“Show Me the Money!”: A Pecuniary Explication of William Makepeace Thackeray’s
Critical Journalism

by

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of the requirements for the degree of
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Dedication

To my wife Jeannie, my love, my companion and partner in life and in learning, who encouraged me to take early retirement and enter graduate school, shared with me the pleasures of the study of English literature and thereby intensified them, patiently listened to my enthusiasms, and urged me onward at every stage of this work,
Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Dr. Pat Rogers for his general guidance of the work reported in this dissertation and for his personal example of the essence of academic scholarship. I would also like to thank the other members of my dissertation committee, Dr. Marty Gould, Dr. Regina Hewitt, and Dr. Laura Runge for their counsel and support both in and outside of the classroom. The embryonic idea behind this study was developed in a course taught by Dr. Gould, and I particularly thank him for that early encouragement and for an early detailed review of a portion of this dissertation. Dr. William Scheuerle provided guidance and support and introduced me to the study of Victorian periodicals. Dr. Peter Shillingsburg encouraged my early interest in the writings of William Makepeace Thackeray and generously sent me back copies of an invaluable resource, *The Thackeray Newsletter*. I also want to acknowledge the information regarding the British periodical *Punch* kindly provided by Dr. Patrick Leary and the assistance of Michael St. John McAlister of the British Library.

Throughout this effort my wife Jean Simons has been a constant source of support, contributing ideas of substance, editorially improving the manuscript, and offering encouragement. This dissertation could not have been written without her.
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Abstract

Scholars have heretofore under-examined William Makepeace Thackeray’s early critical essays despite their potential for illuminating Victorian manners and life. Further, these essays’ treatments of aesthetics, class, society, history, and politics are all influenced by the pecuniary aspects of periodical journalism and frequently expose socio-economic attitudes and realities. This study explicates the circumstances, contents, and cultural implications of Thackeray’s critical essays. Compensatory payments Thackeray received are reconciled with his bibliographic record, questions regarding Thackeray’s interactions with periodicals such as Punch and Fraser’s Magazine answered, and a database of the payment practices of early Victorian periodicals established.

Thackeray’s contributions to leading London newspapers, the Times and the Morning Chronicle, address history, travel, art, literature, religion, and international affairs. Based upon biblio-economic payment records, cross-references, and other information, Thackeray’s previously skeletal newspaper bibliographic record is fleshed out with twenty-eight new attributions. With this new information in hand, Thackeray’s views on colonial emigration and imperialism, international affairs, religion, medievalism, Ireland, the East, and English middle-class identity are clarified. Further, Thackeray wrote a series of social and political “London” letters for an Indian newspaper, The Calcutta Star. This dissertation establishes that Thackeray’s letters were answered in print by “colonial” letters written by James Hume, editor of the Calcutta Star; their
mutual correspondence thus constitutes a revealing cosmopolitan – colonial discourse. The particulars of Thackeray’s *Calcutta Star* writings are established, insights into the personalities and viewpoints of both men provided, and societal aspects of their correspondence analyzed.

In his many newspaper art exhibition reviews Thackeray popularized serious painting and shaped middle-class taste. The nature and timing of Thackeray’s art essays are assessed, espoused values characterized and earlier analyses critiqued, and Thackeray’s role introducing middle-class readers to contemporary Victorian art explored. Other Thackeray newspaper reviews addressed literature; indeed, Thackeray’s grounding of literature in economic realities demonstrably carried over from his critical articles to his subsequent work as a novelist, creating a unity of theme, style, and subject between his early and late writings. Literary pathways originating in Thackeray’s critical reviews are shown to offer new insights into Thackeray novels *Catherine*, *Vanity Fair*, *Henry Esmond*, and *Pendennis*. 
Introduction

During the first decade of the Victorian era the major novelist-to-be, William Makepeace Thackeray, earned his living as a journalist. Although some of Thackeray’s periodical writings – most notably the early novels serialized in *Fraser’s Magazine* and the major satiric articles published in *Punch* – have received considerable scholarly attention, his many critical essays and reviews remain under-examined. Surprisingly little attention has been paid to the journalistic and cultural drivers informing these writings. Moreover, despite Thackeray’s canonical status, the bibliographical – and even biographical – records of his journalistic endeavors are substantively incomplete. This study explicates and assesses the circumstances, contexts, contents, and cultural implications of these periodical writings.

The broad extent and great variety of Thackeray’s periodical writings are themselves daunting. Thackeray contributed to periodicals on essentially a weekly basis from the summer of 1837 through the summer of 1847; during that decade he wrote over 600 separately published articles for over 20 different periodicals. For many of those years his living heavily depended on regular employment as a leading literary critic for London’s major daily newspapers, the *Times* and the *Morning Chronicle*. During the same time period Thackeray also wrote for a variety of weekly periodicals including the satiric magazine *Punch*, the illustrated newspaper the *Pictorial Times*, and the literary magazine *Britannia*. Moreover, Thackeray regularly contributed both fiction and
criticism to monthly literary magazines such as *Fraser’s Magazine*, the *New Monthly Magazine*, and *Ainsworth’s Magazine*. Further, financial need and literary ambition drove him to write both scholarly and humorous articles for prestigious quarterly reviews such as the *Westminster Review*, the *Foreign Quarterly Review*, and the *Edinburgh Review*. Additionally, Thackeray penned revealing political and social opinion pieces for overseas periodicals, such as the American *Republic* and the *Corsair*, and the Indian *Calcutta Star*.

The range of subjects Thackeray addressed in his writings is no less extraordinary than his breadth of publication venues. Within his periodical articles one can find much of the manners and life of the early Victorian world: assessments of the world of art; reviews of the works of leading English and American authors and the literary trends of the day; ruminations on the aesthetics of poets and poetry; remarks on leading thinkers and politicians of the era; examinations of England’s tangled relationships with America, France, Ireland, and Russia; sentiments regarding Evangelism and Catholicism; thoughts on the roles of commoners, aristocrats, and royalty, and on the essential nature of republics and totalitarian regimes; considerations regarding travel to and the cultures of countries of Europe, Africa, and Asia; observations on medieval and modern history; and comments on commerce and colonialism.

Indeed, a study of Thackeray’s early Victorian journalism must, *de facto*, also be a study of early Victorian journalism itself. Thackeray interacted with all the literary and journalistic movers and shakers of his era; he contributed to all the major classes and categories of periodicals; he wrote many different kinds of articles on many different topics; and he variously worked as an editor (the *National Standard*), a subeditor (the *Examiner* and *Galignani’s Messenger*), a staff member (*Punch*), a regular contributor
(Fraser’s Magazine, the Times, and the Morning Chronicle), an irregular freelance contributor (many periodicals), a columnist (Calcutta Star and others) and an illustrator (Fraser’s Magazine, Punch, and others). As a professional journalist dependent on his pen for his living, Thackeray was subject to journalism’s economic and social pressures. In short, Thackeray serves as a stand-in for journalists of his era, and analytical techniques and insights appropriate to his journalism are likely to be broadly applicable to early Victorian journalism at large.

Further, as in the 1996 movie Jerry Maguire, where all lines of conversation and persuasion invariably led to the catch-phrase economic demand, “Show me the money,” this dissertation demonstrates that money – understood in the larger sense as a matrix of financial factors, forces, rewards, and consequences – played a central mediating role in Thackeray’s journalism. Thackeray wrote from economic necessity during an era when journalism was notoriously poorly paid. His journalistic opportunities, commitments, and decisions were financially driven. This dissertation demonstrates that financial factors not only influenced where and when he wrote and what he wrote about, but also, perhaps indirectly, the attitudes and positions he took in his writings. Thackeray’s treatments of aesthetics, class and society, and the world at large all have subtle, or sometimes not so subtle, financial subtexts. And his writings often implicitly serve class-related financial goals and advance particular socio-economic interests. Thus, as in the above mentioned movie, the threads of Thackeray’s journalism can be traced backward to their origination or forward to their conclusion by examining their pecuniary motivations or consequences.

In chapter 1 of this dissertation, entitled “‘Make up my account now directly’: Reconciling the Accounts of a Victorian Journalist,” I establish and trace the direct
associations between Thackeray’s periodical contributions and the compensatory financial payments he received. Although many Victorian writers depended on journalism for their income, little is known regarding their rates of payment. There do not appear to be any systematic studies of the financial terms under which periodical authors were paid and how that payment influenced their work. Accordingly, although this chapter examines Thackeray’s case in particular, it further serves as a test case for early Victorian journalism in general. Specifically, in chapter 1 I (1) analyze various records to illuminate the interactions between author and editor and the associated payment rates and practices of a broad spectrum of early Victorian periodicals; (2) utilize these financial records to provide new insights into the circumstances and financial drivers behind Thackeray’s writings; and (3) resolve (and sometimes raise) pecuniary, biographical, bibliographic and contextual questions regarding Thackeray’s periodical contributions. Indeed, I demonstrate that financial records can shed new light even on Thackeray’s most studied periodical relationships, those with *Fraser’s Magazine* and *Punch*.

Chapters 2 and 3, respectively entitled “‘Five guineas for a week’s work’: The Victorian World in the *Times*” and “‘Getting good pay always thinking’: The Victorian World in the *Morning Chronicle*,” focus on Thackeray’s contributions as a critic for two of England’s leading newspapers. Because of attribution difficulties I contend that the scholarly community has not appreciated that many of Thackeray’s newspaper reviews are not simply on-point reviews but rather constitute mini-Roundabout Papers, i.e., essays on a broad range of topics including history, travel, government, the arts, religion, international affairs, and society. Consequently, these essays undeservedly have received little prior critical attention. In each chapter I (1) document the current state of knowledge
regarding Thackeray’s association with the newspaper; (2) clarify and extend the bibliographic record to provide a more nearly complete picture of Thackeray’s newspaper journalism; (3) explicate the financial underpinnings and consequent patterns and regularities of Thackeray’s newspaper journalism and (4) analyze various aspects of the Victorian world implicitly characterized by and through these essays.

Chapter 4, “‘No money from Hume’: The Squab - Idler Newspaper Correspondence” examines through a pecuniary lens a unique journalistic dialogue. In the mid-1840s Thackeray wrote a series of London letters for the Calcutta Star. An incomplete file of the Calcutta Star has yielded six surviving Thackeray letters of overt political, social and economic commentary, each signed “Squab.” To date, however, Thackeray scholars have not recognized that response letters from “Idler” back to “Squab” were also published in the Calcutta Star (and were subsequently republished in book form). “Idler” was James Hume, proprietor and editor of the Calcutta Star, scion of a prominent Radical political family, a man deeply involved in colonial economic and cultural life and a one-time Thackeray intimate. In this chapter I examine the Squab – Idler correspondence to clarify the particulars of Thackeray’s Calcutta Star writings and reveal their financial underpinnings, to provide new insights into the personalities and viewpoints of both men, and to illuminate a cosmopolitan – colonial social and economic discourse on events of the day.

Chapter 5, “‘I could turn an honest penny’: The Chronicler of the London and Paris Art Exhibitions” treats the monetary and journalistic influences behind, and the socio-economic consequences of, Thackeray’s art criticism. During the early Victorian era Thackeray popularized serious painting and shaped middle-class taste through articles
on art in mass consumption periodicals. Thackeray’s often studied magazine-based art reviews were written in the guise of Michael Angelo Titmarsh, a flamboyant and boastful failed artist; however, Thackeray also wrote anonymous non-Titmarsh art reviews for London’s leading newspapers. Some of these latter reviews have not been previously attributed, nor have their contents or cultural significance been analyzed. In this chapter I (1) explicate the nature and timing of Thackeray’s anonymous and Titmarsh essays on art as acts of financially driven working journalism; (2) characterize the values espoused in these newspaper articles in light of prior assessments of Thackeray’s art criticism; and (3) discuss the socio-economic implications of these reviews and how they contributed to the early Victorian conversation on art.

Lastly, Thackeray is best known, of course, as a novelist, and in chapter 6, “‘The proceeds of that last masterpiece’: The Tradesman of Literature from Critic to Novelist,” I connect Thackeray’s journalism with his novels. Thackeray considered literature as a trade, a way of earning a living, rather than as a romantically elevated pursuit. This grounding of literature in the economic realities of life carried over from his writings as a critic to his work as a novelist and is central to Thackeray’s aesthetic concept of realism. In this last chapter I explore the role of pecuniary factors in shaping both Thackeray’s literary criticism and his mature writings; in particular, I contend that the “payment by the yard” practice prevalent in Victorian journalism both enhanced and disfigured Thackeray’s writings. I further argue that a unity of theme, style, and subject connects Thackeray’s early and late writings, and the embellishment of personality of both narrator and subject that made for an interesting review became a central characterization skill of
the novelist. Lastly, I describe some pathways between the ideas and expressions of Thackeray’s literary critical reviews and well-known aspects of his novels.

I have frequently supported my arguments with extended quotations from Thackeray’s critical reviews. I have included these quotations partly because these original texts are not as readily accessible as a novel such as *Vanity Fair*; partly because Thackeray is often entertainingly expressive and it is a joy to read his writings; and partly because it is insightful to read Thackeray’s own words. In order to maintain the original flavor of these quotations I have retained Thackeray’s English spellings and his now sometimes archaic word choices usually without the intervention of disfiguring *sic* notations.
Chapter 1

“Make up my account now directly”: Reconciling the Accounts of a Victorian Journalist

Despite Thackeray’s canonical status, significant uncertainty exists regarding the context and content of his periodical journalism. The culture of his time was to publish most articles anonymously, and Thackeray wrote so many articles for so many different periodicals that Edgar Harden’s 1996 enumerative Thackeray bibliography\(^1\) is demonstrably materially incomplete.\(^2\) Moreover, much of Thackeray’s correspondence regarding the circumstances of his journalism has been lost. Many open questions remain to be addressed: what, for example, influenced Thackeray’s choices of periodical venue and article subject? What were his business agreements and relationships with various periodicals and their editors? How much did various periodicals pay their contributing authors, and how did that influence Thackeray? What did he earn? How did Thackeray juggle the competing priorities of everyday journalism? What concealed specifics and details of Thackeray’s journalism exist that, if unveiled, could shed new light on his opinions and beliefs, his development as a writer, or early Victorian journalism as a whole?

Although born into a wealthy family, Thackeray lost most of his money in his youth and for many years earned his living through his writing. He was certainly conscious of the financial side of journalism – his letters are replete with complaints regarding the low rates of periodical pay and demands to editors that they “make up my
account now directly” and pay him what he was owed.3 Surely, in at least some cases, Thackeray’s surviving financial records are tell-tale tracings of long-ago journalistic transactions, arrangements, and writings. Yet, while scholars have retrieved and anecdotally commented on some of Thackeray’s financial records and references, no one has yet performed a systematic biblio-economic reconciliation and comparative analysis of Thackeray’s journalistic writings and financial receipts.4 In this chapter I report on such an analysis.

Unfortunately a full set of his financial records has not survived. Nevertheless, some of Thackeray’s papers and relevant third-party accounts of his financial dealings have been preserved. As we shall see, surviving editors’ ledgers, personal account book fragments, diary entries, and letters can be used in conjunction with bibliographic information to reconstruct a projected ledger of Thackeray’s financial receipts as a journalist and to expose previously obscured transactions and events.5 Any reconciliation of bibliographic and financial records should be both iterative and interactive. Accordingly, I have (1) examined Thackeray’s published letters and papers and relevant third-party materials to identify, retrieve and organize information regarding his financial transactions with periodicals; (2) analyzed this surviving financial data for direct insights regarding specific interactions and to determine Thackeray’s rates of pay from various periodicals; (3) applied these rates of pay to known Thackeray periodical publications to generate a trial receipt ledger, (4) compared this ledger with information contained in Thackeray’s letters to identify bibliographic “holes” and issues and to develop insights into Thackeray’s relationship with various periodicals; and, as new attributions came out of these examinations, (5) added to the receipt ledger and repeated the process.
Although the immediate goal of this analysis is to shed light on the circumstances and specifics of Thackeray’s periodical writings, Thackeray wrote so broadly that this is tantamount to a study of the financial underpinnings of early Victorian periodical journalism itself. Unfortunately, contemporary accounts of the pay rates and practices offered by periodicals of the 1830s and 1840s are inaccurate to the point of uselessness. Scholarly literature on Victorian journalism does not include comparative assessments of pay scales and practices across a range of Victorian periodicals. The products of my study, however, include a vetted reference base of payments and rates of pay to a prominent contributor from a variety of early Victorian periodicals, a composite multi-year financial profile for a prolific early Victorian journalist, and a series of narrative descriptions of various (and often financially driven) author–periodical relationships. Although this approach is apparently new, I have less systematically applied some of these techniques in an earlier examination of Thackeray’s 1837-1840 contributions to the *Times.*

As table 1.1 shows, the financially straitened Thackeray wrote for almost anyone who would pay him. He contributed to major daily and weekly newspapers (*Times*, *Morning Chronicle*, *Pictorial Times*, etc.); overseas periodicals (such as the *Corsair*, the *Republic*, the *Calcutta Star*, etc.); monthly magazines (Colburn’s *New Monthly Magazine*, *Fraser’s Magazine*, *Ainsworth’s Magazine*, and others); quarterly reviews (*British & Foreign*, *Westminster*, *Foreign Quarterly, Edinburgh*); and, of course, weekly publications, most notably *Punch*. Sometimes Thackeray held salaried staff positions, but he, like most journalists of the time, was usually paid by the column or by the sheet (a sheet consisted of sixteen pages).
Table 1.1 Timelines of Thackeray’s known periodical contributions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Periodical</th>
<th>Timelines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Standard</td>
<td>1833 – 1834</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paris Literary Gazette</td>
<td>1835</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constitutional</td>
<td>1836 – 1837</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Times</td>
<td>1837 – 1840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bentley’s Miscellany</td>
<td>1837</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraser’s Magazine</td>
<td>1837 – 1847</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Monthly Magazine</td>
<td>1838 – 1845</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galignani’s Messenger</td>
<td>1838</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British &amp; Foreign Rev.</td>
<td>1839</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London / Westmin. Rev.</td>
<td>1839 – 1840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Corsair</td>
<td>1839 – 1840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cruikshank’s Almanac</td>
<td>1838-1839</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cruikshank’s Omnibus</td>
<td>1841</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Britannia</td>
<td>1841</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Quarterly Rev.</td>
<td>1842 – 1844</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ainsworth’s Magazine</td>
<td>1842</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punch</td>
<td>1842 – 1854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calcutta Star</td>
<td>1843 – 1845</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pictorial Times</td>
<td>1843 – 1844</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Republic</td>
<td>1844 – 1844</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morning Chronicle</td>
<td>1842 ?, 1844 – 1848</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examiner</td>
<td>1845</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edinburgh Review</td>
<td>1845</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cruikshanks’ Table Book</td>
<td>1845—1845</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unfortunately Thackeray’s bank records were destroyed when a successor to his bank was itself merged into Coutts and Co. in 1914. However, Thackeray did maintain for his own purposes informal and partial records of receipts and disbursements. An early Thackeray “account book” extract of this type was sold into private hands in 1924 and has not been republished; nevertheless, Van Duzer’s published description of that account book specifies Thackeray’s 1836-7 salary from the *Constitutional* as 8 guineas per week. Further, Thackeray’s partial account books for 1838 and 1844 have survived. In addition, diary entries, letters, and third-party sources collectively serve as supplementary or “virtual” account books. In the following I present and analyze the 1838 account book extract, virtual account book information from 1838 through 1843, the 1844 account book extract, and virtual account book information from 1844 through 1847.

Financially-based narrative explorations of Thackeray’s interactions with periodicals, including prominent publications such as *Fraser’s Magazine* and *Punch*, are integrated into the text. These narratives range from the definitive to the openly
speculative based upon the varying nature of biblio-economic information. Detailed
comments regarding Thackeray’s financial and journalistic interactions with the *Times*,
the *Morning Chronicle*, and the *Calcutta Star* are reserved for chapters two, three, and
four of this dissertation.

### 1.1 The Account Book for 1838

Table 1.2 summarizes Thackeray’s recorded cash receipts for the first five months
of 1838 as published by Gordon Ray. The format is straightforward: each line shows a
date, an identifying source, and an amount in pounds / shillings / pence format.

**Table 1.2** Extracts from partial account book for 1838

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dec 24</td>
<td>Addison</td>
<td>2. 0. 0</td>
<td>Mar 25</td>
<td>Daly</td>
<td>11. 0. 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan 1</td>
<td>Delane</td>
<td>22. 1. 0</td>
<td>Mar 28</td>
<td>Galignani</td>
<td>8. 0. 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan 3</td>
<td>Colburn</td>
<td>9. 0. 0</td>
<td></td>
<td>Swinney</td>
<td>9. 9. 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan 4</td>
<td>Fraser</td>
<td>20. 0. 0</td>
<td></td>
<td>Isabella</td>
<td>13. 0. 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 2</td>
<td>Delane</td>
<td>13. 0. 6</td>
<td>Apr 10</td>
<td>Colburn</td>
<td>4. 0. 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 15</td>
<td>Colburn</td>
<td>7. 0. 0</td>
<td>Apr 16</td>
<td>Fraser</td>
<td>25. 0. 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar 1</td>
<td>Fraser</td>
<td>20. 0. 0</td>
<td>May 5</td>
<td>Fraser</td>
<td>20. 0. 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Times</td>
<td>14. 0. 0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.1.1 Reconciling Accounts.

Some references in table 1.2 are unequivocally interpretable and some are not; for
instance, the December 24 payment from Addison is certainly for the eighteen colored
plates Thackeray contributed to Addison’s *Journey to Damascus and Palmyra*, which
was published at the end of 1837. Thackeray was very active as an illustrator early in his
career. Similarly, the payment from Galignani is for the two weeks in March of 1838 during which Thackeray worked as a subeditor assembling articles in Paris for Galignani’s *Messenger*. On the other hand, both the identity of “Swinney” and the nature of that transaction remain unknown. Nevertheless, much of the data in this table can be reconciled with Thackeray’s periodical bibliography.

As shown subsequently in this chapter, a surviving monthly invoice proves that Thackeray was paid at a rate of 2 guineas per column by the *Times*. Since the above account book references to Delane apparently refer to W. F. A. Delane (the father of the future *Times* editor J. T. Delane), who was paymaster for the *Times* in 1838, there are three indicated payments from the *Times* – the payment of £22.1.0 on Jan 1 from Delane, the payment of £13.0.6 on Feb 2 from Delane, and the late May payment marked “Times.” In chapter 2 of this dissertation these payments are used to illuminate Thackeray’s late 1837 and early 1838 journalistic endeavors for the *Times*.

Whereas a surviving invoice establishes the payment rate for Thackeray’s contributions to the *Times*, such information has heretofore been lacking for Thackeray’s extensive contributions to the *New Monthly Magazine*. However, one can work backward from the three payments Thackeray received from the publisher Henry Colburn shown in table 1.2 to establish that rate. The payment of £9.0.0 from Colburn on January 3 is presumably for the twelve illustrations Thackeray provided for Jerrold’s *Men of Character*, a volume Colburn published in January of 1838. The payments on February 15 (£7.0.0) and April 10 (£4.0.0) must, respectively, correspond to the articles “Passages in the Life of Major Gahagan” (occupying nine pages in the February 1838 *New Monthly Magazine*) and “Historical Recollections of Major Gahagan” (five pages in the March
1838 issue). Comparing article lengths to payment values, it is clear that Colburn paid Thackeray 12 guineas per sheet. I have used that rate to project Thackeray’s subsequent revenues for the many articles he published in the *New Monthly Magazine* in 1838-1844.

The reference in Thackeray’s 1838 account book to his receipt of £11.0.0 from “Daly” on March 25, 1838 is somewhat mysterious. As a starting point for speculation about this payment, I note that Thackeray frequently either “puffed” or satirized the people he dealt with. The only reference to a contemporary “Daly” in Thackeray’s published writing is the favorable mention of a publisher or book seller, “Mr. Daly, of Leicester Square,” in the original periodical version of Thackeray’s June 1840 essay on Cruikshank; the subsequently published book version of this essay deletes this reference. Indeed, an edition of *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* was published in 1839 by “Charles Daly, 14 Leicester Street, Leicester Square,” thus establishing that at a date near that of both the Cruikshank essay and the account book reference the publisher Charles Daly was located at Leicester Square, and thus, presumably, is the same Daly mentioned by Thackeray. The British Library’s holdings include eleven books from the 1830s - 1850s listing Charles Daly as a publisher, but lists no holdings for any other contemporary book publisher named “Daly.” Further, the Wellesley index of Victorian Periodicals does not contain any reference to a “Daly.” If the recorded account book payment is for professional writing or drawing services, it is likely that “Daly” refers to the publisher Charles Daly.

Charles Daly has no known connection with periodicals; however, in 1838 he published many books, including editions with limited illustrations of well-known works. Examples identified through online searches include: (1) Goldsmith’s *The Vicar of*
Wakefield; (2) *Pocket Lacon: A Manual of the Best Words by the Best Authors*; (3) George Sale’s translation of *The Koran*; (4) Scott’s *Marmion*; (5) Gregory, Chapone and Pennington on *The Improvement of the Mind*; (6) Cunningham’s *Poetical and Prose Works of Robert Burns*; (7) Scott’s *The Lady of the Lake*; (8) *Sacred Harmony* (an edition of religious poetry) and (9) Dryden’s *Fables from Boccaccio and Chaucer*.

Speculatively, the Daly referenced in Thackeray’s account book likely is the publisher Charles Daly, the only contemporary Daly referenced in Thackeray’s writing, and apparently the only contemporary Daly who was a publisher, and that the unidentified receipt may consequently refer to a payment for illustrations provided by Thackeray for one or more of Charles Daly’s 1838 books.

### 1.1.2 Thackeray’s Strike Against *Fraser’s Magazine*

The four early 1838 payments from James Fraser of *Fraser’s Magazine* to Thackeray are all simple multiples of 5 pounds (January 4 - £20; March 4 - £20; April 16 - £25; May 5 - £20). Whereas the *Times* and the *New Monthly Magazine* paid exact amounts based on article length, in 1838 *Fraser’s* apparently maintained an account for Thackeray and paid him either a standard monthly draw or a rounded amount each month. Thus, these payments may not be precisely associated with specific article lengths, but they do shed light on a series of interesting events and possibilities. There is an unconfirmed third-party report that Thackeray was initially paid £10 per sheet for his contributions to *Fraser’s*, and there is a surviving letter dated March 5, 1838 in which Thackeray announces he is on strike and demands an increase to 12 guineas per sheet – one wonders if the suggested original rate is supported by the payment record, and if
Thackeray received his increase. This serves as an interesting test case of the negotiating power of a journalist heavily dependent on a particular editor and periodical.

As a further complication, that same letter includes the demand that Thackeray be paid two guineas for each of the full-page drawings which accompanied some of his Yellowplush episodes, but there is no information as to what (if anything) he had previously been paid for these drawings. Lastly, Thackeray was owed money by the erstwhile editor of *Fraser’s Magazine*, William Maginn, and the March 5 letter also states that Maginn had committed to give the proceeds of his *Fraser’s Magazine* writings to Thackeray. The letter further directs James Fraser to give a check to Thackeray’s wife (Isabella) for Maginn’s February and March contributions. To date there has been no confirmation as to whether Thackeray actually received these funds. Finally, Thackeray’s single known contribution to the April 1838 issue of *Fraser’s Magazine* is only five pages long, and one wonders if the comparatively large £25 payment he received on April 16, 1838 indicates that other articles in that issue were written by Thackeray.

Indeed, a scenario which answers all the above questions can be constructed based on a reasonable, although admittedly not certain, interpretation of the observed payment stream from *Fraser’s*.

Thackeray contributed a 6.5-page article to the December 1837 issue of *Fraser’s Magazine*, and articles of 10.8 pages (with one illustration) and 13.25 pages to the January 1838 issue of that periodical. At £10 per sheet this comes to 19.01.11 – if the illustration were reimbursed at the rate of, say, £1, this would bring this total owed to almost exactly the £20 actually received by Thackeray on January 4. In the February and March issues of *Fraser’s Magazine* Thackeray published two “Yellowplush” articles and
an article entitled “Half-a-Crown's Worth of Cheap Knowledge” which collectively total 25.9 pages and one illustration. Again employing the tentative rates of £10 per sheet and £1 per illustration, this comes to a little over 17 pounds – close to the presumably rounded value of £20 Thackeray received on March 1. Thus, the observed payments are at least consistent with the reported rate of £10 per sheet and the presumption that Thackeray received something additional for each of his full page illustrations. Indeed, if Thackeray were receiving much less or much more – say if he were getting nothing for illustrations, or if he received either the £7 per sheet which was reportedly the “standard” rate for Fraser’s Magazine,\(^1\) or the 12 guineas per sheet which we now know the New Monthly Magazine paid Thackeray – the reconciliation between contributions made and payment received would be much weaker.

After his March 5 “demand” letter to James Fraser, Thackeray received £25 on April 16 and £20 on May 5. Evidence to be subsequently provided in this chapter indicates that Thackeray did get a raise to £12 (but perhaps not 12 guineas) per sheet, and I have assumed that he received perhaps £2 per illustration. Under these assumptions Thackeray’s known contributions to Fraser’s Magazine for April and May come to only £6 and £12, respectively. Apparently Thackeray either did write other articles or he did receive at least some of Maginn’s earnings. Unfortunately, we do not know Maginn’s page rate, but assuming he was paid the Fraser’s standard rate of £7 per sheet, and using the attributions shown in the Wellesley Index, Maginn’s per-page earnings were approximately £2 for February, £18 for March, £13 in April, and £8 in May. Note that (1) the observed April payment to Thackeray of £25 is perilously close to the sum of Thackeray’s April writing (£5) plus the “back” February and March writings of Maginn.
Thackeray’s May 5 payment of £20 equates to the sum of Thackeray’s April earnings of £12 and Maginn’s presumed April earnings of £8; and (3) Maginn’s suggested April earnings of £13 is exactly the amount that Isabella deposited in Thackeray’s bank account sometime between March 28th and April 10. This agreement, of course, is only suggestive; yet it is noteworthy that Thackeray’s payment records are demonstrably consistent with a reasonable course of events that (1) explains and reconciles all payments, (2) validates Thackeray’s tentative before-and-after per-sheet pay rates, (3) suggests that the contemplated diversion of Maginn’s earnings to Thackeray did in fact occur, (4) explains the previously unexplained deposit made by Isabella, and (5) requires no previously unrecognized Thackeray contributions to Fraser’s Magazine. In this manner, financial records can suggest or support an interpretation of events.

1.2 The Virtual Account Book from 1838 to 1843

Whatever account book records Thackeray maintained from mid-1838 through 1843 have been lost; however, table 1.3 incorporates financial data taken from multiple sources as a “virtual” account book. These data establish or support several of Thackeray’s rates of pay – note the entries in table 1.3 for the British and Foreign Review (£11 per Sheet), Cruikshank’s Comic Almanack (13 1/3 guineas per sheet), Fraser’s Magazine (originally 10 pounds per sheet, subsequently 12 pounds per sheet), the Pictorial Times (one guinea per column), Punch (non-staff rate, one guinea per column), and the Times (two guineas per column). These records can be used to support the identification of articles written by Thackeray, project his journalistic income, assess the
pay practices of different periodicals and editors, and better understand Thackeray’s actions and preferences as a journalist.

Table 1.3 Virtual account book records for 1838 – 1843

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Periodical</th>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Comment / Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Corsair</td>
<td>Ray, Letters, 1:406.</td>
<td>From N. P. Willis, Thackeray would write for The Corsair at “a guinea a close column.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cruikshank’s Almanack</td>
<td>Ray, Letters, 1:365.</td>
<td>Payment was to be “twenty guineas” [for the 24 pages of “Stubbs Calendar; or the Fatal Boots”].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraser’s Magazine</td>
<td>Edwards, 37.</td>
<td>Thackeray’s starting rate [1837, early 1838] from Fraser’s was &quot; Twelve and six pence a page&quot; [10 pounds a sheet].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraser’s Magazine</td>
<td>Ray, Letters, 1:447; 2:29.</td>
<td>6/1/1840 - Fraser’s owes Thackeray £20 or near it [25 pages = 18.15 at £12 per sheet]; 7/24/1841 - Fraser’s owes Thackeray “some 17 or 18 £” [24 pages = £18 at £12 per sheet].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pictorial Times</td>
<td>Vizitelly, Glances Back, 1:251.</td>
<td>Vizitelly: “three guineas . . . for a couple of columns weekly”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Messenger</td>
<td>Ray, Letters, 2:475.</td>
<td>In a letter dated 12/19/1848 Thackeray wrote “We worked in Galignani’s newspaper for 10 francs a day very cheerily 10 years ago.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punch (non-staff)</td>
<td>Harden, Letters Supplement, 1:122.</td>
<td>Letter dated 9/19/1842 states that Thackeray’s agreement with the editor was for “two guineas a page” [or presumably one guinea a column].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Times</td>
<td>Ray, Letters, 1:375.</td>
<td>Invoice of £21 from Thackeray to The Times for five November 1838 articles totaling 10.0 columns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>Ray, Letters, 1:458.</td>
<td>In a letter dated 7/30/1840 Thackeray wrote ” I could get 300 £ for three months work [for a book] instead of the 120 £ which the Magazines would pay me”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Times</td>
<td>Ray, Letters, 1:469.</td>
<td>Letter dated 9/1/1840: “ £20 worth of work . . .this fortnight”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign</td>
<td>Ray, Letters,</td>
<td>Thackeray’s 7/29/1842 letter: “I hope you’ll like my</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In particular some entries shed light on Thackeray’s relationships with the prestigious and scholarly quarterly reviews which were in full flower in the early Victorian era, and with the emerging iconic comic periodical, **Punch**.

### 1.2.1 The Quarterly Reviews

The first half of the nineteenth century saw the ascendance and zenith of the influential quarterly reviews: the whiggish *Edinburgh Review*, the conservative *Quarterly Review*, the Benthamite *Westminster Review*, the anti-Russian *British & Foreign Review*, the internationally oriented *Foreign and Quarterly Review*, and the pro-Catholic *Dublin Review*. As a young journalist in the late 1830s and early 1840s Thackeray sought to write for these periodicals, partly “for reputation’s sake.” Yet pecuniary factors were central to his interactions with all of them.

Thackeray’s exultant May 1839 exclamation that he had just received 34 pounds from Jacky Kemble not only marks a financial milestone in Thackeray’s critical journalism – it does not appear that he ever again received as much for a single critical
review article – but also highlights the frustrations faced by early Victorian journalists anxious to develop continuing good-paying relationships with editors of periodicals.

The British & Foreign Review, started in 1835, was more a political than a literary organ. Its announced goal was to “disturb English complacency over the plight of less fortunate nations and to emphasize the close relations between social and intellectual progress at home and abroad.” John Kemble, the editor and prominent Anglo-Saxon scholar and archeologist, had been a Cambridge school friend of Thackeray. As early as December of 1836 Thackeray wrote Kemble “if you encourage me perhaps I will send an article for the review (which wants lightness to my thinking).” At some point Kemble must have encouraged Thackeray, for by November of 1838 Thackeray was hard at work on an article, “Manners and Society in St. Petersburg,” which was published in the British & Foreign Review in January 1839. Thackeray’s 50-page dull-sounding “Speeches of Lord Brougham” – an article which is actually a delightfully satiric commentary on a political figure who, according to Thackeray, had “too strong a wit and too weak a character to allow him to enter the foremost rank of great men of this time” as well as “too great a vanity and too small a principle to be its historian” – was published in the next issue, in April 1839, and it is for this article that Thackeray received his 34 pounds. A simple calculation shows that Kemble paid Thackeray at the rate of £11 per sheet; however, this rate by itself is insufficiently informative. A single page of the British & Foreign Review had only 40 lines, each containing approximately 62 characters; consequently, Thackeray received about 5.5 shillings for every thousand characters. Examining the master rate table presented in section 1.5 of this chapter, this rate is 2/3 greater than the 3.2 shillings per thousand characters Thackeray was receiving
at that time from Fraser’s Magazine, or 1/3 greater than the 4.25 shillings per thousand characters Thackeray was receiving from The Times.

The opportunity to write long articles at a relatively high rate of pay must have been very attractive to Thackeray. Perhaps this explains both the zeal with which Thackeray unsuccessfully pursued Kemble over the next year – in July of 1839 offering to write an article on Marlborough and / or “a slasher on religious fictitious literature;” in October proposing to write a long article on the history of Napoleon from the viewpoint of French and English newspapers; in December arguing for “a sweet article of 20 pages say on French fashionable novelists Horace de Viel-Castel and Charles de Bernard;” and in January of 1840 suggesting both an article on the American writer N. P. Willis and a study of Socialist and Chartist Publications – as well as the disappointment evident in Thackeray’s February 1840 declaration that “I am not going to write for the B&F. Jacky Kemble gives himself such airs that he may go to the deuce his own way.”

Indeed Thackeray’s financial relationship with the British & Foreign Review may be contrasted with his very different relationship with the Westminster Review. Although we do not know the specific rate of pay Thackeray received from the latter periodical, it must have been low: after submitting a lengthy essay on George Cruikshank, Thackeray wrote the Westminster Review editor asking him to “as speedily as you possibly can to transmit to its author that trifling remuneration for which in a moment of weakness -- of imbecile delirium he engaged to supply you with his composition.” In a subsequent letter he declared that he had been paid “1/2 price.” Indeed, apparently the editor of the Westminster Review later wrote Thackeray soliciting contributions, but Thackeray, stating that he wished to make at least 20 guineas for an article on dramatists of the
Victorian age, declined a specific offer. With the *British & Foreign Review* Thackeray was the “pursuer;” with the *Westminster Review* he was the “pursued.”

Thackeray’s most productive and extended relationship with a quarterly was with the *Foreign Quarterly Review* (*FQR*). The lengthy gaps between article submission and publication inherent with a quarterly publication raised special problems for Victorian authors – could they afford to wait until after article publication to be paid? Further, Thackeray’s articles in the *FQR* are strangely clustered – with as many as three or four articles in a single issue, and no articles in other issues. Thackeray’s 1842 and 1843 letters shed light on these concerns, and suggest a new Thackeray attribution, but also pose a puzzling contradiction. To understand the situation one must retrace Thackeray’s relationship with that periodical.

The *Foreign Quarterly Review*, founded in 1827, offered review articles comparable to those in the *Edinburgh Review* and the *Quarterly Review*, but devoted itself exclusively to foreign literature. Thackeray established a connection with the *FQR* in late 1841 and agreed to furnish articles around the beginning of March of 1842 for the April 1 issue. His first project was a scholarly article on France during the Bourbon Restoration and the subsequent reign of Louis Philippe. Thackeray spent several weeks researching and writing this article, but “the work seemed to grow bigger as it went on.” To keep his commitment, on February 25, 1842 he sent to Chapman and Hall a lengthy review covering just the Bourbon Restoration, with the promise to “keep L. P. [Louis Philippe] for another number.” In that same letter he also offered to write a review of Victor Hugo’s *Rhine* which he could submit by March 10. Chapman and Hall must have taken him up on that offer, because Thackeray’s review of Hugo’s *Rhine* was, in fact,
submitted on March 12, 1842 and published in the April issue. The review of the Bourbon restoration was, however, held back from that issue – perhaps because it was overlong for the April page budget, or perhaps because other articles were judged to be timelier.

Mirroring his earlier pattern, in May of 1842, while preparing his submittals for the July *FQR*, Thackeray wrote Chapman and Hall stating that he would “have their article ready by the 30th” and further offering to write an additional “light article” to submit by June 10. Un fortunately this letter does not identify “their article,” but the Bourbon restoration article had been submitted months earlier; thus, the article to be submitted by May 30 might well have been a second article. Further, the offer to submit an additional “light article” must have been accepted, because on June 11, 1842 Thackeray wrote his mother that he had written nearly £25 in the last few days for *Punch* and for the *Foreign Quarterly Review*. Under this interpretation of the correspondence, there were three unpublished Thackeray articles submitted and available for the July 1842 issue of *Foreign Quarterly Review*.

Another Thackeray letter offers direct financial support for this reading and addresses the financial impact of delayed publication. Presumably acting at Thackeray’s request, the *FQR* agreed to make a partial payment for Thackeray’s work in advance of publication and accordingly sent Thackeray £20. Thackeray acknowledged this advance payment on June 4, 1842 but pled for more money, noting that he had “too much confidence in your sense of justice to suppose that you would think of paying 4 sheets of shuperb [sic] writing with 40 £”. Thackeray’s plea not only indicates that Chapman &
Hall proposed to pay him £10 per sheet, it also suggests that in June of 1842 Thackeray had 4 sheets (64 pages) of articles in progress with FQR.

Thackeray’s deferred 36-page February submission, “The Last Fifteen Years of the Bourbons” was, in fact, published in July, as was another article that can be definitively attributed to Thackeray, the 14-page “The German in England.” However, these two articles come to only 50 pages -- yet, Thackeray apparently had three articles in the “hopper,” and had received partial payment for 64 pages of work. There appears to be an unaccounted for article of approximately 14 pages.

Edgar Harden has taken an undated Thackeray submission letter for his essay “Travelling Romancers: Dumas on the Rhine,” which was published in the November 1842 issue of the Foreign Quarterly Review, and, effectively assuming that this article is the missing third “light article,” suggested that the letter and the essay were written in June. I regard this interpretation and dating as unlikely, because Thackeray took several days in September of 1842 to write a Foreign Quarterly Review article, and the October “Romancers” article is the only realistic match for this period of September writing. Indeed, Thackeray’s undated letter contains a plea for assistance from the editor, the kind of assistance that an author away from home might need – Thackeray was in Ireland in the fall of 1842 doing spade work for his Irish Sketch Book.

There is a more likely interpretation of the surviving records. There is one (and only one) unattributed major article in the July 1842 Foreign Quarterly Review, and that article, a review of Eugene Sue’s Mathilde, perfectly matches both Thackeray’s interests and the financial data. Thackeray was an expert on Sue, he subsequently wrote an FQR review on Sue’s Mysteres of Paris, and he commented in his letters and elsewhere on
Indeed, his expressed opinions regarding *Mathilde* – that the novel’s incidents and characters are exaggerated, but that its heroine’s sentiment and sufferings are effectively portrayed with a ring of truth that inspires interest – are central to the unattributed July 1842 article. Moreover, this review of *Mathilde* is exactly 14 pages, thereby validating Thackeray’s reference to four sheets of writing. Lastly, in 1907 Robert Garnett, lacking the financial information and supporting letters cited in this chapter, argued based on content and style that this article was “probably by Thackeray.” The essay itself presents Thackeray’s perspective as to how the writings of Sue, Sand, and Bernard reflect contemporary social trends in France.

Yet Thackeray’s July 29, 1842 letter to his mother, in which he writes “I hope youll like my articles the German and the last 15 years of the Bourbons in the Review,” puts all of the above into question. If Thackeray indeed wrote the review of *Mathilde*, why didn’t he also reference that article in his letter to his mother? Had Thackeray, now in Ireland, not seen the July 1, 1842 issue of *FQR*? Did he not know that the *Mathilde* essay had been published? There is a second discrepant letter to his mother regarding the *FQR* – a letter dated March 28, 1843 in which he comments on having two articles appear in the next issue of *FQR* when other evidence strongly suggests he instead had three or four. Perhaps he really did not know when his *FQR* articles would be published, for on August 3, 1843 he wrote a letter to Chapman and Hill expressing his displeasure that an article he thought would be published in July had not, in fact, appeared in that issue.

Thackeray’s association with the *Foreign Quarterly Review* continued through 1842 and into 1843. In July of 1842 Thackeray, already in Ireland to develop material for
his *Irish Sketch Book*, wrote back to Chapman & Hall: "If you light upon any pleasant German or French book that may be reviewed without trouble or consultation of other works, please keep it for me -- travelling is expensive and I shall be glad to help my purse along. Mind also that the article (to come) on Louis Philippe belongs to me . . . Though the Louis Philippe article will take much time, & bring no profit, I want to do it, for reputation's sake. I don't think at all small beer of the Restoration -- to which you gave a good title." Later in July he again wrote to Chapman & Hall, apparently responding to their request that he finish the Louis Philippe article, explaining that he could do nothing with regard to the Louis Philippe article without books to consult, and offered instead to write an article on Miss Pardoe. (Chapman & Hall did not honor Thackeray’s request to “hold” the Louis Philippe article for him; instead, the final part of that project was given to George Henry Lewes who published “Louis Blanc’s History of Ten Years” in the October 1843 issue of *FQR*.)

On September 1 Thackeray wrote his mother "I shall be detained here [in Ireland] some days with an article for Chapman & Hall." As I indicated earlier, the undated submission letter and the attendant review of “Travelling Romancers: Dumas on the Rhine” — which is, in fact, “a pleasant German or French book that may be reviewed [mostly] without trouble or consultation of other works”—and which Harden tentatively placed in June is, instead, more properly a product of this September time period.

1.2.2 Biblio-Economic Reconciliations

In late March of 1843 Thackeray wrote to his mother that, with all the time spent in Ireland and all the effort on the Irish Sketch book, he had earned “110 elsewhere”
[since last July]. This serves as a reference point for a biblio-economic analysis: can it explain the associated level of activity, or, perhaps, even replicate this sum? Indeed, it can do both.

Thackeray had already received half-payment (in June) for his July *Foreign Quarterly Review* submissions, leaving £20 outstanding from Chapman & Hill. The eleven “Tickletoby Lectures” published in *Punch* from July to October of 1842 occupy 26.75 columns of text space and, according to our analysis, Thackeray should have received payment from Bradley and Evans at a rate of 1 guinea per column or £28. The “Traveling Romancers: Dumas on the Rhine” article in the October 1842 *Foreign Quarterly Review* occupies 20 pages for which Thackeray should have received approximately £12.5. Fitz-Boodle articles were published in *Fraser’s Magazine* in July, October, January, February, and March; these articles total 61 pages for a projected remuneration of £46. And Thackeray’s first article in *The Pictorial Times* was published on March 18, 1843 with an anticipated payment, based on its 2.5-column size, of 4£. These monies total as follows: £20 + £28 + £12.5 + £46 + 4£ = £110.5! This near exact agreement with Thackeray’s own assessment testifies both to the ability of the biblio-economic method of analysis to associate literary activity with realized remuneration and to Thackeray’s careful tracking of his own revenues. Further, it strongly suggests that there are no major “missing” Thackeray articles or periodical revenue sources in the July 1842 – March 1843 time frame. In particular, the assertions by one of Thackeray’s biographers that Thackeray performed a significant amount of work for the *Examiner* and / or *The Morning Chronicle* during this time period must be incorrect.\(^{48}\)
In that same March 1843 letter Thackeray also wrote that “I have about 200 £ coming in from the book [the Irish Sketch Book] and unpaid articles” and “I have earned the book call it 300 £.” Thackeray’s contract for the Irish Sketch Book with Chapman & Hall called for Thackeray to receive a £120 advance (which he had received in 1840) and an additional £50 upon delivery of the manuscript. Further payments were predicated on the sale of various numbers of copies. Although there is no confirmation that Thackeray had received his manuscript delivery payment, Thackeray delivered the manuscript in February, and it would have been unlike him not to have insisted upon immediate payment. Assuming that Thackeray had, in fact, already received his manuscript fee, he would have received £170 of his estimated £300 for the book, so that perhaps £130 of the £200 that “were coming in” was book-related. This analysis then projects that perhaps £70 of the £200 should be associated with unpaid articles.

It is a simple matter to attempt to reconcile Thackeray’s periodical contributions with this £70 value. Thackeray was doing very little for Punch at the time; instead, he was mainly writing for the Calcutta Star, the Pictorial Times, Fraser’s Magazine, and the Foreign Quarterly Review. In early March Thackeray sent a letter to the Calcutta Star that was worth, perhaps, £2-3. For the Pictorial Times he had one contribution in late March and three contributions awaiting publication in the April 1 issue that collectively came to about £7-8. The April 1 issue of Fraser’s Magazine contained a Fitz-Boodle article that should have been worth £8, and it is probable that Thackeray still had not received payment of £10 for his March Fraser’s Magazine article. These articles total at most 25 – 30 pounds, leaving £40 – 45 or more unaccounted for. The only known candidates to fill this gap are the four articles in the April 1st issue of Foreign Quarterly
Review that have been at times attributed to Thackeray. Two of the attributions, one article entitled “George Herwegh’s Poems” and a second entitled “Thieves Literature of Paris,” are externally confirmed; these articles total almost 34 pages and should have been worth £21, leaving perhaps £19 - 24 unaccounted for. The two questionable attributions, “English History and Character on the French Stage” and “Balzac on the Newspapers of Paris,” total 35 pages or £22. Thus a biblio-economic reconciliation of Thackeray’s statement regarding what was “coming in” with possible “unpaid articles” suggests that the uncertain Foreign Quarterly Review articles are by Thackeray.

1.2.3 Punch in 1842

Surviving editor’s contribution ledgers for the years 1843 - 1855 specify the writers and column lengths of most Punch articles,\(^{50}\) however, some questions about Thackeray’s early Punch contributions remain unresolved. Athold Mayhew asserts that Thackeray wrote the July 1841 article “A Fair Offer,”\(^{51}\) while Marion Spielmann suggests that Thackeray’s first Punch article may have been the June 1842 “The Legend of Jawbrahim Heraudee.”\(^{52}\) All sources agree, however, that Thackeray wrote the eleven “Miss Tickletobey Lectures on English History” that were published between July and October of 1842.

Punch was a mixed-media periodical: text and illustration often played off one another to give a composite effect which neither could produce on its own. The editor’s ledger books do not address the source of drawings, which often remain a bibliographic puzzle. Thackeray, of course, was both a writer and an illustrator. Sometimes he supplied illustrations to support his own articles, sometimes he did not, and sometimes he
provided illustrations for articles written by others. Some of Thackeray’s illustrations are “signed” with an image of a pair of spectacles, but others are not. As Edgar Harden has written, “The unsigned drawings accompanying Thackeray’s own contributions to *Punch* . . . require notice but often cannot positively be attributed to him.” In particular, the provenance of the unsigned illustrations integrated into the “Tickletoby” lectures remains uncertain.

