

THACKERAY'S TRAVEL WRITINGS

Dissertation for the Degree of Ph. D.  
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY  
RICHARD MICHAEL KLISH  
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By

Richard Michael Klish

AN ABSTRACT TO A DISSERTATION

Submitted to  
Michigan State University  
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## ABSTRACT

### THACKERAY'S TRAVEL WRITINGS

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William Makepeace Thackeray has seldom impressed subsequent generations as a celebrant of the open road, but the truth is that he spent nearly one-third of his fifty two years away from England. His travels began at age five when he left his birthplace in India for England; they eventually included trips to North America and the Middle East, along with several lengthy stays in Continental Europe. All this traveling had several causes: foreign birth, writing and lecturing opportunities, the search for knowledge, and perhaps simple wanderlust. Most importantly, Thackeray joined his passion for journeying to his interest in writing at an early stage of his career, and produced three major travel books, several minor sketches, and important travel episodes in each of his seven novels.

As he embarked on travel writing, he encountered a distinctive literary form that had its own demands and traditions. The travel narrative--basically the account of a visit to an unfamiliar area--is an empirical form



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that places limitations on a writer fictional work does not, yet still requires great insight and imagination. In response to those requirements, four major travel literature traditions had evolved by Thackeray's time; defined by their main subject matter, they were the humanistic, personal, romantic and picturesque schools.

During the 1830's and early 1840's, Thackeray reviewed several travel books, and there revealed his own loose theory of travel writing. In those reviews, he marked the growing ease of travel and the proliferation of the guidebook, and accordingly opted for the personal school of travel literature, recommending that the writer provide a unique perspective on the land visited rather than carefully catalogue foreign buildings and customs. His three major travel books are The Paris Sketch Book (1840), The Irish Sketch Book (1843), and Cornhill to Cairo (1846); together they show the gradual development of his technique and his mastery of the form. Thackeray organized those books around Michael Angelo Titmarsh--an engaging, companionable narrator--and clusters of interconnected themes; he used a wide variety of devices--expansion, impressionism, the "multi-media" approach among them--to impress a fresh, vivid view of foreign lands on his readers.

When Thackeray wrote Vanity Fair in 1847-48, he drew heavily on his journeying experience and his travel narratives. It is both an "imperial" and "international" novel, thoroughly conscious of countries other than England. His

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stays in other lands had given him definite views of British and foreign culture, and he incorporated those opinions into an extensive thematic contrast between England and the Continent that is important to the entire novel. His three travel books served not only as apprentice work, but as sources for the Vanity Fair puppet-master, and for several of the novel's narrative techniques and patterns. Thackeray's other six novels are also marked, in varying degrees, by his travel experience and his efforts to write about it.

Travel had a significant formative impact on Thackeray, man and artist. It lent him the opportunity to stand apart from British society and critically analyze it according to other standards; it directed him to a travel writing career. Thackeray's pre-eminent achievement--his seven novels--were importantly shaped by those two forces.

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## INTRODUCTION

In the seven years before the appearance of Vanity Fair, William Makepeace Thackeray published three travel books and numerous short travel pieces for magazines. The books appeared in three year intervals, until the arrival of his great novel in 1847, and then no more appeared--products, clearly, of those hard formative years when Thackeray was honing his writing skills to the level of mastery that yielded Vanity Fair. Written under the name of Michael Angelo Titmarsh, the travel books were among the first volumes published by Thackeray; they were joined, in the early 1840's, by a heavy output of travel sketches for magazines like Fraser's and Punch. Thus, before becoming a novelist Thackeray was a travel writer of considerable experience and some success.

Such an important, and potentially formative, phase in a major novelist's career should arouse curiosity, but not necessarily serious attention. After all, the work produced might be a holiday from serious writing--or mere hack-work--that merits brief perusal and then prompt dismissal. Or perhaps the books are strictly ancillary to



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the writer's overall career, involving areas that he experimented in and lost interest with.

A reading of Thackeray's three travel books--and they are The Paris Sketch Book (1840), The Irish Sketch Book (1843), and Cornhill to Cairo (1846)--undermines any hypothesis that they are hastily contrived exercises. They are clearly the works of a polished, professional writer who knows what he is about and who has devoted serious attention to his task. Although these books appear in a literary genre that is generally not as highly esteemed as the novel, they are genuine examples of literary craftsmanship, and invite careful study. Furthermore, an examination of the travel narratives, even casual in approach, reveals several similarities between them and Thackeray's novels, correspondences that place the three books within the mainstream of the author's life work.

The question of whether the travel books deserve attention should be answered in the affirmative, then. But the resolution of this question excites others: What led Thackeray to travel literature in the first place? What shaped the travel books? What are these books' themes, aesthetic patterns, and literary techniques; or, simply, how do they work? And finally, what is their role in Thackeray's total literary output, most particularly in regard to his novels? The responses to these questions, and the exploration of what led to the travel narratives

and what flowed from them, has determined the contours of this dissertation.

Study of Thackeray's letters and his biography help explain why he became a travel writer. Travel was, quite simply, a powerful and lifelong interest of Thackeray, one that he pursued in many ways for over forty years. His first great trip was at the age of five, taking him from India to England; he subsequently enjoyed a kind of "Grand Tour" as a young gentleman, a long stay in Paris as a struggling family man, lecture tours to America, visits to Ireland and the Levant for business purposes, and many Continental pleasure jaunts. His constant rambling gave him several opportunities--chances to stand apart from England and critically analyze it, to broaden his knowledge of human life, to grow as a person. Most importantly, it gave him the chance to exercise another great interest, which was writing. At age nineteen, he hit upon the notion of writing a travel book about Germany, and although this project was never begun, a future course had been charted.

When he finally embarked on that course, he confronted a literary genre with definite requirements and developed traditions. An empirical form, travel writing places constraints on its practitioners that fictional novel writing does not, while still demanding considerable insight and imagination. In response to these demands, and to human thought and historical circumstance, four traditions of travel literature had been developed by

Thackeray's time. Defined by their subject matter and major interest, they were: the humanistic, concerned with Man and his works; the personal, concerned with the responses of the writer to the area visited; the picturesque, concerned with a highly stylized treatment of nature as landscape painting; and the romantic, concerned, primarily, with the exotic in foreign life and the beauties of natural scenery. Thackeray was aware of the demands and traditions of travel literature, and, when he came to write his own works, was guided by those forces, just as he was influenced by his travel experiences.

As a writer, Thackeray opted for the personal mode of travel literature. The Irish Sketch Book and Cornhill to Cairo, especially, are personal works, dominated throughout by their charming and intrusive narrator, Michael Angelo Titmarsh. Thackeray believed that only by centering his narratives around a strong story-teller, with a distinctive point of view, could he make his works interesting and vital to the reader. His narrator comes to assume the triple role of companion to the reader, conduit of information, and character in the work--a posture designed, in part, to bridge the gap between the reader and the subject of the narrative. While the narrator unifies the work with his personality and viewpoint, thematic clusters organize and relate the travel book's various insights. Thackeray brings, in short, aesthetic and thematic discipline to his travel literature.



When Thackeray turned to novel writing, he invested the hard won skills of his travel narratives in the new enterprise. The narrator of Vanity Fair, in his personality and role, is a lineal descendant of Titmarsh of the travel books; narrative techniques applied in the earlier works re-surface in the novels. Further, Thackeray's attitudes toward foreign lands, developed in his travels and enunciated in his letters and travel books, become themes in Vanity Fair--and an understanding of those beliefs helps to clarify important sections of the novel. What is true for Vanity Fair holds, in varying degrees, for Thackeray's other six novels, all of which contain travel sequences to foreign lands.

Thackeray's travel books, while not his finest work, still have considerable intrinsic literary merit, and their well-written, insightful, and imaginative pages well repay the attention given them. Substantial, too, is their extrinsic value. Study of them leads us to focus sharply on travel and foreign lands in Thackeray's life, and hence gives us a better understanding of the man. And Thackeray's most enduring monument--Vanity Fair and his other six novels--is illuminated and explained in part by an analysis of the books' themes and form.

This dissertation has proved to be a collective enterprise and I would like to thank those who assisted me in it. I owe special thanks to Professor Richard E.

Benvenuto of Michigan State University--a teacher whose assistance, patience and encouragement were invaluable to me. Professors James D. Rust and Robert W. Uphaus both read the work in manuscript and offered very helpful comments and suggestions which I greatly appreciated.

But my greatest gratitude goes to my wife Barbara, whose support, in ways too numerous to mention, made this long project a finished task.



## CHAPTER I

### THACKERAY'S JOURNEYS TO FOREIGN LANDS

Writing to an American friend in November of 1853, William Makepeace Thackeray recounted his travels for the past year, and then exclaimed: "What a number of places and agitation of life! I begin to feel most tranquillity of mind in a railway carriage now; and retirement in an inn . . ."<sup>1</sup> While these words are cast in their author's habitual manner, and must be taken ironically, they signal an aspect of his life and art that must be taken most seriously. After all, the twelve months preceding this letter were marked by the almost constant "agitation" of travel to foreign countries. Thackeray spent November, 1852, to April, 1853, touring and lecturing in the United States; returning to England on May 2, he tarried only ten days in London before rejoining his daughters in Paris. After a brief return visit to England, the Thackeray family embarked on a ten-week pleasure swing through Switzerland and Germany that ended in mid-August. Writing friends that "our travels are all over for a while" (Letters, III, 300), Thackeray then spent most of October

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and November with his step-father and mother in the French capital, only to migrate south to Rome for a winter's stay on November 27.<sup>2</sup> What a number of places, indeed.

Professor Gordon N. Ray, Thackeray's definitive biographer, perceptively notes that "the image of Thackeray most firmly fixed in posterity's mind shows him as he was during his years of continuous London residence at 36 Onslow Square" from 1856 to 1862.<sup>3</sup> However, the picture of Thackeray as a mature, established celebrity, both sage and social lion, while accurate for the final years of his life, does not square with the reality of Thackeray as struggling aspirant and relentless traveler who spent nearly a third of his fifty-two years away from England.

In many ways, William Thackeray was a wanderer, a rootless man who drifted from city to city, from country to country, from continent to continent throughout his life--a British subject but a citizen of the world. Although he did not circle the globe in his journeys, Thackeray could be called, with little exaggeration, a world traveler, having visited four of the world's six continents. Born in Calcutta, India, he never became completely attached to England as a homeland (at age 30 he used to humorously refer to Paris as "home" and London as "exile"<sup>4</sup>) and never lost his fascination for travel (at age 50, tired and infirm, he contemplated a lengthy trip to St. Petersburg<sup>5</sup>). Fluent in French and German and thoroughly accustomed to living out of a portmanteau, he



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would impulsively depart England for the Continent on a moment's notice, skipping breakfast in his haste; or would leave for a ten-week voyage to Africa and the Levant after two days' planning and frantic preparation.

Of all the major British novelists of the nineteenth century, it is perhaps Thackeray who is least rooted to a particular place or locale. Dickens's close knowledge of London enabled him to place much of his fiction there; Thomas Hardy transformed a large sector of southwestern England into his fictional Wessex; George Eliot frequently returned to her rural English background for her novels' settings. Lacking in large part what William Carlos Williams called a "local"--a physical environment known intensively and intimately--Thackeray often placed his action in a moral or social environment such as a Vanity Fair, or a Fable-land, an environment that would span several different geographical places. Dickens's London, of course, forms a moral and social atmosphere for its characters, but the reader also perceives the great metropolis as a concrete entity whose sights, sounds and smells shape and direct the human beings who populate it. One does not have the same sensation when reading Thackeray: his London, Brussels, and Brighton are parts of a pervasive moral milieu and much less importantly distinctive physical landscapes. Further, in his lack of attachment to a single physical locale, Thackeray is less akin to contemporary Victorians than to later writers like Conrad and Stevenson,



to Americans like Henry James, and to the Parisian expatriates of post-World War I Europe and America.

The "rootlessness" of Thackeray's fiction was apparently compounded by his writing habits, for he frequently composed his works while on the move. In 1840, Thackeray's wife wrote: "To look at all sides of the question the best parts of the Paris book were written last year under the excitement of travelling" (Letters, I, 462). To Mrs. Brookfield, Thackeray himself acknowledged the stimulation travel provided him:

I came on hither yesterday, having passed the day previous at Dover where it rained incessantly, and where I only had the courage to write the first sentence of this letter--being utterly cast down and more under the influence of blue devil than I ever remember before but a fine bright sky at five o'clock in the morning and a jolly brisk breeze, and the ship cutting through the water at 15 miles an hour restored cheerfulness to this wearied spirit . . . (Letters, II, 406).

This excitement and uplift would contribute to the flowering of his art. Part of his first novel, Barry Lyndon, was written during a six-month journey to the Near East and Italy, and much of The Irish Sketch Book, an 1843 travel narrative, was drafted while on tour in Ireland.

But perhaps a glance at the composition of The Newcomes would be most revealing in this regard. Thackeray's longest novel, ultimately appearing in twenty-four segments, The Newcomes was begun during the pleasure tour of Switzerland and Germany in the summer of 1853. Finishing four parts there, Thackeray completed part five in Paris before

departing for Italy for the winter of 1853-54. In five months at Rome and Naples, he wrote numbers six through ten; then, summering with the Dickens family in Boulogne in 1854, he composed through number fifteen. Thackeray wrote the final two numbers in Paris in early 1855. Thus, more than two-thirds of this major novel had been written abroad--in several locales, on several tours. It is no surprise, then, that The Newcomes has a massive middle section describing the "Congress of Baden," an important set piece in Rome, and key passages in Paris.<sup>6</sup>

Travel did not figure merely in the composition of Thackeray's works, but in their very subject matter: he wrote three major travel books, several travel articles for magazines, and included a travel sequence in each of his seven major novels, and in several of the shorter fictional works. For him, then, travel was not wielded as an occasional artistic device, but became a central concern informing his life's work.

With all this in mind, I would like to turn to an outline of the major travel episodes of Thackeray's life. Along with naming names, places and dates, special emphasis will be placed on the range of his journeying, his reasons for it, and the impact these excursions had on his career as a professional writer, and on his attitudes towards foreign countries and towards England. Being an outline, the following narrative does not seek to exhaust all the details and ramifications of Thackeray's travels. It

seeks rather to establish the central importance of these travels through vital selected facts.

A child of Empire, Thackeray was born in Calcutta on July 18, 1811, son of a British civil servant. His first major journey was departure from India at age five; he left for England aboard the Prince Regent on December 17, 1816, accompanied by his brother and a family servant. The 4-1/2 month voyage was interrupted by stopoffs at the Cape of Good Hope on February 17, 1817, and at St. Helena on March 8. There, the servant led the young man to "a garden where we saw a man walking. 'That is he!' cried the black man. 'That is Bonaparte! He eats three sheep a day and all the children he can lay hands on!'"<sup>7</sup> The party arrived in England May 4.

Although we have this anecdote of Napoleon and a few scattered memories of an Eastern childhood, close investigation need not be visited on these early days as a source of travel inspiration. The important thing was Thackeray's immersion in the Anglo-Indian society of that time, and thus his membership in a distinct social and cultural group. V. S. Pritchett says of the Anglo-Indians:

Their social position in India was grander than it was in England and when they came home on retirement, they clung together in an exclusive group, denouncing the home-product as shabby, backward, and indifferent. The Anglo-Indians themselves were subject to Thackeray's satire. Their long years of colonial exile made them out of date in every generation, and in Thackeray's time they still lived in the mental climate of the eighteenth century. Thackeray's own feeling for the eighteenth century, his habit of retrospect and of seeing the

present as something transient and passive, passing not into the future, but reflecting on the past, owes everything to the colonial trauma . . .<sup>8</sup>

In his fiction, Thackeray depicted several Anglo-Indians who were homeless, drifting men, divorced from the social rhythms about them. Jos Sedley is one example, and on his return from India attempts the life of a gay bachelor in London--

But he was as lonely here as in his jungle at Boggley Wollah. He scarcely knew a single soul in the metropolis: and were it not for his doctor, and the society of his blue-pill, and his liver complaint, he must have died of loneliness (Works, I, 31).

Vanity Fair tells us that Jos had been abroad eight years. Another of Thackeray's colonials, Colonel Thomas Newcome, spent considerably more time in India, and became a victim of cultural "suspended animation": his manners were outdated, and his glowing admiration of eighteenth century literature out of phase with the rising tide of Romanticism. In other literature, one might recall Peter Walsh of Mrs. Dalloway as a figure stamped by the eastern imperial experience.

Pritchett has more to say about the colonials:

Equally important is the intimate side of the Anglo-Indian story. The climate and diseases of India were dangerous to adults and disastrous to young children. The latter were therefore sent home at an early age to be brought up by relations, strangers, or boarding schools, and were abruptly taken away from maternal affection.<sup>9</sup>

This passage could serve as a thumb-nail sketch of the first ten years of Thackeray's life, and could explain why he developed little sense of home. Removal from his birthplace,



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separation from his parents, life at boarding schools and with relatives until his mother and step-father returned to England in 1820--all conspired to make the young child rootless. The rambling habits of the Carmichael-Smyths (the name is Thackeray's step-father's) until they settled at Larkbeare in 1824, and their dispatch of young William to Charterhouse in 1822, could only compound the situation.<sup>10</sup>

Ideologically, the Carmichael-Smyths were at odds with much of Regency society, moving toward a firm political radicalism in their dissatisfaction with the state of England as they returned from the East. Colonel Newcome, that backward-gazing hero of The Newcomes, was in fact patterned on Thackeray's step-father.<sup>11</sup> So the home of young William (what home there was) in those early English years was perceived by his parents as an island amidst a hostile political and cultural sea; it would be difficult for him to attain the attachment and integration into English life a native-born and cultural mainstream individual would. Of course, this should not be pushed too far; in his maturity Thackeray could say: "Tell those who would travel that they may go father and fare much worse than in the blessed neighbourhood of the Strand . . ." and "How I long to see the Strand again. It seems to me when I once get to London I shall never be a stranger & wanderer any more" (Letters, II, 178, 185). But once we make these necessary qualifications, we see Thackeray, born apart from and raised against the grain of English society, as

singularly well-prepared in later life to step aside from and criticize that society, and to travel about the world without fear of home-sickness.

From 1822 to 1830, Thackeray was schooled at Charterhouse and Cambridge. At the end of his initial university term, he made his first important trip abroad since childhood, heading for France and Paris in the summer of 1829 with a fellow student. Then just eighteen years old, Thackeray was deeply touched by his first sight of the French port Calais, an enchanting vision he returned to thirty years later in his Roundabout Papers:

When I come to look at a place which I have visited any time these twenty or thirty years, I recall not the place merely, but the sensations I had at first seeing it . . . That first day at Calais; the voices of the women crying out at night, as the vessel came alongside the pier; the supper at Quillacq's and the flavour of the cutlets and wine; the red-calico canopy under which I slept; the tiled floor and the fresh smell of the sheets . . . (Works, XXVII, 225).

The almost Proustian intensity of these sensations is certainly significant.

Thackeray stayed in Paris until October 22, immersing himself in the city's nightlife, art, theater. Early in August, he and his friend left one boarding house in which "all the people or almost all were English" (Letters, I, 90) to lodge together, and presumably to meet the foreign culture head on. In spite of the golden picture of Calais, France and Paris did not completely please Thackeray; he was unimpressed with French art ("I am very greatly disappointed in the pictures here--I hardly see a



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tolerable one," Letters, I, 91) and even in adolescence could lash out with John Bullish arrogance:

I took a walk almost round half Paris the other day; returning from Notre Dame wh<sup>h</sup> as I opine is not so fine as Exeter Cathedral. The organ there only plays on particular days; & the whole place hath an appearance of dirt and decay wh<sup>h</sup> will accord with an Englishman's idea of the great National Temple . . . I went to that same Tivoli some time ago, but it is nothing like our Vauxhall (Letters, I, 86).

Perhaps the most powerful single impression left on Thackeray was the bewitching lure of gambling: "The interest in the game of Rouge et Noir is so powerful that I could not tear myself away until I lost my last piece--I dreamed of it all night--& thought of nothing else for several days" (Letters, I, 90-1). Gaming remained a disturbing magnet to Thackeray for many years. Often in his writing, in longer works like Barry Lyndon and The Kickleburs on the Rhine, and in shorter pieces like "A Caution to Travellers" and "A Gambler's Death" from The Paris Sketch Book, cards and the spinning wheel are prominent among the allures and pitfalls of Continental life.

Although Thackeray could be coolly critical of French and Parisian life, he was evidently fascinated by it. Over his 1830 Easter vacation from Cambridge, he stole to Paris without his parent's knowledge, leaving with 20£ and returning flat broke, guilty, but happy. Perhaps spurred on by that further taste of Continental life, he left in July, 1830 on one of the most important journeys of his life--a German trip which culminated in a long winter's stay in the duchy of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach.

The German visit was to be an interlude--Thackeray had left Cambridge without a degree in 1830, and would travel before deciding on some profession. The pressures of vocation were not great, however, for William expected to inherit between 15,000£ and 20,000£ from his father's fortune. So the Continental sojourn was to be primarily a pleasure jaunt, with the practical benefit of mastering the German tongue also weighed in the balance; a sort of "Grand Tour," although the custom had fallen into eclipse for some time.<sup>12</sup>

After a series of German lessons in London, Thackeray embarked for the Continent in late July, arriving in Rotterdam after a twenty-four hour passage. Soon he was cruising down the Rhine ("almost equal to the Thames") and writing enthusiastically from Koblenz: "This is a beautiful place, magnificent old houses, old turrets, old bridges &c--I have got one or two sketches: the Moselle & the Rhine here join; the grand fortress of Ehrenbreitstein overlooks the town . . ." (Letters, I, 112). At Godesberg on the Rhine, near Bonn, he returned to the magnetic charm of his colorful surroundings: "Every old Castle and Hill has its peculiar legend & tradition. I long to read German to understand them or rather I long to understand German to read them . . ." (Letters, I, 113). Leaving Godesberg, Thackeray wrote his mother in early September from Westphalia, announcing he was on his way to Dresden--his originally intended wintering quarters. But later that month he decided to settle down

in Weimar instead, telling Mrs. Carmichael-Smyth: "for though the Society is small it is remarkably good, & tho' the court is absurdly ceremonious, I think it will rub off a little of the rust w<sup>h</sup>. School & College have given me . . ." (Letters, I, 126).

Located in central Germany, Weimar was then the capital of the duchy of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach and the residence of the aged Goethe. The young traveler would later transform the small duchy into the comic Pumpernickel of Vanity Fair. Staying there from September, 1830 to March, 1831, Thackeray's Weimar time was memorable--he later called it the "days of youth the most kindly and delightful" (Letters, III, 442). In the manner of his Calais memories, he could summon up their vivid and living impression twenty-years later in a letter to G. H. Lewes:

At least a score of young English lads used to live at Weimar for study, or sport, or society; all of which were to be had in the friendly little Saxon capital . . . The Court was splendid, but yet most pleasant and homely. We were invited in our turns to dinners, balls, and assemblies there. Such young men as had a right, appeared in uniforms, diplomatic and military . . . Of the winter nights we used to charter sedan chairs, in which we were carried through the snow to those pleasant Court entertainments . . . (Letters, III, 442).

Weimar also meant romantic infatuation to Thackeray ("Since I have been here I have been twice desperately in love . . ." (Letters, I, 142) and confrontation with the world of art, for on October 20 he was granted a half-hour meeting with the eighty-year old Goethe.



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The six months passed in this tiny country were a formative period for Thackeray in several ways. Most obviously, it introduced him to German culture and enabled him to learn the German language. More importantly, it encountered him with a culture freer and more open than England's,<sup>13</sup> a society which placed some stress on Arnold's "spontaneity of consciousness" as opposed to "strictness of conscience." This contrast between the free-wheeling Continent and restrictive England would reverberate throughout Thackeray's mind and art; one example: the raffish Bohemian existence the fallen Becky Sharp maintains in *Pumpnickel* is a comment on the "moral" facade she feels compelled to uphold in England. The Weimar time could certainly broaden his perspective on life and "rub some of the rust" off his provincial attitudes (although, indeed, the small society of Weimar was very provincial). But, most importantly to us, he was seized by the impulse to write about his experiences:

Some day when I have nothing better to do--I will return to Germany, & take a survey of the woods and country of it wh<sup>ch</sup> are little known--I think with a sketch-book, a note-book, & I fear still a Dictionary I could manage to concoct a book wh<sup>ch</sup> would pay me for my trouble, & wh<sup>ch</sup> would be a novelty in England. (Letters, I, 147-8)

Perhaps following up on this notion, Thackeray wrote his friend Edward Fitzgerald in September of 1831, suggesting they embark on a Continental walking tour the coming summer.<sup>14</sup> However, neither the summer trip or the travel book materialized.



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But travel was becoming part of his blood, and so was Paris. After making a brief feint towards a law degree upon his return from Germany, Thackeray left for Paris in July, 1832, and spent four months in the French capital at its libraries, museums, theaters and gaming tables. The July visit inaugurated a five-year span in which Paris was Thackeray's principal home--a time during which he lost a fortune, found a career, and wooed and wed Isabella Shawe.<sup>15</sup>

Professionally, the Paris years were critical to Thackeray; it must be noted that he discovered his life's calling, and then apprenticed himself to it, while away from England. He gained his entree into professional writing in May, 1833. Then, Thackeray purchased the National Standard, a newspaper of small circulation, and became its Parisian correspondent, issuing four dispatches to the journal. For about eight months he hustled between London and Paris trying to keep his concern afloat, but the National Standard folded in January, 1834.

At about the same time this writing experience was begun, Thackeray also embarked on another scheme--that of becoming an artist. He tells his mother in October, 1833:

I spend all day now dear Mother at the Atelier & am very well satisfied with the progress wh I make, I think that in a year were I to work hard I might paint something worth looking at . . . The other men in the Atelier are merry fellows enough, always singing, smoking, fencing, & painting very industriously besides . . . The artists with their wild way & their poverty are the happiest fellows in the world . . . (Letters, I, 266).

Like Weimar, this was a most pleasant season in his life, much happier than life in London. Once, when he was forced to visit the English capital at a moment's notice, he laments: "I found my chambers damp, my keys half an inch thick with rust . . . I was very happy at Paris, & when I got here yesterday to my horrible chambers, felt inclined to weep . . ." (Letters, I, 269).

Thackeray had other reasons for sorrow during these years, perhaps prime among them the loss of his private fortune. In late 1833, his inheritance disintegrated with the collapse of several investment houses; the young heir became a struggling gentleman.<sup>16</sup> He returned to England in December, 1833 and stayed with his parents for nine months, devoting most of his time to the study of painting still. The lure of Paris remained considerable, so he returned to that city with his grandmother in September, eventually leaving her to strike out on his own in June, 1835. Around this time he met Isabella Shawe, daughter of a late Army officer, who was staying with her family at a Parisian boarding house; over a year later William and Isabella were married at the British Embassy, and settled into a small apartment in the French capital.<sup>17</sup>

In the years between the loss of his fortune and his marriage, Thackeray began writing for money and out of necessity, and turned to travel as a means of bread-winning. In April, 1835, he wrote to John Payne Collier, asking this friend to vouch for his application for the position of

Constantinople correspondent to the Morning Chronicle--  
an application which was turned down. Then he hatched a  
scheme for writing a travel book:

I propose going from Munich to Venice by what I  
hear is the most magnificent road in the world--  
then from Venice if I can effect the thing, I  
will pass over for a week or so into Turkey,  
just to be able to say in a book that I have been  
there--after which I will go to Rome, Naples,  
Florence . . . then I will go to England book in  
hand . . . (Letters, I, 281).

Nothing came of this venture either, but it demonstrated  
how the ideas of writing and travel were becoming interwoven  
in Thackeray's mind. And there were, to be sure, enter-  
prises that proved profitable. In 1836 his stepfather pur-  
chased a newspaper, subsequently named the Constitutional,  
and Thackeray became its Paris correspondent. The 300-400£  
a year position helped provide Thackeray with the financial  
means to get married. When the newspaper went out of  
business in 1837, he and his wife moved to London, and the  
long Paris episode was over.<sup>18</sup>

In later life, Thackeray tended to view these Paris  
days through the magical haze of fond reminiscence. From  
the perspective of 1849, the '30's were a carefree, idyllic  
era:

I went to see my old haunts when I came to Paris  
thirteen years ago and made believe to be a painter--  
just after I was ruined and before I fell in love and  
took to marriage and writing. It was a very jolly  
time. I was as poor as Job: and sketched away most  
abominably, but pretty contented: and we used to  
meet in each others little rooms and talk about Art  
and smoke pipes and drink bad brandy & water.  
(Letters, II, 503).



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Ten years after this letter, Thackeray imaginatively reconstructed the Paris days in his novel Philip. Much of that work's action centers around the adventures of young Philip Firmin, who lost his patrimony and eventually became a writer, while leading a gay Bohemian existence in Paris, a time that "was the happiest of his life" (Works, XV, 492).

When Thackeray departed France in March, 1837, he closed out not only the "Paris phase" of his life, but also ended the first stage of his travel experiences. In those early years, travel and life abroad were generally carefree and cheerful experiences, pursued to escape the tedium of home life, the dullness of England. The motif of idyll or golden age frequently appears in Thackeray's remembrances of those times. Gradually, however, a new phase of Thackeray as traveler began. Pressed by the financial needs of a growing family, stripped of his inheritance, he started to travel quite deliberately to collect material for books. This, of course, had been a plan even in his younger days, but the modest success of his first published volume, The Paris Sketch Book (1840), sparked a round of travels that were undertaken to put words on paper and money in his pocket.

The second cycle of his journeys lasted from roughly 1840 through 1846, and consisted of five trips that produced three travel works. The first was an excursion to the Continent: Thackeray left for Belgium and the Rhine August, 1840, with plans to make another sketch book. In his wife's

words: "he says he will make a series of articles for Blackwood . . . he is sure Titmarsh in Belgium will take as Titmarsh in Paris . . ." (Letters, I, 462).<sup>19</sup> (Titmarsh was Thackeray's pen name for The Paris Sketch Book.) Three weeks later he wrote his mother, claiming to have sold a manuscript to Chapman and Hall for 70£--"a little book on Belgium & the Rhine to come out as a guide-book next year" (Letters, I, 463). The draft never did appear in that form, however, In the same letter, Thackeray mentioned that he agreed with those publishers to produce a travel narrative on Ireland; he later told them "unless illness or any domestic calamity sh.<sup>d</sup> intervene I propose to deliver the work to you before 31 December [1840]" (Letters, I, 470).

That "domestic calamity" struck en route to Ireland in September, during the first trip designed to collect material for the book. Thackeray's wife went insane while at sea: "the poor thing flung herself into the water (from the water-closet) & was twenty minutes floating in the sea, before the ship's boat even saw her . . . in the next night she made fresh attempts at destruction . . ." (Letters, I, 483). After a brief stop at Cork, Thackeray returned to London and then Paris with his wife, his plans for the book shattered for the time being.

But less than two years after the disaster, from June to November 1, 1842, Thackeray was back in Ireland, researching and writing the promised book of Irish travels. Moving beyond Cork this time, he swept through the northern

and southern halves of the island, visiting the major towns and countryside. While working on his book, Thackeray was thinking about another travel writer--one Charles Dickens, whose American Notes would be published by Chapman and Hall in October. To his publishers he wrote: "I have been on a very pleasant journey, and hope to God to give a decent account of it. Let us pray that you may publish two decent books of travel this year"; and to his mother: "I think Dickens's new book w<sup>h</sup> all the world is talking about will in so far help me, as people who have read that & liked it will like more reading of the same sort" (Letters, II, 66, 88). Published in March, 1843, The Irish Sketch Book did not enjoy the considerable success of American Notes. In later years, Thackeray was a conscious rival of Dickens, comparing how his Vanity Fair was doing in contrast to Dombey and Son, or his Pendennis against David Copperfield. Significantly, this habit of comparison began with travel writing, not novel writing.

Thackeray's fourth trip during this cycle lasted from August 4 to 30, 1843, and consisted of a jaunt through Cambrai, Valenciennes, Brussels, Antwerp, Rotterdam, The Hague and Lille. Melding the impressions of this journey with those of the August, 1840 excursion, he wrote three articles on the Low Countries that appeared in Fraser's Magazine in May and October, 1844, and January, 1845. When later collected, they were entitled "Little Travels and Roadside Sketches."

In February, 1844, Thackeray wrote to Chapman and Hall: "Can't you send me to any other country to travel? The dullness of this town is immeasurable . . ." (Letters, II, 162). Betraying its author's great desire to travel, this comment ironically foreshadowed a very busy year of journeying. Taking a short trip to Belgium in July and August, 1844, he returned to London. There, on August 20, he received an offer from the Peninsular and Oriental Company for a free berth on a voyage to the East. Before he left, Thackeray made hasty arrangements for a travel book on the journey with Chapman and Hall; he wrote his mother: "It offers such a chance as I may never get again . . . I'm to write a book for 200<sup>h</sup> for C & H, on the East first, or that Cockney part w<sup>h</sup> I shall see . . ." (Letters, II, 177). On August 22, just two days after the offer for travel free passage was tendered, Thackeray boarded the Lady Mary Wood for a trip of almost ten weeks duration. When Thackeray traveled on his own, he liked to freewheel: "that is the best way of travelling, surely never to know where you are going, until the moment and Fate say Go" (Letters, II, 416). In this respect, the Eastern voyage deserves a special niche in his experiences, for it was very much like a guided tour, with a large number of stops guaranteed to give its participants the East once over lightly. Thus, there were stays at Lisbon, Cadiz, Gibraltar, Athens, Smyrna, Constantinople, Rhodes, Jerusalem, Alexandria and Cairo, all before he completed his tour on October 27. It was "by far the most

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ambitious of Thackeray's travels during this period" and was described in Notes of a Journey from Cornhill to Grand Cairo, published in January, 1846.<sup>20</sup>

While Thackeray made five trips to gather literary materials, the years from 1840 to 1846 also saw him in almost constant transit between England and the Continent for family reasons. The prime cause was the mental breakdown of his wife: in November, 1840, Isabella was institutionalized at Jeanne Esquirol's Maison de Sante at Ivry--an outstanding mental hospital for its time. Having business affairs in London, Thackeray was forced to shuttle between there and France. In the summer of 1841, he took Isabella to the Rhine, hoping to cure her insanity by a series of water immersion treatments administered at Boppard. This failing, they returned to France and spent the winter of 1841-42 in Paris before Isabella was placed in the care of Dr. Puzin in Chaillot. (Mrs. Thackeray returned to England in October, 1845, and never did regain lucidity: she outlived her husband by more than thirty years, dying in 1894.)<sup>21</sup>

The second reason was the new residence of his mother and step-father: the Carmichael-Smyths moved to France in 1838 because of indebtedness growing out of the shipwreck of the Constitutional.<sup>22</sup> Because of Isabella's breakdown and William's business, the Thackerays' two children, Anne and Harriet, stayed with the Carmichael-Smyths in Paris till 1846. So while professional demands forced Thackeray to

maintain a residence in London, compelling family demands forced him to "commute" to Paris; it was during this time that he referred to Paris as "home" and London as "exile."

The final stage of Thackeray's career as traveler comprised the years 1847 to his death in 1863; his career as a travel writer, however, ended in 1846 with the publication of Cornhill to Cairo. Why did this vigorous writer of thirty-four abandon work in a genre he had tilled so skillfully and profitably? For an answer, one perhaps need look no farther than Vanity Fair, which began its serial appearance on January 1, 1847. Before that masterpiece, Thackeray had published only one full-length novel--Barry Lyndon in 1844-45; his efforts had been directed towards journalism and magazine writing, along with his travel books. But after Vanity Fair, that great divide in his life and fortune, he became predominately a novelist, completing five other novels besides Vanity Fair before his death. He continued to travel, and the observations he made on those journeys would find their way into his writing--but in novels, not travel narratives.<sup>23</sup>

To be sure, Thackeray still considered writing travel works after 1847, but tended to dismiss those projects almost as quickly as they occurred to him. He toured the Continent in 1852, and mused: "I have been to Vienna Berlin Munich Hanover--proposing to write a book. But l'homme propose. I found I had nothing worthy to say, and that the book was best left alone" (Letters, III, 67); in Italy in

1854 he asks: "If I had to write a book about Rome what on airth could I say?" (Letters, III, 337). And as time passed, the notion of another travel book grew more remote--writing to a publisher he says: "if I do a book of travels I shall bring it to you but this is hardly likely" (Letters, III, 471).

Next to his blossoming career as novelist, there are several other reasons why Thackeray ceased writing travel books. In the 1850's he uncovered another way to mingle the pleasures of travel with task of making money--the lecture tour. He developed two series of lectures, The English Humourists of the Eighteenth Century and The Four Georges, and delivered them to audiences in England, Scotland, and the United States. The tours proved very profitable (the first in the United States netted 2,500£);<sup>24</sup> and it is possible that the fatiguing rituals of the lecture circuit slaked his desires to write travel narratives. Further, in the years after Vanity Fair, Thackeray lacked the proper subject. Italy, Germany and the United States were the major areas visited, but for various reasons, none attracted him as a fit topic for a travel book. A final reason is given by Thackeray himself in a letter to his daughters:

Shall I make a good bit of money for you in America and write a book about it?--I think not. It seems impudent to write a book; and mere sketches now are somehow below my rank in the world--I mean a grave old gentleman, father of young ladies, mustn't be comic and grinning too much. (Letters, III, 108-9)

While these remarks are delivered in a jesting manner, they perhaps place the judgment on his early travel writings and sketches as "apprentice" work, and not quite as important or serious as his novel writing. In any event, after Thackeray became a success and celebrity after Vanity Fair, his travel writing vein was played out.

