Victorian Literature and Culture (2007), **35**, 417–449. Printed in the United States of America.
Copyright © 2007 Cambridge University Press. 1060-1503/07 $9.50

"BLACK HOLES" OF CALCUTTA AND LONDON: INTERNAL COLONIES IN *VANITY FAIR*

By Corri Zoli

> Those who know the English colonies abroad know that we carry with us our pride, pills, prejudices, Harvey-sauces, cayenne-peppers, and other Lares, making a little Britain wherever we settle down.
>
> — W. M. Thackeray, *Vanity Fair*

> Above all, as a range of interest groups including feminists, ethnic and racial minorities, and queer theorists have argued, the old literary histories routinely erased multiple differences, enshrining the triumph of center over the margins, substituting a false vision of unity for a reality that was and is ever more multiracial, multiethnic and multicultural. English literature was always an unsteady amalgamation . . . like English language itself . . . a mixed, impure, and constantly shifting medium.
>
> — Stephen Greenblatt

WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY'S *Vanity Fair* (1847–48) makes a passing reference to a seemingly insignificant trope, the "Black Hole of Calcutta." Part of an eighteenth-century legacy of unofficial rule in India by the East India Trading Company, this reference to a prison incident in June 1756 rehashes the event that occurred there – nearly one hundred years before the novel was published. The name, the "Black Hole," evokes the prison itself: an enormous pit dug deep into the ground "eighteenth feet long by fourteen feet, ten inches wide," according to social historian Brijen K. Gupta.[1] It was "British" in the sense that East India Company agents stationed on-the-ground in Calcutta controlled this makeshift dungeon, using it to enforce local trade agreements with native authorities. Those who intervened were deemed traitors, the worst offenders of state.

That disciplinary practice was paradoxical at best. No official British state existed in India until the nineteenth century, so incarcerating "traitors" presumed a crime against a victim (the state) that did not yet exist. In fact, most historians mark territorial colonization after the events of the Great Mutiny of 1857, when the government of India was effectively transferred from the corporate body of the East India Company to the Crown.[2] An imaginary

https://doi.org/10.1017/S106015030705156X Published online by Cambridge University Press

state notwithstanding, Victorians were obsessed with this hundred year old Black Hole prison and the "shameful" role reversal in power relations between British soldiers and native insurgents that occurred there during an attack on the English Factory at Fort William by native forces. John Holwell, reputed to be a prisoner in the Black Hole, reports the incident in this way:

> Figure to yourself, my friend, if possible, the situation of one-hundred and forty six wretches, exhausted by continual fatigue and action, thus crammed together in a cube of about eighteen feet, in a close sultry night, in Bengal, shut up to the eastward and southward (the only quarters from whence air could reach us) by dead walls, and by a wall and door to the north, open only to the westward by two windows, strongly barred with iron, from which we could receive scarce any the least circulation of air.[3]

Aside from Holwell's evocative use of language designed to set off the imagination ("[f]igure to yourself"), English newspapers portrayed this account as fact, describing an outnumbered group of Europeans placed in the Black Hole. Of those 146 allegedly imprisoned, 123 fatalities were thought to have occurred from suffocation in one night, with only 23 total survivors – including a woman. Though intensely debated, this incident was increasingly repeated in newspapers and novels as the century wore on – including Francis Burney's *Evelina* (1782) and H. Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1886). By Thackeray's time the mere mention of the event tripped a combustible mix of national shame and pride that came to define metropolitan thinking on the subject.

There were skeptics. Karl Marx, writing at mid-century like Thackeray, described the event as a ploy, a "sham scandal," fabricated by East India Company officials "to justify," as cultural historian Vijay Prashad adds, "their own barbarity" and "to hide capitalism's hand in the production of such grief" (117).[4] Indeed, it was not insignificant in thinking about the strange and interesting topics of *Vanity Fair* that Marx attributed this event's public currency to Anglo-Indian corporate interests. In fact, for Thackeray, the "Black Hole of Calcutta" was exactly the kind of loaded sign – with complex ties to culture and history – that he relished exploiting in his fiction. Moreover, while these figures might disagree over reasons, both were well aware that this eighteenth-century event achieved a public authenticity that was then used to rationalize other politically-charged actions in the period, including administering harsher punishments in Victorian India and finally instituting a British state.

Despite the recognition today of the myth-building function of nationalism and its use in both English literary canon formation and empire-building, what new historicist Stephen Greenblatt calls a "nationalist model of literary history" still persists in much contemporary literary practice – most obviously in the continual habit of framing literary inquiry by such nationalist field designations as "British literature" no matter what the relation of creative production to national heritage (50).[5] In this essay I examine *Vanity Fair* through the historical symbol of the Black Hole of Calcutta to address one aspect of this problem – the role of a nationalist notion of "culture" in this mythic model of literary history. In a novel that notoriously breaks with Victorian conventions of the deepest kind, offering an exemplary instance of British history as imperial, mixed and polycultural, a complex notion of identity consumed by socially-defined artifice and the performance of Englishness – not ethnic purity or essentialism – Thackeray offers a notion of "culture" that gains its power and definition from international, not national coordinates, including a mass of imperial references which

https://doi.org/10.1017/S106015030705156X Published online by Cambridge University Press

form this novel's most consistent texture.[6] In exploding a seamless relation between cultural identity and national belonging, *Vanity Fair* thus offers a counter-narrative in the project of building, as I suggest in my second epigraph, "new maps" of literary history beyond homogenous ideals of "national culture," including in this case insular England.[7]

Why this particular novel is available for such rebuilding efforts is, however, only partially due to Thackeray's own (uneven) consciousness of the complexity of the Victorian period itself. His ethnic and national identity as an Anglo-Indian in contrast to his writerly identity as the consummate English novelist, which I treat below, has something to do with it. But more important, this novel's formal peculiarities – rather than any concerted subversion on Thackeray's part – inform its value for this critical historical project. Such formal traits include the narrator's own infamous unruliness; his relentless demystifying of Victorian artifices; and his incessant use of racialized details, perspectives, and memories as literary tropes, including those derived from his own childhood in Calcutta and his lasting affiliation with that Anglo-Indian community. Beyond Thackeray's now generally-recognized genius for *literary* transgressions, the novel, in providing a counter-narrative to what we expect to find in even satires of Victorianism, can help to elicit our own historical consciousness about "culture" beyond nationalist models. I want to be clear that by a critical historical project I mean not only re-inventing models of literary history that are more accountable to that complex world which once existed, but those that also intervene into narrow or anachronistic premises that continue to stock our contemporary theories of history. I mean a view of history which can recognize, as world systems theorist Giovanni Arrighi has argued, our modern historical "perceptions" as "distorted by an overestimation of the actual importance of nation-states as the basic units of world politics in the modern era," and further, an approach to literature and history within the ambit of these insights (Arrighi and Silver 37).[8]

De-Romanticizing "Race"

THACKERAY'S REFERENCE TO THE Black Hole of Calcutta is characteristically off-hand. At the novel's start, Rebecca Sharp upon leaving Miss Pinkerton's academy famously tosses her gift of "Dr. Johnson's Dixonary" from Amelia Sedley's carriage in Chiswick Mall (10; ch. 1). When Amelia responds with: "How could you do so, Rebecca?," a "laughing" Becky replies with: "Why, do you think Miss Pinkerton will come out and order me back to the black – hole?" (14; ch. 2). Becky's "bad girl" rebelliousness in contrast to Amelia's paralyzing naiveté poises "worldly" knowledge (of this event) against the wholesome canons of English civil culture (Dr. Johnson's dictionary) – depicting a cultural contempt that was highly appealing to many Victorian readers (352; ch. 29).[9]

Second and more important, toward the novel's end when Amelia's brother Joseph Sedley, the novel's notorious nabob character, makes his return home to England from Bengal, he chooses to live in an unusual Anglo-Indian neighborhood of retired colonial administrators in London. The narrator writes of this place, feigning that his facts come from upper-class gossip: "Who does not know these respectable abodes of the retired Indian aristocracy, and the quarter which Mr. Wentham calls the Black Hole, in a word?" (761; ch. 60). The "Black Hole" of London, a racial slur for a hybrid metropolitan "colony," makes fraught the notion that Jos in his fetishized love for all things Indian has really left the East, or that any meaningful distance exists between Anglo culture at home and its

https://doi.org/10.1017/S106015030705156X Published online by Cambridge University Press

"Eastern possessions" abroad (202; ch. 17). In Becky and Jos – the most interesting, morally scrutinized, and nationally hybrid characters of the novel – the "Black Hole" draws readers' attention to questions of "Englishness" and to the fraught *cultural* boundaries of nation. But more than this, in Thackeray's hands, this distant event in place and time is imaginatively brought home to England where its historical significance is slowly overturned from this narrator's own playful "insider-outsider's" perspective.

Colonial and racial references not only appear, but abound in this novel. On page one, we meet twice the "black servant, Sambo," and only a few pages later, "Miss Swartz," the "rich woolly-haired mulatto from St. Kitts," who devolves "hysterically" into "a passion of tears" at Amelia's leave-taking (3; ch. 1, 7; ch. 1). Likewise, the novel's central tensions emerge from racialized motifs. Becky fantasizes about marrying Jos because "they say all Indian nabobs are enormously rich"– a dream, we are told, that initiates the novel's action and links it to other exotic tales like "*Arabian Nights* and *Guthrie's Geography*" (22; ch. 2, 26; ch. 3). Many of the novel's key turning points also involve colonial references. Miss Pinkerton bids the girls goodbye wearing a "large and solemn turban," one that Rebecca hopes to see "floating," along with her teacher, at the "bottom of the Thames" (10; ch. 1, 14; ch. 2). Jos flees Becky's marital pressures by returning to Calcutta, whereas Dobbins takes leave of Amelia's indecision by enlisting as a colonel in Caribbean, Indian, and Canadian campaigns. After they finally marry he snubs Amelia for the more fascinating task of "writing a *History of the Punjaub*" (877; ch. 67).

These references are handled in a way that produces a consciousness about their representational status – a consciousness that animates the meaning of the novel as a whole. Becky imagines herself in colonialist settings and garb, for instance, dressed in "an infantry of (Cashmere) shawls, turbans and diamond necklaces" and "mounted on an elephant" – ready to "pay a visit to the Grand Mogul" (26–27; ch. 3). To win Jos, she agrees to validate all this "East India Company Civil Servant" has to say about "Boggley Wollah"– "a fine, lonely, marshy, jungly" place "famous for snipe-shooting" and "where not unfrequently you may flush a tiger" (27; ch. 3). Her colonial-inspired "scheming" indeed defines the novel's ending: she finally snares Jos with a representation of the colonies – a portrait of him sitting atop an elephant in an Eastern scene (860; ch. 67). Most tellingly, George Osborne, in a passage that critics cite for its explicit racism, chooses Amelia as a wife to disobey his father's orders to "[m]arry that mulatto woman" – the rich Creole heiress Miss Rhoda Swartz (259; ch. 21). Mr. Osborne's "blood boiled with honest British exultation," we are told, at his son's refusal of her, and the father further disowns George for "fling[ing] away eight thousand a year" (249, 259; ch. 21) – a move that prompts George to enlist as a soldier at Waterloo in an adventure that ends his life and widows Amelia.

At mid-century, "Great Britain" – a word Thackeray routinely uses – is fast approaching its well-documented imperial apex. At century's end, nearly a third of the world's landmass would be British, with one third of the world's products passing through English ports. If London, therefore, functions as the main *entrepôt* for the globe, and if India stands as its infamous, lucrative jewel, the absence of a hybrid metropolitan vernacular and its stock types, including racialized ones, would be suspect – not their presence. A language develops at this time to rival the "foreign" goods stocking and flowing from British ports. Yet critics consistently exhibit a squeamishness about the visibility of this language of "race" and empire in *Vanity Fair*. On the one hand, they normalize Thackeray's racism: Joseph Sherman has argued, for instance, that "racial stereotyping and racist discourse were ingrained not

https://doi.org/10.1017/S106015030705156X Published online by Cambridge University Press

only into Victorian social consciousness at large, but were also part of Thackeray's personal outlook as his many contributions to *Punch* makes clear."[10] Edward Said also speaks of Thackeray's use of "race" and the East as certain deployments in a broader cultural discourse of imperialism (*Culture* 68). Yet, on the other hand, critics recoil at Thackeray's *explicitness* about the cultural and linguistic facts of Victorian empire. Many point to Thackeray's overt racism, for instance, in George's statement of refusal of his father's mercenary plans to marry Miss Swartz. "I don't like the colour, sir," George notes summarily, as he compares the Caribbean heiress to "the black that sweeps opposite Fleet Market" (259; ch. 21). As if the point could be possibly unclear, Thackeray includes two illustrations of Miss Swartz, reiterating George's words: "her curly jet-black hair" (as "curly as Sambo's"), a "nose ring," and a "plume of feathers" all of which makes her look the "perfect Belle-Sauvage" (245; ch. 20).

