University of Cambridge

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Thackeray and Bohemia

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Trinity Hall

A dissertation submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy 2010

For Moo and Petey

This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration.

This dissertation does not exceed the regulation length, including footnotes, references, and appendices but excluding the bibliography.

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Abstract

Whether as a counter-cultural phenomenon or a sociological myth, Bohemia has long eluded concrete definitions. In the last thirty years, however, there has been a noticeable contrast between the ambitious theoretical concerns of cultural historians of nineteenth-century Continental Bohemianism and the more staunchly biographical approaches of critics concerned with Bohemian writers in mid-Victorian England. In the absence of the Latin Quarter, attempts to define the English Bohemianism of Thackeray's era have been somewhat reductive, revolving around London establishments such as the Garrick Club and disparate groupings such as the metropolitan novelists, journalists, and playwrights who are sometimes pigeonholed as 'Dickens's Young Men'. This thesis uses the work of William Makepeace Thackeray (1811–63) to argue that such readings have lost sight of the profound impact which mid-Victorian ideas of Bohemianism had on a far wider section of middle-class Englishmen.

Chapter 1 explores the pivotal role which Thackeray played in the translation of Bohemian behavioural ideals from France to England. Beginning and ending with his seminal Bohemian protagonist in *Vanity Fair* (1847–48), it surveys his engagement with the still-evolving ideas of Bohemianism at home and on the Continent. The chapter interrogates the relationship between the anglicized brand of homosociality which characterizes Thackeray's later fiction and the often contradictory images of Bohemianism which were circulating in 1830s and 40s Paris while he was an art student and then a foreign correspondent in the city. In the process, it considers the significant influence which these factors have exerted over later conceptions of Thackeray's biography and personality. As a whole, the chapter argues that his increasing focus on more anglicized spheres of masculine interaction in the late 1840s contributed to the emergence of a de-radicalized brand of middle-class English Bohemia.

The second chapter considers the parallels between the impact of Thackeray's work and the contemporaneous writings of the famous chronicler of Parisian Bohemianism, Henry Murger (1822–61). Through analysis of cultural reception and literary form, this chapter investigates the way in which these writers have been both criticized and revered for perpetuating particularly inclusive myths of Bohemianism. It then explores the way in which Thackeray's *Bildungsroman*, *The History of Pendennis* (1848–50), helped to shape other myths of collective homosocial unconventionality — in particular, those which came to surround Fleet Street journalism.

Chapters 3 and 4 are companion chapters, surveying the way in which ideas of Bohemianism developed post-*Pendennis* in the course of the 1850s and 60s. They demonstrate that the myths of 'fast' Bohemian life which came to be associated with particular journalists, playwrights, and performers, were as much the product of critical attacks as any form of Bohemian self-representation. Exploring the work of 'Bohemian' writers such as George Augustus Sala (1828–95) and Edmund Yates (1831–94), as well as the dynamics of London's eclectic club scene, these chapters conclude that ideas of a 'fast' disreputable Bohemianism always coexisted with more widely accepted and understated Bohemian ideals which thrived on remaining undefined.

Contents

Acknowledgements

List of Illustrations

Abbreviations

OED	*Oxford English Dictionary*
Letters	Ray, Gordon, ed., *The Letters and Private Papers of William Makepeace Thackeray*, 4 vols (London: Oxford University Press, 1945–46)
Wisdom	—— *Thackeray: The Age of Wisdom, 1847–1863* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958)
Adversity	—— *Thackeray: The Uses of Adversity, 1811–1846* (London: Oxford University Press, 1955)
Works	Thackeray, William Makepeace, *The Works of William Makepeace Thackeray with Biographical Introductions by his Daughter, Anne Ritchie*, 13 vols (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1899)
Recollections	Yates, Edmund, *Edmund Yates: His Recollections and Experiences*, 2 vols (London: R. Bentley & Son, 1884)

Introduction

Bohemian Histories: Painting Paradigms

'By the end of the [nineteenth] century [...] if you sat on the floor or boiled an egg unassisted you became a Bohemian. The romance of the 50s has become the myth of the century.'
V.S. Pritchett, 'Murger's *La Vie de Bohème*' (1943)[1]

'We are all Bohemians now.'
Virginia Nicholson, speaking about her new book *Among the Bohemians* in 2004[2]

'Funny how a post like this provokes so many "theres no such things as bohemians! theyre all middle class whingers!"
theres so much self directed class (self) hatred around [*sic*].'
***Guardian* blogger responding to an article by Sam Jordison (2007)[3]**

Looking back over his distinguished literary career at the age of seventy, the author and critic Victor Sawdon Pritchett mused: 'Life — how curious is that habit that makes us think it is not here, but elsewhere.'[4] In his youth, Pritchett certainly seems to have possessed this habit of mind as does William Makepeace Thackeray a hundred years before him. As young men in their early twenties, both of these prolific writers had hoped to embark on life as professional painters and, accordingly, 'elsewhere' had

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[1] Reprinted in *On Bohemia: The Code of the Self-Exiled,* ed. by César Graña and Marigay Graña (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1990), pp. 54–58 (p. 55).

[2] Quoted in John Ezard, 'Bohemian Culture is the 'New Norm'', *Guardian*, 2 June 2004 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/ uk/2004/jun/02/arts.guardianhayfestival2004> [Accessed 4 August 2004].

[3] Blogger 'TonyONeill' responding to other blogger responses to Sam Jordison's article, 'Where did all the Bohemians go?', *Guardian*, 18 October 2007 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/booksblog /2007/oct/18/ wheredidallthe bohemiansgo> [Accessed 27 April 2009].

[4] V.S. Pritchett, *Midnight Oil* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1971), p. 173.

signified Paris and its thriving artistic communities. Almost a century lay between Thackeray and Pritchett's youthful haste to leave London for the Latin Quarter, and during this time British and French society clearly changed beyond recognition. Nonetheless, had Thackeray been able to see into the future, he might well have taken quiet comfort in the striking parallels which Pritchett's twentieth-century career bore with his own.[5] Upholding the thoroughly Thackerayan maxim that 'the thing that hath been, is that which shall be,' Pritchett's Parisian rite of passage recalled Thackeray's a century earlier — mirroring not only the latter's double-edged fascination with French culture but also his early vicissitudes of fortune and ultimate failure to realise his ambition to be a painter.[6] Thackeray's artistic training was the more structured of the two men, taking the form of daily lessons in an atelier in the mid-1830s. Pritchett, on the other hand, was compelled to teach himself to paint while struggling to make ends meet as a commercial traveller round and about 1920s Paris.

Figure a: Thackeray, *The Paris Sketch Book* (1840)

Differences aside, within less than two years of unsuccessfully trying to earn a living by the brush, both men had become disillusioned with their artistic talents and given up. Thackeray conceded that his abilities did not extend beyond pen-and-ink drawing and consoled himself by supplying the illustrations for much of his later work (of which

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[5] For a full life of Pritchett, see Jeremy Treglown, *V.S. Pritchett: A Working Life* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2004).

[6] The maxim is derived from Ecclesiastes, 1. 9: 'The thing that hath been, it *is that* which shall be; and that which is done *is* that which shall be done: and *there is* no new *thing* under the sun,' — a passage which Thackeray invokes both directly and indirectly throughout his fiction.

figure a. is an example).[7] Pritchett more ruthlessly characterized himself as an entirely 'incompetent' draftsman and abandoned painting altogether.[8] The two failed artists turned instead to journalism and novel-writing, and the rest is history: both Thackeray (1811–1863) and Pritchett (1900–1997) left behind their financially precarious experiences in 'Bohemian' Paris to become two of the most successful literary men of their respective generations.[9]

Undoubtedly, any attempt to make such tidy transhistorical comparisons also draws attention to the fact that *the rest* is not history but rather a seething palimpsestic mass of multi-stranded and multi-temporal histories.[10] This thesis, however, hinges on the idea that within this infinitely proliferating web of histories, some come to resonate more universally, more enduringly, and indeed more contentiously than others. As city-myth, myth-factory, and would-be 'Capital of the Nineteenth Century' (and/or Modernity), Paris itself resonates with peculiar intensity through modern and post-modern Western thought.[11] Not least through Walter Benjamin's allusive and elusive explorations of the Parisian Arcades, the historical and symbolic spaces of nineteenth-century Paris have had an immeasurable impact on cultural studies, urban sociology, and theories of everyday life in the twentieth century. Yet amongst histories of Parisian

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[7] Thackeray was backed up by his contemporaries in this opinion. In a significant review of *Vanity Fair* over a decade later, Thackeray's friend, Abraham Hayward recalled seeing Thackeray 'engaged in copying pictures in the Louvre in order to qualify himself for his intended profession.' He added that 'It may be doubted, however, whether any degree of assiduity would have enabled him to excel in the money-making branches, for his talent was altogether of the Hogarth kind, and was principally remarkable in the pen and ink sketches of character and situation which he dashed off for the amusement of his friends.' See 'The Irish Sketch-Book', *Edinburgh Review,* 87 (January 1848), 46–67 (p. 49).

[8] Pritchett, *Midnight Oil,* p. 26.

[9] Interestingly, a further parallel is visible in the legacy of these writers. Both have been seen as particularly high-quality representatives of the literature of their time and both have suffered more critical neglect than one might have expected when they were at the height of their success.

[10] At least in the wake of Walter Benjamin, Michael Serres, and others. See Linda Nead for a useful summary of some such theories of multi-temporal modernity: *Victorian Babylon: People, Streets and Images in Nineteenth-Century London* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 4–8.

[11] On nineteenth-century myths of Paris, see Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, *Paris as Revolution: Writing the Nineteenth-Century City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 225–28. On the frequent Franco-centric bias of histories of Modernity and Modern Art see, for example, Andrew Ginger, *Painting and the Turn to Cultural Modernity in Spain: The Time of Eugenio Lucas Veláquez (1850–1870)* (Cranbury: Rosemont Publishing, 2007), pp. 14–16.

existence, few have consistently provoked such deeply divided responses as accounts of Bohemian life.

In the biographies of Thackeray and Pritchett as I present them above, certain paradigmatic features of the *vie de Bohème* shine through: both men navigate a temporary period of artistic apprenticeship and unconventional living before moving into a mature phase of respectability and professional success. It is not just the implied sowing of creative (and other) wild oats which is archetypal in these narratives — the initial act of failure is just as important. Nonetheless, it is due to these recognizable Bohemian motifs that the parallels between Thackeray and Pritchett do not feel as arbitrary as they might. Even today, the Bohemian life trajectory induces a sense of cultural déjà vu. This finds a well-established precedent in what both Thackeray and Pritchett would have experienced during their own times. Both had after all travelled to Paris hoping to find something that they felt they already knew. In his influential work on modern and post-modern geographies, David Harvey frequently returns to a compelling formulation by Balzac: 'Hope is a memory that desires.'[12] Like many men before them, Thackeray and Pritchett were driven to Paris by a combination of creative ambition and an irresistible desire to escape the conventionality of their home surrounds. These ambitions and desires were not so much personal as drawn from a web of collective preconceptions — their respective cultures' pre-existing 'memories' of the French capital.

Between 1837 and 1843, Balzac had himself made a particularly enduring contribution to the myth that a phase of unconventional living in Paris represented a

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[12] In an interview with Stephen Pender, Harvey states that this is his favourite line from the French novelist. See 'An Interview with David Harvey', *Studies in Social Justice,* 1:1 (2007), 14–22 (p. 21). It forms a springboard for Harvey's discussions in both *Spaces of Hope* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), passim., and *Paris, Capital of Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 2003), pp. 52–54.

natural (and inherently hazardous) stage in the creative man's career.[13] Like Thackeray and Pritchett, Balzac's doomed protagonist, Lucien de Rubempré travels to the city full of preconceptions and hopes, only to find a story of *Lost Illusions* once he arrives. This fictional poet-turned-journalist of course comes to a very different end to the real-life English writers. Another significant difference, however, is that where Lucien is an outsider from the French Provinces, Thackeray and Pritchett descended on Paris from an entirely different country. The early lives of both thus raised the question of whether an Englishman in Paris — and particularly an Englishman seeking to immerse himself in unconventional artistic life — could ever be more than a cultural tourist or, worse, a philistine interloper.

Invasions (both cultural and geographical) and pretensions (both behavioural and class related) are significant themes in this study. However, my concern lies less with the experiences eagerly lapped up by the English émigré in Paris than it does with the far more hesitant absorption of the *vie de Bohème* into the cultural imagination back home in England. The version of Bohemia which took root in mid-Victorian London has generally received a very bad press — something which was certainly not helped at the time by the fact that it was seen to embody a thoroughly bad element of the Press itself. Equated with the most dissolute and hack-like members of the journalistic profession, this English brand of Bohemia was often portrayed as a tarnished imitation of a Parisian prototype — a faulty and decidedly grubby import ill-equipped for Anglo society. However, if the reputation of London Bohemia diminished as a result of such unflatteringly narrow and grimy classifications, it also suffered through the almost antithetical allegation that it was both generalized and sanitized. Its worst press in more recent times, on the other hand, has been to be ignored entirely.

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[13] *Illusions Perdues* was published in three parts in 1837, 1839, and 1843 respectively, before being collected into the Furne edition of *La Comédie humaine* in 1845.

In the last twenty years or so, the most ambitious attempts to move beyond doggedly sociological definitions of Bohemia and to consider its dimensions as a more symbolic social space and cultural myth, fail to make any reference to the anglicized strain of Bohemianism which lies at the heart of this thesis. A number of the most inspiring of these studies remain exclusively focused on that ever captivating 'birthplace of capitalist and aesthetic modernity': nineteenth-century Paris. Against this stirring backdrop, Bohemia ranges evocatively from a marginal social sphere in which the conflicts of middle-class identity are acted out and interrogated (as in the work of Jerrold Seigel), to a fractured collection of artistic voices which simultaneously parody and perpetuate popular culture (as in the work of Mary Gluck).[14] There are also plenty of histories of Bohemia which move beyond the bounds of the Latin Quarter and set their sights on the examination of a more global form of modernity. However, whether they are concerned with the avant-garde of Greenwich Village, the expanding journalistic scene of colonial Melbourne, or — as in the case of Elizabeth Wilson — an impressive array of Bohemias across space and time, mid-Victorian Bohemia in London still fails to make an appearance.[15]

Against this critical landscape, one might be forgiven for thinking that 'true' English Bohemia began with Bloomsbury. It is not surprising that the colourful social enclaves of Modernist London have come to be seen as particularly compelling embodiments of Bohemian life. The experimental lifestyles of the Bloomsbury Group

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[14]See Jerrold Seigel, *Bohemian Paris: Culture, Politics, and the Boundaries of Bourgeois Life, 1830-1930* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986) and Mary Gluck, *Popular Bohemia: Modernism and Urban Culture in Nineteenth-Century Paris* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2005). Other twentieth-century studies of note which investigate Parisian Bohemia are: Joanna Richardson's *The Bohemians: La Vie de Bohème in Paris, 1830–1914* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1969), T.J. Clark's *Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973), and Marilyn R. Brown's *Gypsies and Other Bohemians: The Myth of the Artist in Nineteenth-Century France* (Epping: Bowker, 1985).

[15] See Christine Stansell, *American Moderns: Bohemian New York and the Creation of a New Century* (New York: Henry Holt, 2000), Andrew McCann, *Marcus Clarke's Bohemia: Literature and Modernity in Colonial Melbourne* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, 2004), and Elizabeth Wilson, *Bohemians: The Glamorous Outcasts* (London: Tauris Parke Paperbacks, 2003).

and those of their dingier neighbours in the artist-saturated haunts of Fitzrovia, have understandably inspired critics such as Hugh David and Peter Brooker, as well as popular writers such as Virginia Nicholson (the grand-niece of Virginia Woolf), to cast this social scene as London's answer to Parisian Bohemia.[16] Less legitimate, however, is the fact that the association between these unconventional social lives and the self-constructed 'newness' of Modernism has helped to fuel an illusion that it was not until the early decades of the twentieth century that a credible English brand of Bohemianism came into being. Virginia Nicholson's view that 'we are all Bohemians now' reveals another reason that this version of Bohemia continues to speak to us in a way that unconventional living in Thackeray's time does not.[17] Bloomsbury proved a particularly successful enactment of the ideal that Bohemia should break down old barriers to produce new social realities. Nicholson — ever aware of her own lineal connection to Bloomsbury — exemplifies a continuing tendency to see ourselves as products of these early twentieth-century acts of social (and sexual) emancipation. However many problems we might have with the political and cultural views of the individuals involved, we feel indebted to them in the belief that they liberated the lifestyles which the most privileged of us still enjoy.

Heavily homosocial and disappointingly blunt-edged when it came to social rebellion, mid-Victorian variations on the Bohemian theme have failed to crystallize in the same way as those of either the Latin Quarter or Bloomsbury. In this regard, it is telling that the most recent explorations of the variety of English Bohemianism which interests me here have been characterized by very different critical vocabularies to more Franco-centric studies. As she outlines her methodology and the difficulty of collating a

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[16] See Peter Brooker, *Bohemia in London: The Social Scene of Early Modernism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), Hugh David, *The Fitzrovians: A Portrait of Bohemian Society, 1900–1950* (London: Michael Joseph, 1988), and Virginia Nicholson, *Among the Bohemians: Experiments in Living 1900–1930* (London: Penguin, 2002).
[17] See note 2.

'History of Bohemia', Elizabeth Wilson observes that the idea of Bohemianism as a symbolic and subversive lifestyle has long been rooted in a series of self-perpetuating cultural myths. In other words, the individual accounts of self-proclaimed Bohemians on which Wilson depends for her primary material, have accumulated over time to reinforce and amplify collective myths of Bohemianism.[18] As will be explored further in my second chapter, one of the most significant contributors to this cumulative process was the French writer Henry Murger (1822–1861). By far his most influential contribution to myths of Bohemian life, on the other hand, was his *Scènes de la vie de Bohème* (see figure b) — the famous source of Puccini's *La Bohème*. Within this work, the axiomatic preface has had a particular impact, perhaps most famously through the combined maxims that: 'La Bohème, c'est le stage de la vie artistique; c'est la préface de l'Académie, de l'Hôtel-Dieu ou de la Morgue. Nous ajouterons que la Bohème n'existe et n'est possible qu'à Paris' ['Bohemia is the apprenticeship of artistic life; it is the preface to the Academy, to the Hospital or to the Morgue. We will add that Bohemia does not exist and is not possible anywhere other than Paris'].[19] These much-quoted lines have been such a keynote in romanticized accounts of Parisian Bohemia that they can certainly be read as performative statements — creating the *myth* as much as they describe the *reality* of the nineteenth-century Latin Quarter. In this particular example, translating Murger from French to English has further magnified the quotation's myth-making dimensions. In the translation of *Scènes de la vie de Bohème* which is most frequently referred to by English critics, the assertion that 'la Bohème, c'est le *stage* de la vie artistique' has been condensed into the phrase: 'Bohemia is a

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[18] Elizabeth Wilson, p. 6.

[19] Henry Murger, preface in *Scènes de la vie de Bohème* (Paris: Michel Lèvy, 1851), p. vi. All translations throughout the thesis are my own unless otherwise indicated.

stage in artistic life.'[20] The mistranslation of the French 'stage' as its false mirror image 'stage', rather than its true equivalent 'apprenticeship', endows the English version with a whole new set of connotations. Bohemia appears less of a training ground, more transitory, and potentially more theatrical than in the French original.

Critics like Wilson have faced distinctive problems as they have attempted to dissect such symbolically charged representations of Bohemia and to root them in socio-historical 'realities'. It soon becomes apparent in many of the best 'Histories of Bohemia' that it is very difficult for the historian to avoid a level of dependence on the figurative imagery perpetuated by Bohemian writers themselves. In Joseph Seigel's influential discussions of Bohemian Paris and 'the Boundaries of Bourgeois Life', for example, the shifting metaphorical boundaries established in literary representations of Bohemia come to underpin his analysis of the similarly shifting metaphorical boundaries of modern class identities. Wilson, on the other hand, repeatedly employs theatrical metaphors in an attempt to get to the bottom of the 'glamorous' myth of the Bohemian 'outcast'. This works to great effect

Figure b: Charles Courtry, 'Comment fut institué le cènacle de la Bohême', from Henry Murger, *Scènes de la vie de Bohème* **(Paris: Michel Lévy frères, 1886), originally published 1851**

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[20] My italics. See Murger, *The Bohemians of the Latin Quarter* (Paris: Société des Beaux-Arts, 1912), p. xxxvi. This edition reprints Vizetelly and co.'s somewhat clumsy 1888 translation, which seems to have been the first version of the work to appear in English. It remains the edition which critics most frequently quote despite its inaccuracies. Ellen Marriage and John Selwyn's 1901 edition more successfully captures the sense of the original with: 'Bohemia is a stage of the artist's career'. See *The Latin Quarter ('Scènes de la Vie de Bohème'),* (London: Grant Richards, 1901), p. xxi.

as she explores a succession of famous Bohemians and their 'dramatization of dissent' on the 'urban stage of modernity'.[21] Yet, for better or worse, such imagery inevitably reinforces the emblematic quality of these Bohemian biographies.[22] This is not to disagree with Wilson. On the contrary, this thesis appreciatively concurs with her view of the performative nature of Bohemia — both as a mode of existence and as a transformative linguistic concept. Indeed, as Joseph Seigel points out, Bohemia arises 'where action and meaning, [and] gesture and awareness, intersect.'[23] However, it is precisely Bohemia's tendency to span evocative linguistic descriptions and inherently extra-linguistic experiences which makes it so difficult to capture critically. Both Seigel and Wilson develop extremely compelling critical vocabularies in order to grapple with the symbolic and experiential facets of Bohemia. Yet, because of the inevitable interdependence of these vocabularies and those of their Bohemian subjects, their work contributes to the cultural resonance of Bohemia both as a symbolic space and as a valid historical phenomenon.

If studies like these reinforce the legacy of nineteenth-century Parisian Bohemia and its twentieth-century offshoots in other parts of the world, the same cannot be said for the far sparser number of works which tackle the idea of Bohemia in mid-Victorian London. Critics such as Nigel Cross, P.D. Edwards, and Christopher Kent have remained staunchly materialist in approaching the writers associated with this ill-defined English tradition. Their primary focus has been on the ways in which Bohemian journalists strove to meet the conditions of an ever-expanding periodical marketplace.[24]

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[21] Elizabeth Wilson, p. 26.

[22] Nicholson also frames her study of Bohemia using theatrical motifs — most conspicuously by including a list of its 'extensive cast of characters' under the title 'Dramatis Personae'. See Nicholson, pp. 292–311.

[23] Seigel, p. 12.

[24] These three critics remain the pioneering figures in the underexplored field of Victorian Bohemianism. See Nigel Cross, *The Common Writer: Life in Nineteenth-Century Grub Street* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), P.D. Edwards, *Dickens's 'Young Men': George Augustus Sala, Edmund Yates,*

This has cultivated the impression that historians of English Bohemia manage to retain a more pragmatic level of detachment from their subject-matter than scholars of the more renowned forms of Bohemia discussed above. Nigel Cross, for example, remains decidedly matter-of-fact as he equates mid-nineteenth-century Bohemia with London's rising population of comic journalists at the time. The English Bohemians, he remarks, 'were not in earnest.' They were more concerned with 'satisfying the insatiable Victorian craving for humour' than with creating subversive social satire or engaging in radical political causes.[25] Similarly P.D. Edwards and Christopher Kent maintain a rather disciplined focus on the social lives of writers such as George Augustus Sala and Edmund Yates. Though they acknowledge the emergence of Bohemia as a symbolic cultural space, their analysis is for the most part grounded in issues of social class and literary professionalism. This down-to-earth sociological approach appears at its most extreme, however, in an article published by Patrick Brantlinger in the early 1980s. In this, Brantlinger imposes an absolutist division between Parisian Bohemia and the literary scene of Victorian London — arguing that the two could not have been more different. Where the former actively dissociated itself from the marketplace through the doctrine of 'Art for Art's Sake', the latter represented the 'capitulation of writers to commerce' — a realm of opportunistic hack writing. Not satisfied with characterizing literary London in the nineteenth century as a latter-day Grub Street, Brantlinger casts it as everything that the 'Romantic' Latin Quarter was not: a 'Neoclassical' anti-Bohemia.[26]

Significantly however, just as Wilson and Seigel's evocative critical metaphors reflect the heavily mythologized nature of Parisian Bohemia, there is a degree of

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and the World of Victorian Journalism (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997), and Christopher Kent, 'British Bohemia and the Victorian Journalist', *Australasian Victorian Studies Journal,* 6 (2000), 25–35.
[25] Cross, p. 102.
[26] Patrick Brantlinger, 'Bohemia versus Grub Street: Artists' and Writers' Communities in Nineteenth-Century Paris and London,' *Mosaic,* 16:4 (1983), 25–42 (p. 26).

overlap between Brantlinger's determinedly demystifying criticism and the ways in which English Bohemian writers represented themselves. The latter did not shy away from acknowledging their compliance with the contemporary marketplace. Indeed, far from being ashamed of the concessions which they made to commercial demands, they wryly embraced both the imagery and the energy of the Grub Street myth. While in Brantlinger's sceptical view such compromises ruled out the existence of a London Bohemia, these writers had no qualms about drawing on both Bohemian and Grub Street traditions without feeling the need to commit to either. In fact, Brantlinger's binary opposition of the two did not even hold true in nineteenth-century Paris: Latin Quarter Bohemia produced plenty of hack-work and varied considerably in its commitment to 'Art for Art's sake'. As will be seen in Chapter 1, this section of Parisian life was far from homogeneous and came in for its fair share of iconoclastic attacks. However, such impulses towards demystification were more fundamental to the identity of London Bohemia. The foreign origins of *la Bohème* meant that its re-construction in England was frequently tinged with ironic self-awareness. In the English capital, writers who saw themselves as Bohemian — and indeed those who labelled them as such — were perpetually alert to ideas of cultural hijack and derivativeness. Chapters 3 and 4 of this thesis demonstrate the extent to which English conceptions of Bohemia were shaped through derogatory critiques as much as through semi-autobiographical portrayals of unconventionality.

However, this process of negative construction was not just a question of reactionary Establishment pitting itself against a disorderly group of upstart journalists. One crucial reason that the boundaries of mid-Victorian Bohemia were so difficult to trace was that those on the *inside* thrived on comedic self-subversion and brusque disavowals of fraternalism. In the mid-1850s, the notoriously Bohemian journalist and

novelist, George Augustus Sala, wrote with characteristic flair that: 'the inhabitants of Bohemia, like great men, may be divided into three grand divisions: those who are born Bohemian, those who achieve Bohemianism, and those who have Bohemianism thrust upon them.'[27] Appearing in Dickens's *Household Words,* these lines are themselves quintessentially Bohemian in style — not simply because they are a pastiche, but because they are a pastiche of a passage which is already infused with dramatic irony.[28] With this multi-layered self-parody, Sala epitomizes a deeply Bohemian determination not to be taken — or to take himself — too seriously.

Yet, for all their flippancy, Sala's words provide an incisive reflection of just how difficult it was to define oneself as Bohemian. His playful categorization of the 'inhabitants of Bohemia' captures the extent to which Bohemianism rests precariously between behavioural practice and intrinsic identity. There was indeed a sense in which a man's Bohemian status had either to be inherent from birth or to be indirectly 'thrust upon' him. The way in which a man might actually 'achieve Bohemianism', on the other hand, was far more nebulous. Though Bohemian identity was reliant on the performance of certain kinds of behaviour, it was often very difficult to determine what the nature of this behaviour should actually be. It was true that a man could vocalize his Bohemian status by drawing on any number of behaviour-related descriptions: 'I idle', 'I wander', 'I carouse', or 'I defy', for example. Taken in isolation, however, such statements clearly had no fixed connection with Bohemianism. Furthermore, they had to compete with a plethora of unflattering verbs which came to be just as closely associated with cultural imaginings of the Bohemian — verbs such as 'to chatter', 'to corrupt', and 'to cocknify'. This helped to compound the fact that, at the time that Sala was writing, any essentialist assertion of Bohemian identity possessed very little

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[27] George Augustus Sala, 'A Tour in Bohemia', *Household Words,* (8 July 1854), 495–500 (p. 496).
[28] See Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night, or What You Will*, II, v, 144–46.

currency. Claims such as 'I am a Bohemian' or 'I am unconventional' tended to incite either disbelief or ridicule. To this extent, the terms *Bohemia* and *Bohemian* themselves came to exert a strangely paradoxical hold over sections of mid-Victorian culture. They often triggered the most powerful reactions from those commentators who argued that the terms were devoid of any meaning at all. Clearly, if these expressions were as hollow as such critics claimed, they nonetheless became vessels for a significant amount of indignation.

Bohemian Instincts: Housetraining Thackeray

A central tenet of this thesis is that such overt references to Bohemia caused offence because they drew unwelcome attention to the collective narratives which certain sectors of society had come to rely upon. Men of a particular class and profession anticipated Virginia Nicholson in taking it for granted that certain aspects of Bohemianism were universal — or at least universal amongst their own rank and gender. Some of the key features of the *vie de Bohème* undoubtedly overlapped with more widely circulated ideals of male homosocial life. Late hours, unfettered conversation, and eccentric working habits were preferences which many middle-class men shared but did not wish to broadcast by pigeonholing themselves as *Bohemian*. In the second half of the nineteenth century, this label began to be applied far more liberally — something which has legitimately been read as evidence of the gentrification and institutionalization of the Bohemian lifestyle.[29] This is a process which has generally been associated with the 1880s and 90s — with a proliferation of

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[29] See, for example, Arthur Ransome's damning assessment of gentrified Bohemia at the turn of the century, in *Bohemia in London* (Kendal: The Arthur Ransome Estate, 2002), first published 1907, pp. 4–6.

'respectable' Bohemian clubs, and the emergence of hugely popular depictions of Parisian Bohemia in works like George du Maurier's *Trilby* (1894) and Puccini's *La Bohème* (1896). Indeed, the rise of Aestheticism and even the prevalence of ideas of cultural degeneration in these decades proved surprisingly conducive to idealized visions of Bohemia. While this was true in both Britain and France at the time, the ascent of an inclusive romance of Bohemianism was most pronounced in the United States.

Between the 1850s and 1870s, the bustling metropolitan scenes of cities such as Boston and New York had enthusiastically embraced ideas of Bohemian life.[30] A particularly pivotal moment came in 1872 when a group of journalists in San Francisco established what would soon become one of the country's most famous literary fellowships. It was simply named the 'Bohemian Club'.[31] This organization's original members had become accustomed to publically referring to themselves as *Bohemians* while working as journalists in the 1850s. The label was formalized when these men took up their pens as special correspondents in the American Civil War and became widely known as the 'Bohemian Brigade'.[32] This forthright application of the term *Bohemian* contrasted with the situation in England where (as will become clear in Chapters 3 and 4), the idea of Bohemia remained both more oblique and more controversial. However, the development of a more outspoken version of Bohemia in America during this period hastened its popularization on both sides of the Atlantic later in the century.

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[30] Pffaf's beer cellar was one of the most famous self-proclaimed Bohemian haunts in nineteenth-century New York. See *The Vault at Pfaff's: An Archive of Art and Literature by New York City's Nineteenth-Century Bohemians* < http://digital.lib.lehigh.edu/pfaffs/about/intro/> [Accessed 2 December 2008].

[31] In recent times, this fraternity has become much more than a literary club. Its membership now includes many high-powered individuals (including global leaders) and it has accordingly become the subject of numerous conspiracy theories.

[32] See James Moorhead Perry, *A Bohemian Brigade: The Civil War Correspondents, Mostly Rough, Sometimes Ready* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2000).

In 1896, one of the Bohemian Club's most prolific members: the American artist, author, and humorist, Gelett Burgess created the 'Map of Bohemia' seen in figure c. This whimsical image captures the patchwork of cultural myths and literary motifs which had accumulated around the inherently figurative geography of Bohemia. Burgess was a self-proclaimed 'cartomaniac' and though his map is a product of the San Francisco Bohemian scene, it clearly spans beyond local boundaries. The landscape is emphatically symbolic — represented in the style of a Renaissance exploration map
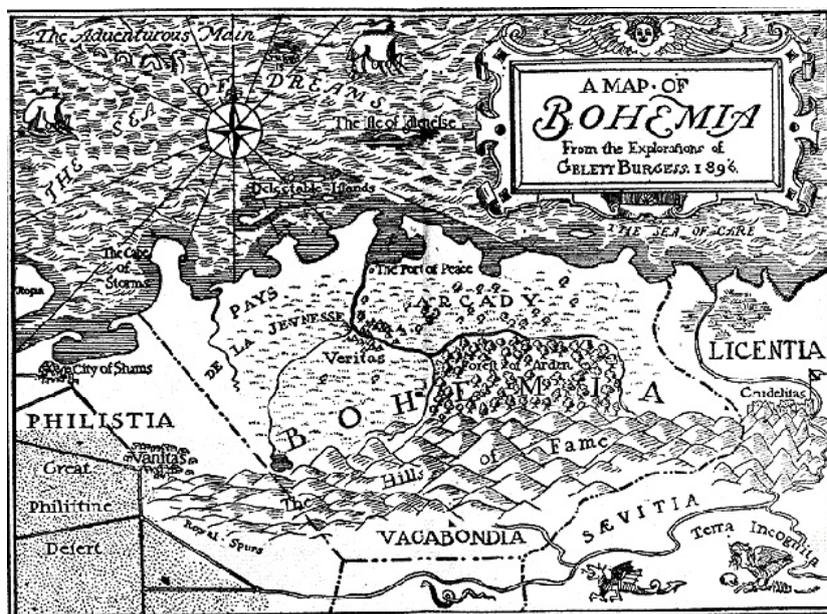
Figure c: Gelett Burgess, 'Map of Bohemia', *The Lark,* **1 March 1896**

with a dose of Classical mythology thrown in for good measure. Similarly, Burgess recycles a well-established Bohemian in-joke in associating the terrain's coast with the psychological aspects of Bohemian life. The 'Sea of Dreams' and the 'Sea of Care' are doubly fantastical, playing on Shakespeare's famous geographical error in *The Winter's Tale,* when he (possibly deliberately) endows the Central European kingdom of

Bohemia with an imaginary shoreline.[33] Just as significantly, Burgess's fanciful topography brings together elements from the Murgerian tradition of Parisian Bohemia (including the 'Pays de la Jeunesse' and the 'Cape of Storms') and from the Anglo-American tradition of the opportunistic Bohemian journalist (including the realms of 'Licentia' and 'Vagabondia'). More Anglocentric still is the land of 'Philistia' to the west of the map, with its Thackerayan 'City of Shams' and fort of 'Vanitas'. From this evocative medley, Burgess derives a universally accessible (though quintessentially masculine) version of Bohemia. In an article accompanying his map, he describes the heartland of Bohemia — the 'Forest of Arden' — observing that: 'here is spoken a universal language, Nature's own speech, the native dialect of the heart.' For Burgess, the forest symbolizes a phase of fraternal initiation and, as he informs his male reader, 'once [you are] free of the wood, you are of the Brotherhood and recognize your fellows by instinct, and know them, as they know you, for what you are.'[34]

Burgess was a prolific Nonsense writer and his map is something of a literary curiosity. Indeed, one might argue that his depiction of Bohemia bears marks of the Nonsense genre not only in its flights of fancy and wordplay, but also in the emphasis which it places on a universalizing intuitive response. The non-semantic rhythms of Nonsense verse after all depend on a not insignificant degree of instinctive appreciation. Moreover, the paradoxical idiom and absurdist humour of the genre clearly parallel the conversational verve and quick wit often associated with the allegedly spontaneous 'spirit of Bohemia'. Yet, for all this, Burgess's metaphorical landscape is a valuable historical document. Its romanticized vision of Bohemianism provides a form of pictorial *Begriffsgeschichte* — or 'Conceptual History'. Rising to prominence in the

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[33] Scholars have long disputed the relevance of Shakespeare's apparent geographical inaccuracy. See, for example, Andrew Gurr, 'The Bear, the Statue, and Hysteria in *The Winter's Tale*', *Shakespeare Quarterly,* 34 (1983), 420–25.

[34] Gelett Burgess, 'Where is Bohemia?' from the *Lark,* 1 March 1896, reprinted in *The Romance of the Commonplace* (San Francisco: Paul Elder & Morgan Shepard, 1902), pp. 128–32 (p. 131).

1970s, this German methodology places particular emphasis on the socio-historical potential of linguistic expressions. Central to its approach is the view that individual concepts embody 'collection[s] of experiences and expectations [and] perspectives and explanations of historical reality'.[35] More specifically, *Begriffsgeschichte* seeks to combine the diachronic with the synchronic — moving beyond the etymological analysis of specific concepts to arrive at a sophisticated understanding of their 'historical depth'. According to Reinhart Koselleck — the founder of this school of criticism — such *depth* is 'not identical with [a concept's] chronological succession of meanings' but is rather the product of a 'multiple stratification of meaning descending from chronologically separate periods'.[36] Burgess' prose description of an intuitive Bohemian Brotherhood gives little indication that Bohemia might have any such 'historical depth'. Despite being similarly idealized, his visual interpretation of the concept, on the other hand, exposes its eclectic origins. In fact the map essentially flattens out Bohemia's 'depth' — emblematizing a number of the nuances which were assimilated into its 'meaning' at different points in the nineteenth century. In this respect, if Burgess perpetuates a romance of inclusive Bohemia, he does so with a demystifying flourish — laying bare the concept's multi-stranded historical identity.

In uncovering its fragmentary French, English, and American heritage, Burgess uncovers the Bohemia at the heart of this thesis — a Bohemia which was the product of a concatenation of different cultural customs and distinct collective narratives. As a concept, its 'multiple stratification of meaning' was all too often on the verge of buckling, and as a way of life even its staunchest adherents were all too ready to

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[35] Hans Bödeker, 'Concept – Meaning – Discourse. *Begriffsgeschichte*', in *History of Concepts: Comparative Perspectives*, ed. by Iain Hampsher-Monk, Karin Tilmans, and Frank Van Vree (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1998), pp. 51–64 (p. 55).
[36] Reinhart Koselleck, 'The Method of *Begriffsgeschichte* and Social History', in *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. by Keith Tribe (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985), pp. 73–91 (p. 89).

puncture its illusions. The popularization of Bohemianism at the end of the nineteenth century inevitably intensified the urge to demystify Bohemian life and to divest it of its artistic and counter-cultural associations. What Burgess' heavily mythologized map cannot capture is the weariness and even claustrophobia which had come to surround ideas of Bohemian companionship by this time. Many men had begun to tire of Bohemia's shifting identity, deeming its homosocial narratives to be stiflingly unrealistic. English responses to Bohemianism were especially unforgiving with some (such as that of G.K. Chesterton discussed in Chapter 2) reading like supporting documents for Marx's famous maxim that 'the traditions of all dead generations weigh like a nightmare on the brain of the living.'[37] The idea of Bohemianism had become so entangled in the mainstream fabric of middle-class masculine life that, more often than not, such accounts show a visible desire to shake off a fusty Bohemian inheritance.

The urge to de-mythologize Bohemia at the end of the nineteenth century is of course another reason that critics have tended to turn to Bloomsbury rather than to dig deeper into the past for examples of English Bohemianism. It can indeed seem hard to get beyond the array of cultural doubts which became part and parcel of Bohemia during these decades. These doubts were to some extent linguistic, relating to a nonconstructivist mistrust of metaphorical language; Bohemia's figurative representations of fraternal interaction were seen as 'deviant and parasitic on 'normal'' language and thought.[38] At a broader level, a similarly naturalistic insistence on the truth provoked dismissals of Bohemia as a distortive cultural myth; it was becoming commercialized and its symbolism was perceived by some to be a source of false consciousness. Most significantly, however, fin-de-siècle dissatisfaction with Bohemia

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[37] Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte,* translator unidentified (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1978), first published 1852, p. 1.
[38] See Andrew Ortony, 'Metaphor, Language and Thought', in *Metaphor and Thought,* ed. by Andrew Ortony (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 1–18 (p. 2). This article represents the classic discussion of constructivist and nonconstructivist theories of metaphor.

clearly bore a relationship with contemporary concerns regarding male homosocial culture.

In the last three decades, few critics have provided a more convincing basis for such an interpretation of late Victorian Bohemia than Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. Rightly celebrated for her wide-ranging investigations of masculinity and its discontents, Sedgwick has both transformed and darkened contemporary understandings of homosociality.[39] Of particular importance has been her identification of a precarious 'continuum' between the nonsexual male bonding demanded by mainstream patriarchal society and the homosexual bonds which it has traditionally prohibited. Her formulations of 'homo*social* desire' and 'homo*sexual* panic' have captured the psychological strain which prescribed sociological ideals such as masculine solidarity can impose on men at a very personal level.[40] In this respect, her work has had a significant impact on recent views of the social bonding between men as competitive, anguished, potentially paranoid, and inherently contradictory.[41] Sedgwick after all depicts 'male homosociality' as a 'double bind': essential to the maintenance of patriarchal power structures but also fundamentally un-masculine, if not emasculating.[42]

It is owing to this penetrating approach to male social life that Sedgwick stands out amongst the relatively small number of critics to have tackled the extra-domestic world of Victorian Bohemia. However, the form which this masculine realm takes in

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[39] The extent of Sedgwick's influence on gender theory is difficult to overstate. It ranges from performance theory (see Sharon R. Bird, 'Welcome to the Men's Club: Homosociality and the Maintenance of Hegemonic Masculinity,**'** *Gender and Society*, 10: 2 (April, 1996), 120–32) to socio-linguistics (see Scott Fabius Kiesling, 'Homosocial desire in men's talk: Balancing and Re-creating Cultural Discourses of Masculinity', *Language in Society,* 34 (2005), 695–726). Her imprint is also clearly discernable on the work of historians of Victorian masculinity such as John Tosh and James Eli Adams.

[40] My italics. Sedgwick first developed these theories in *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

[41] Views exemplified in studies such as David D. Gilmore's *Manhood in the Making: Cultural Concepts of Masculinity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990) and David Buchbinder's *Performance Anxieties: Re-producing Masculinity* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 1998).

[42] All further use of the term *homosocial* will refer specifically to *masculine* interaction unless otherwise stated.

her work is determined by her distinctive periodization of nineteenth-century homosociality. Sedgwick engages with Victorian literary representations of English Bohemia in *Epistemology of the Closet* — an inherently proleptic study which rarely loses sight of the transformative fin de siècle and its impact on twentieth-century Western culture. Accordingly Sedgwick identifies the discontented rumblings which began to trouble Bohemia in the 1880s and 90s with the contemporaneous explosion of new 'medical, legal, literary, [and] psychological' discourses which were concerned with the classification of sexuality.[43] Sedgwick argues that the new cultural visibility which this conferred on the question of homosexuality triggered a surge of 'panicked' self-consciousness within the fraternal environs of Bohemia. The ideal of the free-spirited bachelor began to lose its appeal as the renunciation of mainstream domesticity became a potentially (homo)sexually loaded act.

In locating this anxious and unstable Bohemia at the end of the nineteenth century, Sedgwick simultaneously assumes that it was preceded by something which was not only less anxious but also less self-aware. Indeed, her account of Bohemian homosociality earlier in the century follows Henry Murger in characterizing Bohemia as a 'developmental stage' in a young man's life. Not yet 'strewn with [the] psychic landmines' which she identifies with the fin de siècle (p. 194), this sphere of highly concentrated masculine camaraderie still provided men with an effective means of processing anxieties. Significantly, however, Sedgwick represents the latter as more socio-professional than sexual. Even more significantly in the context of this thesis, she places Thackeray at the heart of her account of Anglo-Bohemia in Victorian literature. In a much-cited passage, she argues that:

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[43] Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 2. All further references to this work will be given in the text.

> Literally, it was Thackeray who introduced both the word and the concept of bohemia to England from Paris. As a sort of reserve labour force and a semiporous, liminal space for vocational sorting and social rising and falling, bohemia could seemingly be entered from any social level; but, at least in these literary versions, it served best the cultural needs, the fantasy needs, and the needs for positive and negative self-definition of an anxious and conflicted bourgeoisie. (p. 193)

Moving through a series of impressionistic binaries, this account shares a certain slipperiness with the concept which it describes. Sedgwick claims that the mid-century version of Bohemia in question had not yet acquired 'a distinctly gay colouration' and that, as a result, its extra-familial attractions remained safely 'generalized' (p. 193). Her sweeping overview appropriately captures this air of generalization as it layers social reality upon cultural fantasy, positive self-definition upon negative self-definition, and Bohemia upon bourgeoisie.[44] In doing so, however, it obscures the precise nature of Thackeray's contribution to English Bohemia.

Sedgwick's use of the adverb *literally* is a particular source of ambiguity here. It initially appears to suggest little more than the *OED*: that Thackeray was categorically the first English writer to endow the word *Bohemia* with a new set of counter-cultural associations derived from the French.[45] At the same time, it gives the impression that he transferred the concept of *Bohemia* from France to England with a considerable degree of fidelity. However, in the context of mid-Victorian Bohemianism, the term *literally* also invokes decidedly pejorative connotations. As this introduction has suggested, the movement from Parisian to London Bohemia has often been equated with a loss of figurative significance. Sedgwick's phrasing thus raises the possibility that Thackeray's

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[44] In capitalizing the terms *Bohemia*, *Bohemian*, and *Bohemianism* throughout this thesis, I am adhering to the convention most commonly followed by self-identifying Bohemians and their critics in nineteenth-century Britain. The case in France was (and still is) different, with only the proper noun *Bohême* being capitalized.

[45] See discussion below in Chapter 1.

Anglicization of Bohemia might lose something in translation — emerging as a prosaic re-packaging of a more meaningful original.

At the most basic level, Sedgwick simply uses the term *literally* to suggest that Thackeray introduced the idea of Bohemia to England through literary representation. However, this relatively uncontentious remark comes immediately after the more loaded assertion that mid-Victorian Bohemia was something which Thackeray 'half invented' and 'half merely housetrained' for English literature (p. 193). Here, though Sedgwick acknowledges that Thackeray had a seminal impact on English conceptions of Bohemianism, she curbs any sense of innovation with the more unsettling idea of housetraining. The question of whether Thackeray domesticated the quintessentially non-domestic realm of French Bohemia will be explored further in the course of this thesis. In Sedgwick's analysis, however, Thackeray's housetraining — or 'housebreaking' — of Bohemia carries connotations of repression, feminization, and even aggression. His numerous bachelor protagonists are seen to perpetuate a form of Bohemia which is both self-marginalizing and self-centred. For Sedgwick, this marks their rather irritable response to the underlying contradictions of masculine interaction and, more specifically, to the 'strangulation of homosexual panic' which she claims characterized the mid-nineteenth century. Thus, like much of her study, this vision of 'housebroken' Bohemia is rooted in prolepsis — dependent for its full effect on the implosive psychiatrization of homosociality at the end of the century. Within this framework, Sedgwick certainly represents Thackeray's bachelor-saturated Bohemia as a source of powerful homosocial myths in the mid-nineteenth century. At the same time, however, our specific appreciation of his impact on Bohemia comes as much from Sedgwick's account of radical demystification at the fin de siècle as it does from any analysis of Thackeray's mystification of masculine social life during his own lifetime.

Though she devotes more attention to Thackeray than many other theorists of Bohemia, Sedgwick's is far from the whole story.[46] As she concertinas the relationship between French and English Bohemianism, she gives only a limited sense of the distinctiveness of Thackerayan Bohemia and of the impression which it made on men at the time. Not unlike Sedgwick, this thesis holds that unpredictable fluctuations between mystification, demystification, and indeed re-mystification played a necessary role in cultural definitions of Bohemia. However, as a writer who has been accused of cynical demystification almost as frequently as he has been of romanticizing homosocial life, Thackeray serves as an important reminder that such fluctuations lie in the eye of the beholder. Accordingly, the late nineteenth-century impulse to demystify an anglicized and de-radicalized form of Bohemia should not be read as a conclusive dismissal. This thesis seeks to move beyond the idea that mid-Victorian Bohemia was either a form of concealment or a response to repression. If it was often characterized by disavowals and unspoken assumptions, it was also rooted in a complicated combination of shame and pride, self-deprecation and self-promotion, secrecy and publicity.

Later in her career, Sedgwick herself came to question the 'paranoid' modes of interpretation or — in Paul Ricoeur's words — the 'hermeneutics of suspicion' which she felt had become too dominant in late twentieth-century critical theory. Not ashamed to identify aspects of her own work with this trend, she developed a provocative comparison between 'Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading' in an essay of the

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[46] Sedgwick remains one of the few critics to have offered a concerted discussion of Thackeray's impact on English Bohemia. Kent (British Bohemia and the Victorian Journalist', *Australasian Victorian Studies Journal,* 6 (2000), 25–35), Nicholas Dames ('Brushes with Fame: Thackeray and the Work of Celebrity', *Nineteenth-Century Literature,* 56 (2001), 23–51), and Rosemary Ashton (*142 The Strand: A Radical Address in Victorian London* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2006)) all provide less detailed observations on the subject. Richard Salmon goes further, expanding on Sedgwick in an account of Thackeray's masculinised brand of realism, in *William Makepeace Thackeray* (Tavistock: Northcote House Publishers, 2005), pp. 80–83.

same title, first published in 1997.[47] In this, she argues that the prevalent post-modern practice of 'suspicious' analysis — which seeks out concealed meanings beneath the textual surface — could valuably be supplemented with a more 'reparative' approach to literary criticism. The latter involves a shift in emphasis away from the demystifying 'exposure of hidden violence' towards a more constructive form of interpretation rooted in juxtapositions and the 'accretion' of meaning. This move forms part of Sedgwick's quest for a more non-dualistic way of thinking about literature — exploring that which lies *beside* a statement rather than that which lies *beyond* or *beneath* it.[48]

Sedgwick's desire to release the critic from the constraints of paranoid reading practices and binary-orientated thinking bears particularly significant implications for a concept which has incited as much suspicion as Bohemia. If pre-Foucauldian mistrust in the nineteenth century tended to centre on the idea that Bohemia glamorized debauchery, Foucault-inspired suspicions in the second half of the twentieth century have more commonly related to the mystification of sociological divisions and the concealment of class guilt.[49] Sedgwick's post-Foucauldian musings, on the other hand, suggest new ways of framing a cultural ideal which rarely comes into being without inspiring an immediate attack. The 'spacious agnosticism' permitted by her conception of the *beside*, in particular, provides a means of collating and negotiating the puzzling oppositions which have long characterized attempts to define Bohemia. As Melissa Gregg points out, the preposition *beside* is non-hierarchical — 'interested in relations of

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[47] Sedgwick, 'Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, or, You're so Paranoid, I Bet You Think this Essay is About You', reprinted in *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (London: Duke University Press, 2003), pp. 123–51.

[48] Sedgwick, 'Introduction', *Touching Feeling,* pp. 8–9.

[49] For examples of the former see George Saintsbury and John de Capel Wise discussed in Chapter 3. For Foucauldian readings, see particularly Mary Gluck on Henry Murger's 'sentimentalization' of Bohemia (*Popular Bohemia*, pp. 16–23).

proximity and tension' rather than 'origins and futures'.[50] In the labyrinthine social scene of nineteenth-century London, countless different Bohemias indeed existed *beside* each other: 'Bohemian' clubs were never entirely distinguishable from the haunts of more 'respectable' men, and the actuality of Bohemian experience was often difficult to disentangle from its journalistic representation. Similarly, a single account of Bohemian life more often than not inspired diametrically opposed reactions — being identified as the depths of gritty realism by one group of commentators and as the pinnacle of masculine pathos by another.

To conclude, in recuperating Thackeray's contribution to mid-Victorian Bohemia, this thesis proceeds in the spirit of Paul Ricoeur — the French philosopher who also provides inspiration in Sedgwick's later work. Though Ricoeur coined the phrase 'hermeneutics of suspicion' and places great faith in its value in the work of Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud, he equally emphasizes the affirmative potential of de-mythologization.[51] In his view, the dispelling of cultural myths does not necessarily represent an exposure of embedded ideological delusions. Rather it can comprise a positive 'critical' action, bringing into relief the collective narratives which make up the 'social imagination' and, by extension, the 'social realities' which we experience. Myths are not just distortions or examples of nostalgic regression; they embody a 'poetics of the possible' — reflecting society's aspirations and dreams.[52] This thesis similarly maintains that though it is necessary to remain alert to the myths propagated by mid-Victorian Bohemia, any attempt at its 'de-mythologization' must also seek to safeguard the illusions, possibilities, assumptions, prejudices, and desires uncovered in

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[50] Melissa Gregg, 'How to Avoid Being Paranoid (Review of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Touching Feeling*)' <http://www.electronicbookreview.com/_thread/criticalecologies/beside> [Accessed 3 August 2009].

[51] For a scholarly overview of Ricoeur's philosophy, see Richard Kearney, *On Paul Ricoeur: The Owl of Minerva* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004).

[52] See ibid., pp. 59–73.

the process. Housetraining, Anglicization, and gentrification should not automatically be read in negative terms — exclusive and conservative though they sometimes seem. Despite its gender bias, its fraternal brusqueness, and its incipient claustrophobia in the latter part of the nineteenth century, Victorian Bohemia played an important role in the development of the English national character. Demonstrating the irresistible pull of companionship — even in a world where effusive camaraderie often ran counter to dominant ideologies and behavioural norms — it also continues to speak to us today.

Like the Victorian era, our own 'post-heroic' age is quickly irritated by any hint of Bohemian pretentiousness.[53] We even retain the Victorians' cynicism as to whether an authentic subculture can exist in the first place.[54] Bohemia has of course been absorbed into a whole new set of 'culture wars' — particularly in the United States, where Neo-conservatives such as David Brooks have waxed hypocritical about self-professed Bohemians who thrive on consumer culture.[55] Nonetheless, today, as in the nineteenth century, Bohemia remains an underexplored and oft-misrepresented love-hate concept. This thesis thus strives not only to bring mid-Victorian Bohemia back into view but also to readjust our focus. Thackeray was not the first to chronicle Bohemian life; yet in salvaging the low-key rebelliousness, the ostentatious mediocrity, and the sometimes bewildering dynamism of the Bohemia which he helped to create, this study seeks to reinvigorate understandings of Anglo-Bohemianism — past and present.

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[53] See note 3 above.

[54] Exemplified in the world of critical theory by the rise of 'Post-subcultural Studies'. See, for example, David Muggleton and Rupert Weinzierl, eds., *The Post-Subcultures Reader* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2003).

[55] See David Brooks *Bobos in Paradise: The New Upper Class and How They Got There* (New York: Touchstone, 2000). Casting non-Bohemian suburbia as the new social underdog (and the location of society's true moral values), Brooks coins the term *Bobo* to denote a modern 'bourgeois bohemian' elite. This disingenuous group offset the material comforts which they enjoy courtesy of modern capitalism with alternative Bohemian values (such as 'spirituality' and 'self-help'). For a riposte to Brooks, see, for example, Ann Powers, *Weird Like Us: My Bohemian America* (Cambridge MA: Da Capo Press, 2001).

CHAPTER 1

Le Roi de Bohême: Thackeray's Translation of Bohemianism

1.1 Defining Defiance: Bohemia and the Dictionary

'I like Becky in that book. Sometimes I think I have myself some of her tastes. I like what are called Bohemians and fellows of that sort. I have seen all sorts of society — dukes, duchesses, lords, and ladies, authors and actors and painters — and taken altogether I think I like painters the best, and Bohemians generally. They are more natural and unconventional.'

Thackeray reflecting on *Vanity Fair* in 1856[56]

Figure 1a: Thackeray, 'Rebecca's Farewell', Chapter I, *Vanity Fair* (1847–48)

As her coach rolls away from her old school in the opening scene of *Vanity Fair* (1847–48), Thackeray's 'natural and unconventional' anti-heroine, Becky Sharp performs a parting act of rebellion. Finally leaving behind the financial dependence and social tyranny which she has endured at Miss Pinkerton's Academy, Becky leans out of her carriage window and thrusts a copy of Johnson's *Dictionary* into the institution's garden (figure 1a). The

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[56] A statement made to John Esten Cooke, quoted in Herman Merivale, *Life of W.M. Thackeray* (London: Walter Scott, 1891), p. 147.

submissive Jemima Pinkerton had surreptitiously given Becky the volume as a farewell souvenir — bestowing it on the articled pupil against the wishes of her domineering sister: the eponymous Miss Pinkerton. This dramatic episode, complete with its mock-epic undertones, sets the novel's plot in motion. Becky's Satan-like assault on the Pinkerton garden not only introduces the reader to her fundamental amorality as a character, but also foreshadows her ultimate fall from social grace. Of course, Miss Pinkerton's Academy is no paradise and the moral implications of Becky's eventual descent into vagabondage are studiously ambiguous. In this instance, however, the focus of Becky's defiance seems clear: she rejects both the cultural Establishment (symbolized by Johnson's *Dictionary*) and the philistinism of commercial modernity (embodied by the hypocritically materialistic Miss Pinkerton).