Travel itself, however, was his meat and drink. Phase three of Thackeray's travel experience embraced many separate excursions, but can be conveniently reduced to two main categories: the vacation tour of the Continent with his daughters, and the lecture tour to America. The first became an almost yearly event in the 1850's. After delivering a series of lectures in London in 1851, Thackeray went on a six-week tour with Anne and Harriet, visiting Antwerp, Cologne, Mayence (Mainz), Frankfort, Baden-Baden and Switzerland ("the whole of the Swiss week was a series of wonderful sights and golden days," (Letters, III, 120);<sup>25</sup> then to Milan, Venice, Verona and home. And in the summer of 1852, the trio spent two months on the Continent, traveling and sight-seeing.

But these were pleasure tours over well-trodden ways, while Thackeray's lecture tours in the United States broke new ground and opened new horizons. Undertaken in 1852-53 and 1855-56, the ventures were designed to provide financial security for the family:

I must and will go to America, not because I like it, but because it is right I should secure some money against my death for your poor mother and you 2 girls--And I think if I have luck I may

secure nearly a third of the sum that I think I ought to have behind me by a six month's tour in the States. (Letters, III, 93)

The trips were indeed financially successful, but they had the added bonus of introducing the middle-aged author to a country that stimulated him intellectually and artistically.

On his first transatlantic voyage, Thackeray left England October 30, 1852, sailing on the Canada with fellow travelers James Russell Lowell and Arthur Hugh Clough. Arriving in Boston November 12, he journeyed to New York four days later and delivered his first lecture on the 19th. Befriended by the Baxter family of New York City, Thackeray passed most of December and January in the East, making side trips to Boston and Providence. He gloated over his money-winning success: "I have agreed to deliver 3 [lectures] at Providence . . . for 180£ a pound a minute" (Letters, III, 120); by December 20th, he had netted 1200£ and hoped for another 2000£ in the coming months. February, 1853 was spent mainly around Washington and Philadelphia; March, in a southern swing which included Richmond, Charleston, and Savannah. The 2,500£ made was invested in American railway stocks, and Thackeray was back in England by April.<sup>26</sup>

Thackeray formed a favorable first impression of the New World. He met "very kind & pleasant people" in America (Letters, III, 149) and enjoyed the great urban centers: "I have seen three great cities, Boston, New York, Philadelphia, I think I like them all mighty well . . ." (Letters, III, 193). And soon observations on America and Americans found their way into his writings.

Before the lecture tour, there were few such comments. In Vanity Fair, there was a page devoted to a scathing portrait of John Paul Jefferson Jones, correspondent to the New York Demagogue; in Henry Esmond, the English hero eventually emigrates to America, but his life there occupies a small fraction of the narrative. But from brief allusions in the pre-tour fiction, Thackeray moves to full-blown, elaborate presentations of Americans and their life in post-tour works like The Virginians, and to a lesser extent, Philip. These insights and opinions on America were cast in the fictional mold of the novel, not the empirical mold of travel literature; Thackeray refused to write a travel book, partly for fear of antagonizing the people as Dickens did in American Notes.

Thackeray's second American tour began October 13, 1855 when he left Liverpool aboard the Africa. Arriving in Boston twelve days later, he was soon lecturing on The Four Georges. November and December were spent in New York and Boston, with a trip up the Hudson to Albany (where he visited Washington Irving); January, in Philadelphia, Washington and Baltimore. After lecturing in Charleston and Virginia in February, Thackeray plunged south to New Orleans in quest of dollars. There, he confronted for the first time a ruder, less civilized part of the United States--and much of his enthusiasm for America evaporated. A dreary weary half dozen journies from Savannah . . . the dreariness of this country, everywhere, almost consumes

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me . . ." (Letters, III, 574-5). After two weeks in New Orleans, he cruised up the Mississippi in a riverboat: two lectures were read in St. Louis, two in Cincinnati, and then he staggered back to New York City via Buffalo, exhausted by the brutal grind of traveling in backwoods America.<sup>27</sup>

Thackeray was repelled by the "sordid greed" and "triumphant barbarism" of western and southern America, to the point where he remained "not near so good an American as I was after my first visit" (Letters, III, 553, 608). The first tour, after all, was spent in the large Eastern American cities, where polished manners and civilized comforts would please a citizen of sophisticated old Europe. But the vital, raw, untamed frontier society would not. The former was perhaps England in a younger, livelier, more democratic pitch; the latter, the brutish ignorance of Queen's Crawley writ large.

Gordon Ray has written:

During the last decade of his life Thackeray was an established celebrity. Though he made two long lecture tours in America and travelled a good deal on the continent, London remained his home. He spent his leisure hours among his family and intimate friends, in London society, and in the bohemian haunts of the literary and artistic familiars.<sup>28</sup>

Ray's statement could be disputed for the years 1853 and 1856, when Thackeray maintained a vigorous travel pace; but it certainly holds true from 1856 (after his return from the second American trip) to 1863 (his death). In 1857, the Carmichael-Smyths returned to England and settled there

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permanently, thus removing a reason for travel to Paris. For Thackeray, there were still trips to the Continent with his daughters--in the summer of 1858, in September of 1859, in the summer of 1860. But in these twilight years, Thackeray's health was not good, and much of his interest was absorbed in building an elaborate Queen Anne's style house at 2 Palace Green in Kensington. The beautiful home seems significant--a very expensive venture, it possibly signalled the desire of an aging wanderer to settle down after a vagabond existence. In August, 1863, he made his last journey, spending two weeks abroad with his daughters in Brussels and Paris; in December he was dead.<sup>29</sup>

What kind of traveler was Thackeray? Possibly it is best to begin by saying what he was not. First, he was never an expatriate--an exile alienated from British society, and therefore living abroad. The impulse for his traveling stemmed not from displeasure with English life, but the professional opportunities and considerable amusements foreign lands offered; while life abroad afforded him the opportunity to criticize England, he did not repudiate it. Further, Thackeray was not a bold explorer or a trail-blazer. Love of creature comforts generally left him deaf to the call of the wild. So he clung to the safe, well-beaten roads, and when he departed them--as in wilderness America--dissatisfaction was the usual result. Nor could Thackeray be called a full-fledged cosmopolitan. Actually,

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he straddled the provincial and the cosmopolitan--able to appreciate and blend into foreign ways, yet still a Briton and approaching them through that frame of reference.

Because of his Anglo-Indian background and childhood experiences, he always stood slightly apart from England--like the moon to the earth, independent, but still in its orbit.

To better understand Thackeray as traveler, it is profitable to study some of the comments he made on other journeyers. While abroad, Thackeray gave considerable attention to fellow English travelers, analyzing their conduct away from their island home. Those remarks help define the milieu he moved in while traveling, and some of his attitudes towards English and foreign society.

In the first place, much of the social life that Thackeray and his fellow Britons enjoyed abroad was to them, an extension of home culture: in The Newcomes he says "we carry our insular habits with us. We have a little England at Paris, a little England at Munich, Dresden, everywhere. Our friend is an Englishman, and did at Rome as the English do" (Works, VIII, 171). His most thorough exposition of this idea came in Philip:

Aeneas . . . and his select back of Trojans founded a new Troy, where they landed; raising temples to the Trojan gods; building streets with Trojan names; and endeavoring to the utmost of their power, to recall their beloved native place . . . And do not British Trojans, who emigrate to the continent of Europe, take their Troy with them? You all know the quarters of Paris which swarm with us Trojans. From Peace Street to the Arch of the Star are

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collected thousands of refugees from our Ilium . . . We live for years, never speaking any language but our native Trojan; except to our servants, whom we instruct in the Trojan way of preparing toast for breakfast . . . I am sure there are many English in Paris, who never speak to any native above the rank of a waiter or shopman . . . (Works, XVI, 24-5)

A great deal of Thackeray's life in other countries was spent in these cultural enclaves, these English language ghettos. In the Paris atelier, in Weimar, and several other times, however, he cut himself off from Troy and moved in foreign circles, to foreign social rhythms. After all, Thackeray was fluent in French and German, and could move about with experienced ease in countries speaking those languages, free from any linguistic umbilical cord. His contacts with foreign lands became close and personal.

Some English tourists could not or refused to enter into foreign lifeways, and often treated foreigners, by accident or design, as contemptible inferiors. Frequently, Thackeray depicted this boorish conduct in his version of John Bull, a nineteenth century ancestor of the Ugly American of current travel lore:

That brutal ignorant peevish bully of an Englishman is showing himself in every city in Europe. One of the dullest creatures under heaven, he goes trampling Europe under foot . . . At church or theater, gala or picture-gallery, his face never varies. A thousand delightful sights pass before his bloodshot eyes and don't affect him. Countless brilliant scenes of life and manners are shown him, but never move him. He goes to church and calls the practices there degrading and superstitious, as if his altar was the only one that was acceptable. (Works, XXII, 127-8)

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Thackeray realized that the obnoxious behavior of this traveler angered citizens of host countries:

How they hate us, these foreigners, in Belgium as much as France! What lies they tell of us; how gladly they would see us humiliated! . . . They hate you because you are stupid, hard to please, and intolerably insolent and air-giving . . . Of all European people, which is the nation that has the most haughtiness, the strongest prejudices, the greatest reserve, the greatest dulness? I say an Englishman of the genteel classes . . . (Works, XXVII, 460-1)

English tourists were not Thackeray's only target--he also attacked the conduct of Americans abroad for displaying similar characteristics.<sup>30</sup>

While he could be remorseless in his criticism of John Bull, Thackeray at times shared some of the traits he so castigated in others. Many of his thrusts at the French, Irish, and Easterners seem very unfair, bred from intolerance rather than penetrating insight--such as his comments on the "sham" life of France, the "brutish" life of the East. An American friend of Thackeray mentioned his "insular intolerance, for he was equally unfair in his estimate of France and her people, and . . . not entirely free from that common English air of condescension and superiority to all human beings not born in their country."<sup>31</sup>

But in spite of this occasional rigidity, travel had an important shaping influence on Thackeray. As a human being, it gave him a wider knowledge of the human condition, and the opportunity to stand apart from England and view it from a Continental (or American, or even Irish) vantage point. As a young writer, it lent him both subject and

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inspiration for his craft. At age nineteen he joined together the notions of travel and writing: a marriage that would eventually produce three full length travel books and would dominate a large part of his early career. And as a mature writer, his travel experience would give him incidents, characters, and thematic structures for his novels. After briefly exploring the nature and tradition of travel literature in the following chapter, I will discuss how Thackeray, as imaginative artist, related his travel experience, in either the empirical form of travel literature (Chapter III) or the fictional form of the novel (Chapter IV).

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FOOTNOTES--CHAPTER I

<sup>1</sup>The Letters and Private Papers of William Makepeace Thackeray, ed. by Gordon N. Ray (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1945-1946), p. 313. This will hereafter be referred to as Letters; all references will be included within the text.

<sup>2</sup>Gordon N. Ray, Thackeray: The Age of Wisdom (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1958), pp. 223-225.

<sup>3</sup>Age of Wisdom, p. 322.

<sup>4</sup>Gordon N. Ray, Thackeray: The Uses of Adversity (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1955), p. 301 from Letters, II, 139 and manuscript letter to Tom Fraser, March 11, 1844.

<sup>5</sup>Lionel Stevenson, The Showman of Vanity Fair: The Life of William Makepeace Thackeray (New York: Scribner, 1947), p. 381.

<sup>6</sup>Ray, Age of Wisdom, pp. 222-236; and Stevenson, pp. 282-295.

<sup>7</sup>Ray, Adversity, p. 65. The quote is from The Works of William Makepeace Thackeray (New York: Scribner, 1904), XXVI, p. 70. This is the Kensington Edition, hereafter referred to as Works; references will be included within the text.

<sup>8</sup>"Afterword," Vanity Fair: A Novel Without a Hero (New York: New American Library, 1962), p. 824. Referred to hereafter as Pritchett.

<sup>9</sup>Pritchett, p. 825.

<sup>10</sup>Ray, Adversity, pp. 74-79 discusses the early movements of the Thackeray family.

<sup>11</sup>Gordon N. Ray, The Buried Life: A Study of the Relation Between Thackeray's Fiction and His Personal History (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952), p. 107; and Ray, Adversity, p. 77.

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<sup>12</sup>Ray, Adversity, pp. 139-140, 162.

<sup>13</sup>Ray, Adversity, pp. 143-144.

<sup>14</sup>Letters, I, p. 156.

<sup>15</sup>Letters, I, pp. 221-238. Stevenson regards Paris as Thackeray's "principal home" (in Thackeray's eyes) until 1838, p. 76.

<sup>16</sup>Ray, Adversity, p. 162.

<sup>17</sup>Ray, Adversity, pp. 167-190.

<sup>18</sup>Ray, Adversity, pp. 190-193.

<sup>19</sup>Ray, Adversity, p. 252.

<sup>20</sup>Ray, Adversity, p. 297.

<sup>21</sup>Ray, Adversity, pp. 260-261, 278, 305.

<sup>22</sup>Ray, Adversity, p. 201.

<sup>23</sup>There is a possible exception here, and it is The Kickleburys on the Rhine (1850), a Christmas book that might be defined as a fictionalized travel narrative. But this curious hybrid most properly belongs to a study of Thackeray's fiction--especially Christmas writing.

<sup>24</sup>Ray, Wisdom, pp. 215-221.

<sup>25</sup>Stevenson, p. 241.

<sup>26</sup>Ray, Wisdom, pp. 198-206.

<sup>27</sup>Ray, Wisdom, pp. 258-263.

<sup>28</sup>Buried Life, p. 117.

<sup>29</sup>Stevenson, pp. 354, 358, 367; and Ray, Wisdom, pp. 391-393.

<sup>30</sup>Works, XXVII, 460-461; and Letters, III, 298.

<sup>31</sup>James Grant Wilson, Thackeray in the United States, I (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1904), p. 234.

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## CHAPTER II

### TRAVEL LITERATURE AND ITS TRADITIONS

Thackeray's travel experiences and attitudes toward foreign lands are certainly the major influences on his travel books. But like any other literary effort, those works were also shaped by their genre and tradition--and in the case of Thackeray's three travel narratives, the shaping influence was considerable. As the travel literature genre and its traditions have not been widely explored in the past, I would like to discuss them here, using an enhanced understanding of them as a most valuable entree to fuller appreciation and comprehension of Thackeray's travel literature.

First, the travel genre. In The Nature of Narrative, Scholes and Kellogg note that "the traveller's tale is a persistent oral form in all culture . . . in a sense, the amateur's answer to the professional rhapsodist, skald, or jongleur."<sup>1</sup> Although not always strictly truthful, the travel narrative based on empirical evidence is one of the oldest literary forms--and closely related to the oral epic form which is often structured around a "fictional" travel

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experience (e.g., The Odyssey, Gilgamesh). If the travel narrative's lineage is ancient, it is also noble, having attracted the talents of many masterful writers. In eighteenth century British letters, we have Defoe, Addison, Sterne, Smollett, Fielding, Johnson and Boswell; in the nineteenth century, Dickens, Hazlitt, Wordsworth, Trollope, Stevenson, Butler; and in American literature of the nineteenth century, Irving, Howells, Hawthorne, Twain and James-- and there are certainly more. The travel motif is one of the major plot devices of all literature, occurring in such diverse works as Pilgrim's Progress, Moby-Dick, Rime of the Ancient Mariner and The Reivers. But surprisingly, in spite of its long and notable past, the factual travel narrative has received very little attention as a literary form, although individual travel books have, of course, been given consideration.<sup>2</sup>

What is this literary form? Warner G. Rice says:

the purest examples of the travel book are reports of what a traveller has actually experienced and seen, his descriptions of routes traversed, of the cities in which he has lodged, of the antiquities, monuments, customs, commodities, and character of the peoples among whom he has moved.<sup>3</sup>

This brief definition is adequate as far as it goes, but a few additional comments should be made. First, it must be emphasized that the traveler's account has to be factual and based on a real journey, thus eliminating works like Gulliver's Travels (which is in part a parody of the genre) from consideration. However, a traveler's narrative might

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embellish or exaggerate the bare facts at times (impolitely called "lying") to achieve certain desirable artistic effects--with a work like George Borrow's The Bible in Spain a possible example.<sup>4</sup> It can even contain patently fictional material, such as folk tales and legends gleaned from the people visited by the traveler.

Neither travel itself nor contact with foreign lands are essential elements of the form. The travel book need not record the physical act of traveling, but could, for example, confine itself to a stay in a foreign town. The narrative does not have to deal with a foreign country, but simply an area the writer is unfamiliar with, perhaps in his native land. Finally, like the novel, the travel narrative can be presented in various ways--as a journal, a series of letters or notes or as straightforward first-person narration. So a fuller definition of the travel literature form might read: "an account of an actual trip to or stay in an area unfamiliar to the author, in which he accurately describes his surroundings (whether natural or man-made), and the peoples and cultures he contacts."

Within the grounds staked out by this definition, we are confronted with a wide variety of work--ranging from the romantic outpourings of a Warburton in The Crescent and the Cross, to the lucid, disciplined reports of Bishop Heber's Journal, to the eccentric humor and playfulness of Sterne's Sentimental Journey. As all literary forms, the travel narrative is capable of embracing God's plenty. Since it

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takes for its subject human experience while traveling, and reflections on that experience, its bounds are as wide as human life. Indeed, Rice adds: "like other forms, travel literature may be, and often is, modal rather than generic--e.g., the traveller's interest may be concentrated chiefly on commerce, or geography, or archaeology, or natural history, or sociology, or anthropology, or linguistics."<sup>5</sup> Because it is so flexible, so open, travel writing is "as various as the aims and abilities of the authors who produce it."<sup>6</sup>

But while it is laden with possibilities, the travel form also has its snares--presenting demands and limitations that can hamstring some writers. In an Idler essay, Samuel Johnson attacks certain travel books, and indirectly points out some of the restrictions a writer labors under:

It may, I think, be justly observed, that few books disappoint their readers more than the narrations of travellers . . . The greater part of travellers tell nothing, because their method of travelling supplied them with nothing to be told. He that enters a town at night and surveys it in the morning, and then hastens away to another place, and guesses at the manners of the inhabitants by the entertainment which his inn afforded him, may please himself for a time with hasty change of scene, and a confused remembrance of palaces and churches . . . [Further there are] those sons of enterprize, who visit savage countries, and range through solitude and desolation, who pass a desert, and tell that it is sandy; who cross a valley, and find that it is green. There are others of more delicate sensibility . . . that wander through Italian palaces, and muse the gentle reader with catalogues of pictures; that hear masses of magnificent churches, and recount the number of pillars or variegations of the pavement . . .<sup>7</sup>

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Of course, Johnson is not criticizing the travel narrative as a literary form, but discrete unsatisfactory examples of it. Still, the widespread weaknesses that he notes are in part outgrowths of the form's requirements.

Superficial observation, needless details, failure to generalize--these are some of the flaws Johnson perceived, and strove to avoid in his own travel narrative. The traveler's tale is, among other things, factual and chronological, the writer presenting what he has seen in roughly the order he has seen it. To keep this chronological chain intact, some writers feel compelled to discuss each link, giving accounts (no matter how uninspired) of days in cities and trips simply because those incidents are part of their journey. Unlike a fiction writer, the travel narrator does not generate "facts" or incidents from his imagination, but records and selects them from his memory--and the facts surrounding portions of his journey might be interesting, uneventful. Believing in the whole truth and nothing but, some are reduced to recording the number of dollars, or the greenness of a valley.

The restrictions of the travel narrative come into even sharper focus when compared to a narrative form like the novel. Because of its consecutive chronology, the travel book cannot readily explore the vistas of a novel like Lord Jim, which jumbles its time sequence to make important thematic affirmations. Point of view has been used in many subtle and complex ways in the novel, but the

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travel narrative is generally restricted to the simple use of the narrator's point of view. Nor can a travel work have a well-constructed plot, which builds interest and suspense as it moves to its conclusion, for human travel is plotless, and it concludes when the journey is over. And finally, it is difficult to unify the diverse elements of the travel narrative under or around one overriding theme, while it is easier to do so in the novel.

All this seems to make the travel writer very passive--indeed, more submissive than he really is. The restrictions he confronts are not insurmountable barriers, and can be overcome with resource and initiative. Borrow's The Bible in Spain generates the same excitement, has the same readability, of a novel with a well-built, suspenseful plot; Thackeray's Cornhill to Cairo manages to tie together much of its incident around the theme of religion. But, it must be repeated, even with these successes, the travel narrative remains an empirical literary form--and instead of having an entire universe for his imagination to play around in, the writer is restricted to a defined and limited set of experiences and facts. This greater confinement need not be destructive; the sonnet form, after all, is even more limiting, but its strict boundaries have given writers occasion to channel their creative energies, and thus produce memorable literary works.

Working within a narrower radius than the novelist, the travel writer must turn to options yet available to him

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in order to fashion his narrative. And to make his tale interesting and valuable, he must do more than tamely record, in lockstep chronological order, the rivers he has crossed, old castles he has visited, inns he has slept in, along with opinions of such. Something must give this amorphous mass of data some coherence, and many writers have utilized the narrator to do just that. Indeed, the only reason the experiences and ideas of a trip "belong" together is that they have occurred to one person--the traveler-narrator.

There are several ways the character of the narrator can be used to make the various sensations of a journey interesting, orderly, or aesthetically related. The narrator can take on several guises--and each role embraces several qualities that lend appeal to his work. In one guise, the narrator of the travelogue can become an entertaining companion, winning over the reader with sheer literary grace and style. This is the case of A. W. Kinglake's Eothen, where vivid and memorable prose, colorful descriptions of foreign lands and customs, the play of humor and wit, luminous anecdotes, and a fine sense of narrative pacing make the journey a fascinating whole to a reader. A charming storyteller with finely-honed narrative skills--this combination has brought interest to all kinds of narratives, and the travel book is no exception.

Secondly, the narrator can become a keen intellectual observer, his work claiming merit through its

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penetrating insight and wide view of foreign lands. These are the virtues of Samuel Johnson's A Journey to the Western Islands: the book carefully records and acutely examines life in the Hebrides; it illuminates, through sweeping (yet generally accurate) generalization from various details, aspects of Scot life and culture; it places its observations within a highly educated and knowledgeable frame of reference. Thus, the book goes beyond surface phenomena, presenting not only the separate incidents of the trip, but an increased understanding of foreign life and--as Johnson would insist--of all human life.

Next, the narrator can act as subject or hero, playing up human interest by relating the travel experiences to his personality. Seeing events through the narrator's eyes, the reader can become involved in his character; the incidents related do not then simply happen, but happen to a person the reader cares about. The reader comprehends both the outward events of the trip and the inward spirit of the narrator, and the journey can be transformed into an adventure. Identification with or interest in the narrator is a common device in the travel book: we see it clearly in the works of Thackeray, or in Tobias Smollett's Travels through France and Italy.

Lastly, the narrator can give shape and value to the materials of his travel not by assuming a particular role, but by approaching them with a consistent angle of vision. This is related to the "modal" nature (as Rice claims) of

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the travel narrative, for whether the narrator's concerns be manners and morals, art and antiquities, those interests provide unifying viewpoints on the events of the trip. Not only the narrator's interests, but also his attitudes (admiration, irritation) and frame of mind can weave together the strands of his tale.<sup>8</sup>

Working hard, working carefully, the writer can find many opportunities for expression in the travel narrative. But its limitations on him are real, and this is perhaps why W. H. Auden remarked that: "of all possible subjects, travel is the most difficult for the artist, as it is the easiest for a journalist."<sup>9</sup>

The infinite variety of the travel narrative, and its "modal" rather than "generic" nature makes it difficult to examine its literary traditions. The many travel books that Thackeray read out of the thousands written between 1700 and 1840 (the rough boundaries of his knowledge of travel literature before he began writing it) reflected a bewildering potpourri of interests, biases, and literary techniques, all that resist easy pigeon-holing. But out of this welter emerge four major traditions in which travel books were written--traditions I choose to label humanistic, personal, picturesque, and romantic. The modes are distinguished by the subject matter they deal with: the humanistic travel book is directed toward an investigation of man and his works; the personal, toward a description of the experiences and opinions of the traveler himself; the

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picturesque, to depiction of natural scenery in a highly stylized manner; the romantic, to pursuit of natural beauty and the unique and exotic in human life.

Before discussing these traditions in more detail, a few comments should be made. First, the interests that appear in travel books are, logically, direct reflections of the interests of travelers. Further, these interests--whether they be cities or rolling plains, monuments or mountains--were determined in part by cultural and historical factors. The traditions are therefore products of their times, and some of the differences between them can be ascribed to changing circumstances--an aspect I intend to touch on below. Also, because the travel narrative is a literary form, it is subject to change through literary influence; it is clear, for example, that the Romantic movement left its mark on travel writing.

The humanistic travel tradition finds an advocate in Josiah Tucker's Instructions for Travellers (1757), a book that directs the young journeyer to "examine the general Properties of the Soil, the Climate, and the like; and attend to the Characteristics of the Inhabitants, and the Nature of Several Establishments, Religious, Civil, Military, and Commercial."<sup>10</sup> Human life is the focal point of Tucker's directions--even the soil and climate were to be studied as they related to man in terms of agriculture. This orientation was a common denominator among Grand Tourists and eighteenth century travelers, for these people

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were more concerned with foreign social customs, artifacts and language than with the natural scenery of mountains, daaverns and glens. Samuel Johnson dismissed "the mere lover of naked nature,"<sup>11</sup> and it was Henry Fielding who stated the rationale and interests of the humanistic school:

when I say the conversation of travellers is usually so welcome, I must be understood to mean that only of such as have had good sense enough to apply their perigrinations to a proper use, so as to acquire from them a real and valuable knowledge of men and things; both which are best known by comparison. If the customs and manners of men were everywhere the same, there would be no office so dull as that of a traveller; for the difference of hills, valleys, rivers; in short, the various views in which we may see the face of the earth, would scarce afford him a pleasure worthy of his labour; and surely it would give him very little opportunity of communicating any kind of entertainment or improvement to others.<sup>12</sup>

The humanistic traveler explores life in foreign lands, and compares and contrasts it to life in his native place. The goals of this type of travel literature are in part to

Survey mankind from China to Peru;  
Remark each anxious toil, each eager strife,  
And watch the busy scenes of crouded life!<sup>13</sup>

so that a fuller understanding of human life can be reached.

The humanistic traveler's method is a careful and objective rendering of foreign life--empirical descriptions perhaps flavored with the traveler's insights and educated opinions. The journeyer's personal experiences and inward feelings on the trip, while important, are generally subordinate to a lucid and widely-embracing outward view of the foreign land.

Two examples of the humanistic school of travel writing are Joseph Addison's Remarks on Italy (1705) and

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Dr. Johnson's A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland (1774). Addison was one of the earliest English exponents of the "Sublime" in both writing and nature, and in the book's preface and in the body of his journey he often points to natural scenery. But often when Addison seems to be talking about Nature he is really discussing Man: "The greatest pleasure I took in my journey from Rome to Naples was in seeing the fields, towns and rivers that have been described by so many Classic authors, and have been the scenes of so many great actions."<sup>14</sup> And the great thrust of Remarks is toward human art--the statues, medals, buildings of ancient and modern Italy--and human government, with thoughtful descriptions and analyses of the political workings of Venice, San Marino and Switzerland, among others. Addison is also greatly concerned with the people themselves, giving broad character sketches of the dwellers of some cities, like Genoa, and, in one passage, engages in an extended comparison of the Italians to the French. The humanistic concern encompasses even Addison's narrative technique: instead of directly picturing Italy from his own viewpoint, he often quotes lengthy passages from classic Roman works, his vision thus partly determined by past literature and human thought.

Johnson's Journey to the Western Islands, while stamped with its author's unique personality, nevertheless serves as a fine example of the humanistic school, its interests and techniques. In the wild and remote Hebrides,

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Johnson acts much like an anthropologist investigating a "primitive" culture, diligently noting the customs, beliefs, implements and language of the people. Unlike the modern anthropologist, however, whose goal is scientific understanding, Johnson is a moral observer, attempting to uncover the valuable and constant in human affairs. In this endeavor, his frequent method is to move from the particular realities of the Hebrides to general truths about life. For example, Johnson notes the custom of "payment of rent in kind" at St. Kilda, then expands this small observation into the sweeping principle that "money confounds subordination, by overpowering the distinctions of rank and birth, and weakens authority by supplying power of resistance, or expedients for escape."<sup>15</sup> Throughout he is sifting, probing, comparing--he renders Scottish life in its uniqueness, but also in its significance to all human life. Like Addison, Johnson discusses natural scenery; and like his predecessor, he often does so with a distinct humanistic twist--as when he indicates how mountains have determined the character of the Highlanders. Johnson is indeed practicing his preaching "that the great object of remark in human life," and fills the pages of his Journey with careful observations and sharp insights into the inhabitants of Scotland, as when he discusses their manner of speech as "prompt and peremptory"<sup>16</sup> or the "general discontent" that infects the Highlands.

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Humanistic travel writing is certainly not an exclusive product of the eighteenth century; its tradition was carried through Thackeray's time by writers like William Hazlitt in Notes of a Journey through France and Italy (1824), Frances Trollope in Paris and the Parisians (1835), and Charles Dickens's American Notes (1842), with countless other examples possible. Within the eighteenth century, though, humanistic travel writing, with its disciplined reporting, objective approach and interest in man, was the dominant travel tradition.

Man can be studied in a group--as a nationality, for example--or as an individual. And it is the individual, the traveler himself, who is the centerpiece of the personal mode of travel writing. In the preface to Eothen (1845), Kinglake bluntly states:

From all historical and scientific illustrations--  
from all useful statistics--from all political  
disquisitions--and from all good moral reflections,  
the volume is thoroughly free . . . My notion [is]  
dwelling precisely upon those matters which happened  
to interest me, and upon none other . . .<sup>18</sup>

In the personal tradition, travel literature is closely related to autobiography and the essay. The autobiographical impulse shapes the personal travel narrative by determining its narrative content. Instead of describing the major cities and important sights on his itinerary--things that would most likely interest a reader--the personal travel writer might discuss events and things "which happened to interest" him--like a stay in a small inn or a

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meeting with a peasant. Its kinship to the essay, particularly the informal essay, influences narrative form and content. As a record of thoughts, the book is less likely to be structured on strict chronology, but to be shaped by the association of ideas in the narrator's mind. Further, the opinions offered by the narrator will more probably be subjective than, for instance, the attempts by Johnson to state reasoned, universal truths from his observations.

The places and peoples visited by the personal travel writer are not so important in themselves, but as they relate to him. Instead of looking outwards, to cities and mountains and customs, the writer's gaze is directed inwards, toward his emotions and opinions that occur as he travels. Thus the true subject matter of this mode would not be (for instance) France, but Sterne in France, or Smollett in France.

Personal travel writing should not be considered as egotism or self-advertisement, but as a way the writer can give form and focus to his material. Kinglake continues:

the egotism of a traveller, however incessant--however shameless and obtrusive, must still convey some true ideas of the country through which he has passed, His very selfishness--his habit of referring the whole external world to his own sensation, compels him . . . to observe the laws of perspective;--he tells you of objects, not as he knows them to be, but as they seemed to him.<sup>19</sup>

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Laurence Sterne's A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy (1768) is a personal travel work. In an early passage the author admits he is "well aware . . . both my travels and observations will be altogether of a different cast from any of my fore-runners"<sup>20</sup>--and subsequent pages realize this promise. He jettisons the traditional subject matter of the European trip--famous cathedrals, lofty monuments, historical battlefields--and instead presents objects and people that excite his sensibility--a dead ass, a mendicant friar, a fille de chambre. Working in this subjective mode, Sterne believes the way a traveler perceives is as important as what he perceives, and he categorizes travelers according to their personality traits--idle, inquisitive, proud, vain, and splenetic are some. Yorick/Sterne is the sentimental traveler, and he views France through glasses colored with playful wit and tearful sentiment; the reader is forced to use precisely those spectacles to view that country. The very subjective nature of the book's attitudes and material naturally call attention to Yorick, and he becomes, in effect, the hero of the narrative, the things and events in it gaining meaning as they relate to him.

Sterne's narrative is a response, in part, to another done in the same personal tradition. He is attacking Smollett's Travels through France and Italy (1766):

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The learned SMELFUNGUS travelled from Boulogne to Paris--from Paris to Rome--and so on--but he set out with the spleen and jaundice, and every object he pass'd by was discoloured or distorted--He wrote an account of them, but 'twas nothing but the account of his miserable feelings.<sup>21</sup>

Whatever the justice of this criticism, Smollett's Travels emphatically are a reflection of his feelings. While a good deal of the doctor's attention is directed to human life and works, the interests of humanistic travel writing, the book is awash with personal opinions, sharply spoken. Ill during the journey, Smollett attacks the food, lodgings and climate of foreign lands as infringements on his well being. He also addresses cultural and artistic matters, slashing away at French and Italian civilization and remaining a steadfast John Bull. This critical spirit, this pervasive opinionating marks the Travels as a personal travel work--an approach to a foreign land through the personality of the author.

James Boswell's The Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides (1785) is a twist on the autobiographical pattern of the personal narrative. It is really a biographical work: at center stage is Dr. Johnson, and his experiences in and responses to Scotland; in the wings is Boswell, foil and observer. Overhanging the book is the aura of experiment, for Boswell has brought his distinguished friend up north to watch him interact with foreign surroundings. This interaction between the personality of Johnson and the features of Scotland is the true interest of Boswell's

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Journal, much more so than detailed descriptions of man and nature.

In part, the personal tradition of travel writing is a reaction to the humanistic mode. After a nation has been visited and written about by a host of travelers--after its great sights have been exhaustingly depicted by foreigners, and its strange, colorful manners made commonplace by repetition--many subsequent visitors feel compelled, in the interests of novelty, to give their responses to foreign lands (which are unique) rather than factual descriptions (which are not). Hence, the personal mode, with its emphasis on distinctive personality, offers a strong alternative to the humanistic mode, with its stress on universal truths.

Romantic travel writing offers another possibility. While the other two modes have long histories, the romantic tradition, born in the eighteenth century, bursting into full bloom in the nineteenth, is a comparatively recent addition to the travel family. Because it is recent, we can trace its causes, and a brief listing of these forces can lead to an understanding of its nature. The first great force is, of course, the gradual transformation of art and taste from (in Walter Jackson Bates's terms) "classic" to "romantic"<sup>22</sup>--from an interest in the universal, traditional and rational to the unique, personal, intuitive and imaginative. This sweeping movement touched, of course, all aspects of English civilization, and all literary forms. Humanistic

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travel literature is basically "classic" in impulse, based on its objective, factual descriptions, its strenuous attempts to plumb universal human truths, its concern for Man as a species rather than as an individual, and its emphasis of human nature over natural scenery. Personal travel literature goes against some of those tenets; romantic literature, as we shall see, against all of them.

Secondly there was the change, in Marjorie Hope Nicolson's phrase, from "Mountain Gloom" to "Mountain Glory." Rugged natural scenery and mountains, perceived as inconveniences and largely ignored by artists until the seventeenth century, gradually became objects of awe and aesthetic inspiration by the nineteenth. Long descriptions of crags and caverns, ravines and waterfalls found their way into all literature, with travel writing no exception--prose pictures often fashioned in the intense, solemn, mystical-religious tones of Romanticism. Nature became valuable and exciting in itself, not simply in how it related to man.<sup>23</sup>

Finally, there are historical reasons, bound up in political and commercial tides, that account for the growth of romantic travel writing. First, the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars between England and France, stretching from 1793 to 1815, were a prolonged military struggle that closed much of the Continent to British tourists for over two decades. But while the fashionable French-Italian-German circuit had been cut, other European areas were still open to the English traveler--Portugal and Spain, Greece and

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Turkey. Most Britons were not familiar with these nations, and at first glance saw them as mysterious, rugged, primitive countries. Further, the Empire steadily expanded through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, engendering increased trade with India, the Middle East, and Australia. A considerable segment of the British population was brought in contact with strange, non-Western cultures, and this intercourse sparked interest in those societies. Thus, wars and commerce helped create a taste for the exotic over the familiar, for the Taj Mahal over Trafalgar, the Niles over the Thames.

