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Thackeray's qualifications as a literary critic

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Thackeray's Qualifications as a Literary Critic

I.

Thackeray's first qualification for literary criticism was the "aesthetic education" which he underwent rather outside the walls of school and university buildings than inside them and which eventually proved more rewarding than the school and university curricula, although his formal education, being good, even though unfinished, does of course form a very important part of his endowment. This informal and voluntary aesthetic education had many aspects, the chief of them being the discussions on art and literature which he carried on with his school and later his University friends, his extensive reading, both his regular and his voluntary study of the art of painting in the Paris and London studios, museums and galleries, his visits to theatres and concerts, and his own early activities as writer, critic and caricaturist.

One of the most important assets for him as literary critic was of course his extensive knowledge of literature, especially of those *genres* which later became the main subject of his critical interest (fiction, historical, biographical and travel-books), but also of those to which he paid, as critic, lesser attention (poetry and drama). We possess much direct evidence concerning his familiarity with the works of a very great number of classical, English, French, German, Italian and American writers, supplied by the records of his reading in his diaries, by the state of his library, the testimony of his friends, the records of his conversations, numerous occasional references to individual books and writers in his works and correspondence, and of course the bibliography of his criticism. The surprisingly wide range of his reading will be shown by the following list which includes the names of authors to whom he paid formal critical attention or whom he burlesqued or parodied (these names are distinguished typographically), of writers whose works he critically assessed in marginal notes scattered throughout his published writings, as well as of those whose names he only mentioned or whose works he referred to or quoted from (not always specifying his source), or whose characters he used for defining some particular traits of his own personages, of the characters created by other writers or of the authors whom he criticized. The list is arranged in alphabetical order and contains both great and minor writers in all *genres* of imaginative literature, including essay writers (authors of memoirs, chroniclers, pamphleteers and letter-writers are therefore excluded, as well as several anonymous works, mostly novels, of minor importance). Of the minor writers only such are mentioned who are to be found in the standard biographical dictionaries and companions to literature; their biographical dates are given in brackets (not, however, in the case of the writers to whom he paid formal critical attention, or the minor French writers already considered in my previous study). The list includes only those authors and works referred to by Thackeray in his works and letters (and in his critical contributions not yet reprinted, but considered in my analysis), and not those he mentioned in conversation, as I have not succeeded in seeing all the existing records of the latter. For ref-

erences from his *Works* the Oxford edition was used, as I had not access to the complete set of the Biographical or any other edition. In contradistinction to my preceding study on Thackeray's criticism of French literature I do not state the place where the references occur, as the footnote apparatus would be too cumbersome and I was too strongly aware of the danger of missing some of the references. As I have since ascertained, I have not escaped this danger even in the study referred to, and shall therefore give the references I missed in the footnotes to the names of the particular French writers.¹ I do not lay claim to any exhaustive treatment of the problem and am fully aware that the list does not and even cannot include all the writers whom Thackeray really read, for I may again have missed some of his references and have been unable to identify some of those I found (especially as far as his quotations from and references to French and German literary works are concerned), and he undoubtedly read several other authors to whom he does not refer anywhere.

Gilbert Abbott À Beckett, Joseph Addison, Aeschylus, Aescop, Gustave Aimard, William Harrison Ainsworth, Mark Akenside (1721—1770), Alcaeus, Andrea Alciati (1492—1550), Henry Alford (1810—1871), William Allingham (1824—1889), *Amadis de Gaul*,² Anacreon, Virginie Ancelot, Hans Christian Andersen, Auguste-Anicet Bourgeois (1806—1871), Benjamin Antier, *The Arabian Nights*, Archilochus, Ludovico Ariosto, Aristophanes, Charles Victor Prévot, Vicomte d'Arlicourt,³ Ernst Moritz Arndt, Ludwig Achim von Arnim,⁴ *Arthurian legends*, Émile Augier, Jane Austen, William E. Aytoun (1813—1865), Philip James Bailey (1816—1902), Edward Ball, afterwards Fitzball⁵ (1792—1873), Honoré de Balzac, Pierre Marie Baour-Lormian, Anna Letitia Barbauld (1743—1825), Richard Harris Barham (1788—1845), Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Abbé Barthélemy, Jean François Alfred Bayard (1796—1853), Frederick William Naylor Bayley ("Alphabet Bayley") (1808—1853), Thomas Haynes Bayly ("Butterfly Bayly") (1797—1839), James Beattie (1735—1803), Pierre Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais, Francis Beaumont, Roger de Beauvoir, Nikolaus Becker (1809—1845), William Beckford, Richard Bedingfield, Pierre Jean de Béranger, Charles de Bernard, Jacques Henri Bernardin de Saint-Pierre,⁶ Arnaud Berquin, the *Bible*, Robert Montgomery Bird (1806—1854), Sir Richard Blackmore (1650?—1729), William Blake,⁷ Samuel Laman

¹ Some French writers mentioned in the previous list (historians, memorialists, chroniclers, letter-writers) are not, however, included and so I reserve this footnote for the missed references to them. For those to Abbé Brantôme see *The Oxford Thackeray*, 17 vols., ed. George Saintsbury, Oxford University Press, London, New York, Toronto, 1908 (cited hereafter as *Works*) II, 383; to Jean Baptiste Colbert, Marquis de Torcy see *Works* II, 319n., XIII, 323, Garnett, op. cit., p. 147; to the *Mémoires du Cardinal Dubois* see *Works* II, 328; to Jacques Fitz-James, Duc de Berwick see *Works* XIII, 269, 279, 282 etc., 704; to Marquis de La Fare see *Works* III, 129; to Louis de Rouvroy de Saint-Simon see *Works* II, 321n., Garnett, op. cit., p. 150; to Alexandre, Comte de Tilly see *Punch*, vol. XIX, 1850, No. 486, p. 184. The following French writers have been missed by me altogether: Baron Amable Guillaume Prosper Bruguère de Barante (1782—1866; see Gulliver, op. cit., p. 226), Baron François de Bassompierre (1579—1646; his *Mémoires* were found in Thackeray's library), Christine de Pisan (1363?—1431; see Gulliver, op. cit., p. 227).

² For a missed reference to *Amadis*, used as a common generic name, see *Works* X, 198.

³ Thackeray reviewed his travel-book *The Three Kingdoms for the Morning Chronicle* (April 4, 1844), and commented on his novels only as a critical reader.

⁴ Thackeray had in his library *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* by von Arnim and Clemens Maria Brentano (see below).

⁵ Mentioned in the review of Bulwer's tragedy *Earl Harold*, *The Times*, September 5, 1837, p. 5.

⁶ For a missed reference to *Paul and Virginia* (to a picture on that subject) see *Works* II, 659.

⁷ Thackeray does not refer to Blake by name, but quotes from his "Tiger" (see *Works* XVII, 480).

Blanchard, Marguerite Power, Countess of Blessington, Boccaccio, George Henry Boker (1823—1890), Joseph Xavier Boniface ("Saintine"), the *Book of Common Prayer*, Joseph-Pétrus Borel, Ludwig Börne, Joseph Bouchardy,⁸ Dionysius Lardner Bourcicault ("Dion Boucicault") (1820?—1890), Sir John Bowring (1792—1872), Mary Elizabeth Braddon⁹ (1837—1915), Nicholas Brady (1659—1726), Clemens Maria Brentano, Anne Brontë, Charlotte Brontë,¹⁰ Emily Brontë, Charles William Shirley Brooks (1816—1874), Dr. John Brown (1810—1882), Thomas Brown¹¹ (1663—1704), Sir Thomas Browne, Robert Browning, John Baldwin Buckstone, Eustace Budgell (1686—1737), Lady Rosina Bulwer-Lytton, née Wheeler (1804—1882), John Bunyan, Gottfried August Bürger, John Burgoyne (1722—1792), Fanny Burney,¹² Robert Burns, Robert Burton, Lady Charlotte Campbell Bury, Lord Byron, Thomas Campbell, George Canning (1770—1827), Henry Carey (d. 1743), William Carleton (1794—1869), Frederick Howard, fifth earl of Carlisle (1748—1825), Giovanni Batista Casti, Catullus, Susannah Centlivre (1667? to 1723), Cervantes, A. Chamerovzov, Adelbert von Chamisso, Paul Aimé Chapelle (1806 to 1900), George Chapman, Hester Chapone, née Mulso (1727—1801), François René, vicomte de Chateaubriand, Thomas Chatterton, Geoffrey Chaucer, Guillaume Amfrye de Chaulieu, Charles Churchill, Colley Cibber, Lewis Gaylord Clark (1808—1873), Edward William Clarke ("Athanasius Gasker") (1800—1838), Claudian, Mrs. Archer Clive (1801—1873), Arthur Hugh Clough, Alexander Cochrane-Baillie (1816—1890), Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Jean François Collin D'Harleville (1755—1806), Wilkie Collins, William Collins, George Colman, the elder, George Colman, the younger, William Congreve, Benjamin Constant, Thomas Cooke (1703—1756), James Fenimore Cooper, Pierre Corneille, Marie Risteau Cottin, Abraham Cowley, William Cowper, Don Telesforo de Trueba y Cozio (1805?—1835), George Crabbe, Claude Prosper Jolyot de Crébillon, fils, Rev. George Croly (1780—1860), Dante, Daniel Defoe, Thomas Dekker, Casimir Delavigne, Abbé Jacques Delille, Demosthenes, Thomas De Quincey, Aubrey Thomas De Vere (1814—1902), Thomas John Dibdin (1771—1841), Charles Dickens, Denis Diderot, Benjamin Disraeli, William Drummond of Hawthornden,¹³ John Dryden, Philippe François Pinel Dumanoir (1806—1865), Alexandre Dumas-fils, Alexandre Dumas-père, Charles-Désiré Dupeuty,¹⁴ Thomas D'Urfey (1653—1723), Frédéric Auguste Duvert (1795—1876), Anne Honoré Joseph Duveyrier ("Mélesville") (1787—1865), John Earle¹⁵ (1601?—1665), Maria Edgeworth, Pierce Egan, George Eliot, Ebenezer Elliott, Sarah Ellis, née Stickney (1810?—1872), Ralph Waldo Emerson, Desiderius Erasmus, George Etheridge, Euripides, Johannes Daniel Falk (1768—1826), George Farquhar, François de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénelon,^{15a} Susan Edmonstone Ferrier, Paul Féval, Henry Fielding, Edward FitzGerald, Gustave Flaubert, John Fletcher, Jean Pierre Claris de Florian,¹⁶ Louis Marie Fontan (1801—1839), Samuel Foote, John Ford, Marc

⁸ Minor French dramatist, whose play *Hermann L'ivrogne* (1836) (though he does not mention its author) Thackeray critically considers in "French Dramas and Melodramas" (1840).

⁹ Thackeray saw the dramatization of her novel *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862), by George Roberts, in 1863.

¹⁰ Thackeray did not write any regular review of Charlotte Brontë's novels, but wrote a preface (which was at the same time an obituary article) to her unfinished novel *Emma*, published in the *Cornhill Magazine* in April 1860 ("The Last Sketch"). This is also the place where his only reference to Emily and Anne Brontë may be found.

¹¹ Thackeray very often refers to the widely known jingle of this minor satirist, hack writer and translator, "I do not love thee, Dr. Fell".

¹² Thackeray did not formally criticize her novels, though he commented on them as a reader, but reviewed her *Diary and Letters* for the *Morning Chronicle* (September 25, 1846).

¹³ The only reference occurs in the review of Ben Jonson's *Works*, *The Times*, December 28, 1838. Since my photocopy of this review (which I have succeeded in locating — see note 1 to Chapter VI) does not show the page number, I am obliged to omit this in my references.

¹⁴ A French minor dramatist whose play *Bergami et la reine d'Angleterre* (1833), written with Alhoy and Fontan, Thackeray critically considers in "French Dramas and Melodramas", not mentioning the author by name.

¹⁵ The English prelate, author of *Microcosmography* (1628), a collection of witty and epigrammatic character sketches which Thackeray had in his library.