With such examples at hand, it is, perhaps, no surprise that J. Russell Perkin and Sandy Morey Norton have agreed that this "novel has certainly not been read as an attack on British imperialism and domination," and that "for all his satire, Thackeray overtly endorses these values in his story."[11] While depiction and endorsement are different literary matters altogether, it still seems that Patrick Brantlinger's early position on the issue (though he speaks mainly of Thackeray's treatment of India) is defining. Thackeray's novels, he writes:

> offer a clear expression of average, bourgeois, mid-Victorian values and ideas about many social issues . . . (including) a perfectly complacent, uncritical image of *Anglo*-India – he was no more interested in depicting 'native' India than he was in depicting factory workers and strikes in Manchester. Anglo-India and the Empire were givens, and these facts of life the mildly cynical portrait painter of Vanity Fair never questioned at any fundamental level. (105)

While Victorianists know well the ubiquity of racialist discourse throughout the period – they are indeed the "facts of life" – it is Thackeray's *explicit* reference to such cultural facts and his translation of them into tropes in the novel that critics seem to find troubling, even damning. In certain ways, modern and contemporary critics romanticize "race" in nineteenth-century novels: quite aware of its historical occurrence, they loathe to face – or to explicate – its literary signs and representation.

Such critical delicacy smacks of a lingering, deceptive universalism that Nigerian novelist and critic Chinua Achebe argues defines western or so-called "colonialist criticism":

> In the nature of things the work of a western writer is automatically informed by universality. It is only others who must strain to achieve it. So and so's work is universal; he has truly arrived! As though universality were some distant bend in the road which you may take if you travel out far enough in the direction of Europe or America, if you put adequate distance between yourself and your home. I should like to see the word 'universal' banned altogether from discussions of African literature until such a time as people cease to use it as a synonym for the narrow, self-serving parochialism of Europe, until their horizon extends to include all the world.[12] (qtd. in Ashcroft 59–61)

While Achebe speaks of a 1970s tendency of western critics of African writing to seek out and to name as "universal" that which is essentially western in literary value and design (a recognition that comes to define a broader postcolonial epistemic break with western philosophical discourse from Descartes to positivism), Thackeray's writing is resolutely of

https://doi.org/10.1017/S106015030705156X Published online by Cambridge University Press

his world. Yet in his case that horizon has been extended to include "all the world," in part because of the cultural facts of empire, and in other part, because of a deliberate narrative perspective that speaks to this problem of false universalism. That is, if the authority of western canonical literature traditionally lies in its purportedly unbiased, even unlocatable viewpoint – a *false* universalism historically continuous with western practices of rule – any disruption of that presumed neutral, universal perspective, whether from non-western or western locations, and whether in fiction or in criticism, imperils the reputation of the literary canon as a general civilizational (universal) good. As Said has pointed out, one feature of this false universalism is a schizophrenic approach to key figures of Anglo literary canonicity in literary history. Certain texts are excised from a given signature: the liberal J. S. Mill, for example, is cut off from the Mill of the East India Company Office who writes that "the sacred duties which civilized nations owe to the independence and nationality of each other, are not binding towards those to whom nationality and independence are certain evil, or at best a questionable good" (*Culture* 80). Likewise, the spiritual Thomas Carlyle of *Past and Present* (1843) is separated from the Carlyle who writes "Occasional Discourse on the Negro Question" (1849) in which a figure, "Quashee," the "emblematic Black," is doomed "forever to subhuman status" by his "ugliness, idleness, rebellion."[13] Such explicit statements are, Said argues, not "obscure, occult, or esoteric," but "frank" and pervasive in the literature; *not* disconnected from the subjects of art, but designed expressly to "connect" various "political ideas about British world domination" to "aesthetic" even "moral philosophy" – a connection made obvious in John Ruskin's theory of aesthetics (*Culture* 104).

One of the curious strengths of *Vanity Fair* is that such opportunistic separations – and their informing critical delicacy – are impossible to make in this novel. Indeed, to attempt to excise the novel's colonialist and racial references is like trying to separate, as in Ferdinand de Saussure's famous example of the simultaneity of signifier and signified, the back from the front of a single sheet of paper. Thackeray's language is thoroughly Victorian, one might say, replete with elements of an increasingly "scientific" racial classifying system, one more aggressively mobilized as the century wears on. Thackeray's very indelicacy about "race" and imperialism, including his posture as a certain kind of "native informant" who tells of ordinary Victorian obsessions with race, has a curious disarming effect on dominant models of literary history, nationalist myths of autonomous aesthetic culture, and the "faux-universalism" to which the literary canon is still often subtly enlisted – in the assumption that our most cherished English writers are in fact English.[14] If this is one of this novel's curious, albeit difficult, advantages for a historical project, Thackeray is even more helpful. Not only does he layer the novel with obstacles to faux-universalism – a voice he likes to sardonically ventriloquize – he also brings such Victorian alien references and vernacular terms for "otherness" home, not only to metropolitan discourse, but to metropolitan sites. Such toying with spatial distance – a distance that racialist discourse requires – has literary as well as ethical aims.

I have suggested that Thackeray's bluntness – whatever its motivation – in representing the facticity of empire in racial tropes, especially across a broad range of ethnic types (Caribbean, African, Indian, Arabic) for whom the Victorians developed a vernacular, makes this novel useful for confronting more accurately the complexity of Victorian culture and history – a complexity that helps us to build new maps today of literary and cultural history. I would like to go one step further to add that to back away from Thackeray's ample, fictional use of such Victorian racial and imperial motifs is only to continue practicing another related

https://doi.org/10.1017/S106015030705156X Published online by Cambridge University Press

element of western universalism – the belief that English literature and language can remain something other than an ethnic and geopolitical "amalgamation," the belief that English is purportedly pure, removed, or separate from an imperial history of which it is a constituting part. Unfortunately an immaculate conception of "culture," forty years after its theoretical debunking by critics as varied as Raymond Williams, Christopher Herbert, James Buzard, James Clifford, Arjun Appadurai, and Homi Bhabha, turns up again in our most ordinary literary habits and evaluative instincts.[15]

If Thackeray's bluntness about "race" and empire in this novel has the effect of highlighting the historical specificity of Englishness, it also reveals a Victorian cultural identity and aesthetic whose defining characteristic is *both* hybridity and universalism – a point Robert Young has explored.[16] Thackeray, that is, exposes the *partiality* of English universalism in both senses of the word: as elliptical, as only part of a far more complex story, and as narrowly self-interested or willfully political. Indeed, his use of the metaphor "vanity" is the best expression of this critique of false universalism at both levels: the hubris of mistaking one's local, nationalist perspective for a god's eye-view, and its resulting privileged naïveté (best captured in simpering Amelia) which is willfully and self-interestedly blind. As my first epigraph hopes to indicate, "Englishness," for Thackeray is a mobile and changeable cultural identity and set of values; it is not essentialist or nationalist, but defined by what it "carr(ies) with it abroad," in this case, notably, "pride," as well as "pills, prejudices, Harvey-sauces, cayenne-peppers, and other Lares." For him, "vanity" thus describes an *Anglo* gaze whose (often petty) desires masquerade as universalist. What gives this novel, then, its precise if disturbing ability to depict Victorian racial classifying systems is Thackeray's keen, complex grasp on this international Englishness, this roaming imperial gaze, captured in this novel's distinct narrative style and structure – one whose unusual approach to history I will describe. This view of history is bound up in complex ways with Thackeray's own Anglo-Indian identity and his sense, from that vantage point, of the internationalization of English culture through various global circuits and its resultant creation of commercial values and vanities.

Before I turn to this narrative style – or what I call Thackeray's accidental theory of history – I want to examine the function of such colonialist and racial references in the novel, especially once "race" is reframed in relation to international Englishness and its institutional life blood, the settler community and their special relationship to "English history." I then return to Thackeray's critique of English vanity internationalized, itself based in his knowledge of a parallel British Indian history, where events like the Black Hole of Calcutta become markers of an entirely different definition of Victorian culture.

While critics have attended to Thackeray's fictional use of "race," racism, and imperialism, few have noticed the forced or funny exoticism of *Vanity Fair*, or the moral undertow that such references exert on the novel's structure as a whole, including the fate of its main characters.[17] I want to return to the example of George's refusal of Miss Swartz – that moment of undisputed racism in criticism – but through a sense of this novel's more flexible architecture built of Victorian cultural discourses of race as its raw materials. While this scene plays to low humor, a point Thackeray's illustrations reiterate, humor is also this narrator's weapon of choice to place a sophisticated, even jaded Victorian reader, well versed in novelistic conventions, off guard and thus to create a more deeply disarming effect. The novel critiques George and Amelia, and more importantly their relationship, through the vehicle of creole Miss Swartz. Defined, at first, by her absence of culture (intelligence,

https://doi.org/10.1017/S106015030705156X Published online by Cambridge University Press

English manners, taste) in this party scene, Thackeray begins to undermine this point and the audience's normative view of this "dark object" (251; ch. 21). Miss Swartz, he writes, "was quite ignorant of all [the party-goers'] plans regarding her, and, taking all the young ladies' flattery for genuine sentiment, and being, as we have before had occasion to show, of a very warm and impetuous nature, responded to their affection with quite a tropical ardour" (251; ch. 21). While introduced as a mere object of humor – the butt of a well-worn Victorian joke in which culture slips and slides into race – the narrator begins to create sympathy for this character, given her exclusion and ill-treatment by a fickle upper class. Further, he transfers an initial sympathy readers would have pinned onto Amelia and George to Miss Swartz herself. This easy victim of class manipulation – coded in racialist terms – unaware of her society's ulterior motives masked as flattery, begins to exhibit childhood loyalty to Amelia. Indeed, Thackeray uses Miss Swartz's excessive feeling to highlight the serious *lack of feeling* – his most scathing critique – in the race and class hypocrisies of those around her.

She is contrasted with George's sisters, for instance, who beg George not to mention publicly the now-bankrupt Amelia since her "family has disgraced itself," a reference to Mr. Sedley's misfortunes in the stock market (256; ch. 21). But Miss Swartz, becoming a speaker in her own right, claims affiliation with Amelia in the face of such shaming tactics, thus eschewing fickle class/caste partialities for genuine feeling: "Spinning swiftly round on the music-stool" she cries out, "Lor! Is it my Amelia? Amelia that was at Miss P.'s at Hammersmith? I know it is. It's her, and – Tell me about her – where is she?" (256; ch. 21). If the point were merely to portray Miss Swartz as lacking in culture, or as a simpleton, unwise to the ways of "Vanity Fair," there would be no need to continue this contrast with Amelia, George, and his sisters – all to *their* moral disadvantage. Amelia, we are told bluntly, being "the hypocrite as she was," remained cool toward her only ally, nursing "a great deal of pretty jealousy" about Miss Swartz: "lest George should forget her for the heiress and her money and her estates in St. Kitts" (247; ch. 20). Likewise, Miss Swartz begins to undo any heroic hopes readers might attach to George, since, while he bluntly tells his father, "I'm not going to marry a Hottentot Venus," he recasts his overt racism for Amelia's ears into a flattering self-representation (259; ch. 21). He chooses Amelia as a wife, he tells her, no matter "how many plantations in the West Indies" Miss Swartz will inherit – a point immediately refuted by his own covetous detailing of all the heiress's assets: "and a deal of money in the funds; three stars to her name in the East India Stockholders' list; a mansion in Surrey, and a house in Portland Place" (245; ch. 21). When George does finally propose to Amelia, the narrator shows that surfaces – skin color – are not far from his mind: Amelia is "the only person of our set that ever looked, thought, or spoke like a lady," he says, a comparison whose meaning emerges from its prior contrast with "that mulatto woman" (247; ch. 20). Miss Swartz's excessive ("tropical") feeling, that core trope which guarantees (by opposition) western rationality/reason, has slowly shifted to reveal her genuine feeling – that test for Thackeray of moral character.

If there were any doubt about the conclusions that readers should draw here, Thackeray has repeated a similar convergence of race, class, and female respectability in an earlier scene – and hinted toward its treacherous outcome. During Becky's early visit to the Sedley's home, Mrs. Sedley spies her seducing Jos amidst "a chintz of a rich and fantastic India pattern, and a calico of a tender rose-colour" (36; ch. 4). After telling her husband of Becky's artful designs, Mr. Sedley reminds his wife that racial purity must trump even that Victorian touchstone of female respectability in class: "Let Jos marry whom he likes," he says, "The girl's a white

https://doi.org/10.1017/S106015030705156X Published online by Cambridge University Press

face at any rate . . . Better she, my dear, than a black Mrs. Sedley, and a dozen mahogany grandchildren" – a nod to this father's recognition of how deep Jos's love for all things Indian goes (36; ch. 4). The narrator then undermines the otherwise funny exoticism of Mr. Sedley's flagrant tone by turning this scene didactic: as Joseph Sherman notes, "there is a jolt when one recognizes" that the narrator "is speaking of Becky Sharp who ultimately [will] make Jos her 'prey'" in her most "terrifying role as one of the fiendish marine cannibals, feasting on their pickled victims" (82). The narrator's point is clear. Despite this father's advice, a "whiteface" does *not* prove a better choice than any "dark object," and further, a larger message becomes clear: such a (racialist, classist) basis for choosing one's love object has disastrous and highly unpredictable consequences.