Both confrontational and counter-cultural, this is the first of many gestures over the course of the narrative which come together to convey the protagonist's deep-seated Bohemianism. Behavioural indicators of this kind build up particular momentum in the novel's opening number, as Thackeray devotes his second chapter to Becky's insalubrious origins in London's Artists' Quarter. Within a few pages of her departure from Miss Pinkerton's, we read of her unconventional upbringing at the hands of a French actress-mother and a talented but abusive artist-father — a childhood which has endowed her with a thoroughly double-edged creative energy or, in the words of the narrator, 'the dismal precocity of poverty.'[57] While Becky's father is still alive, she channels her peculiar ingenuity into witty mimicry — ruthlessly satirizing the Pinkerton sisters in puppet shows for the benefit of her father's male associates. Once her debt-prone parent is dead, she moves permanently into Miss Pinkerton's stifling Academy,

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[57] Thackeray, *Vanity Fair,* ed. by Peter L. Shillingsburg (New York: W.W. Norton, 1994), first published 1847–48, p. 12. All further references will be to this edition and will be given in the text preceded by the abbreviation, *VF*.

only to long for the 'freedom and beggary' of her old home, 'the studio in Soho' (*VF,* p. 14).

It should thus come as no surprise that the wilfully nonconformist Becky Sharp has held significant sway in the idea that Thackeray ('literally') introduced Bohemia to England. Despite bearing little in common with the traditional Bohemian bachelor, Thackeray's socially promiscuous leading lady even underpins aspects of Sedgwick's homosocial theory. Most significantly, in her account of Thackeray's impact on Victorian Bohemia, she cites just one rather unexpected source: Richard Miller — author of the eccentric *Bohemia: The Protoculture Then and Now* and, according to this book's blustering blurb, sometime 'marine, merchant seaman, cab driver, grave digger, foreign correspondent, public relations specialist, free-lance journalist, and scholar.'[58] This colourful 'historian' takes his lead from the *OED*, while Sedgwick in turn takes her own lead from Miller's sweeping survey of Western 'cultural resistance'. Yet, in each case, the upshot is the same: Becky's wayward personality and parentage confirm Thackeray as the original translator of Bohemianism.[59] Most explicitly, the *OED* identifies the term's first appearance in English with Thackeray's description of Becky's 'wild, roving nature,' which, as we have already learnt, was 'inherited from [her] father and mother, who were both Bohemians, by taste and circumstance' (*VF,* p. 652). In the etymological schema of the *Dictionary*, this represents the moment that *Bohemian* ceased to be restricted to its original sense of either a native of Central European Bohemia or, more broadly, a gipsy-nomad. Instead, it acquired a new figurative significance, from this point onwards also alluding to:

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[58] Richard Miller, *Bohemia: The Protoculture Then and Now* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1977), back cover.
[59] In addition to the *OED*, Miller's view of Thackeray's seminal contribution to Bohemia is backed up by earlier histories of Bohemia such as Orlo Williams's *Vie de Bohème: A Patch of Romantic Paris* (Boston: Gorham Press, 1913), p. 11.

> A gipsy of society; one who either cuts himself off, or is by his habits cut off, from society for which he is otherwise fitted; especially an artist, literary man, or actor, who leads a free, vagabond, or irregular life, not being particular as to the society he frequents, and despising conventionalities generally.[60]

The *Dictionary* provides the important addendum that the term can be 'used with considerable latitude, with or without reference to morals.'

According to Richard Miller's somewhat patchy overview, the re-invented term's appearance in *Vanity Fair* paved the way for the next ten years, by the end of which time it had entered into 'common usage'. To some extent, the gaps in Miller's account are symptomatic of the fundamentally discontinuous nature of Thackeray's impact on English perceptions of Bohemia. Having observed Thackeray's Bohemian innovations in *Vanity Fair,* for example, Miller abruptly moves forwards thirteen years to quote the following well-known excerpt from the early 1860s: 'What is now called Bohemia had no name in those days [*sic*] though many of us knew the country very well. A pleasant land, not fenced with drab stucco.'[61] Rather misleadingly, Miller presents this extract as the novelist's personal recollection of his artist days in Paris thirty years earlier. It would certainly be possible to argue that the quotation is quasi-autobiographical on the grounds that it comprises the words of Thackeray's protagonist-cum-narrator, Arthur Pendennis.[62] However, Miller's re-contextualization of these lines masks the fact that they concern the youthful idling of the more troubling Thackerayan

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[60] Like the earliest recorded occurrence of *Bohemia* (see below), the *OED's* identification of Thackeray as the first writer to use this new version of *Bohemian* can only be approximate. Indeed, Christopher Kent has suggested that the modernized expression appeared on a number of other occasions between 1847 and 1848, though I have been unable to find any evidence of this (see 'British Bohemia and the Victorian Journalist', p. 1). Thackeray's high-profile application of the term in his first major novel and his subsequent emergence as a figurehead of old-school Bohemia seem to have caused these examples to fade from view (both at the time and in later critical accounts). This is only reinforced by the fact that Kent does not cite any of the other appearances which he claims the term made in the late 1840s.

[61] Miller, p. 59.

[62] Critics have long conflated Thackeray and Pendennis. Judith L. Fisher usefully challenges this convention in *Thackeray's Sceptical Narrative and the 'Perilous Trade' of Authorship* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), pp. 245–47. Richard Salmon's use of the epithet 'fictive autobiographical persona' is perhaps most valuable here (*Thackeray,* p. 11).

alter-ego, Philip Firmin. It also confuses their original point of reference; this nostalgic evocation of Bohemia in fact relates as much to the experiences of young lawyers in London's Temple Inn as it does to artistic life on the Continent.

Miller's reframing of this oft-cited fragment from *The Adventures of Philip* (1861–62) is a product of the fact that it is taken directly from the *OED* rather than from the original text.[63] The *Dictionary* quotes exactly the same lines under its entry for the noun *Bohemia* — a term which it casts as another Thackerayan neologism. Thackeray is again responsible for endowing a pre-existing geographical term with fresh figurative significance. Similarly, the expression's new associations are once more derived from the French (*Bohème*), though these are not really captured by the *Dictionary's* rather uninspiring definition of *Bohemia* as 'the community of social 'Bohemians', or the district in which they chiefly live.' In this case, the *OED's* etymology falls wide of the mark and, as will be seen later, *Bohemia* appears in its new form in a number of popular journals of the 1850s. From another point of view, however, Thackeray's use of the term in *Philip* is indeed a novelty. Despite the fact that his work in the years following *Vanity Fair* is brimming with examples of Bohemian homosociality, it is not until his last complete novel that he employs the term *Bohemia* in print — or indeed that he again refers to a Bohemian. If Becky's Bohemianism was linguistically cutting edge, Thackeray appears to have made something of a retreat in the late 1840s — introducing the idea of the Bohemian into the English cultural mindset, only to then abandon it for the duration of the following decade.

This is not to overstate the intrinsic importance of the terms *Bohemia* and *Bohemian* themselves. Misty-eyed commentators have certainly been quick to emphasize the extra-linguistic timelessness of Bohemia — claiming that its existence is

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[63] The lines originally appear in Thackeray, *The Adventures of Philip, Works*, XI, 148. All further references will be to this edition and will be given in the text preceded by the abbreviation *PH*.

as inevitable as the 'conventional' society from which it seeks to escape.[64] More pertinent, is the observation that many of the men and women to whom we now apply the term would not have regarded themselves as Bohemian at the time.[65] Nonetheless, while the existence of unconventional lifestyles did not depend on the descriptive categories which emerged during the nineteenth century, the act of linguistic classification had an undeniable impact. This is compellingly illustrated by the lines from *Philip* above which, as well as appearing in the *OED*, regularly resurface in discussions of Victorian Bohemia. Pendennis's remark that 'what is now called Bohemia [formerly] had no name [...] though many of us knew the country very well', can be read as a knowing reference to notable developments in the preceding decade. As the passage continues, Pendennis becomes increasingly effusive, entering into a hyper-poeticized catalogue of the daily pleasures which characterize this previously unnamed realm; it is a haven of youthful idleness and sated appetites, boasting 'much tobacco [...] billiard-rooms, supper-rooms, oysters [...] song [...] soda-water [...] and frothing porter' (*PH,* p. 148). Perhaps most notably, this labyrinth of homosocial spaces is shrouded in an 'endless fog' — an atmosphere which reflects the decidedly hazy nature of the masculine recreations unfolding within. Indeed, having declared that this elusive sphere has only recently been defined linguistically, Pendennis almost defines it to death. The true nature of Bohemia recedes from view as he accumulates an ever more generalized list of masculine diversions. Famously, Thackeray's narrator ends the passage by acknowledging that, by this point in his life, he has anyhow lost his way to Bohemia. By now a family man of sorts, Pendennis has passed the point of being able to suspend pragmatic disbelief and to buy into this frothy realm of unfettered

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[64] See, for example, Gelett Burgess in my introduction or Arthur Symons's reverential foreword to *Scènes de la vie de Bohème* discussed in Chapter 2.

[65] This was true of many of the 'Bohemian' artists working in Paris during the 1830s and 40s (see Seigel, p. 28).

homosociability. As his luxuriant description suggests, however, he is not entirely willing to relinquish the captivating associations evoked by its new trademark name.

With this curious section of narrative, Thackeray wryly acknowledges the preconceptions and figurative images which had built up around the increasingly familiar idea of Bohemia during the 1850s. *The Adventures of Philip* emerged in the wake of a decade in which 'unconventional' varieties of homosocial interaction had taken particular root in the popular imagination. As will become apparent, this was by no means a universally welcome development. Yet, if all publicity was not exactly good publicity, the rise of the term *Bohemia* certainly reflected an increased tolerance for some of the behaviour which it had come to describe. These images of nonconforming masculinity of course bore very little resemblance to Thackeray's depictions of the rebellious Becky Sharp at the end of the 1840s. In fact, the disappearance of the term

Figure 1b: Thackeray, 'Pen pursuing his law studies', Chapter XXVIII, *The History of Pendennis* (1848–50)

Bohemian from Thackeray's work after *Vanity Fair* coincided with a much-noted and, for some critics, much-lamented change of direction. In *The History of Pendennis* (1848–50) and the novels which followed, Thackeray left behind the cosmopolitan booths and rousing misadventures of his satirical masterpiece to produce some of his most memorable depictions of eccentric homosociality (see figure 1b). Though they do not all occur in England, these encounters share a recognizable air of Anglo-gentlemanliness. Similarly, though they are not overtly labelled Bohemian and are less hyperbole-fuelled than Pendennis's above

homage to Bohemia, they exhibit their own comparable blend of unhindered conversation, cigar-smoking, and 'lotos-eating'.

1.2 An Inspired Cockney in Paris and London

Surroundings and behaviour of this kind have certainly dominated later conceptions of Thackeray's own Bohemianism. Commentators seldom allude to the latter without also touching on his signature gentlemanliness or, of course, on his appetite for homosocial club life. In fact, depending on their agenda, critics have long been at odds regarding the relationship between Thackeray's Bohemian and gentlemanly attributes. Potentially incompatible but just as frequently interdependent, these divergent facets of Thackeray's character have tended to sit in uncomfortably close proximity. Indeed, as they battle it out in Thackeray's corpulent body, they all too often appear a source of corporeal as well as psychological conflict. This sense of inner disquiet has encouraged the view that Thackeray was socially ill-at-ease in mid-Victorian Bohemia. In his seminal account of this aspect of London's literary scene, Nigel Cross has described the 'lesser' Bohemian journalists at its heart as 'little Dickenses and little Thackerays' who could not 'compete [...] only imitate.'[66] He goes on to suggest that, for Thackeray, far more than for Dickens, this discrepancy in literary talent could introduce an unsettling imbalance into social relationships. Like many critics before him, Cross suggests that Arthur Pendennis's 1861 declaration that he has lost his 'way to Bohemia now' directly reflects the older Thackeray's alienation from a rising generation of younger writers. More damningly, he implies that the *Philip* quotation might conceal an inflated sense of self-dignity.

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[66] Cross, p. 102.

Thus, if he 'lived much of his life as a Bohemian among gentlemen, a gentleman among Bohemians', Thackeray has emerged as a troubled and troubling Bohemian figurehead.[67] From Gordon Ray's groundbreaking biographical work onwards, his involvement in London's so-called Bohemian circles has been subsumed into accounts of high-profile quarrels and disintegrating private relations. In Ray's work, Thackeray habitually emerges on the 'gentlemanly' side of such disputes — whether he is pitting himself against Douglas Jerrold in the 'clash between gentlemanly and Bohemian standards in *Punch*' or taking on Edmund Yates and his 'Grub Street cronies' in the Garrick Club Affair.[68] More recently, Christopher Kent has instigated a trend which places both Thackeray and the Garrick Club at the centre of the 'geography of English Bohemia'. For Kent, Thackeray's victory in the Garrick Club dispute (which I will come back to in Chapter 3) was symptomatic of his presiding role in a contemporary convergence of Bohemian and gentlemanly ideals.[69] In Kent's account, Thackeray emerges at the vanguard of gentrified Bohemianism while his opponents are described as 'Dickensians'. Rosemary Ashton, on the other hand, introduces a very differently nuanced geographical shorthand for Thackerayan Bohemia in one of the best recent considerations of unconventional living and thinking in mid-nineteenth-century London. In Ashton's study of the radical publisher, John Chapman, Thackeray's popularization of the term *Bohemian* alongside his social preferences place him at the head of the eclectic group of middle-class men who regularly colonized the night-time haunts of London's Strand. Primarily journalists and 'fledgling lawyers', these men were radical in their political views but were widely held to be excessively laissez-faire when it came to work ethic and social morality.

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[67] Quotation from Joseph E. Baker, 'Thackeray's Recantation', *PMLA*, 77 (1962), 586–94 (p. 592).
[68] For the *Punch* dispute, see *Adversity*, p. 362. For the Garrick Club Affair context and aftermath, see *Wisdom*, pp. 274–90 and Chapter 3 below.
[69] See Kent, 'British Bohemia and the Victorian Journalist', pp. 4–7.

Ashton's characterization of the men she terms 'Thackeray's Bohemians' forms part of the very deliberate contrast which she draws between the socially transgressive spaces of the Strand's risqué night spots and the intellectually charged nonconformism of her subject: 'the most radical of the "respectable" publishers along the Strand'.[70] For Ashton, John Chapman's forward-thinking social circle emphatically bore little or no relationship with the Strand's Bohemian nightlife — middle-class and progressive though it might partially have been. In this determination to maintain a clear divide between rigorous ideological challenges to the status quo and frivolous lifestyle-based equivalents, Ashton follows in the footsteps of many commentators at the time. The urban vagabondage and idle sauntering which she associates with Thackeray's Bohemian connections certainly preoccupied many of those who knew him. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the Transcendentalist poet and artist, Christopher Cranch, for example, fondly recalled accompanying Thackeray to one of the establishments on the Strand which Ashton has in mind. On arriving at the legendary 'Cyder Cellars' the American artist was surprised to find that this mysterious-sounding location was not a cellar at all 'but a very plainly furnished but comfortable parlour on the second floor.'[71] In this informal setting, Cranch and his companions drank punch, smoked cigars, and listened with 'deep interest' to Thackeray reading aloud from the final number of *The Newcomes* (1853–55), which had just been published. While the company revelled in Thackeray's 'artless rendering' of the novel's poignant closing scene, another rowdier group of young men 'irrupted' into the room. Cranch describes the new arrivals as 'artists and small authors' and recalls how they surrounded

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[70] Ashton, p. 7.

[71] Originally published in the New York *Critic* just before Cranch's death in 1892. Reprinted in James Grant Wilson, *Thackeray in the United States, 1852–53, 1855–56*, 2 vols (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1904), II, 193. On the taste for cavernous imaginings and metaphors of the 'underground' in male Victorian nightlife, see Jaap Harskamp, 'Underground London: From Cave Culture Follies to the Avant-Garde', *Electronic British Library Journal* (2009) < http://www.bl.uk/eblj/2009articles /pdf/ebljarticle72009.pdf> [Accessed 13 January 2010].

Thackeray 'in a boisterous way' while giving 'vent to all sorts of small shallow talk in a free and familiar style of manners.' For Cranch, the contrast between this and the previously hushed atmosphere of Thackeray's pathos-infused reading had a 'jarring effect'. At the time, the fact that Thackeray himself appeared to experience no such uneasiness and indeed that he 'seemed to be on intimate terms with this noisy matter-of-fact crowd', reminded Cranch that the novelist 'had two sides to him, the thoughtful, the tender, the purely literary, and — well, the Bohemian.'[72] Somewhat disenchanted, Cranch left the scene soon after the arrival of Thackeray's young Bohemian admirers.

Cranch's response was representative of a common nineteenth-century view that the unstable social status encoded in the idea of the Bohemian translated into a lack of steady resolve and, in turn, suggested an absence of serious reflection and sincere emotion. In 1879, Anthony Trollope had deployed these deficiencies to great effect in his famous biography of Thackeray. In his account, far from being a source of social authority and respect, his fellow novelist's Bohemianism was an early impediment to literary professionalism and mainstream success. For Trollope, this hindrance had little to do with Thackeray's raucous social companions, and was instead a 'condition of mind' which prevented the author from emulating the precocious rise of his rival, Dickens. As he reviews their early careers, Trollope asks a pivotal rhetorical question: 'why was Dickens already a great man when Thackeray was still a literary Bohemian?'[73] His answer to this relies on a decidedly fluid understanding of the latter term. Initially, Trollope suggests, Thackeray's Bohemianism was part and parcel of his detrimental self-doubt — a source of chronic vacillation in his writing as he was repeatedly overcome with a sense of his own mediocrity and impending failure. When he went on to achieve more substantial successes as a regular contributor to *Punch*,

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[72] James Grant Wilson, p. 195.
[73] Anthony Trollope, *Thackeray* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1879), p. 18.

however, the lack of fixity associated with his Bohemianism mutated into a form of ambition, spurring him on to create a more enduring work in the form of *Vanity Fair*. In this respect, Trollope approaches a view embraced by more positive arbiters of Bohemia — somewhat begrudgingly acknowledging that the uncertainties of Bohemian experience might sometimes provide a valuable form of professional apprenticeship. At the same time, if, as Trollope implies, Thackeray left behind his identity as a literary Bohemian when he achieved widespread mainstream success¸ his account begs the question of what exactly it was which changed. After all, irresolution and self-doubt have often been seen as characteristics which defined Thackeray for the entirety of his career, rather than qualities which were expunged with the publication of his first truly successful novel.

In fact, pace Trollope, Thackeray had no qualms about advertising the more Bohemian aspects of his cosmopolitan identity in the immediate aftermath of *Vanity Fair*. Just a few months after he had begun to serialize *The History of Pendennis*, he provided the Anglophile journalist, Philarète Chasles, with a short biographical account for an article in the intercultural *Revue des Deux Mondes*. Chasles translated and 'arranged' the piece, integrating it into a longer review of *Vanity Fair* for his French readership.[74] Though Thackeray's original has not survived, he heartily approved of the French version and it is generally assumed that it did not stray far from his own.[75] What comes through most clearly is that he was unflinchingly candid in the details with which he supplied Chasles regarding his youthful escapades in Paris. The French review presents the young Thackeray as 'thoroughly lazy, given to smoking and idling'

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[74] See Philarète Chasles, 'Le Roman de mœurs en Angleterre. La Foire aux vanités', *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 1 (février, 1849), 537–71.

[75] Philip Collins reprints a translation of part of Chasles's article under the title of 'An Account of Thackeray, by Himself' in *Thackeray: Interviews and Recollections,* 2 vols (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1983), II, 1–3. Thackeray later recommended the piece to another French man of letters, Amédée Pichot, when the latter approached him for a biography. See *Letters,* III, 410–11 (Ray speculates that this undated letter was sent to Pichot in 1854).

and, more seriously, as 'ruining himself' financially.[76] At the same time, however, it couches these experiences in romanticized images of homosocial vagabondage. We are informed that the young Thackeray has been 'cast here and there, like Aeneas, by the accidents of his life' and that, in the process, he 'has talked with dressing-gowned German students and with our felt-hatted art students [in the Latin Quarter]'. Chasles adds that 'he is as familiar with the musical restaurants along the shores of the Rhine as with the clubs of London or Paris.' It is these Becky Sharp-esque meanderings which have transformed Thackeray into 'a man of experience and of *savoir-vivre* [...] — a man who has felt much and suffered much.'[77] Chasles claims that these eclectic early experiences are 'a precondition for all original talents' and that, in Thackeray's particular case, they are responsible for his inimitable 'truthfulness'. Manifesting itself as 'fine, frank, satirical, and unpretentious observation', the latter unequivocally reflects 'the dash and verve of a man of the world rather than the conventional ways of authorship.'[78]

Chasles's biographical article was translated and reprinted in both America and Germany and emerged at a time when Thackeray was particularly conscious of changing perceptions of his public image.[79] Not long before this, the Irish novelist, Charles Lever, had launched an attack on both his persona and his professionalism using the deeply insincere 'publisher's man-of-all-work', Elias Howle, in his novel, *Roland Cashel* (1848–49). Branded an 'inspired Cockney', this character was a retaliatory response to Thackeray's satire of Lever's own writing in 'Punch's Prize Novelists' (April–October 1847). Elias Howle was not only 'weak' and 'uncertain' but was also an unflattering embodiment of metropolitan worldliness — responsible for the

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[76] Philip Collins's translation.

[77] Philip Collins, p. 1.

[78] Ibid., p. 2.

[79] A translation of the article appeared in the New York journal, the *Literary World*, on 23 June 1849. In his letter to Pichot above, Thackeray notes that he had also come across a version in the German press.

rise of a 'new school of travel which, writing expressly for London readers, refers everything to the standard of "town"'.[80] As Chasles's account would more sympathetically suggest, Thackeray's 'man of the world' persona prior to *Vanity Fair* had indeed been significantly tied up in ideas of the roaming sketch writer and reviewer. Reducing the cosmopolitanly urbane to the mundanely urban, however, Lever's parodic portrayal of Thackeray ruthlessly subverts the broad horizons and innovative itinerancy associated with works such as *The Paris Sketch Book* (1840), *The Irish Sketch Book* (1843), and *Notes of a Journey from Cornhill to Grand Cairo* (1846).

Thackeray attempted to shrug off Lever's lampoon but was clearly hurt by the fact that these very personal slurs came from a former friend.[81] His sense of injury was only exacerbated by the fact that he was still adjusting to the transformations in his personal and professional circumstances following *Vanity Fair*, not to mention the dramatic upheavals which had unfolded across Europe in the meantime. Indeed, in the biography which he sent to Chasles in February 1849, his eagerness to emphasize the unconventionalities of his past was arguably symptomatic of the fact that he was feeling increasingly estranged from this period of his life. Chasles's article appeared at the end of four years in which Thackeray had been uncharacteristically absent from Paris.[82] During this time he had been busy meeting his publisher's deadlines for the monthly numbers of *Vanity Fair* and regularly contributing to *Punch* as well as an array of other publications. Equally, having given up hope of his wife ever recovering after her mental collapse at the beginning of the decade, he had been preoccupied with raising enough

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[80] Charles Lever, *Roland Cashel*, 2 vols (London: Chapman and Hall, 1858), first published 1848–49, I, 193.

[81] See his protest on 22 November 1848 to Edward Chapman, who had published Lever's *Roland Cashel* as well as a number of Thackeray's own works — including *The Irish Sketch Book* and *A Journey from Cornhill to Grand Cairo* (*Letters*, II, 455–56).

[82] This four-year lacuna often goes unnoticed when biographers make the otherwise accurate observation that Thackeray rarely went for long before returning to the French capital. His last sojourn there had been in February 1845 on the way back from the Near East (the journey which had resulted in *From Cornhill to Grand Cairo*).

capital to purchase a satisfactory home for his remaining family. He finally succeeded in mid-1846 and his two daughters joined him from Paris where they had been living in the care of their grandparents. While Annie and Minnie Thackeray settled into a domestic routine with their father in South Kensington, the novelist's mother and stepfather stayed behind in Paris and sustained a constant correspondence with their son throughout the tumultuous years either side of 1848.

Not surprisingly, this was an uneasy period in which Thackeray suffered a great deal of personal anxiety about the safety of his mother and her husband. Though Louis-Philippe was safely out of the picture when he eventually returned to Paris in February 1849, Louis Napoleon had just forced the newly formed National Assembly to vote its own dissolution — a move which was widely expected to trigger further popular unrest. To an extent, Thackeray was able to be more blasé about potential uprisings than he had been at a distance the year before when revolutionary activities were at their height. The day after he arrived in Paris, he wrote to his treasured friend, Jane Brookfield, and blithely remarked that 'Some say there is a revolution ready for today — the town is crammed with soldiers and one has a curious feeling of interest and excitement as in walking about on ice that's rather dangerous and may tumble in at any moment.'[83] However, the work which he produced during his stay was rather less light-hearted.

Other than visiting his mother, one of the primary reasons that Thackeray had travelled to Paris was to amass much-needed material for new contributions to *Punch*. Following the conclusion of *Snobs of England* in February 1847, his last major contribution to the satirical journal had been *Sketches and Travels in London* — a series which had begun in tongue-in-cheek agreement with the idea that 'Britons do not care a

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[83] Thackeray to Jane Brookfield, 1–2 February 1849, *Letters*, II, 493–98 (p. 495).

fig for foreign affairs'.[84] In this string of metropolitan vignettes narrated by 'Mr Spec',

Thackeray had developed some of the key London-centred techniques and topographies

which would become more prominent in his later novels. Most notable, in this respect,

was the debut appearance of the 'Cave of Harmony' — Thackeray's amalgamated

portrait of various Covent Garden nightspots which he goes on to use to such resonant

effect in *The Newcomes* and *The Adventures of Philip*.[85] On its first appearance in

Punch, as Thackeray's narrator initiates the reader into this 'haunt of pleasure', he

exudes Pendennis-like nostalgia and packages his description into sweepingly

collectivized masculine memories. Alongside such Oxbridge types as 'Lightsides of

Corpus' and 'Bardolph of Brasenose', Spec is 'carried instantaneously back to the days

of [his] youth' as he listens to one of the Cave's professional singers, Mr Grinsby,

perform a comic 'rustic' song. Grinsby's exaggerated gestures and feigned emotions

trigger a series of universalizing meditations on the performative nature of the public

life of the common man. Beginning with the exclamation: 'O Grinsby [...] what a

number of people and things in this world do you represent', Mr Spec runs through a

list of professionals who are equally dependent on carefully fashioned outward

identities which belie their true feelings. In characteristic Thackerayan fashion, the

meditation comes full circle, and Spec concludes as he began, wondering: 'Who isn't

like Grinsby in life?'[86] It was such cyclic musings and their reappearance in *The*

Newcomes which helped to fuel some of the most evocative myths surrounding

establishments such as the Cyder Cellars where Thackeray would later entertain

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[84] *Sketches and Travels in London*, *Works*, VI, 541–603 (pp. 541–42). The series ran in *Punch* between November 1847 and April 1848.

[85] The venues in question are the Cyder Cellars and the Coal Hole — managed by the brothers William and John Rhodes respectively — and Evans's Music-and-Supper Rooms which were presided over by John "Paddy" Green. Because of the lack of agreement as to which was the original model for the Cave of Harmony, it has been most usual to see Colonel Newcome's famous haunt as a fusion of all three. See, for example, Lewis Saul Benjamin, [Lewis Melville], *The Thackeray Country* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1905), pp. 125–26.

[86] *Works*, VI, 541–603 (pp. 580–81).
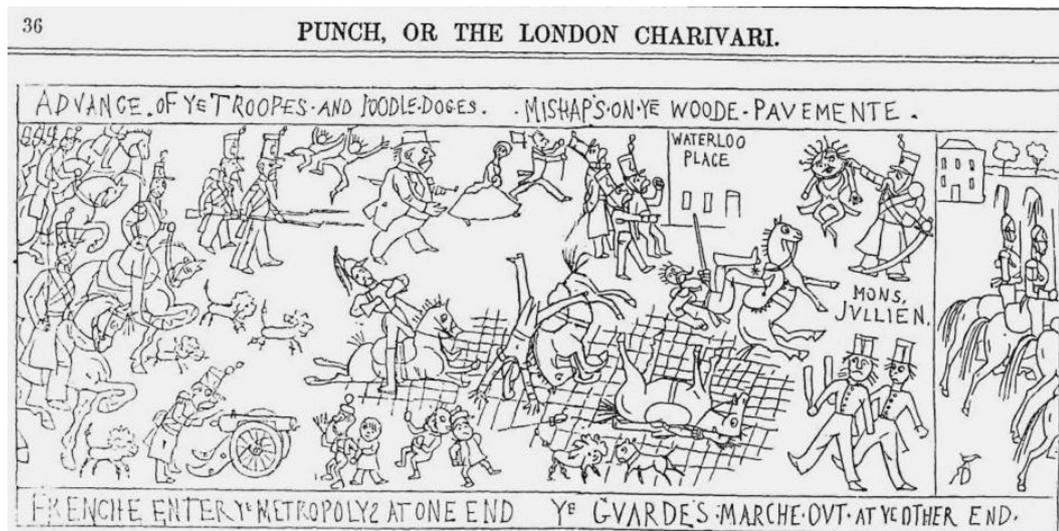
Figure 1c: Richard Doyle, 'Our Barry-eux Tapestry: Ye Foraye of the Frenche', *Punch* (29 January 1848), 33–38 (p. 36)

Christopher Cranch. Even those who regarded these 'interesting' late-hours venues with suspicion tended to concede that Thackeray's fiction had exerted an improving effect. The temperance campaigner, J. Ewing Ritchie, for example, acknowledged that Thackeray 'had something to do with th[e] reform' of this formerly 'obscene' establishment, ensuring that 'now nothing objectionable is sung.'[87] Alternatively, John Hollingshead's semi-affectionate characterization of the Cyder Cellars as a 'harmonious sewer' captured the double-edged associations which Thackeray's writings helped to instil in the popular imagination.[88]

Though Thackeray was certainly an enthusiastic participant in London's social scene at the time, the original context in which *Sketches and Travels in London* appeared ensured that its Anglo-isolationist stance was infused with irony. He unveils the Cave of Harmony, for example, on a page in *Punch* which is divided between his sketch and an image from Richard Doyle's 'Barry-eux Tapestry' — a seething six-plate Bayeux-Tapestry-style comic strip sending up British fears of an invasion from France. Thackeray's account of his nostalgist-narrator's arrival at a thoroughly English night-

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[87] J. Ewing Ritchie, *The Night Side of London* (London: William Tweedie, 1858), p. 92.
[88] John Hollingshead, *My Lifetime*, 2 vols (London: Sampson Low, Marston & Company, 1895), I, 156.

time haunt thus appears directly below a chaotic illustration of French soldiers and a pack of 'poodle-doges' invading London — or rather 'Y$^{\text{E}}$ METROPOLYZ' (see figure 1c).[89] Doyle's caricature culminates with the French and their poodles besieging the *Punch* office on Fleet Street before being chased out of England by the magazine's symbolic figurehead, Mr Punch, and his canine sidekick, Toby. In this way, Thackeray's depiction of London homosocial life emerged in tandem with a characteristic manifestation of *Punch's* rumbustious approach to its neighbours across the Channel. Indeed, the magazine had acted as a defiantly unforgiving mirror to the strained Anglo-French relations which had increasingly characterized the 1840s. From the Prince de Joinville's threatening pamphlet on French naval potential in 1844, through the Spanish Marriage Crisis of 1846, and throughout the 1848 upheavals themselves, *Punch* remained an unashamedly biased champion of British interests.[90] The upshot of this on a number of occasions was a complete embargo on the journal throughout France — something which only added fuel to comic retaliations from satirists such as Richard Doyle against the French governing powers.[91]

However, as Marion Spielmann would point out later in the century, the *Punch* staff of the 1840s not only represented events abroad from an English perspective but were also generally felt to identify themselves with the capital — 'seeing with London's eyes and judging by London standards.'[92] Accordingly, as mounting unrest in France erupted into revolution, Thackeray used his London-centric series to comment on foreign affairs in a manner that was perfectly in keeping with *Punch's* customary approach. Soon after Louis-Philippe's abdication and his flight from Paris to London,

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[89] Thackeray, 'Travels in London: A Night's Pleasure', *Punch* (29 January 1848), 35–36 (p. 36).
[90] For an unparalleled account of *Punch's* mulish approach to 'Foreign Affairs' during this period, see Richard Altick, *Punch: The Lively Youth of a British Institution, 1841–1851* (Columbus, Ohio State University Press, 1997), pp. 380–418.
[91] On *Punch's* censorship in France, see M.H. Spielmann, *The History of 'Punch'* (London: Cassell & Co., 1895), 190–91.
[92] Ibid., p. 110.

Figure 1d: Thackeray, 'A Club in an Uproar', *Punch* (11 March 1848), 95–96 (p. 95)

Thackeray published a sketch entitled 'A Club in an Uproar'.[93] As the illustrated initial of its opening sentence might suggest (figure 1d), this was a piece in which the perceived harmony of English homosociality and the destabilizing radicalism of its French equivalent came to a satirical head. In this sketch, Thackeray parodies the '*habitués*' of a Pall Mall club as they are swept up into a wave of hysteria when they learn of the latest dramatic turn of events across the Channel. In doing so, Thackeray generates a very different idea of collectivized masculine experience to that which Spec encounters in the Cave of Harmony little more than a month earlier.

In this later contribution to *Sketches and Travels in London*, Spec visits the 'Megatherium' — a gentleman's club-cum-homosocial pressure cooker. Here, the reader encounters a skirmish between the club's normally respectable members as they squabble over conflicting and ever more sensationalized reports of the upheavals in France. To the contemporary nineteenth-century reader, however, there would also have been clear ironic parallels between this raucous scene and the type of mutinous commotion which had inspired this very English panic in the first place. The clubmen's 'prodigious bawling and disputing', bear striking echoes of the behaviour more usually associated with Francophile revolutionary clubs in London — fraternities which were generally described in alarmist terms and which were blamed on the influx of émigrés from the collapsing French regime.[94] Widely perceived as riotously seditious and chronically ill-mannered, these gatherings contributed significantly to the socio-

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[93] Louis-Philippe abdicated on 24 February 1848. 'A Club in an Uproar' appeared in *Punch* on 11 March 1848.

[94] *Works*, VI, 541–603 (p. 584).

political unease rife in England at the time — and indeed in respectable London establishments not dissimilar to Thackeray's fictional Megatherium.[95] Yet as much as anything else, Thackeray's sketch gives wry expression to the potentially macrocosmic consequences of localized homosocial exchanges. As he describes the chaos unfolding in this particular gentleman's club, Spec foregrounds the influence which institutional homosocial spaces exert over the psyche of the average middle-class Englishman. At the same time, the sketch's most disquieting inference is that unsubstantiated rumour and idle gossip play a decidedly active role in the formation of public opinion. Underlying this, however, is a strain of characteristically robust self-mockery directed back onto *Punch* itself. The garrulous excesses of the Megatherium clubmen mirror the excesses of the satirical publication in which they appear — a publication which was wholly unapologetic about its status as a dominant and often domineering metropolitan mouthpiece for the mood of the nation.

When a somewhat jaded Thackeray returned to post-revolutionary Paris a year after this sketch, one gets the impression that his fatigue related not only to London itself but also to his employer's exuberantly metropolitan approach to satirical commentary. Perhaps still smarting from Charles Lever's charge that his writing savoured excessively of the 'town', he confessed to Jane Brookfield that he had recently been feeling so weary of *Punch* that he was beginning to think that he 'must have done with it.' On one level then, his journey to the French capital — which he hoped would 'give [him] a subject for at least 6 weeks in *Punch*' — marked an undoubted attempt to shake off his ennui by means of fresh subject-matter.[96] The trip represented a chance to revisit the 'haunts of his youth' and ideally to get back in touch with the creative energy and excitement which he had felt as a young art student in the Latin Quarter. Any

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[95] For *Punch's* take on these exiled Parisian clubs, see 'Paris Clubs in London', *Punch* (12 August 1848), 74.

[96] 1–2 February 1849, *Letters*, II, 493–98 (p. 494).

prospect of a new start, however, seems to have swiftly evaporated. Though he dispensed with Mr Spec, his new persona ('Folkstone Canterbury') was just as much a man of the world and, if anything, was more world-weary. In the event, Thackeray only managed to find energy and material for three articles for *Punch*: 'Paris Revisited by an Old Paris Man' (10 February 1849), 'Two or Three Theatres at Paris' (24 February 1849), and 'On Some Dinners at Paris' (3 March 1849). All three share the same air of disenchantment. This can of course be partly attributed to the dramatic changes which the capital had undergone since Thackeray's last visit. It was a city in limbo, struggling to adapt to its status as the capital of a volatile (and ultimately short-lived) republic. Not someone who had ever had much time for the recurrent changes of the French regime, Thackeray felt that, in the aftermath of 1848, Paris had become 'rather dreary and shabby'. His *Punch* sketches at the time conjure up a city cluttered with vacuous commemorative emblems of the revolution and inhabited by a dispirited population bound together by little more than a form of 'national atheism'.[97]

However, for all the 'moral bankruptcy' which he perceives in Paris itself, it is Thackeray's own sense of emptiness and dislocation which is most palpable in these late contributions to *Punch*. Written two years before he resigned from the journal in protest at an especially irreverent caricature of Louis Napoleon, these sketches are marked by an inability to find rejuvenation in reminiscence. As much as he tries, the thirty-seven-year-old Thackeray seems incapable of shaking off the taint of London — or, at least, of escaping habits which have become essential to his daily existence. This comes through particularly strongly in his final *Punch* sketch from the period. In 'On Some Dinners at Paris', published in March 1849, he is besieged by multiple expatriate friends all of whom insist on entertaining him with their best English fare. He soon

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[97] Thackeray, 'Two or Three Theatres at Paris', *Works*, VI, 150–54 (p. 151).

concludes that he might as well have stayed in London as he finds that he does not have time for the 'quiet evenings' which he had hoped to spend at the truly Parisian haunts of his youth. Crucially, the anglicized meals with which his hosts provide him are not without their own air of Bohemian frugality. The boiled legs of mutton — the potatoes, turnips, beeksteak, and ale — are all offered in the spirit of informal hospitality to which Thackeray had become accustomed back in London. In the course of the 1840s this was undoubtedly a brand of social life which he had come to relish as a member of the *Punch* circle — penning jubilant drinking songs such as 'The Mahogany Tree' (1847) in celebration of the fact. In this sketch at the end of the decade, however, his ever-present British friends are by no means a wholly welcome addition to his time in Paris. For Thackeray, they are a perpetual reminder of the disjunction between his past and present selves — their well-meaning intrusions exacerbating his sense of alienation from the more thoroughly continental Bohemian experiences of his youth.

1.3 Flogging Bohemia: Biographical Extremes

> 'No, Becky — our hearts neither bleed for you, nor cry out against you. [...] You are not one of us, and there is an end to our sympathies and censures. [...] The construction of this clever little monster is diabolically French.'
> **Elizabeth Rigby, '*Vanity Fair: A Novel without a Hero*', *Quarterly Review* (1848)**[98]

Becky Sharp's opening act of lexicographical defiance in *Vanity Fair* does not simply fluster the faint-hearted Jemima Pinkerton — it scandalizes her fellow protagonist and travelling-companion, Amelia Sedley. In the same way that Becky's misbehaviour establishes her transgressive nature, Amelia's alarm provides an early indication of her

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[98] 84 (December 1848), 153–85 (p. 157, p. 160).

weakly compliant disposition. Indeed, the latter's agitation at the catapulted dictionary

arises from a fear-induced respect for authority which Becky is conspicuously without.

Thus we read that Amelia's horror at her friend's disdain for convention relates to the

fact that she has just 'left school, and the impressions of six years are not got over in

that space of time' (*VF,* p. 9). However, rather than focalizing Amelia's schoolgirl

anxieties, the narrative skirts around her personal response with a bluffly generalizing

digression. Advancing from behind his curtain, the 'Manager of the Performance'

informs the reader that 'with some persons [the] awes and terrors of youth last for ever

and ever.' He proceeds to illustrate his point with an anecdotal aside, casually

remarking that:

> I know for instance an old gentleman of sixty eight, who said to me one morning at breakfast, with a very agitated countenance — "I dreamed last night that I was flogged by Doctor Raine." Fancy had carried him back five and fifty years in the course of that evening. Dr. Raine and his rod were just as awful to him in his heart then at sixty eight as they had been at thirteen. If the Doctor with a large birch had appeared bodily to him even at the age of threescore and eight; and had said in awful voice, "Boy, take down your pant* *" Well, well, Miss Sedley was exceedingly alarmed at this act of insubordination. (*VF,* pp. 9–10)

Both the content of this digression and the act of digression itself are quintessentially

Thackerayan. From his earliest journalism through to his final novels, bitter-sweet

nostalgia for schoolboy floggings is not only a recurrent motif but also a notable

narratorial device.[99] Almost without exception, these garrulous narrative detours are

centred on male public schools and are strangely self-emasculating.[100] They exert a

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[99] Thackeray's fascination with corporal punishment has often been noted. See, for example, Lambert Ennis, *Thackeray: Sentimental Cynic* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1950), p. 9 or John Carey, *Thackeray: Prodigal Genius* (London: Faber and Faber, 1977), p. 28. All further references to the latter study will be given in the text preceded by '*Prodigal*'.

[100] Examples include 'St Philip's Day at Paris', *Works,* XII, 552–65 (p. 558), first published in *Britannia,* 15 and 22 May 1841, or *Philip,* p. 109.

variety of deflationary effects and, in this case, the calculated loss of narrative focus destabilizes both Amelia's prim outrage and Becky's rather trifling 'act of insubordination'. More specifically, however, this masculinised digression places the cultural antagonisms at the heart of the episode under substantial satirical strain.

The nationality-clash between Thackeray's protagonists becomes increasingly apparent as Becky revels in her symbolic victory over her former oppressors. She exuberantly broadcasts her French origins in a triumphant war cry: 'Vive la France, Vive l'Empereur, *Vive Bonaparte*!' This outburst once again mortifies Amelia, who responds with another reproach: 'O Rebecca, Rebecca, for shame'. In case we should be left in any doubt about the fact that Amelia represents the voice of English propriety, the narrator explains her reaction with the observation that 'in those days, in England to say "Long live Bonaparte," was as much as to say "Long live Lucifer"' (*VF,* p. 10). In the shadow of the preceding narrative digression, however, both French and English voices struggle to secure our conviction. The narrator's anecdotal rambling instils the passage with a self-sabotaging air of English conservatism. In fact, the hypothetical old gentleman's fixation on school day beatings runs counter to any sense of progress — whether narrative or ideological. His universalized recollections create a regressive backdrop against which Becky's subversive behaviour appears as bathetic and unproductive as the gentleman's quasi-senile nostalgia. Ultimately, the compulsive pull of reminiscent digression and institutionalized homosociality drains Becky of the exotic allure which she might otherwise have possessed.

First drafted in early 1846 and eventually published in January 1847, this passage emerged at the heart of Thackeray's writing career.[101] It notably brings together elements of both Continental Bohemianism and the distinctive brand of English

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[101] See Peter Shillingsburg, *Pegasus in Harness: Victorian Publishing and W.M. Thackeray* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1992), pp. 27–28, for an outline of the compositional history of *Vanity Fair.*

Figure 1e: Thackeray, Chapter Initial (Becky as Napoleon), Chapter LXIV, *Vanity Fair*

homosociality which would become increasingly dominant in Thackeray's later work. Indeed, the piece strikingly anticipates some of the more wide-reaching developments which have so infuriated critics such as John Carey. The latter's unqualified rejection of all of Thackeray's fiction after *Vanity Fair* encompasses a reaction to precisely the type of urbane but disempowering masculine intervention seen in this passage. Just as significantly, Carey's view that Thackeray was ultimately 'destroyed by success' uncovers a paradox which is already beginning to surface in the first number of this novel. Carey sees the eventual 'collapse' of Thackeray's work 'into gentlemanliness and cordiality' as a sign of the wholesale 'emasculation' of his art (*Prodigal*, p. 20). It is therefore ironic that, as in the case of the anecdotal digression above, this alleged process of emasculation begins to occur at exactly the time that Thackeray becomes more focused on male homosocial spaces and experiences.

Taking inspiration from the 'plain-mannish' George Orwell, Carey construes Thackeray's life and output as a narrative of retreat, fabrication, and enervation.[102] For Carey, Thackeray's depictions of masculine interaction post-*Vanity Fair* are unforgivably compromised — solely designed to entertain (and sell novels) without offence.[103] Among the worst culprits are Thackeray's well-known Bohemian duo, Arthur Pendennis and George Warrington, who appear not only in *The History of*

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[102] Carey invokes Orwell's dismissal of Thackeray's later work in the 1944 essay 'Oysters and Brown Stout' (see *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell,* ed. by Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus, 4 vols (London: Secker & Warburg, 1968), III, 299–302). Stefan Collini scathingly describes Carey as a 'plain-mannish whistle-blower' in *English Pasts: Essays in History and Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 291. This is an attitude which he associates with the 'plain-speaking' Orwell elsewhere in his work.

[103] A view also ascribed to by Thackeray's most recent biographer, D.J. Taylor. He sees *Pendennis,* for example, as a consecutive 'pulling of punches' designed to conciliate the more prudish sections of Thackeray's readership. See D.J. Taylor, *Thackeray* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1999), p. 287.

Pendennis, but also in *The Newcomes* and *The Adventures of Philip*. In Carey's view, their antics are no better than 'inexpert imitations of masculine pleasures' and form part of Thackeray's highly manufactured portrait of a 'wild yet innocuous' social scene (*Prodigal,* p. 152). Characteristically, Carey's agenda is doggedly anti-elitist; his complaint is not so much that Thackeray idealizes the wrong sort of masculine behaviour but rather that his romanticization of male middle-class frugality airbrushes out genuine instances of social deprivation. Yet, if Thackeray pedals a seductively 'hearty' and 'hygienic' version of unconventional homosocial life, Carey is himself seduced by an alternative Bohemian narrative.

George Levine has argued that, in his precarious embodiment of both sentimentality and cynicism, the eponymous protagonist of *Pendennis* personifies 'the realist's compromise'. By this, Levine intends us to understand that Arthur Pendennis's distinctive approach to life endorses 'the quietly dishonest assumption that the real world is not rife with extremes.'[104] It is just this dulling of extremes which Carey laments in his own evaluation of *The History of Pendennis*. He categorically rejects the softened edges of Thackeray's pragmatic version of reality in this and later novels, yearning instead for the dramatic contrasts of more spontaneous modes of working — or, as some commentators at the time put it, for the 'slashing downright Bohemian papers' of Thackeray's magazine days.[105] Carey finds plenty of extremes in Thackeray's biography, on the other hand. Claiming that his life 'reads like a fiction', Carey particularly relishes the 'wild ups and downs of fortune' characterizing the earlier chapters of Thackeray's 'prodigal' literary career (*Prodigal,* p. 11). Carey's handling of this period establishes a satisfying crossover between the reckless verve of Thackeray's

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[104] George Levine, '*Pendennis:* The Virtue of the Dilettante's Unbelief', in *Modern Critical Views: William Makepeace Thackeray,* ed. by Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987), pp. 153–67 (p. 165).

[105] Joseph Grego, *Thackerayana: Notes and Anecdotes* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1875), p. 446.

early life and the 'immense, if spasmodic' imaginative energy which distinguished his satirical journalism at the time. The latter appears more captivating than his later work precisely because of the parallels between its intrepidly parodic subject-matter and the precarious circumstances under which it was composed. In this, Carey again seems to be writing in the spirit of his kindred critic, George Orwell — showing a latent preference for a more 'down and out' or, at least, hands-on form of reportage. His account undoubtedly privileges the hand-to-mouth existence of Thackeray the maverick journalist over the more regimented professionalism of Thackeray the successful novelist. Fundamentally, however, Carey buys into a myth of Bohemian authenticity: his critique thrives on the idea that there was something more honest about Thackeray's prodigal failings and voracious appetites before he suffered the curse of mainstream success.

To some extent, Carey's preferences are a natural product of Thackeray's own inclinations at the time — or at least of the biographical and literary evidence on which critics have come to rely in defining the latter. A view which has gained particular currency in post-modern theory is that — more so than any other capital in nineteenth-century Europe — Paris was a locus of desire.[106] If this was not the case, Thackeray has certainly done a good job of convincing many of his biographers otherwise. A year after he left Cambridge without a degree at the age of nineteen in June 1830, he moved to London to begin legal studies in the Middle Temple. Famously, at this time in his life, his heart was neither in the Law nor in the English capital. Lambert Ennis expresses a common view when he observes that, in Thackeray's younger days particularly, Paris represented 'freedom, gaiety, Bohemia'.[107] As a young man, he spent the first half of

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[106] A notion which has its roots in the male protagonists and flâneur-figures of Balzac, Baudelaire, and Flaubert. See Ferguson, pp. 90–94.

[107] Lambert Ennis, *Thackeray: Sentimental Cynic* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1950), p. 50.

the 1830s moving back and forth between London and Paris, and clearly pined for the French capital when he was not there. Struggling to find his vocation in London, he intermittently continued to study for the bar, became involved in a bill-discounting firm (January–May 1833), purchased and edited a newspaper (the *National Standard and Journal of Literature* between May 1833 and February 1834), and studied at Henry Sass's Bloomsbury Art Academy (in the summer of 1834). During this period, he seldom went for long before returning to Paris. His trips were partly recreational, as in the second half of 1832 when he spent four months sampling the delights of Parisian nightlife and literature. Yet, they also formed an invaluable part of his professional apprenticeship — both in his time as a foreign correspondent for the *National Standard* (June–August 1833) and then, after a trial period in an atelier (October–November 1833), in his artistic training for which he moved permanently to Paris (living there between September 1834 and April 1836).

Richard Pearson is just one of the most recent critics to have represented Thackeray's long-term relationship with the French capital using a vocabulary of corporeal appetite and desire.[108] For Pearson, Paris is 'a symbolic place of value to Thackeray's sense of self-identity.' In his personal life, it is 'a place of desire', which provides a liberating alternative to British society, simultaneously containing and releasing 'sexual excitement and decadence'; in his work, on the other hand, it brings together themes of 'desire, loss, and absence'.[109] Thackeray's strong attachment to the city is certainly visible in his patchy correspondence and elliptical diary entries from the period. In his often despondent letters to his mother, for example, it is possible to detect elements of sexual frustration and loneliness in his yearning for the French capital.

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[108] Carey himself is predictably less kind in his characterization of Thackeray's semi-sexual attraction to Paris. He identifies a 'frustrating doubleness' in the author, claiming that 'the artist and Bohemian in him, plainly aroused, keep struggling with a prissy conformist and Francophobe' (*Prodigal*, p. 121).

[109] Richard Pearson, *W.M. Thackeray and the Mediated Text: Writing for Periodicals in the Mid-Nineteenth-Century* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), p. 98.

Before he moved there in 1834, he wrote to her a number of times to convey his cripplingly low spirits at being re-confined to the 'dismal' atmosphere of the Middle Temple and his suffocating London routine. He found the latter drearily homosocial, commenting that:

> I find a great change between [London Temple life] & Paris, where one makes friends, & here though for the last three years I have lived, I have not positively a single female acquaintance — I shall go back to Paris I think, & marry somebody'.[110]

Following another brief Parisian trip two months later, he wrote: 'I was very happy at Paris, & when I got here yesterday to my horrible chambers, felt inclined to weep'.[111] However, once Thackeray acted on his intentions and moved to Paris in 1834, the details of his experiences become notoriously sketchy. As his secretary, Eyre Crowe, later pointed out, even the identity of the Parisian atelier in which he completed his artistic training remained a mystery 'only to be guessed at.'[112]

In fact, Thackeray's scant surviving correspondence and cryptic diary jottings have only served to reinforce viewpoints such as that of John Carey. Sporadic notations of intense pleasure are closely followed by moments of intense self-doubt, and obscure references to hedonistic escapades are tainted with nagging anxieties about the future — all of which reinforce the impression that the young Thackeray's life in Paris was characterized by acute extremes. Biographers have accordingly returned time and again to a few key incidents — whether it be Thackeray's disgust at his fellow artists' louche behaviour towards a female model who 'would not pose but instead sung songs & cut capers', or his shame over his slow artistic progress: 'I am in a state of despair — I have

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[110] Thackeray to Mrs Carmichael-Smyth, 6 September 1833, *Letters*, I, 263–65, (p. 264).

[111] Ibid., 12 November 1833, *Letters*, I, 269–70, (p. 269).

[112] As Crowe goes on to add, critics have traditionally speculated that Thackeray worked at Baron Antoine-Jean Gros' atelier. However, there is no concrete evidence of this. See Eyre Crowe, *Thackeray's Haunts and Homes* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1897), p. 9.

got enough torn-up pictures to roast an ox by — the sun riseth upon my efforts and goeth down on my failures'.[113] In order to fill in the gaps between these scattered insights, critics have drawn heavily on two particular works which Thackeray wrote at very different points in his career. One of these is *The Adventures of Philip* (1861–62) discussed above, while the other is *The Paris Sketch Book*, published two decades earlier in 1840.

In the first edition of the latter collection of Parisian short stories, observational sketches, and discursive articles, Thackeray informs us that a portion of its contents is 'borrowed from French originals', while the rest is either based on 'facts and characters that came within the Author's observation during a residence in Paris', or relates 'to public events which occurred during the same period'.[114] Thackeray prefaces this matter-of-fact advertisement with a more capricious overture from the ever-energetic Michael Angelo Titmarsh. With characteristic effusiveness, Thackeray's impecunious persona dedicates the work to his fictional Parisian tailor to thank him for a much-needed one thousand franc loan. He informs his Parisian dedicatee that:

> History or experience, Sir, makes us acquainted with so few actions that can be compared to yours, — an offer like this from a stranger and a tailor seems to me so astonishing, — that you must pardon me for thus making your virtue public, and acquainting the English nation with your merit and your name. ('Dedicatory Letter', *PSB,* p. 5)

This back-handed compliment is representative of both Thackeray's comic style and his personal circumstances at this stage in his career. Over the previous three years,

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[113] Both Ray and D.J. Taylor dwell on these examples in their biographies. This particular expression of artistic self-doubt is from a much-quoted letter to his friend the artist, Frank Stone, 17 April 1835, *Letters,* I, 278–81 (p. 279). For Thackeray's view of the 'disgusting' behaviour of his fellow artists, see Diary, 1–2 November 1834, *Letters,* I, 277.

[114] Thackeray, 'Advertisement', *The Paris Sketch Book, Works,* V, 3–266 (p. 6). All further references to this miscellany will be given in the text preceded by the sketch in question and the abbreviation, *PSB*

Titmarsh had become the staple voice of his art criticism for *Fraser's Magazine* and, in this disparate Paris miscellany, provides something of a unifying force. Indeed Titmarsh's tribute to the tailor's financial generosity is part of a running joke with the reader and picks up the thread of his *Fraser's* art review which had appeared earlier in the same month (July 1840). This had ended mid-Titmarshian rhapsody, with the magazine's vociferous editor informing his readership that the debt-ridden critic has absconded from his London lodgings leaving a series of unpaid bills behind him.[115] With his reappearance at the beginning of *The Paris Sketch Book* a few weeks later, Thackeray playfully cultivated the impression that Titmarsh had eloped to Paris and was continuing to live out his accustomed precarious existence.

The biographical haziness surrounding Thackeray's early career in Paris, combined with these exuberant passages in his journalistic work, have left this period of his life particularly susceptible to critical refashioning. Pared down, it fits very neatly into the type of over-determined biographical trajectory exemplified by Louis James in his guide to *The Victorian Novel*. In this, we read that Thackeray was:

> Born in India the son of a senior civil servant, he received a gentleman's education there and in England, but left Cambridge without a degree. He began careers in law, art and journalism, but, unable to settle in any of them, lived a Bohemian life in Paris, squandered his inheritance, and married a penniless Irish girl who was later certified incurably insane. He was forced to write for a living.[116]

Though his account is far more expansive than this heady summary of misfortune and indecision, John Carey displays similar relish as he spins a narrative of prodigality and vicissitude to portray Thackeray's younger days. This is not to say that he commends

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[115] 'A Pictorial Rhapsody Concluded', *Works,* XIII, 341–60, first published in *Fraser's Magazine* in July 1840.
[116] Louis James, *The Victorian Novel* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), p. 140.

Figure 1f: Daniel Maclise, Sketch of Thackeray, 1832

the legendary excesses of this period. Indeed, he describes Thackeray's 'career as a wastrel' (the gambling addiction, the procrastination, the alleged Brothel visits) with such gusto that his criticism often approaches the satirical didacticism which he so admires in Thackeray's work (*Prodigal,* pp. 14–15).

