A “POOR DAY-LABOURER IN THE WINEYARD,” Thackeray called himself in a letter to a friend at the end of 1843, concluding in the same vein with reference to his recent tour of Ireland: “As an agriculturalist I should wish that the Humbug crop should not be quite so plenteous in 1844 as it has been in '43.” Humbuggery had been Thackeray’s announced subject from the outset, and the particular Irish variety already introduced in the persons of Major Gahagan and Aunt Hoggarty. Since then, Thackeray had extended opportunity to look at “the dashing, daring, duelling, rollicking, whiskey-drinking people” up close, recording his impressions of them and their surroundings in The Irish Sketch Book, the first work to come out under his own name. A by-product of this trip was “The Luck of Barry Lyndon,” Thackeray’s last tale for Fraser’s Magazine, which began its run there a month after the letter relating to the “Humbug crop.” In this later incarnation the Irish braggart has become more swashbuckling and more cosmopolitan if no less naïve, and is allowed to tell his own story at length in a consummate display of “the humorous ego.”

Thackeray seems to have had Barry Lyndon in mind as early as the summer of 1841, following his first and shorter trip to Ireland. At this time, in a letter to James Fraser, he writes of a semilegendary figure of Irish literature who had captivated his imagination, Captain Freeny, a peripatetic highwayman who ran away from home as a boy: “I have in my trip to the country, found materials (rather a character) for a story, that I’m sure must be amusing.” Thackeray
admired in particular "the noble naïveté and simplicity of the hero as he recounts his own adventures, and the utter unconsciousness that he is narrating anything wonderful. It is the way of all great men, who recite their great actions modestly, and, as if they were matters of course; as indeed to them they are."\(^\text{15}\)

On his return to Ireland, Thackeray resumed interest in Captain Freeny's history, together with other "ephemeral repertories" from the wild past of his host nation, accounts of rogues and vagabonds, "suited to the meanest as well as the highest capacity, tending both to improve the fancy and enrich the mind." On a rainy night at an inn he regaled himself with a few "Galway-Nights' Entertainments" (by analogy with his favorite Arabian Nights). These, he writes, "have the old tricks and some of the old plots that one has read in many popular legends of almost all countries, European and Eastern: successful cunning is the great virtue applauded; and the heroes pass through a thousand wild extravagant dangers, such as could have been invented when art was young and faith was large."\(^\text{16}\) Barry Lyndon carries on the tradition:

There was much more liveliness and bustle on the king's highroad in those times, than in these days of stage-coaches, which carry you from one end of the kingdom to another in a few score hours. The gentry rode their own horses or drove in their own coaches, and spent three days on a journey which now occupies ten hours; so that there was no lack of company for a person travelling towards Dublin. I made part of the journey from Carlow towards Naas with a well-armed gentleman from Kilkenny dressed in green and a gold cord, with a patch on his eye and riding a powerful mare. He asked me the questions of the day, and whither I was bound, and whether my mother was not afraid on account of the highwaymen to let one so young as myself travel? But I said, pulling out one of them from a bolster, that I had a pair of good pistols that had already done execution, and were ready to do it again; and here a pock-marked man coming up, he put spurs into his bay mare and left me. She was a much more powerful animal than mine, and besides, I did not wish to fatigue my horse, wishing to enter Dublin that night, and in reputable condition. (Chap. 4)

This "civilized" brigand is obviously well endowed with the blarney and bravado that distinguished his forerunners. By the time he has returned to his native land after his continental escapades, we are quite ready to go along with his characterization of his countrymen: "There was a simplicity about this Irish gentry which amused and made me wonder. If they tell more fibs than their downright neighbours across the water, on the other hand they believe more" (chap. 15). These words of course are equally appli-
cable to Barry himself, who really proves more gullible in the long run than do any of his victims, or the reader. Another instance of Thackeray’s sly parody is his inversion of the Freeny formula. Unlike that outlaw’s disposition to recite “great actions modestly,” Barry, who has much to be modest about, is prone to amplify ordinary achievements:

I am not going to entertain my readers with an account of my professional career as a gamester, any more than I did with anecdotes of my life as a military man. I might fill volumes with anecdotes of this kind were I so minded, but at this rate my recital would not be brought to a conclusion for years, and who knows how soon I may be called upon to stop? I have gout, rheumatism, gravel, and a disordered liver. I have two or three wounds in my body, which break out every now and then, and give me intolerable pain, and a hundred more signs of breaking up. Such are the effects of time, illness, and free-living, upon one of the strongest constitutions and finest forms the world ever saw. Ah! I suffered from none of these ills in the year ’66, when there was no man in Europe more gay in spirits, more splendid in personal accomplishment, than young Redmond Barry. (Chap. 11)

Nor need I mention my successes among the fairer portion of the creation. One of the most accomplished, the tallest, the most athletic, and the handsomest gentleman of Europe, as I was then, a young fellow of my figure could not fail of having advantages, which a person of my spirit knew very well how to use. But upon these subjects I am dumb. (Chap. 14)

In keeping with the interplay between “sham history” and “true history” carried out through so much of Thackeray’s fiction, in 

_Barry Lyndon_ fantasy—here taking the form of the Irish tall tale—is constantly intruded upon by the rude world of fact. Originally subtitled “A Romance of the Last Century,” Thackeray’s rogue tale could have been called “A Romance of Real Life,” like many a novel of its time, and with more justification than most, for it is grounded more firmly than his previous fiction in biography, history, journalism, and contemporary politics.

Besides personal observations based on his travels, Thackeray drew on various records to limn out Barry Lyndon’s story. It is known that the latter part, concerned with Barry’s stormy marriage to Lady Lyndon, is based on the career of the notorious adventurer Andrew Robertson Stoney-Bowes, who wheedled a wealthy countess into marriage and subsequently made her life miserable until she was able to wrench herself free from him by divorce. For the repulsive intrigue involving the Princess of X—Thackeray himself indicates that he drew upon a “silly little book,” _L’Empire_, by the
Baron de la Mothe-Langon, which contains an account of the execution of Princess Caroline by the King of Wurtenberg after she was taken in adultery. These two disparate incidents seem to have bound themselves together in Thackeray's mind by analogy, both involving tyrannical husbands, hysterical wives, and adultery played out against a background of corrupt society.

The somberness that hangs over Barry's last years echoes the sad demise of that real-life Irish hero William Maginn. "Maginn a famous subject for moralising," Thackeray commented on reading an obituary on the late editor of Fraser's Magazine, whose death occurred at the time when "The Luck of Barry Lyndon" was beginning to appear. It is hardly Maginn's learning, scholarship, and wit that are carried over into Thackeray's vulgar, semiliterate hero, but one detects about Barry something of Maginn's facile charm, slippery morality, and sense of doom. There is also a suggestive parallel between Barry's death in prison in a non compos state and the ignominious end of Beau Brummell, whose career was just then being widely publicized through Jesse's biography. Generally Thackeray's way of proceeding with his rogue hero resembles his handling of his criminal heroine Catherine Hayes—pushing back from effects to causes, from what is known about the later life of his character, as recorded in biography, history, or chronicle, to the reconstruction of his early days. Such an approach is anticipated in "Hints for a History of Highwaymen," the Fraser's review that influenced Catherine, where it is proposed that when one sets down the life history of a malefactor: "It would be well to have him at last displayed as he really is in action and in principle; recount if you can his education and his first associates, his first temptations, and all that may palliate or aggravate his first yielding to the tempter."

Modern readers who know Thackeray's Irish hero only through the revised and retitled version of his narrative called The Memoirs of Barry Lyndon, Esq. can easily lose sight of its Fraserian roots. In the revised version prepared for the Miscellanies, a number of the discursive essays and moralizings (useful to maintain rapport with monthly readers) were dropped, and the role was virtually eliminated of Thackeray's favorite persona of the time, the staid, smug, snobbish, somewhat humorless bachelor George Savage Fitz-Boodle who is nominally the editor of Barry's papers. Barry's opening words, "Since the days of Adam, there has been hardly a mischief done in this world but a woman has been at the bottom of it," line his tale up with "Men's Wives," a rather harsh series of narratives that had appeared in Fraser's during the previous year under the editorship of Fitz-Boodle centering on a number of young hus-
bands wheedled, henpecked, or otherwise victimized by grasping wives or mothers-in-law. Barry's pretension to being a displaced aristocrat ("I would assume the Irish crown over my coat-of-arms, but that there are so many silly pretenders to that distinction who bear it and render it common"), along with his concern with getting on in the world, makes his memoir also a kind of continuation of Fitz-Boodle's "Professions," in which this man-about-town offers ideas for new vocations for "younger sons of the nobility" thrown upon their own resources. Old faces turn up from "F—a magazine of wit"—such as Deuceace and the Earl of Crabs from *The Yellowplush Papers*, and the Irish expatriate who had figured in "Denis Haggerty's Wife" in the "Men's Wives" series, as well as in *The Great Hoggarty Diamond*—but readers were brought up to date as well on "topics of the day." To one following its progress month by month, "The Luck of Barry Lyndon" must have read like an extension of Fraser's editorial and review pages.