From these roots grow the tree-romantic travel writing is marked by extensive descriptions of nature, a zest for the bizarre, and an emphasis on the traveler's subjective, rather than objective, vision. Natural scenery is not presented casually, as a mere conversation piece during a journey from city to city, but reverently, or excitedly, as an important area of interest, or perhaps as the trip's great object. Man and his works are discussed: while the humanistic writer views these objectively, seeks to compare them between nations, and sees his observations as part of an educational process that broadens knowledge and understanding of man, the romantic travel writer perceives imaginatively, confronts men and human works in their uniqueness, and addresses the emotions and sense of adventure. It is this questing spirit that is the tradition's vital trait, and we can glimpse this in Eliot Warburton's preface to The Crescent and the Cross (1845):

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the variety that strikes upon the senses--the delicious climate . . . the wild animals . . . In the cities there is that appearance of something secret and suppressed, which stimulates curiosity and adventure--there is the mystery that envelopes woman--the romance of every-day life--the masquerading-looking population . . .<sup>24</sup>

And the preface to The Bible in Spain (1842) speaks of the Iberian nation as "the land of old renown, the land of wonder and mystery" and of its author as having "better opportunities of becoming acquainted with its strange secrets and peculiarities than yet were afforded to any individual, certainly to a foreigner."<sup>25</sup>

Wonder, mystery, adventure--all these are aspects of the intense attitude of the romantic traveler and writer. This heightened feeling is manifested not only in prose travel narratives, but in poetic "excursion poems" like Byron's Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, Shelley's Alastor, and Wordsworth's The Prelude and The Excursion.<sup>26</sup> It might well be argued that Byron's work laid the ground work for the entire prose school of romantic travel. Written from 1812 to 1818, Childe Harold is in many ways a metrical travelogue, and "it became the manual for a whole generation of tourists," for "to a generation which was becoming intensively sensitive to the beauty of nature and the romance of the past the enchantment was irresistible."<sup>27</sup> Byron's influence on later works might be direct and major, or simply casual, but it is certain that many elements of Childe Harold--colorful details, fascination with the dark

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Before I discuss some specific romantic works, an important distinction should be made between them and personal travel writing. Both are one in their subjective approach, in the way they emphasize the personality and opinions of the narrator. They are distinguished in part by their interests (romantic writing discusses natural scenery, the exotic) and by the attitude they take to the external world. In romantic travel writing, the narrator tends to identify with the people and country visited, to annihilate his personality into their beings. This is a characteristic romantic response--we see it at work in Keats's contemplation of the Grecian urn, or address to a nightingale, in Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind," in Byron's famous assertion "I live not in myself, but I become/ Portion of that around me" while brooding in the Alps. In personal travel writing, there is a greater gap between perceiver and that which is perceived: the narrator, to a large extent, stands apart from his environment to show how things and events affect him. Thus the subjectivity of romantic writing leads to the infusion of the Self into the world; of personal writing, to the relating of the world to the Self.

All the elements of romantic travel writing can be found in Warburton's The Crescent and the Cross. Immersing himself in the "perpetual poetry of Eastern life,"<sup>28</sup> the author takes a lengthy journey down the Nile River, finding

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adventure on its waters and fascinating antiquities on its shores. Colorful natural surroundings are presented in a prose style that at times gushes ("There! flames forth the sun-shine of the tropics, flashing over the roseate granite cliffs, and the dew-diamonded palms, and the silvery river . . .")<sup>29</sup> and that is constantly impressionistic, evocative. Strange non-Western customs--the slave market, the harem--are cultivated by Warburton's taste for the exotic. He does comment extensively on ugly aspects of Eastern life--its disease and filth for example--but still leaves the reader with the impression that it is an intenser, more vibrant reality than life in England. The cumulative impression he leaves the reader with is that of a magic carpet ride through an enchanted land.

Washington Irving's The Alhambra (1832) and Borrow's The Bible in Spain are both romantic travel books dealing with Spain, then widely considered a primitive, mysterious land. Irving's book treats its Moorish past and legends, attempting to capture the romance of a long-dead civilization. The long, adventurous journey to the ancient citadel in Granada, the meetings with the strange natives, the sensation of escape from the commonplace to the unusual, all in the early chapters, form a gateway to an intensified reality--one Irving celebrates with his bizarre legends and carefully manicured patches of poetic description. Borrow's book deals with the fantastic exploits he had while circulating the Bible in "heathen" Iberia. In attempting

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to save Spaniards from a fate worse than atheism (and that was Roman Catholicism to Borrow), he leads a dangerous underground existence, mingling with Gypsy bands and other "undesirables." His romantic escapades in Spain include not only feats of derring-do, but a fine appreciation of the nation's physical and spiritual faces, and ultimately, a deep feeling for the land and its people.

The fourth mode of travel writing of these years is the picturesque school--a tradition minor in influence and narrow in scope, but important to us because it seems to have some influence on Thackeray. Picturesque travel writing owes great debts to landscape painting, particularly the works of Claude Lorrain and Salvatore Rose; it approaches the natural world in terms of stylized human art. The picturesque traveler would avoid cities and men, seeking lush natural scenes--forests and meadows, rivers and waterfalls--and then carefully analyze them for their aesthetic impact on the human eye. The book he produced would be a series of "scenes," where, like a studious art critic, he would break natural tableaux into "vistas and lights and foregrounds and points of view and side-screens."<sup>30</sup>

Perhaps the most famous and influential picturesque travel writer was the Rev. William Gilpin, whose books like Remarks on Forest Scenery or Observations on the Mountains and Lakes of Cumberland and Westmoreland were filled with word-paintings and aesthetic criticisms of the English

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countryside. As an example, these are some of his comments on a scene near Lymington:

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While the subject is nature, Gilpin's approach here is sharply different from that of romantic writers like Byron or Warburton: they approach glorious scenery with religious reverence, and treat it as a vessel of truth; he views it with a critical eye, as a connoisseur peruses a painting. Indeed, it is likely that the romantic attitude toward nature gradually undermined the assumptions of picturesque travel writing, and eventually the tradition itself--a viable form through the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, it has since passed to extinction.

The three other travel traditions have not. For although they are defined in part by their subject matter and interest, which are attached to a particular time, they also strike attitudes toward foreign lands which transcend time. The humanistic writer stands apart from his subject, probing it thoughtfully for his reader; and personalist brings his subject under the domination of his personality, where it is colored and processed for the reader; the romantic, through the powers of sympathy and imagination, attempts to grasp the inner spirit of his subject, and then render it to his reader.

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When Thackeray began writing travel works early in his literary career, he was confronted with several difficulties and hard decisions. First, there was the very nature of the travel genre, which as an empirical literary form tends to be more restrictive than fictional ones. Then, there was the changing nature of travel itself. Mechanization, mass tourism, the collapse of the Grand Tour--these and other prominent occurrences made the writer confront an area of human experience in the midst of a revolution. In some way, Thackeray had to come to terms with this fluid, rapidly altering situation. Finally, he was confronted by three major traditions in the literature of travel, and had to decide which, if any, would suit his personal angle of vision on foreign lands and travel. That he was familiar with the humanistic, personal, romantic and even picturesque schools of travel writing is certain, and in the next chapter we will consider his analysis of them and experiments with them. Indeed, the responses that Thackeray made to these difficulties are essential to the shape of his travel books, which will now be examined.

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## FOOTNOTES--CHAPTER II

<sup>1</sup>Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg, The Nature of Narrative (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 73.

<sup>2</sup>In the category of reference works, Edward G. Cox, A Reference Guide to the Literature of Travel, 3 vol. (Seattle: University of Washington, 1935-1949) is the outstanding example. Works have dealt with individual authors as travelers or travel writers: Charles N. Coe, Wordsworth and the Literature of Travel (New York: Bookman, 1953); John A. Christie, Thoreau as a World Traveler (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965); and James L. Dean, Howells' Travels Toward Art (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1970).

<sup>3</sup>"Introduction," in Literature as a Mode of Travel (New York: The New York Public Library, 1963), p. 8.

<sup>4</sup>F. A. Kirkpatrick, "The Literature of Travel, 1700-1900," in The Cambridge History of English Literature, XIV (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1917), p. 266.

<sup>5</sup>Rice, p. 8.

<sup>6</sup>Henry Fielding, The Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon, ed. by Henry Pagliaro (New York: Nardone, 1963), p. 7. The quote is Pagliaro's.

<sup>7</sup>The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson, II, ed. by Walter Jackson Bate, John M. Bullitt, and L. F. Powell (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), pp. 298-300. Hereafter referred to as "Johnson."

<sup>8</sup>Dean, pp. 1-9 has a very good discussion of the limitations and difficulties of travel writing to which I am greatly indebted. Dean's comments about "angle of vision" were particularly helpful.

<sup>9</sup>"Introduction," The American Scene by Henry James (New York: Scribner's, 1946), p. v.

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- <sup>10</sup>Instructions for Travellers (1757), reprinted under the editorial direction of W. E. Minchinton (New York: S. P. Publishing, 1972), p. 4.
- <sup>11</sup>Johnson, IX, ed. by Mary Lascelles (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), p. 156.
- <sup>12</sup>Fielding, pp. 23-24.
- <sup>13</sup>Johnson, VI, ed. by E. L. McAdam, Jr. with George Milne (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), pp. 91-92.
- <sup>14</sup>The Miscellaneous Works of Joseph Addison, ed. by A. C. Guthkelch (London: G. Bell, 1914), II, p. 95.
- <sup>15</sup>Johnson, IX, p. 113.
- <sup>16</sup>Johnson, IX, p. 51.
- <sup>17</sup>Johnson, IX, p. 95.
- <sup>18</sup>Eothen, 2nd Edition (London: John Olliver, 1845), pp. vi-vii.
- <sup>19</sup>Kinglake, pp. viii-ix.
- <sup>20</sup>A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy by Mr. Yorick to which are added The Journal to Eliza and A Political Romance, ed. by Ian Jack (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 11.
- <sup>21</sup>Sterne, pp. 28-29.
- <sup>22</sup>Walter Jackson Bate, From Classic to Romantic (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1946).
- <sup>23</sup>Marjorie Hope Nicolson, Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory (New York: Cornell University Press, 1959).
- <sup>24</sup>The Crescent and the Cross (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1849), I, p. vii.
- <sup>25</sup>George Borrow, The Bible in Spain (London: J. M. Dent, 1907), p. 1.
- <sup>26</sup>Nicolson, p. 375.
- <sup>27</sup>Mona Wilson, "The Decline of the Grand Tour," in Grand Tour: A Journey in the Tracks of the Age of Aristocracy, ed. by R. S. Lambert (London: Faber & Faber, 1935), p. 154.
- <sup>28</sup>Warburton, I, p. 17.

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<sup>29</sup>Warburton, I, p. 171.

<sup>30</sup>Samuel H. Monk, The Sublime: A Study of Critical Theories in XVII-Century England (New York: Modern Language Association, 1935), p. 204.

<sup>31</sup>William Gilpin, 3d Edition, Remarks on Forest Scenery, and Other Woodland Views, Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty (London: T. Carhill, 1808), p. 157.

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### CHAPTER III

#### THE TRAVEL BOOKS

If travel writing was a significant part of Thackeray's literary apprenticeship, so was the work of book reviewing. And in the apprenticeship years of 1838 to 1845, for Fraser's Magazine, Foreign Quarterly Review, the London Times and The London Morning Chronicle, Thackeray wrote a series of reviews on travel books that reveal a good deal about his attitudes toward and objectives for travel literature.<sup>1</sup> Some letters written during this period also give explicit shape to some of the values and beliefs that are embedded but not articulated in the travel writing itself.

Thus a brief analysis of these reviews and letters would form a convenient archway to Thackeray's travel literature. They serve as an excellent index to his likes and dislikes and clearly foreshadow some of the major pre-occupations of his travel writings. Further, they demonstrate Thackeray's sure knowledge of the kinds of travel literature being written, of the difficulties facing travel writers of his time, and of various strategies used

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to overcome those problems. Because these reviews were written approximately the same time as the travel works, the relationship between precept and performance, between critical formulation and artistic exercise, should be close and clear.

Despite their considerable value, due caution must be exercised when approaching these reviews. First, they were written for popular magazines and newspapers, and are therefore not rigidly analytical nor precise in critical terminology. Reviews for Fraser's or The London Times were expected to be informal, entertaining, and to amply display the beauties (or defects) of the book reviewed through extensive quotation; reviewers were paid by the page,<sup>2</sup> and would accordingly produce pieces comprised of lengthy direct quotations stitched together with brief patches of transitional prose. Written within this framework, the typical Thackeray review was an easy-going production, most often composed of a few introductory paragraphs setting forth the work's major issues, a casual, chatty exploration of specific ideas, long excerpts, and digressions that expand on some of the book's ideas. Secondly, Thackeray was concerned with making specific critical comments on books he treated, rather than enunciating general principles. The broader framework must be inferred from statements scattered over several pages and many years, and inferences so made should be accepted with certain reservations. Finally, several of Thackeray's views are

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thoroughly unexceptional--for example, a belief that a travel writer should be interesting and avoid the commonplace--and do little to differentiate him from other writers.

With these facts in mind, we can turn to the reviews. Although they are filled with random, unsystematic comments, two major areas of concern emerge: the realities of travel as Thackeray perceives them, and the qualities of the travel book narrator. These areas are inter-related, and taken together reveal much of what Thackeray believed travel writing should be, along with establishing the distinctive slant of his thought.

By the "realities of travel," I am referring in large part to the impact of the Travel Revolution of the early nineteenth century. Travel had become quick and cheap, available to many; thus:

A hundred years ago a man might have built up a very respectable traveller's reputation within the confines of Europe . . . But now the case is different: Europe is abandoned to the mere tourists--the dimunitives of travellers; and we hardly think of giving a wanderer credit for belonging to the latter class until he has, at least, passed a fashionable season at Timbuctoo . . .<sup>3</sup>

The Middle East was once an exotic, seldom visited region, by Thackeray's time it could be toured at a "trifling expense of time, money and personal fatigue."<sup>4</sup> The saturation of the region by travelers created problems for the writer:

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So many have gone through this simple and easy journey that the accounts which they bring back of their travels can hardly be expected to differ from the personal narratives of the hundreds of predecessors who have made the same tour . . .<sup>5</sup>

Not only had travel become a mass industry, but so had travel literature through the agency of the ubiquitous guidebook. Becoming increasingly popular in the nineteenth century under the aegis of John Murray and others, guidebooks were eventually written on almost every country a tourist might visit. And little novel or exciting could be written about, say, Brussels after Murray had painstakingly explored the city and given a copious factual account of its main sights, history, customs, perhaps even legends. The guidebooks did their job so well that many a travel writer was tempted to borrow (Thackeray says "rob")<sup>6</sup> material from them to flesh out his narrative; in his book reviews, Thackeray accused Grant, Hugo, Dumas and Michaels of pirating information.

Implicit in Thackeray's concern over tourism and guidebooks is a concern for the value of humanistic travel literature. The humanist writer proceeds by careful and objective description of man and his works. For a rarely visited region, this can be a very valuable and entertaining exercise. But for an area that has been heavily visited, embalmed in previous travel works, cross-indexed in guidebooks, the chances of saying something new that is true (and worthwhile) are not good. Style, wit, intellectual

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penetration could still sustain the humanistic writer, of course. But Thackeray also explored other alternatives in his reviews, chief among them the qualities of the travel book narrator.

A prime quality of the narrator, as Thackeray sees it, is the ability to provide a distinctive angle of vision on the region journeyed in. Thackeray commends Lord Lindsay's Travels in Egypt and the Holy Land:

His Lordship possesses . . . some qualifications which are rare even among the multitude of Egyptian and Syrian travellers--he has enthusiasm and activity, a fine feeling for art and for natural beauty; and, above all, an intimate acquaintance with the book which has made the lands he visited so especially interesting to us.<sup>7</sup>

The travel writer need not have precisely those credentials of Lord Lindsay, or even the same kind of credentials. But he should be able to perceive a foreign land in a way different from his predecessors, and then be able to report those fresh perceptions. Dr. Carus, a German scientist, fails to make his observations distinctive in spite of his unique background, and is severely rebuked by Thackeray: "Any groom or footman, any person, however stupid or ignorant, could not have made a journey and observed to little purpose as this laboriously imbecile and educated man of science."<sup>8</sup>

The relationship of narrator to reader looms large in these reviews, and we find Thackeray discussing this link frequently. Whenever he treats this relationship, he tends to use similar terms--and in three separate reviews

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occur the phrases: "we find him a most pleasant compagnon  
de voyage," "he is still a very delightful companion," and  
 his reader cannot fail to be pleased with his companion-  
 ship."<sup>9</sup> Thackeray is concerned with the subject matter of the  
 travel work, and the personality of the narrator. Appro-  
 priately for travel literature, the narrator should have the  
 virtues of a good traveling companion, a boon comrade who  
 could enliven a long, rugged coachride; thus, "active,"  
 "gay," "determined," "amusing," and "good natured" are  
 some of the qualities Thackeray mentions. This favors a  
 genial, informal style of narration rather than an astringent,  
 intense one--not in the manner of a lecturer talking to  
 a student, nor even quite (in Wordsworth's phrase) that of a  
 man talking to men, but rather of a man talking to his  
 friends. Thackeray's repeated interest in "companionship"  
 also implies that the establishment of a central figure in  
 the travel work--that of a narrator with a pleasant,  
 agreeable personality--is a major task for the travel  
 writer, an important rhetorical strategy.

But while the narrator's personality is of great  
 consequence to the travel book, its expression must be kept  
 within reasonable bounds. Thackeray attacks one writer  
 because: "amiable egotisms occur at every page, and it is  
 only occasionally that the reader gets a glimpse of the  
 country in this book of travels, the writer being incess-  
 antly occupied with the person of Mr. Mohan Lal."<sup>10</sup> With  
 these remarks, Thackeray limits the role of the narrator, and puts

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his function into a certain focus. While a travel book should not be a stream of dry facts impersonally related, it should not be disguised autobiography or a cluster of the narrator's opinions either. Rather, a narrator should convey information, facts, impressions in an attractive and distinctive manner. Ideally, the "data" of the journey and the narrator who relates it are not in conflict but mutually supporting: the information on foreign lands makes the narrator an informed and interesting person to listen to, while the "companion"-narrator makes the details of the trip available in a winning format.

Beyond the qualities of amiability, Thackeray also believes that fairness and honesty are important to the travel writer. His compagnon de voyage must be pleasant, but must command respect. The reader should believe that he is reporting accurately, is well-balanced, even though the reader need not always agree with him. Thus Thackeray rates Hugo and Michiels for freely borrowing material from guidebooks without acknowledgement and mildly criticizes a German naturalist who "paints English society in a manner somewhat too flattering"<sup>11</sup>--the first two for being dishonest and the latter for being lopsided in his views.

Thackeray's views on the realities of travel and the nature of the narrator, when taken together, work to support the major assumptions of the personal mode of travel literature. As mentioned in Chapter II, the rise of the personal mode of travel literature might be considered a

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response to the decline of the humanistic mode. The first accounts of foreign lands--those of early explorers--are almost invariably filled with careful and extensive descriptions of foreign people, customs, cities, landscapes; the investigation of the unknown supplies the work's interest and value. But after repeated visits and numerous travel narratives, the unfamiliar land becomes familiar, and it becomes harder for the writer to sustain interest through the depiction of externals. Hence the movement is from outward to inward, from external description to the narrator's mind. It is the narrator who can give a novel, distinctive view of a foreign country by filtering scenes of that land through his personality, or by approaching it from a different perspective.

By the 1830's, the movement from outward to inward was well underway. As Thackeray saw the humanistic mode decline under the impact of mass travel and mass travel literature, he turned to the narrator and the personal mode of travel writing as replacements. From his reviews, we see the narrator as a central figure and major interest--a charming, humorous personality with an ingratiating manner--and the foreign land as something to be seen through the bright glow of the narrator's character.

All travel works, of course, have a subject and a narrator, and Thackeray was conscious of both when he reviewed those travel narratives. In fact, some of his travel work is but lightly colored by the narrator,

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and seems a fairly straightforward and objective treatment of an external subject. But the thrust of his opinions is not toward travel related, but travel narrated--travel presented to the reader by a highly visible, intrusive companion who comes to dominate the entire work. This is implied in his reviews, and, we shall see, is made explicit in his travel literature.

### The Paris Sketch Book

The first book of Thackeray's published in England has a curious history that reveals much about its final form and nature. The first mention of the work comes in a letter to publisher John Macrone in January, 1837:

Will you give me £ 50 20 now for the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition of a book in 2 Volumes. with 20 drawings. entitled Rambles & Sketches in old and new Paris by WMT. I have not of course written a word of it, that's why I offer it so cheap, but I want to be made to write, and to bind myself by a contract or fine.<sup>12</sup>

When Thackeray wrote his mother almost three and a half years later, in June 1840--stating "the immortal Paris Sketch Book is this instant concluded: after unheard of toils and pangs of labour" (Letters, I, 448)--several changes had been made from the original prospectus in the 1837 letter. The title had changed, Thackeray had adopted the nom de plume of Michael Angelo Titmarsh, and, it turned out, he had already written some of the finished product when he queried Macrone.

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When the two volume Paris Sketch Book first appeared in July, 1840, it contained nineteen short pieces written over a seven year period, at least thirteen of which had appeared in at least five magazines and newspapers previously.<sup>13</sup> "The Devil's Wager," for example, is one of the earliest works of the Thackeray canon, appearing in the National Standard in August, 1833; other pieces were apparently being completed just a month before final publication in July, 1840. But while the work's composition was spread over several years, it should be noted that the great bulk of The Paris Sketch Book was written from 1838 to 1840, after Thackeray had decided on writing a book on Paris. The book, therefore, can not be regarded as a series of magazine pieces hastily slapped together for publication with little connection between them, for the author had a vision of collective publication for most of the articles while he was writing them.

Written over several years, these nineteen articles show considerable diversity in format. On the title-page Thackeray remarks that the volumes are made up of "copies" and "compositions"---the former works "neatly stolen from the collections of French authors" (there are three of these in the book) and the latter "studies of French modern works, that have not as yet . . . attracted the notice of English public."<sup>14</sup> This distinction between adaptations and originals borrows the terminology of painting and suggests a division along those lines--but we can also see

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several divisions of the work in terms of literary genre. The volumes are made up of short stories, book reviews, art criticism, poetry, informal essays, even political commentary, along with the sketches the title mentions. Further, within the area of the short story there is variety, as samples of the devil's tale, rogue's tale, and sentimental story are found in the book.

Perhaps because of its manner of composition and its great diversity of genre, several critics have not included The Paris Sketch Book among the travel works of Thackeray, but have considered this early effort a miscellany.<sup>15</sup> There is some justification for this viewpoint; however, there are also good reasons to believe the work is more than a "miscellaneous potpourri of tales and articles" and indeed a travel work, albeit a loosely organized one. First, the work opens with a very explicit travel sequence--"An Invasion of France"--which shows a British family journeying from London to Paris. The separate articles that follow are clearly to be taken as the reports, impressions or stories of a traveler/visitor. Secondly, the publishing firm of Chapman and Hall contracted Thackeray to do a guidebook on Belgium and a series of travel sketches in Ireland soon after The Paris Sketch Book appeared--a forerunner in Belgium and in Ireland to go along with the sketch in Paris.<sup>16</sup> Both the publisher and the writer, however, saw the Paris work as a kind of travel literature, and Thackeray as a travel writer. Finally, although there

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is little movement and physical travel in the work, it does attempt to give a sustained and comprehensive view of foreign life through an empirical account of a journey abroad. This qualifies it as a travel work according to our definition in Chapter II, even though some segments of the book are fictional.

Although the format of Thackeray's work might be considered unconventional at first glance, The Paris Sketch Book does have its precursors. It apparently owes a debt to Washington Irving's The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent. published in 1819-20 (note that the full title of Thackeray's work is The Paris Sketch Book of Mr. M. A. Titmarsh). Thackeray was familiar with Irving's work and even visited the American author at his New York home in 1855; he once called Irving the "first ambassador whom the New World of Letters sent to the Old."<sup>17</sup> In addition to the clearly parallel titles, there are other similarities: both works employ personas, both mix short stories, literary criticism and sketches, both employ daydream sequences, both rewrite older tales (what Thackeray called "copies"). Both, finally, have early travel sequences or sketches which define the works as travel books--Irving's "The Voyage" from America to England, and Thackeray's "An Invasion of France."

However, it should be pointed that Thackeray's use of the word "sketchbook" is fraught with more significance than Irving's. Thackeray meant "sketch" to be both a "short

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literary piece" and an artistic drawing. After all, he had studied art in Paris and subsequently illustrated his own works; his very first published book, Flore et Zephyr (1836), was a series of drawings. Drawing is a motif that runs throughout the Paris book: in addition to the twenty sketches by the author, and the notion of naming the prose pieces either "copies" or "compositions," three of the articles are concerned with painting and drawing--"On the French School of Painting," "The Painter's Bargain" and "Caricatures and Lithography in Paris."

Thackeray's interest in pencil drawing carries further implications, for it underlines what might be called the "multi-media" approach of the book. Paris is viewed through the lenses of pencil sketches, poetry ("Four Imitations of Beranger"), and a very wide variety of prose forms--a markedly diverse array of tools for one artist to employ in one book. The work's prose and illustrations are the product of one mind, and their integration with the text a fact of considerable import. The usual practice was to have a book written and illustrated by separate hands (Dickens's novels are an example); the distinct conception is the writer-illustrator, represented in English literature by Blake and Thackeray. In The Paris Sketch, word refers to image, and picture illustrates and lends on prose. In "A Gambler's Death," Thackeray says of John Attwood, "he was lying as I have drawn him, one on his breast, the other falling towards the ground"

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(153) and adds a subsequent illustration; in "French Dramas and Melodramas," he briefly describes the typical Englishman as represented in French theater, and then draws a picture of him. The pencil sketches, however, do more than embellish the prose statements--they make "statements" of their own which are eventually borne out in the prose text. The frontispiece entitled "Paris Sketches" is a good example of this latter technique. In that illustration, a Carlist, Bonapartist, priest, artist and five other figures are crowded together on the same page, a rich and confusing melange that points out the diversity and complexity of French life. In the prose pieces that follow this opening salvo, Thackeray develops the idea first expressed pictorially: he notes the "mongrel" nature of Boulogne (8) and remarks on the complicated welter of French politics:

Why the Emperor of the French should be better than the King of the French, or the King of the French better than the King of France and Navarre, it is not our business to inquire; but all the three monarches have no lack of supporters; republicanism has no lack of supporters; St. Simonianism was followed by a respectable body of admirers; Robespierism has a select party of friends. (157)

Another use of prose and picture might be found in "A Contribution to Travellers," where Thackeray draws a picture of the Baronne de Florval-Delval and a simpering Sam Pogson. Here, the illustration is not an ornament to the story, but a part of it; the picture broadens the reader's knowledge of the two characters and their relationship, and

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"Multi-media" also refers to the plethora of literary forms and models found in the work. The Paris Sketch Book grew out of magazine and newspaper writing, and uses almost every kind of literary piece found in those media during Thackeray's time--light humorous verse, political analyses, book reviews, short stories, sketches, personal essays. In addition to that mixture, there is also a broad compass of prose styles that enliven the work, from the sentimental prose of "Beatrice Merger" to the mock-medieval style of "A Devil's Wager" to the angry broadsides of "Napoleon and His System." Each literary form, each prose style, of course, constitutes a different way of perceiving and discussing Paris and its people. And the use of multiple aesthetic forms (prose, poetry, drawing) is highly appropriate in a work which gives multiple perspectives on France through nineteen different stories and articles.

Indeed, this book's thrust is toward the all-embracing, expansive, multiple, rather than the restrictive, narrow, and monolithic; its direction is centrifugal rather than centripetal, continually exploring new materials instead of tightly organizing the materials at hand. Along with its many viewpoints and literary forms, The Paris Sketch Book explores the full range of French society, from the humble peasant Beatrice Merger to the Sun King, Louis

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XIV, with a crowded gallery of characters in between them on the social ladder--painters, robbers, British emigres, revolutionaries, priests. The work is expansive in time, containing a medieval story and tales of the Revolution, along with pieces set in the time of Louis Phillipe; it is expansive in space, moving from the painter's garret to Versailles, from the provinces to the capital. The stories and articles have a panoramic effect, not so much when they are taken individually, but in their cumulative impact. Concomitant with the great range and diversity of this travel work is its loose structural arrangement, represented in its nineteen separate articles that do not form a consecutive narrative.

Before turning to a treatment of those articles and stories, the reasons for the work's format should be examined. The first reason is found in the nature of Thackeray's experience of France and Paris. He had spent long years in the country and city when he wrote his travel book, and thus his work cannot easily muster the intensity and compactness that a volume based on a single, two month visit can. A stay spread over five years is not conducive to the day-to-day or city-to-city narrative form that many travel books employ, a treatment that gives them a certain cohesiveness.

Next, there is the diverse, complex nature of Parisian and French life that seems to demand a diverse manner of treatment. Thackeray's illustration, "Paris

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etches," and his views on French politics, discussed above, indicate his belief that a richly variegated God's plenty confronts the visiting Englishman. Aside from the infinite variety of French society, Thackeray also believes that it is largely inscrutable to the traveler. In a significant passage from "On Some French Fashionable novels," he comments:

let a gentleman who has dwelt two, four, or ten years in Paris (and has not gone thither for the purpose of making a book, when three weeks are sufficient)--let an English gentleman say . . . how much he knows of French society . . . He has . . . seen an immense number of wax candles, cups of tea, glasses of orgeat, and French people, in best clothes, enjoying the same; but intimacy there is none; we see but the outsides of the people. (117)

Only the quick traveler who sees Paris for "three weeks" in order to make a book can pretend to understand French society--and by this passage Thackeray announces that he is not that kind of traveler, and that his travel work will not be similar to a day by day narrative account of a stay in Paris.

Presiding over this loosely arranged travel work Michael Angelo Titmarsh, the purported author of the book and also a character in some of its stories. Because Thackeray wrote all three of his travel books under the name of Titmarsh, and because he places such an emphasis on the narrator in his reviews, it is important to study this figure's role in The Paris Sketch Book.

The relationship between Thackeray and Titmarsh would be the first matter to be discussed. Is Titmarsh

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separate and distinct from his creator, like Swift's Gulliver or Thackeray's own Barry Lyndon? Or is he largely a voice of the author, a manifestation of Thackeray's own personality, like Irving's Geoffrey Crayon or Sterne's Yorick in Sentimental Journey? With certain reservations, the latter is the correct assessment--Titmarsh's voice is largely that of Thackeray and not that of an autonomous character. To be sure, Thackeray pokes fun at his own narrative mask at times, showing, for example, a drunken Titmarsh in "A Gambler's Death," and at others forcing Titmarsh to speak in a humorous and exaggerated manner. But the ironic gap between author and narrator is slight, and by and large the opinions Titmarsh expresses are, on the evidence of letters and other writings, those of Thackeray.

The reader can discover few details about Titmarsh's personal life and history. We learn that he is a veteran resident of Paris (394); that he lives "up a hundred and thirty-seven steps in the remote quarter of the Luxembourg" (28) in a "little garret" where he maintains a sketch-book (147) and has a servant named Beatrice Merger (203); that from his friendships with Sam Pogson and Jack Attwood, he seems to be a member of the lower middle class. It is not precisely clear whether he is married.

While the reader's knowledge of Titmarsh's personal life is slim, his information on the narrator's personality is extensive--and somewhat confusing. It is extensive

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because Titmarsh's personality leaves a deep and significant stamp on many of the articles; it is confusing because that personality seems markedly different from sketch to sketch. In "A Caution to Travellers," the humorous and ironic elements of the narrator come to the fore; in "Napoleon and His System," Titmarsh appears as a serious, bold and highly opinionated political thinker. Further, in some of the pieces, like "The Painter's Bargain" and "The Devil's Wager," the narrator fades away into ghostliness. Part of this apparent inconsistency is obviously due to the nature of the work--the nineteen separate articles, of such marked variety, call forth different facets of the narrator's personality. However, despite the critical formulations made in the travel book reviews, by 1840 Thackeray was either unable or unwilling to put some of his statements on the narrator into artistic practice. Thus, instead of the consistently realized "companion" who provides a distinctive angle of vision on the country visited, the Titmarsh of The Paris Sketch Book often becomes a rhetorical tool whose personality and values change according to the needs of the article at hand.

But despite some limitations, a fairly clear outline of Titmarsh's personality does emerge in the volume's four hundred pages. He is first of all a humorous man, with a ready stock of comic exaggerations and pleasant ironies; he sets this tone very early in the first article of the book with a mock-epic simile:

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As when the hawk menaces the hen-roost, in like manner, when such a danger as a voyage menaces a mother, she becomes suddenly endowed with a ferocious presence of mind, and bristling up and screaming in the front of her brood, and in the face of circumstances, succeeds, by her courage, in putting her enemy to flight . . . (2)

After striking this keynote, Titmarsh maintains a comic-ironic tone through much of the book. This mood pervades his discussion of Cartouche's rascality or Little Poin-sinet's folly--it is a genial humor that excites smiles rather than guffaws, but is not remote or over-subtle. And the humor makes it clear that Titmarsh is very concerned with entertaining his auditors, perhaps even before enlightening them.

Co-existent with the comic facet of the narrator's personality is a marvelous capacity for outspoken bluntness. He is extremely eager to deliver his opinions on virtually any subject, and does so occasionally with ham-fisted emphasis (and insensitivity); he is a moral observer and likes to make moral judgments. Discussing Victor Hugo's poetic plea to free the criminal Barbes, he heatedly exclaims:

Now in countries where fools abound, did one ever read of more monstrous, palpable folly? In any country, save this, would a poet who chose to write four crack-brained verses, comparing an angel to a dove, and a little boy to a reed, and calling on the chief magistrate, in the name of the angel, or dove (the Princess Mary), in her tomb, and the little infant in his cradle, to spare a criminal, have received a "gracious answer" to his nonsense? (47)

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In "Madame Sand and the New Apocalypse," he attacks--with too much vigor--current religious movements among French writers and intellectuals:

there is scarce a beggarly, beardless scribbler of poems and prose, but tells you, in his preface, of the saintete of the sacerdoce litteraire; or a dirty student, sucking tobacco and beer, and reeling home with a grisette from the chaumiere, who is not convinced of the necessity of a new "Messianism" . . . (284-5)

In passages like these, the reader discerns a gap between author and narrative mask. Their overheated rhetoric stamp Titmarsh as a "character"--a eccentric figure whose vehement opinions should stir shock, interest, and amusement in his audience.

But while this humor and bluntness amuse the reader, Titmarsh's wide range of knowledge should win his respect. Not only is he clearly an old Paris hand, with a plentiful supply of anecdotes and information about the city; but he also can speak with insight and authority on art, drama, history, law and politics. Thackeray himself had been an apprentice artist and a law student; "On the French School of Painting" contains thoughtful commentary on the collections of paintings at the Louvre, Luxembourg, and Ecole des Beaux Arts, and "The Case of Peytel" contains an interesting analysis of a crime celebre and of the French legal system. Titmarsh is never strenuously profound in these discussions, but his alertness and poise reveal him to be an educated man who can skillfully expound and defend his viewpoints.

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Other characteristics of Titmarsh also deserve mention: his sentimental turn, his tendency to moralize, his flashes of bright gaiety. But the three traits described above--humor, outspokenness, broad knowledge--define him most clearly; in The Paris Sketch Book, we basically see him as an energetic raconteur who loves to be on display, dominating his audience and his stories with witty, informative banter.

Titmarsh is also an interesting critic of French life and culture, and much of the book seeks seriously to analyze Gallic lifeways and compare them to those of England. Throughout, he uses England to criticize France and France to criticize England, using his travel experience to broaden his understanding of both nations. A discussion of the range of Titmarsh's opinions may well be joined with a treatment of the book's themes, for the two areas clearly overlap and are in several cases identical.

Titmarsh finds many things wrong with France. He sees it as a violent nation, a theme that runs through five of the pieces: "Cartouche" and "The Case of Peytel" detail criminal violence, "The Story of Mary Ancel" presents violence of the Revolution, and "On the French School of Painting" and "French Dramas and Melodramas" discuss how violence is reflected in the art. In the last article he comments:

And, as the great Hugo has one monster to each play, the great Dumas has, ordinarily, half-a-dozen, to whom murder is nothing . . . who

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The robberies of "Cartouche," the murders of "The Case of Peytel" shock the English visitor as does the rampant sexual immorality. The casual French attitude toward adultery stuns Titmarsh: "We are married, and have fourteen children, and would just as soon make love to the Pope of Rome as to any one but our own wife" he says of his countrymen, while across the Channel "if you do not make love to Flicflac, from the day after her marriage to the day she reaches sixty, she thinks you a fool" (118). At least four of the stories detail what Titmarsh regards as sexual licentiousness: "A Caution to Travellers," "The Story of Mary Ancel," "French Dramas and Melodramas," and "On Some French Fashionable Novels." Running close behind brutality and debauchery as moral concerns of Titmarsh are French tendencies to sly trickery and deception. Sam Pogson, a traveling salesman, is fleeced by the natives in "A Caution to Travellers," Little Poinset is the repeated butt of his friends' cruel jests and confidence games; Simon Gambouge of "The Painter's Bargain" is crafty enough to outwit the devil. Thus, over the course of the work, a composite picture of an immoral France is developed and then contrasted with England, generally to the latter's benefit.

Another major theme of The Paris Sketch Book can be introduced with a few sentences from "The Fetes of July,"

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where a blustering Titmarsh announces: "I can hardly bring my mind to fancy that anything is serious in France--it seems to be all rant, tinsel, and stage-play. Sham liberty, sham monarchy, sham glory, sham justice . . ."

(48). In brief, a sort of *Vanity Fair*, and the phrase "rant, tinsel, and stage-play" seems to anticipate the brilliant "Before the Curtain" section of *Vanity Fair*. In any event, French folly is a motif that runs through the work--and the author zestfully pounces on examples of it, exposing foibles with a mixture of scorn and humor. In "Napoleon and His System," he lashes away at *Idees Napoleoniennes*, a political treatise by Prince Louis Napoleon, stopping at one point to remark: "Let us take breath after these big phrases--grand round figures of speech--which, when put together, amount, like certain other combinations of round figures, to exactly 0" (168).

