

W.M. THACKERAY : NOSTALGIC SATIRIST

A Reappraisal of Some Aspects of his  
Style.

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ERRATA

- p.33, 3rd line, for "Cheston" read "Chesterton."
- p.52, 4th line, should read "possessions."
- p.98, 9th line from bottom, should read "glum-faced."

## Preface

In this brief study, I have attempted to re-examine various critical issues raised by Thackeray's style, which seem to me unavoidable and which for convenience I have divided into these subjects: "Authorial Voice", "Satiric Method", "Stereotyping", "Time" and "Cynicism and Distance".

I hope that the title: "Nostalgic Satirist" will be seen to have some meaning in view of the comments made in these chapters. The first of these concentrates predominantly on Thackeray's habit of commenting in asides, a habit much criticised and which I have attempted to defend in terms of the genre of Thackeray's works, which I take to be closer to the eighteenth century than to the Victorian era. I have attempted to explain his tendency towards rhetoric in terms of his self-conscious attitude, the special relationship he has with his reader, and in terms of his satiric method which is necessarily often rhetorical.

Chapter 2 deals with this method in greater detail, and also with Thackeray's derivative use of the satiric fiction of the picaresque. Chapter 3 develops the defence of this method, involving as it does the use of stereotypes. I have attempted to show how Thackeray is again here using a well established tradition.

Chapter 4 deals with one of Thackeray's preoccupations: Time, as it affects his style, particularly in Henry Esmond. Here, I have also attempted to show his wistfulness for the past, evident elsewhere in his choice of subject matter and approach.

In Chapter 5, I have dealt briefly with that "old chestnut", cynicism, much discussed but unavoidable, which leads me to speculate on the common feature of all the issues discussed: a

feature which I have called "distance", which I take to be Thackeray's distinctive "trade mark".

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## Note

Where the Smith, Elder & Co. edition of Thackeray's novels was available, I have given page, as well as chapter references. Elsewhere, due to the plethora of editions available, I have simply given chapter references.

Also, due to the exigencies of the word processing facility used, I found it more convenient to use end notes, rather than footnotes, and for this irregularity I ask the reader's indulgence.

## Chapter 1 - Authorial Voice in Thackeray's Work

One of the more familiar criticisms of Thackeray's style has been that he "tells" rather than "shows"; that his commentary is intrusive and excessive. Further, on occasion, these asides and commentaries become insincere and sententious. Certainly, the author's voice is frequently heard, drawing us aside to pronounce upon this or that but it is not merely Thackeray's voice as a single entity which causes problems; he has numerous voices. This obviously complicates the sincerity issue since it has to be established exactly "who" the author is in each situation, ranging from the all-seeing narrator of Vanity Fair to the "I" of Henry Esmond. In his early essays and articles, and particularly in his contributions to Punch, in the person of the Fat Contributor, he invents a fictitious persona for himself (not too far-removed from his own personality.) Some of these instances will be explored more fully in this chapter, but first a more general examination will be made of the nature of authorial asides and comments.

It is important to clarify what it is about "telling" which provokes criticism. To say that it involves a special relationship between the author or narrator and his reader is obvious, but "special" in what way? And why should this be regarded as stylistically weak? Perhaps this is because it bursts the bubble of fiction, as it were, since it is self-conscious in that the author intrudes himself or his narrator's persona and addresses the reader directly, thereby suspending the time sequence and also the illusion of objective reporting or journalistic fiction which we expect of the novel. Our expectations of the "great tradition" of the nineteenth century novel with its attempt at objective accuracy may be misplaced,

however, in a consideration of Thackeray's work and it seems misguided to apply the frequently-quoted later criteria of D.H. Lawrence in his piece "Why the Novel Matters" (Phoenix).<sup>1</sup> The latter's dictates on the purpose of the novel (which paradoxically abjure "purpose" in the novel) place emphasis on the importance of "man-alive" and on the avoidance of sterile theorizing. The aside or commentary might be considered to fall under the latter heading, but an overall view of Thackeray's work leaves a strong impression of "man-alive", at any rate, with this reader.

Comparisons with later authors seem to be unfruitful, but when we examine the work of Thackeray's precursors in satire, Sterne and Fielding, we find different attitudes to the novel from those we have come to expect of the "great tradition".

Sterne's disrespect for the integrity of his fiction is legendary; so much so that Tristram Shandy has almost no structure, the story of Tristram Shandy being merely an excuse for a series of hilarious digressions. More specifically, these digressions constitute a very particular element of Sterne's fiction; that is a special relationship between Sterne and his reader, and between Sterne and his own fiction. He satirizes the conventions of contemporary fiction:

I know there are many readers in the world, as well as many other good people in it, who are no readers at all, - who find themselves ill at ease, unless they are let into the whole secret from first to last, of everything which concerns you.<sup>2</sup>

The reader's conventional curiosity and love of realistic detail, then, is satiated with interminable descriptions of Tristram Shandy's conception, birth, circumcision, and so forth.

To add to the complications of this fiction, the reader's enjoyment is by no means diminished by the awareness that the narrator himself is fictitious. Throughout the work, Sterne

inserts himself (as Tristram Shandy) and suspends the story in order to address the reader; for instance:

How could you, Madam, be so inattentive in reading the last chapter? I told you in it, that my mother was a papist. - Papist! You told me no such thing, Sir....<sup>3</sup>

Here we find an author satirizing his own art in a manner more recently typified by the "Monty Python" team. While it may be fairly objected that Thackeray's humour never involves clowning around to this extent we nevertheless find him stepping aside in a similar manner to laugh at the conventions of the romantic novel at the end of The Newcomes, as follows:

But for you, dear friend, it is as you like. You may settle your Fable-land in your own fashion. Anything you like happens in Fable-land. Wicked folks die apropos ... annoying folks are got out of the way; the poor are rewarded.... And the poet of Fable-land rewards and punishes absolutely ... makes the hero and heroine happy at last, and happy ever after.<sup>4</sup>

Fielding had, of course, also made use of asides in order to satirize the business of fiction itself, for instance, Book V, Chapter i of Tom Jones is entitled: "Of the serious in writing, and for what purpose it is introduced." He also anticipates the reader's reactions and addresses the hypothetical critic, in Book X: "Containing instructions very necessary to be perused by modern critics". He then addresses the "ordinary" reader:

Reader, it is impossible we should know what sort of person thou wilt be;... we think proper, before we go farther together, to give thee a few wholesome admonitions; that thou may'st not as grossly misunderstand and misrepresent us, as some of the said editors have misunderstood and misrepresented their author.<sup>5</sup>

and again:

This work may indeed be considered as a great creation of our own; and for a little reptile of a critic to presume to find fault with any of its parts, without knowing the manner in which the whole is connected and before he

comes to the final catastrophe, is a most presumptuous absurdity.<sup>6</sup>

To a great extent, probably, this sort of self-conscious rhetoric diminishes during the nineteenth century as authors become seriously concerned to create works of fiction as entities in themselves with their own internal logic, apparently disconnected from their authors. George Eliot's attempt at dissociation from her work by the assumption of a man's name was, however, hardly borne out by her characteristic tendency to moralise and comment throughout her novels. While she refrains from appearing in person, so to speak, her views are evident. Even James, arch-representative of that "great tradition" of objective novel-writing, occasionally lapses into "telling". In The Europeans, for the most part, characters are admittedly allowed to reveal developments through their own perceptions of one another, free of authorial intrusion; for instance, Eugenia tells her brother that both Clifford and Robert Acton are in love with her; it is left to the reader to discover the truth of her assumptions. However, this very abdication of overall control of the characters results, paradoxically, in an aside from James: "I cannot say to which member of Gertrude's phrase he alluded...."<sup>7</sup> and elsewhere, the reader is "told" about characters rather than being "shown":

If you had been present, it would probably not have seemed to you that the advent of these brilliant strangers was treated as an exhilarating occurrence.<sup>8</sup>

Again, in A Portrait of a Lady, he directs the reader's response: "Smile not, however, I venture to repeat, at this simple young woman from Albany...."<sup>9</sup>

It seems, then, that even the most objective of authors occasionally needs to address the reader directly. Why, then,

should these intrusions be found unacceptable? Perhaps for roughly these reasons:-

- a) because they destroy the illusion of "realism";
- b) because they imply incapacity on the author's part, in that he cannot dramatize or enact his viewpoint without resorting to overt "telling";
- c) because these comments reveal laziness on the author's part, in that he prefers to take the easier course of directing the reader's thoughts about a character or an issue, rather than enacting them so that the reader can come to his own conclusions;
- d) because such intrusions are stylistically clumsy and result in distortion of the structure of the work;
- e) because they are representative of unfashionable Victorian, moralistic, didactic tendencies;
- f) such moralistic comment is often sententious and sometimes insincere.

a) In the "realistic" novels (for instance those of George Eliot and Henry James) suspension of disbelief or the creation of a credible fiction is desirable. Admittedly, George Eliot often indulges in moral debate, aside from the narrative, or generalises from the particular. James, too, as has been shown, occasionally addresses the reader or refers to a character out of its fictional context. However, in both cases we find that the author has a serious attitude towards both his narrative and his characters, seeming to "believe" in them, thus demanding the reader's belief also. This reverence for fiction is only found in the "serious" novel, however. In novels of a more satiric vein a different approach is needed. Indeed, as we have seen from brief references

to Sterne's and Fielding's work, if a satirist is to have a free rein nothing can be sacred, let alone the author's own art. This necessitates a certain self-consciousness on the author's part, an awareness of his peculiar relationship to his reader and to his own fiction. For one assuming a role of integrity and the right to satirize vice and folly, it would be the height of hypocrisy to ignore the essential artificiality of fiction itself. This is clearly seen in Tristram Shandy and Tom Jones.

Thackeray, too, in his early pieces for Punch by the "Fat Contributor", exhibits this self-consciousness, albeit of a fictitious "self", but his role here is that of universal satirist and the very essence of his role demands a special privileged position for himself and the reader:

My mind fills with a savage exultation every now and then, as, hearing a piece of folly, I say inwardly - "Ha, my fine fellow! you are down." The poor wretch goes pottering on with his dinner; he little knows he will be in Punch that day fortnight.<sup>10</sup>

Here Thackeray seems to be satirizing the satirist (see Chapter 2 of this thesis) for the amusement of the reader in confidential asides, consolidating the special, privileged relationship between "author" and reader.

Above all, young traveller, take my advice, and never, never be such a fool as to go up a mountain, a tower, or a steeple.... Keep you down; and have breakfast while the asinine hunters after the picturesque go braying up the hill.<sup>11</sup>

In this example, far from puncturing the illusion of fiction by the use of ironic asides, Thackeray succeeds in creating a thoroughly realistic, fictional world.

Elsewhere, Thackeray tends to distance himself from his story by blurring detail; by suggesting a lack of particularity. It might have been one character who said such-and-such, or then

again, another; the action taking place, if not that day, then the next. Here is an example from The Newcomes, Vol.II, Chapter XLVII:

As far as we can judge from the above conversation, which we need not prolong - as the talk between Madame de Montcontour and Monsieur Clive, after a few complimentary remarks about Ethel, had nothing to do with the history of the Newcomes - as far as we can judge, the above little colloquy took place on Monday,....<sup>12</sup>

Admittedly, Arthur Pendennis is narrator here, but elsewhere he has cheerfully adopted the role of omnipresent narrator, besides this is not an isolated example of this sort of vagueness or typicality.

Thackeray's method of description is often generalised; he describes the typical rather than the particular, for instance, Pendennis's life in London is described in this way:

He would breakfast, for instance, at Mr. Plover's of a morning, in company with a peer, a bishop, a parliamentary orator, two blue ladies of fiction, a popular preacher, the author of the last new novel....<sup>13</sup>

This method of creating a generalised or typical fiction rather than a specific one does not, however, cause any sort of a jolt; the fictional illusion is not interrupted in this way.

b) The suggestion that authorial intrusion implies authorial incapacity is a more serious accusation. If an author resorts to asides and intrusions through inability to depict or enact his ideas then he is guilty of lack of skill. There are instances in Thackeray's work, for instance in Pendennis, in the chapter entitled "The Way of the World", where excessive comment may lead us to suspect that he is substituting glib asides and moralisms for the hard labour of wrestling with these issues in terms of dramatic enactment. (His avoidance of "hard labour" incidentally suggests that Thackeray is lazy - see c) rather than incapable.)

However, the accusation presumes that there is only one authorial method to which all novelists must aspire and that any exceptions to its fulfilment imply failure. Thackeray's art is characterised by a penchant for asides, but these give scope for some of his most biting irony and satire and, as will be seen from Chapter 2, asides are essential to satire. In Wayne C. Booth's words: "for a highly general, expansive kind of satire... loquacity is clearly useful."<sup>14</sup>

In addition, his asides reveal an interesting ambiguity of attitude which will be examined under point f).

An effective instance of this loquacity can be found in Vanity Fair which abounds in such satirical asides, in the chapter, "How to Live Well on Nothing a Year":

I suppose there is no man so little observant as not to think sometimes about the wordly affairs of his acquaintances, or so extremely charitable as not to wonder how his neighbour Smith can make both ends meet at the end of the year. With the utmost regard for the family, for instance (for I dine with them twice or thrice in the season), I cannot but own that the appearance of the Jenkinse in the Park, in the large barouche with the grenadier-footmen, will surprise and mystify me to my dying day; for though I know the equipage is only jobbed, and all the Jenkins people are on board wages, yet those three men and the carriage must represent an expense of six hundred a year at the very least. And then there are the splendid dinners;....<sup>15</sup>

Here the owner of the authorial voice is himself the prime object of satire, as Thackeray acts the part of the average malicious gossip, speculating on his neighbour's income. This sort of social malice is only a secondary issue so far as the main subject of Vanity Fair is concerned; it is a part of the more general, panoramic view of society presented by Thackeray, and for this reason demands a generalised aside. This example shows how an aside need not intrude upon the narrative, as Thackeray moves from this general remark to the specific fiction of Becky and Rawdon's

life "on nothing a year".

c) The suggestion that Thackeray's use of asides springs not from incapacity but from laziness is probably no less serious as a criticism of a serious author, but seems of a piece with his frequently careless attitude to his craft, shown by the numerous inconsistencies of plot, names, dates and so on, discovered by critics. Mistakes like these very probably stem from the tremendous pressure of work facing Thackeray, in terms of publishers' expectations. His output was enormous and he frequently wrote to deadlines, facing financial difficulties on several occasions. Especially in later life when he was urged on by the wish to make provision for his daughters, he worked perhaps too hard, forcing himself to undertake heavy burdens in terms of lecture tours. This does not of course excuse stylistic weakness and no doubt laziness in basic fictional method remains a grave misdemeanour in critics' terms. However, it does seem too much to expect that every phrase should be polished and every satirical point enacted dramatically, in such a huge body of work. Further, it does not seem clear that it is necessary to defend Thackeray over a stylistic feature which is simply idiosyncratic.

d) From b) we can see that there are instances where the aside is stylistically fruitful, rather than clumsy, although, regrettably, not all instances blend so easily with the main body of fiction. For instance, in Pendennis (vol. II, Chapter "Explanations"), we find:

Lucky he who can bear his failure so generously, and give up his broken sword to Fate the Conqueror with a manly and humble heart! Are you not awe-stricken, you, friendly reader, who, taking the page up for a moment's light reading, lay it down, perchance for a graver reflection, to think how you, - who have consummated your success or your disaster, may be holding marked station, or a hopeless and nameless place in the crowd - who have passed through many struggles of defeat, success, crime,

remorse, to yourself only known! - who may have loved and grown cold, wept and laughed again, how often! - to think how you are the same YOU, whom in childhood you remember, before the voyage of life began? <sup>16</sup>

This sort of forced rhetoric, with its plethora of abstract nouns and exclamation marks seems to show Thackeray to be guilty of the charge of clumsiness - it does not carry the conviction of his chatty, cynical asides, (like those quoted in b). The lack of conviction here is in some way involved with the point raised in e) and f); the sentiments expressed are so sententious as to raise doubts as to their sincerity.

In common with most critics, then, we have to admit that the quality of Thackeray's writing is inconsistent. This may be for the reason offered in c), namely, pressure of work. The fact that some examples of authorial aside are stylistically weak does not, however, condemn the aside per se.

As for the claim that authorial asides weaken structure, obviously in a book like Tristram Shandy, structure becomes a farce; the business of digression is the very stuff of which the book is made. Thackeray's approach is completely different, of course, but asides and commentary do make up a weighty proportion of, for instance, Pendennis, Vol.II, Chapter LXI, "The Way of the World", in which four of the fifteen pages consist of moralism. The asides here are all relevant to the story, however, even if the plot is delayed, and it is hard to see how the book's structure is otherwise impaired.

e) Closely allied to the previous point about distortion of structure must be the objection to the excessively moralistic quality of many asides in Thackeray's work; for instance, the passage quoted in d). If an author becomes over-concerned to illustrate some moral, he may distort the "natural" development of

his story or his characters, in order to prove his point. In Pendennis, I think we are left with this impression; Thackeray wishes to make virtue reign supreme by allowing Pendennis to marry Laura, despite the otherwise realistic tenor of the novel which suggests that this is an unlikely outcome.

As far as passages of moralizing are concerned, however, these include some of Thackeray's more subtle writing, revealing a sophisticated, shifting attitude to moral issues. One such example is taken from Pendennis, Vol.II, Chapter LI, dealing with Arthur's motive in abandoning the socially inferior Fanny Bolton:

Thus, as if fate seemed determined to inflame and increase the poor child's malady and passion, all circumstances and all parties round about her urged it on. Her mother encouraged and applauded it; and the very words which Bows used in endeavouring to repress her flame only augmented this unlucky fever. Pen was not wicked and a seducer: Pen was high-minded in wishing to avoid her. Pen loved her: the good and the great, with the chains of gold and the scented auburn hair! And so he did: or so he would have loved her five years back, perhaps, before the world had hardened the ardent and reckless boy - before he was ashamed of a foolish and imprudent passion, and strangled it as poor women do their illicit children, not on account of the crime, but of the shame, and from dread that the finger of the world should point at them. What respectable person in the world will not say he was quite right to avoid a marriage with an ill-educated person of low degree, whose relations a gentleman could not well acknowledge, and whose manners would not become her new station? - and what philosopher would not tell him that the best thing to do with these little passions if they spring up, is to get rid of them: that no man dies about a woman, or vice versa; and that one or the other having found the impossibility of gratifying his or her desire in the particular instance, must make the best of matters, forget each other, look out elsewhere, and choose again? And yet, perhaps, there may be something said on the other side. Perhaps Bows was right in admiring that passion of Pen's, blind and unreasoning as it was, that made him ready to stake his all for his love; perhaps if self-sacrifice is a laudable virtue, mere worldly self-sacrifice is not very much to be praised; - in fine, let this be a reserved point to be settled by the individual moralist who chooses to debate it.

So much is certain, that with the experience of the world which Mr.Pen now had, he would have laughed at and scouted the idea of marrying a penniless girl out of a kitchen. And this point being fixed in his mind, he was but doing his duty as an honest man, in crushing any

unlucky fondness which he might feel towards poor little Fanny.

So she waited and waited in hopes that Arthur would come. She waited for a whole week, and it was at the end of that time that the poor little creature heard from Costigan of the illness under which Arthur was suffering.<sup>17</sup>

Here Thackeray underlines the pathos of Fanny's position in characteristically sentimental style and comments ironically on the changes brought about in Pendennis's character by his "worldly wisdom".

In the first paragraph, the pathos of Fanny's suffering is contrasted with a heavily ironic treatment of Pendennis's "high-minded" conduct. Thackeray works upon the reader's sentiments by creating tragic irony:

"as if fate seemed determined to inflame and increase the poor child's malady and passion, all circumstances and all parties round about her urged it on."

It is doubly ironic that those most concerned for Fanny's welfare; her mother and Bows, should be instrumental in encouraging her fatal passion.

Pendennis, meanwhile, is viewed with an element of detachment, but his pomposity and self-conscious "goodness" are satirized.

"Pen was high-minded in wishing to avoid her. Pen loved her: the good and the great, the magnificent youth, with the chains of gold and scented auburn hair."

This view of Pen is partially the deluded, romantic vision of Fanny, but also partially, one feels, Pen's own self-image. Pen's own uncertainty about his own feelings is intriguing here:

"And so he did: or so he would have loved her five years back, perhaps, before the world had hardened the ardent and reckless boy"- Admittedly, this is partly Thackeray the moralist passing judgment, but one feels that the Pen of five years ago is still

alive to some extent. Pen's acceptance of social norms now makes him unable to love outside those confines, however. Thackeray's view here seems clear and of a piece with his condemnation of the "worldly" Major Pendennis. His language becomes violent in the latter part of the paragraph, which suggests greater than usual involvement with the issue:

"before he was ashamed of a foolish and imprudent passion, and strangled it as poor women do their illicit children, not on account of the crime, but of the shame, and from dread that the finger of the world should point at them."

This violent image emphasises the inhumanity of behaving "respectably" rather than "naturally", with spontaneous affection. As elsewhere, he points out that most wrong-doers' shame is not real shame, but merely "dread that the finger of the world should point at them". The connection with Pen here is that it might in fact be wrong for Pen to continue with the relationship, but his motive for ending it has been fear of social condemnation or snobbery. That snobbery and the elevation of respectability to a virtue are not merely folly but are in fact evil is one of Thackeray's firmly-held convictions in his earlier essays and it is interesting to find some loyalty to this theme in Pendennis.

The second paragraph presents the reasonable view; the practicalities of marriage to someone of a different social class would be fraught with pain and embarrassment in the society of the time. It is true that "no man dies about a woman..." etc., and we may be led to think that Thackeray approves of the "respectable" view, but the overall impression of the passage is that Thackeray is being ironic here, for the sentence: "The best thing to do with these little passions if they spring up, is to get rid of them...." is unavoidably linked to that earlier image of the poor

women strangling their illicit children - a ruthless, rational act.

And yet, Thackeray's sarcasm is subtle enough to contain a grain of truth, however ruthless he finds the "philosophers"; as already mentioned, there is some truth in his reflection:

no man dies about a woman, or vice versa; and that one or other having found the impossibility of gratifying his or her desire in the particular instance, must make the best of matters, forget each other, look out elsewhere, and choose again? (Ibid.)

Thackeray's attitude seems to be vacillating here; it is possible on the one hand to read his remarks as a bitterly ironic comment on worldly advice, and on the other as an objective, urbane acceptance of such worldly wisdom.

Sure enough, he articulates this desire to look at both sides of the the issue:

"And yet, perhaps, there may be something said on the other side..." proceeding to assert the value of "blind and unreasoning" but unworldly love. This, we suspect, is where Thackeray's true sympathy lies. He does not labour the point, however, and asserts his values tentatively, even ironically:

"perhaps, if self-sacrifice is a laudable virtue, mere worldly self-sacrifice is not very much to be praised;"

Irony is, I think, the clue to most of Thackeray's moral debates and asides. Not wishing to provide moral solutions, but wishing to air the issues, his ironic turn of mind makes it difficult for him to express convincingly sincerely-held beliefs or values without supplying an embarrassed ironic twist or shrouding them in piously sentimental language which may itself be ironic, or punctured by irony. For instance, in The Newcomes, after a long passage about the untold miseries of ordinary people's married lives, he finishes thus:

The fate under which man or woman falls, blow of brutal tyranny, heartless desertion, weight of domestic care too heavy to bear- are not blows such as these constantly striking people down? In this long parenthesis we are wandering ever so far away from M. le Duc and Madame la Duchesse d'Ivry,....<sup>18</sup>

In this instance, we are at least aware that Thackeray does not feel comfortable about his own sermonizing. As in the example from Pendennis, he avoids an ultimate conclusion, finding this unnecessary or obtrusive:

"in fine, let this be reserved by the individual moralist who chooses to debate it".<sup>19</sup>

This apparent fence-sitting stems possibly from fear of becoming dogmatic and a bore; from self-consciousness, that is, rather than indifference. Why then, we may ask, does he venture into moral debate at all if the outcome is to be inconclusive after such drawn-out discussion? Here Thackeray seems to be posing (or perhaps sincerely speaking) as the not-too-intellectual clubman who merely throws these issues out for his fellows to discuss and think about as they choose, in rather the same manner as the very mildly satirical songs of Flanders and Swann.

In the third paragraph of the passage quoted from Pendennis, Thackeray's irony and sentimentality come together effectively to condemn Pen's childish "worldliness": "with the experience which Mr. Pen now had, he would have laughed at and scouted the idea of marrying a penniless girl out of a kitchen." Just how much "experience of the world" Arthur has at twenty-five or so, we are already aware, and "Mr. Pen" reinforces the foolishness and pomposity of this youth. The irony of "but doing his duty as an honest man, in crushing any unlucky fondness he might feel towards poor little Fanny" approaches tragic pathos, through Pen's mistaken notion of what is "honest" and "duty". The recurrence of

the "crushing" image serves to arouse pathos while even the sentimentality of "poor little Fanny" is acceptable in this context.

The last paragraph achieves simple pathos:

"So she waited and waited....She waited for a whole week, and it was at the end of that time that the poor little creature heard from Costigan of the illness under which Arthur was suffering."

The irony of Fanny's hearing the news from someone as heartless and insensitive as Costigan is doubly poignant. There is also irony in her sympathy for Arthur's "suffering" - as though her own were trivial.