While satirical of them, Thackeray does not intervene into Victorian discourses of "race" or empire. His use of these tropes is instrumentalist: he seeks to expose the premises by which Victorians and especially Victorian novels declare the propriety of their own conventions. He shows that reigning assumptions about such seemingly benign issues as the good (heroic) or bad character, the nature of a fine match, or even how one defines personal happiness, all involve for Victorians *racial* discriminations. Racial tropes thus infuse Victorian moral argumentation; they are their most ordinary terms (the "facts of life"). Indeed, it is because Victorian "race" discourse is itself so unformed, shifting, variegated, and discontinuous, as George Stocking, Jr. notes[18] – even at its modern birth – that Thackeray's use of such tropes can remain complex and ambivalent in ways that Sandy Morey Norton has explored ("Boggley-Wollah"). Moreover, to assume that Thackeray could extricate himself from these discourses and their imperialist function is to misunderstand cultural history and the institutional function of discourse, and more problematically, to pass off the work of decolonizing culture and its historic monuments – a contemporary obligation – to the past through the idealist hope that prescient, exceptional Victorians could stem the tide of their own historicity. Neither the past nor the contemporary works that way. Instead, to intervene in how contemporary culture is understood and defined by its appeal to history, including literary history, requires confronting the terms by which implicit claims about Anglo or western identity are deemed tactful, truthful, and legitimate, over time. Thackeray is helpful in such an endeavor, not because he is an under-appreciated progressive hero, but because he targets, not racism or empire *per se*, but its representation.[19]

He does this for formal, not for moral reasons. Critics, for instance, have noticed Thackeray's deflation of Victorian hypocrisies, as well as his general fatigue or resignation over Victorian arbitrary objections to vice. They have also noticed his tendency to expose such artifice indirectly, sidestepping the moralist's wrath, or skirting the policed boundaries of Victorian morality. Yet, rarely have they linked such formal matters with questions of "race." Few have noticed that Thackeray's much maligned, cynical tone, for instance, one of *faux* resignation, is a formal strategy (though it appears spontaneous) to capture readers within the matrix of their false assumptions and cultural terms. When the narrator must explain what Becky has been doing before Jos, Amelia, and Dobbins meet up with her again on the Continent, for instance, he frames this chapter ("We Meet an Old Acquaintance") around what *cannot* be said – given Victorian hypocritical rules of literary politeness: "We must pass over a part of Mrs. Rebecca Crawley's biography with that lightness and delicacy which the world demands – the moral world, that has, perhaps, no particular objection to vice, but an insuperable repugnance to hearing vice called by its proper name" (812; ch. 64). The narrator chooses satire and playfulness over critique, if critique means identifying

https://doi.org/10.1017/S106015030705156X Published online by Cambridge University Press

the conditions of possibility for explaining "what is" (or in his words, the act of calling something by its "proper name"). He does this in order to place readers more fully into "the world of Vanity Fair" without putting them off through a frontal attack on their dearly-held assumptions – assumptions that define the intelligible. His is thus a pedagogical move: once seduced into the "carnival" of "Vanity Fair" through familiar, stereotypical landmarks, including racist ones, the narrator then deploys exaggeration, typecasting, extensions, or reversals to thicken and finally to highlight and undermine readers' initial beliefs. In this context, the clever deployment of colonial and racial metaphors, like Miss Swartz and the Black Hole of Calcutta, are tropes to carry and slowly unleash layers of subversive meaning at pivotal moments of impact. In effect, Thackeray dismantles such novelistic and cultural certainties without ever having to dictate their "proper names."[20] Indeed, he does this to better arm readers with a history of information with which to interpret the novel, to discern, in this case, George's ultimate false propriety or Amelia's ethical fickleness. His narrational strategy thus teaches readers to read paradigmatically as well as syntagmatically, to accumulate information across the novel's dispersed landscape, to listen for literary clues dropped from scene to scene, and to build from that context the novel's final meaning. As a bi-product of such efforts, racial assumptions and their links to class hierarchies and self-serving conceits of nation are also undone.[21]

To miss this instrumentalist use of colonial motifs and hyper-racialized tropes is to miss Thackeray's more general exaggeration of Victorian literary conventions, the stock types, for instance, that people his novel, or its narrator's on-going dialogue with readers about the tired, arbitrary conventions of Victorian fiction. All *Vanity Fair* characters are *excessively* classed, raced, and/or gendered, for instance, including the angel of the house (Amelia); the dull bourgeois hero (Dobbins); the classic nabob (Jos); the philistine business man (Mr. Sedley); the depraved aristocrat (Mr. Crawley); the philandering soldier (George Osborne); the rich mulatto heiress (Miss Swartz); the licentious Frenchman (Monsieur de Steyne). Even Anglo racial stereotypes litter its pages: Dr. Johnson, the symbol of Anglo civility, is poised against "Black Sambo"; soldiers at Waterloo are the "beef-eating British"; George Osborne is obsessed with "complexion" among his friends, including Dobbins's "yellow complexion" after he catches yellow fever three times abroad; Mr. Osborne's "boiling blood" is described as "British," racializing his bourgeois crass calculations. Thackeray even extends such satirical exaggerations to his own classist narrator: this novel is concerned with "Everybody," he writes sarcastically, "everybody that was noble, of course, [since], as for the bourgeoisie, we could not quite be expected to take notice of *them*" (804; ch. 63).

Judging from Charlotte Brontë's astute sense of Thackeray's critique of "bigotry," this narrative mode can appear contradictory. But such exaggerations of treasured Victorian types extended to their absurd *and* logical conclusion is designed to unveil bigotry as a Victorian moral mindset with, as I have suggested, a racial charge. Amelia, for instance, the hyperbolic angel of the house of Victorian domestic fantasy, exhibits sadomasochistic tendencies at the base of feminine identity; Joseph Sedley, the colonial administrator, fetishizes the "other" as he drains off their wealth in taxes; Becky, the least good, least respectable woman, could have been "a good woman" if she possessed "five thousand (pounds) a year" (532; ch. 41). No character escapes such flattening techniques; no realist conceit is left unturned. Because such novelistic conventions are in fact linked to larger ideologies of race, class, and gender, however, Thackeray ultimately exposes their irrational, arbitrary, power-laden sources that animate reigning social conventions.[22] In effect, what critics still treat as the endpoint of

https://doi.org/10.1017/S106015030705156X Published online by Cambridge University Press

analysis – the narrative's formal unruliness, the "calculated confusion" in the "very structure of the novel"[23] – is a unique and deliberate narrational mode that highlights representations of race and empire as *Victorian*.

Locating Critical Internationalism: Thackeray as an Anglo-Indian Writer

Born in Calcutta (1811) of a three generation-old family of colonial administrators who did precisely "the Queen's duty" abroad, Thackeray's maternal and paternal lines "served India."[24] Lionel Stevenson notes that while Thackeray may only dimly recall these early years in India, it was also "the only period of his life when he had been completely happy"– not an incidental memory for a deeply unhappy man (125). Two events kept him connected to India and to its unique "Anglo" institutions beyond his Calcutta childhood. In 1815, Thackeray's father, a Bengali tax-collector like Jos Sedley, died of fever in a district near Calcutta. His mother quickly remarried another Anglo-Indian, choosing to remain among her community. She sent Thackeray, merely five years old, back to England for school, as was customary for Anglo-Indians of his class. He did not see his mother until three and a half years later and spoke poignantly of this early separation, likely compounded by his father's death, "I could never bear to think of children parted from their parents somehow without a tendency to blubbering: and am as weak to this day upon the point, as I used to be at school" (*Letters* 2: 197, to Mrs. Carmichael-Smyth, June 1845). He also treats this issue of separation in *The Newcombes* (1853–55) where he specifically links it – as a generic theme – to "our Indian story":

> What a strange pathos seems to me to accompany our Indian story! Besides that official history which fills the Gazettes, and embroiders banners with names of victory; which gives moralists and enemies cause to cry out at English rapine; and enables patriots to boast of invincible British valour – besides the splendour and conquest, the wealth and the glory, the crowned ambition, the conquered danger, the vast prize, and the blood freely shed in winning it – should not one remember the tears, too? Besides the lives of myriads of British men, conquering on a hundred fields, from Plassey to Meanee, and bathing them *cruore nostro*: think of the woman, and the tribute which they perforce must pay to those victorious achievements . . . The lords of the subject province find wives there: but their children cannot live on the soil. The parents bring their children to the shore, and part from them. The family must be broken up.[25]

This pathos – and its accompanying social analysis – persisted throughout his life and writing.

Second, Thackeray's father left a legacy in part shameful to him. Before his father Richmond Thackeray married his mother, he had a Eurasian partner whom many critics call his "mistress." As Deborah Thomas points out, ethnic intermarriage, common until the early nineteenth century, became stigmatized after mid-century with the rise of new pseudo-scientific theories of race.[26] Definitions of Englishness, identity, and race – concepts thought to be stable, even timeless – radically changed during Thackeray's own lifetime. Indeed, the "floating signifier" of race, as Stuart Hall explains in another context, is no more culturally or historically stable when referring to "Englishness" or "whiteness" than to other ethnic groups. Such changes, however, were not theoretical to Thackeray, but likely went to the core of his own identity definition, causing him pain. His father had a child by his first partner,

https://doi.org/10.1017/S106015030705156X Published online by Cambridge University Press

Sarah, whom he carefully provided for when he died – facts that suggest a more significant connection than the word "mistress" implies. Moreover, Thackeray kept in contact with his half-sister Sarah throughout his own life, though he was reportedly embarrassed by Sarah's own daughter's (Sarah also married a Eurasian) visit to him in London.[27] He wrote to a friend of the visit by his "black niece," a point that some critics believe explains his opinion of his half-sister and her kin.[28] Indeed, he is also thought to have sent his own family away during her stay, and he did write of his niece's audacity to his mother.[29] But Thackeray also claims Sarah as his "natural" sister in the same letter, and after her death (1841), he writes this in his diary: "It is the sorest point I have on my conscience never to have taken notice of her" (*Letters* 2: 32, Diary entry for 6 August 1841).[30]

In the nineteenth century, the term "Anglo-Indian" refers to white/western English nationals born or stationed in India, typically for purposes of commerce or government. Yet given eighteenth and nineteenth-century habits of intermarriage in conjunction with the generational features of rule, many Anglo-Indians, otherwise thought of as westerners in class, status, and ethnicity, could very well be mixed in their ethnic makeup. As in Thackeray's case while critics are certain to refer to Sarah as mixed or "Eurasian," they do not use this same term for Thackeray himself, even while, as Gordon Ray notes, he was also likely of "mixed-descent," since his maternal grandmother perhaps "had some Asiatic blood."[31] Surely what distinguishes Sarah (whose father was Anglo and whose mother was Eurasian) and Thackeray (whose father was Anglo and whose grandmother was likely Eurasian) is a difference that has little to do with blood – and much more to do with the conflation of class, race, and nationalism. In fact, as Homi K. Bhabha points out elsewhere, rule binds desire, difference, and power together so that actual ethnic makeup – whatever that is anyway – is filtered in its perception by a clustering of other factors ("The Other Question"). In colonial occupation, what counts as pure ethnic identity – especially of the ruling class – is more likely an ideological element of relations of rule and less an empirical description of identity groups. While the Victorian term "Anglo-Indian" refers to the English abroad in India, their presumed Anglo ethnic purity was functionally in question: ultimately this conflation of an ethnic, cultural, and national distinction in the term "English" is to greater and lesser degrees arbitrary.

Despite Thackeray's own experiences and his expressed ties to India and to an Anglo-Indian diasporic community (evident in his on-going correspondence with his mother), few critics have made much of the impact of this history on the *form* of his writing. Instead, Thackeray is traditionally treated as the consummate English writer: *Vanity Fair* is seen as gossipy, centered on intimate details of English life and its famous personages, not those of its distant alien counterpart. There are, however, exceptions. Gordon Ray, for instance, provocatively suggests that while Thackeray's own experiences in India were short-lived, they were important, "He was raised among Anglo-Indians whose talk was chiefly about the land that they had left. He was brought up on such books as the histories of India of James Mill and Orme, Bishop Heber's *Narrative of a Journey Through India*, Southey's *Curse of Kehama*, and Tom Moore's *Lalla Rookh*. India thus continued to be a living force in his imagination. Moreover, the indirect effect of Thackeray's Indian heritage and experience was immense" (67). Ray's sense of a lasting "talk" of India as "a living force" in Thackeray's "experience" and "imagination" anticipates a contemporary notion of "discourse" and links questions of writing, identity, institutions, and form. Moreover, Henry James, arguing that "Thackeray's people, on both sides, for generations, had been drops in the great bucket . . . of

https://doi.org/10.1017/S106015030705156X Published online by Cambridge University Press

English pioneership," sees Thackeray's Anglo-Indian roots "as making for his distinction" (215).

I would like to suggest that such propositions are not contradictory. While *Vanity Fair* may not belong to a traditional Anglo-Indian canon like works by W. D. Arnold, Rudyard Kipling, E. M. Forster, or George Orwell, the excessively English voice of *Vanity Fair*, its preoccupation with what "the English" "do," how they talk and think, and their most deeply held beliefs and hidden desires, is similar to how Anglo-Indian writers scrutinize the alien "other"– though in Thackeray's case, the "other" is English.[32,33] Thackeray both studies "Englishness" as if it were an object of ethnic analysis in this novel, as if he were an anthropologist; and his narrator is also excessively English, acting out the part of an Englishman "in the know" – well aware of Anglo jokes, idioms, vices, habits, and desires.[34] In his very obsession with "Englishness," one sees an anxiety of belonging: anxious English types stock this novel, including Jos Sedley, but also Mr. Osborne, who translates bourgeois class anxiety into nationalist terms by constantly referring to himself as a "simple" "British merchant" (248; ch. 21). Both vantage points occupy the novel: the consummate, if excessive English insider, and the outsider-traveler who jots down notes of the culture of his travels – though in this case, his objects of writing are England and Anglo culture (the original subtitle was "Pen and Pencil Sketches of English Society"). Indeed, this second dimension of the narrator's voice professes a more distanced, even distracted view, as if the narrator were entering English society from an external vantage point, learnt from entrenched insiders. In effect, the hyper-Anglo voice of the novel has both an insider and outsider dimension – these views are twin sides of a single internationalist perspective. Both, whether anxious insider or distracted outsider, depict "Englishness" not as exclusive to the Island, but as a perspective formed in movement, whether in the spread of Anglo culture through colonization or by Anglo settler communities. Thackeray is fascinated with the appearance and reappearance of Anglo culture in extreme forms or in unexpected places: in the colony of Pumpernickle, Germany, in the Black Hole of Calcutta and London, in the philistine businessman, or in the black servant putting on "English" airs. This double-sided Anglo voice, obsessed with details of English life and highly internally variegated, is not separate from racial or imperial concerns – these, instead, constitute an important part of its affect.