"The Case of Peytel" vigorously questions the French legal system; "Meditations at Versailles" shows amusement at Louis XIV and the homage paid him by the people; the various art and literary criticisms of the work occasionally regard French efforts with breezy contempt; and there are numerous other examples. Dominating article after article is the belief that "in their aptitude to swallow, to utter, to enact humbugs, these French people, from Majesty downwards, eat all the other nations of this earth." (42)

Against these French tendencies to dishonesty and absurdity, Titmarsh finds some genuinely admirable aspects of French culture. Life in France is much more gay, pleasant:

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I, for my part, never landed on Calais pier without feeling that a load of sorrows was left on the other side of the water; and have always fancied that black care stepped on board the steamer, along with the custom-house officers, at Gravesend, and accompanied one to yonder black louring towers of London--so busy, so dismal, and so vast. (34)

he opening sketch, "An Invasion of France," notes how bright and lively Parisian street scenes are in comparison to those of London. The volume's third article, "The Fetes of July," takes up this theme, praising the gay and pleasing manner of the common Parisians during the celebration of a national holiday. And repeatedly Titmarsh comments on the openness of French life--and the release it gives from the narrow restrictions, gloomy climate, even poorish manners of English existence, for in Paris "there is a thousand times more life and colour" (13).

The other major positive theme of The Paris Sketch Book is a sincere appreciation of the French attitude toward art. Thackeray himself often noted how little prestige was awarded the English artist (in either literature or painting), but this is not the case in France, especially Paris. While Titmarsh can be critical of Gallic art, he commends the French people for their good treatment of artists and their sincere interest in art. For example, "On the French School of Painting" begins with a laudatory sketch on the generally delightful existence of the aspiring young artist ("This country is surely the paradise of painters and penny-a-liners" (58-9)); the article "Caricatures and Lithography in Paris" develops an extended

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As a social critic, then, Titmarsh views France as a more uninhibited, flexible nation than England--a nation with more immorality partly because it has more freedom, more folly because it allows for the liberty to blunder. As an artist, he welcomes this freedom; as a moral and middle-class Briton, he is shocked by it. The tension between those two poles of thought occasions most of the book's analysis of France.

If Titmarsh's attitude is somewhat ambiguous, so the quality of his commentary is decidedly mixed. In other books, Thackeray would condemn John Bull--the insolent British traveler who considered foreign nations as contemptible, foreign people as inferiors. Unfortunately, in this early work, Titmarsh's views of France are at times sullish. In other words, his criticisms occasionally go beyond reasonable balance and seem the peevish display of insular bigotries. Other critics have felt the same way,<sup>18</sup> and for support of this view, one need only look at some of the statements quoted above--the "rant, tinsel, and stage-play" passage, for example. In sections like those, he abandons the role of witty, charming observer and becomes an arrogant proclaimer of the Law, a visitor whose outlook is provincial, whose truth is prejudice.

In his John Bull guise, Titmarsh is intolerant of French customs (such as the fetes of July); of the Catholic



religion (he attacks "this absurd humbug, called the Catholic or Christian art" (68) in one article, the resurgence of Catholic religious practice in another); of the last Bourbon monarchy (Louis XVI "is said to have been such a smart journeyman blacksmith, that he might, if Fate had not perversely put a crown on his head, have earned a couple of louis every week by the making of locks and keys") (412); and in many ways, about French art. How foolishly they run things on the other side of the Channel, seems to say--let us sneer at them.

But that is only part of the truth, for as John Addams very accurately comments: "Here Thackeray is a strange blend of British insularity and cosmopolitan tolerance . . . He shares the ineffable British feeling of superiority to the rest of the world, but not infrequently is aware of his prejudices . . ." <sup>19</sup> And in many ways he is a keen, penetrating--and flattering--observer of the French. He shrewdly applauds French skill in caricature in one article, and compliments the gay manners of the common people in another; he dedicates the volume to M. Titmarsh, a Parisian tailor who won Thackeray's esteem for generosity. Further, many of his attacks on French culture are justified, and while Titmarsh might be very zealous in searching for examples of "humbug" (a favorite word), he certainly found valid examples of it and many of the negative statements are not outgrowths of provincialism

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If the narrator of The Paris Sketch Book bears considerable investigation, so does the work's method of presentation. Faced with the complexity and difficulty of understanding French life, Thackeray breaks away from a monolithic and empirical narrative and relates his experience and vision of France in nineteen discrete segments. The book should be considered an attempt by a writer to give his responses to and understanding of a foreign culture and people by a kaleidoscopic, perspectivist method. The narrator of the work presents his comprehension of France based on years of residence there, and instead of recording impressions based on physical sensations gleaned during a short stay. Although many physical descriptions appear in the volume, Thackeray is ultimately trying to capture the mood, the "feel" of a foreign land.

To capture this mood, Thackeray approaches France through its culture and people, not through its buildings or geography. This is foreshadowed in the words of an early letter:

There are plenty of dry descriptions of public buildings, pictures views armories & so forth-- but the People of Germany are not known in England, & the more I learn of them the more interesting they appear to me--Customs, & costumes--and National Songs, stories &c with which the country abounds. (Letters, I, 147-8)

Later, Thackeray was to do this for the people of France, largely avoiding "dry descriptions" of the outward

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ask of a nation and focusing on the inner spirit as it appears in folkways. To grasp this inner spirit, Titmarsh immerses himself in the country's art forms--popular fiction, stage plays, painting, caricatures and lithography (all popular forms in France)--and devotes an article to each of them. The article "On Some French Fashionable Novels" contains Thackeray's justification for approaching a nation through popular art forms--of the French novels he admits "that we borrow from these stories a great deal of knowledge of French society than from our own personal observation" (117). In this way, Titmarsh is separating himself from a strictly empirical mode of travel writing and viewing France ("dry description," "personal observation") and shows a willingness to deal with that nation through imaginative works.

This attitude also explains the inclusion of many of these stories, some of them "copies" of French originals, in this book. "On Some French Fashionable Novels" commences with a lengthy contrast of real and sham histories (the former being novels), arguing that the "real histories . . . in fact, mere contemptible catalogues of names and dates . . ." (115). Like other imaginative artists before him, Titmarsh believes empirical history cannot render the life of a nation or an age as well as fictional "history"--as Dickens's Pickwick Papers "gives us a better idea of the manners and ways of the people than one could gather from more pompous or authentic histories" (119). If

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fictional history can be superior to empirical history, so "fictional" travel writing--works of imagination about the country and people visited--has its advantages over strictly factual travel accounts.

The inclusion of short stories sets this travel book apart from most others in terms of method. Their appearance in The Paris Sketch Book is due to the book's development from magazine writing (which featured short fiction), the impact of Irving's Sketchbook, with its blend of short stories, essays, and sketches, and perhaps even Dickens's Pickwick Papers, which freely intersperses tales into the loose narrative. Aside from Irving, fiction was a usual component in travel books, and one must further remember that 1840 marked an early stage in the development of modern short fiction. Thus Thackeray was an early practitioner of this form, and while he was not a major innovator in short fiction, he used it skillfully in his travel writing, welding fiction to penetrating social comment. An analysis of one of these stories, "A Caution to Travellers," is an example of how Thackeray's fictional method develops insights into French life and culture.

The plot of the story is simple. Sam Pogson, a commercial traveler and friend of Titmarsh, visits France for the first time. Arriving in Calais, he meets a "Gypsy" de Florval-Delval--and, enchanted with the woman, travels to Paris with her. There, he falls in with the woman's husband and Tom Ringwood, son of a lord, and is

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rilled with the friendship of "nobility." Then, one night, Pogson is swindled of over six hundred pounds when gambling with those friends and gives them IOU's for that amount. Pogson cannot pay, so he turns to Titmarsh, and Titmarsh enlists the aid of one Major British, a retired military man. British confronts the swindlers and makes Magwood return the IOU's to Pogson.

Thackeray cleverly turns this simple story into a tale of British culture confronting the French. The characters are clearly meant to represent whole classes of people. For example, Sam Pogson is described as "a young fellow, not much worse, although perhaps a little weaker and simpler than his neighbours" who visits "Paris with exactly the same notions that bring many others of the British youth to that capital" (18). Of Major British, he mentions "there are many likenesses now scattered over the continent of Europe" (34), and, of course, his surname indicates he is to be considered a symbol.

Through Pogson, the typical young Briton, Thackeray gives flesh to many traits of English life and manners. He is in the merchantile business ("a city man"), working hard and very confident of his own abilities. Slavishly admiring the upper class, he is easily contemptuous of foreigners. Being ignorant of foreign life and culture, he believes he is quite knowledgeable about them and comments with ready arrogance--"there was no such thing as good meat in France," "French soldiers are "whipper-snappers" (20). When

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this young man visits France, he immediately confronts a wily older woman who embodies many aspects of French life. The Baroness (actually a former actress on the Boulevard) claims she is thirty, but is actually forty five. She is a worldly woman, attractive, colorfully dressed, charming, shrewd--also deceitful and immoral. Representative of "a greater number of native and exotic swindlers than are to be found in any other European capital" (18), the Baroness easily manipulates the youthful merchant with her art as an actress.

The first half of the story, then, might be read as English innocence waylaid and seduced by French experience, a clever swindle that is made possible by blind British confidence and sly French charm. Into this equation enters the story's third central figure, Major British. It is the retired officer who eventually saves his countryman and defeats the crafty Frenchwoman (with her British ally). Further, it is Major British who is clearly intended to reflect a mixture of English and Continental cultures. "He passed eight months a year, regularly, abroad" (34) and is thus conversant with France and its people. While he has maintained many British characteristics--national pride, love of rank--he is also a worldly, sophisticated man who is supremely capable of dealing with the French on their own terms. Major British, although far from perfect, represents a strong combination of British level-headedness and confidence with French polish and cleverness.

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"A Caution to Travellers" should not be read as a simple allegory. Still, treating the wider meanings of its characters reveals a good deal about Thackeray's method in the Paris Sketch Book. Using fictional incident and characters, he is able to expand them to make statements on culture, giving the reader both the pleasures of lively fiction and the insights of social analysis. A parallel process is at work in "Meditations at Versailles," where Thackeray takes a historical figure (Louis XIV) and carefully develops him as French folly incarnate. There, as elsewhere, Thackeray's art and imagination transform rather than merely record, presenting the wider significance of a person or event instead of simply and accurately describing it. By expansion of meaning, the separate event is viewed in cultural terms rather than as a discrete, unique happening; it is portrayed in terms of its "Frenchness."

This technique of expansion, of investing things with wider meaning, is only part of Thackeray's method in this book. For example, he frequently does employ straightforward description, relating scenes and customs to convey local color rather than symbolic overtones; the opening sections of "Meditations at Versailles" and "An Invasion of France" are instances of this, and throughout the work are scattered brief, insightful mentions of French customs and scenery. In other words, at times the reader is presented France directly, with Thackeray acting as a recorder, or a journalist.

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Another method employed in the work is the kaleidoscopic approach, an attempt to capture the richness of France through many different perspectives and moods. From the angles of folk tales, political analysis, social commentary, past history, France is revealed in all its glory and venality, beauty and ugliness, wit and knavery. The abundant variety of French culture, indicated in the picture of the frontispiece, arouses mixed emotions in a visitor, and accordingly the work varies in mood from the horror, fear, disgust and anger of some pieces to the humor, wit and sentiment in others. There is the purity and simplicity of Beatrice Merger, the peasant girl to contrast with the cynical immorality of the Baroness; the wisdom of the caricaturists against the pretentiousness of "Catholic art"; the shrewdness of Simon Gambouge, who can trick the devil (in "The Painter's Bartain"), and the utter naivete of little Poinset, victim of the baldest practical jokes. There are nineteen pieces, and the image of France that appears in one might directly contradict that of another-- what Thackeray says of France is what Walt Whitman says of himself: "Do I contradict myself?/Very well then I contradict myself,/(I am large, I contain multitudes)". The Paris Sketch Book acts as a prism, breaking a complexity into less complex fragments.

The Paris Sketch Book has a "framework" structure-- opening and closing pieces draw rough boundaries around intervening segments. The curtain-raising sketch, "An

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Invasion of France," very clearly celebrates an initiation rite--the naive and gullible Briton being introduced to French culture, the visitor contacting the foreign land, which is the basis of all travel literature. The final segment of the volume, "Meditations at Versailles," adopts an entirely different tone, for it speaks in the voice of a person very familiar with France, lamenting, for example, changes in French transportation over the years. The naïf has become a sophisticate, and accordingly explores the zenith of the Ancient Regime--the rule and residence of Louis XIV. The work thus moves from introduction to comprehension, from workaday France to majestic France (although Thackeray certainly questions the "majesty" of the Sun King).

The Paris Sketch Book's unity is a loose one; it must be ultimately regarded as a mosaic of uneven and unequal pieces. The stories are decidedly mixed in quality, ranging from raw and weak apprentice work ("A Devil's Wager") to the polished play of style and keen observation ("A Caution to Travellers") that was the mark of the author of Vanity Fair.<sup>20</sup> The attitude and presence of the narrator varies from sketch to sketch, from the highly intrusive and chatty Titmarsh who speaks directly to the reader, to a narrator who largely recedes into the background. Even the tradition of travel literature it arises from is hard to pinpoint. There are elements of the romantic in some of the tales which are marked with Gothic overtones; the

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manistic element is strong in his treatment of French popular art; the personal mode comes into play in the pieces where Titmarsh freely offers his opinions on aspects of French life.

In conclusion, Thackeray's first travel work must be considered an experimental effort. He was not even bound by ideas he had previously articulated in travel book reviews, developing his own work along different avenues than many of his criticisms might suggest. But there are clear continuities from those reviews, especially the establishment of a narrator (Titmarsh), his domination of many pieces through his personality and distinctive style of vision, and his "companionable" nature. Thus, as the reviews portend, Thackeray's work is subjectively narrated rather than objectively presented, and his art transforms France rather than recording it.

#### The Irish Sketch Book

Thackeray's second travel book was published in March, 1843; like its predecessor, it had been planned for years before it was eventually published. The writer first mentioned his new project in a letter to the publishers Chapman and Hall in a September, 1840, message, "I propose to publish a couple of volumes called Titmarsh in Ireland, of the size and somewhat of the nature of my Paris Book, and I shall be glad to make arrangements with you . . ." (Letters, I, 470). Ironically, Thackeray noted later in

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the letter: "Unless illness or any domestic calamity sh<sup>d</sup> intervene I propose to deliver the work to you before the 31 December." Ironical, because his wife Isabelle went insane during the passage to Ireland, and delayed the work's completion.

The writer's second visit to Ireland lasted from the first week of July, 1842, until November 1. While he traveled he was composing The Irish Sketch Book; after two months he wrote from Dublin: ". . . I will make quick work through the north of Ireland and complete the book at home--I have a volume written within a score of pages: and material for some more" (Letters, II, 74). This method of composition, one akin to maintaining a daily journal, gave an immediacy to his writing, a concern with capturing vivid impressions. "Unless in going through the country I write of it the next day I find it is not near so well done--so much for all infamous memory" (Letters, II, 76). Further, scenery and cities were approached with the very deliberate intention of writing about them for a travel book; of the Giant's Causeway, Thackeray says: "It will make a capital chapter though, and that's something" (Letters, II, 85).

So in spite of the similarity in title and an early claim that the Irish book would be "somewhat of the nature" of his Paris work, Thackeray's first two travel books have different backgrounds. The first was written over years, in non-sequential segments, and was based on long residence in France; the second was composed over a period of months

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s a consecutive narrative, based on a four month journey through the country. The deceptive verbal echo of the titles<sup>21</sup> should be qualified by the fact that Thackeray had proposed two other tentative designations: "Titmarsh in Ireland" as mentioned in the 1840 letter, and later "The Cockney in Ireland" which was changed "through the pathetic remonstrances of the publishers" (Letters, II, 106).

The two discarded titles are really more accurate indicators of the major thrust of the work than its given name--for whether it is "Titmarsh" or "The Cockney," the book's main interest is the narrator. Gordon Ray has observed that the reader of The Irish Sketch Book "is far more interested in the narrator than in what the narrator describes"; and George Saintsbury admits that "it is a book of travels and one of the best," but goes on to contend "it is also a kind of novel, or at least biography, with its author for hero."<sup>22</sup>

In several passages, Thackeray confirms this bias, making it clear that Ireland is being presented through the opinion and personality of his Titmarsh. At one point he explains:

Well, this is no description of Shannon, as you have no need to be told . . . All that one can hope to do is, to give a sort of notion of the movement and manners of the people; pretending by no means to offer a description of places, but simply an account of what one sees in them . . .<sup>23</sup>

After he re-emphasizes this point: "This is not a description of the Giant's Causeway . . . but of a Londoner there . . ." (425).

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If The Paris Sketch Book shows similarities to Irving's work, Thackeray's Irish Sketch Book, particularly in its treatment of the narrator, has echoes of Sterne's Sentimental Journey. Saintsbury acknowledges the similarity between the two works,<sup>24</sup> and there are other links between the two writers. Thackeray often alluded to Sterne in his writings, and the relationship was love-hate--"I think how I admire, dislike, and have abused him" (Works, XXVII, 347). Although he violently denounced Sterne's "immorality" in English Humourists of the Eighteenth Century, he later wrote a charming Roundabout Paper entitled "Dessein's" in which he conducts a dialogue with Sterne's ghost (Dessein's being the Calais inn where Sentimental Journey begins). Thackeray's prose style has been considered in debt to Sterne's.<sup>25</sup> In terms of their travel literature, the question of indebtedness is a slippery one, but the problem of similarity and parallelism is not. In both works, the narrator is the center of interest; he is intrusive and establishes a direct relationship with the reader; he treats events that interest him instead of the traditional travel itinerary; he makes the clear the country he pictures is colored by his own personality. And it is a statement Sterne makes in Tristram Shandy that is reflected, in part, in Thackeray's use of Titmarsh in the Irish narrative:

I have undertaken, you see, to write not only my life, but my opinions, also: hoping and expecting that your knowledge of my character, and of what kind of mortal I am, by the one, would give you a better relish for the other.<sup>26</sup>

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terne is talking here about "my life," about biography; and Thackeray is interested in "travel experience," in travel literature. Thackeray wants to interest the reader not only in his travel experiences, but in his opinions about them, so that an interest in one "would give you a better relish for the other."

Sterne wrote in the personal mode of travel literature, and that, in the main, is the path Thackeray follows in The Irish Sketch Book. Unlike the sometimes elusive narrator of the Paris sketches, Thackeray takes pains to establish the centrality of Michael Angelo Titmarsh in his Irish ramblings, the narrator being of vital importance to the personal mode. And the narrator here is an unblushing cockney (the word appears several times in the text): Irish, urban, Protestant and proud of being all three. His personality is largely similar to the Titmarsh of the Paris book--Thackeray's narrative mask is thus setting into firm mold. The Irish Titmarsh is opinionated, and gives his opinions with surpassing bluntness; yet he strives for impartial air at many junctures (e.g., "The people, though dirtier and more ragged, seem certainly happier than those in London" (472)). He has a keen eye for the ridiculous and is quick to pounce on it, as when he examines Irish newspapers in the first chapter; but he also has great appreciation of beauty and a reverent attitude toward it. Most of all, he is full of talk, a raconteur apt at charming surprises and fresh insights. Thackeray's

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critical premises of the need for an angle of vision and the need for a "companion" are realized in his Titmarsh: the angle of vision of a London Protestant strikes sharply against the Irish grain and is sure to produce interesting perspectives, and the personality of Titmarsh is that of a supremely entertaining and interesting fellow journeyer.

In broader terms, the outlook Titmarsh embodies in the Irish sketches is that of the "marginal man"--the observer of a culture or nation who can stand both in and outside of it, holding a double perspective. This is key-noted in the first chapter, where Titmarsh is examining the Irish newspapers:

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 . . . 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? (11)

Since 1800, Irish members had sat in Parliament, and Ireland was part of England politically. (Indeed, Thackeray's wife was Irish.) But while Titmarsh understands the language and institutions of "your own country," there is a shock of non-recognition at the people and their culture--the detachment of a person encountering a totally foreign land. Titmarsh visits Irish homes, delights in Irish pastimes, reads Irish literature, but he remains a sojourner who comments on the culture from a viewpoint developed outside

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The double focus implicit in Titmarsh's viewpoint assures continual comparison between England and Ireland, and a good deal of flexibility and sensitivity, for the "marginal man" is generally cosmopolitan in outlook. Accordingly, he compliments the Irish on their "heartiness and affection" (112) and their "brightness and intelligence" in crowds (168-9) as opposed to their neighbors across the Channel; throughout the work he makes other judicious and balanced statements about the two cultures that shed light on both of them. Thackeray himself was, especially in his earlier years, a participant in two English-speaking cultures: English and Anglo-Indian.

But the marginal man gives way to John Bull, and the British, Protestant and urban viewpoint Titmarsh largely expresses can be often intolerant. Catholicism repeatedly aroused his ire--at times he treats it as a strange, alien creed, almost like Voodoo in its mysteries. After visiting a convent, he exclaims: "I think . . . we have as much right to permit Sutteeism in India as to allow nuns in the United Kingdom to take these wicked vows . . ." (11). His religious views are also harsh toward a Quaker "monkery" set up close to Carlow--"We may soon get a community of Fakeers and howling Dervishes into the country" (70) he quips. Hard words like those are not restricted to religion in Ireland, but extend to folk manners, customs, and politics. In them, we see the steely glint of the vulgar provincialism that appeared in the pages of The Sketch Book.

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Thackeray uses his idiosyncratic narrator to present Ireland because straightforward descriptive accounts are already in the guidebooks. He does not offer a description of places, but simply an account of what one sees in them" because:

if any traveller after staying two days in Limerick should think fit to present the reader with forty or fifty pages of dissertation . . . upon the state of commerce, religion, education, the public may be pretty well sure that the traveller has been at work among the guidebooks, and filching extracts from the topographical and local works. (190)

another point, his protest is half-comic:

A plague take them! what remains for me to discover after the gallant adventurers in the service of Paternoster Row have examined every rock, lake, and ruin of the district, exhausted it of all its legends . . . (326)

Thackeray centers interest on his narrator not only because guidebooks have exhausted possible discoveries, but because their tactic of precise natural description is defective:

After describing, as accurately as words may, the features of a landscape, and stating that such a mountain was to the left, and such a river or town to the right . . . it has no doubt struck the reader of books of travels that the writer has not given him the slightest idea of the country, and that he would have been just as wise without perusing the letter-press landscape through which he has toiled. (67)

Throughout the work, Thackeray carries on a running dialogue with the Irish guidebooks, openly quoting their description of an area, and then making comments on his own. The limited, lumbering style of the quoted works contrasts sharply with Thackeray's sprightly, alert prose, and this contrast is made deliberately. The clear implication is

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that while a guidebook-descriptive approach can picture the country accurately, it cannot bring it to life, to vivid focus; but the narrator, in revealing how the outward reality impinges on his consciousness, makes it a living reality available to the reader.

Chapter 10 of The Irish Sketch Book can serve as a good example (there are many others) of Titmarsh at work, how he proceeds, how he swallows Ireland up in the penumbra of his personality. The title of the Chapter is "From Loughgariff to Killarney," and the real topic is not Ireland between the two cities, but Titmarsh. To begin with, he is a self-conscious narrator who makes it clear that he is introducing the book the reader is perusing (e.g., "Amen, and may every single person who buys a copy of this book meet with the same deserved fate" (149)). This in itself calls attention away from Ireland and to the narrator.

The Chapter commences with a coachride from Loughgariff to Kenmare. Instead of describing the countryside along the way in objective, precise terms, Titmarsh presents it as it strikes his sensibility, as a blur of impressions to the traveler on a moving coach: "Rock, wood and sea stretch around the traveller--a thousand delightful pictures: the landscape is at first wild without being fierce, dense woods and plantations enriching the valleys--beautiful streams to be seen everywhere" (144). Then he turns to describing his fellow travelers on the coach, and makes only brief mention to Kenmare when they arrive there.

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only what strikes and impresses Titmarsh is rendered--he mentions that "a splendid luncheon of all sorts of meat and excellent cold salmon may sometimes be had for a shilling" at the Kenmare hotel (146), and that trivial detail carries more narrative weight with him than the city itself. The Irish universe spins around Titmarsh's person.

Because he writes about what appeals to him, there is little system to the narrative. He feels free to digress when he pleases ("here would be a good opportunity to enter into a dissertation upon national characteristics" (151) notes, and promptly seizes the chance), and to slide forward or backward in time. One can go back, of course, and draw a rough itinerary of this journey from Glengariff to Killarney, and there itemize what Titmarsh did and what he saw. But that would only depict what occasioned the chapter, and not explain the chapter itself. The real content of Chapter 10 (and of the entire book) is not so much what Titmarsh did and saw in Ireland, as his own musings about those actions and sights.

Those musings are everywhere apparent in the chapter--in the narrator's literary, musical and historical allusions, in his interjections into the flow of the narrative, in the philosophical generalizations he makes. The reader is shown Ireland, but mainly told about it, and his response must be conditioned by the response that Titmarsh makes. The narrator will take a sight like "the famous lake and the blue mountains about Killarney" and then give his own

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reactions to it--"I think of that diabolical tune in "Der Freischutz" . . ." (148); he repeats this pattern so often that the reality of Ireland and Titmarsh's response to it blur into a single shade.

Thackeray also has a structural purpose for his Titmarsh. In The Paris Sketch Book, the panoramic effect desired by the use of nineteen different perspectives gives a strong appearance of disunity to the work--on the surface, a series of pieces rather than a whole. But in his second travel work, Thackeray enlists his narrator to give a panoramic view of Ireland while giving a certain unity to it all. For the narrator travels throughout Ireland and reports on almost every aspect of Irish life, depicting town and countryside, north and south, public and private life. Through his mobility, the reader can see agricultural shows, horse races, the insides of convents and colleges and schools, the beautiful scenery of the countryside, the politics and business of the cities. The Irish people too, in their relationships with the traveler, are dramatically brought into focus, like the Ursuline nun of the Blackrock convent or the Vicar of Dundalk. The artist's hand is behind all this, carefully selecting details and avoiding (as much as possible) repetition, so that the panorama has a thoroughness--an unobtrusive thoroughness. Speaking of a coach-house, Titmarsh jokes: Several of the arch-stones are removed, and the whole edifice is about as rambling and disorderly as--as the

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arrangement of this book, say" (114). This statement is a rifle deceptive: while the book might superficially appear as a casual, unstructured journal of a four month sojourn in Ireland, it actually proceeds with controlling purpose and selective art.

There is another reason why the narrator is dominant and central in this work--it is because Thackeray wishes to emphasize the process of travel. Many travel writers, particularly of the humanistic mode, emphasize the products of travel--the understanding of the land gained by visiting it, the insights into customs and manners, the carefully drawn descriptive sequences. The process of travel itself--the coach rides, the stays at inns, the mundane realities of living out of a portmanteau--is seen as a means to those products. The general emphasis on product over process has its exceptions: the Sentimental Journey of Sterne is a clear example<sup>27</sup> and there are works, where the process is unusual or exciting (e.g., riding on camel, being robbed on the highway). And in the Irish sketch, the realities of daily travel fall into sharp focus and are given considerable space: the rudeness of three English travelers in a Glengariff inn, the tedium of a rainy evening in Galway, a conversation with a Temperance woman on the route to Blackrock. These unspectacular happenings, along with many others like them, are as much the backbone of The Irish Sketch Book as descriptions of Dublin and Belfast.

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John Dodds notes of the work: "If it is more monotonous than the later Cornhill to Cairo, it is perhaps through the repetition of much the same kind of scene in the various towns and counties."<sup>28</sup> There is a tedium in the work, and it is related to the emphasis on process. For there is the tedium of travel--the long dull coach rides through dull towns, the monotony of viewing scores of drab villages. The occasional boredom involved in the process of travel was an important part of the narrator's Irish experience, an aspect he conveys to the reader in long blocks of repetitious sequences.

Thus, while Thackeray employs his Titmarsh as a companion, and as a conduit of information, he also uses him as a character in the work--an individual who is undergoing the process of travel. Through identification with this first-person narrator, the reader vicariously understands the moods, experiences and emotions that travel itself elicits. On the journey from Glengariff to Killarney, for example, Titmarsh tells of the jovial companionship of the coach, the dangers of falling off it, an evening of whiskey and cigars in his lodgings, and these are granted almost as much space and attention as his observations of the mare and Killarney. Ultimately, Thackeray's point is that the growth and understanding gained by travel itself (the process) are of sure value and on par with that gained by seeing Ireland and its culture. This use of Titmarsh enhances the reader's vision: he sees not only Ireland,

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but the process that leads to the vision of Ireland. Instead of passively observing a series of scenes presented to him by the narrator, the reader vicariously participates in the making of those scenes.

I have dwelt on the narrator of this book for a simple reason--that, to a great extent, Titmarsh is the Irish Sketch Book, and his observations are its subject matter; his prejudices, its themes; his moods, its tone. All discussion must begin with this ubiquitous figure whose presence suffuses every page, this dominant figure who calls attention to himself like Gulliver in Lilliput. I have said in Chapter II that travel literature stands somewhere between the autobiography and the essay as a literary form. The powerful tug of Titmarsh's person forces the Irish book to oscillate between those two poles. With its generous attention to detailed itinerary and specific names and places, the book swings toward autobiography, and Thackeray reinforces this notion by calling Titmarsh his "travelling-tittle" (vii). With author and narrative mask virtually identical, the book can be largely read as an account of Thackeray's stay in Ireland from July to November, 1842. While autobiography is a record of one's actions, the personal essay is a chronicle of one's thoughts, and this is the other direction Titmarsh leads to. Spicing the book with numerous one- and two-page vignettes on topics ranging from national characteristics (151-2) to English management of Ireland (317-8) to education (451). In the essay,

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Titmarsh uses the technique of expansion so prominent in "A Caution to Travellers," seizing an observable fact and then erecting a superstructure of thought and opinion atop it. In their own ways, then, autobiography and essay lead the travel work from focus on the observed to the observer; and this is both the intent and result of Thackeray's work in The Irish Sketch Book. But there is more to the work than this narrator, and for the balance of this essay, we will turn from the teller to the tale, from Titmarsh to the organization, patterns and themes of this travel narrative.

The book's organization is chronological and geographical, divided into thirty-two chapters labelled by single cities (Chapter VII is "Cork") or a group along a travel route (Chapter XIII is "Tralee--Listowel--Tarbert"). Dublin appears three times in the book: in the first chapter, in Chapter XXII, and in the concluding chapter. Its appearance in Chapter XXII marks the divide between the first two-thirds of the journey, taken in southern Ireland, and the final third, which explores the northern part of the island. The split has thematic significance, to be discussed later.

Organization by place and time is logical in a work that proclaims itself a "journal" (412), and indeed, there are other clear outgrowths from the book's genesis in daily chronicle form. As a journal, the book embraces a wealth of precise, sharp detail that was recorded when memory was

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fresh and uncluttered, as the picture of "a great, wide, blank, bleak water-whipped square" beneath Titmarsh's window in Galway. Pictures like this give the travel book a spontaneity, a vivid immediacy that a summarizing narrative would not have. But it seems to pay the price for this exactness by its loose, disconnected, repetitious format. Strictly speaking, a journal is a series of daily narratives, bound together loosely by the flow of time rather than cause and effect; hence, a certain formlessness that a retrospective, summarizing narrative should not have. This was what Thackeray had in mind when he called his book "rambling and disorderly." Further, a summarizing narrative prunes away repetition, but a journal begins on page one many times; thus Titmarsh's admissions that "I think this sentiment has been repeated a score of times" (12) or even "for the hundred and fiftieth time" (282).

The journal format is adhered to with a pair of exceptions. The first is found in Chapters XV and XVI, almost the exact midpoint of the volume, where Titmarsh devotes almost sixty pages to quoting and commenting on the books of Irish popular fiction. Dubbed Galway Nights' entertainments, the tales and plays are clearly an interlude, an island of fiction in a sea of empirical fact. The second break in the prose narrative occurs in Chapter XXX, where fifteen stanzas of light, humorous verse are devoted to an Irish maid named Peg of Limavaddy. Both of these artures serve well as pleasant diversions from the formlessness that the journal form can foster.



On the book's final pages, Titmarsh acknowledges that his journal's "aim . . . was to look at the manners and scenery of the country" (476). Scenery is here given a prominent position, one that is fully merited by its importance in the entire work. For while the personal mode of travel literature certainly dominates The Irish Sketch Book, very strong elements of the picturesque mode are evident also. As mentioned in Chapter II, the picturesque mode approaches, and then describes, natural scenery in terms of landscape painting--composition, perspective, use of light and shade, etc. Moreover, the impulse of picturesque travel literature is primarily aesthetic rather than religious or philosophical--nature is approached with the critical (and appreciative) eye of an art connoisseur rather than the reverential perceptions of a Wordsworth.

In addition to his training as a painter, Thackeray had written several articles of art criticism for Fraser's Magazine ("On the French School of Painting" was one, which subsequently appeared in The Paris Sketch Book) and other periodicals. From references in his works, it is obvious that he was familiar with landscape painters Claude Lorrain, Karel Dujardin and others. The relationship between Thackeray's knowledge of painting and his prose descriptions has not been widely examined in previous criticism, but the Irish work makes it clear that such a relationship does exist. For example, at Glengariff he

self-consciously slips into picturesque natural description:

the yacht, island and castle looked as if they had been washed against the flat gray sky in Indian-ink . . . at a few hundred yards most of the objects were enveloped in mist; but even this, for a lover of the picturesque, had its beautiful effect, for you saw hills in the foreground pretty clear, and covered with their wonderful green, while immediately behind them rose an immense blue mass of mist and mountain that served to relieve (to use the painter's phrase) the nearer objects.  
(138)

Of all Thackeray's works, this might be the one most concerned with natural scenery, and throughout he waxes enthusiastic over the Irish landscape. In Cornhill to Cairo, his view of nature stirs religious longings, but in the Irish travels it leads him to draw sketches with his pen and pencil--to put a frame around nature and present it to his reader. Like the description quoted above, Thackeray frequently attempts landscape paintings in words, using the printed page as a canvas to group objects, describe vivid colors, discuss foregrounds and vistas. Although Thackeray admits more than once that "it is vain to attempt to describe natural beauties" (349), his descriptions of Westport and the road from Inniskerry to Bray are monuments to this "vanity." In spite of his doubts about the value of careful outward description in travel literature, he nevertheless turned to the pictorial landscape mode when confronted (and by his account, overwhelmed) with Irish scenery.

This picturesque mode must be considered part of the "multi-media" approach that Thackeray employs in his work as he did its predecessor. As in The Paris Sketch Book, he uses both pen and pencil sketches, and writes in different literary forms--prose, poetry--and he even quotes parts of an Irish play. Over thirty drawings are spread throughout the book, and repeated references in the text to the drawings make it clear that they are integral parts of the work, not afterthoughts or mere embellishments. As expressive art, they make "statements" of their own which substantially enrich the entire work: as, for example, the picture of the Waterford courthouse on page 65, which deftly comments on four people involved in the court proceedings; or the sharply critical drawing on page 182, which attacks a Roman Catholic religious celebration in Tralee. Perhaps Titmarsh turns to drawing because he feels that words are inadequate in pictorial description--a complaint that rings throughout the book in passages like: "what is the use of putting down all this? A man might describe the cataract of the Serpentine in exactly the same terms, and the reader be no wiser" (175). So where words fail, or where impulse demands, Titmarsh is ready to draw.

Another artistic pattern Titmarsh uses to good effect in the volume is his technique of expansion--of developing a simple empirical observation into a broad comment on culture. He does this overtly in the first



chapter, when, after observing a window of a Dublin inn propped up with a broom, he humorously comments:

Is it prejudice that makes one prefer the English window, that relies on its own ropes and ballast (or lead if you like) and does not need to be propped by any foreign aid? or is this only a solitary instance of the kind, and are there no other specimens in Ireland of the careless, dangerous, extravagant hearth-broom system? (25)

Titmarsh embeds his values, opinions, insights about Ireland in his rendering of scenes and incidents of daily life, often in a more subtle manner than the "hearth-broom" passage, but generally quite explicitly. This technique might be called symbolic or allegorical, and that would be true to a point. But the real essence of expansion is not the stark presentation of the symbolic person or event, but of Titmarsh's careful cultivation of it through his commentary so that it acquires additional meanings only through his statements. When he visits the Ursuline convent in Blackrock, he shows the reader the constrictions of convent life in the routine of the nuns there, and then goes on to directly comment on "that infernal, wicked, unnatural altar" (99), to develop its significance through overt judgements, and to conclude with:

I came out of the place quite sick; and looking before me,--there, thank God! was the blue spire of Monkstown church soaring up into the free sky--a river in front rolling away to the sea--liberty, sunshine, all sorts of glad life and motion round about . . . (100)

The reader, then, is always aware of Thackeray's expansion, always knows what he is about. Indeed, at one point Titmarsh feels it necessary to warn the reader he is not



expanding: "Let the above passage . . . simply be understood to say, that on a certain day the writer met a vulgar little Scotchman--not that all Scotchmen are vulgar . . ." (151).

Both the "multi-media" and expansion techniques were used in The Paris Sketch Book, along with the use of thematic motifs that connected and related the different pieces. Thackeray appropriates this latter method for his Irish book, giving some unity to what might have been a formless empirical narrative by employing a series of contrasts and polarities that shape his vision of Ireland. He sees that country divided into opposing camps, for "to have 'an opinion about Ireland,' one must begin by getting at the truth; and where is it to be had in the country? Or rather, there are two truths, the Catholic truth and the Protestant truth. The two parties do not see things with the same eyes" (476). The contrast between Catholic southern Ireland and Protestant northern Ireland runs throughout the work, and is the basis for many of its observations.