Much influenced by Carey, Thackeray's latest biographer, D.J. Taylor has been equally forthright about his subject's youthful indiscretions in London and Paris. Describing the author's exploration of the 'byways of contemporary Bohemia' in the early 1830s, Taylor bluntly remarks that 'whatever else it may have encompassed, 'Bohemia' in Thackeray's time consisted principally of gambling, low company and sex.'[117] Indeed, both Carey and Taylor set about disinterring the grittier realities of Thackeray's youth with grim enthusiasm. To a significant extent, their approach is a reaction to the defensive reticence of more traditional accounts of Thackeray's Bohemian days. Two years after Thackeray's death, his friend James Hannay asked of one of his most eccentric fictional characters: 'where is there a jollier bohemian — a bohemian but still a gentleman?'[118] Though he was referring to a literary creation, Hannay's breezy rhetorical question could just as easily have applied to Thackeray himself. It certainly encapsulated a common attitude amongst the novelist's friends and descendents, many of whom were all too keen to rescue his reputation from the murky depths of Bohemia.

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[117] Taylor, *Thackeray,* p. 88.

[118] James Hannay, *Studies on Thackeray* (London: Routledge & Sons, 1869), p. 29. Hannay is referring to the swaggeringly erudite journalist, Fred Bayham, of *The Newcomes.*

This was true of the two men who became Thackeray's posthumous sons-in-law, for example, who were both insistent that his youthful dalliances were not only short-lived but, more importantly, the unavoidable products of circumstance. For his eldest daughter's husband, Richmond Ritchie, Thackeray's time at Cambridge was pivotal. It irrevocably 'fixed his social status' and ensured that, though he was afterwards 'to consort with Bohemians and other strange acquaintances into which a man is forced by adversity, he was never a Bohemian and always faithful to the traditions of the class to which he was born and bred.'[119] Harriet (Minnie) Thackeray's more distinguished spouse, Leslie Stephen, goes further as he grapples with comparable issues of social rank in his contribution to the *Dictionary of National Biography.* Not content with severing Thackeray's ties with the less reputable acquaintances of his youth, Stephen directly identifies Bohemia with his late father-in-law's enemies. He is most concerned, however, to defend Thackeray against a charge which Michael Sadleir would later sum up when he claimed that 'Thackeray was a snob who worked an ostentatious anti-snobbery to death.'[120] Like the expression *Bohemian*, Thackeray had famously re-invented the term *snob* in his journalism of the 1840s. Moreover, as with images of Bohemian life, he had come to be closely associated with the snobbish social identities which he had been among the first to represent. As Stephen points out in his biographical entry, Thackeray was 'accused of sharing the weakness [of snobbery] which he satirised, and would playfully admit that the charge was not altogether groundless.' Mindful of the common complaint that Thackeray had abandoned his humbler Bohemian associates once he became successful, Stephen claims that, though the author had temporarily enjoyed its 'humours and unconventional ways,' he was

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[119] Quoted in Lewis Saul Benjamin, [Lewis Melville], *The Life of William Makepeace Thackeray,* 2 vols (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1899), I, 53.
[120] Michael Sadleir, *Bulwer and his Wife: A Panorama, 1803–1836* (London: Constable & Co, 1931), p. 255.

ultimately 'forced into "Bohemia" by distress.' Indeed, Stephen insists, the men encountered in this shabby homosocial sphere were Thackeray's 'inferiors in refinement and cultivation'. As such, they 'were apt to show their "unconventionality" by real coarseness' and to denounce any 'taste for good society' as 'snobbishness'.[121] Thus, somewhat perversely, it is not Thackeray but the Bohemians with their 'mean admiration of mean things' who embody true snobbery.

1.4 'No abodes, no asylum': Bohemia Pathologized

John Carey is clearly more in sync with those whom Leslie Stephen classes as Thackeray's Bohemian detractors than he is with Leslie Stephen himself. His determination to reclaim Thackeray's youth in all its unadulterated shades of light and dark (both moral and aesthetic) actively resists any such justification of Bohemia as a transitional stage in a gentleman's life. Alongside its class iconoclasm, however, Carey's study remains resolutely focused on Thackeray's personality. In this respect, it continues in the biographical tradition which, until the last decades of the twentieth century, dominated considerations of Thackeray's work.[122] With its high proportion of psychological and emotional analysis, it is this trend which has led to Thackeray's status as an unusually pathologized literary figure. Whether it be idleness, cynicism, or fogyism, his personal quirks and weaknesses have had an overwhelming impact on views of his merit as a writer as well as of his private temperament.[123] In Carey's case,

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[121] Leslie Stephen, 'The Life of W.M. Thackeray', *Works,* XIII, 689–717 (pp. 701–02), originally published in the *Dictionary of National Biography* (1898), seven years after Stephen had resigned as first editor of the series.

[122] For a summary of this phenomenon, see Juliet McMaster, *Thackeray: The Major Novels* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1971), pp. 51–53.

[123] Ennis's extremely speculative application of psychoanalysis in *Thackeray: Sentimental Cynic* is one classic example of this — as is Nathaniel Wright Stephenson's earlier *The Spiritual Drama in the Life of Thackeray* (New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 1913).

Thackeray's idiosyncratic personality or, more specifically, his legendary 'self-doubt' is paradoxically both his saving grace and the cause of his downfall.[124] On the one hand, Carey argues, the young Thackeray's self-doubt facilitated his penetrating criticism of human shortcomings. Later in his career, however, it engendered the 'need for approval' which Carey claims destroyed him as a writer by leading him to 'make his books more complaisant' (*Prodigal,* p. 202).

Though it is itself somewhat idiosyncratic, John Carey's account of Thackeray's 'prodigal' personality type is an important reminder that the figure of the Bohemian, like Thackeray himself, has been subject to recurrent pathologization. By the early twentieth century, the idea that Bohemianism was a pathological phenomenon tended to relate to concerns about excessive commercialization and socio-psychological degeneration. This was certainly true in the oft-recounted case of Parisian Bohemia in the 1920s and 30s when it was felt to have detrimentally succumbed to a contemporary culture of conspicuous consumption.[125] The perception that true artists had been priced out of the Latin Quarter and indeed that Paris was awash with foreigners playing at being Bohemian, led to the common conclusion that Bohemianism was itself akin to a contagious disease in the capital. The conservative American artist, Thomas Craven, expressed this in particularly plain terms when he claimed that Bohemianism 'is a perversion of the spirit of Paris [...], a disease indigenous to the Latin Quarter.'[126] He argued that, where this mode of life had previously represented 'a means to an end, and as such [was] a healthy manifestation of social instincts', it had now become 'an end in

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[124] As Francis O'Gorman has observed, recent critics have increasingly placed *Pendennis* at the centre of the Thackeray canon (see 'Review of Thackeray's Skeptical Narrative and the 'Perilous Trade' of Authorship', *The Review of English Studies,* 54 (November 2003), 704–05). Part of rising trends in cultural materialism, this development perhaps helps to explain why Carey's personality-focused dismissal of such a large section of Thackeray's work now feels somewhat outmoded.

[125] Amongst others, see Elizabeth Wilson, pp. 42–49, Seigel, pp. 215–41, and Marcus Verhagen, 'Bohemia in Doubt', in *The Nineteenth-Century Visual Culture Reader,* ed. by Vanessa R. Schwartz and Jeannene M. Przyblyski (New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 327–38.

[126] Thomas Craven, *Modern Art — The Men, The Movements, The Meaning* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1934), p. 13, p. 17.

itself'. For Craven, this had transformed Bohemia into 'a pustule on the organism of Paris' — an unsightly if not parasitic drain on the city's cultural potential.

Two years later, the ethnohistorians, George S. Snyderman and William Josephs, similarly protested against the socially regressive nature of Bohemia in Paris and elsewhere, claiming that to be a member was essentially to be suffering from a personality disorder. For Snyderman and Josephs, the Bohemianism of contemporary times was little more than a manifestation of extreme individualism impeding legitimate social progress. However, there was more than a touch of irony in their assertion that 'the ideal Bohemian, if there were one, would show many definitely psychopathic personality traits, melancholia, satyriasis, claustrophobia, hyperesthesia, apathy, dyspepsia and chronic alcoholism.'[127] This hyper-pathologized figure strikes a rather bizarre pose and suggests that Snyderman and Josephs did not take the personality type which they were presenting entirely seriously. Indeed, theirs was as much an attempt to sideline as it was an attempt to attack Bohemianism — dismissing the counter-cultural lifestyle as a social irrelevancy that was always already a scam.

In the less flattering assessments of Thackeray's own Bohemianism, the pathological connotations of this always-controversial label were quick to surface even during his lifetime. Perhaps unsurprisingly, this was particularly true of evaluations written at a safe distance on the other side of the Atlantic. In 1857, the Irish-American journalist and author of fantasy fiction, Fitz-James O'Brien, for example, had no qualms about comparing Thackeray in decidedly unfavourable terms to George William Curtis — an American writer who was in fact good friends with the English novelist. Writing in *Putnam's Monthly*, O'Brien claimed that, in stark contrast to Curtis, Thackeray was a:

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[127] George S. Snyderman, and William Josephs, 'Bohemia: The Underworld of Art', *Social Forces,* 18:2 (December 1939), 187–199 (p. 191).

> British Bohemian, a man really capable of excesses and of coarseness, a man really familiar with the sins and the degradations, the acute sufferings and the morbid ill-health of the modern world. The satire of Thackeray is poignant and bitter, because he has drank of the bitterest cups which can be held to the lips of man, and he dwells on all the littleness, disappointments, short-comings and affectations.

O'Brien is careful to characterize this catalogue of weaknesses as Europe-specific. While Thackeray's flaws stem in part from his 'strongly sensual nature' and his personal 'domestic sorrows', they are also specifically the result of 'his continual contact with the most diseased classes of European society'.[128] O'Brien's animosity towards Thackeray was in all likelihood motivated by residual personal rivalry. Before he moved from London to New York at the beginning of the 1850s, he had been an active contributor to Henry Vizetelly's short-lived *Puppet-Show* (1848–49) — one of a number of *Punch* spin-offs in that decade to have (ineffectually) attempted to capitalize on the satirical market-leader's success.[129] However, O'Brien's antagonistic characterization of Thackeray's unhealthy 'British Bohemianism' was also a proclamation of his own allegiance to the New York Bohemian scene on which he had become a prominent fixture. Like Thackeray, while a young man in London, O'Brien had squandered his inheritance and suffered his fair share of personal and professional setbacks. Yet, unlike Thackeray, O'Brien had moved to America in an attempt to reinvent himself in literary circles comfortably removed from those of the British

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[128] Fitz-James O'Brien, 'Our Authors and Authorship: Melville and Curtis', *Putnam's Monthly*, 9 (April 1857), 384–93 (p. 392).
[129] Others included *The Man in the Moon* (1847–49), *The Squib* (1842), *Judy* (1843), *Puck* (1844), *The Great Gun* (1844–45), *Joe Miller the Younger* (1845). See Chapter 4 for further discussion of *Punch's* rivals.

capital. He was even accused by some of those whom he met over there of attempting to disguise his Irish roots in order to blend in.[130]

O'Brien's territorial pathologization of British Bohemianism mirrored that of many of his London counterparts vis-à-vis their French predecessors. Self-professed Bohemian writers in London's literary circles in the 1850s and 60s were keen to expunge any connotations of morbidity which they might have inherited from across the Channel. In a seminal article in 1863, the Bohemian novelist and poet, Mortimer Collins, set about severing the ties between French and English Bohemianism with a characteristic combination of matter-of-factness and whimsy. For Collins, Parisian Bohemia was epitomized by the life and work of the French writer, Henry Murger, and the latter's 'lugubrious' personality and poor physical health were synecdoches for all that was wrong with it. They were responsible not only for his 'gloomy unhappy Byronic writing' but more broadly for the fundamentally self-emasculating nature of Bohemianism in the Latin Quarter. The English version, by contrast, was made of stronger stuff. Its members were unpolluted by the Murgerian personality and were physically robust even when their work was ephemeral.[131] It was partly as a result of this process of negative self-definition against the French that Thackeray's Bohemianism — seen as conflicted and hypocritical by some — was seen as the epitome of healthy English vigour by others. By 1887, even Frederick Greenwood's conservative *St James's Gazette* felt able to make the somewhat uncharacteristic claim

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[130] See 'Fitz-James O'Brien', *The Vault at Pfaff's: An Archive of Art and Literature by New York City's Nineteenth-Century Bohemians* <http://digital.lib.lehigh.edu/pfaffs/people/individuals/16/> [Accessed 2 December 2008].

[131] Mortimer Collins, 'Bohemia', *Temple Bar,* 8 (July 1863), 551–63. The article is a reply to Justin McCarthy's less optimistic review of British Bohemian writings earlier in the same year which is discussed in my next chapter.

that 'the most pleasing trait in Thackeray's character [...] was his healthy Bohemianism.'[132]

Such conclusions were far less clear cut during Thackeray's younger days in Paris and this was in part because he lived there at a time when French ideas of Bohemianism were themselves still very much in the process of being defined. As well as denoting the inhabitants of Central European Bohemia, the French terms *bohême* and *bohémien* had been synonymous with the term *gitan* [gipsy] since the Middle Ages. By the eighteenth century, the expressions had come to acquire a greater range of ethical and sociological connotations. They implied an indeterminate level of social nonconformism, a lack of fixed abode, and — just as frequently — a lack of fixed moral principles. When the terms came to relate more specifically to artists and artistic lifestyles in the early nineteenth century, *bohême* and *bohémien* (or the feminine *bohémienne*) remained virtually interchangeable. However, the linguistic flexibility permitted by these parallel expressions meant that French conceptions of the Bohemian tended to be even more nuanced than those of the English. *Bohémien*, for example, preserved stronger links with the expression's earlier meaning of gipsy and consequently came to be more suggestive of rootlessness and physical exile than the term *bohême*.[133]

Significantly, Thackeray's relocation to Paris at the age of twenty three coincided more or less exactly with the period in which most theorists argue that French conceptions of the Bohemian started to change. It has long been critical convention that in 1834 the radical journalist and playwright, Félix Pyat, became the first writer to use

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[132] Quoted in 'Thackeray's Bohemianism', *Derby Mercury* (20 July 1887), 6.
[133] On the history and polysemy of these French terms, see Françoise Genevray, 'Bohême, Bohème, Bohémien: Autour de George Sand', presentation given at Université Jean-Moulin Lyon on 10 April 2003 <http://www.univ-lyon3.fr/08326378/0/fiche__pagelibre/&RH=INS-ACCUEIL__&RF=INS-RECHarticles> [Accessed 20 April 2009]

the term *bohémien* to characterize the social marginality of the contemporary artist.[134] In fact, Robert Darnton's recent discovery and publication of the marquis de Pelleport's obscure 1790 novel, *Les Bohémiens*, serves as an important reminder that such etymological narratives are inherently open-ended.[135] It is partly for this reason that Benjamin's palimpsestic *Arcades Project* remains one of the most compelling attempts to document the multi-stranded histories of Parisian Bohemia.[136] Nonetheless, Pyat's innovative use of the term *bohémien* at the height of the Romantic Movement was clearly bound up in important changes in cultural perceptions of the figure of the artist. For Pyat, writing in the mid-1830s, 'the Bohemians of today' ['les Bohémiens d'aujourd'hui'] are young artists suffering from a mania ['une manie'] whereby they wish 'to live outside their own time, with other ideas and other manners' ['vivre hors de leur temps, avec d'autres idées et d'autres mœurs']. This 'isolates them from the world, renders them foreign and strange, places them outside the law, ostracized from society' ['les isole du monde, les rend étrangers et bizarres, les met hors la loi, au ban de la société'].[137] In this way, Pyat's seminal description of the artistic Bohemian represents an early contribution to the deep-rooted pathological associations of *la Bohème*. This becomes increasingly clear as he goes on to classify the Bohemian 'mania' of the artist as a symptom of *artistisme* — a form of delusional disease which he claimed was ravaging the capital's artistic communities and driving their withdrawal from society.[138]

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[134] Seigel, Elizabeth Wilson, Genevray, and Marilyn R. Brown certainly adhere to this idea.

[135] Anne Gédéon Lafitte (marquis de Pelleport), *The Bohemians*, ed. by Robert Darnton, trans. by Vivian Folkenflik (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), first published 1790. Having unearthed this forgotten novel in the archives, Darnton presents it as evidence that the idea of *la Bohème* might have come to be associated with the artistic and literary callings at an earlier date than has previously been assumed.

[136] References to the multiple generations of artists who composed Parisian Bohemia at different points in the nineteenth century are scattered throughout Benjamin's kaleidoscopic masterpiece.

[137] Félix Pyat, 'Les Artistes', in *Nouveau tableau de Paris au XIXme siècle,* 6 vols (Paris: Mme Charles-Béchet, 1834–35), IV, 1–21 (pp. 8–9).

[138] Ibid., p. 18.

Appearing alongside a selection of panoramic sketches of Parisian life by authors such as Balzac, Paul de Kock, and Jules Janin, Pyat's portrait of the Bohemian artist, on one level, seemed a thoroughly disapproving take on the more outrageous groups of writers and artists at work in Paris at the time. By this point in the 1830s, Victor Hugo and his Romantic followers had won a series of symbolic victories against the Establishment. For many onlookers, the undesirable upshot of this had been that behavioural and sartorial excess had become the order of the day. Pyat's outlandish modern Bohemians can certainly be seen as a protest to this effect — taking a playful swipe at such Romantic circles as the riotously eccentric *Boursingots* and the exotically costumed *Jeunes France* [Young France].[139] The latter included Théophile Gautier, Gérard de Nerval, and Petrus Borel (known as 'the Lycanthrope'), all of whom formed part of the *petit cènacle* — the raucously youthful subsidiary of Victor Hugo's dominant Romantic salon, the *Cènacle*. In addition to their highly public acts of bourgeois-baiting, these men had become notorious for their literary output which was frequently characterized as 'frenetic literature' or, less sympathetically, as the outpourings of a 'Satanic School'. Such writings were Gothic in tone and showed a distinct partiality for sensationalized plots.

As has often been noted, Thackeray was not only familiar with this genre of work but became its scathing critic while working as a young foreign correspondent in Paris. Writing for his own paper in June 1833, for example, he devoted one of his weekly reviews to the textual and the social identities of *les Jeunes France*. According to Thackeray, the latter's taste for histrionic excess — 'for something more piquant than an ordinary hanging matter' — makes their work both more gruesome and more morally reprehensible than even that of the English Newgate novelists. He argues that:

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[139] Hugo's most famous triumph was the so-called 'Battle of the *Hernani*' in February 1830, when a group of his supporters successfully shouted down Classicist detractors in the audience of the opening performance of his Romantic (and anti-Classical) play, *Hernani*.

> To succeed, to gain a reputation, and to satisfy La jeune France, you must accurately represent all the anatomical peculiarities attending the murder, or crime in question: you must dilate on the clotted blood, rejoice over the scattered brains, particularise the sores and bruises, the quivering muscles, and the gaping wounds; the more faithful, the more natural.[140]

Having thus dismissed their literary output as morbidly de-humanizing, Thackeray ends his article by sardonically playing *les Jeunes France* at their own game. He provides his readers with a 'specimen' of the group which he claims to have 'discovered the other day in the Tuilleries [*sic*]' and then proceeds to dissect this ostentatious individual's own 'anatomical peculiarities'. Reducing his subject to the pronoun *it* and providing an accompanying illustration (figure 1g), Thackeray describes the Frenchman 'leaning poetically against a tree', and observes that '*it* had on a red neckcloth and a black flowing mane; a stick or club, intended for ornament as well as use; and a pair of large though innocent spurs, which had never injured any thing except the pantaloons of the individual who wore them.'[141]

Figure 1g: Thackeray, 'Foreign Correspondence', *National Standard of Literature* **(22 June 1833)**

Though the term *Bohemian* does not feature in this satirical portrayal of a counter-cultural Romantic writer, its combination of unhealthy imaginative excess and self-alienating conduct clearly bears parallels with Pyat's notion of *artistisme*.

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[140] 'Foreign Correspondence', *National Standard of Literature* (22 June 1833), reprinted in *Mr Thackeray's Writings in the 'National Standard' and 'The Constitutional'*, ed. by Walter Thomas Spencer (Whitefish: Kessinger Publishing, [n.d.]), first published 1899, pp. 27–31 (p. 28).
[141] Ibid., p. 30. My italics.

Significantly, it is just this type of anti-Romantic derision which has tended to most unsettle commentators on Thackeray's early writings about France and the French. From a relatively young age, his expertise in French language and literature far exceeded that of many of his more erudite contemporaries. This makes it particularly ironic that even his most sympathetic critics have often found themselves struggling to defend his youthfully rambunctious responses to France — generally resorting to the argument that his were simply the prevalent Anglo attitudes to the Continent at the time.[142] Gordon Ray, on the other hand, has argued that Thackeray's 'detachment' from a culture which he also held in great affection was a deeply personal affair. He explains Thackeray's ambivalent relationship with Parisian artistic life on the grounds of his evangelical upbringing, claiming that the latter 'clashed with [the former's] bohemian irreverence' and that, in relation to this, 'both his common sense and his habit of regarding life from the ethical point of view caused him to take alarm at the prospect of translating romantic ideals into terms of actual life.'[143] Displaying some Anglo-rambunctiousness himself, Ray even suggests that Thackeray's physical build was a factor in his occasional superciliousness towards the French. He invites us to 'imagine Thackeray in France as a tall, burly young man, constantly looking *down* on the natives as they hurried by him in the streets, almost as if he were Gulliver in Lilliput'. He accordingly demands 'How could [Thackeray] respect these scrawny little fellows?'[144]

If 'hope is a memory which desires', it was certainly true that Thackeray's early 'hopes' for his Parisian life were wryly coloured by inherited cultural 'memories' of the

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[142] The two most comprehensive twentieth-century reassessments of Thackeray's little-admired French criticism both take this line. See Lidmila Pantůčkovà, 'Thackeray as a Reader and Critic of French Literature', *Brno Studies in English,* 9:166 (1970), 37–126 and Donald Hawes, 'Thackeray and French Literature in Perspective,' *Studies in the Novel,* 13:1–2 (Spring–Summer 1981), 5–20.

[143] Gordon Ray, 'Thackeray and France: Being an Account of the part played by Thackeray's life in France and his reading of French Literature in the Formation of his Mind and Art' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Harvard University, 1940), p. 62.

[144] *Adversity*, p. 245. Ray's italics.

city's recurrent political upheavals.[145] In line with common English views of the 'political unfitness' of the French and anticipating Marx's representation of the farcically repetitive nature of Franco-revolutionary history, Thackeray had little time for the counter-cultural potential of Parisian Bohemia.[146] In his journalistic portrayals of Paris both in the article above and throughout the 1830s and early 1840s, caricature is not just his primary mode but is something which he sees as endemic to French culture. At this period in his life, Parisian artists and writers are frequently represented not just as consummate caricaturists in their work but also as self-caricatures in their flamboyant lifestyles and idiosyncratic manners. Furthermore, Paris emerges as a city so saturated with art galleries, artists' ateliers, and picture shops that the Parisians themselves seem to be 'pictures walking about' ('On the French School of Painting', *PSB*, p. 41). Yet, if the visual arts bleed into real life and endow it with a grotesquely vivid picturesqueness, it is the image of revolution which is the most insidious and which is perpetually on the verge of bathetically engulfing the capital. The taint of imminent social turmoil is palpable in its landmarks, in its regular commemorative festivities, and even in the temperament of its individual residents — as Thackeray flippantly remarks elsewhere in *The Paris Sketch Book,* 'a Frenchman must have his revolution' ('The Fêtes of July', *PSB,* p. 36).

However, Félix Pyat's portrayal of the contemporary artist as a volatile sufferer of *artistisme* provides a striking reminder that the anti-Romantic discourse which characterizes Thackeray's more cautious responses to Parisian society was something which was often shared by the French themselves. It is also a reminder of the extent to which criticism of Romanticism at this particular point in the nineteenth century was often dynamically self-parodic. In Pyat's case, both his artistic loyalties and the objects

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[145] See note 12 above.

[146] For *Victorian Political Thought on France and the French,* see Georgios Varouxakis, (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002). For Marx on history as farce, see *Eighteenth Brumaire*, p. 1.

of his satire remain playfully open to interpretation. Though his essay directly satirizes the excesses of 'young artists' such as *les Jeunes France*, his innovative use of the term *bohémien* arguably also represents an irreverent critique of an older and more conservative generation of Romantics. Four years earlier, one of the original patriarchs of French Romanticism, Charles Nodier, had published the luxuriantly cryptic, *Histoire du roi de Bohême et de ses sept châteaux* [*History of the King of Bohemia and of his Seven Castles*].[147] In this lyrical fantasy, the dominion of *Bohême* retains figurative links with both the real-life kingdom of Bohemia and with an ever-receding gipsy realm of creative freedom. The latter represents both a dream-world and (appearing in the year of the fall of the Bourbon Monarchy) a retreat from political realities. By the time that he published this work, Nodier was fifty years old and had forfeited control of the leading Romantic salon, the *Cènacle*, to Victor Hugo.[148] Moreover, by the time that Pyat published his essay on the Bohemian artist four years later, Nodier had been elected to the *Académie Française*. In the light of the encroaching respectability of older Romantics such as Nodier, Pyat's characterization of 'les Bohémiens d'aujourd'hui — 'the Bohemians of *today*' — establishes a loaded contrast between past and present. Pyat's young artists might be socially eccentric and psychologically abnormal but their theatricalised behaviour and youthful acts of public protest endow their modern brand of Bohemianism with a sociological relevance which could seem absent from the dreamy escapism of the previous generation — and certainly from Nodier's whimsical quest for the kingdom of *Bohême*.

In fact, in satirizing artistic cliques such as *les Jeunes France*, both Pyat and Thackeray were tapping into an already seething atmosphere of self-referential parody. In 1831, the Parisian daily, *Le Figaro*, to which Pyat was a regular contributor, had

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[147] Charles Nodier, *Histoire du roi de Bohême et de ses sept châteaux* (Paris: Delangle frères, 1830).

[148] Pantůčkovà notes that Nodier was one of the few writers associated with the 'Satanic School' about whom Thackeray remained 'predominantly positive.' See Pantůčkovà, p. 69.

published a series of lampoons entitled 'Les Jeunes Frances'.[149] As in Thackeray and Pyat's later descriptions, these articles ridicule the exotic dress, the hyper-emotional behaviour, and the rarefied self-promotion of this flamboyant group of Romantics. They are particularly scathing about the latter's tendency to present themselves as champions of the people while, at the same time, going to such extreme efforts to differentiate their lifestyles and appearances from those of the general population. As so often, these eccentric artists and writers are heavily pathologized. One instalment, for example, describes the perverse air of 'rotten cheerfulness' ['gaîté putride'] which arises from their feverish mannerisms and preoccupation with death.[150] Two years after this series, however, one of the most prominent members of *les Jeunes France*, Théophile Gautier, published a meta-parodic riposte to *Le Figaro*, entitled *Les Jeunes-France: romans goguenards* [*The Young France: Mocking Tales*].[151] In this tongue-in-cheek collection of short stories, Gautier facetiously re-appropriated the language which had been used against both himself and his artistic comrades in *Le Figaro* and elsewhere. In the tales themselves, Gautier employs a wryly self-subverting narrator to chronicle the adventures and eccentricities of a fictional selection of these artistic comrades — creating his own fantastical cast of *Jeunes France*.

Most striking, however, is Gautier's emphatically self-emasculating preface which plays on precisely the type of imagery found in the satirical *Figaro* sketches. In this, he informs the reader that two of his friends who felt that he was excessively surly and fastidious ['ours et maniaque'] bear the responsibility for having transformed him into an accomplished member of *les Jeunes France*. Satirizing the idealized notions of

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[149] This anonymous series ran in the August and September of 1831. Its most likely author was the journalist and playwright, Léon Gozlan, who (like Pyat himself) socialized on the fringes of the circles associated with *les Jeunes France*.

[150] 'Les Jeunes Frances', *Figaro* (30 août 1831), 1.

[151] Mary Gluck characterizes this collection as one of the most significant contributions to what she terms 'ironic Bohemia'. She also suggests that the work was one possible source behind Murger's later *Scènes de la vie de Bohème*. See discussion below in Chapter 2 and Gluck, pp. 19–20 and pp. 54–57.

fraternal collaboration and heightened empathy associated with the Romantic circles of the Latin Quarter, Gautier presents a humorous rite of passage in which he learns to apply the label *bourgeois* to anyone who wears a shirt collar and to smoke 'quite gallantly without vomiting too much' ['assez crânement sans trop vomir'].[152] At the same time, he sarcastically bandies about the jargon which has repeatedly been used to describe his own life and writing style as well as those of *les Jeunes France* as a group. He jokes, for example, that he regularly gets drunk in a 'perfectly Byronic manner' ['une manière tout à fait byronnienne'], before going on to add that women find him 'adorably satanic' ['satanique adorable'] because he has a naturally sallow complexion.[153] Before his *Mocking Tales* are even underway, Gautier thus succeeds in simultaneously sending up both the prosaic small-mindedness of his detractors and the theatrical absurdities of his ostentatiously poetic companions.

Appearing in the same year as these parodic short stories, Thackeray's *National Standard* article on *les Jeunes France* centres on the work of Petrus Borel and makes no mention of Gautier.[154] However, the latter's roguishly shifting perspectives on Parisian artists and authors, as well as his exuberantly indiscriminate emasculation of his narrator, subject-matter, and projected reader, are also distinctly characteristic of Thackeray's early work. The inflated absurdities of the artist, Andrea Fitch — with his 'large Gothic chest' and his 'affected' and stultifying dedication to 'his art' — could easily be seen as a 'Cockney' version of any number of Gautier's eccentric protagonists in his *Jeunes-France*.[155] Even more notable are the parallels between the narratorial *jeu d'esprit* of Thackeray's trusty persona, Michael Angelo Titmarsh, and that of Gautier's

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[152] Théophile Gautier, *Les Jeunes-France: romans goguenards* (Paris: Bibliothèque-Charpentier, 1919), first published 1833, p. xvi.

[153] Ibid., p. xvii.

[154] It seems likely that Thackeray would have been aware of Gautier's *Les Jeunes-France* though it is difficult to prove this. By 1848, he was certainly on friendly terms with the French writer and, fourteen years later, he tried to get him elected to the Garrick Club.

[155] Thackeray, *A Shabby Genteel Story*, *Works*, XI, 3–94 (p. 22).

self-confessedly ridiculous narrator. In fact, Thackeray's best remembered depictions of

Paris under the July Monarchy are governed as much by ebullient Gautier-esque irony

as they are by any sense of 'looking down on the natives'.[156]

Despite his often deflationary approach to the politics and aesthetic ideologies

of Parisian (counter-)culture, Thackeray produced some of the most animated

depictions of artistic life to be exported from France to England in the 1830s and 40s. In

one particularly memorable passage of *The Paris Sketch Book*, he describes 'the life of

the young artist' in the Latin Quarter as 'the easiest, merriest, dirtiest existence

possible.' For Thackeray, the basis of this existence is a raucously congenial routine in

which the average artist:

> arrives at his atelier at a tolerably early hour, and labours among a
> score of companions as merry and poor as himself. Each gentleman
> has his favourite tobacco-pipe; and the pictures are painted in the
> midst of a cloud of smoke, and a din of puns and choice French
> slang, and a roar of choruses, of which no one can form an idea
> who has not been present at such an assembly. ('On the French
> School of Painting', *PSB*, p. 42)

This exuberant homosocial scene serves as a springboard for an equally spirited

comparison of the respective social positions of artists on different sides of the Channel.

Thackeray observes that, where the universally esteemed French artist looks down on

the 'sober citizen' from the 'height of [his] poverty [...] with the greatest imaginable

scorn,' the artist back home continues to face prejudice from even the lower echelons of

society. Thackeray's stance in this emblematic passage is one of slightly strained

detachment; he is both an initiated artistic insider and a bourgeois English onlooker

who pushes his carnivalesque subject to the limits without quite descending into

mockery. As in Gautier's work, these precariously balanced viewpoints cannot be taken

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[156] Ray's words in *Adversity*, p. 245. See note 144 above.

at face value. Indeed, the height from which the capital's outlandish artists look down at its 'sober citizens' mirrors and destabilizes the implied height from which Thackeray's (English) readers look down at his Parisian subject-matter. Furthermore, Thackeray is writing in the guise of Titmarsh — a figure encumbered by thwarted artistic and social ambitions of his own — and, like Gautier, he harnesses his narrator's very palpable flaws to cultivate a multi-directional form of parody in which neither artist nor demystifying critic are left unscathed.

Not unlike Gautier's *Les Jeunes-France*, the topsy-turvy combination of hyper-sociability, ostentatious frugality, and artistic abandon characterizing the extract above has often led to it being viewed as a compelling freeze-frame of 1830s Bohemia.[157] By the time that either Thackeray or Gautier used the latter term, however, it had become enmeshed in an even more complicated web of associations. Almost exactly a decade after his *Mocking Tales*, Théophile Gautier found himself attacking the use of the term *bohémien* in a new melodrama which had taken Paris by storm. Penned by the popular dramatists, Eugène Grangé and Adolphe D'Ennery, the play in question was *Les Bohémiens de Paris* — a loose adaptation of Eugène Sue's ground-breaking *roman-feuilleton*: the enormously successful *Les Mystères de Paris* (serialized in *Le Journal des Débats* between 1842 and 1843). Like Sue's original, *Les Bohémiens de Paris* styled itself as a realistic though sensationalized excavation of the unsavoury characters and salacious intrigues of the Parisian criminal underworld. Where Sue's long-running serial had captured the threatening immensity of the city's *classes dangereuses* through its sprawling labyrinthine narrative, Grangé and D'Ennery's melodrama conjured up the expansiveness of criminal Paris through an imposing series of panoramic stage-

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[157] See, for example, Elizabeth Wilson, p. 93 and Nicholson, p. 147.

tableaux.[158] The spectacular success of this play was promptly replicated in England with a flurry of adaptations including C.Z. Barnett's *The Bohemians of Paris; or, The Mysteries of Crime*, Edward Stirling's *The Bohemians or the Rogues of Paris*?, and the anonymous *The Bohemians! Or the Thieves of Paris*.[159] As the titles of these English translations make clear, the Bohemians of Grangé and D'Ennery's original were the pickpockets, fraudsters, and speculators that had long formed the essence of the literary low-life genre as well as fuel for popular imaginings of the contemporary metropolis as a modern Babylon.

Gautier's objections related specifically to a number of short passages in which the play's villain, Frederick Montorgueil, defines 'the true Bohemians of Paris'. Initially, Montorgueil seems to allow these figures a degree of romantic charm, describing them as 'that class of individuals whose existence is a problem, whose condition is a mystery, whose fortune is an enigma — who, having no abodes, no asylum, are never to be found, and yet are to be met with everywhere'. However, Montorgueil then abruptly strips away this cloak of mystique and inserts his Bohemians into a far less becoming sociological framework. In his estimation, they are a band of opportunistic vagabonds — 'a hundred thousand parasite birds' — who will take on any profession that they can find. He becomes increasingly heated as he goes on, warning his audience that:

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[158] The lavish production debuted at the *Théâtre de l'Ambigu-Comique* on 27 September 1843. See Donald Roy, Victor Emeljanow, Kenneth Richards, and Laura Richards, eds, *Theatre in Europe: A Documentary History. Romantic and Revolutionary Theatre, 1789–1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 375–76.

[159] All three debuted in the last months of 1843 and had a knock-on effect on the success of urban melodramas located in London as well as in the French capital. Indeed they directly inspired the plots of works such as the anonymous *Modern Bohemians; or, London Scamps* (1843), T.W. Moncrieff's *Scamps of London* (1844), and Charles Selby's *London by Night* (1845). See Michael Booth, 'The Metropolis on Stage', in Jim Dyos and Michael Wolff, eds, *The Victorian City*, 2 vols (London: Routledge Kegan and Paul, 1973), I, 211–24 (p. 219).

> The speculator, who proposes an affair of a million, and ends by borrowing a franc, is a Bohemian. The editor of a paper that never appears — Bohemian! The pretended banker, who invites you to dine at Verey's, and, when the desert is placed upon the table, has forgotten his purse — Bohemian! The man that you hardly know, who calls you his dear friend, and squeezes your hand — Bohemian! Bohemian — nothing but Bohemian![160]

In the play's performances, Montorgueil's assessment was visually reinforced by a bedraggled chorus of 'Bohemians' who colonized the stage and provided a series of appropriately boisterous songs extolling their 'merry Bohemian life'.

Just as he had retaliated against mainstream parodies of *les Jeunes France* ten years earlier, Gautier protested in the strongest possible terms against the misapplication of the 'charming' word *bohémien* to this mass of 'ill-tempered, frightful, repugnant rogues' ['ces grinches, ces escarpes, tous ces affreux scélérats']. In his view, D'Ennery and Grangé's characters were 'hideous toads hopping around in the mires of Paris' ['hideux crapauds qui sautellent dans les fanges de Paris'], and thus entirely at odds with the 'true' artistic species of Bohemian. The latter, Gautier claimed, was composed of 'that foolish youth which lives by its intelligence rather haphazardly from hand to mouth [...], which favours pleasure over money, and which prefers above everything, even glory, idleness and liberty' ['cette jeunesse folle qui vit de son intelligence un peu au hasard et au jour le jour [...] qui aime mieux le plaisir que l'argent, et qui préfère à tout, même la gloire, la paresse et la liberté'].[161] To this extent, Gautier's definition of the 'true Bohemian' shares something of the air of mystique which initially enshrouds Montorgueil's melodramatic equivalent. However, the differences between the two quickly become apparent as Gautier universalizes his

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[160] All quotations taken from C.Z. Barnett's 1843 translation, *The Bohemians of Paris; or, The Mysteries of Crime* (London: Thomas Hailes Lacy, [1843]).

[161] Gautier, 'Ambigu. *Les Bohémiens de Paris*', first published in *La Presse*, September 1843. Reprinted in Gautier, *Histoire de l'art dramatique en France depuis vingt-cinq ans*, 6 vols (Paris: Édition Hetzel, 1858–59), III, 106–07 (p. 106).

version of the artistic Bohemian and grandly claims that 'We are all more or less part of this Bohemia, or we have been in the past' ['De cette bohème, nous en sommes un peu tous, plus ou moins, ou nous en avons été'].[162] Though Gautier was primarily addressing his fellow 'painters, musicians, actors, poets, [and] journalists', his evocation of an all-encompassing sphere of Bohemian experience also represented a wider attack on unthinking populism. Many commentators at the time felt that *Les Bohémiens de Paris* was part of a concerted popular backlash against the capital's artistic classes or, as the journalist, Léopold Dérôme, later observed: 'the revenge of the philistines who had been disdained by artistic and literary Bohemia'.[163] Where mainstream attacks on *les Jeunes France* had focused on their supposedly pathological qualities, the 'revenge of the philistines' in this case showed a determination to expose Bohemianism's latent associations with criminality.

On this occasion, however, Gautier's response to such a high-profile send-up of the Parisian artist lacked the self-parodic verve of his riposte to *Le Figaro*'s '*Jeunes Frances*' series. Rather, his allusion to a universally accessible realm of Bohemia suggested a more urgent desire to dispel the negative connotations which had come to surround the capital's artistic life. As will be seen in the next three chapters, Gautier had reason to be concerned. The tendency to associate Bohemia with criminality remained so persistent in the decades which followed his review that it was often equally visible at both ends of the political spectrum. Thus, on the one hand, notoriously reactionary figures such as the Goncourt Brothers drew heavily on ideas of dishonest professional practice in their derogatory characterizations of Bohemia — which, in their work, primarily comprised the rising tide of new writers sweeping the increasingly democratic contemporary marketplace. These aristocratic anti-Bohemians

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[162] Ibid., p. 107.

[163] Léopold Dérôme, *Causeries d'un ami des livres, les éditions originales des romantiques* (Paris: Rouveyre, 1886–87), p. 177.

claimed to take issue with the corrupt publicity-mongering of less well-heeled members of their own profession — though their objections plainly also stemmed from the personal threat which they felt at an encroaching 'socialism of literature'.[164] Ironically, however, Edmond and Jules de Goncourts' staunchly pro-Establishment stance was not all that far away from that of Karl Marx. This pioneer of counter-culture famously categorized Parisian Bohemia as an 'undefined, dissolute kicked-about mass' of 'vagabonds, dismissed convicts, pickpockets, and organ grinders,' who were willing to be bribed by the dominant classes to do their bidding. Like the Goncourts' disreputable journalistic scandalmongers, Marx's Bohemians were commercially motivated sell-outs — though, in this case, they formed part of the malleable 'lumpenproletariat'. Marx's *Bohème* was thus in many ways more condemnable than that of the Goncourts since — by Marxian standards — its members engaged in the ultimate betrayal: bringing about their own exploitation in return for material gain.[165]

Five years before he characterized Becky Sharp as a Bohemian in *Vanity Fair*, Thackeray had himself reviewed the source material for D'Ennery and Grangé's melodrama in an article for the *Foreign Quarterly Review*. This piece lamented the 'sheer folly, bad taste, and monstrous improbability' of Eugène Sue's bestselling *roman-feuilleton* while also characterizing its author as 'one of the cleverest quacks now quacking'. Indeed, Thackeray could not deny his own compulsive enjoyment of the meandering narrative of *Les Mystères de Paris*.[166] The following year, he was even inspired to embark on a translation of the novel.[167] By the time that he began work on *Vanity Fair*, however, he was in no doubt as to the extreme differences between Sue's

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[164] For a detailed discussion of the Goncourts' fanatical anti-Bohemianism, see Seigel, pp. 157–80.

[165] Marx, *Eighteenth Brumaire*, p. 73.

[166] Thackeray, 'Thieves' Literature of France', *Foreign Quarterly Review*, 31 (April 1843), 231–49 (p. 233).

[167] A translation commissioned by the publisher, Giraldon, but never completed due to the latter's failure to provide due payment on time. See Thackeray to M. Giraldon, 2 February 1844, *Letters*, II, 159.

sensational methods and his own. This comes through particularly clearly in the original manuscript for his sixth chapter in which he describes Jos Sedley's rack-punch humiliation at Vauxhall Gardens. Here, Thackeray's narrator insists that 'we must take our story as we find it — in the neighbourhood of common life not in the extreme heights and depths of it'. This, he acknowledges, represents a marked contrast to 'such a novel as the famous French *Mystères de Paris*' which, unlike his own decidedly unromantic narrative, 'would be sure of acquiring great success and creating a general sympathy' (*VF*, p. 692). In the event, Thackeray did not include this allusion to French literary low life in the final draft of *Vanity Fair* which appeared before the public (in February 1847 as part of the novel's second number). Instead, he chose to define his novel's 'modest' narrative against the sensational storylines of the English Newgate tradition.

When Thackeray eventually classified Becky as a Bohemian, however, both the melodramatic and the criminal undertones of the Parisian *Bohème* were very much present. Discussions of his modernization of the term *Bohemian* have tended to overlook the fact that though *Vanity Fair* began its serial run in January 1847, he did not actually use the expression until its final double-number in July 1848. Thus Thackeray's famously Bohemian anti-heroine was not explicitly identified as such until over a year and half after he had first described her unconventional upbringing in London's artistic demimonde. Having not used the term *Bohemian* until this late point in the novel, Thackeray proceeds to use it four times within a very short space of narrative — on each occasion endowing it with a slightly different set of associations. In keeping with the ongoing slippage of meaning characteristic of conceptions of the Bohemian in the 1840s, he brings together varying degrees of gipsydom, beggarhood, criminality, itinerancy, and performative creativity. In this way, he first reveals Becky's

Bohemian identity in the aptly titled 'A Vagabond Chapter' (Chapter LXIV) which obliquely chronicles her social exile on the Continent following the exposure of her dalliance with Lord Steyne. Here Thackeray initially gipsyfies his amoral heroine, drawing on figures from popular mythology and describing her as 'a little wanderer [...] setting up her tent in various cities of Europe, as restless as Ulysses or Bampfylde Moore Carew.'[168] Yet any sense of heroic wiliness or idyllic beggary quickly fades away as he informs his reader that Becky's 'taste for disrespectability grew more and more remarkable' and that, before long, she became 'a perfect Bohemian [...] herding with people whom it would make your hair stand on end to meet' (*VF*, p. 645). In thus acknowledging the social disapproval of his projected respectable readership, he anticipates the darker aspects of Becky's Bohemianism which will become increasingly apparent as the passage continues. Accordingly, in the next paragraph, he brusquely catalogues Becky's new Bohemian companions, describing a disorderly crew of 'English raffs', 'shabby bullies', and 'penniless bucks', who 'drink and swagger', 'fight and brawl', 'swindle and cheat' (*VF*, pp. 645–46). It is not until the next chapter that such Eugène Sue-esque connotations become less prominent and that Becky's Bohemianism is more comfortably linked to artistic qualities inherited from her parents (*VF*, p. 652).

Against the Napoleonic backdrop of *Vanity Fair*, Thackeray's use of the term *Bohemian* was of course anachronistic. In fact, as the product of a decade in which both English and French ideas of Bohemia were still evolving, the composition of his anti-heroine's Bohemianism was on the verge of becoming outmoded even by contemporary standards. Two years later, in the preface to his next novel, *The History of Pendennis*,

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[168] Carew (1693–1759) was a legendary adventurer who left behind his respectable background to join a group of gipsies. He often attracted romanticized titles such as the 'King of the Beggars' or the 'King of the Gipsies'.

Thackeray would again invoke Eugène Sue. As in *Vanity Fair*, the French novelist serves as a melodramatic cipher against which Thackeray defines his brand of realist fiction — here, forming part of an ironically self-deprecating defence of his decision to abandon a more 'exciting' narrative plan (*PN*, p. xlviii). However, as he once again declines to enter into competition with the French master of metropolitan sensation, Thackeray is defending a protagonist who would come to embody a very different set of Bohemian ideals to Sue's resourceful Parisian underclass. Quite unlike Becky Sharp, Arthur Pendennis's encounters with Bohemian vagabondage were restricted to (extremely enthusiastic) visits to the London theatre. As will be seen in the next chapter, however, the impact of this middling gentleman-protagonist on mid-Victorian Bohemia was something of a sensation in its own right — and one which extended far beyond the melodrama stage.

CHAPTER 2

Prosaic Romantics:

Thackeray, Murger, and Bohemian Re-creations

2.1 Bohemia is Dead (Vive la Bohème!)

> 'Our British Bohemia, [...] was less picturesque, it was more
> practical and commonplace, perhaps a trifle more vulgar; but its
> denizens had this in common with their French prototypes — that
> they were young, gifted, and reckless; that they worked only by fits
> and starts, and never except under the pressure of necessity; that
> they were sometimes at the height of happiness, sometimes in the
> depths of despair, […] and that — greatest item of resemblance —
> they had a thorough contempt for the dress, usages and manners of
> ordinary middle-class civilization.'
> **Edmund Yates, *His Recollections and Experiences* (1884)[169]**

In a now much-cited article published in the *Westminster Review* in 1863, the Irish
journalist, novelist and politician, Justin McCarthy, grandly proclaimed that 'The
Bohemian days are gone'.[170] He added that 'perhaps they closed with the youth and the
life of Murger'.[171] Notwithstanding the invariably premature nature of such
declarations, McCarthy makes a persuasive attempt to prove that English Bohemianism
is culturally redundant. His iconoclastic article brusquely strips unconventional living
of its romantic and figurative associations, most specifically by relegating English

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[169] *Recollections*, I, 299–300.
[170] McCarthy re-published the review in his well-received critical miscellany *Con Amore* (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1868). It remains one of the classic critiques of mid-Victorian Bohemia.
[171] Justin McCarthy, 'The Literature of Bohemia', *Westminster Review*, n.s., 23 (January 1863), 32–56 (p. 47). Murger had died two years earlier in January 1861. All further references to this article will be given in the text.

Bohemian writers to a dwindling school of prose. Indeed, McCarthy's portrait of the latter is insistently reductive, limiting it both geographically (to the journalistic quarters of Fleet Street) and stylistically (to 'a certain dashing, flippant, fast style of description and of reflection, all flavouring purely of London'). McCarthy roots this metropolitan Bohemia firmly in the present day, identifying it with an emphatically 'new element' of English literature. The latter spans some of the era's most up-and-coming genres, including the 'fast novel', 'the sensation article', and the 'theatrical burlesque' (p. 51). In establishing the School's quintessential modernity, McCarthy acknowledges that much of its output provides an accurate record of the professional and social lives of a particular section of London's journalistic community. Throughout the article, such concessions amount to damning with faint praise as he makes a series of double-edged observations, claiming for example that: '[the English Bohemians] are very realistic, all of them: they take the world, or rather just that section of society which makes up their world, exactly as they find it' (p. 55). The inference is that, beyond their value as up-to-the-minute historical documents, English Bohemian productions bear only ephemeral cultural significance. McCarthy goes on to make this point more forcibly by invoking the incontrovertible powers of the contemporary literary market. He ominously remarks that 'the author who can only describe one phase of life must expect, unless he possess very wonderful powers, to find his listeners soon grow weary' (p. 53). Ultimately, McCarthy reassures both himself and his readership that it will not be long before an expanding and increasingly demanding consumer public tire of the Bohemians' narrowly focused depictions of a certain set of socio-professional activities.

McCarthy's article appeared at a key moment in the widening of popular conceptions of English Bohemia. As was seen in the last chapter, the evolution of ideas of Bohemianism in the 1830s and 40s was fragmentary and unpredictable on both sides

of the Channel. In Thackeray's particular case, shifting Anglo-French relations as well as more personal developments helped to displace Continental Bohemia and he focused increasingly on anglicized spheres of masculine interaction. The remaining chapters of this thesis will show that English perceptions of Bohemianism continued to change drastically in the years following the tumultuous events of the late 1840s. During the next decade, the so-called English Bohemian School emerged, gaining a notably unstable status in the cultural imagination. It is this School which lies at the heart of McCarthy's seminal review of Bohemian literature. Indeed, the term *School* remained an unsatisfactory — and frequently derogatory — means of categorizing this sprawling set of London journalists, novelists, and playwrights. If the artists and writers of the Latin Quarter in the 1830s and 40s had been eclectic, these men were even more so. Despite Edmund Yates's nod towards rebellious counter-culturalism in the quotation above, the 'British Bohemia' he describes found little unity in shared political motivations or coherent artistic manifestoes.

It was partly as a result of this that self-professed English Bohemians in the 1850s came to occupy an indeterminate cultural space between the mainstream and the unorthodox. Still in the prime of their youth, in this decade they were both productive and profligate, contributing sketches and serial fiction to major journals like *Household Words*, while also attempting to strike out on their own. Most conspicuously, they established ambitious but ultimately short-lived periodicals such as *The Idler* (surviving for just a year under the editorship of James Hannay in 1856) and *The Train* (edited by Edmund Yates from 1856 until it was forced to cease publication in 1857). With their prolific output and self-publicizing lifestyles, these writers built on the traditions of Continental Bohemianism to develop their own somewhat chaotic network of self-representational strategies, lifestyle myths, and professional ideals. However, the

Bohemian identities of these men were only ever partially within their own control. In the mid-nineteenth century, cultural ideas of the *Bohemian* as literary man and of *Bohemia* as socio-professional space were at the mercy of critical onlookers whose sympathies varied significantly. In this way, by the beginning of the 1860s, the literary output and cultural reception of writers such as Yates and George Augustus Sala had helped to foster a somewhat diffuse and conflicted understanding of Bohemia in the English imagination. As will be seen, an important factor in this was the fluid relationship between the distinctive modes of interaction associated with English Bohemian figures and wider mid-Victorian ideals of masculine behaviour. Popular conceptions of English Bohemianism came to encompass not only a very specific sector of London's journalistic trade, but also a far less clearly defined section of middle-class masculine society.

This chapter explores two of the commanding influences in this development — two very different writers who lived and worked on opposite sides of the Channel. One was Thackeray and the other was the French writer, Henry Murger. Both perpetuated exceptionally influential representations of male homosocial life and both were absorbed into English ideas of Bohemianism from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. However, as well as forming resonant touchstones, these men and their work have just as frequently emerged as sites of dispute. As writers, they have been seen to exert both a clarifying and a falsifying effect on cultural imaginings of Bohemia and its associated behavioural ideals. Fundamental to this have been two curiously porous texts: Thackeray's *History of Pendennis* (1848–50) and Murger's *Scènes de la vie de Bohème* (1851). Both have been condemned for repackaging and diluting grittier realities — or, by even more unsympathetic critics, of apathetically absorbing, replicating, and

reinforcing what their readers want to believe. At the same time, they have inspired generations of writers and critics in ways which their authors could not have imagined.

In Justin McCarthy's article above, the work of Henry Murger serves as central evidence in his case for the restrictive subject-matter and transient cultural relevance of English Bohemian writings. McCarthy claims that while the French writer is similarly preoccupied with a limited section of Parisian society, he surpasses the comparatively prosaic English Bohemians through his display of 'rare humour, a wit thoroughly Parisian, but now sadly uncommon in Parisian literature, and a pathetic power which, when it shines at all, shines with a penetrating light.' Having acknowledged Murger's nationality-specific moral eccentricities, McCarthy endows his combination of humour and pathos with a more universal significance, describing it as 'a rich stock of that true and unfading humour which Thackeray so well defines as the blending of love and wit' (p. 40). Where the writing styles and lifestyles of the English Bohemians are seen as transient symptoms of modern life, Murger's prose and personality are associated with more enduring qualities. For McCarthy, the English Bohemians are vivacious but
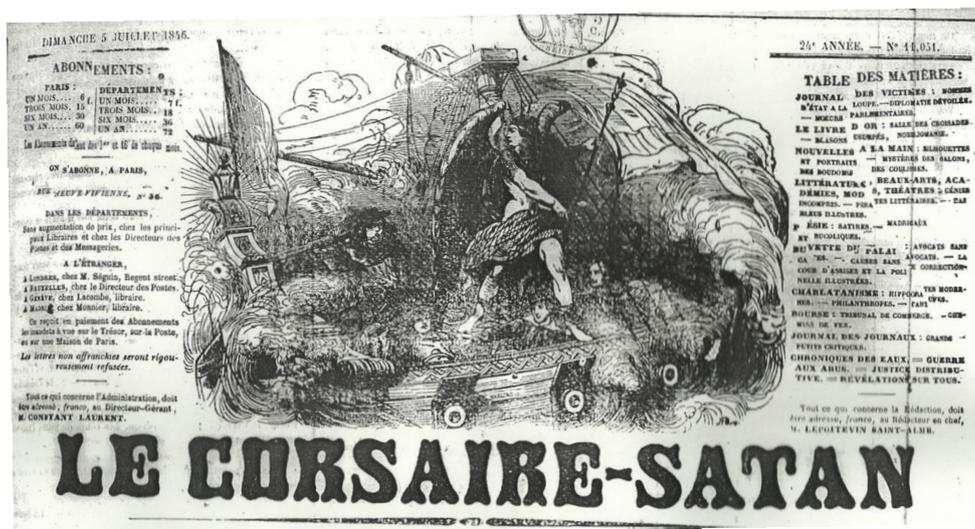
Figure 2a: *Le Corsaire-Satan* (5 July 1846), 1

flippant and erratic. Murger's comic dynamism, on the other hand, encompasses reliable stylistic and emotional qualities which sustain empathy and communication.

McCarthy invokes Thackeray's lectures on *The English Humourists of the Eighteenth Century* to reinforce such associations. In this series, Thackeray conceives of ideal humour as the 'blending of love and wit', and, most importantly, as a social tool to bind men together. His account of Addison, Fielding and others, relies on a cross-over between the values governing these writers' personal and professional relationships and the values which they perpetuate in their work. Thackeray's informal but distinctly masculinized canon commemorates the manly independence, frankness, and conviviality visible in both the lives and writings of those English Humourists that he most admires. McCarthy thus identifies Murger with a canonical brotherhood of English writers and his Parisian brand of Bohemianism with the ideals of masculine behaviour perpetuated in Thackeray's influential lectures.[172]

McCarthy's vision of Murger is primarily based around his *Scènes de la vie de Bohème,* which the French writer had published in the same year that Thackeray delivered his *English Humourists* lectures.[173] By the time that McCarthy was writing, this collection of sketches had achieved phenomenal popularity and had brought the recently deceased writer substantial fame in France. Yet Murger had in fact begun his career in a journalistic world as precarious as that of the English Bohemians. On 9 May 1845, he published a short sketch entitled 'Un envoyé de la Providence' ['A Messenger of Providence'] in the Parisian *petit journal*, *Le Corsaire-Satan* (see figure 2a). The piece describes a day in the lives of two Parisian artists named Marcel and Schaunard — a day which primarily comprises an extended practical joke at the expense of a

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[172] Delivered first in 1851 in Britain and then later in the United States, Thackeray's widely publicized lectures were both popular and lucrative. McCarthy enthusiastically attended the whole series, and later recalled the 'delightful experience' of listening to Thackeray's 'unstudied art of expression'. See Justin McCarthy, *Reminiscences*, 2 vols (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1899), I, 33–34.