Comments in Thackeray’s letters which are highlighted in the above virtual account book establish that in June of 1842 Thackeray wrote “near 25 £ in four days” for *Punch* and the *Foreign Quarterly Review*; that his non-staff pay rate for *Punch* was “2 guineas per page,” that he had been paid for his first article, that by September he had been writing for *Punch* for three months, and that after complaining about late payment he subsequently received £25 from *Punch*. Consequently, these records demonstrate that Thackeray did not write the 1841 article or any other early *Punch* contributions prior to “Jawbrahim Heraudee.” Moreover, as “The Legend of Jawbrahim-Heraudee” runs to 4.15 columns, presumably Thackeray was paid a little over 4 guineas for this story.

The 11 Tickletoby articles collectively include approximately 26.75 columns of text; at one guinea per column, this comes to a little over 28 pounds, in excellent agreement with the 25 pounds Thackeray had received by September 27, 1842 (which may not have included payment for the last article which was not published until October 1). However, the Tickletoby articles also include 24 unsigned illustrations which themselves occupy an additional 6.7 columns. This analysis shows that Thackeray was not paid for these illustrations. It is unlikely that a non-staff writer would have done these
extensive illustrations as “throw-ins;” they are, therefore, in all probability not by Thackeray.

### 1.3 The Account Book for 1844

The following table presents extracts from Thackeray’s account book for the first quarter of 1844 as published by Gordon Ray. Thackeray’s spellings and markings have been retained; however, three liberties have been taken in this presentation: (1) extracts that are from different pages have been placed side-by-side, (2) columns have been vertically aligned, and (3) a black line has been placed in the middle of each column in order to dramatize what I believe to be an important distinction.

**Table 1.4** Extracts from partial account book for 1844

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>January Cash Receipts</th>
<th>February Cash Receipts</th>
<th>March Cash Receipts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>At Lubbocks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>32.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 0</td>
<td></td>
<td>Drew from B&amp;É</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Cash at Lubbocks</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 From Stevens</td>
<td>do from Nickisson</td>
<td>Nickisson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>22.15/</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>in pocket 140 £</td>
<td>Fraser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 Drew on Lubbock for 23½ leaving a balance of 20£</td>
<td>Received from Giraldon 100£.</td>
<td>C &amp; H 40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrote 2-15 Punch</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Wrote Preface</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 India Letter</td>
<td>3 3</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-11 Novels for Fraser</td>
<td>American Letter</td>
<td>Chronicle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>4 10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20 Barry Lyndon</td>
<td>Barry Lyndon &amp;c. III</td>
<td>Punch (say)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Mysteres</td>
<td>Barry Lyndon IV</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 Child of Godesberg</td>
<td>Godesberg</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India and America Letter</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The items above the bold black line for each month document cash receipts. These items focus on payments to Thackeray’s banker, Lubbocks, from various entities and editors. Thackeray’s diary, for example, establishes that in early January he borrowed...
10 pounds from his friend Augustus Stevens, a debt that was repaid in March. Similarly, in early February Thackeray acknowledged and thanked George Nickisson, the editor of *Fraser’s Magazine*, for a cash payment – presumably the 22 pounds and 15 shillings listed under cash receipts for February. But the items below the bold line, although they have previously and understandably been interpreted as cash payments, are, I submit, instead primarily Thackeray’s work lists and projected receipts. He simply could not have received all the funds shown on the dates indicated.

Take, for example, the lower-left-hand box for January of 1844. As can be verified by a cross-check with surviving fragments of Thackeray’s diary, the numbers 2-15, 3, 8-11, and so on are the dates on which the indicated work was done. Specifically, on January 2 Thackeray wrote “Leaves from the Lives of the Lords of Literature” and on January 14 Thackeray wrote “Lady L.’s Journal of a Visit to Foreign Courts” for *Punch*; during the period January 16 – 20 he wrote the second segment of the serial novel “Barry Lyndon” for *Fraser’s Magazine*; the “Child of Godesberg” material was written on January 25-28 and not even submitted to a publisher until early in February; there were two India letters (to the *Calcutta Star*) written in January, one on the third and one near the end of the month and mailed to India in February, and so on. The numbers associated with these items cannot generally represent monies Thackeray received in January (few publishers paid in advance of publication), but rather, I argue, represent Thackeray’s estimate of the financial value associated with each entry. Thackeray’s financial records were subjective and informal, designed for his personal use and purposes, and not intended to be formal ledgers. There are similar reasons for believing that the lower entries for February and March are predominantly work lists rather than
records of cash received. Examining Thackeray’s letters it is clear that the 25 pounds listed in February from *Punch* represents both work done and payment received in that month, but there is every indication that Thackeray received no money for his American letters in February, and his February submissions of parts of *Barry Lyndon* best ties to monies Thackeray received from George Nickisson, then proprietor of *Fraser’s Magazine*, in March.

With this understanding a number of interesting reconciliations and conclusions can be drawn. For instance, Gordon Ray suggested that Thackeray abandoned his translation of Eugène Sue’s *Mystères de Paris* because he was not promptly paid. However, the January 21 work list reference regarding 4 pounds for Mysteres clearly ties to the February payment received from Giraldon of 100 francs; obviously, Thackeray was paid and our understanding as to why he abandoned this project is incomplete.

In general the entries confirm the earlier stated 12-pounds-per-sheet pay rate for *Fraser’s Magazine*; however, the £9 projected payment for the 16.5 page article “A Box of Novels” seems discrepant until one realizes that this article contains 4.5 pages of extracts; this suggests that, under the editorship of Nickisson, *Fraser’s Magazine* paid only for the original text of review articles and not for the extended extracts then normally included in book reviews. This is a significant observation. Early Victorian book reviews often contained extended extracts, and our analysis shows that newspapers such as the *Times* and the *Morning Chronicle* paid Thackeray “by the column or fraction thereof” regardless as to the mixture of original comment or textual extract employed by the reviewer (although sometimes extracts were printed in a smaller font). In such cases it was clearly to the reviewer’s advantage to include extracts to boost his income. However,
if *Frasers* (and, potentially, other literary magazines) excluded extract space in computing their payments, then authors must have had non-monetary motives for including extended quotations from the works they were reviewing.

W. C. Desmond Pacey has attributed to Thackeray a clever satiric essay on Louis Phillipe which appeared in the March 16, 1844 issue of a short-lived New York periodical, the *Republic*. Edgar Harden interpreted Thackeray’s account book to mean that one American letter payment was received in January and two in February and accordingly questioned this attribution. Now, appreciating the work-list nature of this account book and reviewing associated letters, a fuller understanding validates Pacey’s attribution and sheds new light on Thackeray’s relationship with that periodical. Indeed, Thackeray wrote to Henry Wikoff, a co-proprietor of *The Republic*, on January 28, 1844, rejecting Wikoff’s earlier proposal that Thackeray write letters from Paris for his journal at a rate of £9 per month, and adding that he [Thackeray] did not want to commit to staying in Paris. Instead, Thackeray offered to send “an article for your paper, to be followed by two more by the Havre packet,” if Wikoff would immediately forward payment to Thackeray and allow Thackeray greater freedom of movement. The American Letter work-list reference at the end of January and the two “American Letters” in February suggest that, with or without Wikoff’s concurrence, Thackeray went ahead with his part of this proposed agreement, and it further appears from the work list that Wikoff owed Thackeray approximately 9 pounds (an estimated £2 for the January submission, perhaps £1.75 for the first February letter, and £4.5 for the second February letter).
The letter from Paris published in the March 16, 1844, issue of *The Republic* and identified by Pacey as having been written by Thackeray carries the notation of being written in February.\(^6\) Following Pacey’s arguments, it is most likely that this article corresponds to one of the American letters in Thackeray’s February work list – the other two letters have not been recovered. However, Thackeray then seems to have terminated his relationship with Wikoff. Indeed, Thackeray’s March work list does not include any American letters. This rupture is explained by a March 11, 1844 letter Thackeray, who had by then left Paris and returned to London, wrote to his friend Thomas Fraser, Paris correspondent of the *Morning Chronicle*. (Thomas Fraser should not be confused with Hugh Fraser, the cofounder of *Fraser’s Magazine*, or James Fraser, publisher of that same periodical.) In this letter Thackeray asked Fraser “to write a leading article on the affairs of France and Europe in general and to send it addressed to H. Wikoff.”\(^6\)

Apparently Wikoff had never abandoned his original insistence that his foreign correspondent be located in Paris. Thackeray included with his letter to Fraser a letter to be forwarded to Wikoff’s bankers, and asked Fraser to extract payment for his own letter from any remittance and to forward the rest to Thackeray. And, apparently, something of this sort did happen, as Thackeray’s March cash receipts include £9 from Fraser – presumably a pass-through on funds received from Wikoff – and there is also a small deduction under March Cash Paid to Fraser.\(^6\)

Similarly, although Thackeray scholars and biographers have previously noted that Thackeray wrote columns for the *Calcutta Star* in the mid-1840s, they have generally been vague as to the specifics of this engagement. As detailed in chapter 4 of this dissertation, entries in this virtual account book help clarify and correct erroneous
misconceptions regarding this aspect of Thackeray’s journalism. Further, Thackeray wrote for the *Morning Chronicle* during the mid 1840s, and this account book establishes Thackeray’s rate of pay from that periodical. Thackeray wrote two articles for the *Chronicle* in March of 1844 – one of 1.9 columns and one of 1.15 columns – and the projected £8 pounds cited in his account book equates exactly to a pay rate of 2.5 guineas per column. This linkage of payment to length of contribution is in accord with the practices of the time and is consistent with Thackeray’s 1848 comment that the *Morning Chronicle* paid him [presumably on average] 5 guineas per article.64

### 1.4 The Virtual Account Book 1844-1848

Table 1.5 summarizes Thackeray’s virtual account book records for 1844-1848.

**Table 1.5 Virtual account book records for 1844 – 1848**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Periodical</th>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Comment / Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Morning Chronicle</em></td>
<td>Ray, Letters, 2:164.</td>
<td>In 3/11/1844 letter Thackeray estimates that a position with <em>Morning Chronicle</em> would be “worth 300 £ per year”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Morning Chronicle</em></td>
<td>Ray, Letters, 2:172.</td>
<td>In letter dated 6/11/1844 Thackeray states that “I don’t do above 20 £ [monthly] for the Chronicle instead of 40 – but it is my own fault – the fact is I can’t write the politics and the literary part is badly paid”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Punch</em></td>
<td>Punch Contributions Ledger - 1844</td>
<td>Punch contributions monthly summary ledger credits Thackeray with making 4 columns worth of contributions to issue # 130, January 6, 1844.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Punch</em></td>
<td>Ray, Letters, 4:325.</td>
<td>Three undated letters to Frederick Mullet Evans contain the respective quotes: (1) “Can you settle with me – a ¼ quarter of Punch and the proceeds of the last masterpiece;” (2) Will you pay in for me my month and 70£ as the Punch Quarter”; and (3) “Can you let me have 60 for the no. and 40 on the Punch acct. that will ease the payment at the end of June which would otherwise come awfully heavy upon you.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>General</em></td>
<td>Ray, Letters,</td>
<td>In letter dated 6/1/1844 Thackeray states that</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“somehow it doesn’t go above 65 or 70 a month – and in that occasional failures” and adds “Fraser & the Chronicle and the mighty Punch above all will tie me here for many days to come.”

Calcutta Star

Ray, Letters, 2:147. Diary entry dated 8/6/1844 “Found a letter from Hume with 10 £ only”; on 8/7/1844 a diary entry states “Wrote Humes letter”

Fraser’s Magazine

Ray, Letters, 2:176. Letter to Nickisson asking for 25 sovereigns to cover two months’ work on Barry Lyndon [typical monthly segments were 16 pages]

Calcutta Star

Ray, Letters, 2:842. Account Book entry shows 3.0.0 under August for Hume letter

New Monthly Magazine

Ray, Letters, 2:198. In a letter dated 6/30/1845 Thackeray writes “Your terms are prodigiously good – and if I can see the material for a funny story you shall have it.”

Examiner

Ray, Letters, 2:203. In a letter dated 26 July 1845 Thackeray writes “The Examiner and I have parted company . . . it took more time than I could afford to give it for four sovereigns”

Edinburgh Review


General

Ray, Letters, 2:225. Thackeray letter (January 1846?): “I have besides 700 £ between Punch & the Chronicle: though I don’t count on the latter beyond the year as I am a very weak & poor politician only good for outside articles and occasional jeux d’esprit.”

Morning Chronicle

Ray, Letters, 2:231. In letter dated 3/6/1846 Thackeray writes "The Chronicle and I must part or I must cut down half the salary. They are most provokingly friendly all the time, and insist that I should neither resign nor disgorge -- but how can one but act honorably by people who are so good natured?"

General

Ray, Letters, 2:243. In a letter dated 8/6/1846 Thackeray estimates his income as “say 800 £ a year that’s about it till the novel [Vanity Fair] begins”

General

Ray, Letters, 2:382. In a letter dated 6/5/1848 Thackeray writes “Well, I am to have 1000 a year for my next story, and with Punch & what not can do very like 700 or 750 more”

Morning Chronicle

Ray, Letters, 2:442. In a letter written in mid-October of 1848 Thackeray writes “I have begun to blaze away in the Chronicle again – it is an awful bribe that 5 guineas an article”

Bentley’s Miscellany

Harden, Letters Supplement, 1:566. In an 1853 letter Thackeray recalled Bentley offering to pay him £12 per sheet in trade books during the serialization of Vanity Fair

Punch

Harden, Letters In a letter to Mark Lemon complaining about his rate of
Supplement, 1:667. pay from Punch Thackeray notes: “A Column of Punch contains 85 lines of 56 letters = 4760 letters. A Page = 9520; A Page of Blackwood contains 60 lines of 56 letters = 3360. 3 pages of Blackwood at 5 guineas is 35/ per page or 28£ per sheet”

General

Harden, Letters Supplement, 2:1414. In a diary entry for September of 1859 Thackeray lists the following estimates of money earned: Since 1840: N. M. Magazine (say) 200; Punch (say) 4000; Before 1840: Examiner 100, Fraser (say) 400, Morning Chronicle (say) 400

As described in chapter 3 of this dissertation, the derived rate of 2.5 guineas per column for the Morning Chronicle has immediate implications regarding the identification of Thackeray’s subsequent writings for that periodical. Additionally, the July 1845 reference to the Examiner serves to establish the duration and weekly pay rate of Thackeray’s work as a subeditor for that periodical. The single October 1845 reference to Thackeray receiving 20 guineas for a ten-page article in the Edinburgh Review establishes the payment rate for that periodical as 32 guineas per sheet, or substantially more than Thackeray had earlier received from the British and Foreign Review (£11 per sheet), The Westminster Review (£10 per sheet or less), or the Foreign and Quarterly Review (£10 per sheet). This differential might be associated with the higher status of the Edinburgh Review, but it could equally well be associated with Thackeray’s growing reputation as an author. Even before Vanity Fair Thackeray’s earning power as a journalist was increasing. On July 26, 1845 he wrote "The admirers of Mr. Titmarsh are a small clique but a good and increasing one if I may gather from the daily offers that are made for me: and the increased sums bid for my writings." It is evident, for example, that Thackeray’s compensation arrangement with the New Monthly Magazine, which had been set at 12 guineas per sheet, was upgraded in 1845. Harrison Ainsworth had taken over that periodical and had extended an increased offer to Thackeray.
responded on June 25, stating "Your terms are prodigiously good -- and if I can see the material for a funny story you shall have it." While the specifics of Ainsworth’s offer to Thackeray have not survived, we do know that Ainsworth offered the comic writer Thomas Hood 16 guineas per sheet to write for *Ainsworth’s Magazine*, and presumably Thackeray received a similar boost.

1.4.1 *Punch* 1844-1848

Thackeray became a full-time staff member for *Punch* late in December of 1843 upon the resignation of Albert Smith. However, Thackeray was not individually listed in the Punch editor’s record book as a regular contributor until *Punch* issue # 131, published on January 13, 1844. Thackeray’s own records for the early January transition period are incomplete; however, presumably to monitor levels of contribution (and possibly affect compensation), *Punch*’s record book also included monthly summary totals for all staff contributors. Thackeray’s monthly statement, which I have designated as a virtual account book record in table 1.5, asserts that Thackeray contributed 3 columns of material for *Punch* issue 130 (published on January 6, 1843). However, Thackeray bibliographers from Marion Spellmann to Edgar Harden have credited Thackeray with contributing only a single half-column article in that issue. Did Thackeray ease into his *Punch* role or did he hit the ground running as a fully contributing staff member? The discrepancy may be resolved by examining a segment of the detailed ledger page for *Punch* issue 130 as shown below:
Here, under the category “Editor’s” are listed contributions made by the editor or by free lance contributors. For example, the second article, “Reflections on New Year’s Day,” was written by Thomas Hood and occupied half a column. The reference to a Thackeray contribution which has been caught by previous bibliographers is “Important Promotions (Thackeray’s) ½,” referring to the half-column article “Important Promotion!Merit Rewarded.” But the following words, “A Christmas Game (Ditto) ¼. Shirt Question (Ditto) ¼. Regarding the Royal Billiard Table (Ditto) 1 ½.,” are also important – in the context of the summary ledger the writer clearly believed that the three articles “A Christmas Game,” “Another Word on the Shirt Question,” and “Regarding the Royal George Billiard Table,” which would have brought Thackeray’s contribution to that issue of Punch up to exactly 3 columns, were by Thackeray. The “Ditto” comment for “A Christmas Game” was subsequently crossed out and replaced, in another color ink (not shown in the above black and white figure), with a reference to John Oxenford. But it appears that “Another Word on the Shirt Question,” and “Regarding the Royal George Billiard Table” were credited by Punch as being Thackeray’s and should be added to the
list of Thackeray’s contributions to *Punch*. The “Shirt Question” article is a follow-on to Hood’s “The Song of the Shirt” which had been published in *Punch* in December; this article, signed “Philodicky,” sarcastically complains that it costs more to launder a shirt than the sempstress was paid to make it, and that consequently Philodicky is reduced to wearing a dirty garment. The “Royal George” article is a satirical petition by *Punch* opposing the use of the timbers of a sunken British battleship, the “Royal George,” to construct a billiard table for the Queen (see a December 21, 1843 *Times* article).  

Mark Lemon, the *Punch* editor, preferred to pay staffers a salary and allocate them a specified number of columns to fill. Undated surviving letters from Thackeray to Bradbury & Evans requesting payments for the “Punch Quarter” suggest that Thackeray also was ultimately salaried. One of these “virtual account book” letters specifies the quarterly payment to be £70, and Thackeray’s records document that he did in fact receive £70 from Bradbury and Evans in the first quarter of 1844. An annual total of £280 would be very much in line with the reported annual compensation levels for Shirley Brooks (about £275), Henry Silver (a little over £325), and Douglas Jerrold (£300 plus a thirty shilling addition for each of the popular “Mrs. Caudle’s Curtain Lectures” articles). Of course, this compensation was to cover a projected level of work; Marion Spielmann states that Thackeray’s allocation was 46 columns per volume or 92 columns per year. An annual target of 92 columns and an annual salary of £280 implies an effective rate of 3 guineas per column.

Thackeray often fell well below his *Punch* column allocations, and there is no information as to whether his compensation was consequently reduced. Accordingly, for this analysis I have used the conservative 3-guineas-per-column rate. Indeed, Thackeray’s
letters show he was “per column” driven. When he first joined the *Punch* staff he exulted that his pay rate would be “more than double of that I get anywhere else.” Later, in 1854, after he had left the *Punch* staff and had become an occasional writer for that periodical, he complained that his per-column rate of pay was less than it used to be.

### 1.4.2 Biblio-Economic Answers and Questions

In June of 1844 Thackeray complained that “somehow it [his periodical income] doesn’t go above 65 or 70 [£] a month.” This serves as another test of a biblio-economic analysis: will an April – June projected receipt ledger support Thackeray’s comment?

That reconciliation is shown below:

**Table 1.6 Biblio-economic reconciliation for the second quarter of 1844**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>April £</th>
<th>May £</th>
<th>June £</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calcutta Star</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>Calcutta Star</td>
<td>1.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Quart. Rev.</td>
<td>10.44</td>
<td>Fraser’s Magazine</td>
<td>20.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraser’s Magazine</td>
<td>14.55</td>
<td>Morning Chronicle</td>
<td>19.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morning Chronicle</td>
<td>11.68</td>
<td>New Monthly Mag.</td>
<td>4.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punch</td>
<td>20.95</td>
<td>Pictorial Times</td>
<td>1.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Punch</td>
<td>14.48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>60.12</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>62.46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Obviously the revenue projections are in accord with Thackeray’s observation; the lower projected revenue for June suggests that there are likely additional Thackeray writings in the June *Morning Chronicle* (see the June 1844 *Morning Chronicle* candidate articles identified in chapter 3). Indeed, the “big three” – namely, *Fraser’s Magazine*, the *Morning Chronicle*, and *Punch* – each appear to contribute about 1/3 of Thackeray’s
journalistic income. In his case, at least, it required multiple journalistic outlets to support an early Victorian journalist at a rate of approximately £700 per annum.

Thackeray’s terms of payment with either *Punch* or *The Morning Chronicle* or possibly both periodicals increased starting in late 1845 or early 1846. In a letter dated by Ray as being written in January of 1846, Thackeray wrote “I have besides 700 £ between Punch & the Chronicle.” In August of that year Thackeray estimated his income as “say 800 £ a year that’s about it till the novel [*Vanity Fair*] begins [in 1847].” Both of these references imply Thackeray anticipated, whether or not it was realized, a combined *Punch* and *Morning Chronicle* income approximating £700 per year.

One possible explanation for this increase is that Thackeray was receiving more money from *Punch*, and that Thackeray’s projected 1846 periodical revenues may have been roughly *Punch* £500 and the *Morning Chronicle* £200. In 1859, many years after he had ceased writing for both periodicals, Thackeray summarized his career earnings in a diary entry. He estimated that he had earned £4000 from *Punch*; if that estimate is correct – which it need not be – then he must have earned nearly £500 per year in his 1845-1851 peak years for *Punch*. Indeed, there is one undated partial letter from Thackeray to Mark Lemon, the editor of *Punch*, in which Thackeray wrote: "100 will do for the present very well and you are heartily welcome to let the other stand over.” The implication of that letter is that Thackeray was owed more than 100 pounds (and well more than the 70 pounds that he was apparently at one time receiving per quarter). Further, in a letter dated June 5, 1848 Thackeray writes “Well, I am to have 1000 a year for my next story, and with Punch & what not can do very like 700 or 750 more,” again suggesting that his *Punch* income had increased. Going back to the 1859 career income diary entry we also
find a strangely placed (and thus questionable) notation that Thackeray’s estimated career earnings from the *Morning Chronicle* were £400\(^{78}\); since roughly half of all known Thackeray *Morning Chronicle* articles were published in 1846 this total value would be consistent with 1846 earnings of £200. Under this reading of the evidence Thackeray received more money from *Punch* as his work succeeded and his popularity increased. Yet the question about the source of Thackeray’s increased earnings remains open.

Another possible explanation of Thackeray’s financial projections, that he may have been getting paid for political articles written for but not published by the *Morning Chronicle*, is presented in chapter 3 of this dissertation.

### 1.5 Payment Practices and Rates

Table 1.7 below displays the rates of payment Thackeray received from a variety of early Victorian periodicals; this apparently is the largest and most comprehensive data base of its type ever presented for a Victorian journalist. Typically payments were made on a “per-sheet” or a “per-column” basis. Rates that have been validated by specific real or virtual account book records are shown in normal font; estimated rates, based on non-quantitative comments in Thackeray’s letters or on rates of related periodicals, are shown in italics. Multiple rates with associated time spans are shown for several periodicals where evidence indicates that the rate of pay changed over time. I have been unable to examine the original format of the *Republic* or the *Calcutta Star*, thus Thackeray’s typical rate of remuneration for those publications is given on a per-article basis. As indicated previously, Thackeray worked for *Galignani’s Messenger*, the *Examiner*, and the *Constitutional* on a daily or weekly salary basis.
### Table 1.7 Thackeray’s rates of pay from periodicals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Periodical</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Rate</th>
<th>Page = rows x characters / per 1,000 chars</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Ainsworth’s Mag.</td>
<td>1842</td>
<td>10 guineas / sheet</td>
<td>67 x 78 or 88</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bentley’s Miscellany</td>
<td>1837</td>
<td>12 guineas / sheet</td>
<td>53 x 68</td>
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<td>Britannia</td>
<td>1841</td>
<td>2 guineas / column</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British &amp; Foreign Rev.</td>
<td>1839</td>
<td>£11 / sheet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calcutta Star</td>
<td>1843 – 1845</td>
<td>£2.5 / article</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comic Almanack</td>
<td>1838 – 1840</td>
<td>13 1/3 guineas / sheet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constitutional</td>
<td></td>
<td>8 guineas / week</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corsair</td>
<td>1839 – 1840</td>
<td>1 guinea / column</td>
<td>80 x 74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edinburgh Review</td>
<td>1845</td>
<td>32 guineas / sheet</td>
<td>45 x 65</td>
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<tr>
<td>Examiner</td>
<td>1845</td>
<td>£4 / week</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Quarterly Rev.</td>
<td>1842 – 1844</td>
<td>£10 / sheet</td>
<td>45 x 65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraser’s Magazine</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fraser’s Magazine</td>
<td>4/1838 – 1847</td>
<td>£12 / sheet</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cruikshank’s Omnibus</td>
<td>1841</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cruikshank’s Table Book</td>
<td>1845</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heads of the People</td>
<td>1839 – 1840</td>
<td>£10 / sheet</td>
<td>42 x 70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London &amp; Westmin. Rev.</td>
<td>1839</td>
<td>£8 / sheet</td>
<td>45 x 65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galignanni’s Messenger</td>
<td>1838</td>
<td>£4 / week</td>
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<td>Morning Chronicle</td>
<td>1842 – 1848</td>
<td>2.5 guineas / column</td>
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</tr>
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<td>New Monthly Magazine</td>
<td>1837 – 6/1845</td>
<td>12 guineas / sheet</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Monthly Magazine</td>
<td>7-8/1845</td>
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<td>1842 –1843</td>
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<td>Times</td>
<td>1837 – 1840</td>
<td>2 guineas / col</td>
<td>190 x 52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westminster Rev.</td>
<td>1840</td>
<td>£8 / sheet</td>
<td>45 x 65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Page = rows x characters / per 1,000 chars
As one might expect, each of these periodicals has its own page or column dimensions and font sizes which greatly affects its true rate of pay. A journalist analyzing remuneration levels from different periodicals would, presumably, look beneath the surface to make “apples to apples” comparisons. To facilitate that analysis, table 1.7 contains a column showing the number of shillings paid per 1,000 characters. (Thackeray based his own remuneration comparisons on numbers of letters or characters rather than on numbers of words. The numbers largely speak for themselves. Indeed, when placed on a per-thousand-characters basis, compensation rates vary by as much as a factor of 5! The high rates paid by the *Edinburgh Review* stand out compared to the other quarterlies. The per-thousand-character rates paid by the monthly magazines are much more tightly grouped. And *Punch* paid more than any of the other weekly or monthly periodicals. The extent to which Thackeray’s experience was replicated by other journalists remains to be determined – for example, did the *Westminster Review* offer low rates to most or all of its contributors or was that peculiar to Thackeray and his relationship with the editors, William Hickson and Henry Cole?

Payment practices varied as described in the narratives presented in this chapter. Most periodicals (*New Monthly Magazine, Edinburgh Review, British & Foreign Review, Times*, etc.) paid their contributors only after their contributions were published. When long waits were involved, writers sometimes negotiated partial payment in advance of publication, as Thackeray did with the *Foreign Quarterly Review* and *Cruikshank’s Comic Almanack*. Judging from Thackeray’s frequent pleas to editors, there was some room to negotiate prices exceeding standard rates for individual articles. *Punch’s* salaried core staff approach was fairly unusual.
In 1838 as an emerging journalist Thackeray earned an average of £20 per month for his periodical work; by 1844, by increasing the number of periodical venues and getting higher rates of pay, he increased that monthly figure to £60 per month. Despite his best efforts he was never able to earn more than that sum per month from his journalism. By and large, and as described in the narratives presented in this chapter, Thackeray’s moves from one periodical to another appear to have been part of a continuing search for higher rates of compensation. Thus, it is clear why in 1846 Thackeray shifted his journalistic focus from *Fraser’s Magazine* to *Punch*: *Punch* was paying over 10 shillings per thousand characters, more than three times as much as *Fraser’s*! The narrative explorations of Thackeray’s financially-driven relations with periodicals presented in this chapter, as well as the pecuniary interactions with *The Times, The Morning Chronicle,* and *The Calcutta Star* described in subsequent chapters of this dissertation, provide a new richness of biographical and bibliographical detail, including a significant extension of Thackeray’s bibliography, and thereby demonstrate the utility of biblio-economic analysis.

Notes


3. Thackeray used this language to request that he be paid all he was owed by *Fraser’s Magazine* in July of 1839. See Gordon Ray, ed., *The Letters and Private Papers*


6. Volume 2 of James Grant’s 1837 work, The Great Metropolis, is devoted to a study of the London periodical press. Grant does provide supposedly representative rates of remuneration for contributors to various periodicals. Unfortunately, I have found that the payment rates reported by Grant are often overstated and are inconsistent with information from other sources. See James Grant, The Great Metropolis (London: Saunders & Otley, 1837), 2:278, 281, 284, 289, 292, 317, 322, 325, 331, 335, 337, 340, 347, 352.

7. Simons, “Contributions to the Times.”


10. Van Duzer’s Thackeray library was sold at auction on February 6 and 7, 1922. See “Thackeray Shown as an Illustrator,” New York Times, January 22, 1922.

11. See end note 3.


15. Hugh Blair, Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres (London: Charles Daly, 14 Leicester Street, Leicester Square, 1839).

16. Vicar of Wakefield, http://books.google.com/books?id=xC4vAAAAYAAJ&dq=inpublisher%3ADaly&pg=PP15#v=onepage&q&f=false; Pocket Lacon,
http://www.rookebooks.com/product?prod_id=7380; Koran,
http://www.earlyamerica.com/shopping/ebayproducts.html?itemid=300421021158&rp=antiquebooks; Marmion,
http://books.google.com/books?id=fnHyQAAAACAJ&dq=inpublisher:Daly&hl=en&ei=VHsvTPmjDsKqlAebsYWeCQ&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=6&ved=0


18. Patrick Leary raised this as an unanswered question in his study of the early years of Fraser’s Magazine. See Patrick Leary, “Fraser’s Magazine and the Literary Life, 1830-1847,” Victorian Periodicals Review 27, no.2 (Summer 1994): 109, 122-123.


20. The £12 a sheet rate for Fraser’s Magazine is established more definitively in Thackeray’s Account Book for 1844.


22. Eventually Thackeray contributed to all but the Dublin Review.


43. There is no doubt that the articles entitled “Thieves Literature of Paris” and “George Herwegh’s Poems” in the April 1843 issue of *Foreign Quarterly Review* are by Thackeray. Gordon Ray has concluded, based on a Thackeray letter which apparently is in private hands, that Thackeray also wrote that issue’s “English History and Character on the French Stage” and “Balzac on the Newspapers of Paris.” Wellesley Index concurs regarding the “English History” attribution, but expresses skepticism regarding “Balzac.” See Gordon Ray, *Thackeray: The Uses of Adversity 1811-1846* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1955), 485.
50. Actually these day-books cover the specific periods 2/11/1843 – 9/30/1848 and 10/21/1848 – 8/11/1855.
61. In 1839, when Thackeray was writing for another American periodical, the *Corsair*, a letter Thackeray dated July 25th was published on August 24, and a second letter dated August 16 was published on September 21. Apparently, a month’s delay was then “normal” for trans-Atlantic foreign correspondence. Starting in 1840 Cunard steam ships reduced mail delays across the Atlantic by as much as a week [see Richard Altick, *Punch: The Lively Youth of a British Institution 1841-1851* (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State UP, 1997), 14.], however one might still expect an extensive delay from writing to publication.
66. The *Punch* editor’s handwritten contribution ledger books contain individual pages for each separate weekly number or issue of *Punch*. On each of these pages the name of each primary staff member is listed followed by his contributions (by title, and usually by column length in fractions of a column to the nearest quarter column) to that issue; the right side of the ledger indicates the total number of columns in that issue for that writer. The number of graphics (‘cuts’) to be inserted into an article were sometimes also indicated, but it is clear from a perusal of these manuscript account books (which are now maintained at the British Library) that the column lengths shown were both approximate and measures of text length only. At the bottom of each page there would be a similar section devoted to listing that issue’s editor’s copy articles; editor’s copy signified articles were supplied by Mark Lemon either directly through his own writing or indirectly through the contributions of non-staff contributors. Infrequently the name of a non-staff contributor might be shown in parenthesis after one of these articles, but most of the time the source of an editor’s copy article was simply not specified.


78. The strange placement was that the *Morning Chronicle* earnings were listed under a heading “Before 1840.” Perhaps this heading was just an idle jotting by Thackeray, because (1) it is most unlikely that he earned any significant money from the *Morning Chronicle* before 1840, and (2) he did not explicitly include the *Morning Chronicle* in his “Since 1840” list even though it is clear he extensively wrote for that periodical in the mid-1840s. See Harden, *Letters Supplement*, 2:1414.

Chapter 2

“Five guineas for a week’s work”: The Victorian World in the *Times*

Many editions of Thackeray’s writings have been represented as his “Complete Works,” yet all of these editions have either ignored or given meager attention to Thackeray’s contributions to London’s leading newspapers, the *Times* and the *Morning Chronicle*. Despite this neglect, these newspaper articles were central to Thackeray’s development as a writer and essential to his livelihood as a journalist. During 1837-1840, for example, Thackeray wrote as many as five articles per month for the *Times*. In the face of pressing financial need, Thackeray decided that his game was “to stick to the *Times*.”¹ Later, however, he complained that for his *Times* article on Fielding he earned only “five guineas for a week’s work.”² Although almost all of his *Times* articles nominally were book reviews, Thackeray often used his bully pulpit to expound on topics such as governance, commerce, colonialism, religion, biography, history, society, travel, literature, and art. As a result, these articles not only shed light on Thackeray, the man, but also serve as windows into the early Victorian world.

Any serious investigation of Thackeray’s newspaper writings must address the uncertain circumstances, tentative timelines, and fragmentary bibliographic record of his newspaper work. Thackeray’s articles were published anonymously, and no master logs matching article to author have been found. The articles themselves typically offer fewer clues for literary detectives than do Thackeray’s works of satiric fiction. Thackeray never
collected and republished these articles. Only in 1888, 25 years after his death, did Charles Johnson first attribute a handful of Times critical reviews to Thackeray, and the currently most comprehensive academic edition of his works, the 1908 Oxford Thackeray, includes just a half dozen of Thackeray’s Times critical reviews and only one Morning Chronicle review. Further, scholars have reported a number of misunderstandings regarding his newspaper writings. This chapter explicates and analyzes Thackeray’s work for the Times; the next chapter similarly addresses his work for the Morning Chronicle.

Specifically, this chapter: (1) begins with an overview of Thackeray’s known arrangements with the Times; (2) summarizes the previous bibliographic record; (3) establishes and explores linkages between compensatory payments to Thackeray and his specific writings and proposes additional article attributions; and (4) explores aspects of the Victorian world – particularly colonialism and imperialism, international affairs, attitudes toward religious differences, and medievalism – as constructed by and through Thackeray’s newspaper writings. Sections 2.1 – 2.3 of this chapter have previously been published in somewhat altered form.

2.1 Thackeray and the Times

During the years 1837-1840 the Times was published six days a week as a six-column broad-sheet, typically in four- or eight-page editions. From July 1837 through December 1840 the Times published roughly 250 literary review articles, an average of approximately six per month. Novels, travel books, histories, biographies, and religious texts were frequently reviewed. Individual articles ranged in size from less than half a
column to four or more columns; a long review was often spread over several “notices” that might be published days or even months apart (for example, the 1839 review of Spark’s *Life of Washington* was broken into four notices, published on January 3, January 11, January 23, and April 2). As was standard for the time, frequently 50% or more of an article consisted of extracts from the work being reviewed.

We do not know precisely the period of time that Thackeray worked as a literary critic for the *Times*. Thackeray had been working for his stepfather’s newspaper, the *Constitutional*, which failed in July of 1837. Needing funds to support his young family, Thackeray apparently used a family connection with Edward Sterling, a *Times* leader writer, to secure assignments from the *Times*; his first generally acknowledged article, a review of Thomas Carlyle’s *The French Revolution*, was published on August 3, 1837. Although Thackeray contributed a few essays to the *Times* in the 1860s, his work as an active reviewer is variously assumed by Thackeray’s biographers to have ended with the death of Sterling in November of 1840 or with the death of *Times* editor Thomas Barnes in March of 1841. Thackeray’s last generally recognized contribution as a reviewer is his article “Fielding’s Works,” which was published on September 2, 1840.

During this three-and-a-half-year period, Thackeray’s letters often describe him as hard at work for the *Times*. In the August 24, 1839 issue of the *Corsair*, N. P. Willis, the *Corsair’s* editor, introduced Thackeray to his readers as “the principal critic for the *Times*.“ However, there is surprisingly little information as to which reviews Thackeray actually wrote. A surviving invoice for November 1838, the only month for which an incontrovertibly complete list of his contributions to the *Times* exists, enumerates five contributions: “Annuals” on November 2, “Steam in the Pacific” on November 8, “Henry
V” on November 12, “Fraser” on November 16, and “Krasinski” on November 27. There is no reason to believe that this month or this rate of article generation is atypical; even if Thackeray’s average sustained monthly contribution during his three and one-half years of active reviewing was only half as large as that of November 1838, his projected total writings in the *Times* would exceed 100 reviews. Yet external evidence has thus far been found for only 18 critical articles, which accordingly might well represent less than 20% of Thackeray’s actual contributions.

### 2.2 Bibliographic Background

In his 1934 book *Thackeray’s Literary Apprenticeship*, Gulliver extended the list of articles previously attributed to Thackeray using four techniques: (1) He found extraordinary agreements in wordings and content between reviews contemporaneously written by Thackeray for *Fraser’s Magazine* and reviews of the same works in the *Times*; since Thackeray was simultaneously writing for both publications, one might reasonably infer that Thackeray also penned the reviews in the *Times*. (2) He reasoned that if Thackeray was the known author of one notice in a review that was partitioned into several articles or notices, he was most probably also the author of the others. (3) He utilized cross-references, in which one review referred to another review as if it were by the same author; although these cross-references could have been the products of editorial intrusion, in general their embedded emplacements within the articles suggest that they were placed by a reviewer – in this case, Thackeray – who was responsible for both reviews. (4) He considered external evidence offered in the letters and memoirs of Lady Ritchie (Thackeray’s daughter), William Macready, and Thomas Carlyle.
Although some of Gulliver’s externally-based attributions are questionable, in general his arguments are persuasive. As shown in the summary table included in this chapter, the authorship of several articles that Gulliver first attributed to Thackeray has since been confirmed. Gulliver more than doubled the number of reasonably supported attributions of Thackeray articles in the *Times*. Nevertheless, perhaps not fully appreciating the significance of Gulliver’s 1934 work, a renowned Thackeray scholar, Robert Colby, independently recreated some of Gulliver’s reasoning in 1998 and 1999 and suggested as new attributions several reviews that had previously been attributed by Gulliver.\(^{12}\) Indeed, in the absence of a modern coordinating and consolidating review of Thackeray’s contributions to the *Times*, other scholars may have inadvertently missed prior Thackeray attributions in the literature; perhaps this is why Edgar Harden declared that “Turnbull’s *Austria*” was “an addition to Thackeray’s canon” in 1994 notwithstanding Lela Winegarner’s 1948 attribution of that article to Thackeray.\(^{13}\) Harden’s 1996 monograph, *A Checklist of Contributions by William Makepeace Thackeray to Newspapers, Periodicals, Books, and Serial Part Issues, 1828-1864*, the current standard bibliography of Thackeray’s periodical publications,\(^{14}\) includes Gulliver’s book in its list of citations, but excludes without comment many of Gulliver’s attributions of *Times* articles to Thackeray.\(^{15}\)

Of course, sometimes external evidence of authorship can be more misleading or more subject to misinterpretation than internal analyses. Several confusions in the literature are associated with external evidence that in retrospect was not definitive. For example, based on an errant twenty-years-afterward recollection of Thackeray’s daughter, Lady Ritchie, it was believed that Thackeray wrote the November 1, 1851
Times review of Carlyle’s Life of John Sterling, even though the review expressed opinions that were contrary to those Thackeray normally held. Based on Lady Ritchie’s recollection, this article was included in the standard Centenary Edition of Thackeray's works, and this attribution was subsequently endorsed by Gulliver and by Thackeray’s pre-eminent biographer, Gordon Ray. In 1999, however, K. J. Fielding demonstrated that the review in question was actually written by Samuel Phillips.

Working with an extract of a Thackeray letter that was published in the 1898 Biographical Edition of his works, Gulliver also fell prey to inaccurate external information. Gulliver seized upon the (apparently dated March 20, 1838) quotation that “I have been writing all day, and finished and dispatched an article for the Times” and argued that Thackeray was the author of an article regarding a public dinner at the Casino Paginni that was dated March 20 and published on March 23. But this attribution is unlikely to be correct. A complete version of the Thackeray letter in question shows that this was a multi-day letter, and that the quotation cited by Gulliver was actually written after March 20.

Indeed, Thackeray’s article “The Exhibition in Paris,” published on April 5 (with a letter date of March 21, and, unusually for Thackeray’s contributions to the Times, designated as a letter through the byline “From a Correspondent”), is almost certainly the article in question. Gulliver had argued for this exhibition article being by Thackeray as well, but, misled by the date on the published letter extract, had argued for the existence of two Thackeray articles sent from Paris when it now appears that there was only one.

Even Thackeray’s own letters cannot always be taken literally. Ray published an undated letter from Thackeray to Mrs. Proctor in which Thackeray wrote “I stop the pens
to ask if you have seen an attack on Mrs. Jameson in the *Times* this morning. I am the author of course.” After persuasively dating the letter to January of 1839, Ray concluded that the review in question was of Jameson’s recently published book, *Winter Studies and Summer Sketches in Canada*. However, that book was never reviewed in the *Times* – in fact, there were no *Times* reviews of any works by Mrs. Jameson in 1839. A review of a work by Mrs. Jameson was published in October of 1838 – a review that in style and content may well have been by Thackeray – but other information precludes an October 1838 date for the letter. One is almost forced to conclude that Thackeray deliberately lied, but, of course, there is a better answer. On January 24, 1839 the *Times* published a review of Mrs. Trollope’s *The Widow Barnaby*. Using cross-references Gulliver attributed this article to Thackeray. The most likely explanation for Thackeray’s letter is that, like many of us, Thackeray mis-wrote, thinking “Mrs. Trollope” but writing “Mrs. Jameson”; thus even clear attribution claims in external documentation need to be treated with skepticism and carefully validated against other information.

Indeed that very same letter to Mrs. Proctor contains another confusing reference. In this letter Thackeray awkwardly asserts that another reviewer wrote the December 28, 1838 *Times* review entitled “The Works of Ben Jonson, with a Memoir of his Life and Writings by Barry Cornwall.” In an otherwise excellent treatise on Thackeray’s work as a critic of literature, Lidmila Pantůčková suggests that Thackeray himself wrote this review, and consequently attaches great importance to Thackeray’s supposed views regarding Jonson. This interpretation and attribution seem most unlikely. The reviewer whose identity is in question praises Jonson but disparages Barry Cornwall, claiming that “Mr. Barry Cornwall seems to have nothing but the most confused jumble of ideas” and
“But a sad value is to be found in the memoir which is prefixed to it written by Mr. B. Cornwall . . . who has shown himself utterly incapable of doing it justice.” Mr. Cornwall was a close personal friend of Thackeray, and it is highly unlikely that Thackeray would have disparaged him in those terms. But more significantly, Barry Cornwall was the pseudonym of Bryan Proctor—Thackeray’s letter was to Proctor’s wife! If Thackeray had made such negative comments about her husband it is most unlikely that he would have freely acknowledged his authorship to Mrs. Proctor. Hawes has also questioned this attribution, but on stylistic grounds.22

If authors sometimes misstate their own contributions, third-party assertions regarding authorship are even more suspect. Apparently once Carlyle knew that Thackeray had written the review in the Times of his The French Revolution, he tended to be easily persuaded that other related reviews in the Times were also by Thackeray. Carlyle erroneously attributed a January 1838 series of Times articles entitled “Old England” to Thackeray and asserted that a May 1, 1838 review of the first of a series of his (Carlyle’s) lectures in the Times was also by Thackeray.23 Gulliver correctly noted that the “Old England” articles were, in fact, written by Disraeli, but accepted Carlyle’s attribution of the May 1 article to Thackeray and assumed that a May 22 review of the last of his lecture series was by Thackeray as well.24 It is possible that the May 1 and 22 reviews are by Thackeray, but given the unreliability of Carlyle’s “persuasions” and the fact the reviews do not seem to be written in Thackeray’s style, these attributions are uncertain.25 Gulliver’s attribution of a short November 7, 1837 review of a production of Hamlet at Covent Garden Theater to Thackeray should also be regarded as uncertain. Thackeray was an inveterate theatergoer and would have been a good candidate to write
theater reviews. The *Times* often ran several theater reviews in the course of a month, however, and one might expect that if Thackeray had been regularly assigned to write theater reviews that sometime over the course of three and a half years there would be clear external evidence of at least one *Times* theater review in Thackeray’s letters. No such evidence has been found; with the exception of his opportunistic letter on the art exhibition in Paris (which presumably was written because of his trip to the French capital), his *Times* contributions seem to have been confined to literary reviews. Gulliver’s attribution is based on a comment in Macready’s diary for April 14, 1838 which doesn’t specify the date of the alleged review.\(^{26}\) Additionally, Gulliver himself uses other examples from Macready’s diary to demonstrate “the uncertainty of human testimony,” and in this context the attribution must be regarded as uncertain.\(^{27}\)

### 2.3 Following the Biblio-Economic Money Trail

As discussed in chapter 1 of this dissertation, Thackeray wrote out of financial necessity, and there normally was a close connection between the articles he wrote and the compensatory payments he received. Following the money trail from payment back to article should, therefore, support bibliographic scholarship and possibly explicate the circumstances associated with Thackeray’s work for the *Times*. To apply this technique one needs a financial “yardstick”: how much was Thackeray paid for each article? A surviving invoice for November 1838 shows that Gordon Ray’s assessment that “Thackeray was paid about two pounds each for his contributions [to the *Times*]” is, however, substantively incorrect.\(^{28}\) Thackeray’s bill to the *Times* for the month of November 1838 details the number of columns in each of his five November articles as,
respectively, 2-1/4, 3/4, 3-1/4, 2-1/4, 1-½ and explicitly sums the number of columns to 10.0. The bill further notes that these 10 columns are charged at 21 pounds, a rate of two guineas per column.\textsuperscript{29} In further confirmation of this rate, Thackeray later wrote to Mrs. Brookfield that the \textit{Times} paid him five guineas for a September 2, 1840 article on Fielding that occupies exactly 2.5 columns.\textsuperscript{30} Thackeray’s \textit{Times} articles range from one-half to over three columns, with the average article running approximately two columns. Thus, Thackeray received on average four guineas per article, more than twice as much as suggested by Ray. More significantly, having a precise billing rate for Thackeray’s \textit{Times} articles allows us to confirm, identify, or discredit some Thackeray attributions.

In chapter 1 I established that Thackeray received specific payments from the \textit{Times} of 22.1.0 on January 1, 1838, 13.06 on February 2, 1838, and 14 pounds in late May of 1838. My contention is that these payments must be connectable at the 2-guinea-per-column rate to specific Thackeray \textit{Times} articles. Indeed, as I reported previously,\textsuperscript{31} other extracts from Thackeray’s Account Book for 1838 include references to three Thackeray January 1838 \textit{Times} articles: an article published on January 6 which Thackeray cited as being 2-1/5 columns long, an article on January 11 which ran 2-½ columns, and a 1-½-column article on January 31, for a total of 6.2 columns.\textsuperscript{32} At two guineas per column, this would total 12.4 guineas, or a few pence over 13 pounds. This figure directly correlates with the Account Book notation that on February 2 Thackeray received from the \textit{Times} 13 pounds six pence.\textsuperscript{33} In this instance, at least, the \textit{Times} apparently paid promptly at month’s end for Thackeray’s month of work.

During February, March, and April of 1838 the pace of Thackeray’s efforts for the \textit{Times} slowed. Although Thackeray’s Account Book notes payments from other
periodicals during March and April, no payment is shown during those months for the 
*Times*. However, after a May 5 payment entry for *Fraser’s Magazine*, there is an undated 
entry for the *Times* showing Thackeray received 14 pounds. According to the 2-guinea- 
per-column rate, 14 pounds equates to 6-2/3 columns of contributions.

Depending upon a cross-reference in a confirmed Thackeray article, Harold 
Gulliver suggested that the February 6, 2.25-column article “South America and the 
Pacific” was by Thackeray.\(^{34}\) External evidence supports the attribution of two Thackeray 
*Times* articles in April 1838, the 1.2-column April 5 article “The Exhibition at Paris” and 
a 1.2-column April 17 article reviewing *The Poetical Works of Dr. Southey*.\(^{35}\) And 
Gulliver also proposed that the April 24 2-column review of *Alice; or the Mysteries* was 
by Thackeray, again based on a cross reference.\(^{36}\) Thus, external evidence and cross-
references account for some 6.65 Thackeray columns for the *Times* during the months of 
February, March, and April of 1838 against a payment from the *Times* which would 
cover 6 2/3 columns. Based on this agreement it is unlikely that there were any additional 
contributions by Thackeray to the *Times* between January and April of 1838. Moreover, 
this biblio-economic analysis supports Gulliver’s attributions.

