified:

> And then it struck her, with inexpressible pain and mortification too, that it was William who was the giver of the piano; and not George, as she had fancied. It was not George's gift; the only one which she had received from her lover, as she thought—the thing she had cherished beyond all others—her dearest relic and prize... It was not George's relic. It was valueless now. The next time that old Sedley asked her to play, she said it was shockingly out of tune, that she had a head-ache, that she couldn't play. (578)

While Amelia's pain is understandable, it is her selfishness that is most prominent. Far from using the piano for the enjoyment of the family, her refusal to play for her ailing father shows only too clearly that it was hedonism and self-absorption, and not familial affection, that prompted her to play for him in the past. This is in direct contrast to the picture of Amelia as a gentle and devoted daughter, as suggested by the first placement of the piano in the new house, when her fortune has been restored: "Amelia would have it up in her sitting-room, a neat little apartment on the second floor, adjoining her father's chamber: and where the old gentleman sate commonly of evenings" (577). Indeed, for the whole family, Dobbin's gesture is given worth by the assumption that a more socially important figure than he had made it, and the piano is taken by all as a signal that the wealthy Osbornes have not forsaken them altogether, and that they may yet, as a result, have social worth: "The good natured fellow had found Mrs. Sedley only too willing to receive him, and greatly agitated by the arrival of the piano, which, as she conjectured, *must* have come from George, and was a signal of amity on his part" (167). Even later, when both her parents have died and all traces of their former disgrace erased, Amelia cannot attribute to the humble Dobbin this gesture of affection. To do so would be to admit that it was the lowly and

[1] John Broadwood and Sons manufactured pianofortes, established in the 1700s and in London from 1808. http://www.uk-piano.org/broadwood/history.html.

unattractive Captain, and not the wealthy, dashing, and handsome George who saw her as desirable, and at no point does she recognize that her desirability, like everything else that George desired, has made her into a commodity object herself.

Throughout the novel, then, Thackeray uses the piano to demonstrate in Amelia a certain inbred selfishness of disposition which dates back to her spoilt childhood, and a utilization of the "virtues" of femininity for hedonistic forms of gratification. Just as Amelia is willing to depend upon Dobbin's love without the slightest intention of giving him anything in return, so she is willing to use the piano only to feed her feelings of self-worth. As a result, then, we come to recognize in Amelia a domestic situation which is different from that of Becky, but in its own way just as selfish. Mrs. West, in her *Letters to a Young Lady* (1806), described the ideal role for women: "to be the helpmate of man, to partake of his labours, to alleviate his distresses, to regulate his domestic concerns, to rear and instruct the subsequent generation; and, having finished our probationary course as accountable beings, to enter on another state of endless existence" (35). Clearly, the management of her husband's domestic affairs was seen as one of a woman's paramount social duties. Given the relatively poor quality of both husbands (Rawdon and George) and a fair proportion of the fathers in *Vanity Fair*, such a domestic ideal could certainly be seen as having its practical uses; however, just as *Vanity Fair* is a "novel without a hero," so too does Thackeray deny his readers the compensatory satisfaction of a heroine with the feminine qualities to remedy the situation. In place of either Hero or Heroine, we are offered a tableau of props: a desk, a piano, a pair of hessian boots, a little child's shirt in a work-box; items against which these characters' lack of development can be measured. Becky is brazenly selfish while Amelia is subtly so; and it is through his deployment of commodity objects that Thackeray shows how his heroines' identification with these objects is a dangerous transfiguration of human qualities into business transactions.

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The Male Body and Heroic Manhood in Thackeray's *Vanity Fair: A Novel without a Hero*

by Nikole King

> Suppose now, gentle reader, you met a man in society rich, titled, handsome, and accomplished: his relatives and connexions move in good company; and draw and impart luster from him. The world would exclaim at once, that he was a Gentleman. It would receive him as one; and probably laugh the doubter of this fact to scorn. But in his lack of principle,—if such should be the case,—what at best would he be, but a *good-mannered* man? He has spirit, wit, courage,—and grace to set them off; but in his deficiency of high principle is he a Gentleman in the strict and correct sense of the term? Is he one, whom you would respect or admire, beyond that passing approbation, which might, under similar circumstances, be given to the most worthless and contemptible of men? Assuredly not. —*The English Gentleman*

The male body—its size, shape, and composition—has largely been ignored in the recent burst of studies on Victorian masculinity. Published between 1847 and 1848, but set twenty to forty years earlier, Thackeray's *Vanity Fair: a Novel without a Hero* offers a vivid portrait of early Victorian discourse on masculinity and acceptable standards of male embodiment. The novel demonstrates a shift in social and moral values, as Regency-era profligacy gave way to the more austere qualities for which the Victorian period is famous. This shift is reflected on the bodies of the novel's heroes, providing insight into the highly contested construction of masculinity in the early decades of the Victorian era. From the overdressed, corpulent body of Jos Sedley and the handsome, athletic figure of George Osborne to the overly lean, ungainly physique of William Dobbin, Thackeray reveals the multiple, often conflicting ideals associated with what it meant to be a middle-class Victorian man and how that was negotiated at mid-century.

In the physical composition of these three "heroes," Thackeray enters the mid-century discussion of *mens sana in corpore sano*, meaning a sound mind in a sound body. To Victorians, a body that appeared out of sorts raised concerns about the mental and moral health of the individual. Conversely, a fit body signified moral and mental salubrity. In terms of the mid-century emphasis on muscularity, a fit man was one who was robust, hearty, and energetic. These idealized physical traits, in turn, signified such internal characteristics of Victorian manliness as moral courage, honesty, straightforwardness, and self-discipline. Having too much fat or not enough fat was equally troubling, the health of the individual male body being perceived as indicative of the nation's well-being. The unfit male body raised concerns about the viability of the English race and implicated the national body in its debility; consequently, men were increasingly called upon to discipline, manage and, if necessary, reform their bodies to meet desirable standards of embodiment.

Thackeray questions the Victorian equation of a sound mind with a sound body by critiquing a certain type of bourgeois masculinity that places too much emphasis on the body and is

superficial in its pursuit of beauty. He challenges the assumption, and literary convention, that outer beauty reflects inner beauty. *The English Gentleman*, a conduct manual published a year after *Vanity Fair,* warns readers not to be fooled by a type of masculinity that is attractive on the surface but intrinsically shallow; that is, do not confuse a "good-mannered man" with a gentleman. In *Vanity Fair*, Thackeray insists that readers examine appearances critically because they can be deceiving: beauty does not necessarily beget a hero. Physical attractiveness, or the attempt at such as in Jos's case, is suspect in this novel; the physical appearance of each "hero" does reflect the inner character of the man, but not in the way some readers might expect. Instead, Thackeray endorses a type of masculinity that embodies the internal qualities of manly character, and he gives these attributes to one of the least attractive men in the novel. William Dobbin, with his awkward social graces and unattractive, attenuated physique, is an unlikely hero who embodies more manly qualities than any other male figure in the novel. Through Dobbin, Thackeray redefines the terms of heroism within the nascent genre of literary realism, and he does so most conspicuously by challenging readers' assumptions about the male body.

Dobbin is the hero of *Vanity Fair* in that he is not an idealization but quite ordinary. The heroes of Thackeray's imagination are everyday men, argues Ian Ousby; they are "flawed but admirable" (166). This brand of heroism developed in the nineteenth century when Victorians abandoned "much of the traditional concept of heroism" because it did not fit well with the social and cultural changes of the nineteenth century (152). Victorians did not reject heroism, but they did redefine it: "They make heroism over to their own needs, with mixed feelings of complacency and disappointment. On the one hand they are at last establishing heroism on a basis of enlightened good sense; on the other they are reducing it to fit the restricted scope that modern life affords" (152-53). Writers like Thackeray and Thomas Carlyle despised the "Romantic self-indulgence" of poets like Byron, and they set out to attack false heroes and hero worship before defining "true heroism" (153). In his analysis, Ousby mentions Dobbin only briefly, and his status as hero is never fully developed. This essay asserts a more comprehensive examination of Dobbin within a discussion of heroism and realism by comparing the physical appearances and moral qualities of the novel's three middle-class "heroes." An examination of Thackeray's construction of various masculinities reveals that the "flawed but admirable" William Dobbin is the novel's true hero.

Heroic Bodies

Contrary to stereotypes of the nineteenth-century gentleman as portly, medical texts and conduct literature of the time suggest that men, like women, were expected to practice restraint when dining in order to maintain a healthy physique. Writing in 1825 at the close of the Romantic period, the French gastronome Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin warned readers about the consequences of obesity. Obesity, which he defines as the "state of fatty congestion in which a person's bodily parts gradually grow larger, without his being ill, and lose their form and their original harmonious proportions," is a calamity for both women and men (245). Its most distressing effect is the destruction of strength and beauty. Excessive weight, for example, ruined the handsome figure of the Duke of Luynes and caused him to pass "the last ten years of his life in an almost uninterrupted doze" (254). Echoing his concern about obesity a few decades later, the Victorian physician Francis Edmund Anstie, who often wrote on the topic of corpulence and health, argues that too much fat "diminishes bodily and mental activity" (458). A lack of vigor,

and hence productivity, is the implicit concern in these commentators' assessments of excessive corpulence and its effects on men. Victorian discourse linked obesity with greed, self-indulgence, and moral transgression, casting Jos, the first "hero" under examination, as an affront to the ideals of bourgeois Victorian manliness.

Jos's corpulent body and overeating suggest he lacks manly self-restraint and discipline, hallmark values of the Victorian middle class. With his liver complaint, he is hardly the picture of health; moreover, Jos "was lazy, peevish, and a *bon-vivant*" (21), reflecting a hedonistic lifestyle, an inability to refrain from overeating, and chronic indigestion. Thackeray subjects Jos to the Victorian imperative of corporeal discipline: "His bulk caused Joseph much anxious thought and alarm—now and then he would make a desperate attempt to get rid of his superabundant fat, but his indolence and love of good living speedily got the better of these endeavors at reform, and he found himself again at his three meals a day." Although Jos is self-conscious about his overabundant size, he lacks the self-discipline to reform his corpulent body and live a more abstemious lifestyle. Instead of changing his eating habits, Jos uses "every girth, stay, and waist-band then invented" in order to "give himself a waist." That is, he relies on artificial methods rather than self-discipline to mold his obese body into a more acceptable size and shape. Jos, as this early description of his bulk makes clear, is the antithesis of Victorian manly self-restraint, discipline, and physical vigor.

Jos's self-indulgent habits also reveal themselves in a slavish devotion to fashion, which in turn raises questions about his masculinity. He is preoccupied with his appearance: he "took the hugest pains to adorn his big person: and passed many hours daily in that occupation....Like most fat men, he *would* have his clothes made too tight, and took care they should be of the most brilliant colours and youthful cut" (21). Such devotion to wardrobe and toilet makes Jos appear effeminate; indeed, his "toilet-table" is "covered with as many pomatums and essences as ever were employed by an old beauty." The attention Jos gives to his appearance in the purchase of copious amounts of grooming products and perfumes and in his dedication to the cut and color of his apparel is feminizing; indeed, Jos is "as vain as a girl" (22).

By conflating the behaviors of an "old beauty" with those of a young girl, Thackeray suggests that Jos's habits violate gender norms in multiple ways, making his behavior seem even more unnatural. It was the fairer sex, according to Victorian gender ideology, that was less equipped to resist the pressures of the marketplace and more inclined to engage in the frivolous activity of personal decoration. Bourgeois men were expected to be immune to fashion trends; but Jos is hardly immune, even sporting a mustache to look the part of rugged, martial masculinity fashionable at mid-century. Along with the stays he requires to contain his corpulence and mold his body into a more acceptable form, Jos also violates gender norms with the style of clothing he wears. While Victorian men did indeed wear corsets, those who did so were typically considered effeminate. As Brent Shannon notes in his study of men's fashion, it was not until the turn of the twentieth century that this practice lost its connotations of effeminacy and became more socially acceptable.[1] Thus the stays Jos depends upon, and his devotion to fashion more generally, make him appear effeminate. His behavior is not what was expected of Victorian bourgeois men. As Miles Lambert eloquently puts it, "A man who flaunted jewellery and scent, who wore dress

[1] By the turn of the twentieth century, cosmetic and body-shaping products "were no longer solely the affectations of effeminate dandies but had come to be worn by a large number of middle-class professional men. Corsets seem to have been particularly popular" (Shannon 86).

designed to attract attention and comment, and who exalted his public image above all else, was as far from a gentleman as Thackeray could conceive" (69).

Jos's behavior, moreover, is doubly transgressive in that the attention he pays to his appearance violates class norms as well. In all his sartorial fastidiousness, Jos attempts to appear a Regency-era dandy, a figure typically associated with upper-class vanity, ostentation, and idleness. According to Shannon, the dandy "overtly rejected the bourgeois pillars of utility, thrift, and hard work at the same time the middle-class male was embracing them" (130). Bourgeois men were expected to demonstrate sincerity and straightforwardness through plain dress in order to distinguish themselves from the comparatively artificial and frivolous habits of the upper classes: "middle-class dress served as a kind of class-specific self-display too, but conveying sobriety, hard work, and serious-mindedness seemed somehow more legitimate than conveying elitism, idleness, and overrefinement" (131). By aping the sartorial and consumer habits of the upper-class dandy, Jos again violates middle-class values.

In contrast, the aristocrat Rawdon Crawley escapes much of the narrator's criticism even though he is a "'very large young dandy'" and appears just as fashionable and fast as Jos (Thackeray 106). He escapes censure primarily because, as Sarah Rose Cole suggests, he upholds Victorian expectations of class.[2] In a series of essays published in *Punch*, "Thackeray implies that effeminacy and male vanity are appropriate for idle aristocrats, while middle-class men who are vain must be condemned as snobs" (Cole 152). That Jos's behavior is unacceptable is reiterated in old Mr. Sedley's contempt for his "vain selfish lazy and effeminate" son, complaining that he "could not endure his airs as a man of fashion" (Thackeray 52). It is Jos's pretentiousness that is particularly troublesome to Thackeray, for whom Jos is clearly unworthy of the title "hero."

As an "Indian Nabob" and a civil servant in the East India Company, Jos's behavior is also problematic because it implicates the imperial project.[3] Self-restraint, discipline, and physical vigor were virtues highly valued as necessary to imperial expansion. Having none of these, Jos hardly seems fit to do the work of empire. In his debility, Jos raises concerns about the health of the nation and its fitness as an imperial power. How can the imperial project be successful when individuals like Jos are managing English endeavors in the colonies? With all his faults, Jos challenges the notion of racial superiority that helped justify the imperial project. Ironically, he behaves more like the supposedly undisciplined native than the ostensibly more abstemious English, as his excesses at the dinner table make evident. What is more, Jos's unrestrained consumption points to rather unsavory factors motivating imperialism, factors that were coming under increasing scrutiny at mid-century. Jos's greed both at the dinner table and in the marketplace indicate that he thinks only of his own personal gain. It would be easy to assume, then, that Jos's devotion to material wealth is what motivates his work as a collector in India, "an honourable and lucrative post as everybody knows" (Thackeray 20). Jos's example illuminates mid-century doubts about the morality of imperialism, since the colonies were viewed as places requiring men who were bold, daring, and courageous—the antithesis of Jos Sedley.

William Dobbin, George Osborne's comrade in arms and rival for Amelia Sedley's affection, does not fare much better in terms of physical attractiveness. Although depictions of Dobbin are less spectacular and less ironic than those of Jos, he has none of the physical

[2] Cole's study of masculinity in this novel emphasizes Thackeray's critique of the middle-class snob. While helpful for understanding this figure, her analysis does not extend to Dobbin—who, I argue, is a foil to this type of masculinity.