Despite this final, and effective, note of pathos, Thackeray has revealed a complex attitude to a moral issue; making his point by using irony, yet avoiding an over-dogmatic or propagandist manipulation of the reader's emotions (something which he abhorred). This is probably because he consistently finds himself unable to avoid the opposite point of view; while caricaturing the "worldly" attitude, he nevertheless concedes that it contains some truth. This surely illustrates that the aside has a place in exploring moral problems, without necessarily providing pat answers.

f) There are, of course, regrettable exceptions to this standard of aside and Thackeray does tend, particularly in his later work, to use sententious remarks and express stock "moral" sentiments and his sincerity on these occasions is lamentably dubious. The passage from Pendennis quoted in d) is one such example: "Lucky he..."<sup>20</sup> The archaic style of rhetoric here: "Fate the Conqueror" and "you, friendly reader, perchance" lead one to suspect the sincerity of the passage but even, perhaps, to wonder

if it is not written ironically. It is more probable that here, as elsewhere, Thackeray was paying lip service to pious, conventional sentiments which he did not sincerely share, but which he included to satisfy readers' expectations. The pomposity of the style here: "you, friendly reader ... who have passed through many struggles of defeat, success, crime, remorse, to yourself only known!" is very far from the irreverent, cynical Thackeray we know from Vanity Fair. Readers of the period had a sense of the need for "worthiness" in their reading matter, and perhaps this was Thackeray's attempt to provide them with an example of what did not come naturally to him. If this is the case, it is not surprising that the tone seems forced. However, one has an uneasy feeling that the passage may have been written tongue-in-cheek.

There are some occasions, of course, when Thackeray seems genuinely, and embarrassingly, to wallow in piety; particularly over issues connected with his own life-story. For instance, we know that Thackeray himself was a prodigal in his youth, plagued by a guilty conscience which was continually prodded by the presence of his worthy mother. This passage from Pendennis, Vol.I, "Flight after Defeat", leaves the reader uneasily suspecting that his maudlin sentiments are genuine:

And all this pride and affection of uncle and mother had been trampled down by Pen's wicked extravagance and idleness! I don't envy Pen's feelings (as the phrase is), as he thought of what he had done. He had slept, and the tortoise had won the race. He had marred at the outset what might have been a brilliant career. He had dipped ungenerously into a generous mother's purse: basely and cruelly spilt her little cruse. Oh, it was a coward hand that could strike and rob a creature so tender! And if Pen felt the wrong which he had done to others, are we to suppose that a young gentleman of his vanity did not feel still more keenly the shame he had brought upon himself? Let us be assured that there is no more cruel remorse than that; and no groans more piteous than those of wounded self-love.<sup>21</sup>

Not a glimmer of irony comes to the rescue until the last line here and solidly "worthy" sentiments are expressed through a welter of abstract nouns, virtues and vices; for instance, "pride", "affection", "extravagance", "idleness". There is a hint that Thackeray is embarrassed at detecting his self-identification with Pen's feelings here: "I don't envy Pen's feelings (as the phrase is)". However, the wave of emotional rhetoric regains its momentum with the Biblical allusion to the pathos of the widow's cruse, "recklessly spilt" by the selfish youth: "Oh, it was a coward hand that could strike and rob a creature so tender!" Here he reaches for the sublime in rhetorical devices, in the convention of the second-rate, moralistic Victorian novel. And yet we do not feel "worked upon" in any real sense; Thackeray seems here to be observing convention rather than genuinely attempting to wring pity from the reader. It seems that he is less successful in touching the reader when he expresses pious sentiment than he is in his more cynical voice:

"Let us be assured that there is no more cruel remorse than that; and no groans more piteous than those of wounded self-love."

The shock of the anti-climax prompts a strong sense of Thackeray's honesty in admitting to this very human experience.

Elsewhere, Thackeray suspends his customarily ironic tone to express "worthy" sentiments, using an elevated style, spattered with exclamation marks. One such example is his generalisation about doctors's visits: (Pendennis Book II, Chapter LII)

It is not only for the sick man, it is for the sick man's friends that the doctor comes. His presence is often as good for them as for the patient, and they long for him yet more eagerly. How we have all watched after him! What an emotion the thrill of his carriage wheels in the street, and at length at the door, has made us feel! how we hang upon his words, and what a comfort we get from a smile or two, if he can vouchsafe that sunshine to lighten our darkness! Who hasn't seen the mother praying

into his face, to know if there is hope for the sick infant that cannot speak, and that lies yonder, its little frame battling with fever? Ah, how she looks into his eyes! What thanks if there is light there; what grief and pain if he casts them down, and dares not say "hope"! Or it is the house-father who is stricken. The terrified wife looks on, while the physician feels the patient's wrist, smothering her agonies, as the children have been called upon to stay their plays and their talk. Over the patient in the fever, the wife expectant, the children unconscious, the doctor stands as if he were Fate, the dispenser of life and death: he must let the patient off this time: the woman prays for his respite.<sup>22</sup>

While the emotion described is a recognisable one, there is nevertheless something forced in the passage. Again, the rhetorical style seems to reveal a lack of real involvement on Thackeray's part:

"How we have all watched him!"

"Who hasn't seen...?"

"Ah, how she looks into his eyes!"

The fact that he resorts to these devices provokes the reader to suspect his sincerity. Further, his vocabulary has become uncharacteristically elevated and religious:

"if he can vouchsafe that sunshine to lighten our darkness!"

Again, he uses stock religious terms to reinforce the pious atmosphere: "thanks", "prays", "grief", "pain", "hope", "Fate", "life and death".

In judging Thackeray's "sincerity", we must at some time be brought to consider what it is we demand of an author in this respect. Must he convince us that every statement made by him is a firm, personal conviction? Wayne C. Booth in The Rhetoric of Fiction describes sincerity as "internal coherence of viewpoint".<sup>23</sup> This, regrettably, is lacking in much of Thackeray's work, when we bear in mind his switches from cynicism to sentimentality. Critical attention has been drawn to this ambivalence or inconsistency in Thackeray's work, but perhaps his two attitudes

are merely two sides of the same coin; for as sentimentality is only a partial, somewhat inadequate reaction to life, so also is outright cynicism. But, putting aside supposed inadequacies of Thackeray's personality, it is interesting that he should need to treat certain issues uncritically; issues such as mother and child relationships, duty and affection. Perhaps he was merely half-heartedly observing the conventionally pious sentiments of the contemporary middle-classes, or perhaps even the irreverent, satirical Thackeray felt that there were areas which were taboo even for him. That this should result in a blustering, weakened style is of concern, however, although these lapses are fortunately fairly uncommon.

The "sincerity" issue, as mentioned earlier, is further complicated by the fact that Thackeray uses different "voices", and we know from experience of authors like Defoe in Moll Flanders that an author need not be identified with the mouth piece he uses. He does, it is true, write in his own "voice" in Vanity Fair, Pendennis and The Virginians and elsewhere in numerous other works. However, he seems to enjoy creating a persona behind which he can hide; for instance the Fat Contributor, Henry Esmond and Arthur Pendennis in The Newcomes. Booth seems to think it relatively unimportant whether an author uses the "I" voice or not:

If the reason for discussing point of view is to find how it relates to literary effects, then surely the moral and intellectual qualities of the narrator are more important to our judgment than whether he is referred to as "I" or "he".<sup>24</sup>

This seems to ignore the phenomenon of the "pseudo-author", whose moral and intellectual qualities may be completely at variance with those of the true author - for instance in Barry Lyndon where "literary effects", for instance satire, are dependent on the role

of the "pseudo-author".

In "Papers by the Fat Contributor", published in Punch, we find Thackeray dramatizing the "I" person; he has created a character not far from his own: a lazy, gourmandising satirist who wanders the world reporting on the follies of others. This results in a fairly astringent satire, since the irresponsible tone he adopts masks a serious concern with folly, particularly the folly of snobbery. The fact that he uses the first person and apparently writes about real issues to real people brings his criticism closer to home. A modern descendant of this sort of episodic satire is Auberon Waugh in his "Diary" in the satirical magazine, Private Eye. Here also we find real issues, real people and a certain element of autobiographical truth given by the author, and yet he treats everything, including himself, ironically and irreverently. This sort of comic journalism presupposes an intimated, limited and sympathetic readership.

Thackeray also gives us a hint of the tactics he employs in insinuating himself into "society" circles and betraying them from within; as Chesterton put it:

To batter the worldly castle with the artillery of open derision, as Dickens did, is a much swifter task than to blow it up from within with one carefully constructed bomb of irony. This was indeed one of the essentials of Thackeray's power and position; he was attacking Vanity Fair from the inside, and must have been at least sufficiently polite to get inside it.<sup>25</sup>

It is Thackeray's "power and position" as a member of the society which he satirizes which gives his first person voices their piquancy; he has in fact been a guest at the tables of the great. He realises that his method of worming his way into their homes and appearing to be a harmless guest is hypocritical and treacherous, and offers a typical excuse: we all do it. He really seems to take a malicious delight in the future discomfiture of



*Old Gentleman. Miss Wiggets. Two Authors.*

*Old Gentleman.* "I am sorry to see you occupied, my dear Miss Wiggets, with that trivial paper 'Punch.' A railway is not a place, in my opinion, for jokes. I never joke—never."

*Miss W.* "So I should think, sir."

*Old Gentleman.* And besides, are you aware who are the conductors of that paper, and that they are Chartists, Deists, Atheists, Anarchists, and Socialists, to a man? I have it from the best authority, that they meet together once a week in a tavern in Saint Giles's, where they concoct their infamous print. The chief part of their income is derived from threatening letters which they send to the nobility and gentry. The principal writer is a returned convict. Two have been tried at the Old Bailey; and their artist—as for their artist. . . ."

*Guard.* "Swin-dun! Sta-tion!"

[*Exeunt two Authors.*]

those pompous fellow-guests, as was seen in the passage quoted in a):

"My mind fills with a savage exultation every now and then, as, hearing a piece of folly, I say inwardly - "Ha, my fine fellow! you are down."<sup>26</sup>

However, his satire is also directed back at himself as he shows how polite society reacts to him when they discover his identity. There is the cartoon of himself and Punch cartoonist, Leech, in a public coach as they hear the magazine and its contributors condemned by their fellow-passengers. Again, in The Book of Snobs, as each chapter is published, Thackeray refers to the outraged letters he has received from readers defending themselves from inclusion in some class of "snob", or he mentions the hostile effect he has aroused among the upper middle-class among whom he moves. In Chapter XXXVIII, on "Club Snobs", he comments:

Ever since the Club Snobs have been announced, I observe a sensation created on my entrance into any one of these places. Members get up and hustle together; they nod, they scowl, as they glance towards the present Snob. "Infernal impudent jackanapes! If he shows me up," says Colonel Bludyer, "I'll break every bone in his skin."

This realistic involvement and confidentiality, whether fictitious or not, does help to create immediacy. The author's real point of view may sometimes not be apparent in this sort of instance, however, as he is anchored to one particular viewpoint, not necessarily identical with his own; for instance, Henry Esmond has a far more "stuffy" personality than Thackeray's, whereas Pendennis in The Newcomes is perhaps more worldly. This does complicate the issue of "point of view", since the dramatized "I" voice may sometimes, for instance, be mistakenly taken at face value, when Thackeray had intended to treat the "pseudo-author" ironically. In those novels in which Thackeray preserves a

certain anonymity approaching the omniscient author of other novelists of the period, such as Vanity Fair and Pendennis, greater subtlety is possible. Thackeray can then present a less biased narrative and indulge in the shifting viewpoint and lack of commitment which we have discovered above, and which seem to appeal to him, (however reprehensible we may find this tendency).

There are advantages in using the "I" voice, however; for instance, in the enjoyable story, "A Little Dinner at Timmins's", published in Punch in 1848, (Contributions to Punch), Thackeray creates a confidential, chatty relationship between narrator and reader, frequently using "I", and giving a vivid, present tense description of the characters. For instance, from Chapter IV:

"Fitzroy Timmins, whose taste for wine is remarkable for so young a man, is a member of the Megatherium Club,...."

He assumes close acquaintance with his characters: "If Rosa had had a fancy for the cook of the Prime Minister, I believe the deluded creature of a husband would have asked Lord John for the loan of him."

One of Thackeray's most endearing and fantastic passages of description is found in this story, and its immediacy is also sharpened by this same "gossipy" tone, by which Thackeray takes the reader into his confidence. This is the passage describing Fubsby's, "that magnificent shop at the corner of Parliament Place and Alicompayne Square", which combines the most delectable delights for Thackeray - beautiful young ladies and delicious confectionery:

Yes, there they sit; and others, perhaps, besides Fitz have cast a sheep's-eye through those enormous plate-glass window-panes. I suppose it is the fact of perpetually living among such a quantity of good things that makes those young ladies so beautiful. They come into the place, let us say, like ordinary people, and gradually grow handsomer and handsomer, until they grow

out into the perfect angels you see. It can't be otherwise: if you and I, my dear fellow, were to have a course of that place, we should become beautiful too. They live in an atmosphere of the most delicious pine-apples, blancmanges, creams (some whipt, and some so good that of course they don't want whipping), jellies, tipsycakes, cherry-brandy - one hundred thousand sweet and lovely things. Look at the preserved fruits, look at the golden ginger, the outspreading ananas, the darling little rogues of China oranges, ranged in the gleaming cylinders.<sup>27</sup>

The main element in the charm of the passage is its freshness and lightness, coupled with the fantasy about the process of the young ladies' beautification, but the freshness and enthusiasm are intensified by the immediacy of the author's inserting himself and us into the scene:

"if you and I, my dear fellow, were to have a course of that place...."

and:

"Look at the preserved fruits..."

Elsewhere in the story, we find a dramatized narrator, with his own idiosyncrasies of speech and attitude which are by no means immune from the odd satirical shaft. Having made numerous uncharitable remarks about Timmins's standards of cuisine, the erstwhile guest is made to remark:

"I hate a man who goes and eats a friend's meat, and then blabs the secrets of the mahogany."

He proceeds to give away "secrets" in the same confidential, alluring voice; for instance, he reveals that poor Timmins had to borrow forks and spoons:

"I know, for instance, that he had my six, among others...."

In these instances from his early work, Thackeray disguises his true voice to achieve a dramatic effect, in that the narrator

is given an active role in the piece. This is often fruitful, and we are seldom unaware of Thackeray's true point of view. Satire can be made less uncomfortable for the victims and less risky for the satirist (in avoiding libel suits!) by the author's assumption of a role, since this remove from the particular enables him to achieve a more general sort of satire, where types rather than individuals are the target. (See Chapter 3 of this thesis.) Yet, at the same time, an admirable confidentiality is established with the reader.

This chapter has dwelt almost exclusively on Thackeray's authorial voice as revealed in asides or commentaries. Of course, we "hear" an author's voice throughout his writing; every writer has a distinctive tone, whether or not he uses asides. Nevertheless, Thackeray is probably most recognisably himself in these revelatory passages. What qualities of voice, then, are distinctively Thackerayan? To some extent, the familiar criticism of his ambivalence, veering from cynicism to sentiment is borne out by the passages examined above, but more distinctive is that faculty revealed in the passage about Fanny Bolton; that is, Thackeray's ability to withdraw, or refrain from commitment; to distance himself from a problem, not through irresponsibility or cynicism, but through genuine self-doubt. For one who spent a life-time devoted to fiction, he showed a healthy suspicion, or a daring irreverence for it:

The incidents of life and of love-making especially I believe to resemble each other so much, that I am surprised, gentlemen and ladies, you read novels any more. 28

## Chapter 2 - Thackeray's Satiric Method

As shown in Chapter 1, Thackeray's voice is often distinct and his style comes closer to the rhetoric we associate with eighteenth century writers than to the mimetic and dramatic techniques of nineteenth century writers of fiction. One mood in which this rhetorical style is used to maximum effect is satire; it is also one of the more characteristic aspects of Thackeray's style. Indeed, it seems that satire demands that the author's voice be "audible", according to R. Paulson:

To the extent that satire presents, and so represents its "object", it is related to other mimetic forms. But to the extent that satire attacks, it is rhetorical.... and there is a persuasive end in sight. However much mimesis or representation is involved, the generic end is rhetorical.<sup>1</sup>

This is true of Thackeray's method, when his satire is of the attacking kind; he also uses the other sort; viz. that which "presents and so represents its object" which will be examined later. However, first let us examine the rhetorical method, used in asides, essays and articles where Thackeray's aim is evidently persuasive, usually ironic, and his voice is clearly heard, describing with mock gravity examples of folly or vice. He seems here to be indirectly following the ancient tradition of the satirical cynic of the Roman "satura", who takes us aside and points out to us such examples with the purpose of instructing by ridicule. (More directly, of course, he is following in the footsteps of previous English satirists like Swift and Pope.)

One literary form which lends itself well to this rhetorical style is the travelogue. In numerous light articles written for periodicals, in the Sketchbooks and in other travelogues we find Thackeray, ostensibly speaking with his own voice, making ironic

comments on all he encounters. The suitability of the travelogue was not exactly Thackeray's discovery. As will be seen in the second half of this chapter, the picaresque form is a well-established medium, an important element of which is the wanderings of the "picaro" or rogue from which the genre takes its name. Thackeray's use of the travelogue in his early work differs from this, however, in that he was particularly dedicated to his role of universal observer and satirist, although in "Sketches and Travels in London" (Contributions to Punch), he does recognise the pretentious side of his desire to travel:

I have travelled as Mr. Punch's Commissioner in various countries; and having, like all persons of inquiring mind, from Ulysses downwards, a perpetual desire for locomotion, I went to propose to our beloved chief a new tour.<sup>2</sup>

However, the Editor tells him that the English "do not care a fig for foreign affairs":-

"You want to travel?" said he, whisking his bamboo. "Go and travel there sir. Begin your journey this moment. Travel in London, and bring me an account of your tour."<sup>3</sup>

This did not, of course, prevent Thackeray from writing The Irish Sketchbook (1843) nor Cornhill to Cairo (1845).

He had already written The Paris Sketchbook in 1840, and although it was written under the pen-name of Michelangelo Titmarsh, the voice and the impressions of the journey and of so many aspects of Parisian life are clearly Thackeray's.

This sketchbook is only perhaps secondarily satirical; his first aim seems to have been simply to entertain. Nevertheless, as with much of his digressive commentary, his tone is frequently ironic and often bitingly sarcastic. At the beginning, in "An Invasion of France", we are introduced to his fellow-passengers in a typically detailed and delighted piece of description which

dwells upon the indignities and follies shared by sea voyagers.

His account of the harrassed mother is only mildly mocking:

"Elizabeth, take care of Miss Jane," screams that worthy woman, who has been a fortnight employed in getting this tremendous body of troops and baggage into marching order.<sup>4</sup>

Again, a fairly mild comment is reserved for

a number of young men, of whom three or four have allowed their moustaches to begin to grow since last Friday; for they are going "on the Continent", and they look, therefore, as if their upper lips were smeared with snuff.<sup>5</sup>

Thackeray's method - he was also a cartoonist of ability - is to conjure up a type of character by adding a few well-observed touches and details. Thus he moves comfortably from the particular to the general and back again with no seeming incongruity. As evening falls:

Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_ (the wife in general) has brought up her children and self from that horrid cabin, in which she says it is impossible to breathe; and the poor little wretches are, by the officious stewardess and smart steward (expectoratoonifer), accommodated with a heap of blankets, pillows and mattresses, in the midst of which they crawl, as best they may, and from the heaving heap of which are, during the rest of the the voyage, heard occasional faint cries, and sounds of puking woe!

Dear, dear Maria! Is this the woman who, anon, braved the jeers and brutal wrath of swindling hackney-coachmen; who repelled the insolence of haggling porters, with a scorn that brought down their demands at least eighteenpence? Is this the woman at whose voice servants tremble; at the sound of whose steps the nursery, ay, and mayhap the parlour, is in order? Look at her now, prostrate, prostrate - no strength has she to speak, scarce power to push to her youngest one, - her suffering struggling Rosa, - to push to her the - the instrumentoon!<sup>6</sup>

The pomposity and inflation of the style here expose the foolish "Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_". She obviously has roots in actual observation; the details of her complaints and "the heap of blankets" seem to indicate this, and yet she is not to be seen as an individual; Thackeray calls her "the wife in general".

Thackeray has typified "the wife" perhaps so that his comments may be generalised and softened by spreading the satire over a wider range of subjects. The realism of the description is counter-balanced by an element of fantasy in the comic exaggeration and pomposity of style, which effectively projects the woman's character. The "expectoratoonifer" extends the comic fantasy of the "expectoratoon" mentioned earlier - a genteel, English version of the spittoon, "only...larger". The respectable title is fittingly used by such a respectable woman.

The comic suffering of sea-sickness is treated in an exaggerated style, in order to extract the full satiric potential from the scene, with lapses into bathos, so as to contrast the pomposity of the organising Maria with her present degrading state. The second paragraph is almost parodic; a sort of paean to "the woman who, anon, braved the jeers of swindling hackney-coachmen". The heroism hinted at by the inflated vocabulary is belied by the smallness of her concerns; Thackeray has reverted to the specific here with his "dear, dear Maria". His admiration for and terror of the efficient domestic dragon may well have had some autobiographical basis; he certainly relishes the prospect of Maria's prostration. The final bathos of the description mocks Maria's martyred attitude:

"no strength has she to speak, scarce power to push to her youngest one - her suffering struggling Rosa - to push to her the - the instrumentoon!"

Suspense and a sense of the melodramatic come from the dashes and Maria's maternal solicitude and sentiment are then abruptly deflated by that archly-named vomit bowl.

Thackeray obviously created scenes like the above primarily for enjoyment but he reserved his more seriously-inspired satire

for more worthy objects. One such is the English snob who is delighted at discovering an intelligent Frenchman who flatters him:

He is a foreigner, and you have been conversing with him, in the course of the morning, in French - which, he says, you speak remarkably well, like a native in fact, and then in English (which, after all, you find is more convenient.) What can express your gratitude to this gentleman for all his goodness towards your family and yourself? - you talk to him, he has served under the Emperor, and is, for all that, sensible, modest, and well-informed. He speaks, indeed, of his countrymen almost with contempt, and readily admits the superiority of a Briton, on the seas and elsewhere. One loves to meet with such genuine liberality in a foreigner, and respects the man who can sacrifice vanity to the truth.<sup>7</sup>

The Englishman's bigotry is exposed; he assumes the superiority of Britain to be a fact. Thackeray's irony is here barbed with all the embarrassed fury of a young man wishing to appear cosmopolitan and encountering for the first time one of his fellow-countrymen making himself ridiculous "abroad". The Englishman's real snobbery and lack of true manners are exhibited satirically as soon as he discovers that the Frenchman is, in fact, a hotel commissionaire for the Hotel Bedford, touting for business.

...Curse the fellow for an impudent, swindling, sneaking French humbug! Your tone instantly changes, and you tell him to go about his business; but at twelve o'clock at night, when the voyage is over, and the custom-house business done, knowing not whither to go, with a wife and fourteen exhausted children, scarce able to stand, and longing for bed, you find yourself, somehow, in the Hotel Bedford (and you can't be better), and smiling chambermaids carry off your children to snug beds; while smart waiters produce for your honour - a cold fowl, say,<sup>8</sup> and a salad, and a bottle of Bordeaux and seltzer water.

This passage is more bitingly satirical than the previously-quoted one, and it is surely no accident that it is blatantly rhetorical; "you" here is an inclusive pronoun, it includes both the author and his English reader. As in The Book of Snobs, Thackeray spreads the guilt by suggesting that all

Englishmen are snobs, including himself. This particular brand of snobbery involves both national chauvinism and class prejudice; while the Frenchman is flattering and admitting to the superiority of the English, he is a "gentleman". As soon as he appears as a commissionaire, he becomes an "impudent, swindling, sneaking French humbug" because the Englishman is embarrassed at having engaged in the converse of equals with a servant; what other "swindle" can he be guilty of than of having misled the Englishman into treating him as an equal? The latter's final humiliation is complete, since he ends up at the Hotel Bedford - ("and you can't do better").

Elsewhere in The Paris Sketchbook, the objects of Thackeray's irony range from the fine arts to the politics of Napoleon. In all cases, he appears as a sane traveller, commenting on the follies of a foreign country, and as a Victorian it seems impossible that he should escape entirely the charge of chauvinism himself. However, his patronizing remarks about the French are minimal and even then can be interpreted as irony at the expense of Michelangelo Titmarsh, (or himself).

His art criticism is decidedly rhetorical although his comments are often simply critical rather than satirical. His comments on French classicism are extremely sarcastic:

The anticlassicists did not arise in France until about 1827; and in consequence, up to that period, we have the old classical faith in full vigour. There is Brutus, having chopped his son's head off, with all the agony of a father, and then calling for number two; there is Aeneas carrying off old Anchises; there are Paris and Venus, as naked as two Hottentots, and many more such choice subjects from Lemprière.

But the chief specimens of the sublime are in the way of murders, with which the catalogue swarms.<sup>9</sup>

There follows a lengthy list of weighty titles among which there is a preponderance of gory death scenes.



REN

LUDOVICUS

LUDOVICUS REN

AN HISTORICAL STUDY

In "Meditations at Versailles" (Paris Sketchbook, p.253), Thackeray points out the absurdity of reverence for royalty, detached from any judgment of character. His sketch of "Rex... Ludovicus... Ludovicus Rex" says, perhaps more succinctly, what he expands upon in the passage about Louis XIV:

I have often liked to think about this strange character in the world, who moved in it, bearing about a full belief in his own infallibility; teaching his generals the art of war, his ministers the science of government, his wits taste, his courtiers dress; ordering deserts to become gardens, turning villages into palaces at a breath; and indeed the august figure of the man, as he towers upon the throne, cannot fail to inspire one with respect and awe:- how grand those flowing robes! In Louis, surely, if in any one, the majesty of kinghood is represented.