[173] McCarthy also briefly considers Murger's 1858 novel, *Le dernier rendezvous* and two biographical accounts of the French writer: Armand de Pontmartin's *Les Jeudis de Madame Charbonneau* (Paris: Michel Lévy frères, 1862) and *Histoire de Murger, pour servir à l'histoire de la vraie Bohème, par Trois Buveurs d'Eau* (Paris: Hetzel, 1862), co-authored by Adrien Lelioux, Léon Noël, and Nadar. See discussion below.

bourgeois merchant. The latter — one Monsieur Blancheron — has come to sit for his portrait and the two central characters set about tapping his resources at all possible levels. As he paints the merchant, Schaunard looks forward to his fee while also ordering an extravagant dinner at his sitter's expense. Marcel, on the other hand, takes advantage of the diversion to borrow the merchant's dress jacket so that he can attend a dinner held by a patron of the arts. Despite the artists' seeming triumph, however, the story does not really lend itself to symbolic readings of the victory of creative unconventionality over mainstream philistinism. The naive egotism which makes the merchant such an easy target is matched by the artists' inconsistency as they refuse to adhere to any particular set of artistic ideals or political principles. Marcel's appetite proves more persuasive than his radical convictions, for example, as he agrees to attend a dinner hosted by a pro-government deputy. Even more significantly, the tale concludes with the mutual intoxication of Schaunard and Monsieur Blancheron as they drink the wine which Schaunard has ordered using the latter's credit. The artist and the merchant dance together, swear everlasting friendship, and fall asleep in each other's arms. The story culminates with Marcel returning to the incongruous sight of his Bohemian friend sleeping with the bourgeois enemy. The sketch thus seems as much a playful dramatization of youthful flippancy, independence, and indifference as it does a symbolic depiction of class conflict on the social margins.

The piece was not exceptional. The editor of the *Corsaire-Satan* had a taste for stories featuring the Latin Quarter escapades of students, artists, and grisettes, and had authorized the publication of a number of such accounts in the same year that Murger's emerged.[174] Murger was at this time struggling to make ends meet in the artistic district

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[174] Among others, Seigel cites a story entitled 'Chien-Caillou' ['Dog Pebble'] by Murger's sometime roommate, Champfleury (Seigel, p. 43).The *Corsaire-Satan's* editor at this time was Poitevin de Saint-Alme (real name Podevin). For insight into the running of the paper in the 1840s, see Graham Robb's

where his sketch is set, and he was very much aware of this trend. Indeed, his choice of

subject-matter was a conscious attempt to tap into the success which his colleagues had

already achieved. A few months before the emergence of 'Un envoyé de la Providence',

he had written to his friend, the poet, Léon Noël, exuberantly claiming that 'Pris d'une

belle veine caustique, j'ai jeté une douzaine de canards dans la boîte du *Corsaire,* et j'ai

l'agrément de les voir défiler un à un; de quoi il va résulter une collaboration au sus dit

— où comme mes amis qui y travaille, je moissonnerai de trente à quarante francs par

mois sans me gêner' ['In a fine caustic vein, I have cast a dozen or so anecdotes into the

Corsaire letter-box*,* and I have the pleasure of seeing them appear in print one after

another, from which more work for the paper will result — where, like my friends who

work there, I will earn thirty to forty francs a month without too much effort.'].[175] In

fact, since a year elapsed before another of his sketches emerged in the paper, Murger

was either exaggerating the number of articles which he had submitted or was being

casually optimistic about the speed of his success.[176] Nonetheless, over the next four

years he went on to publish a series of sketches which gained a certain amount of

popularity among the readership of the *Corsaire-Satan*.[177] These sketches comprised

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introduction to Auguste Vitu's *Le Corsaire-Satan en Silhouette: le milieu journalistique de la jeunesse de Baudelaire* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University, 1985).

[175] I follow Joanna Richardson in translating 'canards' as 'anecdotes', though the term fails to capture the more derogatory associations of the French term (which also conveys a sense of false report or slander, particularly in the context of scurrilous journalism).

[176] According to Henry Curwen, Murger would in fact earn fifteen francs per sketch. See 'Henry Murger, The Bohemian', *Westminster Review*, n.s., 43 (April 1873), 404–49 (p. 436).

[177] Seigel describes this paper as 'a saucy, provocative sheet devoted to literature and politics', which 'seems to have been well known in the Latin Quarter if not in the rest of the city' (p. 37). However, throughout the 1840s, the *Corsaire-Satan* lists circulation offices in London, Brussels, Geneva and Madrid. On 13 September 1846, *The Era* published the circulation figures of the twenty-six Parisian Dailies of the time. Out of a total 157,287 newspaper copies, the *Siècle* came top at 31,603, the *Journal des Débats* sold 9519, the *Charivari* sold 2823, while the *Corsaire-Satan* sold 890 copies per day. The latter thus had a circulation of just under a third of the capital's main satirical paper. Indeed, by 1848 *The Times* was frequently coupling it with the *Charivari* as a satirical publication of note. In *The Times* reports on the French political upheavals, for example, the *Corsaire* and the *Charivari* are recurrently praised for their unforgiving satirical stance towards the Republican 'mob' (see, for example, 'The State of France', 14 April 1848, p. 6, 'The State of Paris', 5 April 1848, p. 5, or 'The State of Paris,' 20 March 1848, p. 2). The *Corsaire-Satan* was thus perhaps more widely known (by reputation at least) than Seigel suggests.

more Latin Quarter-based exploits and featured both Marcel and Schaunard with the addition of two further characters: Rodolphe the poet and Colline the philosopher. With the publication of his fourth sketch, 'Le Cap des tempêtes' ['The Cape of Storms'], Murger introduced the series title, 'Scènes de la vie de Bohême', maintaining this heading until the emergence of his last sketch, 'Son Excellence Gustave Colline' ['His Excellency Gustave Colline'], on 21 April 1849.[178]

Figure 2b: Frontispiece, *Scènes de la vie de Bohème* (Paris: Michel Lévy frères, 1886)

Just two years after the publication of this final vignette, a volume entitled *Scènes de la vie de Bohème par Henry Murger*, made its appearance on the literary scene.[179] The publisher, Michel Lèvy, had approached Murger and purchased the rights to his work for five hundred francs.[180] This quickly proved a wise investment as Lèvy went on to sell 70 000 copies of the volume in the ten years before Murger's death in

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[178] The former was originally published on 9 July 1846 and appears as the tenth chapter of the 1851 volume edition. The latter appeared in three parts in the *Corsaire-Satan* but does not feature in the volume edition.

[179] Seigel notes that Murger did not adopt the grave accent in place of the circumflex on the term *Bohême* until further into the series (Seigel, p. 43).

[180] Murger's fee was modest in comparison with the prominent French novelists of the day. Six years earlier, in 1844, Balzac had received 11,000 francs for *Modeste Mignon*, George Sand 10,000 francs for *Jeanne*, while Eugene Sue (following the ground-breaking success of *Les Mystères de Paris* from 1842-43) was paid 100,000 francs for *Le Juif Errant.* On the other hand, Murger's publisher would later pay a still little-known Flaubert just 800 francs for *Madame Bovary* (1857). This initially sold only 6750 copies — far less than Murger's debut volume. See Henry-Jean Martin and Roger Chartier, eds, *Histoire de l'édition française: le temps des éditeurs du Romantisme à la Belle Époque,* 4 vols (Paris: Promodis, 1983–86), III, (1985), p. 135, p. 152–53.

1861.[181] This marked the beginning of Murger's rapid cultural assimilation as both the classic chronicler of Parisian Bohemia and as its symbolic figurehead. In the decades following the work's initial publication, countless new editions were produced. A lavishly illustrated tome appearing in 1886, for example, captures the drastic reinvention of Murger's identity over time. The volume's frontispiece sets a portrait of the author against three pastoral scenes which serve as allegories of the vicissitudes of love and fortune running through his tales (see figure 2b). Most significant, however, is the visual link which the engraving establishes between Murger's likeness, his name, and the poeticized alias of the Parisian student quarter: 'Le Pays Latin'. The 'Latin Country' is a motif dating back to the Renaissance and reminds the reader that the romanticization of this area of Paris is a well-established convention.[182] Here, however, Murger's persona is firmly stamped in a dominant position above 'Le Pays Latin' and in front of his own pastoralized re-imaginings of this realm. He is clearly emblematized as the unparalleled re-inventor of the myth of the Latin Quarter. More specifically, the frontispiece provides a striking visual precursor to later critical opinion which not infrequently casts Murger as a perpetuator of an idealized and formulaic version of Parisian artistic life.

Yet Murger's emergence as a Bohemian myth-maker was not simply a result of his transition from the opportunistic struggles of journalism to the mainstream success of novel-writing. Aside from the fact that *Scènes de la vie de Bohème* is not actually a novel, Murger's initial triumph occurred through the theatre.[183] His ability to attract the

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[181] See Curwen, p. 436. Later including this article on Murger in his miscellany, *Sorrow and Song: Tales of Literary Struggle,* 2 vols (London: King and Co., 1875), Curwen took a sympathetically romantic view of the French writer's plight — observing that his five hundred franc fee was 'altogether something under thirty-four pounds for one of the most popular books of modern times.'

[182] 'Le Pays Latin' is a phrase often attributed to Rabelais and originally related to the fact that Latin was the language of the University at the heart of the district. For a short historical account, see Augustus J. C. Hare, *Paris,* 2 vols (London: George Allen, 1900), II, 83.

[183] At the end of his first sketch, Murger himself emphasizes the fact that his short stories do not compose a novel. Despite this, nineteenth- and twentieth-century accounts of Murger's life and work repeatedly

interest of a major publisher was down to the sell-out success of a theatrical adaptation of his sketches: *La Vie de Bohème*.[184] Produced in collaboration with the dramatist, Thèodore Barrière, this was first staged on 22 November 1849 to a full house at the Théâtre de Variétés. Recently returned from his own Bohemian exile in London, Louis Napoléon was amongst the audience.[185] However, Murger's response to this dramatic triumph was not just a straightforward anthologization of his *Corsaire-Satan* sketches. Lévy's edition of *Scènes de la vie de Bohème* comprised an abridged and rearranged selection of twenty-one of Murger's original journalistic contributions. The author framed the revised collection with a new introductory tale ('Comment fut instituté le cénacle de la Bohème' ['How the Bohemian Circle Came Together']), as well as something akin to a narrative climax ('La Jeunesse n'a qu'un temps' ['Youth is Fleeting']). Most significantly, Murger furnished the volume with a distinctive preface, in which he lays out the sociological and psychological characteristics of Bohemianism. Famously asserting that Bohemia is only possible in Paris, he identifies four separate groups within this marginal section of Parisian society. He dismisses the first three of these, which he characterizes as two distinct groups within 'la Bohème ignorée' ['unknown Bohemia'] and a separate group comprised entirely of amateurs. Together, these represent inauthentic and self-delusional imitations of 'la vraie Bohème' ['true Bohemia'] — the subject of Murger's work. Aphoristic and highly quotable, this preface would go on to become by far the most common touchstone in subsequent

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resort to this shaky classification of his collection of interrelated but nonetheless episodic sketches. This is a product of Murger's historical pigeonholing as the original mythologizer of Parisian Bohemia — something which obscures his roots in the financially uncertain world of Parisian journalism.

[184] Henry Murger and Théodore Barrière, *La Vie de Bohème: pièce en cinq actes* (Paris, 1849).

[185] According to Edwin Colby Byam, the play ran for fifty consecutive performances and rescued the théâtre des Variétés from financial ruin. It remained on the repertory of the theatre for ten years and was revived on multiple occasions in the second half of the nineteenth century. See *Thèodore Barrière: Dramatist of the Second Empire* (London: Oxford University Press, 1938), p. 23.

accounts of Bohemianism — whether they were idiosyncratic rambles or scholarly histories.

In this way, Justin McCarthy's confidence that Murger's work would outlive that of the English Bohemians was partly based on contemporary evidence. By the time that he contributed his article to the *Westminster Review,* both the sensational success of Murger's theatre production and the careful repackaging of his sketches had fundamentally transformed popular conceptions of French Bohemian life. His review even includes a consideration of a new biography of the author, *Histoire de Murger, pour servir à l'histoire de la vraie Bohème* — a work which confirms Murger's already secure position in French culture. Published the year after his death, the volume includes a selection of Murger's letters alongside an affectionate commentary by three of his old friends.[186] The latter close their account with what they claim is Murger's last letter before he died. This final note certainly combines aspects of the humour and pathos with which McCarthy identifies the author. As he lies dying, Murger expresses his affection for another Parisian hospital to the one in which he finds himself. He wryly observes that 'On est plus chez soi là-bas. Enfin!' ['One is more at home there. After all!'] This revelation is immediately followed by the work's final line, in which Murger's biographers wistfully inquire: 'Quelle péroraison pourrait remplacer celle-là?' ['How could it be summed up better than that?] The pithy knowingness of this finale suggests that McCarthy's conception of 'humour and pathos' had well-established roots in popular imaginings of Murger and the mode of homosocial life which he had come to represent. Furthermore, as they repeatedly emphasize their brotherly affection for their deceased subject, Murger's biographers perpetuate exactly the type of unified personal

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[186] Originally published anonymously under the signature 'les trois buveurs de l'eau', the work was in fact the handiwork of the playwright, Adrien Lelioux, the poet, Léon Noël, and the photographer, Nadar. The men had been core members of the eclectic artistic circle known as the 'Water Drinkers'. Murger fraternized with the group in the early 1840s only to go on to associate them with the isolated futilities of 'la Bohème ignorée' — an association with which they would not necessarily have disagreed.

and professional companionship which McCarthy uses to correlate the French author with Thackeray.

In 1863, Murger was not as well known in England as across the Channel, and had certainly not attracted such sympathetic biographers. McCarthy observes that, in contrast to Paris where Murger's death two years earlier had been marked by an unusually large public funeral, 'to the general English public his works and his celebrity [...] were almost entirely unknown.'[187] He adds that 'those who had heard anything of him regarded him and his writings for the most part as something utterly disreputable — something wholly out of the pale of social and literary consideration' (p. 36). It is now difficult to assess Murger's cultural status in England at this time. References to his work in the press of the 1850s do not appear frequently. Yet, when they do, they assume a degree of familiarity on the part of the reader and are far from wholly condemnatory.[188] Indeed, a magazine as mainstream as *Ainsworth's* (to which Thackeray himself had contributed in the early 1840s) published a not unsympathetic review of *Scènes de la vie de Bohème* in the same year that the work was published in Paris.[189] Just two years later, a *Times* review of an English production of one of Murger's plays observes that the latter 'has lately gained much celebrity by his

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[187] Commentators such as the Goncourt brothers were highly critical of the lavish funeral bestowed on the (by then penniless) writer, objecting that it was a waste of government money.

[188] Allusions to Murger in the English press include an unsigned review in *Bentley's Miscellany,* which translates an extract of *Scènes de la vie de Bohème* but does not mention Murger by name ('Paris Viveur Bohemian, and Industrial', 36 (December 1854), 586–603). See also Sidney Laman Blanchard, 'The True Bohemians of Paris', *Household Words,* (15 November 1851), 190–92, George Augustus Sala, 'A Tour in Bohemia', *Household Words,* (8 July 1854), 495–500 (Sala claims that Murger's 'admirable book *Les Bohémiens de Paris* has suggested [his] desultory article'), and R.M. Milnes, 'Fictions of Bohemia', *Quarterly Review,* 103 (Apr 1858), 328–46. A.V. Kirwan gives a less positive account of the French writer in 'The Decline of French Romantic Literature', *Fraser's Magazine,* 53 (June 1856), 711–21. He describes Murger's story, 'La Résurrection de Lazare', as 'active wicked outrage' (p. 714). Similarly, *The Literary Gazette* reports the anger of the journalist, Louis Veuillot, when the *Légion d'Honneur* was awarded to 'a certain number of Bohemians' including Murger ('Foreign Correspondence' (11 September 1858), 339).

[189] 'The Bohemians of Art and Literature', *Ainsworth's Magazine,* 20 (November 1851), 448–58.

illustrations of French student-life.'[190] Thus, in some circles at least, Murger may not have been as far beyond the 'social pale' as McCarthy implies. However, in presenting himself as the saviour of Murger's English reputation, McCarthy is able to enact one of the primary arguments of his article: the contention that the ascendant brand of London Bohemianism should be supplanted with a superior model.

This becomes clearer as the parallels between Murger and Thackeray become increasingly reciprocal. Just as McCarthy uses the latter to link Murger with anglicized ideals of masculine behaviour, he similarly draws on Murger's culturally resonant images of homosocial life to endow Thackeray's work with new significance. Indeed, alongside his French contemporary, Thackeray provides the other major point of comparison through which McCarthy exposes the limitations of London's literary Bohemia. Ironically, he does so by placing the author at the heart of this 'pretentious native imitation' of Parisian life — establishing Thackeray as the quintessential chronicler of this sphere with an extended quotation of Pendennis's afore-considered Bohemian eulogy.[191] However, he also firmly sets the novelist apart with the qualifying observation that had he 'not been capable of something far higher, [he] might have led our Bohemian School' (p. 49). For McCarthy, Thackeray is a consummate realist and his potent association with English Bohemia relates to his ability to translate his own experiences onto the page with unparalleled accuracy. However, in contrast to the work of a writer such as George Augustus Sala, these representations of Bohemian spaces, characters, and lifestyles form just a small sub-section of Thackeray's sweeping socio-cultural overviews. While McCarthy praises Sala's reportorial accuracy and even grants him leadership of the English Bohemian School, he claims that the latter's skills as a

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[190] 'French Plays', *The Times* (9 May 1853), 5. The review relates to a production of Murger's one-act piece, *Le Bonhomme jadis* at St James's theatre. The play had premiered the year before at the *Théâtre Français* in April 1852. There appear to have been no London productions of the Murger-Barrière collaboration, *La Vie de Bohème* in the 1850s.

[191] *PH*, p. 148. See discussion above, p. 33.

realist evaporate as soon as he turns his attention to a subject beyond the limits of journalistic London which, he adds, 'embrace but a very small corner of Mr Thackeray's field' (p. 52).

Nonetheless, this 'very small corner' has a not insubstantial effect on McCarthy, causing him to lapse into effusive praise and to declare that:

> Nowhere can there be found more faithful and vivid sketches of the British Bohemian than those which Mr Thackeray has carelessly touched off in so many stray chapters. The author describes as one of the initiated and acclimatized alone could do. The true spirit and fragrance of the Bohemian atmosphere are about him. His Warringtons, Fred Bayhams, Clive Newcombes, J.J. Ridleys, and the rest, are not only admirable as a general grouping, but each one is in himself a perfect type of a class or variety of the genus. (p. 49)

McCarthy's admiration of these insider representations of Bohemian life destabilizes his suggestion that English Bohemia is in its death throes. Indeed, his description idealizes exactly the same qualities which drive his dismissal of the London Bohemian School. Thackeray's careless sketching is not out of keeping with the dubious flippancy of more thoroughly Bohemian writers and yet, in this affectionate overview, the author's methods appear almost heroic. At this point, McCarthy is unfazed by what he goes on to characterize as the esoteric narrowness of the Bohemian sphere. Rather he relishes the fact that Thackeray is such a compact embodiment of its less tangible qualities. Ultimately, for all his attempts to characterize Bohemianism as a passing cultural fad, McCarthy appears unable to resist its more enduring appeal.

His evaluation of Thackeray, like that of Murger, presupposes the existence of certain shared ideals of masculine behaviour and understanding. These are not as clearly articulated as in his description of the French writer's 'blending of love and wit'. However, in Thackeray's case, McCarthy's evocation of a somewhat hazy brand

of shared masculine experience is more clearly class-specific. This becomes increasingly apparent as he goes on to differentiate Thackeray's work from that of Dickens, claiming that the latter:

> has done nothing bearing any resemblance to this kind of [Bohemian] picture. His Richard Swivellers and Micawbers are admirable comedy, but they do not belong to Bohemia. None of the air of that picturesque land has ever breathed upon them. […] Whatever the genuine Bohemian may be, it is absolute and essential that he must never be vulgar, and that he must always at least have the sympathies of a scholar and an artist, and something of the native grace of a gentleman. (p. 50)

Here, McCarthy slides imperceptibly between Dickens's fictional characters and Dickens's personal identity as he excludes both from 'genuine' Bohemianism and its inherent gentlemanliness. As he does so, he moves away from the superficial ostentation and affectation which he elsewhere associates with Bohemian behaviour, approaching a more deeply embedded sense of middle-class identity. The figurative topography of Bohemia, with its abstract picturesqueness and its odourless fragrance, obfuscates the traditionally lowly social status of its legitimate inhabitants. As these genuine Bohemians fade from view behind a hazy screen of gentility, one might feel that McCarthy's description provides a particularly notable example of the mid-Victorian mystification of the category of the gentleman.[192] His standpoint on Dickens and Thackeray's representations of Bohemia is certainly coloured by his personal experiences. In later years, McCarthy remembered feeling 'rather afraid of Dickens'. The latter's manner was disconcertingly 'full of energy'; he was 'physically overpowering', and the 'very vehemence of his cheery good-humour bore one down.'

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[192] Ina Ferris has convincingly placed Thackeray himself at the heart of this phenomenon. She argues that his representations of homosocial life contributed to the contemporary refashioning of gentlemanliness as 'an elusive but real quality of moral superiority rather than a relatively straightforward designation of social position.' See 'Thackeray and the Ideology of the Gentleman,' in *The Columbia History of the British Novel,* ed. by John Richetti (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), pp. 407–28 (p. 427).

In the presence of Thackeray, on the other hand, McCarthy recalled that he 'never felt the same kind of awe or awkwardness.' The only direct explanation he gives for this is that Thackeray 'seemed less self-assertive, less conscious of his superiority than Dickens'. In fact, McCarthy's disquiet at Dickens's comic exuberance and self-conscious superiority displaces another source of unease: his distaste for the boisterous crowd of Bohemian young men to whom Dickens 'seemed to represent all literature'.[193] Thackeray, in contrast, is 'simply an educated gentleman'. His approachability reverses the usual rules of class exclusion as, rather than being the elitist barrier that one might expect, his gentlemanliness facilitates social intercourse. It is in this precarious combination of refined restraint and unaffected affability that McCarthy locates Thackeray's native Bohemianism. Indeed, it should be clear by this point that Thackeray's sketches of Bohemian life do not depict the English Bohemia which McCarthy dismisses in the rest of his article but rather a distinctly Thackerayan version.

Like the work of English Bohemians such as Sala, Thackeray's novels after *Vanity Fair* have frequently been seen to amplify the significance of particular homosocial spaces and even to glamorize the interaction which takes place within them. Yet McCarthy's view that Thackeray surpasses these writers on account of his more expansive fictional world is clearly only part of the story. His admiration for both Thackeray and Murger rests on the impression that they produce less historically and geographically specific representations of masculine experience than those of inferior Bohemian writers. In effect, McCarthy seeks to dispel the thoroughly modern myths and methods by which the English Bohemians promote both their public identities and their saleable work. He is particularly critical of their cultivation of the illusion that their throw-away writings and unconventional lifestyles are inevitable reflections of the

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[193] McCarthy, *Reminiscences,* I, 30–31.

contemporary literary market. Reluctant to associate Thackeray and Murger with such modern modes of self-commercialization, McCarthy conceives of their work through loftier ideas of collective interaction. In the case of both writers, he focuses on ideals such as brotherly loyalty and artistic integrity — values no more the monopoly of Bohemia than they are integral to the conduct of a dignified professional life. In the process, his romanticized visions of both Thackeray and Murger escape him and Bohemianism emerges as an abstract but seductive image of professional conduct and masculine camaraderie. Its seductiveness lies in its power to persuade the male reader either that he might want to be part of such a Bohemian life or indeed that he is part of it already. In this way, rather than dismissing the English Bohemian movement, McCarthy's evocation of Thackerayan Bohemia places significant pressure on the inherently fragile boundaries between Bohemian life and a more wide-reaching sphere of middle-class homosociality.

2.2 'At once unreal and warmly human'

McCarthy's treatment of Thackeray and Murger at the beginning of the 1860s anticipates significant parallels between critical reactions to the writers over the second half of the nineteenth century and beyond. Both men would come to be increasingly associated with universalized versions of Bohemian life, neither clearly opposed to the mainstream nor comfortably integrated into middle-class society. As McCarthy's article suggests, this social dislocation was rooted in reader response. Both writers portray particular homosocial experiences in ways which have encouraged readers to identify them as more representative modes of life than they were originally intended to be.

In England, Murger became increasingly well known as the century progressed. He received a number of serious-minded biographical notes in the 1870s; the first adaptation of his *Vie de Bohème* appeared on the London stage in 1881, and the earliest English translation of his volume of sketches was published by Vizetelly in 1888. Responses to his work were still somewhat unpredictable, as the reception of the first anglicized dramatizations of his work demonstrates. In 1873, the Irish melodramatist, Dion Boucicault produced an adaptation of *La Vie de Bohème* for New York audiences. Changing the play's title to *Mimi,* he supplemented the original plot with a series of sensationalized adventures, as well as heightening the sentimentality of the play's tragic finale.[194] The production met with a warm reception and eight years later, Boucicault brought a revised version of the adaptation to London's Court Theatre. This time, however, he re-located the drama's Latin Quarter action in England. The Parisian grisette, Mimi, was now a poor gypsy girl, while the poet, Rodolphe, had been replaced by a caddish Cambridge student named Leo Chillingham. This 'romantic drama' was met with universal derision. *Punch* parodied the play's 'Mimi-cry' of its French source and jibed that the eponymous heroine's climactic death occurred 'under the unfortunate inspiration of too much Murger.'[195] What was worse, the audience of the debut performance lost patience with its pathos-saturated closing scene and 'laughed derisively [...] vigorously hiss[ing] their condemnation.'[196] In this instance, Murger's delicately balanced combination of 'sentiment and humour' had collapsed into outright bathos and the play was soon withdrawn from the Court's repertory.[197]

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[194] By the end of the century, such transformations had come full circle when the American dramatist, Clyde Fitch produced a version of the play with a happy ending. It ran for only forty-eight performances at the New York Empire but inspired Willa Carther to write an essay arguing that 'the business of an artist's life is not Bohemianism [...] but ceaseless and unremitting labor.' See 'Murger's Bohemia', *Nebraska State Journal* (5 April 1896), 16.

[195] 'Mimi; or, the Gentle Gent and the Genteel Gipsy', *Punch* (19 November 1881), 232.

[196] 'The London Theatres', *The Era* (12 November 1881), 7.

[197] Boucicault himself remained characteristically defiant. He wrote to *The Era* both to dispel the charges of plagiarism which had been levelled against him and to make the assertion that 'I think *La Vie de*

Such reluctance to identify with Boucicault's (admittedly bastardized) version of Murgerian Bohemia was counterbalanced by other far more amenable attitudes at the fin de siècle. These included that of the avant-garde editor and literary scholar, Arthur Symons (1865–1945). In his introduction to a turn-of-the-century translation of *Scènes de la vie de Bohème,* Symons effusively celebrates Murger's account of 'the eternal Bohemia' — which he characterizes as 'a country where people love lightly and sincerely, and weep and laugh freely, are really hungry, really have their ambitions, and at times die of all these maladies.' For Symons, Murger's portrayal of this captivating land induces a particularly powerful identification between the reader and his work. Symons accordingly informs his own reader that, 'in Murger's pages, you will [...] see more of [Bohemia] than anything less than a lifetime spent in it will show you.'[198] Underlying all of this is a mystification of the chronology of reader response. Symons cultivates an illusion of déjà vu by persuasively suggesting that Murger's 'eternally youthful' Bohemia will be instantly recognizable to his readers. He deprives Murger's self-confessedly anecdotal sketches of their geographical and temporal specificity, translating them into a timeless and seemingly predetermined realm of archetypal homosocial relationships.

Somewhat paradoxically, it is Murger's skilful encapsulation of ephemeralities which makes his portrayal of this enduring realm so effective. For Symons, Murger's essential subject is the fleetingness of youth — one of the most persistently compelling dilemmas of the human condition. Of equal significance, however, is Murger's impressionistic style. Though his depictions of homosocial life provide an incomparably authentic glimpse of Bohemia, they do not do so through conventional

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Bohème as fine a work as it was held to be thirty years ago, and shall continue to hold that opinion whether the London press and public agree with me or not' ('The Press and "Mimi"', *The Era* (19 November 1881), 8).

[198] Marriage and Selwyn's edition of Murger's *The Latin Quarter* (London: Grant Richards, 1901), p. vii.

realism. Rather, Symons suggests, Murger's work captures 'a certain kind of reality, caught as it were in passing; an improvisation in which the faults of the artist count for something, in their suggestion of the mere instincts or accidents of nature.'[199] Here, Symons becomes rather cryptic. From one point of view, Murger's stylistic carelessness — his 'youthful exaggerations' and virtuosic elisions — are seen as admirable means of communicating the artless eccentricities of Bohemian life. At the same time, Symons is careful to add that 'no one is quite sincere in Bohemia [...] everyone poses for effect, an effect of sincerity, if you will.' Yet, he then glosses over the suggestion that Murger's appealing naivety might be less than spontaneous with the whimsical interjection that Bohemian life is 'an art: rhetoric is the embellishment of art; let life be rhetorical, a vari-coloured thing of sonorous cadences.'

Symons was himself a notable proponent of 'art for art's sake', and his own work was much inspired by that of the French Decadents.[200] Murger, on the other hand, had been fairly ambivalent about the antecedents to such doctrines. Indeed, in his famous preface he identifies the naive ['naïfs'] disciples of figures such as Théophile Gautier with 'unknown Bohemia', describing them simply as 'la race des obstinés rêveurs pour qui l'art est demeuré une foi et non un métier' ['the race of inveterate dreamers are they, for whom art is always a creed and not a craft'].[201] For an aesthete like Symons, Murger's artistic shortcomings are something of a concern. It is for this reason that his endorsement of the author's universal relevance becomes so convoluted. In his account, the reader's identification with Murger's fictional world ultimately appears to arise from an obscure amalgamation of aestheticism, naturalism, autobiography, sham, and raw emotion. Crucially, Murger's depictions of Bohemian

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[199] Ibid., p. xii.
[200] Symons was a keen member of W.B. Yeats' (rather Bohemian) Rhymers' Club and shared his principles with many of its members (most obviously Oscar Wilde).
[201] Ellen Marriage and John Selwyn's translation in the edition in which Symons's preface appears (p. xxii).

life reach out to the reader against his own 'better judgment' — as he is persuaded to overlook the writer's aesthetic shortcomings and to tap into his essential humanity. Symons thus appeases his own artistic doubts by resolving that Murger's genius lay not so much in art for art's sake as in emotion for emotion's sake. He concludes that the chronicler of 'eternal Bohemia [...] gives us every sentiment for its own sake, taking part with it uncritically; and, in his forgetfulness to be an artist, seems to come closer to us, like a comrade.'[202]

The allure of both Murger's work and his personality extended well into the twentieth century — as did debates about the legitimacy of his charismatic representations of homosocial life. The prolific biographer, Joanna Richardson, encapsulated the contested nature of Murger's legacy when she observed that 'he fixed a certain vision of the Bohemian way of life, and, rightly or wrongly, he gave it lasting glamour.'[203] Richardson's coy refusal to pass moral judgement draws attention to the extent to which Murger's Bohemia has indeed tended to be assessed in moral and ideological terms. On the one hand, sympathetic critics have sought to move beyond Symons-style vagaries and to contradict the idea that Murger perpetuated an unwarrantably stylized vision of artistic life. At the more effusive end of the scale is a critic such as Michael Sadleir. He grounds the traditional grand narrative of Murger as the original chronicler of Bohemia in the techniques of realism, arguing that *Scènes de la vie de Bohème* represents 'reportage of the most veracious kind.' He observes that 'each character is a compound of real persons, each incident actually took place,' while 'the brilliance of Murger's achievement is that he gives the charm of imaginative romance to what is in literal fact a chronicle of *choses vues*.'[204] Sadleir's somewhat

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[202] Ibid., p. xiii.
[203] Richardson, p. 95.
[204] Michael Sadleir, 'Introduction', in *Vie de Bohème*, by Henry Murger, trans. by Norman Cameron (London: The Folio Society, 1960), p. 7. Sadleir's preface was first published in 1949.

tautological insistence on Murger's 'literal' verisimilitudes serves a similar purpose to the emphasis which earlier critics such as Justin McCarthy placed on the universally affecting pathos of his work. Stemming out of a synthesis of romanticism and realism, Murger's work induces an enhanced level of empirical recognition, on the one hand, and emotional empathy, on the other. Scholars such as Arthur Moss, Evalyn Marvel, and Robert Baldick have been keen to historicize these composite stylistic qualities, locating Murger at a moment of transition between French Romanticism and the rising Realist movement.[205] For these commentators, the success of Murger's sketches was inextricable from the fact that they brought together characteristics from both of these literary camps: 'they were sentimental, pathetic, romantic — but they were also witty, comic, reportorial.'[206]

Yet such views have tended to be outweighed by others which take Symons's vision of Bohemia posing for an 'effect of sincerity' to its logical conclusion. The classic account in this respect is Albert Cassagne's *La Théorie de l'art pour l'art en France*. Cassagne presents Murger as an entrepreneurial architect of Bohemia — a 'metteur en scene' who knew exactly how to manipulate bourgeois tastes at the time.[207] In this account, *Scènes de la vie de Bohème* pedals a sentimental myth in which genuine Bohemian life is deliberately confused with that of the bourgeois Latin Quarter student. With its sentimentalized depictions of localized nonconformism, this saleable Bohemian legend provides the middle classes with a safe outlet for their unrealized dreams of political liberty — in the process, confining Revolution to the realm of fond reminiscence. Cassagne's vision of faux Latin Quarter Bohemia and its sublimatory

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[205] See Arthur Moss and Evalyn Marvel, *The Legend of the Latin Quarter: Henry Mürger and the Birth of Bohemia* (London: W.H. Allen, 1947) and Robert Baldick, *The First Bohemian: The Life of Henry Murger* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1961).
[206] Moss and Marvel, p. 95.
[207] Albert Cassagne, *Le Théorie de l'art pour l'art,* ed. by Daniel Oster (Seyssel: Champ Vallon, 1997), first published 1906, p. 135.

purpose has unsurprisingly inspired later Marxist responses. T.J. Clark, for example, resolutely dismisses Murger's bourgeois strain of Bohemianism in an attempt to reinstate an authentically revolutionary version. In his view, 'true' Bohemia embodied the 'wretchedly poor and obdurately anti-bourgeois' locus of dissent which composed 'one part of the rebel fighting force' in the 1848 revolution.[208]

Most recently, Mary Gluck has inserted Murger's 'subversive but safe' vignettes into an 'historical archaeology of popular Bohemia.' She identifies his work with a myth of 'sentimental Bohemia' which, like Clark, she distinguishes from a more authentic predecessor. In place of zealous revolutionaries, however, the genuine counter-cultural sub-group which she wishes to rescue from oblivion goes by the name of 'ironic Bohemia.' The latter is firmly located in the 1830s and is associated with the 'parodic gestures and ironic public performances of experimental artists'.[209] Not unlike McCarthy's English Bohemians, Murger is cast as a commercially minded perpetuator of narrowly focused images of modern literary and artistic professionals. In this framework, Murger again brings together elements of romanticism and realism. This time, however, the former represents his infectiously marketable brand of sentimentality while the latter infiltrates both his observational writing style and his prosaically commercial mode of life.

2.3 Thinking Thackeray: Everybody's Past?

Thirty-six years after he had surveyed 'The Literature of Bohemia' on behalf of the *Westminster Review,* McCarthy looked back over his younger days and remarked that 'about that time [in the early 1860s] some of us talked Dickens, and some of us thought

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[208] Clark, p. 33.
[209] Gluck, p. 15, p. 23.

Thackeray.'[210] Just fourteen years later, G.K. Chesterton would more famously describe Thackeray as 'the novelist of memory — of our memories as well as his own,' becoming increasingly enigmatic as he stated that 'Thackeray is everybody's past — is everybody's youth.'[211] Neither McCarthy nor Chesterton refers directly to Bohemia, yet both go on to relate Thackeray's representativeness to homosocial spaces and modes of interaction which, in other contexts, might have been classed as recognizably Bohemian. The fact that neither actually uses the term reflects the extent to which Thackeray's representations of Bohemian life had come to be identified with more indeterminate ideas of collective masculine experience.

Approaching the age of seventy when he compiled his *Reminiscences,* McCarthy continues to relish the idea that Thackeray's fiction cultivated a sense of collective masculine belonging. He fondly recalls that 'those of us who pretended to have any ideas about society at all thought of it just as Thackeray had taught us to do.'[212] In fact, it very quickly becomes clear that McCarthy's universalizing first-person plural is not just gender-specific but principally relates to 'the young literary men' who wrote in the periodicals and newspapers of the time. Nonetheless, his evocation of the pervasive influence of both Dickens and Thackeray retrospectively imposes a loose group identity on a large section of the young middle-class men of the 1850s and 60s. As in McCarthy's article on Bohemia, Dickens's role in this is decidedly double-edged. At best, 'talking Dickens' serves as short-hand for the topical conversation binding together the middle-class young men of McCarthy's youth. The suggestion might be that the latter proactively debated the same pressing issues as Dickens's socially engaged fiction. As before, however, McCarthy in all likelihood has

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[210] McCarthy, *Reminiscences*, I, 36.

[211] G.K. Chesterton, *The Victorian Age in Literature* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), first published 1913, p. 126.

[212] McCarthy, *Reminiscences*, I, 36.

a more derogatory intent. Dickens's immense impact on 'everyday language' was a common complaint during his lifetime. A characteristic review of his work in the 1850s, for example, observed that '*Wellerisms* and *Gampisms* [...] have got blended insensibly with our stock of conversational phrases; and now in our most serious moments we talk *slang* unwittingly.' [213] The notion of 'thinking Thackeray', on the other hand, leaves no room for such a descent into colloquialism. Thackeray is again associated with more deeply ingrained qualities than Dickens as McCarthy suggests that his brand of realism had the power to reshape the mindset of a whole section of his readership.

Like Murger's Bohemia, the characters and settings found in Thackeray's fiction are associated with a sense of déjà vu. Yet, in this case, the heightened level of recognition which they induce in the reader has become extra-textual. The perceived representativeness of Thackeray's work is due not just to the fidelity with which it portrays the 'real' world but also to the impact which it has had on the way in which the world is viewed in the first place. In fact, McCarthy suggests that the atmosphere of particular homosocial spheres in the mid-nineteenth century had become problematically imbued with identifiable elements of both Dickens and Thackeray's fiction. He bemoans the fact that, during his youth, authors like himself 'lived on imitation', adding that 'it was the very breath of our nostrils.' Attaching another towering influence to the list, he observes that 'a man who inhales smoke must breathe out smoke; and a man who inhales Dickens, Thackeray, or Carlyle, was sure to give out a weak or smoky imitation of Dickens, Thackeray, or Carlyle.'[214] In this way, for all his admiration of Thackeray, McCarthy ultimately welcomes the apparent absence of such universally recognizable and influential authors at the end of the century. In his view,

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[213] 'Charles Dickens and *David Copperfield*', *Fraser's Magazine,* 42 (December 1850), 698–710 (p. 699). Contributor remains unidentified by *Wellesley Index*.

[214] McCarthy, *Reminiscences*, I, 37.

the lamentable loss of these major literary men has had the knock-on effect of ventilating the previously stifling literary scene and of providing new space for young up-and-coming writers.

Nonetheless, G.K. Chesterton's response to Thackeray demonstrates that the air of representativeness surrounding his fiction continued into the first decades of the twentieth century. From a superficial point of view, Chesterton appears to de-historicize Thackeray's representations of human experience. Taken out of context, his description of Thackeray as the novelist 'of our memories as well as his own' assigns the latter a wide-reaching symbolic status. His fictional representations of past events and encounters are seen as archetypal and, in turn, as inviting an exceptionally strong identification between every reader and the text. However, as Chesterton describes the narrative characteristics driving this identification, it becomes clear that his conception of Thackeray's representativeness is just as gender- and class-specific as McCarthy's. Seeking to illustrate this potent form of readerly empathy, he claims that in Thackeray's novels, 'forgotten friends flit about the passages of dreamy colleges and unremembered clubs.' He identifies himself with the general (masculine) reader as he observes that within these evocative fictional spaces, 'we hear fragments of unfinished conversations, we see faces without names for an instant, fixed for ever in some trivial grimace: we smell the strong smell of social cliques now quite incongruous to us; and there stir in all the little rooms at once the hundred ghosts of oneself.'[215] In recent years, Nicholas Dames has used Chesterton's view as the basis for his theory that Thackeray's *History of Pendennis* is governed by a distinctly predictable form of memory. Encapsulating the classic Victorian idea of Thackeray as the novelist of 'personal past', Chesterton's description also gestures towards 'a nostalgia so intense that "everybody" can share in

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[215] Chesterton, pp. 126–27.

it'.[216] For Dames, this involves a clear loss of specificity and indeed an averaging out of experience. In a novel like *Pendennis,* memory becomes a habituating process of 'progressive boredom', which merely reveals that which is already known and which translates life's vicissitudes into 'commonplaces'.[217] Accordingly, 'the unique lesson' of this unorthodox *Bildungsroman* 'is that tomorrow [...] will be very much like yesterday.'[218]

Yet, from another point of view, Chesterton is of course grappling with a very particular personal past. His assessment of Thackeray's fiction is rooted in the distinctly homosocial and middle-class experiences of university education and club social life. Furthermore, amidst the 'dreamy' homosocial institutions and the 'strong smell of cliques', one detects the influence of that most 'picturesque land' of cloistered masculine interaction: a romantically inclusive form of Bohemia. Though he was writing on the eve of the First World War and twelve years after Queen Victoria's death, Chesterton (1874–1936) was still essentially a late Victorian man of letters. Born eleven years after Thackeray's demise, Chesterton would have been familiar with homosocial spaces and encounters of the type depicted in the novelist's fiction. However, in comparison with McCarthy, he seems more profoundly ill at ease when faced with Thackeray's cultivation of collective masculine experience. This ambivalence is most evident as he uses images of forgetting and 'unremembering' to describe the reader's identification with Thackeray's narrative. The heightened level of recognition which the latter inspires in specific groups of male readers is dependent on a particularly hazy engagement with the text. It occurs through elliptical impressions and fleeting sensations, suggesting that any sense of collective belonging relies on a

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[216] See Nicholas Dames, *Amnesiac Selves: Nostalgia, Forgetting, and British Fiction, 1810–1870* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 149.
[217] Ibid., p. 153.
[218] Ibid., p. 157.

suspension of disbelief as Thackeray somehow persuades the reader to associate the depicted experiences with his own. As Dames suggests, such universally representative experiences entail an inevitable loss of specificity — even when the experiences are restricted by class and gender as they are here.

However, Chesterton's concern at the possibility that Thackeray presents an excessively generalized version of homosocial life goes deeper than this. The intensely recognizable elements of Thackeray's fiction are in the process of becoming disorientating and the affinity which Chesterton feels with Thackeray's narrative past is on the brink of dying away. In fact, as he identifies the 'now incongruous smell' of previously familiar cliques and the unheimlich quality of Thackeray's formerly recognizable characters, Chesterton appears all too aware of the weight of the Victorian period. Just two pages earlier, he had characterized the latter as 'domestic and genuine, even when it was hoodwinked and unworldly.'[219] This forms the basis of his final verdict on Thackeray as a novelist, whom he concludes 'was too Victorian to understand the Victorian epoch.' In Chesterton's view, Thackeray was 'hoodwinked' by his own Victorian representativeness: he was a Victorian pragmatist who took 'it for granted that the Victorian compromise would last forever' and a Victorian radical who 'thought of all reform as simple and straightforward and all of a piece.' If Thackeray 'did not realise that the Victorian platform was a moving platform', Chesterton, on the other hand, shows a determination to move beyond the novelist's universalized homosocial experiences and to stride into the future unencumbered by the past.[220]

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[219] Chesterton, p. 123.
[220] Ibid., pp. 128–29.

2.4 The Romance of Journalism

'Grub Street is glorified! [...]
Fleet Street, not sweeping censure only sums
Thy manifold activities!'
***Punch* (1884)**[221]

'*Pendennis* — a Grub Street softened and sweetened with the essence of early Victorian sentiment.'
Sydney Castle Roberts (1933)[222]

McCarthy and Chesterton are visibly ambivalent about Thackeray's legacy. It is clear that, in the eyes of both, the latter often cast too ubiquitous a shadow over mid-nineteenth-century culture. Yet, for each of these men of letters, this view is combined with deep affection for the author and is, in turn, illustrative of the unique inspiration which his work held for fellow members of the literary profession. With his phrase 'thinking Thackeray', McCarthy of course sums up the more insidious side of this inspiration and its potential to lapse into mediocre imitation. However, his analysis also reflects the extent to which aspiring Victorian literary men had looked to Thackeray's fiction to buttress their social and professional identities. At the heart of this had been the author's three interrelated but stylistically unique novels of masculine formation: *The History of Pendennis* (1848–50)*, The Newcomes* (1853–55)*,* and *The Adventures of Philip* (1861–62). Of these, the earliest and in many ways the most controversial had exerted the greatest influence over perceptions of the literary profession — both positive and negative.

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[221] 'The Town: No. VI.—Fleet Street', *Punch* (19 July 1884), 33.

[222] *An Eighteenth-Century Gentleman and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933), p. 29.

PENDENNIS.   405

In the political department of the paper Mr. Pen did not take any
share; but he was a most active literary contributor. The "Pall
Mall Gazette" had its offices, as we have heard, in Catherine Street,

in the Strand, and hither Pen often came with his manuscripts in his
pocket, and with a great deal of bustle and pleasure; such as a man
feels at the outset of his literary career, when to see himself in print

Figure 2c: Thackeray, 'Pen and Mr Finucane — subeditor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*', Chapter XXXV, *Pendennis*

From almost the moment that it began serialization, *Pendennis* has met with a fascinatingly divided reception. Having published its first number in November 1848, by the middle of the following year Thackeray was providing his readership with what Mark Cronin has described as 'one of the most complete and unadorned depictions of literary societies in all of Victorian fiction.'[223] A decade earlier than Cronin in 1985, Nigel Cross claims of the same section of the novel that it 'gave definition to Victorian Bohemianism by refashioning the often sordid world of [William] Maginn and [Theodore] Hook into a romantic "Corporation of the Goosequill"'. Cross notes that these compelling representations of the 1820s and 30s literary scene inspired a whole new generation of budding writers in the 1850s and beyond. In contrast to Cronin, however, he maintains that this was not because *Pendennis* could claim the 'slightest degree of realism' but rather 'because it was a genial caricature that made the whole business of authorship seem gloriously easy; and when it was not easy, this scattering of ink was at least good fun.'[224] This might be read as a rather uncharitable variation on Gordon Ray's earlier premise that *Pendennis* conveyed the 'romance of journalism [...] as never before'.[225] Just over a century prior to Ray, however, Dickens's close friend and then-editor of the *Examiner,* John Forster, expressed another more notorious view. Triggering the short exchange which would

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[223] Mark Cronin, 'The Rake, The Writer, and *The Stranger*: Textual Relations between *Pendennis* and *David Copperfield*,' *Dickens Studies Annual,* 24 (1996): 215–40 (p. 228).

[224] Cross, p. 100.

[225] *Wisdom*, p. 115.

come to epitomize the ongoing 'Dignity of Literature' debate, he complained that the depiction of professional writers in *Pendennis* not only descended into undignified caricature but — more unforgivably — was merely the latest manifestation of Thackeray's 'disposition to pay court to the non-literary class by disparaging his literary fellow-labourers.'[226]

Forster's objections arose out of an existing dissatisfaction with Thackeray's methods.[227] Similarly, his most immediate concern was with a reactionary treatise on the (in)validity of state pensions for literary men, which had appeared two days earlier in the *Morning Chronicle*.[228] However, his attack on *Pendennis* in the midst of its serial run was also driven by a significant irritation with the novel's previous number — an irritation which had had plenty of time to brew during an unforeseen break in serialization as Thackeray recovered from severe illness.[229] In chronicling the early life and loves of the dandyish Arthur Pendennis, Thackeray had, before his health deteriorated, gone some way to establishing his protagonist's identity as apathetic lawyer, bad poet, mediocre novelist, and quite good journalist all rolled into one. Indeed, the numbers which had appeared in the last three months before Thackeray's incapacitation had been devoted to a compact series of homosocial spaces and

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[226] John Forster, 'Encouragement of Literature by the State', *Examiner* (5 January 1850) 2–3 (p. 2). The classic summary of this controversy remains K.J. Fielding, 'Thackeray and the Dignity of Literature', *Times Literary Supplement,* 19 September 1958, p. 526 and 26 September 1958, p. 552. See also *Wisdom,* pp. 135–38 and Craig Howes, '*Pendennis* and the Controversy on the 'Dignity of Literature'', *Nineteenth-Century Literature,* 41:3 (1986), 269–98. For recent reconsiderations of the overlapping positions of Thackeray, Forster, and Dickens in the debate, see Salmon, 'Farewell poetry and aerial flights': The Function of the Author and Victorian Fiction,' in *The Concise Companion to the Victorian Novel,* ed. by Francis O'Gorman (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), pp. 134–55 and Clare Pettitt, *Patent Inventions: Intellectual Property and the Victorian Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 154–71.

[227] He had previously responded with impulsive anger to Thackeray's parodies of fellow writers in 'Punch's Prize Novelists' (serialized in *Punch* between April and October 1847). He ill-advisedly complained to a loquacious friend that Thackeray was 'as false as hell' — a remark which soon found its way back to the novelist. See *Wisdom,* p. 135.

[228] See the *Morning Chronicle* (3 January 1850), 4.

[229] Thackeray fell seriously ill on 17 September 1849 and was diagnosed with 'bilious fever' (D.J. Taylor has suggested that this may have been cholera picked up in Paris). Within a month, he was beginning to convalesce.

exchanges which, taken together, formed a resonant topographical introduction to Pendennis's new social and professional life in London.[230] In addition to the mock-chivalric environs of the Inns of Court and the mock-domestic realm of the beery 'Back Kitchen', Pen's metropolitan quest had already taken him into the depths of London's literary scene.

By the time that Forster publicly took issue with the novel, Pen was well into his journalistic stride (see figure 2c), confidently dashing off 'flippant' but 'honest' literary reviews for the *Pall Mall Gazette.* However, he had also found time to mix with plenty of commercially motivated writers who were less honest and — what was worse — who did not even have the intellectual vigour to be flippant. Most notable was Pen's attendance of a rather dingy dinner party hosted by the publisher, Mr Bungay, for some of his firm's writers.[231] Following an evening of cross-purposes, failed puns, and lacklustre business-chat, Pen leaves the gathering in the company of his gruff personal and professional mentor, George Warrington. A pair of journalistic moonlighters walking home together 'in the moonlight', the latter turns to his younger friend and demands: 'now [...] that you have seen the men of letters, tell me, was I far wrong in saying that there are thousands of people in this town, who don't write books, who are, to the full, as clever and intellectual as people who do?'[232] Tellingly, the *Morning Chronicle* article which had first prompted Forster's criticism had only quoted these lines. Though this earlier piece had suggested that Warrington's throw-away comment fostered 'a baneful prejudice' against literary men, its primary intention had been to demonstrate that state pensions for literary men were a bad idea — likely only to 'force

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[230] The 1849 numbers for July (Chapters XXVII–XXIX), August (Chapters XXX–XXXII), and September (Chapters XXXIII–XXXV).

[231] Like most of the supporting cast in Thackeray's fictionalized literary scene, Mr Bungay was partially based on a real-life figure — in this case, the publisher, Henry Colburn (1784/5–1855).

[232] Thackeray, *The History of Pendennis, Works,* II, 340. All further references will be to this edition and will be given in the text preceded by the abbreviation, *PN.*

the production, or increase the breed of the Shandons, the Bunions, the Warringtons, and the Waggs.'[233]

In his initial article which entirely refuted such arguments, Forster nonetheless agreed that Thackeray fostered a prejudice against his own profession — a prejudice which not only paid 'court to the non-literary classes', but which encouraged precisely the type of blinkered view expressed by the *Morning Chronicle.* In a riposte printed in the latter publication, Thackeray by contrast indignantly insisted that the literary profession in the modern world 'is not held in disrepute; nobody wants to disparage it, no man loses his social rank, whatever it may be, by practising it.' He justified his unflattering portraits of literary figures such as the alcoholic debtor, Captain Shandon, and the roguish philistine, Mr Wagg, on the grounds not only that they reflected unhappy realities but also that they represented didactic illustrations of how the dutiful man of letters should not behave. Above all, however, Thackeray's argument was that dignity should come from within. The best way for literary men to secure social respect was to 'silently assume that they [we]re as good as any other gentlemen' and to be strong enough to withstand depictions of the individual failings of particular members of their own professional class.[234] To behave otherwise and to expect special treatment amounted to a denial of contemporary market realities — a denial which was both dishonest and unmanful.

Commentators at the time were quick to pick up on elements of this staunchly matter-of-fact approach in *Pendennis* itself. While some merely noted the narrator's 'ruthless' attempts to 'unpoeticize' every aspect of 'artistic life', others related this tendency to more fundamental stylistic traits.[235] According to Samuel Phillips of *The Times*, for example, where Dickens was sometimes 'over-poetical', Thackeray's 'prose

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[233] *Morning Chronicle* (3 January 1850), 4.
[234] Thackeray, 'The Dignity of Literature', *Morning Chronicle* (12 January 1850), 4.
[235] '*The History of Pendennis*', *Athenaeum* (7 December 1850), 1273–75 (p. 1274).

[wa]s downright prose' — something which could either provide a welcome breath of pragmatism or exacerbate the homogeneity of his characters.[236] For G.H. Lewes, on the other hand, Thackeray's plain-speaking stance on the literary profession translated into a lack of professional decorum in his literary output. If the author was determinedly candid in his acknowledgment of the 'realities' of the contemporary literary trade, his fiction was also particularly marked by the 'facile methods' of modern serial publication. Though Lewes admired *Pendennis* as a whole, he objected that serialization only encouraged the naturally slapdash Thackeray to indulge 'carelessly' in gossipy asides and to digress from his main narrative with sketches of contemporary society. Protesting that 'that which is written for the hour is apt to perish with the hour,' Lewes in effect dismissed those qualities in Thackeray's work which were most likely to draw attention to its currency as a commercial product and, though he did not use the term, to make it more journalistic in style.[237]

For many nineteenth-century critics of *Pendennis*, however, it was the aristocratic Bohemian, George Warrington, who represented the most fortuitous manifestation of Thackeray's no-nonsense rationale. It was generally agreed that his 'rough cynical' exterior and 'plainness of manners and speech' did not simply belie his inner nobility but rather served to heighten these deep-set aspects of his character.[238] In part, this was of course a result of his picturesque conformity with contemporary ideals of masculinity. R.S. Rintoul expressed this particularly clearly when he identified this part-time lawyer-journalist and full-time gentleman with the 'healthy animalism' of 'our better class of young men'.[239] In this, Rintoul was perhaps inspired by Charles

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[236] Samuel Phillips, '*David Copperfield and Arthur Pendennis*', *The Times* (11 June 1851), 8.
[237] G.H. Lewes, '*Pendennis*', *Leader* (21 December 1850), 929–30 (p. 929).
[238] See David Masson, '*Pendennis* and *Copperfield*: Dickens and Thackeray, *North British Review*, 15 (May 1851), 57–89 (p. 87) and R.S. Rintoul, 'Thackeray's *Pendennis*', *Spectator*, 23 (21 December 1850), 1213–15 (p. 1214).
[239] Rintoul, p. 1214.

Kingsley's strident preface to his versified drama, *The Saint's Tragedy,* which had been published two years earlier. Kingsley had presented the proto-protestant hero of this work (the vassal, Walter of Varila) as an embodiment of 'the "healthy animalism" of the Teutonic mind, with its mixture of deep earnestness and hearty merriment.'[240] In Warrington's case, this combination of inward sincerity and outward levity translated into a form of physicalized eloquence which, in turn, added impetus to Thackeray's uncompromising anti-romanticism. In keeping with the English 'national ideal', Warrington leant 'rather to strength than subtlety' and his physical prowess fed directly into his determined campaign against 'cant' — a campaign which, as David Masson suggested, might have prompted 'him to kick the words art, the ideal, transcendentalism, &c., to death, if ever they came too provokingly across his path'.[241]

Interestingly, though Warrington has certainly lost some of his charm, his robust form of anti-idealism has again come to the fore in the historicist backlash which has sought to restore *Pendennis's* reputation over the last twenty years. The staunch Thackerayan, Peter Shillingsburg, headed this critical trend when he published his meticulous investigation of Thackeray's working methods in 1992.[242] Far more than any earlier attempt to revive appreciation of Thackeray, Shillingsburg brings new light to bear on his writings through an exhaustive examination of his publishers' ledgers. Indeed, for this thoroughly material historian, such data forms the basis not just of his research methodology but also of his critical ideology, which finds its roots in Thackeray's own approach. Accordingly, when he comes to consider the Dignity of Literature debate, Shillingsburg is rather disdainful of Forster and indeed of Dickens

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[240] Charles Kingsley, *Poems of Charles Kingsley, 1848–70,* ed. by Humphrey Milford (London: Oxford University Press, 1913), p. 16.
[241] Rintoul, p. 1214 and Masson, '*Pendennis* and *Copperfield*', p. 87.
[242] Shillingsburg's already-cited *Pegasus in Harness* published in 1992. Other significant contributions to this trend include the works by Mark Cronin, Clare Pettitt, and Richard Salmon cited above. See also Richard Pearson's chapter on *Pendennis* in *W.M. Thackeray and the Mediated Text*, pp. 177–95.