[3] Shillingsburg defines "Indian nabob" as a "slang term for Englishmen who had made their fortunes in India" (17).

characteristics or social graces of a traditional hero, and thus would seem undeserving of the appellation "hero." Early in the narrative he is described as "the quietest, the clumsiest, and as it seemed the dullest of all Dr. Swishtail's young gentleman" (38). Upon meeting Amelia for the first time, he is depicted as a "very tall ungainly gentleman with large hands and feet and large ears set off by a closely cropped head of black hair" (47). His ungainliness causes him to "stalk" rather than to walk and, while Osborne has fair features, Dobbin's are a sickly hue, the result of yellow fever contracted in the colonies. Nor does his wardrobe compensate for his lack of personal beauty; distinct from Osborne's fashionableness, Dobbin dresses in a "hideous military frogged coat and cocked-hat." When he is finally introduced to Amelia, he makes her "one of the clumsiest bows that was ever performed by a mortal"; his awkward appearance makes him a victim of ridicule, Amelia's included. Dobbin's lean, clumsy body and awkward social graces make him appear nothing like a hero.

Moreover, Dobbin's body evokes troubling class connotations. While Jos's body is too large, associating him with bourgeois perceptions of aristocratic excess and indulgence, Dobbin's thin, and sometimes attenuated, body links him to the lower classes. With his lanky limbs and yellow complexion, Dobbin has the appearance of weakness and illness, a problem Victorians associated with lower class intemperance and squalor. The bourgeois Victorian man was supposed to be healthy and strong, standing apart from his lower-class peers, but Dobbin fails to appear so. Reinforcing his association with the working class are his nickname "Figs" and his surname "Dobbin." Hailing from a lower middle-class background, Dobbin was nicknamed "Figs" at school because his father was a grocer, a telling contrast to his friend's name, "with his royal George and his noble Osborne" (Moore 480). The surname "Dobbin," meaning a plodding, patient workhorse, not only highlights his physical unattractiveness but suggests a proletariat heritage as well. With its connotations of servitude, the name Dobbin implies an absence of boldness and enterprise, masculine qualities necessary to do the work of nation and empire. Thus through lack rather than excess, meagerness of appetite rather than gluttony, Dobbin also appears unfit for the role of hero.

By all physical accounts, then, George Osborne would seem to be the hero of Thackeray's tale. Initially, he appears to embody the exterior characteristics required of Victorian bourgeois manliness; his countenance signifies his status as a model of this ideal and, despite being stationed in the West Indies, his face remains unblemished, unlike Dobbin's. Most notable about his appearance are his "beautiful black, curling, shining whiskers" (Thackeray 46). Facial hair was gaining currency in men's fashion, and by mid-century the full beard lost the negative connotations associated with radical political movements like Chartism; believed to contribute to men's health and vitality, it served as "the outward mark of inward qualities—particularly independence, hardiness, and decisiveness—that were the foundations of masculine authority" (Oldstone-Moore 8). The beard became a visible assertion of masculinity at a time of changing gender standards—as women gained more influence at home and in the workplace, and society became more competitive and commercialized. Although Osborne's whiskers alone mark him as appropriately masculine, he has other notable physical attributes; he is a "regular Don Giovanni...famous in field sports, famous at a song, famous on parade, free with his money," having coats that are "better made than any man's in the regiment" (Thackeray 123-24). Osborne is a hero at least in the eyes of his peers; his men—whom he can out-drink, out-fight, and out-ride—adore him and, indeed, nearly everyone he meets worships him. As a handsome, well-

dressed, athletic, and charming man, Osborne appears to exhibit all the exterior qualities of a gentleman. From his beautiful black whiskers to his skill on the playing field, he embodies a traditional hero.

Yet Osborne's athletic ability, physical attractiveness, and hyper-masculine whiskers belie a character that by social convention should coincide with his appearance. He has none of the internal qualities admired by Victorians; while he has all the exterior trappings of a gentleman, he lacks the qualities of heart and mind that make a man "manly." Athletic skill and courage notwithstanding, the narrator questions whether military valor is enough to make a man a hero:

> What qualities are there for which a man gets so speedy a return of applause, as those of bodily superiority, activity, and valour? Time out of mind strength and courage have been the theme of bards and romances; and from the story of Troy down to to-day, poetry has always chosen a soldier for a hero. I wonder is it because men are cowards in heart that they admire bravery so much, and place military valour so far beyond every other quality for reward and worship? (301)

While courage on the battlefield is admirable, it doesn't outweigh qualities like honesty and integrity, which Osborne lacks—evidenced by his lighting his cigar with one of Amelia's letters and his inability to remain loyal to her. He confides to Dobbin that, before he is married, he "must have a little fling," and then he will reform (125); but he does not reform, his attempted affair with Becky negating this resolution. Although his fit, athletic body does not betray his selfish desires and indulgent habits quite as spectacularly as Jos's corpulent body does, he nevertheless fails to measure up to the moral standards of Victorian bourgeois masculinity in his lack of faithfulness.

Most damaging to Osborne's credentials as a Victorian gentleman and hero is his vanity. In his slavish attention to personal appearance, he violates the same gender and class boundaries as Jos: he, too, is "as vain as a girl" (22). His countenance is described as "pale," linking him more to the idleness associated with women and the aristocracy than to the pragmatism of bourgeois masculinity and the ruggedness of the imperial hero (46). His whiskers are perhaps just a little too shiny and black, while his apparel is much too stylish for him to fit the mold of proper Victorian masculinity; as the narrator snidely observes, "We all know a hundred whose coats are very well made, and a score who have excellent manners, and one or two happy beings who are what they call, in the inner circles, and have shot into the very centre and bull's eye of the fashion; but of gentleman how many?" (621-22). Ironically, Osborne's bearded face should serve as an emblem of rugged masculinity, but his staring into the mirror to admire his whiskers reveals a vanity associated with women.

Victorian conduct authors cautioned against such attention toward one's appearance. *The English Gentleman* warns men against being "over careful" and "elaborate" in their dress because it would give them a "finical and effeminate appearance" (102); they should avoid paying attention to their appearance after leaving the dressing room. Do not fidget, the author counsels, and by all means do not lose yourself in the mirror:

> avoid leaning into every mirror that you may cross; and if you should seat yourself in such a position that your image is reflected in one, do steal as few conscious glances towards it as you can. It is a bad compliment to those you are conversing with; and remember this,—that when your back is turned, it is never passed over. (103-04)

Sarah Cole convincingly argues that the mirror-gazing man, a category into which only the middle-class male characters of this novel fall, transgresses both gender and class norms, rendering "the middle-class snob doubly unnatural" (148). Vanity was acceptable in women and in male aristocrats who were expected to be idle and decorative; Osborne's vanity is not merely "self-infatuation" but a "parasitic imitation of the aristocracy" and "a perversion of the male gaze away from its proper direction: the body of Amelia" (146, 163). Significantly, the description of Osborne is remarkably similar to that of Rawdon Crawley: both enjoy drinking, gambling, and riding, both have female admirers, and most notably, Osborne's "large black whiskers" closely resemble Rawdon's "large curling mustachios" (Thackeray 145, 160). The implication is that Osborne is a class interloper, aping the habits of the aristocracy to which Rawdon belongs. Ironically, for all his posturing, he always loses to Rawdon when gambling which, as Cole argues, further feminizes him (164). Osborne's masculine pretentions indicate personal failure, implied by Amelia's nostalgia for her "little white bed" after experiencing the marriage bed (Thackeray 262).

Both Jos and Osborne transgress middle-class mores by violating what theorists have called the "Great Masculine Renunciation," a demonstration of bourgeois reserve, hard work, and pragmatism through plain, simple dress.[4] Mid-century conduct literature emphasized "a combination of reserved understatement and relaxed effortlessness…a complete absence of self-consciousness" (Shannon 27). Middle-class Victorian men were expected to forego flashy clothing and almost all jewelry and accessories save the pocket watch, wearing only dark fabrics and muted colors. According to *Routledge's Etiquette for Gentleman*,

> A gentleman should always be so well dressed that his dress shall never be observed at all….perfect simplicity is perfect elegance, and…the true test of dress in the toilet of a gentleman is its entire harmony, unobtrusiveness and becomingness. If any friend should say to you, "What a handsome waistcoat you have on!" you may depend that a less handsome waistcoat would be in better taste. If you hear it said that Mr. So-and-So wears superb jewellery, you may conclude beforehand that he wears too much. Display…is ever to be avoided. (Shannon 28-29)

It is worth pointing out the irony inherent in the "Great Masculine Renunciation." That is, while men were called upon to demonstrate reserve and humility in their outward appearance so as to avoid giving the impression they cared too much about fashion, it took a significant amount of time, energy, and effort to do so. Men went to great lengths to appear understated and disinterested. Of course, many bourgeois Victorian men cared very much about their appearance, enough to generate a market for men's fashion, which by the end of the century was highly successful. The proliferation of men's departments and advertisements directed at men underscore this phenomenon. Nonetheless, the "Great Masculine Renunciation" was a powerful

[4] According to Shannon, psychologist J. C. Flugel popularized the theory of the "Great Masculine Renunciation" in 1930, noting "a radical shift to sober male attire during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries…having arisen from the sociopolitical upheavals of the French Revolution" (23). Advocates of democracy sought to distinguish themselves from the aristocracy by rejecting upper class sartorial habits. A similar impulse for sober dress in British society distinguished bourgeois men from aristocratic peers, as well as from women. See Shannon (23-26).

ideology; Osborne's crime is not that he is merely a little too well-dressed, but that he has obviously taken great pains to appear so. Simply put, he does not demonstrate manly sartorial reserve.

What Osborne's vanity also signifies is that, like his brother-in-law, he is selfish and therefore an affront to the bourgeois values of humility and generosity. Selfishness, exclaims the author of *The English Gentleman*, is "the blot and the disgrace of civilized society; a baseness, which curdles every kindly and good quality of our nature; and degrades the fine and noble soul of man beneath the level of the brute creation" (50). Osborne never acts out of concern for anyone other than himself and places his own gratification foremost. In one telling scene, having intended to buy a gift for Amelia, Osborne changes his mind when an attractive shirt-pin catches his eye: "And I daresay he would have bought something very handsome for Amelia; only, getting off the coach in Fleet Street, he was attracted by a handsome shirt-pin in a jeweller's window which he could not resist, and having paid for that had very little money to spare for indulging any farther exercise of kindness" (Thackeray 127). Like Jos, he cannot resist the temptations of the marketplace; he has little self-control and is easily manipulated by consumer culture. Because his attractive appearance represents self-indulgence and absorption, Osborne is not a candidate for hero status in Thackeray's novel.

A Hero in Disguise

If there is a hero in *Vanity Fair*, it is Dobbin, who has more internal qualities of manliness than any other male figure in the novel. Despite his awkward social graces and his unattractive appearance, it is the internal qualities of heart and mind that Thackeray privileges in his construction of heroism. Although he is not faultless, Dobbin is a true gentleman whose "thoughts were just, his brains fairly good, his life was honest and pure, and his heart warm and humble" (622). A gentleman is a man "whose aims are generous, whose truth is constant, and not only constant in its kind but elevated in its degree"; it is someone "whose want of meanness makes" him "simple," and who can "look the world honestly in the face with an equal manly sympathy for the great and small," not someone whose coat is "very well made" (621-22). Good manners and fashionable dress do not make a man manly; as Bruce Haley notes, many Victorian writers attempted to rid their heroes of the traditional, external markers of gentlemanliness, namely "pedigree, wardrobe, [and] accent," insisting instead on such internal characteristics as honesty, self-discipline, and industriousness; "sham gentility" was to be avoided (206). Several years after Thackeray's novel was published, a sporting magazine article entitled "Mens Sana in Corpore Sano" argued for a course of education and self-discipline that would prepare boys and men of the middle classes for any eventuality and give them "a cheerful, active, confident tone, an upright carriage, and a graceful ease, instead of that lounging, semi-swaggering, confoundedly lackadaisical manner which they have adopted in compliment, I presume, to the real swell, and the man of fashion" (335). Sham gentility is all too apparent in this critical description of young middle-class men who ape the manners of men of fashion. Unlike the "real swell" who is lazy and arrogant, bourgeois Victorian men were expected to be hard working, pragmatic, and straightforward, in thought, action, and appearance.

Dobbin embodies all the inward characteristics that Haley and conduct authors of the period name as essential to Victorian gentlemanliness. He practices restraint in eating, drinking, and gambling; unlike his fellow officers, who "hunt hogs, and shoot snipes, or gamble and smoke cheroots, and betake themselves to brandy-and-water," Dobbin prefers more domestic activities such as riding with Glorvina, "copying music and verses into her albums, and playing at chess with her very submissively" (Thackeray 434). He encourages moderation in others, namely Osborne and later Osborne's son little Georgy, warning them against drinking and gambling.[5] More importantly, Dobbin "was very little addicted to selfish calculations" (54). His bare face, in contrast to Jos's mustachios and Osborne's shining whiskers, indicates that he has none of the personal vanity or selfishness the others exhibit, and he is demonstrably empathetic: "Dobbin was very soft-hearted. The sight of women and children in pain always used to melt him. The idea of Amelia broken-hearted and lonely, tore that good-natured soul with anguish....And he broke out into an emotion, which anybody who likes may consider unmanly" (185). Despite the sentimentality, Dobbin's manliness stems from his generous heart and emotional display: "manliness, the mark of the true gentleman, was not the opposite of womanliness. Manly did not mean strong-willed, daring, or stoical, but humane, displaying natural human kindness and sentiment" (Haley 206). By emphasizing qualities of the heart in his depiction of Dobbin, Thackeray challenges the more traditional qualities of masculinity like "pedigree, wardrobe, [and] accent" and reiterates the value of emotion in his construction of heroism.

Dobbin's most admirable characteristic is honesty. He receives more respect and admiration from the narrator than any other major male character, primarily because of his straightforwardness and inability to dissemble. An "entire and unreserved Love of Truth...[is] the very basis of a man's character" (*English* 33). Dobbin's honesty and sincerity distinguish him from the selfish calculations of other characters; he is not easily manipulated and can see through others' attempts at manipulation. Becky, for instance, does not like and even fears him; her "arts and cajoleries did not affect him, and he shrank from her with instinctive repulsion" (Thackeray 241). Often referred to as "honest Dobbin," "the honest gentleman," and "the honest Major," Dobbin is generous where others are selfish, modest where others are vain, and faithful when others are false. He is the novel's true hero.

Notably, Dobbin does exhibit at least one external attribute of the traditional hero: his physical prowess in battle. His friendship with Osborne begins at the Swishtail Seminary when he rescues Osborne from the school bully Cuff, "the unquestioned king of the school" who "ruled over his subjects" with "splendid superiority" (40). Either out of revolt against tyranny or revenge, Dobbin threatens to thrash the bully if he does not leave Osborne alone; when Cuff refuses and a fight ensues, Dobbin, the obvious underdog, goes three rounds without getting a blow in himself, but he refuses to give up the fight. In the end, he overcomes the favored opponent, surprising his schoolmates and winning their esteem; significantly, this is the only physical confrontation articulated in the novel. While Osborne's strength, courage, and prowess are alluded to, detailed descriptions are not offered; his rather inglorious death also contributes to the conclusion that Osborne's military virility is also just a sham. No other male character in the novel engages in physical combat, making this one of the more memorable scenes by displaying the courage and loyalty Dobbin brought to his relationships. At the root of his actions is moral courage, "that quality of mind by which we support a just cause under every possible form of difficulty, opposition, or danger; and do what we feel to be right, regardless of consequences"

[5] Perhaps Thackeray's emphases on this point stemmed from his own experiences as a young man who lost his fortune by gambling; he spent most of his adult years striving to regain that lost fortune for his children. See Peter Shillingsburg, *William Makepeace Thackeray: A Literary Life*.

(*English* 39-40). It is Dobbin's sense of justice that gives him the moral courage to take on intimidating opponents.