But a king is not every inch a king, for all the poet may say; and it is curious to see how much precise majesty there is in that majestic figure of Ludovicus Rex. In the plate opposite, we have endeavoured to make the exact calculation. 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 fleur-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 the majestic, imperial and heroic! Thus do barbers and cobblers make the 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 heroic stature.

Again, Thackeray's satire is turned inward upon himself and the reader and this is surely his most insidious, potent form of satire; after aiming his shots outward at some external target, he abruptly alters focus and we find that we, too, are its objects; in this case for blindly reverencing the unworthy object that is the king. Elsewhere, Thackeray frequently seems to betray those to whom we might have expected him to show loyalty. This is the very stuff of Vanity Fair, where Thackeray reveals "the secrets of

the mahogany" as he puts it; it is only possible for someone "inside" to satirize the social manners of the English upper classes. (See Cheston's remarks, quoted in Chapter 1.) However, Vanity Fair requires special attention and another chapter will be more specifically devoted to it. In The Irish Sketchbook and Cornhill to Cairo, Thackeray's irony occasionally misses its mark, as some jingoistic remark, inspected with hindsight, rebounds on the author. He resents the lack of deference and commercial ambition of the carman at Kingstown pier:

a carman, who is dawdling in the neighbourhood, with a straw in his mouth, comes leisurely up to ask whether you will go to Dublin? Is it natural indolence, or the effect of despair because of the neighbouring railroad, which renders him so indifferent? - He does not even take the straw out of his mouth as he proposes the question he seems quite careless as to the answer.<sup>10</sup>

This must be one weakness of using the first person in satire, for the author's assumption that we share his viewpoint may be misguided. Certainly it is unfair to illustrate this weakness by quoting examples where public attitudes have changed; this was, after all, light journalism written for a middle-class English public in 1843. Nevertheless, it must surely even then have seemed somewhat bigoted of Thackeray to have made the following arch comment:

In the Morning Register, the Englishman will find something to the full as curious and startling to him: you read gravely in the English language how the Bishop of Aureliopolis has just been consecrated; and that the distinction has been conferred upon him by - the Holy Pontiff! the Pope of Rome, by all that is holy! Such an announcement sounds quite strange in English, and in your own country, as it were: or isn't it your own country? Suppose the Archbishop of Canterbury were to send over a clergyman to Rome, and consecrate him Bishop of the Palatinate or the Suburra, I wonder how his Holiness would like that?<sup>11</sup>

In some instances, it is impossible to tell whether Thackeray is speaking as himself, or is guying the average English

gentleman's reaction to the Irish. In the passage above, for instance, the overemphasis of: "the Pope of Rome, by all that is holy!... in your own country, as it were." may be a neatly placed satirical bomb, planted to stir the reader perhaps into recognising his own bigoted attitudes. However, satire and irony should surely be recognisable; it shows some lack on the author's part if his irony is interpretable as straightforward commentary.

Again, in his attitudes to the Irish beggars (Chapter III), he reveals an irritable, bigoted personality which could effectively have been attributed to a fictitious persona like the Fat Contributor with doubly satiric effect, but since he writes The Irish Sketchbook in his own name, we must associate these reactions with Thackeray. On arriving at a village called Royal Oak:

Of course, as we stopped for a moment in the place, troops of slatternly ruffianly-looking fellows assembled round the carriage, dirty heads peeped out of all the dirty windows, beggars came forward with a joke and a prayer, and troops of children raised their shouts and halloos. I confess, with regard to the beggars, that I have never yet had the slightest sentiment of compassion for the very oldest and dirtiest of them, or been inclined to give them a penny: they come crawling round you with lying prayers and loathsome compliments, that make your stomach turn; they do not even disguise that they are lies; for, refuse them, and the wretches turn off with a laugh and a joke, a miserable grinning cynicism that creates distrust and indifference, and must be, one would think, the very best way to close the purse, not to open it, for objects so unworthy.

How do all these people live? One can't help wondering; - these multifarious vagabonds, without work or workhouse, or means of subsistence? The Irish Poor Law Report says that there are twelve hundred thousand people in Ireland - a sixth of the population who have no means of livelihood but charity, and whom the State, or individual members of it, must maintain. How can the State support such an enormous burden; or the twelve hundred thousand be supported? What a strange history it would be, could one but get it true, - that of the manner in which a score of these beggars have maintained themselves for a fortnight past!<sup>12</sup>

As a reaction from a travelling satirist, this is surely an

inadequate one. Perhaps we should admire his honesty in admitting to personal irritation and lack of sympathy, but the reader expects more from a serious satirist. Dickens's view, for instance, exhibits a more adult social criticism. Thackeray's observations are all on a small, petty scale; the beggars' "lying prayers and loathsome compliments" seem to blind him to the outrage of the situation. One compares his mild curiosity as to "how these people live" with Swift's justified anger and biting satire in his solution to the Irish Problem. However, we are expecting too much if we look for an analysis of society as a whole in Thackeray's work; his satire is of individuals or rather types, rather than of classes or political movements. As such, it is still of value; he judges the behaviour of people, not the social causes for that behaviour and this puts him closer to a Mediaeval, Christian morality than to a modern view of society.

It is in his comments on his own kind; the upper middle-class English, that he reveals his most observant and telling satire. At Killarney races he observes the contrast between the English and the Irish:

Here were the squires of Cork and Kerry, one or two Englishmen, whose voices amidst the rich humming brogue round about sounded quite affected (not that they were so, but there seems a sort of impertinence in the shrill, high-pitched tone of the English voice here).... And here of course the conversation was of the horse horsey:  
 .... 13

One instance of a more serious sort of satire is Thackeray's comment on electoral malpractices, although even this is treated more as an accepted joke than as something to be corrected:

Among the beauties of Coleraine may be mentioned the price of beef, which a gentleman told me may be had for fourpence a pound; and I saw him purchase an excellent codfish for a shilling. I am bound, too, to state for the benefit of aspiring Radicals, what two Conservative citizens of the place stated to me, viz:- that though

there were two Conservative candidates then canvassing the town, on account of a vacancy in the representation, the voters were so truly liberal that they would elect any person of any other political creed, who would simply bring money enough to purchase their votes. There are 220 voters, it appears; of whom it is not, however, necessary to "argue" with more than fifty, who alone are open to conviction; but as parties are pretty equally balanced, the votes of the quinquagint, of course, carry an immense weight with them. Well, this is all discussed calmly standing on an inn steps, with a jolly landlord and a professional man of the town to give information. So, Heaven bless us, the ways of London are beginning to be known even here. Gentility has already taken up her seat in the Giant's Causeway, where she apologises for the plainness of her look: and lo! here is bribery, as bold as in the most civilized places - hundreds and hundreds of miles away from St. Stephen's and Pall Mall.<sup>14</sup>

The cutting irony of this passage effectively condemns bribery and corruption on a small scale, but the most caustic sarcasm is reserved for the so-called "gentility" of the English, from whom this corruption has apparently spread. A satiric device is used in the comparison of the bathetic price of beef and codfish with the price of voters. His sarcasm intensifies after: "the voters were so truly liberal...." until his imitation of the chatty tone of the "jolly landlord and a professional man of the town": "Well,....So, Heaven bless us." Finally, he uses a parodic or perhaps mock epic style: "Gentility has already taken up her seat in the Giant's Causeway, where she apologises for the plainness of her look: and lo! here is bribery."

This style is reminiscent of Pope's scathing irony and classical parody.

Other examples of effective rhetorical satire abound in Thackeray's essays and articles; The Book of Snobs, for instance. However, I have chosen the travelogue as being symptomatic of Thackeray's wideranging "panoramic" method and therefore as a rich source of such examples. From Cornhill to Cairo, while containing numerous examples of unfortunate, unconscious satire (Thackeray

being jingoistic again) is another case in point. For the sake of brevity, I shall include just one quotation from this work; yet another instance of Thackeray's exposure of snobbery and hypocrisy, as he depicts the tourist mentality which receives at second-hand a reverence for "great sights":

First we went to the Church of St. Roch, to see a famous piece of mosaic-work there. It is a famous work of art, and was bought for I don't know how much money. All this information may be perfectly relied on, though the fact is, we did not see the mosaic-work: the sacristan, who guards it, was yet in bed; and it was veiled from our eyes in a sidechapel by great dirty damask curtains, which could not be removed, except when the sacristan's toilette was done, and at the price of a dollar. So we were spared this mosaic exhibition; and I think I always feel relieved when such an event occurs. I feel I have done my duty in coming to see the enormous animal: if he is not at home, "virtute mea me", etc. - we have done our best, and mortal can do no more.<sup>15</sup>

Here again, Thackeray makes what appears to be a specific comment, but manages to make it generalised by the insidious use of "we". Whilst he is apparently speaking for himself, his ironic remarks:- "I think I always feel relieved when such an event occurs", seem calculated to arouse agreement in the reader. Thus "I" here has become the spokesman for all weary tourists, and what appears to be self-satire is in fact a subtle method of spreading the accusation more widely.

#### Barry Lyndon and the Picaresque

As mentioned above, Thackeray's satire is not exclusively rhetorical; a satiric end may sometimes be served by the use of a convenient fictional form so that the object of satire can be enacted or represented. One such fictional form with a satiric purpose is the picaresque. Thackeray borrowed and adapted the form to suit his own purposes.

In its original form, then, the picaresque, such as in Guzman de Alfarache and the earlier Lazarillo de Tormes contained various formal elements:

a) It was the story of a "picaro" or rogue, a failed outsider, the servant of many masters, a penniless, amoral anti-hero who copies the conduct of his contemptible masters, his rôle varying from that of fool to knave.

b) A narrative point of view was another feature; usually the narrative being written in the first person. This added immediacy and probably dates from the fashion for criminal "autobiographies" in Spain. From the author's point of view, this element offered possibilities for satirizing the protagonist, as in Defoe's Moll Flanders.

c) The episodic structure of the picaresque is probably one of its most widely-known features and certainly one which lends itself to wide-ranging satire, giving as it does as many opportunities as possible for encounters with different types of knavery and folly as the protagonist proceeds upon a series of episodes, which are often connected by a journey.

Most of these elements are included by Thackeray in Barry Lyndon, which closely follows the pattern of Smollett's Roderick Random, which, in turn, derived largely from Le Sage's Gil Blas. Firstly, the protagonist himself, Barry, can loosely be termed a "picaro" despite his noble birth, for he is penniless, amoral, often a failed outsider and, for a short while, a servant of different masters. He sometimes lives the life of the lowest and this is often used to potent effect when he aspires to gentility; this is one of Thackeray's methods of pointing up the absurdity of Barry's snobbish pretensions; for instance:

I never had a taste for anything but genteel company, and

hate all descriptions of low life.<sup>16</sup>

He then proceeds to describe, with obvious relish, numerous scenes of "low life". He lives the life of a corporal in the English army and then that of an impressed recruit in the Prussian army, then of a spy, then a professional gambler, fortune-hunter and ultimately bankrupt and gaol-bird; meanwhile he pretends throughout to the standards of an Irish nobleman. The contrast is effectively and comically made. This contrast is also within the picaresque tradition since the "picaro" often claims to abhor the life he leads; his obvious hypocrisy is amusing.

Barry is frequently the "failed outsider", exploited and outwitted by knaves, (the fool/knave relationship described by Paulson being central to the picaresque.)<sup>17</sup> In his youth, Barry is the naif dupe of the flirtatious Nora; of his scheming cousins; of the "con-artist" couple in Dublin and of the Prussian recruiting officer. In the early stages of the story he is undoubtedly penniless and when he does gain a fortune it is the result of a gambling win and of its very nature transient and is soon lavishly squandered. Barry also serves various masters in both armies, and then works for his uncle, the Chevalier de Balibari.

Barry's "knaveish" qualities are even more frequently described by himself with obvious relish and self-approbation so that the reader is left to judge for himself, as Thackeray ironically allows Barry to bear witness against himself. For instance, Barry explains the necessity of behaving so badly towards the wounded Lieutenant Fakenham whom he robs of his uniform and papers:

I was determined to escape, and to escape under the character of Lieutenant Fakenham, taking it from him to his face, as it were, and making use of it to meet my imperious necessity. It was forgery and robbery, if you like; for I took all his money and clothes, - I don't care to conceal it; but the need was so urgent, that I

would do so again: and I knew I could not effect my escape without his purse, as well as his name. Hence it became my duty to take possession of one and the other.<sup>18</sup>

Self-interest is assumed to be a sufficient and justifying motive by Barry - seen as "my duty". In his dealings with Lady Lyndon, he is completely amoral; he shows the relative morality of the picaresque hero which in this instance we fail to condemn because Lady Lyndon so obviously deserves bullying. He acts as Thackeray's agent in satirizing her. His criterion is simply success. He admits to terrorizing her into marrying him:

Terror, be sure of that, is not a bad ingredient of love. A man who wills fiercely enough to win the heart of a weak and vapourish woman must succeed, if he have opportunity enough.<sup>19</sup>

There are aspects of Barry's character which are admittedly out of keeping with the picaresque conventions, but these are merely an extension of the satiric aims of the picaresque. For instance, Barry is more socially mobile than his Spanish predecessors; he is in fact able to move freely in all the courts of Europe, (although regarded as a free-booting outsider). Sometimes, specifically English issues which Thackeray wishes to satirize necessitate adaptations. Thackeray's preoccupation with English social snobbery is transferred (anachronistically) to eighteenth century Europe. A critical view of the "gentleman" is central to the work, so we are treated to numerous maxims about gentlemanly behaviour by Barry, the knave, outsider and gambler, who always adheres to his title as an impoverished Irish noble. After the war, he has to seek an occupation and Thackeray ironically lets Barry reveal his foolish code of honour:

Many of our mess got leave to work in trades; but I had been brought up to none: and besides my honour forbade me; for as a gentleman, I could not soil my fingers by a manual occupation.<sup>20</sup>

The idle life of the privileged, rich, titled, pedigree-ridden aristocrat as Thackeray imagined him to have existed in the eighteenth century is also satirized. Barry has a flagrantly bogus coat of arms drawn up:

I warrant the legends of the Herald's College are not more authentic than mine was.<sup>21</sup>

His uncle, the Chevalier de Balibari, in reality also an impoverished Irish gambler, also becomes the vehicle for Thackeray's irony, an irony all the more pointed because the Chevalier takes the business of birth seriously. He:

knew the pedigree of every considerable family in Europe. He said it was the only knowledge befitting a gentleman; and when we were not at cards, we would pass hours over Gwillim or D'Hozier, reading the genealogies, learning the blazons, and making ourselves acquainted with the relationships of our class. Alas! the noble science is getting into disrepute now, so are cards, without which studies and pastimes I can hardly conceive how a man of honour can exist.<sup>22</sup>

Paulson points out the central importance of the variations of the knave/fool relationship to the satire of the picaresque fiction and it is surely in the protagonist's ability to assume different roles that his satiric potential lies. On one occasion, the humour of the situation lies in his folly, usually in aspiring to an absurd code or ordeal, for instance, his debased idea of "honour", which is exploited by some knave. On another occasion, he is the satiric agent, operating as a knave to exploit someone else's folly. In increasing his protagonist's adaptability and social mobility, Thackeray is merely extending the possible range of objects of satire. He can, for instance, now satirize the corruption and foppery of the courts of Europe, as well as the life of a poor relation in a family of the petty landed Irish gentry, in addition to life in the armies of England and Prussia.

Another formal element of the "picaresque" retained by

Thackeray is the narrative point of view. Barry Lyndon "speaks" in the first person as do most picaresque protagonists. As well as adding immediacy, this gives the author the possibility of satirizing the satirist as we have seen from some of the examples above. More important than the narrative is the voice of the protagonist. Barry frequently destroys the illusion of suspense by revealing, prematurely, the outcome of some incident, like his duel with Captain Quin. He leaves his mother's house to fight the duel...

The curtains of her bedroom windows were down, and they didn't move as we mounted and trotted off .... But two hours afterwards, you should have seen her as she came tottering downstairs, and heard the scream which she gave as she hugged her boy to her heart, quite unharmed, and without a wound in his body.<sup>23</sup>

It is almost as though Barry's egocentricity makes him manipulate the narrative so that he always appears (to himself) to best advantage, regardless of the narrative itself. In fact the narrative is often inconsequential and rambling, due to the eccentricities of the "narrator"; however, this gives the author the opportunity to select and omit incidents at will. In addition, the creation of a persona as narrator other than the author's can reconcile the satirist's dual needs for rhetoric and mimesis in that he can alternately enact some folly or vice and then point these out in others.

One example of the adaptability of this form of narrative is the following passage in which Barry defends the status of his profession as gambler. The first person narrator gives Thackeray the chance to satirize Barry himself, but also, ironically, the snobbish illogicality of society's view of gambling:

All the luxuries becoming my station could not, of course, be purchased without credit and money: to procure which, as our patrimony had been wasted by our ancestors,

and we were above the vulgarity and slow returns and doubtful chances of trade, my uncle kept a faro bank....We always played upon parole with anybody: any person, that is, of honour and noble lineage. We never pressed for our winnings or declined to receive promissory notes in lieu of gold. But woe to the man who did not pay when the note became due! Redmond de Balibari was sure to wait upon him with his bills, and I promise you there were very few bad debts: on the contrary, gentlemen were grateful to us for our forbearance, and our character for honour stood unimpeached. In later times, a vulgar national prejudice has chosen to cast a slur upon the character of men of honour engaged in the profession of play; but I speak of the good old days in Europe, before the cowardice of the French aristocracy in the shameful Revolution, (which served them right) brought discredit and ruin upon our order, They cry fie now upon men engaged in play; but I should like to know how much more honourable their modes of livelihood are than ours. The broker of the Exchange who bulls and bears, and buys and sells, and dabbles with lying loans, and trades on State secrets, what is he but a gamester? The merchant who deals in teas and tallow, is he any better? His bales of dirty indigo are his dice, his cards come up every year instead of every ten minutes, and the sea is his green table. You call the profession of the law an honourable one, where a man will lie for any bidder; lie down poverty for the sake of a fee from wealth, lie down right because wrong is his brief. You call a doctor an honourable man, a swindling quack, who does not believe in the nostrums which he prescribes, and takes your guinea for whispering in your ear that it is a fine morning; and yet, forsooth, a gallant man who sits him down before the baize and challenges all comers, his money against theirs, is proscribed in your modern moral world. It is the conspiracy of the middle classes against gentlemen: it is only the shopkeeper cant which is to go down nowadays. I say that play was an institution of chivalry: it has been wrecked, along with other privileges of men of birth.<sup>24</sup>

Although the passage serves predominantly as an ironic comment on Barry's hypocrisy and warped view of life, it nevertheless also questions the arbitrariness of the standards of a society (surely Thackeray's own) which grants respectability to speculation on the Stock Exchange but not to gambling. In this way, Barry is both enacting folly and commenting upon it.

The episodic structure of the picaresque is also tailor-made for the rambling sort of satire at which Thackeray excels. Barry Lyndon is very fragmented due to this structure, although it is

roughly chronological. Barry's life, from his youth in Ireland, through two armies, the courts of Europe, aristocratic England, Ireland, and ultimately the Fleet Prison, is chronicled as a series of minor incidents and adventures, each of which reveals some instance of human absurdity or evil. This also gives scope for Thackeray's peculiar panoramic vision so central to Vanity Fair. In this structure lies, perhaps, the most obvious difference between this sort of satirical fiction and the novel. Criticism of Barry Lyndon as a loosely constructed novel with a weak plot and trailing end is thus seen to be inappropriate, since the essential purpose of the work is to satirize, and only secondarily to create an elegant plot.

To understand more clearly how Thackeray's satire works, a closer examination will be made of two episodes from Barry's narrative. The first of these is Barry's duel with Captain Quin, over the favours of Nora Brady, Barry's cousin, who has flirted with the fifteen-year-old Barry, but promised to marry Quin. Barry writes letters of farewell to his mother and to Nora, referring to "the field of honour" and to Captain Quin, ("whom I hate but forgive") and this sets the mock-heroic tone of the following description. He describes a sentimental breakfast with his mother, during which neither refers to the duel and Barry spills the salt,

... on which she started up with a scream. "Thank God," said she, "it's fallen towards me".<sup>25</sup>

The forgoing sentimental passage makes the following bathos even more effective.

At eleven o'clock Captain Fagan arrived, on horseback, with a mounted dragoon after him. He paid his compliments to the collation which my mother's care had provided for him, and then said, "Look ye, Redmond my boy; this is a silly business. The girl will marry Quin,

mark my words; and as sure as she does - you'll forget her. You are but a boy. Quin is willing to consider you as such. Dublin's a fine place, and if you have a mind to take a ride thither and see the town for a month, here are twenty guineas at your service. Make Quin an apology, and be off."

"A man of honour, Mr. Fagan, says I, "dies, but never apologises. I'll see the Captain hanged before I apologise."

....

What had taken place I may as well tell here. When we got to the ground, Ulick, Mick and the Captain were already there: Quin flaming in red regimentals, as big a monster as ever led a grenadier company. The party were laughing together at some joke or the other: and I must say I thought this laughter very unbecoming in my cousins, who were met, perhaps to see the death of one of their kindred.

"I hope to spoil this sport," says I to Captain Fagan, in a great rage, "and trust to see this sword of mine in yonder big bully's body."

"Oh! it's with pistols we fight," replied Mr. Fagan. "You are no match for Quin with the sword."

"I'll match any man with the sword," said I.

"But swords today are impossible; Captain Quin is - is lame. He knocked his knee against the swinging park-gate last night, as he was riding home, and can scarce move it now."

"Not against Castle Brady gate," says I: "that has been off the hinges these ten years." On which Fagan said it must have been some other gate; and repeated what he had said to Mr. Quin and my cousins, when, on alighting from our horses, we joined and saluted those gentlemen.

"Oh yes! dead lame," said Ulick, coming to shake me by the hand, while Captain Quin took off his hat and turned extremely red.

"And very lucky for you, Redmond my boy," continued Ulick; "you were a dead man else; for he is a devil of a fellow - isn't he, Fagan?"

"A regular Turk," answered Fagan; adding, "I never yet knew the man who stood to Captain Quin."

"Hang the business!" said Ulick; "I hate it. I'm ashamed of it. Say you're sorry, Redmond: you can easily say that."

"If the young feller will go to Dubling, as proposed" here interposed Mr. Quin.

"I am not sorry - I'll not apologise - and I'll as soon go to 'Dubling' as to \_\_\_\_!" said I, with a stamp of my foot.

"There's nothing else for it," said Ulick, with a laugh, to Fagan.

"Take your ground, Fagan, - twelve paces, I suppose?"

"Ten, sir, said Mr. Quin, in a big voice; "and make them short ones, do you hear, Captain Fagan?"

"Don't bully, Mr. Quin," said Ulick surlily; "here are the pistols." And he added, with some emotion, to me, "God bless you, my boy; and when I count three, fire."

Mr. Fagan put my pistol into my hand, - that is, not one of mine (which were to serve, if need were, for the next

round), but one of Ulick's. "They are all right," said he. "Never fear: and, Redmond, fire at his neck - hit him there under the gorget. See how the fool shows himself open."

Mick, who had never spoken a word, Ulick, and the Captain retired to one side, and Ulick gave the signal. It was slowly given, and I had leisure to cover my man well. I saw him changing colour and trembling as the numbers were given. At "three", both our pistols went off. I heard something whizz by me, and my antagonist, giving a most horrible groan, staggered backwards and fell.

"He's hit here, in the neck," said Mick; and laying open his coat, blood was seen gurgling from under his gorget, at the very spot at which I aimed.

"How is it with you?" said Ulick. "Is he really hit?" said he, looking hard at him. The unfortunate man did not answer, but when the support of Ulick's arm was withdrawn from his back, groaned once more, and fell backwards.

"The young fellow has begun well," said Mick, with a scowl. "You had better ride off, young sir, before the police are up. They had wind of the business before we left Kilwangan."

"Is he quite dead?" said I.

"Quite dead," answered Mick.

"Then the world's rid of a coward," said Captain Fagan, giving the huge prostrate body a scornful kick with his foot. "It's all over with him, Reddy, - he doesn't stir."

"We are not cowards, Fagan," said Ulick roughly, "whatever he was! Let's get the boy off as quick as we may. Your man shall go for a cart, and and take away the body of this unhappy gentleman. This has been a sad day's work for our family, Redmond Barry: you have robbed us of L1500 a year."

"It was Nora did it," said I; "not I." And I took the riband she gave me out of my waistcoat, and the letter, and flung them down on the body of Captain Quin. "There!" says I - "take her those ribands. She'll know what they mean: and that's all that's left to her of two lovers she had and ruined."

I did not feel any horror or fear, young as I was, in seeing my enemy prostrate before me; for I knew that I had met and conquered him honourably in the field, as became a man of my name and blood.<sup>26</sup>

The predominant satiric method here is the use of the parodic or mock-heroic, in Paulson's terms. This device usually displays a "low" or unworthy character aspiring to absurd or inappropriate ideals, speech or conduct, thereby revealing not only his own folly but the absurdity of the ideal, in this case, the notion of "honourable" conduct, displayed in the code of duelling. This is

probably a legacy of Don Quixote, but here treated with ridicule in an eighteenth century setting. The naif youth adheres to an absurd code:

"A man of honour, ... dies, but never apologises."