(whose position is commonly linked with the former). He associates both of these men with the ahistorical 'balderdash' which he feels underlies the 'romantic image of the autonomous writer-genius'.[243] Thackeray, on the other hand, emerges as a force of demystification — an iconoclast whose view:

> cuts through the pomposity and cant about the dignity of literature to the heart of the ideals of his profession — to love and truth, upholding the ideals without losing sight of the mundane business facts of authors writing for money, relying on and being relied upon in turn by publishers in much the same way that the printers and the paper sellers rely on one another in the business transactions that make books and periodicals.[244]

Here, Shillingsburg essentially constructs a historicist romance. He argues that Thackeray maintains his professional integrity both by spurning over-idealized representations of his profession and by finding his way to 'truer' ideals beyond such representations. However, it is difficult to shake off the impression that there is something of an overlap between Thackeray's ability to find and 'uphold' such ideals and his determination not to overlook 'mundane business facts.' Shillingsburg privileges a form of materialist honesty which in many ways endows the 'mundane realities' of Thackeray's working conditions with a symbolic weight of their own.

Jennifer Ruth is one of the most recent critics to have observed the prevailing 'hermeneutics of suspicion' in twentieth- and twenty-first-century criticism of the Victorian professional writer.[245] She suggests that we have been too prone both to assume that the latter naively 'fostered the illusion that he transcended the marketplace'

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[243] Shillingsburg, p. 13.
[244] Ibid., p. 20.
[245] Jennifer Ruth, *Novel Professions: Interested Disinterest and the Making of the Professional in the Victorian Novel* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2006), p. 16. As discussed in my introduction, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick is another critic who has made similar observations. Both Ruth and Sedgwick are indebted to Paul Ricoeur (from whom Ruth derives the phrase 'hermeneutics of suspicion', though she does not cite him).

and to take upon ourselves the task of dispelling such myths.[246] In Shillingsburg and elsewhere, Thackeray's narrative approach in *Pendennis* and his stance in the Dignity of Literature debate have made him particularly well suited to such critical strategies. Indeed, he cuts a very convincing figure as an incisive proto-historicist, determinedly demythologizing a heavily mythologized calling.[247] However, John Forster's strongly expressed objections in the Dignity of Literature controversy should also remind us that one man's demythologization can be another's distortion or, alternatively, re-mythologization. In his review of *Pendennis* quoted above, G.H. Lewes opens with an observation from Carlyle that 'No age ever seemed the Age of Romance to itself'.[248] Writing in the middle of the nineteenth-century publishing explosion, Lewes himself is unable (or unwilling) to see either the fast-paced working methods of the contemporary literary market or Thackeray's forays into topical gossip as anything other than ephemeral and decidedly unromantic. Carlyle's remark, however, sits uneasily with this. It brings to mind the idea that the lasting relevance of a work is determined as it is redefined in hindsight — with its romantic (or unromantic) status being down to the culture which construes it rather than that which has produced it. Ultimately, permanent value can be found in qualities previously dismissed as transient and commonplace — the everyday can be emblematized, the prosaic can be poeticized, and the seedy can be sentimentalized.

In fact, the divided reception of *Pendennis* has often concealed a sneaking suspicion that the spirit of the novel is one of out with the old romance and in with the new. If it 'conveys a deeply unsentimental and demystified perception of the nature of the literary profession', it also perpetuates some decidedly figurative representations of

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[246] Ibid., p. 9.
[247] Alternatively, as Richard Salmon has suggested, Thackeray's trenchant dissection of the commodification of literary labour in *Pendennis* might cast its author as (a somewhat underdone) proto-Marxist. See Salmon, *Thackeray*, p. 33.
[248] Thomas Carlyle, 'The Diamond Necklace'*, Fraser's Magazine,* 15 (January 1837), 1–19 (p. 2).

the humdrum realities of the commercial writing life.[249] This is not simply a question of the novel's long-term legacy. *Pendennis* emerged at a time when increasingly systematic attempts were being made to define the modern journalistic profession. When the first number of the novel appeared in November 1848 — and indeed when Forster condemned the work in January 1850 — no volume-length history of journalism had yet been produced. By the time that the last number of *Pendennis* emerged at the end of 1850, however, the journalist Frederick Knight Hunt had published two volumes entitled *The Fourth Estate: Contributions towards a History of Newspapers, and the Liberty of the Press*.[250] Both the dynamism and the drawbacks of periodical publication had of course been relentlessly debated in the first half of the nineteenth century — well before either Hunt's history or Thackeray's *Bildungsroman* appeared on the scene. Nonetheless, contemporary commentators greeted Hunt's work as something which had long been missing from the country's bookshelves. A contributor to the *Morning Chronicle,* for example, expressed surprise that no official history of journalism had yet been written, speculating that the reason was to be found 'in the peculiar difficulties surrounding anything like an attempt to give the world a fair and complete view of what journalism was and what it is.' After all, he added, 'a leading characteristic of the system is the dark veil of the anonymous which hangs over it.'[251] Hunt's account was thus presented both as a site of authority (it satisfied a public need for information) and as a source of intrigue (it initiated the public into a hitherto mysterious world).

Significantly, though the novel had not yet completed its serial run, Hunt chose to use an extract from *Pendennis* as the epigraph to both of his volumes. The excerpt which he selected was George Warrington's famous eulogy to a newspaper office on

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[249] Salmon, 'Farewell poetry and aerial flights', p. 143.
[250] F. Knight Hunt, *The Fourth Estate: Contributions towards a History of Newspapers, and the Liberty of the Press* (London: David Bogue, 1850).
[251] 'The Fourth Estate', *Morning Chronicle* (27 June 1850), 6–7.

the Strand — an episode which marks his grandiloquent induction of both Arthur Pendennis and the reader into the ways of the modern press. This scene — which I will come back to — had emerged just a few months before Hunt's *History of Newspapers* and played a central role in the novel's contribution to the evolving vocabularies which were being used to describe the journalistic profession at the time. However, it also reflects the potent air of initiation which pervades those sections of the work devoted to London's literary scene. Like Hunt, the narrator of *Pendennis* all too often appears to be drawing back a 'dark veil' to conduct the reader into an enigmatic, albeit prosaic, realm of modern journalism. Contemporary reviewers certainly tended to feel that the literary world of *Pendennis* accurately reflected the dramatically changing professional milieu of the time. One notable commentary, for example, endorsed Warrington's matter-of-fact assessment of Bungay's inarticulate literary gathering with the observation that it 'is true [...] that literary men talk less than they did.' Remarking that contemporary writers 'seldom "lay out" much for conversation', the author of this piece concluded that 'the conversational, like the epistolary age, is past; and we have come upon the age of periodical literature.' In this 'age', savvy periodical writers remain silent because they are keeping their best thoughts stored away ready to be converted into saleable material 'as opportunity offers'.[252] Viewed in this light, Thackeray's literary men appear inevitable signs of the times while Warrington emerges as a seer of modern professional truths.

The desire to counter such impressions and to puncture the aura of literary initiation surrounding *Pendennis* was undoubtedly a motivating factor in Forster's Dignity of Literature attack. This became clearer in the second article which he contributed to the *Examiner* to challenge Thackeray's unrepentant defence of his novel.

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[252] John William Kaye, '*Pendennis* — The Literary Profession', *North British Review*, 13 (August 1850), 335–72 (p. 343).

Where the original *Morning Chronicle* piece had only included Warrington's levelling statement regarding the intellect of those who write books and those who do not, in this further addition to the dispute, Forster is careful to cite the passage which follows this and concludes the chapter. Here, in responding to his companion's blunt review of the dinner which they have just attended, Pendennis is:

> forced to confess that the literary personages with whom he had become acquainted had not said much in the course of the night's conversation that was worthy to be remembered or quoted. In fact, not one word about literature had been said during the whole course of the night: and it may be whispered to those uninitiated people who are anxious to know the habits and make the acquaintance of men of letters, that there are no race of people who talk about books, or perhaps, who read books, so little as literary men. (*PN*, p. 340)

As he introduces this additional section of the novel to advance his argument that Thackeray had a 'desire to be thought above' his profession, it quickly becomes apparent that it is this 'whispered' address to the 'uninitiated' which exasperates Forster as much as anything else. However, there is more to this than the idea that Thackeray was taking a cheap shot at mainstream popularity by seeking to 'abat[e] the curiosity' of lay-readers outside the literary profession. Indeed, Forster is arguably just as concerned that Thackeray is pandering to those who share his vocation. In this second article, his main complaints are, firstly, that Thackeray's light-hearted tone is flippantly disingenuous and, secondly, that he presents his idiosyncratic literary men as representative types rather than anomalous caricatures. In the latter case, Thackeray falls foul most obviously by equating the characteristic 'habits and conversations' of literary men as a class with the 'manners and talk of a set of drunkards, rogues, and

fribbles'.[253] However, Forster's denunciation of what he terms Thackeray's 'tone of persiflage', is a reminder that the dissolute guests at Bungay's dinner party are not the only literary characters being constructed in this section of the novel. The peculiar mannerisms and larger-than-life dissipations of figures such as Captain Shandon are after all easy enough to dismiss. Rather, it is the two literary men who might be said to share Thackeray's style of mildly derisive raillery, Arthur Pendennis and George Warrington, who pose the most significant threat to the public reputation of the modern writer.

Particularly revealing in this respect is Forster's choice of the term, *persiflage* — a quality which he claims is 'seldom in good taste' — to describe the most disagreeable aspects of Thackeray's writing. When Forster observes that 'nothing so tyrannises over one as the habit of jesting and contempt, real or assumed', he is not simply referring to Thackeray's failings but is rather gesturing towards the deficiencies of a wider section of the ephemeral literature of the day. The form of light-hearted banter captured almost onomatopoeically by this French term had its roots in the salons of eighteenth-century Paris — and was a quality which turn of the nineteenth-century wits such as Sydney Smith had lamented in their own era. By the time that Forster submitted his objections to the public, however, this form of humour had been updated, being particularly associated with the 'fast school' of comic writers who were increasingly identified under the rubric of Bohemianism. A contributor to *Chamber's Edinburgh Journal* two years earlier, for example, was in good company when he wrote that 'it is painful to observe the mocking spirit, the persiflage, the satirical tone which pervades most of the youthful circles around us.' His assessment gains in vitriol as he remarks that the members of these comic cliques 'would sacrifice their best friend for a

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[253] Forster, 'The Dignity of Literature', *Examiner* (19 January 1850), 35.

bon-mot.'[254] Despite Carlyle's 1832 pronouncement that the 'age of persiflage' had passed, by the end of the 1840s the expression was making ever more regular appearances in characterizations of the 'spirit of the age' — an age repeatedly and ambivalently categorized as the age of fun, the age of jokes, the age of mettle, or, simply, the comic age.[255]

To this extent, Forster's characterization of Thackeray's persiflage was a pointed allusion to the novelist's background in comic journalism. It evoked the witty infighting and insatiable relativism of satirical magazines such as *Punch*, to which Thackeray was still regularly contributing. As well as bringing to mind the frivolous humour and throw-away wordplay of this genre, however, the habit of persiflage was seen as a sign of restlessness and discontent. In a gossip column twenty years later, George Augustus Sala would describe the approach as 'neither so soft as humour nor so trenchant as wit', only to conclude that it 'belongs to dissatisfied people'. He added that persiflage 'is only suited for swallow-flights of effort,' and that it becomes 'tiresome' even 'in the hands of a master.'[256] In this way, Forster's denunciation of Thackeray's use of this form of mockery represented a two-pronged attack on his denigration of the literary profession. The latter's 'tone of 'persiflage' not only advertises his personal dissatisfaction (or 'uneasy shame') with his line of work, but also reflects his contribution to a facetious brand of journalism which Forster felt to be particularly detrimental to the dignity of contemporary literature as a whole.

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[254] 'A Word on Fun', *Chamber's Edinburgh Journal* (22 April 1848), 257–58 (p. 257).

[255] Thomas Carlyle, '*Goethes Werke*', *Foreign Quarterly Review*, 10 (August 1832), 1–44 (p. 38). Such views continued well into the 1850s and beyond. George Augustus Sala was characteristically complacent in his estimation of 'a whole school of *quasi* youthful authors in this era' as a 'bad sign of the age'. See *Twice Round the Clock* (London: Richard Marsh, 1862), first published 1859, p. xi. For more genuinely scathing criticism of 'the comic age in which we live', see J. Ewing Ritchie, *The Night Side of London* (London: William Tweedle, 1858), p. 85. For a global view of the mid-nineteenth century as an age characterized by the widespread marketing of jokes, see Lewis Gaylord Clark, 'Editor's Table', *The Knickerbocker, or New-York Monthly Magazine,* 28 (August 1846), 172–88 (p. 181).

[256] George Augustus Sala, 'What is a Persifleur?', from 'Echoes of the Week', *Illustrated London News*, reprinted in *The Sphinx* (14 August 1869), 169.

In the section of *Pendennis* at the heart of Forster's critique, this air of persiflage is broadly associated with Thackeray's narrative voice but is also more specifically identified with that of George Warrington. The difficulty with this was that, if Thackeray could plausibly argue that the attendees of Bungay's dinner party were not meant to be taken as univeral representatives of the modern literary profession, this seemed to be far less easy to claim of Warrington. As has been seen, the latter emerges as both Pendennis's guide to the journalistic profession and as an embodiment of a variety of contemporary behavioural ideals. For all his eccentricities, it is hard to escape the feeling that he is being presented as the most legitimate incarnation of the modern literary professional within the novel. At the same time, however, while he clearly complies with Thackeray's ideal of the writer who 'silently assumes that he is as good as any other gentleman', he is far from a passive embodiment of gentlemanly understatement. Some twenty years after the novel was published, Leslie Stephen astutely observed of contemporary models of masculine behaviour that 'We are rather in the habit of talking about [an ideal of] healthy animalism and try most elaborately to be simple and manly.'[257] Appearing before the public at a pivotal moment in the calcification of collective imaginings of the journalistic profession, Warrington risked appearing exactly this: an artificially constructed portrait of manly simplicity. More worrying for Forster, however, was the possibility that his air of representativeness would cause his behavioural and professional traits to become culturally ingrained in the long term — emerging as aspirational qualities for the journalistic classes.

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[257] Leslie Stephen, 'Hours in a Library. No. III.—Some Words about Sir Walter Scott', *Cornhill Magazine*, 24 (September 1871), 278–93 (p. 293).

A particular issue in this respect was the fact that Warrington and Pen's friendship bore resonances with a multitude of less commendable pairings. The motif of a man of the world initiating a young provincial novice into town life was, of course, part of a well-established literary tradition. Indeed, Thackeray himself actively draws attention to this on a number of occasions as he introduces the reader to Pen's new life in London. One notable example can be seen in his invocation of Alain-René Lesage's admonitory daemon, Asmodeus, to facilitate his sweeping overview of Pen and Warrington's dingy but myth-saturated living quarters in Temple Inn.[258] In the number immediately following this passage, Thackeray integrates this worldly-wise spirit guide into an allegorical chapter initial (figure 2d). This image's primary level of significance reflects another questionable mentorial relationship as the erotically threatening figure of Pan is seen teaching a young Pendennis (who figures as Daphnis) to play the pipes. However, the demonic qualities of Asmodeus also seep into this illustration, reinforcing the impression that Pen's journey to maturity demands his navigation of a series of less than reliable authority figures.

Figure 2d: Thackeray, Chapter Initial (Pan with a young Pen), Chapter XXX, *Pendennis*

In the years leading up to Forster's attack on *Pendennis*, the brand of urbane perspicacity and satirical sophistication exhibited by Lesage's lame devil had inspired a wealth of light-hearted dissections of Parisian life in the field of the 'Physiology' genre.[259] Yet echoes of this amoral style of instruction were also perceptible in England in more intimately satirical depictions of homosocial mentorship. At the time of the

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[258] See Alain-René Lesage, *Le Diable boîteux*, first published in Paris in 1707.

[259] The classic example of this was *Le Diable à Paris: Paris et les Parisiens* (Paris: J. Hetzel, 1845–46), comprising contributions by George Sand, P. J. Stahl, and others.

Dignity of Literature controversy, Thackeray himself had only recently completed a series in *Punch* in which a comically pedantic gentleman-mentor strives to initiate his neophyte nephew into the ways of the metropolis.[260] The older gentleman at the heart of this rather placid satire of polite London society undoubtedly had more in common with Pendennis's 'selfish old mentor', Major Pendennis, than he did with George Warrington. A more unsettling predecessor to the latter could nonetheless be found in the work of one of Thackeray's own early mentors: the infamous William Maginn — a mentor who, like Asmodeus, was far from wholly dependable. In 'The Tobias Correspondence' which had appeared in *Blackwood's* almost a decade earlier, Maginn had created the memorably blasé journalist-persona, Nestor Goosequill. In this two-part series, Goosequill offers another aptly named character, Tobias Flimsy, counsel on how best to proceed in his fledgling journalistic career.[261] Like his counterpart in *Pendennis*, Captain Shandon, Goosequill is a hardened member of the press and combines doggedly unromantic commercialism with a willingness to lapse into flights of fancy should the price be right.[262] Infinitely flexible in his political convictions, Goosequill reduces the practice of journalism to a collection of 'main topics' and rhetorical formulae. At the same time, he makes a series of knowing allusions to his young correspondent's debt-encumbered existence — an existence which, in this tongue-in-cheek context, figures as the archetypical lifestyle of the modern journalistic professional.

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[260] Originally published in *Punch* as 'Mr Brown's Letters to a Young Man about Town', 24 March–18 August 1849 and republished as 'Mr Brown's Letters to his Nephew' in *Sketches and Travels in London*. See *Works,* VI, 604–74. See discussion in Chapter 3 below and also figure 3d for an illustration from the series which self-parodically identifies Thackeray with his comically pompous persona.

[261] See William Maginn, 'The Tobias Correspondence', nos I and II, in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 48 (July 1840), 52–63 and 48 (August 1840), 205–14.

[262] Generally not noted in discussions of Thackeray's possible source materials for *Pendennis*, 'The Tobias Correspondence' strengthens the case that the Maginn-inspired Captain Shandon represented a homage rather than a disservice to the notoriously wayward editor of *Fraser's Magazine*.

Maginn's glib-tongued newspaper man represents an amusingly unruly precursor to the 'Corporation of the Goosequill' to which Warrington confesses his membership at the end of the section of *Pendennis* bearing the above chapter initial (figure 2d). His revelation marks the finale to an eventful evening at the Bohemian Back Kitchen and is rendered all the more climactic by the backdrop of the Strand. Having unveiled his true professional identity to Pendennis, Warrington promptly draws on their topographical surroundings to illustrate the dynamism of his newly disclosed vocation. As the two friends head home, he turns Pendennis's attention to a busy newspaper office, deftly converting this hub of activity into a metonymic symbol for the journalistic trade as a whole. He animatedly exclaims:

> There she is — the great engine — she never sleeps. She has her ambassadors in every quarter of the world — her couriers upon every road. Her officers march along with armies, and her envoys walk into statesmen's cabinets. They are ubiquitous. Yonder journal has an agent, at this minute, giving bribes at Madrid; and another inspecting the price of potatoes in Covent Garden. (*PN,* p. 302)

This emblematic passage has attracted much critical attention. Among many epithets, it has been described as inhuman, satanic, mock-heroic, and sexualized.[263] When taken out of context, its somewhat grotesque amalgamation of personification and mixed metaphor is indeed de-humanizing — conjuring up an omnipotent and omnipresent journalistic institution which dwarfs its discrete human components. In the context of the novel, however, Warrington's eulogy to contemporary journalism emerges at the end of a meticulously choreographed series of encounters between individual journalists, all of which lay the groundwork for Pen's own entrance into the profession.

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[263] See Howes, Shillingsburg, and Pearson respectively.

These episodes are condensed into a single evening at the Back Kitchen — the 'little eccentric society of men of letters and men about town' with which Pen is becoming increasingly familiar. In the course of the night, Pen bumps into some unwelcome acquaintances from his past before finding himself in the company of such members of the press as the rivalrous Hoolan and Doolan of the *Day* and *Dawn* newspapers. Most notable however, is an extended conversation at the end of the scene with the hyperbolizing namedropper, Mr Archer, who — unbeknownst to Pen — is a society journalist. Archer regales Warrington and Pendennis with exaggerated tales of his personal connections in high society, all of which are designed to prove his unparalleled insider knowledge as a reporter. As they walk home at the end of the evening, Warrington defines this journalist's character by jovially punning on his name and remarking to Pen that: 'put aside his archery practice, that man is both able and honest — a good man of business, an excellent friend, admirable to his family as husband, father and son' (*PN*, p. 301). With this, Warrington suggests that Mr Archer's inflation of the truth in day-to-day conversation essentially represents a flexing of his journalistic muscles — vital preparation for the similarly inflated tales of society which he will go on to write for his newspaper. What is most notable about their bantering exchange, however, is just how effortlessly Pendennis is able to join in with Warrington's word play. Despite the fact that he is as yet unaware of the pun's professional connotations, he instantaneously responds to Warrington's 'archery practice' quip with the question: 'What is it makes [Mr Archer] pull the long bow in that wonderful manner?' It is this which leads Warrington to reveal both Archer's profession and his own. He informs Pen that an 'amiable insanity' lies at the root of Archer's exaggerations, qualifying this by adding that 'he would never write a word or do an act against his party, as many of us do.' Here, a seemingly frivolous social

exchange consolidates the professional bonds between Warrington and Archer, as well as foreshadowing Pendennis's own admission into their professional fraternity. Indeed, at this point in the narrative, Pendennis is essentially taken up into a linguistically dextrous brotherhood of journalists before he has become fully aware of its existence.

2.5 Dealing in Metaphors

Appearing at the beginning of the *Pendennis* instalment for August 1849, this episode forms the first of a series of set-piece conversations between Pen and Warrington in the lead-up to the latter's controversial assessment of the literary profession in the novel's September number. In May of the same year, Dickens had published his first instalment of *David Copperfield*. The idea that these more or less contemporaneous *Bildungsromane* defined themselves against each other has been considered many times before.[264] Yet, as well as shedding light on their authors' very different views of literary industry, the dialogue between these novels in the build-up to the Dignity of Literature exchange also reveals Dickens's stark divergence from Thackeray on the question of universalized masculine experiences. Indeed, in the final month of Thackeray's convalescence (the month before Forster's *Examiner* articles), Dickens published a number which reads as a critical rewriting of both Pen's initiation into a new profession and of his self-definition through his surrounding homosocial environment. The first chapter, 'Some old Scenes, and some new people' (*David Copperfield*, Chapter XXII) shadows Pen's Back Kitchen carousing in 'Old and New Acquaintances' (*Pendennis*, Chapter XXX), while the number as a whole is saturated with ominous allusions to

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[264] See especially Cronin, 'The Rake, The Writer, and *The Stranger*: Textual Relations between *Pendennis* and *David Copperfield*'. See also Michael Lund, *Reading Thackeray* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988), pp. 73–78 and Salmon, 'Farewell poetry and aerial flights', pp. 143–44.

Steerforth's coming elopement. The latter, with his offhand attitude to the 'common lot' of humanity, of course forms one of a multitude of possible parodies of Thackeray in Dickens's work, as well as representing another dubious mentor in whom Warrington finds an unsettling reflection.[265] By the end of the number, Steerforth has led David into his 'First Dissipation' (Chapter XXIV): a revelrous night which unravels in the hero's Temple chambers and which scathingly parallels Warrington and Pen's own diurnal and nocturnal routines. In a telling contrast, while Pen's Bohemian dalliances remain safely set apart from his daily life and he continues to 'haunt' the Back Kitchen, David's humiliation in front of Agnes ensures that he is sufficiently 'haunted' by the excesses of the night before not to repeat the same mistake again.

What is particularly compelling about this December number of *David Copperfield*, however, is the extent to which the 'bad angel' influence of David's wayward mentors relates to the loss of the self. In the number's central chapter, Steerforth steps in as the protagonist's insouciant careers advisor and shows a level of unconcern which causes even the besotted David to show surprise 'at his balancing all callings and professions so equally.' As David probes him on the question of a legal career, Steerforth shows very little opinion either way and, lapsing into the first person plural, merely enquires 'what says our aunt on the subject?'[266] Once David has made what he can of this evasive counsel and has officially established himself in Temple lodgings, Steerforth pays an evening visit with two friends — one of whom shows a compulsive fondness for a similar mode of expression. The 'youthful-looking' Markham, David observes, 'always spoke of himself indifferently, as "a man," and seldom or never in the first person singular.' Markham peppers his speech with such

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[265] Other Thackeray figures include Henry Gowan in *Little Dorrit* and Eugene Wrayburn in *Our Mutual Friend.*

[266] Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield,* ed. by Nina Burgis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), first published 1849–50, p. 335. All further references will be to this edition and will be given in the text preceded by the abbreviation, *DC.*

platitudinous observations as 'town seems to sharpen a man's appetite. A man is hungry all day long. A man is perpetually eating.' As Dickens's deadpan narratorial voice points out, by 'a man', Markham 'means himself' (*DC*, pp. 350–51). Further into the evening, David conveys his progressive intoxication through a series of shifting personal pronouns: 'somebody was smoking. We were all smoking. *I* was smoking' (*DC*, p. 352, Dickens's italics). Here, David has reached his lowest point — not simply because he is alienated from his true self but because he has essentially become Markham. His drunken state exposes the corruption at the heart of the apathetic myth that, because 'the sun sets every day, and people die every minute', all men are the same (*DC*, p. 415).

For all Dickens has himself been criticized for relying too heavily on caricatured types, this section of *David Copperfield* displays a profound suspicion of collectivized imaginings of masculine behaviour and its repackaging into idealized archetypes. To this extent, his indirect answer to *Pendennis* represents less an attack on dissipation per se than an attempt to undermine the idea that the latter is in any way a natural or forgivable symptom of male middle-class youth. Indeed, for Dickens and, by extension, Forster, the threat posed by *Pendennis* was not simply its suspected glamorization of laissez-faire Bohemian attitudes in both social and professional spheres. Rather both men were alert to the persuasiveness of even the most deflationary imagery in the novel and indeed to its potential to reshape the reader's perceptions of reality.

Thackeray's own narrative after all externalizes this possibility itself. In the final section of the number for August 1849, Warrington gives famously short shrift to Pen's lament for the trials of literary genius which, on this occasion, are embodied by the incarcerated Captain Shandon. Doggedly wrenching the myth of rarefied genius back down to earth, he labels himself 'a prose labourer' and his own work his 'Pegasus' —

or, in other words, a commodity to be valued by his 'dealer' rather than according to his own creative principles. Pen's initial response to this memorable outburst is to point out that, though Warrington rightly claims to be 'very prosaic', he nonetheless 'deal[s] in metaphors' (*PN*, p. 322). Warrington certainly tends to use the figurative as a means to a literal end rather than in any attempt to convey meaning which transcends the everyday. More specifically, one might argue that he employs 'weak metaphors', remaining wryly half-hearted about his intended meaning and lacking 'absolute conviction in his metaphorical substitution'.[267] In the case of his 'Pegasus' metaphor, Warrington blithely reduces all labour and creativity to one homogeneous mass equally subject to the laws of the marketplace. At the same time, however, his brand of humour thrives on the offhandedness with which he introduces this incongruous Classical image. His approach differs very much, for example, from that of Charles Kingsley's literary protagonist in his *Bildungsroman* of the following year. When he is reduced to 'hack-work', the tailor-poet, Alton Locke, earnestly informs his reader that 'I [...] sorrowfully, but deliberately put my Pegasus into heavy harness, as my betters had done before me.'[268] Warrington, by contrast, employs the same metaphor with non-committal verve and, in constructing his argument, engages in 'aerial flights' of his own thoroughly journalistic kind. His 'prosaic' use of metaphor thus potentially introduces an unwelcome association with the distinctive poetic license of the 'lowlier' members of the press at the time. The much-maligned 'penny-a-liner', in particular, was habitually satirized as an 'imaginative paragraphist' churning out increasingly far-

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[267] For a discussion of 'weak' and 'strong' metaphors, see Max Black 'More about Metaphors', in *Metaphor and Thought,* ed. by Andrew Ortony (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 19–41 (p. 26).

[268] Kingsley, *Alton Locke, Taylor and Poet. An Autobiography* (Cambridge: Macmillan and Co., 1862), first published 1850, p. 149.

Figure 2e: Engraving from Schiller's 'Pegasus in Harness' (1796)

fetched reports and 'ascending to allegory' in the process.[269] Nonetheless, in the passage above, Warrington's metaphors have a palpable cognitive impact on Pen, triggering elated thoughts of his own prospective literary career as he lies in bed that night. As with his post-Back Kitchen wordplay earlier in the narrative, Warrington's exuberantly matter-of-fact treatise on his profession only draws Pen further into the literary fraternity.

Just over twenty years ago, Michael Lund turned his attention to the external time frame of *Pendennis* to consider the ways in which Thackeray harnessed the temporal breaks in serial publication to transform his contemporary readers' perceptions of the modern writer. Yet, for all his interest in the individual serial instalments of *Pendennis*, Lund is ultimately concerned to affirm the novel's status as a legitimate *Bildungsroman* — pointedly responding to earlier critics who have denied it such a privilege.[270] Lund argues that the impact which Thackeray's novel exerted over his mid-nineteenth-century readers' opinions and experiences amounted to a successful realization of the 'form' of the *Bildungsroman*. In essence, *Pendennis* emerged as a particularly audience-centred version of the genre, where the reader's development and incipient maturity were just as, if not more, important than the protagonist's. When considering the novel's impact on its readers in the longer term, however, such a genre-focused view seems out of place, if not untenable. The significant influence which *Pendennis*

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[269] *Punch* specialized in such representations. See, for example, 'A Peckham Allegory', *Punch* (23 January 1847), 36 or 'Manning a Poet', *Punch* (6 October 1849), 141.
[270] Such critics as Jerome Buckley in his seminal *Season of Youth: The Bildungsroman from Dickens to Golding* (1974). See Lund, p. 39.

has exerted over generations of male writers, in particular, has tended to occur episodically, facilitated both by ruptures in the narrative and by metaphors 'off-loaded' into the public sphere. Recently, Sarah Rose Cole suggested that *Pendennis* represented a key point of intersection between the British and French *Bildungsroman* traditions.[271] Yet, if its appearance was contemporaneous with a number of other English *Bildungsromane*, Thackeray's serial novel also coincided with the last of Henry Murger's sketches in Paris.[272] As with Balzac's *Illusions Perdues*, there is no evidence that Thackeray was familiar with Murger's work at this time, despite the fact that he was friendly with a number of French writers who undoubtedly were.[273] Nonetheless, as suggested above, the reception of Thackeray's work has borne some notable parallels with that of his French counterpart. The narrative of *Pendennis*, in particular, has induced a comparable combination of misremembering and veneration to that of *Scènes de la vie de Bohème*. Where Murger's collection of romantic vignettes has habitually been misrepresented as a self-contained novel, however, Thackeray's *Bildungsroman* has had almost exactly the reverse problem, coming to be represented by an inherently unrepresentative selection of de-contextualized fragments and isolated images.

Nowhere has this been more apparent than in the inspirational appeal which the novel came to hold for members of the journalistic profession. As contemporary media theorists have noted, cultural definitions of 'the Press' have long drawn heavily on

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[271] Sarah Rose Cole, 'National Histories, International Genre: Thackeray, Balzac, and the Franco-British *Bildungsroman*', *Romanticism and Victorianism on the Net,* 48 (November 2007) <http://www.erudit.org /revue/ravon/2007/v/n48/017436ar. html> [Accessed 19 July 2009]. Cole reads *Pendennis* as a re-writing of a Balzacian 'narrative of disillusionment' that 'ultimately affirms British domestic ideology'.

[272] On *Pendennis* and the mid-Victorian *Bildungsroman*, see Salmon, 'The Genealogy of the Literary *Bildungsroman*: Edward Bulwer-Lytton and W.M. Thackeray', *Studies in the Novel,* 36:1 (Spring 2004), 41–55.

Murger's last sketch appeared in the *Corsaire-Satan* in April 1849 while *Pendennis* was in the middle of its serial run. His sensationally successful play premiered in Paris on 22 November 1849 while Thackeray still more or less bed-bound

[273] Most notably the theatre critic, Jules Janin, with whom Thackeray had spent a significant amount of time during his visit to Paris in September 1849. In his review of Murger and Barrière's *Vie de Bohème* for *Le Journal des débats* later that year, Janin claimed (probably erroneously) that he had been the first to advise Murger to transform his sketches into a play (26 November 1849).

metonyms.[274] The most notable example of this today is the continuing use of the evocative synecdoche of 'Fleet Street' to symbolize the British press as a whole. The exodus of all major newspaper organizations from this district in the course of the last thirty years has done little to de-stabilize its position in the cultural imagination. Similarly, in the years after *Pendennis's* publication, certain key images from the novel were rapidly absorbed into the figurative geography of mid-Victorian journalism. In the process, the novel provided imaginative impetus to a rapidly changing profession which remained both fascinated and disturbed by the idiosyncratic individuals making up its number. To a certain extent, the legacy of *Pendennis* confirmed Forster and Dickens's anxieties in so much as it helped to keep alive the myth of the fiercely opinionated, gloriously opportunistic, and picturesquely dissipated journalist — a myth which offered a flipside to the potentially sterile anonymity of institutional journalism. From another point of view altogether, however, the novel provided a means of keeping such myths under control, serving as testimony to the emergence of the gentlemanly journalist who could be respectably assimilated into a dependable 'Fourth Estate'.

The latter was particularly apparent in early twentieth-century accounts of the professionalization of journalism over the last decades of the nineteenth century. In his seminal 1911 biography of major Victorian journalists, T.H.S. Escott, for example, turns to *Pendennis* as a historically accurate touchstone in his account of the Bohemian routines of journalists of the 1850s and 60s. For Escott, the novel is representative of a time when Bohemia was still an impecunious 'locality [...] peopled by persons who never moved or thought of moving outside its limits' — something which was directly related to 'the newspaper-worker's [...] altogether insufficient wage.' At the time that Escott is writing, on the other hand, he feels that Bohemia 'has become a phase, an

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[274] See, for example, Peter Dahlgren and Colin Sparks, eds, *Journalism and Popular Culture* (London: Sage Publications, 1992), p. 7 and Barbie Zelizer, *Taking Journalism Seriously: News and the Academy* (London: Sage Publications, 2004), pp. 6–7.

aspect of social existence not confined to any single class.' Instead, it is now 'equally shared in by the leaders of fashionable smartness and their highly respectable suburban or provincial imitators.'[275] Escott draws on the literary characters of *Pendennis* to pay qualified tribute to the now-extinct Bohemia of rougher days gone by, observing that it boasted 'not only its Bludyers, Finucanes, and Costigans, but its Warringtons [...] that, happily for the journalistic craft, were a good deal more plentiful than in the novel.' He refrains, however, from entirely confining *Pendennis* to the past. Embedded within his qualification is the idea that 'real-life Warringtons' paved the way for 'the vigorous and capable writers of the press' who benefitted from superior professional conditions as the century progressed.[276] Here, *Pendennis* forms a bridge between the past indignities of the journalistic profession and the advances in the trade which permitted later 'Warringtons' to work on a more equal and indeed genteel footing.

The association between *Pendennis* and this potentially paradoxical combination of social equality and gentrified professionalism found particularly concrete expression in the years immediately following Thackeray's death. In 1865, two of his colleagues from the *Cornhill Magazine* — the publisher, George Smith, and the rising newspaper editor, Frederick Greenwood — established a new evening paper named the *Pall Mall Gazette* after Shandon's publication of the same title in *Pendennis*. As a later commentator pointed out, this represented a 'bold attempt to realise Thackeray's fancy of a paper 'written by gentlemen for gentlemen''.[277] In its early years, it was certainly at pains to construct itself as a representative of a newly respectable and staunchly independent division of the press — emerging as a newspaper which knew its place in

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[275] T.H.S Escott, *Masters of English Journalism* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1911), pp. 225–26.
[276] Ibid., p. 229.
[277] H.R. Fox Bourne, *English Newspapers: Chapters in the History of Journalism*, 2 vols (London: Chatto & Windus, 1887), I, 274.

the natural order but which would bow to no one.[278] At the same time, however, in invoking the spirit of a fictional publication owned by a philistine and edited by a drunk, the new journal's proprietors were clearly taking a risk. Three years after its first appearance, the prolific children's writer, William Brighty Rands, mischievously drew attention to the way in which this 'bold' gamble had paid off against the odds. He mused:

> Who would have dreamt that a *jeu-d'esprit* flung into a novel by an earnest persifleur in 1850 would, in 1865, "strike its being into bounds," and "result in" so large, so grave, and so influential a thing as the "evening newspaper and review" which is now known by the name that was given to Bungay's organ, though it stands related to such an organ as a man to an anthropoid ape?[279]

As Rands playfully suggests, the *Pall Mall Gazette* had filtered out the inherent flippancy of Captain Shandon's original paper and, as such, reflected an attempt to rein in some of the more anarchic associations of the journalistic profession. To do so, it had carefully sidestepped Shandon's farcically overblown prison-cell prospectus to the 'gentlemen of England', tellingly choosing not to include one of its own in its inaugural number. Indeed, the paper rather cunningly deflected attention away from this element of its Thackerayan roots by invoking an entirely different portion of the novelist's work. For the first month of its publication, it included a weekly column entitled 'Letters from Sir Pitt Crawley, Bart., to his Nephew on his entering Parliament'.[280] This comprised a mentor-novice correspondence in the satirical style of Thackeray's own series, 'Mr Brown's Letters to his Nephew', with Brown replaced by the priggish Sir Pitt (the younger) from *Vanity Fair*. This tuft-hunting persona counsels his nephew (who is

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[278] See, for example, 'Honest Journalism', *Pall Mall Gazette* (13 April 1866), 9 and 'Journalism and Oratory', *Pall Mall Gazette* (13 November 1867), 10.

[279] William Brighty Rands, 'The London Press', *Contemporary Review*, 7 (April 1868), 578–85 (p. 579).

[280] The column appeared between 7 February and 9 March 1865. Escott claims that it was co-written by the paper's regular contributors, H.D. Traill and Charles Austin (Escott, *Masters of Journalism*, p. 245).

presumably Becky Sharp's estranged son, Rawdon Crawley junior) on how best to serve one's own interests when entering into Parliamentary life. In evoking Thackeray's satirical treatment of the Second rather than the Fourth Estate, the *Pall Mall Gazette* thus shifted its readership's focus away from the deficiencies of the journalistic profession and towards those of contemporary politics.

The *Gazette* did not entirely succeed in escaping its true Thackerayan origins, however. Greenwood had only been running the paper for two years when the unruly spectre of Captain Shandon resurfaced in a quarrel with the novelist and *Belgravia Magazine* editor, Mary Elizabeth Braddon. In September 1867, the *Pall Mall Gazette* had published a strongly worded denunciation of this controversial author of sensation fiction, alleging that her latest foray in the genre was simply a plagiarized re-working of a little-known French drama.[281] The paper built on this with a series of spurious letters in its correspondence section, all purporting to shed light on the controversy but in fact comprising further slander of Braddon. Her patience having been tried to the limit, Braddon responded with an extended 'Remonstrance' in her own magazine. Assuming the persona of Captain Shandon (returned from 'the land of shadows') she launched a scathing and arguably proto-feminist attack on Greenwood's paper. Rather more sober and less blustering than Thackeray's original, Braddon's Shandon begins by fondly evoking his Fleet prison preface to the *Pendennis* version of the *Pall Mall Gazette*. This fictional backdrop is unequivocally identified with a departed socio-professional golden age. Like Escott, Braddon's persona focuses on Warrington rather than on the paper's less reputable contributors, observing that the latter's presence on the *Gazette's* staff was enough to ensure that, though 'we had our pet antipathies and our trade interests [...] we were always gentlemen.' This enables Braddon to turn the accusation of

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[281] '*Dahlia* and *Circe*', *Pall Mall Gazette* (16 September 1867), 9.

plagiarism back on her attackers as she disdainfully remarks on Greenwood's appropriation of the 'best sentence' in Shandon's preface and on his manifest failure to produce a journal 'written for gentlemen by gentlemen'. Instead, she claims, the real-life *Pall Mall Gazette* consists of 'a bundle of cuttings from other papers, garnished with flippant and frivolous comment; and little carping, spiteful paragraphs.'[282] In contrasting the latter with the more legitimate flippancy of the robust gentleman-journalists of *Pendennis*, Braddon equates the *Gazette's* slander against herself with unmanly cowardice of the worst kind — claiming not only that it is governed by ulterior commercial motives but also that it represents an unchivalrous 'war against a woman'.

Somewhat incongruously, what lies at the heart of Braddon's invocation of a superior gentlemanly past is an attack on a combination of anti-populism, gender-prejudice, and personal malice. Emerging from behind the mask of her Thackerayan persona, Braddon concludes the piece by advising Greenwood that he would:

> do well in future to refrain from these noisy onslaughts upon popular female novelists; which are more characteristic of the disappointed author of two or three unappreciated novels than of the gentleman editor who writes for gentlemen readers.[283]

Rather predictably, such an attack did little to help Braddon's cause and certainly invited additional mockery from some quarters. For example, the pugnacious satirical journal, *Tomahawk* — another publication named after a Thackerayan original — published its take on the affair in a facetious smoking-room dialogue between two urbane club members.[284] From within this exclusively masculine sphere, one clubman

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[282] Mary Elizabeth Braddon, 'A Remonstrance', *Belgravia*, 4 (November 1867), 80–86 (p. 81).
[283] Ibid., p. 86.
[284] Active between 1867 and 1870, *Tomahawk* was founded and edited by Arthur William À Beckett. It was named after Mr Bludyer's 'slashing' journal in Thackeray's *Men's Wives* (1852).

observes to the other that Braddon's Remonstrance 'is supposed to be written by Captain Shandon — you know — or rather his shade.' He languidly adds that 'if he did write it, it would seem that the air of Hades doesn't agree with the poor old fellow — it's awfully silly.' He seals the compliment by suggesting that the article might rather have been written in Billingsgate.[285] As well as confirming that social and gender equality were distant prospects in professional journalism at this time, Braddon's fate externalizes the pungently masculine atmosphere which would surround collective definitions of her vocation for many years to come. The apocryphal lifestyles of the 'Street of Shame' after all do not sit as easily with those who automatically incur weightier 'shames' on account of their gender.

Writing in the *Guardian* at the turn of the millennium, Thackeray's most recent biographer, D.J. Taylor, published a self-reflexive eulogy to modern 'Grub Street'. In this, he suggested that *Pendennis*, along with several later works, represented 'classic Grub Street documents'. For Taylor, Thackeray's novel is one of a number of English prose accounts to be charged with 'the classic Grub street atmosphere' — which he describes as 'a kind of compound of garrets, forgotten masterpieces, bold hopes and black despair'.[286] This contrasts very much with Taylor's response to the work in his official biographical study of its author. In this, he follows his academic mentor, John Carey, in regarding *Pendennis* as Thackeray's first wrong turn in his increasing 'capitulation' to the respectable classes. Also echoing John Forster, Taylor argues that the novel's 'ultimate aesthetic effect is compromised by a reliance on what its audience expected from the fiction they read.'[287] In this case, however, Taylor's own expectations are palpably dependent on the professional role which he is himself

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[285] 'In the Smoking-Room', *Tomahawk* (9 November 1867), 274.

[286] Taylor, The Street of No Shame', *Guardian,* 1 December 2001 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books /2001 /December/01/society> [Accessed 19 May 2008].

[287] Taylor, *Thackeray*, p. 287.

fulfilling. As a literary critic in his *Thackeray* biography, Taylor strives to dissect Thackeray's romanticizing urges and to uncover his social compromises. Working as a journalist, on the other hand, Taylor is willingly seduced by a mystified version of the literary scenes in *Pendennis*. The sentiment of his article depends on its author's strong identification with the still-precarious world of the journalistic professional. As such, Taylor shows himself particularly receptive to the concoction of myths and metaphors which continue to colour the archetypical journalist in the contemporary imagination. Seeking to convey the chanciness and inevitable vicissitudes of his own vocation, he allows himself the romance which he denies *Pendennis*. It is thus perhaps unsurprising that he concludes with a flourish which would not have been to Thackeray's taste. Endowing the struggles of creative life with an inherent emotive value which — despite their differences — both Thackeray and Forster were keen to avoid, Taylor declares that:

> It is not being overly sentimental to suggest that much of what we value about books rests in the ability of [the unrecognized book reviewer] — ground down, hard up, but sustained by a genuine love of the work he does — to go on existing.[288]

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[288] Taylor, 'Street of No Shame'.

CHAPTER 3

The Chattering Classes:

Disclosing Double-Standards in Victorian Bohemia

3.1 Hijacked by Dick Swiveller

> 'Of all the words which, by dint of clumsy repetition and misuse, have become unwelcome to the ears of Englishmen, there are perhaps few that are more unwelcome than the words Bohemia and Bohemianism. […] The lower variety of novelist and journalist has fastened upon them, and after his kind has altogether perverted their meaning.'
> **George Saintsbury, 'Henry Murger',** *Fortnightly Review* **(1878)[289]**

When George Saintsbury delivered this scathing verdict on English representations of Bohemianism, he was a relative newcomer both to professional journalism and to the London journalistic scene. Until just a year before, he had been a schoolmaster in north-east Scotland and an occasional contributor to a select number of periodicals.[290] Considering his only recent emergence as a full-time metropolitan journalist, Saintsbury's attack might look like a cautious attempt to differentiate himself from 'lowly' Bohemian members of his new profession. The fact that the remainder of his essay consists of a largely positive appraisal of the more strictly hierarchized French Bohemianism of Henry Murger certainly adds to this impression. At this time, Saintsbury shared his aesthetic preferences and social life with a not unbohemian circle

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[289] 24 (August 1878), 231–49 (p. 231). All further references to this article will be given in the text.
[290] See Dorothy Richardson Jones, *"King of Critics": George Saintsbury: 1845–1933* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1992).

of Francophilic poets and critics. Eventually coming to be known as the English Parnassians, this group anticipated the English Aesthetic movement and included Andrew Lang, Edmund Gosse, and, briefly, Robert Louis Stevenson. Embracing traditional French literary forms and taking inspiration from Théophile Gautier's doctrine of 'art for art's sake', these men would certainly have wanted to be aligned with the 'Upper Bohemia' of Murger's 'Water Drinkers' rather than the more prosaic Bohemianism which had come to be associated with London journalism.[291] However, Saintsbury's essay is significant because it encapsulates something of the conceptual knots and rhetorical twists and turns which had come to characterize definitions of English Bohemianism over the previous three decades.

In comparison with his strident opening, Saintsbury's portrayal of the actual ways in which English Bohemianism has been 'perverted' is somewhat evasive. Elaborating on the assertion quoted above, he simply states that 'sometimes it seems to be observed that anybody who has any sort of connection with literature or art is a Bohemian, and the word would thus apply to colour-grinders and printers' devils'. He continues that 'sometimes, and more often, the assumption is made that Bohemianism consists in more or less senseless and vulgar dissipation, extravagance and display' (p. 231). Here, Saintsbury's passive phrasing obscures the distinction between the images of Bohemianism perpetuated by 'the lower variety of novelists and journalists' and the public perceptions which arise from these representations. This is significant because while Saintsbury refers to such conceptions of Bohemianism as 'ignorant folly', he cannot ultimately dismiss them. Even if they originally arose from false associations,

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[291] For useful discussions of the English Parnassian movement see, for example, Christopher Harris, '"English Parnassianism" and the Place of France in the English Canon,' *Working With English: Medieval and Modern Language, Literature and Drama*, 2:1 (2006), 37–46 and James K. Robinson, 'A Neglected Phase of the Aesthetic Movement: English Parnassianism,' *PMLA*, 68:4 (September 1953), 733–54.

Harris observes that the label 'English Parnassians' is generally attributed to Edmund Gosse but that he cannot trace its usage any earlier than 1904 (p. 44).

they have acquired an undeniable reality at the level of cultural myth. It is this reality which drives the ambivalent Saintsbury to the actually rather spirited conclusion that: 'the Bohemian ideal of France is not unlike Chatterton [while] the Bohemian ideal of at least some Englishmen bears a strong resemblance to Dick Swiveller' (p. 231). In France it seems, Bohemianism's association with wasted opportunity remains tied up in the romantic fantasy of overlooked genius. In the case of England, on the other hand, Saintsbury cannot escape the impression that Bohemianism has not only become detached from such ideals but that it has roguishly turned the notion of wasted opportunity on its head. Like Dickens's resourceful Dick Swiveller (figure 3a) — a character 'conspicuous for his dirty smartness', his 'strong savour of tobacco-smoke', and his 'flowery' oratorical skills — the English Bohemian of the public imagination

has become a dubious but dynamic figure who makes the most of the opportunities thrown at him.[292] Viewed in a more cynical light, the English Bohemian's alleged lack of genius means that, unlike his French counterpart, he is not seen to have begun life with that many opportunities to waste in the first place.

The challenges facing Saintsbury are to some extent philological and reflect the convictions of contemporaries such as Richard Chevenix Trench who claimed that words 'diffuse a moral atmosphere'.[293] Saintsbury

Figure 3a: 'Kyd' (Joseph Clayton Clarke), 'Dick Swiveller', from a Dickens postcard series published by Raphael Tuck & Sons in 1889

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[292] Dickens, *The Old Curiosity Shop* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1853), first published 1840, p. 10, p. 11, and p. 35.

[293] See Richard Chevenix Trench, *On the Study of Words: Five Lectures Addressed to the Pupils at the Diocesan Training School, Winchester* (London, J.W. Parker, 1851), p. 81.

reaches an impasse because the terms *Bohemian* and *Bohemianism* and the ways in which they affect the popular mindset have been irrevocably transformed. His frustrations suggest a desire to dispose of layers of unwanted significance by moving backwards in time and returning the concept to an original moral state. The English Channel appears a protective barrier between two variant myths as Saintsbury associates Murgerian Bohemianism with such a prelapsarian state. In discussing Murger, his earlier complaints against the excessive inclusiveness of English Bohemianism dissolve as he praises the collective understanding which the French writer's work allegedly inspires. Having acknowledged Murger's 'limited' subject-matter and sometimes problematic morality, Saintsbury concludes that Murger's work nonetheless 'strikes truly and skilfully a string which has vibrated at one time or another in the heart and brain of every man who has brain or heart, and therefore it deserves a place in the literature of humanity' (p. 249). Murger's socially and financially precarious Bohemian lives are judged as legitimate reflections of universal patterns of masculine experience.

Saintsbury thus begins his essay with a denial of one form of collective homosocial identification and ends with an affirmation of another. The fact that Murger's work originates from France seems to facilitate this shift. In his closing praise for the writer, Saintsbury invokes Matthew Arnold and is clearly influenced by the latter's belief that the French nation excelled in the generation of a democratic but nonetheless cultivated social spirit.[294] However, what he does not address is the fact that leading cultural commentators such as himself were as much responsible as any other journalists for the perception that English Bohemianism lacked such a well-balanced and cohesive social spirit. The notion that a 'lower variety of journalist' had perpetuated

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[294] See Varouxakis, p. 55.

glamorized myths of Bohemian disrespectability was itself one of the central myths which had come to surround ideas of English Bohemianism between the 1850s and 1870s. In fact, the disreputable status of English Bohemia was symptomatic of the persistent self-interrogation and even self-laceration of the expanding mid-nineteenth-century press. During these middle decades, conservative publications such as the *Saturday Review* reviled upstart Bohemian hacks while 'highbrow' satirical publications such as *Punch* and *Tomahawk* aggressively pigeonholed their lesser imitators as 'Bohemian guttersnipes'. In thus attempting to purge the press of what they saw as faux Bohemian associations, they in fact further perpetuated the myth of the dissipated but thoroughly modern Bohemian. By the end of the 1870s, depending on a commentator's political stance, the well-known caricature of the Bohemian journalist ranged from the mercenary penny-a-liner to any fully signed-up journalist who did not also belong to another more 'respectable' profession.

The vigorous self-criticism of the mid-Victorian press frequently formed part of a drive to higher standards. Yet the vehemence with which particular journalists denounced their 'Bohemian' colleagues often risked drowning out any such constructive agenda. By their very nature, such attacks could seem divisive, threatening illusions of corporate unity as they carved up the press into different factions. Saintsbury, who begins by rejecting the English Bohemian fraternity but ends on a note of collective homosocial identification, is again significant here. On the one hand, in opting for Murgerian over English Bohemianism, he appears rather wistful. He is after all dismissing ideals which could, if nothing else, have provided some sense of collective belonging in a notoriously atomized profession. However, I would argue that in ending with an alternative form of collective identification, Saintsbury makes a tacit assumption made by many anti-Bohemian commentators at the time. This was the idea

that a more modest form of homosocial Bohemianism had long characterized the various circles making up London's journalistic and literary societies. This understated Bohemianism thrived on remaining undefined. It did not cultivate a continuous sense of collective identity, but could be called upon when necessary to give at least an impression of social cohesion.

The 'lower variety' of Bohemianism which inspires such uneasiness in Saintsbury, by contrast, publicized homosocial spheres which had previously been at least partially concealed from the public eye. Despite the fact that he criticizes this brand of Bohemianism for its excessive inclusiveness, Saintsbury in all probability had a specific group of writers in mind. His correlation of the English Bohemian ideal with the comical but ultimately benign opportunist, Dick Swiveller, is a case in point. With this Dickensian character, Saintsbury in effect identifies himself with the widely held viewpoint that the youthful contributors to Dickens's *Household Words* were ringleaders in the Bohemia which surfaced in mid-century London.[295] In the 1850s and 60s, George Augustus Sala and Edmund Yates's perceived stylistic debt to Dickens shaped the popular image of a metropolitan Bohemian School.[296] As is well known, the *Saturday Review* was particularly vocal in such attacks, representing 'Dickens and his followers' as a corpus of the same stylistic eccentricities: they were a 'mannerist school of prose' who subordinated 'manner to matter' and who 'would rather pen a platitude with an air of oddity and originality about it, than utter the profoundest truth or most

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[295] As discussed in the previous chapters, considerations of English Bohemianism in the 1850s very frequently cast its proponents as lesser disciples of Dickens or Thackeray or both. More recent critics following this model have included Brantlinger, Cross, Kent, and Ashton (all cited above). While there is clearly a good basis for this association, it is important to remember that it is primarily a convenient shorthand and is certainly not exclusive. As this chapter seeks to demonstrate, the boundaries of English Bohemianism were open to renegotiation throughout the nineteenth century and were, at no time, confined to a single group of men.

[296] Other men falling into this category included Blanchard Jerrold, John Hollingshead, Percy Fitzgerald, and Andrew Halliday.

sparkling witticism in ordinary language.'[297] Saintsbury's mode of singling out this group gains particular piquancy when juxtaposed with the very different invocation of Dick Swiveller already seen in Justin McCarthy's article fifteen years earlier.[298] Where McCarthy had cast the character as the brash antithesis of genuine gentlemanly Bohemia, Saintsbury places him at the heart of a degenerate though still Bohemian alternative — an alternative which clearly bears similarities with the school of writers whom McCarthy was so keen to confine to oblivion.

However, such Dickensian pigeon-holing could only go so far. By the time that Saintsbury was writing, Dickens was dead, *Household Words* was long gone, and 'Dickens's young men' were well into middle age and established literary careers. The charge of derivativeness — Dickensian or otherwise — proved a lasting springboard from which critics launched more general indictments of the 'Bohemian School'. The English Bohemians' perceived emulation of Dickens and other major writers such as Thackeray and Douglas Jerrold fuelled a more enduring idea that they were unoriginal and unfortunate by-products of the modern literary market. They were dismissed as a Cockneyfied faction of writers and their work as almost grotesquely prolific. A common view was that, rather than providing inspiration, their writing catalyzed duplications of itself, resulting in more of the same: more comic ephemeralities and more extraneous urban sketches. At the same time, these men were closely associated with the rise of decidedly modern journalistic roles such as the special correspondent, the investigative reporter, and the gossip columnist. In such cases, their supposed derivativeness was associated with the idea that they disseminated rumoured occurrences and assumed sham worldly personae. These roles were characterized by 'knowingness' rather than knowledge and triggered the accusation that the English

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[297] 'Mr Sala on Life in London', *Saturday Review* (3 December 1859), 676–77 (p. 677).
[298] See Chapter 2 above, p. 99.