^{15a} For a missed reference to Fénelon see *Punch*, vol. XIX, 1850, No. 486, p. 184.

¹⁶ For a missed reference to Florian see *Works* IX, 224.

Fournier (1803—1880), Benjamin Franklin, James Hain Friswell (1825—1878), *Frithiof*, John Galt, David Garrick, Sir Samuel Garth (1661—1719), Mrs. Gaskell, Dr. John Gauden¹⁷ (1605—1662), Théophile Gautier, John Gay, Paul Gerhardt¹⁸ (1607—1676), Salomon Gessner,¹⁹ Richard Glover (1712—1785), William Godwin, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Oliver Goldsmith, Samuel Griswold Goodrich (“Peter Parley”) (1793—1860), Catherine Frances Gore, Léon Gozlan, Thomas Colley Grattan (1792—1864), Richard Graves (1715—1804), Thomas Gray, Robert Greene, Jean Baptiste Gresset, Gerald Griffin (1803—1840), Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, *Guy of Warwick*, Hafiz, Thomas Chandler Haliburton (1796—1865), Anna Maria Hall, née Fielding (1800—1881), Basil Hall (1788—1844), Anthony Hamilton,²⁰ James Hannay (1827—1873), Georg Wilhelm Heinrich Häring (“Willibald Alexis”), George Julian Harney (1817—1897), Wilhelm Hauff,²¹ William Hayley (1745—1820), William Hazlitt, Reginald Heber²² (1783 to 1826), Heinrich Heine, Felicia Dorothea Hemans (1793—1835), John Abraham Herard, George Herbert, Robert Herrick, Georg Herwegh, Hesiod, Joseph Thomas James Hewlett²³ (1800—1847), Émile Marc Hilaire (“Marco de Saint-Hilaire”) (1793—1887), John Hippisley (d. 1748), E. T. A. Hoffmann, Oliver Wendell Holmes, John Home, Homer, Thomas Hood,²⁴ Theodore Edward Hook, Thomas Hope (1770—1831), John Hopkins (d. 1570), Horace, Victor Hugo,²⁵ Leigh Hunt, *Huon de Bordeaux*, Washington Irving,²⁶ G. P. R. James, Jules Janin,²⁷ Douglas Jerrold, Samuel Johnson, Charles Johnstone²⁸ (1719?—1800), Ernest Charles Jones (1819—1869), Ben Jonson, Patrick Weston Joyce (1827—1914), Juvenal, Alphonse Karr, John Keats, John Keble (1792 to 1866), Hugh Kelly (1739—1777), Thomas Ken (1637—1711), Edward Vaughan Hyde Kennealy (1819—1880), John Pendleton Kennedy (1795—1870), James Kenney (1780—1849), Thomas Killigrew (1612—1683), Mrs. Henry King, née Susan Petigru (1826—1875), Alexander William Kinglake (1809—1891), Charles Kingsley, James Sheridan Knowles, Paul de Kock, Karl Theodor Körner, August von Kotzebue, Pierre-Ambroise François Choderlos de Laclos,

¹⁷ Claimed to be the author of *Eikon Basilike*, to which Thackeray refers several times in *Esmond* and of which he also makes use in the structure of the novel, as Loofbourrow has pointed out (see op. cit., p. 157).

¹⁸ German Lutheran clergyman and hymn writer. For Thackeray's reference to his “Nun ruhen alle Wälder”, see *Works* XVII, 233.

¹⁹ Thackeray's reference (in *Works* III, 198) to Gessner's idealized shepherdesses might refer either to his pictures or to his pastoral *Idylls* written in prose, but most probably to the former.

²⁰ For a missed reference to his *Mémoires du comte de Grammont* see *Works* XIII, 223.

²¹ Thackeray refers to Hauff only once by name (see *Works* V, 127), but quotes from his poetry (see R. M. Werner, *Der Einfluss der deutschen Literatur auf W. M. Thackeray*, Teplitz-Schönau, 1907, p. 27), and his burlesque fairy-tale *Sultan Stork* was directly inspired by Hauff's fairy-tale *Die Geschichte von Kalif Storch* (see Heinrich Frisa, *Deutsche Kulturverhältnisse in der Auffassung W. M. Thackerays*, Wiener Beiträge zur Englischen Philologie, XVII. Band, 1908, p. 26).

²² In his youth Thackeray read Heber's *Narrative of a Journey through India, 1824 to 1825* (1828) to which he refers in *The Letters and Private Papers of William Makepeace Thackeray*, ed. G. N. Ray, 4 vols., Oxford University Press, London, 1945 (cited hereafter as *Letters*; the quotations are presented in the original form, without any corrections of spelling and punctuation), IV, 262 and in *Works* XIII, 809, but he also quotes from his poetry (see *Works* XIII, 808). For a positive evaluation of Heber as a good divine, one of the best of English gentlemen and a charming poet see *Works* XIII, 807—808.

²³ Author of *Peter Priggins*, *The College Scout* (3 vols., 1841), referred to by Thackeray as to a novel by Theodore Hook.

²⁴ Critically considered in an essay “On a Joke I Once Heard from the Late Thomas Hood”, *The Cornhill Magazine*, December 1860.

²⁵ Thackeray reviewed only two non-fictional works by Hugo, but commented on his poetry and drama as a reader.

²⁶ Critically considered in an obituary essay “Nil Nisi Bonum”, *The Cornhill Magazine*, February 1860.

²⁷ Critically assessed by Thackeray as journalist and critic.

²⁸ Author of *Chrysal*, or *the Adventures of a Guinea*, which Thackeray had in his library.

Paul Lacroix ("Le Bibliophile Jacob") (1806–1884), Jean de La Fontaine,^{26a} Alphonse de Lamartine, Charles Lamb, Friedrich de La Motte-Fouqué, Letitia Elizabeth Landon, La Rochefoucauld,^{26b} George Alfred Lawrence (1827–1876), Nathaniel Lee, Charlotte Lennox (1720–1804), Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont, René Lesage,²⁹ Adolphe de Leuven, Le Comte de Ribbing³⁰ (1807–1884), Charles Lever, August Lewald (1792 to 1871), Matthew Gregory Lewis, George Lillo, Thomas Henry Lister (1800–1842), Frederick Locker-Lampson (1821–1895), Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Jean Baptiste Louvet de Couvrai,³¹ Samuel Lover, James Russell Lowell, Lucan, Lucretius, Henry Luttrell (1765?–1851), Lycophron, John Lydgate, George Lyttelton, first Baron Lyttelton (1709 to 1773), Edward George Earle Lytton, Bulwer-Lytton, Henry Mackenzie (1745–1831), Charles Macklin (1697?–1797), James Macpherson, *The Mahābhārata*, Francis Sylvester Mahony ("Father Prout") (1804–1866), François de Malherbe, Mary De La Rivière Manley (1663–1724), Lord John James Robert Manners (1818–1906), Walter Map, Auguste Maquet (1813–1888), Louis Antoine François de Marchangy (1782–1826), Marguerite de Valois-Angoulême, Queen of Navarre, Christopher Marlowe,³² Jean François Marmontel, Frederick Marryat, Anne Marsh, later Marsh-Caldwell, née Caldwell, John Marston, Martial, Sir Theodore Martin (1816–1909), Harriet Martineau,³³ William Mason (1724–1797), Philip Massinger, Charles Robert Maturin, William Hamilton Maxwell (1792–1850), Augustus Septimus Mayhew, Henry Mayhew, Prosper Mérimée, Joseph Méry (1798–1865), Henry Hart Milman (1791–1868), Richard Monckton Milnes, Lord Houghton (1809–1885), John Milton, Mary Russell Mitford (1787 to 1855), Molière, Henri Monnier, Charles Montagu, first earl of Halifax (1661–1715), Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Michel E. de Montaigne, James Montgomery (1771–1854), Robert Montgomery, Thomas Moore,³⁴ Hannah More, Sir Thomas More, Lady Sydney Morgan, née Owenson (1776–1859), James Justinian Morier (1780?–1849), Charles Morris (1745–1838), J. Maddison Morton³⁵ (1811–1891), John Motley (1692–1750), William Mountfort (1664?–1692), Johann August Musaeus³⁶ (1735–1787), Alfred de Musset, Gustave Nadaud, Carolina Nairne, née Oliphant (1766–1845), William Johnson Neale (1812–1893), Louis François Nicolaie ("Clairville")³⁷ (1811–1879), Charles Nodier, Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton, née Sheridan, Laurence Oliphant (1829–1888), Thomas

^{26a} For a missed reference to and quotation from La Fontaine see *W. M. Thackeray, Stray Papers*. Being Stories, Reviews, Verses, and Sketches (1821–1847), ed. Lewis Melville, Hutchinson and Co., London, 1901 (further to be denoted as *Stray Papers*), pp. 139–140.

^{26b} For a missed reference to and quotation from La Rochefoucauld see Garnett, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

²⁹ For some other references to *Gil Blas*, not mentioned in my previous study, see *Works* II, 397, 627, 628 (pictures on the subject), *Works* XVII, 614.

³⁰ Author of *La Foire aux idées* (1849) (with Lhérie), critically considered by Thackeray in "Two or Three Theatres at Paris", *Punch*, February 24, 1849, though the author is not mentioned by name.

³¹ For a missed reference to Louvet see *Stray Papers*, p. 291.

³² Thackeray does not refer to Marlowe by name, nor does he mention any of his plays, but more than once he has references to Bajazet, the historical ruler of the Ottomans, which might refer to Bajazet as he figures in Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great* (or in Rowe's *Tamerlane*).

³³ According to Gulliver, Thackeray reviewed her book *How to Observe. — Morals and Manners* for the *Times*, October 9, 1838.

³⁴ Thackeray reviewed the last volume of his *History of Ireland; from the earliest Kings of that Realm down to its last Chief*, 4 vols., for the *Morning Chronicle* in 1846.

³⁵ Author of farces, one of which, *A Desperate Game*, was produced as private theatricals at a house-warming at Palace Green (February 1862) (see Melville, *William Makepeace Thackeray*, II, p. 54).

³⁶ Thackeray certainly read three stories by this German Romantic in Carlyle's *German Romance*, but he does not refer to him anywhere.

³⁷ Author of the play *La propriété, c'est le vol!* (1848) which Thackeray critically considers in "Two or Three Theatres at Paris", though he does not mention the author's name, and author or co-author of several other plays which Thackeray saw performed on the stage.