As an adult, Dobbin's physical competency and skill are evident in his success on the battlefield, prompting little Georgy to brag to his mother that he "heard Colonel Buckler, at Grandpapa's, say that he was one of the bravest officers in the army, and had distinguished himself ever so much" (Thackeray 599). Little Georgy's grandfather reacts with surprise, exclaiming, "'*That* feller! why, I didn't think he could say Bo to a goose.'" But Colonel Buckler's sentiments are repeated throughout society and Dobbin's name appears "in the lists of one or two great parties of the nobility" (607). The assumption that Dobbin is timid on the battlefield because of his physical qualities and lack of athleticism is belied by his accomplishments; indeed, it is Osborne who dies at Brussels while Jos deserts the scene altogether. Osborne's military career is all veneer—simply a matter of putting on a uniform—while Dobbin's "aggression, strength, courage and endurance have repeatedly been defined as the natural and inherent qualities of manhood, whose apogee is attainable only in battle" (Dawson 1). He receives several promotions over the course of the novel, first from captain to major, and then from major to lieutenant-colonel and is "greatly respected" in his regiment as "the best officer and the cleverest man in it" (Thackeray 239). Strength and physical courage are not the qualities that matter most to Thackeray in his construction of heroism, although character is.

Character was one of the most vital qualities of manliness during the nineteenth century. Samuel Smiles, the Victorian author renowned for self-help books, writes: "Character is one of the greatest motive powers in the world. In its noblest embodiments, it exemplifies human nature in its highest form, for it exhibits man at his best" (*Character* 1). Character was emphasized so much in the discourse on manliness during the nineteenth century that the two became synonymous with one another (Haley 206). Neither character nor manliness, however, can be determined solely on the basis of appearance; as Smiles argues, external qualities like a strong mien and upright carriage are not reliable indicators:

> Character exhibits itself in conduct, guided and inspired by principle, integrity, and practical wisdom....[and] religion, morality, and reason....esteeming duty above reputation, and the approval of conscience more than the world's praise....it preserves its own individuality and independence; and has the courage to be morally honest...trusting...to time and experience for recognition. (12)

The man of character is "true, just, honest, and faithful, even in small things" (2), terms used to describe Dobbin, and he is not easily corrupted by wealth and luxury: "Wealth, in the hands of men of weak purpose, of deficient self-control, or of ill-regulated passions, is only a temptation and a snare—the source, it may be, of infinite mischief both to themselves and to others" (5). Both Jos and Osborne are weak in purpose and deficient in self-control, while Dobbin, although easily swayed by his love for Amelia, demonstrates the most self-discipline of all three male figures under discussion because he does not submit to physical vanity or selfish desires. It is Dobbin who helps support Amelia emotionally and financially after her father's ruin, buying back her piano and humbly remaining quiet when Mrs. Sedley mistakenly attributes the gift to Osborne. He continues to support Amelia after Osborne's death, paying for his burial and her removal from Brussels. No other male figure in Amelia's life matches Dobbin's generosity. True

manhood, according to Smiles, cannot exist without self-control; it is "at the root of all the virtues" (158) and Dobbin's defining quality.

Significantly, the narrator refers to all three characters as "heroes," thus urging readers to question Thackeray's use of a term whose meaning is inconstant. "Hero" implies protagonist but is not always synonymous with that role; these three male characters are very different from one another, with unique strengths and weaknesses. Discriminating readers must discern who is deserving of the title "hero," Thackeray's attitude toward his major characters being complex and *Vanity Fair*'s narrative voice particularly "slippery" (Shillingsburg 64). Using the term "hero" in such a varied manner is not indiscriminate but purposeful because the contrast between all three types of "heroes" makes the truly heroic stand out. In this case, the truly heroic is Dobbin.

Realism in Thackeray's Construction of Heroism

Dobbin is not faultless, and his imperfection is the key to understanding Thackeray's construction of heroism in this novel. Wayne Burn's claim that Dobbin is "the only one wholly without vanity" is not completely accurate (17); while Dobbin does not succumb to physical vanity like his peers, he is subject to another kind of vanity. In a letter to Robert Bell, Thackeray clearly ascribes vanity to Dobbin: "if I had made Amelia a higher order of woman there would have been no vanity in Dobbins falling in love with her" (Tillotson and Hawes 67). Like the pin Osborne purchases for himself instead of a gift for Amelia, both Osborne and Amelia are ornamental—they are beautiful, but lacking in substance—and so neither one is worthy of being admired with the fastidiousness and devotion that Dobbin demonstrates. Notably, one of the epigraphs that Smiles includes at the beginning of his book *Self-Help* is a statement made by Thackeray: "'Might I give counsel to any young man, I would say to him, try to frequent the company of your betters. In books and in life, that is the most wholesome society; learn to admire rightly; the great pleasure of life is that. Note what great men admired; they admired great things; narrow spirits admire basely, and worship meanly'" (qtd. in Smiles). But in his devotion to Osborne and Amelia, Dobbin does not "admire rightly." At one point, he "fanatically admired" Osborne (Thackeray 209), suggesting his veneration for his friend is unreasonably enthusiastic and even zealous, causing him to act at times in less than admirable ways himself. For instance, the one time that Dobbin's sincerity is called into question occurs after Amelia and Osborne have been married, an event made possible by Dobbin himself. The narrator calls Dobbin a hypocrite after he assumes "a jovial and rattling manner" in an attempt to hide his love for Amelia when seeing her in her "new condition" as Mrs. George Osborne (240). A. E. Dyson asks, "Is Dobbin's fidelity to the living but unresponsive Amelia entirely different from Amelia's fidelity to the dead George?" (25); the answer to that is "no."

Dobbin's pursuit of Amelia is shallow and empty, and because she is unresponsive, his unremitting devotion is self-effacing; he submits to her low estimate of him with resignation: Amelia "had rather a mean opinion" of Dobbin and "made light" of him, all the while Dobbin "knew her opinions of him quite well, and acquiesced in them very humbly" (Thackeray 241). Her affections are superficial in that she cannot see beyond the surface of the man she loves and disparages the man who is much more worthy of her. She is blinded by the dazzle of George's charm and beauty, just as he was seduced by the glamour of a shirt-pin. As for Dobbin, he is a "spooney" in his pursuit of superficiality, and his adoration of the undeserving looks like vanity

and weakness of character. Even the name "dobbin," with its servile connotations, points to his fawning adoration of Osborne and Amelia, neither of whom deserve such admiration.

Dobbin's fixation on Amelia is also physically damaging, seen in his frenzied trip from India to England after hearing of her supposed engagement to the Rev. Mr. Binney. He arrives in Madras with a fever, and it appears he might die; he recovers, but his normally gaunt appearance now appears skeletal. Once in England, his tendency towards self-sacrifice manifests itself again when he forgets to eat and drink while preoccupied with Amelia. He is selfless to a fault: "This woman had a way of tyrannising over Major Dobbin (for the weakest of all people will domineer over somebody), and she ordered him about, and patted him, and made him fetch and carry just as if he was a great Newfoundland dog" (663). Dobbin's physical weakness and moral dependency on Amelia complicate his role as a hero; again, Thackeray's construction of heroism is not what readers might expect.

Although some critics disagree, Dobbin is the hero of *Vanity Fair*, and it is his very flaws that make him so.[6] He is not an epic hero, nor does he fit the excesses of Romantic heroism. Thackeray's heroic characters are really very ordinary; unlike Dickens's characters with their exaggerated gestures and habits, they "remain outwardly realistic" (Shillingsburg 106). In a letter to David Masson, Thackeray observes that Dickens does not represent "Nature duly; for instance Micawber appears to me an exaggeration of a man, as his name is of a name. It is delightful and makes me laugh: but it is no more a real man than my friend Punch is" (Tillotson and Hawes 772). For Thackeray, the purpose of the novel is

> to convey as strongly as possible the sentiment of reality: in a tragedy or a poem or a lofty drama you aim at producing different emotions; the figures moving, and their words sounding, heroically: but in a drawing-room drama a coat is a coat and a poker a poker; and must be nothing else according to my ethics, not an embroidered tunic, nor a great red-hot instrument like the Pantomime weapon. (772-73)

While Dickens's work falls within the tradition of realism, Thackeray's characters are more believable. As a realistic character, Dobbin is not hyperbolic or larger than life. In his ordinariness, he is an accessible hero whose strengths are not exaggerated and whose faults evoke sympathy. His struggles are what make him admirable and, therefore, heroic.

In the end, after "spooning" over Amelia for most of the novel, Dobbin finally acknowledges his misplaced love and confronts her: "'No, you are not worthy of the love which I have devoted to you. I knew all along that the prize I had set my life on was not worth the winning; that I was a fool, with fond fancies, too, bartering away my all of truth and ardour against your little feeble remnant of love. I will bargain no more: I withdraw'" (Thackeray 670). By rejecting Amelia, Dobbin overcomes his fanatic adoration of someone so undeserving, further enhancing his appeal; even Becky, probably the most manipulative and morally questionable character in the novel, comes to admire him, and wishes she could have a husband like Dobbin. She ranks his "noble heart" and "brains" above his large feet and, despite her own faithlessness, she can see past the superficial in ways Amelia cannot (670). Becky admonishes Amelia for repeatedly

[6] For alternative viewpoints, see: Véga-Ritter, Max. "Manhood in *Vanity Fair*." *Cahiers Victoriens et Edouardiens* 38 (Oct. 1993) 87-102; Burch, Mark H. "'The World is a Looking-Glass': *Vanity Fair* as Satire." *Genre* 15 (Fall 1982): 265-79; Dyson, A. E. "*Vanity Fair*: An Irony against Heroes." *Critical Quarterly* 6.1 (1964): 11-31; and Lougy, Robert E. "Vision and Satire: The Warped Looking Glass in *Vanity Fair*." *PMLA* 90.2 (March 1975): 256-69.

refusing "'one of the best gentlemen'" she ever saw, calling George Osborne a "'selfish humbug,'" a "'low-bred cockney-dandy,'" and a "'padded booby, who had neither wit, nor manners, nor heart'" (680). Revealing that Osborne made love to her just after Amelia's marriage, Becky forces Amelia to recognize the truth about both Osborne and Dobbin.

Dobbin's heroism challenges Victorian conventions that equated a sound body and attractive physical appearance with the virtues of manly character. *Vanity Fair* reverses this logic in order to critique the bourgeois masculinity that is superficial in its pursuit of beauty, devoid of moral fiber, and therefore, unmanly. Dobbin, however physically and emotionally imperfect he may be, is not dishonest or selfish, and more importantly, he is not "as vain as a girl."

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Vanity Fair's Ethic of Readerly Emotion

by Julia Bninski

Many early and mid-Victorians imagined literature as an ethical and affective resource: a bulwark against dehumanizing capitalist competition and social atomism, against overwhelming rationality and calculation. We can see this prevalent attitude in texts as diverse as Charles Dickens's *Hard Times* and J. S. Mill's essays on poetry (Adams 33). Against this earnest ethical backdrop, William Makepeace Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (1847-48) seems an anomaly, closer to the satiric and parodic traditions of the eighteenth century or even the classical world than to the earnestness of his contemporaries. Thackeray critics frequently note that his narrators thwart the emotional gratification of identifying with characters, thus forcing readers into active interpretation and judgment. These statements are justified. Nonetheless, *Vanity Fair* participates in the Victorian conversation about literature as an ethical resource that relies on affective solicitation for its efficacy.

Sympathy—a term connoting sincerity or earnestness on the part of the author, and emotional involvement on the part of the reader—was a key term in the nineteenth-century's ethical conception of literature. Among the Romantics, an unusually strong emotional capacity was considered the mark of poetic subjectivity. Sympathy and sincerity were especially associated with poetry because of the assumed identification between the author and the lyric "I" that provides the reader with a point of identification and emotional transfer.[1] When the novel began to take its place as the era's premier literary form, novelists who theorized the ethical purpose of their work continued to rely on the concept of moralized literary sympathy. Perhaps George Eliot's novels most perfectly exemplify both Victorian literature's ethical inclination and the centrality of modes of feeling—especially sympathy—to the pedagogical projects of Victorian writers. Even if they wanted to do so, the nature of the genre meant that novelists could not rely upon the lyric "I" to signal sincerity or serve as a point of emotional identification. Meanwhile, many Victorian poets—including Alfred Tennyson and Robert Browning—were moving away from the tight identification between author and lyric speaker. What would sympathy mean for the more multivocal form of the novel? The answers depend on how the novelist understood the relationships among author, reader, text, and reality.

In keeping with Thackeray's philosophical skepticism about our limited ability to know and language's limited ability to describe the world, *Vanity Fair* enacts a theory of literary sympathy and emotional identification that, remarkably, does not rely on the represented sincerity, unity, or

[1] Throughout his *Preface*, Wordsworth connects poetry both to human emotional life and to what he calls "moral relations" (57). Poetic pleasure is different from other pleasures because "its object is truth, not individual and local, but general, and operative; not standing upon external testimony, but carried alive into the heart by passion" (73). Although the poet has an unusually developed capacity for feeling, it is a difference of degree and not of kind. The poet has a deep affective connection to others: he feels and represents "the general passions and thoughts and feelings of men" (78).

psychological depth of either characters or narrator.[2] *Vanity Fair* also eschews the solicitation of sympathy through extended depictions of innocent characters suffering, a common affective strategy in sentimental domestic novels. Thackeray recognizes that such literary codes cannot actually guarantee the ethical status of readers' emotional involvement. Rather than offering continuous emotional identification with an "I" or with a single protagonist, the narrator self-consciously shifts the emotional and ethical distance that separates readers from characters.

Alternately flaunting its fictionality and its referentiality, the text engages the reader emotionally and incorporates emotion into readerly interpretation and judgment. In order to accomplish this modulation of the reader's ethical and affective position vis-à-vis the characters, the narrator relies on a variety of devices—deploying satiric conventions, addressing the reader directly, switching between the roles of omniscient puppet-master and embedded observer—to foreground the ambiguous, overlapping relationship between the textual world and the reader's world.[3] The result is a structural indeterminacy about the limits of the text that does not fully immerse the reader in a fictional world. The confusion about the separation between the novelistic world and the reader's world functions to implicate the reader in the characters' harmful behaviors. Are we in the Fair or outside it? And given our ambiguous position, what ethical and emotional frameworks can we use to evaluate the characters and their decisions?

The careful manipulation of emotional and ethical distance in the depiction of characters' feelings solicits and modulates readerly emotion for a threefold didactic purpose: to propose that emotion plays a role in right judgment in life; to heighten the text's satiric critique of Regency society; and to train the reader in ethically-charged emotional engagement with art. The text demands that readers make judgments, but it also highlights the positionality of those judgments. The implied reader must judge and feel from the shifting ethical and emotional ground that she or he is forced to share with the denizens of Vanity Fair—a position in which sympathy is an urgent ethical necessity, despite the text's skepticism about the likelihood of virtue being rewarded in an unscrupulous world. In order to demonstrate how this affective and ethical modulation operates, I begin with a close reading of Chapter 35, when old Osborne learns of his son's death in the Napoleonic Wars. Then, focusing on the clash between satiric and sentimental codes, I explore how this strategy of affective modulation allows Thackeray to address problems within the prevailing conception of art as an emotional and ethical resource. In the process, I augment two critical commonplaces about *Vanity Fair*: that the text is structured by unresolved oppositions, with Becky/Amelia and satire/sentimentality being two of the most obvious; and that *Vanity Fair* demands active interpretation from its readers, forcing them to construct "a flexible and subtle way of seeing and judging the world," to use Robert M. Polhemus's words (101). Critics discussing the opposition between satiric and sentimental modes tend to overlook the crucial role that emotion plays in the text's project of training the reader in active interpretation.[4]

[2] For a detailed discussion of Thackeray's philosophical skepticism and its effect on his narration, see Judith L. Fisher's *Thackeray's Skeptical Narrative and the "Perilous Trade" of Authorship* (2002).