Bohemians perpetuated vulgarized versions of masculine camaraderie and bonhomie.[299]

In this sense, the idea of derivativeness was not confined to the Bohemian writers'

literary products but influenced contemporary conceptions of their social lives. Much of

the vociferous criticism surrounding the English Bohemians — which did not simply

come from conservative quarters like the *Saturday Review* — shows a prevailing

anxiety that they had hijacked and exaggerated pre-existing ideals of masculine

behaviour.

3.2 Worse than a Parasitic Cuckoo

During the 1860s, John Chapman's radical *Westminster Review*, for example,

challenged the Bohemian School on more than one occasion. Justin McCarthy's

carefully argued obituary for the 'Literature of Bohemia' in January 1863 has been

considered elsewhere.[300] Despite the moderate tone of his article, McCarthy is

determined that Bohemian literature should be viewed as an ephemeral product of the

1850s, and that the early 1860s when he is writing is an appropriate time to put the

School to rest. Three years later, as if exasperated by its continuing prevalence, John

Richard de Capel Wise provides the *Westminster's* readers with a far more ruthless

appraisal of the 'Cockney Bohemian School'. At the heart of the article, is the

aforementioned objection that the descriptive and satirical methods of the English

Bohemians are simply those of Dickens and Douglas Jerrold 'at second-hand'.[301]

However, Wise's condemnation of the English Bohemians' unoriginality goes much

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[299] For insightful discussions of the importance of 'knowingness' in mid-nineteenth-century metropolitan culture, see Richard Maxwell, *The Mysteries of Paris and London* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1992), p. 3 and p. 22, and Peter Bailey, *Popular Culture and Performance in the Victorian City* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 128–50.

[300] See Chapter 2 above.

[301] John Richard de Capel Wise, 'Belle Lettres', *Westminster Review,* n.s., 29 (January 1866), 280–98 (p. 281). All further references to this article will be given in the text.

deeper than this. A successful ornithologist as well as a journalist, he launches a damning attack on the Bohemians' literary parasitism using a series of metaphors drawn from the natural world.

Wise begins by linking the rise of the English Bohemian School with a nation-wide proliferation of what he terms 'Cockney chatter'. From this he derives two tongue-in-cheek labels for the archetypal member of the School: 'the Cockney, or, perhaps, as he had better be called, the Bohemian Chatterer' (p. 280). The 'Bohemian Chatterer' is the common name of a real migratory bird sometimes also known as the Black-Throated Waxwing. The 'Cockney Chatterer,' on the other hand, has no existence in nature and is simply Wise's facetious term for a typical English Bohemian. This opening play on words is important. Firstly it brings into question the apparent interchangeability of the epithets *Cockney* and *Bohemian* — a point which I will return to.[302] Secondly, Wise's vacillation between a real bird and its fictional 'Cockney' equivalent reveals the extent of his marginalization of the English Bohemians. Here and in the course of his article, Wise refuses to allow the Bohemian a legitimate place in the natural order. The 'Cockney Chatterer' is a distortion not only of nature but also of the modern author. In turn, he exerts a distorting effect on the world around him.

Wise has a particular 'Cockney Chatterer' in mind. His critique is a response to the publication of two new volumes by the novelist and gossip columnist, Edmund Yates.[303] For Wise, Yates's work embodies the worst qualities of English Bohemian writing, while the latter class of work embodies the worst qualities of contemporary literature as a whole. Underpinning this is the belief that Bohemian writers actively corrode contemporary culture not simply by imitating more established authors but also by vulgarizing time-honoured intellectual disciplines. Wise claims that Yates and his

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[302] See Chapter 4 below, p. 205.
[303] These were *The Business of Pleasure* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1865) and *Running the Gauntlet* (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1865).

colleagues reduce Political Economy to the sociology of London nightlife, Philology to the study of slang, and Geology to 'observations on the London pavement' (p. 281). It is in relation to this that ornithology again comes into play. In the course of his article, Wise constructs a scathing analogy between the literary methods of the English Bohemians and the cuckoo's invasion of other birds' nests.[304] In fact, the English Bohemian is more pernicious than the cuckoo since the latter 'only lays its eggs in the lark's nest, [while] the Cockney Chatterer takes the lark's eggs and calls them its own' (p. 284). Wise illustrates this with specific lines which Yates has extracted from the work of other writers and modified to suit his own purposes. These 'purloined larks' eggs' include a misquotation of Tennyson's 'Locksley Hall' and a clumsy allusion to Keats's *Hyperion.* In both cases, Wise suggests, Yates disfigures lyrical treatments of wildlife by transposing them into 'fast, comic and slangy' prose accounts of modern life.

Strikingly, Wise invokes Charles Darwin to dismiss Yates's plagiarism and to characterize it as a distinctly Bohemian brand of 'parasitism'. He initially introduces the celebrated naturalist to reaffirm his view that in producing second-rate versions of more legitimate literature the English Bohemians have no place in the natural order. He insists that 'Darwin's theory accounts for most phenomena in nature, except parasites' (p. 284). He then goes on to compare the English Bohemians not only to the cuckoo but also to the parasitic bee, both of which had featured as primary examples in *The Origin of Species*, published seven years' earlier. However, this simile-laden attack does not

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[304] Such ornithological comparisons would not have been unfamiliar to Yates. It was common practice to link metropolitan authors of 'light literature' with birds such as the chit and the urban sparrow. The cultural motif of the 'cockney sparrow' was particularly well established, capturing chirpiness and urbane quick-wit, on the one hand, but grubbiness and vulgarity, on the other. See Peter A. Coates, *American Perceptions of Immigrant and Invasive Species: Strangers on the Land* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), p. 39.

Yates himself would later note that the arch-Bohemian poet, Mortimer Collins, had dismissed him as a 'pert London sparrow' in the *Plymouth Mail* in the 1850s. See *Recollections,* II, 60.

match up with Wise's source material. In fact, *The Origin of Species* uses the cuckoo and the parasitic bee to prove precisely the opposite: that natural conditions can and do frequently favour the instincts which lead to parasitic behaviour.[305] In Darwin's system, parasites have a place in the natural order because they are products of natural selection just like every other living organism.

A friend of G.H. Lewes and George Eliot, Wise was a radical thinker and naturalist who embraced contemporary advances in evolutionary theory. Rather than representing any kind of disagreement with Darwin, Wise's classification of parasitism as unnatural is clearly bound up in his determination to prove that the market success of the English Bohemians is invalid. At the time of his review, the forces of popular demand were visibly working in this group of writers' favour. They had become rapidly adept at catering for the literary market's ever-expanding reader base and Edmund Yates was a prime example of this. Born in 1831, by 1866 he had become well established if somewhat infamous in several fields. While holding down a job at the General Post Office, he had carved out a career editing a number of small-scale comic journals and collaborating on several West End plays. Probably most significantly, however, he had emerged as the innovator of two separate gossip columns: 'The Lounger at the Clubs' in Henry Vizetelly's widely read *Illustrated Times* (1855–63) and 'The Flâneur' in Justin McCarthy's radical *Morning Star* (1864–67). Yates would go on to cite these series as evidence that he had originated the style of 'Personal Journalism' which became so prevalent after the 1860s.[306] By the time that Wise came to review his work, Yates was on the route to prosperity. He had authored two relatively successful

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[305] Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1864), first published 1859, pp. 185–216. Darwin says of the parasitic bee: 'I can see no difficulty in making an occasional [parasitic] habit permanent, if of advantage to the species, and if the insect whose nest and stored food are feloniously appropriated, be not thus exterminated' (p. 195).

[306] P.D. Edwards points out that this claim (made in *Recollections*, I, 278) has generally been accepted by later critics (Edwards, p. 41).

novels and, for the previous three years, had been editor-in-chief of the popular shilling monthly, *Temple Bar*. During the 1860s, this affordable miscellany of fiction and light topical discussion persistently outsold more expensive and politically engaged quarterlies like the *Westminster Review*. Indeed, in the years that Wise was a regular contributor, John Chapman's platform of radical opinion continually teetered on the edge of financial ruin. Chapman was forced to rely on a substantial number of unpaid contributors and it is likely that Wise received little or no payment for his review of Edmund Yates' newest literary offerings.[307]

In denying parasitism a Darwinian explanation, Wise appears acutely aware of the parallels which might be drawn between the laws of natural selection and those governing the literary marketplace. In placing parasitic behaviour beyond the scope of natural selection, he symbolically places writers like Yates outside the laws of supply and demand, refusing to see these forces as a justification for the prevalence of second-rate and, in his view, plagiaristic work. At the same time, Wise betrays an anxiety that the popular style of the English Bohemians might indeed come out on top, surviving the conditions of the contemporary market more effectively than superior literature. The defining characteristics of this style would only have served to compound Wise's anxieties. The English Bohemians of the 1850s and 60s rooted their work firmly in the present day, employing a thoroughly modern conversational style to represent thoroughly modern metropolitan subjects. Critics like Wise were left struggling to dismiss the worryingly convincing possibility that the English Bohemians had an

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[307] According to the *Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals*, *Temple Bar* had a respectable circulation of around 11,000 in 1866. That of the *Westminster Review* is less easy to determine. In 1840, J.S. Mill claimed that the quarterly's circulation had been around 1200 for several years (again *Wellesley Index*). Alvar Ellegard has since suggested that by 1860, this figure had risen to 4000 ('Ellegard, Alvar, *The Readership of the Periodical Press in mid-Victorian Britain* (Götteborgs: Götteborgs Universitets Arskifft, 1957), p. 54). However, this was a year in which the near-bankrupt Chapman was forced to sell his publishing business and the circulation of his journal remained precarious as he increasingly struggled to pay high-quality contributors.

essential role to play in modernity — the possibility that as 'fast' modern men, they were more qualified than most to deal with what they portrayed as a fundamentally 'fast' modern world.

3.3 The Provincial Chatterer

Wise is hitting out directly at the English Bohemians' self-styled modernity in his scathing application of the verb *to chatter*. Yates and writers like him are not simply stylistic parasites that sponge off the work of their betters. They are offensive 'Chatterers' who pillage the private domain for gossipy exposés — or, in other words, social parasites that trade in the lives of others. As Wise's opening image of reverberative 'Cockney chatter' suggests, Yates was perceived to be only one vociferous figure at the heart of a wider contemporary phenomenon. However, his aforementioned innovations in the gossip genre and certain pivotal events in his public life meant that he had a particularly important impact on English responses to Bohemianism after the 1850s — responses like those of George Saintsbury and John de Capel Wise.

Wise's choice of the term *Chatterer* encapsulates the fact that the English Bohemians emerged at the crossroads of two particularly contentious developments in English journalism: the advent of the gossip columnist and the rise of investigative reporting. These were developments which transformed not only the legitimate subject-matter of the journalist and his role in the public sphere, but also the nature of the journalistic voice itself. From Addison's 'Mr Spectator' to Thackeray's 'Jeames Yellowplush', the flamboyant journalistic persona had been a definitive feature of periodical writing for at least a hundred and fifty years. From the late 1840s onwards,

however, the *character* had increasingly displaced the *caricature* of the journalist. With this, the average journalistic personality tended to be more naturalistic though no less voluble than previously.

As has been seen, Yates would later lay claim to a leading role in the emergence of this increasingly 'personal' form of journalism.[308] By the time that Wise labelled him a 'Chatterer' in 1866, Yates's gossip columns had already had a significant impact on how many commentators viewed the future of newspaper writing. This was despite the fact that both 'The Lounger at the Clubs' and 'The Flâneur' had well-established precedents elsewhere in the English press, such as the *Athenæum's* 'Our Weekly Gossip on Literature and Art' and the *Literary Gazette's* 'Gossip of the Week'.[309] These features foreshadow Yates in their concern with the minutiae of contemporary cultural life and yet are written in the first-person plural so that they appear more or less in line with the collective voices of their respective periodicals. Yates broke with this tradition in his first weekly column, 'The Lounger at the Clubs', when it began to appear in the *Illustrated Times* in June 1855. He did so by adopting a distinctive first-person voice, which allowed him to fluctuate between flippant outsider in relation to the rest of the contents of the *Illustrated Times* and arcane insider in relation to the events which he reported. Assuming the guise of the worldly Lounger, Yates presents his 'intelligence'

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[308] Yates's notion of 'Personal Journalism' can be related more or less broadly to what came to be known as 'New Journalism' in the final decades of the nineteenth century. See Richard Salmon, '"A Simulacrum of Power": Intimacy and Abstraction in the Rhetoric of the New Journalism', in *Nineteenth-Century Media and the Construction of Identities,* ed. by Laurel Brake, Bill Bell and David Finkelstein (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000), pp. 27–39 (p. 27).

From Raymond Williams onwards, critics have increasingly challenged the idea that New Journalism represented a sudden break with the past in the 1880s and 90s. This idea of a graduated progression towards a more personality and celebrity-oriented press beginning at mid-century informs my own reading. See, for example, Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2001), first published 1961, pp. 218–19, Joel H. Wiener, 'How New was the New Journalism?' in *Papers for the Millions: The New Journalism in Britain, 1850s to 1914*, ed. by Joel H. Wiener (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990) 47–71, and Mark Hampton, *Visions of the Press in Britain: 1850–1950* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2004), pp. 36–39.

[309] There were of course other precedents than these — some more respectable than others. H.R. Fox Bourne (II, 299–301), for example, sees Yates as a 'society' journalist and traces his roots back to Daniel Defoe's Scandalous Club and to 1820s and 30s scandal sheets such as *John Bull*, *The Age*, and *The Town*.

in a manner that is both deliberately oblique and mischievously non-committal. As a result, the relationship between his journalistic personality and his readers appears intimate on the one hand, and enigmatic on the other. His very first column was representative in this respect. Here, the Lounger starts as he means to go on, speaking from the 'shrouded recesses of an easy chair' and offering some fragmentary thoughts on a recent banking crash.[310] From this appropriately shady position, he invites the reader into an imagined club scenario in which various fictional clubmen consider the impact of the disaster:

> Little Toady laments the losses sustained by the aristocracy, and tells you how the Duke of D— and Lord F— have been victimised to the extent of £40,000 each, while old Catesby (the greatest radical in the club, and who, under the signature of 'Gracchus' is always worrying the committee with complaints) growls out that he is not the least surprised and asks what the deuce you can expect when baronets, and 'your fools of fashion at the West End, sir' are mixed up in business matters.[311]

As Yates slides between different voices, he shifts between differing levels of fact and fiction: 'Little Toady' and 'Old Catesby' are imaginary embodiments of typical club behaviour, while the 'Duke of D—', 'Lord F—' and the £40,000 lost by each, presumably have at least some roots in reality. The fact that this combination of 'flippant nonsense' and rumour-mongering appeared directly alongside the 'factual' stories making up the rest of the paper reinforced the impression that Yates's voice had invaded a world of more serious journalism.[312]

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[310] The banking crisis is unspecified but perhaps refers to the notorious Strahan, Paul and Bates bank firm which failed in 1855 for £750,000. Alternatively, the Royal British Bank also failed in this year. See George Robb, *White-Collar Crime in Modern England: Financial Fraud and Business Morality, 1845-1929* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 60–63.

[311] Yates, 'The Lounger at the Clubs', *Illustrated Times* (30 June 1855), 26.

[312] The phrase 'flippant nonsense' is Yates's own retrospective description of 'The Lounger at the Clubs'. See *Recollections*, I, 278.

Just a year before Wise reviewed his work, such criticism had come to a head when Yates used his latest gossip column to attack the publisher, George Smith. Writing as the 'Flâneur' in the *Morning Star*, Yates insinuated that Smith had established his new newspaper, the conservative *Pall Mall Gazette*, out of self-interest in a bid to secure a parliamentary seat.[313] A few years earlier, Yates had notoriously perpetuated a report in which Smith emerged as an archetypal literary philistine.[314] For a literary businessman striving for commercial success, such an accusation struck uncomfortably close to the bone and caused Smith a significant degree of personal embarrassment. The resourceful publisher thus had reason to hit back at the gossip columnist with some force when the latter again offended him in February 1865. In the event, the *Pall Mall Gazette* responded with an indictment of what it characterized as 'A New Type of Journalist' — with the new journalist clearly being Yates.[315] This riposte sets about documenting the questionable ethics and lack of skill required of the latter in his role as 'a purveyor of gossip, a collector of tittle-tattle, [and] a disseminator of idle rumours'. Accordingly, it witheringly undermines his textual representations of urbane mobility (as a 'Stroller in the Clubs' or a 'Saunterer in the Arcades') with its own representations of Yates as a man disabled by a lowly social status (as 'nobody in himself' and certainly not a gentleman).[316] According to the *Pall Mall Gazette*, the

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[313] See Escott, *Masters of English Journalism*, p. 262 and Edwards, p. 113.

[314] On 26 May 1860, Yates had contributed a gossip column to the *New York Times* ('Echoes from the London Clubs', p. 2), in which he claimed that the success of George Smith's only recently inaugurated *Cornhill Magazine* 'was on the wane'. He buttressed this professional slight with a more personal one, relaying a conversation between Thackeray and Smith in which the latter failed to understand a reference to Dr Johnson. This column was reprinted in England in the *Saturday Review* ('Newspaper Gossip' (23 June 1860), 799–800), and sparked an indignant reply from Thackeray in a *Cornhill* 'Roundabout Paper': 'On Screens in Dining-Rooms'. See *Wisdom*, pp. 305–08.

[315] 'A New Type of Journalist', *Pall Mall Gazette* (18 February 1865), 6. P.D. Edwards observes that George Augustus Sala attributed the article to the conservative but not unbohemian writer, James Hannay — a long-time rival of Yates and himself, and a protégé of Thackeray (Edwards, p. 113).

[316] There is a degree of irony in the fact that this attack on proto-New Journalism occurred in the *Pall Mall Gazette* — a paper which would go on to specialize in a particularly sensationalist branch of New Journalism: the slumming investigative article. This began with James Greenwood's 'Amateur Casual' series in 1866 and continued to more controversial effect during W.T. Stead's reign in the 1880s. The

Lounger sees the London club as 'a perfect Bank of England'. In siphoning off and selling on club rumours to a credulous 'provincial' public, Yates essentially carries out an act of embezzlement followed by an act of falsification.

The claim that Yates's gossip columns were only really popular with 'provincial' readers was one that resurfaced repeatedly in criticism of the London-based Lounger. The reasons for this become clearer in a characteristically anti-populist critique written by James Fitzjames Stephen three years earlier. Appearing in the *Cornhill Magazine* (another George Smith venture) in July 1862, Stephen's article presents readers with a doggedly hierarchical dissection of the newspaper business. In Stephen's view, the average modern newspaper has two 'principal' divisions: one that generates 'original matter' and one that is concerned with reporting 'news'. He values the latter below the former and splits the news department into two further subsections: 'Intelligence' and 'Gossip.'[317] The article enters into an extended comparison of the erudite leader writer, who contributes 'original matter' to the paper, and the self-educated special correspondent, who provides his readers with stirring but stylistically dubious news reports — or 'the latest intelligence'. Yates's 'Lounger' provides Stephen with a grand finale, forming the bottom rung of his journalistic hierarchy and illustrating the dangerously fine line between the 'Intelligence' and 'Gossip' sections of a paper's news division. The 'Lounger at the Clubs' is essentially just the special correspondent 'in a lighter mood' who 'enlightens the readers of country newspapers as to the ways of the London world'. For Stephen, however, the 'real lounger' is 'probably a middle-aged, and rather stupid man, of moderate means, who eats a mutton-chop at two, reads newspapers, and dawdles until seven, then dines, and ponders and dozes over

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latter inspired Matthew Arnold's famous denunciation of New Journalism as 'feather-brained' in 'Up to Easter', *Nineteenth Century*, 123 (May 1887), 629–43 (p. 638).

[317] James Fitzjames Stephen, 'Journalism', *Cornhill Magazine*, 6 (July 1862), 52–63 (p. 52). All further references to this article will be given in the text.

a book till bedtime, without hearing any rumours whatever' (p. 62). He hammers his scorn home with an anecdote illustrating what is, in his eyes, the greatest crime of Lounger-like gossip journalists: their tendency to sell 'their wares several times over'. The anecdote is rooted firmly in the world of the Provincial press and focuses on a copyright dispute between two West Country newspapers. The issue is resolved when the barely literate author of the duplicated article at the heart of the row writes into the papers acknowledging that he contributes to both (p. 63).

In establishing a firm link between Yates-inspired gossip columns and provincial journalism, Fitzjames Stephen's aims are clear. Firstly, he denies Yates and his imitators any capacity for originality by associating them with a section of the press that was of necessity traditionally derivative. In the past, most provincial newspapers had been weeklies and heavily reliant on second-hand reprints from the metropolitan dailies. At the time that Stephen was writing, however, the balance between the metropolitan and the provincial press was beginning to shift. Aided by the abolition of Stamp Duty in 1855, a number of influential provincial dailies had sprung up in the second half of the 1850s and their fast-growing circulation had acted as a reminder of the political sway held by areas of the country beyond London.[318] In this sense and others, Stephen's view is stubbornly old-fashioned. However, it is in his interest to cultivate the conventionalized view that readers outside London were less sophisticated than their worldly metropolitan counterparts. This enables him to portray Yates and his imitators as deceitful metropolitan special correspondents who are out to hoodwink innocent non-urbanites. Determined to marginalize Yates as a charlatan, Stephen wishes to suggest that Yates's representations are so false that only those who had never had

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[318] Among the most important were the *Liverpool Mercury*, which moved from weekly to daily publication in 1858 and the *Birmingham Daily Post*, established in the previous year. For a brief account of the expansion of the Provincial press at this time, see Alan J. Lee, *The Origins of the Popular Press in England: 1855–1914* (London: Taylor & Francis, 1976), pp. 73–76.

first-hand experience of city club life would believe them to be accurate. It is this impulse which also underlies the *Pall Mall Gazette's* dismissal of Yates's journalism.

In both cases, these articles perpetuate an impression that is part-myth, part-reality. It was true that notwithstanding its expansion, the provincial press frequently carried columns by journalists who labelled themselves 'London Correspondents'. As John Plunkett points out, there was still a substantial degree of crossover between their contributions to different papers — if nothing else because there was a limit to how many correspondents could fit into one building on any one official occasion.[319] Extracts from Yates's gossip columns were certainly sometimes reprinted in non-London newspapers and, in view of their London-centric 'revelations', it is possible to understand why they might have been classed as just another example of 'Pall Mall correspondence'.[320] At the same time, however, both of the newspapers which published Yates's original gossip columns were emphatically metropolitan papers. The *Illustrated Times* had been established by the London publisher Henry Vizetelly as direct competition to the *Illustrated London News* and was staffed by journalists who lived, breathed, and wrote the metropolis. The *Morning Star*, with its radical agenda was similarly imbued in the political activities of parliamentary London. In relation to this, there was often a more personal dimension to critical attacks which linked Yates with the provincial press. Yates and journalistic colleagues like George Augustus Sala, Henry Vizetelly, and Robert Brough prided themselves on their knowledge of the city and the idea that they formed the life-blood of London's quasi-Bohemian club scene. Both Fitzjames Stephen and the *Pall Mall Gazette* strike at the roots of the metropolitan

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[319] John Plunkett, *Queen Victoria: First Media Monarch* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 221–22.

[320] Another oblique attack on Yates which makes this assumption appeared in the *Saturday Review* on 26 January 1861, entitled 'Pall-Mall Correspondents' (pp. 93–94). Like Fitzjames Stephen, the author of this claims that 'the London society on whose behalf [such Pall-Mall correspondents] profess to speak does not, as a matter of fact, exist' (p. 94).

identities of these writers, classing them not as men of the world but as conmen of the
marketplace — conmen dealing in counterfeit representations of the city.

3.4 Special Gossip

In representing the prowling gossip columnist as just one step removed from the
enterprising special correspondent, Fitzjames Stephen establishes a stylistic and
behavioural continuum between groups of journalists whose work varied significantly
in both subject-matter and scope. Like gossip journalism, special correspondence was a
relatively new and still-evolving branch of newspaper writing, which had undergone
considerable transformations in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. While it
had its roots in the established field of foreign correspondence, the novelty or
'specialness' of this emergent discipline lay in the idea that it provided a new form of
reportorial immediacy — an immediacy generated through graphic and exciting first-
hand accounts of significant cultural events. It is easy to see why the Lounger and his
imitators were often considered parochial by comparison. Dramatic military and
technological upheavals in the decade which preceded Stephen's article had helped to
transform the special correspondent and his on-the-scene reportage into a widespread
popular phenomenon.[321] In the course of the 1850s, the British public had developed a
voracious appetite for the gripping first-person reports which special journalists such as
William Howard Russell sent home from the tumultuous scenes of conflicts abroad.[322]

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[321] The most significant technological factor in the rise of special correspondence was the gradual
proliferation of electric telegraph lines. For the telegraph's impact on news reporting, see Richard Menke,
Telegraphic Realism: Victorian Fiction and Other Information Systems (Stanford: Stanford University
Press, 2008), pp. 95–97.
[322] Joseph J. Matthews and others have identified the 1850s as a transformational decade in the 'news
gathering' practices of special correspondents — in particular those reporting from warzones. See
Reporting the Wars (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), pp. 52–78. The presence of both
'special' artists and newspaper photographers for the first time from the Crimean War onwards, also

Anxiously characterized by one government official at the time as a 'painful excitement

for information,' the widespread enthusiasm for the dramatically evoked encounters

which typified special correspondence was visible across the cultural spectrum.[323]

During the two most important military events in British foreign affairs of the 1850s,

for example, the public flocked to the London theatres to see a string of melodramas

which were based on episodes from both the Crimean War and the Indian Mutiny.[324]

Similarly, large numbers of visitors paid to experience spectacular images of these

conflicts in the form of multiple panoramas which sprang up across the capital.[325]

In the midst of this popular vogue, a select group of special correspondents were

very quickly propelled to celebrity status and a somewhat glamorized image of this

class of journalist emerged.[326] The meteoric rise of the Irish journalist, William Howard

Russell, played a leading role in these developments. His legendary Crimean War

reports for *The Times* between 1854 and 1855, contributed directly to contemporary

imaginings of a quasi-heroic special correspondent who would brave the most perilous

of conditions in order to provide the public with 'intelligence'. The presence of an

individualized journalistic personality was less conspicuous than in Yates's garrulous

behind-the-scenes exposés which began to emerge within a year of Russell's first

dispatch. Yet the unique 'I' of the newspaper's 'own' special correspondent was crucial

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contributed to a new reportorial immediacy in the coverage of such conflicts. See Mitchel P. Roth, ed., *Historical Dictionary of War Journalism* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1997), pp. 71–72.

[323] Quoted in Matthews, p. 59.

[324] For popular portrayals of both of these conflicts on stage, see Heidi J. Holder, 'Melodrama, Realism, and Empire on the British Stage', in *Acts of Supremacy: The British Empire and the Stage, 1790–1930*, ed. by J.S. Bratton (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), pp. 129–49 (p. 137).

[325] Well-known panoramas inspired by the Crimean included Robert Burford's 'Battle of the Alma' and 'Siege of Sebastopol,' both shown at Burford's Leicester Square rotunda in December 1854 and May 1855, respectively. During the Indian Mutiny (1857–58), Burford would go on to mount a much-visited panorama of the Siege of Lucknow. See Richard Altick, *The Shows of London* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 480.

[326] On the establishment of special correspondents like William Howard Russell as public personalities, see James Grant, *The Newspaper Press: Its Origin — Progress — and Present Position*, 2 vols (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1871), II, 247–59, and Plunkett, p. 217.

to the impact of Russell's reports.[327] This was despite the fact that throughout the most significant part of his correspondence as he detailed military operations and the plight of individual soldiers, Russell's presence was generally restricted to a string of first-person plural pronouns. These identified Russell with the objects of his description in a manner that was both patriotic — as he described 'our cavalry' and 'our battalions' — and dramatic — as he drew the reader into the midst of military action by creating the impression that he accompanied the Army on their missions. Crucially, however, Russell framed these insider accounts of British military activity with the challenges which he himself faced as a special correspondent.

In his first dispatch from the major Siege of Sebastopol, for example, Russell devotes his opening paragraph to an explanation of the conditions which might impede the composition and transmission of his daily reports. Thus he describes the proximity of his camp to enemy fire, the nightly disturbances from alarms, the early onset of nightfall and the scarcity of candles, and the fact that 'to visit all the [British Army] camps, scattered over so much ground as they are, and divided by ravines, takes up nearly the whole day.'[328] The air of adventure which Russell cultivates as he represents his experiences was to some extent justified by the realities of his situation. It was true that he lived in the midst of the British troops, even wearing a version of the military uniform and arming himself for protection. However, as Fitzjames Stephen's article should remind us, almost as soon as such romanticized views of the adventurous special correspondent began to emerge, they attracted suspicion and satirical attack. From the moment that he first came to prominence, the special correspondent's most outspoken

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[327] Interestingly, Yates made his own contribution to the cult of 'Crimean Russell' in 1857, dedicating a piece in his short-lived comic journal, *The Train*, to the 'principal events in the life of [Russell,] our cleverest and most popular journalist'. This appeared in Yates's 'Men of Mark' series, which foreshadowed his ground-breaking 'Celebrities at Home' feature, published in *The World* twenty years later. See 'Men of Mark. No. I.—William Howard Russell', *Train*, 3 (April 1857), 224–30.

[328] Russell, 'The War: The British Expedition, The Siege of Sebastopol', *The Times* (28 October 1854), 7.

detractors had portrayed him as little more than a glorified 'penny-a-liner' — regarding him as a wholly commercially driven journalist who was simply concerned with satiating the demands of an overcurious and unimaginative public.[329] Not unlike Yates's Lounger, he was often held to be out for what he could get, selling off his journalistic adventures at any opportunity — an impression which Russell himself did little to dispel when he repackaged his Crimean experiences into a series of lucrative lectures in 1857.[330] Increasingly, however, criticism of the special correspondent came to centre on weightier issues of reportorial hubris.

Among satirical critics, *Punch* was characteristically quick to fasten upon and subvert the trademark language of the modern special correspondent — relentlessly poking fun at this figure's self-mythologization from the late 1840s onwards. One quality which provided particular comic mileage was the special correspondent's fondness for such grandiose geographical clichés as 'the seat of war'. *Punch* contributors took every opportunity to deflate this pseudo-epic phraseology, stretching its punning potential to bathetic extremes with such questions and answers as: 'What is the Seat of War? [...] The Seat of War in a literal sense would be a Camp Stool'.[331] In the summer of 1854, Thackeray himself was to pick up on the satirical potential of this phrase in an incisive satire of Crimean War reporting. Published in *Punch* in seven parts, this bore the deliberately lumbering title: 'Important from the Seat of War! Letters from the East, by our own Bashi-Bozouk'. The excesses of Thackeray's parodic

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[329] This early association continues to an extent in later official nineteenth-century histories of journalism. James Grant's *Newspaper Press* and H.R. Fox Bourne's *English Newspapers* both juxtapose sections on the penny-a-liner and the special correspondent, suggesting that they are members of the same reporting genus. Fox Bourne goes further, observing that 'special correspondents are only exalted, more responsible, and more influential penny-a-liners, many of them being actually promoted from the ranks' (II, 376). Similarly in *Punch*, as late as the 1870s, the association still bears currency. See, for example, 'Improved Penny-a-lining', *Punch* (14 January 1871), 18.

[330] In doing so, Russell was advised by both Thackeray and Dickens. He earned £1600 from the series. See Roger T. Stearn, 'William Howard Russell', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <http://www.oxforddnb. com> [Accessed 2 June 2009].

[331] 'What is the Seat of War?' *Punch* (6 May 1854), 190.

special correspondent, Mick, extend beyond his self-important reporting style and into the promiscuous personality which he evinces in a series of anti-heroic adventures.[332]

However, since Thackeray had abruptly left the regular *Punch* circle three years earlier after a disagreement over editorial policy, this series was something of a one-off. The idiosyncratic energy driving the wayward Mick in his outrageous intrigues is an apt reflection of Thackeray's own outsider status in the increasingly reputable satirical magazine. More representative of *Punch* and more revealing in terms of the historical development of the special correspondent, are two articles which appeared over a decade apart and which both take the phrase, 'Seat of War', as their starting point. The
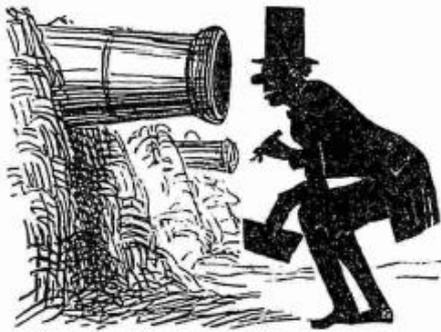
Figure 3b: 'Our Foreign Correspondents',
***Punch* (20 May 1848), 210**

first of these is a burlesqued 'Letter from the Seat of War' which purports to be from a special correspondent in Constantinople reporting on the early stages of the Crimean conflict.[333] This continues in the spirit of earlier *Punch* parodies of the special correspondent such as the caricature seen in figure 3b. In the latter, the shadowy anonymity and physical awkwardness of the top-hatted reporter who nosily peers into a cannon are designed to show up the self-aggrandizement of contemporary correspondents reporting on the 1848 revolutions across Europe. The accompanying skit lambasts the credulous modern reader who is seduced by these reporters' claims to unique geographical access and hazardous self-sacrifice — a reader who fancies that he can see the special correspondent 'writing his "flimsy" amid the roar of artillery, and, in the absence of ordinary steel pens, scribbling away with the end of a bayonet.' In

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[332] Mick's 'special correspondence' appeared in *Punch* between 24 June and 5 August 1854. For further discussion of this Thackerayan persona, see Pearson, pp. 167–71.

[333] 'Letter from the Seat of War', *Punch* (13 May 1854), 191.

'Letter from the Seat of War' six years later, *Punch's* mock-special correspondent places a similarly ironic emphasis on the 'self-devotion and personal sacrifice' involved in collecting the 'precise and graphic' information which comprises his report. The joke revolves around the fact that in order to guarantee the transmission of this vital intelligence the cowardly correspondent has taken up his 'abode between two and three hundred miles from the scene of action.' His disingenuous reportage accordingly consists of a series of truisms about who is fighting who in the Crimean War, accompanied by a catalogue of complaints about the shortcomings of his hotel accommodation.

Twelve years later, another spoof letter 'From the Seat of War' appeared in *Punch*, providing a parodic on-the-scene account of a different contemporaneous conflict, the 1866 Austro-Prussian War.[334] Here, the special correspondent shares the same combination of petulance and self-importance as his Crimean predecessor. However, rather than a lack of material comforts, on this occasion the hardships of his situation relate to the universal hostility which he encounters in his interactions with the Military. He finds himself so unwelcome that he claims to be unsure which camp is that of the enemy: 'The soldiers of both armies have behaved most rudely to me; they wouldn't tell me what they are doing.' This time, the elusiveness of the highly marketable site of the 'Seat of War' relates not to the correspondent's cowardly reluctance to get too close to the conflict but rather to his impotence as an investigative reporter who has failed to access the 'intelligence' which represents his professional goal. This shift in satirical focus reflects significant changes in the form of reportorial hubris which commentators had come to associate with the special correspondent. In the earlier *Punch* parody, the hubristic crimes of the special correspondent are

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[334] 'From the Seat of War', *Punch* (28 July 1866), 37.

opportunism, histrionics, and a tendency to take liberties with the truth. In the sketch a decade later, the antagonism between the Military and the satirized special correspondent is indicative of a different set of misdemeanours. This time the liberties taken by the spoof-reporter relate not to his distortion of the truth but rather to the fact that he has intruded into the military realm in the first place — a realm which had previously been safely removed from the public eye.

As Joseph J. Matthews has pointed out, from its earliest beginnings at the end of the eighteenth century, war correspondence had come under fire for revealing information that potentially jeopardized the military efforts which formed its subject.[335] However, it was not until the Crimean War and the explosion of special correspondence which accompanied it, that latent tensions between this type of journalist and both the Military and the government were fully exposed in the public sphere. Appearing ten years after the Crimean War had ended, *Punch's* 'Seat of War' skit in 1866 is testimony to the lasting effect which these developments had on cultural perceptions of the special correspondent. As has been well documented, Russell's sensationally popular reports from the Crimean front uncovered fundamental failures in British military strategy and officerial management. They also drew attention to widespread instances of suffering, on the one hand, and drunkenness, on the other, amongst the British troops.[336] Just as well known are the public calls for military reform which these unsettling disclosures triggered.[337] However, Russell's convincing impact on these demands for change could

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[335] Matthews cites the critical responses to both John Bell's reports on the French Revolutionary Wars in the *London Oracle* and Henry Crabb Robinson's reports on the Napoleonic Wars in *The Times* (Matthews, p. 200).

[336] Many historians have pointed out that Russell was not the only Crimean correspondent to bring these inadequacies to public attention (see, for example, Phillip Knightley, *The First Casualty: The War Correspondent as Hero and Myth-Maker from the Crimea to Kosovo* (London: Prion, 2000), pp. 6–9). However, Russell was undoubtedly the most famous special correspondent of the day and the one who had the most significant impact on public ideas of this class of journalist.

[337] His reporting is often seen to have precipitated the fall of Lord Aberdeen's ministry and was certainly a key inspiration behind the Administrative Reform Association, founded in May 1855 by Samuel Morley and Austen Henry Layard. The Association numbered Dickens and Thackeray among its active

not entirely offset the disquiet which his revelatory methods and those of special correspondents like him, continued to inspire. From the outset, senior military figures in the Crimean such as General Raglan had made it clear that the hordes of special correspondents who had rushed to the scenes of combat were intrusive and potentially destructive additions to the British Army camps. As the conflict went on and Russell's revelations about the British Military mounted up, this sense of intrusiveness came to underlie wider changes in the public mood. The unexpected death of a worn-down General Raglan was a decisive moment since it occurred ten days after Russell had severely criticized him for his part in a disastrous attack on Sebastopol (on 18 June 1855). For a while public sympathies turned against Russell and his attacks on Raglan were retrospectively characterized as libellous. Even Prince Albert — one of his early admirers — identified him as 'a miserable scribbler'.[338]

In the aftermath of Russell's partial fall from grace, the *Saturday Review's* criticism of the by then notorious special correspondent was particularly revealing.[339] The paper's attacks on Russell exemplify the way in which the perceived misdemeanours of the special correspondent bore significant similarities with those of his gossip columnist colleague in the more insular world of society journalism. One such attack, for example, scathingly dissects Russell's claims that in transmitting 'interesting intelligence' back to Britain he is performing an important public service. The author of the article turns this claim on its head by focusing entirely on the term *interesting* and the sensational *affect* of Russell's reports. He pointedly overlooks the idea that the correspondent's work might represent 'intelligence' or have any kind of

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members and campaigned for increased 'honesty and efficiency' in what it viewed as a fast-deteriorating government.
[338] See Knightley, pp. 7–14.
[339] Russell's change of fortune was not permanent and he retained many readers and supporters. Nonetheless, his reputation remained volatile throughout his career and this was certainly not the last controversy that his brand of special correspondence would provoke.

informative *effect* on its reader.[340] Like Yates's Lounger, who had made his *Illustrated News* debut less than five months earlier, Russell is seen to be no more than a purveyor of intriguing rumours and personal trivia.[341] The information which he uses to arouse his reader's interest, however, relates to British Army camps abroad rather than London clubs at home. He is a figure whose sole 'business' is to collect '"interesting" camp tattle' and 'gossip', and just as the *Pall Mall Gazette* and Fitzjames Stephen deride the air of social omnipresence cultivated by Yates, so the *Saturday Review* mockingly observes that 'Nothing escapes [Russell]', that 'his eyes are in not two, but in twenty places at once', and that 'his ears are in the council and the guard-room, and in both camps at the same time.' Russell is essentially another 'Chatterer', a figure for whom 'personal talk' is a reportorial tool as he raids the military sphere for material, 'ever ready to give and take — to talk and be talked to'.[342]

Unsurprisingly Russell's 'camp tattle' was felt to have more dramatic social repercussions than the Lounger's club room gossip. The *Pall Mall Gazette* and Fitzjames Stephen both represented the Lounger as a parochial pretender who deceived his reader with inaccurate imitations of metropolitan club life. For the *Saturday Review*, on the other hand, Russell's representations of army life had international consequences and, if anything, it was their excessive accuracy which was so dangerous. According to the author of the article above, Russell employs convincing statistics and stirring imagery to perpetuate credible but highly selective depictions of British soldiers in various modes of disorder and distress. These hyper-realistic descriptions are not necessarily individually fictitious, but collected together they provide a deceptive and

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[340] '"Our Own Correspondent"', *Saturday Review* (17 November 1855), 44–46 (p. 45).
[341] In the American journalistic scene, the surge in special correspondence was less of a shock to an already publicity-centric system. As seen in my introduction (p. 15), special correspondents across the Atlantic banded together as the so-called 'Bohemian Brigade' and were greeted in a more celebratory manner than their colleagues in Britain.
[342] Ibid.

'over-coloured' image of the British Military as a whole. In effect, Russell gives the British public the erroneous impression that they have been taken 'behind the scenes' of the Nation's Army bases and, in the process, encourages them to support ill-advised reform measures — measures which, in the ever-influential opinion of the *Saturday Review*, can only weaken Britain's national defences and international prestige.[343]

3.5 The Seat of War in the Garrick Club

Despite these considerable differences in geographical and political range, the gossip columnist and the special correspondent continued to inspire strikingly analogous anxieties in the course of the 1850s and 60s. Both types of journalist were seen to pose a serious threat to the officially sanctioned privacy of particular social spheres. Contemporary critiques of modern journalism such as that of Fitzjames Stephen discussed above provide some insight into why this was. Stephen's incorporation of the special correspondent and the gossip columnist into a common 'News' division reflects the not infrequent assumption of the time that both were unskilled and somewhat indiscriminate gatherers of 'intelligence' — or rather information of varying degrees of reliability. More fundamentally, however, Stephen's taxonomization of these journalistic roles shows a deep-set mistrust of itinerancy which underlies much mid-nineteenth-century commentary on professional journalism. The vocational itinerancy of reporters like the special correspondent and the gossip journalist exacerbated anxieties about the unwelcome disclosures which they were perceived to make. Stephen's article provides a particularly clear illustration of this while also perpetuating

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[343] Other *Saturday Review* attacks of this kind included an article a month later which condemned Russell's gossipy 'interference' as well as the 'impertinent publicity' which he had given to army misconduct — matters which the author of the article believes could have been handled more effectively internally. See 'Notice to Quit the Crimea', *Saturday Review* (29 December 1855), 148–49.

the idea that these itinerant journalists threatened the traditional and more centralized loci of journalistic authority.[344]

Such issues are clearly in evidence as Stephen goes on to compare these 'news gathering' journalists with the more intellectually 'talented' leader writers who supply newspapers with their 'original matter'. In some ways, the most striking contrast to emerge out of this pairing is not between unoriginality and inventiveness but between itinerant reporting and a somewhat perplexingly immobile alternative. As one might expect, Stephen's vision of the ideal leader writer is of a highly cultivated figure who only engages in journalism on a part-time basis to supplement a more socially reputable day job. More remarkable, however, is the fact that he associates the journalistic activities of such gentlemanly reporters with moments of inactivity in their other professions. Thus, according to Stephen, the most productive leader writers are:

> barristers waiting for business, or resigned for want of it; clergymen unattached, who regret their choice of a profession which their conscience or inclination forbids them to practise, and which the law forbids them to resign; [or] Government officials, whose duties are not connected with party politics, and do not occupy the whole of their time. (p. 56)[345]

Such professional lulls provide peculiarly appropriate conditions for the composition of Stephen's model leading article. He claims that, at its best, the latter is 'nothing more than [a] sample of the conversation of educated men upon passing events, methodized and thrown into a sustained and literary shape' (p. 55). Crucially, the suggestion is that

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[344] It is worth comparing Stephen's views with those expressed in the 1855 prospectus to the first edition of the *Saturday Review* — a paper with which Stephen's name became synonymous. The prospectus states that the journal will specialize in 'leading articles and other original matter' and emphatically distances itself from the newsgathering practices of prominent dailies such as *The Times*. See 'Notice', *Saturday Review* (3 November 1855), 18.

[345] This description of the superior journalist of course reflects Stephen's own professional circumstances at the time. Though he was called to the bar in 1854, the vicissitudes of the legal profession led him to take up journalism and he became one of the leading contributors to the *Saturday Review* after it was founded in 1855.

the part-time leader writer picks up these samples of conversation on-scene in the social spheres which he frequents when not engaged in his main profession. However, Stephen is at pains to displace the practical implications of this method of gathering material, insisting that the leader writer's primary talent lies in 'composition', or rather 'the power of filling the mind rapidly and almost unconsciously with the floating opinions of the day, [and] throwing these opinions into a precise, connected, and attractive form' (p. 56). Unlike the Lounger who stealthily embezzles information while lurking about the clubs, the leader writer appears almost bodiless — an abstract presence who synchronically reflects the circulating opinions of the day without himself needing to circulate in order to collect them. Even the argument of the leader itself appears to avoid diachronic progression as Stephen claims that the article 'rarely show[s] traces of gradually increasing knowledge'. In stark contrast with the observational disclosures of the special correspondent and the gossip columnist, the information conveyed by the leader writer appears to come from primarily a priori sources. According to Stephen, the leading article simply consists of 'clever and sensible passing remarks made by a man whose business it is to reduce his observations into a particular sort of form' (p. 54). Here, however, the journalist's 'observations' and 'remarks' lack a definite empirical referent, remaining instead at a purely conceptual level as the leader writer reflects on contemporary topics.

Despite appearing dislocated from his immediate surroundings, however, the implied locality of Stephen's ideal leader writer is pretty unambiguous. Stephen restricts this class of modern journalist to a select middle- and upper-class pool of 'not more than a hundred' sometime barristers, clergymen, and Government officials. While, he makes no direct reference to a particular city, his article is underpinned by a distinctive faith in the benefits of metropolitan cultural life. His description of the leader

writer's absorption and reformulation of the 'floating opinions of the day' is, in many ways, simply an understated Victorian version of the coffee house culture of the previous century. Though the civilizing effects of conversation have been replaced by a more hazy idea of a beneficial intellectual atmosphere, it is clear that Stephen's convictions lie in the value of collective rather than individual experience. Such sympathies leave little room for the personalized first-hand accounts of the roaming special correspondent. Indeed, Stephen's analysis of the journalistic profession can be read as a concerted attempt to reclaim the site of political and cultural analysis from the itinerant reporter. In privileging the part-time gentlemanly journalist over the latter, he recovers the locus of authoritative social commentary from Russell's army camps — and, more importantly, from the Lounger's 'dingy parlour' — and relocates it in the heart of the middle-class metropolis. Ultimately, Stephen's article implies, the most representative and legitimate journalism emerges out of such metropolitan powerhouses of opinion as the gentleman's club — whether it be in London or another city.

Stephen's impressionistic description of the leader writer's reporting methods reflects the extent to which he uses stylistic characteristics to construct very different social identities for this part-time journalist and his itinerant counterpart. The dexterity and ease with which the elusive leader writer 'throws' his articles together clearly signals his gentlemanly education. However, these qualities also symbolize the uncontested stability of his social position and the effortlessness with which he integrates into respectable society. In the case of the special correspondent, on the other hand, both style and social status are emphatically unstable. His style is 'peculiar, but not good', 'verbose', 'gaudy' and even 'vicious' (p. 61). This stylistic errantry underpins the itinerancy which characterizes not just his professional output but also his social trajectory through life. According to Stephen, the average special correspondent

begins his career in a 'humble capacity' on the newspaper staff and 'works [his] way forwards to a better position'. At any time in the course of this professional advancement, however, he risks 'stopping on the road' and falling into 'very objectionable habits' (pp. 61–62). Such behavioural degeneration is presented as part of an inevitable continuum — a logical extension of the itinerant correspondent's intrusive revelations and of the air of mystique which he cultivates to drum up interest in his disclosures. This cross-over between stylistic and behavioural excess is similarly visible in *Punch's* parodies of the special correspondent reporting 'from the seat of war'. However, Stephen's use of journalistic writing style to denote journalistic lifestyle particularly stands out as it represents an attempt to insert a dividing line between two closely related groups of journalists, many of whom fraternized in the same homosocial spheres.

In the 1850s, Edmund Yates and William Howard Russell, for example, were both staunch regulars in two notable homosocial circles: the Garrick Club and the Fielding Club. Yates and Russell themselves came from relatively different backgrounds and the men whom they encountered in these establishments had similarly varied pasts.[346] When it was founded in Covent Garden in 1832, the Garrick Club quickly built up a reputation as a more socially inclusive and informal institution than the grand gentlemen's clubs on Pall Mall.[347] This only partially Bohemian association of literary men, actors, and theatre managers had nonetheless had relatively prestigious beginnings. The prolific journalist T.H.S. Escott describes the 'Garrick at its birth [as] partly noble, partly royal, and altogether patrician'. He goes on to observe that the club never truly lost these associations. The Garrick membership of the 1850s undoubtedly

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[346] The son of two actors, Yates took up his position at the post office immediately after leaving school in 1847. Russell was the son of a struggling businessman but was privately educated and attended Trinity College, Dublin, for two years before leaving without a degree in 1841.

[347] Clubs such as White's, the Athenaeum, the Carlton, and the Reform, for example.

remained a peculiar mix of aristocratic patrons of the arts as well as actors, authors, and journalists.[348] As Garrick members during this decade, 'news' journalists such as Yates and Russell would have encountered prominent Establishment figures such as Sir Charles Taylor and Sir Henry de Bathe, highly respected writers such as Edward Bulwer-Lytton and Thackeray, as well as less well-heeled editors and leader journalists such as John Payne Collier and James Hannay. The club had originally been founded to promote 'easy intercourse between artists and patrons' and there were certainly times in its early history that the social distinctions implicit in the latter relationship risked destabilizing the club's democratic ethos.[349] The Fielding Club, on the other hand, was a more intimate and arguably a more egalitarian affair. According to Yates's own account, it was founded in Offley's Tavern, Covent Garden in 1852 by a group of Garrick members with a taste for later hours than those permitted by the licensing regulations of the more established club. Yates describes the Fielding as 'eminently a place in which men cast aside their ordinary work-a-day shell' to engage in an 'abundance of good talk, [...] general conversation and private chat'.[350] As at the Garrick, the membership was eclectic, ranging from Thackeray and G.H. Lewes to the leader writer and satirist, Shirley Brooks, and the flamboyant comic journalist and lecturer, Albert Smith. Yet, according to Yates's description at least, the club's snug setting and lack of ceremony meant that there was less scope for social factionalism than at the Garrick.

The Fielding was part of a small-scale renaissance of male middle-class tavern-club culture in the mid-nineteenth century — a distinctly Victorian renaissance which,

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[348] Escott, *Club Makers and Club Members* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1914), p. 250. For other histories of the Garrick Club see John Timbs, *Club Life of London*, 2 vols (London: Richard Bentley, 1866), I, 255–66, and Percy Hetherington Fitzgerald, *The Garrick Club* (London: Elliot Stock, 1904).

[349] Quoted in Fitzgerald, p. 2. Though Thackeray was clearly not Yates's patron, the issue of social rank formed an important undercurrent in the acrimonious Garrick Club Affair. See discussion below.

[350] *Recollections*, I, 242.

as the Fielding Club's name suggests, was nonetheless coloured by more than a hint of nostalgia for Augustan London.[351] The seminal theorist of Victorian masculinity, John Tosh, has noted that with the first decades of the nineteenth century there was a rapid dissolution of the eighteenth-century association between tavern conviviality and acceptable male middle-class sociability. Tosh places the 'public re-moralization of men's leisure' in the 1820s and 30s at the heart of this development, claiming that 'even before the rise of the temperance movement [in the 1830s], London taverns had become off limits for respectable bourgeois men, due to a greater sensitivity about class distinctions as well as the growing appeal of domesticity.'[352] For Tosh, as for many other cultural historians, the widespread rise of subscription clubs, not just in Pall Mall but across the country, plugged some of the social gaps left by the tavern. It has frequently been pointed out that the co-operative ethos of the subscription club provided middle-class men with an alternative domestic sphere, where a gentleman's limited financial means could be translated into a mode of life more suited to his class identity.[353] The early Victorians themselves made much of this shift from tavern to subscription club, contentedly reading it as a symbol of modern sociological advance. The police magistrate and author, Thomas Walker, for example, was expressing a common sentiment when he argued in *The Original* in 1835 that 'one of the greatest and most important changes in society is the present system of clubs. The facilities of living have been wonderfully increased by them in many ways, whilst the expense has been greatly diminished.'[354] The emphasis which he goes on to place on the institutional

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[351] Yates claims that the name was selected by Thackeray who was one of its founding members (*Recollections,* I, 235).

[352] John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), p. 125.

[353] In addition to Tosh see, for example, Christopher Kent on the contrast between the co-operative 'Pall Mall model' and the eighteenth-century 'proprietary model' of the club: 'The Whittington Club: A Bohemian Experiment in Middle Class Social Reform,' *Victorian Studies,* 18:1 (September 1974), 31–55.

[354] Thomas Walker, 'Clubs', in *The Original*, 2nd edn (London: Henry Renshaw, 1836), pp. 253–59 (p. 253). The article was originally published on 9 September 1835.

facilitation of masculine independence is particularly characteristic of assessments of club life in the first half of the nineteenth century. He describes the typical club as a 'sort of palace' in which 'every member is a master, without any of the trouble of a master', and in which 'he can come when he pleases, and stay away as long as he pleases without any thing going wrong.'[355]

In the middle decades of the nineteenth century, however, increasingly hesitant views of the palatial subscription club emerged. Some such hesitancy is certainly visible in Thackeray's well-known satirical takes on respectable club life in his work for *Punch* in the 1840s. Indeed, a *Punch* persona such as his garrulous mock-mentor, Brown the Elder, might almost be read as an extended parody of the form of Whiggish complacency which Thomas Walker's view exemplifies (see figure 3d).[356] As he initiates his nephew, Brown the Younger, into the mysteries of club life, Brown the Elder constructs a series of comically elliptical links between the rise of the modern club, and crucial advances not just in the 'honesty' and 'economy of young men of the middle classes' but also across 'civilization' as a whole. His introduction to the club as a triumph of modernity culminates in a self-deflating amalgamation of the cultural and moral progress of humanity, as he pompously informs his nephew that: 'We advance in simplicity and honesty as we advance in civilisation, and it is my belief that we become better bred and less artificial, and tell more truth every day.'[357] A decade later, in his own garrulous introduction to the metropolitan social scene, George Augustus Sala more pointedly describes the 'bran-new modern club' as:

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[355] Ibid., p. 254.

[356] Thackeray, 'Brown the Elder takes Brown the Younger to A Club', *Works,* VI, 604–74 (pp. 627–38). See Chapter 2 above for discussion of publication context. Thackeray also satirizes Pall Mall club life in the 'Club Snobs' numbers of his earlier *Punch* series: *Snobs of England.* See *Works,* VI, 303–464 (pp. 433–59).

[357] *Works,* VI, 541–701 (p. 636).

the very looking-glass of the time; of the gay, glittering, polished, improved utilitarian, material age. Nothing more can be done for a palace than the fitters-up of a modern club have done for it. The march of upholstering intellect is there in its entirety.[358]

As with Dickens's 'bran-new' Veneering family in *Our Mutual Friend*, the polished surface of the luxurious subscription club directly reflects the soulless materialism of modern life. Both Sala's description and the engraving which accompanies it (figure 3c) suggest a yearning for a more connected and constructive mode of social interaction. William McConnell's somewhat higgledy-piggledy illustration is cluttered with club members — about half of whom are sitting down engaged in their own reading.[359] Each out of the handful of conversations taking place involves one of these seated figures and one or more standing gentlemen. Unlike their more relaxed and reclining conversation partners, the latter appear somewhat stiff and ill at ease. They are wearing their hats and carrying canes as if, like the gentlemen in the background of the scene, they are getting ready to leave. In McConnell's image, social interaction appears stilted and insubstantial — nothing more than a momentary interruption from one's private thoughts or one's rushed daily business.