2.3.1 New Attributions

Unfortunately, the extract from Thackeray’s Account Book does not go any 
further; however, the Account Book shows a payment of 22 pounds one shilling from the 
*Times* to Thackeray on January 1, 1838 – suggesting payment for 10.5 columns of 
Thackeray articles printed in December 1837 or possibly in prior months.\(^{37}\) The question
remains as to whether any of these compensated for but as yet unattributed articles can be identified.

In December of 1837 nine literary reviews were published in the *Times*:

**Table 2.1** Literary reviews in the December 1837 *Times*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Cols</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Colonel Mitchell’s Life of Wallenstein”</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Memoirs of Dr. H. Bathurst”</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Lardner’s Cyclopaedia, Vol. 93 - Literary and Scientific Men of Great Britain”</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Lardner’s Cyclopaedia - Lives of Eminent Literary Characters”</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The Life and Times of George Whitefield”</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Trelawney of Trelane”</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The Dispatches of the Marquis Wellesley - Spain”</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Rambles in the Footsteps of Don Quixote”</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Mary Raymond and Other Tales”</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Estimated article length in fractions of a column; these values may not be identical to those used by Thackeray or by his editors.

“Lardner’s Cyclopaedia,” December 11 & 14, 1837; “Rambles in the Footsteps of Don Quixote, December 23, 1847. Internal evidence suggests that the two articles on Lardner’s *Cyclopaedia* are by Thackeray; the writing is certainly in Thackeray’s mocking and teasingly sarcastic style. Additionally, Thackeray poked fun at Lardner in his December 1837 article on the Annuals in *Fraser’s Magazine* (which was reprinted in the December 25 and 26 issues of the *Times*) and further mocked him in “The Yellowplush Correspondence - Mr. Yellowplush’s Ajew” which was published in *Fraser’s* in August 1838.\(^{38}\) Gulliver had previously noted, without reference to the payment information presented here, that the December 11, 1837 Lardner article had “distinct touches of his [Thackeray’s] style.”\(^{39}\) In these “Cyclopaedia” articles the
reviewer critiques presumptive biographers. The article “Rambles in the Footsteps of Don Quixote” also appears to be by Thackeray; the review’s title foreshadows other “Rambles” articles by Thackeray and the reviewer’s loving and respectful treatment of Cervantes (to the disregard of the actual travels of Inglis in Spain which is the book’s real content) reflects Thackeray’s frequently expressed admiration for the Spanish master.40

“The Life and Times of George Whitefield,” December 20, 1837. With a somewhat lower degree of confidence, I suggest that the article on George Whitefield is also by Thackeray. The reviewer expresses a non-dogmatic view of religion which values individual morality and sincere striving for “good,” rather than ideology, in line with Thackeray’s privately expressed views.41 Additionally, the review explicitly documents the close intertwining of Whitefield’s life story with that of Lady Huntingdon. In fact, perhaps most tellingly, the reviewer frames the likely readership for this book as “the religious world” in exactly the same way as Thackeray does in a review entitled “Selina, Countess of Huntingdon” which I will subsequently show is by Thackeray (and which also discusses Whitefield). The Lardner, Cervantes, and Whitefield articles total 7.3 columns, leaving approximately 3.2 columns of unattributed but compensated work.

The review of the Life of Wallenstein is not by Thackeray, for cross references suggest that the reviewer of that article also wrote the April 27, 1838 article entitled “Colonel Mitchell on Military Tactics”; as per the above discussion, all of Thackeray’s reviews during April of 1838 are already accounted for. The reviewer of the Memoirs of Dr. H. Bathurst takes political and religious positions – specifically gratuitous Whig bashing and judgmental comments on a minister’s duty – which are atypical of opinions expressed elsewhere by Thackeray. A possible final attribution for Thackeray for
December of 1837 – and the one that best fits the financial payment data given in Thackeray’s account book – is the 3.1-column article on the dispatches of the Marquis Wellesley. That article, however, lacks any identifying Thackeray touches, and all that can be asserted is that it is a possibility that best fits the financial evidence. Other possibilities exist; although they also lack distinctive Thackeray indicators, the “Trelawney” and / or “Mary Raymond” reviews could have been written by Thackeray. Gulliver’s suggestion that Thackeray wrote theater reviews for the Times cannot be ruled out; accordingly, a number of short reviews (typically .2 or .3 columns) of presentations at Drury Lane, Covent Garden, the Adelphi, the Victoria, and the Olympic theater hypothetically might, in various combinations, fill out some of the unallocated columns. Or perhaps Thackeray was able to secure payment from the Times for the aforementioned reprinted Annuals articles from Fraser’s Magazine. Lastly, it is possible that the January 1, 1838 payment also covered some “spillover” work from November of 1837.

“The Life and Times of Selina Countess of Huntingdon,” August 21, 1840; “Memoirs of a Prisoner of State,” August 15, 1840. As I have noted previously,\(^4\) Thackeray’s comment to his mother in a September 1, 1840 letter that he had “managed to do about £20 worth of work for the Times this fortnight”\(^5\) contains another useful financial clue to his writings. Ray glosses this reference as referring to a September 2 article on Fielding, but that 2.5-column article accounts for only a quarter of Thackeray’s 20 pounds. Although the letter reference is inexact, from Thackeray’s comment one would expect that he wrote on the order of nine or 10 columns of work in the latter half of August that were published in that time period or perhaps in the early part of September. Reviews by Thackeray of Ranke’s History of the Popes were published on
August 11 (2.25 columns) and August 18 (2.10 columns); if Thackeray’s comment is interpreted literally, the first of these Thackeray articles would not be included as part of his “fortnight’s work,” while the second might be. A detailed examination of the August 1840 issues of the *Times*, however, reveals two additional articles that, with a high degree of probability, were written by Thackeray: the August 21, 3.1-column review “The Life and Times of Selina Countess of Huntingdon” includes the embedded cross reference “some days since we had to notice, in a work of very different tendency, Ranke’s Papal History.” And the August 15 review entitled “Memoirs of a Prisoner of State” contains the statement “We noticed some time since the work of an intelligent traveler, Mr. Turnbull, who spoke in terms, we thought, too respectful of the Austrian ‘parental’ system” – a clear reference to Thackeray’s earlier review, “Turnbull’s Austria.” As discussed later in this chapter, the “Selina” article is noteworthy for containing what are perhaps Thackeray’s most extensive published comments on Evangelism, and “Memoirs” contains an eloquent denunciation of Austrian totalitarianism. Both the “Selina” and the “Memoirs” articles are new attributions to Thackeray. Thus, from August 15 through September 3, in essential accord with Thackeray’s letter, at least 9.7 columns of Thackeray reviews can be identified: August 15, “Memoirs” at 2.0 columns; August 18, “Ranke” at 2.1 columns; August 21, “Selina” at 3.1 columns; and September 3, “Fielding” at 2.5 columns.

Sometimes, even in the absence of cross-references or guiding financial information, internal evidence is so strong that with reasonable assurance a claim of attribution can be made. Indeed, I submit that such attributions to Thackeray can be made for five additional reviews: “Des Idees Napoleonienes, par Le Prince Louis Napoleon
Bonaparte” (October 21, 1839); the “History of New South Wales” (split among four notices, September 18 and 26 and October 16 and 19, 1838); “Eve Effingham by James Fenimore Cooper” (December 19, 1838); “Records of Real Life in the Palace and Cottage by Miss Pigott” (April 18, 1840); and “The Annuals of 1841” (with three notices, December 4, 7, & 9, 1840).

“Des Idees Napoleoniennes, par Le Prince Louis Napoleon Bonaparte,”

October 21, 1839. In chapter 1 of this dissertation I used records of financial payments to Thackeray to support the attribution of articles to Thackeray’s pen. Negative references can also be helpful in deciphering the riddle of the identification of Thackeray’s critical reviews. On December 11, 1839, Thackeray’s wife wrote to Thackeray’s mother that “he [Thackeray] does nothing for the Times.” At the end of that month Thackeray wrote his mother that “a heap of books [had] just come from the Times” and that Barnes, the editor of the Times, was glad “to find his reviewer returned.” By exclusion, then, one can infer that Thackeray did not contribute any Times critical reviews in December 1839. In fact, it seems that there was an extended hiatus in Thackeray’s critical work for the Times, as there is only one confirmed Thackeray contribution from May 1839 through February 1840 – a time period which, almost certainly not coincidentally, coincides with Thackeray’s extended absence from London.

That single confirmed late 1839 Thackeray article, however, is a new attribution. It is well known that many of the papers in Thackeray’s 1840 The Paris Sketch Book were previously published in periodicals such as the Corsair, Fraser’s Magazine, the National Standard and the New Monthly Magazine. It appears to have escaped prior notice, however, that the segment of The Paris Sketch Book entitled “Napoleon and His
“System” was, in fact, originally published in the *Times* on October 21, 1839 as a book review entitled “Des Idees Napoleonniennes, par Le Prince Louis Napoleon Bonaparte.” This article – which, as discussed later in this chapter, contains Thackeray’s succinct summary of French-English relations: “they hate us” – is, therefore, a certain new attribution of a *Times* critical review to Thackeray.

“History of New South Wales,” September 18, 26 & October 16, 19, 1838. Lang’s *History of New South Wales* was reviewed early in Thackeray’s tenure with the *Times*. Like some of Thackeray’s other *Times* reviews – such as the November 8, 1838 review entitled “Steam Navigation in the Pacific” – the tone of this review is generally unremarkable and factual, with little room for Thackeray’s characteristic satire or humanism. However, the September 26 notice includes a tell-tale commentary that strongly smacks of Thackeray. In describing the convict population of New South Wales, the reviewer first quotes from Dr. Johnson and then concludes that “the admirable violence of the criminal himself, who prates from the hulks about his political rights, and meriting a halter, demands gravely a vote, could only be properly illustrated by Hogarth, or described by Fielding.” The sarcasm of “admirable violence” and the contradictory juxtaposition of “meriting a halter” and “demands gravely a vote” certainly reads like Thackeray, but the appeal to the wisdom of Dr. Johnson and to Thackeray’s heroes and reference points Hogarth and Fielding – in fact, the mere introduction of Thackeray’s beloved 18th century English humorists into the review of a book which is so unrelated to them – marks Thackeray as the likely reviewer. Indeed, this review reveals a great deal regarding Thackeray’s attitudes toward British colonialism and Australia which is not otherwise exposed in his writings and further fills in the apparent gap in Thackeray’s
Times work between his August 1837 review of Carlyle and his confirmed reviews of January 1838.46

“Eve Effingham by James Fenimore Cooper,” December 19, 1838. On August 27, 1846, the Morning Chronicle published a review by Thackeray of James Fenimore Cooper’s Ravensnest; or the Red Skins that Harden has cited as a source document for Thackeray’s subsequent burlesque of Cooper in Punch’s Prize Novelists.47 In fact, however, all the characteristic Thackeray attitudes regarding Cooper are also revealed in the December 18, 1838 Times review of Cooper’s Eve Effingham. One sees in both articles a denunciation of Cooper’s alleged hypocritical comments regarding the aristocracy and false “republican airs,” an articulated sense that Cooper treats both English and American society badly despite being well-treated in both countries, and a claim that Cooper is bitter and malevolent toward all mankind. It is impossible to look at the two reviews side-by-side and not believe they were written by the same hand. Thus the Eve Effingham review can with reasonable probability be attributed to Thackeray, and it becomes clear that his attitudes toward Cooper – and his own sense of the inherent conflicts between republican and hierarchical values – were established well before the review of Ravensnest. (For a Times review of a Cooper novel which takes a very different tack, and which, I submit, was most probably not written by Thackeray, see the December 24, 1840 review of Cooper’s Mercedes of Castille.)

Records of Real Life in the Palace and Cottage by Miss Pigott,” April 18, 1840. In his campaign against the “Silver-Fork” novels of high society, Thackeray frequently commented sarcastically on the “fashionable” novelists’ use of bad grammar and bad French.48 Thus, the April 18, 1840 Times review of Records of Real Life in the
Palace and the Cottage, an entertaining and elegantly written review which contains much Thackeray-like language and sentiments, is most likely by Thackeray. Its opening statement – “We have always maintained that the writers of fashionable novels, who are one and all remarkable for an immoderate indulgence in the French language, have given us an unfaithful picture of genteel society, the members of which, as we thought, if they must employ silly French phrases to eke out silly English conversations, at least would treat the former in a decent grammatical way” – virtually proclaims Thackeray’s authorship. If any further evidence is needed, sarcasms within the article aimed at some of Thackeray’s favorite targets, namely Lady Charlotte Bury, Lady Morgan, and Lady Bulwer, provide it. The cutting humor of this review makes it fully worthy, on a literary basis, of inclusion into Thackeray’s canon.

“The Annuals of 1841,” December 4, 7, & 9, 1840. From the 1820s into the 1850s the annuals were popular in literary Britain. Typically published shortly before Christmas, these frothy books were filled with colored prints or steel engravings, poems, short stories, and essays. Thackeray was a regular (and normally disparaging) reviewer of these publications, as in his December 1837 review in Fraser’s Magazine, his November 1838 review in the Times, or his January 1839 review in Fraser’s Magazine. In December of 1840 the Times published a heretofore unattributed three-notice review of that season’s Annuals which is almost certainly an addition to Thackeray’s series of annuals reviews. The style, values, nature of comments, and even expressed pet likes and dislikes of this review are consistent with his prior reviews. Moreover, the December 9 notice contains, as a Thackeray “fingerprint,” the following scathing comments about a poem by Robert Montgomery: “The chronicle extends over more than 30 pages: but all of
it that is worth reading may be condensed into less than half that number of lines. Its dullness is mortal, not merely to the reader, but also to the author.” This language is so similar to the words Thackeray employed in his 1833 critique of another Robert Montgomery poem – in which he declared the only pleasant line to be the line identifying the publisher, and in Dunciad-like language denounced Montgomery’s dullness – that it is difficult to conceive that the two reviews were written by different authors.51

**Other Candidate Thackeray Times Literary Reviews.** A full list of Thackeray’s work for the *Times* would undoubtedly also include critical reviews which lack sufficient distinguishing markers for even tentative identification. However, there are a number of unattributed *Times* articles whose tone, style, or sentiments – and sometimes all three – are strongly redolent of Thackeray. In the absence of supporting external data, embedded cross-references, or “smoking gun” expressions or language, it would be inappropriate at this time to attribute any of these articles to Thackeray, yet there are legitimate reasons for suspecting that Thackeray is the likely author of at least some of them. Consider, for example, the following articles:

“Queen Elizabeth and Her Times,” August 25, 1838. The focus on personalities and the liberal use of personal adjectival modifiers (crafty, courtly, fiery), as well as the sense of charm and irony, are Thackerayesque.

“Guizot’s Life of Monk,” September 14, 15, 1838. This review is Thackeray-like in its voice, its subject, its expressed admiration for Guizot’s impartiality, and in its sense of moral values being more important than political affiliation.

“Mrs. Jameson’s Memoirs of the Beauties of the Court of Charles II,” October 16, 1838. The light humorous touch is characteristic of Thackeray, and the descriptions of the
beauties of the court are reminiscent of the portrayal of Isabel Esmond in Thackeray’s novel *The History of Henry Esmond*.


“The Misfortune of the Dauphin,” December 26, 1838. This review concerning a book by a claimant to the French throne reflects Thackeray’s attitudes toward realism and displays his sense of humor. Additionally, Thackeray wrote a similarly structured review of this same work which was published in the February 1839 issue of *Fraser’s Magazine*.

“Life of Washington,” January 3, 11, 23 & April 2 1839. The reviewer’s concept of Washington seems very close to the Washington Thackeray described in his private correspondence, his 1853 letter to the *Times*, and in *The Virginians*.

“Life and Time of John Bunyan,” February 1, 1839. In his admiration for good English, his comments about various biographies of Bunyan, and his use of personal adjectival describers this reviewer may well be Thackeray.

“Memoirs of the Princess Dashaw,” April 22 & 28, 1839. The sense of irony, the focus on personalities and human characteristics rather than events, and the commentary on what is needed in a successful biography all suggest Thackeray’s sensibility.

“Democracy in America Part II by M. Alexis De Tocqueville,” May 19, 1840. The reviewer’s comments on both France and the United States appear to reflect Thackeray’s views on the strengths and weaknesses of republics.

“A Summer Among the Borages and the Vines,” September 24, 1840. The reviewer’s approval of unexaggerated depictions of persons and places is Thackerayan,
and the comments describing an English gentleman with a great mass of luggage and children in a “great thundering English barouche” echo the flavor of the opening passages of “An Invasion of France” in Thackeray’s *The Paris Sketch Book*.

The existence of these and other possible Thackeray *Times* articles suggests that the current Thackeray *Times* attribution list still understates Thackeray’s contributions; Thackeray’s comment about writing “many articles for the *Times*” is certainly true, and there appear to be a greater number of contributions by Thackeray to the *Times* than scholars had, perhaps, previously projected.53

2.3.2 A Thackeray *Times* Bibliography

In the table below Thackeray’s attributed contributions to the *Times* are listed chronologically. In all probability the 60 listed citations, *in toto*, still understate Thackeray’s total contribution to the *Times*, and it is unlikely that a full Thackeray *Times* bibliography will ever be established. Nevertheless, this bibliographic list captures the full span and true nature of Thackeray’s work for the *Times*, including reviews of novels, travel books, biographies, histories, and books with religious themes. Within these articles one can find much of the manners and life of the early Victorian world: assessments of the world of art; reviews of the works of leading English and American authors and the literary trends of the day; ruminations on the aesthetics of poets and poetry; commentary on that era’s leading thinkers and reformers; opinionated views of the nature and demands of power and on England’s tangled relationships with America, France, Ireland, and Russia; sentiments regarding both Evangelism and Catholicism; thoughts on the roles of commoners, aristocrats, and royalty, and on the essential nature
of republics and of totalitarian regimes; insightful remarks regarding travel to and the
cultures of countries of Europe, Africa, and Asia; observations on medieval and modern
history; comments on commerce and colonialism; and Thackeray’s personal sense as to
what were the essential characteristics of a good man and a good writer.

The pattern and timing of Thackeray’s work for the Times are now clarified.
There were extended periods of time in which Thackeray wrote articles on essentially a
weekly basis, and other periods, particularly from May of 1839 through February of
1840, during which he wrote very little. Edgar Harden’s assertion that “Further reviews
[after the initial Carlyle review in August of 1837] for the Times had to wait until the turn
of the year” should now be amended, as should Richard Pearson’s comment that the
September 1840 article on Fielding “was Thackeray’s last piece of work for the Times.”54
Hopefully, this bibliography, in its textual variety and chronological range, will enable
interested readers to sample different aspects of “early Thackeray,” and will support
future analyses of Thackeray’s critical journalism or assessments of Thackeray’s views of
the early Victorian world during a critical period of his literary apprenticeship.

Table 2.2 Thackeray’s contributions to the Times

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Article</th>
<th>Attribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8/3/1837</td>
<td>“The French Revolution, by T. Carlyle”</td>
<td>Johnson, Early Writings, 51; Ray, Letters, 1:347n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/5 1837</td>
<td>“Earl Harold - A Tragedy”</td>
<td>Gulliver, Apprenticeship, 97; based on comment in Macready’s diary, attribution uncertain</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/18/1837</td>
<td>“History of New South Wales. By Dr. Lang”</td>
<td>Simons; based on internal evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/26/1837</td>
<td>“New South Wales - The Convicts”</td>
<td>Simons; based on internal evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Title</td>
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<td>9/30/1837</td>
<td>“Ernest Maltravers - by the Author of Rienzi, Eugene Aram, &amp;c”</td>
<td>Gulliver, <em>Apprenticeship</em>, 100; based on comparison to Thackeray review in <em>Fraser’s Magazine</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>10/6/1837</td>
<td>“Ethel Churchill - by Miss Landon”</td>
<td>Gulliver, <em>Apprenticeship</em>, 100; based on comparison to Thackeray review in <em>Fraser’s Magazine</em></td>
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<td>10/16/1837</td>
<td>“New South Wales - The Colonist - Dr. Lang on Transportation and Colonization”</td>
<td>Simons; based on internal evidence</td>
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<td>10/19/1837</td>
<td>“New South Wales - The Colonist - Dr. Lang on Transportation and Colonization”</td>
<td>Simons; based on internal evidence</td>
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<td>10/25/1837</td>
<td>“The Vicar of Wrexhill - by Mrs. Trollope”</td>
<td>Gulliver, <em>Apprenticeship</em>, 98-99; based on comparison to Thackeray review in <em>Fraser’s Magazine</em></td>
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<td>11/3/1837</td>
<td>“A View of “Fashionable” Life, by a “Fashionable” Footman”</td>
<td>Simons; extracted from Thackeray article in <em>Fraser’s Magazine</em></td>
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<td>11/11/1837</td>
<td>“Covent-Garden Theatre” (Review of Macbeth)</td>
<td>Gulliver, <em>Apprenticeship</em>, 96; based on entry in Macready’s diary, attribution uncertain</td>
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<td>“Lardner’s Cyclopaedia - Lives of Eminent Literary Characters”</td>
<td>Simons; based on internal evidence and billing consistency</td>
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<td>“The Life and Times of George Whitefield”</td>
<td>Simons; based on internal evidence and billing consistency</td>
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<td>12/23/1837</td>
<td>“Rambles in the Footsteps of Don Quixote”</td>
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<td>“The Annuals”</td>
<td>Simons; reprinted from <em>Fraser’s Magazine</em></td>
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<td>1/6/1838</td>
<td>“Duchess of Marlborough’s Private Correspondence”</td>
<td>Johnson, <em>Early Writings</em>, 52; Ray, <em>Letters</em>, 1:515; based on Account Book for 1838</td>
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<td>1/11/1838</td>
<td>“Eros and Anteros - or Love, by Lady Charlotte Bury and A Diary Relative to George IV and Queen Caroline”</td>
<td>Johnson, <em>Early Writings</em>, 53-54; Ray, <em>Letters</em>, 1:515; based on Account Book for 1838</td>
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<td>4/24/1838</td>
<td>“Alice; or the Mysteries”</td>
<td>Gulliver, <em>Apprenticeship</em>, 111; based on cross-reference</td>
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<td>5/1/1838</td>
<td>“Mr. Carlyle’s Lectures”</td>
<td>Gulliver, <em>Apprenticeship</em>, 92; based on Carlyle letter, attribution uncertain</td>
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<td>5/22/1838</td>
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<td>Gulliver, <em>Apprenticeship</em> 92; based on assumed consistency of authorship, attribution uncertain</td>
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<td>“City of the Czar”</td>
<td>Harden, <em>Letters Supplement</em>, 1:38</td>
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<td>9/4/1838</td>
<td>“A Romance of Vienna by Mrs. Trollope”</td>
<td>Gulliver, <em>Apprenticeship</em>, 113; based on cross-reference</td>
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<td>“The City of the Czar”</td>
<td>Harden, <em>Letters Supplement</em>, 1:38</td>
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<td>9/25/1838</td>
<td>“Lord Lindsay’s Travels in Egypt”</td>
<td>Gulliver, <em>Apprenticeship</em>, 113; based on cross-reference</td>
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<td>10/2/1838</td>
<td>“Elliott’s Travels in Austria, Russia and Turkey”</td>
<td>Gulliver, <em>Apprenticeship</em>, 111-112; based on cross-reference</td>
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<td>Gulliver, <em>Apprenticeship</em>, 111-112; based on cross-reference</td>
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<td>Gulliver, <em>Apprenticeship</em>, 113; based on cross-reference</td>
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<td>“Tyler’s Life of Henry V 1387-1400”</td>
<td>Gulliver, <em>Apprenticeship</em>, 114; one of three notices</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/25/1838</td>
<td>“Tyler’s Life of Henry V”</td>
<td>Gulliver, <em>Apprenticeship</em>, 115; one of three notices</td>
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<td>11/16/1838</td>
<td>“Fraser’s Winter Journey to Persia”</td>
<td>Ray, <em>Letters</em>, 1:375; based on monthly bill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/19/1838</td>
<td>“Eve Effingham by Fenimore Cooper”</td>
<td>Simons; based on internal evidence</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/24/1839</td>
<td>“The Widow Barnaby”</td>
<td>Gulliver, <em>Apprenticeship</em>, 114; based on cross-reference</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/21/1839</td>
<td>“Des Idees Napoleonienues par Le Prince Louis Napoleon Bonaparte”</td>
<td>Simons; based on comparison to <em>Paris Sketch Book</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>3/16/1840</td>
<td>“Turnbull’s Austria”</td>
<td>Winegarner, “Thackeray’s Contributions to the <em>British and Foreign Review,</em>” 244-245; Harden, <em>Letters Supplement</em>, 1: 60</td>
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<td>4/18/1840</td>
<td>“Records of Real Life in the Palace and Cottage by Miss Pigott”</td>
<td>Simons; based on internal evidence</td>
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<td>8/15/1840</td>
<td>“Memoirs of a Prisoner of State”</td>
<td>Simons; based on cross-reference and billing consistency</td>
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<td>8/21/1840</td>
<td>“The Life and Times of Selina Countess of Huntingdon”</td>
<td>Simons; based on cross-reference and billing consistency</td>
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<td>“The Annuals of 1841&quot;</td>
<td>Simons; based on internal evidence</td>
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<td>12/7/1840</td>
<td>“The Annuals of 1841&quot;</td>
<td>Simons; based on internal evidence</td>
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<td>12/9/1840</td>
<td>“The Annuals of 1841&quot;</td>
<td>Simons; based on internal evidence</td>
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<tr>
<td>6/21/1862</td>
<td>“Mr. Leech’s Sketches in Oil”</td>
<td>Harden, <em>Letters Supplement</em>, 2:1093-1094</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/15/1863</td>
<td>“Cruikshank’s Gallery”</td>
<td>Johnson, <em>Early Writings</em>, 51; based on Jerrold’s biography of Cruikshank</td>
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**2.4 What the Large Loose Baggy Monsters Left Out**

Henry James famously designated Thackeray’s novel of English middle-class
society, *The Newcomes*, as a “large loose baggy monster,” and the same descriptor could also be applied to Thackeray’s other novels of Victorian society, such as *Pendennis* and *The Adventures of Philip*. But these “monsters” do, as James also admitted, bring to life the Victorian world, with their hundreds of distinctly drawn characters, thousands of pages of detail, extensive allusions to contemporary institutions, and panoramic vistas of social activity. Nevertheless, these novels still leave out or treat minimally some aspects of the Victorian world – several of which are, paradoxically, instead addressed in Thackeray’s relative minnows, his newspaper articles.

For example, Thackeray’s leading men (William Dobbin, George Osborne, Arthur Pendennis, Major Pendennis, George Warrington, Colonel Newcome, Clive Newcome, Philip Firmin, and others) are all writers, artists, or soldiers, and thus are generally removed from direct involvement with England’s growing commercial empire. Although some of these figures draw incomes from India, these connections are left shrouded in obscurity, and Thackeray’s novels do not delve into the imperialist and colonialist commercial forces which drove Victorian Britain. But some of Thackeray’s reviews for the *Times*, particularly his four-part review of Lang’s *History of New South Wales* and his two articles on Peter Scarlett’s early proposals for a Panama Canal and steam navigation in the Pacific, do explicitly address these issues.

As another example, Thackeray’s novels are intensely personal, dealing with the day-to-day circumstances affecting individual lives. Unlike, say, Trollope’s Palliser books, Thackeray’s novels never address issues of governance. Yet Thackeray had strongly held opinions on governance, most particularly on international affairs, which he expressed in many of his *Times* reviews. Likewise, in an age of religious controversy,
Thackeray’s novels take a muted stand on religion – typically Thackeray presents clerical figures as (sometimes amiable) hypocrites, and extols (perhaps ironically) the “goodness” of sincerely devout women. Yet the disparate roles of dissenters / low church / and high church advocates are never brought into high relief as they are in the works of Anthony Trollope or George Eliot. Similarly, the anti-Catholicism evident in novels such as Charles Kingsley’s *Yeast* or *Westwood Ho!*, or Charlotte Bronte’s *Villette*, is suppressed in Thackeray’s fiction. Attitudes toward religion and religious differences do, however, come to the fore in several of Thackeray’s *Times* articles.

Even with regard to literary cultural issues and values there are “holes” in Thackeray’s large loose baggy monsters. For example, the Victorian era was marked by an intense interest in medievalism. Essayists such as Thomas Carlyle, John Ruskin, Walter Pater; poets such as Alfred Tennyson, Robert Browning, William Morris, and Dante Gabriel Rossetti; and novelists from the extraordinarily influential Walter Scott (*Ivanhoe* and others) through George Eliot (*Romola*) or Charles Reade (*The Cloister and the Hearth*), all integrated this passion into their works. Yet Thackeray’s social novels do not reflect this fascination, and his one attempt at a medieval novel was quickly aborted. Indeed, Thackeray has been described by Lorretta Holloway and Jennifer Palmgren in their study of Victorian medievalism as “seemingly anti-medieval.” One finds, however, that Thackeray’s *Times* newspaper writings reveal his own conception of and enthusiasm for medievalism.

In the following subsections I examine Thackeray’s *Times* articles to assess his views on these four facets of the early Victorian world that his large loose baggy monsters left out – colonialism and imperial commerce, international affairs, religious
conflicts and values, and medievalism.

### 2.4.1 Colonial Emigration and Imperialism

Thackeray’s four 1837 articles on John Lang’s *An Historical and Statistical Account of New South Wales* and his two 1838 articles related to P. C. Scarlett’s *South America and the Pacific* are, for the most part, summaries of information rather than critical reviews. Indeed, Thackeray’s comment that “We propose . . . not so much to discuss the controversial points . . . but chiefly to recapitulate the facts as he states them, and condense the important information which he gives,” accurately describes both sets of articles. Further, editorial direction or intervention may well have dictated the opinions expressed in articles dealing, as Thackeray noted, with “great commercial and political interests.” Nevertheless, despite his own disclaimer, Thackeray’s opinions on these nominally non-Thackerayan subjects do bleed through. Thackeray offers a disturbing assessment of Australian colonization that sharply contrasts with the impressions left by Charles Dickens’s *Great Expectations* or Charles Reade’s *It’s Never Too Late to Mend*, and a prescient advocacy for the commercial and imperial advantages to be associated with a Panama Canal.

Before considering Thackeray’s views on the penal colony of New South Wales, one might recall that Thackeray, arguing that crime novels by Harrison Ainsworth (or even Dickens’s *Oliver Twist*) made heroes out of criminals by glorifying lives of crime, strongly critiqued the Newgate novels of the early Victorian era. Despite his political Radicalism, Thackeray thought rogues were rogues and should be presented accordingly – his preferred example of a criminal novel was Fielding’s *Jonathan Wild*. Accordingly, it is not surprising that, following Lang, Thackeray saw the convict population of New
South Wales not as a sympathetic group deserving a second chance in life, but rather as a still criminal and avowedly immoral populace which, by virtue of their numbers:

[W]ith impunity dictate the morals, the politics, and the religion of the colony. . . .

And this is a settlement where, to answer the purposes of its formation, the system of government . . . should be stern, prompt, implacable – where, as a kind of legal purgatory, there should be punishment, and gloom, and repentance. We find in place of these an absolute rogue’s saturnalia, a scouting of the common decencies of the law; convict attorneys conducting suits, convict editors inculcating morals, convict politicians spouting about the rights of man, convict Lovelaces with harems of convict women – all the debauchery and drunkenness, all the swindling and thievery, which these gentry practised in England . . .

Instead, Thackeray argues, “there should have been an honest, reputable, peaceable, middle class of colonists, farmers, tradesmen, artisans, and then neither the New South Wales nobility nor the convict helots would have attained the indecent degree of influence which each party seems to have acquired.” Moreover, displaying a skeptical attitude toward emigration in general, Thackeray considered the English government’s campaign to encourage the non-convict poor to emigrate to New South Wales as manipulative and deceptive: “The shoals of needy emigrants who flock to New South Wales in order to better their condition . . . will do well to . . . not trust so implicitly to the veracity of the philanthropists of Downing street.” In particular, a strong strain of Victorian morality and paternalism emerges as Thackeray characterizes the effort to encourage the emigration of unattached poor women as a “Sabine importation”:

[T]he females now emigrating from England, to whom the Government promises
such a brilliant avenir, must fall for the most part to the convicts share; – a pretty pretext with which to lure honest women from their homes; an excellent asylum for those of doubtful character – the one going to Sydney but to lose in the corruption of the place the innocence which they had kept in England, the others but to increase and consolidate crime, and propagate fresh villains from generation to generation. . . . It may be harmless for families of artisans to emigrate to New South Wales, where . . . the resources and extent of the country still insure them a profitable market for their labour; but for women without a calling or a protector, who have no resources or means of livelihood but to become the wives or paramours of the inhabitants of the colony, none but Whig statesmen would venture to recommend their transportation.  

Thackeray recounts anecdotes from Lang’s book and from other sources of enormous gains made in New South Wales by those middle-class emigrants who have capital to invest. Yet, while he doesn’t overtly contest these claims, his comment that the reported quintupling of wealth in five years is “a mode of multiplying capital which is unknown even to the Rothschilds of this country” suggests a bit of skepticism, and his farcical concluding comment that “We expect that half of the officers now on Her Majesty’s half-pay will be in six months on their way to New South Wales” subverts the anecdotal reports.

Although Thackeray is dubious about the benefits of emigration to distant colonies, he does argue for an imperialist extension of British commercial power around the globe. Thackeray is openly supportive of Scarlett’s proposals for constructing a Panama canal and establishing steam navigation in the Pacific: “Is it not a disgrace to the
boasted march of scientific knowledge, of commercial intelligence and industry, of political foresight and modern statesmanship, that 34 statute miles [the Isthmus of Panama] should form an obstacle to the intercourse of the inhabitants of Europe, Asia, Africa, and America? . . . . The plan cannot fail of being ultimately acted upon . . .

Moreover, Thackeray articulates the advantages to English mercantile interests:

Such a plan will reduce the period of the communication between Great Britain and the western coasts of America two-thirds at least – from nearly four months, that is, to six weeks; and the merchant will receive the proceeds for his goods four or five months earlier than he could have done before, and will have moreover the advantage of knowing what goods to send, by the frequency of advices from his correspondents in the foreign markets. . . . . When the isthmus shall be (virtually) no more, a glance at the map is sufficient to show how the western American coast will rise into importance from the immense increase of intercourse which the removal of the present barrier will necessarily cause. It opens to us a direct road to China. New Holland, Van Dieman’s Land, the islands of the Pacific, will be brought within two months’ less distance from England than they at present are, when to reach them our ships are obliged to make the dangerous passage round Cape Horn; and we may look, too, to find Jamaica . . . once more the entrepot of supplies for the northern ports of the Pacific, and enabled, to a great extent, to resume that lucrative trade by which her prosperity was formerly so much promoted.
2.4.2 International Affairs

Thackeray strongly disapproved of novelists investigating “questions of great social or political interest,” because, as he claimed:

For it no more follows, because a man is a clever novelist that he should be a great political philosopher, or an historian, or a controversialist, than that he should be able to dance the tight rope or play the flute. All virtuous indignation against grinding aristocrats, artful priests, &c., all sentimental political economy, ought, we think, to be marked and branded. It is not only wrong of authors thus to meddle with subjects of which their small studies have given them but a faint notion, and to treat complicated and delicate questions with apologues instead of arguments . . . it is not only dishonest, but it is a bore. 65

Indeed, Thackeray, the novelist, stayed true to this credo; Thackeray the newspaperman, however, felt free to comment on governance, governments, and international affairs. Indeed, Thackeray’s Times articles reveal a politically involved personage, offering extended political commentaries on the great powers of Europe and the emerging United States. Thackeray posits a superior English society facing competitors and adversaries burdened with inferior political systems. These assessments can be drawn from the indicated articles: (1) Austria – the March 16, 1840 review of Turnbull’s Austria and the August 15, 1840 article on Memoirs of a Prisoner of State; (2) Russia – the two City of the Czar reviews (August 30 and September 7, 1838) and the October 2, 1838 review, “Eliott’s Travels in Austria, Russia, and Turkey;” (3) France – the October 21, 1839 article on Prince Louis Napoleon Bonaparte; and (4) America – Thackeray’s December 19, 1838 review of a James Fenimore Cooper novel. Of course, Thackeray’s opinions
about political issues are not intrinsically more insightful than his opinions on dancing
the tight rope or playing the flute; however, they do flesh out the views of a canonical
author and, to the extent that Thackeray is representative of a segment of Victorian
educated opinion, his views provide insight into early Victorian thought.

Thackeray’s articles on the Austrian and the Russian empires reveal him to be
wary of controlling governments and authoritarian states. Austrian emperors of the 1830s
and 1840s (Francis I and Ferdinand I), although absolute rulers, portrayed themselves as
paternalistic and committed to the welfare of their citizens. English travel writers such as
Frances Trollope and Peter Evan Turnbull accepted that vision and wrote books praising
the Austrian system, delighting in the pleasurable aspects of Viennese society, and
ignoring the police state operating behind the curtain. But Thackeray would have none of
this – he denounced the system’s basic premise:

But, allowing the wonderful excellence of Francis’s personal character, it
immediately follows that where a nation receives so much benefit from a good
monarch, it suffers equally under a bad one, and it is better to guard against such
chances altogether. . . . surely there is no government toward which we should be
more careful and chary of our praise than that amiable, dangerous one of the
Emperor Francis, with its “paternal” solicitude that prevents its children from
speaking what they think, and that shuts out books from them, and sets them to
play for fear the poor little things should think too much. Pleasant it is, no doubt,
to be a child and have a good natured prudent father, who orders your meals and
settles your walks. . . but don’t let us be too eager to praise this state of existence,
nor enlarge too much upon the virtues of political pap, whipping, and babyhood. .
Let the reader look at a Vienna newspaper; there are but two published in the capital: no Englishman can look at the mean, shabby, narrow, ill-printed scrap of paper without contempt – contempt for a Government which endeavours in our days to make such a miserable compromise between human intelligence and its own interest . . . Under this “paternal” government there are 12 censors perpetually at work – 12 pairs of shears ceaselessly clipping slices of the truth out of every manuscript to be published . . .

In a later review Thackeray peers beneath the veneer of paternalism to expose the Austria that Trollope and Turnbull missed:

[T]he public will find in M. Andryane’s work what this parental system is . . . to what horrid exercises of tyranny it is obliged to resort, to what infinite meannesses it must have recourse in order to assure the obedience of its children.

An English reader . . . can form no idea of the rascalities recorded in it, the tyranny and spying, the miserable shifts of bigotry and falsehood, to which the magnificent monarchy condescends, that at a little distance appears to us so venerable and so stately. . . Mr. Turnbull travels through the country, and from the cushions of his britschka surveys smiling landscapes and peasantry, or, descending from the said britschka, dines with Herr Graaf or Herr Baron, and pronounces the system to be good: the fashionable Trollope jumps out of her place (in the back part of the eilwagen no doubt), presents her letters, and is straightway cheek by jowl with Metternich, Kolowrath, Esterhazy, in the midst of that ever-to-be-famous Crème de la crème de la haute volée. What is good to Turnbull seems to Trollope divine. What a government, what a society, what a
country, what a benevolent *pater patrice*, and what a charming happy family does he govern! Yes, indeed, and in the meanwhile the Spielberg prisoners are scraping lint in their dark dungeons, and gaolers are brickling up the only place from which they could peep into the fields and gain a little harmless glimpse of consolation!\(^{67}\)

Thackeray offers similar denunciations of the censorship, political imprisonment and executions imposed by the Russian autocracy, but here there is an added element of geopolitical concern and condemnation, not of British authors, but of the policies of the British Government. Fifteen years before the outbreak of the Crimean War Russia is portrayed as an eternal adversary of Britain, and political positions are argued in language reminiscent of that used during the twentieth-century cold war between the USSR and the West:

\[F]or every step taken by Russia itself [England] must fall back – for every advantage gained by her must itself incur a proportional loss – for every new accession of territory or increase of commerce, its foreign trade must suffer a diminution in its own power and dignity . . . . And what has our Government been doing to check the progress of a power about which it talks so much! What are the plans of Lord Palmerston, which are to maintain our commerce and the honour of our name, the integrity of our territories, and the supremacy of our flag upon the seas! Why, in the first place, he instructs his friends in the Legislature to pour out floods of abuse against the monster who governs all the Russias, of whining cant over the fallen Poles – of sham sympathy for the brace Circassians. This is to show our spirit. Then he ordains that a series of state papers, taken from the Russian archives, shall be published, that all the world may read. These are to
awaken the national indignation, and to smother Nicholas under the weight of innumerable “Portfolios.” Well, he discharges his whole artillery of stationery, and then proceeds with his great crowning measure, which is to knock the Muscovite giant from off his heels, and leave him prostrate for eyes. . . . English emissaries make their appearance in a country at war with Russia, encourage its resistance, inflate its hopes, and promise it support. An English vessel appears on the coast to defy an unjust and unrecognized blockade. And what then? Why, then the English vessel is seized and confiscated, and the English Government declares that the seizure is legal. As for its poor agent, it abandons him, as it abandons every friend in the hour of need, and every principle upon the sacred and honourable plea of self-preservation.68

Thackeray views France in a different but not necessarily more flattering light, describing French instability and recurring dreams of glory as a national character flaw, and postulating eternal (or almost eternal) French hostility toward the English:

If in a country where so many quacks have had their day Prince Louis Napoleon thought he might renew the imperial quackery, why should he not? It has recollections with it that must always be dear to a gallant nation; it has certain claptraps in its vocabulary that can never fail to inflame a vain, restless, grasping, disappointed one. In the first place, and don’t let us endeavour to disguise it, they hate us. Not all the protestations of friendship . . . not all the benefit which both countries would derive from the alliance, can make it, in our times at least, permanent and cordial. They hate us. The Carlist organs revile us with a querulous fury that never sleeps; the moderate party, if they admit the utility of
the alliance, are continually pointing out our treachery, our insolence, and our monstrous infractions of it; and for the Republicans, as sure as the morning comes, the columns of their journals thunder out volleys of fierce denunciations against our unfortunate country. They live by feeding the natural hatred against England, by keeping old wounds open, by recurring ceaselessly to the history of old quarrels, and as these we, by God’s help, by land and by sea, in old times and late, have had the uppermost, they perpetuate the shame and mortification of the losing party, the bitterness of past defeats, and the eager desire to avenge them.69

As for America, Thackeray sees in American society a fundamentally hypocritical national ideology, namely the failure to acknowledge the importance of social rank. He posits the problem thusly: “All men are equal, therefore an hereditary aristocracy is odious and absurd; but some men are superior to others (by birth, merit, wealth, or other circumstance) therefore an equality is absurd.” Thackeray adds:

Whether, since the fact is, and has been since God made man, it be better to think that this incontrovertible law [acceptance of social rank] was made for man’s good – that an acquiescence in it is not a sign of inferiority, but should rather cause our pride – whether the manly humility which is necessary for those who maintain the law is not a higher quality than the turbulent independence of those who would subvert it, we shall not argue here . . . – and thus specifically raises the particular argument that he said he would not raise! Thackeray goes on to summarize his views:

And what becomes, then, of . . .the sweeping reforms proclaimed by the founders of his [Cooper’s] republic, that banished titles and declared all men equal?
Human nature is stronger than the statute-book, and though rank may be an article of which the introduction into the States is forbidden by the laws of the union, the people do with this commodity as with others – they smuggle it, and use it in fact, if not by name. . . . The Americans respect rank as much as we, only they are a free people, and do not like to say so.  

2.4.3 Attitudes Toward Religion

Thackeray wrote multi-part reviews of two multi-volume works describing the conflicts of the Reformation and Counter Reformation, Valerian Krasinski’s Historical Sketch of the Rise, Progress, and Decline of the Reformation in Poland and Leopold von Ranke’s The Ecclesiastical and Political History of the Popes of Rome. Although these works nominally focused on events of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, for Thackeray, and presumably for most early Victorian English readers, these books were relevant to the perceived contemporary threat posed by Roman Catholicism against (as Thackeray put it) the “wise notions of the orderly Christian scheme” of mainstream Anglicism.  

Thackeray was not rabidly anti-Catholic: in other forums he attacked those who demonized Irish and English Catholics, and even in his Times articles he takes care to praise “the merits of good [Catholic] citizens differing from ourselves indeed, but performing their duty, and serving honestly our common head.” Yet underlying his articles is a sense of palpable threat which may be hard to appreciate in the context of today’s secularized and relatively united Europe.

Thackeray saw in Catholicism a dangerous “orthodox slavishness which is necessary for the true believers of the church of Rome.” He argued that “this very unity
“of opinion”” is one of the proofs of falsehood [of Catholicism] . . . . It is folly to say that every man . . . was endowed by nature with exactly the same opinions, had precisely the same degree and quality of intellect, had gone through the same opinion of thought and experience, which led him to behold the truth [in the same way].” Thus, while Thackeray as a reviewer could admire the “astute and indefatigable Jesuits” who led the Counter Reformation, his articles contain many judgmental anti-Catholic and pro-Protestant assessments: “Romish priests . . . taught [an early Polish king] how to persecute his subjects”; French and Polish monarchs display “the same fatal prudence” and enter into a “godless compact with expediency” as they abandon Protestantism for political reasons; Protestantism is “the great cause of truth and civil freedom”; “Providence checked [the Counter Reformation] at the height of its triumphs, and restored, never more to be shaken, the oppressed Protestant faith”; Catholic leaders employed “arts of persuasion and remorseless efforts of tyranny” to pursue the Counter Reformation.”

Thackeray describes a powerful and threatening seventeenth century Roman Catholic Church:

And what energies she had, and what a tremendous power did she possess and employ! In every corner of Europe, and over high and low, her influence was felt; she employed the best means and the worst alike; she worked upon the purest feelings of the heart and upon its basest; she could lead mobs or persuade princes; she could bring to her aid the force of Christian example and captivating purity of life, learning and intellectual superiority not less persuasive, or dreadful tyranny or monstrous falsehood where these were ineffectual; she had at her service the pure lives of martyrs, or the bloody weapons of assassins, and with so much virtue and crime, so much to excite admiration, or cupidity, or fear among those over
whom she was determined to reassume her sovereignty, we scarcely can wonder at the successes which she obtained, and at the feeble resistance which a party disunited was able to offer her.\textsuperscript{76}

To Thackeray, and presumably to his readers, this threat continued:

Are they beaten yet? Indeed no: and one must admire, if not the principles, at least the incredible activity, of the men. They manage in Belgium to turn out one King and establish another; in Prussia to set one half of the nation against the other; in England they are establishing newspapers, nunneries, colleges, cathedrals, with a dexterity that is not a little curious. Catholic bells are tinkling in 500 villages, where such music has not been heard for three centuries: nay, conversions take place in a decent number, and proselytes are as usual ardent.\textsuperscript{77}

Yet, in the context of his times, Thackeray was not an alarmist:

If one did not know the good sense of our country, indeed, we might take leave to be alarmed; but a man must have a very poor reliance upon the strength of his own religion, and upon the truth and independence, which, thank God, are part of an Englishman’s birthright, to suppose that this old, mean, exploded, soul-debasing system of Jesuithood can ever take a serious hold upon free and honest men.\textsuperscript{78}

Of course, early Victorian Anglicanism not only confronted Catholicism, it also was challenged by the more austere formulations of Protestantism such as Evangelicalism or Methodism. Thackeray’s \textit{Times} articles on two of the leading lights of eighteenth-century Methodism, George Whitefield and Selina Hastings, express his admiration for their zeal, earnestness and desire to do good, while simultaneously and gently deploring
what he saw as their bigotries, and offering an alternative and more humanistic vision of
religion. Thackeray carefully focuses his discussion on Whitefield the man rather than on
Whitefield’s religious views:

Of the doctrines laid down . . . it is not now intended to give an opinion. Whether
or not Calvin and his followers are the best interpreters of, or the best
commentators on, the religion of the Bible, it would be improper to enter into a
controversy about, in the columns of a newspaper . . . .Whatever may be the
opinions of those who differ with, or those who agree with, the tenets of
Whitefield, no person can deny that he was a zealous and an able labourer in the
vineyard of religious instruction, that he was actuated by an enthusiastic zeal for
the welfare of his fellow creatures, and that whether or not that zeal was directed
by discretion, his sincerity is beyond suspicion. . . 79

Three years later, reviewing a biography of Selina Hastings, Thackeray once more
expresses his admiration for the zeal and integrity of the early Methodist leaders, but now
he distances himself and his readers from evangelical beliefs, stating that the book can
profitably be read by those interested in “the state and notions of a vast body of
Christians, with some of whose extreme opinions they do not haply coincide.” Moreover,
Thackeray takes exception to the Methodist’s reports of supernatural visitations and
claims to unique insight into God’s wishes:

Men of the world will smile at some of the enthusiastic rhapsodies in which Lady
Huntingdon and persons of her way of thinking indulged; readers of a calmer
temperament, though, let us hope, with as strong a conviction as that of her
Ladyship or any of her congregation, may be disposed to question the authenticity
of that direct Divine influence under which the followers of Whitefield and
Wesley believed they acted – indeed, every sect in and out of Christianity has had
its revelations, its prophets, and its miracles; but, however we may incline to
doubt the genuineness of their pretensions in matters of belief, we cannot refuse to
admit the excellence of their practice, and admire their integrity and zeal...³⁰

And when discussing a comment supporting John Wesley’s assertion regarding the anti-
religious nature of Addison’s Spectator, Thackeray is moved to defend one of his beloved
eighteenth-century humorists. In the process Thackeray offers an articulate defense of his
own humanistic but still Christian religious beliefs:

To the writer, a good and just man doubtless, this harmless and beautiful book
[the Spectator], the work of a delightful genius and a most refined and gentle
Christian spirit, appears a stumbling-block to the truth and an inducement to error,
because it does not directly advocate the principles which he holds, and out of
which he fancies that everything must be erring and sinful. . . . who has not heard
of a conqueror who burnt all the books in a famous Eastern library because the
Koran contained everything that was necessary for the spiritual welfare of all
believers, and therefore all other books were needless and harmful. The Methodist
argument, as we take, and the Turkish are precisely similar. We won’t quarrel
with the honesty of the persons who advocated either, but we may thank God that
the world has formed a different judgment, and acted on a plan more liberal. Even
in the matter of religious improvement, how is Mr. Wesley, or Lady Huntingdon’s
biographer . . . to say what shall or what shall not conduce toward it? The work
before us is full of remarkable instances of conversions which took place from
trivial causes, that at first sight would appear to have no possible connexion with the good which was made to arise out of them; may we not fairly say on our side that the view of a fine landscape, or picture, the reading of a fine poem or of a kind Christian essay in this very Spectator, may lead a man to turn toward Heaven and be thankful towards it, as much as any sermon by stout-hearted Whitefield or gentle Wesley himself? . . . We can praise God in a thousand ways as well as on our knees: it is good to address him no doubt in church, or from the hymn-book of the conventicle, but he is a poor philosopher, as we fancy, who pronounces all bad except what he can find on his own prayer-cushion or from the lips of his own preacher . . .