[3] H. M. Daleski identifies five kinds of narratorial shifts between the real world and the fictional world of *Vanity Fair*; see pp. 124-28. These shifts draw the reader into the fiction and the narrator and characters into the real world, creating "a shadow (fictional) world . . . to mediate between the real world and the (real) fictional world" (134).

[4] A partial exception is James H. Wheatley, who identifies "the play between more or less sympathy" as one of *Vanity Fair*'s many strategies for "shifting distances and perspectives" (65). Wheatley's brief consideration of sympathy is part of a formal analysis of *Vanity Fair's* shifting patterns. I am more concerned with why and how *Vanity Fair* disarticulates literary sympathy and ethical reading practices from the criterion of sincerity.

Parental and filial love (and their failures) have a privileged place in *Vanity Fair*. To twenty-first-century eyes, this emphasis may stray into blatantly ideological territory—as when the narrator uses the pathos of young Rawdy's loneliness to suggest that Becky's un-motherliness is her most damning quality. Yet the text's treatment of family bonds never wholly sinks to reproduction of Victorian gender ideology. Indeed, the description of family relationships, and the modulated solicitation of readerly emotion in those descriptions, provides a sharp critique of Regency society while extending that critique to the reader.[5] Early on, for instance, we learn that Osborne Senior's love for his son George is complicated by social snobbery and even greed. He obsesses about his son's encounters with nobility and demands that George jilt the bankrupt Amelia and marry for money (133-34). At first, Osborne appears a parodic mixture of the authoritarian and the servile. As the plot develops, the narrator solicits readerly pity for the proud but heartbroken old man, only to position the reader as being equally culpable of intimate emotional crimes and, perhaps, equally pitiable.

Britain's commodified system of family relations is critiqued in the often-remarked disownment scene. After George defiantly marries Amelia, Osborne burns his will and obliterates his son's name from the family Bible that sits in a place of honor next to a copy of the Peerage (231). Robert Polhemus, for instance, reads this scene as condemning the way that economic competition, social snobbery, and stern religion structure nineteenth-century family relationships (118-20). I agree, but I want to supplement Polhemus' reading by tracking audience address and affective solicitation in the depiction of Osborne Senior. Chapter 35, in which Osborne reads a newspaper account of his son's battlefield death, exemplifies how the narrator modulates the reader's emotional and ethical position in relation to Osborne in order to evoke emotion without relying on represented sincerity (Osborne's or the narrator's) to guarantee the ethical status of emotional identification or transference between text and reader.

The narrator begins with an acute observation of Osborne's reaction. The description of Osborne as a "gloom-stricken old father" invites pity, and the interjection "Good God!" mimetically represents both the movement and the strength of his thoughts and feelings as he remembers his anxiety during George's childhood illness (352). However, the narrator gives the reader access to a fear that Osborne himself "dared not own," the fear that he has somehow been the cause of his son's death; Osborne intuits but refuses to recognize his guilt. The narrator and, consequently, the reader know Osborne better than he knows himself. Thus a paragraph that invites pity for Osborne does not position the reader in Osborne's own emotional or ethical space. The text solicits pity for his loss, but not identification with his mingled grief and pride or with the ethical distortion by which he denies his culpability. The feeling of pity lends affective force to the satiric critique of Osborne and the society that produced him.

[5] In its refusal to conclude with its protagonists achieving naturalized, happy familial units, *Vanity Fair* declines to participate in the "inward turn" of the mid-nineteenth-century European novel. Drawing on Herbert Marcuse and Nancy Chodorow, Nancy Armstrong identifies this inward turn as shifting the arena of represented desire from the social and political sphere to the domestic sphere of the heterosexual family (144). Armstrong's study of how the novel comes to interpolate the modern subject contains only a single, glancing reference to Thackeray: she includes Becky Sharp with Catherine Earnshaw, Bertha Mason, and others in a list of monstrous nineteenth-century literary females (80). The fact that she ignores such a successful novelist suggests that Thackeray's fiction does not fit into her argument about the ideological work accomplished by the British novel.

The narration then switches to factual recitation of Osborne's actions as he requires his household to go into mourning and receives a call from Sir William Dobbin. Sir William delivers George's last letter:

> The letter was in George's well-known bold hand-writing....The great red seal was emblazoned with the sham coat of arms which Osborne had assumed from the Peerage, with "Pax in bello" for a motto; that of the ducal house with which the vain old man tried to fancy himself connected. The hand that signed it would never hold pen or sword more. The very seal that sealed it had been robbed from George's dead body as it lay on the field of battle. The father knew nothing of this, but sat and looked at the letter in terrified vacancy. He almost fell when he went to open it. (353)

The factual narration dwells on physical details that add poignance to the scene's bitterness. The symbolism of the sham coat of arms in relation to Osborne's pride is too clear to need narratorial elaboration, but it is a symbolism presumably lost on Osborne. He does not know that the seal was stolen after its owner was robbed of life, but the reader is given enough information to discern a parallel: the same acquisitiveness that marked Osborne's relationship to his son finds gruesome expression in the actions of a battlefield scavenger. Thus, objectively narrated details underline what the reader already knows from the more subjective psychological analysis of the previous page.

Yet the narrator does not allow the reader to remain in a position of comfortable pity and ethical superiority. The passage above is immediately followed by a direct address to the reader: "Have you ever had a difference with a dear friend? How his letters, written in the period of love and confidence, sicken and rebuke you!...Most of us have got or written drawers full of them. They are closet-skeletons which we keep and shun" (353). Rather than soliciting the reader's trans-textual emotional identification with Osborne, the narrator previously positioned the reader as inhabiting a space from which to pity him while still maintaining enough ethical distance to evaluate his feelings and behaviors. Now he abruptly positions the reader (and, with the shift from "you" to "we," joins the reader) in Osborne's emotional and ethical space. This positioning is rhetorically confrontational, accomplished by accusation of the reader rather than by soliciting the reader's sympathetic identification with Osborne. Indeed, the merchant remains unappealing despite his suffering. Although *Vanity Fair* begins with the artistically self-conscious "Before the Curtain" and contains recurrent reminders of its own artifice, this address to the reader is not a moment of overt fictionality. In unceremoniously placing the reader alongside Osborne, the text momentarily collapses the distance between the represented fictional world and the represented "real" world of the narratively-constructed reader, a space that necessarily is entangled with the non-narrative world of the actual reader. It is a mark of Thackeray's authorial control that elsewhere he can use the opposite technique—the insistence on fictionality—to achieve the same purpose, the disruption of the reader's emotional gratification.[6]

Having pitied and judged Osborne, the reader now occupies Osborne's own ethical/emotional position, the space of one who deserves both pity and censure. Thus pity is

[6] One memorable example of denied gratification is the narrator's insistence on the artificiality of Dobbin and Amelia's final reunion (Hardy, *Feeling* 86). "Here it is—the summit, the end—the last page of the third volume" (*VF* 684).

constructed as a sympathetic emotion that is not based on the worthiness or sincerity of its represented recipient. If we were reading a lyric poem, we might be able to imagine our emotional identification with the speaker to be a morally improving experience of intersubjective harmony. In contrast, emotional communion with Osborne's twisted emotions and half-denied guilt can hardly function as the guarantee of an ethically beneficial emotional transfer between text and reader. Instead, the text constructs a reader who combines sympathy and judgment for Osborne not through identifying with his psychologized interiority, nor through access to a better ethical framework, but by sharing his position.

All this modulation of emotional and ethical distance occurs before Osborne even opens his dead son's letter. In the Bible scene, documents by and about George acted as mementos encapsulating and calling up Osborne's pride and love for his son. Here George's letter is inadequate to express the young man's feelings: "He had been too proud to acknowledge the tenderness which his heart felt....His father could not see the kiss George had placed on the superscription of his letter" (353). Thus the letter provides news (George's wife Amelia may be pregnant) but does not change Osborne's pre-existing emotional pattern: "His son was still beloved and unforgiven."

Again the narrator provides access to emotional information unavailable to Osborne, this time about the nature of George's feelings rather than about Osborne's own. Consequently, the reader is better positioned than Osborne is to evaluate George sympathetically. Furthermore, the reader's sympathy is not impeded by emotional identification with Osborne's specific motives of pride and revenge (although we are certainly capable of pride and revenge on our own accounts). Previously, the occasionally omniscient narrator acted as a reality principle providing the reader with "facts" about George that allow us to judge him as less worthy than Amelia believes. In contrast, the reality principle here operates to make George seem more worthy of forgiveness than Osborne can perceive. Furthermore, the lack of omniscient narration in real life deprives the reader of a full grasp of one's own reality—a reality that includes others' thoughts and feelings. Consequently, disproportion in both positive and negative evaluations of others is inevitable.

Thackeray's rejection of literary sympathy predicated on a sincere, unified, transparent narrative voice allows him to adapt moralized literary sympathy to the novel's multivocality without privileging a single voice over others. Furthermore, this strategy addresses a concern that Thackeray shared with his contemporaries: the fear that literature's affective power can go wrong. In his lectures on *The English Humourists* (1852), Thackeray raises worries about feeling and its possible perversion in the literary marketplace. After a censorious biography of Laurence Sterne, Thackeray locates some redeeming value in Sterne's parent-child relationship:

> In his last letter there is one sign of grace—the real affection with which he entreats a friend to be a guardian to his daughter Lydia. All his letters to her are artless, kind, affectionate, and *not* sentimental....A perilous trade, indeed, is that of a man who has to bring his tears and laughter, his recollections, his personal griefs and joys, his private thoughts and feelings to market, to write them on paper, and sell them for money. Does he exaggerate his grief, so as to get his reader's pity for a false sensibility? feign indignation, so as to establish a character for virtue?...How much of the paint and emphasis is necessary for the fair business of the stage, and how much of the rant and rouge is put on for the vanity of the actor? His audience trusts him: can he trust himself? How much was deliberate calculation and imposture—how much was false sensibility—and how much true feeling? Where did the lie begin, and did he know where? (232-33)

Here Thackeray defines sentimental writing against sincere writing; yet even sincerity cannot function to guarantee the ethical status of fiction. Sentimental writing is meant to provoke emotional effects, but so is almost all fiction. The danger Thackeray identifies is that literature's emotional power may fool readers and authors alike.

Thackeray's penchant for parody is a response to the inadequacy of sincerity as a criterion for an ethical practice of affective communication between text and reader. His parodic early novel *Catherine* (1839-40) mocks the contemporary vogue for criminal romances, which made rogues into sentimental figures. *Catherine*'s narrator (who goes by the name Ikey Solomons) criticizes William Harrison Ainsworth's *Jack Sheppard* (1839-40) for both its falsity and its undiscerning sincerity: "[G]ood and bad ideas, he hatches all with the same great gravity; and is just as earnest in his fine description of the storm on the Thames...as in the scenes at Whitefriars," Solomons complains (*Catherine* 133). Solomons goes on to argue that criminal romances like *Jack Sheppard* and Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist* (1837-39) create sympathy for bad people (133). Elsewhere, Thackeray's criticism of sentimental writing focuses less on questions of who "deserves" sympathy. His review of Charles Lever's *St. Patrick's Eve* points out that novels depicting "a misty reconciliation between the poor and the rich" with "happy life, happy marriage and children, happy beef and pudding for all time to come" fail to address class divisions (qtd. in Clarke 43). Sentimental fiction—of the criminal or domestic variety—provides middle-class readers with pleasurable emotional responses that may actually interfere with perceiving and changing social realities.

In *Vanity Fair*, as in *Humourists* and *Catherine*, Thackeray treats sentimental writing as misleading.[7] Sentimental writing seems even more suspicious when we realize that Becky Sharp is a master of the genre. As Judith L. Fisher notes, Becky's ability to evoke emotions in others resembles Thackeray's description of Sterne (46). Becky's tale to Jos Sedley in Pumpernickel neatly epitomizes the narrator's mockery of both sentimental narratives and their audience. Becky tells "a tale so neat, simple, and artless, that it was quite evident from hearing her, that if ever there was a white-robed angel escaped from heaven to be subject to the infernal machinations and villany [sic] of fiends here below, that spotless being—that miserable unsullied martyr—was present on the bed before Jos—on the bed, sitting on the brandy-bottle" (655). We learn that Jos, "who was very fat, and easily moved" is "touched" by Becky's story (658). For the purposes of my argument, it is important to understand the sentimental as a code not just of writing but also of reading. Becky's tale is ridiculous not simply because it is false, but because it is the foolish, cowardly, effeminate Jos who believes it. A novel may be deemed sentimental not just because of its content, but because of who reads it and how. As Kate Flint has demonstrated, *Vanity Fair*'s construction of an actively interpreting reader is Thackeray's attempt to take back the domestic novel from such unthinking, feminized reading practices. According to Flint, "the mode of reading which Thackeray most admires and wishes to promote is one which does not deny

[7] Today, with a greater appreciation for the genre and its cultural importance, we may define sentimental texts in more neutral or even positive terms describing content, form, intended audience, or social function. See for instance Jane Tompkins's *Sensational Designs* (1985) and Lauren Berlant's *The Female Complaint* (2008).

readerly pleasure, but which goes hand in hand with a capacity to stand back from too close, too emotional an involvement with fictional characters and situations" (262). Flint is right that Thackeray works to differentiate *Vanity Fair* from sentimental novels with similar domestic plots. This difference is asserted by the text's style and by the active mode of reading that it demands. However, by focusing on the historical opposition between feminized/emotional and masculinized/critical reading practices, Flint does not address the fact that critical reading of Thackeray actually relies on readerly emotion.

A closer look at the clashing codes of sentiment and satire will illustrate my point. Initially, it seems easy to map misleading emotional investment onto sentimentality, and a keen-eyed grip of reason and fact onto satire. It is also tempting to map these antitheses onto Amelia and Becky, respectively. As Polhemus puts it, "Becky can see reality, but she cannot love. Amelia can love, but cannot see the truth...she has no perspective on reality, no way of discriminating between sentiment and fact" (106, 115). In contrast, I argue that Amelia/sentimentality/delusion and Becky/satire/reality do not line up so neatly.

It is true that Amelia resembles a sentimental reader, too immersed in her emotions to evaluate their object. But as we have seen, Becky is also associated with sentimental texts. Her ability to solicit emotion from other characters is the ability of a purposefully manipulative sentimental writer. Unlike Sterne, she appears to be in very little danger of being taken in by her own sentimental performances. To complicate matters, she is a master satirist, second only to the Satirical-Moralist himself. Like the novel as a whole, her letter to Amelia (75-83) is an entertaining mixture of sentimental and satiric conventions. Becky's letter combines sentimental diction ("'I will not tell you in what tears and sadness I passed the fatal night in which I separated from you'") with the deflationary observation that life does not live up to sentimental fiction ("'Sir Pitt is not what we silly girls when we used to read Cecilia at Chiswick, imagined a baronet must have been'") (75-76). Becky, like the narrator, is adept at exposing moral and monetary pretensions. It is she who provides what likely strikes the reader as the text's most accurate assessment of George Osborne, "'that selfish humbug, that low-bred cockney-dandy, that padded booby'" (680).

Perhaps Polhemus had such anti-sentimental speeches in mind when he implausibly claimed that Becky, unlike Amelia, has access to reality. Although Becky's satire can seem aligned with the represented reality about characters, the fact that Becky is a master of satiric and sentimental codes suggests that both are simply that—literary codes that can be employed with more or less earnestness but that cannot guarantee anything outside of their own textual performance.

The examples of Becky and Sterne demonstrate that Thackeray sees sentimental writing as harmful. His depiction of Amelia indicates that he also sees sentimental reading as harmful: Amelia makes foolish, even wrong decisions based on her sentimental investment in George Osborne. But importantly, his depiction of Amelia and his management of readers' reactions to her demonstrate that *Vanity Fair* does not just rehearse a binary opposition in which reason is ethically preferable to emotion. Nor does the text map such an opposition onto satiric and sentimental modes, or onto reading practices of active interpretation versus passive emotional identification. Rather, a willingness to engage emotionally with literature is necessary if the reader is to benefit from the week-day preacher's sermon.