He is treated as a fool on two levels:- firstly by his cousins, by Captain Fagan and his adversary, who all perform a pantomime to convince the lad that he has killed Quin; secondly, Thackeray makes Barry the victim of dramatic irony in that the reader can perceive the absurdity of both the charade and Barry's conformity to the code.

The reader is given numerous hints of which Barry is unaware, although he is made aware later in the narrative of the trick played on him - that the cousins, Fagan and Quin are in collusion:

"The party were laughing together at some joke..."

Fagan desperately seeks to prevent the duel by diverting Barry from fighting with swords, with his invented excuse of Quin's lameness, and, to gain the support of the others, repeats it to them. The banality of the situation, already prosaic enough, involving a fifteen year-old youth and an uncouth captain fighting over the fat, frumpy Nora, is increased by the absurd and irrelevant reference to the Castle Brady gate, "off its hinges these ten years".

Ulick and Fagan overact hideously, to convince Barry of the authenticity of the duel, whilst the reader is aware that all is not quite as it should be. Fagan gives Barry Ulick's pistols, instead of his own, (they are obviously doctored) and tells him to aim for a particular spot under Quin's collar - where a capsule of artificial blood can easily be concealed. Quin himself overacts "giving a most horrible groan", then Fagan becomes ludicrously melodramatic: "Then the world's rid of a coward," said Captain

Fagan, giving the body a scornful kick...." Mick hastens the body away with threats of the police, and the hoax is complete. Barry, the dupe, is blinded to it by his absurd belief in "honourable" conduct:

I did not feel any horror or fear, young as I was, in seeing my enemy prostrate before me; for I knew that I had met and conquered him honourably in the field, as became a man of my name and blood.

The irony here is directed partly at Barry for debasing the code of "honour", and partly at the code itself, which is shown to be absurd in this context, in rather the same way as Don Quixote misapplies a knightly code of honour to a prosaic context. For this reason, the satiric method can be said to use something approaching the mock-heroic, here. Although we may laugh at Barry, he earns our sympathy also, as the foolish victim of a knavish hoax. However, his folly is seen to merit such exploitation. The violence, or at least, apparent violence of the scene works in a slightly different way from the usual "punitive" violence of satire, (see below) since Quin is not actually punished, but lives to claim the bride. However, the gory description of the blood, "gurgling from under the gorget" makes a powerful impact on the young Barry, since he remembers it with such clarity later. The purpose of the image may be to add to our impression of Barry's youthful vainglory; in addition, we experience the shock which Barry should receive, although he claims to be unmoved. In another passage entitled "I Personate the Lieutenant", we find Barry in the role of knave, exploiting the folly and vanity of Lieutenant Fakenham. The latter's behaviour is boorish and snobbish towards both Barry the corporal and his hostess, "the fair Lischen", in the house where he has billeted himself while he recovers from his wound.

(Fakenham) always treated me with scorn.... Nor was I the only person in the house to whom the worthy gentleman was uncivil. He ordered the the fair Lischen hither and thither, made impertinent love to her, abused her soups, quarrelled with her omelettes and grudged the money which was laid out for his maintenance.<sup>27</sup>

The irony of "the worthy gentleman" here draws our attention again to the notion of gentility; here we find a complete travesty of the officer and gentleman. He is rude, arrogant and mean towards his "inferiors" and exploits his rank and wealth, which he thinks entitle him to special privileges and he begrudges anyone sharing these:

Whenever any delicacy was to be provided for the wounded lieutenant, a share was always sent to the bed opposite his, and to the avaricious man's no small annoyance.<sup>28</sup>

However, his evident deserts are not Barry's chief concern; as unconscious satiric agent, he is merely pursuing his amoral course. He has learned from experience that self-interest is of paramount importance and we do not take his subsequent apology to Fakenham too seriously:

If Mr. Fakenham is now alive, I here tender him my apologies for my conduct towards him. He was very rich; he used me very ill. I managed to frighten away his servant who came to attend him after the affair of Warburg, and from that time would sometimes condescend to wait upon the patient, who always treated me with scorn; but it was my object to have him alone, and I bore his brutality with the utmost civility and mildness, meditating in my own mind a very pretty return for all his favours to me.<sup>29</sup>

Unimpassioned revenge, then, is part of Barry's motive for what follows, coupled with the pressing needs of self-interest. However, punishment is seen to be deserved, and Fakenham is a worthy object of what Paulson calls "punitive" satire.

Paulson discusses the metaphor of violence or scourging which is used in satire (incidentally a preoccupation of Thackeray's):

Punishment is the most extreme, and at the same time most common, consequence in satire.

....

The implications of the device of punishing the guilty are clarified by a survey of its sources. A satire is said to "pillory" or "lacerate" or "blister" the person it attacks. The convention of punishing a knave within the satiric fiction was probably first based on the belief that by a pre-enactment of his wishes the satirist could somehow coerce nature into making the fiction real; in this sense, punishment is a vestige of satire's origin in ritual and magic. .... Punishment thus conveys a definite admonition: this is the consequence of your foolish act, this is the effect of X's evil act; or, beware! this is what you could look like or what X does in fact look like.<sup>30</sup>

The later satirist's equivalent to magic is wishful thinking; in such modern satirical writings as those of Tom Sharpe or Auberon Waugh, the fool or villain of the piece is often placed in a humiliating or painful fictitious situation.

In Barry Lyndon's predecessor, Roderick Random, by Smollett, we find that revenge or punishment is Random's frequent motive; Paulson again emphasises that this is part of a satiric tradition:

The convention of punishment is traced in picaresque literature. .... Smollett the physician doubtless found it convenient to employ the correspondence between the physical and the moral: a good whipping will strip off moral disguise.<sup>31</sup>

Smollett has added to this tradition by making the "picaro" the "punisher rather than the punished".<sup>32</sup>

Thackeray has adopted this device in Barry Lyndon and uses it to great effect, (possibly he is drawn to it by his own obsession with corporal punishment, mentioned by John Carey in his recent study: Prodigal Genius.) An example of this sort of punishment is found in the following scene between Barry and Fakenham. Barry has carefully laid the ground, by lying in a darkened room with his head bandaged up, pretending to be mad, to confuse the doctor as to the two invalids' identities. Then he adopts the lieutenant's jacket and explains to the

doctor that the corporal upstairs, (really Fakenham) is mad and frequently imagines himself to be a lieutenant. The scene is set for the lieutenant's final humiliation:

As the lieutenant lay still in bed upstairs, I did not hesitate at all about assuming his uniform, especially after taking care to inform myself from the doctor whether any men who might know me were in town. But there were none that I could hear of; and so I calmly took my walks with Madame Lischen, dressed in the Lieutenant's uniform, made inquiries as to a horse that I wanted to purchase, reported myself to the commandant of the place as Lieutenant Fakenham, of Gale's English regiment of foot, convalescent, and was asked to dine with the officers of the Prussian regiment at a very sorry mess they had. How Fakenham would have stormed and raged, had he known the use I was making of his name!

Whenever that worthy used to inquire about his clothes, which he did with many oaths and curses that he would have me caned at the regiment for inattention, I, with a most respectful air, informed him that they were put away in perfect safety below; and, in fact, had them very neatly packed, and ready for the day when I proposed to depart. His papers and money, however, he kept under his pillow; and, as I had purchased a horse, it became necessary to pay for it.

At a certain hour, then, I ordered the animal to be brought round, when I would pay the dealer for him .... and then, making up my mind to the great action, walked upstairs to Fakenham's room attired in his full regimentals, and with his hat cocked over my left eye.

"You gweat scoundwel!" said he, with a multiplicity of oaths; "you mutinous dog! what do you mean by dwessing yourself in my wegimentals? As sure as my name is Fakenham, when we get back to the wegiment, I'll have your soul out of your body."

"I'm promoted, Lieutenant," said I, with a sneer. "I'm come to take my leave of you;" and then going up to his bed, I said, "I intend to have your papers and purse." With this I put my hand under his pillow; at which he gave a scream that might have called the whole garrison about my ears. "Hark ye, sir!" said I, "no more noise, or you are a dead man!" and taking a handkerchief, I bound it tight around his mouth so as well-nigh to throttle him, and, pulling forward the sleeves of his shirt, tied them in a knot together, and so left him; removing the papers and the purse, you may be sure, and wishing him politely a good day.<sup>33</sup>

Lieutenant Fakenham has already been seen to merit satiric punishment for his vain adherence to wealth, rank and pedigree. That he should lose these is only appropriate, and the fact that Barry can remove them by merely abducting his uniform, papers and money reveals how arbitrary and temporary these aspects of Fakenham's power really are. Whereas these should merely symbolise Fakenham's position, in his

case they are the totality of his claim to importance, for when Barry assumes them, he "becomes" Lieutenant Fakenham. The violence with which Barry completes his theft merely helps to emphasise the incident, and underlines the fact that all Fakenham's material possessions are merely props, capable of being stolen. His impotence and rage on being robbed add to our impression that he is without natural dignity or authority. Here again, he travesties the ideal English officer, who is authoritative without ostentation, courageous and manly. We find the negation of all these virtues in Fakenham.

Barry, by contrast, demands our admiration for his coolness and bravado in convincing the doctor, then lying barefacedly to Fakenham about the whereabouts of his uniform. He replies to the lieutenant's curses "with a most respectful air", whilst all the time, as we know, he is packing up the clothing downstairs for his own use. Dramatic irony is a powerful weapon here in the destruction of Fakenham's vanity; the reader knows of his humiliation before he does. Barry's coolness and deliberate villainy show that he has developed as a rogue since the days of his outraged innocence, when he allowed anger to rule his head. His ultimate outrageous behaviour, tying Fakenham's sleeves together and gagging him, robs Fakenham of any vestiges of self-respect; he becomes an impotent, silenced wretch. The image is an appropriate one; since Fakenham is morally feeble and exploits his position for power, satirically he is seen to be robbed of it. We approve of Barry's conduct and may find the situation amusing; anyway, it is hard to feel any sympathy for Fakenham. Admittedly, this is only a temporary state of affairs; the balance is continually being swung to one side or the other as the protagonist is alternately victim and agent in the business of outwitting. (Shortly after this, he becomes too inflated with conceit and falls victim to the confidence trick of the Prussian recruiting sergeant.)

In addition to being a piece of satire directed at the specific folly and vice of one typical, snobbish officer, the incident is part of a whole series of scenes entitled "Military Glory" which treat romantic, idealistic pictures of military life with cynicism and ironic scorn. No-one is exempt; Barry's fellow-soldier knocks him down and steals his reward; Fakenham is a travesty of an officer, as his name implies a fop and a snob; and Barry has no sense of military honour or respect for senior officers. Barry is here the wise one; the ideal is seen to be betrayed at every turn.

Although satire has been seen to use punishment as an effective metaphor to illustrate vice or folly, it remains removed from moralism. Lessons are not necessarily learnt; Fakenham persists in his folly, and in the sequel to the incident, finds himself impressed into the Prussian army, mistaken for a corporal. Even after his humiliation, and robbed of the symbols of his rank and birth, he persists in shouting pathetically at the Prussians, who do not understand him:

"You infernal wascal, I'll be wevenged for this. I'll wite to my ambassador as sure as my name's Fakenham of Fakenham."<sup>34</sup>

He is an absurd figure because his vanity blinds him to the real world. Barry understands how the world works and recommends that Fakenham offer a bribe to the commandant of the depot. This advice is offered out of good nature, but Fakenham shows no gratitude and is so mean that he nearly loses the chance of freedom by offering too small a bribe. Here the object of satire is a ridiculous individual, exhibiting folly, which, the reader feels, he (as a fictional figure) will continue to do.

This is where satiric fiction differs from the moral tale. It is not the business of satire to posit a moral solution; but merely to point to vice and folly. To this end, the protagonist himself can be a knave and/or fool to the end, and though he is the victim of satire,

the fiction does not offer any positive moral resolution, by showing the victim's reform, for instance. Barry Lyndon ends in gaol but has learnt no lesson from his experiences since he is a stereotype who cannot be made to diverge from his basic character. Thackeray's lesson is an illustrative one but not a moralistic one.

## Chapter 3 - Stereotyping

This chapter will be concerned with Thackeray's method of stereotyping, particularly in Vanity Fair. This applies obviously to character and, in a slightly different sense, to descriptive and narrative style and to commentary; for instance, as we may accuse someone of showing a "stereotyped response".

Firstly, though, we must examine and define what is meant by "stereotyped" characters. What does this term imply? Usually it is used pejoratively, suggesting that the author is too incapable or idle to create any but stereotyped characters - "flat" rather than "round" in E.M. Forster's sense.<sup>1</sup> That is, they exist only in one dimension, or they represent just one quality, vice, folly or virtue. From the Mediaeval morality play onward in the English tradition, the symbolic figure has been used and has developed. In early religious drama, a propagandist end was served by depicting characters which portray only one quality and cannot diverge from this role. This may be indicative of a relatively primitive culture and audience, but the use of stereotypes continued through more sophisticated times, being used for different purposes, often comic, for instance; Shakespeare uses such figures as Sir Toby Belch alongside his more fully-drawn "round" characters. Again, in Restoration comedy, we find Mrs. Malaprop illustrating just one foible. Satirists like Pope created stereotyped figures as the butt of their satires, for instance, the vain Belinda in The Rape of the Lock. Moving right on to Victorian times, Dickens sometimes creates stereotypes like Scrooge, recognisable, like Sir Toby Belch and Mrs. Malaprop, as comic types. In the previous century, Defoe and Fielding had made unashamed use of types, and the latter set out with the professed

intention of doing so. (See Joseph Andrews.)<sup>2</sup>

In much romantic literature of the nineteenth century, and for that matter of this, stereotyping is rightly disapproved of as representing weakness of creative imagination, and encouraging what I.A. Richards calls a "stereotyped response". That is, the reader is saved the task of having to respond afresh to a character or situation, since it is readily recognisable to him and he can resort to an easy, second-hand, familiar response. This sort of stereotyping characterises the weaker sort of romantic fiction; the Mills and Boon style of today. It seems reasonable enough at first sight to condemn stereotypes "en masse", then, as representing a primitive, unsophisticated tendency, especially when we contrast them with the subtly-drawn and observed characters of an author like Henry James, for instance.

However, we must not forget more recent experiments with stereotypes, which are far from indicative of primitivism; for instance, the plays of Beckett, where a symbolism reminiscent of the old Morality plays is used for a far from simple purpose.

As far as Thackeray is concerned, Fielding is probably the most influential force as regards characterisation, in that his "flat" characters are intentionally "flat", for a satirical purpose. A stereotyped character always behaves in a predictable way and this is important. In simple drama with a moral purpose, directed at an unsophisticated audience this is essential, but it is also necessary for the satirist's purpose that the fool or knave being satirized should not suddenly become a complex or sympathetic character. Thus, Thackeray's types are often functional, serving to enforce a satirical point; for instance, Lady Southdown is always the archetypal domineering evangelist.

Many other examples will be examined to illustrate the satirical function of the stereotype.

In addition to the types created for satirical purposes, there are also some in Thackeray's work which seem to be there merely for the fun of the thing or for comic enjoyment; for instance the aristocratic cheeses in Chapter LI of Vanity Fair:-

After dinner Mrs. Crawley had an assembly, which was attended by the Duchess (Dowager) of Stilton, Duc de la Gruyere, Marchioness of Cheshire, Marchese Alessandro Strachino, Conte de Brie....

Here one has to remember that even when Thackeray is merely playing, it is nevertheless at the expense of his "bête noir", the aristocracy. These types would fit W.J. Harvey's definition of a "card"; non-functional and merely for entertainment.<sup>3</sup> There are a few such types in Vanity Fair, for instance Miss Swartz and Macmurdo, Rawdon's second, and some of the colourful figures encountered on the German tour; e.g. Tapeworm, the Chargé d'Affaires, and even Jos himself, with his outrageous appetites and waistcoats. However, for the most part, Thackeray's stereotypes serve a satiric function. Amelia is the stereotyped "good" character to contrast with Becky, and George is the stereotyped "cad" to arouse indignation and a sense of the ridiculous in the reader. Pitt Crawley is the stereotyped hypocrite, albeit an interesting one in that he recognises what makes a type. He is able to re-type himself, as seen in his transformation from serious ascetic to country squire:

Lady Jane was instructed to be friendly with the Fuddlestones, and Wapshots, and the other famous baronets their neighbours. Their carriages might be seen in the Queen's Crawley avenue now;.... for though Pitt did not care for joviality, being a frigid man of poor health and appetite, yet he considered that to be hospitable and condescending was quite incumbent on his station, and every time that he got a headache from too long an evening sitting he felt that he was a martyr to duty. He

talked about crops, corn-laws, politics, with the best country gentlemen. He (who had been a sad freethinker on these points) entered into poaching and game-preserving with ardour. He didn't hunt - he wasn't a hunting man; he was a man of books and peaceful habits - but he thought that the breed of horses must be kept up in the country, and that the breed of foxes must therefore be looked to,.... And, to Lady Southdown's dismay, too, he became more orthodox in his tendencies every day: gave up preaching in public and attending meeting-houses; went stoutly to Church; called on the Bishop, and all the Clergy at Winchester; and made no objection when the Venerable Archdeacon Trumper asked for a game of whist. What pangs must have been those of Lady Southdown, and what an utter castaway she must have thought her son-in-law for permitting such a godless diversion! (Chapter XLV, p.614)

Here we have an excellent example of what George Moore described as "materialism", a study of which may help to explain Thackeray's obsession with types.<sup>4</sup> Moore accuses Thackeray of dwelling on secondary, superficial details, rather than on a deeper analysis of human character and motive. However, he does concede that this emphasis of Thackeray's is intentional:

He had decided that he would paint the visible world as it appears to us, and he never allowed himself to be tempted beyond the limits of this design, and judged by his intention, his success is complete. If little else, Thackeray was, at least, an admirable artist. The characters in Vanity Fair are known to us as friends we meet in clubs and drawing-rooms. They are drawn in firm, clear outline; their habits, manners, and habitual gestures have been well-observed and understood, and the result is a set of cartoon portraits marvellously well executed.<sup>5</sup>

However fair or unfair this may be in relation to Thackeray's insight into motive, it nevertheless gives credit for his observation of externals, an example of which we have seen in the passage about Pitt Crawley. Thackeray's preoccupation with the connection between material status and social manners has often been commented on; for instance, with reference to that oft-quoted remark of Becky's:

"I could have been a good woman on £5,000 a year."

He does seem to hold a materialistic view of human behaviour; society or Vanity Fair is an aggressive, competitive structure in which all jostle for position and possessions and the failures (the bankrupt, both financially and socially) are instantly forgotten. His emphasis on the vanity theme - the transience of social position and wealth - is clear in Becky's story, coming to a head as she stands surrounded by her ill-gotten trinkets, a ruined woman. This "vanity" is so pervasive that it dictates character: for instance, old Sedley, formerly a likeable gentleman, on his ruin becomes a grovelling snob and toady. Servants, too, are victims of the status game and behave as snobbishly as their masters, treating their employers according to their current wealth and rank. Sir Pitt's maid, the Raggles and the Clapps all alter their attitudes according to their employers' circumstances.

It is no doubt true that Thackeray's method of character sketching often rests on externals or superficial details. However, some qualification needs to be made of George Moore's analysis:

They are drawn in firm, clear outline; their habits, manners and habitual gestures have been well-observed and understood, and the result is a set of cartoon portraits marvellously well-executed (Ibid.)

The first part of this statement seems to be true, but the term "cartoon portraits" does Thackeray less than justice. A cartoon is not merely an outline, it is a comic exaggeration or distortion, usually with a persuasive purpose; in short, a caricature. Occasionally, Thackeray comes close to this, (for example with Jos and the other "cards") but there is an important distinction to be made between his more general stereotype and what may be termed "caricature", at which Dickens is the past

master.

An example of this contrast in methods may appropriately be made by setting old Osborne against Dickens's *Dombey*. Thackeray particularly admired *Dombey and Son*, which was published in the same year as *Vanity Fair*. The parallels between the characters are obvious; they are both British businessmen, hard, materialistic and stern fathers. Yet they are drawn very differently. Our first encounter with Osborne comes only in Chapter XIII. We have just left George, eating ices "in very good humour":

It was not so with old Mr. Osborne. When that gentleman came home from the City, and was welcomed by his daughters and the elegant Miss Wirt, they saw at once by his face - which was puffy, solemn, and yellow at the best of times - and by the scowl and twitching of his black eyebrows, that the heart within his large white waistcoat was disturbed and uneasy. When Amelia stepped forward to salute him, which she always did with great trembling and timidity, he gave a surly grunt of recognition, and dropped the little hand out of his great hirsute paw without any attempt to hold it there. He looked round gloomily at his eldest daughter, who, comprehending the meaning of his look, which asked unmistakably, "Why the devil is she here?...." (Chapter XIII)

Admittedly, Osborne presents an unattractive subject and he is judged by the reader, correctly, to be surly and bad-tempered, yet he has an unmistakable, awful, heavy dignity, especially as seen through Amelia's eyes. His appearance accords with the type; his face is "puffy, solemn and yellow" and yet he is immediately an individual and a not totally unsympathetically observed one, despite his "scowl" and "twitching black eyebrows". Beneath his "large white waistcoat" beats a heart which is capable of being "disturbed and uneasy". Even his ungallant irritation with Amelia, while marking him uncouth, is not incredible or even inexcusable in some readers' eyes.

Osborne retains this unlikeable, heavy dignity; boorish though

he often is, he is never merely ridiculous. This is perhaps one advantage of Thackeray's method of observing externals and reporting speech instead of delving into his characters' interiors (by contrast with Dickens's method). Much later in the story, when Osborne's intransigence towards Amelia and tyranny over his daughter have become familiar enough for the reader to have judged him dismissively, Thackeray nevertheless allows him a certain pathos:

He has not been the happiest of mortals since last we met him. Events have occurred which have not improved his temper, and in more instances than one he has not been allowed to have his own way. To be thwarted in this reasonable desire was always very injurious to the old gentleman; and resistance became doubly exasperating when gout, age, loneliness, and the force of many disappointments, combined to weigh him down. His stiff black hair began to grow white soon after his son's death; his face grew redder; his hands trembled more as he poured out his glass of port.<sup>6</sup>

Despite a certain irony in Thackeray's tone, implied in how "injurious" it was "to be thwarted", he nevertheless preserves Osborne's dignity as a credible human being. Cruel though he may be, Osborne has his own personal tragedy and the traces of satirical humour with which he is treated are free from the archness Dickens uses to portray Dombey. Yet Osborne is very definitely the stereotype he declares himself to be in his conversation with George after dinner, early in the story. He is a snobbish, middle-class businessman with a "chip on his shoulder":

"You shan't want, sir - the British merchant's son shan't want, sir. My guineas are as good as theirs...."<sup>7</sup>

Yet he is at the same time an individual who is capable of deep feeling though this is implied only in his appearance and angry behaviour.

By contrast, Dombey is presented to us in far lighter vein.

The description of his appearance is made subservient to the arch comic effect of the contrast between himself and his baby son:

Dombey was about eight-and-forty years of age. Son about eight-and-forty minutes. Dombey was rather bald, rather red, and though a handsome well-made man, too stern and pompous to be prepossessing.<sup>8</sup>

Allowing for obvious differences in the characters themselves, the method of description is completely different. Dickens's tone is light, mocking and dismissive. The comic effect is the priority here. As we learn more of Dombey, the method of caricature becomes obvious:

Of those years he had been married, ten - married, as some said, to a lady with no heart to give him; whose happiness was in the past, and who was content to bind her broken spirit to the dutiful and meek endurance of the present. Such idle talk was little likely to reach the ears of Mr. Dombey, whom it nearly concerned; and probably no one in the world would have received it with such incredulity as he, if it had reached him. Dombey and Son had often dealt in hides, but never in hearts. They left that fancy ware to boys and girls, and boarding-school books. Mr. Dombey would have reasoned: That a matrimonial alliance with himself must, in the nature of things, be gratifying and honourable to any woman of common sense. That the hope of giving birth to a new partner in such a house, could not fail to awaken a glorious and stirring ambition in the breast of the least ambitious of her sex. That Mrs. Dombey had entered on that social contract of matrimony: almost necessarily part of a genteel and wealthy station, even without reference to the perpetuation of family firms: with her eyes fully open to these advantages. That Mrs. Dombey had had daily practical knowledge of his position in society. That....(etc.)<sup>9</sup>

Dickens's determination to raise a laugh dictates the archness and sarcasm of tone here, but the character's integrity is severely jeopardised. Instead of allowing Dombey's appearance, speech and manners to reveal his comic potential, Dickens wades in and guts the character's attitudes, making a caricature, that is, an absurd exaggeration, rather than merely a stereotype.

Further on, he speculates in comic vein on Dombey's reactions on learning that his wife might inadvertently die:

To record of Mr. Dombey that he was not in his way affected by this piece of intelligence, would be to do him an injustice. He was not a man of whom it could properly be said that he was ever startled or shocked; but he certainly had a sense within him, that if his wife should sicken and decay, he would be very sorry, and that he would find a something gone from among his plate and furniture, and other household possessions, which was well worth the having, and could not be lost without sincere regret. Though it would be a cool, business-like, gentlemanly, selfpossessed regret, no doubt.<sup>10</sup>

Again, comedy is the effect produced by this exaggeration. Dickens does not intend to create a totally realistic creature; his purpose is not satire, but rather something approaching comic fantasy, which the reader can enjoy while at the same time recognising the distortion for what it is. The stereotype, on the other hand, represents with only some simplification, a real and recognisable class of people, or a real folly or vice, and so must retain some credibility in human terms if the satiric aim is to be achieved.