2.4.4 Thackeray’s Medievalism

In October and November of 1838 the Times published three articles by Thackeray that were stimulated by James Endell Tyler’s history Henry of Monmouth: or, The Life and Character of Henry the Fifth. The articles were among the longest Thackeray ever published in the Times, each containing approximately 5,000 words, more than half of which is original writing rather than extract. Thackeray described these writings as articles or notices rather than reviews; indeed, although there is some critical commentary regarding Tyler (who Thackeray felt was “too much the antiquary, and too little of the narrator” and who obscured the big picture by his over-pursuit of details), Thackeray’s articles are more recounts of the lives of Richard II (October 19, 1838), Henry IV (October 25, 1838), and Henry V (November 12, 1838) than commentaries on Tyler’s book. Sometimes Thackeray follows Tyler’s wording rather closely, but more
often he deviates from Tyler and offers his own judgments. Interestingly, Thackeray brings in a wealth of other sources, particularly antiquarian biographies and accounts, to support his presentation of events. The articles are studded with entertaining footnotes containing quotations in archaic English from fifteenth- and sixteenth-century sources. These articles, then, show us Thackeray more as a would-be medievalist historian than as a literary critic.

But Thackeray, unlike Tyler, is more a narrator than an antiquary. He can’t help but personalize the action, and he intertwines character-revealing anecdote with political and military history. Just as, in another context, Thackeray brought to life the political and social figures of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century England in his *Four Georges*, he here imbues the leading characters of his medieval study with distinctive personalities. And, although Thackeray is clear-headed as he describes the villainies and tribulations of the medieval era, he nevertheless revels in romanticized visions created largely through the archaic language of his sources, as when he quotes a description of rebels against Henry V being given free passage “in their schertes and breeches, eche man a crosse in his hand.”

Thackeray has been aptly described as a “sentimental cynic”; as a cynic, Thackeray does not fill his medieval world with the “glorious knights and fair ladies” which Holloway and Palmgren suggest most Victorians constructed as part of the medieval world. For instance, after quoting Tyler’s presumptive praise for the supposed virtues of Henry of Monmouth’s parents and grandparents, Thackeray interjects:

Common gallantry will not allow us to dispute the correctness of these surmises regarding Henry’s mother and grandmother; for after all, as Mr. Tyler says, these
ladies *may* have been very moral, and let us give them the benefit of the surmise. But as for the “gallant young knight,” Henry of Derby, and his old father, he was not very likely to learn principle from them . . . . Time-honoured Lancaster was a greedy traitor and conspirator, and his son no better. 84

Richard II similarly does not fare well in Thackeray’s accounting. Focusing on the contradictions in the writings of a Frenchmen who accompanied Richard II upon his return from Ireland, Thackeray concludes that Richard was “miserably cruel, deceitful, and cowardly,” and that “his revenge in success is as mean as his despair in misfortune.” Further, the sentimental cynic doesn’t speak well of the English in general, as he notes: “The disloyalty of the English was proverbial in those days.” 85

Yet mixed with Thackeray’s sarcasms is a nostalgic sense of the energy, bustle, and humanity of the medieval era. For example, Thackeray offers an extensive quotation from the circa 1400 Lydgate’s song of “London Lychpeny,” depicting hawkers and buyers of food and clothing around Westminstergate, as a “most delightful and humorous picture of the city in those old days.” Similarly, Thackeray quotes the writings of an attendant upon Henry regarding the education of young noblemen partly (I submit) to revel in the sense of antiquity, and partly to debunk the ecclesiastical arguments supporting Henry V’s claim to the crown of France:

“And as lords sons be sent at four years age
“At school to learn the doctrine of letrure;
“After, at six to have them in language,
“And sit at meat seemly in all nurture;
“At ten and twelve to revel is their cure,
“To dance and sing and speak of gentleness;

“At fourteen year they shall to field, I’m sure,

“To hunt the deer and gain of hardiness.”

At sixteen they are –

“To learn to worry and to wage,

“To joust, and ride, and castles to assail,

“And every day his armure to assay,

“And set his watch for peril nocturnalye.”

Their literary education being thus completed at the mature age of six, it is evident that they could not have learned to use, or even to understand, the priggish allusions to Roman lore, the continual allusions to the early Bible history, and the endless logical quibbles and complications which were the weapons of the ecclesiastics.⁸⁶

Moreover, when describing the lead-up to Agincourt and the battle itself, Thackeray loses his traditional skepticism and offers a stirring and rather patriotic account of English bravery and heroism, including a justification for the slaying of French prisoners as driven by military necessity. In addition, Thackeray closes his third article with an abridgement of an ancient account of Henry’s return to London after Agincourt surrounded by “floating banners,” “blowing trumpets and horns,” “innumerable boys dressed in white, with wings and locks like angels,” towers “decked in crimson cloth,” a giant with an axe and the keys to the city, and “the twelve kings, martyrs and confessors of England.” It is possible that cynical side of Thackeray presents this mythic text to his readers as an object of ridicule, but I would argue that instead
Thackeray, the renowned realist, the writer who abhors and denounces exaggeration, is himself sentimentally entranced with this medievalist fantasy which he delights in sharing with his readers. Thackeray knew well that Victorian medievalism was essentially mythic, understood that unromantic “fever and dysentery” were more characteristic of medieval war than were exploits with the sword, and appreciated that medieval noblemen were largely ignoble; yet he, too, could take pleasure in this world that never was.

Notes


10. In addition to the reviews listed in the above invoice, a partial account book for the early months of 1838 specifies four other articles (Ray, Letters, 1:515-516). Other letters support three 1840 articles (Ray, Letters, 1:461); two 1838 articles (Harden, Letters Supplement, 1:38-39); a review of an art exhibition in Paris on April 5, 1838


27. Ibid., 95.
30. Ibid., 2:462.
31. See note 4.
33. Ibid., 1:513.
37. The payment book actually shows a payment from J. Delane, whom Ray glosses as the editor of the *Times*. However, John Thadeus Delane was still at Oxford in 1838 and apparently did not start working for the *Times* until July of 1840; see Arthur Dasent, *John Thadeus Delane: Editor of the “Times”* (London: John Murray, 1908), 1:23. It is more likely that the payment in question came from W. F. A. Delane, who was paymaster for the *Times* in 1838; see Derek Hudson, *Thomas Barnes of the ‘Times’* (Cambridge: University Press, 1944), 105. Presumably the initial ‘J’ is a misread or an error.
38. This reprinting – which does not appear to have been noted previously – further substantiates the close association between Thackeray’s work for *Fraser’s Magazine* and his contemporaneous work for the *Times*. Since the reprints are noted as coming from *Fraser’s Magazine*, presumably the *Times* did not pay Thackeray for them.
42. See note 4.
43. Ibid., 1:469.
45. Ibid., 1:60.


49. Ibid., 181.


61. Ibid.


63. [Thackeray], “South America and the Pacific.”


66. [William Makepeace Thackeray], “Turnbull’s Austria,” *Times* (London), March 16, 1840.


68. [William Makepeace Thackeray], “City of the Czar,” *Times* (London), August 30, 1838.


71. [William Makepeace Thackeray], “Krasinski’s Sketch of the Reformation in Poland,” *Times* (London), March 5, 1840.

72. See, for example, Thackeray’s *Letters from a Club-Armchair* as discussed in Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

73. [William Makepeace Thackeray], “Ranke’s History of the Popes. Translated by Mrs. Austin,” *Times* (London), June 10, 1840.


75. Ibid.; [William Makepeace Thackeray], “Krasinski’s Sketch of the Reformation in Poland,” *Times* (London), March 5, 1840; “Ranke’s History of the Popes. Translated by Mrs. Austin,” *Times* (London), August 11, 1840.

76. [William Makepeace Thackeray], “Ranke’s History of the Popes. Translated by Mrs. Austin” *Times* (London), August 11, 1840.

77. [William Makepeace Thackeray], “Ranke’s History of the Popes,” *Times* (London), August 18, 1840.

78. Ibid.


86. [William Makepeace Thackeray], Tyler’s Life of Henry V.” *Times* (London), November 12, 1838.

87. Ibid.
Chapter 3

“Getting good pay always thinking”: The Victorian World in the *Morning Chronicle*

During the years 1844-1846 and 1848, and quite possibly earlier, Thackeray wrote fine arts and literary reviews for the *Morning Chronicle*. Faced with the continual need to produce a stream of copy, Thackeray was, as he put it, “getting good pay always thinking.”¹ Indeed, although this type of financially-driven short-term journalism is often denigrated as “hack work,” Thackeray *was* always thinking, and his newspaper articles often metamorphosed into essays on history, international affairs, biography, society, travel, literature, and art. Inevitably, embedded in these articles are many markers of Thackeray’s development as a major Victorian novelist and essayist. Further, given the range and scope of his newspaper writings, one can draw from Thackeray’s *Morning Chronicle* writings representations of the early Victorian world.

Unfortunately, Thackeray never collected and republished his *Morning Chronicle* articles. The most comprehensive academic edition of Thackeray’s works, the 1908 *Oxford Thackeray*, includes only one article from the *Morning Chronicle*.² During the twentieth century scholars brought to light some of Thackeray’s newspaper work, most notably as documented by Harold Gulliver in his 1934 book *Thackeray’s Literary Apprenticeship*³ and by Gordon Ray as part of his 1945-6 publication of *The Letters and Private Papers of William Makepeace Thackeray*⁴ and with the subsequent republication
in 1955 of some of these articles in William Makepeace Thackeray: Contributions to the Morning Chronicle. Yet large gaps in our knowledge remain.

Accordingly, this chapter: (1) begins with an overview of Thackeray’s pecuniary and contributory arrangements with the Morning Chronicle; (2) summarizes and assesses previous related scholarship; (3) proposes additional article attributions to flesh out our understanding of Thackeray’s work; and (4) explores early Victorian attitudes toward Irish and Eastern peoples and the projection of English middle-class identity implicitly created by and through Thackeray’s newspaper writings.

### 3.1 Thackeray and the Morning Chronicle

As Gordon Ray has noted, “During the eighteen-thirties and eighteen-forties the Morning Chronicle was the chief rival of the Times for the title of London’s principal newspaper.” Under the editorship of John Black in 1834 the Morning Chronicle had been revitalized and converted into a Whig organ to act as counterweight to the Toryish Times. By 1844 Black had been replaced by Andrew Doyle, and the Chronicle had lost circulation and influence. The paper supported the aggressive foreign policy advocated by Lord Palmerston and published the political-economic articles of John Stuart Mill. Although Mayhew’s famous Morning Chronicle series on “London Labor and the London Poor” was only to appear later, during the years 1844-1846 the paper was still generally branded as the “serious” competitor to the Times (as compared to less serious but more popular papers such as Dickens’s Daily News).

In the spring of 1835, when the twenty-three-year-old Thackeray was living in Paris and studying art, he was a regular visitor to the household of Eyre Evans Crowe, the
Paris correspondent of the *Morning Chronicle*.\(^8\) In what appears to be his first effort to get full-time employment, Thackeray with Crowe’s help applied for (but did not receive) a foreign correspondent position at Constantinople for the *Morning Chronicle*.\(^9\) Later, in March of 1838, Thackeray spent time in Paris and with the Crowes. In an 1853 letter Thackeray wrote, "I recalled to Mr. Crowe as we walked back from the cemetery; how 15 years ago he use to pay me 10 francs a day to do his work as Newspaper Correspondent for him."\(^{10}\) In a subsequent letter Thackeray again wrote "How welcome those 10 francs a day used to be when he was away & I was doing his work for the Chronicle."\(^{11}\) Thus, some of Crowe’s *Morning Chronicle* submissions in 1835 or 1838 were apparently written in whole or in part by Thackeray. Moreover, at the conversion rate of 25 francs per pound, the young Thackeray was happy to work for 8 shillings per day – a rate he surely would have spurned at a later date.

Charles Mackay, a subeditor of the *Morning Chronicle* from 1835-1844, wrote in his memoirs that “Mr. Thackeray, from so early a period as 1839-1840, was a frequent contributor to his favourite journal, the *Morning Chronicle*, though he never succeeded in establishing a permanent connection with it.”\(^{12}\) In another memoir Mackay adds that “Thackeray was often a paid contributor to the *Chronicle*, especially on subjects related to the Fine Arts.”\(^{13}\) If Mackay’s memory is correct, Thackeray was submitting contributions to the *Morning Chronicle* in his own name in the early 1840s (although any such submissions would, of course, have been published anonymously). There is a surviving letter from May of 1839 documenting the *Chronicle*’s rejection of a Thackeray submission in which Thackeray writes that he is “now only waiting to know what they want.”\(^{14}\) Thackeray’s *Morning Chronicle* articles from the early 1840s remain largely
undetected; however, later in this chapter I argue that an April 1, 1842 art review in the *Morning Chronicle* (itself dated March 18 and marked as “From a Correspondent”) is likely a Thackeray free-lance contribution.

On March 11, 1844 Thackeray wrote to his mother about a couple of potential posts, “one [of which] is at the *Morning Chronicle* where my friends Doyle & Crowe are working anxiously in my favour.”\(^{15}\) Thackeray thought that these positions would each be worth “300£ a year” and would be “in a fair way of mending” the “money-matters which were going on very badly.” Indeed, Thackeray projected that with both positions his total income would be £800 – “enough to spend and save too.” Gordon Ray speculates that this other position was with the *Examiner*;\(^ {16}\) my suspicion is that Thackeray was referring to his recently appointed staff position at *Punch*. As I have shown in chapter 1 of this dissertation, in 1844 Thackeray was presumably receiving nearly 300£ annually from *Punch*, and was on track to earn £150-200 from *Fraser’s Magazine*, which would be consistent with Thackeray’s projection of £800.

In any event, Thackeray reached some agreement with the *Morning Chronicle*; two articles by Thackeray totaling 3.05 columns were published in the *Morning Chronicle* in March of 1844, and Thackeray’s account book for March of 1844 appropriately shows an entry of 8 pounds for the *Chronicle*, reflecting a rate of 2.5 guineas a column. As mentioned previously, Mackay stated that Thackeray never had a permanent (presumably a salaried staff) position with the *Morning Chronicle*, and that apparently is true; in early June of 1844 Thackeray wrote that “The Chronicle is I believe as safe as if I had an engagement”\(^ {17}\) (emphasis added). Later, in June of 1844 Thackeray complained that he didn’t “do above 20£ for the Chronicle instead of 40 – but it is my
own fault – the fact is I can’t write the politics and the literary part is badly paid.” As noted subsequently in this chapter, this reference to “20£” is a triggering clue for the attribution to Thackeray of two *Morning Chronicle* art exhibition reviews. Thackeray’s comment further raises a question about political articles – one wonders what he was attempting to write, and why those articles weren’t acceptable.

Thackeray’s newspaper work was interrupted during his August 22, 1844 - February 8, 1845 trip around the Mediterranean, but he appears to have resumed his *Morning Chronicle* contributions in March of 1845. During March – July 1845 Thackeray also held a time-consuming position as subeditor of the *Examiner*, and in the second half of 1845 he was absorbed with writing his travel book, *Notes of A Journey from Cornhill to Grand Cairo*, conflicting responsibilities which perhaps explain his generally low level of *Morning Chronicle* activity for most of that year. Previous Thackeray scholars have not identified any Thackeray articles from the period June-November of 1845; however, a Thackeray letter dated November 28, 1845 in which Thackeray asserted that “The Chronicle articles are very well liked – they relieve the dullness of that estimable paper,” makes it clear that unattributed Thackeray articles continued to be published.

In a letter tentatively dated January, 1846, Thackeray returned to the issue of political articles when he wrote “I have besides 700 £ between Punch & the Chronicle: though I don’t count on the latter beyond the year as I am a very weak & poor politician only good for outside articles and occasional jeux d’esprit.” One reading of this letter suggests that Thackeray’s estimated 1846 income of £700 included roughly £300 from *Punch* and £400 from the *Morning Chronicle*. In chapter 1 I have presented evidence that
at least at one time Thackeray was earning £70 per quarter or nearly £300 per year from *Punch*. And the same January 1846 letter which projected his combined *Punch-Morning Chronicle* income at £700 included, as a final cryptic comment, “-The 400 may subside possibly into 2 or 300 but you see there will be enough and to spare.” Perhaps this “400” refers to a projected income from the *Morning Chronicle* which Thackeray feared might drop because of his inability to write political articles. Indeed, in February of 1846 Thackeray wrote that he was “making a failure at the Chronicle[;] all my articles miss fire: except the literary ones.”\(^{19}\) And in March of 1846 Thackeray wrote "The Chronicle and I must part or I must cut down half the salary. They are most provocingly friendly all the time, and insist that I should neither resign nor disgorge -- but how can one but act honorably by people who are so good natured?” “Disgorge” implies giving money back or reducing income. All this suggests that the *Morning Chronicle* may have then been paying Thackeray both for “misfired” political articles – which may or may not have been published – and that because his political articles were unacceptable Thackeray believed his income should be reduced. Under this interpretation several questions remain open: which political articles did Thackeray write for the *Morning Chronicle*, were they published, what opinions did he express, and why were those articles deemed to be failures?

In February of 1846 Thackeray temporarily resigned from the *Chronicle*; however, he soon rescinded this decision and wrote articles from March through at least October of 1846. In January of 1847, coincident with the initial serialization of *Vanity Fair*, Thackeray wrote to Caroline Norton that: “I am no longer a writer in the *Chronicle.*”\(^{20}\) But this also was not a final decision. In March of 1848, Thackeray, despite
the money he was then earning from *Vanity Fair*, wrote to his mother complaining: “My own expenses are something very severe – and with debts keep me always paying & poor.” To find this extra income, Thackeray noted that he was “writing a little for the *Chronicle* and getting good pay always thinking, plunging about, thinking as usual.” Indeed, Thackeray’s letters from April, October, and November of 1848 establish that, motivated by “an awful bribe that five guineas an article,” he continued to write for the *Chronicle*.21 However, with his other income continuing to grow, there is no indication that he wrote for the *Morning Chronicle* after 1848.

From first to last, from the “welcome 10 francs a day” of 1835 or 1838 to the “awful five guineas an article bribe” of 1848, Thackeray’s *Morning Chronicle* experience was a product of his financial need; the trajectory of Thackeray’s efforts is given form and context by the pecuniary comments and evidence documented in his surviving letters and papers.

### 3.2 Bibliographic Background

At the start of the twentieth century only one signed letter and one critical review in the *Morning Chronicle* – a review of R. H. Horne’s *New Spirit of the Age*– had been positively attributed to Thackeray. In 1934 Gulliver pointed out one other certain attribution (“The Poetical Works of Horace Smith”) and, largely on stylistic grounds, attributed a handful of other book reviews: a Beau Brummell biography; Disraeli’s *Coningsby*; a biography of Lord Chancellor Eldon; “The Discipline of Life”; and “Early Travels in Palestine.” In 1942 C. L. Cline found a letter externally supporting Gulliver’s attribution of the *Coningsby* review to Thackeray.22
In 1945-46 Gordon Ray, in the course of collecting and editing Thackeray’s letters and private papers, developed and published his own attribution list of 35 *Morning Chronicle* articles purportedly written by Thackeray during the years 1844-1846 and 1848. Ray accepted Gulliver’s Beau Brummell and *Conningsby* attributions but rejected without comment Gulliver’s other suggestions. Approximately ten years later Ray reprinted those same 35 articles, along with introductory comments and notes, in his volume *William Makepeace Thackeray: Contributions to the Morning Chronicle*. Ray’s attributions have been generally accepted by Thackeray scholars. The articles on Ray’s list are included *in toto* in Edgar Harden’s authoritative 1996 Thackeray bibliography.

Even including Thackeray letters that have come to light since the 1950s, only 8 of Ray’s 35 proposed Thackeray *Morning Chronicle* attributions are now validated by external evidence: the April 2, 1844 review of Horne’s *New Spirit of the Age*, the May 13, 1844 review of Disraeli’s *Coningsby*, the May 13, 1845 review of Disraeli’s *Sybil*, a March 21, 1846 review of the *Life and Correspondence of David Hume*, an August 20, 1846 review of Moore’s *History of Ireland*, a September 21, 1846 review of Horace Smith’s *Poetical Works*, and two short reports on the Chartist movement from March of 1848. Two other attributions – the March 16, 1844 review of Venedey’s *Irland* and the August 2, 1844 review of George Smythe’s *Historic Fancies* – are less firmly supported by references in Thackeray’s diary and letters that establish he was *reading* the works in question shortly prior to the published review. Additionally, an indirect cross-reference in Thackeray’s review of Disraeli’s *Sybil* strongly suggests that Thackeray also wrote the April 3, 1845 review of Lever’s *St. Patrick Eve*. Lastly, a consistent Thackeray critique against “sentimental works . . . investigating questions of greater social or political
interest” gives considerable weight to the argument that the “Christmas Books” reviews of December 24, 26, and 31, 1845 are also by Thackeray. Thus, fourteen of Ray’s Thackeray *Morning Chronicle* attributions have explicitly argued and reasonably firm support.

As to the remaining 21 Thackeray attributions, Ray argues that “the echoes of Thackeray’s acknowledged writings are so numerous, the parallels to his familiar opinions so obvious, and his stylistic peculiarities so manifest, that no doubt as to the authorship of these articles remains, even without specific evidence.” In support of this argument, but without providing any specific rationales or explanations, Ray lists in a footnote some of the places in Thackeray’s works where he finds relevant “echoes” or “parallels;” these references support some of the fourteen previously mentioned articles as well as ten additional articles. The attribution of the remaining eleven articles is asserted without any supporting citations or commentary (see table 3.1). In light of the uncertainty generally and properly associated with attributions based on purely internal evidence, one needs to remember the tenuous nature of most of Ray’s attributions.

### 3.3 Bibliographic Analyses: Contents, Circumstances, and Cash

This dissertation chapter includes, apparently, the first reconsideration and updating of Thackeray’s *Morning Chronicle* bibliography since Ray’s work in the mid-1940s. Indeed, my independent examination demonstrates that Ray was a careful and knowledgeable evaluator of potential Thackeray articles. Although Ray did not provide any specifics regarding eleven of his attributions, the appropriate “echoes, parallels, and peculiarities” do exist. The 1844 and 1846 *Morning Chronicle* reviews of Water Color
exhibitions and the 1846 review of Benjamin Haydon’s *Lectures on Painting and Design* display Thackeray’s characteristic humor, writing style, and artistic opinions. The March 1844 review of *Ireland and its Rulers since 1839* ties nicely with a *Morning Chronicle* reference in Thackeray’s March 1844 financial records, and the opinions expressed in an April 1844 review of a travel book by D’Arlincourt are representative of Thackeray’s other writings on the French and the Irish. The March 1845 review of *Egypt Under Mehemet Ali* contains a subtle reference to Thackeray’s own 1844 exploits in Egypt, and the references to “Gil Blas,” “Hajji Baba,” “Falstaff,” and “S. Panza” in the 1846 review of *Travels in the Punjab* all have a Thackerayan flavor. The July 1846 review of *The Gastronomic Regenerator* reflects Thackeray’s long-term friendship with Alexis Soyer, and the September 1846 review of *Life at the Water Cure* contains tell-tale pet phrases of Thackeray. Of all of Ray’s attributions perhaps the late 1846 reviews of a volume of the memoirs of Madame d’Arblay (Fanny Burney) and of a brochure entitled *Royal Palaces* have the least overt support, but even in these cases the expressive language and opinions seem to be Thackeray’s.

In fact, a case can also be built for the probable attribution of one of the articles suggested by Gulliver but not included by Ray – the July 15 and 25, 1844 two-part review of Twiss’s biography of a former British Lord Chancellor, Lord Eldon. In addition to stylistic and point-of-view arguments, Gulliver supported his attribution by referring to a comment on this biography in Thackeray’s *Four Georges* lectures. Indeed, Edgar Harden has since shown that in the mid-1850s Thackeray consulted this biography in preparation of his lecture on George IV.26 However, there are more contemporaneous references to Twiss and / or Eldon in Thackeray’s writings – as in the December 26, 1846
publication in *Punch* of chapter 43 of the *Snobs of England*, the May 1847 number of *Vanity Fair*, and the April 1849 number of *Pendennis* – which demonstrate Thackeray’s intimate acquaintance with this biography. Further, as shown in chapter 1 of this dissertation, Thackeray depended on the *Morning Chronicle* for roughly 1/3 of his income in May and June of 1844, and the attribution of these reviews to Thackeray is consistent with the reasonable expectation that he would have continued to write for this needed revenue in July.

There is, of course, an inherent conflict between the need to avoid (or minimize) erroneous attributions and simultaneously achieve as complete and representative a set of attributions as possible. Diversity and range of attributions is important, as different articles provide different insights into Victorian affairs and attitudes, Thackeray’s perceptions and thinking, and his development as an author. Indeed, since the 1940s scholars and biographers – such as Robert Colby, Laura Fascik, Judith Fisher, Donald Hawes, Charles Mauskopf, John McAuliffe, Claire Nicolay, Lidmilla Pantůčková, Richard Pearson, Catherine Peters, S. S. Prawer, and D. J. Taylor – have relied upon and drawn from various attributions on Ray’s *Morning Chronicle* list to support their respective analyses of Thackeray’s life and work.

Attributions based solely on arguments of “style” are by their very nature suspect; however, I submit that attributions can reasonably be made on a broader basis of content, circumstances, and sometimes even cash payment records. Indeed, through a page-by-page examination of a file of the 1840s *Morning Chronicle*, encompassing over 400 previously unattributed literary and artistic reviews, I have identified a number of articles not previously mentioned by Ray which I submit more than meet Ray’s “echoes,
parallels, and peculiarities” test. In two cases external financial data support the attribution; in other cases circumstantial evidence increases the likelihood of Thackeray’s authorship. Accordingly, I offer ten new attributions, which collectively place more meat on the bones of the skeletal framework of Thackeray’s *Morning Chronicle* writings. In his review of Ray’s *Thackeray’s Contributions to the Morning Chronicle* Robert Metzdorf, although concurring with Ray’s verdicts, gently chided Ray for not providing the specifics of the detailed supporting arguments for his “somewhat tenuous attributions.” Accordingly, in the following subsections I offer individual, specific, and fully articulated rationales whose persuasiveness can be evaluated.

### 3.3.1 New Attributions

“**The Exhibition of the Louvre,**” April 1, 1842. Thackeray was in Paris in the spring of 1842; and the article published in the April 1, 1842 *Morning Chronicle* entitled “Exhibition at the Louvre,” dated March 18 and designated as “From a Correspondent,” appears to be his. According to Charles Mackay, Thackeray was a free-lance contributor of fine arts articles for the *Chronicle* during the early 1840s. More specifically, Thackeray attended opening day (March 15) at the 1842 Salon, and it would have been unlike him not to seek to profit from that exhibition and to publish a review. And the 1842 *Morning Chronicle* review of the exhibition at the Louvre bears striking similarities to Thackeray’s 1838 *Times* review of the Salon. Unlike essentially all the non-Thackeray contemporary newspaper art reviews, both of these reviews are overtly humorous. Further, both articles have similar extended and personal introductions; both joke about the large number of poor-quality works exhibited; both satirize the alleged vanity of
French artists; both epigrammatically attack artistic pomposity; both regard French portraits and landscapes as inferior to their English counterparts; both single out for praise the artists Biard and Winterhalter; and both are full of archetypically Thackerayan gentle mockery. Finally, this Salon review, coincident with Thackeray’s last March visit to Paris of the decade, is the only independent review (not reprinted from another paper) which the *Morning Chronicle* published on the Salon during the entire first decade of the Victorian era.

“Exhibition of the Royal Academy,” May 8 & 10, 1844. The attribution of the two *Morning Chronicle* art exhibition reviews published on May 8 and 10 of 1844 is supported both by financial information in Thackeray’s letters as well as by a detailed comparison of these articles with a Thackeray review of the same exhibition published in the June 1844 issue of Fraser’s Magazine. The financial argument is straightforward. I have established in chapter 1 that Thackeray received 2.5 guineas per column for his work for the *Morning Chronicle*. In a letter dated June 1, 1844, Thackeray noted that he didn’t “do above 20£” a month for the *Chronicle*; however, previous scholarship had attributed only two May 1844 articles to Thackeray which together total 4.8 columns and are thus valued at twelve and a half pounds. There are a limited number of candidates which might reasonably support Thackeray’s comment, first of which is the 2.75 columns of previously unattributed May 8th and May 10th art reviews in the May *Morning Chronicle* – articles which would bring the value of Thackeray’s May *Morning Chronicle* writings to nearly 20 pounds, in line with his June 1 observation.

Stimulated by this financial fit, I have conducted a detailed comparison of the *Morning Chronicle* reviews with Thackeray’s June 1844 *Fraser’s Magazine* article “May
Gambols; or, Titmarsh in the Picture Galleries.” There is an extraordinary degree of agreement with regard not only to opinion, but also to specific wordings. For example, Edwin Landseer’s *Coming Events cast their Shadows before* is discussed in both reviews: in *Fraser’s* Thackeray claims that the picture “perfectly chills the spectator,” in the *Morning Chronicle* reviewer exclaims that “your teeth begin to chatter as you look at the picture.” Regarding the same painter’s *Shoeing*, *Fraser’s* notes that “the blacksmith only becomes impalpable;” the *Morning Chronicle* suggests that “the man’s figure . . . is somewhat unsubstantial.” With regard to Turner’s *Rain, Speed, Steam*, the *Morning Chronicle* columnist exclaims that the picture “actually succeeds in placing a railroad engine and train before you which are bearing down at the spectator at the rate of fifty miles an hour” and further praises the picture’s ”wonderful effects.” In *Fraser’s Magazine* Thackeray rhapsodizes that “there comes a train down upon you, really moving at the rate of fifty miles and hour,” and adds that the means of the picture are “not less wonderful than the effects are.” *Fraser’s Magazine* praises Elmore’s *Rienzi addressing the People* as “one of the very best pictures in the gallery;” the *Morning Chronicle* asserts that that picture “strikes us as being one of the best pictures in the exhibition.” *Fraser’s* argues that the subject of Poole’s *Moors beleaguered in Valencia* is “worse than last year, when the artist only painted the plague of London;” the *Morning Chronicle* asserts that the subject of this work is “even more horrible than its predecessor.” With regard to Herbert’s *Trial of the Seven Bishops*, the *Morning Chronicle* reviewer declares that “the artist has not had fair play,” while *Fraser’s Magazine* asserts that “Painters have not fair-play in these parade pictures.” A number of other similar points of comparison testify to the common authorship of the *Morning Chronicle* and *Fraser’s Magazine* reviews. Yet, it
should also be noted that each review also contains ideas and expressive wording that are not in its counterpart; thus, the attribution of these *Morning Chronicle* reviews to Thackeray meaningfully extends our knowledge of both his journalistic endeavors and his artistic criticism.


Thackeray often philosophized in his *Morning Chronicle* reviews regarding the importance of realistic writing and the proper attributes of novels. Accordingly, some introductory comments in the June 20, 1844 *Morning Chronicle* review of the novel *Ellen Middleton* are of particular interest:

> We are promised at the commencement an every-day picture of life, and the artist is true to her purpose, and to an evident horror of pretence – avoids every digression, eschews sentiment, unless it comes naturally in the current of the story, shrinks even from exuberance of description, and indulges in no exaggeration of character. There is nothing to attract the reader of falsified taste, no limnings of high life or eminent persons, no piquant anecdotes, no personal satire – so untainted is it with the follies and peculiarities of our day, that it might have been written an hundred years back by Fielding, if he could have divested himself of his coarseness, or by Goldsmith in his simplest vein.

This is so distinctively Thackeray’s literary credo – including his well-documented praise for pictures of everyday life, horror of pretence, aversion to over-sentimentality, disdain for exuberance of description and exaggeration of character, distaste for fashionable “high life,” regard for Fielding mixed with concern for his coarseness, and admiration for Goldsmith – that it strongly suggests that Thackeray wrote that review. Those who are
familiar with Thackeray’s work might look askance on the comments critiquing “digression” and “personal satire,” but digression was only to assert its sway in Thackeray’s writings in later years, and as for “personal satire,” Thackeray – perhaps with self-induced amnesia regarding the very personal attacks he had made on Bulwer – considered himself a social satirist, not a personal satirist. In an 1848 letter to Edward Chapman Thackeray decried “a literary war in which a man descends to describing odious personal peculiarities in his rival” and added “Make fun of my books, my style, my public works – but of me a gentleman – O for shame.”

Other evidence also suggests that Thackeray is the author of this review. The reviewer writes:

[T]here is a novel of our day which “Ellen Middleton” resembles still more [than “Caleb Williams”], although the resemblance be not such as to render imitation possible. That is the “Mathilde” of Mr. Eugene Sue, a story. . . portrayed with a minuteness and warmth which binds us through ever so many volumes to the heroine’s fate. ‘Ellen Middleton’ is ‘Mathilde’ without the melodrama, without exaggeration . . . . But it has the same sustained tone of passion, the same depth of interest throughout.

This comment is particularly relevant because when Thackeray read Mathilde in 1841 his first thought was likewise about the possibility of imitation.” Moreover, a review of Mathilde in the July 1842 issue of Foreign Quarterly Review which is probably by Thackeray offers similar sentiments to describe that novel, referring to Mathilde’s “unnaturalness,” “exaggeration,” and simultaneous high level of sustained “interest” and “foundation of truth and spirit.” Lastly, one finds the Morning Chronicle reviewer’s high
praise for the author of *Ellen Middleton*, Lady Georgiana Fullerton, echoed in Thackeray’s letters.33

“Spain, Tangier, &c., visited in 1840 and 1841. By X.Y.Z,” June 26, 1845. A review of a travel book, *Spain, Tangier, &c., visited in 1840 and 1841*, is most likely by Thackeray. One might suspect that Thackeray is the author based on the reviewer’s (1) repeatedly echoing Thackeray’s well known aesthetics, as in his praise that “the charm of this work is the absence of all pretence” and in its true-to-life portrayals; or (2) use of artistic terms of comparison, as frequently employed by Thackeray, i.e., the author “moralizes like a Hogarth upon scenes that are as finished as the best of Wilkie’s”; or (3) ability to turn an ironic phrase, as in the reference to “that cheerless chamber in which Mr. Barry has, with a truly democratic spirit, doomed the Lords, for their sins, to sit.” However, the strongest arguments for Thackeray’s authorship of this review lie in two points of content which connect Catholic Spain with particular concerns of Thackeray regarding Catholic Ireland. Thackeray had written earlier that spring, in an article published June 9, 1845 in the *Calcutta Star*, that if England respected and supported the Irish Catholic church (through the Maynooth grant) then Ireland would become “the loyal kingdom of the three, rallying round the old fashioned Monarchy, the old fashioned laws, the old fashioned Conservative Catholic religion.”34 It is, accordingly, striking that the *Morning Chronicle* reviewer seizes upon precisely the same argument and quotes a lengthy like-minded extract from the book because it “is so applicable to the discussions on the Maynooth grant.” Moreover, the reviewer goes on to stress the similarity between the book’s comments on “The Madrid Idlers” with the Irish “incessant loungers” in Dublin and Kingston; Thackeray had discussed at length the idle
“shabby sauntering people” between Kingston and Dublin in the opening pages of his *Irish Sketch Book.* Thus, style and content both suggest that Thackeray is the likely author.

**“Exhibition of the Society of British Artists in Suffolk Street,” April 27, 1846.**

In 1945, in an appendix to Volume II of *The Letters and Private Papers of William Makepeace Thackeray,* Gordon Ray announced the attribution to Thackeray of *Morning Chronicle* reviews of the 1846 exhibitions of the Old and New Water Colour Societies and of the Royal Academy. Indeed, it is surprising that Ray did not also attribute to Thackeray the review of the exhibition of the Society of British Artists (SBA) which was published on March 30, 1846. Presumably this omission was inadvertent, since the SBA review includes evidence of Thackeray’s touch, echoes his previously stated opinions, and demonstrates his particular style in the same fashion and to the same degree as do the exhibition reviews included by Ray.

The SBA review begins with an extended humorous complaint regarding exhibition crowding; the reviewer blithely notes he had to “thread a street full of countless chariots, and at the gates, to penetrate through a regiment of flunkies” and still had to “inspect a masterpiece through the tails of a gentleman’s coat.” Structurally, thematically and stylistically this introduction is vintage Thackeray. Moreover, in typical Thackeray fashion this review contains an oblique satirical comment about Benjamin Haydon, dryly acclaims “a laudable scarcity” of portraits, introduces “the veterinary college of art” as “that most popular branch of the profession,” and with regard to historical pictures in deadpan fashion asserts that “The dead body of Harold is discovered in two places.” I submit that this through-and-through marbling of serious art review with
strands of humor is uniquely Thackerayan. Moreover, in conformity with Thackeray’s previously demonstrated artistic views, this reviewer gives Frederic Hurlstone pride of place as the lead SBA exhibitor although he simultaneously criticizes “the unfortunate dirtiness of his palette,” notes the arresting colors of Alfred Woolmer, and praises the heads drawn by Charles Baxter.

Lastly, one should note that this March 30 review fits a pattern of essentially weekly *Morning Chronicle* contributions by Thackeray in the early spring of 1846 [known Thackeray articles were published on March 16, March 23, April 6, April 11, April 21, and April 27] and that it might be expected that the reviewer of the Water Colour and Royal Academy exhibitions would also review the Society of British Artists exhibition.

“In *Londres et les Anglais des Temps Modernes. Par Dr. Buraud-Riofrey,*” July 24, 1846. Thackeray often mused about the inability of the French to understand the English. In his *Punch* essay “On an Interesting French Exile,” 36 for example, Thackeray talks about those foreigners “who live but four hours’ distance from us [the French]” visit London with but a poor understanding of the English language, and misunderstand everything they see. Thackeray’s particular complaint focuses on French writers who misrepresent England. A French journalist, Ledru Rollins, wrote what Thackeray considered to be “an odious picture” of England based on hearsay: “I doubt whether the Frenchman has ever seen at all the dear old country of ours, which he reviles and curses, and abuses.” According to Thackeray even G.W.M. Reynolds, author of *The Mysteries of London*, a penny dreadful that misrepresents English life, had no time to give information to Ledru.
An 1849 *Punch* essay entitled “Two or Three Theatres at Paris” plays upon the same theme satirically using a similar example: “I have been to see a piece of a piece called the *Mystères de Londres* [presumably the play by Féval, not the serial by Reynolds] and most awful mysteries they are indeed. We little know what is going on around and below us, and that London may be enveloped in a vast murderous conspiracy . . .” This same theme of French failure to understand the English also runs through several of Thackeray’s 1843 *Foreign Quarterly Review* essays.

In an 1846 *Morning Chronicle* review of *Londres et les Anglais des Temps Modernes* which contains a number of suggestive stylistic markers of Thackeray’s authorship, one finds the same discussion in almost the same language:

Is it conceivable that when Paris and London are scarcely removed one day’s journey from each other, that such a work as the “Mysteres de Londres” shall have obtained vogue among our neighbours as a fair representation of English life? Is it the custom of young lords to disguise themselves as policemen, for the purpose of carrying on their sentimental intrigues? Do Englishmen divide their lives between boxing and getting drunk? We give this as but one example, probably a striking one, of the misapprehension under which our neighbours lie as to Englishmen and their modes of life; but we have no hesitation in saying that such trash as this, sometimes a little better and sometimes a little worse, is the manner in which Englishmen are represented in the imaginative literature of France.

Incidentally, Thackeray argues in his review that Buraud-Riofrey is an exception to the general rule and is an *accurate* French reporter of English life; nevertheless, this
review apparently provided Thackeray with an opportunity to give voice to one of his hobby horses.

“A Pilgrimage to the Temples and Tombs of Egypt, Nubia, and Palestine, in 1845-6. By Mrs. Romer,” September 4, 1846. The critical review entitled “Pilgrimage to the Temples and Tombs of Egypt, Nubia, and Palestine, in 1845-6. By Mrs. Romer” is Thackeray-like in its expressive diction, ironic reflections on Mrs. Romer’s exaggerations, expressed weariness with obsolete romantic styles, and privileging of the human and quotidian as opposed to the exotic. The reviewer’s curiosity regarding forbidden and unseen (by men) “hareems” mirrors Thackeray’s comments in Notes on a Journey From Cornhill to Grand Cairo, as do the reviewer’s comments on Abou Gosh and the one-eyed sheikh. Further, the reviewer’s comment that “Once a man has seen the Pyramids, or the Great Horn, and the last account of these always become welcome,” while it does not have to have been written by an Eastern traveler, certainly reads like the observation of one who has been to these places, as Thackeray himself had been in 1844. The most persuasive circumstantial evidence for Thackeray’s authorship, however, comes from one of the reviewer’s side comments.

Thackeray often used names in his writings to represent special qualities. In particular, once Thackeray took from Byron the names Zuleikah (or Zuleika) and Medora as representing exotic women of the East, he frequently used one or both names, often with ironic implications. Thus, when the Morning Chronicle reviewer punctures the romance of the East with the comments that “Zuleikah is a fat matron, with corked eyebrows, who has been transferred from the Pasha to the Bey; Medora consoles herself in her lord’s absence with she-buffons and inharmonious singers,” I submit that there is a
strong probability that Thackeray is the reviewer.

“Heidelberg. A Romance. By G.P.R. James,” September 23, 1846. From April through October of 1847 under the running title “Punch’s Prize Novelists” Thackeray published a series of mini-novel spoofs of the styles of several leading novelists. This series was later republished in collected form as Novels by Eminent Hands. In addition to satirizing his own writing (“Je-mes Pl-sh, Esq.”), Thackeray mimicked and exaggerated the peculiarities of Edward Bulwer-Lytton (“George de Barnwell”), James Fenimore Cooper (“The Stars and Stripes”), Benjamin Disraeli (“Codlingsby”), Catherine Gore (“Lords and Liveries”), Charles Lever (“Phil. Fogarty”), and George Payne Rainsford James (“Barbazure”). In the introduction to his critical edition of “Punch’s Prize Novelists” Edgar Harden has noted that this series had “clear origins in book reviews that he [Thackeray] was writing for The Morning Chronicle in 1844-1846.” Specifically: the Bulwer spoof “George de Barnwell” can be loosely paired with Thackeray’s April 21, 1846 review of Bulwer’s New Timon; “Stars and Stripes” mocks those aspects of Cooper’s writing which Thackeray called out in his review of Cooper’s Ravensnest on August 27, 1846; “Codlingsby” is a take-off on Disraeli’s Coningsby which Thackeray reviewed on May 13, 1844; “Lords and Liveries” has the “careless, out-speaking, coarse, sarcastic” authorial voice that Thackeray critiqued in Gore’s Sketches of English Character on May 4, 1846; and “Phil. Fogarty” displays the positive and negative attributes of Lever’s writing which Thackeray noted in his April 3, 1845 review of Lever’s St. Patrick’s Eve. This parallelism suggests that there may well also be an as yet unattributed Thackeray Morning Chronicle review of the romance novelist G. P. R. James to serve as a prequel and source document for “Barbazure.” Indeed, there is a
September 23, 1846 *Morning Chronicle* review of James’s *Heidelberg. A Romance* that perfectly fits that bill. This review runs in virtual lockstep with “Barbazure;” both begin by commenting on two cavaliers on horseback, both emphasize the melodramatic nature of the narrative and the overly romantic description of the countryside, and so on. Indeed, even if there had never been a “Barbazure,” the *Morning Chronicle* review’s joking style which mocks romance and at the same time displays an underlying affection for the work is distinctly Thackerayan; with Thackeray’s established pattern of basing his literary spoofs on his prior reviews there can be little doubt that Thackeray is the author of this review.

**“Exhibition of the New Society of Painters in Water Colours, Pall-Mall,” April 17, 1848.** On April 14, 1848 Thackeray wrote in a letter to his mother that “I am writing a little for the Chronicle and getting good pay always thinking, plunging about, thinking as usual.” 41 Through the first half of that month, however, there was little that could reasonably be associated with Thackeray. On April 17, however, an art review entitled “Exhibition of the New Society of Painters in Water Colours, Pall-Mall” was published which circumstantial evidence suggests is very likely by Thackeray. In overall approach and format the article is very similar to a Thackeray article “The Exhibitions of the Societies of Water Colour Painters,” which was published in the *Morning Chronicle* in 1846, and unlike 1843 and 1845 *Morning Chronicle* exhibition reviews by other writers which are mere assemblages of ratings with little explanation. As Thackeray normally did, this reviewer begins with an extended joke – in this case referring to “a ferocious encounter conducted with the fierce pugilistic competition which distinguishes Englishmen” as having occurred at an overcrowded entry point. Artistically, there are
points of equivalency in the analyses of several artists discussed in the 1848 and 1846 reviews. Thus, the 1848 review speaks of Mr. Wehenrt’s works as having extraordinary power and being painted with “excellent care” and adds “We remember to have seen no water-colour drawing more vigorous;” in 1846 Thackeray refers to works by that same artist as “quivering with an agony frightful to witness” and expresses no doubt as to “the power, vigour, and careful” execution of the painter.” Similarly, in 1846 Thackeray criticized figures drawn by Mr. Riviere; the 1848 reviewer critiques Mr. Riviere’s figures for their “ugliness of countenance.” Female figures by Miss Egerton are praised in both reviews. Mr. Absalon and Miss Setchel, water colorists whom Thackeray had praised as early as 1842, receive strong praise again in the 1848 review. As a further indicator, the 1848 reviewer identifies himself as an “Eastern traveler;” he testifies to recalling similar images to those shown in a painting of Egypt and further notes that “everything is correct except the sky,” which he argues has a wrong tone. Thackeray, of course, had visited Cairo in 1844, and would be one of a limited number of art critics of the era able to judge the verisimilitude of Egyptian scenes and the color of the Egyptian sky.

**Other Candidate Thackeray Reviews in the Morning Chronicle.** A number of other literary reviews “sound like” Thackeray but evidence is lacking to claim attribution. Interested readers might want to examine some or all of these articles to enjoy their expressiveness, language, and sometimes humor; explore their social contents and subtexts; or make their own assessments as to authorship and significance. Some candidate articles are:

“The Prize Comedy, the Committee, and the Candidates,” June 17, 1844. This tongue-in-cheek review by a “quiet and easy observer” of a Punch brochure appears to be
an “inside job” – and Thackeray, was, of course, the common denominator between 
*Punch* and the *Morning Chronicle*. The extended exaggeration of Bulwer’s initials is 
found in several of Thackeray’s literary reviews.

“King Alfred,” June 20, 1844. This review of a “Monster Epic Poem” of 48 books 
begins: “Monsters have been ere now. Men, it has been said or sung, have made monsters 
for and of themselves. There have been (it is whispered) women, also, who have made 
monsters of men. We have had monster meetings, monster speeches, monster trials, and 
monster traversers.” I suggest this comment reflects Thackeray’s sense of humor and his 
free-wheeling review style.

“The Story of a Feather,” July 1, 1844. This review of a Douglas Jerrold story 
eloquently praises Jerrold’s insight and benevolence while gently chiding him for 
“making *all* the lords selfish and *all* the bishops luxurious.” This accurately reflects 
Thackeray’s attitude toward Jerrold and is similar in approach to known Thackeray 
reviews of Jerrold’s work

Thackeray was something of an expert on recent French history and he sought to review 
works of this kind. The attitudes expressed toward Thiers and French political figures 
reflect Thackeray’s known opinions, and the style of the review is consistent with 
Thackeray’s writings on similar subjects.

“Etudes sur L’Angleterre. Par Leon Faucher,” November 24, 1845. This is an 
entertainingly written and thoughtful commentary on a Thackeray interest area, the 
Chronicle articles are very well liked – they relieve the dullness of that estimable paper”43
this might well be the article Thackeray had in mind.

“Poems by Thomas Hood,” January 13, 1846 - This *Morning Chronicle* review praises Hood in Thackeray-like language and describes the Thackeray favorite “Bridge of Sighs” as “the most meek and touching of wails.” A comparison with Thackeray’s subsequent 1860 Roundabout Paper in *Cornhill* on Hood reveals similarities which suggest common authorship.

“Second Love, and Other Tales, from the Note-book of a Traveller,” September 3, 1846. The reviewer gently lectures the author on ways to improve his writing by making his plots more probable. The reviewer’s suggestion that the author adopt “a vow to eschew gipsies for the term of his natural life,” and the reviewer’s satiric take on second loves, both suggest Thackeray’s sense of humor and literary style.

“Hochelaga: or Englande in the New World,” September 8, 1846. This review, written during a period when Thackeray was writing a great deal for the *Morning Chronicle*, has several Thackeray earmarks: expressive language, humor, well-turned phrases, a love of travel, and a particular appreciation for Eliot Warburton, the book’s editor and well-known Eastern travel writer.