The bulk of Titmarsh's travels are in the southern area, and he perceives it paradoxically: a place where people are "starving yet healthy" (35), "poor yet cheerful" (34), "rosy in their rags" (314) with their "forlorn gaiety" (312). Time and time again he writes of hordes of beggars, mired in poverty and rags. The Irish feel this horrible misery should be "laid upon that tyrant of



a sister kingdom," England, but Titmarsh counters that "kings or law don't cause or cure dust and cobwebs, but indolence leaves them to accumulate, and imprudence will not calculate its income, and vanity exaggerates its own powers" (107). Laziness, ignorance and vanity heavily imbue Irish culture, and causes the land's difficulties. Beyond this, there is the disturbing criminality of the country, a motif mentioned in the first chapter, which contains newspaper accounts of violent crimes; developed in a mention of vitriol-throwers of Cork "who are Christians as we are; but interfere with their interests, and they will murder you without pity" (121); repeated in Chapter XVII, devoted to an account of Roundstone petty sessions. At the basis of all these problems, perhaps, is the feeble educational system and religious conflict that saddle the people. Titmarsh peppers his reader with observations of this dirt and hunger and ignorance, and yet--here is the paradox--the people are generally cheerful and bright, their manners pleasant and winning.

The Galway Nights' Entertainment of Chapters XV and XVI is a clever fictional distillation of these themes adumbrated in previous pages. Titmarsh summarizes and quotes directly from some books purchased at Ennis, concentrating mainly on the "Adventures of Mr. James Freeny," the "Battle of Aughrim" and three stories from "The Irish and Hibernian Tales." This large fictional bloc takes up about one-eighth of the entire work and recapitulates

the dishonesty, violence, grandiloquence, and ignorance of the people. One is left with the conclusion that southern Ireland is a cultural wasteland, albeit a cheerful one.

After leaving Dublin in Chapter XXIV, Titmarsh moves northward, eventually crossing into modern day Ulster by Chapter XVII. In this phase of the journey, a new bundle of themes about northern Ireland--setting it sharply apart from the southern section--are articulated. He begins by expanding on a scene at the end of a common near Drogheda:

a score of golden ricks were in the background, the churches in unison, and the people (typified by the corn-ricks) flourishing at the feet of both. May one ever hope to see the day in Ireland when this little landscape allegory shall find a general application? (362)

The prosperity and neatness that "little allegory" implies is fulfilled in northern Ireland. Where the south was tortured by filth, poverty, disease, laziness, the northern town of Newry comes as antithesis and revelation to Titmarsh:

Such a sight of neatness and comfort is exceedingly welcome to an English traveller . . . driving through a plain, bustling clean street, landed at a large plain comfortable inn, where business seems to be done, where there are smart waiters to receive him, and a comfortable warm coffee-room that bears no traces of dilapidation. (389)

In the north, there are several "neat" towns where industry is booming, where the people seem well-dressed and prosperous, where things are orderly and work well. Even the physiognomy of these northerners is different: "sharp and



neat, not broad, lazy, knowing-looking" like the people of the south (394). Northern Ireland reminds Titmarsh of his native England, and his repeated contrast of those two places against the "alien" south structures most of the cultural themes of the book.

Amazed by the contrast between the two Irelands, he asks:

What is the cause of this improvement? Protestantism is, more than one Church-of-England man said to me; but, for Protestantism, would it not be as well to read Scotchism?--meaning thrift, prudence, perserverance, boldness, and common sense: with which qualities any body of men, of any Christian denomination, would no doubt prosper. (395)

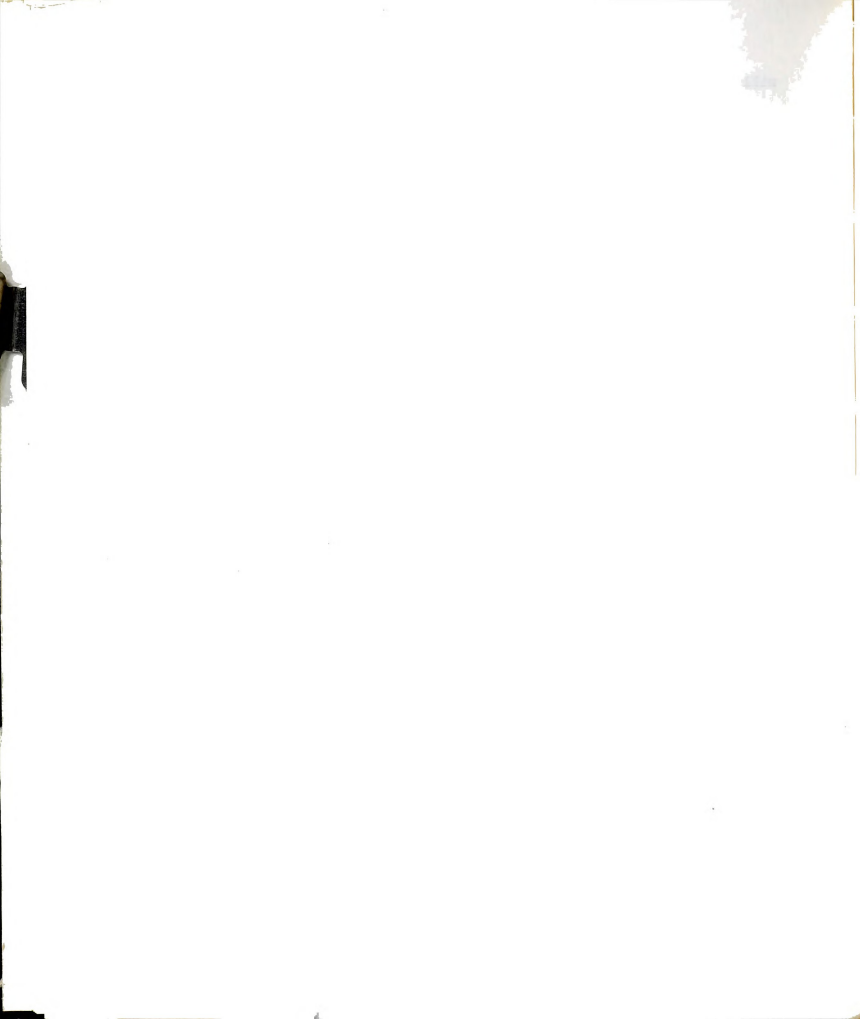
Titmarsh the Protestant parries the original assertion because he is distressed by the religious intolerance that haunts the land, and wishes not to fuel it. Indeed, he feels that "the Protestant of the North is as much priest-ridden as the Catholic of the South" (429) despite his own doctrinal beliefs, and even-handedly condemns the religious bigotry that oppresses both factions.

Writing to his mother at the very end of his tour, Thackeray said: "I have become bitten with a mania for education . . ." (Letters, II, 88). Although the book does not present a "solution" to Ireland's problems of poverty and intolerance, the pictures of Dundalk Infant-School, Dundalk Institution, and Templemoyle School are very suggestive. Their organization, tolerance, eminent good sense would seem to lay the foundation for a better future. As many before and after him, Titmarsh hopes that well-educated future generations

will shuck off benighting traditions, and embrace more civilized values.

But the book's overriding polarity may not be North vs. South, or Protestant vs. Catholic, but the ugliness of human conflict played out against the dazzling beauty of the Irish landscape. The Irish people are damned in the midst of paradise: living often in disease, filth, and poverty against the backdrop of stunning lakes, bays, mountains and cascades that Titmarsh writes of with heated admiration. The picturesque mode celebrates the natural beauties, while many of Titmarsh's loose observations deal with poverty and sectarian warfare; although the contrast between nature and man is never made explicit, it reverberates through scene after scene. The glorious scenery on the road from Ballinahinch to Roundstone, for example, forms a muted, ironic contrast to the inglorious human conduct at the petty sessions in Roundstone. This contrast, along with the others, helps rescue the travel book from the formlessness of simple chronology, and one incident following another without meaning or relationship. Instead, the contrasts serve to connect those incidents on another level aside of chronological--namely, the thematic--and give them the shaping force of an artistic vision.

In conclusion, The Irish Sketch Book has continuities and departures from its predecessor. Like the Paris work, it employs the "multi-media" approach, uses the technique of expansion, is unified by repeated thematic



motifs, and is dominated by roughly the same Titmarshian personality. But instead of employing a perspectivist method, Thackeray relies on a continuous narrative in the Irish book. And the narrator, in his triple role as companion, conduit and character, has a more complex and dominant role than the Parisian Titmarsh did. Because Thackeray follows, in large part, the critical pronouncements of his reviews in the Irish narrative, one feels he is now speaking in his most considered voice as a travel writer.

#### Cornhill to Cairo

Thackeray's last travel work, Notes of a Journey from Cornhill to Grand Cairo, is his finest effort, bearing the stamp of a mature artist who knows what he is about. Published January, 1846, it appeared just one year before the first segment of Vanity Fair reached the public in January, 1847.

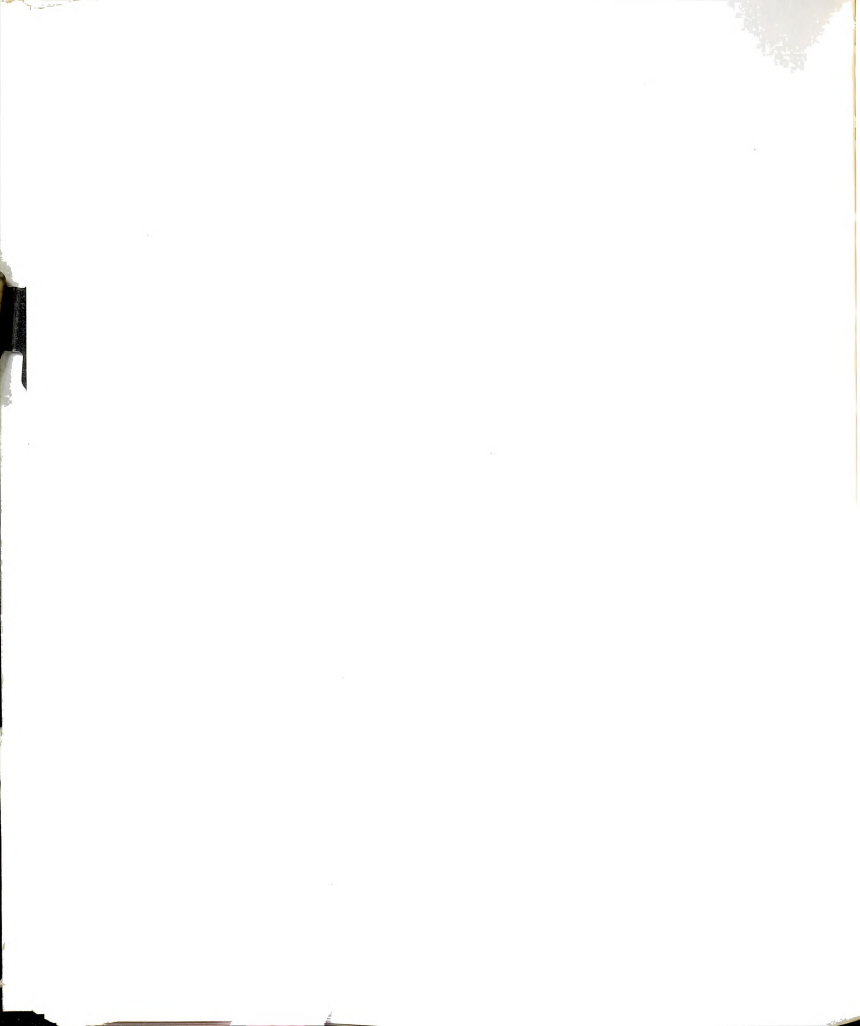
As was mentioned in Chapter I, this book was conceived in a moment of impulse. Attending a dinner on August 20, 1844, Thackeray was offered a free passage on the Peninsular Oriental Company's "Lady Mary Wood" for a voyage to the Middle East. He accepted the offer, and before departing on August 22, he had arranged to write a book about the journey for the publishing firm of Chapman and Hall.



The trip took nine and a half weeks, from August 22 to October 27: Malta, Athens, Smyrna, Constantinople, Jerusalem and Cairo were some of the places visited. As with The Irish Sketch Book, Thackeray composed the book as he traveled, using the long hours of ocean voyage to write his travel book along with his first novel, Barry Lyndon. By January, 1845, he wrote his publishers from Rome: "I hope the Eastern book will be successful--it is all but done" (Letters, II, 185). However close to completion it seemed then, Thackeray was still laboring on the book in July and August, complaining to Charlotte Ritchie "I have been bothering my brain for a fortnight over a chapter about Jerusalem" (Letters, II, 209). Thackeray was paid 200£ for the book; it was finally published fifteen months after the voyage was completed.

The book shouldered its way into a crowded publishing market.<sup>29</sup> Seven years before, Thackeray had noted that accounts of Middle Eastern travels had become commonplace; in 1845 A. W. Kinglake's Eothen and Eliot Warburton's The Crescent and the Cross--two top-notch works--had appeared. Running into such heavy competition, he jokingly sets humble goals for himself; not a "great genius" he says:

This quill was never made to take such flights;  
it comes of the wing of a humble domestic bird,  
who walks a common; who talks a great deal (and  
hisses sometimes); who can't fly far or high, and  
drops always very quickly; and whose unromantic  
end is, to be laid on a Michaelmas or Christmas  
table, and there to be discussed for half-an-hour  
. . .<sup>30</sup>



In brief, Thackeray is falling back on his tested strategy of providing a distinctive angle of vision by "filtering his impressions through the consciousness of an idiosyncratic narrator."<sup>31</sup>

Michael Angelo Titmarsh is that narrator, and he is the same figure that dominates the pages of The Irish Sketch Book. Thackeray wrote that his book would be "on the East . . . or that Cockney part w<sup>h</sup> I shall see" and smiled at "this little cockney voyage" (Letters, II, 176, 180). The Cockney in Ireland has become the Cockney in the Levant, and he freely admits to the perspective he brings to bear:

This, as an account of Cairo . . . you will probably be disposed to consider as incomplete . . . Well, it isn't a good description of Cairo; you are perfectly right. It is England in Egypt. I like to see her with her pluck, enterprise, manliness, bitter ale, and Harvey sauce. (458-9)

Titmarsh's personality--with its humor, wit and bluntness--carries over from the two previous sketch books; and it is clear, at this stage, that Thackeray has grown accustomed to his narrative mask. Likewise, as before, Titmarsh discusses what interests him, based on his English, urban background and his own preoccupations, and offers this as an alternative to the banal indices of major tourist attractions offered by guidebooks and some other travel works. At Athens, for example, Titmarsh first discusses--not the Parthenon--but the brutalities of the classical education he received as an English schoolboy; his account

of the city is colored and prejudiced by past disappointments. Titmarsh admits his viewpoint is limited: "to a skilled antiquarian, or an enthusiastic Greek scholar, the feelings created by a sight of the place of course will be different" (321). But in this limitation is a kind of strength--the reader gets a fresh, frank and piercing view of the Greek capitol. The chapter on Lisbon takes up the same theme in a different way: Titmarsh spends a dreary day visiting the "chief lions of the city" (the major tourist attractions) and then concludes:

Well, it is these state lies and ceremonies that we persist in going to see; whereas a man would have a much better sight into Portugese manners, by planting himself at a corner . . . and watching the real transactions of the day. (276)

And indeed, Titmarsh does plant himself in a corner--that of his British background and distinctive personality--and sees the world from there.

While Titmarsh is the same personality as before and dominates the narrative with that personality, his overall narrative method is somewhat different. Generally, the narrative structure of Cornhill to Cairo is hybrid--an improved strain crossing the "set pieces" of The Paris Sketch Book with the mobile, day-to-day narration of The Irish Sketch Book. The first employs long, stationary viewpoints in discussing French society, and movement--actual travel--is minimal. The second book, concerned as it is with the process of travel itself, is largely kinetic, detailing the traveler's motion through physical space,

and even though there are many pauses when long, stable perspectives are taken, the book's narrative viewpoint is often like that of a moving camera. Further, it is a journal and thus favors immediate, fragmented, rather than summarizing, narrative. Cornhill to Cairo skillfully combines both patterns in its view of the Levant. The long set pieces are chapters that relate stays in cities like Jerusalem and Cairo; in them, the pace slows and Thackeray deliberately explores Eastern lifeways. These reflective segments allow the narrator to penetrate and analyze Eastern culture with anecdote and observation. Between these set pieces are the kinetic parts of the travel work, depicting the movement from city to city, whether by ocean vessel or desert camel, where Titmarsh tells of travel in the East as the set pieces tell of life in the East.

Chapter V, "Athens," is a good example of this narrative method at work. One of the book's set pieces, it smoothly summarizes the thoughts and impressions of his visit there on September 10 and 11. It begins, as is Titmarsh's habit, on a personal note: "Not feeling any enthusiasm myself about Athens, my bounden duty of course is clear, to sneer and laugh heartily at all who have" (313); and the chapter proceeds to tell how Athens relates to Titmarsh and acts upon his consciousness. Accordingly, the early pages of "Athens" begin with his anger at the infelicities of classical education that he suffered as a child. Then he moves into an account of his arrival in

Athens, discussing his movement from harbor to hotel, followed by another essay on classical learning. Finally, there are some reflections on the major Athenian tourist attractions. The progress of his narrative must be considered psychological, moving with the flow of thoughts in Titmarsh's mind, rather than chronological or spatial, that is, depending on movement through time or space. A personal narration: yes; a random, haphazard one: no. Skillfully interwoven into the stream of observations is a reasonably inclusive overview of Athens, presenting the government of Greece and its ruler, a physical description of the people and their dress, a discussion of past history, and a mention of its chief sights for visitors. This overview is effected in Titmarsh's usual manner of evaluating all before him--the "shabbiness of this place" and "yonder dirty, swindling, ragged blackguards" (318)--and directly addressing the reader:

And so, my dear friend, you who have been reading this last page in wonder, and who, instead of a description of Athens, have been accommodated with a lament on the part of the writer . . . excuse this momentary outbreak of egotistical despondency. (323)

Thus the finished product stands somewhere between the informational, objective approach of the guidebook and the subjective method of the personal essay--closer to the latter, but an indication that Titmarsh's set pieces take a bow to the outward description of the humanistic mode.

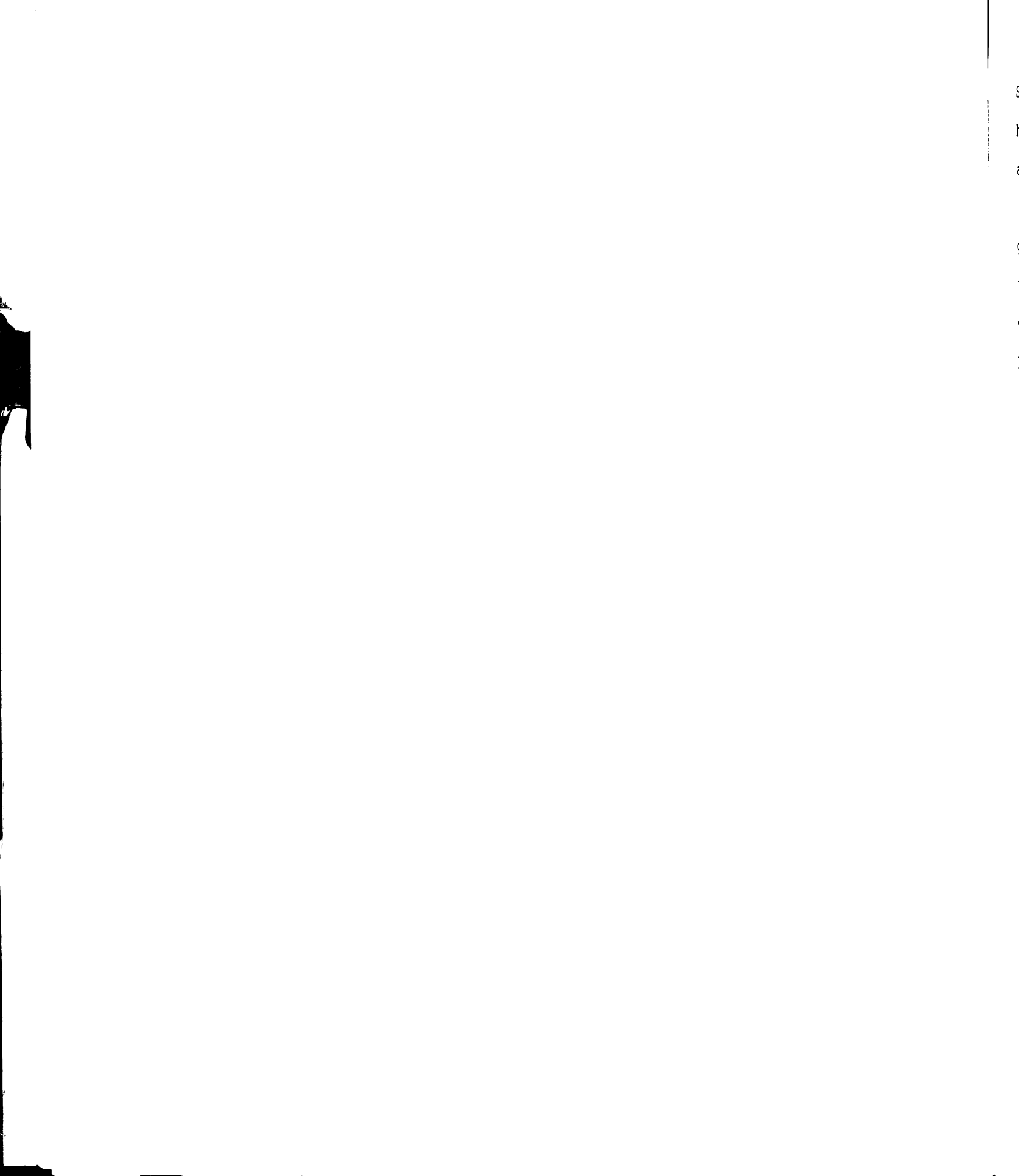
In Cornhill to Cairo, Titmarsh becomes reflective about his art as well as himself, and the book therefore

proves the forum for some important pronouncements on the art of travel writing. One of his dicta is an attack on the romantic mode of travel writing. Titmarsh begins by finding Greek women unattractive, and then proceeds:

give me a fresh, dewy, healthy rose out of Somersetshire; not one of those superb, tawdry, unwholesome exotics, which are only good to make poems about. Lord Byron wrote more cant of this sort than any poet I know of. Think of the 'peasant girls with dark blue eyes' of the Rhine--the brown-faced, flat-nosed, thick-lipped, dirty wenches! Think of 'filling high a cup of Samian wine' . . . (321)

Romantic travel writing is marked chiefly by love of the exotic and of natural scenery, joined with a mood of emotional intensity and awe. In parts of Cornhill to Cairo, like the visit to Smyrna or the ride on the plains of Sharon, Titmarsh excitedly confronts the strange lifeways of the East. But those flights of rapture are brief--the one at Smyrna last but two hours--and Titmarsh rapidly resumes the frank, hard-headed manner of the cockney traveler. The Byronic (and romantic) mode of travel literature does not easily harmonize with the personal mode of Thackeray, which places a premium on direct, honest reporting of impressions; the personal travel writer is not bound by literary convention or tradition, but by his own eyesight. Since he is frankly unimpressed with several wonderworks of the mysterious East, he becomes a debunker:

The palace of the Seraglio, the cloister with marble pillars, the hall of the ambassadors, the impenetrable gate guarded by eunuchs and ichoglans, have a romantic look in print; but not so in reality . . . The place looks like Vauxhall in the daytime. (362)



So much for Constantinople--and after landing at Alexandria, he shrugs: "You might be as well impressed with Wapping as with your first step on Egyptian soil" (445).

Titmarsh, in an admission of his own limitations, gives another reason why he avoids the romantic mode. That type of travel literature demands elaborate and evocative description--poetic description. But Titmarsh isn't a poet, just "a humble domestic bird" who "can't fly far or high" (488). In a mock conversation with his conscience, Titmarsh compares himself to Tennyson, considering that poet an eagle soaring into the sun and himself a humble sparrow that stays close to the ground. So he must go his own way, working on a medium that welcomes his prose style and artistic personality.

But while this plain-dealing, blunt narrator avoids romantic description, he also asserts a method he believes most viable. Sailing into the little bay of Glaucus on September 26, he says: "The effort of the artist, as I take it, ought to be, to produce upon his hearer's mind, by his art, an effect something similar to that produced on his own by the sight of the natural object" (383). This statement is made about art in general, but it defines and defends a most important part of Titmarsh's narrative method in his travel works. He adds to that statement that "only music, or the best poetry, can do this," but his attempt in that venture is embodied, to varying degrees, in all his travel writings, including Cornhill to Cairo.

First, emphasis is placed on the artist/narrator, for the effect that "natural objects" produce upon his mind is primary. His view of the natural object (not the natural object itself) is the stuff of travel literature. Hence, what the reader eventually learns is based on the product of narrator interacting with object. But the narrator is not a passive force--he does not simply pass on to the reader objects colored by his vision. Rather, he proceeds as an artist, shaping his impressions "by his art," so that the reader's mind recapitulates the product of narrator and object. Schematically, this might be presented in two equations:

Natural Object + Narrator = Effect on Narrator's Mind

Natural Object + Narrator's Art = Effect on Reader's Mind

The effect on the narrator's mind is "something similar" (as far as art permits) to the effect on the reader's mind.

To see these equations in action, one might look at the opening pages of Chapter VII. On his first sight of Constantinople, Titmarsh is struck with wondrous admiration. But instead of carefully describing the city for the reader, he immediately reaches for a simile: "the view of Constantinople is as fine as any of Stanfield's best theatrical pictures, seen at the best period of youth" (337). The example, drawn from Drury Lane and the stage, is Titmarsh's artistic attempt to impress the reader with "the effect which Constantinople produces on the mind" (338).

Leading the reader's mind to elicit this feeling of wonder is the best way to convey the reality of the Turkish city:

For, suppose we combine mosque, minaret, gold, cypress, water, blue, caiques, seventy-four, Galata, Tophana, Ramazan, Backallum, and so forth, together, in ever so many ways, your imagination will never be able to depict a city out of them. Or, suppose I say the Mosque of St. Sophia is four hundred and seventy-three feet in height . . . Has your fancy, which pooh-poohs a simile, faith enough to build a city with a foot-rule? (338-9)

There, Titmarsh makes his technique of impressionistic direction explicit. V. S. Pritchett has called Thackeray "above all a superb impressionist" and the first British novelist "to catch visually and actually life as it passes in fragments before us."<sup>32</sup> He uses this tactic to superb effect in Cornhill to Cairo, finding it a way to involve the reader in the work and to give him the "feel," the sensation of traveling in a foreign land. In chapters on Spain and Smyrna, we see this method at work: Titmarsh carefully selects vivid impressions from the stream of reality as it passes him by, hoping that, through the reader's identification with him, the reader will undergo the same feelings as his. To tell the reader about Gibraltar, he shunts aside methodical description to feature pregnant images of "dark Spanish smugglers in tufted hats, with gay silk handkerchiefs round their heads" or of "a ragged fat fellow, mounted on a tobacco-barrel with his hat cocked on his head" (296,298). Dubious about large-scale descriptive sequences, he nevertheless believes a series of pointed



images might produce in the reader's mind a sensation similar to that in the narrator's.

Turning now from the ominipresent Titmarsh and his narrative strategies, the thematic organization of Cornhill to Cairo, much more harmonious and compact than its predecessors, calls attention to itself. Thackeray's first two travel books operate with loose thematic clusters that form contrasting pairs--beauty/art/freedom vs. violence/trickery/immorality in The Paris Sketch Book, for example. But the Eastern travels are dominated--and to some extent unified--by one ascendant theme, that of religion and worship. (In Vanity Fair, Thackeray used vanity as the central theme that would tie together diverse materials, so the device obviously attracted him.)

The religious sentiment is keynoted in the first two paragraphs of the first chapter when a seasick Titmarsh comes on the ship's deck at two in the morning. After surveying the "noble scene" about him, he exclaims that "contemplating this vast, magnificent, harmonious Nature" arouses in him, along with other things, "inexpressible love and reverence towards the Power which created the infinite universe blazing above eternally" (265-6). Starting a travel book with a religious invocation is unusual, and the intensity of the opening passage is startling in itself. But it becomes less surprising when one realizes that Jerusalem--a Holy City for three of the world's major religions--is one of the stops on his voyage, and that the



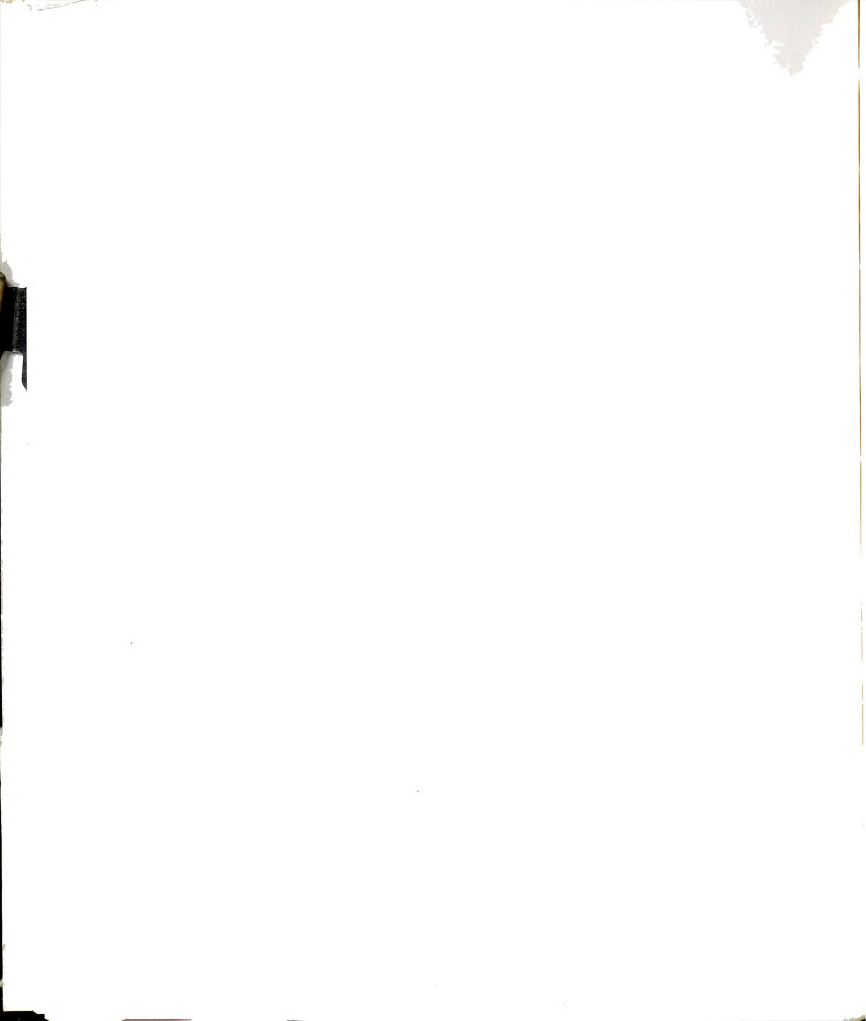
trip is, at least incidentally, a religious pilgrimage. Emphasizing that city's importance, Titmarsh calls it "the centre of the world's past and future history" (414).

The chapter on Jerusalem is, of course, the centerpiece of the religious theme, but Titmarsh discusses religion and worship throughout the work. The first stops of the "Lady Mary Wood" were in Portugal and Spain, and the narrator visited the churches, cathedrals and convents there, among them a small church in Cadiz "crowded with altars and fantastic ornaments, and lights and gilding, where we were told to look behind a huge iron grille, and beheld a bevy of black nuns kneeling" (284). Then come the Islamic nations, and Titmarsh makes many comments on the Moslem religion in visits to its mosques and observations on the holy month of Ramadan. As with the Catholics, he finds their practices exotic, colorful--and perhaps a trifle absurd. He is convinced Moslem congregants are seeing through the "folly" of their religion, wondering whether "the scepticism prevalent amongst the higher orders must descend ere very long to the lower; and the cry of the muezzin from the mosque become a mere ceremony?" (363). Other religions are presented also: during the sailing to Jaffa, comment is made on Polish Jews making a pilgrimage to Jerusalem; the desert passage from Jaffa to Jerusalem introduces the American Consul General of Syria and Jerusalem, an earnest chiliast who "expects to see the Millennium in three years, and has accepted the office of

consul at Jerusalem, so as to be on the spot in readiness" (406).

Doctrinal questionings led to difficulties in composing that Jerusalem chapter. Writing to his mother in July, 1845, he says: "I am gravelled with Jerusalem, not wishing to offend the public by a needless exhibition of heterodoxy: nor daring to be a hypocrite. I have been reading lots of books" for aid in writing the chapter (Letters, II, 204). The original chapter contained some "unorthodox remarks" and was cast aside when his pious mother objected to what Thackeray lightly called "my awful heresy." The final version of the chapter is not controversial, but the writer struggled over it.

Jerusalem aroused deep emotions in Thackeray, emotions that lingered months after his visit there, and he remarks that "the impression I have of it now is of ten days passed in a fever" (440). The stark desolation of Jerusalem, when coupled with its past history of violence and murder, makes Titmarsh a much more serious figure than usual. But still the chapter is the culmination of many religious viewpoints expressed in the book, prime among them anger at religious fakery and conflict. Throughout, Titmarsh expresses contempt for the "disgusting mummerly" (416) that surrounds holy places such as the Church of the Sepulchre. Superstition, ignorance, and deceit envelop this shrine and others, figured in bogus relics like the thicket where Abraham caught the Ram, or the Tomb of Adam; he sees this grovelling before these false momentos a perversion of



religion. The petty animosities between various believers anger him--"And so round this sacred spot, the centre of Christendom, the representatives of the three great sects worship under one roof, and hate each other!" (430).

Titmarsh, meanwhile, attacks Jews and Catholics, speaking of a believer in the latter religion: "it is difficult even to give him credit for honesty, so barefaced seem the impostures which he professes to believe and reverence" (427). Titmarsh's religious faith, as expressed throughout the book, runs counter to what he sees in Jerusalem. As the opening passage and other comments indicate, Titmarsh believes in a simple and direct relationship with God, based on common sense, uncluttered with gaudy buildings, elaborate rites, complicated beliefs; he seems to indicate that man can worship God beneath the sky as well as beneath a church, temple or mosque roof. He remains, however, an Anglican, and in Jerusalem commends "the decent and manly ceremonial of our service" (421) and "the sheer force of good example, pure life, and kind offices" the English religious colony at the city exhibits (436). Plain faith, good works--this is the yardstick he repeatedly measures other religions by in Cornhill to Cairo.

As a cautionary note, it should be mentioned that this work is as much about religion as about the East and Thackeray's voyage there: indeed, much of the travel book is not concerned with this religious theme. But the opening passage, the chapter on Jerusalem, and the network of

incident and detail tie together the work on a level other than narrative continuity. And the very final lines of Titmarsh's musing reassert the religious theme: mentioning his visions of an Islamic priest and Jewish rabbi in worship, he says:

those figures come back the clearest of all to the memory, with the picture, too, of our ship sailing over the peaceful Sabbath sea, and our own prayers and services celebrated there. So each, in his fashion, and after his kind, is bowing down, and adoring the Father, who is equally above all. Cavil not, you brother or sister, if your neighbor's voice is not like yours; only hope that his words are honest (as far as they may be) and his heart humble and thankful (490-1).

The reason religion looms so large in Cornhill to Cairo is not the religious speculation or doctrinal interests of Thackeray. Worship is central because it arises naturally from the trip itself, and because it illuminates cultural aspects of the lands visited, not because the writer wishes to proclaim his Anglican faith. Rather, he used human belief as a means of probing and understanding the lifeways of the East, for he saw (quite correctly) religious articles and practices as shapers of culture, whether it be Judaic, Islamic, or, in the case of the travelers, Christian. Religion is therefore not treated in the abstract, as a body of beliefs, but in the concrete, as it impinges on daily life--in the Arab priest's cry and the Rabbi's study of his book.

Despite the tolerant words of that last chapter, Titmarsh could be brutally unfair to other religions. In The Irish Sketch Book, anti-Catholic sentiments were in

plain evidence, and the Eastern travels bring his religious prejudices into full bloom. Titmarsh's treatment of Islam is harsh, more than slightly contemptuous. As to Judaism, the portrait is negative to an extreme. Take, for example, the description of the Jewish pilgrims at Jaffa:

The dirt of these children of captivity exceeds all possibility of description; the profusion of stinks which they raised, the grease of their venerable garments and faces, the horrible messes cooked in the filthy pots, and devoured with the nasty fingers, the squalor of mats, pots, old bedding, and foul carpets of our Hebrew friends, could hardly be painted by Swift, in his dirtiest mood, and cannot be, of course, attempted by my timid and genteel pen. (366)

Nevertheless, the "timid and genteel" pen would return to the Jews several times following, almost obsessive in its continual references to filth, odor, and Jewish treatment of money. These powerful dislikes were not only true for Cornhill to Cairo, but were apparently lifelong loathings, cropping up in novels like Vanity Fair and The Virginians. While Dickens could balance off the evil Fagan with the admirable Mr. Riah of Our Mutual Friend, Thackeray's Jewish figures are almost invariable cast as vicious stereotypes: malodorous money-changers whose filth-incrusted hands twitch for gold.