Vanity Fair's subtitle: "Pen and Pencil Sketches of English Society", reveals its connection with The Book of Snobs, and certainly the vignettes of recognisable social types are not hard to find. The satiric emphasis always falls on the aristocratic type, but all forms of social pretension or unthinking obedience to absurd codes of behaviour are satirized. Young Jim of the Rectory is ridiculed as the Oxbridge Varsity "blood". (It is interesting to note that, as well as the word "snob", Thackeray is attributed with coining the expression "Oxbridge".) Miss Crawley here has attempted to charm Jim with references to his university career and predicts that he will become "Senior Wrangler". James, however, is crassly amused:

"Haw, haw," laughed James, encouraged by these compliments; Senior Wrangler, indeed! That's at the other shop."

"What is the other shop, my dear child?" said the lady. "Senior Wrangler's at Cambridge, not Oxford," said the scholar with a knowing air;....<sup>11</sup>

James, in fact, is a foolishly pathetic figure, with his automatic acceptance of the precedence of "blood" and his youthful enthusiasm and inexperience of liquor, which make him an easy prey to the cunning Pitt. Pitt's urbanity and easy manipulation of his foolish cousin reveal again his ability to assess and exploit social pretensions: (see above)

"The chief pleasure which my aunt has," said Mr. Crawley, filling his glass, "is that people should do as they like in her house. This is Liberty Hall, James, and you can't do Miss Crawley a greater kindness than to do as you please,.... I know you have all sneered at me for being a Tory. Miss Crawley is liberal enough to suit any fancy."

He tactfully ignores James's insulting remarks to the effect that Pitt knows no difference between a dog and a duck and encourages him to further foolishness, so that he may disgrace himself with his aunt and thus lose any chance of inheriting from her.

"No; by the way," Pitt continued, with increased blandness, "it was about blood you were talking, and the personal advantages which people derive from patrician birth. Here's the fresh bottle."

"Blood's the word," said James, gulping the ruby fluid down. "Nothing like blood, sir, in horses, dawgs and men. Why, only last term, just before I was rusticated - that is, I mean just before I had the measles, ha, ha! - there was me and Ringwood of Christchurch, Bob Ringwood, Lord Cinqbar's son, having our beer at the Bell at Blenheim, when the Banbury bargeman offered to fight either of us for a bowl of punch. .... Well, sir, I couldn't finish him: but Bob had his coat off at once. He stood up to the Banbury man for three rounds easy. Gad how he did drop, sir! And what was it? Blood, sir, all blood."

"You don't drink, James," the ex-attache continued. In my time at Oxford the men passed round the bottle a little quicker than you young fellows seem to do."<sup>12</sup>

Here, as before, it is Pitt's ability to exploit the folly of adhering to social and material trade marks which enables him to

manipulate James. He merely touches various keys in the type-cast model (James) and sets him spinning. For instance, he picks up key words: "it was about blood that you were talking," and then he triggers the typed response by suggesting that the young man doesn't know how to drink.

It is a masterly, cynical piece of manipulation, in which Pitt has become for the moment Thackeray's agent in exposing folly. However, as has been illustrated elsewhere, the reader's condemnation of Pitt is more severe, although he is far more subtle as a type than Jim. Our sympathies for the the latter are aroused in a description of his normal conduct at home:

Mrs. Bute took one glass of port. Honest James had a couple commonly; but as his father grew very sulky if he made further inroads on the bottle, the good lad refrained from trying for more,...<sup>13</sup>

The unsympathetic type, once made "round", in Forster's terms, (see above) even momentarily, at once demands our sympathies. Thus it seems that James was not one of Thackeray's prime targets for satire.

In fact, the irony of the situation and to a great degree the satiric force of the incident are directed at Miss Crawley. For it is James's generosity in standing two prize-fighters numerous gins which damns him in his aunt's eyes and saves him in the reader's:

Had he drunk a dozen bottles of claret, the old spinster could have pardoned him. Mr. Fox and Mr. Sheridan drank claret. But eighteen glasses of gin consumed among boxers in an ignoble pot-house - it was an odious crime, and not to be pardoned readily.<sup>14</sup>

It is Miss Crawley who is here the stereotype - an upper-class "liberal" whose snobbery dictates what she may be liberal about. Admittedly we find traces of caricature, as we see Miss Crawley's values are inverted, as she judges gin-drinking to be an "odious

crime". Thackeray's satire here verges on the comic.

He shows a strong bias towards drawing stereotyped aristocrats, sometimes coming closer to portraying the "cards" mentioned above. Here, for instance, from Chapter VII, we find the names of the Crawley family in his history of their house, changing to be fashionably in keeping with the current monarchy or power:

The family tree (which hangs up at Queen's Crawley) furthermore mentions Charles Stuart, afterwards called Barebones Crawley....

Again, he mocks the aristocracy by attributing Sir Pitt's first wife with the unlikely name of "Grizzel, sixth daughter of Mungo Binkie..." The local squires have suitably "stuffy" comic names; for example Sir Giles Wapshot and Sir Huddleston Fuddleston.

Other social types are also mocked in a manner approaching caricature, and yet, there still remains the attacking satirical style, which picks on well-observed details. Lieutenant-General Sir George Tufto, an elderly military dandy, receives this treatment:

...padded and in stays, strutting down Pall Mall with a rickety swagger on his high-heeled boots, leering under the bonnets of passers-by,....<sup>15</sup>

Also among the military types we find the young ensigns, Stubble and Spooney, innocents impressed by the bogus swagger of officers like George and ultimately victims of the business of war.

Jos Sedley is an archetypal version of the Anglo-Indian breed, satirized in Chapter LX. These were the military and trading community who had made fortunes in India and returned to a comfortable retirement in England (this was a type with whom Thackeray was, after all, very familiar, as his background was Anglo-Indian).

Jos's friends were all from the three presidencies and his new house was in the comfortable Anglo-Indian district of which Moira Place is the centre. Minto Square, Great Clive Street, Warren Street, Hastings Street,.... - who does not know these respectable abodes of the retired Indian aristocracy, and the quarter which Mr. Wenham calls the Black Hole, in a word? Jos's position in life was not grand enough to entitle him to a house in Moira Place, where none can live but retired Members of Council, and partners of Indian firms (who break after having settled a hundred thousand pounds on their wives, and retire into comparative penury to a country place and four thousand a year.)

Jos himself, of course, is an excellent example of the "card"; he serves as a piece of entertainment, an exhibition of folly and as a foil for Rebecca's sharp-witted opportunism. He never exceeds our expectations and is entirely one-dimensional; in short the perfect stereotype. Our introduction to Jos, at the start of Chapter III, tells us all we need to know of this comic sketch of a character, for he never really alters or develops.

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), was reading the paper by the fire when the two girls entered, and bounced off his arm-chair, and blushed excessively, and hid his entire face almost in his neckcloths at this apparition.<sup>16</sup>

His love of comfort, food and flattery make him an amusing butt for Thackeray's satire and an appropriate victim of Becky's wiles. Warned by old Sedley of her intentions, Jos is delighted, and repeats one of his Indian anecdotes about a "girl at Dumdum...who made a dead set...."

Well, sir, the Artillery gave a ball, and Quintin, of the King's 14th, said to me, "Sedley," said he, "I bet you thirteen to ten that Sophy Cutler hooks either you or Mulligatawney before the rains." "Done," says I, and egad, sir - this claret's very good - Adamson's or Carbonell's? <sup>17</sup>

Of the major characters, Amelia is often referred to by

critics as though she were a stereotype. It should be remembered, too, that she is often seen like George as a parody of a stock heroine. Certainly, she seems to fit the definition as a one-dimensional, predictable figure. However, being a virtuous character, she presents Thackeray with difficulties in representing her as adequately as he does the sinful or foolish. Somehow, small, recognisable type-cast details are more readily seized on by the satiric observer than by the admirer and since Thackeray's talent lies in the former category he fails to some extent to depict convincingly the somewhat featureless Amelia. In fact, in this passage from Chapter XII, he seems to anticipate a lack of interest in the reader; an interest which he finds himself unable to generate:

Has the beloved reader, in his experience of society, never heard... remarks by good-natured female friends; who always wonder what you can see in Miss Smith that is so fascinating; or what could induce Major Jones to propose for that silly, insignificant, simpering Miss Thomson, who has nothing but her wax-doll face to recommend her? What is there in a pair of pink cheeks and blue eyes forsooth?

Well, presumably there is something, Thackeray implies, although the attractions of this superior type seem to be conspicuous by their absence. She is a "kind, fresh, smiling, artless, tender little domestic goddess, whom men are inclined to worship - " but her personality never expresses itself except in reaction to others' attitudes. She is struck dumb by the Misses Osborne and "wistful and sad" when ignored by George. Sentimentality is the note struck by Thackeray when he attempts to describe her and apologises for her lack of interest (again in Chapter XII):

Poor little tender heart! and so it goes on hoping and beating and trusting. You see it is not much of a life to describe. There is not much of what you call incident in it. Only one feeling all day - when will he come? only one thought to sleep and wake upon. I believe

George was playing billiards when Amelia was asking Dobbin about him;

It is perhaps a flaw in Thackeray's method of characterisation which restricts him in the creation of this uninteresting character. Lack of incident should not rob a fictional life of interest. Here, Thackeray's preoccupation with externals does not allow him to create a credible character, or at any rate an interesting one. The sheer unreality of a character with "only one feeling all day" is bound to arouse the incredulity and boredom of the reader. What we do learn about Amelia is that she is good, simple and doomed to suffer. Whenever Thackeray sketches in another line it only serves to reinforce our early impressions of her. He chooses, as usual, "material" details (in George Moore's sense) to illustrate her relationship with George:

But if Osborne's were short and soldierlike letters, it must be confessed that were Miss Sedley's letters to Mr. Osborne to be published, we should have to extend this novel to such a multiplicity of volumes as not the most sentimental reader could support; that she not only filled sheets of large paper, but crossed them with the most astonishing perverseness; that she wrote whole pages out of poetry books without the least pity; that she underlined words and passages with quite a frantic emphasis; and, in fine, gave the usual tokens of her condition. She wasn't a heroine. Her letters were full of repetition. She wrote rather doubtful grammar sometimes, and in her verses took all sorts of liberties with the metre. But oh, mesdames, if you are not allowed to touch the heart sometimes in spite of syntax, and are not to be loved until you know the difference between trimeter and tetrameter, may all Poetry go to the deuce, and every schoolmaster perish miserably! (Ibid.)

Here the details of Amelia's letter-writing characteristics add a certain poignancy to her character; it is not the sentiment which makes us uncomfortable, but Thackeray's own discomfort and his unnecessary aside at the end. In fact, he constantly feels the need to tell us about Amelia negatively; that is, he anticipates criticism. This is the surest revelation that the stereotype is

not effective in describing "good" characters, but is at its most powerful as a satirical device.

Another feature of the stereotype revealed by Amelia is that it cannot essentially change; Amelia neither develops nor degenerates and when she changes her mind about being loyal to George's memory, and finally agrees to marry Dobbin, there is no revelation nor maturation shown. She is, characteristically, the passive partner still, allowing herself to be bullied. In Chapter LXVII, Becky violently disillusions her about George, calling him: "that selfish humbug, that low-bred cockney dandy", and shows Amelia the love note from him:

"You know his handwriting. He wrote that to me - wanted me to run away with him - gave it me under your nose, the day before he was shot - and served him right!"

Emmy's reaction to this onslaught is masked, as it is not Thackeray's habit to reveal the inner workings of his characters: (from Chapter LXVII again)

Who shall analyze those tears, and say whether they were sweet or bitter?.... "There is nothing to forbid me now," she thought. "I may love him with all my heart now..." I believe it was this feeling rushed over all the others which agitated that gentle little bosom.

Thackeray only "believes" - he does not tell us for certain. Even at this crucial moment, which should have come as a dreadful shock of disillusionment, Amelia is still the mild, uncomprehending, irritating character that she always was, and if Dobbin expected her to change, he should have known better;

This is what he has asked for every day and hour for eighteen years. This is what he pined after. Here it is - the summit, the end - the last page of the third volume.

..... Ah! Vanitas Vanitatum! which of us is happy in this world? Which of us has his desire? or, having it, is satisfied? (end of novel)

Dobbin himself is an example of a "good" character, but one

who just manages to avoid being stereotyped. Perhaps this is because, being male, he can be allowed certain amusing quirks of mannerism and physique not permissible in a virtuous Georgian lady. He is not a stock "hero", despite Arnold Kettle's irritation with him.<sup>18</sup> Although Thackeray has told us that Amelia is no heroine, either, this only excuses her lack of interest, whereas Dobbin's awkwardness and clumsiness make him more credible. This is another case of Thackeray's illustrative powers focusing on externals: on manners, speech and gait. This is part of the cartoonist's talent so evident in his illustrations.

Thackeray's sympathy with the clumsy misfit arouses a good deal of pathos. At school, Dobbin is considered not "a gentleman" by the other boys, as his father owns a grocery business. His appearance is far from glamorous, and he is slow to learn and is thus kept down with the younger boys:

He marched up with the lower form, a giant amongst them, with his downcast, stupefied look, his dog's-eared primer, and his corduroys. High and low, all made fun of him. (Chapter V)

In fact, to such an extent does Dobbin avoid the heroic mould that he could be termed a stereotyped "anti-hero". His "blushes, stumbles, awkwardnesses" are the complete opposite of the accomplishments of the bully, Cuff, glamorous "cock of the school", with his smuggled wine, ponies on Saturdays, top-boots and gold repeater.

Fortunately, Thackeray manages to avoid sentimentality. Dobbin's: "Don't strike or I'll thmash you" manages a blend of humour and pathos, and it is this ironic detachment which makes Dobbin a convincing character. Undoubtedly he scores a moral victory over Cuff when he beats him in a fight, but we are left under no illusion that his support and popularity are entirely

pragmatic:

In consequence of Dobbin's victory, his character rose prodigiously in the estimation of all his school-fellows; and the name of Figs, which had been a byword of reproach, became as respectable and popular a nickname as any other in use in the school. "After all, it's not his fault that his father's a grocer," George Osborne said, who, though a little chap, had a very high popularity among the Swishtail youth; and his opinion was received with great applause. It was voted low to sneer at Dobbin about his accident of birth.<sup>19</sup>

We can remember that, in the early stages of the fight, George was almost ashamed to say, "Go it, Figs."

Later, Dobbin's awkwardness causes amusement among the Misses Osborne:

"What an innocent it is, that pet of yours..."

"Did you see how he blushed...?"<sup>20</sup>

Old Osborne also despises him for his awkwardness and lack of style.

Although Dobbin later succeeds in the army he is never accepted by fashionable society; his worth is only recognised by such unacceptable persons as Peggy O'Dowd and her husband, as if real goodness must be unorthodox in Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*. In conforming to the mores of society, or becoming type-cast, a character is immediately tainted.

George is one such example. Always popular, fashionable and successful, he is in human terms as Becky succinctly points out, a "selfish humbug, ... a "padded booby".<sup>21</sup> He is seen early on to be mean, vain and heartless. Having borrowed money from Dobbin to buy a present for Emmy, he sets off, at Dobbin's instigation:

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.<sup>22</sup>

His type-cast attractions are mercilessly satirized by Thackeray:

"He beamed on her from the drawing-room door - magnificent, with ambrosial whiskers, like a god."<sup>23</sup> George exists, perhaps, as a stereotyped parody of the stock hero. His appearance and habits are always those of the wealthy, socially acceptable, attractive, dashing young officer. His motives are consistently low and selfish; parodying the accepted conventions of such heroic types who are always assumed to be high-minded. He marries Amelia at Dobbin's instigation, and hugely regrets the loss of his father's fortune as a result. He comes to tell Amelia the news, and we see how warped his scale of values is:

George was too humane or too much occupied with the tie of his neckcloth to convey at once all the news....<sup>24</sup>

He has previously blamed Dobbin for his father's intransigence:

"A beggar, by Jove, and all in consequence of my d\_\_\_\_d sentimentality." .... "Do you suppose a man of my habits can live on his pay and a hundred a year?".... I can't change my habits. I must have my comforts. I wasn't brought up on porridge, like MacWhirter, or on potatoes, like old O'Dowd."<sup>25</sup>

Here we have the truth of the matter, as Thackeray sees it; this type of man cannot escape his type-casting. He cannot "change his habits". In case we have missed the point about George's worthlessness, he then attempts to affect concern for Amelia in an amusing scene:

"It's not myself I care about; it's you..... I can rough it well enough; but you, my dear, how will you bear it?...."<sup>26</sup>

Amelia is, of course, delighted at "the idea of sharing poverty and privation in company with the beloved object". She expresses concern for George:

"O George, how your poor heart must bleed at the idea of being separated from your papa!"  
"It does," said George, with an agonized countenance.<sup>27</sup>

George's shallowness and lack of moral insight remain consistent to the the end. Even in a state of remorse for his extravagance and unfaithfulness, his regrets are selfish:

Why had he married her? He was not fit for marriage. Why had he disobeyed his father, who had been always so generous to him? <sup>28</sup>

George is, then, a stereotype, but his purpose is an original one, in that he is used to satirize the conventions of the stock hero. Thackeray breaks away from the conventions of the novel with his professed intention in the subtitle: "A Novel Without a Hero". It is paradoxical that while having an original purpose, he should at the same time use stereotyping, which implies conventional responses.

Another character who overturns our expectations, and Becky's, is old Sir Pitt (in Chapter VII). Becky has built up a stock picture of him:

"I wonder, does he wear a star?" thought she; "or is it only lords that wear stars? But he will be very handsomely dressed in a court suit, with a ruffle,.... I suppose he will be awfully proud, and that I shall be treated most contemptuously. Still I must bear my hard lot as well as I can - at least, I shall be among gentlefolks, and not with vulgar city people:"

However, reality is very different:

When the bell was rung, a head appeared between the interstices of the drawing-room shutters, and the door was opened by a man in drab breeches and gaiters, with a dirty old coat, a foul old neck-cloth lashed round his bristly neck, a shining bald head, a leering red face, a pair of twinkling grey eyes, and a mouth perpetually on the grin.

Of course, it transpires that this slovenly fellow, taken by both Rebecca and John, the groom, for a servant, is Sir Pitt himself. Not only in appearance is he the antithesis of the stereotyped Baronet; his speech and manners take us by surprise too:

"This Sir Pitt Crawley's?" says John, from the box.  
"Ees," says the man at the door with a nod.  
"Hand down these 'ere trunks, trunks, then," said John.  
"Hand 'n down yourself," said the porter.

His apparently "ungentlemanly" concern with money and lack of social discrimination are also out of keeping with the stereotype:

"He never gave away a farthing in his life," growled Tinker "Never, and never will; it's against my principle. Go and get another chair from the kitchen, Tinker, if you want to sit down; and then we'll have a bit of supper."

("Supper" turns out to be tripe and onions; hardly aristocratic fare.)

Becky herself is one of the best examples of Thackeray's ability to create rounded, multi-faceted characters as well as stereotypes. Admittedly she has a consistent and simple driving force, in that she is entirely motivated by materialistic ends. It may be maintained that her instances of good temper towards Rawdon, Emmy and Sir Pitt are only part of her general acquisitive plan. But it is undeniable that Becky is more than one-dimensional or static. Seeing her in apparently inconsistent roles is important in assessing her character because we see that she has no fixed "character", but changes in a flash to suit circumstances; for instance, compare the alluring, glittering Becky, entertaining Lord Steyne, with the repentant, pleading supplicant who appears before Pitt Crawley; or the malicious cat who taunts Amelia with her ability to steal her friend's husband with the later penniless, "devoted" mother who appeals to Amelia's sympathy.

Within the scope of her delineated role of adventuress, Becky is continually interesting; changing and reacting to others. She cannot be said to "grow", and yet she achieves much of what she intended and thus advances in some sense. Her limitation is not

merely her immorality; we know that she is directed simply by materialism, as she flatters, cajoles, pretends, lies; Thackeray limits her as a "rounded" character or at least as an effective agent in terms of her ultimate success, by showing the confusion and futility of her aim. She has not clarified even to herself what her aim is, since when she reaches the top of polite society, accepted by the Ultimately Respectable, she finds she is bored and would rather dance "in a booth at a fair". When her efforts seem to have come to nothing and she loses everything, we are unable to see into her mind. This is in keeping with Thackeray's usual method, and apart from some vague immediate reactions as she wonders whether Rawdon will kill himself or whether she should do the same, no real analysis is made of her state of mind:

What were her thoughts when he left her? ....<sup>29</sup>  
 What had happened? Was she guilty or not? She said not; but who could tell what was truth which came from those lips, or if that corrupt heart was in this case pure? All her lies and her wiles, all her wit and genius had come to this bankruptcy.<sup>30</sup>

She is seen from the standpoint of the worldly observer who has to judge by externals - but only superficial externals; when Thackeray could allow her to reveal her true motives through speech, he refrains from doing so and he never allows the reader to make an examination of her mind. Perhaps this also has something to do with Thackeray's artistic method of line drawing. He has created a complex character, but has not allowed the reader full access to it; the reader must supply the colouring himself. This method may appeal to some readers more than a lengthy internal exploration of a character's mind and thoughts, in the manner of George Eliot or James. However, it does leave a certain mystery surrounding Becky. So far as the reader can tell, though, Rebecca has learnt nothing from her experience except resilience,

which moves her to pick herself up and start again: (Chapter LV)

"Good heavens! was ever such ill luck as mine?" she said; "to be so near, and to lose all. Is it too late?" No; there was one chance more.

The vagueness of her aspirations is revealed in this phrase, "to be so near and to lose all". What is the acme of her social aspiration? She had been accepted in the homes of the highest in the land, and yet this is apparently still not enough. She is still, of course, materially insecure. Perhaps she aims to marry Lord Steyne, but it is hard to see how this could be "respectably" arranged with their respective spouses still inconveniently in existence. She surely cannot intend to become his mistress on a long-term basis, as this would lose her her hard-won "respectability". The word "lose" is indicative of Becky's gambling streak and it is no coincidence that her fall draws her to the gaming tables of the Rhine. Her aims still remain vague, beyond the desire to "win" and possibly this very incoherence is an intentional element of Thackeray's desire to portray "vanity" - this is effectively symbolised by her lost winnings - the scattered trinkets which Rawdon makes her drop; ("a heap of tumbled vanities lying in a wreck" - Chapter LIII).

However enigmatic the essential Becky may be, she is more than a mere stereotype, by virtue of her sheer adaptability. Unlike the stereotyped villainess, she is a most amusing, good-tempered companion whom we cannot help admiring for her skilful manipulation of virtually every character but Dobbin. She does act in the interests of others, too, when they do not conflict with her own, when she reveals to Amelia George's planned unfaithfulness. Beneath her abrupt manner we seem to discern genuine affection for Amelia:

"You are no more fit to live in the world than a babe in arms. You must marry, or you and your precious boy will go to ruin. You must have a husband, you fool; and one of the best gentlemen I ever saw has offered you a hundred times, and you have rejected him, you silly heartless, ungrateful little creature!"<sup>31</sup>

Rebecca's gruff and almost violent disclosure follows in the scene already quoted in connection with Amelia from Chapter LXVII, towards the end of the chapter. Her irritation, mingled with affection for Amelia, shows a more acutely observed nature than is necessary for mere stereotype. (She is, incidentally, able to discern true worth in Dobbin, beyond his typed exterior, which the Misses Osborne are not.) She throws George's note into Amelia's lap and springs her surprise harshly, yet for Amelia's own good.

On the occasions when Becky shows this complexity and "roundness" of character, she seems less the victim and more the agent of Thackeray's satire; a constant exposé of fools and social stereotypes, of, for instance, Jos, of whom she makes a complete fool, merely by playing on his key follies, vanity and greed. But she, too, becomes the victim eventually, when she is exposed, flirting with Steyne in all her finery; her "vanities" as Thackeray calls them, in Chapter LIII:

Rawdon opened the door and went in. A little table with a dinner was laid out - and wine and plate. Steyne was hanging over the sofa on which Becky sate. The wretched woman was in a brilliant full toilette, her arms and all her fingers sparkling with bracelets and rings, and the brilliants on her breast which Steyne had given her. He had her hand in his, and was bowing over it to kiss it, when Becky started up with a faint scream as she caught sight of Rawdon's white face. At the next instant she tried a smile, a horrid smile, as if to welcome her husband.

Rebecca's blatant hypocrisy is cruelly exposed in that "horrid smile"; as ever, an external observation. Thus, Becky is satirized for her crasser follies; elsewhere she makes a fool of herself when little Rawdon complains that she never kisses him

except in front of Lady Jane. She is also, rarely, seen as a full villainess, with a cutting tongue: (here is an example from Chapter XXIX)

"For God's sake, stop him from gambling, my dear," she said, "or he will ruin himself. He and Rawdon are playing at cards every night.... Why don't you prevent him, you careless little creature? Why don't you come to us of an evening instead of moping at home with that Captain Dobbin? I daresay he is "tres aimable"; but how could one love a man with feet of such size? Your husband's feet are darlings - here he comes. - 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 by Amelia's side, and tripped off with George to dance.