Otway, Ovid, Robert Dale Owen³⁸ (1771—1858), Thomas Paine, Robert Paltock (1697—1767), Julia Pardoe (1806—1862), Coventry Patmore, James Payn (1830—1898), Thomas Love Peacock, George Peele, Thomas Percy, Charles Perrault, Gaius Petronius,³⁹ Phaedrus, Charles Philipon, Adolphe Philippe (“Dennerly”) (1811—1899), Ambrose Philips (1675? to 1749), Charles Antoine Guillaume Pigault-Lebrun, Pindar, James Robinson Planché (1796 to 1880), Count August von Platen-Hallermünde, Plautus, Robert Pollok (1798—1827), John Pomfret (1667—1702), François Ponsard, John Poole (1786?—1872), Alexander Pope, Jane Porter, Beilby Porteus (1731—1808), Abbé Prévost, Matthew Prior, Adelaide Anne Procter (1825—1864), Bryan Waller Procter (“Barry Cornwall”),⁴⁰ Francis Quarles, Edgar Quinet,⁴¹ Quintilian, François Rabelais, Jean Racine, Ann Radcliffe, née Ward, Mary-Anne Radcliffe,⁴² Sir Walter Raleigh, Allan Ramsay, Rudolph Erich Raspe⁴³ (1737—1794), Thomas Buchanan Reid (1822—1872), Charles Reade, Richard Realf (1834 to 1878), Thomas Mayne Reid, Nicolas Edmé Restif de la Brétonne, M. R. L. Reybaud, *Reynard the Fox*, G. W. M. Reynolds, John Hamilton Reynolds (1796—1852), William Barnes Rhodes (1772—1826), George Edward Rice⁴⁴ (1822—1863), Samuel Richardson, Jean Paul Richter, *Robin Hood ballads*, John Rochester (1647—1680), Samuel Rogers (1763—1855), *Roman d’Antar*,⁴⁵ *Roman de sept sages*, Pierre de Ronsard, Michel-Nicolas-Balissou de Rougemont,⁴⁶ Claude Joseph Rouget de Lisle, Jean Jacques Rousseau, Nicholas Rowe, Saadi, George Augustus Sala (1828—1896), George Sand, Sappho, Richard Savage (c. 1697—1743), William Pitt Scargill (1787—1836), Friedrich Schiller, Johanna Schopenhauer, née Trosiener (1766—1838), Walter Scott, Eugène Scribe, Madame de Scudéry, Catharine Maria Sedgwick (1789—1867), Sir Charles Sedley, Titius Septimius, Thomas James Serle (fl. 1819—1847), *The Seven Champions of Christendom*, Thomas Shadwell, William Shakespeare, Henry Wheeler Shaw (1818—1885), Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Richard Brinsley Sheridan, Mary Martha Sherwood, née Butt (1775—1851), Sir Philip Sidney,⁴⁷ Lydia Howard Sigourney, née Huntley (1791—1865), Joseph Simon (“Lockroy”) (1803—1891), Albert Richard Smith (1816—1860), Alexander Smith (1830—1867), Horace Smith, James Smith (1775—1839), Tobias Smollett, George Soane, Solon, Sophocles, Frédéric Soulié, Robert Southey, Robert Southwell, Émile Souvestre, Edmund Spenser, Thomas Sprat (1635—1713), Madame de Staël, Statius, Richard Steele, Laurence Sterne, Thomas Sternhold (d. 1549), William Wetmore Story

³⁸ For Thackeray’s reference to Mr. Dale Owen’s *Footsteps on the Confines of Another World* see *Works* XVII, 441. The author referred to is obviously Robert Dale Owen, son of Robert Owen, journalist and minor novelist in America, interested in spiritualism.

³⁹ Thackeray several times refers to Trimalchio, the rich vulgar upstart from the episode “Cena Trimalchionis” in *Petronii Arbitri Satyricon* (see *Works* XIV, 640, XVII, 548, 549).

⁴⁰ Thackeray reviewed his edition of Ben Jonson’s *Works* (see note 1 to Chapter VI).

⁴¹ Thackeray refers to his philosophic epic *Prométhée*, not to his historical works.

⁴² The author of *Manfrone: or, The One-Handed Monk* (1828), see *Letters* II, 55 and note.

⁴³ The author of *Münchhausen*. Thackeray read the book at Charterhouse (see his drawing of the Historic Muse in *Thackerayana*, A New Edition, Chatto and Windus, London, ed. Joseph Grego, 1901, p. 30), i.e. too early to be able to read it in its famous German version by Gottfried August Bürger (though, as Werner suggests in op. cit., pp. 24—25, and Frisa confirms in op. cit., p. 25; he might have read this work in one of the numerous English editions of the years 1787—1822, all of which relied both on Raspe and Bürger, but especially on the latter writer). Whoever the author of the edition he read may have been, however, he found in *Münchhausen* much inspiration, especially in the creation of Major Gahagan and Barry Lyndon, and in Jos Sedley’s reminiscences of his career in India (for the last see Laurie Magnus, *A Dictionary of European Literature*, George Routledge and Sons, Ltd., London, 1926, p. 358). See also his contribution to *Punch*. “Les Premières Armes de Montpensier; or, Münchhausen Outdone”, April 1844. For references to *Münchhausen* see *Works* V, 529, XVII, 502, etc.

⁴⁴ Author, with John H. Wainwright, of a book of verse called *Ephemera*.

⁴⁵ In 1844 Thackeray read *Antar*, according to Ray possibly *Antar, a Bedoueen Romance* (1820), a partial translation of the long Arabic *Romance of Antar* (see *Letters* II, 157). Subsequently he referred to the hero and heroine several times.

⁴⁶ Author of the play *La Duchesse de la Vaubalière* (1836), critically assessed by Thackeray in “French Dramas and Melodramas”, though its author is not mentioned.

⁴⁷ For a reference to Strephon from *Arcadia* see *Works* XV, 1005.

(1819—1895), Harriet Beecher Stowe, Joseph Strutt⁴⁸ (1749—1802), Emmeline Charlotte Elizabeth Stuart-Wortley (1806—1855), Sir John Suckling, Eugène Sue, Robert Smith Surtees (1803—1864), Jonathan Swift, Algernon Charles Swinburne, Cornelius Tacitus, Torquato Tasso, Nahum Tate (1652—1715), Bayard Taylor (1825—1878), Sir Henry Taylor (1800 to 1886), Jane Taylor (1783—1824), Tom Taylor (1817—1880), Alfred Tennyson, Frederick Tennyson, Terence, Theophrastus, Lambert Thiboust (1826—1867), Hester Lynch Thrale, later Piozzi (1741—1821), Thomas Tickell (1686—1740), Johann Ludwig Tieck, Sarah Trimmer (1741—1810), Anthony Trollope, Frances Trollope, Martin Farquhar Tupper (1810 to 1889), Ivan Sergeevich Turgenev, Johann Ludwig Uhland, Jean Joseph Vadé,⁴⁹ *Valentin et Orson*, François-Charles Van der Velde⁵⁰ (1779—1824), Eléonore Tenaille de Vaulabelle (“Jules Cordier”) (1802—1859), Théodore Lauzanne de Vaux-Roussel (1805—1877), Le Comte Horace de Viel Castel, Alfred de Vigny, George Villiers, second duke of Buckingham (1628—1687), Virgil, Voltaire, Edmund Waller, Horace Walpole,⁵¹ Isaac Walton, Edward (“Ned”) Ward (1667—1731), Samuel Warren (1807—1877), Henry Kirke White (1785—1806), the Rev. James White (1803—1862), Charles Whitehead (1804—1862), William Whitehead (1715—1785), Christopher Martin Wieland, John Wilkes (1727—1797), Nathaniel Parker Willis, John Wolcot (“Peter Pindar”) (1738—1819), William Wordsworth, William Wycherley, Edmund Yates (1831—1894), Edward Young.

Since I ascertained the references to the following authors after the typescript was in the hands of the printers, I give them here separately, along with those authors who took me longer to identify:

Topham Beauclerk (1739—1780), Isaac Hawkins Browne (1705—1760), Elizabeth Carter (1717—1806), Sir Henry Cole (“Felix Summerly”), John Esten Cooke (1830 to 1886), Thomas Osborne Davis (1814—1845), Charles, sixth earl of Dorset (1638—1706), Karl von Holtei (1798—1880), Jacobus de Voragine, Anna Brownell Jameson, John Cordy Jeaffreson (1831—1901), Andreas Justinus Kerner (1786—1862), Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock, *Lazarillo de Tormes*, Marchioness of Londonderry (Lady Frances Jocelyn), Edward Robert Bulwer Lytton (“Owen Meredith”) (1831—1891), Charles Mackay (1814—1889), Adam Gottlob Oehlschläger, Silvio Pellico, John Philips (1676—1709), Plutarch, Winthrop Mackworth Praed (1802—1839), Wentworth Dillon, fourth earl of Roscommon (1633—1685), Henry Sacheverell (1674?—1724), Elizabeth Missing Sewell (1815—1860), John Hall Stevenson (1718—1785), William Tennant (1784—1848), Mary Tighe, née Blachford (1772—1810), Frederick Goddard Tuckerman (1821—1873).

We should add that Thackeray had in his library or refers in his writings to the following works in which he could find information about or even read the works of many other authors than those mentioned in the list:

Aitken John: *The Cabinet, or the Selected Beauties of Literature* (6 vols., 1831); Allibone S. A.: *A Critical Dictionary of English Literature and British and American Authors* (vol. I only, Philadelphia, 1859); Bell R.: *Annotated Edition of the English Poets and Bell's British Theatre* (21 vols., 1776—1781, 36 vols., 1791—1802); Bernstein: *Selection from the best German Authors* (1851); *Biographie Universelle, Ancienne et Moderne* (52 vols., 1811); *The British Theatre* (1806—1809, ed. by Mrs. Elizabeth Inchbald); Brougham, Lord: *Men of Letters of the Time of George III* (1855); *Corpus Poetarum Latinorum* (1849); John Cumberland's *British Theatre*, by D. G. (i.e. George Daniel, 48 vols., 1826—1861); Dodsley Robert: *A Collection of Poems* (6 vols., 1758); The same: *A Select Collection of Old Plays* (1774);

⁴⁸ “...Barham late in 1840 urged him to write a romance on the pattern of Joseph Strutt's *Queen-Hoo Hall*, a tale of fifteenth-century life which had been completed by Scott” (G. N. Ray, *The Uses of Adversity*, p. 268).

⁴⁹ For a missed reference see *Works VI*, 260.

⁵⁰ A German historical novelist. Thackeray refers to one tale of “Vandevelde”, of which he was reminded by one story in Mrs. Percy Sinnett's *A Christmas in the 17th Century* (see *Works VI*, 582). Of course, he also refers to the famous painter Vandevelde (see e.g. *Works X*, 245).

⁵¹ Thackeray reviewed his *Letters* for the *Times*, March 10, 1840.

French Novels, &c. — a large parcel; French and German Books, various — a large parcel; Humphrey E. R.: *Lyra Hellenica* (2 vols., 1854); *Leçons de Littérature Allemande* (1842); Lempière John: *Classical Dictionary; The London Stage* (vols. 1 and 4, 1825); *The Novel Newspaper* (9 vols., 1839—1841); Rollin Charles: *Histoires anciennes* (1730—1738); Sellar W. Y.: *The Roman Poets of the Republic* (1863), etc.

It should also be pointed out that his knowledge of dramatic literature was not confined to his reading, but that he had seen a very great number of dramatic productions performed on the stage, not only in England, but also in Ireland, France or Germany. He also possessed several works of literary criticism, but with these we shall deal separately.

It follows from the above that Thackeray's knowledge of imaginative literature in all its kinds and *genres* was indeed surprisingly extensive for an English novelist and critic of his time. Due emphasis must be laid upon his familiarity with literatures of other countries than his own, which was rare in a writer for the magazines of his day, when travel was expensive, as Melville points out.⁵² Moreover, his reading was not only extensive — it was also appreciative: in most cases he not only recorded books read and performances seen, but also critically commented upon them. Although he had not such a good memory as Macaulay (a limitation which he often regretted), in the course of his reading he acquired a great store of literary materials for his own imaginative work, not to mention that practice in formulating an opinion upon literary works of diverse kinds, so important for a literary critic. Upon the whole we may safely conclude that he was a better-read man than for example Dickens and almost as well-read as G. H. Lewes, the first representative of English criticism to whom an adequate knowledge of foreign literature and a truly European outlook are normally attributed. He was not, however, such a serious student of philosophical and scientific works as was Lewes, or even as was George Eliot. Yet I can provide another, much shorter, list which will show that his interest in philosophy, theology and science was not so narrow and superficial as is usually supposed. From the sphere of philosophy he had in his library or read some works by or refers by name to the following thinkers (both great and minor; those included in the previous list as writers of fiction or other forms of literature are omitted):

D'Alembert, Anaxagoras, Aristotle, Augustine, Pierre Bayle (1647—1706), George Berkeley, Lord Bolingbroke, Charles Bray, Thomas Carlyle, Cicero, Confucius, Victor Cousin, Ralph Cudworth (1617—1688), Democritus, Diogenes, Père Enfantin, Epicurus, Euclid, Fourier, Helvétius,^{52a} Herder, Hobbes, Hume, Kant, Thomas à Kempis, Félicité Robert de Lamennais, Pierre Leroux, Locke, Machiavel, Sir James Mackintosh (1765—1832), Mahomet, Malthus, James Mill, John Stuart Mill, Montesquieu,⁵³ Robert Owen, Blaise Pascal,⁵⁴ Phacdon, Plato, Pythagoras, Saint-Simon, Seneca, Simmias, Socrates, Emanuel Swedenborg.