Figure 3c: William McConnell, 'Five O'Clock p.m.: The Fashionable Club', from George Augustus Sala, *Twice Round the Clock* (serialized in the *Welcome Guest*, May–November 1858)

It should perhaps come as no surprise that Sala's unflattering depiction of the culturally barren 'fashionable club' appears at the end of a far more enthusiastic survey

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[358] Sala, *Twice Round the Clock*, p. 210.
[359] A one-time contributor to *Punch,* William McConnell (1831–67) was a regular collaborator of Sala's during the 1850s.

of earlier and livelier club traditions. Sala, like Thackeray, was an ardent club-goer who played a leading role in attempts to revive the spirit of the eighteenth-century tavern club in his own time. In 1857, for example, he helped to found the landmark Savage Club discussed in the next chapter. This distinctive fellowship started life in an unimposing tavern and yet went on to have a widespread impact on cultural understandings of Bohemianism in the second half of the nineteenth century. At the same time, however, it was also a club which tested the patience of substantial sections of the 'male-dominated associational world'.[360] This was in no small part due to the fact that it became a high-profile institution which was not afraid to promote itself in the public sphere. Such active self-publicization sat uneasily with the club's continuing claim that, within its private precincts, members enjoyed a particularly uninhibited and authentic mode of social life.

In the 1850s, however, the Savage Club's strident institutionalization of unconventional masculine interaction was yet to come. The establishment of clubs such as the Fielding during this decade was a more understated reflection of middle-class desires to socialize in less formal surrounds than those offered by either the Pall Mall club or the marital home. Even the high-minded Fitzjames Stephen belonged to a late-hours club founded around this time — the Cosmopolitan on Berkeley Square in London's West End.[361] Though its membership was arguably more exclusive than the Fielding's, the Cosmopolitan Club also had a Bohemian edge. First established in 1852, it assembled in an unconventional space which had previously been an artist's studio, and its proceedings continued into the early hours of the morning.[362] However, it is no

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[360] The phrase is Peter Clark's in his seminal *British Clubs and Societies 1580–1800: The Origins of an Associational World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 3.

[361] On Fitzjames Stephen's social inclinations, see Leslie Stephen, *The Life of Sir James Fitzjames Stephen* (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1895).

[362] According to Christopher Kent, the Cosmopolitan Club was dedicated to 'conversation and conviviality' and offered its members clay pipes and Turkish tobacco as well as alcohol. See

coincidence that our twenty-first-century knowledge of clubs such as these depends so substantially on the surge of nostalgic autobiographies published some fifty years later. Centring on the turn of the twentieth century, this was a period which the comic journalist Arthur À Beckett (son of the famous *Punch* contributor, Gilbert À Beckett), wryly dubbed an 'age of anecdotage'.[363] In memoirs like his own *À Becketts of Punch*, which emerged during this time, small-scale homosocial clubs serve an important structural function, providing the autobiographer with a means of compartmentalizing his recollections. Acting as a source of amusing anecdotes and a narrative setting for culturally significant encounters in the author's past, they also underwrite the social value of his autobiography — both as a saleable volume and as the culturally relevant life of a man of stature. In Arthur À Beckett's dual memoir of himself and his father, for example, the club-like *Punch* dinners which both attended at different points in the century serve as a source of unity between father and son while also contributing to the À Beckett family's credibility as a dynasty of comic journalists.

À Beckett's candid classification of his own work as the product of an 'age of anecdotage' is interestingly nuanced. His tone of dry resignation and the pun implicit in 'anecdotage' seems a half-hearted acknowledgement of contemporary irritation at the thriving of this nostalgic genre. The idea that there was a surfeit of garrulous authors in their dotage recounting highly personal stories from the past had indeed come to be thought of as a negative sign of the times. À Beckett was writing in the wake of the fin de siècle where the senescence of such wistful writers and that of the nineteenth century

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'Cosmopolitan Club', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <http://www.oxforddnb.com> [Accessed 6 July 2009].

[363] Arthur William À Beckett, *The À Becketts of Punch: Memoirs of Father and Sons* (Archibald Constable and Co., 1903), p. 89. The list of memoirs focusing on the 1850s to 70s but published between 1885 and the first decades of the twentieth century is extensive. Including *The À Becketts of Punch,* À Beckett himself published two separate volumes of reminiscences during this time — the other being *Recollections of a Humourist Grave and Gay* (London: Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, 1907). Yates and Sala both published multi-volumed recollections in the 1880s and 90s, as did well-known comic journalists such as John Hollingshead and Francis Cowley Burnand, and publishers such as William Tinsley and Henry Vizetelly.

itself had frequently been seen as intertwined. Responding to the patchy memoirs of the journalist, George Birkbeck Hill in 1896, a reviewer in the *Athenaeum*, for example, would have been in good company when he linked the volume's 'bundle of discursive anecdotage' with 'the declining years of [the] century'.[364] At the same time, however, À Beckett uses the phrase 'age of anecdotage' to make a crucial distinction between the past and the present day — a distinction which provides him with a useful justification for the publication of his (and his father's) memoirs. Meditating on changes in the art of biography, he claims that: 'The old tradition was to keep the *vie intime* sacred.' He then aligns himself firmly with a more modern tradition which he identifies with writers like Marion Spielmann and his recently published *History of Punch* (Cassell & Co., 1895). À Beckett grandly concludes that in works like Spielmann's: 'the veil has been drawn aside to display the sanctuary.'[365] He here refers to the unveiling not only of the convivial homosocial spheres in which mid-Victorian men took refuge from their daily lives, but also to the realms of their private emotional experience. The suggestion that the turn-of-the-century memoir had the power to excavate previously concealed social and personal domains is more than just a sales ploy, however. It reflects genuine tensions which surrounded the question of privacy in even the more informal all-male clubs of the mid-nineteenth century.

While they flourished in the 1850s and 60s, homosocial circles such as those which congregated at the weekly *Punch* dinners and in the Fielding Club indisputably cultivated something of an air of mystique. Their boundaries were unfixed and porous, as they moved between different lodgings and continually lost and gained members who similarly moved between different clubs. More significantly, while there was no shortage of writers amongst their membership, the translation of club-based experiences

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[364] 'Our Library Table', *Athenaeum* (5 December 1896), 794.
[365] Arthur William À Beckett, *À Becketts of Punch,* p. 89.

into print remained a contested issue. As has been seen, this tacit code of confidentiality did not mean that the inner goings on of the clubroom never made it onto the page. In addition to their representations of the palatial Pall Mall club, both Thackeray and Sala also produced descriptions of more informal and potentially less respectable homosocial gatherings. In doing so they followed in the footsteps of a well-established metropolitan tradition, which stretched back to Ned Ward's acerbic Tory satire, *The Secret History of Clubs* (1709), and continued through Addison and Steele's Spectator Club, right up until the first decades of the nineteenth century with works such as Pierce Egan's slang-saturated, *Life in London* (1821). However, in their journalistic depictions of masculine social life in the capital, both Thackeray and Sala were careful not to abandon aspects of this tradition. Their hazy fusion of fact and fiction, and their use of pseudonyms, representative club 'types', and quasi-allegorical frameworks such as the 'Cave of Harmony', inserted a comfortable or at least carnivalesque barrier between the reader and the realities of club life. Even when the prolific 'Londonologist', John Timbs, made the first concerted effort to compile a history of the *Club Life of London* in 1866, the focus was more on club architecture and interior layout than on the encounters which took place within. Timbs tellingly justifies his methodology in his preface, emphasizing his determination to avoid the 'long-windedness of story-telling' and boasting that, in dealing with clubs which are still extant, he has maintained 'the customary reticence'.[366]

In his major survey of London *Club Makers and Club Members* published just before the outbreak of the First World War, T.H.S. Escott, on the other hand, actively dissociates himself from John Timbs's mid-century approach to 'club structures'. In contrast to Timbs's respectful 'reticence', Escott forthrightly analyses the club system, presenting it as a key to the 'social, political, intellectual, and moral tendencies' of an

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[366] Timbs, p. vi.

era. Unlike Timbs, his interests lie with the interactions of individual club members and the insights which they might give into English 'national life and manners'.[367] Timbs's comparative caution in this respect should certainly not be taken to suggest that such connections were not made in the 1850s and 60s. As Stephen Miller and others have pointed out, the originally Johnsonian conception of 'clubbability' continued to be appreciated as a fundamentally English trait throughout the nineteenth century.[368] Yet, in many ways, this very malleable term only added fuel to the mid-Victorian mystification of the forms of sociability which characterized club interaction. Clubbability came to be attached to any man who was inclined to join a club and no longer bore much relation to his ability to socialize once he actually got there.

In view of the already-cited 're-moralization of male leisure' observed by Tosh and the high value which mid-nineteenth-century society assigned to the domestic sphere, it is certainly tempting to argue that the emphasis placed on club privacy stemmed from a combination of tact and defensiveness. The idea that the potentially dissipated homosocial club conflicted with the domestic and even professional duties of a man, was so well circulated that keen clubmen often shrugged it off as a cultural cliché.[369] Indeed both Thackeray and Sala gently satirize such negative views in their representations of club life. In Sala's case, for instance, he comically deflects complaints against fraternal associations by flippantly congratulating society on the fact that there are 'no ladies' clubs'.[370] However, if it was a strategy to minimize criticism from hostile outsiders, the desire for club confidentiality was also suggestive of doubts among the club members themselves. A substantial amount of the unease inspired by

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[367] Escott, *Club Makers,* p. 7.
[368] Stephen Miller, *Conversation: A History of a Declining Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), p. 118. John Timbs uses the term *clubbable* to describe a number of well-known nineteenth-century club members, including Theodore Hook and Douglas Jerrold.
[369] On the nature of such views see Tosh, pp. 129–31.
[370] Sala, *Twice Round the Clock,* p. 213.

Yates's disclosures as the 'Lounger at the Clubs', for example, clearly related to the
unsolicited attention which he drew to these homosocial institutions. Such publicity was
particularly unwelcome in the context of the 1850s — a decade in which political
upheavals and the rapid expansion of the press had brought issues of fraternalism under
renewed scrutiny. Perhaps most significantly, the turmoil occasioned at home and
abroad by the Crimean War fuelled a public sense of contrast between the esprit de
corps of the British Army and the perceived cliquism of the ruling military and political
classes. Russell's reform-inspiring articles were certainly often read in these terms. For
their admirers, they were revelatory documents which exposed the secret cliques
(mis)governing British society.[371] However, the accusation of cliquism cut both ways
and was used just as effectively by the opposition to attack 'the sundry tribes of
Reformers, hawking their motley ware of genuine and spurious grievances.'[372] The
unsettled state of British politics as new parliamentary coalitions were formed and
traditional party divisions fractured, only reinforced the prominence of the clique in
mid-century imaginings of modern society and its flaws.

Prevalent ideals of manly self-sufficiency and disinterestedness helped to drive
this widespread resistance to cliquism and to foster an appetite for more low-key forms
of fraternalism — or at least fraternalism which only received muted expression in the
public sphere.[373] As this chapter argues, suspicion of the fraternal clique also had an
important impact on views of the literary and journalistic professions in the mid-
nineteenth century. Though the idea of literary 'cliques and coteries' had long had a
place in the cultural imagination, the distinctive climate of the 1850s and 60s gave a

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[371] *The Times* was inevitably self-congratulatory in this respect. See, for example, its editorial on 14
February 1855, p. 6.
[372] 'Party', *Saturday Review* (9 May 1857), 425–26.
[373] Both John Tosh and Seth Koven (*Slumming: Sexual and Social History in Victorian London*
(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004) provide sophisticated discussions of the evolution of
fraternalism in the Victorian era.

particularly derogatory force to the idea that the English Bohemians were a 'London Clique' of unskilled writers. Socially restrictive and potentially conspiratorial, the idea of the 'clique' gave extra weight to the claim that the work of the English Bohemians was reductive and ephemeral.[374] At the same time, however, the members of this Bohemian 'clique' themselves made a great deal of noise about the cliquishness of London literary society. Men such as Yates and Sala repeatedly wrote about the destructive impact of literary cliques on honest journalistic criticism. Indeed, in 1855, Yates even welcomed the establishment of the *Saturday Review* — a publication that would go on to be his most unforgiving critic — extolling the fact that it was 'the first periodical that ha[d] dared to combat a certain spirit of *cliquerie* which for years has been the terror and the bane of the London press.'[375] A year later, both his own periodical, the *Train*, and James Hannay's rival Bohemian journal, the *Idler,* published oppositional accounts of the 'cliques, coteries, sets, parties, schools, staffs, and circles' composing the capital's journalistic scene.[376]

The article in the *Train* is by George Augustus Sala and celebrates the renowned comic actor, (Thomas) Frederick Robson, who was then starring in a string of popular burlesques at London's Olympic Theatre. Sala expresses his enthusiasm for Robson by arguing that comic performance frequently provides more authentic insights into the realities of human nature and individual experience than 'higher' genres such as tragedy. He sets up this argument through an extended lament for the loss of manly individuality in what he sees as a clique-ridden and corporation-dominated modern world. Yet, as he attacks the 'Joint-stock *Societé anonyme* system', his true targets are the exclusive cliques of university-educated writers who support journalistic anonymity

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[374] As has been seen, the *Saturday Review* was a leading proponent of such views in the 1850s. Two particularly strongly worded articles to this effect were 'Literary Men' (12 July 1856), 245–46, and 'Light Literature and the Saturday Review' (11 July 1857), 34–35.

[375] Quoted in Edwards, pp. 60–61.

[376] George Augustus Sala, 'Robson', *Train,* 1 (March 1856), 169–76 (p. 169).

and who write off Sala and his colleagues as a 'fast set' of social upstarts. In signing their articles, Sala claims, his collaborators at the *Train* 'assert [their] manhood' in a Carlylean manner that is foreign to these 'anonymous and irresponsible' journalistic graduates of the 'University of Stinkomalee'.[377]

The anonymous author of the article in the *Idler* similarly links the cliquish claustrophobia of masculine middle-class society in London with the deficiencies of contemporary journalism. However, for this writer, these deficiencies relate not to emasculating anonymity but rather to the ostentatious monopolization of the journalistic market by, what he terms, the 'Dickens clique'.[378] Where Sala equates the pervasive cliquism of London Society with concealment and underhand criticism, the *Idler* associates the capital's 'cliques and coteries' with universal visibility and critical complacency. Rather than being concerned with the personal truths made accessible by comic performance, the latter is preoccupied with the idea that dispassionate social satire is no longer possible because, in the suffocating environs of London's clubs, 'everybody sees everybody, and may know everybody.' The writer complains that this exposed environment allows an incomparably successful writer like Dickens to tyrannize in the marketplace, 'so that he has the whole press of the metropolis at his feet, resolute on sinking all honest criticism of him or his friends.' [379]

These conflicting articles capture opposing extremes of the signature debate which raged in 1850s and 60s journalism, and which has received much critical attention.[380] However, they also share definite frustrations with the capital's tightly knit

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[377] Ibid., p. 170. 'Stinkomalee' was Theodore Hook's facetious name for the non-denominational University College London when it was founded in 1826.

[378] 'London Cliques and Coteries', *Idler* (1856), 238–43 (p. 242). The anonymous article is very much in line with the stridently conservative convictions of the journal's editor, James Hannay, and it is not unlikely that his was the pen behind it.

[379] Ibid.

[380] The seminal survey of this prolonged dispute remains Oscar Maurer's 'Anonymity vs. Signature in Victorian Reviewing,' *Texas Studies in English,* 27 (June 1948), 1–27.

homosocial scene and doubts about the function of clubbability in contemporary masculine life. There is the suggestion in both that middle-class professionals — creative or otherwise — have become dependent on a fundamentally flawed system of networking which they nonetheless cannot do without. The contributor to the *Idler* encapsulates this sense of impasse as he exasperatedly claims that cliquism 'is all in harmony with our national character. The Constitution is a clique'.[381] Despite their different social agendas, the articles thus epitomize contemporary misgivings that cliquism was a modern social inevitability to be found at the root of most metropolitan transactions. As in the debate over post-Crimean political reforms, the accusation of cliquism is used interchangeably between opposing groups as they attempt to marginalize each other. In each case, the ideal of a clear critical overview unimpeded by collective partisan concerns emerges as something of a default defensive position. It was precisely in this respect that excessively conspicuous fraternal bonds became socially undesirable in the 1850s — being cast as cliquish qualities which might all too easily provide one's opponents with a source of critical ammunition.

It was in this context that clubbable men struggled to find a satisfactory means of articulating the value of organized fraternalism and that the principle of discretion acquired such a hold over mid-Victorian ideals of club conduct. It was also in this context that Yates himself gained bitter firsthand experience of the insecurities which dogged this cautiously reticent homosocial scene. In the summer of 1858, just two years after the above articles appeared, he had begun to publish a weekly gossip column entitled 'Literary Talk' in John Maxwell's *Town Talk* — a short-lived gossip and light entertainment weekly which marked Maxwell's debut in the magazine business. In the first of these, Yates published an unremarkable portrait of the physical appearance and

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[381] 'London Cliques and Coteries', p. 243.
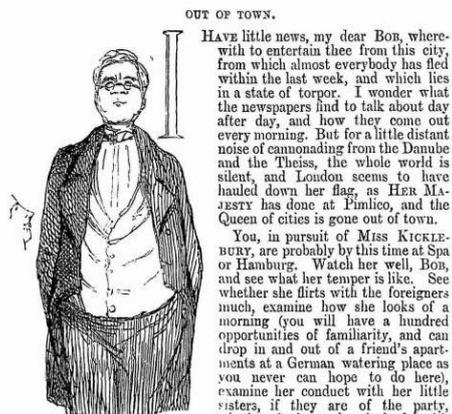
Figure 3d: Thackeray, 'Mr Brown's Letters to a Young Man About Town', *Punch* **(11 August 1849), 53**

lecturing skills of his good friend, Dickens. A week later on 12 June 1858, he composed a far less flattering sketch of the manners and physique of Thackeray, with whom he was on friendly but relatively formal terms through their acquaintance at the Garrick and Fielding Clubs. Most damningly, this article represents Thackeray's 'gentlemanly' comportment as a sign of deep-rooted hypocrisy. He claims that:

> [Thackeray's] bearing is cold and uninviting, his style of conversation either openly cynical, or affectedly good natured and benevolent; his *bonhomie* is forced, his wit biting, his pride easily touched—but his appearance is invariably that of the cool, *suave*, well-bred gentleman, who, whatever may be rankling within, suffers no surface display of his emotion.[382]

Within less than a month, this unbecoming portrait had driven an infuriated Thackeray to take a drastic step which gave Yates significant reason to regret his by then well-known textual personality. In July 1858, Yates's fictionalized identity as the 'Lounger at the Clubs' took on a savage reality as the private man behind the public character was acrimoniously expelled from one of his favourite clubs: the 'sociable and snug' Garrick.[383]

As the caution with which his biographers have approached this episode might suggest, when viewed unsympathetically, Thackeray's severe response to Yates did little to dispel the latter's unfavourable portrayal of his character.[384] Thackeray

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[382] Yates, 'Literary Talk', *Town Talk* (12 June 1858), reprinted in *Letters*, IV, 90–91.
[383] *Recollections,* II, 3.
[384] Kinder biographers have always been at pains to rationalize Thackeray's uncompromising approach in the now-notorious 'Garrick Club Affair'. They have generally presented it in the context of his ever

famously objected to Yates's 'Literary Talk' on the grounds that the younger writer could only have derived its contents from conversations which he had overheard within the private bounds of their mutual club. In his initial letter to Yates, the day after the offending article, Thackeray angrily reminded him that:

> We meet at [the Garrick Club] where, before you were born I believe, I & other gentlemen have been in the habit of talking, without any idea that our conversation would supply paragraphs for professional vendors of 'Literary Talk', and I don't remember that out of that Club I ever exchanged 6 words with you. Allow me to inform you that the talk w^h you may have heard there is not intended for newspaper remark; & to beg, as I have a right to do, that you will refrain from printing comments upon my private conversation.[385]

Aside from the fact that Thackeray could hardly have hoped to assuage the allegation of pride with such a complaint, he also risked corroborating Yates's view of his haughty aloofness and outward inscrutability. His invocation of a shroud of privacy protecting Garrick Club relations from a prying outside world seems uncomfortably close to the unemotional façade which Yates accuses him of using to conceal his inner feelings from the rest of society. Equally, in choosing to interpret Yates's generalized comments on his conversational manner as stolen observations of specific Garrick conversations, Thackeray levelled a charge of voyeurism at the gossip columnist which he did not necessarily deserve. Nonetheless, following an irritable and, as Thackeray saw it, inadequate reply from Yates, he passed on their short correspondence to the Garrick Club Committee to formalize his complaint. Despite Yates's protests to the Committee that Thackeray's grievance was a private matter and not one for a 'collective decision',

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volatile relationship with Dickens, emphasizing his particular irritation at the latter's open championing of Yates throughout the dispute. See, for example, Ray's classic account in *Wisdom* (pp. 278–90), or D.J. Taylor's more recent but less accurate analysis (*Thackeray,* pp. 405–16).

[385] 13 June 1858, *Letters,* IV, 90.

the Committee put the matter to a club vote.[386] Garrick members decided by seventy

votes to forty that Yates should either apologise to Thackeray or 'retire from the club'.

He refused to make any such apology and his name was removed from the club's

membership list on 20 July 1858.[387]

Hostile critics — Yates and Dickens not excluded — have always been quick to

detect double-standards in Thackeray's Garrick Club action. They have been

particularly alert to the fact that Thackeray had been responsible for far more ruthless

satire in his own youth and indeed that some of this had related directly to the inner

realms of club life. The Thackeray-phobic John Carey is characteristically scathing on

this point, arguing that the Garrick Club row 'shows up the pompous gentility of the

later Thackeray.' According to Carey, the novelist's indignation at Yates's article is not

only hypocritical but represents a betrayal of his younger self since, in the 1830s and

40s, 'Yates's ways had been his own' (*Prodigal,* p. 22). Though Carey remains very

much focused on Thackeray's individual response, his reading descends from the

traditional view that Yates was the victim of a broader gentlemanly backlash which had

been imminent for some time in the factionalized Garrick Club. This view, which was

standardized by Gordon Ray's seminal biography, identifies Thackeray with an

Establishment clique of Garrick 'swells' who, as Thackeray's written admonishment

suggests, had been members of the club for over a generation. It associates the twenty-

seven-year-old Yates, on the other hand, with a 'rowdy' Bohemian faction of young

men who looked to Dickens as their mentor and who included Albert and Arthur Smith,

Andrew Arcedeckne, and Wilkie Collins.[388] In this narrative, the dispute appears a

territorial one, with Thackeray claiming his victory over Yates on behalf of a club elite

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[386] Yates to the Garrick Club Committee, 23 June 1858, *Letters,* IV, 95–96.
[387] See *Wisdom,* p. 283.
[388] For more recent overviews of the Garrick Affair which take their cue from Gordon Ray, see Edwards, pp. 59–65, and Kent, 'British Bohemia and the Victorian Journalist', pp. 4–7.

who have tired of the Garrick Bohemians' boisterous conviviality. This train of events encodes the type of convenient forgetfulness which Carey attributes to Thackeray, with the latter emerging as an individual who would not have been out of sympathy with Fitzjames Stephen. Bristling at Yates's presumptuous intrusiveness as a gossip columnist, in such accounts, Thackeray is apparently so ill-at-ease with new journalistic trends that he overlooks his own youthful excesses in the profession.

However, while Yates's sense of injustice led him to put up an understandably hot-headed defence at the time, his retrospective view of the incident was, in many ways, more clear-sighted than John Carey's.[389] Writing at the age of forty-eight in his new literary miscellany, *Time*, he returned to the conflict two decades later, rather self-promotionally claiming that it was still 'frequently vaguely referred to in literary circles'. The social ignominy inflicted by the Garrick Club Affair and Thackeray's perceived double-standards clearly continue to grate, and Yates rehearses the argument in his favour. Reprinting his original article, he asks the contemporary reader to judge it 'by its own merits and demerits', but then, more significantly, to consider it 'in comparison with personalities and criticisms which have been published before and since.' He becomes progressively more heated as he elaborates on this latter point, challenging those who re-read 'Literary Talk' to:

> compare it with what was said by the *convives* of the 'Noctes Ambrosianae' of the Whig politicians and 'cockney versifiers,' among whom were Wordsworth and Coleridge, of the day; let them compare it with what was said by Dr Maginn, and his compeers in *Fraser*, of those from whose political or literary opinions they differed; above all let them compare it with Mr Thackeray's own description in *Fraser* of two of the most prominent *littérateurs* of that period; and let them recollect that for this offence I was not

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[389] The year after the dispute, Dickens helped Yates to write a self-vindicating pamphlet. Publishing the correspondence which had passed between Yates and Thackeray, this document did little to help the former's cause. See *Mr Thackeray, Mr Yates, and The Garrick Club: The Correspondence and Facts, Stated by Edmund Yates* (printed for private circulation, 1859).

> only branded for life with a social stigma, but that so strong was the clique of my opponents, that it required all the kindness of my friends and a not inconsiderable amount of dogged perseverance and constant industry on my own part to enable me to make any way in my literary career.[390]

For all his defiance and self-commiseration, Yates nonetheless recognizes that his fate was not simply the result of a famous novelist's middle-aged complacency. Indeed, as is aptly reflected by the headline illustration above his editorial (see figure 3e), Yates's tirade against the unfair disparity between past and present is a self-assured protest not only against Thackeray but against wider cultural transformations. Enclosing the issue's date in a furnace, this image firmly locates Yates's magazine in an industrially and commercially minded present day. The impression conveyed is of a contemporary age hurtling towards the future and leaving behind the evocative myths of the past. Thus a pensive Father Time with his scythe and forelock of opportunity is

Figure 3e: Headline illustration, *Time,* 2 (January 1880), 385

replaced by an urbane gentleman with a billiard cue and a forelock which appears to be thinning somewhat — perhaps from the shrewd opportunity-grasping inherent in modern commercial life. Similarly, the gauzy classical beauty — whose dress is inspired by the Regency as much as by Ancient Greece — gazes over at her stylish and self-possessed modern counterpart.

Conveying an air of modern progress and demystification, this illustration (which appeared at the head of every edition of *Time* during 1880) reflects the personal

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[390] Yates, 'An Old Club Scandal', *Time,* 2 (January 1880), 385–92 (p. 386). A footnote to the article reveals that the Thackeray-victims whom Yates had in mind were the scientific writer, Dionysius Lardner, and the novelist's favourite target, Edward Bulwer-Lytton.

Figure 3f: 'Club Scandals', *Time,* **2 (January 1880), 393**

and professional validation which drives Yates's retrospective defence. As seen in the extract above, his article wryly looks back to a world of inequalities or, more specifically, to the changing literary playing field of the 1850s. Yates sardonically observes that this decade seemed to have no space for the trenchant satirical attacks which had previously been tolerated from the heavily mythologized bands of men behind *Blackwood's* and *Fraser's* magazines. In this manner, he inserts his Garrick Club misfortunes into a broader narrative of class-based exclusion — exclusion not just from a club elite but from an even more exclusive homosocial clique extending across time. Insisting that as a young man he was denied a place in the vigorous satirical tradition through which Thackeray had launched his career, Yates even implies that this tradition was prematurely truncated to exclude self-taught writers such as himself. As will be seen in the next chapter, this opinion was not entirely unreasonable in light of the rift between the energetically eccentric fraternalism idealized in the first decades of the nineteenth century, and the emergent homosocial values of the 1850s. Writing in a very different climate at the beginning of the 1880s, however, Yates is extremely keen to show that times have changed and that he is now in a position to initiate a posthumous reconciliation with Thackeray.

In 1880, both Yates and gossip writing had indeed come a long way since the Garrick Club Affair. The ever-expanding world of society journalism had gained some legitimacy with the appearance of such widely read journals as Thomas Gibson Bowles'

Vanity Fair and Henry Labouchère's *Truth*. In March 1874, Yates had capitalized on these new conditions and founded his own successful society weekly, the *World,* which featured fiction by such well-known authors as Wilkie Collins and Mary Elizabeth Braddon, as well as political writings by T.H.S. Escott.[391] By this time in his life, Yates felt that he had some claim to be seen as a member of the Establishment; the liberal convictions of his youth were certainly becoming increasingly shaky and before the decade was out, he had been elected to the conservative Carlton Club. Representing Yates as a Father Time figure standing on top of the 'World' (the pictorial embodiment of his thriving magazine), the caricature which closes Yates's retrospective Garrick defence playfully captures his newfound assertiveness (see figure 3f). Tellingly, the now-distinguished editor is the same size and positioned on the same level as the long-dead Thackeray, who is flying down from heaven. In contrast to the convivial gathering of Fraserian contributors in which Thackeray had proudly taken his place forty-five years earlier (see figure 4a), this is a man-to-man transaction with the emphasis placed on individual personality rather than fraternal collaboration.[392] The implication is not only that *Time* is magnanimously healing 'old grievances', but that the modern world has essentially proved Yates right by moving beyond the old cliques and elites which formerly defined the journalistic profession.

Ironically, the incident which inspired Yates's self-affirming gesture of reconciliation makes his judgment seem somewhat premature. His editorial was prompted by a minor scuffle which had broken out on the steps of the theatrical Beefsteak Club in London's West End three months earlier. The episode had involved

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[391] The *World* launched Yates's famous 'Celebrities at Home' series which included interviews of figures ranging from Henry Irving to the Prince of Wales. Using the signature of 'Atlas', Yates also contributed a Lounger-style gossip column, entitled 'What the World Says'. The paper's circulation rose from 6000 to 20,000 copies per week in its first two years.

[392] Critics have often pointed out that, at this stage in his career, Thackeray had contributed very little to *Fraser's Magazine,* and that his inclusion in the famous image owed much to his recently cultivated friendship with Daniel Maclise.

two of the club's members, Yates's former colleague at the *World*, Henry Labouchère and the prosperous proprietor of the *Daily Telegraph,* Edward Levy-Lawson, who had taken offence at an article written by Labouchère about his recently deceased uncle. When the two men were asked to retire from the Beefsteak Club the altercation had revived memories of the Garrick Club Affair, before attracting additional publicity when Levy-Lawson successfully sued Labouchère for libel over his report of the quarrel in his society magazine, *Truth*.[393] This turn of events undoubtedly contributed to the combination of confidence and righteous indignation with which Yates returned to his own troubles in his own magazine. Viewed from the perspective of the litigious but thriving gossip scene of the 1880s, Yates's Garrick expulsion did not only appear less shameful as one amongst a multitude of privacy quarrels but almost seemed an act of professional martyrdom — with Yates taking an early hit on behalf of the journalistic profession so that society journalism could evolve into its popular modern form.

Yet, even by this point in time, Yates's 'martyrdom' was not over. Just four years after his *Time* editorial, he was sentenced to four months in jail (of which he served seven weeks) for publishing a libellous allusion to the peccadilloes of the fifth Earl of Lonsdale.[394] In the world of the 1880s where journalism was on the road to full professional recognition (the National Association of Journalists was founded in 1884) and where Yates was one of many gossip columnists, the ex-Lounger was nonetheless unable to escape his past. Both the Labouchère affair and lingering memories of the younger Yates's Garrick transgression contributed to the particularly harsh ruling

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[393] See Edwards, pp. 164–65, for a succinct account of the affair. Amy Milne-Smith has pointed out that a telling variation of a Horace epistle hangs above the Beefsteak Club's dining room: 'Let no one bear beyond this threshold hence, words uttered here in friendly confidence'. See 'Club Talk: Gossip, Masculinity and Oral Communities in Late Nineteenth-Century London', *Gender and History,* 21:1 (April 2009), 86–106 (p. 104).

[394] Yates was not the author of the paragraph in question (it was contributed by Lady Stradbroke) and claimed not to realise that it referred to 'his friend', the Earl of Lonsdale. Nonetheless, as editor he took full responsibility for its publication.

delivered by his judge, Lord Chief Justice Coleridge. As P.D. Edwards rightly observes, the latter's verdict 'left no doubt in anyone's mind that Yates was to pay, not merely for his own sin, but for the abominations of 'society journalism' in general.'[395] Coleridge made this quite clear when he passed sentence, presenting Yates's 'crime' against the Earl of Lonsdale as a timely moment to take a stand against the ever more frequent infringement of personal privacy by the journalistic profession. He insists on the absolute distinction between the freedom of the press to delve into public matters and their obligation to observe the fact that 'men [...] in their private relations are entitled to have their privacy respected.' As he considers the violations committed by the brand of journalism with which Yates had long been synonymous he becomes increasingly impassioned, demanding:

> Why should we have our lives pried into, our movements watched, our dress recorded, our company catalogued, our most private relations dragged into the light of day—not for any conceivable good—to the great English people, but only to gratify the foolish vanity or the abject curiosity of a small minority of a privileged class.[396]

Coleridge's notion that the society journalism of the 1880s only appealed to a 'small minority of a privileged class' was either wishful thinking or scathingly ironic. By this time, even Yates's old adversary the *Pall Mall Gazette* was prepared to challenge this claim and to embrace the idea that there was a widespread and healthy public 'interest in the publication of personal details about public men'.[397] Yet in the Lonsdale-Yates libel case, Yates emerged as both a veteran and a relic of 1850s and 60s journalism and

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[395] Edwards, p. 172.

[396] 'The Queen of the Prosecution of the Earl of Lonsdale v. Yates', *The Times* (3 April 1884), 3.

[397] 'A Plea for Tittle-Tattle', *Pall Mall Gazette* (3 April 1884), 17. While this article defended society journalists as 'phonographs of the tittle-tattle which forms the staple of the ordinary conversation of Society', it still managed to uphold the paper's long-standing antipathy to Yates. It argued that because the information Yates had published about Lonsdale was untrue, he deserved to be imprisoned for giving society journalism a bad name.

provided Chief Justice Coleridge with a means of tapping into deep-set tensions which mid-nineteenth-century journalists had been the first to contend with but which remained unresolved in the 1880s.

CHAPTER 4

Brothers of the Press?

Bohemian Independence and Fraternal Cynicism

4.1 Drinking and Thinking in Tory Bohemia

Figure 4a: Daniel Maclise, 'The Fraserians', *Fraser's Magazine,* **11 (January 1835), 14–15**

Lord Coleridge's 1884 attack on personal libel and journalistic violations of privacy rested on another long-contested issue: the ever-rising prominence of 'personality' in contemporary journalism — whether it was that of the journalist himself or that of his subject. Coleridge's vigorous condemnation of Yates's journal, the *World,* centred on the charge that it paid society insiders to supply the paper with 'personalities' encountered in fashionable society. However, according to Coleridge, the journal's crime was not simply that it 'dealt' in such personalities for profit but that it paid 'for

their manufacture'. In the Lonsdale–Yates case, Coleridge quite clearly felt that there was more at stake than the exposure of private personalities for (not always flattering) insights into contemporary social life. In his view, the gossip journalist hijacked and distorted the personalities of his subjects, perpetuating a trivialized version of society and an 'attenuated' vision of its inhabitants. This was a charge which would have troubled Yates now that he had reached professional maturity, echoing as it did the criticism which had been levelled against his younger self and other Bohemian writers in the 1850s and 60s. Coleridge's resistance to an excess of personality per se in journalism and his contention that Yates's writing had sunk even lower by pedalling distorted personalities, would have brought back unpleasant memories of the determination with which hostile critics at mid-century had differentiated between contemporary Bohemian writers and their literary predecessors.

On one level, the apparent gulf between Yates's cultural reception and that of the comparably audacious and unconventional writers of the previous generation reflects the fundamental changes in journalistic style and public taste which characterized the transition from the 1820s and 30s to the 1840s and 50s. When Yates began his journalistic career in 1852, the tide had turned against the more intemperate critical and social practices of the larger-than-life personalities associated with the '*convives* of the 'Noctes Ambrosianae'' and of 'Dr Maginn, and his compeers in *Fraser*'. Indeed, in an editorial hailing the final year of the 1840s, *Fraser's Magazine* itself had resolutely turned its back on the boisterous and often unforgiving brand of criticism through which it had defined its identity for almost two decades. Acknowledging that during this time the journal had perhaps 'dealt more than was quite becoming in personalities', the editor claims that the magazine has begun to mend its ways, having recently embarked on a new phase of sobriety to which it claims it will

conform in the years to follow. This newfound moderation extends both to the legendary representations of the Fraserian contributors' social lives — who have 'ceased to attend imaginary *symposia* and to drink gallons of imaginary punch' — and to the tone of the magazine's criticism, which will no longer permit 'the practice of calling hard names' or 'imputing unworthy motives'.[398] This manifesto emerged exactly fourteen years after Daniel Maclise's emblematic imagining of the magazine's staff (figure 4a) and the contrast could hardly have been greater.

Marking the beginning of the year 1835, the magazine's illustriously erratic editor, William Maginn, had supplemented Maclise's portrait of the Fraserian round table with a characteristically lively colloquy. In this, the journal's staunchly Tory contributors — among them Father Prout, John Gibson Lockhart, and James Hogg — engage in a series of exuberant songs and speeches on the topics of 'politics and literature' while carousing and generally enjoying each others' company.[399] The group had good reason to be in high spirits with Robert Peel's Tory party being (temporarily) on the ascendant — a circumstance which Maginn's persona honours with a blusterous anti-Whig speech and other members of the company such as George Robert Gleig and Allan Cunningham celebrate more light-heartedly in song. After almost thirty pages, the company's cerebral banter descends into choric frivolity as the Fraserians sing in unison:

> And so they fell a-drinking
> And so they fell a-drinking'
> And let us pass the jolly glass,

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[398] John William Parker, 'A Happy New Year', *Fraser's Magazine,* 39 (January 1849), 1–3 (p. 3).

[399] Patrick Leary highlights the self-mythologizing nature of the Maclise portrait and Maginn's accompanying article, pointing out that a number of the writers present had never contributed anything to the magazine. See '*Fraser's Magazine* and the Literary Life, 1830–1847', *Victorian Periodicals Review,* 27 (Summer 1994), 105–26 (p. 111).

And no more serious thinking.[400]

By 1849, such droll slippage between thinking and drinking no longer provided *Fraser's* with an acceptable framework for its more serious cultural commentary. The magazine's individual circumstances had clearly changed significantly: the charismatic Maginn had been dead since 1842, the abolition of the Corn Laws had toppled and ruptured the Tories, and the periodical was now edited by the Christian Socialist, John William Parker, who had even agreed to serialize Charles Kingsley's mildly radical *Yeast* the year before (July–December 1848). At the same time, however, *Fraser's* was responding to wider changes in the public mood and a rising consensus that the magazine's former style was out of sync with the modern world.

As Yates and writers like George Augustus Sala and Robert Brough began to forge journalistic careers in the decade which followed, the contemporaneous publishing explosion helped to consolidate this view. A surge of memoirs and anthologies relating to some of the era's most eccentric personalities were met with appreciative but qualified nostalgia — safely relegating the strong-willed criticism and background revelries of late Romantic magazinery to the realm of collective memory.[401] Yet, as Yates's indignation in his *Time* editorial might suggest, the perception that the 'thundering' criticism of 'Doctor' Maginn and 'Professor' Wilson was outmoded did not prevent critics from drawing on these 'eccentric literary giants' to sideline their less established Bohemian descendents.[402] Indeed, even though their carnivalesque warring

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[400] Maginn, 'The Fraserians; or, The Commencement of the Year Thirty-five. A Fragment', *Fraser's Magazine,* 11 (January 1835), 1–27 (p. 27).

[401] During this decade, the prolific writings of both John Wilson (1785–1854) and William Maginn (1794–1842) were anthologized for the first time, published in lavish multi-volume sets. Similarly, major writers who were still active at mid-century such as William Jerdan (1782–1869) and Leigh Hunt (1784–1859) published extensive memoirs mythologizing the heyday of early nineteenth-century periodical writing.

[402] For discussion of 'Tory Bohemia' in the first half of the nineteenth century, see Miriam M.H. Thrall, *Rebellious Fraser's: Nol Yorke's Magazine in the Days of Maginn, Thackeray, and Carlyle,* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1934) and Roger Simpson, *Sir John Tenniel: Aspects of his Work*

in-groups were ill suited to mid-century anxieties about the cliquiness of modern society, there was an eerie sense in which the famous feud between *Blackwood's* Tories and the *London Magazine's* 'Cockneys' returned to haunt the 1850s. Though the term *cockney* had certainly not disappeared from view once the heyday of the *Blackwood's* Cockney School attacks had passed, it experienced a significant resurgence in the mid-nineteenth century.[403] By 1859, as if to avoid any ambiguity, the indefatigable Fitzjames Stephen had even coined the phrase 'Neo-Cockney School' — a reflection of the fact that commentators from across the political spectrum had reclaimed the term and harnessed its already-accumulated associations against up-and-coming journalists such as Yates.[404] John de Capel Wise's 1866 'Cockney Chatterer' emerged when this phenomenon was in its prime and was a natural descendent of earlier responses to the exuberantly colloquial work of writers such as Albert Smith.

However, the mid-century idea of the Cockney, like that of the Bohemian — with which it overlapped but was not synonymous — was complicated and impressionistic. As a historian such as Gareth Stedman Jones has shown, it was a multi-layered concept with a history which long predated its appropriation by Tory periodicals such as *Blackwood's* and the *Quarterly Review*.[405] Yet as they pitted their brand of quasi-pastoral erudition against the thoroughly metropolitan parvenuism of a so-called 'Cockney School' of writers and poets these journals established an enduring cultural motif. Like Bohemia, the dominion of the Cockney quickly came to possess a figurative as well as a literal geography — associated both with London's East End and,

(Rutherford: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 1994). For a twentieth-century account which idealizes Maginn's 'riotous Tory Bohemianism', see John Gross, *The Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters: Aspects of English Literary Life Since 1800* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969), p. 16.

[403] Jeffrey N. Cox convincingly characterizes the enduring impact of *Blackwood's* attacks on Leigh Hunt and other second-generation Romantics, in *Poetry and Politics in the Cockney School: Keats, Shelley, Hunt and their Circle* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 16–37.

[404] Fitzjames Stephen, 'Geniality', *Saturday Review* (24 December 1859), 769–70 (p. 769).

[405] See Gareth Stedman Jones, 'The 'Cockney' and the Nation, 1780–1988', in *Metropolis, London: Histories and Representations since 1800,* ed. by David Feldman and Gareth Stedman Jones (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 272–324.

more ironically, with the Land of Cockaigne: the realm of luxurious idleness imagined in Medieval folklore.[406] The *Blackwood's* attacks facetiously built on this mythology and just as representations of Parisian Bohemianism would strikingly juxtapose images of republican frugality with images of regal extravagance, so the characterisation of Leigh Hunt as the plebeian 'King of the Cockneys' reinvented cultural ideas of the 'metropolitan' — tainting it with a lasting air of social presumptuousness and emasculated inanity.[407] It was this fusion of class insolence and intellectual feebleness which remained recognizable in much of the more unforgiving evaluations of metropolitan journalism in the mid-nineteenth century. Even when the term *cockney* itself was not actually used, it was often bubbling underneath the surface.

When John Wilson's *Noctes Ambrosianae* were first collected into volume form in 1855, for example, the *Saturday Review* was quick to harness the distinctive view of the metropolitan which Wilson and his colleagues at *Blackwood's* had perpetuated thirty years previously.[408] As is often the case, in reviewing the periodical literature of an earlier generation the author of the article does not pass up the opportunity to compare and contrast it with the current journalistic scene. He begins with the standard acknowledgement that the intellectually ferocious and semi-inebriated debates set in Edinburgh's Ambrose Tavern are not in keeping with contemporary tastes; Wilson's idiosyncratic colloquies are excessively 'coarse' in expression, 'personal' in criticism,

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[406] Critics have generally argued that the *Blackwood's* articles were the first to make the ironic link between the Medieval Land of Cockaigne and modern London, though this is difficult to prove. See Cox, *Poetry and Politics*, p. 25.

[407] Like Yates, Leigh Hunt was famously imprisoned for libel (between February 1813 and February 1815) — an occurrence from which Yates may well have taken heart when he was himself jailed seventy years later.

[408] Wilson — better known as *Blackwood's* Christopher North — had died a year earlier, prompting his nephew, James Frederick Ferrier, to begin the anthologization of his copious writings. This culminated in 1858 with the twelve-volume *Works of Professor Wilson of the University of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood & Sons, 1855–58).

and absolutist in 'politics'.[409] However, such charges are almost imperceptibly reversed in the next paragraph which wistfully describes *Noctes Ambrosianae* as 'the effusions of a powerful mind' and praises their author's 'poetry and eloquence', 'broad and delicate' criticism, and 'vigorous manly sense'. All of this prepares the way for the objection that though 'the periodical writing of the present day is, no doubt, more scrupulous as to language [than that of Wilson] it is something of a misfortune that it savours too exclusively of the metropolis.'[410] Here, the writer means to contrast this excessively 'metropolitan' journalism not only with *Blackwood's* Edinburgh-based output but also with the work of eminent literary men like Shelley and Coleridge who spent significant amounts of their lives in London. In the latter case, the reviewer insists that despite living out most of his later life in Highgate, Coleridge 'was yet in spirit not of London'. Shelley, who was in fact a central member of Leigh Hunt's 'Cockney circle', similarly escapes the taint of the metropolis on account of the time which he spent living in Italy. In this sense, the reviewer stops short of actually expressing support for Wilson's *Blackwood's* attacks on the inherently metropolitan Cockney School. Instead he implies that he is merely arguing for a return to a broader cosmopolitan approach to literature, observing that London is 'but a small part of the world' and that its literary society 'forms but an exceedingly small part of the whole body of men of letters'.

In praising Wilson's *Noctes* and his uninhibited critical style, the *Saturday Review* thus puts forward an argument which anticipates that of the *Idler* a year later in the article discussed in the previous chapter. Warning that London's claustrophobic

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[409] For the critical reception and impact of Wilson's distinctly hard-hitting reviewing style, see Robert Morrison, '*Blackwood's* Berserker: John Wilson and the Language of Extremity', *Romanticism on the Net*, 20 (November 2000) <http://users.ox.ac.uk/~scat0385/20morrison.html> [Accessed 10 September 2009].

[410] 'The Works of Professor Wilson', *Saturday Review* (10 November 1855), 37–38 (p. 37). All further references to this article are to this page.

literary society risks stagnating into a self-congratulatory 'Société pour l'admiration mutuelle', it advocates a need for more detached and emphatically non-London-based critics of Wilson's stamp, who will 'bring a new and independent sense into the circle of our current criticism'. Tellingly, like many other nostalgic appraisals of *Noctes* at the time, the review suggests that despite Wilson's strong Tory convictions, he somehow transcended the 'spirit of cliquery'.[411] Specifically, the 'pervading spirit' of his work 'is noble and generous' and displays 'no smallness or soreness, no petty personal jealousy, no flippant disparagement, [and] no malignity'. In this way, for this mid-nineteenth-century reviewer, Wilson's *Noctes* colloquies essentially represent a romance of perfect balance — a balance which guarantees independent-mindedness while allowing some level of fraternal identification. This was a romance which Wilson and his *Blackwood's* colleagues had actively cultivated as they defined themselves against the alleged vulgarity and effeminacy of Hunt's Cockney coterie. Jeffrey N. Cox has persuasively described the universally negative connotations which the idea of a poetic 'School' held at this time. Regardless of the political or aesthetic convictions of the poets in question the label suggested discipleship and thus a lack of originality. However, while Cox shows that Hunt's Cockney School was not unique in being attacked on the grounds of 'collective literary activity', he also argues that its members were particularly vocal in embracing a philosophy of 'sociability' and in advertising their status as a 'collaborative community'.[412] Setting the boldly expressed opinions and forthright manners of the *Noctes* characters against the regular backdrop of Ambrose's tavern enabled Wilson to mock this self-publicizing form of fraternalism while advancing a sociable community of his own — a fraternal (and non-urban) community which

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[411] The phrase is from a predictably affectionate review of the *Noctes* collection in *Fraser's Magazine* a month earlier. See James Craigie Robertson, 'Noctes Ambrosianae', *Fraser's Magazine* 52 (October 1855), 363–78 (p. 377).

[412] Jeffrey N. Cox, 'Leigh Hunt's Cockney School: The Lakers' 'Other'', *Romanticism on the Net,* 14 (May 1999) <http://users.ox.ac.uk/~scat0385/huntlakers.html> [Accessed 14 September 2009].

appeared more spontaneous, more understated, and more individualistic than that of Hunt's cliquish Cockneys.

4.2 Unbrotherly Metropolis, Unfriendly Bohemia

The *Saturday Review's* positive re-evaluation of Wilson's *Noctes Ambrosianae* appeared just a week after the paper made its public debut at the beginning of November 1855. Its sympathy with both the purging mentality of *Noctes*-style criticism and with *Blackwood's* tendency to associate metropolitan life with cliquism is clearly in keeping with its own desire to affirm its identity as a new and independent voice in contemporary journalism. Indeed, in its first issue a week earlier, both the inaugural prospectus and a separate article on the state of 'Our Newspaper Institutions' bear out Edmund Yates's initial response to the journal — categorically heralding the paper as a long-overdue antidote to a 'spirit of *cliquerie*' afflicting the 'London press'.[413] In this opening number, it is the 'despotism' of *The* (London-based) *Times* which receives the most immediate blame for this emphatically metropolitan phenomenon.[414] However, rather than seeking to enter into head-to-head competition with *The Times*, the new weekly journal proposes a more indirect challenge to the market leader's daily authority. The *Saturday Review* will rival *The Times* by virtue of its 'independent position' in the marketplace and the high-quality journalism which this impartiality will allow it to produce. In effect, the younger paper's first-rate leading articles and unparalleled 'original matter' will serve as a continual reminder that the 'Absolute

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[413] See above p. 188.
[414] See 'Our Newspaper Institutions,' *Saturday Review* (3 November 1855), 2–3 (p. 3).

Wisdom' of the inferior-quality *Times* is illusory and that, beneath the latter's unified front, lies a network of cliques and vested interests.[415]

As has been seen, it soon became apparent that the *Saturday Review's* mid-century quarrel with the metropolitan press did not just lie with *The Times* but rather encompassed much of the cutting edge of London journalism. Whether it was faced with the itinerant special correspondent or with his domestic equivalent the gossip columnist, the *Saturday Review* whole-heartedly pitted itself against an up-and-coming brand of reporter whose subject was the metropolis and whose method was sociological investigation. Henry Mayhew was undoubtedly a pivotal figure in this — though for more than just the content of his *London Labour and the London Poor* at the end of the 1840s. This work has come to bear justified weight in literary and historical criticism. Yet, as a result, it has perhaps become a little too easy to categorize his work as a ground-breaking precedent to the explosion of urban explorative journalism which characterized the 1850s and 60s.[416] This is particularly the case considering the visible imprint which the French physiology genre of the 1830s and 40s also left on this strand of urban writing.[417] Nonetheless Mayhew's landmark metropolitan investigations certainly set the tone for similar work in these decades — and they did so through their impact on popular imaginings of the urban reporter as much as they did through their

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[415] See 'Notice', *Saturday Review* (3 November 1855), 18.

[416] Mayhew has certainly tended to form a keynote in studies of journalistic Bohemianism in 1850s London. See, for example, Kent, 'British Bohemia and the Victorian Journalist', p. 10 and Cross, pp. 102–03.

[417] See Martina Lauster, *Sketches of the Nineteenth Century: European Journalism and its Physiologies, 1830–50* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). As late as 1849, a group of young metropolitan journalists including Horace Mayhew, Shirley Brooks, Albert Smith, Robert Brough, and James Hannay had collaborated on a physiology-style anthology: *Gavarni in London: Sketches of Life and Character, with Illustrative Essays by Popular Writers,* ed. by Albert Smith (London: David Bogue, 1849). The continuing influence of this genre in the 1850s can be seen in writers such as Charles Manby Smith whose physiology-inspired *Curiosities of London Life: or Phases, Physiological and Social, of the Great Metropolis* was published in 1853 (London: A.W. Bennett).

actual taxonomization of city life.[418] Mayhew and journalists like him were attempting

to fulfil modern investigative roles and yet as soon as their work entered into the public

domain it was subjected to past conventions. For a long time, critics persisted in

associating the urban reporter with long-established literary types such as the roving

vagabond narrator and in categorizing his output using traditional narrative modes such

as the low-life genre.[419] David Masson's review of the volume edition of *London

Labour and the London Poor* was not untypical, for example, when it responded to the

publication with a meditation on the 'vagabondage of literary men'.[420] Thackeray

himself wryly commented that Mayhew's new work was 'better and more romantic

than any romance including [his own forthcoming *History of Henry Esmond*].'[421]

In its early days especially, such associations with classic literary modes were

reinforced by the way in which this expanding form of urban journalism was so quick

to infiltrate other spheres of popular culture. In addition to their impact on journalistic

and novelistic depictions of London, the metropolitan types encountered in Mayhew's

journalism in particular, took on a life of their own on the contemporary stage. As well

as inspiring theatre and Music Hall productions by others, Mayhew himself translated

his writings into performance and, in the summer of 1857, he staged *Mr Henry

Mayhew's Curious Conversazione*.[422] In this, Mayhew would begin in the manner of a

traditional lecturer, providing background information about the metropolitan

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[418] The loose metropolitan tradition often associated with Mayhew ranged from extremely light-hearted rambles such as Yates's *My Haunts and their Frequenters* (1854) and James Hain Friswell's *Houses with their Front Off* (1854), to metropolitan *jeu d'esprit* such as Sala's *Twice Round the Clock* (1859), through to more morally-engaged expeditions such as James Ewing Ritchie's pro-Temperance *Night Side of London* (1858) and John Hollingshead's *Ragged London* (1861).

[419] The phrase *low life* was applied with particular frequency to Sala's spirited London sketches. See, for example, 'Gas and Daylight', *Literary Gazette,* 2 (May 1859), 588–89, and 'Mr Sala on Life in London', *Saturday Review* (3 December 1859), 676–77.

[420] David Masson, '*London Labour and the London Poor*', *North British Review* 14 (February 1851), 382–420.

[421] Thackeray to Lady Henrietta Stanley, 6 December 1851, *Letters,* II, 815–17 (p. 816).

[422] Deborah Vlock cites two major plays inspired by Mayhew staged in the 1850s: J. Elphinstone's *London Labour and the London Poor, or, Want and Vice* (1854) and J.B. Johnstone's *How we Live in London* (1856). See Vlock, 'Henry Mayhew', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <http://www.oxforddnb.com> [Accessed 15 June 2009].

characters which were to feature in his show. He would then retire and return in the guise of a specific urban type, impersonating both their physical and spoken mannerisms.[423] Noting the crossover between dramaturgical and anthropological methods of transmitting oral history, James Bennett and others have pointed out that such performances provided Mayhew with a means of publicizing social reformist causes.[424] Nonetheless, a not insignificant proportion of his audience clearly viewed these '*viva voce* illustrations of the peculiarities of the London Poor' as comic entertainment — something which inevitably strengthened Mayhew's ties with the existing conventions of melodrama and burlesque which had long placed London's 'dangerous classes' on the stage.[425]

Significantly, however, by the time that he wrote *London Labour and the London Poor*, Mayhew formed part of a more concrete metropolitan fraternity. In the four years leading up to his magnum opus, he collaborated with his brother, Augustus, on six separate comic novels using the signature 'the Brothers Mayhew.'[426] Twelve years older than Augustus, Henry also involved his younger brother in his work for the *Comic Almanac* and indeed in collecting material for *London Labour and the London Poor* itself. Another of the seven Mayhew brothers, Horace, was an active journalist and editor, working on such publications as the *Illustrated London News* and *Punch*. In the eyes of some, by the mid-1850s Henry and his two journalistic brothers had become something of an unholy metropolitan trio. A particularly severe article in the

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[423] Mayhew's metropolitan characters included a 'London costermonger', a 'professional beggar', and a 'Punch and Judy man'.

[424] James Bennett, *Oral History and Delinquency: The Rhetoric of Criminology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), pp. 19–20.

[425] See, for example, the description of the audience response to Mayhew's 'very amusing entertainment' in 'Mr Henry Mayhew's Curious Characters', *Musical Gazette* (1 August 1857), 364–65. Mayhew had been the author of a number of entertaining plays in the 1830s and 40s, which made such responses to his *Conversazione* even less surprising.

[426] Novels by 'the Brothers Mayhew' included *The Greatest Plague of Life, or, The Adventures of a Lady in Search of a Good Servant* (1847), *Whom to Marry and How to Get Married* (1848), and *Fear of the World, or, Living for Appearances* (1850).

traditionally Tory *Dublin University Magazine* the year after Henry had staged his *Curious Conversazione*, demonstrates the distinctly double-edged nature of the fraternal Mayhew trademark. Written by the recently ordained clergyman, Augustus Stopford Brooke, the article is a review of Augustus Mayhew's latest (and now best-remembered) novel, *Paved with Gold, or, The Romance and Reality of the London Streets*. Subtitled *An Unfashionable Novel*, the work is semi-picaresque, tracing the roguish adventures of the street urchin, Philip Merton, from his birth in a prison through to his criminally accomplished rise to fortune. Like many novelists before him, Augustus Mayhew aims to *provide a 'truthful account [...] of the miseries of criminal life' and to destroy 'the fancied romance of wickedness' in which the sensational Newgate genre had specialized.*[427] *Less usual is the additional claim to veracity which Mayhew makes on the basis of the London street interviews which he carried out when aiding his brother with his sociological masterpiece.*

For Stopford Brooke, it is precisely this overlap between factual source material and saleable novel which subverts Augustus Mayhew's moral purpose. Brooke was himself closely involved in philanthropic causes such as F.D. Maurice's Working Men's College, and keenly felt the need for direct action against metropolitan poverty. In his review of *Paved with Gold*, he represents the novel as selfishly detached from such causes, and scathingly identifies it with a contemporary tendency 'to worm out the poverty and suffering of London' for profit.[428] However, it is in focusing on the Mayhews' ostentatiously advertised fraternal ties that Brooke's criticism is at its most damning. Brooke suggests that by repeatedly dedicating their interrelated work to one another, the 'tribe of Mayhews' (Henry, Horace, and Augustus) compose their own

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[427] Augustus Mayhew, 'Preface', *Paved with Gold: Or, the Romance and Reality of the London Streets* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1858).