“Lionel Deerhurst; of, Fashionable Life under the Regency. Edited by the Countess of Blessington,” October 8, 1846. Although Thackeray attacked most silver-fork novels, he never attacked the Countess of Blessington’s novels. The *Morning Chronicle* reviewer adroitly avoids assigning the Countess any responsibility for this bad novel in a way consistent with Thackeray’s cleverness as a writer and reflective of their close personal relationship.
“Early Travels in Palestine. Edited by Thomas Wright,” October 12, 1848. This joyous satiric commentary on the fantastic travel writings of Sir John Maundeville appeared to Harold Gulliver as a likely referent for Thackeray’s October 18, 1848 claim that “he had begun to blaze away in the Chronicle again.”

I agree.

3.3.2 A Thackeray Morning Chronicle Bibliography

The table at the end of this section lists Thackeray’s attributed contributions to the Morning Chronicle. Without doubt the 48 listed entries understate Thackeray’s total contribution. Moreover, although Gordon Ray argued that possible future additions to his somewhat smaller subset of 35 republished contributions “should not materially alter the estimate of his work for the Chronicle,” I respectfully disagree. As detailed previously, it is possible that Thackeray was paid for unidentified political articles. Moreover, it is also likely that Thackeray’s art reviews, and perhaps his comments on novels, are more distinctive, with more expression and more potential cross-references and authorship clues, than his reviews of biographies, histories, or travel writings. Thus, the currently attributed Morning Chronicle writings may not be fully representative of his contributions.

Nevertheless, the articles that have been identified as Thackeray’s do add a great deal to our understanding of his ideas and his times. As discussed in chapter 5 of this dissertation, most of Thackeray’s anonymous art criticism was published in the Morning Chronicle, and these articles document his views. As Gordon Ray observed, Thackeray’s Morning Chronicle literary reviews establish, perhaps better than do any of his other writings, his aesthetics and philosophy with regard to fiction. Looking outside the
domestic sphere, no less than six of Thackeray’s *Morning Chronicle* articles address the tangled relationship of England with Ireland, and another four comment on English views of the mysterious (or, as Thackeray claimed, no longer so mysterious) Eastern world. Further, Thackeray’s varied comments on people and current events offer the empathetic perspective that one would expect from the author of *English Humourists of the Eighteenth Century* and *The Four Georges* and consequently shed light on the “manners and morals” of the early Victorian era.

Thackeray’s writings for the *Morning Chronicle* were tightly clustered. There were extended periods of time in which Thackeray wrote articles on essentially a weekly basis: namely, from mid-March through July of 1844, the spring of 1846, and especially from mid-August into October of 1846. Even the “candidate” articles identified in this chapter tend to be associated with those time periods. However, there are long periods where simply nothing that clearly carries Thackeray’s touch was published in the *Morning Chronicle*. The general rule that whenever Thackeray was out of England he stopped his newspaper writing explains the gap from mid-August of 1844 to mid-March of 1845. The reason for Thackeray’s failure to write for the *Morning Chronicle* in the second half of 1845 is less clear. Further, despite Thackeray’s comments in letters, there is little published in 1848 that can unambiguously be attributed to him.

The table below summarizes Thackeray’s contributions to the *Morning Chronicle*.

**Table 3.1** Thackeray’s contributions to the *Morning Chronicle*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Article</th>
<th>Attribution</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4/1/1842</td>
<td>“The Exhibition of the Louvre”</td>
<td>Simons, based on circumstantial evidence and comparison to Thackeray 1838 <em>Times</em> review of same exhibition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Title and Author</td>
<td>Reference</td>
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<tr>
<td>5/6/1844</td>
<td>“Jesse’s Life of George Brummel, Esq.”</td>
<td>Gulliver, <em>Apprenticeship</em>, 143-44, based on a comment in a 5/15/1844 article by Thackeray in the <em>Pictorial Times</em> as well as references to Brumell in Thackeray’s 5/13/1844 review of <em>Coningsby</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/8/1844</td>
<td>“Exhibition of the Royal Academy”</td>
<td>Simons, based on financial data and similarities to review in <em>Fraser’s Magazine</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/10/1844</td>
<td>“Exhibition of the Royal Academy” [continued]</td>
<td>Simons, based on financial data and similarities to review in <em>Fraser’s Magazine</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/13/1844</td>
<td>“Disraeli’s Coningsby”</td>
<td>Gulliver, <em>Apprenticeship</em>, 144, based on similarities to Thackeray review in the <em>Pictorial Times</em>; see also Thackeray letter “But I have made fun of him [the “Mosaic Arab” – a term taken from <em>Coningsby</em>] in the <em>Morning Chronicle</em>; Harden, <em>Letters Supplement</em>, 1:138.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Book Title</td>
<td>Attribution and Notes</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/15/1844</td>
<td>“The Public and Private Life of Lord Chancellor Eldon”</td>
<td>Gulliver, <em>Apprenticeship</em>, 143; based on style and point of view. (Ray did not incorporate this attribution into his own list.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/25/1844</td>
<td>“The Public and Private Life of Lord Chancellor Eldon” concluded</td>
<td>Gulliver, <em>Apprenticeship</em>, 143; based on style and point-of-view. (Ray did not incorporate this attribution into his own list.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/30/1846</td>
<td>“Exhibition of the Society of British Artists in Suffolk-Street”</td>
<td>Simons, internal evidence (comments on Hurlstone, irony and humor, literary references) and temporal pattern of once a week contributions to <em>Morning Chronicle</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Title</td>
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<tr>
<td>7/24/1846</td>
<td>“Londres et les Anglais des Temps Modernes. Par Dr. Buraud-Riofrey”</td>
<td>Simons, unpublished, based on comparison to Thackeray’s letters and articles in <em>Punch</em> and in the <em>Foreign Quarterly Review</em>.</td>
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<td>Date</td>
<td>Title</td>
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<tr>
<td>8/27/1846</td>
<td>“Ravensnest; or, the Red Skins”</td>
<td>Ray, <em>Letters</em>, 2:845; based on similarities to spoof of Cooper’s writing published in “Punch’s Prize Novelists.”</td>
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<td>9/4/1846</td>
<td>“A Pilgrimage to the Temples and Tombs of Egypt, Nubia, and Palestine, in 1845-6. By Mrs. Romer”</td>
<td>Simons, unpublished, based on use of characteristic expressions and comparisons to Thackeray’s <em>Notes on a Journey From Cornhill to Grand Cairo</em>.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4/17/1848</td>
<td>“Exhibition of the New Society of Painters in Water Colours, Pall-Mall”</td>
<td>Simons, letter reference, internal evidence (Egyptian traveler; comments on Wehnert, Setchel, Egerton, Corbould, Riviere).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/12/1850</td>
<td>“The Dignity of Literature. To the Editor of the Morning Chronicle.”</td>
<td>Signed letter.</td>
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3.4 National Identity: Foreigners and Englishmen

Many of Thackeray’s *Morning Chronicle* articles are either art reviews or commentaries on novels or poems. Here, however, I wish to examine Thackeray’s treatment of mid-1840s English concepts of nationality and identity such as the “Irish Question,” Orientalism, and the markers of English middle-class culture. It should be noted that while these issues are clothed in many garbs – including the residues of historic privilege and power, and the heritage of religious differences – at their core they all fall under the rubric: “Show Me the Money.” The factors underlying these English attitudes are essentially pecuniary and economic: Irish poverty as an agrarian “colony” of England, Eastern weakness in the face of Western advancing economic power, and the need for a distinctive identity for an ever wealthier and more numerous English middle class.

Thackeray often wrote about national identity in the voice of an adopted persona. His *Irish Sketch Book* (1843) and his book of Eastern travel, *Notes on a Journey From Cornhill to Grand Cairo* (1846), were written using the persona of Michael Angelo Titmarsh, toned down from his earlier presentation as the drunken and boastful failed artist and author of Thackeray’s art reviews for *Fraser’s Magazine*, but still a flamboyant and comfort-loving Cockney. His favorite *Fraser’s Magazine* voices of the period were the idle tobacco-addicted younger son of a baronet, George Fitz-Boodle, and the Irish rogue, Barry Lyndon. And his *Punch* contributions in various voices are almost entirely tongue-in-cheek: everything is mocked and nothing can be taken at its face value. All of these narrative personas are themselves more objects of satire than reliable reporters. As a result, although literary critics have frequently attributed to Thackeray the opinions and
views of his creations, this assumption is problematic, for it conflates what he was
mocking and what he was endorsing. In this regard the *Morning Chronicle* reviews
provide, perhaps, a unique measuring stick. Although they are sometimes satiric, the
intention of the author is not obscured by the presence of a mediating persona. As a
result, these articles facilitate an informed reading of other Thackeray texts as well as an
interrogation of Thackeray’s true views.

3.4.1 The Irish Question

In the 1840s Ireland and England had been united by the Act of Union but were
still separated by religion, a history of British conquest and Irish defeat, and enormous
differences in wealth and power. Ireland was effectively a poor agrarian colony of a
wealthy industrial power; at the height of the Irish famine of 1845-1850, in which over
one million Irish starved to death, large amounts of corn were exported from Ireland to
England. In the face of this mix of religious and mercantile differences there is ample
evidence that the English public held strong anti-Irish attitudes.\(^{47}\)

Thackeray’s *Irish Sketch Book*, published in 1843 almost at the eve of the great
famine, has been read as a politically revealing document of the era’s prejudices and
inequities. As summarized by John McAuliffe in a recent investigation of the *Irish Sketch
Book*,\(^ {48}\) beginning in the 1950s some scholars have viewed the comments (of the *Sketch
Book*’s narrative persona, Michael Angelo Titmarsh), in the face of breath-taking poverty
and starvation, as evidence of anti-Irish racial prejudice. McAuliffe argues that these
scholars have inappropriately conflated Thackeray and Titmarsh; they have failed to
appreciate that Titmarsh is an object of satire, and that the juxtaposition of Titmarsh’s
extravagances with Irish poverty is intended as a telling condemnation of the social 
forces behind Irish poverty. McAuliffe offers and then critiques the strawman assertion 
that “Thackeray was at best a facile stereotype of Ireland and at worst a racist” through an 
analysis of the text and by offering the unsupported comment that Thackeray’s almost 
contemporaneous articles on Ireland in the *Morning Chronicle* “are models of 
impartiality and sympathy.” Indeed, to the extent that the *Morning Chronicle* reviews 
reflect Thackeray’s opinions, these reviews illuminate English attitudes toward the Irish 
and also indirectly contribute to the ongoing assessment of the *Irish Sketch Book*.

In support of McAuliffe’s position, Thackeray’s *Morning Chronicle* reviews do 
advocate practical measures for Irish advancement. In 1844 and 1845, for example, 
Thackeray argued for government support for the Irish Catholic church as a matter of 
fairness and good policy.49 Thackeray believed that, given reasonable British policies, the 
Irish would be inherently loyal, stressed the importance of “equality and justice,” urged 
that England give up the policy of “applying brute force towards Ireland” as useless, and 
philosophized “What have arms ever done for Ireland, and how much has peace not 
done?”50

Thackeray also intellectually accepted a measure of English responsibility for 
Ireland’s misery. In his review of Venedey’s *Irland* Thackeray satirically refers to the 
sublimity of Irish poverty as a “flattering homage to England’s constitutional rule over a 
sister country” and as “our shame.”51 In his review of Moore’s *History of Ireland* 
Thackeray is more outspoken in acknowledging England’s past culpability:

[Mr. Moore’s book] is a frightful document as against ourselves – one of the most 
melancholy stories in the whole world of insolence, rapine, brutal, endless
persecution on the part of the English master; of manly resistance, or savage
revenge and cunning, or plaintive submission, all equally hopeless or unavailing
to the miserable victim. . . . Surely no Englishman can read the Irish story without
shame and sorrow for that frightful tyranny and injustice, that bootless cruelty,
that brutal and insolent selfishness which mark, almost up to the last twenty years,
the whole period of our domination.52

And yet even in these comments there is a twinge of self-justification: the above
quotation from the review of Venedy’s book contains the key word “constitutional” –
emphasizing that English rule is legal and appropriate. Moreover, that review’s
comparison – a trip to Ireland to see the “grand misère” is akin to a trip to Scotland for its
“romantic recollections and beauty” and a trip to England for the “wonders of its wealth”
– minimizes the human impact of Irish poverty by satirizing it as a showpiece. And the
review of Moore’s book contains an “everybody did it” defense of English actions: “Not
that we are any worse than our neighbours of Europe in this respect. All Europe acts
under the same principle; every government hangs and murders for the government
religion . . . . Persecution was a condition of faith in the last period, axe and fire the
weapons of argument all the world over.”

Moreover, although acknowledging past injustices, Thackeray was unable to
appreciate the continuing colonial nature of English policy toward Ireland. In 1846, when
English policies toward the starving Irish were arguably Malthusian, Thackeray wrote in
the Morning Chronicle that England now “proclaims at last that equality and justice are
the only possible conditions of government,” that “the English people are sincerely and
warmly interested in [Ireland’s] behalf,” and that “If injuries wrought during such a
period cannot be healed suddenly, at least they are acknowledged and over.”

Other Thackeray *Morning Chronicle* comments on Ireland demonstrate insensitivity to Irish suffering. In his 1845 review of Lever’s *St. Patrick’s Eve* – at the onset of the great famine – Thackeray defends hunger as an appropriate weapon for Irish landlords against tenants: “Why not hunger? Without hunger there would be no work.”

And, at least to twenty-first-century eyes, Thackeray is often guilty of stereotyping the Irish: e.g. they are idle, cruel in war, gallant but guilty of ignoring facts. Lastly, while it is true that as a satirist Thackeray also mocks the English, that mockery frequently has an admixture of respect for English institutions, personalities and power. In contrast, Ireland, and the Irish people, never seem to be treated with respect in Thackeray’s *Morning Chronicle* reviews. The Irish leader Daniel O’Connell is presented as an actor playing a role for his people; Irish aspirations for repeal of the Act of Union are never taken seriously; the English are always “we” and the Irish are always “they.” Moreover, running through these reviews is an elusive undercurrent that marks Ireland’s poverty as predominantly Ireland’s fault, a fault which the Irish would rather complain about than resolve, and a victimhood they would rather glory in than remedy through hard work.

Insofar as the *Irish Sketchbook* is concerned, McAuliffe’s comments on the complexity and ambiguity of Titmarsh’s narrative presence are persuasive. However, while I agree with McAuliffe that Titmarsh as narrator is an object of satire – his epicurean and comfort-loving tendencies are intended to provoke mirth – I must also agree with those earlier critics of Thackeray who found markers of racial stereotyping and colonialist attitudes in Thackeray’s travel book. Titmarsh and Thackeray are different and distinguishable, but they are not *that* different. Titmarsh’s sense of Irish victimhood,
idleness, inability to complete practical tasks, boastfulness, or, positively, sociability and friendliness, are echoed in rather than rejected by Thackeray’s *Morning Chronicle* essays. Thackeray – Titmarsh genuinely feels Ireland’s pain, but neither the writer nor his persona emotionally accepts England’s ongoing responsibility to remedy that pain. Any effort to give Thackeray a twenty-first-century sensibility must fail; he remains, more interestingly and revealingly, a man of his times.

3.4.2 The Englishman’s East

In his landmark book *Orientalism* Edward Said uses the term “the Englishman’s East” to describe an ethnocentric stereotyped vision of an Eastern world which supposedly serves to test English mettle but actually solidifies racial prejudices and proclaims the superiority of English identity.  

Said was commenting on Alexander Kingslake’s 1844 travel book *Eothen*, but similar comments could have been made regarding Thackeray’s 1846 Titmarsh travel book, *Notes on a Journey From Cornhill to Grand Cairo*. Indeed, both books emphasize the Englishness of their narrators; as aptly summarized by Robert Hampson, Thackeray’s travel writing was not so much about the place itself as the place refracted through the character and idiosyncrasies of the narrator. Yet while Kingslake in the desert “glories in his self-sufficiency and power,” Thackeray punctures the image of the intrepid Englishman by instead reveling in Titmarsh’s timidity and love of comforts. Of course, this mask of humorous weakness can be read as a subtle proclamation of power. Similarly, Thackeray chooses to have it both ways as Titmarsh sometimes embraces a romantic East of titillating sensuality, and sometimes deflates Eastern mystery into commerce, inconvenience, and dirt. Thackeray’s
travel narrative is richly ambiguous, embracing the need to entertain and reflecting the previously established character of Titmarsh. An alternative perspective on Thackeray’s “Englishman’s East” without the Timarshian presence may be garnered from Thackeray’s contemporaneous newspaper reviews of Eastern travel books.

Two of Thackeray’s *Morning Chronicle* reviews and one *Times* review directly deal with Middle Eastern travel: the March 27, 1845 article “Egypt under Mehmet Ali,” the September 4, 1846 article on “A Pilgrimage to the Temples and Tombs of Egypt, Nubia, and Palestine in 1845-6,” and the September 25, 1838 *Times* article “Lord Lindsay’s Travels in Egypt and the Holy Land.” Other insights can be drawn from “Mohan Lal’s Travels in the Punjab” (*Morning Chronicle*, April 6, 1846) and from “Fraser’s Winter Journey to Persia” (*Times*, November 16, 1838). The first three of these articles suggest that travel to the Middle East – and, by extension, the Middle East itself – is no longer romantic. For example, the review of “Pilgrimage” begins:

Mrs. Romer quotes, we know not from what part of Monsieur de la Martine’s Eastern Travels, some accounts of “lions and panthers,” which the deputy of Macon says, or fancied, that he saw on the route between Jericho and Jerusalem. It is only to such favoured beings as the author of the Poetic Meditations that a sight of those ferocious animals is granted. Thousands of travellers have been on the same road, and never saw a lion, unless it might be a Mayfair lion on his annual tour. There is no account of such in the brilliant narrative “Eothen,” in the elegant pages of the “Crescent and the Cross,” or in any English book we know of. Romance has gone off the road. The Company of Jerusalem Hadjees in this town must amount to thousands, who would no more credit a story of panthers
about the Jordan than they would an account of wild elephants in Kensington Gardens. And we take it the romantic style for books of Eastern travel has come to an end too, and will soon become as obsolete as that fashion of writing classical works which used to obtain fifty years ago, when quartos were written by the governors of young noblemen who went the grand tour.\(^{59}\)

Continuing in a similar vein, Thackeray teasingly invokes masculine sexual fantasies of the sensual East only to mock them and substitute a sense of the shopworn:

Mrs. Romer had opportunities of beholding in the East many sights which are forbidden to the most curious male traveller. Numerous hareems were unveiled to her (behind the curtained gates of which and the eunuch guard every reader of the Arabian Nights has peeped in his imagination): but the romance and beauty of those mysteries disappears too upon close view; the charming houris whom we admire in poetry are seen in prose with rouge on their tawdry cheeks. Zuleikah is a fat matron, with corked eyebrows, who has been transferred from the Pasha to the Bey; Medora consoles herself in her lord’s absence with she-buffoons and inharmonious singers; the famous Ghawazee are filthy posture-mistresses, the celebrated magicians exploded humbugs.

This vision of a tawdry East hardly challenges English mettle; not only is it not romantic, in some respects it is not even Eastern. Western commerce and trade have made the Middle East a tributary extension of the West. Thackeray argues that visitors to Egypt are now “mere tourists”: “The famous land of Egypt, too, is . . . becoming quite European. A fortnight’s pleasant voyaging may waft us from the Thames to the Nile . . . . A widely different place, indeed, is the Egypt of the present day from the savage land it
was. . . . Steamer are frightening the crocodiles of the old Nile.” These steamers are, of course, emblematic of Western commerce, Western ideas, Western presence, and Western money. Thackeray’s Englishman’s East is more about money than mystery. For example, in the late 1830s Egypt occupied Syria; England opposed and was able, in 1840, to reverse this occupation. In an 1838 *Times* article Thackeray reviews the comments of a former British Consul-General in Syria regarding the negative aspects of Egypt’s occupation. Interestingly enough, Thackeray’s discussion is largely pecuniary, including specific observations on supposedly inappropriate taxation policies and currency debasements, with attendant negative impacts on the quality of Syrian life.

Thackeray has no doubt that Westernization is displacing an inferior social order. He writes that Mehemet Ali, the ruler of Egypt, is building railways; establishing fleets, arsenals, and schools; and “making the Arabs civilized [emphasis added] whether they will or no.” To make certain that we have captured this central idea he later repeats it, praising the “honesty of purpose with which he [Ali] labours in his great work of the civilization of Egypt.” There is no indication that Thackeray, an educated man as well as a celebrated satirist, sees any irony or satire in his depiction of Westerners “bringing civilization” to the land that many regard as the home of civilization.

Thackeray’s overall lack of respect for indigenous Eastern peoples is particularly evident in his April 6, 1846 review of Mohan Lal’s *Travels in the Punjab*. Lal traveled with various English explorers in India, Afghanistan, Persia, and Central Asia. Thackeray ridicules Lal for egotistically exaggerating his role and accomplishments. Of course, Thackeray also ridiculed Westerners whom he regarded as pretentious. (See, for example, his *Morning Chronicle* review of a travel book by the German Doctor Carcus.)
However, Thackeray’s commentary has a racist and colonialist edge when Thackeray describes Lal’s “killing Kashmerian ogle” or when he mocks Lal’s account of an English friend shedding tears at his departure with the comment “we presume it is the wont of English gentlemen in the Indian service to weep in the embraces of their Hindoo retainers.” This is not an exceptional case. Indeed, an earlier Thackeray newspaper review of a book recounting a journey to Persia by an English diplomat cheerfully designates Persia as a “merry nation of boasters and swindlers, whose qualities, like Falstaff’s, are always amusing, though they may not perhaps be very high.”62 That same article includes an extract, characterized by Thackeray as a “delectable anecdote,” about the supposed Persian “love of physic” and its humorous consequences. In short, Thackeray’s vision of the Englishman’s East is a false front, a “Vauxhall by daylight,”63 conquered by Western commerce and open to Western civilization, but populated by an inferior people who are fit subjects for ridicule.

3.4.3 English Middle-Class Identity

Thackeray wrote for an upper-middle-class English audience, and his major novels have been justly described as “lively studies of middle-class manners.”64 Yet before the creation of Arthur Pendennis it is problematic to consider any of Thackeray’s narrative personas as themselves representative of English middle-class identity. I have already commented on the exaggerated and non-stereotypically English flamboyance and eccentricity of Titmarsh. In 1842 and 1843 Thackeray’s other Fraser’s Magazine persona of choice was George Savage Fitz-Boodle. With obvious and unmerited conceit the indolent and overweight Fitz-Boodle prides himself on being “the third-best whist player
in Europe.” Self-proclaimed as “not a reading man,” this younger son of a country baronet was rusticated at the University and expelled from the army. His romantic opportunities have been sabotaged by his addiction to tobacco. While this persona embodies and satirizes upper-class vices, he is an extreme parody that cannot be taken as representative of Englishness. Likewise, far from being an English everyman, the eponymous anti-hero of the 1844 serialized novel *Barry Lyndon* is a completely amoral rogue— and Irish to boot! However, a less extreme yet distinctly personable everyman English presence inhabits Thackeray’s 1844-1846 *Morning Chronicle* articles. I suggest that the overt and implicit attitudes of this unnamed reviewer are aligned with Thackeray’s conception of mid-1840s Victorian middle-class English identity.

Thackeray’s *Morning Chronicle* articles present and endorse an Englishness which encompasses the enjoyment of literature, respect for the heritage of great English authors, and an appreciation of contemporary English art. A love of nature— particularly the relatively benign and domestic English countryside— runs through many of Thackeray’s art reviews and can also be taken as an assumed national characteristic. Beyond these aesthetic concerns, it is a truism that we are defined by what we are not, and, as I have noted in this chapter, Thackeray’s *Morning Chronicle* Englishman is clearly not Irish and most definitely not Eastern. Compared to the Irish, Thackeray views the English as more reserved and more practical; showing more persistence and exhibiting less braggadocio; reflecting independence and strength rather than subservience and weakness. And, even though Thackeray’s Englishmen are characteristically hypocritical in their self-interest, they nevertheless drive and subdue the world, particularly the Eastern races which are generally portrayed at best as simple and
kindly, and at worst as superstitious, credulous, and somewhat hapless. Indeed, Thackeray further contrasts the English with the French (“a luckless race” who show a lack of judgment in idolizing the ridiculous; whose literature includes “vulgar and licentious, and therefore very natural characters and dialogues”; and who for the most part are vainglorious and fail to understand the English – “Do Englishmen divide their lives between boxing and getting drunk?”);65 the Germans (suffering from the misfortune of “religious difference and sects”; and presented as overly literal, diligent, credulous, and dull);66; and even the Americans (“Brother Jonathan” is “uncomfortable” because, although he officially rejects class distinctions, he nevertheless admires and seeks them).67

Thackeray’s Englishmen are anchored in life’s realities. When Thackeray comments in the review of Mrs. Gore’s *The Snow Storm* that “The best piece of writing, perhaps, in the book, is the description of a supper, which is exceedingly luscious and agreeable,”68 he is making a social point as well as a literary one: in a world full of falsity and pretence Englishmen realize the importance of an “agreeable” dinner. Indeed, describing a dinner at the Reform Club, Thackeray writes of the attendees that “flushed with victuals, their attack upon the enemy was irresistible (as under such circumstances the charge of Britons always is).”

Along with food, of course, money is a continuing down-to-earth English concern, and love of money is an aspect of Englishness. Thackeray once wrote that “the 5 guineas” he received on average for each *Morning Chronicle* article was “an awful bribe” – if he succumbed to the desire for money, so did the Englishmen he wrote about. Beau Brummell’s failure is marked by his “having failed (although he told lies for the purpose)
to get money from his friends. Thackeray often refers to large sums satirically, effectively emphasizing that they exceed realistic middle-class possibilities: Coningsby is cut off “with a miserable ten thousand pounds;” Sybil unbelievably turns out to be “a baroness of forty thousand pounds a year;” Paul Reveley’s return after a fifty-year absence is marked by the villagers with a jubilation as “if he were going to present them with ten thousand pounds all round.” Mrs. Romer tells about an Oriental Viceroy who presumably offered to give 100,000 pounds for a beautiful woman, and Thackeray is moved to comment: “How many wives are there who would fetch such a price?”

When Thackeray wishes to offer approbation in his Morning Chronicle reviews he frequently employs adjectives such as “honest,” “noble,” or “manly.” Thackeray valued honesty, but one can hardly argue that Thackeray saw it as a general mark of Englishness; his novels are full of self-serving dishonest Englishman. I also doubt that Thackeray considered most Englishmen to be “noble” – in the sense of being elevated or lofty or showing moral superiority – but it is interesting that he used such a class-inflected word. For Thackeray certainly considered class and class-consciousness to be part of middle-class English identity. Indeed, class awareness runs through Thackeray’s Morning Chronicle reviews, from his belief that Disraeli had too strong a leaning for “the nobs against the middle class,” to his distinguishing the “class of men” who are butlers from bankers or gentlemen, from his characterization of Jerrold’s Mrs. Caudle’s Curtain Lectures as “an amusing picture of English middle-class life” to his careful demarcation of the Chartist meeting on Kennington Common as “a public meeting of the working classes.” Thackeray’s reviewers’ voice always considers violations of class norms as inappropriate.
On the other hand manliness is arguably perceived by Thackeray as an English virtue. The English biographer Captain William Jesse and the famous schoolmaster Thomas Arnold are both designated as “manly.” When Thackeray discusses behavior he considers to be un-English, he uses “manly” sarcastically, as in the “manly course of life” associated with Jesuitical self-flogging.\(^7^3\) The Oxford English Dictionary defines “manly” using referents such as courageous, strong, independent of spirit – and presumably all of these may be ascribed to Thackeray’s use of the term. “Manly” may be viewed as contrasting with “childish,” but one cannot escape the secondary sense in which “manly” is opposed to “womanly.” Sometimes Thackeray’s words regarding Victorian womanhood, as expressed in his \textit{Morning Chronicle} reviews, suggest that Thackeray’s satire includes a strain of misogynism. In the review of \textit{Mrs. Caudle’s Curtain Lectures}, for example, Thackeray writes:

They [Mrs. Caudle and Mrs. Nickleby] are both types of English matrons so excellent, that it is hard to say which of the two should have the \textit{pas}. Mrs. Nickleby’s maundering and amiable vacuity endear her to all her acquaintance; Mrs. Caudle’s admirable dullness, envy, and uncharitableness, her fondness for her mamma, brother, and family, and her jealous regard of her Caudle, make her an object of incessant sympathy with her numerous friends.\(^7^4\)

When Thackeray wishes to express his approval of English women he often does so in terms that would give offense today but which provide insight into the early Victorian mindset regarding feminine identity. Mrs. Romer, a travel writer whom Thackeray characterizes as “our fair author,” writes “with feminine grace and loveliness, and a hand that is at once elegant and faithful.”\(^7^5\) In another review Thackeray quotes the
anonymous female author X.Y.Z as declaring that “the real gentleman, and the real lady, as they exist in England, have their equals no where, either in external appearance, in manner, in conduct, or in character.” In response, Thackeray opines that “the writer might have added ‘in taste, in purity of feeling, and accomplishments,’” further noting that the work “is manifestly the composition of a lady – of an English lady.”

Thackeray’s *Morning Chronicle* articles, taken as a whole, arguably offer a multidimensional view of the early Victorian world, and provide a significant gateway into Thackeray’s thinking and artistic development. They deserve to be considered part of the Thackeray canon.

**Notes**

1. This comment was made by Thackeray about his writing for the *Morning Chronicle* in a letter dated April 14, 1848. See Gordon Ray, *The Letters and Private Papers of William Makepeace Thackeray* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1945-6), 2:373.


42. [William Makepeace Thackeray], “An Exhibition Gossip,” *Ainsworth’s...*
Magazine, July 1842.

44. Thackeray, Oxford Thackeray, 17:460-472.
46. Ray, Contributions, xiii.
47. A. N. Wilson, The Victorians (London: Arrow Books, 2003), 74-83
49. Ray, Contributions, 10; [William Makepeace Thackeray], “Spain, Tangier, &c., visited in 1840 and 1841,” Morning Chronicle (London), June 26, 1845.
50. Ray, Contributions, 10, 165, 166.
51. Ray, Contributions, 1.
52. Ray, Contributions, 164-5.
53. Ray, Contributions, 166.
54. Ray, Contributions, 76.
55. [Thackeray], “Spain, Tangier.”
60. Ray, Contributions, 65.
62. [William Makepeace Thackeray], “Fraser’s Winter Journey to Persia,” Times (London), November 16, 1838.
63. See the comments by Dickens in Chapter 14 of Sketches by Boz; Charles Dickens, Sketches by Boz (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea and Blanchard, 1837), 117-118
65. Ray, Contributions, 118, 23; [Thackeray], “Londres et les Anglais.”
66. Ray, *Contributions*, 2, 107-113. Note that the Germans Venedy and Carcus are both presented as credulous and overly literal.


70. Ray *Contributions*, 43, 82, 106.

71. [Thackeray], “Egypt, Nubia, and Palestine.”


75. [Thackeray], “Egypt, Nubia, and Palestine.”

76. [Thackeray], “Spain, Tangier.”
Chapter 4

“No money from Hume”: The Squab - Idler Newspaper Correspondence

Gordon Ray’s half-century-old (but still authoritative) two-volume biography of William Thackeray contains only the following brief comment on Thackeray’s writings for the *Calcutta Star*:

Between March, 1843 and August, 1844, he [Thackeray] wrote a long letter each month for the *Calcutta Star*, a newspaper established by his old associate James Hume who had gone out to India in 1842. Though Hume was able to pay him only about three pounds a letter, friendship kept Thackeray faithful to his task, and he seems to have resumed his contributions for a time after he returned from the East in 1845.¹

Ray based his comment on a reading of Thackeray’s letters and private papers which includes Thackeray’s March 1844 complaint that the India mail had brought him “no money from Hume.”² Unfortunately, Ray was not able to examine any of these *Calcutta Star* articles, as no Western library is known to possess a file of that newspaper. In 1963, however, Henry Summerfield examined an incomplete file at the National Library of Calcutta and was able unequivocally to identify six letters, each headed *Letters from a Club Arm-Chair* and signed “SQUAB,” as written by Thackeray. One of these letters contains the salutation “My Dear Idler”; Summerfield glossed that Idler “was a prominent local contributor to the *Calcutta Star* and kindred papers.” Arguing that these
letters merited examination as “Thackeray’s only known attempt at sustained political comment” and that “the excellence of the writing . . . can speak for itself,” Summerfield reprinted them in *Nineteenth Century Fiction*.\(^3\) In addition to political commentary these letters also include interspersed musings on the commonplaces of ordinary life, such as London emptying in August as people take their vacations, the glory of the writer’s view of the Thames, the rapid expansion of London, Prince Albert’s fear of traveling fifty miles per hour on a train, and similar Thackerayish “takes” on life. Nevertheless, with the exception of Richard Pearson, who has made several interesting comments regarding these articles,\(^4\) recent Thackeray biographers and scholars have generally contented themselves with echoing Ray’s statement.\(^5\) To date these letters have not been republished in any collected edition of Thackeray’s works.

In this chapter I establish that “Idler” was, in fact, a pseudonym for the editor of the *Calcutta Star*, James Hume. More significantly, the *Calcutta Star* “London” Squab letters were, in fact, answered in the *Calcutta Star* by a corresponding set of “colonial” Idler letters. And although most of Thackeray’s letters are apparently lost, Hume’s republished letters are accessible for scholarly examination.\(^6\) Idler-Hume’s letters to Squab-Thackeray (in conjunction with other data) support the construction of a chronological listing of and narrative commentary on Thackeray’s *Calcutta Star* writings. Despite Ray’s assertion that “friendship kept Thackeray faithful to the task,” it appears that direct payment was the *sine qua non* for Thackeray’s contributions to his friend’s newspaper; in fact, as we shall see, Ray’s brief account is wrong in several of its particulars.
Further, although James Hume himself has become almost lost to history, his is an intriguing colonial voice and counterbalance to the cosmopolitan Thackeray. Hume was enterprising and influential, a scion of a prominent Radical political family and a cousin of one of the founders of the Indian Congress party. Not only was Hume a pioneer in the development of the Indian colonial periodical press, he also played a central role in colonial Indian politics, commerce, sports, and justice. Accordingly, the Squab – Idler letters not only provide new insights into the personalities and viewpoints of both Thackeray and Hume, they also collectively constitute a culturally revealing dialogue on the issues of the day.

4.1 James Hume and the Calcutta Star

James Hume was reportedly born in 1808 as the third of six children of a James Hume and a Marianne Grant. The Humes were a prominent Anglo-Indian family (Anglo-Indian in the sense of living in India for lengthy periods rather than of being of mixed Indian and British ancestry) that originated in Montrose, Scotland. Joseph Hume, the Radical MP and uncle of the James Hume born in 1808, had spent a decade in India before returning to England and entering politics. James Hume’s cousin, Allan Octavian Hume, went on to become a well-known ornithologist as well as a leading Anglo-Indian politician and cofounder of the Indian Congress party. Most of James’s siblings spent part or all of their adult lives in India. James was educated in England, studied law at the Inner Temple, and was called to the bar on January 27, 1832.

William Thackeray was undergoing his own legal training at the Middle Temple in 1831 and 1832, and possibly then met James Hume. At any event, they certainly knew
each other when Thackeray was owner and editor of a London-based weekly periodical, the *National Standard and Journal of Literature, Science, Music, Theatricals, and the Fine Arts*, from May of 1833 to February of 1834. A surviving Thackeray letter from December of 1833 identifies Hume as Thackeray’s assistant. There are no surviving Thackeray-Hume letters from that period, but, as we shall see, the nature of their personal relationship can be inferred from subsequent correspondence. Their common Anglo-Indian family heritage, their shared Radical political views and legal training, and their mutual literary and journalistic interests may have drawn them together.

Hume arrived in Calcutta on April 29, 1839, and lost no time getting involved in the judicial, political, and journalistic aspects of colonial life. On June 15 he was admitted to practice as an advocate in the colonial Supreme Court, and in a public meeting on October 5 eulogized the public character of the independent-minded Whig politician, Lord Brougham and attacked the Bengal regional government. On December 5, 1839 Hume announced that he was starting a new weekly newspaper, the *Eastern Star*, whose first number would be published on January 5, 1840. In June of 1841 Hume took over the *Daily Calcutta Intelligencer and Commercial Advertiser* and repositioned it as the *Calcutta Star*, a daily newspaper which commenced publication on July 1.

A listing of the holdings of the National Library of India at Calcutta notes that the *Calcutta Star* contained:

Advertisements, Notices, Domestic occurrences, Commercial Intelligence, Shipping Intelligence, Bank shares, Price of Bullion, Rates of interest and discount, Literary articles, Sporting intelligence, Original correspondence, Editorial paragraphs, Orders of the Governor General in Council, European
intelligence with special reference to England, House of Commons reports, Parliamentary miscellanea, Precis of miscellaneous events, Europe – births, marriages and deaths.\textsuperscript{14}

There are no firm data on the size or circulation of the paper, but it appears to have been a rather general mainstream newspaper targeted to the English community in Calcutta. Hume himself wrote in May of 1844:

When the \textit{Calcutta Star} was started, it addressed itself to no particular section of the community here, nor body of the Europeans in India . . . . it entered the field, careless of whom it displeased by the publication of opinions honestly believed to be true, and material to the public good – and what has been the result? There are papers with a larger circulation, but there never was one which met with greater success. It has a very much larger circulation in little more than 2 ½ years than as I am informed the \textit{Englishman} had in more than double the time [according to another Hume \textit{Calcutta Star} letter, in 1842 the \textit{Englishman’s} circulation was about 1200 a month\textsuperscript{15}], and I have very little hesitation in saying, that here, where it is best known, it has a larger \textit{bona fide} circulation than any Paper in Calcutta has, or ever has had.\textsuperscript{16}

Hume’s name next surfaces in Thackeray’s surviving letters in August of 1842 when Thackeray wrote his mother that “Hume wrote me a kind letter” and reported that “he is flourishing at Calcutta, where he may set up his papers.” Apparently Thackeray had lent Hume money, because Hume promised “to pay 100 this year”; bills sent by Thackeray to Lubbocks on Hume’s behalf were, however, not honored.\textsuperscript{17}
Hume, indeed, flourished in Calcutta. An anonymous correspondent offers as a capsule description of Hume that

He was the Police Magistrate of Calcutta and Justice of the Peace. He was Secretary to the races. He was proprietor and editor of the *India Sporting Review*, and Secretary to, and General correspondent of the Agricultural and Horticultural Association. He was the acknowledged proprietor and editor of the *Calcutta Star*. He was a Director of the Inland Steam Navigation Company.\(^1\)

Indeed, other evidence adds credence to this miniature biography. The *History of the Royal Calcutta Turf Club* notes that Hume resigned as Secretary of the club in 1849.\(^2\)

The June 1846 issue of *Simmonds Colonial Intelligence and Foreign Miscellany* states that in April “Mr. James Hume, the editor of the *Calcutta Star*, has been appointed to the vacant magistracy.”\(^3\) The *Madras Journal of Literature and Science* reprints January 1849 and May 1850 letters which James Hume signed as Secretary of the Agricultural and Horticultural Society of India.\(^4\) Reginald Burton asserts that Hume edited the *India Sporting Review* starting in 1845;\(^5\) as Sidney Laman Blanchard reports, the long standing relationship between Hume and this periodical was “killed by the mutinies of 1857 – nearly all its contributors being besieged somewhere or engaged in besieging somebody, and its editor, Mr. James Hume, the senior magistrate, not be able to find sufficient aid at hand to support it.”\(^6\) Hume outlived the great mutiny by only five years, as he is reported to have died at Galle (outside of Calcutta) on September 21, 1862.\(^7\)

Hume had dramatic and literary aspirations. A contemporary journalist revealingly reports that “Hume had an idea that he was a tragedian. His declamatory powers were fine, and he had a tendency to tear a passion to tatters, which found room
for gratification in *Othello* and *Macbeth*; but his figure was thick and stumpy, and his face devoid of suitable expression.” Exercising his literary bent, Hume published a biographical memoir of the Anglo-Indian author and colonial administrator Henry W. Torrens in 1854. And, most significantly for this analysis, W. F. B. Laurie established that it was Hume himself who “wrote the famous letters . . . by an Idler.”

Indeed, starting in June of 1842 a series of long letters addressed to various European friends was published each month in the *Calcutta Star* as “Letters from an Idler.” These letters contained opinionated commentary on both local news and on events in England. Three volumes of these collected letters were subsequently published, the first covering June 1842 – May 1843; the second, June 1843 to May 1844; and the third, June 1844 to May 1845. It is not clear when these monthly letters terminated; they could not have gone on for much longer as *Allen’s Indian Mail* reports that Hume resigned as editor of the *Calcutta Star* on April 29, 1846. In any event, there is no indication that a fourth volume of letters was ever published.

These volumes collectively include 36 letters; 10 of these are addressed to “SQUAB” and are thus, in effect, letters to Thackeray. As listed in table 4.1, some of these letters actively engage and comment on prior Thackeray - Squab letters. In other cases it is not clear if Thackeray – Squab was then an active correspondent or if Squab’s name was simply being retained as a placeholder. Other Idler letters in these volumes are addressed to Mackenzie (June 1842, October 1842, January 1843, February 1843, May 1843, August 1843, March 1844), Charlotte (September 1842, September 1843), and Alfred (July, 1842, November 1842, December 1842, March 1843, April 1843, April 1843, October 1843, November 1843, December 1843, August 1844, September 1844,
November 1844, December 1844, January 1845, February 1845, March 1845, and April 1845). None of the Idler letters to addressees other than Squab are overtly part of a bi-directional published correspondence, and there is no information regarding the identity of these other addressees except that they are members of a family, with Alfred and Charlotte respectively being the son and daughter of Mackenzie.

**Table 4.1** Idler (Hume) letters to Squab (Thackeray)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<th>Pages – Volume</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Interactive</td>
<td>1-22 – Vol 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1843</td>
<td>Interactive</td>
<td>23-43 – Vol 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 20, 1844</td>
<td>Interactive</td>
<td>142-165 – Vol 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 18, 1844</td>
<td>Interactive</td>
<td>166-188 – Vol 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 19, 1844</td>
<td>Not interactive</td>
<td>219-246 – Vol 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 13, 1844</td>
<td>Not interactive</td>
<td>247-287 – Vol 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 8, 1844</td>
<td>Not interactive</td>
<td>1-29 – Vol 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 12, 1844</td>
<td>Uncertain</td>
<td>30-67 – Vol 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 10, 1845</td>
<td>Interactive</td>
<td>219-246 – Vol 3</td>
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**4.2 Thackeray’s Letters to the Calcutta Star**

Both the Squab letters recovered by Summerfield and the collected Idler letters to Squab shed light on the particulars and circumstances of Thackeray’s writings for the *Calcutta Star*. The Thackeray-Squab letters recovered by Summerfield contain internal header dates within the letters (presumably indicating the dates on which the letters were written) as well as publication dates. Both sets of dates are shown in table 4.2.
Several conclusions can be drawn from this table: firstly, approximately 45 days elapsed between the writing and the publication of each Thackeray letter. This delay is associated with the slow Indian mail service of the 1840s; mail from England was transported with intermediate stops at Marseille and Malta to Alexandria, sent overland across the Isthmus of Suez, and then shipped to points in India, including Calcutta. As one might imagine, the arrival in Calcutta of mail from England was something of an event, and detailed records are available about specific mail departure and arrival dates in 1843 and 1844.\textsuperscript{30} In January of 1845 the normal single monthly mail service to India (usually leaving London around the sixth of each month and arriving in Calcutta around the 20\textsuperscript{th} of the following month) was replaced by a bi-monthly service, under which letters from London could be sent on the 7\textsuperscript{th} or the 24\textsuperscript{th} of each month.\textsuperscript{31} Indeed, the letters recovered by Summerfield show that Thackeray took advantage of the bi-monthly mail to write two letters each month. In fact, in September of 1844 Thackeray reminded Hume in a \textit{Calcutta Star} letter that “when the fortnight mails are established” the remittances to him should be doubled.\textsuperscript{32}

\textbf{Table 4.2} Squab letters recovered by Summerfield

\begin{tabular}{|l|l|l|l|}
\hline
          & Date Written & Date Published & Interval  \\
Letter 1  & August 7, 1844 & September 21, 1844 & 45 days  \\
Letter 2  & March 24, 1845 & May 7, 1845 & 44 days  \\
Letter 3  & Undated & May 22, 1845 &  \\
Letter 4  & April 24, 1845 & June 9, 1845 & 46 days  \\
Letter 5  & May 7, 1845 & June 21, 1845 & 45 days  \\
Letter 6  & July 7, 1845 & August 21, 1845 & 45 days  \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
Although Summerfield did not state specifically the ways in which the *Calcutta Star* file he examined was incomplete, a separate list of the holdings of that periodical in the National Library of India at Calcutta is available and provides that information:


This listing provides useful negative information regarding Thackeray’s involvement with Hume and his newspaper. Since Summerfield did not find any Squab columns after August of 1845, even though copies of the *Calcutta Star* were available for the rest of 1845 and all of 1846, presumably the letter published on 21 August of 1845 was Thackeray’s last in that paper. Likewise, the failure to find any Thackeray articles in the second half of 1843 strongly suggests that Thackeray’s writings, which began in early 1843, were interrupted – an interruption which I will subsequently confirm and explain. On the other hand, Thackeray letters may well have been published in July of 1845, bridging the gap between his June and August articles, since that month’s issues of the *Calcutta Star* were not available for Summerfield to examine.

Idler’s first letter to Squab is dated June 8, 1843. Hume’s introductory paragraph of this letter states: “There have now appeared three of your letters in the *Calcutta Star*. I recognized your style before I saw your signature, and should have written you last month to correspond directly with your humble servant, had I not desired to close out the first dozen of my letters to the esteemed friend with whom they began.”

In 1843 mail service from London to India was usually once a month; the three mail deliveries to Calcutta prior to June 8 arrived, respectively, on March 23, April 23, and May 23. Presumably Thackeray’s letters were published within a few days of their
receipt. Working backward, and looking at mail shipping records, these letters must have been written and sent from London by, respectively, February 6, March 4, and April 6. Summerfield was unable to recover copies of these columns, but Idler’s letter provides indirect confirmation that they were written and that they marked the initiation of Thackeray’s journalistic involvement with the *Calcutta Star*. In further support of this conclusion, Gordon Ray published an undated Thackeray letter, which he suggested was written in March of 1843, in which Thackeray wrote “I sent off a long letter yesterday to Hume and his Star.” However, Ray’s assertion that Thackeray submitted monthly letters for the next 12 months is demonstrably incorrect; in fact, apparently only these first three Squab letters were published in 1843. In his July 1843 Idler letter Hume acknowledged that Squab had not written “by the May Mail” (which left London on May 6th and arrived in Calcutta on June 14th). Hume’s letter contains a tongue-in-cheek admonishment of Thackeray:

> You have no right to excite expectations if you are not prepared to gratify them. If you wrote to order, I should find some apology for you . . . but this idea cannot be entertained of a gentleman of ample fortune; albeit, with a wife and nine children, a town and country home, two carriages and a seat in Parliament to keep up.

At this point of his life Thackeray, of course, was far closer to a “starving artist” than to “a gentleman of ample fortune.” He wrote *only* “to order,” i.e. for specific committed payments, and Hume’s farcical commentary suggests that uncertain payment prospects stilled Thackeray’s pen; remember, as of August of 1842 Hume had apparently still not repaid an old debt to Thackeray. Indeed, all the remaining Idler letters for calendar 1843
were addressed to people other than Thackeray. In further support of this understanding, note that even though the appropriate issues of the *Calcutta Star* were available for his examination, Summerfield was unable to identify any Squab letters dating from July – December 1843.

By late 1843 the relationship between Thackeray and Hume must have been repaired – or appropriate financial commitments or payments received – for Hume’s January 20, 1844 Idler letter is once again addressed to Squab. Hume announced that Squab’s “last letter, first I hope of another long series, was the most welcome new year’s gift it was my fortune to receive.” Indeed, “new year’s gift” is a well-selected descriptor, because a special mail leaving London on November 15, 1843, arrived in Calcutta on New Year’s Day! Accordingly, Thackeray must have written a mid-November letter which was presumably published in very early January. Unfortunately, Summerfield was unable to recover this letter because the National Library of Calcutta lacked the Jan-June 1844 issues of the *Calcutta Star*. Presumably Thackeray also wrote a letter for the next India mail which left on December 6, 1843 (and would have arrived in Calcutta and been published around January 19, 1844), since Hume’s next interactive response to Thackeray is dated February 18, and the January 6 London mail hadn’t arrived in Calcutta by February 18. Thackeray’s records do show that he continued this series and wrote letters to the *Calcutta Star* on January 3, 1844 and in early February. It is, however, unclear if Thackeray wrote letters in March, April, or May. Moreover, it is unlikely that he wrote a letter in June because Summerfield did not find a published Squab letter in the National Library of Calcutta July 1844 file of the *Calcutta Star*, and it is certain he did not write a letter in July. A Thackeray diary entry indicates he was
anticipating a payment in March from Hume which he did not get; this failure to receive payment may have led Thackeray to cease submitting articles.\textsuperscript{40} Idler continued to address his April, May, and June monthly letters to Squab, but, unlike his previous letters to Squab, the tone and content of these letters is impersonal and makes no mention of any prior Squab correspondence. The tone of Idler’s July letter to Squab is ambiguous as some comments might be interpreted as a response to an earlier Squab letter.

On August 5, 1844 Thackeray wrote that he was returning from Belgium to London partially “for the sake of” Hume’s letter.\textsuperscript{41} Thackeray’s diary for August 6, 1844 states that he had “found a letter from Hume with 10 £ only” – this would have covered about three letters. On August 7 Thackeray dispatched a letter to Hume which arrived in Calcutta on September 18, was published on September 21 and overtly acknowledged by Idler in his letter of October 16.\textsuperscript{42} Thackeray was in the Mediterranean from mid-August of 1844 until February of 1845; thus, it is not surprising that neither Idler’s letters nor the Calcutta Star files suggest that any Squab letters were published during that interval.