In these instances, Becky is the victim of Thackeray's satire, whilst she is usually in a position to capitalise on the follies of others. When a victim, Becky comes closer to the stereotype, whereas when seen as a "rounded" character, she is used by Thackeray as an agent to expose and satirize.

From the above examples, we can see that far from being a stylistic weakness, stereotyping is a skilful and convenient aspect of satiric method; indeed, it may be an inevitable accompaniment of satire, for some degree of simplification is always required in the portrayal of vice and folly, if the reader's sympathies are to be disengaged.

Kettle writes in favour of "types", although not of stereotypes, in the following excerpt. Granted that the sort of typicality he discusses is of a more generalised, universal sort than that discussed above, nevertheless, the same defence still holds good to some extent. On the subject of Becky, whom he finds not to be a stereotype, he has this to say:

Like Oliver Twist and Jeanie Deans she has a typical, symbolic quality which makes her an individual and yet more than an individual.

This sort of typicality is regarded by some critics as a weakness in art. To say of a character that he is a

type is supposed to show a deficiency, a failure to individualize on the part of the author. But in fact characters in literature who are in no sense typical cannot well be artistically interesting. If Hamlet were an isolated creature, a being whose individuality made him essentially and utterly different from other individuals, a neurotic who had lost touch with the typical contours of human existence and relationships, he would not be a great artistic character. He is in fact no less an individual for being a type, a fact which Shakespeare recognised well enough when he represented him in the convention of the melancholic man, a class of character easily recognizable by and significant to the Elizabethan audience.

The artistic type (and here we see the value of the old theory of "humours" despite its psychological crudity) is not an average, not a lowest common multiple of human characteristics, but rather the embodiment of certain forces which come together in a particular social situation to create a peculiar kind of energy.<sup>32</sup>

The stereotype differs from Kettle's "type" in that the former has been deliberately simplified for a specific function. All the same, despite a certain lack of individuality, the stereotype still provides the reader with what is recognisable and universal. It serves its satiric function admirably and should not be scorned for this reason.

Next, we come to Thackeray's "stereotyped" descriptions, narrative and commentary. Reference has already been made in Chapter 1 to Thackeray's distancing and use of the typical and general in this sort of passage, and it is intended here to look in more detail at a few such examples. "Stereotyping" may in this context not be precisely the term required, but that the same sort of approach is recognisable as with characterisation will, I hope, become clear.

Much comment has been made on Percy Lubbock's definition of Thackeray's style as "panoramic". He sums up as follows:-

Not in any single complication of incident, therefore, nor in any single strife of will, is the subject of Vanity Fair to be discerned. It is nowhere but in the

impression of a world, a society, a time - certain manners of life within a few square miles of London, a hundred years ago. Thackeray flings together a crowd of the people he knows so well, and it matters not at all if the tie that holds them to each other is of the slightest;.... unity does not depend on an intricately woven intrigue. It depends in truth upon one fact only, the fact that all his throng of men and women are strongly, picturesquely typical of the world from which they are taken, that all in their different ways can add to the force of its effect. The book is not the story of any of them, it is the story they write to tell, a chapter in the notorious career of well-to-do London.<sup>33</sup>

Arnold Kettle and Kathleen Tillotson properly object that there is more than "certain manners of life" in Thackeray's work.<sup>34</sup> However, the typical aspect of his style is undeniable. Whilst the term "panoramic" is not precisely the one to apply to the following example, there is nevertheless a strong "impression of a world", and the keynote of the opening passage is the typicality of the description of auctions in general, before a specific description is made of the Sedleys' auction in Chapter XVII:

If there is any exhibition in all Vanity Fair which Satire and Sentiment can visit arm in arm together; where you light on the strangest contrasts, laughable and tearful; where you may be gentle and pathetic, or savage and cynical, with perfect propriety, - it is at one of those public assemblies, a crowd of which are advertised every day in the last page of The Times newspaper, and over which the late Mr. George Robins used to preside with so much dignity.

There are very few London people as I fancy, who have not attended at these meetings; and all with a taste for moralizing must have thought,.... of the day when their turn shall come too, and Mr. Hammerdown will sell, by the order of Diogenes's assignees, or will be instructed by the executors to offer to public competition, the library, furniture, plate, wardrobe, and choice cellars of wines of Epicurus deceased.

Even with the most selfish disposition, the Vanityfairian, as he witnesses this sordid part of the obsequies of a departed friend, can't but feel some sympathies and regret. My lord Dives's remains are in the family vault; the statuaries are cutting an inscription veraciously commemorating his virtues, and the sorrows of his heir, who is disposing of his goods. What guest at Dives's table can pass the familiar house without a sigh?-....

He goes on to describe the typical memories of Dives's friends:

"He was pompous, but with such a cook what would one not swallow?" Then follows a typical description of a house, the contents of which are up for sale:

How changed the house is, though! The front is patched over with bills, setting forth the particulars of the furniture in staring capitals. They have hung a shred of carpet out of an upstairs window - a half-dozen of porters are lounging on the dirty steps - the hall swarms with dingy guests of Oriental countenance, who thrust printed cards into your hand, and offer to bid. Old women and amateurs have invaded the upper apartments, pinching the bed-curtains, poking into the feathers, shampooing the mattresses, and clapping the wardrobe drawers to and fro.

As he indicated ironically to start with, these reflections give Thackeray tremendous scope for both "Satire" and "Sentiment"; the selfish "Vanityfairian" misses the old Dives household, but won't miss a good bargain. His heir orders the "cutting" of "an inscription veraciously commemorating" his father's virtues while "cutting up" the old man's estate. The typical, general quality of the piece is reinforced by the stereotyped Mr. Hammerdown, and then broadened by the classical allusion to Diogenes and the Biblical one to Dives; yet all is addressed to the "London people" of Vanity Fair. The moralising is impossible to escape, but its efficacy is not lost since the use of specific descriptive detail blends with the more general. The closely-observed details of the posters listing the contents of the house and the image of the "old women and amateurs" poking about amongst the bedrooms have the savage immediacy of the scene from the film, Zorba the Greek, where a horde of crones descend upon the cottage of a dead woman, snatching what they can. The scene here is emblematic in an almost mediaeval way; it serves as a "memento mori", although an updated one:

O Dives! who ever would have thought, as we sat round the broad table sparkling with plate and spotless linen,

to have seen such a dish at the head of it as that roaring auctioneer?<sup>35</sup>

It seems, in fact, to be impossible to separate description from commentary in general passages like this, where moralising asides punctuate the picture being drawn. Indeed, the picture is very obviously drawn in order to illustrate the moral point, (however slight we may feel that point to be). Nevertheless it is a picture, and a vivid one.

From the general and typical, Thackeray finds no strain in jumping back to the particular, as he plunges straight into the description of the actual Sedley sale: "It was rather late in the sale". The juxtaposition is an interesting one; as a device for holding the reader in suspense it makes good narrative technique, and as a blend of general and particular it adds credence to Kettle's assertion that although Thackeray creates "a whole world ... we recall it in terms of individual people and their relationships."<sup>36</sup>

Another moralising passage, this time confidentially including fellow-readers of The Times, generalises from the particular instance of Pitt Crawley's meanness:

But as one reads in the columns of The Times newspaper every now and then queer announcements from the Chancellor of the Exchequer, acknowledging the receipt of £50 from A.B. or £10 from W.T., as conscience-money on account of taxes due ... - so is the Chancellor no doubt, and the reader likewise, always perfectly sure that the above-named A.B. or W.T. are only paying a very small instalment of what they really owe, and that the man who sends up a twenty-pound note has very likely hundreds or thousands more for which he ought to account. Such, at least, are my feelings when I see A.B. or W.T.'s insufficient acts of repentance. And I have no doubt that Pitt Crawley's condition, ... towards his brother by whom he had profited, was only a very small dividend upon the capital sum .... Not everybody is willing to pay even so much. To part with money is a sacrifice beyond almost all men endowed with a sense of order .... 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 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. Money has just a different value in the eyes of each.

So, in a word, Pitt Crawley thought he would do something for his brother, and then again thought that he would think about it some other time.<sup>37</sup>

Thackeray moves from the particular to the general and back with apparent ease. From Pitt Crawley he moves to the reader's and his own shared experience, to his own moralising on conscience money - this in turn leads back, via analogy, to Pitt's imperfect recompense. "A.B." and "W.T." (his own initials) are the typical, the reader is real but general, and Pitt particular (but of course fictional). The movement is familiar. We find the occasional moralism divorced from any typical description: "To part with money is a sacrifice beyond almost all men endowed with a sense of order."

Then follows a piece of cynical moralism about "Thriftless" and "Thrifty" - two typical figures. What appears to be a purely Utilitarian view of morality here (both are merely doing what increases their own pleasure) may actually be a piece of self-criticism, bearing in mind Thackeray's spendthrift generosity, (but more of cynicism in Chapters 4 and 5). From the general statement: "Money has only a different value in the eyes of each", he moves back, chastened by the awareness of his own wandering, to Pitt: "So, in a word,..."

What makes Thackeray's generalisations and often inadequate forays into moralism different from, say George Eliot's, considerably better morally and intellectually equipped though she may be, is this power of Thackeray's to create this third, intermediary level: the typical - the area occupied by Mr.

Hammerdown, Dives, A.B., W.T., Thriftless and Thrifty - which comes between particular fiction and abstract moralism and feeds both, by its illustrative and general power. This is not precisely enough indicated by the term "stereotyping" but the connection with this method of characterisation is clear.

There are instances where the pejorative meaning of "stereotyping" may apply, as when Thackeray offers a stock or unfelt response in his commentary or narrative, although probably never in his description. Kettle suspects Thackeray's sincerity in his final moralistic summing-up:<sup>38</sup>

Ah! Vanitas Vanitatum! which of us is happy in this world? Which of us has his desire? or having it, is satisfied?

Presumably Kettle feels this to be part of Thackeray's portable and easy-won philosophy, part of the pot-boiler vocabulary; yet a study of Thackeray's biography reveals that he might have had some justification for expressing this sentiment in all sincerity. The lightness with which it is thrown away is typical of the man.

Further, despite the odd easy moralism, which was probably expected by the serious reader of the 1840's, an author of his era who could make Becky suggest that she could be a good woman on £5000 a year, and make her, at the moment of her downfall, admire her husband's strength in confronting her, must have had great perspicacity and freshness of outlook; not the clichéd mentality of one who could only think along stereotyped lines.

## Chapter 4 - Time in Henry Esmond

The issue of time in the novel is a central one, as A.A. Mendilow points out in his book, Time and the Novel.<sup>1</sup> It is closely connected to "point of view" (see chapter 1 of this thesis) over the issue of immediacy, in that the novel writer usually establishes a sequence of events in the novel which attempts to involve the reader in a sense of "continuous present" which adds to dramatic impact, makes identification with characters easier, and retains suspense. (This is not perhaps true of modern novelists like Virginia Woolf, Joyce or Proust, whose treatment of time is not always linear.) Mendilow implies that an "illusion of immediacy and directness" should be sought by the best novelists and seems to abhor the destruction of suspension of disbelief involved when an intrusive author interrupts the narrative, thereby imposing a different time scale on it. Thackeray can easily be accused of this sort of intrusion.

An example of this tendency is his narrative style in Henry Esmond. In addition, it is a) an "autobiographical" and b) an historical novel, so further problems are posed: a) the supposed author, Henry Esmond, needs to explain some details of the narrative in the light of subsequent events, since he has supposedly written long after the events described took place and b) the reader is further dissociated in time from the narrative as it is set in the distant past and written in the nearer past.

Thackeray seems to have been well aware of these issues, as his struggles with them show, and Henry Esmond shows a not altogether successful resolution of these problems. He was concerned with time in other ways, too, as is shown by his recurring treatment of themes like time and change, youth and age,

constancy and fickleness and his preoccupation with the past, illustrated in his choice of subject matter.

First, to take up the narrative issue: Henry Esmond contains numerous breaches with the dramatic present, or time shifts. Esmond interrupts his own narrative perpetually; for instance:

Her heart melted, I suppose (indeed she hath since owned as much)....<sup>2</sup>

although sometimes this is carried to impossible extremes:

To the very last hour of his life, Esmond remembered the lady as she then spoke and looked.<sup>3</sup>

(This example must be attributed to Thackeray's carelessness.)

Sometimes the confusion between past narrative and present remembrance even causes a convincing slip from third person pronoun to first:

The poor boy trembled before his mistress, who called him by a hundred ugly names, who made nothing of boxing his ears, and tilting the silver basin in his face which it was his business to present to her after dinner. She hath since repaired, by subsequent kindnesses to him, these severities, which it must be owned made his childhood very unhappy. She was but unhappy herself at this time, poor soul! and I suppose made her dependants lead her own sad life. I think my Lord was as much afraid of her as her page was, and the only person of the household who mastered her was Mr. Holt. Harry was only too glad when the Father dined at the table, and to slink away and prattle with him afterwards, or read with him, or walk with him. Luckily my Lady Visountess did not rise till noon. Heaven help the poor waiting-woman who had charge of her toilette! I have often seen the poor wretch come out with red eyes from the closet....<sup>4</sup>

With the past tense, the third person is used as in "the poor boy trembled". An apparently recent event but still in the past is described thus: "She hath since repaired, by subsequent kindnesses to him" (underlining mine) while a memory, conjured up in the present, using the perfect tense, demands the first person: "I have often seen..." and so also do comments made in the present: "I suppose.... I think...." but then he reverts to

"Harry" in the description of the past tense.

Whether these switches were intentional or merely the unconscious effect of Thackeray's adopting Esmond's time of writing as his own present, they nevertheless do intrude on the present of the narrative. However, it does not seem fair to say that such intrusions destroy the dramatic illusion, for the narrative is of the typical sort described in Chapter 3 and no one event is interrupted. In fact, in some examples, the intrusion makes the narrative more personal since although the suspense is to some extent spoiled, the reader has a stronger sense of Esmond the writer's present than of the narrative's present. The reader's focus of interest is on the ultimate resolution of the story and he is never under the impression that he is reading anything other than a personal reminiscence, continually interpreted through Esmond's hindsight, as in this example from Book II, Chapter XII:

'Tis not to be imagined that Harry Esmond had all this experience at this early stage of his life, whereof he is now writing the history - many things here noted were but known to him in later days.<sup>5</sup>

There are instances where valuable clues are tossed away and narrative suspense is undoubtedly spoiled, for instance when Viscount Castlewood's death is prophesied:

If Harry Esmond's patron erred, 'twas ... from a disposition rather self-indulgent than cruel; and he might have been brought back to much better feelings, had time been given to him to bring his repentance to a lasting reform.<sup>6</sup>

Again, towards the end of the plot to reinstate the feckless Stuart pretender, Thackeray/Esmond allows the dramatic content to fizzle out by revealing subsequent events:

A year afterwards gallant heads were falling, and Nithsdale in escape, and Derwentwater on the scaffold;

whilst the heedless ingrate, for whom they risked and lost all, was tipping with his seraglio of mistresses in his "petite maison" of Chaillot.<sup>7</sup>

This is not as serious a breach of suspense as the former as the reader has probably already supplied the conclusion from his own historical knowledge of real events, so it comes as no surprise that this fictitious plot should come to nothing. However, it is a characteristic of the autobiographical method that it should leap from one time sequence to another.

In an "autobiographical"-cum-historical novel like this, the reader's interest is understandably with Esmond and his view of events, rather than in the events themselves and to this extent Thackeray cannot be accused of robbing his central figure of vividness. However, it is one of the penalties of the "autobiographical" novel that the pseudo-author (in Mendilow's terminology) must occasionally clarify events for the reader. This can be done by the omniscient author in other types of novel, by means of the chronological narrative, but where one of the novel's characters is also narrator, he cannot be omniscient nor ever-present, so sometimes he has to supply contorted explanations. Also, the business of suspense is of secondary importance in an "autobiographical" novel, since the primary area of interest is the narrator's memories, which may, for the sake of verisimilitude, be recalled out of their chronological sequence. This necessarily weakens the impact of the plot.

Since Henry Esmond is supposedly written long after the events described, Esmond can choose to shape his narrative in the light of subsequent events and can use the "sort of prophecy after the event" mentioned by Mendilow.<sup>8</sup> This must weaken, for instance, his description of his desperate love for Beatrix, since he must justify his subsequent choice in marrying her mother, and further,

seems to be nervous of Rachel's comments and those of her heirs, on his memoirs. Therefore, Beatrix is almost always compared unfavourably with her mother. Having referred to her as "the most beautiful woman in England in 1712,"<sup>9</sup> and described her many conquests, Esmond continues:

Who knows how many were nearly made happy by possessing her, or rather, how many were fortunate in escaping this siren? 'Tis a marvel to think that her mother was the purest and simplest woman in the whole world, and that this girl should have been born from her.<sup>10</sup>

To some extent, Esmond's awareness of the weaknesses of character of Beatrix, his great love, lends poignancy and credibility to the affair; for some while it seems possible that Thackeray is preparing the reader for a tragic outcome - perhaps Esmond will marry Beatrix and be miserable. Thackeray does manage to maintain an element of suspense concerning this relationship, at least until the death of the Duke of Hamilton. Beatrix's attitude towards Esmond is so ambivalent that despite all likelihood to the contrary, it seems until quite late in the story that she may soften towards him. As late as Book III, Chapter III, they have an interview in which Beatrix seems unusually sympathetic and it is only at the very end of the chapter that her mother disillusiones Esmond by revealing that Beatrix has become engaged to the Duke of Hamilton. Indeed, it may have been this promise of tragedy which Victorian readers were expecting and of which they were balked by the final resolution which explains, in part, the violence of some critics' disgust with the end of the story, although they attributed this disgust to their sense of moral outrage that Esmond should marry his "mother". Perhaps they really felt frustrated by the "second-best" flavour of Esmond's choice.

However, with hindsight the reader can in fact pick up clues

throughout the book that Beatrix will not "do" in the end. Even the Preface is an indication as it is written by Esmond's loyal daughter, Rachel Esmond Warrington, who surely has more of the mother Rachel in her than the fiery Beatrix.

Again, on historical issues, this sort of "prophecy" is used by Thackeray but this time making use of his own knowledge of later real history, rather than Esmond's fictitious "hindsight".

'Tis strange here, and on a foreign soil, and in a land that is independent in all but the name (for that the North American colonies shall remain dependants on yonder little island for twenty years more, I never can think),....<sup>11</sup>

This trick of supplying the pseudo-author with foreknowledge of real events is effective in tying Esmond more firmly to a real political and social context and strengthens the reader's confidence in Esmond's judgment.

Another complexity for the reader caused by the historical aspect of Henry Esmond, is that Thackeray is writing for his contemporaries and Victorian interpretations of eighteenth century events may well differ from those of today, as Mendilow mentions. This is borne out by Esmond's accounts of the Catholic question, the Stuart and Hanoverian issue and Marlborough's wars. In connection with this last, Thackeray attempts to add authenticity to the description of Marlborough's campaigns by assuming a partisan loyalty to General Webb, on Esmond's part, (Thackeray was in fact distantly connected to Webb) and by adding footnotes by Esmond's anxious grandchildren, eager to correct his scurrilous accusations against Marlborough. On the Catholic question, Thackeray gives a somewhat Victorian view of the matter: Father Holt is seen as a foolish, conceited, power-hungry schemer - the traditional view of the Jesuit, which would probably be shared by many Victorians, but which seems limited today. Again, Esmond's

praise of William of Orange, his disillusion with the Stuarts and disgust with the Hanoverians reflect Thackeray's own views, very largely, as can be seen from his lectures on The Four Georges. Of course, the reader is aware that he is reading a very partial interpretation of history and adjusts his own attitude accordingly. However, it is occasionally difficult to disentangle a realistic dramatization of eighteenth century Tory views from Thackeray's own unfavourable interpretation of them, as he casts Esmond in the role of a disillusioned Tory, whose sympathies are changing to those of the Whigs. Esmond, after arranging to smuggle the Young Pretender, James, into England, starts having regrets:

Whom did I mean to serve in bringing him? Was it the Prince? Was it Henry Esmond? Had I not best have joined the manly creed of Addison yonder, that scouts the old doctrine of right divine, that broadly declares that Parliament and people consecrate the Sovereign, not bishops, nor genealogies, nor oils, nor coronations.<sup>12</sup>

Although this provides an interesting glimpse of the political theories of the time, it seems that this is less the conviction of the true blue Tory of the period, than of Thackeray himself, who admires Addison's "manly creed". Thackeray's own views on hereditary power are everywhere apparent in his work, from the famous sketch, "Ludovicus Rex", (see Chapter 1 of this thesis) to his scathing comments on the ne'er do weel Stuarts in Henry Esmond and his heavy ridicule of the Hanovers in The Four Georges.

Thackeray's preoccupation with the past and in particular with the eighteenth century, seems to be of a piece with the theme of time itself, which has been studied by John Carey in his recent study, Prodigal Genius.<sup>13</sup> He sees the recurring theme of time as destroyer throughout Thackeray's work, suggesting biographical reasons for this; it does seem that Thackeray had personal reasons

for expecting change to be always for the worse. He had, after all, effectually lost both parents when still an infant - his father died and he was separated from his mother, being sent from India to school in England. Later he lost his inheritance, then he suffered the loss of his first child, and of his wife who did not die, but went insane.<sup>14</sup> With such a background, a certain degree of pessimism seems unavoidable. Whatever the reasons, it is undeniable that the ruin brought about by time is a preoccupation in his work. Carey thinks that this preoccupation is most effectively projected through powerful visual images of transience, for instance, the recurring scene of the ruins of a dinner:

...amidst melting ices and cut pineapples, and bottles full and empty, and cigar-ashes scattered on fruit, and the ruins of a dessert which had no pleasure for him.<sup>15</sup>

The passage quoted in Chapter 3 of this thesis, describing the auction of Sedley's goods, could be seen as part of the same tendency, as could the glimpse of Becky surrounded by her scattered trinkets. In these instances it seems that Thackeray's satirical role makes him side maliciously with time; as Carey puts it:

While he busies himself with multiplying the evidences of rot and ruin, we can see that he relishes what he's at.<sup>16</sup>

There is a suggestion that this apparently malevolent delight is really the defensive attitude of a vulnerable and embittered man, as Carey shows when he comes to the effects of time on Thackeray's people, especially in his early work, for instance Dennis Haggarty's Wife, which grossly caricatures an Irish wife and her mother. (His wife Isabella Shawe was Irish and her mother an outrageous mother-in-law.) In this story time's wrack is quite horrific. The wife becomes blind, suffers smallpox and becomes

repellent-looking, but she is described with disgust and without sympathy, which seems to indicate an extraordinary degree of obsession and lack of objectivity on Thackeray's part about his own miseries.

This obsession with the spoiling of women by time is evident throughout his work; Blanche Amory and Ethel Newcome, the aristocratic flirts, do not improve with time; nor does Amelia. Rosy Mackenzie and, more horrifyingly, her mother, in The Newcomes, are utterly corrupted and ruined by time. It is therefore all the more readily understandable that Thackeray should somewhere seek to create a character and a relationship which would symbolise the unchanging and the constant. Rachel in Henry Esmond is such a symbol, contrasted throughout with the dazzling but transient Beatrix. Thackeray makes Beatrix the epitome of the fickle beauty, always changing her mind, flirting and teasing, and by no means proof against time's effects on her beauty. She has preserved her appearance until the age of twenty-six, but Thackeray's use of his favourite time-reflecting image of the mirror emphasises the futility of her efforts and the sense of time marching on is unavoidable:

And she flung back her curls, and looked over her fair shoulder at the mirror superbly, as if she said, "Time, I defy you."<sup>17</sup>

By contrast, we find the almost unnerving phenomenon of Rachel becoming younger and younger. Thackeray was unable to resist giving her small pox, but the resulting diminution of her beauty seems to be forgotten as the story progresses. From the rôle of mother, she somehow develops into some some sort of eternal woman, standing in an ambiguous relationship to Esmond:

Brighter eyes there might be, and faces more beautiful, but none so dear - no voice so sweet as that of his

beautiful mistress, who had been sister, mother, goddess to him during his youth - goddess now no more, for he knew of her weaknesses; and by thought, by suffering, and that experience it brings, was older now than she; but more fondly cherished as woman perhaps than ever she had been adored as divinity.<sup>18</sup>

Carey comments on the agelessness of the couple, Rachel getting younger and Esmond older throughout the book.<sup>19</sup> The fact that this process involves a certain amount of infringement of taboos is undeniable. Four chapters after the above-quoted passage, Esmond is still infatuated with Beatrix, and blurts out his passion to his mother-figure, Rachel:

She listened, smiled, consoled, with untiring pity and sweetness. Esmond was the eldest of her children, so she was pleased to say....<sup>20</sup>

A few pages later, she makes their relationship plain, apparently:

"I am your mother, you are my son, and I love you always," she said, holding her hands over him.

And yet, it seems that Rachel, at least, is disguising her real feelings about which she has a strong sense of guilt. By the time Esmond has expressed his feelings for Beatrix, her mother has to sublimate her own, but earlier, when Esmond is reunited to the family after a year's disgrace, following Lord Castlewood's death, Rachel's behaviour shows a dangerous hysteria, indicative of repressed sexual feelings for Esmond:

"I know how wicked my heart has been; and I have suffered too, my dear. I confessed to Mr. Atterbury - I must not tell any more. He - I said I would not write to you or go to you - and it was better even that, having parted, we should part. But I knew you would come back - I own that. That is no one's fault. And today, Henry, in the anthem, when they sang it, "When the Lord turned the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream," I thought, yes, like them that dream - them that dream. And then it went, "they that sow in tears shall reap in joy; and he that goeth forth and weepeth, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him;" I looked up from the book, and saw you. I was not surprised when I saw you. I knew you would come, my

dear, and saw the golden sunshine round your head." She smiled an almost wild smile as she looked up at him. The moon was up by this time, glittering keenly in the frosty sky. ....