I want to briefly treat the formal complexity of this perspective in examples of the narrator's voice in *Vanity Fair* – one that operates by several oppositions. On the one hand, this narrator meddles in his own plot (taboo for the realist narrator) and, on the other hand, he shows himself uniquely vulnerable as a narrator, helplessly, even inexorably drawn (like readers) into the "world of Vanity Fair," including its false conceits, immoral rules, and artificial values. This opinionated *and* vulnerable narrator with his disembodied and embodied voice functions to trick, cajole, and manipulate readers into confronting their own cultural norms in a flexible enough environment that places ultimate responsibility on them for meaning and decision-making. For example, trained to watch for the eventual union of characters introduced early on in the novel, Victorian readers tacitly assume the moral teleology of domestic realism: the anticipated endpoint of proprietous marriage. While one desires to see Becky snare Jos, as U. C. Knoepflmacher points out, one is also secretly glad for Jos's delay in proposing to see more of this highly enticing "little temptress." Thackeray feeds this desire, lulling readers into thinking of Becky only as a delightful distraction – not as a dangerous force. In the opening scene, for instance, when she is desperate to "like *everything* from India," the narrator shows her easily undone by a single chili pepper lurking

https://doi.org/10.1017/S106015030705156X Published online by Cambridge University Press

in one of Jos's many "Indian curries." In this initial context, she is seen as still safe, and readers are, hence, still naïve about the act of reading:

> 'A chili,' said Rebecca, 'Oh, yes!' She thought a chili was something cool, as its name imported. . . 'How fresh and green they look,' she said, and put one into her mouth. It was hotter than the curry; flesh and blood would bear it no longer. She laid down her fork. 'Water, for heaven's sake!' she cried. Mr. Sedley burst out laughing (he was a coarse man from the Stock Exchange, where they love practical jokes). 'They are real Indian, I assure you,' said he. 'Sambo, give Miss Sharp some water.' (29–30; ch. 3).

It is noteworthy that a colonial object plays a role in exposing Becky's opportunistic exoticism. But while the narrator has here downgraded her scheming, he does leave clues about its import. The key character in this scene, in fact, is not Becky or even Jos at all, but Mr. Sedley, who functions as the narrator's surreptitious cover. His game, like the novel's rules, draws out and echoes readers' similar position and desires. Like Becky, who eagerly enters the terms of Jos's desires because she hopes to gain something by doing so, the reader strikes up a similar deal with the narrator – comfortably entering "Vanity Fair" and hoping to be rewarded by the final promise of delayed pleasure. Yet like the eventual deadly trap that Becky sets for Jos, Thackeray also traps readers in their own unreflective desires, undermined at the novel's end.

This narrator does this, in part, by taking charge of the novel's narration, entering as a character or a character-cover – even claiming a moment out of its time to reflect with readers upon a character's decision or the novel's direction as a whole. While such "intrusions" appear to be a heightened moment of truth telling, a place where the veneer of storytelling is ripped away in favor of direct contact, Thackeray is actually most deceptive in these instances. He writes, for instance: "[t]he argument stands thus. Osborne, in love with Amelia, has asked an old friend to dinner at Vauxhall – Jos Sedley is in love with Rebecca. Will he marry her? That is the great subject at hand" (60; ch. 6). Beyond satirizing this "great" topic, such "irritating" digressions confront readers with the mechanics of the novel, its formal structure, *how* and on what basis it constructs *truth-effects*. He goes on to discuss the various ways he could have handled this same material "in the 'genteel,' 'romantic,' or 'facetious' manners" (60; ch. 6). "Suppose we had shown how Lord Joseph Sedley fell in love, and the Marquis of Osborne became attached to Lady Amelia," he writes, asking his readers to consider the difference class makes (60; ch. 6). Or "we [could have] resorted to the entirely low," he writes, with "black Sambo . . . in love with the cook (as indeed he was)," fighting "a battle with the coachman on her behalf" (60; ch. 6). This approach, he writes sarcastically, "might be supposed to represent scenes of 'life'" (61; ch. 6). Or we could "take a fancy for the terrible," he adds, and make "the lover of the new *femme de chamber* a professional burglar" who "slaughters Black Sambo at the feet of his master, and carries off Amelia in her night-dress, not to be let loose again till the third volume" (60–61; ch. 6). This last tack would "easily . . . construct a tale of thrilling interest" through whose "fiery chapters" "readers should hurry, panting" (61; ch. 6). Such behind the scenes chats, because they seem to reveal the mechanics of artifice, become the place for this narrator's most devious satire.

In these moments Thackeray uses the conventions of the realist novel – terms he has delegitimated all along – to recover a more adequate social theoretical vocabulary for

https://doi.org/10.1017/S106015030705156X Published online by Cambridge University Press

Victorian life. After disrupting the pleasure readers take in the realist novel's slippage between fiction (artifice) and "real life," the narrator reverses the realist formula and suggests that the novelistic "artifice," the highly artificial terms of "Vanity Fair," are far more descriptive of Victorian society and its peculiar artificial culture, "my reader must hope for no such romance, only a homely story, a chapter about Vauxhall which is so short that it scarce deserves to be called a chapter at all. And yet it is a chapter and an important one too. Are there not little chapters in everybody's life that seem to be nothing, and yet affect all the rest of history?" (61; ch. 6). In this purportedly scaled-down story (no high romance, no allegiance to one genre), the narrator practices an implicated, instead of an omnipotent narrator-position; he uses multiple voices, not one monological view; and he masters a complex, interlaced, arbitrary mode of storytelling, in contrast to the single voice or tidal sweep of narratives in the realist and historical modes. This break defines an accidental theory of history that runs counter to the "monological" voice of so-called "great man theories of history."[35] In *Vanity Fair*, this narrator examines the accidental, the small, the forgotten, and the unlikely as they powerfully return to structure "all the rest of history." Indeed, the very course of history may be determined – or thrown off – by a single chili pepper or another incidental object, like the painting of an elephant whose causal role in this plot is only visible in hindsight. This mode of narration preys upon the random, the small, and the forgotten in which "all the rest of history" is gathered up in its single if fleeting image.[36]

But this curious use of history is also made technically possible through Thackeray's now famous abrupt shifts in perspective or counterpoint – a mode that depends upon treating the nation and Englishness as mere conceits. In perhaps the most well-known example of counterpoint, Thackeray provides an unconventional approach to the Battle of Waterloo and in the process creates an "unhistorical" or anti-historical history.[37] In this scene, the narrator builds the familiar suspense: "all that day from morning until past sunset, the cannon never ceased to roar," until "all of a sudden . . . the cannonading" stops (405; ch. 32). But, instead of rehearsing that story, readers are treated to a didactic digression on the perils of nationalist pride:

> All of us have read of what occurred in the interval. The tale is in every Englishman's mouth; . . . and you and I never tire of hearing and recounting the history of that famous action. Its remembrance rankles still in the bosoms of millions of the countrymen of those brave men who lost the day. The pant for the opportunity of revenging that humiliation; and if a contest, ending in a victory on their part, should ensue, elating them in their turn, and leaving its cursed legacy of hatred and rage behind to us, there is no end to the so-called glory and shame, and to the alternations of successful and unsuccessful murder, in which two high-spirited nations might engage. (405; ch. 32)

Refusing to give way to the easy pleasure of national pride, Thackeray's critique of nationalism, while it appears to target war *per se* (a worthy enough object) focuses on *representations of war*: war stories, nationalist "tale(s)" of war, those that "every Englishman" knows – including the novel's contributions. The reader faces an *absent* battle and *bloodless* battlefield; moreover, after his talk, when readers expect to return to the battlefield again, the fight has ended. "Darkness," we are told, has fallen "on the field and city" (32; ch. 406). No bodies litter the place – a mass testament to the necessary sacrifices for England – no traditional wide-angle epic lens hovers over heroic soldiers. Instead, the narrator cuts abruptly to a different site altogether: Amelia at home in the act of "praying for George" who,

https://doi.org/10.1017/S106015030705156X Published online by Cambridge University Press

simultaneously, and unknown to her, is “lying on his face” on the absent battlefield “dead, with a bullet through his heart” (406; ch. 32). When the next chapter begins, the narrator has shifted scenes once again from the despoiled battlefield to Miss Crawley’s cozy living room, where she idly reads of her son’s promotion in the newspaper.

This switch to Amelia’s perspective or to the “‘vanities’ of Brighton life,” as Knoepflmacher explains, “trick[s]” and jars the reader into “ambivalent responses” – ones they must face with incomplete, incompatible perspectives on something normally fully in their view (54). Unlike other realist writers, Thackeray seeks not to establish “a perfect confidence in the author” or a predictable readerly comfort-zone “where the chief characters are constantly before us” in a “uniform setting” (Knoepflmacher 56). Instead, readers are bereft of predictable orientation and lacking heroic characters or an omnipresent narrator to guide them. Without such tools, they must “toss out the ordinary dictionary definitions by which most men order their lives” – like Becky at the novel’s start (Knoepflmacher 54). Not only does a reader experience multiple, conflicting impressions about what is real, true, or certain, one is forced into the position as an interpretive agent in the politics of such representations.

I want to extend Knoepflmacher’s important analysis of Thackeray’s shifting viewpoints by suggesting that this narrator uses counterpoint not only to juxtapose moments in time to thicken interpretation and to displace agency from narrator to reader, but that he also juxtaposes spaces: the Waterloo scene in *Vanity Fair* critiques national pride from different temporal and spatial perspectives, from the specific communities of its re-production. In the very next scene, Thackeray focuses on English upper-class *exiles* abroad, whose defining trait is geographic mobility. Indeed, the continental “colony” is one key locus of Englishness as national pride, one important vehicle of spatial counterpoint, and that place to which Jos returns in his fateful reunion with Becky Sharp. In considering the scenes which involve the post-war idle pleasures of the English “colony” in Germany, Thackeray again returns to his disarming tool of choice: humor. At Pumpernickel, nation-based rivals form over a silly, protracted jealousy: who among their group is the better opera singer during evening theaters. Further, the comedic weight of this scene is placed, not only on the players themselves, mere symbols of absurd nationalism (e.g., “we had on our side the Home Minister, the Master of the Horse, the duke’s private secretary, and the prince’s tutor”), but on their ridiculous conversations which are formalized into often official letters home (805; ch. 63). The narrator details each faction’s nationalistic voice in this petty feud, showing how each resorts to official government discourse and to abstract concepts of national culture to win his point. He samples their dispatches:

> For instance, on our side we would write: ‘The interests of Great Britain in this place, and throughout the whole of Germany, are perilled by the continuance in office of the present French envoy: this man is of a character so infamous that he will stick at no falsehood, or hesitate at no crime, to attain his ends. He poisons the mind of the Court against the English minister, represents the conduct of Great Britain in the most odious and atrocious light, and is unhappily backed by a minister whose ignorance and necessities are as notorious as his influence is fatal’. (805; ch. 63)

The narrator makes it plain (“for instance”) that he is rendering conversations and not lulling the reader unaware directly into live discourse. “On their side,” Thackeray continues, “they would say” of the British envoy:

https://doi.org/10.1017/S106015030705156X Published online by Cambridge University Press

> 'M. de Tapeworm continues his system of stupid insular arrogance and vulgar falsehood against the greatest nation in the world. Yesterday he was heard to speak lightly of Her Royal Highness Madame the Duchess of Berri; on a former occasion he insulted the heroic Duke of Angouleme, and dared to insinuate that H.R.H. the Duke of Orleans was conspiring against the august throne of the lilies. His gold is prodigated in every direction which his stupid menaces fail to frighten. By one and the other, he has won over creates of the Court here – and, in fine, Pumpernickle will not be quiet, Germany tranquil, France respected, or Europe content, until this poisonous viper be crushed under heal,' and so on. (806; ch. 63)

Cast to highlight the incremental breakdown in the very conceit of public civility and governance, Thackeray shows how players style themselves (outside their homes) as men of state, no matter how menial, and further, how they sink with little provocation into a rabid defense of their respective "greatest nation[s] in the world." Indeed, his deft addition of "and so on" at the end of the transcription reiterates his *faux*-indifference to the devolution of language from superficial civility to rash irrationality. Such opportunistic dispatches, played out entirely through counterpoint, even ensconce parties off scene and on the other end of such communiqués. As if an explanation were needed, the narrator states bluntly: "the fact is," these women were "the two flags of the French and English party at Pumpernickel, and the society was divided in its allegiance to those two great nations" (805; ch. 63). The humor of this situation arises from how carelessly parties toss about grand terms of state, "the interests of Great Britain," "the greatest nation in the world," as if they were private playthings, and how the narrator himself becomes implicated in their tiny war. Thackeray even shows the lightening quick relay between idle classism, self-interested nationalism, and this mobile classes' cosmopolitan appeal to all of "Europe"– their game's biggest chess-piece. Nationalism, that plaything of leisured pleasure, is the imperial ethos of Anglos abroad, the culture of the nomadic Anglo colony – the culprit in spreading their specific interests as if they were the voice of all of England.