From late March to early July of 1845 (with corresponding publication dates of May – August), however, it appears that Thackeray made semimonthly contributions to the Calcutta Star. As indicated in table 4.2, Summerfield was able to recover many of these articles, with the noted exception of the missing July Calcutta Star files. Why Thackeray ceased his contributions remains a mystery, nor do we know if Idler wrote any letters to Squab after May of 1845. However, Thackeray wrote elsewhere in July of 1845 that he was being offered increasingly larger sums for his writings by London periodicals; hence, it may have been an economic decision that his time was better spent writing elsewhere that ended his contributions to the Calcutta Star.\textsuperscript{43}
The following table presents a reconstructed bibliography of Thackeray’s writings for the *Calcutta Star*. Estimated writing dates and publication dates are based on mail shipping records. Although only six letters have been retrieved to date, this analysis suggests that Thackeray wrote 15 to 18 letters between March of 1843 and July of 1845, with extended breaks in writing and publication primarily due either to payment issues between Hume and Thackeray or to Thackeray’s extended travel in the Mediterranean.

**Table 4.3 Chronology of Squab (Thackeray) *Calcutta Star* letters**

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<th>Written</th>
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<td>~3/25/1843</td>
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<td>~4/25/1843</td>
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<td>Confirmed by Hume “Idler” Letter reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Confirmed by Hume “Idler” letter reference</td>
</tr>
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<td>Confirmed by Thackeray Account Book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>~3/23/1844</td>
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4.3 Personalities and Personal Commentaries

The surviving Squab-Thackeray letters are friendly and collegial in tone, but they rarely address Idler-Hume in a personal manner, and they do not characterize their recipient. They do, however, characterize Thackeray, or at least the Squab persona that Thackeray adopted for this correspondence. For example, Thackeray starts the Calcutta Star letter written on August 7, 1844, and published on September 21, 1844, with a paragraph that concisely establishes Squab as socially involved, sarcastic, witty, artistic, indolence-loving, indulgent, urbane, humorous, and self-mocking:

The Club Arm-Chair will very soon find but few occupants – honourable members are pairing off in the most touching union. Steamers are carrying away people by shoals to Boulogne and Ostend; dinners are becoming scarce; the opera boxes are filled with the queerest dubious faces and figures – the common sort are rushing by myriads to Gravesend whither six-pence will carry you, and where shrimps, bad music, and the fresh air recreate the Cockney weary of the season. I don’t know where my next letter may be dated from – from Munich, probably, for a stay in this metropolis will be impossible: indeed, I failed you in last month’s packet, having nothing to write about from a quiet little German Bath whither I had betaken myself.

Squab effectively maintains this persona – which is, arguably, very much Thackeray’s own personality – throughout the correspondence. For example, later in this same letter Thackeray notes that “This is written at Greenwich” where “Mr. Derbyshire has received orders to frapper the brown hock ever so little;” a few paragraphs later Thackeray actually appends to a paragraph the italicized parenthetical sentence: “(Here enter
whitebait, water souchy, Etc. and the correspondence suddenly ceases.” and the reader envisions Squab interrupting his writing precisely at that point to greedily consume his dinner.

Idler-Hume’s letters, on the other hand, while never as expressive, nuanced or self-mocking as Thackeray’s, are much more passionate and personal, accordingly providing insight into Hume’s attitude toward and relationship with Thackeray and, indirectly, into Hume’s own personality. In his June 8, 1843 letter Hume writes:

I perceive, Squab, that you are the same wicked wag and professing Radical as ever; but in politics never was your particular delight: I doubt whether you would ever have thought of them unless the follies of party had attracted alike your satirical pencil and pen. I suspect you found more to laugh at in musty Toryism than in Whiggism, and the other two isms [Radicalism and Chartism] of party together, and that this decided you. . . . If I have measured you wrongly in politics, and your heart should be more in the cause than I believe, I am sorry we should both have made a mistake.

These comments suggest that Hume viewed Thackeray as a jokester, and as a *professing* but not entirely sincere Radical, despite his 1836 service as a foreign correspondent for his stepfather’s avowedly Radical newspaper, the Constitutional. Thackeray emerges from this correspondence as a political skeptic, while Hume defines himself as a true-believer Radical. To Hume, Toryism was inconceivable as a political home. Further, Hume wrote that “Whiggism has become so contemptible, that Radicalism is the only refuge for a reasonable man. Chartism and its five points must stand over for the present, and it will be a long future before the five are carried.”
Indeed, it is apparent that Thackeray’s missing letters must have poked fun at party disloyalty and political inconsistency. Some of the contents of Thackeray’s early letters can be inferred from the additional responsive comments in Hume’s June 3, 1844 letter:

“You are very severe upon him [Lord Brougham] . . . . “Then again you remind us of the Marquis of Londonderry, who threatens to quit the Tory camp because he didn’t get the Blues; hint that even republican Roebuck might perchance be black-balled at the Reform Club, had he again to pass the ordeal . . . and tell us that the faith of Radical Leader is to be questioned.”

Thackeray’s letters were not entirely political: in that same June 8, 1843 letter Hume writes that “You speak of a model [of an Aerial carriage] having flown; the papers mention nothing of the sort. Were you trying to get a rise out of us?” Indeed, on March 30, 1843, just in time for Thackeray’s *Calcutta Star* letter which must have been written the first week of April, the *Times* published an article entitled “The Aerial Steam Carriage,”44 describing the ideas of a Mr. Henson for a light-weight steam engine to be incorporated into an airplane. The project was in development; nothing had actually flown. The tone of the *Times* article is reserved but optimistic regarding eventual success; one wonders how the “wicked wag” Thackeray presented this story.

In his July 1843 letter Hume testifies to his appreciation of Thackeray’s skills as a writer. Complaining that Thackeray had not written by the May Mail, Hume wrote:

I am about to pay you a compliment, and you must listen to the truth which is tacked on to it. You know so much of what is going on, and write so well, that not to hear from you is a double disappointment. We lose many items of interesting
intelligence, and the pleasant vein in which they would have been told. Your
letters are most acceptable, and your silence most unpardonable.

In his January 20, 1844 letter Hume welcomed Thackeray’s renewed
correspondence and indirectly highlighted aspects of its contents through his responses.

Hume wrote:

May you live till your great English Revolution is realized, and write me
faithfully the particulars of its progress. I am afraid Clubs, in which you so much
luxuriate, will share the fate of so much of aristocracy as you would gladly see
swept away. . . . It surprises me that a backbone Radical can regard them without
horror . . . . You are a Radical, and you are eloquent in your denunciations of
cliques and coteries, and parties – you are all for the people, the industrious, hard-
working unwashed, and the intelligent, modest, moral middle class; so am I, but
my dear S. just tell me don’t you think there is something anti-liberal in your
Clubs, don’t you exclude a man because he is this, or is not the other. . . . You
may quarrel, my dear Squab, with this letter if you will, and growl over it in your
Club Arm-Chair, but the Mail, generally, you will find is interesting.

Hume’s response suggests that the Thackeray-Squab letter written in mid-
November of 1843 and published in early January of 1844 did indeed comment on the
desirability of a “great English Revolution” and was “eloquent in [its] denunciations of
cliques and coteries, and parties.” This would be an interesting and new aspect of
Thackeray’s public writings, as his published works – including those Squab letters that
have been recovered, all but one of which are from 1845 – generally maintain a tone of
ironic detachment and skepticism on issues of politics. (In a letter to his mother dated
November 24, 1843, Thackeray enthuses about the abolition of the Corn tariffs, suggesting that “It will be a great and magnificent peaceful Revolution – the government of the country will fall naturally into the hands of the middle classes as it should do: and the Lords and country gentlemen will – only have their due share.” Presumably these private attitudes bled into his Squab letter written approximately 10 days earlier.)

Further, in his letter Hume identifies and probes a dichotomy in Thackeray’s values. Thackeray was a professed Radical; in 1840 he wrote his mother that “when is the day to come when those 2 humbugs [“rascally Whigs & Tories”] are to disappear from among us? Don’t be astonished. I’m not a Chartist, only a republican. I would like to see all men equal, this bloated aristocracy blasted to the wings of all the winds.” At the same time, Thackeray seemed to value highly elitist club life and seek out aristocratic society. (Apparently in latter years Hume relaxed his own attitudes toward clubs, as he reportedly was one of the chief promoters of a Cosmopolitan Club in Calcutta which included both European and native members.)

Perhaps Idler’s attacks on Thackeray’s clubbish sympathies did indeed create a quarrel. Although no copy of Thackeray’s response letter(s) has yet come to light, Hume’s February 18, 1844 letter begins with an angry retort:

You tell me I am a Whig at heart. What can I have done to deserve this? If you mean that I am of that party it amounts to gross defamation: if you mean that my political principles are Whig, then I can only surmise something discreditable, for I never had the opportunity of discovering what Whig principles were. I told you in my last that I was, equally with yourself, for the people; the industrious, hard-working unwashed; and the intelligent, modest, moral middle class. Is that what
you understand by Whiggery? . . . Can you understand a man being in favour of the monarchical form of government – hereditary if you will, as saving a good deal of trouble, -- but opposed to the poisonous influences exercised by a class interest to the destruction of the principle of the thing professed, making that despotic in their hands which should be limited by the laws, in which laws the people should be heard. . . . I say, my dear Squab, if you understand there being a party who would for these days of popular instruction uphold the form of government under which we live, give reality to a fiction and substance to a shadow, and can find a generic name for that party, you may enroll me as soon as you please but if you love me call me not a Whig.

Without knowing the tenor of Thackeray’s comments which appear to have provoked Hume, we can nevertheless take from Hume’s response both the sincerity of his strongly-held anti-Whig and anti-party views as well as, perhaps, his personal tendency to take over-seriously what in all probability was gentle teasing. In any case, over the next several months Idler’s letters addressed to Squab are generally impersonal, and it is not clear if Thackeray was continuing his end of the correspondence.

Hume’s letter of October 16, 1844 takes a less political and more personal tack in its response to the Thackeray letter written on August 7 and published on September 21, as it begins with the comment “You began your last letter by telling us that all the London world was going out of town.” At one point in his letter Hume personally reaches out to Thackeray; after favorably noting the positive use by the new Governor General of India (Sir Henry Hardinge who has replaced Lord Ellenborough) of the phrase *diffusion of knowledge*, Hume asks Thackeray: Do we not well remember when these words were
words of contempt to the ear of a Tory?” This suggests a shared recollection, perhaps from their time together in the mid-1830s, of their distaste for Tory rejections of the value of education for lower classes.

Hume’s letter of May 10, 1845, once again responds to a Thackeray letter that is missing. Hume begins in what is likely a response to a jocular account by Thackeray of the end of his extended Mediterranean travels:

I received your letter by the last Mail with unfeigned pleasure: I highly approve of your determination to abandon travel and attend your Club, where everything that goes on in the world is picked up without the smallest possible fatigue, and at the cheapest possible rate. . . . pleasure parties to the Pyramids are talked of so familiarly that they threaten to become another plague in Egypt. . . . My dear Squab you have been there [the desert] lately; tell me – do you think there is any chance of the Bedouin taking heart and doing a bit of bold robbery with a touch of violence, say, carrying off a pretty girl or two on a fleet dromedary, and shooting some chivalrous fellow who might attempt a rescue. Unless something of this sort should occur, the interest of the Overland journey will speedily become a thing of the past.

4.4 England’s Game With the World

“The Great Game,” an expression attributed to Arthur Conolly (1807–1842), an officer of the British East India Company’s Sixth Bengal Light Cavalry, refers to Britain and Russia’s nineteenth century strategic rivalry in Central Asia. But to Thackeray, as he wrote in a Calcutta Star letter published on May 7, 1845, “the tremendous game
which England is playing with the world” referred more generally to English international policies; free trade; the enormous growth in wealth, commerce, communications, and power associated with the simultaneous industrial and commercial revolutions occurring in Britain; and the associated loss of established power in traditional figures “from the Pope down to the Squire.” The Squab-Idler letters were written during the 1841-1846 ministry of Robert Peel, a Tory Prime Minister who, against his party’s historic positions, repealed tariffs, promoted international trade and colonialism, and sought conciliation with Ireland. Peel’s Foreign Secretary, Lord Aberdeen, advocated peaceful resolution of international conflicts. Nevertheless, in Asia these years saw the disastrous English intervention in Afghanistan, the conclusion of the first Opium War with China, and further English conquests in India. Thackeray and Hume, from their respective vantage points in London and Calcutta, commented on the events of the day through their published letters. Accordingly, the Squab-Idler letters constitute a revealing cosmopolitan-colonial discourse.

Writing from the center of the growing British Empire, Thackeray had an overarching sense of the sweep of British power. Thackeray’s *Calcutta Star* description of a summer view of the Thames can also stand as a metaphoric representation of the seat of British power:

[I]f you could but behold the River Thames you would see a glorious sight. There is a bright sky and a terrible strong wind blowing. All the ships have their flags up; all the churches have theirs; there is [a] union jack floating from the top of the monument, and from the tower a prodigious royal standard, as big really as two [of] the corner turrets of the building.49
After returning from his several-month trip to the Mediterranean in 1845, Thackeray viewed London with an exuberant sense of English commercial power. His *Calcutta Star* essay written on March 24, 1845, exclaims:

“Each time a Londoner returns to his native place, after ever so brief an absence, he can’t but admire how his darling village has expanded . . . where there used to be poor little cabbage gardens and rows of cottages devoted to washerwomen; and in the city grand streets of palaces rising splendid out of the dingy ruins of old courts and allies . . . . The wonder is who fills the new houses; where does all the money come from? As soon as the Bayswater washer-woman and cabbage garden have disappeared, up springs a fine mansion, with plate-glass windows . . . There is something frightful almost in this energy of procreation, this prodigious efflorescence of London wealth; it always strikes a man, especially coming from the Continent, out of the sleepy regions of the dozing effete old world.

Thackeray, of course, knew very well where all the money was coming from. Writing expressively about London’s financial center, he enthused:

As for the city, the movement there is just as wonderful and startling. In those grand palaces which are daily springing up each garret is battled for by a hundred claimants, and let for a hundred guineas, there are offices on every floor, and every office contains the clerks, and the directors, and officers of undertakings, in which millions of money are wanted, found, spent, and beget more millions.

Despite his characteristic skepticism about human foibles and the prospects of personal improvement, Thackeray’s *Calcutta Star* essays offer a vision of national and international progress based on capitalism, commercial growth, and free trade:
[I]t is all in the cards of that tremendous game which England is playing with the world just now, and which is carrying us, who knows whither? to free trade – to abolition of nationalities and war in consequence – to universal equality, peace, republicanism; far in the distance as yet, no doubt, but each consequence, I do believe, resulting from its predecessor. We are covering Europe with railways, that we may sell our goods there: Peace, freedom, personal and national equality, for all Europe, are the results of our desire to sell our cotton and iron. A new epoch of man’s history begins; no more conquerors, glory, violence, now – it is all over with tyrants of every description from the Pope down to the Squire.

Thackeray’s optimism was not totally blind: he did foresee the collapsing of the railroad bubble: “The crash is to come at the end of May, the wise ones say,”50 and, as always with Thackeray, there is a self-mocking overtone in his writing which questions his own enthusiasm.

Hume, writing from Calcutta, lacked Thackeray’s perspective and certainly lacked Thackeray’s poetic prowess as a writer. Nevertheless, Hume apparently shared Thackeray’s vision of the advance of civilization through commercial development, although he expressed it in far more pedestrian and practical terms. Hume’s *Calcutta Star* essays are studded with generally optimistic comments on the prospects of specific commercial ventures: exporting Indian wheat to English markets, opening up the interior of India through the Steam Ferry Bridge Company or the Inland Steam Navigation Company, the importance of the new Bank of Bengal, a new crop of indigo, new steamships and improved mail and transport systems. Sometimes Hume’s “practical” commentaries reflect the self-serving interests and attitudes of his time and class but
clash with modern outlooks and sensibilities. For example, on several occasions Hume writes about the opium trade with China. He opines that “a great deal of nonsense has been written by some of your virtuous gentlemen at home on this subject [the opium trade]” and adds “what will the Opium anti-productionists say, when they hear that the last Government sale realized more than £280,000!”  

In another Calcutta Star letter Hume writes:

As for the Opium smuggling on the coast, with that we cannot interfere; the

Chinese must protect their own laws, but it is impossible for them to do so! Their

only course then is to admit it on duty, and to this I believe it must come in the end. It will be surely smuggled as it will be grown, and it would be grown even were this Government to attempt to prohibit it, which would be absurd.

Similarly, Hume wrote on several occasions about the so called “Cooly trade,” specifically the sponsored emigration of Indian workers to the Indian Ocean island of Mauritius to work as agricultural laborers. In his comments the workers are treated as commodities. In fact, Hume deplored the system under which “the Government pays a bounty of £7 per head on every labourer landed there” not because of any supposed mistreatment of the workers, but because the system “extracts as much as Rs. 40 from the planter for every labourer supplied to his estate.” Hume felt this unfairly rewarded middlemen agents, and considered it a defect of the system that the bonus to individual Indian workers “unnecessarily” increased from Rs. 8 to Rs. 15.

Thackeray’s Calcutta Star letters regularly comment on the policies of the British Government and the attitudes of the English populace with regard to France and Ireland. Thackeray’s views are representative of educated middle-class English thought of his
times, with an added dash of awareness of human self-deception and the ironically self-serving nature of human actions. Thus, although in his *Calcutta Star* letter of September 21, 1844 Thackeray recites, with real rancor, a list of English grievances against France – including the French publication of a pamphlet on how to attack English coastal towns, alleged French misbehaviors in Morocco and Tahiti, and the “charming ingenuity” of French newspapers in finding fault with Britain – he also ironically points out the inherent hypocrisy and self-serving nature of a likely English response:

> We may hear some day of Espartero\textsuperscript{54} returning to Spain on account of the intolerable tyranny of Narvaez in that country, and of our benevolent interference with the brutality of O’Donnel in the Havana. That is *our* way of showing our sympathy for oppressed nations and our hatred of French domination, -- we were so angry at the murder of Louis XVI that we took the Spanish colonies. The insolence of the French Directory was so unbearable that we seized Malta; and, depend on it, we shall be showing our amiable sympathies soon in some way. These rascals of Frenchmen! what an infernal quarrelsome spirit theirs is!

The Peel ministry wrestled with an Irish movement led by Daniel O’Connell for repeal of the Act of Union of 1800 between Ireland and England (that denied Ireland its own Parliament), and supported the Maynooth Grant, a partial funding by the British Government of an Irish institution to educate Roman Catholic priests. Thackeray’s *Calcutta Star* comments on these two controversial issues display a curious mixture of concern and contempt. Thackeray was sensitive to at least some of England’s injustices to Ireland; in his characteristically sarcastic manner he praised those pro-Maynooth politicians who “say to the poor Irish, we, the great victorious Englishmen who are
always right, were wrong in this case. Our Church will *not* fit you; we acknowledge it. . . . . You have a right to worship God your own way . . . we should not keep your Church revenues to pay our parsons.” At the same time, Thackeray regarded Ireland’s worst enemy to be not the English but the Irish themselves. He acknowledged Irish poverty to be a significant human tragedy, but seemed to consider it a national character flaw rather than a result of geopolitical circumstances; one of his essays contains a stinging and insensitive joke line about “the fertile and prosperous [Irish] districts of Connemara, where you see a pig now every 10 miles, and a beggar every three.” Thackeray never treats Irish politicians and the general Irish populace with much respect. When O’Connell was imprisoned, Thackeray satirized his firebrand reputation by writing “We have been trying to get up some sympathy for O’Connell in his durance, but the old gentleman has himself put an end to any tender feelings one might have had regarding him by his outrageous comfortableness and good humour.” Thackeray later painted O’Connell as a humbug, an insincere pawn of the Irish mob:

The King of the Irish paid us but a short visit. He was wondrous meek and crestfallen in demeanour; and studiously gentle in public manners. But the very day before he left Ireland he gave his subjects a speech about the massacre at Wexford by the brutal Saxons; and immolated those three hundred women whom he has so often slain in his speeches. . . . [B]y the way it is only in Ireland that he professes to be a temperance man. Among the Saxons he cracked his bottle with decent joviality.

Regarding the general Irish populace, Thackeray wrote: “In their dealings with this country, they are mad – these Irish.” They are not only blinded by “foolish savage
Anti-Englishism and taken in by O’Connell, they “applaud the cut-throat folly” of suggested military action against England with the supposed support of America and France. Further, the “obstinate refusal on the part of the Irish to be pacified” is due, in part, to the fact that it is the Tory leader, Peel, who is leading these reforms (rather than the Whigs). Irish leaders “have all taken . . . opportunities to disown, sneer at, spit upon, and otherwise mistreat, the new professor of the faith.” However, Thackeray reserves his greatest vehemence for his attack on the Anti-Catholic reaction in England to the Maynooth Grant. In early April of 1845 Thackeray wrote: “The no-popery cry is now roaring with considerable effect through the land, the tabernacles and the old women are aroused, and the parsons are loud in their denunciation of the scarlet abomination.” By late April Thackeray’s rhetoric becomes even stronger:

The pious of the country are in such a rage just now that in event of an election we might find a No-Popery Parliament sent back to govern us . . . [and] pervert the destinies of the world. Yes, the Protestantism of the country is up . . . the legion who amongst them make up the monstrous No-Popery Beast, quite as hideous and disgusting an animal as that Popery monster which they hate so.

An extended argument on the folly of basing political opinion on scripture follows this last quotation.

Thackeray is at his best in his characterizations of the major political figures of the era. Just as his *English Humourists of the Eighteenth Century* and *The Four Georges* bring to life and endow with personality the literary and political figures of England’s past, in these *Calcutta Star* letters, perhaps more than anywhere else in his writings, Thackeray brings to life figures such as O’Connell (see above), Peel, Disraeli, Macaulay,
the Duke of Wellington, and Prince Albert. As an example, Thackeray arguably raises political commentary to literature as he brilliantly employs metaphor to describe the parliamentary duels between Peel and Disraeli:

The Tory aristocracy, that might have raised a dire commotion, and would, had they been left in opposition, are bound over and delivered neck and heels, by their *Maroto* of a leader. They march out of their forts and strongholds one by one, the enemy occupying each as they retreat, and the free-trade flag flying there, and the poor fellows striking theirs as they disconsolately retreat. . . . He [Peel] is the best general that ever lived – for the enemy. [Only Disraeli] of all the Tory host, has the courage to look his leader in the face and call him ‘traitor.’ . . . He [Disraeli] delivers his sarcasms in a bland easy manner, watching his points, and, between each, as the house is roaring with delight and laughter, he wipes his nose meekly with his pocket handkerchief. The great Bull, piqued by this Israelitish Matador, is said to suffer most direfully under the punishment. He has turned savage, and tried to rip up his antagonist once or twice; but Moses Almaviva is over his head, and has planted a fresh dart in his buttock before the big animal has touched him: there sticks the dart quivering with its silken pennon, and all the boxes shout bravo Matador!66

Hume could never match the strength, elegance, or expressiveness of Thackeray’s prose, but in his own way his letters also embody a long-gone society. Whereas Thackeray wrote primarily about domestic British and European concerns, Hume, in turn, understandably spent the bulk of his letters dealing with Indian and Asian matters. Hume’s *bête noire* was Lord Ellenborough, the Tory Governor-General of India, whom
Hume criticized in virtually every one of his letters. The British East India Company was still in charge of British India, and under Ellenborough’s leadership that company was pursuing an expansion of its influence and geographical domain. In violation of established treaties, the Western Indian province of Sindh was conquered by the British under Sir Charles Napier in February of 1843. The Punjab was brought under full British control in 1846. Hume’s letters offer an interesting colonial perspective on these expansions of British India as he repeatedly commented on the first conquest and presciently anticipated the second. Despite his role as a colonist, he argued for moral distinctions regarding the expansion of British power. Regarding Sindh, in June of 1843 Hume wrote:

> The “licentious press” of our small colony has had little or nothing to say in palliation of this wholesale robbery . . . . The difficulty the Government will have to grapple with, independent of right or wrong, will be the violation of the non-aggression policy to which the triumphal songster [Ellenborough, who had adopted the slogan ‘Peace in India’] pledged himself. My own opinion is that on this occasion he did not change his mind, that he always intended to lay violent hands on Scinde, and that his flourish about natural limits was the tinkling charm of taking phrase . . .

In a July 1843 follow-up Calcutta Star essay Hume referred to the conquest of the Sindh as “the disgrace of having feloniously appropriated the property of others.” In May of 1844 he eloquently came back to this topic: “What a disgraceful figure England cuts in this affair, having seized a country beyond what she had declared the natural
boundary of her empire in India – and for that being without the shadow of a pretence of a justification . . . why not admit the wrong and repair it?“69

Hume had a different attitude regarding the Punjab. He wrote in June 1843 that: “Shere Sing [the Maharaja of the Punjab] is said to be in a precarious state, and on his death the succession will fall on a child of about ten years of age, during whose minority it is next to impossible internal peace should be preserved without some external power. That power must be British.” Shere Sing died in September of 1843, and in February of 1844 Hume noted that Ellenborough “had time to turn his attention . . . to the little boy in the Punjaub – which he is doing without affecting to have an eye in that direction” and added that “our interference is only a question of time.”70 By October of 1844 Hume had concluded that “The future of the Punjaub is one of those matters on which it would be idle to speculate, beyond saying that ere very long we shall be involved in its affairs, and that the probability is, our interference will end in apportioning the country into protected states, to lapse to the British Crown in the event of certain contingencies.”71 Apparently, Hume found explicit treaty violations offensive, but considered a need for (or a pretext of) restoring or imposing order a sufficient cause for conquest and annexation.

The British Afghan disasters of 1842 must still have been fresh in the memory of Anglo-Indians, and it is clear looking at Hume’s letters that there was continued debate regarding who was to blame for the destruction of the retreating British army. Hume praised those he saw as heroes – particularly Sir William Nott and Major Eldred Pottinger – and assigned villains.

Almost every Hume letter reports on unrest and fighting in one or more parts of India, and there are some reports of discontent in the army that anticipates the Great
Mutiny of 1847. In April of 1844 Hume wrestled with the question of what concessions should be made to disaffected troops who were refusing orders to go to Sindh. He concluded somewhat torturously that justifiable grievances should be remedied, but that mutiny should not be rewarded. In May of 1844 Hume argued that mutiny was invited “by the perfect immunity which has attended the infamous conduct of even the worst of the late refractory regiments.” He argued that leniency should be shown when the “unsoldierly conduct was limited to passive resistance, but that exemplary punishment should have been inflicted on those whose violent conduct betokened a spirit of disaffection.” Prophetically, Hume feared that a second mutiny might be more dreadful than the disaster in Afghanistan and “might leave us in considerable doubt of holding what we have long been accustomed to call our own.” In July of 1844 Hume reported on a regiment “that refused to take its pay because it was not what they had expected.” Reading these letters one senses both Hume’s deep concern and the inherent and long-running instability associated with depending on an army of sepoys.

The Squab – Idler correspondence was not entirely political and commercial and thus reached beyond “the tremendous game England was playing with the world.” Thackeray wrote about subjects as varied as local murderers, new club houses, Queen Victoria’s facial blemishes, Viennese dancers, the Queen’s costume ball, Dickens’s return to London, Prince Albert reviewing the Life Guards, Punch, and the world “beginning to come to an end” as people leave London in July. Hume, in his turn, wrote about the advancement of native Indians, colonial celebrations of the birthdays of the Royal family, balls and dances, the local Calcutta theater, the serialization of Martin Chuzzlewit in a local newspaper, military dinners, the Hindu Durga Puja festival, and the
horse races. The letters that Hume addressed to other European correspondents, though lacking the interaction with Thackeray, supply their own insights into Calcutta life. For example, an Idler letter dated July 5, 1842 and addressed to Alfred describes the financial benefits available to Englishmen coming out to Calcutta:

If he has got £100 worth of property in the world to convert it to cash – it will bring him out in a Liverpool ship and equip him besides. When he is here he has only to be introduced to any one of five or six gentlemen I will point out to him, and if he plays his cards well he will in a few months fall into some berth or another of say £20 per month. Don’t let him go mad with joy at the thought of £240 a year instead of £80. . . . he can have a house, four or five servants, a couple of horses and a buggy.  

Both the Squab and the Idler letters provide a sense of social immersion and create an indelible portrait of their respective cosmopolitan and colonial worlds.

Notes


4. Richard Pearson, *W.M. Thackeray and the Mediated Text: Writing for Periodicals in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 126, 139, 156, 158, 164. Pearson suggests that the articles recovered by Summerfield are “parodies of journalistic reporting” and “an alternative version of regular journalism.”

M. Thackeray (Charlottesville, University Press of Virginia, 1992), 38. Shillingsburg states that “contributions [to the Calcutta Star] have yet to be traced, listed and reprinted” without reference to Summerfield’s prior tracking and reprinting of six of those articles.

6. [James Hume], *Letters to Friends at Home from June, 1842 to May, 1843* (Calcutta: Star Press, 1843); [James Hume], *Letters to Friends at Home from June, 1843 to May, 1844* (Calcutta: Star Press, 1844); [James Hume], *Letters to Friends at Home from June, 1844 to May, 1845* (Calcutta: Star Press, 1845). The second and third of these volumes are available electronically on *Google Books*.


11. Thackeray and Hume were in every sense contemporaries; they were born within three years of each other (in 1811 and 1808, respectively), both married in 1836, and they died a year apart in 1863 and 1862.


17. Ray, *Letters*, 2:73; Ray’s incorrect comment that “Hume went out to India in 1842” is apparently based on this letter.


28. See endnote 2 above.


33. See endnote 5.


36. See endnote 27.


39. Thackeray’s Calcutta Star letter written on August 7, 1844, contains the comment “I failed you in last month’s packet, having nothing to write about from a quiet little German Bath whither I had betaken myself.” See Summerfield, Letters, 207.


54. General Baldomero Espartero was a regent who temporarily governed Spain in the early 1840s. Espartero was supported by England but opposed by most European powers. Summerfield, *Letters*, 206.
65. Rafael Maroto was a Spanish general who was notorious for switching sides during the civil war in Spain in the 1830s. See Francis Duncan, *The English in Spain; or, The Story of the War of Succession Between 1834 and 1840* (London: John Murray, 1877), 244.
Chapter 5

“I could turn an honest penny”: The Chronicler of the Paris and London Art Exhibitions

During the first decade of the Victorian era Thackeray popularized serious painting and shaped middle-class artistic taste through review essays on contemporary art exhibitions in periodicals such as *Fraser’s Magazine* and in newspapers such as the *Times* and the *Morning Chronicle*. In her seminal study of the commercial and cultural aspects of Victorian art collecting, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class: Money and the Making of Cultural Identity*, Dianne Macleod noted that “Victorian art cannot be understood independently of its relationship to money.”¹ Indeed, in this chapter I demonstrate that what applies to the root must necessarily apply to the branch: the nature and pattern of Thackeray’s art reviews was heavily shaped by journalistic economic forces, and the contents of those reviews had class-specific cultural impacts and financial consequences.

Thackeray’s magazine-based art reviews, written in the guise and comedic persona of a failed artist, Michael Angelo Titmarsh, are easily traceable and identifiable. Indeed, these Thackeray art essays have remained at the intersection of literature and art history as they are regularly referenced and discussed in current-day studies of early Victorian art. Jeremy Mass, for example, begins his scholarly survey *Victorian Painters* by noting “I have quoted no less freely from critics like Thackeray and Henry James than from Ruskin.”² Mass further describes Thackeray as an “exuberant but very sensible art
critic in the ‘forties’ and proceeds to report Thackeray’s views on historical painting, public taste, and several artists of the period. The index of David Robinson’s *Sir Charles Eastlake and the Victorian Art World* contains 22 page references to Thackeray’s art criticism\(^3\) -- a total that is second only to the number of references allocated to Ruskin. Martin Hardie’s definitive multi-volume study of *Water-colour Painting in Britain* likewise contains numerous approving references to Thackeray’s critical judgments regarding late Romantic and early Victorian water colorists.\(^4\) In his *Victorian Painting* Christopher Wood, a leading authority on Victorian painting, repeatedly refers to the artistic judgments and comments of Thackeray, whom Wood calls “that supreme observer of the early Victorians.”\(^5\) In his *Painting the Past: The Victorian Painter and British History* Roy Strong quotes from Thackeray’s reviews and declares them “revealing on the attitude of both critics and public.”\(^6\) John Olmsted chose to highlight comments by Thackeray and to include Thackeray’s “Titmarsh” reviews in his collection, *Victorian Painting Essays and Reviews: Volume One, 1832-1848.*

In addition to these general works, scholars such as Helene Roberts, Judith Fisher, and Elizabeth Prettejohn have examined Thackeray’s art criticism in greater depth. Roberts concluded that “Of all the English art critics of the first half of the nineteenth century Thackeray can be compared only with Hazlitt, Haydon, and Ruskin in combining a knowledge of the technical aspects of art, a grounding in the aesthetic theories of his day, and an unusual command of the English language. Alone among art critics he displayed a playful wit and an ebullient sense of fun.”\(^7\) Fisher asserted that “Thackeray’s knowledge of the art world combined with his training and versatility with the pen to make Thackeray the most readable and knowledgeable (despite some of his suspect
judgments) of the art critics writing for popular journals.” And Prettejohn noted that Thackeray had written “a sophisticated series of Royal Academy reviews” and called Thackeray the most eloquent proponent of “sympathy” as a criterion for art evaluation.9

While the above comments demonstrate the continuing interest in and importance of Thackeray’s “Titmarsh” art essays, prior investigators have largely seized upon and discussed epigrammatic statements in individual essays. Significantly, no one has yet considered the essays as a comprehensive body of work and examined the journalistic and financial pressures which influenced their production and informed their content. Moreover, Thackeray also wrote many art reviews which were published anonymously in London’s leading newspapers. These reviews are as much his legacy and contribution as his Titmarsh articles and in some respects may reflect more sincerely held opinions. Yet many of these newspaper reviews have never been properly attributed, nor have their critical contents or cultural significance been analyzed. And lastly, the specific economic and social roles of Thackeray’s art criticism in shaping attitudes and influencing Victorian middle-class identity are largely unexplored. Accordingly, in this chapter I will (1) explicate the origin and nature of Thackeray’s essays on art as the products of a working journalist; (2) attribute an additional newspaper review (in addition to the attributions made in chapter 3); (3) characterize the artistic critical values espoused in these newspaper articles and in the “Titmarsh” essays in light of prior assessments of Thackeray’s art criticism; and (4) show how these reviews reflected their societal drivers and contributed to the early Victorian conversation on art.

Table 5.1 lists Thackeray’s known art exhibition reviews, including six attributions established in this dissertation.
Table 5.1 Thackeray’s reviews of Paris and London art exhibitions

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>“Titmarsh” Essays / Reviews</th>
<th>Anonymous Essays / Reviews</th>
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<tr>
<td>“Picture Gossip,” <em>Fraser’s Magazine</em>, June 1845</td>
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* = new attribution made in this dissertation

5.1 The Journalist Art Critic

As an erstwhile serious student of painting, a competent illustrator, and an inveterate sketcher, Thackeray understood artists and their craft and certainly possessed a well defined sense of aesthetics. Nevertheless, unlike, for example, Ruskin, Thackeray was a journalist reporting on artistic exhibitions, not an academician or a theoretician. Thackeray never wrote articles on art theory or books expounding his artistic principles.
Instead, his art criticism was published either in newspapers or in other non-specialist periodicals. Before the advent of his major novels Thackeray depended on journalism for his living; consequently, he viewed the major Paris and London art exhibitions as opportunities to “turn an honest penny.” His selection of topic and venue, his authorial approach and method of argumentation, his attitudes and admonitions, and the various constraints imposed on his writings are all those of a popular press journalist.

Scholars of Thackeray’s art criticism, such as Roberts, Fisher, and Prettejohn, have tended to focus on specific comments and artistic judgments drawn from Thackeray’s individual (and often highly quotable) “Titmarsh” articles. As a result, the journalistic drivers and patterns which shaped the overall body of work of the art critic journalist have received less attention, and Thackeray’s anonymous newspaper art criticism has been comparatively neglected. As shown in table 5.2 (on page 205), much of Thackeray’s art criticism consisted of reviews of the major annual contemporary art exhibitions – the March Salon exhibition at the Louvre in Paris, the late March Society of British Artists Exhibition in London, the April London Exhibitions of the Old Water Colour Society and the New Water Colour Society, and the May London Exhibition of the Royal Academy.

I contend that the financially driven Thackeray reviewed these exhibitions as a matter of course whenever the constraints of time and geography permitted him to do so. His art writings focused on exhibition reviews because exhibitions were newsworthy events and, accordingly, he could place articles in newspapers or magazines reporting the cultural events of the day. He rarely, if ever, missed an opportunity to write about an exhibition. Indeed, as detailed later in this paper, by investigating exhibition “holes” in
Thackeray’s known review writings I have uncovered six additional articles which circumstantial evidence strongly suggests were written by Thackeray.

5.1.1 A Narrative Chronology

Thackeray’s career as an independent journalist began in earnest with the failure in mid 1837 of *The Constitutional*, the newspaper for which he was the Paris correspondent, and his resulting free-lance writing of literary reviews for both *The Times* and *Fraser’s Magazine*. Thackeray’s first subsequent opportunity to write about art occurred in March of 1838, when he was in Paris for a month, and as an art devotee visited the Salon. Because he had informed James Fraser early in March that he would “strike for higher wages,” it is not surprising that he chose to publish his 1838 Salon review in *The Times* (instead of *Fraser’s Magazine*) with the anonymous designation, “From a Correspondent.” This first review complies with the standards one would associate with the *Times*: although sometimes ironically humorous, the article is not flamboyant, and it addresses perceived differences between contemporary English and French painting, with the English patriotically receiving the laurels: “We have a dozen painters as good as their 12 best; and that our second-class artists are far superior.”

When Thackeray returned to London later that spring his relations with James Fraser had healed and he consequently reviewed the Royal Academy exhibition for *Fraser’s Magazine*. Fraser’s was, of course, an outrageous, anything-goes periodical, as compared to the conservative *Times*. Presumably stimulated by his prior success using Charles James Yellowplush, an orthographically challenged footman, as a voice for his literary reviews, Thackeray created Michael Angelo Titmarsh, a flamboyant and boastful
failed artist, as a humorous “author” for his *Fraser’s Magazine* art reviews. In the persona of Titmarsh Thackeray interposed various exaggerated fictional exploits and complaints – including bouts of intoxication, musings regarding the “unfair” disregard of his paintings, fights with fictional editors, and fake bits of pretentious learned essays – with serious commentary on contemporary artists and their works. Occasional over-the-top rhetorical flourishes added extra spice – these articles were designed to be entertaining and provocative.

Thackeray spent the spring art seasons of 1839 and 1840 in London; consequently, each year he wrote combined reviews of the four London art exhibitions for *Fraser’s*, but was unable to review the Parisian Salon. He did, however, visit Paris late in 1839 and reported in *Fraser’s Magazine* on exhibitions at the Louvre, the Luxembourg, and the Ecole des Beaux Arts in an essay entitled “On the French School of Painting: with appropriate Anecdotes, Illustrations, and Philosophical Disquisitions.” This discursive essay, which was subsequently incorporated into Thackeray’s *Paris Sketch Book*, would never have met the focus and page limitation constraints imposed by a daily newspaper. Seeking treatment abroad for his mentally ill wife, Thackeray spent the first half of 1841 in Paris, enabling him to continue his series of *Fraser’s Magazine* Titmarsh art reviews with a review of the Paris Salon, but he could not review the London art exhibitions that year.

In 1842 Thackeray shifted his journalistic focus away from *Fraser’s Magazine* (in 1840 and 1841 he published 11 and 10 articles, respectively, in *Fraser’s*, but in 1842 he published only 4 articles in that periodical). It is clear that Thackeray was unhappy with his rate of pay from *Fraser’s*, and he accordingly spent much of the early part of the year
writing for the *Foreign Quarterly Review* or for *Punch*, both of which paid him at a higher rate than did *Fraser’s*. Additionally, his friend Harrison Ainsworth had started a literary magazine and solicited submissions from Thackeray, and Thackeray sought to replace his old connection with the *Times* (which ended at the end of 1840) with a connection with the *Morning Chronicle*. In any event, when Thackeray was in Paris in March of 1842, he once again reviewed the Salon, and this time, returning to the rhetorical style and themes he used in 1838 for the *Times*, he placed an anonymous review in the *Morning Chronicle*. Moreover, later that spring after Thackeray returned to London, he wrote a Titmarsh review of the London art exhibitions for *Ainsworth’s Magazine*. Ainsworth, however, allotted Thackeray only 4 pages for this review – in 1840 *Fraser’s* had given him 27 pages to cover the same exhibitions! Thus the style of the writing, and the extensiveness of the comments, changed from that of previous years because of journalistic limitations. The “Exhibition Gossip” review in *Ainsworth’s Magazine*, for example, stressed the more prestigious Royal Academy exhibition and only briefly mentioned the Society of British Artists and Water Colour Exhibitions because of lack of space.

In March of 1843 Thackeray agreed to write about fine arts for a new weekly newspaper, *The Pictorial Times*, and in a series of four articles reviewed the Spring London exhibitions for that periodical. As newspapers placed more emphasis on “reportage” and less on “entertainment” than did periodicals such as *Fraser’s Magazine* or *Ainsworth’s Magazine*, the style of these articles conformed to Thackeray’s previous newspaper art reviews for the *Times* and the *Morning Chronicle*. Each begins with a gently humorous and ironic paragraph of introduction and avoids the Titmarshian
exploits and hyperbolic rhetoric which were central to his magazine art reviews. However, by this time the “Titmarsh” brand name obviously had become valuable, and the last three reviews in the *Pictorial Times* were signed “Michael Angelo Titmarsh” even though these articles do not internally reflect the character of or invoke that persona.

By March of 1844 Thackeray had revitalized his connection with *Fraser’s Magazine* and had also established a regular contributory relationship with *The Morning Chronicle*. Accordingly, he was able to “double up” and anonymously review the water color exhibitions and the Royal Academy for that daily newspaper and simultaneously publish a combined review in the voice of Titmarsh for *Fraser’s Magazine*. In the spring of 1845 Thackeray’s busy workload – he was not only writing for *Punch* and the *Morning Chronicle*, but also acting as a sub-editor at *The Examiner*, may have prevented him from reviewing the March and April London art exhibitions – or perhaps he did write reviews which to date have not been attributed to him – but he did review the Royal Academy exhibition for *Fraser’s Magazine*. In 1846 he reviewed all the London art exhibitions in his congenial and humorous anonymous voice for *The Morning Chronicle*. By this time, however, Thackeray’s involvement in *Fraser’s Magazine* was diminishing – he could make so much more money writing for other periodicals – and he no longer reviewed art exhibitions for *Fraser’s*.

The serialization of *Vanity Fair* began in 1847, and under the pressure of producing 32-page monthly numbers – and with the financial relief provided by the 60 pounds per month coming from that serialization – there is no evidence that Thackeray wrote art reviews that year. In the spring of 1848, however, once again seeking additional money, he reviewed at least the New Water Color Society Exhibition for *The Morning*
Chronicle. But the emerging novelist’s days as a financially driven reviewer of art exhibitions were coming to an end. By January of 1851 Thackeray, again in France and looking at an exhibition of pictures at the Palais Royal, wrote: "I went to see it [the exhibition]: wondering whether I could turn an honest penny by criticising the same. But I find I've nothing to say about pictures: a pretty landscape or two pleased me: no statues did: some great big historical pictures bored me -- This is a poor account of a Paris Exhibition isn't it?" Thackeray’s pattern of exhibition coverage is shown in table 5.2.

Table 5.2 Thackeray’s art reviews by year and exhibition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Periodical (publication date)</th>
<th>Salon</th>
<th>SBA</th>
<th>OWCS</th>
<th>NWCS</th>
<th>RA</th>
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<tr>
<td>1838</td>
<td><em>Times</em> (4/5); <em>Fraser’s Magazine</em> (6/1)</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td></td>
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<td><em>Fraser’s Magazine</em> (6/1)</td>
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<td><em>Fraser’s Magazine</em> (6/1, 7/1)</td>
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<tr>
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<td><em>Fraser’s Magazine</em> (7/1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1842</td>
<td><em>Morning Chronicle</em> (4/1); <em>Ainsworth’s Mag.</em> (6/1)</td>
<td></td>
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<td>✔️</td>
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<tr>
<td>1843</td>
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<td></td>
<td>✔️</td>
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<td>✔️</td>
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<tr>
<td>1844</td>
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<td>✔️</td>
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<tr>
<td>1845</td>
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<td>1846</td>
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<tr>
<td>1848</td>
<td><em>Morning Chronicle</em> (4/17)</td>
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<td>✔️</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Bold Face / Red: new attribution; Blue: prior attribution; Pink: minor comments
Salon = Paris Salon; SBA = Society of British Artists; OWCS = Old Water-Colour Society; NWCS = New Water-Colour Society; RA = Royal Academy
5.1.2 A New Attribution

In chapter 3 of this dissertation I newly attributed five *Morning Chronicle* art reviews to Thackeray; in this section I suggest that a previously unattributed art review in *The Pictorial Times* is also by Thackeray.

“The Suffolk Street Exhibition,” *The Pictorial Times*, April 1, 1843. In his 1893 reminisces Henry Vizetelly recalled his 1843 involvement with the startup of *The Pictorial Times*, a weekly paper intended to compete with *The Illustrated London News*. One of the first people Vizetelly brought on staff was Thackeray as “art critic and literary reviewer.” Vizetelly writes that “Thackeray’s contributions to the ‘Pictorial Times’ comprised some letters on Art Unions, signed Michael Angelo Titmarsh, notices of the Academy and Water-colour exhibitions; and reviews of Macaulay’s newly collected ‘Essays,’ and Disraeli’s ‘Coningsby.’” The Macaulay and Disraeli literary reviews were published anonymously; however, there was some controversy regarding each review which evidently remained in Vizetelly’s memory. And like the Art Union letters, the notices of the Academy and Water-colour exhibitions were signed “Titmarsh,” thereby verifying or perhaps stimulating Vizetelly’s recollection.

An examination of a run of the *Pictorial Times*, however, reveals an additional contemporaneous, but unsigned, art exhibition review, the April 1, 1843 review of the exhibition of the Society of British Artists (SBA). Thackeray routinely reviewed all four spring contemporary art exhibitions in London, and it is atypical that, having already been brought on as the “art critic” for the *Pictorial Times* at an early date (he had a submission in the first issue, on 18 March 1843), he would have skipped this first exhibition and reviewed the other three. Further, none of the other identified staff
members of the *Pictorial Times* are known to have ever been art exhibition reviewers or to have had the appropriate background or skills, and that periodical did not publish any art reviews after Thackeray left its staff. These facts suggest that Thackeray may, indeed, have written this unattributed review. The Society of British Artists review conformed to the then standard newspaper practice of anonymous reviews; it may only be after this first review was published that it occurred to the editors that the Titmarsh name had sufficient recognition value to attach it to subsequent reviews. Alternatively, since the SBA review was published in the same issue as an art union letter signed by Titmarsh, it may have been regarded as inappropriate to have two Titmarsh articles in the same issue.

A detailed examination of the SBA review article supports these speculations. If this article was not written by Thackeray, it was written by someone deliberately aping Thackeray’s style and promulgating his artistic values, and doing both quite successfully. The review starts with extended jokes – a standard Thackeray ploy – in this case suggesting that Italian boys should be massacred to prevent their overuse as models in painting, and that Venice should likewise be destroyed or that artists visiting Venice should be “kept in perpetual darkness” to prevent the creation of yet another Venetian scene. Following the pattern of all of Thackeray’s SBA art exhibition reviews, the first artist discussed is Frederick Hurlstone, and his work is praised while the dark coloring of his paintings is simultaneously deplored. The works of Charles Baxter, Henry Boddington, Henry O’Neil, and James Holland are mentioned favorably as they are in other Thackeray reviews of the SBA. The reviewer comments on Woolmer’s use of extreme color in the same fashion as does the reviewer in an 1846 *Morning Chronicle* article which I have previously attributed to Thackeray. The SBA review includes a
teasing reference to a then famous murderer, [William] Burke – the same villain Thackeray facetiously named as one of Becky Sharp’s attorneys in *Vanity Fair* – as well as a reference to one of Thackeray’s heroes, Hogarth. A consistent call in Thackeray’s art criticism, that artists should “ask nature for a model,” is repeated. And critical comment is continually interwoven with humor, in a language which I regard as typical of Thackeray, particularly in the narrative (quoted later in this chapter) suggested to the reviewer by a series of paintings by Prentis. In this last narrative, for example, the reviewer refers to a baked suckling pig in a painting as “purring from under a dish cover in an inviting way;” this expressive use of metaphor is atypical of most reviews and reviewers of the time but is fully consistent in concept and in language with what one would expect from Thackeray. Although I cannot claim that this attribution is definitive, I do propose that this article was likely written by Thackeray.

### 5.3 Characterizing Thackeray’s Art Criticism

Formal assessments of Thackeray’s art criticism began as early as 1884 when W. E. Church opined that Thackeray was “as nobly fearless as Hazlitt, and as zealous as Ruskin to promote a taste for everything pure and simple.” Church argued that Thackeray’s art criticism for *Fraser’s Magazine* was “throughout pervaded by a savour of the writer’s fine instinct for art of the highest kind, and by traces of his sagacious, common-sense insight.” In 1885 Ephraim Young asserted that Thackeray’s Titmarsh essays “show, even more than the later and acknowledged works, the real bent of his genius and the unrepressed feelings of his heart.” Without claiming that he matched Ruskin’s analytic ability, Young does credit Thackeray with a “keen analytic sense” as
well as an ability to go to the heart of a picture and capture the artist’s insight and intent.¹⁸

More recently, Helene Roberts and Judith Fisher have each sought to assess Thackeray’s art criticism. In general their specific judgments as to the schools and types of art and artists Thackeray favored or disfavored are further supported by the newly attributed articles; accordingly, Roberts’s and Fisher’s detailed assessments will not be repeated here.