However, Titmarsh's anti-Jewish sentiments are rooted in racial, as well as religious, prejudices, perhaps chiefly so. Indeed, to understand fully Thackeray the travel writer, one must be aware that Thackeray the man was a racist, that is, a firm believer in acute racial differences, particularly regarding the superior qualities

of his own race and the inferior traits of others.<sup>33</sup> Thackeray was, after all, a son of the great British Empire, born in Calcutta and tended by native servants there in childhood: his assumption of white superiority was not uncommon among his contemporaries, and was evidenced in the works of later Imperial writers like Kipling and Conrad. While he shows a good deal of contempt for Jews, generally Thackeray's racial attitudes are characterized by a smug feeling of superiority, and not hatred of other races; a confidence based in part on greater European technology and "progress":

The paddle-wheel is the great conqueror. Wherever the captain cries "Stop her!" Civilization stops, and lands in the ship's boat, and makes a permanent acquaintance with the savages on shore. (334)

On the whole, these racial notions are implicit in Cornhill to Cairo, for at no point does Titmarsh flatly assert the superiority of his race, and it is difficult to tell whether comments made on Arabs or Turks are motivated by racial, cultural, or even religious considerations. Most accurately, the racial issue is in the undercurrents of the book, silently shaping values and comments; we are sure of its presence because it has surfaced in other prose works and letters. His treatment of members of the black race he meets on his Eastern journey is fairly representative. Seeing blacks in Constantinople and Alexandria, he regards them as happy, grinning and simple children, thoroughly pleasant people who are (by fair inference on the reader's part) incapable of serious thought. This attitude is

confirmed by letters written during an American trip in which he commends slavery in the South, finding it a basically benevolent institution--the noble assumption by the white man of his burden; also, by his rather cruel portraits of blacks in Vanity Fair and Philip.

Cognizant of Titmarsh's religious and racial attitudes, we can now discuss his overall view of life in the Levant, that is, the countries of the Eastern Mediterranean Sea. To be sure, this is his most cosmopolitan travel work, investigating two European countries (Spain and Portugal) and the island of Malta, along with the countries of the Levant. But since his remarks on the European countries are limited and difficult to generalize from, and since four-fifths of the book is devoted to the Levant, the following discussion will emphasize his views on the Middle East.

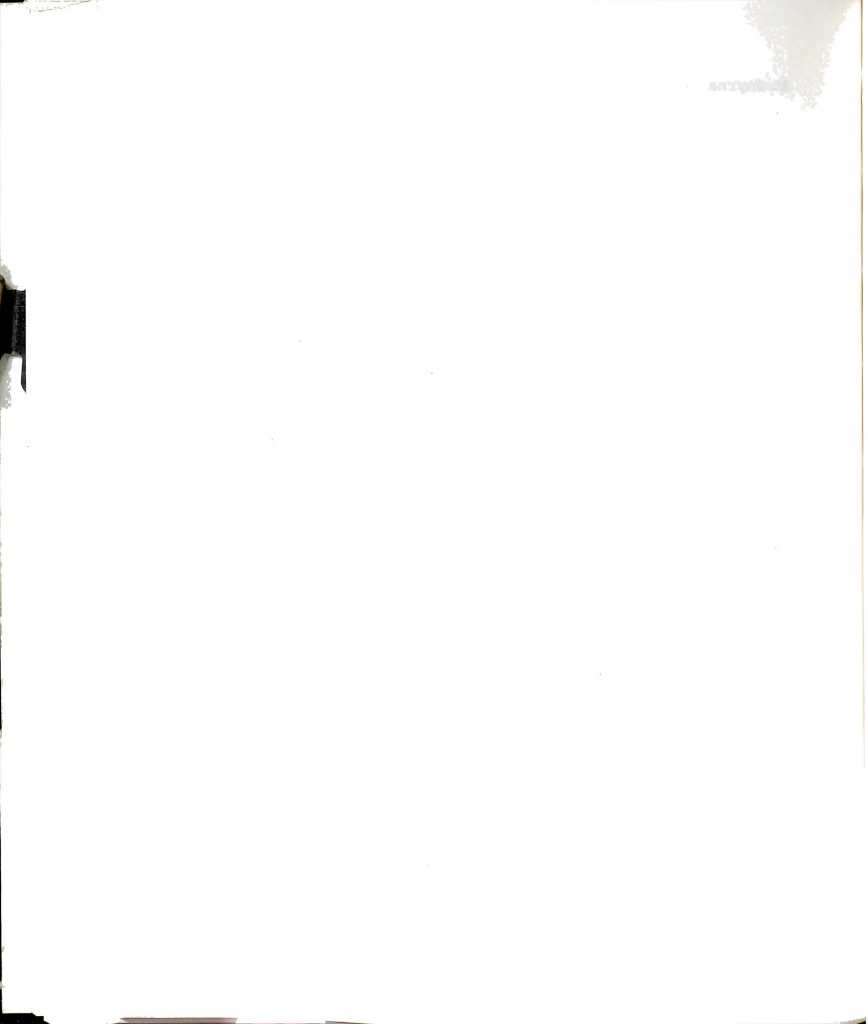
Not surprisingly, his value judgments on that area reflect statements made about France and Ireland. For he sees the Levant, in part, as he saw those two countries--divorced from British restraint and sobriety, the Eastern nations are brighter, freer but also more violent and immoral than England. On the positive side, there is the exotic color and poetry of life in the East:

There is a fortune to be made for painters in Cairo, and materials for a whole academy of them. I never saw such a variety of architecture, of life, of picturesqueness, of brilliant colour, and light and shade. There is a picture in every street, and at every bazaar stall.

At Smyrna, on the plains of Sharon, Titmarsh thrills to the vibrancy and uniqueness of the Eastern tableau before him, significantly comparing both to the magical moment when he first saw France from Calais pier. Day to day living also seems more lively; he asks: "Is there no ennui in the Eastern countries, and are blue-devils not allowed to go abroad there?" (400). In short, the mystery, color and activity of the East seem a pleasant refuge from what Titmarsh calls "the great stalwart roast-beef world" (272) that symbolizes drabness and care.

All this makes the East a charming place to visit, but to extend the cliché, Titmarsh does not want to live there. The magical rapture of Eastern life lasts for a brief time--"A person who wishes to understand . . . the East should come in a yacht to . . . Smyrna, land for two hours, and never afterwards go back again" (326). There is the dirt and decay that lurks behind the Oriental facade, mentioned numerous times; there is the objectionable Islamic religion, which Titmarsh scoffs at; there are the sneaking manners of many of its people. But what seems to outrage Titmarsh the most is Eastern immorality and lust:

The great aim of woman [a young Egyptian told Titmarsh] in the much-maligned Orient, is to administer to the brutality of her lord; her merit is in knowing how to vary the beast's pleasures . . . Do not be led away by German writers and aesthetics, Semilassoisms, Hahnemannism, and the like. The life of the East is a life of brutes. The much-maligned Orient, I am confident, has not been maligned near enough; for the good reason that none of us can tell the amount of horrible sensuality practised there. (463-4)



Titmarsh, writing in the ninth year of Victoria's rule, does not deign to supply examples of this "horrible sensuality" but his strenuous shudder fixes a strong impression on the reader's mind. When it comes to the violence and brutality of the Levant, however, specific instances are plentiful. As noted above, he recounts the bloody past of Jerusalem--the Romans conquering the city, the wars of the Crusaders--that culminate in the "Great Murder" of Christ. On the road from Jaffa to Jerusalem, he discusses the fear of robbery; in Cairo, he tells anecdotes of the vicious robber band called the Arnaoots, and of one "Bluebeard Pasha" threatening the life of his British tutor. In addition to this cruelty, Titmarsh disapproves of the political systems of the Levantine nations, ridiculing King Otho of the Greeks and the Turkish Sultan, finding in Egypt that "the government moves in a happy circle of roguery" (468). And so the image of the East he conjures is of a region with exterior flash and excitement, also beseiged by poverty, dirt and disease, raked by flagrant criminality, and misruled by selfish, corrupt leaders.

Just as Titmarsh's analysis of the East roughly parallels his view of France and Ireland, so do many of the techniques, patterns and attitudes of Cornhill to Cairo find ample precedent in the two sketch books. While earlier works show a willingness to experiment, the Eastern travels break little new ground. In his fifth year of

travel writing and third travel book, the author was content to refine techniques he had used before, to practice hard won skills with greater confidence and mastery.

The "multi-media" approach, the notion of giving pen and pencil sketches of a visited nation, is employed in Cornhill to Cairo. Sixteen sketches, integral parts of the text, enliven its pages and throw special light on the people of the East, their appearance and dress. Further, the book employs multiple literary forms, its normal prose varied with the poem "The White Squall" that comprises Chapter IX, just as the Paris book has "Four Imitations of Beranger" and the Irish travels the poem "Peg of Limavaddy."

Titmarsh himself is essentially the same figure we have seen in previous books: his personality a little more somber, but basically unchanged; embodying the viewpoint of a detached observer, British, Protestant, and urban; relating virtually everything in the narrative to his interests and shaping almost all by his opinions. To Thackeray, Titmarsh came to represent not only a personality or mask, but a certain style of narration; when he wished to relate his experiences of foreign lands in a different way, he would not modify Titmarsh's character, but create a different narrator. Titmarsh's appearance in Cornhill to Cairo is Thackeray's signal that things would be as they were before.

But Cornhill to Cairo was not his only account of the Eastern trip, for between August, 1844, and 1847 a series of short articles appeared in Punch that were signed by the Fat Contributor and written by Thackeray. The Fat Contributor embodies a different narrative viewpoint, a comic one in which irony sharply separates writer and narrative mask. The Fat Contributor is physically clumsy, morally deficient and absurdly provincial. During his wanderings through southern England, continental Europe and the Levant, when he cheats a tailor, gets sea sick, and pastes a Punch handbill on a pyramid, the reader laughs at him as much as with him. By revealing this character's conduct in foreign lands, Thackeray satirically attacks the arrogant John Bull whose rude manners so disturbed him--as Ray comments, "Thackeray's target here is the pretensions of the English abroad."<sup>34</sup> These minor sketches, in fact, have little interest for us except as they demonstrate the vital link, in Thackeray's travel literature, between narrative goals and narrator. When his aim is satire, and not the revelation of a foreign land, he employs the buffoon Fat Contributor rather than the "companion" Titmarsh.

Other continuities of the Eastern travels from the two earlier sketch books suggest themselves: the interest in the process of travel along with its products ("Indeed, what is travelling made of? At least half its pleasures and incidents come out of inns" (297)); the beginning of



the book with a ship voyage; the use of expansion to create broad cultural comment from limited empirical observation; the labelling of the work as a "Journal" (489). Indeed, even the major new developments of this work--its tighter thematic organization and narrative mixture of set pieces with travel sequences--are extensions of previous practices rather than clean departures.

As a final note, an unfortunate contradiction that lies at the heart of Cornhill to Cairo should be recognized. The book makes several professions of benevolence, based on a religious viewpoint, such as:

The Maker has linked together the whole race of man with this chain of love. I like to think that there is no man but has had kindly feelings for some other, and he for his neighbour, until we bind together the whole family of Adam. (312)

But Titmarsh himself cannot live up to this aspiration, and too often denigrates other religions and races with low quips and basically unfair attacks. Thackeray wanted his narrative mask to be that of a gay companion, but sadly, it could also be that of a bigot and a boor.

Early in his career, as a reviewer, Thackeray evolved some ideas about travel writing. Some of them he discarded--such as the need to have extensive knowledge of a land before writing about it--but he maintained a special grip on two, those being the notions of a companion-narrator and of a distinctive angle of vision. Welded together in the heat of endeavor, the two notions became Titmarsh, the



talkative traveler who would provide a unique, entertaining and unconventional view of foreign lands.

The figure of Titmarsh comes to dominate Thackeray's travel literature and places it clearly in the personal mode of writing. His presence, however, varies slightly from work to work, for Thackeray was willing to shape Titmarsh to the needs of the book. In The Paris Sketch Book, for example, Titmarsh becomes a shadowy figure in some of the pieces which do not really require his presence. In The Fat Contributor Papers, on the other hand, Thackeray does not wish to modify his old narrator, so he creates the Fat Contributor in his stead. There is definite interaction, then, between the narrative materials and the narrator himself--they shape each other.

In The Irish Sketch Book and Cornhill to Cairo, Titmarsh achieves his greatest dominance and importance. For in those works Thackeray uses his narrator to envelop the reader in a complex experience of the foreign land. Titmarsh "speaks" in three voices: poetry, prose, and drawings, surrounding the reader with his presence in the various forms. Through identification with the first-person narrator, the reader vicariously experiences the process of travel. The reader sees the foreign land through the narrator's eyes; and through the narrator's art, the effects of foreign objects on the narrator's mind are reproduced in that of the reader. In brief, the narrator

experiences the foreign land, and the reader learns about it by "experiencing" the narrator.

In his last two books, Thackeray had developed his early notions into highly sophisticated and effective art, capable of rendering complex insights through a variety of techniques, of transforming the raw data of travel into meaning and significance. Although this art emphasizes the narrator and proceeds in the personal mode of travel writing, it is heterogenous art. Elements of the picturesque and romantic modes appear in the works, for Thackeray was pragmatic and flexible, never doctrinaire, and would write according to the perceived needs of the separate work.



FOOTNOTES--CHAPTER III

<sup>1</sup>A list of Thackeray's reviews of travel books follows: In The London Times: "City of the Czar," August 30, 1838; "City of the Czar," September 7, 1838; "Lord Lindsay's Travels in Egypt and the Holy Land," September 25, 1838; "Elliott's Travels in Austria, Russia and Turkey," October 2, 1838; "Elliott's Travels in Austria, Russia and Turkey," October 4, 1838; "How to Observe," October 9, 1838; and "Fraser's Winter Journey to Persia," November 16, 1838.

In The Morning Chronicle: "Ireland," March 16, 1844; "Egypt Under Mehemet Ali," March 27, 1845; "Carus's Travels in England," March 16, 1846; "Travels in the Punjab," April 6, 1846.

In The Foreign Quarterly Review: "The Rhine," April 1842; "Extracts from the Travelling Journal of a German Naturalist," July, 1842; "Excursions on the Shores of the Rhine," October, 1842; "Angleterre," July, 1844; "New Accounts of Paris," January, 1844.

In Fraser's Magazine: "Grant in Paris," December, 1843.

<sup>2</sup>Ray, Adversity, p. 322.

<sup>3</sup>"Egypt Under Mehemet Ali," in Thackeray's Contributions to the Morning Chronicle, ed. by Gordon N. Ray (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1955), p. 65.

<sup>4</sup>"Lord Lindsay's Travels in Egypt and the Holy Land," London Times, September 25, 1838, p. 2.

<sup>5</sup>"Lord Lindsay's Travels," p. 2.

<sup>6</sup>"The Rhine," Foreign Quarterly Review, 29 (April, 1842), p. 80. The precise term Thackeray uses is "robberies."

<sup>7</sup>"Lord Lindsay's Travels," p. 2.



<sup>8</sup>"Carus's Travels in England," in Thackeray's Contributions, p. 107.

<sup>9</sup>"Fraser's Winter Journey to Persia," London Times, November 16, 1838, p. 3; "The Rhine," p. 86; and "Extracts from the Travelling Journal of a German Naturalist," Foreign Quarterly Review, 29 (July, 1842), p. 205.

<sup>10</sup>"Travels in the Punjab," in Thackeray's Contributions, p. 120.

<sup>11</sup>"Extracts from the Travelling Journal of a German Naturalist," p. 211.

<sup>12</sup>Letters, I, p. 328. Subsequent references will be identified within the text.

<sup>13</sup>The publication history of previously printed articles of The Paris Sketch Book follows; taken from Harold Strong Gulliver, Thackeray's Literary Apprenticeship (Valdosta: Southern Stationery, 1934), pp. 107-108.

<u>Article</u>	<u>Original Journal</u>	<u>Date</u>
The Devil's Wager*	<u>National Standard</u>	Aug. 1833
Four Imitations of Beranger	<u>Fraser's Magazine</u>	May 1834
The Story of Mary Ancel	<u>The New Monthly Magazine</u>	Oct. 1838
The Painter's Bargain	<u>Fraser's Magazine</u>	Oct. 1838
Caricatures and Lithography in Paris	<u>London and Westminster Review</u>	Apr. 1839
An Invasion of France	<u>The Corsair</u>	Aug. 1839
Madame Sand and the New Apocalypse	<u>The Corsair</u>	Sept. 1839
The Fetes of July	<u>The Corsair</u>	Oct. 1839
Cartouche**	<u>Fraser's Magazine</u>	Oct. 1839
Little Poinsinet	<u>Fraser's Magazine</u>	Oct. 1839
On the French School of Painting	<u>Fraser's Magazine</u>	Dec. 1839

\*In a different form than that of The Paris Sketch Book

\*\*Also published in The Corsair

<sup>14</sup>Works, XVII, p. 117. All other references to The Paris Sketch Book will be identified within the text.

<sup>15</sup>This has been done more by omission than commission. Ray and Dodds, for example, do not deny it as a travel book, but do not group it among his travel writings. Saintsbury calls it a "miscellany." All feel, however, that the work attempts to give a view of foreign life, but do not label it a travel work. This might simply be a matter of terminology and definition. The quote following is from Dodds, p. 47.



<sup>16</sup>Ray, Adversity, p. 253.

<sup>17</sup>Letters, III, pp. 511-512; and Perry Miller, "Afterword," The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent. (New York: New American Library, 1961), p. 373. Irving's Sketch Book was very popular and had many imitators; thus it is difficult to determine whether Thackeray's indebtedness was first- or second-hand.

<sup>18</sup>See Ray, Adversity, p. 245; John Dodds, Thackeray: A Critical Portrait (New York: Russell & Russell, 1963), p. 50.

<sup>19</sup>Dodds, Thackeray, p. 47.

<sup>20</sup>George Saintsbury, A Consideration of Thackeray (London: Humphrey Milford, 1931), pp. 37-41.

<sup>21</sup>Saintsbury, p. 80.

<sup>22</sup>Ray, Adversity, p. 310; and Saintsbury, p. 83. Ray's discussion of the narrator in Thackeray's travel books is very enlightening, and I am indebted to it.

<sup>23</sup>Works, XX, 189. All other references to The Irish Sketch Book will be identified within the text.

<sup>24</sup>Saintsbury, p. 84.

<sup>25</sup>John Loofbrouow, Thackeray and the Form of Fiction (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), pp. 78-79.

<sup>26</sup>Tristram Shandy, ed. by James A. Work (New York: The Odyssey Press, 1940), pp. 10-11.

<sup>27</sup>See Northrop Frye, "Towards Defining an Age of Sensibility," ELH, 23 (1956), pp. 144-152.

<sup>28</sup>Dodds, p. 65.

<sup>29</sup>Ray, Adversity, pp. 315-316.

<sup>30</sup>Works, XXI, pp. 488-489. The subsequent references to Cornhill to Cairo will be identified within the text.

<sup>31</sup>Ray, Adversity, p. 316.

<sup>32</sup>Pritchett, p. 823

<sup>33</sup>See Joseph E. Baker, "Thackeray's Recantation," PMLA, 77 (1962), pp. 586-594. Baker points out the cruelties inflicted on Woolcomb in Philip in this article.

<sup>34</sup>Ray, Adversity, p. 352.

## CHAPTER IV

### VANITY FAIR AS A MOVEABLE FEAST

If the travel writings show Thackeray as a literary apprentice, his novels represent him as a literary master, and accordingly hold the greatest interest for the critic and scholar. The two writing phases overlap--during the Levant voyage of 1845, he was working on both his first full length novel, Barry Lyndon, and his last travel narrative, Cornhill to Cairo. This act of simultaneous composition is significant, for despite the marked qualitative difference between the travel works and novels, both share the same insights, opinions, and interest in foreign lands and travel. Those two subjects had become part of Thackeray's blood and artistic personality; his thoughts on them could be rendered in the empirical mold of travel writing, or the fictive mold of the novel.

The previous chapter concentrated on the empirical efforts; this examines the other side of the coin. Although travel sequences occur in all seven novels, I do not intend to treat all of them in great detail, for that would involve considerable repetition and sharply diminishing returns. Instead, I will embark on an extended discussion of one--

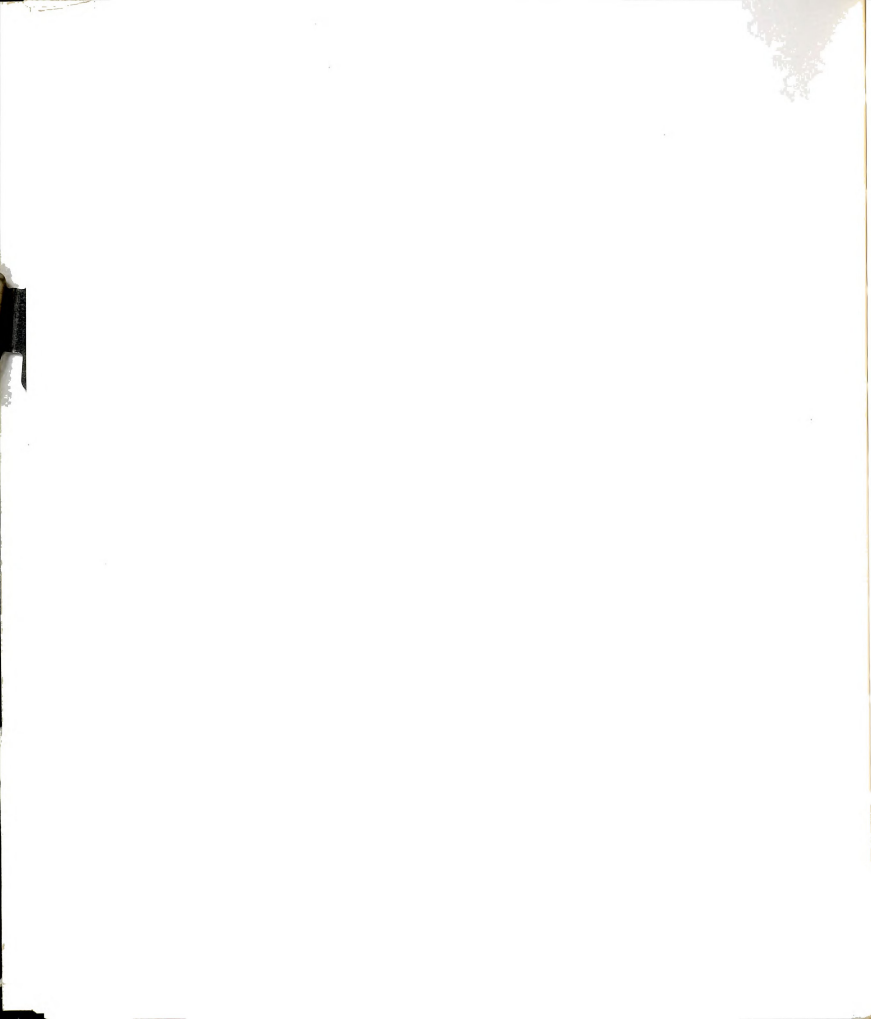
Vanity Fair--that deserves lengthy treatment because of its paramount significance in the Thackeray canon, and its thick, rich substratum of travel material. Chapter V will briefly treat the others. Vanity Fair is a fully representative novel, and a discussion of it will touch on all the major issues relating to travel and foreign lands.

## I

Without entirely losing his insular notions, he had become more cosmopolitan than his rivals; he knew France as intimately as England, had lived many months in Germany, had thoroughly explored Ireland and the Near East. If great fiction needs to be based on wide knowledge of mankind, he was equipped to produce it.<sup>1</sup>

Lionel Stevenson's assessment of Thackeray on the eve of producing Vanity Fair is an accurate one. My first chapter details much of that experience--a part of the author's life that he drew on easily and copiously in his great novel. Indeed, the travel motif is adumbrated in his "Before the Curtain" tableau, where the Manager of the Performance introduces his traveling road show; it is picked up in the novel's very first sentence, when "a large family coach, with two fat horses in blazing harness, driven by a fat coachman in a three-cornered hat and wig, at the rate of four miles an hour" stops before a Chiswick Mall academy in June, 1813.<sup>2</sup>

A better place to start discussion of this motif might be Thackeray's own beginnings. Born in Calcutta,



India, he was an imperial child, and it therefore should not surprise us that Vanity Fair is, in many ways, an "imperial" novel. The great literary era of Empire is usually considered the late Victorian period--the time of Kipling, Conrad, and Stevenson--extending possibly to the early twentieth century, to E. M. Forster and others. But Thackeray's work, with its scenes in India and host of colonial figures, shows a real awareness of the British imperial system.

The novel does not seriously attempt to analyze or evaluate that system, but rather to present the people who run it, and to show how their lives are interwoven with the vast web of English society. The two major branches of colonial rule--the merchantile/administrative and the military--are represented by wanderers through the Fair. In the first group, the prime figures are Joseph Sedley ("in the East India Company's Civil Service . . . as collector of Boggley Wollah" (I, 27)) and Colonel Rawdon Crawley, who becomes governor of Coventry Island through the machinations of Becky and Lord Steyne. The military is depicted in William Dobbin and other figures of the redoubtable "101st Regiment," all of whom served in the garrisons of India and the West Indies. But while Jos, Rawdon and Dobbin are all major characters, the book supports them with several minor people and details that broaden the base of the imperial motif. Miss Swartz, the wealthy West Indian heiress; the Lady Emily Southdown, of

Cape Horn and sundry places; and the Reverend Silas Hornblower "who was tattoed in the South Sea Islands" (II, 156) appear for brief minutes on the Vanity Fair stage, but help flavor the entire novel.

There seem to be two reasons for the book's beguilement with colonial Britons. The first is simple historical fact--England was a farflung Empire in the 1840's, and any writer attempting a panoramic view of its society would certainly touch on its overseas satellites. The second reason is bound up with Vanity Fair's theme. Thackeray wants to show the Fair as a moveable feast, as a condition of mankind not confined by geography or climate, but borne everywhere that two or more are gathered in society's name. In the garrison of the \_\_th Regiment in India, Glorvina O'Dowd and Dobbin "were each exemplifying the Vanity of this life, and each longing for what he or she could not get" (II, 330)--the same folly and futility that is common coin in the great society of London. Further, England's hold on her Empire illustrates Vanity on a vast, national scale--a rich and powerful nation filled with unhappy people and beseiged with problems wealth cannot solve.

The characters who populate this imperial nation in this imperial novel are, not surprisingly, very travel conscious, freely moving from place to place, from country to country. Besides the colonials, there are travelers for pleasure, people of foreign descent who live in England,



and with Lord Steyne and his circle, something like a nineteenth century jet set. All this movement is, of course, Vanity in another of its innumerable guises--doomed attempts to find happiness in this world through changes of scenery.

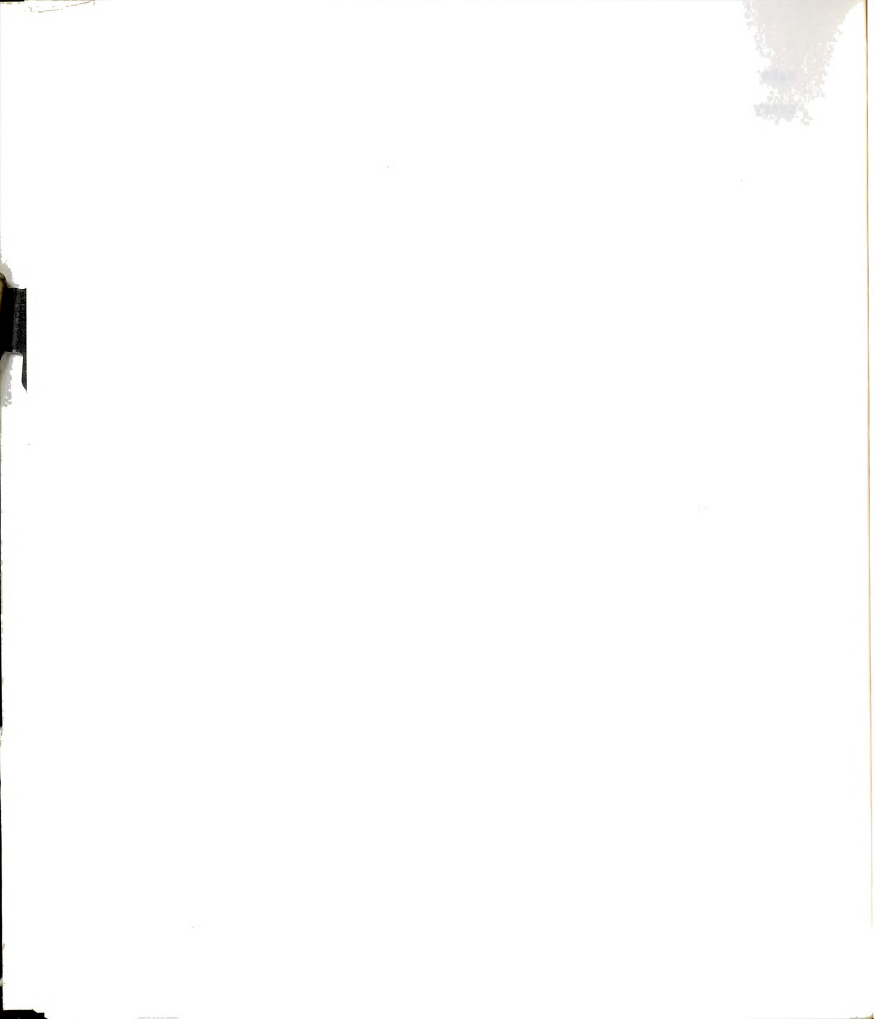
No character (with the possible exception of Steyne) is more widely traveled, more restless than that elusive and bright butterfly, Becky Sharp. From birth she "was of a wild, roving nature, inherited from father and mother, who were both Bohemians" (III, 310-1); her upbringing stamped her as Anglo-French, and separated her from the British cultural mainstream. She remains in almost constant motion throughout the novel, and is labelled a "wanderer" and a "vagabond" (III, 298, 300). Lord Steyne, likewise, roams abroad in his dour and relentless search of pleasure, at one point exiling himself from England to live in Naples. And besides these two heavy, or perhaps even compulsive travelers, there are many other characters in Vanity Fair who visit foreign lands for extended periods. Pitt Crawley had served for ten years as Attache to the Legation at Pumpernickel; old Miss Crawley "had been in France . . . and loved, ever after, French novels, French cookery, and French wines" (I, 136); old Osborne visits Belgium to see his son's tomb; even the colonials--Dobbin and Jos--take pleasure tours on the Continent. Also Amelia, despite her extreme devotion to home and child, despite her utter domesticity, manages to



make two trips to the Continent. With her as a traveler, every major<sup>3</sup> figure in the novel leaves England for an extended period--and the book takes on an "international" cast as well as an "imperial" one.

Vanity Fair is international not only in incident and character, but in theme also. Years before James, Thackeray uses his novel to develop an elaborate contrast between two societies and ways of life (England vs. the Continent in his case), utilizing geographical place to determine characters' actions and to symbolize larger value systems and approaches to life. This "international theme" is closely integrated with the novel's overall thematic and structural patterns; thus, the framework those patterns provide Thackeray's theme should be mentioned.

Although Vanity Fair's structure is certainly loose, it does exist--it might be a loose, baggy monster, but it has some bones. As has been widely noted, its arrangement is dialectical, relying on an extensive series of parallels and contrasts between Becky Sharp and Amelia Sedley. The novel begins as these two young women first face the world, and its two strands are their careers in life. Becky starts her life as a governess, marries a young Army officer, has a son, and rapidly rises in the world until a sudden collapse; Amelia starts high on the social scale, marries a young Army officer, has a son, and sinks into poverty until being rescued by Dobbin. Throughout, the two lives comment on each other, and reinforce each other;



twice they converge after Becky leaves the Sedley house in the book's early chapters--and both meetings are on foreign soil. The first meeting is before and during the Waterloo campaign of 1815, the great bulk occurring in Belgium, although the women do meet in Brighton beforehand. Their second rendezvous is also on the Continent, when a tattered but ever buoyant Becky meets Amelia in Pumpernickel in the summer of 1829. Thus, the two encounters are very important to the overall structure of the novel, merging as they do the two central story lines and focusing on them with clear and undivided attention.

The double-stranded narrative structure is echoed in the novel's thematic organization. Becky and Amelia (along with their respective circles) come to represent two styles of life, two approaches to happiness and human fulfillment. Their philosophies are in basic opposition, and just as incident contrasts with incident in the narrative, so value opposes value in the thematic framework. I believe the two life styles might be labelled, with some qualification, Apollonian and Dionysian, or, the world of order and the world of energy.

The terms come from Friedrich Nietzsche's discussion of Greek drama in "The Birth of Tragedy"; they were adopted, with some changes, by the anthropologist Ruth Benedict in her Patterns of Culture. Because Benedict has so skillfully applied the concepts to life style and culture (the areas I am concerned with), the terms will be

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treated from her viewpoint. She says of the Apollonian value system:

He 'knows but one law, measure in the Hellenic sense.' He keeps the middle of the road, stays within the known map, does not meddle with disruptive psychological states. In Nietzsche's fine phrase, even in the exaltation of the dance he 'remains what he is, and retains his civic name.'<sup>4</sup>

As an example of Apollonian culture, Benedict cites the Zuni Indians of New Mexico, a Pueblo tribe whose lifeways are characterized by order, lack of emotional excess, restraint. "In the pueblos . . . there is no courting of excess in any form, no tolerance of violence, no indulgence in the exercise of authority . . ."<sup>5</sup> Virtually all channels to vent hostility and aggression are closed, and a premium is placed on stable, balanced human relationships. Opposed to this is the Dionysian figure, who seeks value:

through 'the annihilation of the ordinary bounds and limits of existence'; he seeks to attain his most valued moments in escape from the boundaries imposed upon him by his five senses, to break through into another order of experience . . .<sup>6</sup>

Some cultures structured around such goals are those of the plains Indians of the United States, the Dobu tribesman of Melanesia, the Kwakiutl tribe of the Northwest Coast Indians. In these cases, aggression, self-exaltation, and intense, bitter competition are ways of life--violence is commonplace and the emotions are continually stimulated to frenzy.

Benedict applied Nietzsche's terminology to certain "primitive" or pre-technological cultures. I will not use

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it in precisely the way she does, so that the terms, when designating nineteenth century Europeans, are meant to be broadly suggestive rather than rigidly definitive.

This division, which proves to be so important to Vanity Fair, is not a product of Thackeray's reading. While his classical education gave him a firm knowledge of Greek and Roman mythology, and while his books are laden with classical allusions, he did not employ the Apollonian/Dionysian distinction in his writing in a consciously literary way. Instead, he developed the pairing through his experiences and his world view.

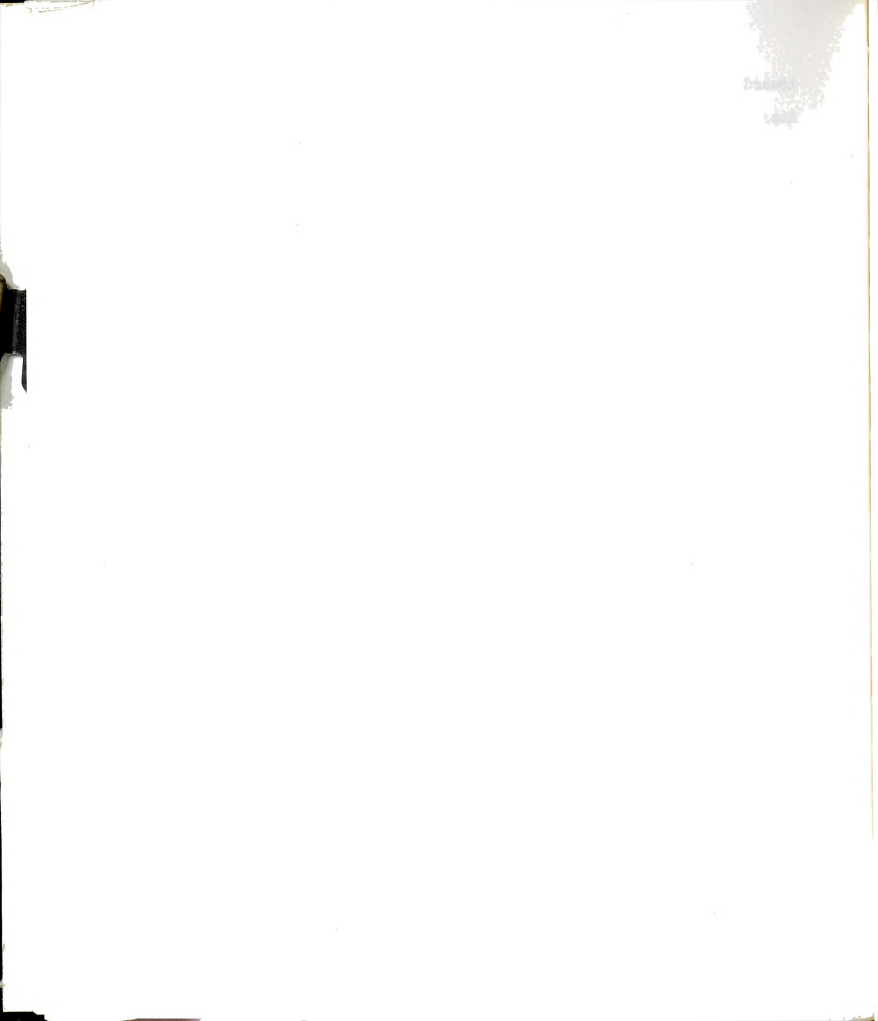
For the realm of experience, foreign travel was crucial. In Chapter III, I discussed Thackeray's responses to France, Ireland, and the Levant, and those reactions--although considerable in range and variety--generally fell into a rough pattern. Thackeray saw foreign lands as open and flexible, as energetic, as artistic--as a riot of color, in brief, which is the Dionysian configuration. Further, this travel experience gave him a perspective on England, and in the travel works we find repeated references to the cautious, safe, and pragmatic British way of life, which seems to follow the Apollonian model. These attitudes would seem to date back to the early travels: to Thackeray's happy times at Weimar, to his apprenticeship to painting in Paris, to his pleasant days as a young married man in the French capital. But if these ideas took root early, they were also sustained for a long time, shaping his attitudes

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toward foreign cultures through the productive decades of his artistic career. To be sure, many of those separate insights were hardly unique to Thackeray: the notion that sinning is something that one does while abroad seems to be shared by a majority of his contemporaries. But the broad sweep of his views on foreign lands, and the ubiquity of his Apollonian/Dionysian division, bears the personal stamp of his individual travel experiences.