No periodic device infrequently employed, counterpoint is the very narrational mode of this novel: clamoring voices are endemic to its form. Further, this mode is far more descriptive of mid-nineteenth-century nationalism – less a grand monologue or metanarrative, the ventriloquized voice of the great man – and more a disunified discourse, animated by class factions, self-interested parties, and international cleavages. Most obviously of all in this scene, this very mode itself is continuous with an insider/outsider's watchful and satirical critique of Englishness.

The "Black Hole of London"

THE LASTING PRESENCE OF THE REHASHED "Black Hole of Calcutta" incident in mid nineteenth-century England held several truths, many of which Victorians were unhappy to face. On the one hand, the symbol helped advance increasingly popular arguments for a British state in India. This claim itself was based on a Victorian self-congratulating differentiation from eighteenth-century style rule: the scattered network of trading zones and factories like Fort William, shifting military zones of commerce and violence, and localized decisions made on-the-ground, not centralized in London. Indeed, eighteenth-century British India saw personalities defined trade agreements, not parliament; piecemeal commercial networks set a geography of operations in motion;[38] and massive, ongoing profits made by

https://doi.org/10.1017/S106015030705156X Published online by Cambridge University Press

self-made merchants who did as they saw fit far from home. The eventual impeachment of national hero Warren Hastings (1784), the second governor-general responsible for making East India Company power paramount in much of India, was the most visible symbol of a Victorian repudiation of this earlier era – indeed, for the systems-building Victorians, such informal rule and *ad hoc* militarism was an era badly in need of moral-minded reform.

But the Black Hole incident in metropolitan discourse also held another truth – one that Victorians were even less willing to face. From its inception, as early as the seventeenth-century chartering of the East India Company, English colonial power abroad was vulnerable, not stable. The reversal of power at the English factory was a lasting reminder of the ubiquity of so-called native uprisings, themselves an indicator of native views on this or other western fantasies of state power.[39] This truth went deeper. Despite nineteenth-century self-representations of this era as one of *Pax Britannica* – one-hundred years of uninterrupted peace and prosperity post-Waterloo (1815) – such an image was impossible to maintain beyond Europe. By different counts, as Giovanni Arrighi argues, the same period saw fifty to seventy-two major colonial campaigns conducted by the British in India and Africa alone (not including, the West Indies, China, New Zealand, or Australia – many sites mentioned in this novel). Within the horizon of *Vanity Fair*'s own publication, there were three major clashes beyond England: the Jamaican Christmas uprising of 1831 (alluded to in *Jane Eyre* 1847), the Chinese Opium Wars that included India of 1839–42 and 1856–58, (mentioned by John Ruskin in *Sesame and Lilies* 1865), and the Great Indian Mutiny of 1857.[40] British global hegemony "was established through an almost uninterrupted series of wars," Arrighi et al. concludes, constituting the "coercive underside" of an official discourse of peace, order, international guardianship, the general interest, and, the state's civilizing missions (224). Metropolitan anxiety about the Black Hole was thus linked both to the fear – and knowledge – that English power abroad was incomplete, an imperial gaze partial, not universal, the nature of British official power chaotic, not orderly. The obvious solution to this recognition was, as in the first case, a British state in India, though this time its terms of desire were less magnanimous, less liberal, more defensive and brutal. The Black Hole of Calcutta helped to "ideologically prepare for" the ostensibly inevitable, whether one's slogan was order or vengeance.[41]

The belief, however, that the Black Hole of Calcutta can be equated with political factions of the age is precisely why literary history – and Thackeray in particular – must supplement our maps of nineteenth-century empire. After the defeat of the world revolutions of 1848, the shift to what economic historians describe as Britain's changing imperial role after mid-century (or the new imperialism of the 1870s) included an additional, defining dimension: unregulated capital flows.[42] Political economist Stephen Gill argues that the aggregate economic developments that define globalization today are in fact reminiscent, not of the contemporary, but of the second-half of the nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries (Gill and Mittleman 12–17, 80, 95). Of the seventy most productive countries in the world, for instance, the rate of exports as a percentage of overall world products in 1913 was 13 percent, and in 1999, 14.5 percent; likewise, capital transfers of the same group in the 1890s were actually larger than today (Gill and Law). In general, 1860–1914, the so-called age of British empire, saw trends that define "globalization" today: free capital flows across borders, intensifying foreign direct investment, the construction of a free-enterprise capitalist market system on a global scale, and the creation of appropriate state and commercial institutions including transportation industries (rail) and the manipulation

https://doi.org/10.1017/S106015030705156X Published online by Cambridge University Press

of exchange rates. Justifications for a British state in India – based on liberal-utilitarian principle, cultural-nationalist fears, and broad geopolitical economic shifts – formed around an ingenious argument that involved the symbol of the Black Hole of Calcutta, itself the fictional product of a British desire for a timeless presence in India already visible by the 1750s.

Into this highly variegated discursive site, Thackeray creates his own trope of the Black Hole in *Vanity Fair* – an image which in re-imagining this symbol conducts a counter-symbolic warfare that ironically gets closer to the truth of the event's actual history and that of his own age. At the most basic level, in relocating this event from colony to metropole, this sign for distant unruly "others" becomes a metropolitan monument, an Anglo-Indian "internal colony" at home in *Vanity Fair* – and one that plays a peculiar role in the story. That Anglo-Indian transnational interests carried in the culture of its colonies are really *metropolitan* interests, and that this monument is no relic of distant places but an artifact of English cultural history, becomes clear in Thackeray's narrative treatment of this hybrid ghetto, especially as it amplifies the novel's main themes: reversals of power, twisted fates, "victories" made of unfair fights, and the most important vanity, the *appearance* of power. Skeptical of vanity in nationalism or war, and no less naïve about rule, this transfer of the Black Hole debate to a ghetto in metropolitan London implies to whom such desires for a British state belong.

At the literal level the "Black Hole of London" is inseparable from Jos, that ingratiating nabob who the narrator never tires of lampooning: Jos even grows larger and more "obsessed with all things Indian" as the novel progresses, like post-Napoleonic Great Britain.[43] Indeed, he chooses this neighborhood because, once home, he pines away for Calcutta, desiring to have his England in the nostalgic husk of "Old India." In this rich nabob's choice of residence – much like the fate of Amelia, Becky and Dobbins, who also make their respective "Return(s) to the Genteel World" (as the chapter title suggests) – the narrator satirizes how such "genteel" aspirations lead to a home that is both English and "not quite white," respectable and ridiculous, and most importantly, chaotic and unruly, but not for residents alone. If "good fortunes" finally begin to "smile upon" Amelia in her own move back to the Black Hole neighborhood with her brother, the narrator writes ironically of her plight: "we are glad to get her out of that low sphere in which she has been creeping hitherto, and introduce her into a polite circle" (761; ch. 60). This "puppet-master" who consciously pulls the plot strings is only too happy to leave readers "dissatisfied" with his *faux*-wind down to a happy ending (878; ch. 67). Racially-discriminating Victorians would no doubt question the respectability of anyone living in the London Black Hole.

But this scene also drops additional clues about the novel's final (ir)resolutions: the Black Hole foreshadows Thackeray's equivocal ending in which, as he told one persistent real-life fan who lobbied for Dobbins and Amelia's marriage, his characters may get their "prize[s]," but they may "not be worth the having." While reversals in fate, fortune, power, and location (from East to West) are not unusual in this novel and so not entirely unexpected at its ending, and while this scene also functions to satirize the whole matter of a happy ending, the ghetto itself has a more direct point: it embodies the insatiability of Victorian desires, as well as their emptiness, and their unruliness, especially in a world defined by capital flows. While divining that one's own desires are empty is no insignificant discovery, more interestingly, this narrator conveys this point by appeal to an alternative "English" history – one in which the Black Hole defines London and the novel's horizon. The neighborhood is first described in this

https://doi.org/10.1017/S106015030705156X Published online by Cambridge University Press

way: "Jos's new house was in the comfortable Anglo-Indian district of which Moira Place is the center. Minto Square, Great Clive Street, Warren Street, Hastings Street, Ochterlony Place, Plassey Square, Assaye Terrace – who does not know these respectable abodes of the retired Indian aristocracy and the quarter which Mr. Wentham calls the Black Hole in a word?" (761; ch. 60). No realist description, few exotic details (endlessly offered elsewhere) are relayed. Instead, readers are assailed with a barrage of signs – street signs – each an emblem of a "great" man or event from British Indian history, now placed onto Thackeray's imaginary London map. "Robert Clive" recaptured the trading post at Calcutta after native and French challenge in the Black Hole incident; Warren Hastings consolidated north and west India for the East India Company – indeed, these first and second governor-generals of eighteenth-century British India encapsulate this era's early, decisive military victories. "Plassey Square" refers to the Battle of Plassey (1757), a war waged less than a year after the Black Hole incident where Bengali territories came under English rule; "Ochterlony" refers to Sir David Ochterlony whose sly victory in the Nepal War (1812–14) repeats the same victory at Plassey, at a different location. In every case, the Black Hole acts as the common spark, the "primal scene" of "native insurgency," one that both initiates and justifies military intervention afterward. Thackeray in effect maps the metropolitan city of London by the pivotal events of a distant "English" history.

But if London is in part Anglo-Indian in its very map, Thackeray also, by contrast, normalizes this neighborhood. The "Genteel World" of the Black Hole of London is affluent like any upscale London neighborhood – a move that, incidentally, implies a whole city of composite "internal colonies" in London inhabited by different stock ethnic and hybrid types. Jos, we are told, leads a life of "dignified otiosity" becoming "a person of his eminence," just like other Anglos of his class; Amelia abides the duties of the gentle lady, paying social calls to Anglo-Indian wives and ministering to Jos's brown servants:

> Amelia had to receive and entertain these gentlemen and their ladies. . . . This and similar talk took place at the grand dinners all round. They had the same conversation; the same silver dishes; the same saddles of mutton, boiled turkeys, and entrees. Politics set in a short time after dessert, when the ladies retired upstairs and talked about their complaints and their children. *Mutato nomine*. It is all the same . . . Don't the barristers' wives talk about the circuit? – don't the soldiers' ladies gossip about the Regiment? – don't the clergymen's ladies discourse about Sunday-schools? – don't the very greatest ladies of all talk about that small clique of persons to whom they belong, and why shall our Indian friends not have their own conversation? – only I admit it is slow for the laymen whose fate it sometimes is to sit by and listen. (765; ch. 60)

The residents of Black Hole, London, happily assimilate to indistinct English upper-class life – Thackeray writes with a knowing wink – as he portrays everyday life in this exotic place as derisively ordinary, even English.

But this landscape of "Anglo" hybrid ghettos in which Jos makes a home is also strange. Jos's "very first point," Thackeray writes, is "to become a member of the Oriental Club: where he spent his mornings in the company of his brother Indians, where he dined, or whence he brought home men to dine" (765; ch. 60).[44] Indeed, the very idea of a hybrid ghetto – some Englishmen, Indian in culture and taste, and some Eurasians and Indians, English in culture and taste – is a comic disjuncture. In certain ways it is simply a reversal of

https://doi.org/10.1017/S106015030705156X Published online by Cambridge University Press

an Anglo colony in British India where Anglo-Indians strain to maintain English habits in a place hostile to them, thereby creating their own exaggerated, even perverse Anglo culture manifested in other imaginary ghettoes across the world. From Thackeray's viewpoint, then, we have an early example, not of cultural imperialism – Anglo colonization of the culture of the "other" – but cultural globalization: the spread of Anglo culture or Anglicization, which is culturally hybrid.[45] Through the imaginary existence of the Black Hole of London one can imagine an England that is itself not a homogenous national space where Englishness, like whiteness, is spread evenly over its geography as the implicit metaphor of "national culture" (as race) implies.

Most important, if the charged and changing symbolic status of the Black Hole of Calcutta at mid-century becomes imaginatively linked to a new kind of imperialism, Thackeray uses this novel to flesh out the details and human logics of this new world's culture – and not in nationalist terms. The unregulated capitalist flows characteristic of the new imperialism mean that, economically-speaking, Britain begins intensively to invest capital in places like India at an unprecedented rate: this poorest colony in Britain's reach was the recipient of one of the most extensive, expensive railroad systems, a byproduct of purposeful capital investment. In certain respects, unregulated capital flows (which begin in earnest in the 1830s and 40s) are reversals of earlier dynamics of capital investment in which Britain shifts from sinking capital into its own industries (the Industrial Revolution) in the first half of the century (1780s–1850s) to its forced industrialization of India on British terms during the century's second half. This means that an English "center" at a certain point in time becomes objectively outside England – and not just in the periphery's buildings, roads, or railways – but in the organized forms of life that follow from such purposeful investments. Not only does the state chase after its capital flows; this dynamic race which includes de-industrializing certain developed sectors of the Indian economy, like textiles, involves the mobility of culture. It means that empire itself is becoming an industry, and further, that once imperialist relations and their institutions are industrialized – or subject to the capitalization of their means of production – new relations of rule emerge. At the most basic level, a British state in India, that Victorian desire, is simply the name for industrializing empire: it is for that reason that Victorians could argue without any apparent contradiction that the eighteenth-century Black Hole of Calcutta incident had exposed a breach of British state authority before any state graced Indian soil.