In “’The Sentiment of Reality’: Thackeray’s Art Criticism,” Roberts moves beyond specific judgments to characterize Thackeray’s art criticism as expressing three major concerns: (1) the technical excellence of the painting, (2) the correspondence of the painting to the real world, and (3) its ability to evoke sentimental responses. She further opines approvingly that, unlike many of his critical colleagues, Thackeray did not “weave little stories around the paintings he reviewed.”¹⁹ In the following I interrogate each of these conclusions with particular consideration given to Thackeray’s less examined non-Titmarsh reviews.

According to Roberts, Victorian mid-century art critics based technical excellence on “composition, design, coloring, and expression, as well as breadth, finish, handling, execution, and similar technical designations.”²⁰ Roberts argues that Thackeray frequently commented on the technical competence of painters and their painting, but did not consider technical execution as an overriding factor in determining a painting’s success. Elizabeth Prettejohn perhaps shifted the balance point of technical excellence as an evaluative consideration even further,²¹ centering her analysis on a Thackeray quotation that “These pictures [by Wilkie and by Eastlake] come straight to the heart, and
then all criticism and calculation vanishes at once, – for the artist has attained his great end, which is, to strike far deeper than the sight; and we have no business to quarrel about defects in form and colour, which are but little parts of the great painter’s skill.”

Reviewing Thackeray’s anonymous art reviews in general, and the new attributions in particular, I find that Roberts’s arguments regarding Thackeray’s concern for technical excellence are largely supported, but that the quotation reported by Prettejohn is hyperbolic. Indeed, there are many places in which Thackeray sharply criticizes execution and places great emphasis on “defects in form and colour.” In his 1838 review of the Salon, for example, he declaims “the great want of colour in the French pictures” and particularly criticizes one artist because “his colours are so irretrievably dirty.” In comparison, in his 1842 review of the Salon Thackeray argues that Charles Moench’s painting “deserves praise, as well as for its good drawing, as for the truth of its colouring.” In his many reviews of Society of British Artists exhibitions Thackeray never failed to fault Hurlstone for the “dirtiness” of his colors. Even when Thackeray is attracted by the dramatic story inherent in Prentis’s *The Spunge*, he nevertheless underscores the painting’s technical problems stating “it will strike no one for its merit as a painting.” Even Charles Leslie, a Thackeray favorite, is criticized in an 1844 article for a painting whose colour “strikes us as heavy, with a disagreeable predominance of black and red.” In the May 10, 1844 review of the Royal Academy, the execution of paintings that Thackeray greatly admires is praised: Mulready’s “The Whistonian Controversy,” is wonderful in point of finish and execution;” Frith’s picture from “The Vicar of Wakefield” “displays much careful and clever painting; Duncan’s “Scotch Martyrdom” is “very finely painted and conceived; and the figures in Dyce’s
King Joash “are finely drawn and painted.” In that same article works that Thackeray considers to be inexpertly executed draw his censure: Lauder’s *Claverhouse* is “theatrical in composition and absurdly incorrect in costume;” Shee’s *Mr. Hallain* is a “weak and flimsy caricature of the classical head; the colour of [Middleton’s] full length [portrait] is very fine, [but] the drawing and details are not sufficiently complete.” In 1848 Thackeray praises Wehnert for a painting of *Murillo and his Pupils*, commenting that the power and depth of tone in this picture are extraordinary . . . all the accessories are painted with excellent care and precision, and with a richness of color quite remarkable . . . the back figures are excellent in dramatic propriety, and the drawing is quite a model for careful and dexterous painting. The contrasts between the gray morning-light and the candle-light are most cleverly managed, and a hundred small details of the picture painted with the greatest skill and truth. Surely these comments testify to Thackeray’s abiding concern for execution. In some pictures he might tolerate limitations of execution if other merits were present, but quality of execution was an ever-present significant critical concern.

Likewise, Robert’s third contention, that Thackeray valued art for its ability to evoke sentimental responses, appears to be so well supported that it is essentially pointless to cite examples – they are everywhere in every Thackeray essay on art.

With regard to correspondence to nature, Roberts reports Thackeray’s frequently repeated injunction to artists to copy nature, suggests that Thackeray’s “interpretation of nature was a literal one,” and cites an 1839 Thackeray criticism of Turner as evidence that Thackeray could not “rise to encompass Turner’s vision of the cosmic essence of
nature.” Using a term that Thackeray himself applied to Dickens’s writings, Roberts summarizes Thackeray’s critical aesthetic as favoring a “sentiment of reality” which includes “a greater commitment to photographic verisimilitude.” Indeed, Thackeray did often urge artists to draw inspiration from nature. In May of 1843, for example, he praised artists of the Royal Academy because “They look at nature very hard, and match her with the best of their eyes and ability.” In April of 1844 he similarly praised watercolor painters: “The painters do not generally attempt what is called the highest species of art, and content themselves with depicting nature as they find her, and trusting to the poetry and charms of the scenes which they copy, rather that to their own power of invention and representing ideal beauty.”

At the same time, there are numerous counter examples that subvert Roberts’s contention regarding Thackeray’s presumed mandate that art reflect the real world. For example, in a May 8, 1844 Morning Chronicle review Thackeray praises a painting by William Etty for its “studied obscurity (which leads the eye to suggest forms, and fill them in where wanting).” Studied obscurity is not photographic verisimilitude; instead, Thackeray appears to assert a more sophisticated artistic aesthetic which privileges art that allows a viewer to construct meaning. Indeed, moving further away from a limited concept of natural reality, Thackeray goes on to praise Etty’s Hesperus and his Daughters three sing about the golden tree for its mystical notion, its indistinct colors, and its “figures dancing around in a haze and film, as one might see them in a dream of the enchanted place.” In the same article Thackeray praises a painting by Daniel Maclise for transcending reality, creating a “statuesque composition – a parade or tableaux – rather than all action.” Thackeray views as a positive that the figures in the
painting “do not look much more alive than the mysterious stone serpents which form the basis of the couch on which the lady reposes” and adds approvingly that this gives “the picture its fitting supernatural look. It is a masque, not a play, and the painter has well felt and rendered, as we think, the unearthly nature of the scene.”

As another example, consider the following extract from Thackeray’s comments on George Cattermole’s *Forest Scene*:

A lonely knight winds his way through a wood of great, unheard-of trees, from the boughs of which “darkness looks downwards with a hundred eyes.” Nobody, not the most extensive traveler, can say he has ever seen trees like these. Their trunks are more gnarled and twisted than olives, their leaves are larger than the leaf of a cabbage, they look so old that mammoths must have rested under them, and their branches must have tossed in the storms of ten thousand equinoxes; in a word, they are entirely impossible trees. But so are the giants of Ariosto, and so is *Caliban* – impossible; we give them, however, a poetic credence. A great artist has a right to these gigantic extra creations; and we stipulate for Mr. Cattermole’s privilege as a poet, and against a number of critics, such as there infallibly will be, and who will object to this tremendous supernatural timber. No person can see such trees as these, certainly, in any wood in England; but suppose the painter’s traveler to be a knight riding through a fairy wood, and you are instantly reconciled to the picture. Nor is the thought alone strange and beautiful: the picture is a marvel of manual skill. Like Paganini’s “single string,” the painter’s brush performs wonders of strength, harmony, and rapidity. His work looks as if it
were dashed in whilst the artist labored under a sort of poetic fury. The effect of
the whole is somber and melancholy.³⁴

Surely these views do not reflect the limited aesthetic range suggested by the
phrase “sentiment of reality.” Indeed, I argue that an inverted phrase, “reality of
sentiment,” more accurately reflects Thackeray’s artistic values. Like many Victorians,
Thackeray valued sincerity of feeling. As Judith Fisher has argued, Thackeray believed
that “a false painting was one which expressed insincere emotion.”³⁵ In the age-old
debate regarding art and nature, I argue that Thackeray recognized that the “real” in art
was not limited to the “real” in nature, but instead insisted that artistic reality had to be
represented with integrity.

Similarly, I believe that Roberts’s assertion that Thackeray could not “rise to
encompass Turner’s vision of the cosmic essence of nature,” while perhaps being a fair
representation of the Thackeray of 1839, is insufficiently balanced as a final judgment. (I
likewise suggest that Laura Fasick’s assertion that Thackeray found Turner to be
“alienating” and “unfriendly” is excessive.³⁶) Consider, for example, Turner’s 1844 Rain,
Speed, Steam, which Christopher Wood argued “met with a generally hostile and
uncomprehending response.”³⁷ Yet Thackeray in his May 8, 1844 Morning Chronicle
review exuberantly praised this painting in which “men appear with vermillion shadows,
and trees of salmon colour; … engine fires blaze where no one ever saw them blaze; and
whirlwinds, cataracts, rainbows, are spattered over the incomprehensible canvass” as
being “most insane and most magnificent” and extolled Turner for using these
“wonderful effects” to successfully create “a train bearing down at the spectator.”³⁸ Or
consider Thackeray’s June 1845 comments on Turner’s The Whale Ship. Thackeray
Thackeray adds,

Look at the latter [*The Whale Ship*] for a little time, and it begins to affect you too, -- to mesmerize you. It is revealed to you; and, as it is said in the East, the magicians make children see the sultans, carpet-bearers, tents, &c., in a spot of ink in their hands; so the magician, Joseph Mallard, makes you see what he likes on a board, that to the first view is merely dabbed over with occasionally streaks of yellow, and flicked here and there with vermilion. The vermilion blotches become little boats full of harpooners and gondolas, with a deal of music going on on board. That is not a smear of purple you see yonder, but a beautiful whale, whose tail has just slapped a half-dozen whale-boats into perdition; and as for
what you fancied to be a few zig-zag lines splattered on the canvass at hap-hazard, look! they turn out to be a ship with all her sails; the captain and his crew are clearly visible in the ship’s bows; and you may distinctly see the oil-casks getting ready under the superintendence of that man with the red whiskers and the cast in his eye; who is, of course, the chief mate. In a word, I say that Turner is a great and awful mystery to me.  

It is difficult to know when Thackeray is speaking tongue-in-cheek, and the above comments can obviously be read several ways. Despite Thackeray’s declaration that Turner is a mystery to him, his review has, in fact, captured both the essence and “magic” of Turner’s painting – and its disorienting yet powerful impact on Victorian viewers – rather well, and that the operative summary words are “great” and “awful” – the last being (perhaps!) intended in the positive sense of full of awe. Overall, I suggest that these comments do not demonstrate a lack of sensitivity on Thackeray’s part to the “wonderful effects” Turner has achieved or to the “essence of nature” revealed in Turner’s paintings.

Lastly, Roberts specifically praised Thackeray for not associating narrative values with art, for not inventing little narratives as suggested by his interpretations of pictures. This assertion is somewhat surprising, as the 1830s and 1840s were the high water mark of English narrative painting. As defined by Raymond Lister in his book, *Victorian Narrative Painting*, a narrative painting is a picture of a story, idea, or anecdote, represented by people in more or less contemporary dress, against a more or less contemporary setting. Usually it had a moral import, sometimes it was comic, often it was a puzzle, … more often still it was extremely pathetic. And almost without exception it was painted with a degree of
representational realism as impressive as that of a set-piece from Madame
Tussaud’s waxwork exhibition. . . . The narrative picture’s raison d’être is
anecdote; it is, in fact, visual literature, and many of its themes were derived from
literary sources.\(^4^0\)

In fact, I find numerous exceptions to Roberts’s observation in Thackeray’s
Titmarsh essays as well as in his anonymous newspaper reviews. This issue is worth
some emphasis; as described in the next section of this chapter, the growth of narrative
painting was a key element in the linkage between Victorian literature and Victorian art,
and the consequent expansion of British art to the middle class. Thackeray was a central
participant in the popularization of narrative art and his role in that regard should not be
obscured.

Consider, for example, Thackeray’s 1843 *Pictorial Times* commentary on *A
Sponge Defined* by Prentis:

Then there is a drama in four acts by Mr. Prentis, which, though it will strike no
one for its merit as a painting, will amuse every one who looks at it, and calls
forth a great deal of delighted attention. Act I. Spunge is seen with an umbrella
watching a baked suckling pig that is just brought to a friend’s house: the pig
purr\* at him from under the tin dish-cover in the most inviting way. Act II.
Spunge follows the pig into the house, and light on his friends just as Betsy has
removed the tin dish-cover, and Mr. Jones is going to carve. Will Mr. Spunge sit
down and dine? Act III. Of course he will; and you see him drinking wine with
Mrs. Jones (the rascal has filled his glass up to the very brim), and he has just sent
Betsy with his plate for some more pig. Act IV. It is night; or morning rather. The
two candles and the whiskey bottle, which may be seen on the side-board in Act III., are now on the dinner-table. The candles are burned out, the whiskey is gone, Mr. Spunge is drunk, and still talking, old Jones quite wearied and frightened, Mrs. Jones in the arm-chair, dead asleep. Betsy is asleep too in the kitchen, but you can’t see her; and this is the end of the history, which is not told with a Hogarthian skill of pencil, but with a rugged Hogarthian humour.\textsuperscript{41}

As a second example, consider the following extract from Thackeray’s 1843 \textit{Pictorial Times} review of Frank Stone’s \textit{Last Appeal}:

Mr. Stone’s ‘Last Appeal’ is beautiful. It is evidently the finish of the history of the two young people who are to be seen in the Water-Colour Exhibition. There the girl is smiling and pleased, and there is some hope still for the pale, earnest young man who loves her with all his might. But between the two pictures, between Pall Mall and Trafalgar Column, sad changes have occurred. The young woman has met a big life-guardsman, probably, who has quite changed her views of things; and you see that the last appeal is made without any hope for the appellant. The girl hides away her pretty face, and we see that all is over. She likes the poor fellow well enough, but it is only as a brother; her heart is with the life-guardsman, who is strutting down the lane at this moment, with his laced cap on one ear, cutting the buttercups’ heads off with his rattan cane. The whole story is told, without, alas! the possibility of a mistake, and the young fellow in the grey stockings has nothing to do but to jump down the well, at the side of which he has been making his last appeal.\textsuperscript{42}

As a third representative example, consider Thackeray’s 1844 \textit{Morning Chronicle}
commentary on another of Stone’s paintings, *The course of true love never did run smooth*:

Mr. Stone has one of his little life touching domestic dramas, with mottoes from Horace and Shakspeare, to the effect that true love never did run smooth. This is a case of double cross-purposes. Two lads are in love with one young woman. He who loves hopelessly is looking on at his callous charmer, who is entertained in conversation by the successful swain; while, on the contrary, there sits by them a second pensive young girl, who is breaking her heart for the hopeless lover first named. This story, which is very difficult to tell in print, is most delightfully and clearly narrated by the painter, whose figures are full of sentimental beauty and refined grace. The picture is a very beautiful and delicately painted one.\(^4\)

As this type of painting was intended to invoke a narrative response in its viewers, surely it was not amiss for reviewers like Thackeray to interpret the story proffered by this “visual literature.” I submit that his reviews may, in fact, have encouraged readers to make their own “readings” of narrative paintings, and thereby contributed to the validation of narrative art and narrative art analysis. Narrative art may be an uncertain aesthetic in twenty-first-century art criticism, but in the context of the early Victorian era – and with regard to the enduring cultural and literary values of these reviews – Thackeray’s narrative interpretations are of obvious significance.

Moving from Helene Roberts’ assessments of Thackeray’s art criticism to the analyses offered by Judith Fisher, one finds that Fisher centers her discussion of Thackeray’s artistic criticism on Thackeray’s “rejection of the heroic sublime in favor of mediocre or beautiful art.” In this context she associates the term “mediocre” with
“genre, landscape, and narrative painting suitable for the family parlour and living room.” Fisher draws much of the support for her interpretation of Thackeray’s aesthetic of the mediocre from an 1839 Titmarsh article in *Fraser’s Magazine* (subsequently incorporated into Thackeray’s *Paris Sketch Book*) in which Thackeray enthuses about the “pleasures of [artistic] mediocrity” and further adds that “I think in my heart I am fonder of pretty third-rate pictures than I am of your great thundering first-rates.” Much of Fisher’s analysis of Thackeray’s aesthetics and its connection with Victorian morality and emerging middle-class values is unassailable. Fisher makes a strong case for her contention that Thackeray viewed art not just as visual preferences, but as moral choices. Likewise, Fisher’s assessment regarding the importance of sentiment in Thackeray’s critical artistic judgment is fully supported both by his Titmarsh articles and by the newly attributed anonymous newspaper art reviews.

However, Fisher’s psychoanalytic probing of Thackeray’s inner motivations is more problematic. Fisher argues that “there is an unspoken desire for safety” in Thackeray’s endorsement of the mediocre, that he feared reaching beyond the mediocre to the sublime because that risked the release of not only false but more importantly unsafe emotions. Fisher further opines that Thackeray believed that “sublime art … tempted viewers to indulge in dangerous passions which would disrupt their social and domestic responsibilities.” While it is impossible to determine definitively the sensibility that an author has left “unspoken” or “unwritten,” I suggest that there is another reasonable interpretation of the underlying nature of Thackeray’s artistic aesthetic that implies more of a displacement than of a rejection of the concept of the sublime, and that endorses rather than avoids strong emotion. I further suggest that to
Thackeray the real risk of reaching for the sublime was not in releasing strong sentiment, but rather in falling short, overreaching, and becoming pretentious.

The concept “sublime” was, of course, shaped for Victorians by Edmund Burke’s famous treatise, *On the Sublime*. Burke argued that sublimity, a state “of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling,” is associated with an underlying sense of “pain and danger.” Burke further argued that this transcendent strong emotion is inspired by dramatic greatness of dimension, overwhelming power or colossal object. Indeed, while the word “sublime” is often used sardonically in Thackeray’s writings to ridicule the pretentious, Thackeray does use the word positively in a semi-Burkean context to pay tribute to what he regards as the real thing. In his “Sketches after English Landscape Painters” Thackeray calls Turner’s “Fighting Temeraire” and “Star Ship sublime” – because of the “stupendous skill and genius of this astonishing master.” In an 1844 *Morning Chronicle* review Thackeray argues that Thomas Creswick’s picture of a waterfall, *A Mountain Torrent*, was “something much more sublime than any sham poetry.” In the June 1840 “A Pictorial Rhapsody” Thackeray praises an Eastlake painting as “more sublime than Pythian Apollos.” In that same article, however, after dismissing Burke’s essay as being of little practical use, Thackeray asserts that “the secret of the sublime” rests on knowing “what sentiment is, and what it is not.”

Thackeray’s writings suggest an aesthetic that reflects less a fear of strong emotion and more a remapping of the source of Burke’s “pain and danger” from large-scale nature to small-scale humanity. To Thackeray, sublimity signified pureness and strength (not weakness) of sentiment. In his *The Four Georges* Thackeray calls the life of Southey “sublime in its simplicity, its energy, its honor, its affection” – in other words, in
its sentiment. In *English Humourists of the Eighteenth Century* Thackeray similarly declares the last lines of Pope’s *Dunciad* “the very greatest height which his sublime art has attained” precisely because these lines proffer “the brightest ardour, the loftiest assertion of truth.” These references to the sublime do not reflect a fear of strong emotion – rather, they invoke and endorse strong emotion when the sentiment is innately honest. And the source of transcendent strong emotion does not necessarily lie only in nature; in his recent study of the Victorian romantic sublime, Stephen Hancock intriguingly invokes Thackeray’s works to argue that, in addition to its Burkean flavoring, for Victorians “the sublime pushes as well towards a transcendent depth and interiority connected to the ultimate moral authority associated with the middle-class ideal of womanhood.” Although a defense of this idea is beyond the scope of this dissertation, I suggest that a strong sense of, if you will, “pain and danger” (and paradoxically commingled reverence and mockery) associated with an elusive, unrealizable, and idealized domestic femininity runs through Thackeray’s writings.

Returning to Judith Fisher’s analysis, her labeling of Thackeray as possessing an artistic “aesthetic of the mediocre,” while correctly capturing part of Thackeray’s artistic sensibility and simultaneously having the virtue of taking Thackeray at his own word, in today’s world also carries an unfortunate negative nuance. Similarly, I disagree with Laura Fascik’s assertion that Thackeray “called upon the painter to renounce both emotional and technical complexity in favor of the easily comprehensible and likeable.” As I have shown, although Thackeray could sometimes tolerate technical weaknesses in a painting, he strongly critiqued problems in finish, coloring, drawing, or grouping and favored technical excellence over mediocre execution. Likewise, exploring the various
nuances and shades of complex and ambiguous emotion that might be associated with a painting were his special delight. And a rejection of “high” art historical painting in favor of domestic painting is a value judgment which, in the twenty-first century, at least, would generally not be considered an endorsement of mediocrity over excellence. Despite Titmarsh-Thackeray’s own hyperbolic endorsement of “mediocrity,” I believe the body of Thackeray’s art criticism is better described today not in terms of mediocrity but rather as supporting an aesthetic of “reality of sentiment” which is, perhaps, sometimes associated with a “domestic” sublimity.

5.4 The Early Victorian Conversation on Art

Taken as a body of work, Thackeray’s art exhibition reviews constitute a repository of comment on early Victorian art. These reviews collectively include critiques of over 250 artists and specific comments on over 600 paintings. All the prominent artists of the period – and many artists that are now lost in obscurity – are critiqued. Thackeray addressed every aspect of the 1830s-1840s art scene, including historic paintings, literary paintings, domestic paintings, animal paintings, religious paintings, landscapes, portraits, miniatures, and sculptures. Prominent institutions of the time, such as the Royal Academy, come to life in these essays. Many of Thackeray’s aesthetic judgments were also supported by other art critics of his era. (However, there was no uniformity of opinion. Other popular reviewers did take positions which fundamentally disagreed with Thackeray’s view – such as arguing for the superiority of historical art versus narrative or genre art, or making negative generalizations regarding artists that Thackeray generally reviewed favorably.56) Thackeray’s reviews, therefore, are more notable for their general
knowledgeability and sophistication, and their extraordinary expressiveness and readability, than for fundamental leaps of critical insight.

In her article “Aesthetic Value and the Professionalization of Victorian Art Criticism 1837-78,” Prettejohn persuasively argues that early Victorian art criticism was less about a “universalized conception of aesthetic value” and more about “historically-specific cultural values.” In particular, Prettejohn notes that art criticism of that era stressed the importance of “sympathy”—a picture’s emotional impact on its viewer—as a middle class artistic and cultural value. Additionally, Prettejohn recognizes that there was also a “commercial function of art criticism in the early Victorian period,” namely advancing the interests and patronage of contemporary British artists. Although Prettejohn positions Thackeray as a leading proponent of sympathy, she does not delineate the cultural or commercial impacts of Thackeray’s art criticism. Accordingly, in the following I explore some of the ways in which Thackeray’s periodical art criticism both expressed and shaped British middle-class identity and influenced the business of British art.

To understand the impact of Thackeray’s art reviews one must appreciate the transition occurring in the British art world in the 1830s and 1840s. Following the precepts and values of Joshua Reynolds, late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century British art still had an aristocratic orientation: old masters were highly valued, large-scale portrayals of historic or mythological scenes were considered “high art,” much contemporary art was associated with portraiture of aristocrats, and art viewing and art collection were still largely elitist endeavors. As Britain slowly recovered its economic health after its post-Napoleonic war hangover, however, art started to become
middle class. In her *Art and the Victorian Middle-Class: Money and the Making of Cultural Identity*, Dianne Macleod has noted that “Middle-class patrons of art were swept to the fore by the current of change in the 1830s and 1840s: political legislation which enfranchised male property owners, social reform which gave rise to the cult of self-improvement, and a demotic press which advocated wider class participation in the arts.”

These new collectors, typically industrial or commercial magnates like John Sheepshanks and Robert Vernon, wished to affirm “a middle class identity that was distinct from the leisured existence of the aristocracy.” Accordingly, they tended to reject the old “high art” and instead bought contemporary art by living artists “which embellished, morally reinforced, or sometimes even parodied the prevailing concept of daily life.”

Although Macleod designates these new patrons as “middle class” – and many of them did have humble origins – in actuality most serious collectors were quite wealthy. Indeed, paintings from leading painters fetched high prices: it was not unusual for patrons to spend several hundred guineas or more for a single complex oil painting from a “name” artist. As one might expect, to guide their purchases these collectors “often sought the advice of professionals . . . . Many employed artists as their agents.”

Confirmed art devotees also turned their attention to the specialist art periodical press, such as the *Art Union Monthly Journal* (founded in 1839), or to prestigious scholarly advocates for specific painters, such as Ruskin, who first argued passionately for Turner and later supported the Pre-Raphaelites.

It is my contention, however, that these patrons and their advisors were not Thackeray’s primary target audience. There is no evidence that Thackeray ever acted as
an advisor for rich art patrons, and Thackeray never wrote for specialist art periodicals or wrote specialist art treatises. Instead, Thackeray wrote for mass-market periodicals; his prototypical reader was not the very wealthy already committed collector, but rather the perhaps peripherally interested or even initially uninterested middle-class reader who would, in all probability, never own or purchase a major painting, and who might or might not have ever gone to an art exhibition. I suspect that the great majority of Thackeray’s readers never picked up a volume of Ruskin’s *Modern Painters*.

Nevertheless, buoyed by technical advances, in the 1840s this average middle-class reader became a significant secondary participant in the world of early Victorian art. As Christopher Wood has written,

> In the 1820’s the steel plate was invented, which made it possible to print several thousand copies from one plate. By the 1840s large size engravings of artists’ work began to be published separately and, by this means, a whole secondary market was opened up. Landseer sold *The Monarch of the Glen* for 88 guineas, but received 500 guineas for the engraving rights. Frith’s *Derby Day* sold for £1,500, but he retained the engraving rights himself, from which he raised a further £2,250.62

These engravings were not only separately sold at prices that were well within the comfort level of most middle-class readers, during exhibition season they were also often emblazoned on the pages of periodicals such as the *Illustrated London News*. Engravings brought serious art to the Victorian lower middle class; their opinions and attitudes toward art now mattered, and their buying power now had commercial significance.
In addition, Thackeray regularly reviewed not only the prestigious Royal Academy exhibitions but also wrote about and was an advocate for the two major annual water color exhibitions; water color paintings were far more affordable, often selling for less than ten pounds. Lastly, even a one-shilling attendance fee – a fee which presumably many middle-class readers could afford – becomes a significant financial factor in the world of Victorian art when as many as 350,000 viewers attended a Royal Academy exhibition. I contend that it is through his influence on the artistically uncommitted – the newspaper reader who was a prospective engraving or water color purchaser or exhibit attendee – that Thackeray shaped attitudes toward art and inculcated artistic appreciation as part of Victorian identity.

Indeed, the most important cultural function of Thackeray’s art criticism may have been largely independent of his specific critical opinions: Thackeray’s reviews attracted the interest of readers to the art world, made art appear familiar and inclusive, and presented art as a middle-class value. Thackeray once wrote regarding his articles in the *Morning Chronicle* that “The Chronicle articles are very well liked – they relieve the dullness of that estimable paper.” And, indeed, Thackeray’s art articles are still fun to read. Some other reviewers of the time engage in sarcasm, but their comments are often hammer blows rather than targeted scalpel probes, and are thus rarely entertaining. Indeed, Thackeray alone among the popular newspaper art reviewers of the period leavened his reviews with humor and expression, thereby making them interesting to read independent of one’s specific interest in art. Although Thackeray’s anonymous newspaper art reviews do not – and, given their venue probably could not – match the
flamboyant humor of his Titmarsh articles, most of them retain a distinguishing humorous satiric literary style.

As examples of Thackeray’s humor outside of the Titmarsh persona consider the following: In satirizing what he saw as the overdone nature of the 1838 Salon and the overabundance of French would-be painters, Thackeray asserted that the gallery in which the exhibit was held was “huge enough . . . to contain all the good pictures that ever have been or shall be painted” and claimed that “there are 3,000 Titians and Michael Angelos in the capital alone.” In his review of the 1842 Salon Thackeray continued in the same vein, commenting on “self-styled artists who . . . prefer spoiling canvas in an attic to getting themselves a living as tailors or shoemakers” and who exit the exhibit “enraged at the non-appreciation of their genius.” In his 1843 review of the Society of British Artists exhibition Thackeray, in Swiftian fashion, advocates a massacre of all Italian boys and Malays because of their overuse as models by painters, and further criticizes the darkness of certain painters’ palettes by suggesting that they should instead use pitch plaster “in the manner employed by Burke”; Burke and Hare were celebrated murderers who in 1828 suffocated strangers in pitch plaster. In his 1846 review of the Society of British Artists annual exhibition Thackeray complains about the crowding by noting that no critic can “inspect a masterpiece through the tails of a gentleman’s coat” and further takes a dig at Benjamin Haydon, whose large historical paintings he regarded as pretentious and not true to life, by noting “the absence of Mr. Haydon, whose great (or certainly large) works sometimes decorate this gallery.” That same year Thackeray “compliments” Nash’s water color *Lincoln Inn Hall* by exclaiming it was “as accurate as a catalogue and as poetical as a Court-guide” and dismisses Jenkins’s *Homini Salvator* –
which he felt grammatically should have been *Hominum Salvator* – stating that the picture “is as great a mistake as the Latin.”

In 1848 Thackeray opines regarding Haghe’s *Monks singing Matins* that “how much better they would be in bed, snoring naturally, than practicing those nasal tunes in the dreary, shivering chauntry.”

Many newspaper art reviews of the period are relatively devoid of expression; sentences are straightforward and to the point, there is little use of metaphor or simile, and the descriptive language regarding a painting is normally either crisply approving or denunciatory. Up or down comments are rarely nuanced. Some reviews are simply a compilation of brief listings of major paintings, typically organized by and itemized under the exhibition-assigned painting number, with short positive or negative score card type comments and with little explanation. Thackeray’s reviews, on the other hand, were typically discursive narratives with highly expressive language. Consider just two of many, many examples: (1) Thackeray wrote that historical paintings, which he deplored, were “pieces of canvass from 12 to 30 feet long, representing for the most part personages that never existed . . . performing actions that never occurred, and dressed in costumes that they never could have worn.”

(2) Regarding one of the literary genre painter Charles Leslie’s paintings inspired by Shakespeare, Thackeray wrote that

Leslie is the only man in this country who translates Shakespeare into form and colour. Old Shallow and Sir Hugh, Slender and his man Simple, pretty Ann Page and the Merry Wives of Windsor, are here joking with the fat knight; who, with a monstrous gravity and profound brazen humour, is narrating some tales of his feats with the wild Prince and Poins. Master Brooke is offering a tankard to Master Slender, who will not drink, forsooth.
I submit that Thackeray’s entertaining and expressive use of language made his reviews more attractive and more readable to art neophytes than those of many of his peers.

Unlike many art critics writing in the popular press, Thackeray was very knowledgeable regarding the techniques and schools of painting. Indeed, in an 1840 review Thackeray decried persons calling themselves critics who, in daily, weekly, monthly prints, protrude their nonsense upon the town. What are these men? Are they educated to be painters? No! Have they a taste for painting? No! I know of newspapers in this town, gentlemen, who send their reporters indifferently to a police-office or a
picture-gallery, and expect them to describe Correggio or a fire in Fleet Street with equal fidelity.\textsuperscript{75}

In his own reviews Thackeray did not eschew technical comments, but he also did not overuse them; most criticism is expressed in layman’s language. Human interest points at the galleries, regarding crowding or the behaviors or misbehaviors of visitors and exhibitors, are engagingly brought into the review and become additional reasons to visit the exhibition – not to go is to be left out. Further, in his recurring discussions Thackeray presents the major artists of the day as if they were known friends and shared acquaintances (which, for the most part, they were to him) – thereby creating a sense of connection between the reader, the reviewer, and the artist. In a small way these artists, like characters in Thackeray’s later novels, acquire personality and become familiar (and perhaps collectable) brand name entities for readers.

Thackeray was not a “house” shill – there were many contemporary artists and styles of art which he repeatedly attacked – yet he clearly was overall a proponent of the British art establishment of his day and many of its leading artists. A number of the contemporary art reviews in the popular press include rather sweeping negative condemnations of exhibitions, which might “demonstrate” the supposedly superior taste of the reviewer, but which would hardly increase reader interest in viewing the exhibition or purchasing works of art; Thackeray never makes such assertions. The works of most of the leading English artists of the first decade of Victorian art – men such as William Mulready, Charles Leslie, Daniel Maclise, William Etty, and Edwin Landseer – typically received favorable Thackeray reviews. Moreover, his reviews often stressed the “British” nature of the subjects or artistry of British artists, indirectly invoking patriotism to create
a “view British” or “buy British” mood among his readers, and making art appreciation an affirmative British middle-class value. Consider, for example, his repeated comments on the British realistic landscape painters Thomas Creswick and Frederick Lee: “I wish one day you could see the hearty, fresh English landscapes of Lee and Creswick, where you can almost see the dew on the fresh grass, and trace the ripple of the water, and the whispering in the foliage of the cool, wholesome wind”;76 “Mr. Creswick’s rock and river scenes are as beautiful and faithful to nature as ever. The Summer’s Afternoon . . . is, indeed, a noble specimen of the English school”;77 “Mr. Lee’s scenes of rural England give the spectator almost the same feeling of pleasure . . . . Mr. Creswick has, perhaps, an equal appreciation of English landscape poetry.”78

Figure 5.3 Thomas Creswick - Summer's Afternoon – 1844. Photo © Victoria and Albert Museum, London
These reviews praise and conflate the “Englishness” of the rural countryside, the artists, and their techniques.

Frequently Thackeray favorably compares British art and artists to foreign, especially French, art. In his review of the Paris Salon in 1838 Thackeray wrote: “We have a dozen painters as good as their 12 best; and our second-class artists are far superior;” asserted that “in portrait painting we maintain our superiority;” and deplored the “great want of colour in the French pictures” and the “absence of that peculiar effect which is the charm of our school.” In 1842 Thackeray wrote “having seen the two exhibitions [Paris Salon and London Royal Academy] ours is the better this year,” and added approvingly that “English painters, for the most part, content themselves with doing no more than they can.” In 1843 Thackeray declared “I think every succeeding year shows progress in the English school of painter”; that same year he praised William Etty by suggesting that “Many lovers of Titian and Rubens will admit that here is an English painter who almost rivals them in his original way” and that Creswick “is an English Claude [Lorrain].” In 1844 Thackeray declared that “The English artists [of religious art] have no call to be afraid of their French brethren.” In 1846 Thackeray argued that “art has made undeniable progress in England” and further prophesized that “Mr. Danby’s *Dawn of the Morning* may take rank with Claude Lorrain.” Perhaps Thackeray’s words have a “protesting too much” feel about them, but there is no doubt that he sought to raise the perceived worth of English contemporary art and art appreciation in the minds of his readers. On the one occasion where Thackeray suggested the superiority of French art, it was in the context of an appeal for better treatment of English artists and better accommodations for art viewing: Thackeray explained that “it
must be remembered that the painter’s trade in France is a very good one; better appreciated, better understood, and generally far better paid [than in England],” and that English artists and art students had to make do with “a national gallery that resembles a moderate-sized gin-shop.”

As scholars such as Roberts and Fisher have previously noted, Thackeray promulgates emerging Victorian values in his art criticism, favoring art which suits the Victorian temperament and fits the Victorian home. Not surprisingly, sexual prudery and religious convention both intrude into his criticism. Thus, while he admired the coloring of William Etty, he sometimes expressed discomfort regarding Etty’s nude female figures: “here is a picture of a sleepy nymph, most richly painted; but tipsy looking, coarse, and so naked, as to be unfit for appearance among respectable people at an exhibition.”

His comment regarding the religious paintings of Charles Eastlake, that “the Christian school . . . teaches that love is the most beautiful of all things, and the first and highest element of beauty in art,” might make uncomfortable reading for a present-day secular art critic. As others have noted, Thackeray frequently urged artists to draw inspiration from nature and praised rural landscapes, perhaps thereby expressing a nostalgic Victorian yearning of urbanized society for an idealized countryside.

Thackeray was a strong advocate of genre painting, i.e., small-scale, contemporary and domestic painting of scenes of every day life. He wrote:

Bread and butter can be digested by every man; whereas Prometheus on his rock, or Orestes in his strait-waistcoat, or Hector dragged behind Achilles’ car, or Britannia, guarded by Religion and Neptune, welcoming General Tomkins in the Temple of Glory – the ancient, heroic, allegorical subjects – can be supposed
deeply to interest very few of the inhabitants of this city or kingdom. We have
wisely given up pretending that we were interested in such, and confess a
partiality for more simple and homely themes.\textsuperscript{88}

As Christopher Wood has noted, “the whole tendency of Victorian art was towards
smaller, more intimate and anecdotal pictures, suitable for the middle-class drawing
room.”\textsuperscript{89} Thus Thackeray’s “bread and butter” paintings became the mainstream of
Victorian art.

Christopher Wood has further noted that Victorian pictures were more widely
discussed or written about than paintings are today. In partial explanation, Wood
comments that “Above all it was a literary society. The average businessman in his
suburban villa was likely to be well-read, and much of Victorian art is literary in
inspiration. Never in art history have art and literature gone so hand-in-hand.”\textsuperscript{90} Wood
further argues that “It was these pictures [anecdotal narrative paintings, often based on
scenes from novels] that first taught the Victorian public to equate painting with
literature, taught them that a picture was something to be read – a novel in a rectangle.”\textsuperscript{91}

Indeed, a strong case can be made that this linkage of art to an already popular literature
helped establish art as a middle-class value. And Thackeray, through his review
commentaries on narrative art as previously discussed in this chapter, and through his
many comments on art inspired by great literary works, was at the center of this
movement.

Pictures drawn from or inspired by the works of Goldsmith, Shakespeare,
Cervantes, Smollet, and other literary luminaries filled art exhibitions in the 1830s and
1840s. Thackeray could and did poke fun at the superabundance of paintings inspired by
The Vicar of Wakefield and other favorite novels; however, his generally positive and often loving reviews of these paintings presumably contributed to their popularity.

Consider, for example, Thackeray’s comments on Charles Leslie’s Scene from “Roderick Random”:

And what words are enough to convey the delight and admiration which everyone must feel before Mr. Leslie’s noble pictures? His large picture from “Roderick Random,” where the young gawky squire is receiving the congratulations of the lawyers, on coming into the entire inheritance, is better than Hogarth, for it is carried up to a higher and more delicate point of humour. The characters are wonderful for their truth and absence of exaggeration. Each acts his part in the most admirable unconscious way – there is no attempt at a pose or a tableau, as in almost all pictures of figures where the actors are grouping themselves with an eye to the public, and, as it were, attitudinizing for our applause. In this noble picture everybody is busied, and perfectly naturally, with the scene, at which the spectator is admitted to look. Every single performer is a character and a comedy in himself, the minutiae of which are somehow revealed to the looker-on by each countenance; and you acknowledge the effect of the whole by a reply of laughter. It is that charming naïveté and unconsciousness which makes Sancho so delightfully ludicrous: you have a ridiculous sympathy, and jocular regard for the honest humourist; and Mr. Leslie (who is the finest commentator upon Cervantes, and on some parts of Shakspeare that ever lived) has seized and understood this point of their art perfectly; he ties you to all these grotesque ways by a certain lurking human kindness; and there is always felt
(though not intended) in the midst of the fun a feeling of friendliness and beauty. His is surely the perfection of pictorial comedy. What would you have more than pathos, beauty, wit, wonderful aptness and ingenuity, and the most perfect and generous good-breeding?92

The 1840s were, in England, the “Hungry 40s,” and some artists, most notably Charles Redgrave, followed by William Powell Frith, turned to pictures of social activism. Redgrave’s pictures of poor governesses and seamstresses received considerable favorable attention for their illumination of the plight of the poor.93 But Thackeray – despite being a proponent of “sympathy,” a self-declared radical, and a professed admirer of Hood’s “The Song of the Shirt,” – did not go along with general opinion. He felt that Redgrave’s paintings were maudlin – an opinion he occasionally had about some of Dickens’s writings. Thackeray’s 1844 Morning Chronicle review of Redgrave’s Sempstress is representative of his reaction to such works:

Mr. Redgrave’s Sempstress (227) and Wedding Morning – the Departure (238), will be relished by all lovers of bourgeois pathos. In the former the poor sempstress has been at work all night long, the candle is nearly out, the grey morning is breaking over the opposite house, where another poor sempstress is very likely working too; it is a carefully painted picture of extreme physical discomfort. But Mr. Redgrave has flung into his canvas none of that terror and dreadful humour which the great poet who wrote the song gave to his lyric; and only has succeeded in exciting (as we think) a very feeble sentiment of pity for a sickly-looking young needlewoman.94
Indeed, the sarcasm positively drips off the page as Thackeray mercilessly critiques Redgrave’s 1845 picture, *The Governess*:

![Image of Richard Redgrave's painting, The Governess](image)

**Figure 5.4** Richard Redgrave - *The Governess* – 1845. Photo © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Of the latter sort [namby-pamby pictures] there are some illustrious examples; and as it is the fashion for critics to award prizes, I would for my part cheerfully award the prize of a new silver teaspoon to Mr. Redgrave, that champion of suffering female innocence, for his ‘Governess.’ . . . . The Teacher’s young pupils are at play in the garden, she sits sadly in the schoolroom, there she sits, poor dear! – the piano is open beside her, and (oh, harrowing thought!) ‘Home, sweet home!’ is open in the music-book. She sits and thinks of that dear place, with a sheet of black-edged note-paper in her hand. They have brought her her tea and bread and butter on a tray. She has drunk the tea, *she has not tasted the bread and*
There is pathos for you! there is art! This is, indeed, a love for lollipops with a vengeance, a regular babyhood of taste, about which a man with a manly stomach may be allowed to protest a little peevishly, and implore the public to give up such puling food.\textsuperscript{95}

Thackeray was sensitive to the role of art in mythologizing and constructing national history and national identity. He often mocked the repetitious painting by British artists of the cultural historic landmark scenes which Roy Strong has argued were crucial to that period’s construction of a Whig view of history and English identity.\textsuperscript{96}

Nevertheless, it was easier to maintain objectivity and insight into the social purposes of art when viewing art as an outsider, i.e. reviewing French rather than English art. Thackeray had no difficulty, for example, in seeing the national myth-making behind the “interminable battle pieces on which at present all French painters are occupied.”\textsuperscript{97}

Indeed, surrounded by a surfeit of battle pieces, Thackeray declared “la glorie Français grows perfectly loathsome.”\textsuperscript{98} In his frustration, he ironically supposed that “very few more battle-pieces will be painted. They have used up all their victories, and Versailles is almost full.” Further, he was astute enough to directly connect the many portraits of sea-fights “in which English vessels are hauling down their colours before the invincible tri-colour” with the repeated French “discomfitures on salt water.”\textsuperscript{99} A defeated nation had a great need to create a victorious heritage. In the Titmarsh review of the 1841 Salon, “On Men and Pictures,” Thackeray expanded upon the role played by works of art in the cycle in which “the conqueror is . . . filled with national pride, and the conquered with national hatred and a desire to do better next time.”\textsuperscript{100}
On the other hand, seeing with the eyes of an Englishman blinded him to some of the subtle implications of some French art. For example, Auguste Vinchon’s “The Opening of the Legislature and Proclamation of the Constitutional Charter, 4 June 1814,” prominently exhibited in the 1842 Salon, portrays the returned Bourbon monarch Louis XVIII giving a Charter to the Chambers as a royal favor. As noted by Michael Marrinan, “no Frenchman would have forgotten that the Charter and the government of 1814 had been imposed on a defeated France.”\textsuperscript{101} Rather than a celebration of the power of the legislature, the picture emblematically served as a reminder of the externally supported suppression of popular rule, and as a comparative endorsement of Louis-Phillipe. In his review of the 1842 Salon Thackeray noted the central position and prominence given to the painting: “Without being by any means of first-rate merit, it attracts much attention from its advantageous position and the number of portraits it contains.” However, he failed to see its political import, as he added only that “it was not, perhaps, easy to give it any other kind of interest. A number of persons, seated in rows, one behind the other, forms a tame subject for a painter.”\textsuperscript{102}

As an apparently widely-read popularizer of contemporary British art, Thackeray clearly advanced the commercial and financial interests of British artists. I suggest that Thackeray played a leading role in bringing art discussion, and consequent art exhibition attendance and / or acquisition of low-cost watercolors or engraved prints, to the middle-class masses. For Thackeray it was a way to feed his family, to “turn an honest penny”; for British artists it brought increased visibility, respectability, and income; for the British middle class it made art appreciation a value and a marker of class identity.
Notes


11. In addition to the major contemporary exhibition reviews discussed in this chapter Thackeray also wrote a review of traditional French art (“On the French School of Painting,” *Fraser’s Magazine*, December 1839); three articles originally published in the quarterly reviews (“Caricature and Lithography in Paris,” *Westminster Review*, April 1839; “A Review of The Humorist [and other works] by George Cruikshank,” *Westminster Review*, June 1840; “A Review of Pictures of Life and Character by John Leech,” *Quarterly Review*, December 1854); several articles on annual gift book which include extensive comments on engravings; and the text for Louis Marvy’s *Sketches after English Landscape Painters*, 1850. Art reviews in the 1833 *National Standard* may also have been written by Thackeray.


23 [William Makepeace Thackeray], “The Exhibition at Paris,” *Times* (London), April 5, 1838


25. [William Makepeace Thackeray], “The Suffolk Street Exhibition.”


28. [William Makepeace Thackeray], “Exhibition of the New Society of Painters in Water Colours, Pall-Mall], *Morning Chronicle* (London), April 17, 1848.


30. Ibid., 21-39.


41. [William Makepeace Thackeray], “The Suffolk Street Exhibition.”


43. [William Makepeace Thackeray], “Exhibition of the Royal Academy,” *Morning Chronicle* (London), May 8, 1844.


45. [William Makepeace Thackeray], “On the French School of Painting,” 688.


48. Note, for example, Thackeray’s comments on people “who think the apex of the sublime” is realized in paintings about Adam and Eve by Martin, or in discussing Bulwer Lytton’s “conceptions of the sublime.” See [William Makepeace Thackeray], “Picture Gossip,” *Fraser’s Magazine*, June 1845.


56. See the variety of reviews and opinions in the critical essays originally published in the *Athenaeum, Westminster Review*, Edinburgh Review, Blackwoods...
Edinburgh Magazine, the British and Foreign Review, New Monthly Magazine, and other
periodicals collected by Olmstead. John Olmstead, *Victorian Painting Essays and


59. Ibid., 1.

60. Ibid., 2.

61. Ibid., 40.


63. See the listed sales prices for water color paintings listed in *The Royal
Watercolour Society: The First Fifty Years 1805-1855* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Antique


66. [William Makepeace Thackeray], “The Exhibition at Paris.”

67. [William Makepeace Thackeray], “The Exhibition of the Louvre,” *Morning
Chronicle* (London), April 1, 1842.

68. [William Makepeace Thackeray], “The Suffolk Street Exhibition,” *Pictorial
Times*, April 1, 1843.

69. Leonard A. Parry and Willard H. White, *Some Famous Medical Trials* (New

70. [William Makepeace Thackeray], “Exhibition of British Artists in Suffolk-
Street,” *Morning Chronicle* (London), March 30, 1846.

71. [William Makepeace Thackeray], “The Exhibitions of the Societies of Water
Colour Painters.”

72. [William Makepeace Thackeray], “Exhibition of the New Society of Painters
in Water Colours, Pall-Mall,” *Morning Chronicle* (London), April 17, 1848.

73. [Thackeray], “The Exhibition in Paris.”

74. [William Makepeace Thackeray], “Strictures on Pictures,” *Fraser’s
Magazine*, June 1838.

75. [William Makepeace Thackeray], “A Pictorial Rhapsody,” *Fraser’s
Magazine*, June 1840.

76. [William Makepeace Thackeray], “An Exhibition Gossip,” *Ainsworth’s
Magazine*, July 1842.

77. [William Makepeace Thackeray], “Exhibition of the Royal Academy,”
*Morning Chronicle* (London), May 10, 1844.
78. [William Makepeace Thackeray], “The Exhibition of the Royal Academy.”
   *Morning Chronicle* (London), May 11, 1846.

79. [William Makepeace Thackeray], “The Exhibition in Paris.”

80. [William Makepeace Thackeray], “An Exhibition Gossip.”

81. [William Makepeace Thackeray], “The Royal Academy,” *Pictorial Times*,
   May 13, 1843.

82. [William Makepeace Thackeray], “The Royal Academy,” *Pictorial Times*,
   May 27, 1843.

83. [William Makepeace Thackeray], “Exhibition of the Royal Academy,”
   *Morning Chronicle* (London), May 8, 1844.

84. [William Makepeace Thackeray], “The Exhibition of the Royal Academy,”
   *Morning Chronicle* (London), May 5, 1846.

85. [William Makepeace Thackeray], “On the French School of Painting.”

86. [William Makepeace Thackeray], “Strictures on Pictures.”

87. [William Makepeace Thackeray], “A Pictorial Rhapsody.”

88. [William Makepeace Thackeray], “The Royal Academy.”


90. Ibid., 15.

91. Ibid., 30.

92. [William Makepeace Thackeray], “The Exhibition of the Royal Academy,”
   *Morning Chronicle* (London), May 5, 1846.

93. Ibid., 50.

94. [William Makepeace Thackeray], “Exhibition of the Royal Academy,”
   *Morning Chronicle* (London), May 8, 1844.

95. [Thackeray], “Picture Gossip.”


97. [Thackeray], “The Exhibition in Paris.”


99. [Thackeray], “The Exhibition of the Louvre.”

100. [William Makepeace Thackeray], “On Men and Pictures,” *Fraser’s Magazine*,
   July 1841.