Although we tend to remember the narrator's skepticism toward sentimentality, he more than once parodies imagined readers who do not have sympathy for characters. One of these passages

appears at the beginning of the book, as Amelia bids farewell to her school friends in a flush of girlish emotion:

> All which details, I have no doubt JONES who reads this book at his Club, will pronounce to be excessively foolish trivial twaddling and ultra-sentimental. Yes, I can see Jones at this minute (rather flushed with his joint of mutton and half-pint of wine,) taking out his pencil and scoring under the words "foolish twaddling" &c., and adding to them his own remark of "*quite true.*" Well he is a lofty man of genius, and admires the great and heroic in life and novels, and so had better take warning and go elsewhere. (6)

A visual caricature of Jones accompanies this passage. Barbara Hardy sees the criticism of Jones as a defense not only of Amelia's sentimentality but of the novel's ("Art" 24). I agree, but I wish to emphasize that Thackeray is not only defending his novel: he is differentiating his use of feeling from that of other texts in which affective solicitation becomes silly or dangerous.

Amelia does not illustrate that all emotion is incompatible with right judgment. Rather, there is a degree (and with Thackeray, it is never an absolute degree) to which feeling is necessary for knowing truth and judging properly. Amelia specifically illustrates the emotional problem of love as overvaluation. Amelia's problem is the mismatch between the object of her emotion—whether it be a silly novel, a husband, or a son—and the scale of her emotion. Dobbin's enduring love for Amelia exhibits a similar disproportion between the scale and longevity of an emotion and the actual qualities of its object; notably, the young Dobbin also overvalued George when they were friends at school. Such disproportional emotion causes harm—in Amelia's case, her overvaluing love for the dead George makes her a "little heedless tyrant" to Dobbin for years (677).[8]

The concept of proportional emotion is based on the idea that a character's represented internal reality should correspond to the represented external reality of the novelistic world. The reader's ability to judge the mismatch between internal reality (emotion) and external (object of emotion) is based on access to a novelistic world that is granted by a narrator who deliberately moves between omniscience and unreliability. Occasionally, as in the case of George Osborne (and more subtly in the case of Dobbin's regard for Amelia), the narrator does give us enough information to prove that the young officer is not the paragon that Amelia believes. The text posits the existence of a reader who, without the benefit of a real-life omniscient narrator, is susceptible to similar acts of overvaluation: "Perhaps some beloved female subscriber has arrayed an ass in the splendour and glory of her imagination....I think I have seen such comedies of errors going on in the world" (128).

It is typical of *Vanity Fair*'s ambiguity that no character offers sustained mediation between the emotional extremes exemplified by Amelia and Becky. Becky's canniness offers the reader relief from Amelia's almost inane devotion. Alternatively, even though Amelia's love is not

[8] Amelia's overvaluation as based on socially-induced repression of sexual knowledge that Dobbin perpetuates by shielding her from the truth about George's infidelity (see Clarke 108-112). This pattern is symptomatic of Victorian gender ideology: "The problems lie on a deeper level than Dobbin's self-knowledge can penetrate and are affected by the equally irrational signals he receives from Amelia, and by a society that dictates many of the elements of sexual relations" (Clarke 110). This psychological dynamic is social and typical, not individual. In a parallel act of repression, the implied reader of the famous siren passage (ch. 64) refuses knowledge of the monster's tail (Becky's illicit sexual practices). Yes, Amelia's repression-cum-innocence is the result of her education and her culture's gender ideology, but her psychological operation is typical not only of poorly educated women, but of the constructed reader, as well.

based on reality, it provides a welcome antithesis to the worldly calculation practiced by Becky and a mercenary society composed of people with "properly regulated" minds (158). The "properly regulated" approach to life is epitomized by the marriage market, where Becky Sharp and Maria Osborne pursue wealthy men. The interchangeability of bridegrooms emphasizes the commodification of marital relations. Becky miscalculates and marries Rawdon instead of his father Sir Pitt. Maria's engagement to Frederic Bullock is "most respectable" precisely because she is equally willing to marry Bullock senior (121). Either man will bring her financial security. Society's "well regulated mind" has a grasp of economic and material realities, but not necessarily of those qualities by which an individual might lay claim to being something other than an interchangeable commodity (122). Thus, the novel suggests that right judgment does rely partly upon emotion. To the extent that the text is didactic, it proposes an ethical model that neither overvalues people and objects nor treats them instrumentally. The text points to this model through unresolved antitheses, not through direct representation of sincere characters who can act as sites of readerly identification and emotional transfer. The result is a demand that the reader exercise ethical and emotional judgment in a text that refuses to provide reliable frameworks for making such judgments.

Vanity Fair not only posits that emotion must play a role in right judgment: it also suggests that emotional engagement with art can be intellectually and ethically transformative. By modulating affective solicitation while demanding active interpretation, *Vanity Fair* trains readers in just such an approach to literature. This approach counters stereotyped sentimental reading practices, but it still relies on the reader's capacity for emotional engagement with fiction.

The ethical role of art and emotion is most clearly formulated in a crucial sequence in Pumpernickel (notably, a location outside the English society that is Thackeray's prime target). Here Amelia "found her delight, and was introduced for the first time to the wonders of Mozart and Cimarosa" (620). Her encounter with opera provides an emotional and intellectual education for the ever-susceptible Amelia: "A new world of love and beauty broke upon her when she was introduced to those divine compositions: this lady had the keenest and finest sensibility, and how could she be indifferent when she heard Mozart?" (621). She feels "raptures so exquisite" that, influenced by the "Washerwoman of Finchley Common," she fears her emotion is wicked:

> She has been domineered over hitherto by vulgar intellects. It is the lot of many a woman. And *as every one of the dear sex is the rival of the rest of her kind*, timidity passes for folly in their charitable judgments; and gentleness for dulness; and *silence—which is but timid denial of the unwelcome assertion of ruling folks, and tacit protestantism*—above all, finds no mercy at the hands of the female Inquisition. (emphases added)

Here, emotional response to art is necessary for the proper development of "intellect." Given that emotional engagement with art offers Emmy the hitherto-denied opportunity "to educate her tastes or her intelligence," perhaps art and literature also offer the possibility of developing her "tacit protestantism" into a more sustained critique of "ruling folks" and the commodification of sexual relations that turns all women into rivals.

Previously, when patronized by the intimidating Misses Osborne, Amelia was unable to engage emotionally with art or to articulate any criticism of the sisters' condescending behavior: "They took her to the Ancient Concerts by way of a treat, and to the Oratorio; and to St. Paul's to

see the Charity-Children—where, in such terror was she of her friends, she almost did not dare be affected by the hymn the children sang" (116). Grounding her argument in the symbolic resonances of *Don Giovanni's* and *Fidelio's* plots (Amelia sees both), Micael Clarke convincingly reads opera as providing an emotional and sexual awakening for Amelia, who has been stunted by her education. This awakening is a necessary step before her relation with Dobbin can be stripped of the delusions inherent in overvaluation (Clarke 102-04). In effect, the experience prepares Amelia to become a more active interpreter of her own life; her awakening didactically provides the reader with a lesson in ethically-inflected emotional engagement with art.

This didacticism does not function through reference to a single, solid standpoint for ethical evaluation. Emotion is undoubtedly necessary to right judgment, but the text leaves us with doubts. When does emotion lead to wrong judgments? How can literature avoid soliciting emotions that are absurd, useless, or hypocritical, as Thackeray complains of Sterne's work? The novel refuses to yield a stable answer. Nor does *Vanity Fair* offer much in the way of moral incentives. The characters' fates and the closing exclamation "*Vanitas Vanitatum!*" hardly suggest that virtue is always rewarded and vice punished (689).

Yet, paradoxically, the novel insists that an ethical emotional practice is an urgent necessity, however difficult a project it may be, and however unlikely it is to bring happiness in an unscrupulous world. The text demands that readers make judgments, but it also highlights the positionality of those judgments. Affective solicitation underlines how much is at stake in the text's satiric critique. The reader is moved to sorrow rather than laughter by old Osborne's starkest moments or little Rawdy's loneliness. This readerly sympathy is not predicated on the sincerity of characters or narrator. The construction of a shifting but shared ethical position prevents *Vanity Fair* from proposing either emotional involvement or distanced judgment alone as adequate moral practices. Instead, *Vanity Fair* proposes a practice of ethical judging *and* feeling in fiction and in life. In reflecting on the didactic function of the humorous writer, Thackeray contrasted himself with Swift, a writer who shared his penchant for pointed social satire, but whom Thackeray saw as lacking ethical feeling:[9]

> If I do not love Swift, as, thank God, I do not, however immensely I may admire him, it is because I revolt from the man who placards himself as a professional hater of his own kind; because he chisels his savage indignation on his tombstone, as if to perpetuate his protest against being born of our race—the suffering, the weak, the erring, the wicked, if you will, but still the friendly, the loving children of God our Father. (*Humourists* 272)

Vanity Fair's ethical imperative proposes that the recognition of shared ethical and perceptual weakness leads not simply to judgment and criticism—though those are necessary—but also to the emotional recognition of others—to sympathy for our "own kind," fellow citizens all of Vanity Fair.

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[9] The occasion was Thackeray's lecture on "Charity and Humour," first given in New York in 1852. He later delivered variations of this lecture in London, at one point titling it "Week-day Preachers" (*Humourists* 267n).

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'Twas the Night before Waterloo: Narrating the Nation in *Vanity Fair*

by Cheryl Wilson

"A battle and a ball resemble each other very closely."[1]

The battle of Waterloo is central to W. M. Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (1848). The events of the entire military campaign, culminating in the battle itself, emit shockwaves that reverberate throughout the text. Yet, Thackeray chooses not to depict the battle, stopping readers as they arch out of town behind Major O'Dowd and bringing them back behind the lines to await news: "We shall go no farther with the ___th than to the city gate: and leaving Major O'Dowd to his duty, come back to the Major's wife, and the ladies and the baggage" (293). The omission of the battle scene is, John Lester notes, typical of Thackeray who "is more interested in his characters' reactions to events than he is in the events themselves" (399)—the battle of Waterloo being an event that produces reactions worthy of the novelist's interest.

Such a deliberate textual maneuver has garnered much critical attention. Some view Thackeray's treatment of Waterloo in the context of the cultural climate surrounding the novel's composition. For example, Peter Schad draws a parallel between the battle of Waterloo (1815) and the Peterloo massacre (1819): "*Vanity Fair* takes us the long way round the many dead bodies of Waterloo partly because the novel is, at some level, mindful of the eleven dead bodies of Peterloo" (27). Mary Hammond, too, considers the context of the writing of *Vanity Fair*, crediting the hero culture of the 1840s with influencing the novel's "preoccupation with, and yet marginalization of, Waterloo....Thackeray's novel was surrounded, not just in its early stages but throughout most of its execution, by debates around the correct way to commemorate war heroes, in particular the 'Hero of Waterloo'" (21-22). Others, such as David E. Musselwhite, consider the omission of the battle in terms of textual, rather than historical, context: "Thackeray postponed writing the Waterloo number twice and it is to be remarked how contorted the novel's time scheme becomes as Waterloo approaches"; and yet "Thackeray's description of Waterloo through its effects rather than by way of epic engagement is a masterly achievement" (118). Similarly, Edward T. Barnaby considers the textual representations of historicity, contending that the novel's omission of Waterloo provides an example of how "Thackeray wishes to resurrect the experience of society as it was lived and not simply to catalog people and events that have arbitrarily risen to celebrity" (51). The absent battle, of course, is made even more prominent by the text's self-conscious use of military metaphors and language in descriptions and chapter titles throughout; for example, in Chapter 27 "Amelia Joins Her Regiment," and in Chapter 28 "Amelia Invades the Low Countries" (265, 271).

Such a marked presence and absence of the military in *Vanity Fair* serves as the basis for a number of interesting and valuable studies of the novel, including those mentioned above. Using the acknowledged significance of Thackeray's omission of the battle as a starting point, this study examines

[1] "Duke of Wellington's Despatches" [sic], qtd. in *Bentley's Miscellany* 1843.

the adjacent fictionalized historical event—the Duchess of Richmond's ball—which Thackeray does render in detail. The treatment of what has come to be known as the "Waterloo Ball" suggests that the presence of dance, which is woven subtly through the text, provides a theatrical and performative counterpoint to the novel's use of military metaphors and language. Thackeray's decision to depict the ball instead of the battle reveals a narrative approach that recognizes and utilizes the potential of social rituals and entertainments to further the novelist's purpose in combining a historical view with a contemporary social consciousness. In *Vanity Fair*, the Waterloo Ball presented *vis-à-vis* the battle of Waterloo allows Thackeray to simultaneously present the local and the global—he can focus on individuals and relationships while engaging with one of the most epic battles in English history.

The attention to dance adds yet another narrative voice to this quintessentially heteroglossic novel, providing a perspective that emphasizes the novel's preoccupation with issues of domesticity and British identity. Such analysis balances current criticism, much of which focuses on the novel's saturation with images of battle and war, imperialism and global agenda, and debatable status as historical fiction, pulling the novel back, even just slightly, to the center of the world—the Vanity Fair—that is the subject of Thackeray's text. Broadening the thematic center of *Vanity Fair* to include both the battle and the ball not only reveals the confluence of the social and the political but also attests to the potential of nineteenth-century social dance to act in culturally significant ways that complement literary modes of representation and facilitate the deployment of multiple narratives. An inherently visual art form, dance also has a marked presence in Mira Nair's 2004 film adaptation of *Vanity Fair*, and this essay concludes with a brief consideration of how the film, in the absence of a narrative voice to articulate the military metaphors or Thackeray's illustrative hand to provide the military-themed caricatures, turns to the dance embedded in the novel as both a unifying feature and a means of representing the state of the British nation in the early nineteenth century. The question of the missing battle, then, prompts re-evaluation of Thackeray's novel itself; it also raises broader considerations of narrative and genre such as the representation of history through social and domestic events, the narrative potential of dance, and the development of the novel in the first half of the nineteenth century.

The Waterloo Ball

Although the juxtaposition of ball and battle works perfectly in Thackeray's narrative, he cannot claim credit for imagining such a scenario. Generally termed "the Waterloo Ball," the Duchess of Richmond's Ball on June 15, 1815, "a *divertissement* arranged at the last moment to maintain the spirits of a group of officers and dignitaries who were either bored, dispirited, or apprehensive for the most part," has become inseparable from the battle it preceded (Pryce-Jones 71). A *Morning Post* article from 1888, part of the late-century search for and debate over the exact location of the famous ball, explains, "There is probably no merely social event in the history of the present century which has become more enshrined in the public memory than the ball given by the Duchess of Richmond at Brussels on the eve of the battle of Quatre-Bras, which immediately preceded Waterloo" (qtd. in Fraser 274). Both in the nineteenth century and today, the image of ballroom revelries interrupted by the roar of canons in the distance—an image perpetuated by Canto III of Lord Byron's poem *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1816)—is captivating and romantic. Byron juxtaposes active dancing bodies and the specter of death in his account:

> Did ye not hear it?—No; 'twas but the wind,
> Or the car rattling o'er the stony street;

> On with the dance! let joy be unconfined;
> No sleep till morn, when Youth and Pleasure meet
> To chase the glowing Hours with flying feet—
> But, hark!—that heavy sound breaks in once more,
> As if the clouds its echo would repeat;
> And nearer, clearer, deadlier than before!
> Arm! Arm! and out—it is—the cannon's opening roar! (190-98)

Similarly, in Thomas Hardy's *The Dynasts* (1904-08), the news of battle dramatically interrupts the dancing: "See—the news spreads; the dance is paralyzed. / They are all whispering round. (The band stops)" (456). Of course, Byron and Hardy are not to be blamed for dramatizing the event a bit, but historical accounts explain that it was news (and expected news at that), not canon fire, that the dancers heard and, once confirmed, the officers quickly responded. In *The Waterloo Ball* (1897), which chronicles his late-century search for the original site of the ball, Sir William Fraser reports, "The information which the Duke received at the Ball was of a character that confirmed the previous announcement: directly he knew the precise road which Napoleon had taken he ordered the concentration of his forces so as to check his approach" (37). In his more recent study, *The Duchess of Richmond's Ball* (2005), David Miller concurs: "The duke could have stopped the Ball at any time during the afternoon or early evening of the 15th—a single sentence would have sufficed. But, by mid-afternoon, when he knew that the French were definitely advancing, he also knew that a number of commanders, senior staff and ADCs would already be making their way to Brussels for the Ball and that to have cancelled it could well have caused some confusion" (136). A correspondent for the *Times* adds, "The Duchess's ball happened to fall on the day when Wellington learnt that the French army had crossed the Belgian frontier, though he remained in doubt until late the same night as to what exactly Napoleon would do next. But, in any event, neither he nor anyone else was surprised at a ball by the enemy's artillery firing away in the middle of the night" (9C). Throughout the nineteenth century and well after the publication of *Vanity Fair*, popular conceptions of the ball presented it as the site of a crucial moment in the battle. The juxtaposition of the social entertainment and the military contest, then, provided the ideal center for a novel in which Thackeray looked through the political events to see their effects on individual personal lives. This double vision further accounts for Thackeray's focus on the ball as an event at which social and political worlds came together and where their mutual effects upon one another could be observed.