But what of the making of new desires – and vanities – new kinds of identities, and new notions of Victorian culture? Thackeray, in writing of the impact of such changes on metropolitan culture, begins to imagine what life – morality, language, values, conventions, even novels – looks like in accommodating such reversals in economic flows and relations. While profits were returned to London (the economic definition of imperialism), insofar as empire itself was becoming an industry, other dimensions of captured profits, the commodification of the "other," were also carried into the metropole as desires. On the one hand, in Thackeray's representation of the Black Hole of London, this lack of separation of worlds, of desires, is made clear. Indeed, the point of his metaphor is thus not only to wind up – ironically – the story of Amelia and Jos's move from uncivilized to civilized worlds, from unhappiness to prosperity, but to implicate them in their own unruly desires, desires also involved in larger international interdependencies. I want to pursue this connection more closely in the unusual stories that Thackeray attaches to his description of the Black Hole of London, stories that are passed off as incidental, but which actually exhibit such

https://doi.org/10.1017/S106015030705156X Published online by Cambridge University Press

complex networks of desires. It is here, on the other hand, that such interdependencies have consequences that also implicate readers.

In describing Amelia and Jos's new situation, the narrator speaks of internal class hierarchies in this unusual ghetto: "Jos's position in life" as a low-level imperial functionary, despite his aggrandized sense of self, was "not grand enough to entitle him to a house in Moira Place where none can live but retired members of Council and partners of Indian firms" (761; ch. 60). If the best homes are reserved for "company men" (East India Company shareholders), this means that class hierarchies are not only indigenous, formed inside England, but emerge in complex interrelations across borders.[46] Jos, instead, "engaged a comfortable house of a second- or third-rate order in Gillespie Street, purchasing the carpets, costly mirrors and handsome and appropriate planned furniture by Seddons, from the assignees of Mr. Scape, lately admitted partner into the great Calcutta house of Fogle, Fake, and Cracksman" (761; ch. 60). The narrator uses a favorite writerly trick to describe this exchange. Instead, of providing further realist description, he offers a tiny, elaborate digression about insignificant stock characters: Mr. Scape along with his incidental family who will be "heard of no more," after Jos's act of buying their "comfortable" "second- or third-rate" home and "purchasing" their "carpets, costly mirrors and handsome and appropriate planned furniture" (762; ch. 60). Only in transferring possessions does Mr. Scape's existence become visible and, of course, unremarkable. His story, yet another reversal of fate or fortune, occurs just after he was "admitted partner" in an Indian financial house into which he had invested "seventy thousand pounds" – the total earnings of his "long and honorable life" (761–62; ch. 60) When the house fails for a million only "two years" after Scape had taken "Fake's place," (a man who himself had profited handsomely and "retired to a princely place in Sussex"), Scape becomes another victim of bad timing and an arbitrary global market, like the Osbornes or Thackeray himself (762; ch. 60).

While this scene is not intended to enlist readers' sympathy – or even their attention for very long – the narrator does detail the consequences of Mr. Scape's ruin for him and his "unfortunate" family. "Scape, ruined, honest and broken-hearted at sixty-five years of age, went out to Calcutta to wind up the affairs of the house. Walter Scape was withdrawn from Eton, and put into a merchant's house. Florence Scape, Fanny Scape, and their mother faded away to Boulogne, and were heard of no more" (762; ch. 60). Thackeray could have, for instance, handled this whole scene differently, using straight description, exotic details of Jos's new home or his anxious mimicking of Anglo-Indian habits – tactics endlessly used elsewhere. Instead he takes the reader in the opposite direction, pulling back from characterization, scene setting, realist details, even the frame of England itself. He does this nonchalantly: Mr. Scape is casually "ruined, honest and broken-hearted at sixty-five years of age"; his son goes from "Eton" to "a merchant's house" while the family's women "fade away to Boulogne." The point is not to build identification – the novel barely builds sympathy for its own protagonists – but to use accidental encounters to define an otherwise invisible, international chain of events, a non-nationalist realm of action. This dynamic map of London is embedded in an equally fluid account of British imperial relations whose cultural parameters at mid-century are defined, organized, and unleashed by desires which, as we shall see, ebb and flow like capital flows.

Such links depend upon strange equivocations. "Good fortune" is polarized, based on another's ruin or ill fate; happiness is partial; relations are interdependent – but all at the most minute, unpredictable, and intimate levels. It is not only that *personal* happiness is

https://doi.org/10.1017/S106015030705156X Published online by Cambridge University Press

transpersonal, bound to larger, transnational events.[47] We are treated, for instance, to another layer of irrelevant information: when the great house "fails" "for a million," the event also "plunge[s]" "half the Indian public into misery and ruin" (762; ch. 60). This micro-narrative, with little to do with the things of which it speaks – the fate of oblique characters, the demise of rogue financial institutions, distant nations as players – also drags readers into the unexamined fate of another order of actor, the "Indian public." Their visibility indeed only occurs, like Scape's, in digressive moments, in incidental details (i.e., Jos's fetishized choice of residency), or small moves that somehow come to imbed large bodies of people. If the bad fate of this unwieldy abstraction, "the Indian public," makes Jos and Amelia's happiness no longer private, it also makes international dependencies human. Thus, while this narrator appears distracted, while he professes a distanced relationship to the random lives of those characters he charts, the Black Hole of London houses a complex chain of accidental events which, by contrast, highlight human affiliations across impossible distances, many borne of casual or unlikely encounters and exchanges.

In being resolutely human, are such vast connections thus informed by moral evaluation; is vanity an analytical or ethical lens? There is no doubt that Thackeray finds such social relations arbitrary, untethered to the manifestation of divine will, the laws of a principled state, a benign ruler. Instead, the marketplace – with its logics of contamination, association, and exchange – organizes this web of haphazard interconnections. But if the world of "Vanity Fair" is, thus, an insular one, with no vision, no higher moral arbiter beyond commodity exchange (afterlife, salvation, redemption), unlike its namesake Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, as many Victorian critics complained, in another sense, this fictional world is not insular at all. All "exotic" spaces (beyond England) are drawn inexorably back into its center, including spatial and civilizational "others" – whether black sweeps, Black Holes, dark mulatto heiresses, or distant colonies. What even counts as "the center" is fractured, dispersed, with Anglo colonies garnering the globe, even returning in changed form to London. The loss of an "outside" to England or to Englishness is thus belied by international motifs, themselves visible only in relational analysis. In certain ways, Thackeray has thus turned the much emphasized temporal logic of "Vanity Fair" another full twist to appropriate the spatial outside and its "others," whether places, identities, or alien histories. This narrative architecture replaces a more familiar one: that seamless metanarrative containing the real world and a better one, and the novelist's ability to join such worlds together through the teleological progress of the heroic pilgrim.

But if these are precisely the premises which *Vanity Fair* disrupts, the Black Hole of London is an especially good metaphor to capture the collapse of such conventions, such different orders of reality – ideal and material, national and international, culture and economy – once navigated by a single heroic consciousness, and further, to describe the meaningful ripple effects of such disintegrations. It is not only that the "center" is *inside* the periphery, the periphery at home in the center, and Victorian culture defined by movement *between* such non-discreet worlds. Indeed, as profits return to London, peripheries and their hybrid cultures meld and emerge there, just as Anglo "culture" changes as it travels along with unregulated capital flows to settle into alien histories; indeed, the cycle continues, repeats and reverses.[48] Instead, the Black Hole of London best illustrates how meaning functions in such a novel, in such a panoramic landscape, especially in relation to history. Staple social conventions, the things which Victorians expect to read about – happy marriages, proper women, heroic men – are, first and foremost, replete with energies that subvert their stability and locality.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S106015030705156X Published online by Cambridge University Press

Likewise, the familiar is host to dynamic, far off connections that change what constitutes the known, even the real. The novel itself, that vehicle of realist, familiar knowledge, itself becomes fraught, as a tightly strung web of relations which includes consumption and misery, happiness and misfortune, national consequences and private transactions, extends its boundaries far beyond any characters' ambit of thought or action. That moral vantage point which realist writers had erected by defining boundaries is crossed in this novel.

But more than this, the "real" does return in spades – in small, seemingly insignificant items and in moments which make visible international connections and, thereby, inform new ethical terms – defined outside conventional notions of national culture. Whether black or brown servants, adventurers and colonial wars, the Oriental club, city-spaces, eastern paintings, or a bowl of rack-punch, such objects, linked to imperial spaces and imbedded in "English" common life, re-orient meaning and morality. Meaning, for instance, accrues in miniature, in little, even prosaic events or objects like purchasing carpets, dining at the Oriental club, or looking into mirrors, and ethical judgments are thus made possible by tracking those items in their own expansive journey through the novel. Such a pattern is most obviously the case with characters, whose identities and fates are built of international dependencies which are revealed at key moments of encounter or exchange. Amelia's adult life, for instance, begins from a foreign stock crisis; George Osborne would be rich and alive if he married a West Indian heiress; Becky's husband Rawdon Crawley becomes a good man – and governor – just as he dies of fever in a South American English colony. In Jos's case, such identity/international/ethical circuits are most pronounced and literal – even expressed in metaphors of self-reflection and mirrors. Thackeray writes of Jos's identity-defining moment: "To be brief, Jos stepped in and bought their carpets and sideboards, and admired himself in the mirrors which had reflected their kind and handsome faces" (762; ch. 60). Mr. Scape has, like all characters in this novel's landscape, unwittingly helped to constitute bumbling, unreflective Jos's new genteel identity in a now familiar role reversal – but, in the process, the narrator shows different spaces, different identities, also momentarily captured together in "the mirror" which held and "reflected" both their "faces." They are indeed trapped together for an explicit instant in conduits of desire and exchange.

To put this point differently, the often-repeated thesis of vanity in *Vanity Fair*, the narrator's ultimate moral judgment – whether capitulated upon or over-stated, as critics equally argue – is a non- national determination. All its characters are vain and petty in exactly the same way: in their narrow vision, in their inability to see their situation in linked global conduits and exchanges. The victims of "Vanity Fair" do not know their implication in dynamic "other" histories, or the chains of desires that thicken, promote, or undermine their own private happiness. Such is a scathing critique of that world, dominant Victorian Englishness, characterized by its claim to know the real and grand world intimately, even universally. Indeed, this criticized narrow vision juxtaposed against a worldly Victorianism conveys that classic definition of vanity, itself linked with hubris – the narcissistic confusion of human with divine perspectives. But to say that "vanity" – that Christian categorical critique of an overstretched vision, a gaze that confuses its own with a god's eye-view – may carry a resonance with imperialist critique in this novel is to push Thackeray's perspective too far. This is so even while the novel depends upon a view of Victorians as "vain" in their contempt for any moral outside in favor of fetishized commodity relations (the carnival of "Vanity Fair"), in the hubris that English "civilization" stands in for the world. Indeed, by showing the elimination of a moral-religious outside – the traditionally transcendent, stable

https://doi.org/10.1017/S106015030705156X Published online by Cambridge University Press

realm of heaven – vanity becomes an era-defining Victorian condition: the "flaw" of vanity, of narrowed vision, is the cultural identity of Victorian England. This critique implicates "Englishness" in a way not geographically tied to England. But the real purpose of the Black Hole Anglo-Indian colony of "British Indians," a place of hybrid cultural cohabitation where Anglo-Indians occupy England (not "India"), is to convey this logic in a narrative form where contamination of once separate spaces is no longer a fear – predicated upon the possibility of separations – but a Victorian reality, one that impacts language, meaning, morals and history. The "Black Hole of London" thus exposes the *fiction* of a national center and its seamlessness with culture; the conceit that Englishness is constituted by national boundaries or that sovereignty is calibrated to geography, instead of a world formed by internal colonies that shift location and purpose within an over-arching international architecture of capital flows. Indeed, any identity of Englishness is just as easily located and constituted elsewhere. Dreams of a British national culture – like a British nation-state in India – are thus but a *fantasy* of power and a fiction of pure Englishness, this novel contends.

Syracuse University

NOTES

The lion share of my gratitude for support in writing this essay belongs to Linda Shires and her liberal (in the archaic sense) grasp and teaching of the Victorians. I wish also to offer heartfelt thanks to Michael Echeruo who compared the latent revolutionary fervor felt by post-colonials toward the "Black Hole of Calcutta" to "the shot heard 'round the world" for Americans; and to Vlad Godzich and Amitava Kumar, who probably do not remember their insightful comments to me about Thackeray's deft and disruptive use of artifice and the cultural complexity of Englishness in an Avignon café.

1. See Gupta for this discussion 73–75. The number of fatalities has long been disputed, with lines of debate often falling between English and Indian historians – though J. H. Little has argued that the incident was a "giant hoax" in the journal *Bengal: Past and Present* (1915). The issue often turns on the reliability of Holwell's narrative which was believed to be accurate, even corroborated by other accounts (Cooke and Captain Mills). Hence, the Curzon-Hill-Wilson school supported Holwell's account while Indian scholars tended to accept Jadunath Sarkar's position, "that those confined to the Black Hole were probably not more than sixty." Contemporaneous Indian accounts are silent on the Black Hole, but two Armenian merchants do mention it: Joseph Emin (1792) suggests that 400 Englishmen suffocated in the Black Hole and Thomas Khojamall (1764) mentions that fifteen Europeans lost their lives there. In addition to the ostensibly primary accounts by Holwell, Mills, Cooke, and Grey, Gupta mentions ten additional accounts, which, ultimately "can be traced to Holwell, Grey and Mills," while "the accounts of George Grey and Captain Mills are largely identical." Gupta goes on to make this interesting point:

> We may, therefore, in view of Grey's account, and the general veracity of these newspaper accounts assume that Mills was not in the Black Hole. If he flattered himself by including his name amongst the survivors of the Black Hole, it was because Holwell had given it publicity, and many other were, indeed, trying to claim the honor of having been confined in the Black Hole [at this time or slightly later].