The list including the names of the theologians and preachers in whose works he was interested is also fairly extensive, and it does not include all the authors of sermons, commentaries on the Bible, etc., whose works he had in his library:

⁵² See Melville, *op. cit.*, I, 138.

^{52a} For a missed reference to Helvétius see *Works* XVII, 4.

⁵³ For references to Montesquieu see *Works* I, 52, XVII, 4, 5.

⁵⁴ For missed references to Pascal see *Works* V, 400 and *Punch*, vol. XIX, 1850, No. 486, p. 184.

B. Aiken,⁵⁵ Richard Allestree⁵⁶ (1619—1681), Francis Atterbury (1662—1732), Isaac Barrow (1630—1677), Hugh Blair, Jacques Bénigne Bossuet,⁵⁷ Alban Butler (1711—1773), John Caird (1820—1898), Edmund Campion (1540—1581), William Ellery Channing (1780—1842), St. John Chrysostom, Charles Drelincourt (1595—1669), Richard Hooker (1554?—1600), John Huss,⁵⁸ Edward Irving (1792—1834), Jerome of Prague, John Knox, William Law (1686—1761), Charles Leslie (1650—1722); Saint Ignatius Loyola, Martin Luther, Olaus Magnus, Jean Baptiste Massillon,⁵⁹ Theobald Mathew (1790—1856), Claude François Menestrier, John Henry Newman, Theodore Parker (1810—1860), Saint Patrick, John Pearson (1613—1686), William Pinnock, Prester John, Edward Bouverie Pusey, Nicholas Ridley (1500?—1555), William Sherlock (1641?—1707), Edward Stillingfleet (1635—1699), Jeremy Taylor, John Tillotson (1630—1694), William Wake (1657—1737), William Warburton, Dr. Isaac Watts, John Wesley, Henry Whitfield (1597—1657), William Wilberforce (1759—1833), Caroline Wilson, née Fry (1787—1846), Nicholas Patrick Wiseman (1802—1865).

The references to the following theologians have been discovered or the writers identified subsequently:

Joseph Butler (1692—1752), John Calvin, Pierre Charron, John William Colenso (1814 to 1883), Thomas Cranmer, Cyrillus and Methodius, Cornelis Jansen, Jean Baptiste Henri Lacordaire, Jan Laski, Diego Laynez, Richard Whately (1787—1863), John Wycliffe.

Of various scholars and scientists Thackeray refers to:

Sir George Biddell Airy (Professor of Astronomy), Athenaeus, Roger Bacon, Francis Trevelyan Buckland (naturalist), Corderius, Faraday, Galileo, Hugo Grotius, Herschel, William Lily, Linnæus (i.e. Carl von Linné), Newton, Paracelsus, Richard Porson (Professor of Greek), David Ricardo, Christian Friedrich Schönbein (German chemist), Adam Smith, Gilbert White, etc.

He also mentions *Vestiges of Creation*, a work presenting the theory of the evolution of species of animal life, published anonymously in 1844 by Robert Chambers (1802—1871). His interest in contemporary science, which is usually denied, was not very deep but proved to be rewarding for his imaginative work, as Loofbourow has shown, pointing out that Thackeray's mock-epic and romance evocations of primitive impulse in *Vanity Fair* are "an imaginative projection of the hypotheses of contemporary science", represent a "contingent aspect of Thackeray's insight" and "a newly recognized aspect of human reality" and become, in *The Newcomes*, "a symbolism of creative method".⁶⁰

Thackeray was so well-read in history that it is almost impossible to compile a list of his reading in this sphere; his familiarity with biographical, epistolary and memoir literature was so wide that no list would be sufficient to demonstrate its range, for we know that he read numerous works of this type, the titles and authors of which he did not record. As Loofbourow has shown, Thackeray's study of biography and history played a very important role in his development as artist, especially in his creation of *Henry Esmond*.

⁵⁵ Author of *The Dean, or the Popular Preacher* (1859) which Thackeray had in his library.

⁵⁶ The probable author of *The Whole Duty of Man* (1658), several times referred to by Thackeray.

⁵⁷ For a missed reference to Bossuet see *Works* XIII, 704.

⁵⁸ Thackeray knew quite a lot about the life, personality and works of John Huss (mostly from historical works he read or reviewed) and even quotes Huss's famous saying "O sancta simplicitas". He also several times refers to Jerome of Prague and Johann Ziska.

⁵⁹ For missed references to Massillon see *Works* XIII, 132, 381, 704.

⁶⁰ Op. cit., p. 89.

II.

A qualification of Thackeray no less important for his critical work than his reading of imaginative literature and his studies in philosophy, history, biography, etc., was his adequate knowledge of the critical and aesthetic literature of all periods and of several countries. I shall try to demonstrate its range in the following survey, summing up all the evidence available to me from Thackeray's works and letters, as well as from the state of his library. This evidence is unfortunately not very extensive as far as the critical and aesthetic literature of older periods is concerned. We have direct evidence that he studied Plato's works at the university and had *Platonis Dialogi* (ed. 1765) in his library, this being probably his own, or should we rather say, Warrington's "old college Plato", to which he refers in *Pendennis*.¹ Aristotle was not studied at Cambridge when Thackeray was at Trinity College, as we know from A. P. Stanley,² but he refers to or quotes from the works of the great philosopher several times, so that we may infer that he became acquainted with at least some of them *ex privata industria* either at the university or later. Thackeray could read Aristotle's works even in the original, but as his knowledge of Greek was not very good, it seems more probable that he became familiar with Aristotle's aesthetic and critical theory from the English translations of the *Poetics*, or indirectly from the work of the philosopher's later English disciples or interpreters, especially the Neoclassicists of the 18th century. On the other hand, however, we do possess evidence that he read Horace's *Ars poetica* in the original (he had *Horatii Opera* in his library and more than once quotes from *Ars poetica* in Latin) and that he studied it very carefully, for one of Horace's principles, selected for the motto to *Henry Esmond* (and quoted in Latin on the title page), concerning self-consistency of literary characters, plays an important role, as Loofbourow has demonstrated, in the whole structure of this novel.³ On the other hand, however, he dissociated himself from another principle of the great aesthete, which was at variance with his own literary practice, to the effect that a work of art should lie ripening for several years before it is published.⁴

We have very little direct evidence of Thackeray's familiarity with the works of the Renaissance critics and aestheticians, Italian, French, or English, but we do know that he was intimately acquainted with Shakespearean and especially Jonsonian criticism from its start down to his own day and that he read Montaigne (his references to the last writer, however, as well as to Malherbe and Ronsard, concern only their creative works and not their aesthetics). Of later aesthetic works Thackeray read Hume's *Essays and Treatises*, with which he was "very pleased not for the language but for the argument,"⁵ but otherwise we know nothing about his views on Hume's critical and aesthetic theory.

When we come to the Neoclassicist period, however, the evidence increases in quantity and convincingly demonstrates Thackeray's really remarkably wide knowledge of the critical writings and aesthetic theories produced at that time,

¹ See *Works* XII, 364, 912.

² See Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, *The Life of Thomas Arnold, D. D.*, Abridged and newly edited, Hutchinson & Co., London, 1903, p. 17.

³ See *op. cit.*, pp. 112, 143.

⁴ See *Works* XII, 521. For another quotation from *Ars poetica* see *Letters* IV, 160.

⁵ *Letters* I, 56 (April 1829).

especially those of England, but not disregarding those arising in France. In my study "Thackeray as a Reader and Critic of French Literature" I have included Nicolas Boileau in the list of older French writers to whom Thackeray referred in marginal comments. To this I should add that one of these references concerns Boileau's positive evaluation of Addison's "elegant hexameters" (i.e. *Musae Anglicanae*), which made the French critic for the first time aware "that England was not altogether a barbarous nation".⁶ As this quotation suggests, and Thackeray's critical attitude to Addison's Latin and English poetry confirms (expressed especially in *Esmond* and to be dealt with in detail later), he did not accept Boileau's doctrine uncritically. He was probably familiar with most of its tenets, if not from the original, then from the quotations in the works of Boileau's English admirers, such as Pope, Dennis, Addison, Reynolds and Goldsmith (from the works of Fielding and Addison he thus became acquainted with the teaching of other French Neoclassicists, such as René Rapin, René Le Bossu, Abbé Dominique Bouhours, Pierre Bayle, André Dacier and Madame Lefèvre-Dacier; he refers, however, only to Bayle as philosopher, as we have seen, and to Madame Dacier, as I have shown in my previous study). In that study I have also dealt with his familiarity with Voltaire's literary and critical theory, especially as expressed in the latter's essay on the "rules" of the drama. Whatever his sources might have been, his knowledge of the critical works produced by the French Neoclassicist school was at any rate so extensive that it enabled him to dissociate himself, in his review of Ben Jonson's *Works* (1838), from "the madness" of its followers who "taught Englishmen to look with aversion on the most original part of their literature, that of the Elizabethan and the following age, as obsolete and barbarous", tarnished for a time even Shakespeare's illustrious name and consigned Jonson's writings "to neglect and almost to oblivion."

If the "Baron de Grimm: *Mémoires Historiques, Littéraires et Anecdotiques*, 7 vols., 1814", which he had in his library, is indeed the famous *Correspondance Littéraire* by Friedrich Melchior Grimm, a friend of Diderot (and two of his references^{6a} seem to confirm that it was), Thackeray might have acquired a sound knowledge of the French philosopher's work, personality and critical and aesthetic theory (though his edition did not contain the two famous *Salons* which were not added until after Grimm's death, in 1819). Of the German critics and aestheticians of the period of the Enlightenment, Thackeray refers by name only to Johann Joachim Winckelmann,⁷ but has nothing to say as to his aesthetics. Of the immediate predecessors of English Augustan classicists, he was a connoisseur of the works of John Dryden, and, though most of his references concern Dryden's poetry or drama, he also indirectly alludes to his *Dedication of Examen Poeticum*, dissociating himself from his statement that Congreve was equal to Shakespeare⁸ and from his adverse criticism of Ben Jonson. Similarly he refers to and disagrees with Congreve's criticism of Shakespeare's female characters.⁹ He does refer to Sir William Temple, assesses his style and personality, but has nothing to say about his literary or critical theory.¹⁰ Thackeray

⁶ *Works* XIII, 527-528; see also note *ibid.*

^{6a} See *Gulliver*, *op. cit.*, pp. 220, 231.

⁷ See *Works* I, 595.

⁸ See *Works* XIII, 13 (and to this also Loofsbourow, *op. cit.*, p. 115), XIII, 509.

⁹ See *Works* XIII, 560.

¹⁰ See *Works* XIII, 480-481, 482, 484-485.

was also familiar with Collier's attack upon Restoration comedy and was more in sympathy with it than with the dramatists attacked.¹¹

Thackeray's familiarity with the works of the English critics of the Neoclassicist period proper, the 18th century, is remarkably extensive. As I shall demonstrate in greater detail in the chapters on his relationship to the Neoclassicist aesthetic creed, as well as in those on his criticism of 18th-century fiction, poetry and drama, he was intimately acquainted with the literary and critical theories of Pope, Addison and Steele, Swift, Fielding, Johnson and Goldsmith. Especially in his *Lectures on the English Humourists* he has much to say on the critical and polemic struggles among the Neoclassicist writers and critics, especially on the famous feud between Pope and the Dunces and that between Fielding and Richardson, but also on some minor controversies, such as for instance the attacks of Churchill and Wilkes upon Hogarth. In this connection he mentions the names of Welsted and Cibber, and has much to say about Dennis and his critical methods. What partly follows from the last-but-one paragraph, but which should be emphasized also here, is his familiarity with the French and especially English Neoclassicist criticism of Shakespeare, which he summed up and expressed through the mouths of some of his characters in *The Virginians*¹² and from which he dissociated himself through the medium of those personages of his who are more or less protagonists of his own attitudes, Esmond, George Warrington and Mr. Lambert. He excludes from his criticism Steele, who admired the great dramatist "affectionately, and more than any man of his time" and brought him, when he "was quite out of fashion", "back into the mode".¹³ Similarly Thackeray dissociated himself from the Neoclassicist criticism of Ben Jonson, as we have seen above, from "the malignant hatred" with which some of the Shakespearean critics (he mentions here Dryden, but his sharpest criticism is directed to Steevens and Malone) had endeavoured "to overwhelm [Jonson's] memory with infamy", clogging his name "with a weight of unmerited obloquy as the enemy and calumniator of that greatest of poets."¹⁴

As far as Hogarth is concerned, Thackeray was a sincere admirer of his paintings and had obviously also read some of his prose works,¹⁵ but he nowhere refers to his *Analysis of Beauty*. The case is somewhat different when we come to Reynolds, for Thackeray not only warmly admired his pictures, but also had his works in his library and obviously studied them very carefully, as he twice quotes from the *Discourses*, with consent, Reynold's well-known statement that the faults of a great master "are always to be seen in the exaggerations of his imitators."¹⁶ Another reference testifies, however, that even though he liked Reynolds as painter and also as man, he did not regard him as an infallible critic.¹⁷ Thackeray was also familiar with the critical opinions of Horace Walpole, for he had in his library this writer's famous *Letters*, which he reviewed, referred

¹¹ See especially *Works* XIII, 512; see also *ibid.*, pp. 121, 268, 403.