Dancing Soldiers

The cultural significance of nineteenth-century social dance—which was bound up in questions of nationalism—also contributed to the navigation of social and political issues at the Duchess of Richmond's Ball. In discussing the effects of education on sexual character, Mary Wollstonecraft outlines the similarities between soldiers and women:

> It may be further observed that officers are also particularly attentive to their persons, fond of dancing, crowded rooms, adventures, and ridicule. Like the fair sex, the business of their lives is gallantry; they were taught to please, and they only live to please. Yet they do not lose their rank in the distinction of sexes, for they are still reckoned superior to women, though in what their superiority consists, beyond what I have just mentioned, it is difficult to discover. (106)

This parallel is just one of the many examples Wollstonecraft uses in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) to underscore the inadequacy of women's education at the end of the eighteenth century. A fondness for dancing is a trait shared by women and soldiers, and in Wollstonecraft's view, the soldier is able to blend this distinctly feminine enjoyment with the privileges of masculinity. Indeed, the image of the dancing soldier is commonplace in nineteenth-century literature. George Wickham practices the art of seduction on the dance floor in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), Guardsman Bertie Cecil waltzes through the early chapters of Ouida's *Under Two Flags* (1867), and memoirist Captain Gronow (*The Reminiscences and Recollections of Captain Gronow* 1892) writes with nostalgic pleasure of Regency ballroom fashions in London and Paris.

The Terpsichorean talents of nineteenth-century soldiers may be due, in part, to the similarities between military field exercises and social dance steps, both of which require the formation of the company into sets that emphasize the preservation of hierarchy and rank. In his memoir *The Business of Pleasure* (1865), Edmund Yates provides detailed renderings of military drills. He describes how his company first learned to "stand at ease": "we now learned that, in order to stand really at ease, we should strike the palm of our left hand very smartly with the palm of our right, then fold the right over the back of the left in front of us, protrude our left foot, throwing the weight of the body on the right" (130). The detailed attention to the placement and movement of body parts is quite similar to the description of a dancer's bow, described by William B. De Garmo in *The Dance of Society* (1875):

> The gentleman is supposed to be standing in 1st or 4th position, with his right side presented towards his partner's left. In order to face his partner he will step off with the left foot and place most of the weight upon it, turning a quarter round to the right, at the same time pivoting upon the ball of the right foot, to turn the toes outward, thus placing himself in 2d position, counting one; then draw the right foot to 1st position, at the same time bowing and casting the eyes downward, counting two; then bring the body erect, with the eyes naturally directed, counting three; then pivot upon the ball of the right foot, at the same time commencing to turn to the left, counting four. (62)

These accounts of the body in the military stance and the dance floor *révérence* both call attention to the placement of the feet, shifting of the weight, and general composure of the limbs. In addition, both texts present the movements as a type of performance that must be studied and learned.

When the attention to detail goes astray, in dancing and in marching, the results can be disastrous. Yates recalls his company's first attempt at marching:

> I recollect that two-thirds of our number had peculiar theories of their own, and that each trying his own plan led to confusion. For instance, the gentleman who would step off with his right foot, at the third step found his leg firmly wedged between the ankles of his precursor, and utterly lost the use of that limb; the light and swinging gait which was admirably adapted for the pursuit of a country postman was found scarcely to tally with the sober, slodgy walk of two-thirds of the corps...so it was some time before we presented that unanimity of action which is necessary to satisfactory marching. (132)

Similar care must be taken in dancing. Formal balls would often open with a March or Grand Promenade. This dance employs a variety of figures, which, like the military maneuvers, illustrate the importance of maintaining one's place within the line:

> First couple lead the march up the center of the room, about six feet apart, to within six feet of the centre, separate, turn facing the sides of the room, ladies march to the right, gentlemen to the left. On reaching the side both turn one-quarter facing the top of the hall, march four steps forward, turn one-fourth facing partners and center of room, and march to center, turn one-quarter and march to center, turn one-quarter and march about six feet apart. On reaching the top of the hall ladies turn to the right and the gentlemen to the left and circle around to the back. (Clendenen 13-14)

This account from *Professor Clendenen's Fashionable Quadrille Book and Guide to Etiquette* emphasizes how the dancers should move with military precision, and the structural similarities that mark the movements and training of dancers and soldiers reveal several connections between these two seemingly disparate aspects of nineteenth-century culture. Both require a heightened physical awareness of one's own body and the bodies of others as well as the ability to adhere to certain rules of performance. Further, both the dance and the battle bear a vexed relationship to predictability. Regardless of strategy, the outcome of a battle remains notoriously unpredictable, while, in most cases, a dance will proceed along expected lines. On the dance floor and on the battlefield, stepping out of line can have violent repercussions, although the social violence wreaked by women like Lady Bareacres is of a different nature than the bullet that pierces George Osborne's heart. The similarities in structure between the ball and the battle—similarities that nineteenth-century readers would have recognized—allow the Waterloo Ball to stand in for the battle in that it, too, foregrounds issues of nationalism, interpersonal violence, and rank.

The Ball and the Battle in *Vanity Fair*

Such cultural similarities provide a basis for the interdependence of military action and social dance that characterizes *Vanity Fair*—both are bound up in rank and nationalism and share a codified and hierarchical structure. Aware of the similarities between the dance floor and the battlefield, Thackeray articulates direct connections between dance steps and military maneuvers throughout his novel. For example, offering a pessimistic view of the impending campaign, Major Dobbin predicts that the French Emperor will "'give the Duke such a dance as shall make the Peninsula appear mere child's play'" (240). Later, in a generic description of a London home, Thackeray locates the ball as the site of military/sexual victory. He describes the staircase, "down which miss comes rustling in fresh ribbons and spreading muslins, brilliant and beautiful, and prepared for conquest and the ball" (603). Similarly, when a battle is staged between the recently-married Amelia Osborne and the Bareacres family, the battlefield is the ballroom. Although on his honeymoon, George "had the honour of dancing with Lady Blanche Thistlewood, Lord Bareacres' daughter," then with Lady Blanche, "who had been languishing in George's arms in the newly-imported waltz for hours the night before" and who hopes he will not bring his wife to future entertainments (278). Thackeray's narrator steps in to explain the situation: "And so, determined to cut their new acquaintance in Bond Street, these great folks went to eat his dinner at Brussels, and condescending to make him pay for their pleasure, showed their dignity by making his wife uncomfortable, and carefully excluding her from the conversation." This scene foreshadows the snobbery and class conflicts Amelia will encounter when she is left in poverty after George's death at Waterloo. Like Alexander Pope, whose mock epic "The Rape of the Lock" (1712) includes a battle played out on a card table, Thackeray imbues the domestic and social space of the ballroom with both military and

political significance, underscoring the exchange between the political and social worlds and situating the battles of society as equally significant—and equally violent—as military campaigns.

The novel's use of dance is centered on the Waterloo ball, a social event that is inextricable from early nineteenth-century nationalism; because of its socio-political significance and juxtaposition with the battle of Waterloo, the event is well suited to illustrate the far-reaching effects of the Napoleonic wars on the development of English character. Philip Shaw characterizes it as "a period of bewilderment, shock and insecurity, a time when the concept of the nation was exposed to the most rigorous scrutiny" (4). Also, H. M. Daleski notes that the novel's preoccupation with the implications of Waterloo for English identity reveals as much about the 1840s as the Regency: "the fact that Thackeray chose to set his novel at the time of the Battle of Waterloo (and its aftermath), even though it is the personal lives of his characters which are at its center and not the historical events in which they are caught up, suggests that his imagination seized on some essential connection between his idea of (the Victorian) Vanity Fair and the Napoleonic conflicts" (18). Depicting the ball in such detail keeps the focus on the characters' personal lives against the background of the military campaign. Moreover, the use of dance to portray social hierarchies, national conflicts, and individual relationships, underscores the multi-dimensional ways that dance can function within a literary text.

When introducing the Duchess of Richmond's ball, Thackeray emphasizes the historical accuracy and significance of this event: "A certain ball which a noble Duchess gave at Brussels on the 15th of June in the above-named year [1815] is historical" (288). He then explains the social significance of the ball: "The struggles, intrigues, and prayers to get tickets were such as only English ladies will employ, in order to gain admission to the society of the great of their own nation." Here, despite its location in Brussels, the ball is characterized as a distinctly *English* entertainment, establishing the link between social dance and nationalism that permeates the text. The events of the ball itself are notable for Becky's carefully choreographed performance: "Mrs. Rawdon Crawley's *début* was…very brilliant." Becky uses her brilliance to simultaneously insult her friend Amelia and seduce Amelia's husband George: "'Where have you been, wretch? Here is Emmy crying her eyes out for you. Are you coming to fetch me for the quadrille?' And she left her bouquet and shawl by Amelia's side, and tripped off with George to dance. Women only know how to wound so" (289). Unlike Byron and Hardy, who depict the swirl of the ballroom arrested by news of Napoleon's imminent arrival, Thackeray presents the scene as a private exchange between Dobbin and George in which Dobbin interrupts George's gaming: "Dobbin went up and whispered something to him, at which George, giving a start and a wild hurray, tossed off his glass, clapped it on the table, and walked away speedily on his friend's arm" (290-92). The relative calmness of this exchange emphasizes how Thackeray keeps the focus on interpersonal interactions rather than large-scale epic events; the Waterloo Ball serves as the historical backdrop against which the dramas and intrigues of fictional characters are played out. The social event is arguably of less significance than its political counterpart, and in this Thackeray deviates from an endeavor that is purely historical in its representation of a particular occurrence to one that is multi-dimensional in its narrative scope and cultural critique, encompassing both the communal and the personal implications of political events.

In depicting the preparations for departure, then, Thackeray carries the ballroom's attention to couples and personal interaction over into private homes. Amelia and George, parted at the ball when he heads for the card room and she is taken home by Dobbin, are united for a final moment. Not having been invited to the ball, Major and Mrs. O'Dowd stoically prepare for battle; the Major anticipates "'there will be such a ball danced in a day or two as some of 'em has never heard the chune of,'" providing yet another example of Thackeray's employment of ball/battle parallels (293). Rawdon Crawley's departure also underscores the contrapuntal relationship between dancing and fighting. Becky wears armor suited to her own battlefield, her ball dress, as she watches Rawdon dress for battle: "Faithful to his plan of economy, the Captain dressed himself in his oldest and shabbiest uniform and epaulets, leaving the newest behind, under his wife's (or it might be his widow's) guardianship" (297). As Rawdon leaves to begin his battle, Becky concludes hers: "There had been no rest for her that night. She was still in her pretty ball-dress," and after her husband leaves, Becky "went to bed, and slept very comfortably" (298).

Narrating the Nation through Dance

The British nationalism that marks the first part of *Vanity Fair* was also reflected in the social dance of the period and underlies the use of social dance in the novel. Throughout the nineteenth century, social dance played a role in reaffirming English national character, particularly in the face of the French cultural invasion. For example, in his description of the quadrille—a French import that became one of the most popular dances of the nineteenth century—dance master and prolific author of dance manuals Thomas Wilson gripes, "An inconvenience, arising from its French origin, occurs in the Anglo-French terms which are used, and renders a knowledge of them necessary; they are easily acquired, but as we consider our own language fully capable of expressing them, we have preferred its use, so far as was consistent with perfect intelligibility" (93). This somewhat passive-aggressive description acknowledges that the French terms should be retained in teaching this French dance but promotes the adoption of the English translation instead. In *Vanity Fair*, the social dance that permeates the text plays as important a role in solidifying the British national character as the military campaign; further, Becky's ability to manipulate the dancers is as potentially threatening as Napoleon's ability to maneuver his troops, representing a social manifestation of political conflicts. The alignment of dance with Englishness even extends to India where such "civilized" entertainments are recreated; for example, Glorvina O'Dowd attempts to seduce Major Dobbin with her ballroom performance: "Glorvina danced past him in a fury with all the young subalterns of the station, and the Major was not in the least jealous of her performance, or angry because Captain Bangles of the Cavalry handed her to supper" (437). Here, Thackeray uses the dance as a marker of the British culture that was transported to India to preserve a sense of the homeland within the colonial space.

Thackeray's engagement with nationalism is also evident in the marked affinity between Becky Sharp and Napoleon. Becky's sympathy for the French Emperor is clear from the novel's opening scene when she shocks Amelia by exclaiming "Vive la France, Vive l'Empereur, *Vive Bonaparte!*" The narrator explains, "in those days, in England to say 'Long live Bonaparte,' was as much as to say 'Long live Lucifer'" (10). Becky even appears in the guise of the French Emperor in several of the illustrations that Thackeray created for his text. According to Patricia Marks, who charts Thackeray's use of the French language, this initial declaration of Becky's allegiances sets the stage for "the historic/fictive metonymic association between Napoleon invading Europe and Becky Sharp invading society" (76). However, in addition to being the land of Napoleon, France is also the birthplace of ballet and home of many popular ballroom dances, and Thackeray's frequent depiction of Becky in terms of dance draws on the accepted assimilation of French fashions into the ballroom, illustrating that, although Napoleon's invasion of Europe may be imminent, French culture has already taken over England, particularly in the fashions and entertainments of the upper classes. In contrast to the battle, then, where the French and English relations are depicted in black and white, the ball provides Thackeray with a more subtle and complex way of

depicting these tensions. Thus, Thackeray's decision to depict the ball instead of, but still juxtaposed to, the battle, allows him to call attention to the fact that the battlefield was not the only place in which cultural supremacy was determined and to highlight the insidious and perhaps more dangerous French invasion of English society.

In giving Becky's family history, the narrator notes that her mother was "a young woman of the French nation who was by profession an opera-girl. This humble calling of her female parent Miss Sharp never alluded to: but used to state subsequently that the Entrechâts were a noble family of Gascony, and took great pride in her descent from them" (11). Although Becky suppresses her mother's occupation, she does acknowledge the legacy of dance, inventing a family named for a step used in both ballet and ballroom dancing; Entrechâts involve "Interweaving or braiding. A step of beating in which the dancer jumps into the air and rapidly crosses the legs before and behind each other" (Grant 47). The direct translation "interweaving or braiding" is particularly appropriate as a description of Becky's social machinations, weaving her way through society while manipulating, or braiding together, individuals and circumstances to support her own cause. Such weaving can also refer to Thackeray's narrative method, which is characterized by multiplicity and interlacing, providing a quintessential example of what Peter Garrett identifies as the "Victorian multiplot novel."