They also bear the stamp of habitual patterns of thought. Brought up in a strict religious household, Thackeray was exposed at an early age to a world view which placed the flesh against the spirit, pleasure against piety, freedom against restraint. V. S. Pritchett believes that Thackeray could never completely free himself from this orthodox training,<sup>7</sup> and those dualities learned at his mother's knee certainly did inform his creative work, even to his last novel at age fifty. The tendency to see the world split into divided camps also carried through to maturity. Therefore, it is not surprising that Thackeray, with his training at home and experiences abroad, should hit upon the opposition of energy to order, and should have this contrast shape the artistic and thematic patterns of his great novel.

In Vanity Fair, the values that Amelia strives for, and to some extent, represents, are the Apollonian ones of complicity and order.<sup>8</sup> Rejecting the "destructive operation of the standards of Vanity Fair," she chooses the

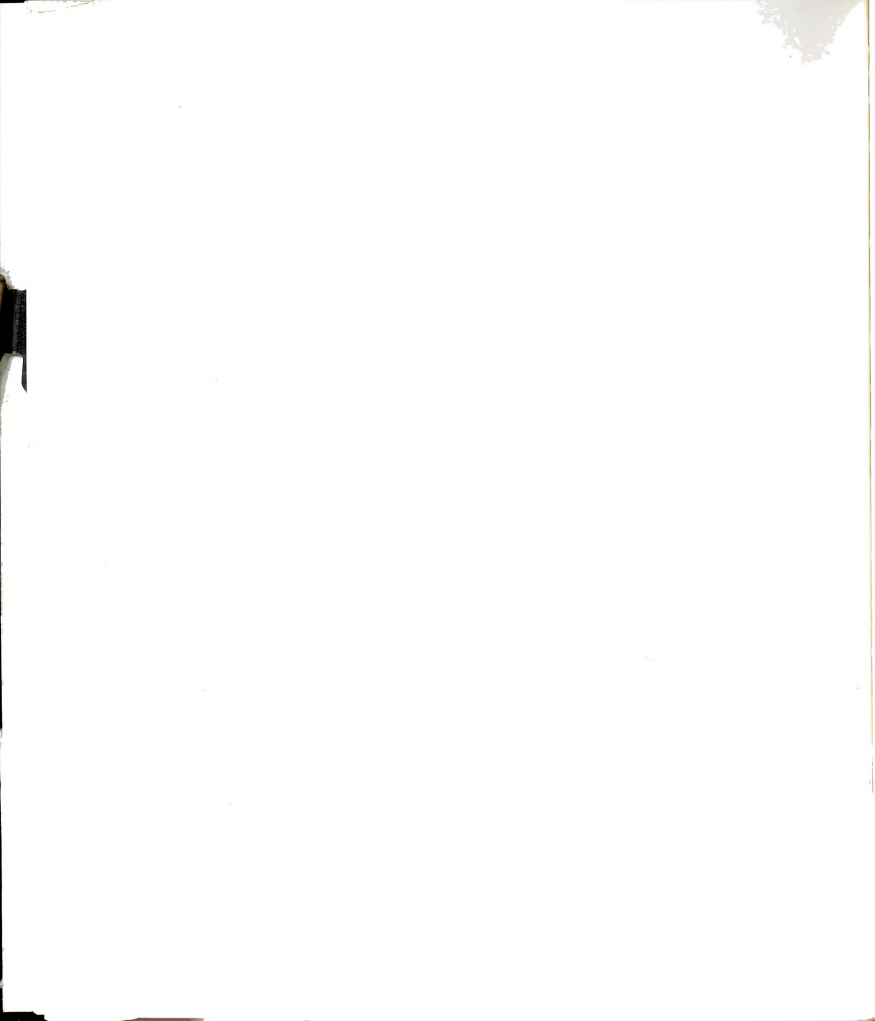


"life of personal relations, the loyalty and selflessness inspired by home affections."<sup>9</sup> The center of this life is the home, a sanctuary that is sustained by loving relationships between husband and wife, parent and child. Thus Amelia worships George long after his death, and worships her son from birth. These relationships, furthermore, are characterized by gentleness, self-sacrifice, and--in the extreme--the annihilation of the individual to serve the family. Thus Amelia spurns, for a long time, the comfort a marriage with Dobbin would provide, preferring to live in poverty and maintain her "union" with George. The love Amelia feels for others, including her two husbands, is agape rather than eros: attachment laden with gentility, religious sanctions and affection rather than deep passion; a wounded Dobbin can speak of her "little feeble remnant of love."

Dobbin is an excellent counterpart for Amelia, for he also shuns worldly prizes for personal relationships. Thackeray hails him as a gentleman, one of the few

men whose aims are generous, whose truth is constant, and not only constant in kind, but elevated in its degree; whose want of meanness makes them simple; who can look the world honestly in the face with an equal manly sympathy for the great and the small . . .  
(IV, 259)

As with Amelia, fame, power, wealth, and honors lie outside his desires, for those baubles must be pursued aggressively and strenuously, and must be sought with traits different from gentleness and self-sacrifice. So the life of Dobbin



and Amelia is basically stable, sober, responsible--and, as some would see it, dreadfully dull and unimaginative.

The Dionysian world of Vanity Fair is incarnated in Becky Sharp; its values are those of energy and self-assertion. Benedict says of the Dobuans: "They are lawless and treacherous. Every man's hand is against every other man."<sup>10</sup> This is the moral universe Becky finds herself in, so in the battle for worldly gains (and military imagery suffuses the novel), deception and trickery are virtues, gentleness and self-sacrifice, vices. She moves up the social ladder by playing with human affections, by virtually robbing Jos Sedley in Brussels in their horse trade, by literally robbing Raggles and Briggs. Power and domination over others is sought just as actively as fame and wealth--power that can lead to violence and to exhilaration. When Rawdon attacks Lord Steyne after finding Becky and him together, his wife responds thus: "She stood there trembling before him. She admired her husband, strong, brave and victorious" (III, 113). For a brief moment the veneer of civilized manners has slipped off the Becky-world: the law of the jungle asserts itself and she stands in approval. It is a most revealing event.

If Dobbin is the Apollonian male, then Lord Steyne is certainly the Dionysian one--a dark, menacing figure of ruthless drives. He has an overweening will to power and pleasure, and those ends he attains by manipulating some figures (like Wenham) and crushing others (like his wife).



When this will is balked, Dionysian emotional frenzy, even violence, can result. Confronted with the angered Rawdon in their great scene, "Stejne rose up, grinding his teeth, pale, and with fury in his looks" (III, 112); in Rome, Fiche tells Becky that Stejne's "rage redoubled . . . he was like a madman last night when he came home" (III, 304-5), and then passes on a thinly-disguised threat to her person. Indeed, because of his son's insanity, Stejne fears going mad. All in all, Thackeray's "Wicked Nobleman" represents worldliness, surrounded by its trappings of great wealth (conspicuously consumed) and influence, and living by its standards of aggression and cynicism.

The Dionysian world appears to be a harsh arena of continual battle, but it nevertheless holds definite attractions. Becky Sharp is certainly one of them, for she possesses both social charm and artistic grace. Chapter LI, which details the charade at Lord Stejne's apartments, is a good testimonial for the life of wealth and glamor, lingering with fascination on the "splendid room," "cool dainties," "grand exclusive table" and "gold plate." Perhaps society is so combative because those baubles are so alluring.

Amelia and Dobbin against Becky and Stejne, love against the world, the Apollonian against the Dionysian--this tension runs throughout the novel. It is this same division that informs Thackeray's travel sequences in Vanity Fair, segments which establish an elaborate contrast

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between an Apollonian England and a Dionysian Continent.

The travel sequences are purposeful; on one hand:

Thackeray meant us to see that Vanity Fair does not stop at the Channel, that "the Performance" which he views . . . with such mingled emotions takes place on a much vaster stage than we might suppose if we took his book as a specifically English story.<sup>11</sup>

On another, he wishes to show that master-passion, vanity, operate on a grand scale--in terms of whole nations and peoples--and trips to other countries allow him to develop this idea. Finally, travel gives him the opportunity to contrast different cultures, and, in analyzing them, to take important thematic statements.

A good place to begin a discussion of this English/Continental antithesis would be with a passage late in Vanity Fair. When Dobbin returns to England after his long tour of duty in India, the author muses about his character's ride from Southampton to London:

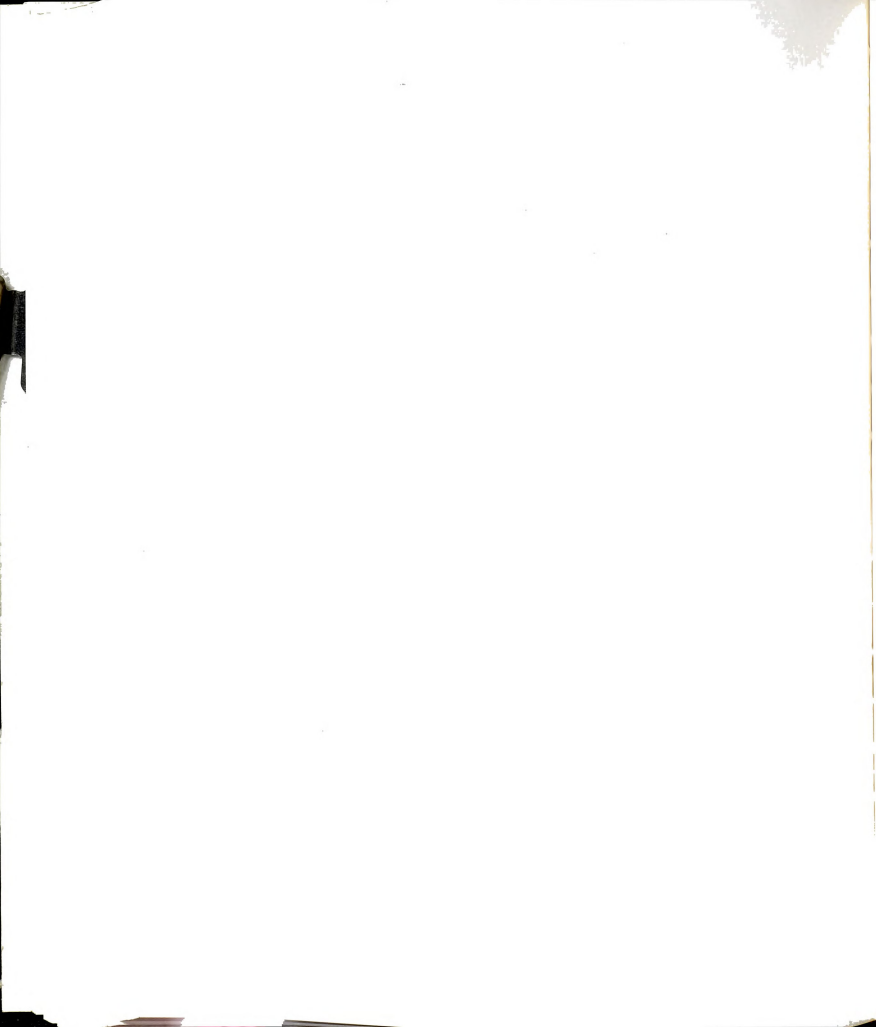
how happy and green the country looked as the chaise whirled rapidly from mile-stone to mile-stone, through neat country towns where landlords came out to welcome him with smiles and bows; by pretty roadside inns . . . by old halls and parks; rustic hamlets clustered round ancient grey churches--and through the charming friendly English landscape. Is there any in the world like it? To a traveller returning home it looks so kind--it seems to shake hands with you as you pass through it. (III, 188)

Here, in this frankly flattering portrait, we see a measured and orderly world, as well as a very charming one. Everything is neat, regulated, molded for human use--and in the background we see the proprietary figure of the landlord.



At one point in Vanity Fair, Thackeray refers to Britain as a "nation of shopkeepers" (II, 51), and while that familiar expression is used ironically, it still indicates a central perception of his vision of England. Many key figures are drawn from important merchantile families--the Osbornes, the Sedleys, the Dobbins--whose business in life is business. The older generations in those families, good early nineteenth century Forsytes, have assiduously compiled wealth through caution, hard business sense, and no flights of fancy. In their circle, Mr. Frederick Bullock, suitor to Maria Osborne, is a paragon: "a man of the world, and a junior partner of a wealthy firm [who] knew what money was, and the value of it" (I, 341); and old Mr. Sedley, who lets a fortune slip through his fingers, is an almost unspeakable disaster. As a class, these sober and industrious Britons are the backbone of their nation, the managers and merchants that obey the laws and work for expansion of the Gross National Product.

The somber work ethic of these people and their austere private lives are shaped in part by religious attitudes. Or, perhaps, their lives shape the religious attitudes, for the worship of the Southdowns, the Bute Crawleys, Sir. Pitt Jr. seems cold, stiff--a business relationship between God and man. This is a religion propagated by stultifying tracts like The Washerwoman of Finchley Common, A Voice from the Flames, and Freshpots Broken; or the



Converted Cannibal;<sup>12</sup> it is used by Pitt and Lady Southdown to manipulate others and advance themselves--to justify man's ways to men. Finally, its heavy emphasis on sin and damnation functions, more than anything else, to keep people obedient and in line.

Of course, in this business-oriented world, order and "good sense" must prevail--people must be allowed to pursue and accumulate wealth without being diverted with dangers like romantic love, idealistic values, sexual immorality, or violence. Society is constructed to deflect or channel those subversive activities so that they do not threaten it; or, in the case of a hard-core sinner, to purge him from its midst and send him abroad. Thus Becky, after being caught with Steyne by Rawdon, flees to the Continent for long years, stopping first "upon the French coast at Boulogne, that refuge of so much exiled English innocence" (III, 288); Rawdon, who fought one duel in his youth and threatened another with the Marquis, leaves England for Coventry Island. With the old Pitt Crawley, society responds in a different way: after he openly flaunts accepted norms by bedecking his butler's daughter in ribbons, the baronet is isolated by the local community, and then seemingly "struck down" by God for his iniquity.

Those who do not leave or die are generally forced to carry out their aggression by civilized means. Sir Pitt's lawsuits, Osborne's hard business dealings, Becky's triumphs over drawing room foes are all examples of muted warfare.

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Even Rawdon, desperate for a duel with Lord Steyne after their great confrontation, is side-tracked from his objective, and what might have been a bloodletting becomes a mock humorous quibble between himself, Captain Macmurdo, and the lawyer Wenham. Further, homage must continually be paid to strict virtue--Becky must have a "sheep dog" and even Lord Steyne must make circumspect bows to morality.

So far I have discussed the marketplace as a locus of English life in Vanity Fair--but the hearth deserves great prominence also. Curiously, Thackeray very seldom shows his major figures at work or business, preferring to depict them in their domestic lives. Some characters, indeed, devote virtually their entire lives to the home, with minimal outside interests--with Amelia, Mrs. Sedley, and Lady Jane Sheepshanks chief among them. But despite this massive investment of energy and emotion, family life is not often happy, and people are continually frustrated with their children and spouses.<sup>13</sup> As Tom Eaves cynically notes: "'the fathers and elder sons of all great families hate each other. The Crown Prince is always in opposition to the crown or hankering after it" (III, 7).

The English world portrayed in Vanity Fair is strongly middle class (as Thackeray was himself, after all) and displays typically bourgeoisie virtues and shortcomings: it is hard-working, orderly, law-abiding, concerned with morality, religion and the home, and on the negative side,



smug, insensitive, unimaginative, dull, selfish, obsessed with money. Basically, it is an Apollonian culture where tensions have been smoothed or muzzled, where extremes are avoided, where people follow their designs with a minimum of excitement or disturbance. It is sane and lackluster then, although there are the spectacular exceptions of Becky from the lower classes and Lord Steyne from the aristocracy.

Continental society serves as foil to the British community, providing, through contrast, a sharper understanding of the workings and values of English life. Thackeray has chosen to reveal Continental living primarily by indirection--by the way it influences the actions of visiting Britons, rather than the way it governs its native people. And in the book's two major travel sequences--the Waterloo Campaign of Chapters XXVIII to XXXII, the Pumpnickel journey of Chapters LXII through LXVI--the conduct of visiting English changes markedly when they set foot across the Channel.

In Belgium before Waterloo, there is a sudden transformation in British manners, a kind of "sea-change." The upper classes

flung off that happy frigidity and insolence of demeanor which occasionally characterises the great at home, and appearing in numberless public places, condescended to mingle with the rest of the company whom they met there. (II, 65)

Old restrictions are cast aside, pent up energies released on the Continent. The atmosphere of Brussels encourages this, being

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one of the gayest and most brilliant little capitals in Europe, and where all the Vanity Fair booths were laid out with the most tempting liveliness and splendor. Gambling was here in profusion, and dancing in plenty . . . beautiful rides, all enlivened with martial splendour; a rare old city, with strange costumes and wonderful architecture . . . (II, 64)

In this festival atmosphere, the English visitors conduct themselves boldly, even recklessly. Becky defies public opinion by lodging in apartments with her husband and General Tufto, and openly flirts with the General; Jos Sedley marches into the Low Countries in colorful military garb; George Osborne neglects his bride of six weeks to pursue Becky; Peggy O'Dowd has a turban and a bird of paradise on display. The whole Brussels experience is summed up by the great ball on the night before the battle of Waterloo--frantic drinking, dancing, gambling conducted under the looming shadows of death.

In the case of Amelia, a trip to the Continent--to Germany and Pumpernickel--brings her liberation and growth. John K. Mathison argues that many of her early shortcomings "are the defects of English middle-class society" and that the German visit broadens her intellectual and emotional horizons, although, in the end, she cannot overcome the narrowness of her upbringing.<sup>14</sup> Certainly the gray bourgeois world of English restricted Amelia to a narrow perimeter, so that she had "not fallen in the way of means to educate her tastes or her intelligence. She has been dominated over hitherto by vulgar intellects" (III, 251).

Amelia's awakening begins on the cruise down the Rhine, where she takes up sketching scenery. Then, in the small German towns along the way, she visits the opera houses, and hears the "wonders of Mozart and Cimarosa" so that "a new world of love and beauty broke upon her when she was introduced to those divine compositions (III, 257-8). The music lead Amelia to Dionysian levels of awareness: "The tender parts of "Don Juan" awakened in her raptures so exquisite that she would ask herself . . . whether it was not wicked to feel so much delight . . ." (III, 258). The glorious Rhine scenery and the works of human art scattered along its banks thus conspire to make Amelis aware of new dimensions of reality and of herself.

But the Dionysian release of energy can take several channels, not all of them as attractive as the gay Brussels, the pleasant Pumpernickel, or the artistic flowering of the Rhineland. For example, the easy morality of the Belgian capital allows for flagrant dishonesty. The characters lie, cheat, exploit and bully each other in a bold, open air style, rejecting the English pattern of sub rosa manipulation. In this, the host people are full equals to their visitors: Isidor, Jos's servant, shamelessly schemes for his master's fortune; Regulus, the Belgian hussar, lies about the battle of Waterloo. Among the English, Becky beguiles and then overcharges Jos Sedley on the horses he wants to leave the city; Jos himself deserts his sister. Significantly, in the catch as catch can atmosphere of the



Continent in warfare, Becky has found the perfect medium for her energies and skills, and makes a tidy sum of money. (Conversely, the Apollonian female Amelia becomes totally ineffectual--Dobbin at one point viewing her "as a parent regards an infant in pain" (II, 102).)

Becky, of course, returns to the Continent after her disgrace, at first clinging to respectability, then becoming "a perfect Bohemian ere long, herding with people whom it would make your hair stand on end to meet" (III, 298). The Roman segment of Becky's wanderings serves as a good vantage point to observe the uglier side of Continental life, as it sets into relief a sordid netherworld of vice and crime. It is peopled by outcasts and exiles, by "shabby bullies, penniless bucks" and by "French widows, dubious Italian countesses" (III, 299, 301) who have been expelled from their countries and prowl about Europe as "marauding irregulars." These people gamble, drink, swindle, rob, and conduct themselves with much more sexual freedom than Britain would allow. In one instance, Lord Steyne, that wealthy self-exile, openly consorts with the Countess of Belladonna (whose husband is away in Morocco). Those more liberal attitudes strike at the very heart of British culture--they allow free rein for passion, they remove sex from its sanctified position in the home--but they reach even into respectable society:

Love and liberty are interpreted by those simple Germans in a way which honest folks in Yorkshire and Somersetshire little understand, and a lady might, in some philosophic and civilized towns,

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be divorced ever so many times from her respective husbands and keep her character in society. (III, 347)

Significantly, the Roman sojourn ends with a threat of physical violence, as Fliche warns Becky that the city is not healthy for her. Moving in the circles she does, accompanied by brutal ruffians like Major Loder, this threat has some credence for Becky, and she avoids Steyne in the future. If the rule of law is not complete in England, it at least offers a modicum of protection from such threats; in Rome, Becky is defenseless and knows it.

Ultimately, Dionysian excess and self-exaltation can lead to physical assaults on others, the celebrated self disdaining the restrictions placed upon him and striking out against them. In Vanity Fair, there are two deaths by violent means, and both of them take place on the Continent. The first is George Osborne's demise on the fields of Waterloo, amidst a bloody military engagement. The second is the murder of Jos Sedley by Becky Sharp at Aix-la-Chappelle fifteen years later, and while Thackeray avoids explicit statement that foul play was committed, he implies as much by picturing Becky as Clytemnestra.

Thackeray clearly has mixed feelings about the Apollonian life of England and the Dionysian life of the Continent, and in some ways sees the two cultures as divided within themselves into opposing camps--foursquare virtue versus Philistinism in England, beauty versus brutality on the Continent. More accurately, however, he sees the



virtues of the cultures very difficult to disentangle completely from their vices. In the case of England, her people's upright and moral lives are partly a product of their dullness; for the Continent, freedom permits the beauties of the Rhenish opera houses and the butchery of Waterloo. All is vanity, he repeatedly tells us, and the hope that one can isolate the good from the bad is a chimera.

Further, while the contrasts between England and the Continent are sharp, the two should not be considered exact opposites. There is considerable congress between the two cultures, and some of the differences would seem to be in degree rather than in kind. For example, Rawdon Crawley violently attacks Lord Steyne in dull and Apollonian England, and then threatens to duel him. Physical assaults tend to be products of the Continent, so Rawdon's action tends to be an exception to the rule; still, English restraint asserts itself, so that the duel is forestalled, instead of ending in death. Indeed, the relative stability and order of British life, as Thackeray envisions it, could be explained in part by the turbulent Continent: Britons who are unhappy, uncomfortable or unwanted in their own country can cross the Channel and inflict themselves on the residents there. On one hand, we might call this a European form of Turner's American Frontier Thesis; on another, it appears that a symbiotic relationship exists between the dissimilar cultures.



Developed out of his insights into foreign lands and beliefs about life, Thackeray's Apollonian and Dionysian systems give him the chance to organize human experience on a broad and cultural level, and to show the different forms that experience takes. They enable him to work the travels and visits to foreign lands into a purposeful artistic pattern. Finally, they help to forward his great theme, for whatever the culture--and there are definite differences between them,--the end result is frustration and unhappiness. In Vanity Fair, there can be little brooding over the road not taken, even though Thackeray is constantly presenting the reader and characters with choices, because all paths lead to the same deadend.

## II

So far this discussion has been restricted to the thematic aspects of foreign lands in Vanity Fair. Now I will turn to the novel's relationship with the travel literature that preceeded it, regarding with special interest the narrative techniques and the character of the narrator in both. Vanity Fair followed an apprenticeship period over a decade long, a phase in which journalism, short stories, sketches, and comic pieces competed for the artist's attention and energies with travel writing. But while travel literature's influence is mingled with that of many others, it has still pressed its own mark on the completed novel.



In defining the character of the narrator, a key passage occurs late in the novel, where, after describing Amelia and Dobbin's progress down the Rhineland, the narrator interjects:

It was on this very tour that I, the present writer of a history of which every word is true, had the pleasure to see them first and to make their acquaintance. (III, 260)

The narrator goes on to describe his first sight of Dobbin and the traveling party at the Erbprinz Hotel in Pumpernickel; the evening at the Court theater where he, as one of "the young fellows in the stalls" (III, 262), watches Dobbin and Amelia; and, after the entertainment, how they greet the party and chat with Jos Sedley. If this entrance into the novel seems a break with the puppet-master--that self-conscious and intrusive narrator who admits he is writing a novel--one must agree that it is, and acknowledge that the narrator isn't completely consistent in his stance toward the narrative. Still, the role of traveler has been well prepared for him by several passages spaced throughout Vanity Fair; he says at various times: "I have heard a brother of the story-telling trade, at Naples . . ." (I, 116); "At the little Paris theaters, on the other hand, you will not only hear . . ." (I, 116); "I recollect seeing, years ago, at the prisons for idiots and madmen at Bicetre, near Paris . . ." (III, 174). The reader is made aware, then, that this man has traveled and has a real knowledge of other nations and cultures; he is cosmopolitan rather than provincial.



At this point, it is important to recall how Thackeray used his narrator. He had a stock of narrative masks he would assume repeatedly (FitzBoodle, Pendennis, Titmarsh), as long as those masks fit the needs of the work at hand; if he wanted to assume a different attitude, Thackeray would create a new figure (like the Fat Contributor) rather than change the character of an old one. While the Vanity Fair narrator is unnamed, his traveling habits make him appear akin to Titmarsh; thus, the question becomes: is the puppet-master a new creation, or does he have other affinities and points of comparison to Titmarsh?

Thackeray's publishers felt at first that the Vanity Fair narrator and Titmarsh were one and the same-- and advertised the book under that familiar non de plume.<sup>15</sup> Subsequently, the book was published under Thackeray's name (the first to be so printed), but there remains ample evidence that the puppet-master, stage-manager, man-about-town of the novel evolved from the narrator of the travel books.

In all those works, the narrator is intrusive and self-conscious, frequently calling attention to his presence and telling the reader that he is writing the book. There are frequent direct addresses to the audience ("But my kind reader will please to remember that this history . . .") (I, 116) is one example), showing a real effort to establish a personal "I-you" relationship. At times there are asides referring to the responses that the audience is



making: in Cornhill to Cairo he mentions "ladies who read" his description of a Turkish bath "will be going into hysterics" (XXI, 344) and in Vanity Fair talks of the contemptuous reaction of Jones to one of his sentimental passages. This give and take is a social affair--and, not surprisingly, the narrator of Vanity Fair sees himself as a traveling-companion to the readers, whom he calls "fellow-sojourners" (II, 160):

This, dear friends and companions, is my amiable object--to walk with you through the Fair, to examine the shops and the shows there; and that we should all come home after the flare, and the noise, and the gaiety, and be perfectly miserable in private. (I, 280)

That the narrator should be a delightful compagnon de voyage is, of course, a constant demand in Thackeray's reviews of travel books, and is one of the major objectives in his own travel literature. The "companion" of the novel we are discussing performs much like the Titmarsh of Cornhill to Cairo or The Irish Sketch Book: charming the reader with gay banter, a wide store of learning and a plentiful stock of anecdotes, always willing to break from his story to digress or moralize. Hence the novel's many parenthetical comments about Lady Emily Hornblower and The Washer-woman of Finchley Common, or "irrelevancies" like the little children and Peggy with the penny (I, 341)--the friendly storyteller is having a pleasant chat with his reader. Strolling casually through the Fair with a comrade, he should not be expected to apply rigid narrative logic to his tale.

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There are two other areas of continuity between the narrator of the novel and the travel books. First, the puppet-master of Vanity Fair retains the triple role of character, companion and conduit that was discussed in Chapter III. He appears in the novel as a character in the Pumpernickel section; as a companion, in his relationship to the reader; and as a conduit, whose art shapes and selects the information the reader receives about the Fair. Secondly, he is essentially the same person, with basically the same personality, as the writer of the travel books. Both Titmarsh and the puppet-master are middle-class figures with classical educations; they hold no discernible jobs, and seem to be men-about town who wile away idle hours in club gossip, or in travel; they are religious, conservative, and, one guesses, older gentlemen. Through the medium of Thackeray's prose, their characters and sentiments appear similar. Take this phrase from Cornhill to Cairo: "If I entertain you with accounts of inns and nightcaps it is because I am more familiar with these subjects than with history and fortifications" (XXI, 302). It is loosely echoed in the sentences from Vanity Fair: "We do not claim to rank among the military novelists. Our place is with the non-combatants. When the decks are cleared for action we go below and wait meekly" (II, 90). Likewise, the description of Vigo's Place of the Constitution--a "scene . . . just like that of a little theatre" (XXI, 271)--has clear

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parallels to the "Before the Curtain" section that opens Vanity Fair.

But the surest index to the narrators' similarity is not verbal echoes or parallel passages, but shared personality traits. The three most prominent characteristics of Titmarsh are also those of the Vanity Fair narrator; good humor and wit, generally of the comic/ironic sort; a tendency to deliver blunt opinions freely and without fear; a habit of moralizing, of evaluating all before them according to certain standards. There is a difference, however, in the relative prominence of those traits in the narrators: Titmarsh is very highly opinionated and plain-spoken, and less importantly a moralist; the puppet-master, just the opposite. This can be explained by the works themselves, though, because the narrator is supposed to assert his personality in travel literature, according to Thackeray, and therefore is outspoken. But in the novel, where a cast of characters share the limelight with the narrator, he can recede from center stage and comment on them as a reflective moralist. And even if the puppet-master is not precisely identical to Titmarsh, it is clear that he has been developed from the earlier figure point by point.

Just as the character of the narrator carries over from the travel books to Vanity Fair, so do various literary and narrative techniques. The first of these tactics needs but the briefest mention here, for it has been discussed

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extensively above--Thackeray's use of cultural comparison and contrast. By using England to criticize the Continent, and vice versa, he is able to illuminate and extend his thematic contrast of the Apollonian to the Dionysian. As in the earlier books, then, Vanity Fair's travel is purposeful--undertaken by the author not to snatch glimpses of exotic scenery (although this does enter in), but to broaden his and the reader's view of the human condition.

Next, Vanity Fair employs the "multi-media" approach mentioned in Chapter III, using both drawings and prose to establish its ideas. The two are intertwined: the prose sector is aware of the drawings, and at one point when Thackeray says: "And while the moralist, who is holding forth on the cover (an accurate portrait of your humble servant) professes to wear neither gown nor bands . . ." (I, 116), he is alluding to a woodcut that was on the cover of the original edition.<sup>16</sup> And as in the travel books, the drawings expand the meanings found in the text. The picture of Becky throwing Johnson's Dictionary at Jemima Pinkerton (I, 10) reveals the character of the two people; the pencil sketch of Becky as Clytemnestra is a vital indicator that she murdered Jos Sedley, and thus helps explain an element of the plot left ambiguous in the prose. To be sure, this "multi-media" approach is not confined to the novels and travel books, for Thackeray illustrated his magazine sketches and short stories also. But the novel's original subtitle, "Pen and Pencil Sketches of English

Society," is certainly significant, echoing the titles of the two sketchbooks, and recalling Thackeray's practice, in Ireland and the Levant, of traveling through an area, executing pencil drawings and short prose pieces as he went. This subtitle was subsequently replaced by the more familiar "A Novel Without a Hero," perhaps signalling a change in the author's conception of the book from a loose confederation of sketches to a highly integrated work. The original tells us, however, that along with the image of puppet-master, stage manager and traveling companion, we can regard the narrator as a rambling artist.

In the travel literature, Thackeray frequently employed an impressionistic style of narration and description, attempting to convey the "fool" of travel and foreign countries through clusters of sharp images. In an essay on Vanity Fair, V. S. Pritchett notes this method, saying that Thackeray "is the first of our novelists to catch visually and actually life as it passes in fragments before us . . . he is above all a superb impressionist--perhaps our greatest . . ." <sup>17</sup> His sharp ear for dialogue, his use of selected detail to "reconstruct" the Regency era in his 1840's novel, his ability in this wide-ranging, quick-moving book to suggest new settings and places in short paragraphs are all facets of his skill as an impressionist. Take the first paragraph of the novel:

a large family coach, with two fat horses in blazing harness, driven by a fat coachman in a three-cornered hat and wig . . . A black servant, who reposed on the

box beside the fat coachman, uncurled his bandy legs as soon as the equipage drew up opposite Miss Pinkerton's shining brass plate . . . (I, 1)

The thick flow of visual detail that opens the book is sustained throughout.

The landscape mode of The Irish Sketch Book, the organization of natural scenery into word pictures, carries over into Vanity Fair. One passage I have quoted above--the Southampton to London road section--is a sample of Thackeray's arrangement of a series of images into a picture frame. He falls into this pattern again in Chapter XXVIII, as he describes the lowlands before the great battle of Waterloo, and in Chapter LXII, where he sketches the Rhineland.

The prose texture of Vanity Fair, aside from landscape prose drawings and impressionistic etchings, is rich in its allusions to foreign lands and travel. Old Mr. Osborne "basked . . . as a Neopolitan beggar does in the sun" (I, 186); Becky is considered like "the most hardened Arab that ever careered across the desert" (III, 345); her sordid history in Europe cannot be baldly described, just "as the Ahrimanians worship the devil, but don't mention him" (III, 289). These are only a few examples: continually the novel harkens the reader to foreign lands and cultures by the fund of metaphor, allusion, simile and comparison woven into its prose. Like travel literature, the writing excites growing awareness of the world "out there."



The most important link between the travel literature and this novel is, perhaps, their common use of the narrator--how he dominates the works by funneling all information to the reader, and by shaping that information through opinion, exhortation, and emphasis. This dominance, of course, is not the exclusive property of the travel books and the novels, but extends to virtually every prose form Thackeray worked in; it links all his literature. Even though it cannot be claimed that Vanity Fair derives its puppet-master's dominance from the travel narratives, two techniques flowing from it deserve mention here: the substitution of psychological relationship for temporal, and the emphasis on process as well as product.

In Chapter III, I showed how Titmarsh would narrate according to the flow of his experiences and the associations they summoned up, rather than to strict chronology and the itinerary of his trip. In Chapter X of The Irish Sketch Book, he would leap backwards and forwards in time, freely digress into short essays, and inflate the importance of seemingly insignificant events, while skimming over "major" ones. The first half of Chapter XLVIII in Vanity Fair likewise seems structured on the passage of thoughts in the narrator's mind, not the characters' passage through time or movement through space. This section tells of Becky's presentation to that "Magnificent Idea," George IV, but shuttling in and out is the narrator with his commentary. Surrounding the details of Becky's trip to the Court that

day, her dress and what she said, and connecting one fact to another, is a web of memory, opinions and predictions spun out by the narrator: ideas about the ways older women dress, the remembrance of seeing the King thirty-two years ago, and the knowledge of the future: "a score of years hence . . . that milliner's wonder, will have passed into the domain of the absurd . . ." (III, 20). These various reflections are vitally important--they provide the context which gives the bare record of Becky's meeting both significance and meaning. This marvellous passage (and there are many others) demonstrates the puppet-master's great power: his thoughts determine the contours of the narrative, the association of those thoughts determine narrative movement, and his opinions, in large part, determine the reader's response.

The importance of this narrator, and his frankly intrusive nature, call attention to the process of storytelling and novel-writing, as well as the product itself, Vanity Fair. In the travel books, we are aware that the narrator is composing his narrative, and that the events confronting him are shaping it. Likewise, the making of Vanity Fair is one of that novel's favorite topics, with frequent asides noting problems encountered and efforts exerted. There is the rhetorical question: "But what would have become of our story and all our friends, then" (II, 63); the discussion of technique: "And, as we bring our characters forward, I will ask leave . . . not only to

introduce them, but occasionally to step down from the platform and talk about them" (I, 117); the concern at what the reader will think: "Yes, I can see Jones at this minute . . . taking out his pencil and scoring under the words . . ." (I, 8-9). Thackeray is the kind of performer who loves to share the tricks of his trade with the audience--a magician who, during the show, will explain how the rabbits pop out of his hat.

In sum, Vanity Fair is permeated with travel motifs, and shaped in part by the travel literature that preceded it--the book's events, themes, narrator and narrative techniques point backwards, toward the author's experiences in foreign lands and his early writings about them. Indeed, travel embraces not only the different aspects of the novel, but the whole. For in "Before the Curtain," Thackeray considers the entire enterprise--stage manager, characters, the Fair itself--a sort of traveling show that has moved through "all the principal towns in England" (I, xviii); one that "a man with a reflective turn of mind," perhaps the reader, can travel through himself at his own pleasure.

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FOOTNOTES--CHAPTER IV

<sup>1</sup>Stevenson, p. 153.

<sup>2</sup>Works, I, 1. All subsequent references will be identified within the text.

<sup>3</sup>The definition of a "major character" in a novel (or play, or motion picture) is slippery. In Vanity Fair, I believe that Becky Sharp, Lord Steyne, William Dobbin, Rawdon Crawley, George Osborne, Amelia Sedley and Joseph Sedley are the major characters due to their importance in the narrative and the amount of time they engage the author's attention.