¹² See *Works* XV, 611, 622.

¹³ *Works* XIII, 568 (his lecture on Steele), 247 (*Esmond*).

¹⁴ Review of Ben Jonson's *Works*.

¹⁵ For a reference to Hogarth's *Anecdotes of himself* see *Works* XIII, 634 and for a quotation *ibid.*, pp. 634-635. There is another quotation *ibid.*, pp. 629n. ff.; the footnote apparatus was not, however, written by Thackeray, but by Hannay.

¹⁶ *Works* V, 510; see also VI, 597.

¹⁷ See *Works* VI, 480.

to numerous times, drew upon in *The Four Georges*, imitated in *The Virginians*, and even intended to edit. But even if he so greatly admired these charming volumes, he dissociated himself from some of the critical views of their author, especially from those upon Fielding, as we shall see later.

As I have shown in "Thackeray as a Reader and Critic of French Literature". Thackeray was acquainted with numerous works of those writers and critics who prepared the ground for the Romantic movement in France and helped to engender its general atmosphere and spirit. I have dealt briefly with his familiarity with some of the literary critics of this period, especially Sismondi and Villemain, and have shown that all his references to Madame de Staël concern her personality, political opinions and novels, none of them referring to her aesthetic theories (the same holds good for his references to Chateaubriand and Hugo).

For Thackeray's knowledge of German aesthetics and criticism in the epoch preceding the Romantic Revival we have not so much direct evidence as in the case of the corresponding period in France. To Herder, for instance, he refers only once, and this is only to introduce a quotation from Mrs. Austin's book on Goethe (in his review of this work), which concerns the relationship between Herder's and Goethe's philosophy. The aestheticians of German classical idealism and Romanticism are only rarely referred to by Thackeray and that mostly negatively. He especially resented the militant Catholic clericalism which was spreading through German Romanticism, as well as in France, thanks to Jacob Joseph von Görres, and which he condemned, together with transcendental philosophy and mystical doctrines in general, in his review of George Sand's novel *Spiridion*.¹⁸ As his allusion to the "mysterious transcendental talk" of the Germans in this reference shows, and the rest of the evidence confirms, Thackeray had a negative attitude to Kantian philosophy as well. Several times he hinted and once openly confessed that he did not understand Kant's teaching, telling Anthony Sterling that he "never pretended to understand" Kantianism or any "other philosophical system."¹⁹ And so even if we have no evidence whatever that Thackeray read Kant's writings on aesthetics, we may safely assume that if he had read them at all, he would have found them incomprehensible, for in consequence of their author's elevation of aesthetics to the level of pure philosophical science, they are practically a sealed book to the uninitiated.

As far as the main theoreticians of German Romanticism, the brothers Schlegel, are concerned, we have evidence that Thackeray was familiar with some works of August Wilhelm, his lectures on art (*Vorlesungen über schöne Litteratur und Kunst*, 1801—1803) and his *Criticisms* (probably *Kritische Schriften*, 2 vols., 1828). He found the latter work interesting and at first also admired the former, even intending to translate it into English, but on more mature consideration he came to the conclusion that it was a "spurious" book and changed his mind about introducing it to the English reading public.²⁰ As we know from Thack-

¹⁸ See *Works* II, 224—227; for other references to German aesthetics and metaphysical philosophy see *Works* IX, 235 and *Works* III, 118. See also Frisa, op. cit., pp. 26—28.

¹⁹ Transcript of undated manuscript letter, quoted by Ray in *The Age of Wisdom*, p. 119. For some other references to Kant see *Works* I, 595, Gulliver, op. cit., p. 201, and especially *Works* I, 68, quoted below on page 54.

²⁰ For his reference to Schlegel's *Criticisms* see *Letters* I, 253; for the comments upon the lectures on art see *ibid.*, pp. 117—118, 123.

eray's correspondence, he bought and most probably also read all the 18 volumes of Schiller's collected works (ed. 1827).²¹ In this case he must have also been acquainted with Schiller's aesthetic theory (he was certainly familiar with the preface to *Die Räuber*, for he not only saw this play on the stage in Germany, but also read it in book form when he returned to England).²² He does not refer to it anywhere, however, nor to Schiller's classic work on aesthetics, his *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*. As far as Goethe is concerned, we may assume, on the basis of available evidence, that Thackeray could have read almost everything the German poet wrote. His references to Goethe's theory, however, are scanty: he refers to the famous evaluation of *Hamlet* in *Wilhelm Meister*,²³ comments upon one of the basic principles of the poet's aesthetics (taken again from *Wilhelm Meister*) and upon one tenet of his critical theory, as I shall demonstrate in greater detail later.

As usual, we are much better off for evidence when we come to English Pre-Romantic and Romantic criticism. We do know from his references that Thackeray was familiar with some works of Richard Hurd and that he dissociated himself from this critic's attacks upon Fielding.²⁴ He read and carefully studied Burke's *On the Sublime*,²⁵ but found the study not very rewarding, as we shall see later. We know for certain that he was familiar with Scott's biography of Swift and most probably, too, with that of Dryden, and he certainly read Lockhart's *Life of Scott*, from which he could learn much about the novelist's literary theory.²⁶ He also several times refers to some of Scott's critical opinions and to his critical theory and practice.²⁷ We may with almost absolute certainty assume that he knew the exposition of Wordsworth's literary theory in the famous preface to the 1800 edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*, as well as the poet's other theoretical writings. He does not explicitly refer to them anywhere, but he accepted one of the tenets of Wordsworth's aesthetics and several times imitated or parodied the poet's prose, as well as his custom of explaining and justifying his creative approach, features to be found nowhere but in the poet's critical writings. On the other hand we have no evidence whatever that he read Coleridge's critical works, for he referred to this poet and critic surprisingly seldom (there are altogether only five references to him in Thackeray's works and letters,²⁸ if we do not count the quotations from

²¹ See *Letters* I, 123.

²² See *ibid.*, p. 219.

²³ See *Works* XII, 65.

²⁴ See *Works* XVII, 471; *Contributions*, 115.

²⁵ See *Works* II, 503; for some other references to Burke's personality or quotations from his works see *Works* II, 314, VI, 110, 201, 604, Gulliver, *op. cit.*, p. 228, etc.

²⁶ Scott's *Life of Swift* is referred to in *Letters* I, 235 and in the text of as well as in the footnotes to his *Lectures on the English Humourists of the 18th Century*, while Scott's biography of Dryden is quoted only in the footnotes, the work of Hanway. For his references to Lockhart's biography see *Works* XVII, 358, 365, *Letters* III, 634, IV, 438.

²⁷ See e.g. *Works* I, 68 and III, 387.

²⁸ See Gulliver, *op. cit.*, pp. 20 and 178 (in one of the contributions to the *Gownsmen* and one to the *National Standard*, neither definitely attributed to Thackeray), *Works* II, 389, *Letters* II, 53 and *The Centenary Biographical Edition of the Works of William Makepeace Thackeray*, with biographical introductions by his daughter Lady Ritchie, in 26 vols., Smith, Elder and Co., London, 1910-1911, XXV, 380-381. His reticence on Coleridge poses an interesting problem: it seems to suggest that he was not an enthusiastic admirer of Coleridge's poetry (for if he had been, he would have probably expressed his admiration, as he did

Coleridge's magazine *The Friend* and from his *Literary Remains* in the footnotes to the lectures on the *English Humourists*, which were not selected by Thackeray, but by the author of the footnote apparatus, Hannay, though obviously with Thackeray's consent). Thackeray read quite early in his life Byron's *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, was familiar with the *Memoirs* and *Letters*,²⁹ as well as the whole body of Byron's literary work, and thus, too, with his aesthetic and critical theory, but he does not refer to it explicitly anywhere. The same holds good for the theories of Shelley and Keats. Obviously his acquaintance with the works of the essayists of the Romantic period was very intimate, but the direct evidence we possess is relatively scanty. In his library he had Lamb's *Works* (ed. 1840) and several times quoted from them, once partly dissociating himself from Lamb's evaluation of Tom Jones.³⁰ He was familiar with Hunt's *Wit and Humour*, read his *Jar of Honey from Mount Hybla* sent him by the author himself as his good friend, and several times refers to Hunt's works or quotes his opinion.³¹ In his library he had De Quincey's *Selections, Grave and Gay* (14 vols.) and even came near to making his personal acquaintance,³² but he nowhere refers either to him or to his works or literary theory. On the other hand, he fairly often refers to Hazlitt or quotes from his works, though again not so often as the many affiliations between the two critics, to be dealt with below, would make us expect. He praises Hazlitt's essay "Going to a Fight", approvingly refers to his evaluation of Correggio, draws upon his *Conversations of James Northcote, Esq.* (in his lecture on Fielding) and upon his evaluation of Hogarth (in his lecture on this painter).³³ Only once does he refer to Hazlitt's critical work in greater detail: in his review of Horne's *A New Spirit of the Age* (*The Morning Chronicle*, 2 April 1844).

As far as Thackeray's familiarity with the criticism of his own time is concerned, it is naturally even more extensive than is his knowledge of the critical

in several cases of his favourites) and that he refrained from criticizing it because he hesitated to attack this generally respected former member of the Fraserian staff and a famous critic of enormous influence. Another cause of his reticence might have been his critical opinion of the poet's "metaphysical entanglements" and personal character, which he vented in the last of the above-mentioned references, in his review of Carlyle's *Life of Sterling*. In this view of his he was not influenced by any personal considerations, for he probably did not meet Coleridge in person — the poet died in the very year (1834) in which Thackeray became the regular contributor to *Fraser's Magazine* (Maclise's well-known drawing "The Fraserians", in which the two critics appear together, was published in January 1835, when the poet was already dead). Thackeray might have also resented Coleridge's political opinions, for they were essentially different from his own earlier ones. The great poet and critic was a staunch Tory and a sworn enemy of Liberalism, to which Thackeray inclined at the time of his Fraserian connection, and was also to a great extent responsible for the conservative political line of this periodical, which was unacceptable to Thackeray, as we shall see in the third chapter.

²⁹ See *Letters* I, 90, *Works* XI, 884–885, XIII, 792–793, Gulliver, op. cit., p. 230.

³⁰ See *Works* XIII, 649; for his other quotations from Lamb see *Works* IV, 247, XIV, 317, *Letters* I, 161–162 and for a positive comment *Letters* II, 563. Hannay quotes Lamb's evaluation of Hogarth in the footnotes to the lectures on the *English Humourists* (see *Works* XIII, 621n. ff.).

³¹ See *Works* VI, 607, *Letters* I, 421–422, II, 711; for some other references or letters to Hunt see *Letters* II, 307, 331, 332–333, 347, IV, 332, *Works* XVI, 496, *Contributions*, 190, *Stray Papers*, p. 124.