Gupta concludes that "it is safe to say that . . . only sixty-four persons were confined to the Black Hole, of whom twenty-one survived," whereas "Mills mentions that '144 men, women and children' were confined in the Black Hole" (78). Likewise, the question of women and children seems doubtful

https://doi.org/10.1017/S106015030705156X Published online by Cambridge University Press

at best, excepting Mrs. Carey, according to Gupta. For references to the cultural energies organized by the Black Hole of Calcutta, see Macfarlane.

2. Before this time, East India Company interests were commercial in motivation, not governmental, the bi-product of an *ad hoc* process of informal interstate negotiations that grew more complex over time. See Lawson and Tuck.
3. See Wheeler, excerpted from Letter from J. Z. Holwell, Esq. to William Davis, Esq. from on board the *Syren* sloop, the 28th of February 1757; printed in Howell's *India Tracts*, London 1758, 231; see also Book IV.
4. See Prashad, "Radical History" 117 and Hutnyk 91.
5. For a succinct genealogy of a nationalist model of literary history and its persistence, see Greenblatt 50. For recent treatments of Victorian nationalism in relation to discourses of race, gender, and other identity and cultural politics, see Catherine Hall et al., Baucom, and Brody.
6. For a thoughtful discussion of polyculturalism in cultural historiography, see Prashad, *Karma*.
7. The historical recognition of the fictions of nation in the ideological construction of nationalism – not that nation-states cease to matter under conditions of globalization – has implications for theories of "culture." As late cultural critic Readings notes: "Culture is entirely internalized as an element within the flow of global capital; it is no longer the idea that the accumulation of national capital claims to serve" (45). Insofar as understanding culture is a premise and rationale for modern and contemporary literary study, its changing status, prompted in part by the present vicissitudes of the nation, requires rethinking relations between culture, literary study, and the analytical unit of the nation.
8. World systems theory complicates our approach to culture, discourse, and literature given present changes in the world economy and given the light those changes throw on the past. Combined with discourse analysis, it offers a more complex account of global modernity than anti-foundational critiques of western metanarratives, and it is open to acknowledging the reciprocal importance of literary culture to international dependencies, logics of relationality, and global forces and actors defined beyond the nation-state. Literary critics, however, even those influenced by postmodern marxisms in their wider applications, have not attended sufficiently to the nature of the world system for the national cultures whose languages, literatures, and discourses they study. This is particularly lamentable in the case of Victorian literature and culture given its long and fruitful relationship with sociological theory and criticism, and given the central role that Victorian Britain plays in the creation of the modern world system – both historically and analytically. See Wallerstein, *World Economy*. To put these issues another way, while critics have long ceased to shut out what Said called "the world" from literary inquiry, they still suffer from the problem of absent critical models.
9. This character contrast, and Becky's amoral mystique, is one meaningful axis of tension in the novel. See DiBattista.
10. Even Thackeray's contemporaries like Elizabeth Barrett Browning found *Vanity Fair*, "cruel to human nature," as critic Sherman notes, and in doing so, they "sought in the novel" those "accustomed expectations" of fiction, Sherman continues, that "Thackeray mustered all his talent to frustrate" 77, 70.
11. This critical commonsense is so universally accepted that attempts to qualify it, as in Norton's own muted claim that the "many voices" and "discontinuities" of the novel (against Thackeray's intention, will or design) can be seen to tip his satire into a critique of imperialist values, has been met with efforts to return Thackeray back to Brantlinger's baseline (124). See Norton, Perkin's response, and Norton's final rebuttal. Indeed, by such a standard, Thomas's sense that Thackeray offers a latent critique of slavery during and after a period of widespread abolitionism – hardly a radical act – appears "controversial." Also see Perkin's essay on empire and orientalism in Thackeray's writing beyond *Vanity Fair*.
12. See Achebe and Ashcroft et al.
13. Carlyle's reactionary defense of slavery, "Occasional Discourse on the Negro Question" was first published in 1849 in *Fraser's Magazine* (London); later in 1853 he changed the title and published

https://doi.org/10.1017/S106015030705156X Published online by Cambridge University Press

the essay as a pamphlet (1853), *Occasional Discourse on the Nigger Question.* J. S. Mill responded in 1850 in *Fraser*'s with "The Negro Question." The two, friends at one time, were alienated from each other after the 1865 Morant Bay, Jamaica resistance was handled with brutality by Governor Edward John Eyre. In 1866, a "Jamaica Committee" investigation was set up that included J. S. Mill, Charles Darwin, John Bright, Thomas Huxley, and Herbert Spencer; and at the same time others formed a defense committee, the "Eyre Testimonial and Defense Fund" that included Thomas Carlyle, John Ruskin, and Alfred Tennyson. Eyre was ultimately acquitted for his excesses. See Said, *Culture* 101–02.

14. Critical silence about "race," a summary judgment of "racism," and/or a reticence to decode "racial" tropes in a given work can be seen as an up-dating of Achebe's "faux universalism," once identified with Eurocentric criticism, because such intellectual moves are based (a.) on the belief that cultural texts should be able to somehow transcend (i.e., they are universal) their culture, in this case, a culture of Victorian scientific racism; that (b.) when they do not, it amounts to an individual author's moral failing, not a structured oppression with ethical and in this case global dimensions, which deserves a textual explication and historical explanation, not a simple judgment (e.g. "racism"). In fact, because "racial" tropes are presumed to signify in terms of power, prejudice, and/or ignorance they are often thought to read themselves, instead of providing a means to describe history and culture, including literary and cultural history, and its persistent categories. Critiques of such universalizing tendencies which are ultimately based, paradoxically, on an isolated notion of England, western Europe, or exclusive conceptions of identity, include Gilroy, Hall, *Civilizing*, and Mehta 60–62. As Gilroy notes it is in "the constitutive relationships with outsiders that both found and temper a self-conscious sense of western civilization" (17) which requires, as Hall adds, a "focus on national histories as constructed, rather than simply there" and in defining the nation "by what is not part of it," thereby "marking both its positive presence" and "its negative and excluded parts" (9).
15. See, for instance, Williams, *Sociology*12–14 and *Keywords* 87–93; Buzard, *Disorienting* 3–18; Herbert 1–28.
16. See Young on the use of hybridity as an imperialist trope.
17. See Sutherland; Thomas; Norton et al.; and Gilmour. On the link between humor and moral critique Thackeray himself makes this plain:

> But my kind reader will please to remember that this history has 'Vanity Fair' for a title, and that Vanity Fair is a very vain, wicked, foolish place, full of all sorts of . . . falsenesses and pretensions. And while the moralist, who is holding forth on the cover . . . professes to wear . . . only the very same long-eared livery in which his congregation is arrayed: yet, . . . who is bound to speak the truth as far as one knows it . . . and a deal of disagreeable matter must come out in the course of such an undertaking . . . I warn my 'kyind friends' then, that I am going to tell a story of harrowing villany and complicated – but, as I trust, intensely interesting – crime. My rascals are no milk-and-water rascals, I promise you . . . Such people there are living and flourishing in the world – Faithless, Hopeless, Charityless: let us have at them, dear friends, with might and main . . . and it was to combat and expose such as those, no doubt, that Laughter was made (95–96; ch. 8).

18. Stocking's description is worth quoting:

> Although the political connotations of the race idea suggest to twentieth-century readers a rigidly biological determinist approach, in 1850 this was far from necessarily the case. The process by which "race" took on a clearly biological meaning was by no means complete, and contemporary biological assumptions in fact justified a confusion of physical and cultural characteristics . . . Given the belief that the habitual behavior of human groups in different environments might become part of their hereditary physical makeup, cultural phenomena were readily translatable into "racial" tendencies. From this point of view, the determinism implicit in the race idea was biological only in a secondary way . . . Well before 1850, however, there were also those who treated racial differences in a more strictly physical way, who emphasized the biological determinism of cultural characteristics. (63–64)

https://doi.org/10.1017/S106015030705156X Published online by Cambridge University Press

19. Thomas argues, for instance, that "Thackeray's most significant depiction of slavery is not literal, but figurative" (4).
20. Thackeray is fascinated by the influence of eighteenth-century writing on nineteenth-century approaches, including his own. This is evident, if negatively so, when Becky defiantly tosses from Amelia's carriage that tome of eighteenth-century learning, "Dr. Johnson's dixionary." Many critics note his formal debt to the classical moralists and satirists, especially Fielding, but also Swift – a connection made evident in his own lectures on the topic, *The English Humorists of the Eighteenth Century* (London, Smith, Elder, 1853). What he perhaps values most in eighteenth-century writing, especially Fielding, is the refusal to make writing simple: for Fielding the novel was biography, history, and public record, not an exercise in sentimentalism, romanticism, or psychological-interiority – aspects of fiction that Thackeray warned Charlotte Brontë against and that abounded in contemporary writing. The consummate classicist, Thackeray values a distant, restrained, even somewhat uninvested relationship to his subject matter, an approach more suited to the satirist than the psychological-realist.
21. In contrast to reigning Dickensonian realist narrative strategies, Thackeray supplies no heroic characters to guide moral interpretation, and no predictable plot to make readers feel settled – a sense of belonging to the sociological landscape that intersects the realist novel with nationalism, as Benedict Anderson has described. There is also no moral-omniscient narrator with whom readers may sympathetically identify *en route* to a righteous (happy) ending. For a useful treatment of Thackeray's realism, see Wheatley and for the commensurability of realism and nationalism, see Anderson.
22. On the topic of children, Thackeray's analysis of hierarchies of power and their effects is clear:

    > If people would but leave children to themselves; if teachers would cease to bully them; if parents would not insist upon directing their feelings and thoughts, and dominating their feelings – those feelings and thoughts which are a mystery to all (for how much do you and I know of each other, of our children, of our fathers, of our neighbour, and how far more beautiful and sacred are the thoughts of the poor lad or girl whom you govern likely to be, than those of the dull and world-corrupted person who rules him?) – small harm would accrue, although a less quantity of as *in praesenti* might be acquired. (51; ch. 5)

    While deeply sensitive, Thackeray finds satire more critically effective than sympathy.
23. Knoepflmacher 54.
24. See Hunter.
25. *The Newcombes* 66; ch. 5 qtd. in McMaster 111.
26. See Thomas 157–87. Ray notes that "In India at the beginning of the nineteenth century concubinage of this sort was still customary among unmarried Europeans" (49).
27. Critics suggest that the rich mulatto heiress Miss Rhoda Swartz may have been modeled on Thackeray's niece. This seems specious not only because Swartz is depicted as West Indian, African, and Jewish – not Indian or Eurasion – and more generally, it assumes that there is such a dearth of models for English "others" in London that Thackeray had to draw on a relative. The reality of Victorian London was undoubtedly far more ethnically mixed and diverse than usual interpretations of the literary canon suggest. Moreover, this issue becomes strangely morally and politically barbed: for instance, Thomas refers to both Sarah and her husband James Blechynden as "illegitimate" – which, while perhaps true by Victorian standards – seems a peculiar language to repeat today, especially given the very conventions of marriage in the colonial context (11). Ray (however, writing a half-century ago) also uses "illegitimate half-caste" for Sarah Blechynden's daughter (49).
28. Writing to Edward FitzGerald, "I have got a black niece staying with me: daughter of a natural sister of mine. She was never in Europe before & wrote to my mother the other day as her 'dear Grandmamma.' Fancy the astonishment of that dear majestic old woman!" (*Letters* 2: 367 March-May 1848).
29. To his mother, Thackeray writes, "What a mercy it is too to have got rid of my niece!" (*Letters* 2:381 to Mrs. Carmichael-Smyth 15–16 May 1848).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S106015030705156X Published online by Cambridge University Press

30. This situation was complicated by the fact that Thackeray's long-standing financial troubles – prompting him to become a professional writer – which also had an eastern source (an "Indian" bank failure ruined him financially, as in the novel) were slightly alleviated when Sarah died, as her own small annuity from their father of one-hundred pounds went to Thackeray.
31. Ray 54.
32. While Anglo-Indian fiction is an unwieldy genre, including Renaissance travel writing and nineteenth-century novels, its artistic/ideological success by mid-century stems from the ability of English subjects born or stationed in India to create an "insider-effect" in the eyes of its primarily metropolitan audience. Thackeray is not traditionally understood as an Anglo-Indian writer. Unlike W. D. Arnold, Rudyard Kipling, E. M. Forster, or George Orwell, his novels do not boast an intimate knowledge of eastern peoples, places, and types, or dialects of regional language; nor are his plots structured around an Anglo or mixed "outsider" trying to find an authentic entrée "inside" the alien community, like moral-didactic texts such as William Delafield Arnold's *Oakfield: Or Fellowship in the East*. For an inclusive, historical description of Anglo-Indian writing and conventions, see Moore-Gilbert; Gorra; and Roy.
33. While Hardy suggests that one should approach Thackeray as a sociologist, he is more akin to an anthropologist – especially with his outsider attention to English life.
34. Generally, biographical evidence is used to explain Thackeray's particularly explicit racism, a product of the rigid polarized hierarchies of Anglo-Indian life – yet personal experiences are just as likely to produce a unique sensitivity to "race." Indeed, the most commonly criticized aspects of Thackeray's form – the instability of cultural meaning and identity, the shifting nature of perspectives that complicate "truth," and the disunified nature of narrative in fiction or history – are lessons he likely gleaned from this his complex location in relation to both rigid ethnic binaries and boundaries and their increased visibility by his shifting location (from India to England) but also in his on-going dialogue with a diasporic Anglo-Indian community.
35. See Norton's use of Bhaktin in her discussion of Thackeray's "double-voice" as opposed to "ideological monologism" in the novel, where "all ideological and creative acts are conceived and perceived as possible expressions of single consciousness, a single spirit . . . the spirit of a nation, the spirit of a people, the spirit of a history," ("Boggley-Wollah" 129). See also Bakhtin 82.
36. For an astute discussion of Thackeray's deliberate blurring of the lines of fiction and history, see McMaster 106–108, and Thackeray's own commentary on this topic in *The Newcomes*, ed. George Saintsbury (London: Oxford UP, 1908) 297.
37. Sutherland in his Introduction writes:

> *Vanity Fair,* then, is an historical novel in whose historical fabric there are gaping, but evidently carefully placed, holes. Thackeray gives us Regency London without Brummell, Byron or the Regent; . . . the great Brussels ball without grandees; the frontline in 1815 without Waterloo, Wellington or Napoleon; and, later, in the novel, Weimar without Goethe. An historical novel, we might call it, without everything conventionally historical. (xv)

38. Fanon speaks of separate black and white towns; Kennedy notes the exaggerated construction of homes high on hill tops or so-called hill stations.
39. Writers like E. M. Forster attempted to capture this truth just as it was ending, in the kind of hysteria over contamination produced in the Anglo-Indian community in *A Passage to India* (1924).
40. Many of these contests are often explicitly or implicitly the subject of British canonical literature, suggesting that despite the dangers of mimetic interpretation, or of confusing historical fiction with sociological fact, literature remains critical in identifying aporias in official history. See, for instance, Meyer for a nuanced treatment of the allusions to slavery and slave revolts in Jamaica (152–53).
41. I have modified slightly Kim Hall's phrasing from "Culinary Spaces, Colonial Spaces: The Gendering of Sugar in the Seventeenth Century" (170) where she speaks of the tacit acceptance of certain colonial foods in European diets as a "natural occurrence," rather than "one which is often contested and must be prepared for ideologically."

https://doi.org/10.1017/S106015030705156X Published online by Cambridge University Press

42. See Millman, Dumett, ed., and especially Parsons.
43. The reference caricatures Jos Sedley, the returning nabob, whose questionable class respectability is coded in racialist terms, amplifying a Victorian common sense about the nabob as questionably white, as well as those long-settled in the colonies in general. But in other ways, Jos is simply an allegory for Great Britain itself: in Thackeray's last sketch ("Jos Dances the Polonaise"), an enormous bumbling Jos tries to retain grace in mid-dance-stride.
44. Though the novel is set twenty years before the actual creation of the "Oriental Club" in Regency England (1824, Sir John Malcolm, Hanover Square), Jos's first point of business after he settles into the neighborhood is to join the Oriental Club, a social club for ex-partners of Indian financial firms (stock-holding companies), retired council and military-men, the administrators-by-default of the Indian colonies like Jos himself. Interestingly Thackeray notes at the novel's beginning (27; ch. 3) that Jos "dined at the fashionable taverns (because the Oriental Club was not as yet invented)."
45. Young argues that hybridity is a compromised term for postcolonial theory precisely because it was used by Victorians in the service of an imperialist mentality, even representing the *sin qua non* of Englishness in the period.
46. In 1834, the East India Company was nominally still a company with shareholders and directors.
47. Thackeray's professional literary career was inaugurated by necessity when he fell into financial ruin through the entrepreneurial mishaps of an Indian firm in which his inheritance was invested. The loss of his entire fortune precipitated a 'declassed' social position after which he began to take up a different relationship to writing as a financial necessity. *Vanity Fair* was Thackeray's first commercial success (above and beyond his journalistic correspondence and illustrations).
48. Thackeray's narrative frame encompasses what Viswanathan demonstrates in the English literary canon, though this dynamic occurs in other cultural institutions built between England and India – including institutions and practices of state, according to Cohn, and economic structures, according to Habib.

WORKS CITED

Achebe, Chinua. *Hopes and Impediments: Selected Essays 1965–1987*. London: Heinemann, 1988.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. 2nd ed. London; New York: Verso, 1991.

Appadurai, Arjun. *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1996.

Arrighi, Giovanni, and B. J. Silver. *Chaos and Governance in the Modern World System*. Minneapolis, London: U of Minnesota P, 1999.

Ashcroft, Bill et al. *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*. New York: Routledge, 1995. 57–67.

Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Problems of Dostoyevsky's Poetics*. Ed. and trans., Caryl Emerson. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1984.

Baucom, Ian. *Out of Place: Englishness, Empire, and the Locations of Identity*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1999.

Bhabha, Homi. "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse." *Location of Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1994. 85–92.

———. "The Other Question: Difference, Discrimination, and the Discourse of Colonialism." *Black British Cultural Studies: A Reader*. Ed. Houston A. Baker, Jr., Manthia Diawara, and Ruth H. Lindeborg. Chicago, London: U of Chicago P, 1996. 87–106.

Brantlinger, Patrick. *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830–1914*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1988.

Brody, Jennifer DeVere. *Impossible Purities: Blackness, Femininity, and Victorian Culture*. Durham: Duke UP, 1998.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S106015030705156X Published online by Cambridge University Press

Buzard, James. *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature, and the Ways to "Culture," 1800–1918*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1993.

———. *Disorienting Fiction: The Autoethnographic Work of Nineteenth-Century British Novels*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2005.

Chaudhury, S. *The Prelude to Empire: Plassey Revolution of 1757*. New Delhi, 2000.

Clifford, James. *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2002.

Cohn, Bernard. *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1996.

DiBattista, Maria. "The Triumph of Clytemnestra: The Charades in *Vanity Fair*." *PMLA* 95 (1980): 827–37.

Dumett, Raymond, ed. *Gentlemanly Capitalism and British Imperialism: The New Debate on Empire*. Addison Wesley Longman, 1999.

Emin, Joseph. *Life and Adventures of Joseph Emin: An Armenian Written in English by Himself*. London: Privately Printed. 1792.

Fanon, Franz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. New York: Grove/Atlantic, 1976.

Geertz, Clifford. *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology*. 2nd ed. Basic Books, 2000.

Gill, Stephen, ed. *Globalization, Democratization and Multilateralism*. International Political Economy Series, Palgrave, 1997.

Gill, Stephen, and David Law. *The Global Political Economy: Perspectives, Problems, and Policies*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1990.

Gill, Stephen, and James H. Mittelman, eds. *Innovation and Transformation in International Studies*. Cambridge UP, 1997.

Gilmour, Robin. "Thackeray: From Europe to Empire." *Creditable Warriors: 1830–1876*. Ed. Michael Cotsell. London: Ashfield, 1990. 97–110.

Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. London: Verso, 1993.

Gorra, Michael. *After Empire: Scott, Naipaul, Rushdie*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1997.

Greenblatt, Stephen. "Racial Memory and Literary History." *PMLA* 116 (2001): 48–63.

Gupta, Brijen K. *Sirajuddaullah and the East India Company, 1756–1757: Background to the Foundation of British Power in India*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1966.

Habib, Irfan. *Essays in Indian History: Towards a Marxist Perception*. London: Anthem, 2002.

Hall, Catherine, Keith McClelland, and Jane Rendall. *Civilizing Missions: Colony and Metropole in the English Imagination, 1830–1867*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2002.

———. *Defining the Victorian Nation: Class, Race, Gender and the Reform Act of 1867*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000.

Hall, Kim. "Culinary Spaces, Colonial Spaces: The Gendering of Sugar in the Seventeenth Century." *Feminist Readings of Early Modern Culture: Emerging Subjects and Subjectivities*. Ed. Valerie Traub, Lindsay Kaplan, and Dympna Callaghan. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996. 168–90.

Hall Stuart, ed. *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. London: Sage, 1997.

Hardy, Barbara. *The Exposure of Luxury: Radical themes in Thackeray*. Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 1972.

Herbert, Christopher. *Culture and Anomie: Ethnographic Imagination in the Nineteenth Century*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1991.

Holwell, John Zephaniah. *A Genuine Narrative of the deplorable deaths of the English gentlemen and others who were suffocated in the Black Hole*. 1758. Rpt. Calcutta, 1884, 1899.

Hunter William, Wilson. *The Thackerays in India and Some Calcutta Graves*. London: H. Frowde, 1897.

Hutnyk, John. *The Rumour of Calcutta: Tourism, Charity, and the Poverty of Representation*. London: Zed, 1996. 91.

James, Henry. "London Notes." *Harper's Weekly* 41 (27 March 1897): 315.

Kennedy, Dane. *The Magic Mountains: Hill Stations and the British Raj*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1996.

Knoepflmacher, U. C. *Laughter & Despair: Readings in Ten Novels of the Victorian Era*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1971.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S106015030705156X Published online by Cambridge University Press

Lawson, Philip. *East India Company*. London: Addison-Wesley Longman, 1993.

Macfarlane, Iris. *The Black Hole: Or, The Makings of a Legend*. London: Allen & Unwin, 1975.

McMaster, R.D. *Thackeray's Cultural Frame of Reference*. London: McGill-Queen's UP, 1991.

Mehta, Uday S. "Liberal Strategies of Exclusion." *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*. Ed. Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler. Berkeley: U of California P, 1997. 59–86.

Meyer, Susan. "Colonialism and the Figurative Strategy of *Jane Eyre*." *Post-Colonial Theory and English Literature: A Reader*. Ed. Peter Childs. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1999. 149–63.

Millman, Richard. *Britain and the Eastern Question, 1875–1878*. Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford UP, 1979.

Moore-Gilbert, Bart, ed. *Writing India, 1757–1990: The Literature of British India*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1996.

Norton, Sandy Morey, J. Russell Perkin, and Gary R. Dyer. "The 'Vanity Fair' of Nineteenth-Century England: Commerce, Women, and the East in the Ladies' Bazaar." *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 46.2 (1991 Sept): 196–222.

Norton, Sandy Morey. "The Ex-Collector of Boggley-Wollah: Colonialism in the Empire of *Vanity Fair*." *Narrative* 1.2 (May 1993): 124–37.

———. "The Imperialism of Theory: A Response to Russell Perkin." *Narrative* 2.2 (1994): 167–77.

Parsons, Timothy. *The British Imperial Century, 1815–1914: A World History Perspective*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999.

Perkin, J. Russell. "Thackeray and Imperialism: A Response to Sandy Morey Norton." *Narrative* 2.2 (May 1994): 161–66.

———. "Thackeray and Orientalism: Cornhill to Cairo and The Newcomes,"*English Studies in Canada* 16.3 (1990 Sept): 297–313.

Prashad, Vijay. *The Karma of Brown Folk*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2000.

———. "Reflections on Radical History: Community Scholarship." *Radical History Review* 79 (2001): 116–19.

Ray, Gordon N. *Thackeray: The Uses of Adversity 1811–1846*. Vol. 6. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1955.

Readings, Bill. *The University in Ruins*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1996.

Roy, Parama. *Indian Traffic: Identities in Question in Colonial and Postcolonial India*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1998.

Said, Edward. *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Knopf, 1993.

———. *The World, The Text, and the Critic*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1984.

Sarkar, Jadunath. *The History of Bengal, Volume II: Muslim Period 1200–1757*. Dhaka, 1972. Rpt. Delhi, B.R., 2003.

Sherman, Joseph. "Race and Racism as Narrative Strategies in 'Vanity Fair." *English Studies in Africa* 34.2 (1991): 77–102.

Stevenson, Lionel. *The Showman of Vanity Fair: The Life of William Makepeace Thackeray*. New York: Scribner's Son, 1947.

Stocking, George. *Victorian Anthropology*. New York: Free, 1987.

Sutherland, John. "Thackeray as Victorian Racialist." *Essays in Criticism* 20 (1970) 441–45.

Thackeray, William Makepeace. *The Newcomes: Memoirs of a Most Respectable Family*. Ed. Arthur Pendennis, Esq. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995.

———. *Vanity Fair*. Ed. John Sutherland. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999.

Thomas, Deborah A. *Thackeray and Slavery*. Athens: Ohio UP, 1993.

Tuck, Patrick J. *The East India Company 1600–1858*. New York: Routledge, 1998.

Viswanathan, Gauri. *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998.

Wallerstein, Immanuel. *Geopolitics and Geoculture: Essays on the Changing World-System*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP; Paris: Ed. de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1991.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S106015030705156X Published online by Cambridge University Press

———. *The Politics of the World-Economy*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994.
———. *Unthinking Social Science: The Limits of Nineteenth Century Paradigms*. Cambridge: Polity, 1991.
Wheatley, James. *Patterns in Thackeray's Fiction*. Cambridge: M. I. T. Press, 1969.
Wheeler, J. T. *Early Records of British India*. 1878.
Williams, Raymond. *Culture and Society, 1780–1950*. New York: Columbia UP, 1983.
———. *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. Revised ed. New York: Oxford UP, 1985.
———. *The Sociology of Culture*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1995.
Young, Robert J. C. *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture, and Race*. New York: Routledge, 1994.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S106015030705156X Published online by Cambridge University Press