"But now - now you are come again, bringing your sheaves with you, my dear." She burst into a wild flood of weeping as she spoke; she laughed and sobbed on the young man's heart, crying out wildly, "bringing your sheaves with you - your sheaves with you!"<sup>21</sup>

Small wonder that Victorian readers felt uncomfortable! Rachel's hysteria, guilt and use of religious devotion to repress a guilty passion all make for a torrid emotional scene. Thackeray must have been aware of the disturbing overtones of Rachel's passion - this is indicated by the fact that he obviously regards it as an abnormal outburst by the repetition of "wild", "wildly", and yet he allows Esmond to take the scene in his stride, almost:

the depth of this pure devotion quite smote upon him, and filled his heart with thanksgiving.<sup>22</sup>

This does raise doubts about Thackeray's objectivity over the issue. Esmond's bland unawareness of the awkwardness of his position seems to indicate some sort of unresolved emotional issue in Thackeray's mind. On the other hand, and more probably, this aspect of the relationship could be hinted at to provide psychological realism towards the greater end of creating an ageless relationship. At this point in the story Esmond has to be proof against Rachel's attractions for the Beatrix plot has yet to unfold. However, Rachel must provide a constant source of affection, which changes from motherly to sisterly, to wifely. For this change to be effected convincingly, some account would have to be made of her moral and psychological confusion.

Given then that the portrayal of an ageless, constant affection is of paramount importance, (it is Rachel's constancy rather than the shifts in the relationship which matters) there is plenty of evidence of Rachel's firmness and agelessness in

contrast with Beatrix's fickleness and rapid maturation. Rachel herself perceives this contrast:

This worldliness, which I can't comprehend, was born with Beatrix, who, on the first day of her waiting, was a perfect courtier. We are like sisters, and she the elder sister, somehow. She tells me I have a mean spirit. I laugh, and say she adores a coach and six. 'Tis natural to her, as to me to love quiet, and be indifferent about rank and riches. What are they, Harry? and how long do they last?<sup>23</sup>

This contrast in age and worldliness is repeated later, as Esmond observes the two squabbling amicably together; Beatrix has just emphasised her mother's youthful appearance and size by telling him that they wear exactly the same sized shoes:

They made a very pretty picture together, and looked like a pair of sisters - the sweet simple matron seeming younger than her years, and her daughter, if not older, yet somehow, from a commanding manner and grace which she possessed above most women, her mother's superior and protectress.<sup>24</sup>

The seeds of future disillusion are sown in that "commanding manner" and the fact that Beatrix is her mother's protectress - Esmond would ultimately see this as his role, and yet Thackeray somehow allows Esmond to admire the daughter more at this stage.

Beatrix herself can see how her mother's simplicity and innocence preserves her youth, whereas her own worldly life is rapidly aging her:

"Look at her, Harry," whispers Beatrix, running up and speaking in her sweet low tones. "Doesn't the blush become her? Isn't she pretty? She looks younger than I am, and I am sure she is a hundred times better."<sup>25</sup>

Beatrix, in fact, is extremely perspicacious in her observation of the strong bond between Esmond and her mother and is jealous of her mother's affection for him:

"...and she loves you, sir, a great deal too much; and I hate you for it. I would have had her all to myself; but she wouldn't."<sup>26</sup>

She realises how much closer their tastes are to each others' than to hers (and one cannot but sympathise with her desire for change and movement.):

"Mamma would have been the wife for you, had you been a little older, though you look ten years older than she does - you do, you glum-faced, blue-bearded little old man! You might have sat, like Darby and Joan, and flattered each other; and billed and cooed like a pair of old pigeons on a perch. I want my wings, and to use them, sir."<sup>27</sup>

Beatrice's fickleness, by contrast with her mother's constancy, is frequently emphasised; she confuses the stolid Esmond with her coquettish ways and her admission that she cannot remain constant to one man:

"We should both be unhappy, and you the most, who are as jealous as the Duke himself. I tried to love him; I tried, indeed I did: affected gladness when he came: submitted to hear when he was by me, and tried the wife's part I thought I was to play for the rest of my days. But half-an-hour of that complaisance wearied me, and what would a lifetime be? .... and I often thought, as I listened to his fond vows and ardent words, Oh, if I yield to this man and meet the other, I shall hate him and leave him! I am not good, Harry: my mother is gentle and good like an angel."<sup>28</sup>

Esmond is not yet completely disillusioned, however, although he is aware of Beatrice's fickleness. It takes her complete breach of faith and honour in leaving a note for James Stuart, arranging an assignation at Castlewood, to make Esmond lose all hope of her.

He, meanwhile, is as aware of his physical aging as Beatrice, with her observation of the "glum-faced, blue-bearded little old man." Esmond acknowledges his own maturity and sense of responsibility:

"My dear lady may hear, too, the last words, which are no secrets, and are only a parting benediction accompanying a present for your marriage from an old gentleman your guardian; for I feel as if I was the guardian of all the family, and an old fellow that is fit to be the grandfather of you all;...."<sup>29</sup>

Esmond is literally "the grandfather of you all" to the fictitious descendants who write footnotes in his memoirs, and this connection helps towards creating an ageless character. (On the other hand, these very footnotes and the whole concept of an historical novel work against the impression of timelessness as we are aware that by the time we read the "memoirs", Esmond would have to be dead.)

Castlewood, as well as Rachel, symbolises for Esmond all that is good and unchanging. When peace is declared after the wars with France, Esmond returns to Castlewood.

Esmond took horses to Castlewood. He had not seen its ancient grey towers and well-remembered woods for nearly fourteen years, and since he rode thence with my Lord, to whom his mistress with her young children by her side waved an adieu. What ages seemed to have passed since then, what years of action and passion, of care, love, hope, disaster! The children were grown up now, and had stories of their own. As for Esmond, he felt to be a hundred years old; his dear mistress only seemed unchanged; she looked and welcomed him quite as of old. There was the fountain in the court babbling its familiar music, the old hall and its furniture, the carved chair my late lord used, the very flagon he drank from.<sup>30</sup>

Esmond seems to regret the inevitable changes brought about by experience: "what years of action and passion, of care, love, hope, disaster!" Thackeray's search for an unchanging relationship is flawed by this unrealistic yearning; Rachel "seemed unchanged", but that experience should have made no impression at all on her may seem to the reader to hint at some sort of emotional inadequacy. However, the nostalgia of childhood memories described so powerfully in this chapter are compelling. Esmond's religious yearning to perform a knightly rôle is convincingly, if sentimentally, portrayed. As he prays and weeps that night after his arrival at Castlewood, he looks back to his early intentions:

... looking back, as all men will, that revisit their home of childhood, over the great gulf of time, and surveying himself on the distant bank yonder, a sad little melancholy boy with his lord still alive - his dear mistress, a girl yet, her children sporting around her. Years ago, a boy on that very bed, when she had blessed him and called him her knight, he had made a vow to be faithful and never desert her dear service. Had he kept that boyish promise? Yes, before Heaven; yes, praise be to God! His life had been hers; his blood, his fortune, his name, his whole heart ever since had been hers and her children's.<sup>31</sup>

The wistfulness and nostalgia of Esmond's memories are conveyed by the somewhat stock images of separation, often used to express death; "the distant bank yonder", "the great gulf of time", and the misery of "sad little melancholy boy". Together with the sad memories and sense of separation from the past comes the positive affirmation that he has kept his "boyish promise", which at last results in a victory over time: "His life had been hers;...."

More convincing than these somewhat nebulous aspirations, in literary terms, are the vivid descriptions of childhood memories attached to things:

Esmond rose up before the dawn, and passed into the next room, where the air was heavy with the odour of the wallflowers, looked into the brazier where the papers had been burned, into the old presses where Holt's books had been kept, and tried the spring and whether the window worked still. The spring had not been touched for years, but yielded at length,.... no one had ever passed thence since Holt used it sixteen years ago.

.... he could hear the clinking at the blacksmith's forge yonder among the trees, across the green, and past the river, on which a mist lay sleeping.

.... The two swords he remembered so well as a boy, lay actually there still, and Esmond took them out and wiped them, with a strange curiosity of emotion.<sup>32</sup>

These passages with their powerful evocation of atmosphere, must surely represent some of Thackeray's finest writing, which suggests that the passage of time was a subject very close to his heart.

Thackeray's equation of the unchanging with goodness and of

the transitory with vanity or evil allows him to create a powerful moral landscape. Castlewood exerts a strong influence for good; Harry is happy there as a child, and Rachel finds contentment there. Beatrix, on the other hand, detests it: "I have been unhappy there and lonely enough," she complains.<sup>33</sup> It is the fabric of Castlewood which protects Beatrix's virtue and prevents her seduction by the prince:

And there being arranged a bed across the court in the Chaplain's room, she had arranged that my Lord was to sleep there. Madam Beatrix had come downstairs laughing with the maids, and had locked herself in, and my Lord had stood for a while talking to her through the door, and she laughing at him.<sup>34</sup>

Beatrix's intentions seem to have been frivolous enough; she "had come downstairs laughing with the maids," and although she locks herself in her room, still laughs at the prince, rather than showing any prim concern for her honour. In Esmond's eyes she is guilty by intent: "Her cheek was desecrated, her beauty tarnished; shame and honour stood between it and him." Her note to the prince allies her with dishonour against all the good values that Castlewood stands for: "Beatrix Esmond is sent away to prison, to Castlewood...."<sup>35</sup> She sees the house as a prison, where Esmond sees it as a refuge from time and change, and the reader is encouraged to see it as a stronghold and protector of Beatrix's honour, the door through which she talks to the prince acting as a barrier.

Time destroys the feckless prince in the end, since he lacks firmness of purpose and is unable to use time to his advantage. The secret note from Court, passing word to the plotters to begin their scheme for putting the Pretender on the throne, contains the cryptic words, underlined: "now or never is the time."<sup>36</sup> Esmond does not forbear to rub this in when upbraiding the prince later:

"It would have been otherwise, . . . ." <sup>37</sup>

This is of a piece with Thackeray's moral attitude to fickleness; the Pretender deserves to lose, whereas Esmond and Rachel have earned their happiness by their constancy. Change is still seen as evil and corrupting, but an emotional victory is scored over time through their relationship.

Rachel represents constancy in more than just the emotional sphere; her political allegiance through thick and thin to the Jacobites, and her religious loyalty to the Anglican high Church are contrasted with the time-servers at Court. The Queen's capricious attitude to her favourites and Marlborough's fall from grace with the Queen and with the general public illustrate this changeability:

And his Grace had sufficient occupation fighting his enemies at home this year, where it began to be whispered that his favour was decreasing, and his Duchess losing her hold on the Queen, who was transferring her royal affections to the famous Mrs. Masham, and Mrs. Masham's humble servant, Mr. Harley.<sup>38</sup>

The old dowager is another whose favourites change at a whim, but Esmond is proof against her fickleness, realising from the start that she is likely to transfer allegiance (which she soon does, to his cousin Frank).

Esmond's continuing loyalty to General Webb and King William illustrate his immunity to fashion and change. Here is an example of the latter:

Mr. Esmond's commission was scarce three weeks old when that accident befell King William which ended the life of the greatest, the wisest, the bravest, and most clement sovereign whom England ever knew. 'Twas the fashion of the hostile party to assail this great prince's reputation during his life; but the joy which they and all his enemies in Europe showed at his death, is a proof of the terror in which they held him. Young as Esmond was, he was wise enough (and generous enough too, let it be said) to scorn that indecency of gratulation which broke out amongst the followers of King James in London,

upon the death of this illustrious prince, this invincible warrior, this wise and moderate statesman.<sup>39</sup>

It seems that Thackeray places great moral weight on the virtue of loyalty for he allows Esmond to appear unusually smug about it.

Images of the passing of time fascinate Thackeray, as Carey has shown. Henry Esmond is no exception. Examples of the opposite sort have been shown, with respect to Castlewood and its mistress, but there are also examples of visual emblems of the passage of time. The mirror scene quoted is one such. Carey also points to Thackeray's use of portraits to emphasise the incongruity of the comparison between the portrait and its now aged subject. The Dowager Viscountess Castlewood parades in front of her youthful portrait:

Specially, and in the place of honour, was Sir Peter Lely's picture of the Honourable Mistress Isabella Esmond as Diana, in yellow satin, with a bow in her hand and a crescent in her forehead; and dogs frisking about her. 'Twas painted about the time when royal Endymions were said to find favour with this virgin huntress; and, as goddesses have youth perpetual, this one believed to the day of her death that she never grew older: and always persisted in supposing the picture was still like her.<sup>40</sup>

There is a certain pathos in this humorous description, which lends Isabella a sympathetic viewing to some extent, but for the most part, the reader is prepared to appreciate the satire on her vanity. Thackeray uses the straight-laced Esmond to point out the folly of her "fascinating superannuated smile". Her vanity consists of deceiving herself as to the effects of time. Even before Thomas Esmond marries her, she is made to stand as a symbol for the effects of the passing of time:

She was lean, and yellow, and long in the tooth; all the red and white in all the toy-shops in London could not make a beauty of her - Mr. Killigrew called her the Sibyl, the death's-head put up at the King's feast as a "memento mori" etc.<sup>41</sup>

This image of a death's head at the feast, here overtly referred to as a "memento mori" is strongly connected with the example quoted earlier from Vanity Fair:

whoever would have thought, as we sat round the broad table sparkling with plate and spotless linen, to have seen such a dish at the head of it as that roaring auctioneer?<sup>42</sup>

The motif is probably a familiar one; Thackeray seems to have been preoccupied with the classical satiric ploy of exposing the jollity of life (the feast) to a harsh contrast such as that of the death's head; a constant reminder of the vanity of enjoyment and its fleetingness. The images of the decayed feast quoted by Carey are obviously part of the same obsession. Again, in Henry Esmond, Thackeray adverts openly to the "memento mori", when Esmond comments on Queen Anne's banishment of her brother:

Frightened perhaps to have such a "memento mori" under her royal eyes, Her Majesty had angrily forbidden the young Prince's coming into England.<sup>43</sup>

The "memento mori" in its conventional use is more closely allied to the Christian attitude than is Thackeray's use of it. In the Morality play, the device is used for a moral purpose in that the audience is urged to "repent, for tomorrow we die". Thackeray, although commenting on the vanity of pleasure and wealth, seems to be expressing an attitude closer to that described by Carey than to the traditional Christian one:

His master theme, the vanity of worldly pleasures, did not represent for him a religious proposition. Wordly pleasure was not wicked, it simply vanished.<sup>44</sup>

This is borne out by most of his work, particularly of course in Vanity Fair, where Rebecca is condemned, admittedly, but no real alternative to worldliness is offered. Amelia and Dobbin are not really effective as examples of the virtues of an unworldly

attitude. Neither The Newcomes nor Pendennis offers a notable example of such virtue. Perhaps Henry Esmond comes closest to offering a positive affirmation of the values of faithfulness, unworldliness and constancy, represented by Rachel. She is, admittedly, a less captivating character than the fiery Beatrix, but virtue is always represented as more dowdy than vice, as Becky is depicted as a far more fascinating character than Amelia. Thackeray refrains from directing irony against Rachel, which seems to indicate that he intends her as his moral heroine, despite his own natural fatal attraction to coquettes.

This assertion of lasting values is accompanied by a degree of cynicism in Henry Esmond as elsewhere in his work. Cynicism does not seem too strong a word, on balance, for the final attitude expressed in Vanity Fair: ("Ah, Vanitas vanitatum..." etc.) Clive Newcome's disastrous marriage to Rosie Mackenzie is not redeemed by Thackeray's appendage to the end of the novel that we may speculate if we like as to Clive's subsequent reconciliation to Ethel, but which cynically reminds us that we are, after all, merely victims of a fictitious illusion. Arthur Pendennis's dismissal of the hapless Fanny is also cynically treated. In Henry Esmond, Thackeray is writing as Esmond, whose serious attitude is far removed from the flippancy of Arthur Pendennis. This may partly explain the difference in moral atmospheres. Yet Esmond, too, shows marked signs of disillusion and a Hamlet-like misanthropy and pessimism on occasion. As Beatrix remarks, he is a "glum-faced, bluebearded little old man." When the Duke of Hamilton is killed in a duel, Beatrix's wedding preparations are in full flood, but the tradesmen abruptly abandon her on hearing the news:

The army of Vanity Fair, waiting without, gathered up all

their fripperies and fled aghast.<sup>45</sup>

Experience has taught Esmond that most people are merely time-servers, literally, in that they change opinions and loyalties with the times. This has been shown in previous examples, but one of the most convincing is Esmond's disgust at the undervaluing of General Webb by Marlborough. Even when Webb's victory at Wynendael is finally recognised, Esmond's thirst for justice is not quenched, as he fully realises that the Court's celebration of the general is motivated merely by opportunism:

When the General's lady went to the Queen's drawing-room, all the Tory women crowded her with congratulations, and made her a train greater than the Duchess of Marlborough's own. Feasts were given to the General by all the chiefs of the Tory party, who vaunted him as the Duke's equal in military skill; and perhaps used the worthy soldier as their instrument, whilst he thought they were but acknowledging his merits as a commander.<sup>46</sup>

Esmond's attitude to Beatrix is to some extent a cynical one, and again this is based on his awareness of the tricks played by time (and chance):

What is the meaning of fidelity in love, and whence the birth of it? 'Tis a state of mind that men fall into, and depending on the man rather than the woman. We love being in love, that's the truth on't. If we had not met Joan, we should have met Kate, and adored her.<sup>47</sup>

On the whole, however, Esmond's speculations on life and time are of a more serious sort. Here are two examples of his awareness of the irony of contrasting simultaneous events or states, separated not by time but by place. On finding Frank alive and roisterously well after the dreadful battle of Ramillies, (Book II, Chapter XII) Esmond is prompted to philosophise in a religious manner:

Great God! What a scene of murder is here within a mile of us; what hundreds have faced danger today; and here are these lads singing over their cups, and the same moon

that is shining over yonder horrid field is looking down over Walcote very likely, while my Lady sits and thinks about her boy that is at the war.

The almost religious unity symbolised by the moon powerfully emphasises the irony of the situation; in that such contrasting scenes can exist simultaneously. Again we find the horrible contrast between death and feasting: "what a scene of murder ... and here are these lads singing over their cups ...."

Another instance of a similar sort of contrast is prompted by Esmond's musings over his mother's grave in Brussels. He notices the contrast between the stillness of the graveyard and the process of life going on outside at the same time. The graveyard exerts a sense of timelessness:

A thousand such hillocks lay round about, the gentle daisies springing out of the grass over them, and each bearing its cross and requiescat. A nun, veiled in black, was kneeling hard by, at a sleeping sister's bedside (so fresh made, that the spring had scarce had time to spin a coverlid for it); beyond the cemetery walls you had glimpses of life and the world, and the spires and gables of the city.<sup>48</sup>

The fresh-made grave seems of a piece with all the others, suspended in an unchanging state. Here, unusually for Thackeray, the contrasting city with its life and bustle is represented without bitterness or any sense of "worldliness". "Life and the world, and the spires and gables of the city" seem attractive rather than otherwise.

Elsewhere, Thackeray rarely refers to changes as beneficial, or, if so, they bring mixed blessings. Describing Esmond's early passion for the village girl, Nancy, and his lack of grief at her death, he writes:

'Tis an error, surely, to talk of the simplicity of youth. I think no persons are more hypocritical, and have a more affected behaviour to one another, than the young. They deceive themselves and each other with artifices that do not impose upon men of the world; and so we grow simpler as we grow older.<sup>49</sup>

The fact remains that "we grow older". It was part of Thackeray's own

self-image that he was "a sulky grey-headed old fellow" when in his mid-twenties, so there is probably a certain element of renunciation in the assertion that we "grow simpler as we grow older".

The presence of death is again referred to in this passage, as Rachel's jealousy of Nancy is crushed by the awareness of that ultimate reality:

In the presence of Death, that sovereign ruler, a woman's coquetry is scared; and her jealousy will hardly pass the boundaries of that grim kingdom. 'Tis entirely of the earth that passion, and expires in the cold blue air beyond our sphere.<sup>50</sup>

Jealousy is Rachel's one failing, the nearest she comes to worldliness, and it is harshly dealt with here. The contrast between the worldly and the timeless is at first glance a pious one, but closer inspection reveals the more chilling objectivity of Thackeray's view that (in Carey's words): "worldly pleasure was not wicked, it simply vanished." This is revealed by the starkness of imagery here; jealousy is not dwarfed by a heavenly vision, but merely "expires in the cold blue air beyond our sphere".

Thackeray's absorption with time could provide the explanation for his great interest in bygone eras - more particularly with the eighteenth century. Perhaps this represented the immediate past for him in an historic sense, but for whatever reason, he was captivated by the period and its atmosphere, as is shown not only in Henry Esmond and subsequently in The Virginians, but also in Barry Lyndon and his lectures on The English Humourists of the Eighteenth Century and those on The Four Georges. He seems to have been naturally sympathetic to what he imagined to have been a sparkling, racy era. He dwells lovingly over descriptions of duelling, card-playing, scandaling and scheming and over colourful appearances, such as that of the Dowager Castlewood, from Book I, Chapter III.

She had as many rings on her fingers as the old woman of Banbury Cross; and pretty small feet which she was fond of showing, with great gold clocks to her stockings, and white pantoufles with red heels; and an odour of musk shook out of her garments whenever she moved or quitted the room, leaning on her stick, little Fury barking at her heels.<sup>51</sup>

It seems likely that for a man whose life had been blighted so early, this sort of yearning for a "golden" bygone age could fill a gap. In addition, he greatly admired the literature of the eighteenth century, as is shown by his inclusion of mythical versions of Addison, Pope, Steele and Swift in Henry Esmond. Thackeray seems sometimes to be a living continuation of their tradition; more at home in the previous century than in his own.

Ultimately, it seems that Thackeray's striving for timelessness is only partially successful. He finds it impossible to avoid the odd cynical remark about time's ruin. His creation of the ageless couple, Esmond and Rachel, and his affirmation of the value of constancy are counterbalanced by the practical difficulty presented by his narrative structure; an historical novel's very nature precludes a sense of timelessness in that the pseudo-author is presumed to be long dead. The presence of the "Preface" and footnotes by fictitious daughter and grandchildren only serves further to distance the narrative from the reader in time. It is ironic that a plunge into the past as a fictitious escape from the changing world of the present should result merely in a greater awareness of change on the reader's part.

## Chapter 5 - Cynicism and Distance

From the preceding chapters it emerges that Thackeray's attitudes to his reader, to his fiction and to "life" can cover a broad range; from seeming cynicism to sentimentality, with a number of gradations between. John Carey sets out to show that Thackeray's greatest writing is evident in the satirical genius of Vanity Fair and in early essays and articles. Later in life, Carey maintains, the satirist was tamed in deference to the author's new-found friends and protectors among the well-to-do. This results, Carey feels, in a blunting of Thackeray's satirical edge and therefore in a diminution of his creative genius.

When we examine a chronological list of Thackeray's works, it does seem as if the life and spark are reduced with age, when we compare, say, the irreverent iconoclasm of The Paris Sketchbook (1840) with the weighty and "worthy" sentiments expressed in The Virginians (1857-9). Of course, a blending of these extremes may be found, and Thackeray was himself aware of the seeming inconsistency in his attitudes. In 1848, he wrote to some Scottish admirers:

under the mask satirical there walks about a sentimental gentleman, who means not unkindly to any mortal person.<sup>1</sup>

The necessity for this "mask satirical" raises questions about Thackeray's personality. It is also interesting to ask whether his attitude ever amounted to outright cynicism: viz. "a contempt for and suspicion of human nature".<sup>2</sup> In a Christian sense, Thackeray doubted human nature, as he recognised his own weakness, but he believed in the possibility of its conversion, not like the true cynic who merely sneers as if to say: "What can you expect? Humans have always been so and always will be." Half-way through

his career, in 1846, he has this to say:

I believe such words as Fashionable, Exclusive, Aristocratic, and the like to be wicked, unchristian epithets, that ought to be banished from honest vocabularies. A court system that sends men of genius to the second table, I hold to be a Snobbish System. A society that sets up to be polite, and ignores Arts and Letters, I hold to be a Snobbish society. You who despise your neighbour, are a Snob; you who forget your own friends, meanly to follow after those of higher degree, are a Snob; you who are ashamed of your poverty, and blush for your calling, are a Snob; as are you who boast of your pedigree, or are proud of your wealth.<sup>3</sup>

This shows more of a moral crusader than a cynic, for however widespread this vice has become, it is still possible, he thinks, for these "unchristian epithets ... to be banished from honest vocabularies." His contempt for and suspicion of human nature are coupled with hope for its reform and arise from self-knowledge (he refers to himself as "this snob") and from accurate, if pessimistic, observations of his fellow-men. His reforming zeal is what impels him to take an occasionally harsh satirical view, which is the method he chooses to depict the corruption he despises. But he is not always so harsh, and this kinder view is not just attributable to a softening caused by age and the flattery of the aristocracy. It is true that the sentimental tone is far more common in his later work; however there are examples of sentimentality in early works and of sarcasm, irony and satire in his later works as well.