³² See Stevenson, op. cit., pp. 326, 330.

³³ See *Works* XVII, 612, *Contributions*, 155, *Works* XIII, 622–623, 686–687. For other less significant references see *Works* II, 494, VIII, 26, *Letters* II, 245–246.

legacy of the immediately preceding periods. In my study on his criticism of French literature I have dealt with his familiarity with the French criticism of his time and shown that he knew and even critically assessed the work of Jules Janin, that he negatively evaluated Gustave Planche, and was familiar with some works of Saint-Marc Girardin, Philarète Chasles and Amedée Pichot. With the exception of Saint-Marc Girardin and Planche he knew all these critics personally; the same holds good for Paul Émile Daurand, not mentioned in my study, who wrote two articles on Thackeray in 1851 and 1854.³⁴ In his article on "Caricatures and Lithography in Paris" Thackeray mentions Émile de Girardin, but only as founder of journals and "the most speculative of speculators",³⁵ not as critic. In the same study I have also pointed out that there is no reference to Sainte-Beuve and Hippolyte Taine in all Thackeray's writings.

Thackeray's familiarity with magazine criticism as well as with critical works in book form produced in his time in his own country was indeed remarkably wide and intimate. He laid the foundations of this at a very early period of his life: when he was still at Charterhouse he read, with his school friends, almost all the magazines taken in by the family of John Frederick Boyes, at whose parents' house he was living in the years 1825—1828. Boyes's later reminiscence of this particular circumstance in Thackeray's early life deserves to be quoted in full:

"We took in the Magazines — *Blackwood*, the *New Monthly*, the *London*, and the *Literary Gazette* — then in nearly their first glory, and full of excellent articles. I do not know who first suggested this, or whether it was a common thing for the senior boys at the public schools to club together for any such purpose; probably not, from the incuriosity about such reading that generally prevailed at one at least of the universities. I am sure there was very little indeed of any such leaven in the mingled mass of undergraduates of my own college. It was a positive intellectual descent from the school set to which Thackeray belonged to the ordinary college level, and a very considerable one. With the exception of a small group here and there, a knowledge of and interest in the better kinds of contemporary literature was very rare indeed at the colleges.

It is uncertain what college tutors or schoolmasters may think of Magazine reading for their pupils; to the set of whom I am now speaking my belief is that it was most advantageous, and that it proved to be a very strong stimulus of literary curiosity and ambition. The constantly fresh monthly or weekly supply of short articles seemed to bring home the fact of literary production, and made it appear, in some degree, within reach. This was the real commencement of Thackeray's connection with the Magazines, which he used to read with the greatest eagerness, little interfered with by any school responsibilities. No doubt he often then thought what a pleasant thing it would be to be one of the guild, and first felt that 'indrawing into the sea' of letters, which he afterwards obeyed. This kind of reading, too, led to much youthful criticism of the topics and merits of the 'periodical' men of the day; the *Quarterly* and *Edinburgh* only being rather too high and dry for us."³⁶

Since these early days Thackeray's interest in critical and literary magazines never diminished. When he was at Weimar, for instance, he had *Fraser's Magazine*, the *Examiner*, the *Literary Gazette*, the *Comic Annual* and the *Keepsake* sent him, one of his purposes being to acquaint Goethe with them. As the condition of his library bears witness, he was a subscriber to or bought the

³⁴ See *Letters* III, 389.

³⁵ *Works* II, 185. In the *Times* of March 17, 1848 ("The Louvre"), Thackeray quotes Girardin's political opinions.

³⁶ "A Memorial of Thackeray's School-Days", *The Cornhill Magazine*, XI, 1865, pp. 126—127.

volumes of the *European Magazine* (1782—1825), *Household Words* (1850—1852), the *Monthly Magazine* (1808—1826) and the *Gentleman's Magazine* (1731—1827), to mention only those periodicals which continued to be published in his century. As early as the 1830s he began to read the *Athenaeum*, to which he did not contribute, but on the staff of which he had in later years some good friends (Henry Fothergill Chorley and Charles Wentworth Dilke). His familiarity with contemporary magazine criticism was of course gradually increasing when he started his professional career as journalist and critic, and when he contributed to or at least contacted many other magazines than those mentioned above, becoming personally acquainted with several prominent and lesser critics of his time, besides a host of political and cultural journalists and editors. He was probably familiar with much of Jeffrey's criticism and we also know that this eminent critic was among the Edinburgh admirers of Thackeray's art who sent him a silver statuette of Punch in May 1849,³⁷ but he probably never met Jeffrey in person and had an indirect controversy with him on the occasion of the publication of his only contribution to the *Edinburgh Review*, the review of Willis's book *Dashes at Life* (October 1845). As Stevenson has pointed out, when this review appeared, "a complaint promptly arrived from *The Edinburgh's* original editor, the redoubtable Lord Jeffrey, who still felt responsible for the standards of the magazine. 'Mr. Nathaniel (or Jonathan) Willis might have been as well let alone', he wrote ominously to Napier [i.e. Prof. Macvey Napier, who replaced Jeffrey in the editorship — LP], 'and his reviewer is not much better than himself'. Napier made haste to assure Jeffrey that he entirely concurred in the verdict, and when he sent Thackeray his cheque he mentioned the opinion of certain friends that 'Willis was too leniently used'."³⁸ On receiving this letter Thackeray replied:

"I quite agree with your friends, who say Willis' was too leniently used, O to think of my pet passages gone for ever" (*Letters* II, 245).

As far as the *Quarterly Review* is concerned, Thackeray's attitude to its critical methods and political line was highly critical in the 1830s and 1840s, as we shall see later, and he did not publish anything in this magazine until after its editorship, left vacant owing to the illness of John Gibson Lockhart, was taken over by the Rev. Whitwell Elwin (in 1853), who later became Thackeray's friend and ardent admirer, and favourably evaluated the novelist's art in an essay on *The Newcomes* published in the magazine in September 1855. Thackeray's general attitude to this magazine suggests that his opinion of William Gifford, who had been mainly responsible for its critical methods, could not have been positive either. And indeed, he scarcely refers to him at all — only three marginal comments are to be found in his whole literary output. In one of these references, however, he warmly and quite justly praises Gifford's "triumphantly accomplished" defence of Ben Jonson and his "admirable edition" of the latter's works.³⁹ His high opinion of Gifford's editorial work, along with the fact that the critic was no longer alive, may have been the main reason why he refrained from direct personal attacks and limited himself

³⁷ See *Letters* II, 538—539.

³⁸ *Op. cit.*, pp. 136—137.

³⁹ See his review of Ben Jonson's *Works*; for the other references see the same review and *Works* II, 376.

to assaults on the critical methods of this magazine in general. In this he of course conspicuously differs from those critics of the Romantic period and his own time who, quite justly, forever branded Gifford as a nuisance which should be abated (Hazlitt) and as a "nonentity in criticism" (Lewes).⁴⁰ Worth noticing, too, is Thackeray's relationship to Lockhart, as to which we have more evidence, and which was for the most part favourable. This seems to be surprising in view of the fact that Lockhart, as the editor of the *Quarterly Review*, was responsible for the critical methods used by his contributors, although in the period of his editorship he himself did not indulge in them so much as he had previously in *Blackwood's Magazine* (if he was not the author of the notorious article "The Cockney School", he was certainly the inventor of the nickname), and he did not therefore deserve "the very unjust obloquy" which rested upon him for his "scorpion" quality in his and Thackeray's time, as Saintsbury has pointed out.⁴¹ We should bear in mind, however, that Thackeray obviously did not know that Lockhart was in any way responsible for the article referred to above. He resented very much this coarse attack on the Romantic poets and essayists, as we shall see, but he does not mention Lockhart in this connection. The evidence we possess suggests that he never stopped seeing in Lockhart his former colleague from *Fraser's Magazine* (Lockhart figures, too, among the Fraserians in Maclise's drawing of 1835). He thought highly of this critic as the biographer of Scott and Napoleon, praised him as a novelist⁴² and sought for Lockhart's friendship during his stay at Rome in 1853-1854, only to discover that the critic was "too unwell to care for any society"⁴³ (Lockhart died in 1854). There was one member on the staff of the *Quarterly Review*, however, who did become the target of Thackeray's critical assaults, and that was John Wilson Croker, whom he satirized in the character of Mr. Rigby,⁴⁴ the critic of the *Quarterly* in *Mrs. Perkins's Ball*, and as Mr. Wenhams in *Vanity Fair* and *Pendennis*. In the period of his professional journalism and even in the years preceding it, Thackeray more than once voiced his resentment at the critical methods of *Blackwood's Magazine* and, moreover, had some unfortunate experiences with its editors when he vainly attempted to become a regular contributor. In his later years, however, he gained some personal friends among the Blackwoods, especially John, the sixth son of the founder of the magazine, who entertained him during his lecturing tour in Scotland, but had no business dealing with him.⁴⁵ At this period, when his

⁴⁰ For the quotation see *The Westminster Review* XXXV, 1847, p. 117; quoted by Morris Greenhut, "George Henry Lewes and the Classical Tradition in English Criticism", *The Review of English Studies*, vol. XXV, 1948, p. 130.

⁴¹ *A History of Criticism and Literary Taste in Europe*, 3 vols., William Blackwood and Sons, Edinburgh and London, 1908, 1914, 1917, III, 483.

⁴² See e.g. *Letters* III, 634, *Works* II, 482, XVII, 358 (praise of the biographies), *The Cornhill Magazine*, July 1911, p. 13 (positive notice of Lockhart's *Valerius*).

⁴³ *Letters* III, 340. In 1854 Thackeray thought of getting the sinecure left vacant by the critic's death, but obviously he did not apply for it (see *Letters* III, 404).

⁴⁴ Croker had been satirized as Rigby in Disraeli's *Coningsby* (for Thackeray's reference to this portrait, as very negative but successful, see his review of Disraeli's novel for the *Pictorial Times*, *Works* VI, 508). It is worth noticing, however, that Croker did not harbour any grudge towards Thackeray and supported the novelist when the latter applied for membership of the Athenaeum in 1850.

⁴⁵ See *Letters* I, 419, II, 263n., III, 406-407n., 687 and note.

philosophy of life, as well as his conception of literature and criticism, were succumbing to the mellowing influence of his advancing age and of his milieu, he read and positively evaluated the popular but politically backward feuilletons *Noctes Ambrosianae*, published in the magazine by its main critic John Wilson ("Christopher North"),⁴⁶ whose collected works, published in 1855, he also had in his library.

As we shall see in one of the following chapters, Thackeray's most important periodical connection in the 1830s and 1840s was with *Fraser's Magazine*, so we must also examine his familiarity with the works of this magazine's most significant critics and contributors. The first evidence of his reading this periodical comes from his Weimar period, but most probably he became familiar with it even earlier and it may be also assumed that he did not cease to follow it between 1830 and the year 1834 when he became a member of its staff.⁴⁷ In this intervening period he also became personally acquainted with its main literary critic, the uncommonly talented Dr. William Maginn,⁴⁸ whom Thackeray at first greatly admired as a most intelligent, learned and witty man and who enabled him to enter the London journalist world and eventually to join the staff of *Fraser's Magazine*. Although we have no direct evidence as to Thackeray's familiarity with Maginn's critical works, we may with a great degree of certainty assume that he read everything this critic wrote for the magazine, and most probably, too, his collected works, published in 1840.

As a matter of course, Thackeray was very well acquainted with the works of another great contributor to the magazine, Thomas Carlyle, and started reading them even before 1837, when the critic became his personal friend. We may safely assume that he read all Carlyle's contributions to *Fraser's Magazine* and everything the great critic published in other periodicals or in book form, but we have direct evidence only for ten works, three of which Thackeray reviewed.⁴⁹ As Ray has pointed out, in his article "Epistles to the

⁴⁶ See *Works* XIII, 787; for another reference see *Works* III, 527.