In the society of *Vanity Fair*, Becky's association with this French accomplishment often works against her. Miss Crawley is displeased to discover that "Mrs. Rawdon Crawley was the daughter of an opera girl. She had danced herself" and later despairs over Rawdon's marriage: "he is a doomed pauper, with a dancing-girl for a wife" (192, 327). However, Becky's dancing abilities do receive grudging admiration from Thackeray's narrator as they help her achieve personal and social goals, illustrating that dance is an essential component of this social world. During a visit to the opera, Becky flits and flirts: "And when the time for the ballet came (in which there was no dancer that went through her grimaces or performed her comedy of action better), she skipped back to her own box, leaning on Captain Dobbin's arm this time" (285). Similarly, when she meets the wife of her patron Lord Steyne, Becky performs "a reverence which would have done credit to the best dancing master" (488). She also showcases her talents on the dance floor; hired by Sir Pitt as governess, Becky sets out to captivate his younger son, Rawdon, at a local dance: "after the Captain and your poor little Rebecca had performed a dance together, do you know she [Mrs. Bute Crawley] actually did me the honour to compliment me upon my steps!" (106-07). Mrs. Bute's observation, of course, is double-edged because the "steps" refer not only to the dance but to her transparent seduction of Rawdon: "I wish you could have seen the faces of the Miss Blackbrooks (Admiral Blackbrook's daughters, my dear): fine young ladies, with dresses from London, when Captain Rawdon selected poor me for a partner!" (108). This scene emphasizes how the ballroom embodied French and English tensions. Becky, a French girl, corrupts the English country dance to seduce Rawdon, which parallels how, in the eyes of many traditionalists, the French quadrille corrupted the English ballroom by replacing the country dance. Social dance historian P. J. S. Richardson writes, "Before the middle of the century the increasing popularity of the Quadrille and the more intimate Waltz and the invasion of our ballrooms by the Polka swept Country Dance off the floor" (57). Thomas Moore provides a more colorful depiction of the rivalry in his poem "Country Dance and Quadrille" (1840) where he describes the trials of "the nymph call'd Country Dance— / (Whom folks, of late, have used so ill, / Preferring a coquette from France, / That mincing thing, *Mamselle* Quadrille)" (1-4). Moore goes on to connect the country dance to an idealized Englishness, showing how Country Dance has been driven from fashionable London venues but is welcome at rural assemblies.

Vanity Fair also connects nationalism to dance in its depiction of King George IV, who is shown engaging in social entertainments, not participating in national or political events. In the world of *Vanity Fair*, the monarchy is presented as equally enmeshed in society and politics, seeing "the past as vividly as the present, the sovereign as critically as the subject, and history itself as a series of questionable and unheroic human decisions" (Sanders 191). The height of Becky's social climbing is when she secures an invitation to the Drawing Room of King George IV: "If she did not wish to lead a virtuous life, at least she desired to enjoy a character for virtue, and we know that no lady in the genteel world can possess this desideratum, until she has put on a train and feathers, and has been presented to her Sovereign at Court" (473). Later, during an evening party, following her triumphant performance in charades as Clytemnestra, Becky's dancing is admired by the King: "Only a feeling of dignity, the gout, and the strongest sense of duty and personal sacrifice, prevented his Excellency from dancing with her himself; and he declared in public, that a lady who could talk and dance like Mrs. Rawdon, was fit to be ambassadress at any court in Europe" (515). During this ball, Becky is again associated with "dancing girls," the renowned early nineteenth-century ballerinas Lise Noblet and Marie Taglioni: "The company made a circle round her and applauded as wildly as if she had been a Noblet or a Taglioni" (516). Just as Waterloo became a political and military symbol of national pride, so dance provides, in the novel, a social counterpoint that achieves the same ends.

Filming the "Fair"

The 2004 film version of *Vanity Fair*, directed by Mira Nair and starring Reese Witherspoon, picks up on these hybrid qualities, while privileging the novel's engagement with dance and extending Thackeray's depiction of the relationship between dance and nationalism to encompass the culture of Britain's empire. In characterizing both the novel and the film, the director notes, "*Vanity Fair* is about the swirl of life" (Nair). Indeed, her comment aptly characterizes this adaptation, which seems to be in perpetual motion—particularly the film's two dance scenes, which illustrate how Nair interprets Thackeray's interweaving of dance and narrative. Just as Thackeray's language establishes parallels between battle and ball, so Nair's visuals and use of dialogue during the Waterloo ball scene accomplish the same. Most historical accounts mention how some of the men went off to battle in their evening costume: "numbers of the officers were present, who quitted the ball to join their divisions, which had commenced their march before they arrived at their quarters, and some of them were killed the next day in the same dress they had worn at the ball" (qtd. in De Lancey n.p.). Similarly, Emily A. R. Shand-Harvey's letter to the *Times* (Sept. 11, 1888), quotes Sergeant Major Cotton's "A Voice from Waterloo": "Little imagined the guests that the music which accompanied their gay and lively dances at her Grace's ball would so shortly play martial airs on the battlefield, or that some of the officers present at the *fête* would be seen fighting in their ball dresses, and in that costume found among the slain" (13G). In addition, Thackeray's specification that Rawdon dresses in uniform before leaving suggests that he, too, wore an evening costume to the ball. Working in the tradition of Thackeray, who employs his illustrations to silently underscore a point made by the narrative, Nair chooses to send the men to the ball in their military uniforms, thereby visually emphasizing the parallels between the ball and the battle as well as foreshadowing the impending conflict.

Dressing the men in this way also adds to the dramatic moment when the news is announced, and the line of soldiers breaks through the circle of dancers. This image visually reproduces the doubling of the narrative—the linear, inescapable, marching forward of the historical-battle narrative and the more

amorphous personal-social narrative, which often doubles back, narrating the same circumstances multiple times. As Barnaby points out, particular events in the novel "need to be told twice and from various perspectives, in defiance of historiographic principles of objectivity and linearity" (40). For example, in recounting the news that the army would soon leave for France, the narrator explains: "Our history is destined in this Chapter to go backwards and forwards in a very irresolute manner seemingly, and having conducted our story to tomorrow presently, we shall immediately again have occasion to step back to yesterday, so that the whole of the tale may get a hearing" (246). Nonetheless, during the ball scene in the film, the circular movements of the dancers are interrupted by the linear ranks of military men moving through the room, imposing the battle onto the festivities.

In the film, dance is also seen as important in establishing a place for the emerging middle class and undermining the elitist practices of the aristocracy. A class shift was occurring during the early nineteenth century, and "the new aristocracy was based on wealth, not blood" (Rosa 5). Just as military prowess could be translated into political power—as was the case with Napoleon's rise to power, and as would later occur for the Hero of Waterloo when Wellington was made Prime Minister of England in 1828 (and again briefly in 1834)—so Becky's dancing, in the film, is directly connected to her social and political achievements. Upon entering the Waterloo ballroom, Becky is observed by Lord and Lady Darlington and Lord and Lady Bareacres, Thackeray's aristocratic mouthpieces, and Lady Bareacres wonders aloud "why does everyone receive her?" This remark immediately precedes the Promenade, which opens the ball with lines of marching men in uniform alongside their gaily dressed partners, further underscoring the importance of rank both on the battlefield and in the ballroom.

The second dance scene, the ballet *Zenana*, replaces the charades and Becky's infamous appearance as Clytemnestra. Nair explains that replacing the charade with a slave dance allowed for the continued saturation of the film with cultures from across the British Empire—in this instance a Middle Eastern dance is performed to the music of an Egyptian pop star—while maintaining the power and emotion of the original scene (Nair). Although not remarked upon in the director's commentary, this scene also nods to Thackeray's discourse on non-Western dance in his later novel *The Newcomes* (1855). Discussing the romantic fate of Ethel Newcome, Thackeray's narrator explains:

> I have read...in books of Indian travels of Bayaderes, dancing girls brought up by troops round about the temples, whose calling is to dance, and wear jewels, and look beautiful....They perform before the priests in the pagodas; and the Brahmins and the Indian princes marry them. Can we cry out against these poor creatures, or against the custom of their country? It seems to me that young women in our world are bred up in a way not very different. What they do they scarcely know to be wrong. They are educated for the world, and taught to display: their mothers will give them to the richest suitor, as they themselves were given before. (604)

In noting the connection between performative female accomplishments, particularly dance, in England and the practices of the Bayaderes in India, Thackeray comments on the artificiality of a marriage system in which a woman's value is staked largely on performative accomplishments. This certainly characterizes the situation of both Becky and Amelia in *Vanity Fair*. Becky uses her accomplishments to attract male lovers and patrons who help her rise through the ranks of society, yet the emptiness of these associations leaves Becky unfulfilled and constantly searching for more. When Amelia tries to use her accomplishments, painting screens and giving lessons, to generate an income after George's death, she, too, finds that her accomplishments are useful only for attracting men. Amelia brings her artwork to the Fancy Repository and Brompton Emporium of Fine Arts, whose proprietor "can hardly hide the sneer with which he examines these feeble works of art" (491-92). With regard to the Eastern ballet in the film, then, Thackeray's parallel between Indian dance and English women's accomplishments, including social dance, helps accentuate the importance of dance, and the social, primarily feminine, narrative it represents, to the text as a whole.

With the presentation at court omitted from the film, the ballet scene provides the only meeting between Becky and King George IV, and thereby marks the height of her social climbing. The ballet is an apt choice to replace the presentation at court because both emphasize physical deportment, carriage, costume, and performance—the individuals being presented at court parade past the monarch much like participants in a ballroom Promenade, or military troops under review. Nair further underscores the relevance of the scene in representing English cultural identity by explaining that she cast Richard McCabe, an actor from the Royal Shakespeare Company, as King George. In the novel, the King praises Becky's dancing at the ball, and in this scene, he praises her performance in the ballet, inviting her to sit next to him at dinner. When Lady Gaunt protests, "precedence would make that a little difficult," he replies, "I am the King, Lady Gaunt, I confer precedence." Here, the film illustrates that Becky is threatening precisely because she can use unorthodox means (in this case her dancing and her sexuality) to achieve a distinction that had formerly been inaccessible and based solely on birth.

Unlike state balls or exclusive fashionable entertainments, the Duchess of Richmond's ball had no pretensions to historical permanence; instead, it had historical permanence thrust upon it when news of what would become the famous battle of Waterloo was whispered throughout the room. Expanding the thematic center of Thackeray's novel to include the ball as well as the battle reveals how Thackeray used the inextricability of these two historical events as a model for intertwining the personal and the political, the domestic and the national, the social and the military in *Vanity Fair*. Moreover, the decision to focus on the ball enabled Thackeray's cultural commentary and novelistic endeavors. Moving beyond the novel, such an approach also illustrates the narrative potential of social dance and the multiplicity of culture and nation in the nineteenth century.

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Victorians Journal, Spring 2012
Featured articles include:

Daniel Brown, "Realistic Poetry: Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh*"
John Kanwit, "'I have often wished in vain for another's judgment': Ideal Aesthetic Commentary and Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*"
Tamara Wagner, "The Making of Criminal Children: Stealing Orphans from *Oliver Twist* to *A Little Princess*"
Shannon Gilstrap, "Of Pets and People: Matthew Arnold's Pet Elegies and Jules Michelet's *The People*"
Inna Volkova, "Waking the 'new mind of England': Discussion among Strangers in Benjamin Disraeli's *Sybil*"
Laura Inman, "Emily Brontë's Defeat of Death and Unintended Solace for Grief"
Robert D. Butterworth, "Is Oliver Twist Too Civilized?"

Book Review

by Judith Fisher

Correspondence and Journals of the Thackeray Family, edited by John Aplin. 5 vols. Vol. 1, pp. vii + 257. Vol. 2, pp. 1 + 404. Vol. 3, pp. 1 + 307. Vol. 4, pp. 1+ 341. Vol. 5, pp. 1 + 422. London: Pickering & Chatto, Ltd. 2011. $795.

This collection of journals and letters, copious and well-edited, basically completes the family records of William Makepeace Thackeray and his immediate family, covering family life and correspondence until the death of Anne Thackeray Ritchie in 1919. The first volume of papers and correspondences deepens our understanding of Thackeray during his life by presenting life with him through the voices of his daughters Anne (Annie) and Harriet (Minny). After Thackeray's death in 1863, the correspondence widens as Annie and Minny mature, marry, and continue their friendship with their father's friends while cultivating their own contemporary social circle. The correspondence is an enlivening record of extremely active and thoroughly connected families, the Thackerays and the Ritchies, as well as an informal picture of the literary world during Thackeray's life, through Annie's own career as novelist and essayist and her increasingly important role as creator and protector of her father's literary legacy.

The primary sources for Aplin's collection are Anne Thackeray Ritchie's papers at the Eton College Library, the private archive of the late Belinda Norman-Butler and the private papers held by Juliet Murray, both great grandchildren of Thackeray. The two journals, those of Richmond Thackeray, and Anne Thackeray Ritchie, have never been published before, as is the case with the vast majority of the letters. However, while these volumes are a treasure trove of new primary material, the collection is not really a stand-alone project, but a reference work to be used in conjunction with Alpin's 2011 two-volume biography of the Thackeray family (*The Inheritance of Genius*; *Memory and Legacy* [Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press]) as well as standard works such as Gordon Ray's biography of Thackeray (*The Uses of Adversity* and *The Age of Wisdom* [New York: McGraw Hill, 1955, 1958). While Aplin does include narrative sections within the letters that cue readers into significant underlying events, such as Minny and Richmond's coming deaths, much of the daily correspondence about events and people familiar to the recipient is elliptical and not easy to decipher. Aplin does provide useful notes identifying references to people and events, but the notes are not (and could not have been, considering the length of the volumes) detailed enough to provide sufficient context. So, these volumes are most usefully integrated with Ray's 4-volume *Letters and Papers of Thackeray* (4 vols. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1940-46) and Edgar Harden's two-volume supplement to Ray as well as the biographies (*The Letters and Private Papers of William Makepeace Thackeray* [New York: Garland, 1994]). In fact, this collection allows many of the letters in Harden's *Supplement* to be dated more accurately.

The collection covers five generations and "more than 120 years" (1: xii) and is based on fresh transcriptions of the journals and letters with strike-outs and insertions indicated and the original spelling (including Annie's rather eccentric orthography) maintained. Volume one centers on Thackeray's parents, containing Richmond Thackeray's journal and then Anne Carmichael Smyth's letters to Annie, Minny,

and Thackeray. Of particular interest in volume one is the collection of George Smith's letters to Thackeray, hitherto unpublished, "represent[ing] the greatest number of surviving letters to Thackeray from a single correspondent" (1:202). These letters should be read in conjunction primarily with Harden's *Supplement*, and Aplin very usefully cross-references his letters with the appropriate correspondence in Harden. While he does provide notes which excerpt relevant letters from Harden, making this section comprehendible on its own, when read in conjunction with Harden the cross-correspondence illuminates the actual negotiations between Smith and Thackeray for the acceptance and rejection of contributions as well as the actual shaping of each number of the *Cornhill Magazine*. The letters dramatize the constant pressure to read, decide, and check proof that was to result in Thackeray's resignation—it becomes apparent that it was this constant "having to do" that drove Thackeray to resign as editor as much as any single editorial disagreement between the two editors. Also made very clear is just how important George Smith was for the actual practical shape of each issue.