<sup>4</sup>Ruth Benedict, Patterns of Culture (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1934), p. 79. She is quoting Nietzsche's The Birth of Tragedy (New York: Random House, 1924), pp. 40, 68.

<sup>5</sup>Benedict, p. 122.

<sup>6</sup>Benedict, pp. 78-79.

<sup>7</sup>Pritchett, pp. 829-830.

<sup>8</sup>See Bernard J. Paris, "The Psychic Structure of Vanity Fair," Victorian Studies, 10 (1967), pp. 389-410. In part this article sees Amelia and Dobbin living by a compulsively "compliant" value system, and Becky Sharp by a compulsively "aggressive" one. In some ways, those value systems parallel Apollonian and Dionysian ones.

<sup>9</sup>Ray, Adversity, p. 422.

<sup>10</sup>Benedict, p. 131.

<sup>11</sup>George J. Worth, "More on the German Sections of Vanity Fair," Nineteenth Century Fiction, 19 (1964), p. 402.

<sup>12</sup>John K. Mathison, "The German Sections of Vanity Fair," Nineteenth Century Fiction, 18 (1963), pp. 243.

<sup>13</sup>Paris, p. 394.



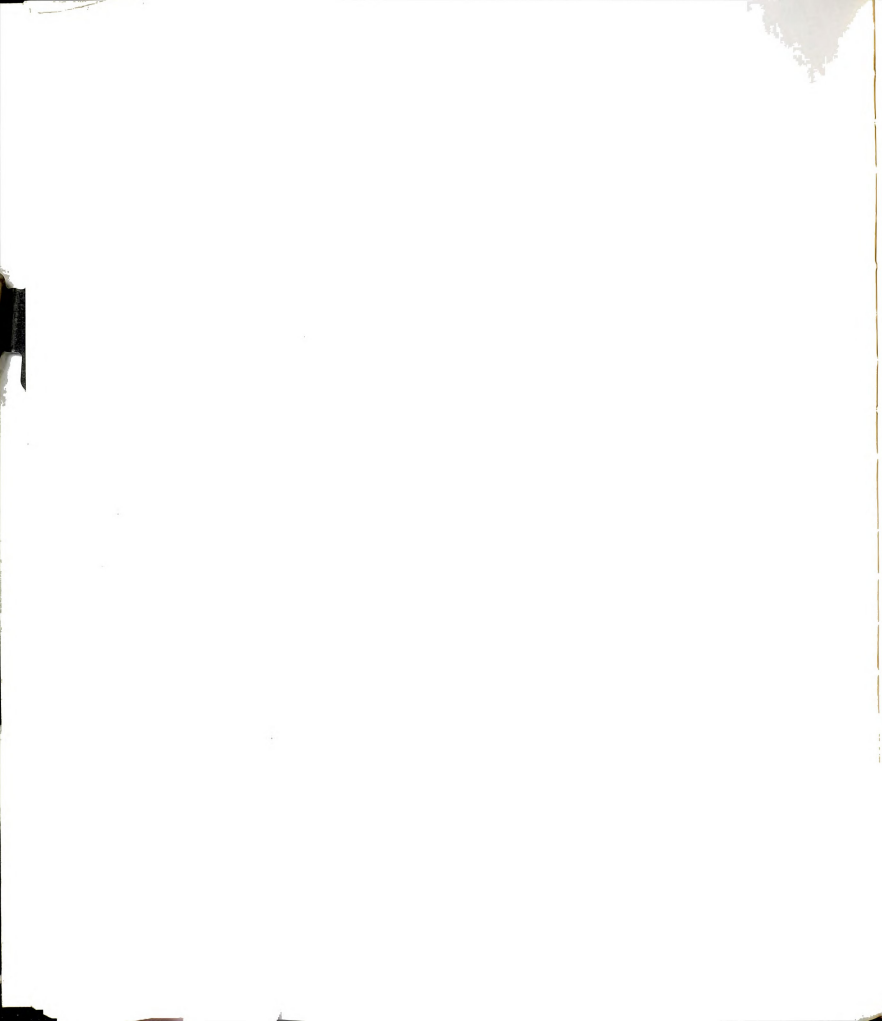
<sup>14</sup>Mathison, pp. 245-246.

<sup>15</sup>Ray, Adversity, p. 385. Bradbury and Evans placed an announcement in Punch in November, 1846:

NEW WORK BY MICHAEL ANGELO TITMARSH  
VANITY FAIR  
BY W. M. THACKERAY

<sup>16</sup>Pritchett, p. 95.

<sup>17</sup>Pritchett, p. 823.

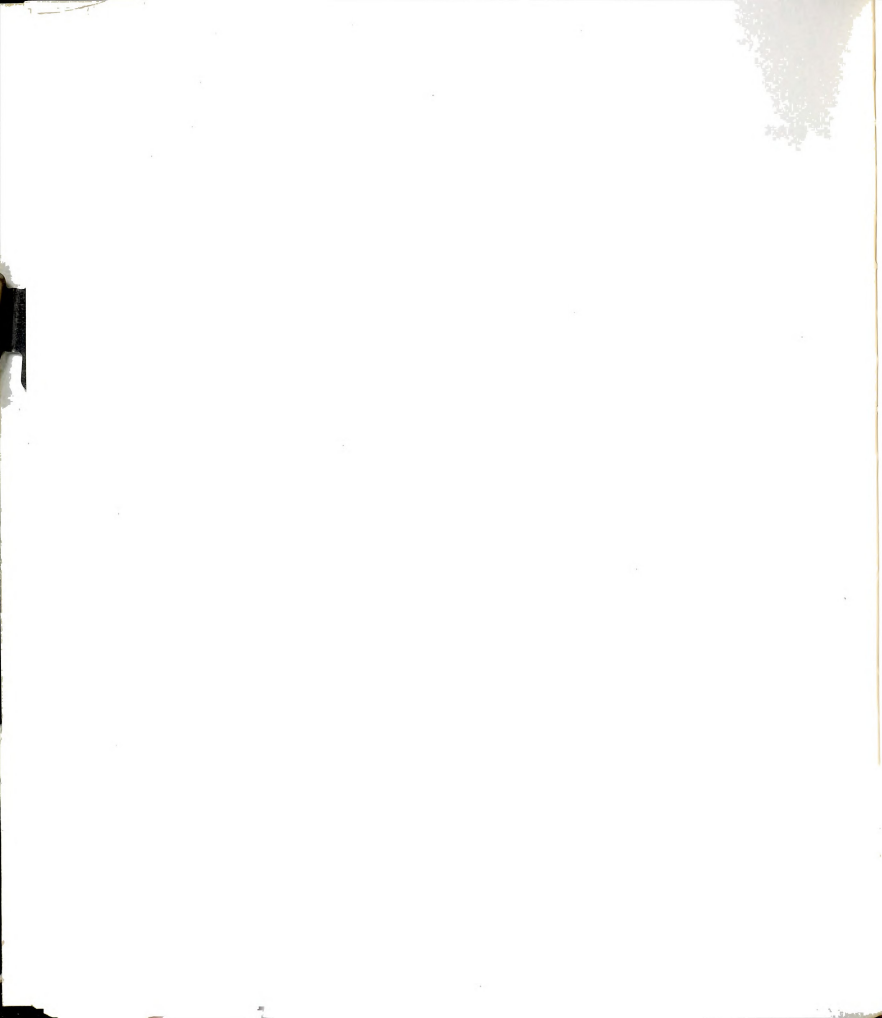


## CHAPTER V

### FOREIGN LANDS IN THE OTHER NOVELS

In this final chapter, I would like to expand briefly on my discussion of Thackeray's thematic treatment of foreign lands, here touching on the way those countries appear in his other novels. Vanity Fair was his great work, and its vision of Continental life was implied in the one novel that preceded it (Barry Lyndon) and substantiated in the five that followed it (Pendennis, Henry Esmond, The Newcomes, The Virginians, and Philip). While these other books include Ireland and the United States as travel destinations, the views that Thackeray holds on the Continent in Vanity Fair carry over to those nations also.

Essentially, Thackeray sees foreign culture as Dionysian (as I have used the term in Chapter IV)-- culture that is directed toward the release of energy, toward liberation, toward self-expression. This unchained energy moves in two opposite directions: the path of beauty and affirmation, or the path of violence and destruction. In Vanity Fair, the glamor of Brussels was an example of the positive side, and the battle of Waterloo



a representative of the negative; and the splendor and savagery of the Continent--its tendencies to excessive beauty and ugliness--are treated in many other ways throughout the novel. The other novels use the same positive/negative pattern.

In those books, I find several prominent themes that stress Dionysian virtues: foreign lands have great color and liveliness; young romantic love can flourish in them; they afford great freedom; they foster artistic expression. In The Paris Sketch Book, Thackeray noted "the dark uniformity of a London street" which looks as though "it were painted in India-ink" while there is "a thousand times more life and colour" on a Parisian byway.<sup>1</sup> This motif is picked up in Pendennis, when Helen Pendennis sees on her Continental tour: "black-veiled nuns with outstretched arms kneeling before illuminated altars . . . bare-footed friars in the streets . . . priests in gorgeous robes, theatres opened, and people dancing on Sundays" (Works, VI, 73). The sheer brightness and vibrancy of foreign lands extends to natural scenery--Clive Newcome crosses the Alps

beholding the snows on St. Gothard, and the beautiful region through which the Ticino rushes on its way to the Lombard lakes, and the great corn-covered plains of the Milanese . . . O sweet peaceful scene of azure lake, and snow-crowned mountain, so wonderfully lovely is your aspect, that it seem like Heaven almost . . . (Works, VIII, 169-170)

In this bright world, the artist's opportunities are great. Clive Newcome and J. J. Ridley spend long months on the Continent in practicing their painting skills;

there is the artists' colony in Rome that is depicted in The Newcomes; Philip Firmin hones his writing skills while living a Bohemian existence in Paris. The people have a great esteem for art, Thackeray believes, and thus "An artist in [Paris] is by far a more distinguished personage than a lawyer & a great deal more so than a clergyman" (Letters, I, 261).

English visitors are frequently charmed and delighted by the colorful and artistic world of foreign culture. Young Philip Firmin claimed his days of poverty in Paris were the happiest of his life, and he does not stand alone in so celebrating life abroad. In The Newcomes, Ethel writes to Laura Pendennis: "I remember, in old days, when we were travelling on the Rhine, in the happiest days of my whole life"; and the author muses that "when Clive Newcome comes to be old, no doubt he will remember his Roman days as amongst the happiest which fate ever awarded him" (Works, IX, 262; VIII, 229). Even dishonest Barry Lyndon enviously looked back on his freebooting Continental days, despite the subsequent wealth he assumed.

Thackeray's work and letters abound with passages celebrating the natural beauty and idyllic charms--one example being these reflections in the Roundabout Papers:

I had occasion to pass a week in the autumn in the little town of Coire or Chur in the Grisons . . . The pretty little city stands, so to speak, at the end of the world--of the world of to-day, the world of rapid motion, and rushing railways, and the commerce and intercourse of men . . . I have seldom seen a place more quaint, pretty, calm and pastoral . . . (Works, XXVII, 1)

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This is the image of a golden era, of the idyllic pastoral experience. Romantic love is part of that experience, and Thackeray depicts several pairs of lovers in foreign lands. Philip Firmin and Charlotte Baynes fall in love in France; Clive and Ethel Newcome revel in their days along the Rhine; Henry and Rachel Esmond quickly settle down in America after their marriage.

Finally, there is freedom in the air--people are allowed to pursue their inclinations without heavy social pressure. In Paris, Philip shuns the stultifying manners of the British colony as much as possible, to mingle happily with open and spontaneous natives. In The Newcomes, the young people at the Congress of Baden find themselves freed, in part, from manners based on selfish calculation and stiff tradition. Freedom, of course, is a two-edged sword, and the greater liberties allowed in foreign countries give the opportunity for simple, straightforward and honest conduct, while including the open temptations to evil. One can become a developing artist, a maker of beautiful things, like J. J. Ridley, or blossom into a dissolute, vicious gambler like Barry Lyndon.

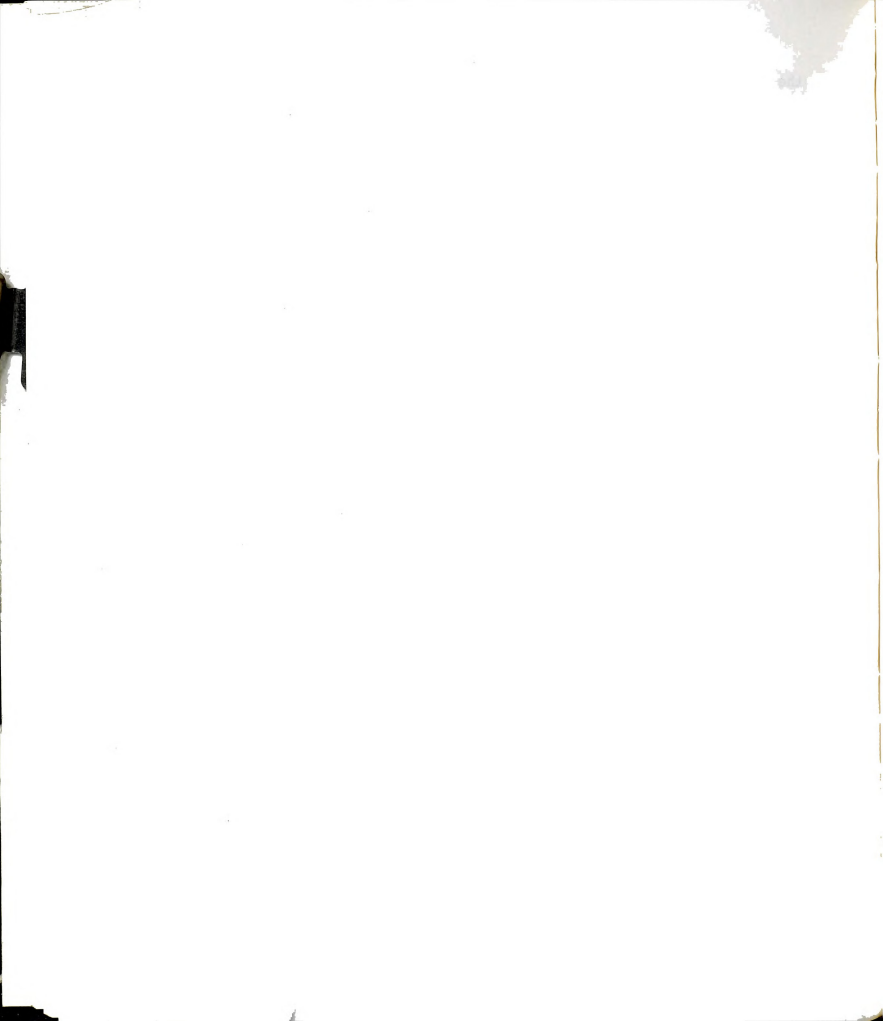
So because of this freedom, Thackeray's golden age and pastoral garden stand uncomfortable near a ruthless, primitive jungle of crime and murder. This is the predatory world inhabited, in Vanity Fair, by figures like Major Loder and Becky Sharp on the lower levels, and Lord Steyne and Napoleon on the upper ones. The primary qualities of

the foreign netherworld are violence, immorality, and deceit, extending all the way from individuals to entire governmental structures.

In work after work, Thackeray paints scenes of warfare, bloodshed and murder in other countries--very revealing when one considers that most of the action of Thackeray's novels occurs in England, but most violence happens abroad. Take this passage from Henry Esmond, concerning a campaign in the War of Spanish Succession:

our troops entering the enemy's territory, and putting all around them to fire and sword; burning farms, wasted fields, shrieking women, slaughtered sons and fathers, and drunken soldiery, cursing and carousing in the midst of tears, terror and murder. Why does the stately Muse of History . . . leave out these scenes, so brutal, mean, and degrading, that yet form by far the greater part of the drama of war? (Works, XI, 15-6)

Barry Lyndon and The Virginians also have long sections dealing with Continental warfare, and those passages invariably deal with the gory and blood-letting aspects of military struggle, instead of making it appear heroic or glamorous. The uncivilized sport of duelling is also treated unsympathetically in Henry Esmond, Barry Lyndon, and The Newcomes, as a distasteful example of warfare on the individual level. Perhaps because of all this violence, death becomes an important part of Thackeray's vision of foreign lands, and it claims victims not only by brutal means, but--in the case of Helen Pendennis and General Baynes of Philip--by natural ones.



Warfare becomes not only fact, but metaphor for foreign life--for a Hobbesian world where people swindle, trick, and assault each other, leading lives which are all too often nasty, brutish and short. Barry Lyndon's career as a professional gambler is a marvelous model for such an existence. It is a procession of rigged gambling matches, cheating on debts, lying and duping others. An exceptionally large portion of the novel is devoted to a sordid intrigue that Lyndon and his uncle become involved in while residing in a German duchy, and as this affair unwinds the cynicism, duplicity, and ruthlessness of all parties becomes apparent.

Thackeray was also shocked by the greater sexual freedom of foreign lands (Ireland and the United States clearly excepted here). In The Newcomes he talks of the Baden-Baden gambling tables, where there are:

ladies who are not virtuous at all, no, not even by name . . . where you meet wonderful countesses and princesses, whose husbands are almost always absent on their vast estates--in Italy, Spain, Piedmont--who knows where their lordship's possessions are? (Works, VIII, 29)

The married woman traveling by herself, whether through simple separation from her husband or divorce proceedings, was an object of scandal to Thackeray, and he placed these women in Continental settings. Lady Clara Belsize of The Newcomes, Agnes Woolcomb of Philip, and a host of minor characters can find social acceptance on the Continent where they would meet outright rejection in England for



their deviations from the strict sexual-marital codes. While Thackeray could find some sympathy for such outcasts, he generally sided with those who decried more tolerant and liberal mores; he would at times contrive suffering and humiliation for such transgressors. Henry Esmond was the product of pre-marital dalliance, and although he was legitimized by a late marriage, his mother spent the balance of her life in a convent, expiating her sin.

In his travel writings and private letters, Thackeray was a frequent critic of foreign political institutions, finding them inadequate and harmful. In The Paris Sketch Book, for example, he attacked French monarchs such as Louis XIV and Louis Philippe, ridiculed the French legal system, and bluntly dismissed the political thoughts of Louis Napoleon. In his novels aside of Barry Lyndon, such criticism is rare. But in that first novel, the individual knavery of the people and the cynicism of the rulers are drawn together on the same broad canvas--and leaders like Frederick the Great of Prussia are not seen as standing above the predatory jungle, but as partaking in its pursuits with special skill.

As I have indicated, Thackeray's general treatment of foreign lands as Dionysian is consistent, and continually falls into the "beauty vs. brutality" pattern. But within this limited framework, there is considerable variety, and Thackeray finds various ways to fit foreign lands and travel into the overall thematic patterns of

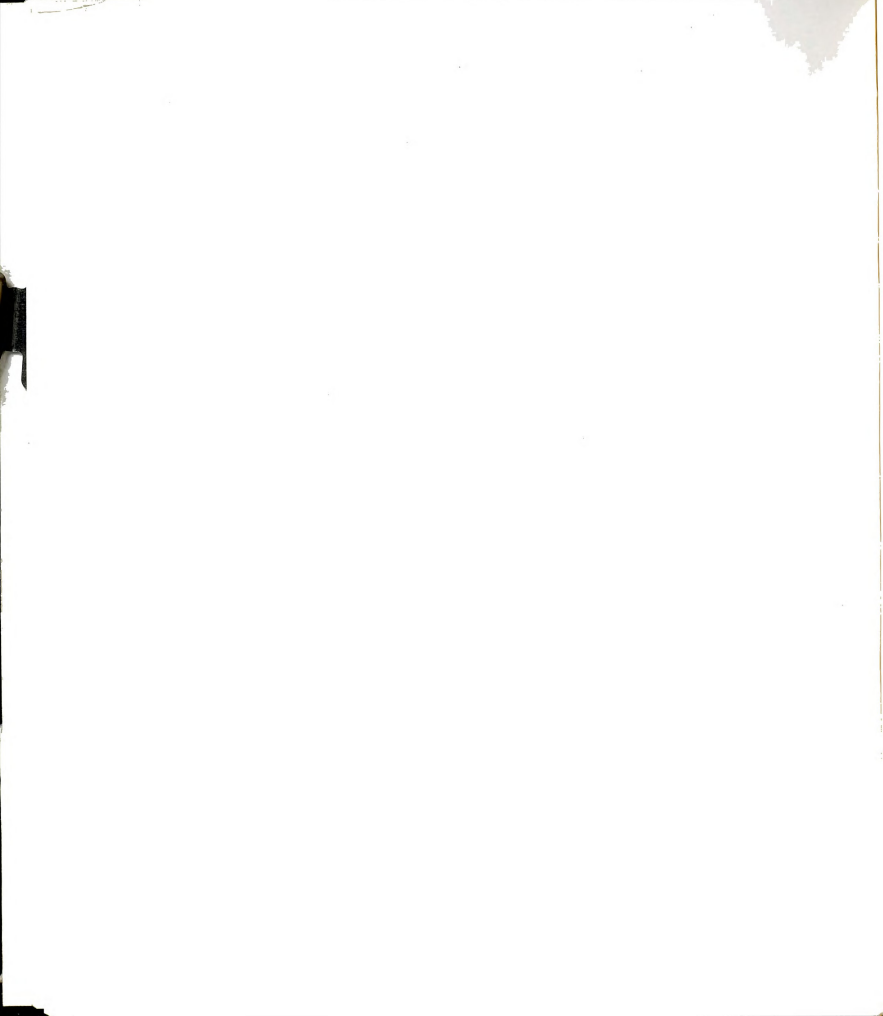
his novels. In *Henry Esmond*, for example, there is a three-way structure involving England, the Continent, and America. In this scheme (to simplify somewhat), the Continent is the arena for continual, bloody strife and naked deceit; America, a place of repose, where Esmond's life "was passed in the tranquil offices of love and duty" (X, xx-xxi); and England, somewhere between the two. The title hero is a soldier on the Continent, a farmer in America, and primarily a suitor for Beatrix in England. The Newcomes, on the other hand, emphasizes the possibilities for young love and artistic expression on the Continent, and more violent aspects of that region are played down (but not excluded). In The Virginians, a very interesting reversal takes place from Thackeray's usual practice-- America, the birthplace of Henry and George Warrington, becomes the "home" country, while England becomes a "foreign" land to the two young visitors. Against this background, Thackeray develops, years before James, the "international theme" of American innocence against European experience and cynicism.

Further, the relative importance of foreign travel varies in these novels, ranging from the dominant (The Virginians) to the clearly secondary (Pendennis). Travel sequences take up large blocs of The Newcomes and Philip, but are restricted to several key chapters in Henry Esmond. Some novels are concerned with travel in a single foreign country; others deal with several.

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These differences, of course, are less important than significant similarities. Presented in each novel, presented in like and purposeful ways, foreign lands and travel are clearly major interests in Thackeray's fiction. They are, furthermore, interests central to his personal life and artistic career, so that a study and illumination of them enhances our understanding of Thackeray's mind and art.



FOOTNOTES--CHAPTER V

<sup>1</sup>Works, XVII, p. 13. All subsequent references will be identified in the text by volume and page.



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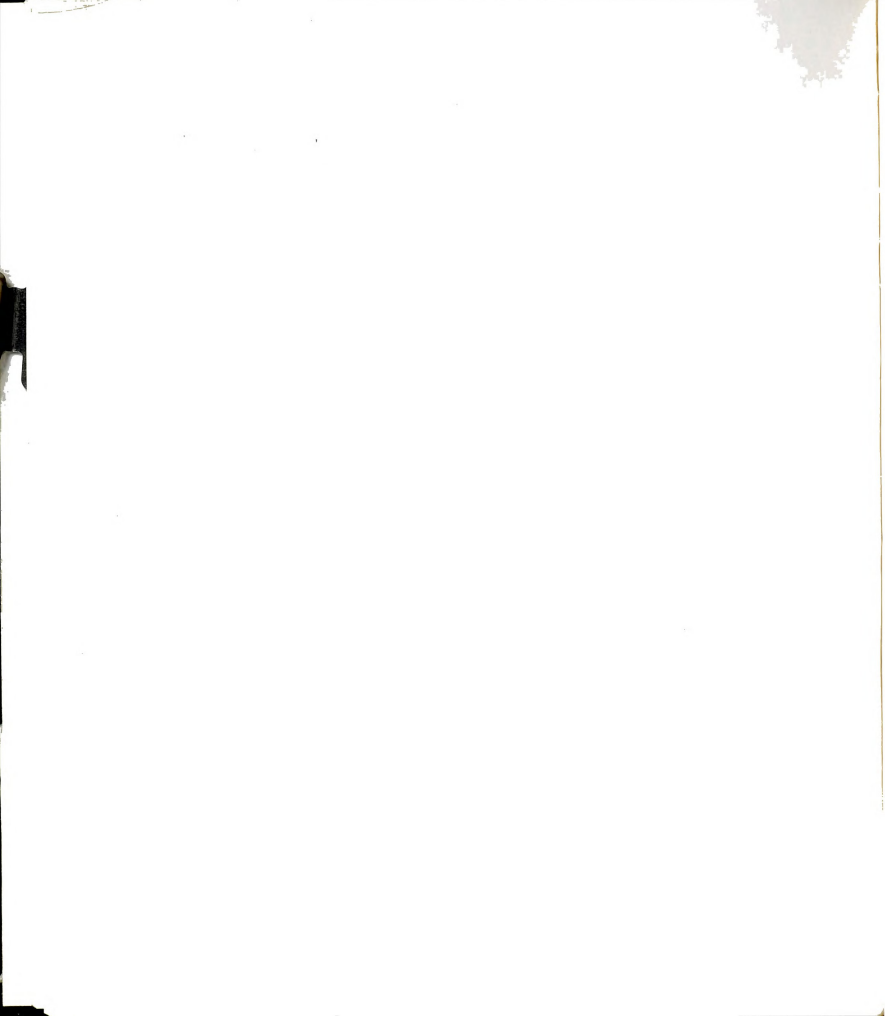
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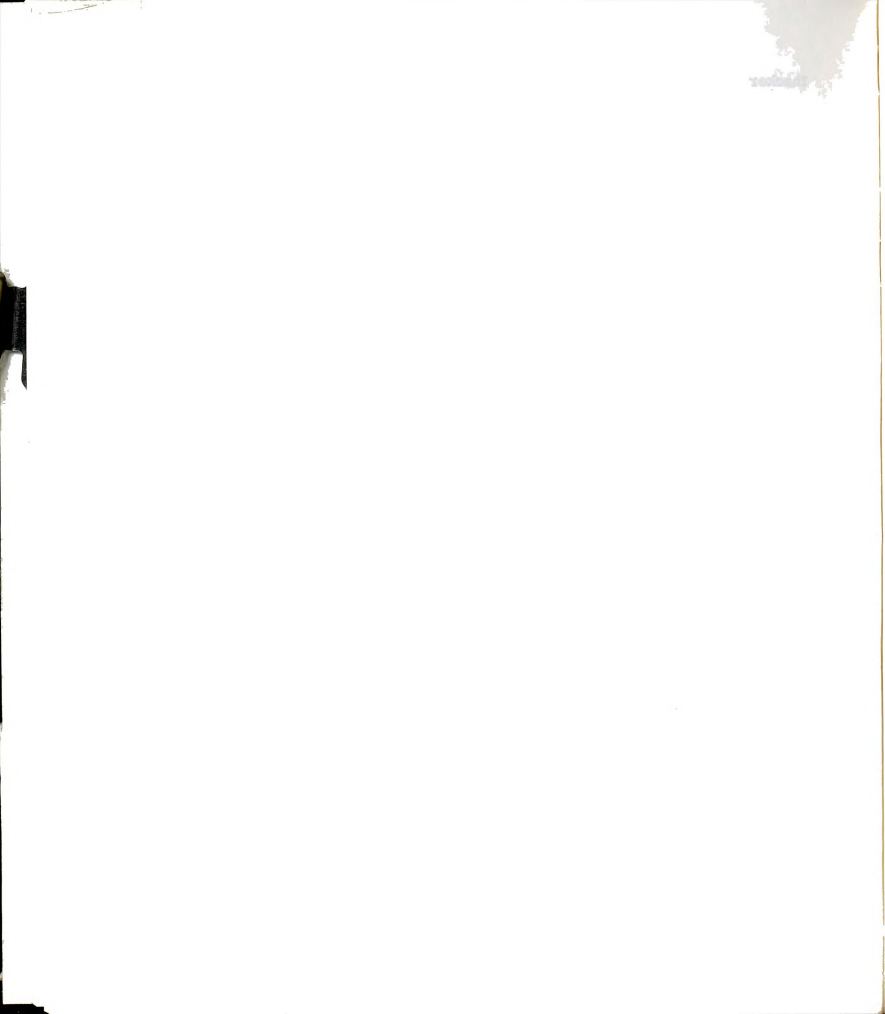
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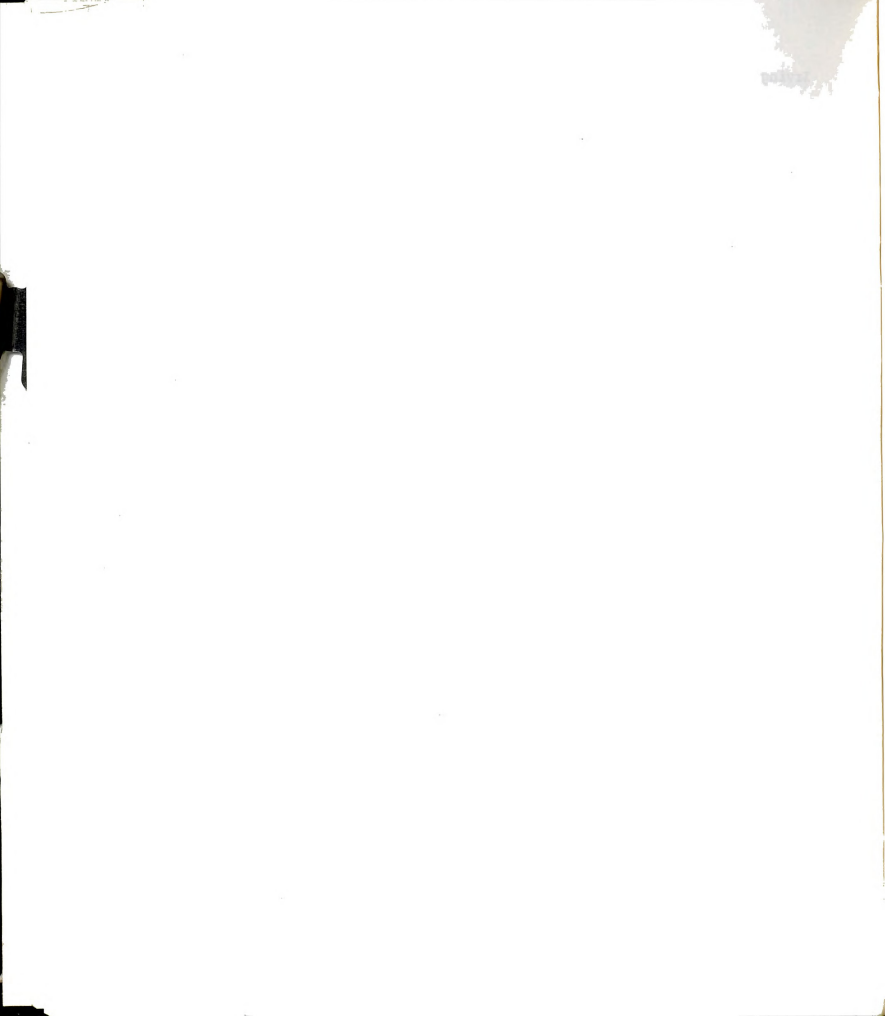
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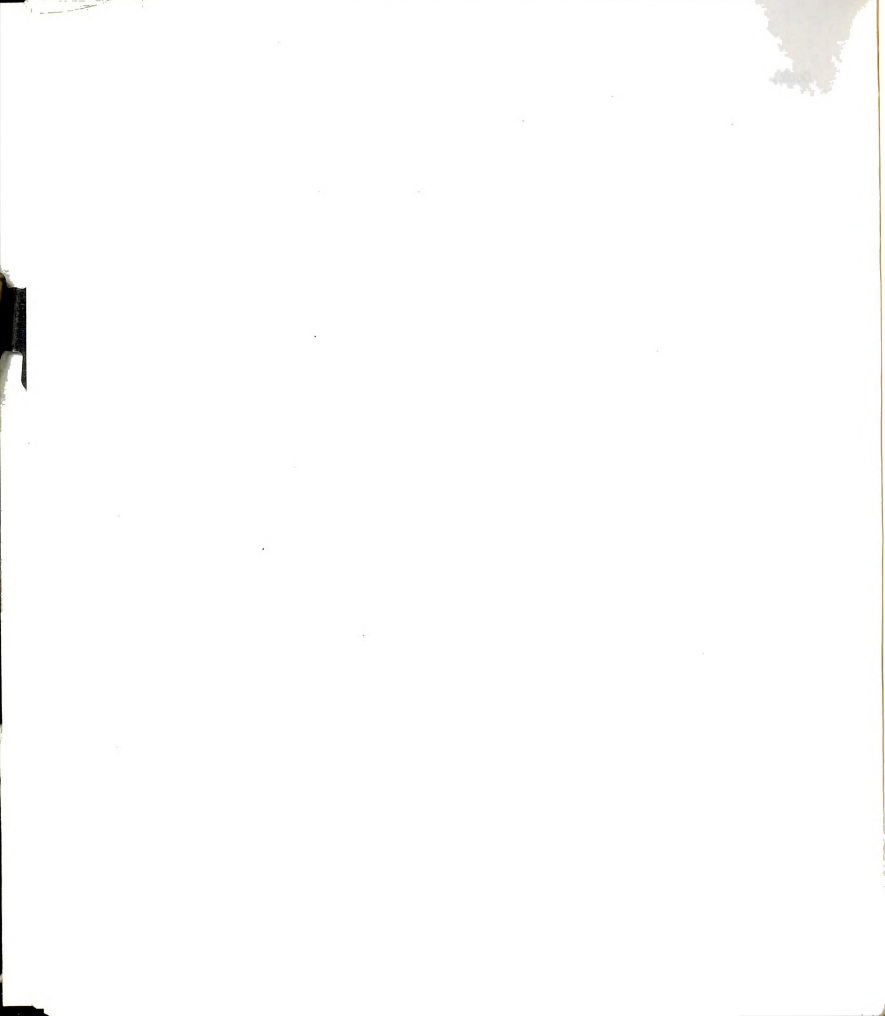
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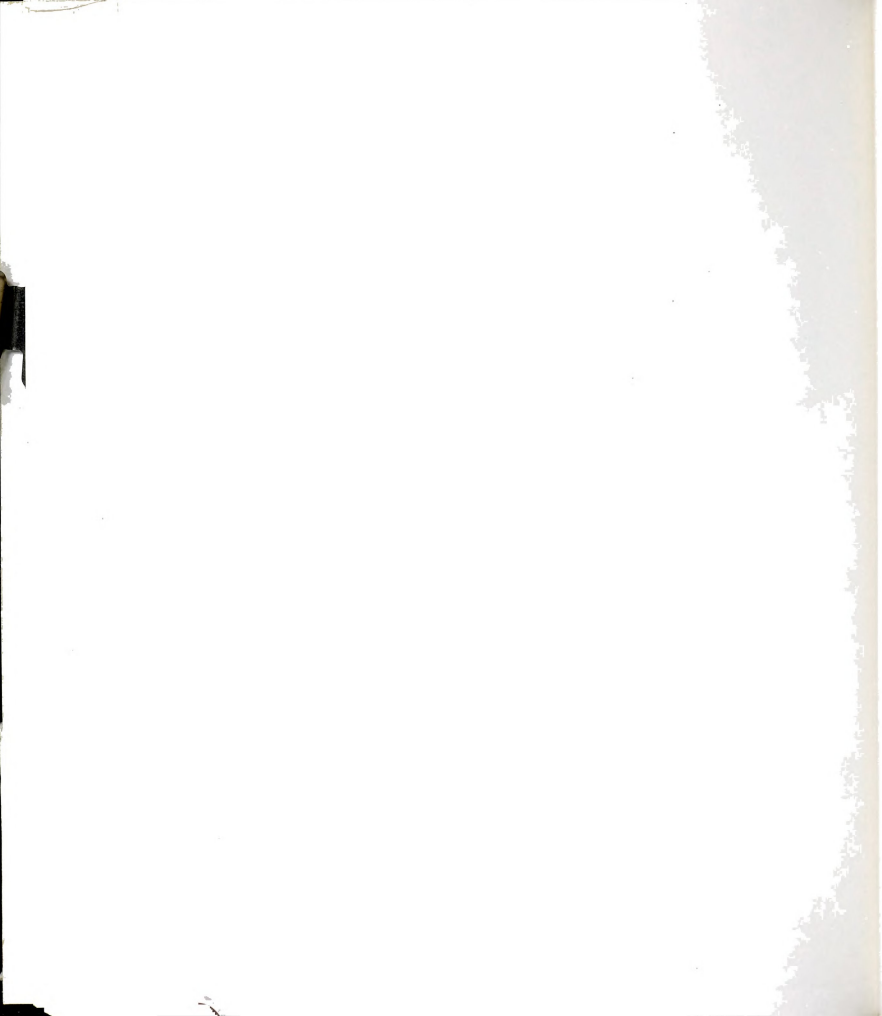


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