⁴⁷ The Thackerayan scholars have not yet agreed upon the date when Thackeray began to contribute to this magazine and suggest several possibilities: 1831 (Gulliver, who ascribes to Thackeray the article "Scenes in the Law Courts", published in that year); 1832 (Ivasheva, ascribing to him the authorship of the review "A Good Tale Badly Told", February 1832, as well as of the two reviews of Ainsworth's *Rookwood*, published in June 1834 and April 1836, "High-Ways and Low-Ways: or, Ainsworth's Dictionary with Notes by Turpin" and "Another Caw from the Rookwood — Turpin Out Again", which are regarded by all the scholars of the present day as well as by Dr. Thrall as not being by Thackeray); May 1833 till the beginning of 1834 (Dr. Thrall, who attributes the last-mentioned two reviews to John Churchill and William Maginn — see op. cit., pp. 61, 71, 247–251). According to White's recent findings, however, Thackeray's first contribution was his imitation of Béranger's "Il était un Roi d'Yvetot" of 1834 (which was hitherto regarded by most scholars as his first safely ascertained contribution) and next *Yellowplush* of 1837, most probably with nothing in between (see op. cit., especially p. 70). Unshakable remains the evidence of the above-mentioned drawing of Maclise, in which Thackeray appears among the other significant contributors to the magazine and which shows that he must have become a regular contributor before the beginning of 1835, when the drawing was published.

⁴⁸ For detailed information on the life, personality, political beliefs, aesthetic creed and criticism of this still strangely neglected journalist see Dr. Thrall's book.

⁴⁹ In 1832 Thackeray read Carlyle's translation of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre und Wanderjahre* and his *German Romance* (see *Letters* I, 213, 214); in August 1837 he reviewed *The French Revolution* for the *Times*; in 1837–1838 he attended some of Carlyle's lectures on literature and reviewed them for the same paper in 1838; in 1839 he

Literati. No. XIV⁵⁰ Thackeray helped Carlyle in demasking the historical imposture on the part of the French concerning the sinking of the *Vengeur* in 1794, ridiculing Carlyle's French detractors who attacked the latter after the publication of his article presenting the true version of this event.⁵¹

Of the other significant critics of his time, not connected with *Fraser's Magazine*, Thackeray greatly admired Thomas Babington Macaulay, whose *Critical and Historical Essays* he reviewed very favourably for the *Pictorial Times* in 1843. We have much evidence, too, for his increasingly enthusiastic, though not entirely uncritical, attitude to Macaulay the historian and we know that he drew much upon this critic's evaluation of Addison in his lecture on the essayist. All these aspects of his relationship to his great contemporary will be dealt with in the appropriate places below. In view of Thackeray's extensive reading of the critical periodicals of his time we may assume that he read, too, at least some contributions of another contemporary of his, George Henry Lewes, but we have direct evidence only for Lewes's article on Thackeray's art, published in the *Morning Chronicle* on 6 March 1848.⁵² As regards Thackeray's familiarity with Ruskin's works we also have very little evidence. We do know that he had in his library the *Seven Lamps of Architecture* and that four instalments of *Unto this Last* were published in the *Cornhill Magazine* under his editorship, arousing among his readers such indignation owing to the author's revolutionary ideas of political economy that Thackeray felt obliged to ask Ruskin to bring the series to an untimely end.⁵³ We also know that he read at least some volumes of Ruskin's *Modern Painters*, but he refers to this work only once (in *Works* II, 665), showing himself as not being convinced by Ruskin's defence of Turner. On the other hand, no evidence exists with regard to Thackeray's familiarity with Arnold's critical writings, though even this critic occasionally contributed to the *Cornhill Magazine* during Thackeray's editorship. We do know, however, that he read Emerson's *Essays* in 1856. Of the minor critics

read *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays* (see *Letters* I, 396): he attended some of Carlyle's lectures *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* and refers to them in *Contributions*, 42 and *Letters* I, 445; in November 1851 he reviewed *The Life of John Sterling* for the *Times* (referring in the review to *Latter-Day Pamphlets*); in *The Virginians* he refers to *Frederick the Great*, having obviously read its first volumes (the whole six volumes were published between 1858 and 1865). As a matter of course he read *Sartor Resartus*, originally published in *Fraser's Magazine* between 1833 and 1834, and though he directly refers to this work only once (see *Works* VI, 418), it found reflection in his works in several places, as we shall see. For an echo from *Chartism* see *Contributions*, 74 and note.

⁵⁰ "Epistles to the Literati. No. XIV. On French Criticism of the English, and Notably in the Affair of the *Vengeur*", *Fraser's Magazine*, March 1840. The article was identified by Ray.

⁵¹ "Epistles to the Literati. No. XI, Thomas Carlyle, Esq. to Oliver Yorke, Esq. On the Sinking of the *Vengeur*", *Fraser's Magazine*, CXV, 1839; for Ray's interpretation of this affair see *Letters* I, cvii; for Thackeray's other references to it see *Works* II, 560-561, X, 612, XVII, 625-626, 671.

⁵² There is also a reference which may presumably concern Lewes's review of *Pendennis* in the *Leader* (see *Letters* II, 716 and note). We may infer, however, that Thackeray read all the ensuing reviews Lewes wrote of his novels, as well as his *Life of Goethe* (1855), in which Lewes included the novelist's reminiscences of the German poet, and naturally all Lewes's contributions published in the *Cornhill Magazine*, both under Thackeray's editorship and in the short period intervening between his resignation and his death. The *Life of Goethe*, of which he refers in *Letters* III, 522, is in Ray's opinion, however, not the biography of Lewes.

⁵³ See Ruskin's letter quoted in *Letters* IV, 211n. and Stevenson, *op. cit.*, pp. 376-377.

of his time Thackeray paid formal critical attention to Richard Henry Horne, as we have seen when discussing his familiarity with Hazlitt's critical writings (we shall deal with this in greater detail later), and was in personal contact or corresponded with several others (David Masson, Nassau William Senior, James Hannay, Robert Bell, James Fitzjames Stephen, Leslie Stephen, Walter Bagehot, John Forster, Eneas Sweetland Dallas, and Edmund Yates, to mention only those whose names are still remembered).

As our survey shows, Thackeray's knowledge of the aesthetic and critical works of the preceding periods and especially of his own, or at least his knowledge of some individual tenets formulated by the great or lesser aestheticians and critics in those periods, was wide enough (though possibly not very deep) to represent a relatively solid theoretical foundation on which he could base his own criticism, enabling him to make comparisons between the standards of judgment and critical methods used by his predecessors or contemporaries, or draw upon them in forming his own, as he certainly in some cases did.

III.

Another very important qualification of Thackeray as literary critic was his study of the art of painting in the Paris and London studios. Although it did not make him a professional painter, it made him an excellent graphic artist, as I have pointed out in my study on his aesthetic ideas, and, as I have suggested in the same place, it was at the same time one of the most significant factors that determined the growth of his aesthetic conceptions and helped in the formation and refinement of his critical perception. Moreover, his own attitude to the study of art reveals a capacity for self-criticism, in which he reminds us of Hazlitt: after a few years of serious and diligent study he was able to realize that his talent was not strong enough for him ever to reach the craftsmanship of the great painters and he gave up the idea of making painting his profession. And last but not least, during his study of painting Thackeray laid the foundations of that future extensive knowledge in the sphere of the visual arts, especially of painting, of which we have ample evidence in his formal art criticisms, as well as in numerous informal comments on individual pictures, statues, painters, sculptors and whole schools of painting. His art criticism forms an important part of his critical heritage, for he worked professionally in this sphere for more than ten years and paid occasional critical attention to art even after 1847, when he stopped working as journalist and critic. Like his study of painting, his professional work as critic of art had a very great importance for the definite formulation of his conception of art and criticism. It helped him to verify his aesthetic principles and critical standards in another sphere of art besides literature, giving them thus a wider scope and greater depth. Indeed, it was in his art criticisms that he pronounced his most important statements upon the basic aesthetic problems of art, and this part of his criticism must be therefore studied by any scholar or reader of Thackeray who wants to come to a deeper understanding not only of his general views upon art, but also of his conception of literature. The assessment of the value of his critical judgments on individual pictures, painters and schools of art is outside the scope of this work, belonging as it does to a different

sphere. I shall therefore take notice only of those aspects of his art criticism which may be regarded as proofs of his general qualification for the critical office not only in the sphere of painting, but also in that of literature.

In the first place, it is his honest endeavour to evaluate the criticized works of art justly, to tell about them the "truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth",¹ his constant awareness of his great responsibility towards the English public and his sincere effort to elevate his countrymen's aesthetic taste, which was in his opinion "far worse than regular barbarism",² to a higher level. In the second place, it is his capacity to discern any deviation from the truthful depiction of Nature in the assessed paintings, to reveal every humbug in art, deflate the false sublime and pathos, and ridicule affectation. In Thackeray the art critic we recognize the same energetic fighter for realism in art whom we find in his literary criticism, though he of course fights in another sphere and chooses other targets for his critical assaults. The sharpest weapons of his criticism and satire are reserved for the representatives of the Classical and Catholic schools in art, for grandiose and idealized pictures on historical and allegorical themes, conventional illustrations in Annuals, pretentious "state" pictures, flattering portraits of courtiers and aristocrats, pictures representing the cruelties of war, murders and martyrdom, as well as paintings pervaded by "drivelling, hysterical sentimentality".³ And finally, it is his ability to see and appreciate the beauty of the picture — at least such as corresponds to his own conception of the beautiful — to feel the atmosphere of the painting and its aesthetic effect on the onlooker. It is again in his art criticisms that he pronounced most of his significant statements on beauty in art and aesthetic enjoyment, on which I shall draw in the following chapter.

The help Thackeray's art criticism offers us in the analysis of his conception of literature is indeed very considerable, and not only because it provides us with numerous quotations. As Saintsbury has pointed out, Thackeray approaches the picture he is assessing from the so-called "literary" point of view, thus following, we should add, though most probably unconsciously, in the tradition of Du Bos, Batteux, Spence and especially of Diderot, with whom he has much in common not only in his critical approach in general, but also in some individual critical opinions, as we shall see later. Thackeray judged the picture less according to its technical merits than according to the choice and elaboration of its theme, which was always of supreme importance for him (though mere theme did not satisfy him). He rather tended to explain the feeling with which a picture inspired him (using brilliant word-painting and almost always succeeding in evoking the same feeling and aesthetic enjoyment in the reader of his criticism), than to elaborate the reason why it was beautiful in itself. As Clapp emphasizes, his judgments are vitiated by the same limitations as all art criticism of literary standing — like all such critics, Thackeray is "looking for a story, an illustration, instead of an aesthetically satisfying composition in line, mass, and color".⁴ We should add, however, that the scholar quoted tends to overestimate the form of the picture to the detriment of its theme and applies

¹ *Works* II, 496.

² *Works* II, 349; see also *ibid.*, pp. 174, 360.

³ *Works* II, 647; see also *ibid.*, p. 616, *Works* XVII, 445.

⁴ "Critic on Horseback", p. 297.

his judgment to Thackeray's art criticism in general, not making any distinction between the different types of pictures Thackeray assessed. His "literary" approach was surely to a great extent justified when he evaluated pictures which had taken their themes from literature (and these form a very large percentage of his assessments) and in a few cases it was, as only Ray admits,⁵ rather a merit than a limitation, namely in his evaluation of the painters-caricaturists, Daumier, Cruikshank, Leech and Hogarth. In these cases it enables Thackeray to evoke the general atmosphere of the individual pictures and scenes, as well as their humour and satire, so successfully, and to describe the characters created by the caricaturists so vividly, that we can see them as living persons before our inner eye and laugh at them or detest them without ever seeing the picture (though in the case of Cruikshank, even this is in most cases provided). To be entirely fair to Thackeray it should also be pointed out that even though he pays greatest attention to the subject of the picture, he always takes note, too, of the painter's technique, drawing, colour and composition, and, himself by no means an amateur in painting, is even able to give some painters useful hints as to the technical means by which their faults could be avoided.⁶

In Thackeray's art criticism we may also discern what we could call his disqualifications as critic. These lie especially in his moralistic attitude to the subject of the evaluated picture (in this again reminding us of Diderot), which reveals itself especially in his assessment of the pictures of Etty, Rubens, Girodet and David, whose nuditities in his opinion offend propriety.⁷ Another disqualification is his inability to assess some pictures on sacred themes (especially depicting Christ with little children and the Madonna with the divine Infant — though on the latter he can be also critical⁸), as well as those depicting mothers and children. Eastlake's picture "Our Lord and the little Children", for instance, went straight to his heart and "then all criticism and calculation vanishes at once",⁹ Thackeray ceases to be a critic and becomes a worshipper of Christ.