The "mask satirical" is in some instances a protective disguise. As we have seen in Chapter 1, Thackeray often finds it difficult to discuss serious questions without resorting to irony. When the satirical mood is inspired by genuine righteous indignation, as in The Book of Snobs or Vanity Fair, it produces an attitude which should not be mistaken for cynicism. The cynic does not care; he merely sneers. Thackeray affects to be

unconcerned, but the sense of tragedy which he communicates to us in, for instance, Amelia's folly in loving George, indicates that he does care.

Pendennis is a novel which promotes thoughts on cynicism. Here we find examples of satire in uneasy juxtaposition with the more sentimental style. Thackeray's satirical description of the worldly Major Pendennis indicates strong disapproval of the latter's cynicism. The major gives what he thinks is a generous assessment of the uncouth and kindly Lady Clavering:

"She is not refined, certainly, and calls 'Apollo' 'Apoller'; but she has some heart, and I like that sort of thing, and a devilish deal of money, too." <sup>4</sup>

There is another example of his worldliness revealed in dialogue in a polished piece of self-condemnation reminiscent of Oscar Wilde:

"Your downfall will not hurt me further than it will extinguish the hopes I had of seeing my family once more take its place in the world. It is only your mother and yourself who will be ruined. And I pity you both from my soul. Pass the claret." <sup>5</sup>

These satirical pieces indicate Thackeray's view of cynicism, however guilty he may himself be of it elsewhere. Blanche Amory is the butt of some vicious satire; in describing her charms he mentions her teeth:

... she showed them very often, for they were very pretty.... <sup>6</sup>

Blanche's gift for self-indulgent emotion rouses some uncommonly vicious remarks on her "tears", ("Mes Larmes" being the title of her book of poetry):

So "Mes Larmes" dribbled out of her eyes any day at command: she could furnish an unlimited supply of tears, and her faculty of shedding them increased with practice. <sup>7</sup>

Blanche's total lack of sincerity is also witheringly depicted

when she gives identical flowers and promises to both Pen and Foker:

... why should not the kind young creature give out of her superfluity, and make as many partners as possible happy? <sup>8</sup>

The next biting comment follows on from what is apparently a trite piece of sentiment about Pen:

Ah! is this the boy that prayed at his mother's knee...? Is this jaded and selfish worldling the lad who, a short while back, was ready to fling away his worldly all, his hope, his ambition, his chance of life, for his love? <sup>9</sup>

The abrupt switch of tone must lead us to question the sincerity of one or other passage.

Again, of a piece with other remarks on the fleeting quality of love and cynical reflections that "few die of the malady", Thackeray shows seeming cynicism, followed by pious moralism, when describing Pen's recovery from his mother's death. First, he reflects on the hypocrisy of those "flunkeys" who show deference for the respected, rich "pater familias" while he is alive, but upon his death abruptly change allegiance to his equally respected superior:

How long do you wish or expect that your people will regret you? How much time does a man devote to grief before he begins to enjoy? <sup>10</sup>

Then follows a piece of stock piety:

All the lapse of years, all the career of fortune, all the events of life, however strongly they may move or eagerly excite him, never can remove that sainted image from his heart....<sup>11</sup>

Yet Thackeray is too self-aware to commit such an apparent incongruity unconsciously; he is always aware of his own vacillating attitudes:

Is this mere dreaming, or, on the part of an idle

story-teller, useless moralizing? May not the man of the world take his moment, too, to be grave and thoughtful?<sup>12</sup>

Perhaps the "grave and thoughtful" Thackeray, the self-conscious Victorian, does not suit with our conception of an "honest" writer, but this is to ascribe to him our own standards of sincerity which seem to demand a uniformity of attitude. (See Chapter 1.) We demand that a satirist remain consistently embittered and cynical, whereas Thackeray's stance was in fact more complex, but not necessarily insincere for that reason. Neither does the co-existence of the softer tone rob the satire of its edge.

A point at which these extremes of attitude are brought into relief is seen during the debate between the upright Warrington and the "cynical" Pen, in the chapter, "The Way of the World" (Chapter LXI ). Caricatured though both views necessarily are, they seem to suggest a real struggle within the author, despite his shocked disclaimer: "We are not pledging ourselves for the correctness of his (Pen's) opinions..."<sup>13</sup>

Warrington, although backed by the reader's expectations of conventional moralisms, somehow lacks at first the force of Pen's "worldly" argument. Warrington echoes Thackeray's remarks, as author, on Major Pendennis's influence:

"You are your uncle's pupil," said Warrington, rather sadly; "and you speak like a worldling."

"And why not?" asked Pendennis; "why not acknowledge the world I stand upon, and submit to the conditions of the society which we live in and live by?..."<sup>14</sup>

Pen then embarks upon an eloquent attack on dogma which Warrington criticizes as indicative of a basic indifference. There is a real debate here, showing at least Thackeray's "negative capability"; perhaps it shows more; that is, a real indecision in himself, despite his ultimate condemnation of cynicism in Pen as being a

"lamentable stage ... one of general scepticism and sneering acquiescence in the world as it is; or if you like to so call it, a belief qualified with scorn in all things extant." The very precision of this analysis is perhaps indicative of Thackeray's self-identification with Pen's attitude; yet the ultimate decision urged upon the reader in favour of Warrington is not merely a matter of lip service to "Victorian" expectations. Part of Thackeray believes and wishes to believe that righteousness is better than "acquiescence". Besides, Warrington has, paradoxically, the cynical perspicacity to see that Pen's philosophical posturing is merely to disguise his own cupidity: "You're going to sell yourself, and Heaven help you!"<sup>15</sup>

It seems then that Thackeray's moral attitude is complex; he is not merely tailoring his iconoclasm to meet the needs of a "respectable" readership. Further, the complexity results not merely in tension between two extremes, but in a wide range of gradations between the two. So we find examples of subtle irony interspersed among "sentimental" passages. For instance, in a highly emotional scene between Helen Pendennis and Dr. Portman, having described her maternal delight that Pen has repaid his debt to Laura, Thackeray still keeps a dart up his sleeve to puncture the worthy Portman:

"The letter does the boy very great honour, very great honour, my dear," he said, patting it as it lay on Helen's knee....<sup>16</sup>

It may be that it is Thackeray's "sentimental" idealism which results in his "cynical" pose; having once found his idealism inconsistent with reality, he resorts to a mechanism of defensiveness or dismissiveness; always expecting the worst, while hoping for the best. When he does achieve realism it is sometimes expressed in a sententious way, but he nevertheless manages to

face the fact that good and bad are inextricably mixed:

We own and see daily, how the false and worthless live and prosper, while the good are called away,.... we see flowers of good blooming in foul places, as, in the most lofty and splendid fortunes, flaws of vice and meanness....<sup>17</sup>

Even in Henry Esmond and The Virginians; both predominantly serious and sentimental in tone, Thackeray is still unable to refrain from ironic and even cynical asides.

In Henry Esmond, the tone is serious and Thackeray attempts to expound some positive moral view, with Rachel gaining the moral victory over her daughter. Embittered, or apparently cynical comments can be read as the sober Esmond's moral reflections on the times; for instance, in the opening pages of his "History", Esmond comments on the disparity between the myth of royalty and the reality:

I saw Queen Anne ... tearing down the Park slopes, after her stag-hounds, and driving her one-horse chaise a hot, red-faced woman, not in the least resembling that statue of her which turns its back upon St. Paul's .... She was neither better bred nor wiser than you and me, though we knelt to hand her a letter or a washhand basin.<sup>18</sup>

This is of a piece with Thackeray's attitudes to royalty seen elsewhere, (See Chapter 2 on The Paris Sketchbook.) It is also consistent with the character of Esmond; a dissatisfied, scathing young Hamlet figure who looks for the worst in married relationships, especially that of his "mother", Rachel. His observations on her crumbling relationship with his lordship should probably be read as no more than this:

Then, perhaps, the pair reached that other stage which is not uncommon in married life, when the woman perceives that the god of the honeymoon is a god no more; only a mortal like the rest of us - and so she looks into her heart and lo! "vacuae sedes et inania arcana." And now, supposing our lady to have a fine genius and a brilliant wit of her own, and the magic spell and infatuation removed from her which had led her to worship as a god a

very ordinary mortal - and what follows? They live together, and they dine together, and they say "my dear" and "my love" as heretofore; but the man is himself, and the woman herself: that dream of love is over as everything else is over in life; as flowers and fury, and griefs and pleasures are over.<sup>19</sup>

As we have seen in the chapter on "Time", this is a part of Thackeray's view of time as a destroyer. It certainly amounts to pessimism, and cynicism on Esmond's part would be understandable here. Yet Esmond is again made the mouth-piece

for more remarks of this kind on the death of love:

Who does not know of eyes, lighted by love once, where the flame shines no more!.... So oaths mutually sworn, and invocations of Heaven and priestly ceremonies, and fond belief, and love, so fond and faithful that it never doubted but that it should live for ever, are all to no avail towards making love eternal: it dies, in spite of the banns and the priest:... It has its course, like all mortal things - its beginning, progress and decay. It buds and it blooms out into sunshine, and it withers and ends.<sup>20</sup>

Esmond is supposed to utter these jaundiced remarks, writing with the hindsight of a "timeless" relationship, brought to fruition, which indicates that the attitude is Thackeray's own. It is not perhaps precisely cynicism, since it represents disillusion rather than an uncaring attitude.

In The Virginians, otherwise rather easily sentimental in tone, we find numerous examples of a throw-away cynicism. This is looser and less well-aimed satirically than in earlier works, which may indicate that the work was hurried or that Carey's criticism is just; that Thackeray's satiric edge has indeed become blunted. For instance, quite early in the work, Thackeray tosses this query to the reader:

Happy! who is happy? Was not there a serpent in Paradise itself, and if Eve had been perfectly happy beforehand, would she have listened to him?<sup>21</sup>

On the whole, however, his sarcastic remarks are reserved for the

hypocrisy of his own age, as he compares it with the more open, less refined manners of the eighteenth century.

Manners, you see, were looser a hundred years ago; tongues were vastly more free and easy; names were named, and things were done, which we should screech now to hear mentioned. Yes, madam, we are not as our ancestors were. Ought we not to thank the Fates that have improved our morals so prodigiously, and made us so eminently virtuous?<sup>22</sup>

His view of the hidden reality of the morals of his own age is evident:

I forbear to go into curious inquiries regarding the Lady Maria's antecedents. I have my own opinions about Madame Bernstein's. A hundred years ago, people of the great world were not so strait-laced as they are now, when everybody is good, pure, moral, modest; when there is no skeleton in anybody's closet;....<sup>23</sup>

Or again, describing Will Esmond's rakish behaviour, he regrets the necessary lack of detail:

A hundred years ago his characters and actions might have been described at length by the painter of manners; but the Comic Muse, nowadays, does not lift up Molly Seagrim's curtain; she only indicates with expressions of horror, and a fan before her eyes.<sup>24</sup>

These remarks and others like them seem to indicate a contempt for the values of his own age. This assessment of Thackeray's views has long been widely held; it was certainly shared by many of his contemporaries, according to Ann Monsarrat, in her biography, An Uneasy Victorian:

In his lifetime no-one was argued about more passionately than Thackeray. He was a Victorian, living in an age which put the greatest value on appearances, and he committed the unforgivable sin of showing what went on behind the immaculate facade.<sup>25</sup>

His occasional lack of respect for his readers indicates a rather jaundiced view of his own craft:

The incidents of life, and love-making especially, I believe to resemble each other so much, that I am surprised, gentlemen and ladies, you read novels any more.<sup>26</sup>

Perhaps this remark is less cynical than weary; of course he must

continue to write while the demand continues, but he gives the impression of writing what the public wants to read, while being bored with the subject matter himself. Again, he writes in an alienated way of his own fiction (rather like a weary Sterne) when Harry has fallen unconscious from his horse:

Lest any tender-hearted reader should be in alarm .... How can we afford to kill off our heroes, when they are scarcely out of their teens, and we have not reached the age of manhood of their story? We are in mourning already for one of our Virginians, who has come to grief in America; surely we cannot kill off the other in England? <sup>27</sup>

(In financial terms, Thackeray could not afford to kill Harry off.)

Ann Monsarrat is anxious to defend Thackeray the man from the charge of cynicism, and a study of his life does reveal someone closer to that "sentimental gentleman" he described than to a sneering cynic. One tribute after his death began:

He was a cynic: By his life all wrought  
Of generous acts, mild words, and gentle ways:  
His heart wide open to all kindly thought,  
His hand so quick to give, his tongue to praise....<sup>28</sup>

There is no denying a certain world weariness in his writings, however, and the effect of this on Thackeray's style is similar to that discussed elsewhere in this thesis; namely a distancing from his material. An author who can comment so scathingly on his own society, his readers and even his own craft must have an alienated attitude to some extent. The apparent anomaly of a generous-hearted man despising the social mores of his own times results in the ambivalence described, (see Lambert Ennis, The Sentimental Cynic)<sup>29</sup> and in the distancing asides which honesty and a keen satiric eye force him to utter.

These asides and commentaries, discussed in Chapter 1, contribute greatly to the distancing effect, for although

Thackeray, for the most part in his early works, achieves closeness with the reader, he does so at the expense of closeness with his fiction. This probably happens least in Vanity Fair, where his "belief" in his characters, particularly Becky, seems strongest. This is indicated by the predominant use of narrative and dialogue rather than commentary. Figures which are removed from their fictional contexts and inspected may still perform a powerful role, but the reader's "belief" in them must be shaken. Even in Vanity Fair, however, Thackeray 'finally and abruptly distances himself and us from his characters by telling us that they are merely puppets, and perhaps he sees this as a valuable lesson for the reader; we must recognise fiction for what it is: an entertainment:

Come, children, let us shut up the box and the puppets,  
for our play is played out. (end of Vanity Fair).

Thackeray's ambivalence or indecision over moral issues, discussed in Chapter 1, also indicates a tendency to distance himself from his chosen subject matter, although it emerges that this is probably the result of self-doubt rather than of cynicism. Perhaps this is of a piece with his attitude to his characters; he does not seem to take his role as moralist any more seriously than his fiction. This is certainly not because he despises "Arts and Letters", as we have seen, but is the result of self-denigration.

In Chapter 2, we see how Thackeray's satiric method involves distancing himself from the object of his satire. He does this by assuming the role of a wandering, objective observer, or by writing tongue-in-cheek in the person of the "picaro", Barry Lyndon. His characteristic use of irony and sarcasm indicate a lack of sympathy or distance from the objects of his satire; for instance, when he caricatures the English snobbish traveller, in

The Paris Sketchbook.

His use of the unsympathetic rogue, Barry Lyndon as protagonist, involves a slightly different form of distancing, as has been shown. The author hides behind his protagonist, whom he satirizes, by allowing Barry to damn himself.

Indeed, it hardly seems necessary to stress the importance of distance between satirist and victim. In Chapter 3, the use of the stereotype for satiric ends can be seen to fall into the same pattern; we cannot sympathise fully with a stereotype and hence can appreciate the author's scathing satire of the vices and follies thus presented. To come too close to these victims would arouse sympathy and thus destroy satire.

Comic exaggeration is another device which he uses widely in his early satirical works; for instance, his satirical description of the French King, "Ludovicus Rex". This device is also important in the creation of the stereotype, for in order to be really comic, the author must preserve distance between his creation and the reader. The clown with a human story immediately becomes tragic. Here the author's use of distance is entirely deliberate and stylistic, whereas the distance discussed in relation to Chapter 1 may have been unconscious on Thackeray's part.

Connected with Thackeray's comic exaggeration is his slick verbal wit. The most enjoyable examples of this rely on an urbane pose which precludes sympathetic involvement; for instance, in Vanity Fair, he writes of Pitt Crawley: "he would have starved rather than have dined without a white neckcloth."<sup>30</sup> and: "yet he failed somehow, in spite of a mediocrity which ought to have ensured any man a success."<sup>31</sup> These examples are perceptive enough to be stinging rather than merely witty. Other examples of happy

turns of phrase also show this combination of insight and polished wit; for instance, the phrase, "cruelly affable". In other cases, he merely enjoys indulging in comic creation, although these cases are mostly confined to his youthful writing. In The Paris Sketchbook, he refers to the oysters which no longer seem to be found on English shores but seem to have moved to the French coast as "poor molluscous exiles". His obvious enjoyment of comic fantasy is occasionally Dickensian; it is shown in phrases like: "eruptive buttons", "the wine was worthy of the gills of a bishop" or that august firm: "The Antibilious Life Assurance Company". Another sort of distancing is shown here; reality is distanced and refuge or escape sought in comic exaggeration or fantasy.

In Chapter 4 of this thesis, we again find Thackeray seeking to escape or distance himself, this time from the present. The effects of time are seen as disastrous, so he seeks to create a sense of timelessness in Henry Esmond. His resort to distant periods for the setting of many of his works seems to indicate dissatisfaction with the present. In terms of his own life story, as we have seen, this was understandable. Add to this a keen criticism of the materialism, snobbery and hypocrisy of his own age and you have the makings of a very "uneasy Victorian" indeed.

It should be pointed out that there are many different sorts of "distance" involved here; varying from Thackeray's unease with his own time to a conscious satiric technique. I have been intentionally vague in lumping them all together for I feel they are all symptomatic of a larger and highly characteristic quality of Thackeray's, that is, a sort of ironic suspicion, probably resulting from a peculiar vulnerability. Trollope described him as a man who "kept his heart-strings in a crystal case," and perhaps it was to preserve that crystal that Thackeray kept his

fiction at arm's length.<sup>32</sup> Techniques such as irony, stereotyping and comic fantasy may act as a buffer to such vulnerability. As for satire, distance has here been seen to be essential.

The characteristic which I have loosely called "distance" is not necessarily a weakness. Every author establishes his or her own distance with his art and with his reader. Thackeray nearly always maintains a close relationship with his reader, either in his own person or through his "pseudo-author", while backing away from reality and from his own creations. This is consistent with the view of a man whose ambivalence made it possible for him to respect and revere his fellow-men in daily life, and occasionally treat his fiction and his characters with contempt.

## Chapter 1

1. D.H. Lawrence, "Why the Novel Matters", Phoenix, (Heinemann Ltd., 1936), p.533.
2. Lawrence Sterne, Tristram Shandy, (Everyman 1912), Chapter IV, p.5.
3. Ibid., Chapter XV, p.43.
4. The Newcomes, Chapter LXXX.
5. Henry Fielding, Tom Jones, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1974), Book X, Chapter I, p.523.
6. Ibid., pp.524,525.
7. Henry James, The Europeans, (Penguin), p.167.
8. Ibid.
9. Henry James, Portrait of a Lady, (Macmillan 1921), Chapter XII, p.127.
10. "Papers by the Fat Contributor": Contributions to Punch, (Smith, Elder & Co., 1906), p.62.
11. Ibid.
12. The Newcomes, Chapter XLVII.
13. Pendennis, (Smith, Elder & Co., 1914), Chapter XXXVI p.349.
14. Wayne C. Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction, (Chicago U.P. 1961), p.199.
15. Vanity Fair, Chapter XXXVI.
16. Pendennis, Chapter LIX, p.589.
17. Ibid., Chapter LI, p.501.
18. The Newcomes, Chapter XXXVI.
19. Op cit.
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21. Pendennis, Chapter XX, p.186.
22. Ibid., Chapter LII, p.507.
23. Op. cit., Chapter 3, "All Authors Should be Objective".
24. Ibid., p.158.

25. G.K. Chesterton, ed. Thackeray, (London: G.Bell & Sons, 1909), pp.xix-xxi, xxii-xxv, xxxi-xxxii.
26. See note 10.
27. "A Little Dinner at Timmins's": Contributions to Punch, Chapter V, p.721.
28. The Virginians, Chapter XVIII.

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2. "Sketches and Travels in London": Contributions to Punch, (Smith, Elder & Co., 1906), p.541.
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8. Ibid.
9. "On the French School of Painting", Ibid., p.47.
10. "Entrance to Dublin": Irish Sketchbook, Sketchbooks, Chapter 1, p.273.
11. Ibid., p.277.
12. Ibid., "From Carlow to Waterford", Chapter III, p.303.
13. Ibid., "From Glengariff to Killarney", Chapter X, p.366.
14. Ibid., "The Giant's Causeway - Coleraine - Portrush", Chapter XXIX, pp.548-9.
15. From Cornhill to Cairo, Sketchbooks, Chapter II, p.595.
16. Barry Lyndon, (Smith, Elder & Co., 1905), Chapter IV, (beginning).
17. R. Paulson, The Fictions of Satire, Chapter 1, p.20 onward.
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19. Ibid., Chapter XV, p.192.
20. Ibid., Chapter VII, p.89.
21. Ibid., Chapter IX, p.110.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid., Chapter II, p.37.
24. Ibid., Chapter IX, pp.111-112
25. Ibid., Chapter II, p.36.
26. Ibid., Chapter II, pp.36-39
27. Ibid., Chapter V, "I Personate the Lieutenant", pp.65-66.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.
30. R. Paulson, op. cit., pp. 10-11.
31. R. Paulson, Satire and the Novel in Eighteenth Century England, (Yale U.P. 1967), pp. 172-173.
32. Ibid.
33. Barry Lyndon, Chapter V, "I Personate the Lieutenant", p.66
34. Ibid., Chapter VI, p.86.

#### Notes - Chapter 3

1. E.M. Forster, "People", Aspects of the Novel, (Ed. Arnold Pocket ed., 1963), Chapter IV, p.65.
2. Henry Fielding, Joseph Andrews, Book III, Chapter II: "I declare here once for all, I describe not men, but manners; not an individual, but a species. ...this...distinguishes the satirist from the libeller."
3. W.J. Harvey, Character and the Novel, extract included in The Theory of the Novel, ed. Philip Stevick (Free Press 1967) p.238.
4. George Moore, "Since the Elizabethans": Cosmopolis, 1896.
5. Ibid.
6. Vanity Fair, beginning of Chapter XLII.

7. Ibid., Chapter XIII.
8. Charles Dickens, Dombey and Son, Chapter 1.
9. Ibid.
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12. Ibid.
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15. Ibid., end of Chapter XXVIII.
16. Ibid., Chapter III.
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22. Ibid., Chapter XIII.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid., Chapter XXV.
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26. Ibid.
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29. " Chapter LIII.
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31. " Chapter LXVII (towards end).
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33. Percy Lubbock, The Craft of Fiction (Jonathan Cape 1921) p.95.
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2. Henry Esmond, Book I, Chapter I.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., Book I, Chapter III.
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9. Henry Esmond, Book III, Chapter III.
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13. John Carey, Prodigal Genius, (Faber 1977), Chapter 6.
14. Ann Monsarrat, An Uneasy Victorian, (Cassell 1980).
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20. Henry Esmond, Book II, Chapter X.
21. Ibid., Book II, Chapter VI.

22. Ibid.
23. Ibid., Book II, Chapter XV.
24. Ibid., Book III, Chapter II.
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27. " Book III, Chapter IV.
28. " Book III, Chapter VII.
29. " " Chapter IV.
30. " " Chapter VII.
31. Ibid.
32. " " "
33. Ibid., Book III, Chapter X.
34. Ibid., Book III, Chapter XIII.
35. Ibid.
36. " Book III, Chapter XII.
37. " " Chapter XIII.
38. " Book II, Chapter XIV.
39. " " Chapter III.
40. Ibid.
41. " Book I, Chapter II.
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44. Op. cit., Chapter 6.
45. Henry Esmond, Book II, Chapter XI.
46. Ibid., Book II, Chapter XV.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid., Book II, Chapter XII.
49. Ibid., Book I, Chapter VIII.
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid., Book I, Chapter III.

## Notes - Chapter 5

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2. Chambers' Twentieth Century Dictionary.
3. The Book of Snobs, Chapter II, ("The Snob Royal").
4. Pendennis, Chapter XLIV, p.435.
5. Ibid., Chapter VIII, p.81.
6. Ibid., Chapter XXII, p.215.
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8. Ibid., end of Chapter XLV.
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13. Ibid., p.614.
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18. Henry Esmond, (beginning) Book I, Chapter I.
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21. The Virginians, Chapter IV.
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25. Ann Monsarrat, An Uneasy Victorian, (Cassell 1980), p.1.
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## Thackeray's Works - in order of publication

(This is not a comprehensive list, but simply contains those read or referred to in this thesis. Publishers are only given where the Smith, Elder, & Co. Biographical Edition was available.)

- 1840 "The Paris Sketchbook": Sketchbooks, (Smith, Elder & Co. 1911).
- 1842 (begins) Contributions to Punch, (Smith, Elder & Co, 1906).
- 1843 "The Irish Sketchbook": Sketchbooks, " " " 1911.
- 1844 The Luck of Barry Lyndon, (Smith, Elder & Co. 1905).
- 1845 "Cornhill to Cairo": Sketchbooks (as above).
- 1846 The Snobs of England, or The Book of Snobs.
- 1847-8 Vanity Fair.
- 1848 "A Little Dinner at Timmins's": Contributions to Punch.
- 1848-50 The History of Pendennis, (Smith, Elder & Co. 1914.)
- 1850 "Rebecca and Rowena": Christmas Books. (also The Kickleburys on the Rhine and "Our Street").

- 1852 The History of Henry Esmond.
- 1853 The English Humourists of the Eighteenth Century.
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- 1855 The Rose and the Ring.
- 1857-59 The Virginians.
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