With volume two, the focus of the collection shifts to Thackeray's daughters and their world, offering readers for the first time a thorough experience of the voices of Annie and Minny in their voluminous correspondence between each other and with friends and family. They show themselves to be their father's daughters in their wit, but their voices become their own—and distinct from each other—with continued reading. Volume two begins with Anne Thackeray Ritchie's journal and then the rest of volume two and the next three volumes present a chronologically organized selection of correspondence from 1837 until 1919. So there is temporal overlap, which can be confusing, between Anne Carmichael-Smyth's letters to Annie and Minny in volume one, which also cover the 1830s and beyond, and the journal and correspondence in volume two. Annie's journal was composed in the late 1890s from her diaries, which she then destroyed. These journals are not the same as the two reflective journals published by Lilian Shankman in 1994 (*Anne Thackeray Ritchie, Journals and Letters* [Columbus, OH: Ohio State UP]). The journals in this volume, primarily a record of social engagements, visits, and travels, cover the years 1860 to 1903. They are most interesting if one remembers that these are reflections upon her earlier life and if one integrates the journals with the appropriate letters in the correspondence section. Again, Aplin provides the necessary cross-referencing to facilitate such revising reading.

Volume two finishes with correspondence running through 1866; Volume three contains correspondence from 1867 to April of 1875, volume four covers April 1875 to December 1893, and volume five runs from January 1894 to March 1919. Aplin uses the end dates of each volume to suggest a narrative shape: volume two ends with the engagement between Minnie and Leslie Stephen, so volume three picks up with their wedding trip and trip to America and ends with Annie's refusal in 1875 of Hasting Hughes' proposal of marriage. Volume four begins the Annie—Richmond Ritchie romance and ends in the anticipation of Isabella Thackeray's death on 11 January 1894. And the final volume takes us to Annie's death in 1919, including the preparation of the *Biographical Edition* and the maturation of her children, Billy and Hester.

Unfortunately, however, Aplin provides no explanation of his principle of selection for this "selected" correspondence. Since the organization is chronological, all the various correspondents—Annie, Minny, Leslie Stephen, the various Ritchie cousins—appear simply when they happened to write to a Thackeray. Some years are richer than others, as, for instance, 1864, when George Smith and Annie are corresponding about the sale of Thackeray's copyright and the conclusion of *Denis Duval* in the *Cornhill* (vol. 2). Also suggestive is the correspondence between Minny Thackeray and Leslie Stephen after their engagement, revealing a vulnerable side to the publically intimidating Stephen, who, bemoaning his pre-Minny life at Cambridge, types himself as having been living "a maimed & half & half kind of existence, like a plant grown in a cellar" (2:403).

Of particular interest in volume three is the extensive correspondence from Minnie and Leslie Stephen to Annie on their trip to the United States in 1868, which can be read as an independent sequence. The letters are quite long and often written by the two of them. Not only do they demonstrate the intimacy between the sisters but Leslie's affectionate tone and detail suggest the real devotion that would develop between himself and Annie and become so important to both of them in the aftermath of Minnie's death until Leslie's own death in 1904. The letters act as an informal "domestic manners of the Americans"—many of them are marked "private" because Minny is quite frank about her likes and dislikes. The joint letters display affectionate teasing and convey just how different they feel themselves to be from "Americans." The pattern of travel—to Boston (their favorite city), New York, Washington, Baltimore, and Philadelphia—is one of intense socializing, being lionized, being introduced to the local literary lions, and visiting various "institootions" (as Leslie imitates the American pronunciation), the latter eventually causing Leslie to fulminate, "I wish all institutions at the bottom of the sea" (3:89). Minny describes "travelling in America [as] like reading an amusing novel, not quite a 1st rate one, about as good as Trollope I should say. . . .The two great objections that I have to American private life are that they hardly ever give us a dressing room & ~~almost~~ no always, breakfast at some outlandish hour" (usually 8:00; 3:118). They also offer an outsiders' account of the presidential election, resulting in U.S. Grant's presidency. Leslie concludes that "America is a half-baked sort of country where everything is boiling & fermenting & rolling about in an unsettled sort of fashion & Providence or whatever does the work of that abstraction with a capital letter, is hammering something or other out of it, wh., I believe—not being much of a believer in any <u>thing</u> except human beings—will be something very good with the time comes" (3:135).

The correspondence surrounding Minny's death in volume four is not only extremely touching but suggests that her death may have accelerated Annie and Richmond's romance. One senses in this volume that Annie's world is changing. As her father's contemporaries, such as Carlyle, George Eliot, Browning, and Tennyson, are dying, she is becoming increasingly a keeper of the past, starting to write her essays and memoirs of past literary figures. Her sister-in-law, Augusta Ritchie Freshfield (Gussie) remarked to her daughter Eleanor, "Anny is so wonderful. It is so wonderful the way she carries her Dead about with her, <u>alive</u> in her life" (4:345). But increasingly, her own circle of contemporaries widens; for example, she begins correspondences with Margaret Oliphant, Henry James, and Rhoda Broughton that will last until their deaths, and she is increasingly recognized as an author in her own right. Volume five continues this development with the correspondence with Reginald Smith (George Smith's son) and the Harper & Brother's representative, Warner Dudley, about the construction and publication practicalities of the *Biographical Edition*. It seems that much of the incentive for this is from Annie herself, who was not pleased by either Trollope's 1879 *Memoir* or by the publication of Jane Brookfield's letters from Thackeray in 1887. As late as 1897, Annie is still contemplating a name for the edition, considering the "Roundabout Edition," the "Gold Pen Edition," the "Memoirs Edition," (5:73) and the "daughter's edition" (5:65). Volume five also contains the many letters Annie wrote to her son Billy at school and the letters between Annie and Richmond as his work and her health begin to separate them. The selection in this volume seems to concentrate on significant biographical moments: deaths in the family, Billy's marriage and then the advent of his children James and Belinda, Richmond's promotion to Permanent Under-Secretary and then his knighthood, and Annie's failing health.

Volume five also contains two extensive indices: one general index and one index of letters divided into senders and recipients. Users will find this index useful in tracking down hitherto unpublished information about the private life of figures such as Tennyson, Browning, and Oliphant. At one point, for example, we find out from Annie that Tennyson "lets his children thump him" (3:88), conjuring up an unusually playful image of the sonorous Poet Laureate. The major voice in the collection is, as Aplin points out, Annie; she has 126 correspondents to Minnie's 20. Her letters are vivacious and impulsive, with many insertions and strike-overs, creating a sense of immediacy and spontaneity. To have so much of her informal, private voice invites a study of the stylistic crossovers between her narrative style, especially the conversational tone of the prefaces for the *Biographical Edition*, and these letters. Edmund Gosse wrote to Annie in 1913 upon her publication of "The Modern Sibyls" in the *Cornhill*, "You are yourself the one authentic Sybil left, with your delicate wavering style that is like shot silk. Is it not so? I have only just thought of it, but I am sure that is right. George Eliot is satin, Mrs. Gaskell is velvet, but you are chatoyant—you are the dove's neck" (4:279). Annie's letters demonstrate that this "wavering," delicate style was her natural voice. Even at the end of the collection Annie is the major figure because the correspondence closes with the many letters written to Hester upon her mother's death. Her position as the link between past and present is indicated by the fact that at her memorial service at the Freshwater church on the Isle of Wight (home of Tennyson's Faringford estate), her coffin was covered with "the embroidered pall which had covered Tennyson's coffin at his Westminster Abbey funeral" (4:350).

Aplin's collection is a valuable addition to the Thackeray archive and demonstrates just how crucial was the epistolary thread to the dense weave of Victorian family and friendships. There is an undoubted authenticity in the letters—their informal, sometimes fragmentary, style, the casual use of nicknames (Richmond Ritchie is "Wizz"; Leslie Stephen is "Lez"), and the incomplete reference to familiar people and events indicate that these letters were not written for publication. The collection suggests that this informal letter-writing was a "natural fact" of life, and its scope invites investigation not just into the life of a famous literary family, but into the ordinary practices of daily life in which daily correspondence forged and maintained articulate and intimate communities.

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Contributor Biographies

Julia Bninski received her MA from the University of Chicago and is currently a doctoral candidate at Loyola University, Chicago. In addition to teaching at the university level, she has worked in humanities education for adults from marginalized communities. Her current research concerns how Victorians theorized connections between aesthetics and ethics.

Alice Crossley is a visiting lecturer at University of Leeds, Trinity College. She completed her PhD last year on the subject of male adolescence in mid-Victorian fiction. She is currently working on a monograph that draws on her doctoral research and has two articles forthcoming with Peer English and Victorian Network. She recently co-organized a conference, "Thackeray in Time, 1811-2011," at the University of Leeds. Her current research focuses on representations of youth and old age in the writing of Anthony Trollope, George Meredith, and W. M. Thackeray.

Judith Fisher is Professor of English at Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas. She is author of *Thackeray's Narrative Skepticism and the Egoism of Authorship* (Ashgate, 2002) as well as articles on textual scholarship, Thackeray, and Dickens in *Text*, *Victorian Periodicals Review*, *Victorian Studies*, and *Studies in the Novel*. In 2007, she published a volume on Thackeray for the Pickering & Chatto series, *Lives of Victorian Literature Figures*; and in 2010, she published a scholarly edition of William Makepeace Thackeray's *The Adventures of Philip* (U. Michigan P). She has most recently finished a history of the critical reception of *Vanity Fair* for Salem Press's *Critical Insights* series. Currently she is finishing a monograph called "The Empire of the Tea-Table, a Literary History of Tea, 1660-1900."

Clare Horrocks is a Senior Lecturer in Media, Culture and Communication at Liverpool John Moores University where she is the convenor of the Victorian Print and Popular Culture research group. She has published widely on *Punch* and the Victorian periodical press, including a number of pieces for *Victorian Periodicals Review*. She is currently building a digitized collection of the *Punch Contributor Ledgers*, along with OERs, to be freely accessible through LJMU's Special Collections.

Carolyn Jacobson received her PhD in English from the University of Pennsylvania after completing a dissertation on mid-nineteenth-century novels that incorporate Victorian theories of disease. She teaches at Grinnell College.

Nikole King received her doctorate in English from the University of California, Riverside in 2009 and is an adjunct instructor in English at North Idaho College in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. Her interests lie in Victorian studies, nineteenth-century American studies, gender, sexuality, and the history of the body. A chapter of her dissertation was recently published in the collection *Historicizing Fat in Anglo-American Culture* edited by Elena Levy-Navarro (Columbus: The Ohio State UP, 2010). She also maintains an interest in student development and holds a master's degree in College Student Personnel from Bowling Green State University, Ohio.

Sean O'Brien is a graduate assistant in the English PhD program at Loyola University, Chicago, where he teaches freshman writing. His research interests include adaptation issues in Wertenbaker's *Our Country's Good*, the politics of form in the novels of Ana Castillo, and the engagement of reality by new media literatures. Before pursuing his PhD, he studied literature and culture in Germany on a Fulbright grant, taught English in Japan, and chaired the English Department at a charter high school in Chicago while earning a Master of Arts in Teaching.

Jen Sattaur completed her doctorate at Aberystwyth University; her research was published as *Perceptions of Childhood in the Victorian Fin-de-siècle* by Cambridge Scholars Press (2011). Other projects include a forthcoming co-authored volume entitled *Literary Bric-à-Brac: Victorian Culture, Commodities, and Curios* (Ashgate). Her research interests include: Victorian literature, "Thing Theory," commodity culture and cultural materialism, contemporary and historical children's literature, supernatural fiction (especially nineteenth-century), and fiction writing for children. She has published articles with *Victorian Literature and Culture* and the *Journal of Children's Literature Studies,* and currently works as a teacher of secondary school English at Charles Darwin School.

Gary Simons is an adjunct faculty member in the English Department at the University of South Florida where he completed his PhD in the spring of 2011. A former scientist and businessman, he took early retirement from the business world to study Victorian Literature. His dissertation and some associated articles examine the critical journalism of William Makepeace Thackeray. He is currently working on a biographical study of the fashionable novelist, Catherine Gore.

Cheryl Wilson is Assistant Professor of English at the University of Baltimore. She is the author of *Literature and Dance in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge UP, 2009), editor of *Byron: Heritage and Legacy* (Palgrave, 2008) and co-editor with Margaret D. Stetz of *Michael Field and their World* (Rivendale, 2007). Her new book, *Fashioning the Silver Fork Novel*, is forthcoming from Pickering & Chatto (Spring 2012). Currently, she is working on representations of world dance in Victorian literature and culture.

Stephanie Womick is an assistant professor of English at Elon University in Elon, NC. Her dissertation from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, "Fashioning Femininities: Sartorial Literacy in English Domestic Fiction, 1740-1853," examines the use of dress in establishing identity. Her research interests deal with issues of gender and performance in British literature.

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Books Received

Adams, Edward. *Liberal Epic. The Victorian Practice of History from Gibbon to Churchill.* Charlottesville: U Virginia P, 2011.

Aplin, John. *The Inheritance of Genius. A Thackeray Family Biography, 1798-1875.* Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2010.

_____. *Memory and Legacy: A Thackeray Family Biography, 1876-1919.* Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2011.

Crimmins, James and Catherine Fuller. *The Collected Works of Jeremy Bentham. Church-of-Englandism and its Catechism Examined.* Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011.

Gaarden, Bonnie. *The Christian Goddess. Archetype and Theology in the Fantasies of George MacDonald.* Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2011.

Kooistra, Lorraine. *Poetry, Pictures, and Popular Publishing. The Illustrated Gift Book and Victorian Visual Culture 1855-1875.* Athens: Ohio State UP, 2011.

Weintraub, Stanley. *Victorian Yankees at Queen Victoria's Court*. Newark: U Delaware P, 2011.

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News, Announcements, CFPs

The major exhibition, "Dickens and Massachusetts: A Tale of Power and Transformation," will run March 30 - October 20, 2012 in Lowell, MA, with over seventy-five events planned for the *Dickens in Lowell* celebration of the bicentenary. For more information, see www.uml.edu/dickens.

Joan Leach Memorial Interdisciplinary Essay Prize 2011-2: The Gaskell Journal is pleased to inaugurate its Graduate Student Essay Prize in honour of Joan Leach MBE, founder and president of the Gaskell Society. The essay competition is open to all graduate students currently registered for an MA or PhD in Victorian Studies. The winning essay will be published in the 2012 edition of the Gaskell Journal and its author will receive £200 from the Gaskell Society, as well as a year's free subscription to the Journal. Essays should be no longer than 7,000 words and not under consideration for publication elsewhere. The closing date for the essay prize is April 30, 2012. Please see gaskelljournal.com for further details.

The annual meeting of the Victorians Institute will be held in October, 2012, at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond. Check www.vcu.edu/vij for more CFP and more information. Organizer, David Latané, dlatane@vcu.edu

THE HISTORIANS OF BRITISH ART TRAVEL AWARD is designated for a graduate student member of HBA who will be presenting a paper on British art or visual culture at an academic conference in 2012. The award of $350 is intended to offset travel costs. To apply, please send a letter of request, a copy of the letter of acceptance from the organizer of the conference session, an abstract of the paper to be presented, a budget of estimated expenses (noting what items may be covered by other resources), and a CV to Renate Dohmen, Prize Committee Chair, HBA, brd4231@louisiana.edu. Deadline Dec. 1, 2011.

THE HISTORIANS OF BRITISH ART PUBLICATION GRANT: HBA invites applications for its 2012 publication grant. The society will award up to $750 to offset publication costs for a book manuscript in the field of British art or visual culture that has been accepted by a publisher. Applicants must be current members of HBA. To apply, send a 500-word project description, publication information (name of journal or press and projected publication date), budget, and CV to Renate Dohmen, Prize Committee Chair, HBA, brd4231@louisiana.edu. The deadline is January 15, 2012.

Interdisciplinary Nineteenth-Century Studies invites nominations and submissions for its annual essay prize. The $500 prize recognizes excellence in interdisciplinary scholarship on any nineteenth-century topic or world region. Articles published in a book or journal dated 2011 are eligible. The winner will be announced at the 2012 conference (University of Kentucky, March 22-25) and invited to put together a panel for the 2013 INCS Conference. **Please send three paper copies** of the nominated essay to Professor Sharon Aronofsky Weltman, Department of English, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA 70803 **no later than January 15, 2012.** See http://www.nd.edu/~incshp/.