IV.

There is yet another sphere of art with which Thackeray was well acquainted, though in this case only as an amateur, and that was music. As we know from Boyes, he had been "decidedly musical" and had "a capital car"¹ even as a boy, while numerous references in his works and letters show that he continued to be a great lover of music during his whole life. He was a frequent visitor at concerts and opera performances, being fond especially of the "solemn old

⁵ See G. N. Ray, *The Uses of Adversity*, p. 239; for Clapp's opposite view see *op. cit.*, p. 297.

⁶ See e.g. *Contributions*, 135, 137, *Works II*, 528, etc.

⁷ See e.g. *Works II*, 55, 56—57, 395, VI, 479, 486, 540, XIV, 314—315.

⁸ See *Works II*, 60; see also *Letters I*, 288, expressing his dislike of Raphael's "simpering Madonnas". "The Sistine Madonna", however, was ranked by him among the ten best, or most famous, pictures in the world (see James Grant Wilson, *Thackeray in the United States*, 1852—1853, 1855—1856, 2 vols., Smith, Elder and Co., London 1904, II, 139).

⁹ *Works II*, 396.

¹ *Op. cit.*, 123.

fashioned airs of Haydn and Mozart"² and always moved to tears by the singing of the choir boys in churches. Besides Mozart and Haydn, he very often refers to Rossini and Beethoven, and occasionally mentions the names of or works by Auber, Bach, Bellini, Berlioz, Boieldieu, Cimarosa, Sir Michael Andrew Agnus Costa, Donizetti, Gluck, François Antoine Habeneck, Handel, Herz, Johann Nepomuk Hummel, Liszt, Johann Simon Mayr, Mendelssohn, Meyerbeer, Paganini, Thalberg, Wagner and Weber, not to mention a fairly great number of various minor composers of operas and stage music and English, Irish, French, German and Italian songs popular in his time. As a Czech I found it very interesting that Thackeray several times refers (and quite justifiably in a negative way) to the piano composition "The Battle of Prague",³ very popular in his time in England, the author of which was a composer of Czech origin, Franz Kotzwara, born in Prague, but living and working in London.

How good Thackeray's musical taste was and how important his familiarity with this sphere of art was for him as novelist has been recently shown by John K. Mathison, in his study "The German Sections of *Vanity Fair*".⁴ As this scholar has demonstrated, Thackeray judges his English travellers in the Rhineland, notably Amelia, by the superior standard of the new German culture, one part of which is represented by the music and literary contents of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* and Beethoven's *Fidelio*, and the other by Goethe's *Werther* and *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*. Goethe's writings are contrasted with the evangelical tracts on which Amelia has been brought up, and *Fidelio* and *Don Giovanni* with musical understanding in England, as shown by the enthusiastic reception of Beethoven's absurd *Battle Symphony* by the English travellers and residents at Pumpernickel. As Mathison emphasizes, the German sections of the novel have particular significance for Thackeray's meaning in *Vanity Fair*, the theme of which is notably clarified by allusions to Amelia's new cultural and literary experiences, which bring into strong relief those qualities which she lacks (and which the chief feminine characters in *Don Giovanni* and *Fidelio* notably possess). These allusions show that Amelia's defects are the defects of English middle-class society and communicate "to the reader the absence of both art and intellect in Amelia's England":

"The reader, remembering these German works, contrasts Amelia's poverty with the richness of thought in the works, and the mature emotional mental lives of their characters, especially the women. He becomes sharply aware that the idea of a positive intellectual and emotional development as a basis for a worthy scheme of moral values did not exist for those responsible for her upbringing."⁵

I think that Mathison's analysis throws much new light upon Thackeray's masterpiece and whole-heartedly agree with him as far as concerns that part of German culture represented by the operas of Mozart and Beethoven. In view of Thackeray's critical attitude to *Werther* and to the moral content of Goethe's works in general (notably of *Wilhelm Meister*), in view, too, of his well-known highly critical opinion of those who disregard the marriage bond, which he always considered to be sacred and inviolable, I doubt, however, that Thackeray

² *Letters* III, 268; see also *Works* VI, 541.

³ See *Works* I, 171, 172, 527, XI, 255.

⁴ *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, vol. 18, December 1963, No. 3, pp. 235-246.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 237.

meant Goethe's *Werther* and *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* to represent the other part of German culture. Indeed, there is no direct connection in the novel between the evangelical tracts and these novels (though there is between the former and Mozart's opera), and there is no evidence at all as to whether Amelia herself had direct personal experience of Goethe's writings, as she had of the musical compositions.

Thackeray's good musical taste and love of music was not an entirely unimportant asset for him as a critic, as the aesthetic enjoyment evoked in him by this art often helps him in his attempts to define that produced by works of art in other spheres, as we shall see later. This part of his endowment played a very important role, too, in his criticism of poetry, for melodiousness was one of those qualities he regarded as indispensable for poetry of the highest order, as will be seen in the appropriate place.

V.

Besides possessing a very extensive knowledge of literature, criticism, the visual arts and music, Thackeray had a very large and deep experience of actual life, of the "way of the world" and of people of all social classes except the lowest. This asset of his, most important for him as a novelist and manifested in this sphere of his work in his remarkable ability to analyse and characterize human nature, also served him in good stead as a critic, when he created the vivid, psychologically reasoned and stylistically elaborated portraits of some of the literary personages he treated critically, notably those of the English "humorists" of the 18th century in his cycle of lectures. A not unimportant qualification was that he was a much-travelled man, who visited several countries in Europe and Asia and the United States of America, travelling with the aim of widening and deepening his knowledge of the manners of the human society of his time and of man as individual and as member of this society. On one occasion he declared that he went abroad to "see the living people and their cities, and the actual aspect of Nature".¹ Of inestimable importance for him as critic of French literature was of course his intimate familiarity with life in France in general and Paris in particular, though neither his familiarity nor his hearty liking for it helped him to rid himself of some prejudices against the French which I investigated in detail in "Thackeray as a Reader and Critic of French Literature" and which exercised, as I have also shown, a harmful influence on his criticism of their literature. He had no such prejudices against the Germans and his stay in their country, though not so long as were his sojourns in France, was perhaps even more important for him both as novelist and critic, playing a far from negligible role in the whole development of his views and personality, as I have shown in more detail in my study on Thackeray's aesthetics. One of his greatest assets as critic was of course his knowledge of foreign languages. His excellent knowledge of French and good working knowledge of German enabled him to read the works criticized in the original and to quote extracts from them in his own translation. His knowledge of Latin and Greek enabled him to illustrate his assessments by parallels from the ancient authors and quotations in the language of the original works.

¹ *Works* IX, 82.

VI.

Thackeray possessed many further qualities which a good critic should not lack — he was a man of intellect, taste and creative imagination, of keen brain and common sense, of sharp insight into the nature of things and into the hearts of people. He really understood what he wrote about, was capable of independent judgment and could analyse and assess. His sensitive reactions to the reality surrounding him and his keen capacity for observation were noticed and appreciated by several of his contemporaries, notably by Mrs. Elwin:

“If you did not know who he was, the first thing which would strike you would be that he was a man who looked with a magician’s eye through and through everything before him. In five minutes you know he has made a complete inventory of the room, and he has weighed out everybody in it. He sits quietly watching a face for two whole minutes, and then he turns away, having spelt every letter of the character.”¹

Thackeray proved himself to be a genius in the sphere of fiction, and I am convinced that Lessing’s well-known statement “Not every critic of art is a genius: but every genius is born a critic of art” applies to a great extent to him. For he possessed that sort of intelligence which produces criticism, he was that kind of writer who, according to Valéry, “carries a critic within him and who associates him intimately with his work”.² The critic in him resembles a creative artist and his critical temperament reveals itself in his novels which are of course in harmony, too, with his conception of criticism. The aesthetic relationship he assumes to the reality depicted is, in his best novels, that of a relentless critic who is himself deeply involved in the world which he pillories. As critic he touched several spheres which he occupied as novelist, as the concrete analysis of his criticism will reveal: he selected for criticism literature of those periods (the 18th century and his own time) which he depicted in his novels. According to Compton-Rickett “no one but a genuine critic could have written *Esmond*, with its intimate knowledge and appraisal of eighteenth-century ways and manners”.³ He paid much attention, too, to the way in which literature of his own time depicted the life of fashionable society, one of the main subjects of his creative interest. His critical spirit does not manifest itself, however, only in his imaginative works. Like one of his models, Hazlitt, he is always critical — not only in his professional but also in private life. The objects of his criticism are not only the social spheres he selected for depiction but also those in which he moved as man and member of society. He criticizes not only books he reviews, exhibitions which he evaluates as professional critic, dramas which he assesses in his critical contributions, but also novels, poems and dramas he reads without professional reasons, pictures and sculptures he sees as a lover of art, plays he enjoys as an enthusiastic theatre-goer. He criticizes not only novelists, poets, dramatists, authors of non-fictional books, but also kings, emperors, politicians, philosophers and snobs in the town and in the country. He assumes a critical standpoint to every problem.

¹ The Rev. Whitwell Elwin, *Some XVIII Century Men of Letters*, 2 vols., ed. by his son Warwick Elwin, John Murray, London, 1902, I, 178.

² Quoted by Austin Warren in *Literary Scholarship. Its Aims and Methods*, Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 1941, p. 171.

³ *Op. cit.*, p. 514.

opinion and sentiment he comes across in his fiction or criticism — having much to say critically, for instance, on various political doctrines, religious creeds and rites, controversial points in history, social problems, ethics, education and a score of other matters, of some of which he had considerable expert knowledge (especially of history). And he criticizes even himself. In his best novels he presents his authorial likeness as a melancholy clown or observer occupying a booth in that fair of vanities which he subjects to merciless criticism, a friend and brother of its inhabitants, upon whose real faces and paltry selves he directs the cruel spot-light of his satire. As a novelist he is very critical of his own productions, is aware of their weak points and is very far from pronouncing any triumphant *exegi monumentum* or from prophesying for his works immortal fame. As a man he knows his own weaknesses, deplors them in his private diaries and with genuine Christian humility asks his God to deliver him from them and grant him forgiveness.

And last, but not by any means least, there are the further qualifications of his personal character, of his tender heart, capable of warm sympathy for all mankind, yet able to listen to the precepts of reason when confronted with a literary pretender, of his kind temper and of his acute sense of the ridiculous, his intense dislike, as Boyes has it, “for anything like meanness, shabbiness, pretentiousness, or tyranny”,⁴ of his generosity, moral integrity and honesty. The greatest asset of Thackeray the literary critic is, after all, his remarkable personality, which must attract any qualified reader of his criticism, a personality which induces us to forget his mistakes and forgive even his blunders, which attracts us so much that we listen spellbound to his views even though we may not agree with them.

The last qualification which must be mentioned here is his brilliant style which renders his reviews permanently readable, quotable and enjoyable, his splendid wit and humour and his ingenuity in finding amusement in even the most stupid and tedious books, thanks to which many dreary and pretentious nonentities, who would otherwise have fallen into deserved oblivion long ago, continue to live in his pages, amusing us with their pretensions and imbecility.

Thanks to the qualifications discussed in this chapter, his education, intelligence, critical acumen, common sense, and remarkable and uncommonly gifted personality, Thackeray was very well equipped, indeed, for his critical work. So endowed he could have become a great critic, had he not become a great novelist instead, and had he not lacked one or two further essential qualifications which would have made his equipment complete. These disabilities will be discussed along with their influence on his criticism in the main chapters of this work.

⁴ Op. cit., p. 125.