102. [William Makepeace Thackeray], “The Exhibition of the Louvre.”
Chapter 6

“The proceeds of that last masterpiece”: The Tradesman of Literature from Critic to Novelist

Thackeray’s “masterpieces” run the gamut from early gems of satiric literary criticism to the late novels which were so admired by his Victorian contemporaries. Thackeray’s journey from critic to mature novelist was long in years – his first critical articles were published in 1833, and serial publication of *Vanity Fair* did not begin until 1847 – but, I submit, short in essence. Without denying Thackeray’s growth as a writer over those years, an essential unity connects his early and late writings. As a self-perceived honest literary tradesman, Thackeray similarly sought “to tell the truth” in both his critical reviews and his later novels. These early and late writings both bear the impressions of comparable journalistic shaping pressures and processes. Further, these works are unified by a consistent world view, a shared ethos of economic and social realism, common textual and stylistic features, and consistently expressed ideas regarding literature and life.

Thackeray presented his views on the literary profession in a *Fraser’s Magazine* article in 1846 and in the famous “Dignity of Literature” letter published in the *Morning Chronicle* in 1850. In these articles he argued for the inherent value and dignity of the “trade of literature” that provided the broad range of literary goods consumed by the nation. “This man of letters contributes a police report; that, an article containing some
Thackeray saw no inherent scale of respectability separating these writers and famous novelists. While as a critic Thackeray recognized that one work of literature might have more merit than another, he also saw a commonality of “virtue” in honest (meaning sincerely written with the intent to convey truth) literary labors, and thus rejected, if you will, the pejorative connotation of “hack work.” As he saw it, a literary man wrote, in the main, “to get his family their dinner,” implying at least a moral equivalency among various works written to that end.²

Indeed, both early and late, Thackeray avowedly wrote for money, not for pleasure or for the aesthetic value of literary creation. He often nakedly posed the financial equation between writing and getting paid, as in his self-mocking request to Frederick Mullet Evans, of the publishing firm Bradbury and Evans, that he be paid “the proceeds of that last masterpiece,” namely the agreed upon stipend for a monthly number of one of his serialized novels.³ He wrote so that he and his children could have a warm fire, a good meal, and financial security. Further, his motives for writing carried over to the content and the style of his writings. Both his critical writings and his novels are anti-romantic in their recognition and celebration of the self-interested middle-class values just cited. Created in the crucible of similar journalistic and economic pressures, Thackeray’s early and late works also share a common set of literary stylistic techniques, as well as a kernel of literary and social concepts. Yet few scholars have addressed this underlying unity in Thackeray’s writings.

Instead, as suggested by the titles of Harden’s two-volume literary biography of Thackeray (Thackeray the Writer: From Journalism to Vanity Fair and Thackeray the
Writer: From Pendennis to Denis Duval), critics have regarded Thackeray’s literary life as traversing an arc from critic to novelist. Many investigators have examined facets of that arc and examined the merits or interpretations of individual critical or fictional “masterpieces” as encountered at their appropriate temporal locations. A few scholars have focused their attention on Thackeray’s early-arc literary criticism; among the more significant studies of this type are the works of Donald Hawes, Charles Mauskopf, and Lidmila Pantůčková. Other scholars, perhaps most notably John Carey and D. J. Taylor, see the arc of Thackeray’s career as a downward arc, with the early works of journalistic fiction perceived as more vital than the later novels. However, most standard monographs on Thackeray, including those by Richard Colby, Barbara Hardy, John Loofborrow, Michael Lund, John Rawlings, and Geoffrey Tillotson, see Thackeray’s critical writings as a period of apprenticeship and explicitly privilege Thackeray’s late-arc mature works. Only a few generalists, including George Saintsbury and Gordon Ray, have, in a balanced fashion, addressed the totality of Thackeray’s writings.

Thus, to date, emphasis has been given to differences between Thackeray’s early and late writings rather than similarities connecting them. As a result: (1) The common role of pecuniary and journalistic factors in shaping both Thackeray’s literary criticism and his mature writings has received little attention; (2) the defining stylistic, textual, and thematic facets of Thackeray’s mature writings have not been traced back to their roots in his literary criticism; and (3) many potentially insightful pathways between the ideas and expressions of Thackeray’s literary critical reviews and well-known aspects of his novels remain untraced. This chapter addresses those deficiencies.
6.1 The Economics of Literature

Thackeray’s father made a fortune in India. Accordingly, Thackeray had a youth of privilege, attended private schools and Cambridge, and spent time in Europe on his grand tour. Thackeray came into approximately £17,000 when he reached his majority in 1833. The rapid dissipation of that inheritance – partly though Thackeray’s own profligacy, but mostly through the failure of Indian banks – dramatically changed the course of his life and art. Until his rise in his profession with the advent of *Vanity Fair*, Thackeray’s years of hard-scrabble journalism were an almost unremitting chase for money. An 1839 letter he wrote to James Fraser typically notes that he was “hard up” and wanted money. Virtually every letter to a publisher was a plea for “a couple more guineas”; letters to his mother complained about his financial distress and bragged about his financial victories. Thackeray did not endure real poverty – he never faced starvation, never lived on the street, and never performed manual labor – but he was often at the edge of genteel poverty. In some ways he never escaped that phase of his life; he was always, as he declared at a Royal Literary Fund dinner in June of 1859, “a struggling literary man of no other profession than that, getting on as best I could.”

Indeed, the themes of his late novels reflect the concerns of his years of penury as a journalist: Thackeray repeatedly wrote about the fall from upper-middle-class wealth into poverty. Despite the many memorable satiric scenes in *Vanity Fair*, arguably the most empathetic and wrenching part of the story deals with the slow decline of the Sedley family from moderate wealth to poverty, a decline that culminates with Amelia giving up her son so that he can realize a better life. Or consider Thackeray’s *Bildungsroman, The History of Pendennis*; in this novel the Thackeray-figure, Arthur Pendennis, lives a life of
bohemian poverty writing articles for various periodicals, encountering fictional editors and publishers drawn to mimic the figures that Thackeray himself dealt with as a periodical journalist until, like Thackeray, Pendennis is buoyed by his own *Vanity Fair*, the fictional novel within a novel, *Walter Lorraine*. In *The Newcomes* the protagonist and would-be artist, young Clive Newcome, is thrust into poverty when he loses his fortune through the failure of Indian banks. In *The Virginians* George Warrington loses parental support and desperately tries to support his young family as a dramatist. In *The Adventures of Philip* Philip Firman earns a precarious living as a journalist and editor after his familial inheritance is stolen. In *Lovel the Widower* Charles Batchelor’s experience as failed owner-editor of *The Museum* echoes Thackeray’s own history with *The National Standard*. Over and over again Thackeray replays the fall into poverty and the journalistic struggles of his youth in his mature novels. The life and art of his early years of journalism unmistakably feed his mature writings.

Moreover, many of the same pecuniary concerns which shaped his periodical writings also factored into the development of Thackeray’s novels. Peter Shillingsburg has documented Thackeray’s contractual dealings with Victorian book publishers.\(^\text{11}\) As Shillingsburg makes clear, although Thackeray took pride in the aesthetic values of his fiction, he saw himself as an honest tradesman rather than as a romantically inspired author. Just as a tradesman values his goods at so much per yard, Thackeray also sold his literary goods quantitatively at so much per word or per sheet. For example, in 1843 Thackeray complained to Chapman and Hall, the publishers of his *Irish Sketch Book*, “I find I am done out of no less than 50 pages by the size of the type &c. I bargained for 25 lines of 40 letters, and our page is 26 lines of 43.”\(^\text{12}\) Eleven years later, in a letter of
complaint to Mark Lemon about *Punch’s* rate of pay, Thackeray once more resorted to the same sort of arithmetic of literary production, as he compared the pay rates and number of characters per line and numbers of lines per page of *Blackwood’s Magazine*, *Punch*, and his current serialized novel, *The Newcomes*. In essence, Thackeray implied that the critically important pay per unit of output transcended the other differences between literary magazine, humor magazine, and novel.

As a periodical journalist Thackeray was subject to a variety of pecuniary forces – the requirement to satisfy multiple, irregular, and frequently short-term assignments with specific deadlines; the need to produce specific volumes of copy; the need to write succinctly to capture reader interest quickly in a small space; and the conflicting financial need to fill all allotted (or potentially allotted) space to maximize revenue. Without doubt these factors shaped his critical writings. Speculatively, the need to write both quickly and irregularly might favor on-the-spot improvisation rather than long careful planning; the need to fill a certain volume of space would favor discursive writing in which it would be easy to make last-minute additions or subtractions; the need to catch and retain reader interest quickly might dictate an instantly “bonding” and collusive narratorial voice; and the spatial limitations of a periodical column might privilege micro-writing – brilliant sentences, epigrams, humorous lines, contrasts and reversals – as compared to large-scale textual macrostructures.

With the exception of *Henry Esmond*, all of Thackeray’s novels were first published serially, either in magazines or as separately purchased numbers. Moreover, as demonstrated by Edgar Harden, Thackeray rarely “wrote ahead”; instead, he typically wrote each monthly number or serial as it was due. Accordingly, his novels faced the
same kinds of journalistic and pecuniary pressures as did his critical articles: each segment had to be quickly put together in the face of competing priorities, had to be done by a specific date, had to fill a specified number of pages, and had to capture and retain reader interest within its own relatively short length.

Of course, other Victorian serial novelists faced the same pressures, and each addressed these pressures in his own way. Anthony Trollope, for example, is famous for the almost metronomic regularity of his writing. His early novels were not serialized; however, starting with *Framley Parsonage* all his novels were serialized. Trollope had the discipline (and a supporting outside income) to almost always complete his novels before they were serialized, and thus avoided many of the potential issues of serialization. Dickens, by way of contrast, published all his major fiction serially. Dickens did need the regular income that serialization provided, and he generally (sometimes stressfully) wrote each part or number just before it was due. However, his mindset and nature was such that “serial issue facilitated planning and structuring the fictions . . . .From *Chuzzlewit* forward, Dickens prepared ‘number plans’ in advance of writing.” With these number plans he placed major turning points and structural hinges at pre-planned parts of the manuscript: in the case of *Dombey and Son*, for example, the Dombey family gains or loses a family member in parts 1, 5, 10, 15, and 20. Thus, Dickens artfully created a macrostructure framework to house and guide individual numbers.

Thackeray differed in both situation and temperament from Trollope and Dickens. Edgar Harden and John Sutherland have each studied the production of Thackeray’s serial fiction, and each arrived at surprisingly different conclusions regarding the
discipline or laxity of Thackeray’s labors and the amount of improvisation and rework in his writings. Without taking sides in that literary dispute, I contend that, to respond to the pressures of novel serialization, Thackeray resorted to the same tools he had already been using as a critical journalist for a decade: discursive and companionable “quick-bonding” narrators whose comments could be expanded or truncated upon need; improvised and well-executed segments of text that sometimes ignored over-arching plans; and an emphasis on the authorial skills that I have dubbed as micro-writing. In summary, similar literary production pressures facing the critic and the novelist led to similar writing approaches and styles. In the following I expand upon the stylistic and thematic unities of Thackeray’s writing and demonstrate the connections between his critical journalism and his novels.

6.2 Unity of Theme, Subject, and Style

Geoffrey Tillotson declared that the goal of his book, *Thackeray the Novelist*, was “to define the Thackerayan Oneness,” the unified impression of Thackeray’s writings which distinguishes his work from that of all other writers. Tillotson found a “oneness” of materials, form and manner, authorial persona, commentarial technique, “truthfulness of personage and action,” and philosophy in Thackeray’s six long novels: *Vanity Fair, Pendennis, Henry Esmond, The Newcomes, The Adventures of Philip*, and *The Virginians*. Additionally, without demonstrating the case, he suggested that there was a unity or coherence within Thackeray’s work that transcended “difference among articles, essays, lectures, sketches (literary and pictorial), stories, nouvelles, novels, verses, and letters.”
In the following I demonstrate that there is, indeed, a Thackerayan oneness – a set of consistencies in theme, subject, focus and style – which encompasses both his early critical journalism and his late mature novels and essays. In their excellences, their weaknesses, their expressed ideas, and their stylistic idiosyncrasies these early and late works are more alike than different. Moreover, evidence suggests that these unities were forged as part of the life and art of Thackeray the critic; in essence, the critic constructed the novelist. While I have profitably read and drawn from Tillotson’s work, as well as from similar ideas expressed by Richard Colby in his book *Thackeray’s Canvass of Humanity*, the specific set of thematic and stylistic unities proposed below are my own.

Viewed against the background of the mid-Victorian novel, Thackeray’s writings are both bound together and distinguished from the works of other writers by:

1) A unified class-conscious world view that crosses the boundaries of individual literary works and even literary genres. There is a remarkable consistency of cultural allusions, social perspective, and even a cross-utilization of characters across Thackeray’s writings. By way of comparison; Dickens’s memorable characters live in their separate domains: Ebeneezer Scrooge does not casually employ Peggotty, Oliver Twist is not mistreated by Silas Wegg, Joe Gargary does not befriend Jenny Wren. Moreover, these various characters do not inhabit the same clubs, know the same people, or have the same socio-economic perspectives. In Thackeray’s one world, however, all the major characters are from the same class, share similar concerns, know each other (or at least know members of each other’s families), and drop in on each other all the time.

2) A delight in characterization which eschews exaggeration and cheerfully admixes real and fictional characters. With regard to the unusual sense of reality of
Thackeray’s creations, Roscoe wrote that “We don’t say that they are life-like characters; they are mere people. We feel them to be near to us, and that we may meet them any day…”  

Saintsbury similarly opined that “it was impossible for him to draw, in words, a character out of nature or unfurnished with life. He is in this respect almost unique; certainly, I think, unique among novelists.”  

And, to a degree which I submit is greater than that of any other Victorian novelist, Thackeray routinely placed real characters, sometimes with and sometimes without name changes, in his supposedly fictional works.

3) An extraordinary emphasis on the thought, role and personality of the narrator. Some level of narratorial commentary was, of course, the rule rather than the exception in the early and mid-Victorian eras, but no other major Victorian writer inserted extended, musing, narratorial interjections into the flow of their novels as frequently and as luxuriantly as did Thackeray.

4) A unique prose style that reviewers found to be simultaneously restrained, clear, elegant and fluid.

Returning to my contention regarding Thackeray’s unity of world view, I note that Robert Colby coined the phrase “Thackeray’s Canvass of Humanity” to refer to the word paintings of human character which are strewn throughout Thackeray’s fiction. Nevertheless; this phrase also metaphorically conveys the essential unity of worldview in all of Thackeray’s writings. Indeed, although some authors of fertile imagination are adept in creating distinctive and individual worlds with each of their literary creations, I suggest that Thackeray’s literary creations are instead connected panels on a single canvass portraying a unified greater world. The lines of connection between literary panels are established through extensive allusion to the “real world” cultural frame of
reference shared with his readers and by a cross-mingling of characters, events, and references between literary works. These unities of worldview inform all of Thackeray’s major novels. His novels, and even his early short stories, are so interlaced with common characters and familial connections that, as Chesterton suggested, “Vanity Fair, Pendennis, The Newcomes, and Philip are in one sense all one novel.”

Tillotson notes that familial connections extend that Pangaean novel backward in time to include Henry Esmond and The Virginirians, and argues that the lack of edged shape and sharply defined endings of these novels creates a sense of continuity spanning them as an entirety.

Moreover, a consistency not only of inhabitants but of tone, interests, concerns, and even subject, runs through these works. As a critic Thackeray once wrote that “morals and manners we believe to be the novelist’s best themes,” and certainly the subjects of morals and manners undergird all these works.

With respect to morals, Thackeray’s protagonists and narrators reflect (and generally endorse) masculine middle-class bourgeois English cultural values. Thackeray writes about educated middle-class Englishmen who are literary and artistic, who struggle with the socio-economic forces of life, and who encounter indeterminate situations and largely unresolved life experiences. Even a supposed footman such as Yellowplush comically presents middle-class rather than lower-class ideas, and a supposed Irish rogue such as Barry Lyndon is rather an English conceptualization of an Irish rogue. Despite all his various authorial personas, Thackeray never could (or, at least, never did) present the world as seen through an outside (i.e. feminine, or lower-class, or non-English) perspective. Partly through the spirit of his narrators, all his novels share a common cultural environment: they refer to a common English literary and social consciousness,
invoke the same cultural images and rites of passage, and to similar degrees mix comedy, satire, and sentiment. Further, as discussed previously, Thackeray’s novels are grounded in socio-economic concerns. The pursuit of money, the pain of penury, the pleasures of sufficiency, and the fear of a fall into poverty run as common threads through his works. Travel writings such as *The Irish Sketch Book* or *From Cornhill to Grand Cairo* easily fit into Thackeray’s novelistic world; these works employ the same cultural allusions and contexts and are written with the same viewpoints and mindsets as his novels. Further, lines of contrast between novels such as *Henry Esmond* or *The Virginians* and essays such as *Eighteenth Century Humorists* and *The Four Georges* blur almost to the point of non-existence. Manners and morals dominate; just as in his novels, Thackeray stated that the goal of *The Four Georges* was “to sketch the manners and life of the old world.”

Similarities in the introduction of cultural references, utilization of ironic humor, satire of society combined with the promulgation of conventional values, and overall use of language transcend genre boundaries.

I contend that this unity of world view extends to – and perhaps originates from – Thackeray’s critical journalism. The nominal range of subjects of Thackeray’s critical journalism is extraordinary. Thackeray critiqued travel books; books of history, religion, and philosophy; biographies and books of letters of authors, philosophers, cultural figures, political figures, and royalty; major British, American, and French novels of the 1830s and 1840s; children’s books and Christmas books; books of drama, poetry, and painting; books on health issues and on cooking; and the general topics of politics, art, and current events. But in this diversity there is a unity; the totality of these writings represents no less than a construction of the Victorian world. And in the vast majority of
these writings, almost independent of nominal topic, manners and morals ubiquitously surface as sub-textual subjects. Thackeray regularly introduces into his critical writings digressions on the little humanistic details of Victorian life, as well as ruminations on human failings and vicissitudes. And in his more discursive critical essays he refers to shared (and typically sentimentalized) aspects of Victorian life, such as the pleasures of tarts as enjoyed by small children, or the triumphs and travails of school. Further, Thackeray brings to his critical essays the same attitudes and worldview that he later invoked for his novels, a world view that stresses an English masculine middle-class perspective and that interconnects his diverse nominal subjects with unifying cultural allusions and common references. Lastly, Thackeray frequently inserts into his fictional world references drawn from his critical world; for example, drawing upon his own critical reviews of Ranke’s *History of the Popes*, Thackeray wrote in *Pendennis* that his youthful protagonist “begins a ‘History of the Jesuits,’ in which he lashed that Order with tremendous severity, and warned his Protestant fellow-countrymen of their machinations.”

Although Thackeray obviously couldn’t use his own fictional characters as common and connecting references in his early critical journalism, he did repeatedly refer to various fictional and real characters drawn from the heritage he shared with his readers. His critical journalism is studded with references to the fictional creations of Goldsmith, Byron, and Cervantes, and to literary icons such as Fielding, Dr. Johnson, and Swift, and to various political and social celebrities or historic figures. These references are almost independent of the nominal subject of the critical article; they are introduced, I contend, to create a common world view and to bond author and readers.
Thackeray’s critical journalism also shares with his novels a companionable ironic tone that pokes at presumed human vanities, as if to say, “reader, you and I share this understanding, let us laugh together” at Bulwer, or Lardner, or at whatever author or fictional or historic character Thackeray targeted, or sometimes at the reviewer himself. Frequently these critical reviews introduce presumably reader-shared subjects of Victorian sentiment – children, mothers, innocence and goodness. And while the typical scope of critical reviews does not allow Thackeray to address stories of financial distress or the difficult economics of Victorian journalism as he was to do in his novels, these reviews frequently reflect a sharp awareness of financial reality as it impacts authors, their fictional creations, and public figures. As discussed previously in this dissertation, Thackeray often raises considerations of class, race, nationality and history in his critical reviews. Thus Thackeray’s constructed one-world – in some ways panoramic and in others myopic, but presumably representing his sense of the “real” world – is inhabited by people who share his attitudes, concerns, prejudices, and interests. Thackeray’s mature novels and essays celebrate and embellish a vision of the world originally developed in his critical journalism.

A oneness of characterization also runs through Thackeray’s novels and his critical writings. Scholars have praised the depth and insight of Thackeray’s characterizations; Joan Garrett-Goodyear noted that “a number of sensitive and illuminating critical studies have argued persuasively that his characterization is both skillfully expressive and psychologically penetrating,”29 Even many of Thackeray’s contemporaries suggested that Thackeray’s novels invoked character whereas other novelists provided caricature. For example, G. H. Lewes opined that “Thackeray has two
great qualities which embalm a reputation – truth and style. . . . Thackeray . . . sees all human feelings, all the motives, high and low, simple and complicated, which make it [human life] what it is. . . . he seizes characters where other writers seize only characteristics.”

Indeed, perusing Geoffrey Tillotson’s and Donald Hawes’s *Thackeray: The Critical Heritage*, one finds that many Victorian reviewers used the word “truth” in describing the characters and events in Thackeray’s novels. In fact, Tillotson himself suggested that a “truthfulness of personage and action” was an aspect of the Thackerayan oneness. Thackeray himself declared in his preface to *Pendennis* “I ask you to believe that this person writing strives to tell the truth. *If there is not that, there is nothing*” (emphasis added).

This aesthetic commitment to a perception of truth in character is rooted in Thackeray’s critical journalism. His early criticisms of the Silver-Fork and Newgate novels stressed their failure (as Thackeray saw it) to portray human character accurately. Dickens, whom in many respects Thackeray greatly admired, did not escape Thackeray’s criticism, as expressed in the comment that: “Micawber appears to me to be an exaggeration of a man, as his name is of a name. It is delightful and makes me laugh; but it is no more a real man than my friend Punch is: and in so far I protest against him . . . holding that the Art of Novels is to represent nature.” Of course, vanity is first among the traits which Thackeray saw as an essential element of “real” character. All his works of fiction incorporate his perception of human vanity; one of Thackeray’s early critics perceptively noted that “*Vanity Fair* is the name, not of one, but of all of Mr. Thackeray’s books.”
Thackeray’s representation of artfully constructed characters both encompasses and transcends the genre of novel. For instance, historical figures inhabit his works of fiction (and often in more than cameo roles) in much the same fashion as they appear in his opinionated but supposedly non-fictional essays. No doubt this is partially due to the desire to “give an appropriate historical texture to the narrative.” But I suspect that Thackeray took great delight in endowing real historical figures with personalities and, in a sense, fictionalizing them. The supposed frailties, vanities, eccentricities, and nobilities of his fictionalized-from-real creations probably interested him as much as did those of his purely fictional figures. After all, both sets of characters allowed Thackeray to display the manners and morals of the times and to convey what he saw as the sometimes endearing but always absurd nature of the human condition.

Further, there is a precedent for this mixing of real and fictional personages in Thackeray’s critical journalism. As a critic and commentator on novels, biographies, histories, and political affairs, Thackeray’s critical reviews blended comments on real and fictional characters. An essay on one of Bulwer’s or Dickens’s novels, for example, would interpose comments on the real figures (the authors) with comments regarding the truths or values of the fictional characters inhabiting the novels. Thackeray’s art reviews contained observations both on the (real) artists and the (fictional) presences portrayed in various paintings. His comments on biographies and histories typically dealt with historical figures, but Thackeray often took liberties by attributing personalities to these characters which went beyond strict historical records, and thus, in a sense, fictionalized them. Indeed, Thackeray’s interests in word painting human character, and treating real and fictional characters on the same basis, flowed from his criticism to his later novels.
Turning to Thackeray’s use of narrative personas, there is a great deal of merit in the supposition that the leading character in, for example, *Vanity Fair* is not Becky Sharp, Amelia Sedley, or William Dobbin, but is rather the unnamed narrator, just as the leading character in Thackeray’s travel writings is the narrative presence of Titmarsh, or the leading character of his *Times* and *Morning Chronicle* literary reviews is the unnamed critic. As John Kleis noted, “Most of Thackeray’s work depends on the correlation of external social data with the inner structural device of the narrative persona, who is a dramatic character in his own right.” Indeed, perhaps more than any other Victorian writer, Thackeray made the narrator a central presence in his writings. His stories are as much about the narrator’s reactions to described events as they are about the events themselves; his travel writings are more about his narrator’s reactions to foreign locales than about those locales themselves; his critical articles are more about the critic’s reaction to a work of art or literature than about the work itself. Nineteenth-century readers appreciated their relationship with Thackeray’s normally companionable, frequently eccentric, and often designedly rambling narrators. And twentieth- and twenty-first-century scholarship stresses the psychological and artistic subtlety and sophistication of Thackeray’s narratological techniques.

I contend that the central narratorial aspect of Thackeray’s fictional style should be understood as an outgrowth of Thackeray’s years as a critical reviewer. As a critic Thackeray interposed his critical assessment skills and writing personality between his readers and the narrative world created by an author. Presumably readers read reviews to learn the critic’s opinions; the actual plot and characters of the reviewed work of literature are, in a sense, secondary. In Thackeray’s hands the persona of the critic played
the essential role, in essence acting as the protagonist, of the review. For more than ten years Thackeray exercised this skill, this style of interpositional writing, on essentially a weekly basis. Although many authors have also written critical reviews, few have had such an extended career writing reviews prior to creating their own mature fiction.

To make his reviews more interesting Thackeray endowed his critical voice with personality, effectively creating personas. Two of Thackeray’s best-known narrative presences, James Yellowplush and Michael Angelo Titmarsh, were first created as fictional critical presences to bring life to critical reviews of books and paintings. Thus, the narrative voice in Thackeray’s critical essays, his musing, often digressive, contemplative and companionable presence, forms a continuum with the distinctive and central narrative voice of his novels. Both narrative voices muse on the significance, artistic quality, and perhaps level of human “truth” contained within a work of literature. This musing is, perhaps, normally associated more with an essayist than a novelist, but, as I have observed, Thackeray never really separated these roles.

Lastly, one should note that the style of Thackeray’s novelistic prose was almost universally praised by his contemporaries. Returning once again to G. H. Lewis, in 1850 he wrote:

First let us mention the beauty of his style. For clearness, strength, idiomatic ease, delicacy, and variety, there is no one since Goldsmith to compare with him. It is not a style in the vulgar sense of the word; that is to say, it is not a trick. It is the flowing garment which robes his thoughts, and moves with every movement of his mind into different and appropriate shapes, simple in narrative, terse and glittering in epigram, playful in conversation and digression, rising into rhythmic
periods when the mood is of more sustained seriousness, and becoming
indescribably affecting in its simplicity when it utters pathetic or solemn
thoughts.  

Seventy-five years later Arthur Quiller-Couch, not a particular fan of Thackeray, commented that “Thackeray’s prose is so beautiful that it moves one so frequently to envy, and not seldom to a pure delight.” Tillotson made similar favorable comments. Lewes, Quiller-Couch, Tillotson, and other commentators drew their assessments of Thackeray’s prose style primarily from his novels. However, the lovely phrase-making, the sharpness of nuance and tone, the light touch which surprises with its effectiveness, and the use of ironic juxtaposition and memorable epigrammatic writing also adorn Thackeray’s now largely unread articles of critical journalism. Indeed, I contend that all of the micro-writing aspects of style which these and other critics have praised were developed and honed as part of Thackeray’s years of journalism and only subsequently became key parts of Thackeray’s tool kit as a novelist.

It is not difficult to find memorable lines in Thackeray’s critical writings. For example, commenting on a fashionable novel by Charlotte Bury entitled Love, Thackeray wrote: “Love was too dull to be dangerous and too entirely vapid and insignificant to be efficiently immoral.” Attacking a Harriet Martineau treatise entitled How to Observe that he regarded as pretentious, Thackeray noted “We have hunted through scores of pages, thinking to catch a thought, but in vain; one is left panting after a pursuit through a thousand similes, illustrations, and amplifications, and never can lay hold of it.” Critiquing the then popular trend of glorifying supposed historical events through elaborate paintings – as exemplified in the works of Benjamin Haydon – Thackeray
asserted that historical pictures were canvasses “representing personages that never existed (at least in such shape), performing actions that never occurred, and dressed in costumes that they never could have worn.” Responding to a religious attack on Addison’s *Spectator*, for example, Thackeray wrote “the view of a fine landscape, or picture, the reading of a fine poem, or of a kind Christian Essay in this very *Spectator*, may lead a man to turn toward Heaven . . . as much as any sermon. . . . We can praise God in a thousand ways as well as on our knees.” On the supposed American rejection of class structure, Thackeray wrote that “Though rank may be an article of which the introduction into the States is forbidden by the laws of the union, the people do with this commodity as with others – they smuggle it, and use it, in fact, if not by name. . . The Americans respect rank as much as we, only they are a free people, and do not like to say so.”

Beyond the memorable epigram, Thackeray’s critical journalism includes many examples of the “flowing garment,” the simplicity and directness of expression, which some so admired in his mature novels. In this, as in other respects, an essential unity connects Thackeray the critic with Thackeray the novelist.

6.3 Literary Pathways

Thackeray’s novels have, of course, been subject to extensive critical scrutiny over many decades. In the course of literally hundreds of critical reviews scholars have often invoked presumed authorial intent, or sought anecdotal support from Thackeray’s letters and the memoirs of Thackeray’s friends and acquaintances, to better understand the development of Thackeray’s “signature” metaphors, themes, or stylistic devices. Yet
surprisingly few of these critical assessments have drawn upon the very foundation of Thackeray’s writings, his own hundreds of critical reviews. This neglect may be partially due to attribution difficulties; however, I contend that Thackeray’s critical reviews have often been dismissed simply as “hack work” and thus unworthy of serious scholarly attention. To the contrary, Thackeray developed his literary values and ideas over the course of many years of critical journalism. Thackeray once wrote to Edward Fitzgerald that “It is the devil of that trade [journalism] that one is always thinking of making good things.” 45 Indeed, the “good things” of Thackeray’s novels can often be better appreciated by tracing them back to ideas originating in his critical writings.

6.3.1 From Critic to the Narrator of Catherine

Consider, for example, Thackeray’s first novel, Catherine: A Story. Critics such as Frederick Cabot, Richard Colby, and Keith Hollingsworth have considered this a flawed but still interesting anti-Newgate novel. 46 So-called Newgate novels of the 1830s and 1840s by Bulwer, Ainsworth, Dickens and others featured criminals as protagonists and arguably placed these figures in favorable lights. Thackeray openly opposed the Newgate school, arguing, as below, that rogues should be portrayed as rogues.

Accordingly, the narrator of Catherine, one Ikey Solomons, Jr., satirically attacks both public taste and Newgate authors – while acknowledging the financial necessity of writing works that will sell – declaring:

The public will hear of nothing but rogues; and the only way in which poor authors, who must live, can act honestly by the public and themselves, is to paint such thieves as they are; not dandy, poetical, rose-water thieves; but real
downright scoundrels, leading scoundrelly lives, drunken, profligate, dissolute, low, as scoundrels will be.47

Despite this narratorial interjection, critics have generally argued that the novel is at least a partial failure due to an inconsistency of tone; in particular, the treatment of the eponymous and nominally villainous Catherine Hayes is inconsistent, in that at times she emerges as a likeable sufferer who is more victim than villain. Frederick Cabot has analyzed this dichotomy, asserting that “Thackeray’s developing strengths of characterization and realistic depiction came into conflict with his satirical and moralistic aims.”48 But, as has been pointed out by John Kleis,49 the picture becomes more complex if one attaches intentional dramatic irony to the statements of Catherine’s narrator.

The narrator is always an important presence in Thackeray’s writings and often serves complex functions. To that end, Judith Fisher has recently argued that Thackeray’s narrators were subtly crafted and endowed with calculated ambiguities and contradictions in order to deliberately stimulate reader skepticism.50 Thackeray identified the narrator of Catherine as “Ikey Solomons, Jr.” presumably because that name was associated with a then famous criminal, Ikey Solomon or Solomons. As Hollingsworth has noted, Isaac (or Ikey) Solomon was “the most successful and elusive of London fences” of the 1820s, whose notoriety was such that “every adult reader [of Catherine] must have thought of him.”51 Thus, Thackeray chose to present his novel through the lens of a Jonathan Wild, or a Mr. Peachum.

It is, however, not entirely clear what effect Thackeray sought to achieve with this narrative identity. As noted by James Wheatley, Solomons’s presumed Jewishness might suggest “the economic motives behind the Newgate fiction.”52 His own criminality would
suggest he possesses a true understanding of fellow criminals (which Thackeray elsewhere argued that Newgate authors Ainsworth, Bulwer, and Dickens did not possess). Sheldon Goldfarb speculated that a *Bell’s Life* article in 1838 had brought that Isaac Solomon to Thackeray’s attention, and opined that perhaps this was simply a “suitably ‘low’ name for the narrator.” If Thackeray had a more specific intent it has remained obscure.

Thackeray’s critical writings, however, shed light on his understanding of Ikey Solomon and accordingly offer new insight into the novel. Indeed, in an 1837 critical review in the *Times* – well preceding the *Bell’s Life* article – Thackeray specifically commented on Ikey Solomons as follows:

> We dare swear, for instance, that Mr. Isaac Solomons (if that remarkable gentleman be still alive) would speak with a great deal of contempt of the character of the once great Mr. Wild. Mr. W., he would say, was only a paltry shopman, a pitiful dealer in stolen goods, with a few mean notions on shop-lifting and picking pockets, and not a single idea of the far higher system of public plunder. Yes, we venture to assert that Mr. Solomons is a public character; he feels deeply that the aristocracy made laws for the poor; he speaks eloquently of a class mighty, intelligent, and oppressed – enslaved, insulted, ROBBED (he says it with tears in his eyes) by the dastardly few, the infamous monopolizers of the wealth of the country … Thus, in the course of a century, does civilization advance – Mr. Wild was but a pickpocket; Mr. Solomons, forsooth, is a politician.
Based on this comment, I submit that Thackeray intended to associate the narrator of *Catherine* not just with a criminal, but also with an unscrupulous and hypocritical politician. And, then and now, the comments of such a politician are presumed to be insincere and misleading. In concert with Fisher’s thesis, then, it appears that Thackeray may have chosen a narrative voice with the intent of stimulating skepticism on the part of his readers. Solomons’s interjections, and perhaps even his reporting of events, cannot be taken at face value; some of the apparent inconsistencies in *Catherine* may reflect intended but previously not fully appreciated dramatic irony and deliberately incorporated uncertainty.

Further, Thackeray’s designation of Solomons as a politician, along with his coupling of that personality with Jonathan Wild, suggests that there may be an overlooked political subtext in *Catherine*. Fielding’s *Jonathan Wild* is critically recognized as both a criminal novel and a political satire; Thackeray’s *Catherine* has never been viewed in that same joint light, but perhaps it should be. Along those lines, one wonders if *Catherine’s* Count Gustavus Galgenstein – a philandering German adventurer who is estranged from his father, who seduces and abandons Catherine Hayes and rejects his bastard son, who gambles and falls prey to drunkenness and gluttony – was drawn as a literary counterpart of the contemporaneous George II. Might Catherine’s Lieutenant Macshane, an Irish rogue with a quixotic sense of honor, similarly have a non-literary eighteenth-century (or nineteenth-century) equivalent? Perhaps a comparative exploration of the characters and events of *Catherine* with regard to the political personalities and events of the early Hanoverian era might add a new dimension to our understanding of Thackeray’s nominally “straightforward” anti-Newgate novel.
6.3.2 From Critic to the Showman of Vanity Fair

*Catherine* is admittedly a relatively minor part of the Thackeray canon, but uncertainties still abound regarding Thackeray’s most famous and durable work, *Vanity Fair*. One of the most commented on aspects of that novel is its frame – a “Before the Curtain” preface invokes the author as the “Manager of the Performance,” and the novel concludes in similar vein with the famous ending “Ah! Vanitas Vanitatum! which of us is happy in this world? Which of us has his desire? or, having it, is satisfied?--come, children, let us shut up the box and the puppets, for our play is played out.” Analysis of this frame as Thackeray’s metaphor for authorship has become a staple of *Vanity Fair* scholarship and commentary. Yet scholars disagree about the origin and the significance of this metaphor.

John Sutherland attests to the importance of the frame and suggests that Thackeray likely drew the image in imitation of the theatrical manager Alfred Bunn, “who came down to address his audiences over the footlights of Drury Lane.” Sutherland notes that Thackeray had previously satirized Bunn and argues that he would have been familiar with Bunn’s 1840 autobiography, *The Stage, Before and Behind the Curtain.* Without commenting on its origin, Roger Wilkenfeld ties the language of the frame to the illustrations Thackeray provided for the novel and argues that “Thackeray’s prelude . . . anticipates the effective characteristics of the fable it introduces” and offers “new, multivalent significations.” Joan Stevens points out that the “Before the Curtain” preface was added after the serialization of the novel and further notes that a similar theatrical analogy was used by Charles Dickens in a January 1837 number of *Pickwick*
Papers and in a June 1837 commentary as editor of Bentley’s Miscellany. Nevertheless, Stevens attributes much significance to the differences in language between Dickens and Thackeray: Dickens’s scenery (i.e. illustrations provided by Cruikshank) becomes Thackeray’s scenes (illuminated by the author’s own commentary), and Dickens’s simple end-of-season thank you and immersion in his characters’ world morphs into Thackeray’s multi-level commentary, coming from above the action, which presents Vanity Fair as a puppet show within a greater Vanity Fair of life. Stevens asserts that “The sophistication of this [Thackeray’s preface] matches beautifully the complexity of Thackeray’s handling of his story. His authorial role is no simple affair of stage management. He moves constantly to and fro between the ‘Performance’ and the society that watches it.” Yet Myron Taube takes a contrary position; after quoting an anecdote reported by Eyre Crowe suggesting that Thackeray based “Before the Curtain” on an off-hand comment made to him in June of 1848, Taube concludes that the frame is an afterthought “failure” that is inconsistent with the representation within the novel of the author as preacher rather than manager of the performance.

Thackeray’s critical journalism sheds new light on his showman metaphor. The participants in the scholarly debate on the Vanity Fair preface were presumably all unaware that Thackeray had invoked a skeletal form of the manager of performance metaphor roughly ten years before the publication of Vanity Fair. In a September 1837 Times largely unfavorable review of Bulwer’s Earnest Maltravers, Thackeray notes that the author “in the guidance of his puppets, and the action of his drama his head is always peeping over the barrier, like that of the proprietor of the show, in the comedy of Mr. Punch.”
A comparison of timelines suggests that Thackeray did draw upon Dickens’s initial use of the stage manager analogy. And while it is possible that Eyre Crowe’s anecdote is correct and that Thackeray was reminded of this analogy in 1848, it should now also be evident that this concept of authorship had long been in Thackeray’s mind. Moreover, however much one might agree with Sutherland, Wilkenfeld, Stevens, and others as to the aptness of this analogy for *Vanity Fair* or the appropriateness of the complexities with which Thackeray embellished the core idea, it is also clear that Thackeray considered this metaphor of authorship, with the supra-positioning of the author as a puppet-master and his characters as puppets, as a generally valid concept, applicable to other authors besides himself, and certainly applicable to novels other than *Vanity Fair*. Indeed, in this and other respects, *Vanity Fair* should be considered more as the fruit of seeds long planted and slowly nurtured over a prior decade of journalism than as an independent product of the late 1840s.

**6.3.3 From Critic to Commentator on Jesuitism in *Henry Esmond***

Thackeray’s critical writings can also serve as explanatory sources for intriguing or unusual positions taken in his novels. For example, Thackeray normally depicted religion as a submerged force, offering a general, even formulaic, religious belief that proceeds along nominally Anglican lines. Decency and secular morality, rather than religion, normally expressed virtue and marked good character. However, some have suggested that *Henry Esmond*, written during the general anti-Catholicism associated with the so-called “Papal Aggression” of 1850, is outside of Thackeray’s norm.⁶²
In his article “Thackeray and Religion: The Evidence of Henry Esmond,” John Peck argues that “Thackeray’s novel is, at least in part, a consideration of the possibilities of Catholicism, for he [Thackeray] is attracted as Newman is by Catholicism’s offer of a set of absolutes.” Peck views Henry Esmond as a struggle between the past, the comforting faith and certainty of Catholicism, and the future, a skeptical and uncertain Anglicanism. Further, Peck suggests that through the character of the Jesuit Father Holt Thackeray presents “the Catholic Church as a sustaining structure, offering security in a world which, for the hero, is insecure,” and even adds that “in some respects, Henry Esmond, in its condemnation of individualism, seems close to a work of Catholic propaganda.”

In support of Peck’s argument, in Esmond the Jesuit Father Holt is initially cast as a powerful, charismatic, and somewhat sympathetic figure. He offers comfort and apparent affection to the friendless orphan and is a model of dedication and selflessness. Holt paints an appealing romantic picture of Catholicism and the Jesuit order, as he tells young Esmond:

of its martyrs and heroes, of its Brethren converting the heathen by myriads, traversing the desert, facing the stake, ruling the courts and councils, or braving the tortures of kings; so that Harry Esmond thought to belong to the Jesuits was the greatest prize of life and the bravest end of ambition; the greatest career here, and in heaven the surest reward; and began to long for the day, not only when he should enter into the one Church and receive his first communion, but when he might join that wonderful brotherhood, which was present throughout world, and
which numbered the wisest, the bravest, the highest born, the most eloquent of men among its members. Of course, Thackeray is an anti-romantic satirist, and this excerpt should be read in that light. Indeed, over the course of the novel Henry Esmond moves away from Catholicism to Anglicanism, and Father Holt is revealed to be less than he initially seemed to be. Nevertheless, Richard Colby also sees Holt portrayed as an “object of respect” and comments on Thackeray’s “conciliatory tone toward Jesuits, so evident in Henry Esmond in reaction against anti-Catholic writing of the time.”

It is a matter of interpretation, however, whether Thackeray sympathizes with Holt the man or Holt the Jesuit, and whether, following Peck, this sympathy extends to the Jesuits as an order and to Catholicism as a religion. It is not always easy to disentangle Thackeray’s blend of satire and truth. Richard Colby quoted Thackeray’s Morning Chronicle review of Steinmetz’s The Novitiate in his analysis of this issue. I suggest that Thackeray’s Times reviews of Ranke’s History of the Popes – articles then presumably unknown to Colby (and to Peck) – offer surer guidance.

In these articles Thackeray does express an admiration – or at least a respect – for the energy, dedication, and skill of the Jesuits, calling them “persevering men” who “never rested in their labours,” praising “their learning and piety,” and extolling their “skill and pertinacity.” Thackeray endows Father Holt with all these virtues, and accordingly one cannot but feel that Thackeray conceived Holt as emblematic of his order. But the tone of the Times reviews – and, I submit, the tone of Henry Esmond – is not that of offering unstinting praise but rather that of giving a formidable enemy his due. For in both the novel and, as I will show, the critical reviews, Thackeray also portrays the
Jesuits as scheming, manipulative, and treacherous. Thus, *Henry Esmond* honors the
tenacity and sacrifice of the Jesuits without necessarily conciliating them.

And with regard to Peck’s claim regarding Thackeray’s supposed attraction to
Catholic absolutes, I argue that Thackeray does recognize – and portrays – the supposed
*attractiveness* of Catholic absolutism to the unsophisticated and inexperienced, without
himself falling prey to that weakness. Indeed, in one of his reviews of Ranke’s *History of
the Popes* Thackeray offers a countervailing view:

> That creed [Catholicism] must be the true one, they say, in which there is seen
such wonderful unity, which has endured so long and been victorious so often.
May we not say, on the contrary, that this very unity is one of the proofs of
falsehood! It is but a huge conspiracy. It is folly to say that every man who
entered it was endowed by nature with exactly the same opinions, had precisely
the same degree and quality of intellect, had gone through the same processes of
thought and experience, which led him to behold the truth precisely as his fellow-
conspirator beheld it. To subscribe as each man did to every tittle of the faith of
the mother church for the time being as she thought fit to expound, or to modify,
or to expunge it – every single man had sacrificed some portion of *the truth* as it
appeared to his own judgment . . . this much-boasted unity is brought about at the
expense of truth, and on the condition of slavish submission; the triumph resulting
from it is a political success, not a religious one; and, however much we may
admire the skill and pertinacity of the individuals who gained it, let us remember
that every one of them has had to sacrifice some one or more of his convictions to
the claims of the imperious society of which he was a member.
In fact, Thackeray’s 1840 critical commentaries on the Jesuits projects to a remarkable degree (but with a bit less sympathy) the ultimate failure and exile of Father Holt as presented in *Henry Esmond* a dozen years later in 1852:

> to suppose that this old, mean, exploded, soul-debasing system of Jesuithood can ever take a serious hold upon free and honest men. It may act on a weak imagination, and dazzle or frighten it for a while; it may accommodate itself to a popular prejudice or feeling, and so fancy that it achieves a momentary triumph; but it is the feeling that triumphs here, not the priest, who is only the fly that goads the horse and rides on the wheel. And it is curious to examine the history of this restless, busy, sly, Jesuit race – how they have, with their wonderful cleverness, taken a hold in almost every nation of the world, and with their wonderful cleverness been thrown over. They are kicked out of Spain, they are kicked out of Portugal, out of France, out of England, out of China, and the Pope’s dominions even, out of every country to which they bring their busy mummerly of intrigue. Was ever fate more merited, or excessive cleverness and dexterity better repaid?71

To consider *Henry Esmond* as a “work of Catholic propaganda” is to fall into the same error made by those who regard Satan as the hero of *Paradise Lost*; Father Holt is made attractive in the novel because he must initially attract young Henry Esmond, but in the end his scheming and his humanity are inextricably com mingled. He is, in a strange fashion, honorable in his intrigues, but he is also very dangerous. His duplicity cannot be sanctioned; his cause must be defeated, not conciliated. Thackeray’s critical journalism, in this case as in others, aids in the interpretation of Thackeray’s novels.
6.3.4 From Critic to Advocate of Sexual Realism in *Pendennis*

To offer one last example of a supporting historical and biographical context, consider the oft-quoted lines in Thackeray’s preface to *The History of Pendennis* that “Since the author of Tom Jones was buried, no writer of fiction among us has been permitted to depict to his utmost power a MAN. We must drape him, and give him a certain conventional simper. Society will not tolerate the Natural in our Art.”

In the context of the novel, in which the protagonist is tempted into a sexual liaison with the working class Fanny Bolton, a liaison which Thackeray with some awkwardness suggests was never consummated, this introductory comment has been generally interpreted as advocating a more open literary expression of human sexuality. Yet, despite his frequently expressed admiration for Fielding, Thackeray’s literary criticism also contains negative comments regarding Fielding’s “coarseness” and indications that Thackeray was conflicted about the literary expression of sexuality.

In an 1840 *Times* review of Fielding’s works Thackeray wrote that “The world does not tolerate now such satire as that of Hogarth and Fielding, and the world is no doubt right in a great part of its squeamishness [regarding presentations of debauchery]; for it is good to pretend to the virtue of chastity even though we do not possess it.”

After indirectly referring to eighteenth-century harlotry, Thackeray continues:

The same vice exists, only we don’t speak about it; the same things are done, but we don’t call them by their names. . . . It is wise that the public modesty should be as prudish as it is; that writers should be forced to chaste their humour, and when it would play with points of life and character which are essentially immoral, that
they should be compelled, by the general outcry of incensed public propriety, to be silent altogether.\textsuperscript{74}

Finally, Thackeray equivocates: “Are persons who profess to take a likeness of human nature to make an accurate portrait? . . . .This is such a hard question, that, think as we will, we will not venture to say what we think.” And, indeed, Thackeray never really answers his own question. He wanted the freedom that Hogarth and Fielding had to display human sexuality, but his adherence to the Grundian standards of his age was not entirely reluctant – he was a product of Victorian sensibility as well as its critic.

With the exception of \textit{Vanity Fair} most of Thackeray’s novels are now rarely read. Literary fashions and trends do change over time; however, it is not clear if Thackeray’s massive novels that the Victorians valued so highly will ever come back into favor. From that perspective, perhaps, one could argue that an assessment and explication of Thackeray’s even less frequently read critical journalism is of little moment. Yet Thackeray was indisputably an essential shaper of the Victorian literary era. Before writing his oft-studied novels he was a prominent journalist and an influential literature and art critic. By studying Thackeray’s journalism and its driving economic forces we gain a fuller understanding of the practices and dynamics of early Victorian journalism as a whole. Thackeray’s wide-ranging \textit{Times} and \textit{Morning Chronicle} articles not only reveal the tenor of the man, they also serve as touchstones of the era. Thackeray’s \textit{Calcutta Star} correspondence with James Hume constitutes a unique and culturally rich cosmopolitan-colonial dialogue regarding the English world of the 1840s. Thackeray’s art criticism
brings back to life cultural and social aspects of the early Victorian art world, a world which has become perhaps unfairly overshadowed by subsequent Pre-Raphaelitism. And Thackeray’s novels themselves can often be better understood and appreciated through the perspective of Thackeray’s journalism. Thus, I contend that any understanding of early Victorian journalism in general or of Thackeray’s overall contribution to our literary heritage that neglects his critical journalism is unbalanced and necessarily incomplete. Moreover, for those who appreciate the Thackerayan “touch,” – a mixture of sense and sentiment, a recognition of the ludicrous in human nature and human activity, an attack on pomposity and pretense, the deft handling of a witty subversive phrase or an insightful contrast, and an underlying affection for honesty and the search for truth – Thackeray’s critical journalism is an essential part of his writings, both for its own excellences and for the insights it brings to his other works.

Notes


2. [William Makepeace Thackeray], “A Brother of the Press,” 335.


18. Geoffrey Tillotson, Thackeray the Novelist, 1.

19. Tillotson, Thackeray the Novelist, 3.

Author and His Public.

21. Of course there are common characters in Victorian novel sequences such as Trollope’s Palliser or Barchester novels, but there is little or no character or situation crossing between different novel sequences or into unrelated novels.


31. Tillotson, Thackeray the Novelist, 115.

32. William Makepeace Thackeray, Pendennis, xvi.


35. Harden, Thackeray the Writer: From Pendennis to Dennis Duval, 125.


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