[428] Augustus Stopford Brooke, 'Recent Novels', *Dublin University Magazine,* 52 (December 1858), 746–54 (p. 747).

brotherly 'Société pour l'admiration mutuelle'. Similarly, the ease with which Henry and Augustus share their London-based material and slip between sociological actuality and fictional romance creates the worrying impression that they are conspiring together to achieve a distastefully metropolitan form of market dominance. For Brooke, this impression in turn contributes to the idea that the Mayhew brothers and their 'manufactured' metropolitan literature are a particularly tight-knit clique of Dickens disciples — following in the footsteps of the master of 'the peculiar London element of modern fiction' and continuing his conquest of 'undiscovered Cockney land.'[429]

It was very much in Brooke's spirit that the *Saturday Review* had announced its arrival as a much-needed independent addition to the London journalistic scene three years earlier. As has been suggested, the journal's staunch anti-cliquism and indeed anti-metropolitanism did not prevent it from laying down some alternative fraternal values of its own. In its initial prospectus, the paper was careful to differentiate its impartiality from 'an indifference to all principles'. Accordingly, it reassured its readership that its writers were mostly 'known to each other' and that they had 'been thrown together by affinities naturally arising from common habits of thought, education, reflection, and social views.'[430] Yet, if the *Saturday Review* emulated the gruffly understated camaraderie of an earlier journalistic era, such a stance became increasingly difficult to maintain at the turn of the 1860s. It was certainly true that the journal's early attacks on a 'London clique' of Bohemian writers such as the Brothers Mayhew reflected unease at the democratization of both the literary market and the writing professions — its objections were after all rooted in concerns about the insidious spread of colloquial language, flippant behaviour, and impermanent

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[429] Ibid., p. 746.
[430] 'Notice', *Saturday Review* (3 November 1855), 18.

literature.[431] Ironically, however, in its very eagerness to root out the modern flaws of this expanding literary milieu, the *Saturday Review* opened itself up to comparable charges. As its competitors pointed out, its sustained assault on the professional cynicism and urbane commerciality of a particular fraternity of London writers seemed itself to display something of a cynical lack of faith. In one particularly barbed exchange in 1857, the emphatically radical *Leader* responded to a characteristic attack on Douglas Jerrold and the poor quality of modern journalism by accusing the *Saturday Review's* contributors of being 'desperate iconoclasts'. The *Leader* maintained that in their 'quixotic zeal to put down all popular writers and popular literature' and in their determination not to 'share the popular feeling', the anti-Bohemian *Saturday Review* showed an 'absence of any very lively faith' and a corrosive 'strength of denial and disbelief.'[432]

In this specific year, the *Saturday Review's* relentlessly cynical approach to democratically inclined literary fraternalism would most likely have touched a particular nerve with the *Leader*. Just a few months earlier its disgruntled ex-editor, Edward Whitty, had published a caustic exposé of the life of the paper in his satirical novel, *Friends of Bohemia: or, Phases of London Life*. The only novel of the decade to take the audacious step of including the term *Bohemia* in its title, this work was designedly scandalous. Before he became its editor, Whitty had cut his teeth as a hard-hitting parliamentary sketch writer for the *Leader* and in his debut novel he transferred his scathingly cynical view of the country's 'governing classes' to London's supposedly respectable social circles. George Henry Lewes and Thornton Leigh Hunt had established the *Leader* in 1850 and by the time that Whitty published *Friends of Bohemia*, the radically democratic paper had endured a number of editorial changes and

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[431] See, for example, 'Literary Men' or 'The History of British Journalism', *Saturday Review* (29 January 1859), 127–28.

[432] 'Literature', *Leader* (4 July 1857), 639–40 (p. 640).

considerable financial difficulties. Whitty, who had been ousted as editor following religious and political differences with the magazine's staff, used his novel à clef to place brutal emphasis on the journal's internal disunities and failed attempts at self-marketing.

In one particularly cutting homosocial dining scene at the heart of Whitty's *Friends of Bohemia*, the literary man-about-town, Brandt Bellars, regales a number of the novel's Bohemian anti-heroes with a damning history of the *Leader* — or, as Whitty dubs it, '*The Teaser*'. Bellars' account reserves especial scorn for any fraternal feelings which might be associated with the *Leader* contributors' shared ideological convictions. Referring to Lewes and Hunt's initial dual-editorship and the paper's pecuniary problems, for example, Bellars piquantly observes that: 'Intense as was their fraternity, they could not both wear the same hat at once. They therefore resolved to send it round [...] for subscriptions.'[433] However, the most derisive depiction of fraternal collaboration is reserved for Lewes and Hunt's much whispered about experiments in communal domesticity. The 'fraternity of the two eminent men' is not just professional but highly personal, extending to their cohabitation in 'a moral Agapemone' — where spouses as well as ideological beliefs are shared in common.[434] Whitty's novel was a savage indictment of the absence of happy camaraderie and effective creative collaboration in a cynically commercial modern world. Yet this was due to more than just the novel's unflattering depiction of London society and its absence of fellow feeling. The work's publication was itself a cynically commercial act of fraternal betrayal. For Whitty's ex-*Leader* colleagues and indeed for many other members of

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[433] E.M. Whitty, *Friends of Bohemia: or, Phases of London Life* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1857), p. 179.
[434] Ibid., p. 180.

London's journalistic 'community', the novel was both a portrait and an enactment of unbrotherly modernity.[435]

4.3 The Borrowed Machinery of Brotherhood

The *Saturday Review's* hostility to claims of literary brotherhood in an ever-expanding profession was clearly not on the same level as Whitty's scathing view of modern society as wholly atomized and self-serving. Indeed, British culture at the turn of the 1860s was saturated with comparable attempts to prioritize individualism at the expense of fraternalism but which were nonetheless unwilling to leave behind the benefits of the latter. In addition to seminal (and very different) endorsements of the collective societal value of self-dependence in works such as J.S. Mill's *On Liberty* (1859) and Samuel Smiles' *Self-Help* (1859), the upsurge of patriotic feeling after a decade of military unrest fed into such important social developments as Christian Socialism and the Volunteer Movement. The latter in particular provided an interesting counter-narrative to more frivolous forms of fraternal bonding as civilian regiments sprang up across the country in the name of National defence. These regional corps fuelled contemporary debates about the best ways to 'cultivate individual hardihood, judgment, and resource' in a military context that depended on fraternal identification and collective discipline.[436] Even the most unconventional literary men — including Edmund Yates himself — found themselves joining up. Similarly, the extremely diverse manifestations of Christian Socialism provided new ways of thinking about the possibilities of self-

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[435] Unsurprisingly, the *Leader's* review of the novel was brutal, concluding that it was 'sorry and malignant trash'. See 'Small Novels', *Leader* (7 March 1857), 235. In other quarters, its reception was more mixed — though the *Saturday Review* was predictably negative ('Friends of Bohemia', 7 March 1857, 228–29).

[436] See 'Volunteering and Physical Education', *Saturday Review* (7 July 1860), 11–12 (p. 11). The press at this time was saturated with discussions of this kind.

disciplined camaraderie — whether it was through tangible reformist activities such as the Working Men's Associations or through best-sellers such as *Tom Brown's School Days*, which was published in the same year as Whitty's very different work.

However, as I have been suggesting, the contemporary press visibly struggled to settle on the best means of articulating these evolving combinations of independence and fraternalism. As the first truly affordable quality monthlies began to emerge after 1859, the increasingly tight competition for a regular readership only added to this discord. This was strikingly illustrated by the tensions which arose between the first of these shilling monthlies, *Macmillan's Magazine,* and the weekly *Saturday Review* (priced at sixpence for thirty pages). Edited by the Scottish intellectual, David Masson, — who would later precede George Saintsbury as Regius Professor of Rhetoric and English Literature at Edinburgh University — the first issue of *Macmillan's* made a very conspicuous effort to launch itself in the image of *Blackwood's Magazine.* Like this established miscellany but costing a third of the price, the new periodical brought together fiction (beginning with Thomas Hughes' *Tom Brown at Oxford*), literary criticism, and socio-political commentary.[437] More specifically, however, while Masson rooted the inaugural issue firmly in the present day with an editorial on 'Politics of the Present, Foreign and Domestic', he closed the number with a striking homage to John Wilson's fictionalized *Blackwood's* fraternity. Initially planned as a regular series, the *Noctes*-inspired 'Colloquy of the Round Table' was written by Masson in collaboration with the Christian Socialists, Thomas Hughes and John Ludlow. The first episode featured a boisterous gathering of *Noctes*-spinoff characters including the humorously named Serious William, Sir John, Andrew McTaggart, Loftus Smart, and Ernest Newlight. As in the original, these men serve different discursive purposes with the

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[437] For the specific values and objectives of *Macmillan's Magazine,* see George J. Worth, *Macmillan's Magazine, 1859–1907: 'No Flippancy or Abuse Allowed'* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003).

exaggeratedly Scottish McTaggart providing comic relief and jaunty dialect, and the 'keen, eager-looking' Ernest Newlight rather predictably emerging as the voice of reason — and indeed as the mouthpiece of the *Macmillan's* contributors.

Despite its resuscitation of *Blackwood's* old-fashioned homosocial backdrop, the *Macmillan's* colloquy is more obviously concerned with an up-to-date form of social fraternalism: the burgeoning Trade Union Movement. Ernest Newlight in particular argues that the success of the latter would help to quell the selfish individualism of contemporary commerce by facilitating more human trading practices. In a derisive response to the colloquy published the week after it appeared, the *Saturday Review* argued that this espousal of a 'purified' form of Trade Unionism read somewhat ridiculously when sandwiched between a two-page-long request for whisky by McTaggart and a drinking song about the debauched son of 'Old King Cole' by Sir John. For the *Saturday Review,* such dissonance was proof that *Macmillan's* 'watery repetition of the *Noctes*' was a wholly commercial attempt to secure a wider 'Scottish and provincial market'.[438] Like the ever-corrosive 'London clique' of popular writers, *Macmillan's* was guilty of self-promotional fraternalism — ostentatiously hijacking vacuous and outdated modes of camaraderie in order to sell its literary product.

In fact, the *Macmillan's* colloquy self-consciously harnesses the disjunction between form and content throughout, playfully drawing attention to the potentially defunct literary tropes which it has appropriated.[439] The group's gentrified philistine, Sir John, is certainly not alone when he self-referentially demands: 'Can't a set of fellows meet and chaff each other without all this humbugging borrowed machinery of

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[438] 'Dead Wut', *Saturday Review* (12 November 1859), 572.
[439] Between 1849 and his death in 1854, John Wilson had himself attempted to revive a 'watered down' version of *Noctes* in *Blackwood's.* Entitled *Dies Boreales,* the series was far less successful than the original.

brotherhood, the *Noctes Atticæ,* and such like stuff?'[440] The series became even more meta-journalistic when Masson and his collaborators used their second colloquy to hit back at the *Saturday Review*.[441] The series' leading man, Serious William, defends 'Colloquy of the Round Table' by arguing that *Noctes* was itself a repetition of a form of masculine social life 'as old as time itself.' He elaborates on this timeless homosociality, demanding:

> Do not men meet every day to talk; do they not eat and drink while they talk, ay, and (such is the eccentricity of custom) emit whiffs of whitish smoke from peculiar looking tubes? And can a set of men meet together [...] without becoming for the time a compound organism higher than the individual — either a polar antagonism of factions, or a real and united Brotherhood?[442]

In this staunch justification of fraternal sociability and the insistence that it is not at odds with the independence of the modern man, it is clear that there is more at stake than the magazine's ill-fated *Blackwood's* imitation. Indeed, like *Noctes Ambrosianae* and the Fraserians before it, 'Colloquy at the Round Table' was a tongue-in-cheek take on the actual behind-the-scenes activities of the *Macmillan's* contributors. In the two years leading up to the first issue, the magazine's Scottish proprietor, Alexander Macmillan, had held weekly gatherings at his publishing headquarters in Covent Garden. In addition to Masson and other regular *Macmillan's* writers, these convivial assemblies were attended by such leading literary lights as Alfred Tennyson, Coventry Patmore, and Herbert Spencer, and came to be affectionately known as 'Tobacco Parliaments'. As in the case of *Punch,* animated discussions took place around a

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[440] Masson, Thomas Hughes, and John Ludlow, 'Colloquy of the Round Table', *Macmillan's Magazine,* 1 (November 1859), 72–80 (p. 77).

[441] According to the *Wellesley Index*, Masson took the leading role in this collaboration.

[442] Masson, Hughes, and Ludlow, 'Colloquy of the Round Table', *Macmillan's Magazine,* 2 (December 1859), 148–60 (pp. 148–49).

specially fashioned round table, with Macmillan setting such store by the meetings that he had originally planned to name his new magazine *The Round Table*.[443]

Its first issue had sold reasonably well (ten thousand copies in the first two weeks) and one might have expected the up-and-coming shilling monthly to have been confident enough to shrug off the *Saturday Review's* mockery. The magazine's Scottish proprietor and editor were after all both successful in their own right — and clearly felt that their magazine could make a strong claim to a place in the *Blackwood's* tradition. Nonetheless, the *Saturday Review's* slur of cynical commercialism was sufficiently unsettling to lead Masson and his co-writers to terminate the 'Round Table' series prematurely. The colloquy's characters had to content themselves by naming and shaming the 'dull, dark' *Saturday Review* at the end of the second and final colloquy before they somewhat petulantly parted company for good.[444] Alexander Macmillan suspected that the prolific *Saturday* reviewer, Fitzjames Stephen, was at the bottom of the attack — something which would have been mischievously hypocritical considering Stephen's attendance of *Macmillan's* thoroughly fraternal inaugural dinner just a fortnight earlier. Despite this and the fact that *Macmillan's* motto was 'no flippancy or abuse allowed', its proprietor in fact seemed to relish the tussle with the *Saturday Review*. On a straightforward level, it was good publicity — as Macmillan observed to his friend James MacLehose a few days after the attack: 'The *Saturday* rascals will keep [*Macmillan's Magazine*] before the public you may be sure' (p. 137). On a deeper level, there was a definite sense in which the spirited altercation between the two papers was

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[443] Masson appears to have persuaded Macmillan to opt for the title *Macmillan's Magazine* on the basis that *The Round Table* would have been too similar to Dickens's *All the Year Round,* which had begun publication earlier in the same year. See Charles L. Graves, *Life and Letters of Alexander Macmillan* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1910), p. 133. All further references to this volume will be given in the text.

[444] 'Colloquy', (December 1859), 160.

more in sync with contemporary ideals of masculinity than those embodied in the colloquy which had sparked the row.

This became clearer a year later when Macmillan entered into bantering correspondence with Fitzjames Stephen himself. Light-heartedly dubbing the *Saturday Review* as the paper 'we all abuse and all read', he praised its 'generally wholesome influence' and its efficacy in dispelling the 'stagnant vapours of small conceited stewing minds'. He furthermore acknowledged that if it 'make[s] a mistake and attack[s] the wrong man, he must be a weakling if he is much hurt by it' (pp.164–65). Though Macmillan praised the *Saturday Review* in the hope of recruiting Stephen as a contributor, his letter was not simply intended as flattery. In inviting Stephen to inject a 'blast of the Saturday Reviewism' into his own magazine, he aligned himself with a very particular view of modern masculinity. For Macmillan, the *Saturday Review* represented an especially vigorous embodiment of the combativeness which was fundamental to productive fraternal friendships. In other words, the brusque critical sparring desirable in the journalistic world is merely a highly publicized reflection of the behavioural ideals which should govern the middle-class everyman in his social life. In both spheres, reciprocal joshing and non-committal fraternal bonds are felt to encourage self-discipline and personal development. At the same time, in both, the 'machinery of brotherhood' remains to a certain degree present — albeit somewhat perversely shifted into place through the agency of persistent denial and ostentatious proclamations of indifference.

It was in this spirit that, a year or so later, Alexander Macmillan's commanding editor returned to the conundrum of independence versus fraternalism in the literary profession. In December 1862, David Masson devoted his editorial to an extended

meditation on the issues of 'Genius and Discipline in Literature'.[445] Significantly, *Blackwood's Noctes Ambrosianae* again formed an underlying point of reference in this article. Unlike 'Colloquy of the Round Table', however, this was a review of a new biography of John Wilson and the latter does not make his appearance until the final paragraph of the review's fifteen pages. By this point in the 1860s, Masson had clearly settled into his editorial stride and was more than willing to dispense with *Noctes*-inspired literary motifs when dealing with the subject of (the often elusive) mutual support systems between literary men. Here, the 'humbugging borrowed machinery of brotherhood' is nowhere to be seen and, instead, Masson sets about making a case for the importance of intellectual self-discipline in the individual writer. His argument is driven by a concern that, in contrast to most other occupations, there is a lack of formal disciplinary structure governing the literary calling. Masson finds his solution, however, in the military profession, arguing that its core codes of discipline, strategy, and tactics can also be applied productively to the writer's career.

Strikingly, before he enters into a meticulous military analogy, Masson appears to embrace the idea of all-encompassing literary Bohemianism. Observing that the literary man 'is the most lawless being on earth,' he claims that 'what is called Bohemianism in the literary world is only an extreme instance of a phenomenon belonging to literature as such.' He becomes increasingly allusive as he continues, declaring that:

> All literature is, in a sense, though not in the same sense, a vast Bohemianism. It is the permeation of ordinary society by a tribe of wild-eyed stragglers from the far East, who are held in check in general matters by the laws of society, and many of whom, in those portions of their lives that do not appertain to that peculiar tribe-business, may be eminently respectable, and even men of rank and

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[445] Masson, 'Genius and Discipline in Literature', *Macmillan's Magazine,* 7 (December 1862), 81–94.

>magistracy, but who, in what does appertain to the peculiar tribe-business work absolutely in secret, and are free from all allegiance except to themselves, and perhaps also, in some small degree, to one another.[446]

A pastiche of the flamboyant descriptions of Bohemianism which had characterized the previous decade, Masson here recycles well-established descriptive conventions, combining images of primitivism and exoticism to represent the characteristic social habits of literary professionals. However, Masson in fact uses this figurative interlude to undermine Bohemia's currency as a sociological metaphor. In extending the concept so that it encompasses the whole of the amorphous literary profession rather than particular cliques, Masson's Bohemianism merely provides an overview of literary society rather than actively generating a sense of group identity. Far from cultivating a feeling of collective belonging, the 'Bohemianism of literature' denotes the necessary independence of the individual writer from his literary colleagues as he creates his unique written product.

Ultimately, Masson harnesses this idea of literary Bohemianism in a *Saturday Review*-style dismissal of the notion that there is such a thing as a universal literary fraternity. The only true common ground between writers is their shared reliance on their own intellectual capital. Indeed, Masson's slight concession that literary men may in 'some small degree' bear an allegiance to one another quickly falls by the wayside as he claims that one might 'almost as well talk of a brotherhood of men who wear wigs, or an organization of men who agree in having turquoise-rings on their fourth fingers, as of a brotherhood of men of letters.'[447] His illustration of the disparities between literary men is telling, however. He observes that despite the amusement which the comic work of a writer such as Albert Smith might provide, the reader would clearly

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[446] Ibid., p. 83.
[447] Ibid.

not compare it to the philosophical tracts of a figure such as John Stuart Mill. Even by English Bohemian standards, Smith was an eccentric who defined himself through outlandish dress and indeed who may well have worn a turquoise ring on his fourth finger.[448] However, Smith was certainly no social outcast. Until his death in 1860, he spent twenty years doggedly securing a place at the heart of mainstream popular culture. The resourceful son of a surgeon, he had recovered from an ignominious dismissal from the staff of *Punch*, and gone on to publish a series of comic social 'zoologies' inspired by the contemporary French craze for physiologies.[449] Outselling even Dickens, these had brought about an unprecedented mythologization of marginal metropolitan types — most famously that of the 'gent'.[450] The latter was a rather dubious man about town who was usually preceded by one or more of the epithets *snobbish*, *cockney*, *fast* or indeed *Bohemian*. Despite Smith's satirical stance, *Punch* and its rivals in the sphere of satirical journalism ensured that both his style of writing and his public persona came to be identified with this figure in the public mindset.[451] They collectively formulated an 'Albert Smith' brand, casting him as the archetypal gent and his work as the prototype for a whole school of comic literature.[452]

To this extent, Albert Smith's meteoric rise to fame (and notoriety) in the second half of the 1840s was somewhat paradoxically accelerated by the boisterously anti-fraternal approach of contemporary comic journalism. Both as a butt of jokes and

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[448] For accounts of Albert Smith's life, see J.M. Thorington, *Mont Blanc Sideshow: The Life and Times of Albert Smith* (Philadelphia, John C. Winston Company, 1934) and R. Fitzsimons, *The Baron of Piccadilly: The Travels and Entertainments of Albert Smith* (London: Bles, 1967).

[449] Accounts of Smith's departure from *Punch* vary and tend to revolve around accusations of plagiarism. What is clear is that some of the early contributors (Mark Lemon and Douglas Jerrold, in particular) disliked him intensely. See *Adversity*, p. 249 and Altick, *Punch*, p. 50.

[450] Smith's 'zoologies' included *The Natural History of The Gent* (London: David Bogue, 1847), *The Natural History of the Idler Upon Town* (London: David Bogue, 1848), and *The Natural History of the Flirt* (London: David Bogue, 1848).

[451] A rather partisan review in *Bentley's Monthly* claimed that this identification was primarily brought about by indignant gents taking revenge on their taxonomizer. See 'Albert Smith', *Bentley's Monthly Review, or Literary Argus*, 2 vols (London: Piper, Stephenson, & Spence, 1854), II, 483–88 (p. 486).

[452] Smith's *History of the Gent* inspired a wave of imitations. Others published in its immediate aftermath included William Gaspey's *Physiology of Muffs,* J.W. Carleton's *Natural History of the "Hawk" Tribe* and Angus Reach's *Natural History of Bores* and *Natural History of Humbug.*

as an editor of a satirical magazine himself, Smith looked on as his reputation was buoyed up by the network of reciprocal mockery which distinguished this ever-expanding genre. Henry Vizetelly's *Punch*-inspired *Puppet-Show*, for example, abounded with tongue-in-cheek references to 'Prince Albert Smith' and his alleged sovereignty over a world of derivative comic writing.[453] A characteristic contributor poses the riddle 'Why is Albert Smith like a locomotive?'. The answer — 'Because he's so fast' — is followed by a typically subversive interjection from the editor who mischievously enquires: 'Would not it have been more appropriate, bearing in mind the immense mass of vapid rubbish Mr Smith sometimes publishes, to have said, "Because he emits such volumes of smoke?"'.[454] In another skit, Smith's name appears at the end of a fanciful list of patent applications — in his case for exclusive rights to 'the full benefit of his peculiarly "snobbish" style of literature'. A facetious editorial parenthesis follows, adding that 'We think this superfluous, as nobody is likely to evince any disposition to imitate the commonplace productions of that *quasi* eminent *litterateur*.'[455] A favourite technique of mid-nineteenth-century satirical journalism, this layering of multiple dissonant voices and densely packed wordplay creates an impression of boisterous repartee. It equally permits a particularly multi-layered and multi-directional brand of satire as *The Puppet-Show* lambasts Smith's alleged lack of talent and originality while, at the same time, impugning the literary tastes of a commercially-driven contemporary age.

It is also true, however, that *The Puppet-Show's* cacophonous lampoons of Albert Smith derived much of their satirical energy from a shared complicity in the

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[453] Like *Punch, The Puppet-Show* (1848–49) was an illustrated comic weekly. However, it cost a third of the price (one penny) for ten, as opposed to twelve, pages. Its youthful staff included James Hain Friswell, William North, Henry Sutherland Edwards, and Thackeray's later protégé, James Hannay. See Vizetelly, *Glances Back Through Seventy Years: Autobiographical and other Reminiscences* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1893).

[454] 'The Right Version', *The Puppet-Show,* 2 vols (London, 1849), II, 90.

[455] 'List of New Patents', ibid., 29. Contributor's italics.

world of 'light' comic literature. In both of the above instances, the exaggeratedly self-important editor who attacks Smith visibly overlooks the vulnerability of his own magazine to extremely similar charges. Such double-standards were very much part of the joke. The pages of *The Puppet-Show* were full of precisely the type of 'cockney' humour and ephemeral frivolities which incensed Albert Smith's more conservative critics. Yet there was also a more concrete basis to such parallels. In the same way that Vizetelly had established *The Puppet-Show* in a bid to capitalize on the success of *Punch*, Smith had made his own more successful attempt with the six-penny monthly, *The Man in the Moon*. Published between 1847 and 1849, this magazine in fact exceeded *The Puppet-Show* in both sales and sophistication.[456] Unlike Vizetelly's publication which imitated *Punch* as closely as possible in both style and page format, *The Man in the Moon* opted for a pocket-size design and introduced English readers to the comic strip for the first time.[457] During its brief but relatively successful two-year challenge to the market leader's authority, it stood out particularly for a virulent pamphlet attack on *Punch* in November 1847.[458] Yet, it returned time and again to jokes at *Punch's* expense, claiming that the latter had lost its comic touch and, more pointedly, that it plagiarized material from *The Man in the Moon's* pages.[459] As even one of *Punch's* most reverential biographers acknowledges, the second allegation was not always ill-founded.[460]

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[456] The sixty-four page magazine was co-edited by Angus Reach and its contributors included Shirley Brooks, Hablot Knight Browne, H.G. Hine, Kenny Meadows, and George Augustus Sala.

[457] Both *Punch* and *The Puppet-Show* were quarto-size. See David Kunzle, *The History of the Comic Strip, Vol. 2: The Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), pp. 308–12, for *The Man in the Moon's* contribution to the English comic-strip tradition.

[458] Entitled 'A Word with *Punch*', this was written in collaboration with the composer, Alfred Bunn. A young George Augustus Sala provided the pamphlet with a mock-*Punch* frontispiece and six thousand copies were reputedly sold. The incident was significant embarrassment for Mark Lemon's satirical market leader.

[459] A well-known instance of this was Shirley Brooks' hard-hitting verse, 'Our Flight with *Punch.*' Brooks would in fact go on to succeed Mark Lemon as editor of *Punch* in 1870, holding the post until his death in 1874.

[460] Spielmann, pp. 156–57.

When Vizetelly's *Puppet-Show* entered the fray it emulated this confrontational approach and its amalgam of shifting voices and double-entendres were swiftly absorbed into the marketplace's infinitely proliferating web of inter-referential ridicule. As well as attacking its competitors individually, it provided sardonic overviews of the rivalry between other journals on London's satirical scene. On one occasion, for example, it reported that a *Man in the Moon* contributor has given a 'bad sixpence' to Mark Lemon as 'conscience money for a joke which he had inadvertently taken from the columns of *Punch*'. A wry reference to the latter's past financial difficulties follows, as the reader is informed that *Punch* has been obliged to 'pay over [the money] as income tax due from the proprietors of the journal to the Government.'[461] Elsewhere, *The Puppet-Show* cites Alfred Bunn's 'Word with *Punch*' and represents the relationship between its rivals as a petty and potentially everlasting cycle of retaliation.[462] In joining in this cycle of retaliation itself, *The Puppet-Show* was doing more than staking its claim in the market for popular satire, however. Even as it lampooned *Punch* and *The Man in the Moon*, Vizetelly's magazine was simultaneously engaged in a more collaborative act — helping to reinforce the brand identity of satirical journalism as a vibrant and relevant genre. Witty infighting had become a popular trademark of the mid-century comic periodical and *The Puppet-Show's* dramatizations of warring cliques of satirical journalists fed into a saleable and thus paradoxically cohesive myth.

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[461] 'Conscience Money,' *The Puppet-Show,* 2 vols (London, 1849), II, 56.
[462] 'Important Intelligence,' ibid., 22.

4.4 'Hang us if we don't all hang together!'

By the time that David Masson made his rather slighting reference to Albert Smith at the end of 1862, the literary world had expanded on all fronts, including in the realm of satirical journalism. *The Man in the Moon* and *The Puppet-Show* may have been long gone but, from 1861 onwards, *Punch* had found itself faced with its first truly credible (and ultimately long-standing) rival, *Fun* — a publication to which Albert Smith would doubtless have contributed had he not died the year before it was established. Yet, despite these transformations, the irascible banter and all-encompassing mockery of late 1840s comic magazinery left its mark on some of the liveliest sections of London's homosocial scene in the decades which followed. This was, of course, not entirely surprising considering that some of the most active contributors to the former became some of the most enthusiastic participants in the latter. This was certainly true in the case of Albert Smith. As well as belonging to Edmund Yates's 'rowdy Bohemian faction' at the Garrick and to Thackeray's after-hours Fielding Club, throughout the 1850s he remained a staunch member of the more acutely Bohemian Arundel Club.[463] Similarly, Smith's former colleague at the *Man in the Moon*, George Augustus Sala, became an increasingly prominent fixture on London's club scene as the decade progressed — being particularly partial to the Covent Garden-based Reunion Club, for example.[464]

However, a crucial turning point came in 1857 when both of these 'clubbable' writers were involved in founding the Savage Club in the Crown Tavern on Drury

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[463] According to Escott, the Arundel was founded by the playwright Frank Talfourd, and Albert Smith was an 'almost nightly' visitor. See *Club Makers*, p. 265.

[464] See Sala, *The Life and Adventures of George Augustus Sala: Written By Himself* (London: Cassell and Company, 1896), p. 259.

Lane.[465] Initially, this 'little band of authors, journalists, and artists' — with the usual

taste for late licensing hours — did not seem particularly exceptional.[466] It was, after

all, simply the latest addition to mid-Victorian London's burgeoning middle-class

tavern culture discussed in the previous chapter. This new assemblage of up-and-

coming creative professionals certainly displayed pretty standard preferences for

dynamic conversation and entertainment away from the inhibitions of everyday life.

However, the fellowship which they founded quickly became notorious where others

had not, imposing itself on the London literary scene as an emphatically Bohemian

organization. As its name suggested, from the very beginning the Savage Club prided

itself on the decidedly robust manner in which its members bonded and supported each

other. A significant number, including Smith and Sala, had begun journalistic careers in

the late 1840s and were certainly in no hurry to leave behind the homosocial vigour

which they associated with this world both on and off the page. In fact, for many of

these men, professional ties with comic journalism remained firmly intact and, when the

playwright and actor, Henry J. Byron, went on to launch *Fun* in 1861, he found plenty

of willing staff amongst his fellow 'Savages'. The club's (sometimes over-fond)

historians have been keen to emphasize that 'rudeness, based on real friendship' and

'baiting one's brethren' were far more characteristic of the Savage's constitution than

were creative collaboration or the trading of favours.[467]

Such verbal jousting and self-subverting camaraderie were a natural extension

of the humorously pugnacious relations which characterized the journalistic satire that

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[465] Sala has often been cited as a ringleader amongst the club's founders. Albert Smith's involvement is less well documented. However, by the time of his death three years later, he had become a sufficiently significant Savage member for the Club to perform a benefit performance for his widow and daughter. Other founding members were Robert and William Brough, Andrew Halliday, James Hannay, G. L. Strauss, C.H. Browne, and Henry J. Byron. See Aaron Watson, *The Savage Club: A Medley of History, Anecdote and Reminiscence* (London: T.F. Unwin, 1907), p. 20.

[466] This is Andrew Halliday's retrospective description of the club's founding members ten years later in his edition of *The Savage Club Papers* (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1867), p. ix.

[467] Aaron Watson, p. 14. See also Edwin A. Ward, *Recollections of a Savage* (London: H. Jenkins, 1923), p. 4.

so many Savage members held close to their hearts. Nonetheless, it was also true that these behavioural practices had been the norm in plenty of other London fraternities which pre-dated the Savage. David Masson himself had been a keen clubman and in old age he affectionately recalled similar qualities in his favourite haunt, Douglas Jerrold's 'Our Club'. At this 'frugal' establishment in Clunn's Hotel, Covent Garden, Masson had become acquainted with such fellow members as Thackeray, Dickens, Mark Lemon, Hepworth Dixon, Robert Chambers, William Hazlitt junior, and William and Henry Mayhew.[468] In later years, he recollected that the club's 'special characteristics were a perpetual brilliant chaff and repartee; a wit, a banter, a certain habit of mutual fooling; a constant friendly warfare of the various nationalities which met there, — all difficult to describe, impossible to reproduce now, but very pleasant to remember.'[469] However, just less than three years before Masson published his editorial on writerly self-discipline in *Macmillan's Magazine*, it had become clear that the Savage was a club which would go on to handle its public relations in a very different way to those which had come before.

In February 1860, notices sprung up throughout the mainstream press announcing 'an amateur performance of somewhat extraordinary character' which was to take place at London's Lyceum theatre on the 7 March.[470] The night in question was to be a theatrical double bill coupling a performance of Richard Brinsley Sheridan's *A School for Scandal* with *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves* — a new burlesque which had been 'written expressly for th[e] occasion' to raise money for the relatives of two

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[468] Like many tavern clubs of the time, the genealogy of 'Our Club' remains hazy. Masson claims that it was a descendent of Douglas Jerrold's 'Museum Club' (so-called because a number of its members were readers at the British Museum) while Gordon Ray suggests that it was a successor to the Fielding Club discussed above (*Wisdom*, p. 345).

[469] Masson, *Memories of London in the 'Forties*, ed. by Flora Masson (Edinburgh: William Blackwood & Son, 1908), p. 218.

[470] 'Lyceum Theatre', *The Times* (23 February 1860), 11.

recently deceased members of the Savage Club.[471] The advance publicity suggests that there was a great deal of 'public interest and curiosity' in anticipation of the performance — something which the press related directly to the fact that *The Forty Thieves* was not only to be performed by the Savage Club members themselves but that it was also a product of their collaborative authorship.[472] In addition to the fact that this creative group effort involved the talents of a number of 'the young burlesque authors of the present day' (including 'Talfourd, Byron, the Brothers Brough, Halliday, Lawrence, Draper, Leicester Buckingham, &c.'), the 'formidable' name of the Savage Club attracted a considerable amount of attention.[473] In their respective previews and reviews of the production, the *Daily News* and *The Era* supplied the club with a speculative social and artistic heritage, linking its 'ferocious title' to the notoriously wayward eighteenth-century poet, Richard Savage.[474] Elsewhere, the 'Savage' name simply cast an intriguing light on the conviviality and creativity which were attributed to its membership. *Baily's Monthly Magazine of Sports and Pastimes* thus described the club as a '*réunion* of men of letters' who indulge 'in such intellectual conversation as may naturally be supposed to emanate from a company of gentlemen actively engaged in the most practical branches of modern authorship.' Yet the magazine was also careful to emphasize the rough edges of these cerebral exchanges, remarking on the Savage members' taste for 'billiards, small-talk, tobacco, and stimulants.'[475] Similarly, in its preview of the Savage burlesque, the *Illustrated London News* associated the club with a distinctly unpretentious form of social life, claiming that its members lived 'on wit and wine, on fun,' and on the strong London ale, 'Barclay and Perkins.' Like *Baily's*

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[471] These members remain unidentified.
[472] 'The Savage Club Amateur Theatricals', *Theatrical Journal* (29 February 1860), 1.
[473] 'Savage Club. Lyceum Theatre', *Theatrical Journal* (14 March 1860), 1.
[474] See *The Daily News*, quoted in Aaron Watson, p. 40 and 'Amateur Theatricals at the Savage Club', *The Era* (11 March 1860), 9.
[475] 'The Dramatic and Musical World of London', *Baily's Monthly Magazine of Sports and Pastimes* (April 1860), 113.

Monthly, however, the illustrated paper was careful to advertise the club's artistic credentials, observing that it contained 'within its walls many men well-known to letters and art.'[476]

In fact, the Savage Club's name also seemed a tongue-in-cheek reference to the early eighteenth-century Mohock club whose own title was inspired by the Native American Mohawk tribe.[477] As much a street gang as a club, the brutal practical jokes of this notorious and possibly apocryphal band of men had created havoc in the public imagination if not in reality, and, like the Savage Club, had sparked something of a media furore.[478] Similarly, though *The Arabian Nights* had long provided source material for nineteenth-century dramatists, the Savage Club's choice of subject-matter mischievously drew attention to the performative modes of masculine behaviour at its heart.[479] Through the narrative template of *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves*, the Savage benefit performance brashly externalized the precarious combination of fraternal support, manly independence, and hearty mockery encoded not just in its own constitution but also in the wider contemporary sphere of middle-class homosocial life. The burlesque's epilogue was particularly revealing in this respect. Composed by the prolific dramatist, J.R. Planché, this insisted on behalf of the Savage Club members that, in taking on the roles of Ali Baba and his forty dubious compatriots:

> We d[o] not seek the "bubble reputation",
> Nor our own nests to feather do we aim;

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[476] *The Illustrated London News,* quoted in Aaron Watson, p. 39.

[477] A variety of Native American regalia collected by one of the Savage Club's members was displayed on the wall of its first headquarters. See Aaron Watson, pp. 19–21.

[478] Robert J. Allen describes the Mohocks and their activities in his seminal *Clubs of Augustan London* (Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 1933), p. 105. Calhoun Winton, on the other hand, argues that the Mohocks were the invention of John Gay and Richard Steele to create publicity for the former's play, *The Mohocks.* See *John Gay and the London Theatre* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1993), pp. 19–25.

[479] Indeed, one of the leading Savage collaborators, Henry J. Byron, wrote and directed another Ali Baba burlesque just three years later in April 1863, entitled *Ali Baba; or, The Thirty-Nine Thieves. In Accordance with the Author's Habit of Taking One Off!*

To succour others is our "little game";
[...]
Don't frown, for we are serious, we protest,
There's many a true word spoke in jest;
We've double meanings, but no double-dealings,
And though we play on words, we don't on feelings.
The charity which smoothes misfortune's pillow
We hope will cover every peccadillo.'[480]

For all its bluster, this finale ironically anticipated the thoroughly double-edged status

which the Savage Club rapidly attained in nineteenth-century culture. Even at this early

stage in its history, the fraternity was at risk of losing any air of Bohemian spontaneity
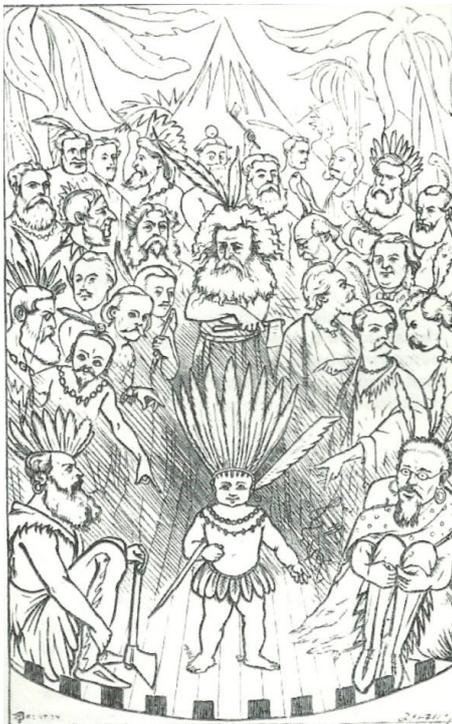
Figure 4b: Frontispiece, *The Savage Club Papers* **(London: Tinsley Brothers, 1867)**

— already vulnerable to the charge that chasing the 'bubble reputation' was in fact one of its primary concerns. Though the Savage was by no means the first club to stage a benefit performance, its initial burlesque was the first of many highly publicized amateur productions which progressively bolstered the establishment's high-profile position on London's literary homosocial scene.[481] Queen Victoria and Prince Albert even attended the burlesque's opening night and, by the middle of the same year, the Savage Club Amateurs had transformed into the more grandiose 'Robert

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[480] Quoted in James Robinson Planché, *The Recollections and Reflections of J.R. Planché (Somerset Herald)*, 2 vols (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1872), II, 216–17.

[481] Henry Morley reports that the Fielding Club performed a generic pantomime for the benefit of Crimean War veterans in 1855 — starring, among others, Albert Smith. However, this remained a far more private affair than the Savage burlesque (see Morley, *The Journal of a London Playgoer from 1851 to 1866* (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1866), pp. 111–13). For the Savage Club extravaganza's position in a long-standing tradition of benefit performance, see Vincent Troubridge, *The Benefit System in the British Theatre* (London: The Society for Theatre Research, 1967), p. 72.

Brough Memorial Fund' complete with an accompanying national tour.

These early performances laid the foundations for the later view that the Savage had 'organise[d] a fragment of the large circle of Bohemian London.'[482] To its detractors at the time, however, there was a sense in which the club was simply a deplorable reflection of the larger than life personalities of its members. For many, men such as Albert Smith and George Augustus Sala remained an acquired taste. Though there was no denying their respectively meteoric ascents to fame, their involvement in the Savage Club's similarly monumental rise inevitably attracted suspicion.[483] The establishment's high-profile position in London society exposed it to the accusation that it had vulgarly publicized masculine social life. Like the individual Bohemian journalist in the 1850s and 60s, the Savage Club was seen to have commandeered pre-existing homosocial structures and to have taken the liberty of making them its own. Irritation at the club's Bohemian presumptions reached a particular peak in the latter part of the 1860s, when the fellowship extended its charitable ventures into the publication of collaborative anthologies. In the preface to the first of these *Savage Club Papers* (see figure 4b), the club's secretary, Andrew Halliday, entered into a calm defence of 'Savage Bohemianism', insisting that it simply consisted in 'assembling once a week to dine together at a board, where we have had the honour to entertain distinguished literary men from all quarters of the globe, and where the stranger, who is of our own class, is ever welcome.'[484] Halliday was specifically responding to an attack on the club by the *London Review* a few months earlier. The latter had fastened on the Savage name,

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[482] Aaron Watson, p. 1.

[483] In the year that the club was founded, Albert Smith was by far the more famous of the two men. He was busily engaged in his spectacularly successful one-man stage show, *Mr Albert Smith's Ascent of Mont Blanc*, which had been on the bill at the Egyptian Hall, Piccadilly, for the past five years. Sala, on the other hand, had just taken up his post as leading special correspondent for the new *Daily Telegraph* — a role which would bring him substantial success in the years to follow.

[484] Halliday, p. xii.

claiming that it epitomized the long-standing pathological undercurrents of the 'abnormal state' of Bohemianism.[485]

At this point in the 1860s, Halliday's somewhat anodyne response had little effect and the Savage Club's self-publicizing Bohemianism continued to provide commentators with a convenient satirical handle — often as a means of deflecting attention away from the cliques and contradictions characterizing London's middle-class homosocial society as a whole. Ultimately, however, the Savage Club arguably won the battle. Though its combination of intellectual refinement and a grittier class of social interaction was certainly nothing new, by the end of the nineteenth century, its institutionalization of Bohemianism was generally seen as a cause for celebration rather than censure. In the process, the club had of course changed beyond recognition — quickly outgrowing not only its original tavern club surrounds in the late 1850s but also a series of increasingly grand premises as the century progressed. By 1900 the club was housed in the majestically neoclassical Adelphi Terrace and, in the same year, it held its forty-third annual dinner at the luxurious Hotel Cecil on the Thames Embankment (which was, at the time, the largest hotel in Europe). According to *The Times,* four hundred Savages attended this event — among them numerous high-profile members of the Aristocracy, the Church, the Military, and Parliament.[486] These included the Lord Chief Justice Alverstone, who, on proposing a toast, regaled the company with a rags-to-riches tale of the Savage Club's rise to fame. Since its humble beginnings in 1857, it had emerged as a significant player in fundraising for the Arts — not only in its continuing dramatic activities but also through 'Savage Scholarships' at esteemed institutions such as the Royal College of Music. The Lord Chief Justice also gave special mention to Gladstone's attendance of the club's birthday dinner in 1878 and to

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[485] 'Bohemianism', *London Review* (6 October 1866), 375–76 (p. 376).
[486] 'The Savage Club', *The Times* (10 December 1900), 14.

the appointment of the Prince of Wales (soon to be Edward VII) as an honorary Savage member in 1882. He might equally have added that the club had established its own Masonic Lodge in 1886 or have referred to any number of the prestigious official dinners which it had hosted over the years.

Such rousing speeches left little room for the suspicion that these changes in circumstances might have placed the club's Bohemian connections under pressure. Having ended his survey of the Savage Club's history, Lord Alverstone confidently claimed that the fellowship was as valuable as it had ever been in cultivating pivotal personal and professional relationships between men. In his view, the club was a 'powerful centre' of contemporary masculine culture, promoting productive fraternal bonds between its members. When Alverstone had concluded this tribute to the Savage's social advantages, the club secretary at the time launched into a more lyrical speech. Brief and exuberant, the latter extolled the fact that the club continued to possess 'the essence and spirit of Bohemianism, good fellowship and good comradeship, which brighten and purify life.' This toast offset the Lord Chief Justice's focus on institutional utility with a vision of Bohemianism which placed the emphasis firmly back on the experiences of the individual members of the Savage fraternity. Taken together, these two very different speeches encapsulated the combination of tangible sociological factors and subjective homosocial enthusiasm through which the club had patented a more publicly acceptable brand of unconventional homosociality.

At the same time, the turn-of-the-century Savage Club had become a bastion of a rather contradictory style of Bohemianism — a Bohemianism which was at risk of seeming excessively abstract, on the one hand, and disappointingly pragmatic, on the other. According to the club's first biographer, Aaron Watson, its modernized version of Bohemia was not associated with 'a gipsy style of living' but was instead rooted in

'temperament.' The club did not countenance 'carelessness of dress or disregard of niceness at meal-times', and yet it cultivated a thoroughly Bohemian 'atmosphere.'[487] Like the secretary at the annual dinner, Watson deprives the Bohemian lifestyle of concrete social and geographical characteristics, suggesting that it is dependent on entirely personal perceptions. However, he also remains in no doubt that the club has successfully preserved the robust form of fraternalism which evolved during its early days as an unassuming tavern gathering. He is similarly confident that this unpretentious mode of homosocial life has not lost any of its practical professional benefits. In fact, Watson's account reinforces the impression that, by this point in time, the Savages had won over a substantial section of London's homosocial society. If their version of Bohemianism was not actually the norm in day-to-day professional life, it had certainly become an influential rhetorical touchstone for members of the capital's creative industries when they sought to define themselves in the public eye.

Though he was himself never a member of the Savage Club, Thackeray's old adversary, Edmund Yates, provided characteristically vocal evidence of this in June 1886 when he gave a speech at the Royal General Theatrical Fund Dinner. Addressing members of London's journalistic, literary, and theatrical professions, he optimistically declared that:

> The great bond between us is — I use the word in its best, and not in its worst sense — a spirit of cultured, but yet unfettered Bohemianism, and I pray that bond may continue as long as — I want no more — as long as the United Empire shall exist.[488]

In fact, Thackeray would probably have tacitly approved of such sentiments. However, like many men of his generation he would have been unlikely to have been comfortable

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[487] Aaron Watson, p. 3.
[488] See 'Royal General Theatrical Fund', *The Era* (5 June 1886), 13.

with Yates's highly public celebration of Bohemian life. It is not hard to understand why. The precarious ideal of 'cultured yet unfettered Bohemianism' was clearly easier to maintain convincingly between a few close friends than it was between a diverse and ever-expanding group of creative professionals. Indeed, many men who had been young in the 1840s and 50s felt that in thus broadening its scope, Bohemia had inevitably to lose its edge. As one of Thackeray's contemporaries observed in old age: 'Yes, perhaps the new [fin-de-siècle] Bohemians are a more reputable set than their predecessors; but one cannot help thinking that they are a great deal duller.'[489]

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[489] This nostalgic lament for the Bohemianism of the mid-nineteenth century appeared anonymously in the *Cornhill Magazine* under the pseudonym, 'Old Fogey'. See 'The New Bohemia', *Cornhill Magazine*, 12 (March 1902), 315–25 (p. 325).

Conclusion: Idle Rebellions

> 'I tell you I am sick and tired of the way in which people in London, especially good people, think about money. You live up to your income's edge [...] You are a slave: not a man [...] I, with a hole in my elbow, who live upon a shilling dinner, and walk on cracked boot soles, am called extravagant, idle, reckless, I don't know what; while you, forsooth, consider yourself prudent. Miserable delusion!'
> **Philip Firmin to Arthur Pendennis in Thackeray's *The Adventures of Philip* (1861–62)**[490]

Long before any sense of 'dull' respectability had begun to cast its shadow over London Bohemia, Thackeray created one final Bohemian protagonist: the irascibly eccentric Philip Firmin. Making his blustering debut in January 1861 in what was to be Thackeray's last complete novel, this hot-headed youth brought together a remarkable selection of attributes. Though he remains a thoroughly mediocre and ungainly character throughout *The Adventures of Philip*, it is through Firmin's early experiences in Bohemia that his physique, his voice, and his behaviour attain their most bizarrely amplified proportions. Presented through Arthur Pendennis's stiflingly self-conscious narrative, Philip's 'wild and reckless' Bohemian idling takes place in a realm which is characterized as much by 'snarling' homosocial disputes as it is by semi-inebriated 'war-whoops', chain-cigar-smoking, and an ostentatious lack of grooming. This thesis has argued that Thackerayan representations of this sort formed a driving force in the emergence of an increasingly self-publicizing and inclusive brand of Bohemianism

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[490] *PH*, pp. 323–24.

amongst metropolitan and middle-class Victorian men — a phenomenon which did not gain its full momentum until the fin de siècle. However, Thackeray's creation of Philip Firmin in the early 1860s represented a pivotal moment in this century-long process. With this larger-than-life protagonist, Thackeray candidly interrogated his own cultural influence by striking at the heart of many of the Bohemian ideals which he had helped to shape over the preceding decade.

What is most remarkable about Philip's Bohemian lifestyle is that it is a direct product of the sins of his father, Dr Firmin. The latter is exposed as a philandering fraud at the end of the novel's opening number. By the second number, Philip's disgust at this paternal transgression has not only triggered his rejection of conventional society but has further magnified his corporeal presence in the narrative. The hostile atmosphere between father and son becomes indistinguishable from the pungent combination of cigar smoke and alcohol fumes which linger about Philip's person. As this unwholesome air infuses the novel, the young Bohemian's behaviour becomes not only increasingly antagonistic but more palpably pathological. Escaping from the macabre surrounds of Dr Firmin's 'dismal' household, Philip finds himself in a morbidly unhealthy Bohemia that provides little improvement. For all his faults, Philip's father is not far off the mark when he charges his Bohemian son with 'idleness and a fatal love of low company, and a frantic suicidal determination to fling his chances in life away' (*PH*, p. 148).

The deathly edge which Thackeray conferred on Philip's Bohemian lifestyle formed part of the novel's broader parody of the Sensation genre which had risen to prominence the year before (in publications such as Dickens's *All the Year Round*). However, the protagonist's pseudo-Gothic characteristics also represented an unmistakable allusion to the Continental Bohemianism of figures such as Becky Sharp

and her *Jeunes-France* predecessors. At the same time, Philip's rather peevish insistence on his own distinctly brash Bohemian principles clearly sent up the hearty brand of Anglo-Bohemianism which has formed the subject of this study. Philip had begun to take shape in Thackeray's mind during his first year as editor of the *Cornhill Magazine* in 1860 — the same year that the Savage Club had staged its boisterous performances of *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves*.[491] Like Edmund Yates, Thackeray was never part of this burgeoning Bohemian fellowship though he was certainly familiar with the work of many of its members — famously dubbing Henry Byron's new *Punch* spin-off '*Funch*', for example.[492] In fact, the most potent aspect of Thackeray's satirical interrogation of Bohemianism was its relationship with the increasing sense of creative pressure which he felt as a widely celebrated novelist. The monthly numbers of *Philip* emerged in the *Cornhill* in tandem with the *Roundabout Papers* and in both works Thackeray shows an acute awareness of just how recognizable his writing style and subject-matter have become to his readers. In the course of their garrulous digressions and self-directed meditations, Arthur Pendennis and Mr Roundabout appear almost physically drained as they repeatedly draw attention to the inevitable stylistic and thematic repetitions in their narratives. Philip Firmin's Bohemian rages very much form part of this narratorial self-laceration. His lumbering attempts to challenge the status quo encapsulate intensely human frustrations about just how difficult it is to be distinctive in a demanding commercial world — whether one attempts to raise oneself above popular mundanities or to rebel against previous generations.

While *The Adventures of Philip* is a novel which treats individualizing claims to originality with suspicion, it is one which enthusiastically embraces the idea that humanity is bound together by a collective air of faint ridiculousness. If Thackeray and

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[491] On Thackeray's advance planning of *Philip* during 1860, see *Wisdom*, p. 387.
[492] See Alvin Sullivan, *British Literary Magazines: The Victorian and Edwardian Age, 1837–1913* (London: Greenwood Press, 1984), p. 135.

Victor Sawdon Pritchett were drawn to the Latin Quarter in their youth by the promise of a liberatingly unconventional 'elsewhere', *Philip* reminds the would-be Bohemian that ultimately he cannot escape himself — that he is confined by his own limitations and those of his fellow human beings.[493] I end this thesis with the suggestion that it is for this reason that Thackeray's last complete novel has remained such a consummate portrait of Anglo-Bohemianism — both in the years following its publication and a hundred and fifty years later.

Today, as in the second half of the nineteenth century, the term *Bohemian* often risks appearing little more than a sociological buzzword — whether it be as a synonym for the so-called 'Creative Classes' or as estate-agent-speak for a neighbourhood teetering precariously between shabby-chic and chic proper.[494] In capturing the self-subverting essence of the English Bohemian, *Philip* leads us towards some more compelling alternatives. Indeed the natural descendants of Thackerayan Bohemia are not simply countercultural types of the more conservative hue — though traces of his primmer Bohemians (such as Arthur Pendennis) can certainly be found in the sartorial nostalgia and 'cut off and contrary' urbanity of social stereotypes such as the 'Young Fogey'.[495] In fact, far more dynamic media-led movements have recently revived elements of the self-parodic spirit, celebratory mediocrity, and relish for peculiarly English eccentricities which were fundamental to gentlemanly Bohemians such as Fred Bayham and Philip Firmin. Within the last two decades, alternative publications such as *The Idler* and *The Chap* have propelled themselves into the public eye with manifestoes which persuasively challenge the work ethic of post-industrial society through a

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[493] See note 4 above.

[494] In addition to the Media at large, the field of urban sociology has contributed significantly to the jargonization of the idea of the Bohemian. Particularly well known is Richard Florida's 'Bohemian Index' which he uses to measure the relationship between a city's economy and its population of 'creative' professionals. See Florida, *Cities and the Creative Class* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

[495] See Harry Mount, 'The Young Fogey: An Elegy', *The Spectator*, 13 September 2003 <http://www.lewrockwell.com/spectator/spec138.html> [Accessed 17 January 2010]

combination of tongue-in-cheek posturing and sincere socio-cultural commentary. Established by Gustav Temple in 1999, *The Chap* harnesses the idea of 'Anarcho-Dandyism' — a subversive mode of imitation whereby followers of the magazine mimic the style of past elites with the specific aim of breaking down social barriers and democratising (arguably) anti-capitalist values such as courtesy. Striving to 'return dignity to the art of loafing', the ethos of *The Idler*, on the other hand, appears a more straightforward throwback to Philip Firmin.[496] As in Philip's case, however, there is more to the magazine's idling philosophy than nostalgic whimsy. Rather, its contributors — and by implication, its readers — seek to find serious alternatives to a life motivated by fast-paced consumerism. These flourishing magazines thus continue to inspire a growing number of 'Idlers' and 'Chaps' who represent fitting successors to Thackeray's 'natural and unconventional' Bohemians. Like the atmospheric haunts of the latter, these publications are not without their contradictions — presenting themselves as universally accessible and yet stemming from a largely metropolitan and middle-class base. This thesis would nonetheless conclude that, like their Thackerayan forebears, those involved in these experimental journals combine satirical bite with mellow self-deprecation to bring about valuable cultural change in their own part-time and pragmatic way.

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[496]See *The Idler*, <http://idler.co.uk/about/> [Accessed 30 March 2010]. The magazine was founded by Tom Hodgkinson and Gavin Pretor-Pinney in 1993.

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