"I presume that there is no gentleman in Europe that has not heard of the House of Barry of Barryogue, of the Kingdom of Ireland, than which a more famous name is not to be found in Gwillim or D'Hozier . . . the noblest of the island, and, perhaps of the universal world," declares Barry at the beginning of his memoirs. His preoccupation with lineage, and with the character of the gentleman, is one that of course transcends nationalities, and was shared quite explicitly, at the time when these words were written, by a Fraser's reviewer. Genealogy and gentility are the very themes of the long article that precedes the first number of "The Luck of Barry Lyndon"—a review of a contemporary book on great families. Despite occasional touches of humor, the article is a straight-faced discussion of family pride and hereditary aristocracy. In *Barry Lyndon* one finds Thackeray both echoing and parodying it, tapping early in his career a vein of social satire that he was to make his own. "Political ethics tells us," affirms the reviewer, himself quoting Gibbon, "that 'wherever the distinction of birth is allowed to form a superior order in the state, education and example should always, and will often, produce among them a dignity of sentiment and propriety of conduct, which is guarded from dishonour by their own and the public esteem.'" The Hatfield and McCoy history of his family that occupies the first several pages of Barry Lyndon's narrative seems calculated to demonstrate just the opposite:

That very estate which the Lyndons now possess in Ireland was once the property of my race. Rory Barry of Barryogue owned it in Elizabeth's time, and half Munster beside. The Barry was always in
feud with the O'Mahonys in those times; and, as it happened, a certain English colonel passed through the former's country with a body of men-at-arms, on the very day when the O'Mahonys had made an inroad upon our territories, and carried off a frightful plunder of our flocks and herds.

This young Englishman, whose name was Roger Lyndon... having been most hospitably received by the Barry, and finding him just of the point of carrying an inroad into the O'Mahonys' land, offered the aid of himself and his lances, and behaved himself so well, as it appeared, that the O'Mahonys were entirely overcome, all the Barry's property restored, and with it, says the old chronicle, twice as much of the O'Mahonys' goods and cattle.

It was the setting in of the winter season, and the young soldier was pressed by the Barry not to quit his house of Barryogue, and remained there during several months, his men being quartered with Barry's own gallow-glasses, man by man in the cottages round about. They conducted themselves, as is their wont, with the most intolerable insolence towards the Irish; so much so, that fights and murders continually ensued, and the people vowed to destroy them. (Chap. 1)

At the same time Barry's family history does illustrate, if in a negative way, another generalization made by the reviewer, bolstered again by a traditional source: "We have the authority of the Jewish legislator Moses, that every creature begets its like; and that may be understood in the most extensive sense, for although there may not be two persons so alike as not to be known apart from each other, the characteristics of families are often very clearly marked and continued for generations." Barry Lyndon, very much a product of his heritage, serves as a clear case in point. His inherited sense of values is revealed in his eulogy of his father, Roaring Harry Barry, who, we are told, might have distinguished himself as a lawyer "had not his social qualities, love of field-sports, and extraordinary graces of manner, marked him out for a higher sphere" (chap. 1). "Peace be to his ashes!" reads Barry's memorial. "He was not faultless, and dissipated all our princely family property; but he was as brave a fellow as ever tossed a bumper or called a main, and he drove his coach-and-six like a man of fashion." Like father, like son, even to the next of kin, Bryan Lyndon, who is carefully nurtured by his father in the family traditions of extravagance, hooliganism and sadism, but whose untimely death extinguishes the line.15

Barry Lyndon's "Pedigree and Family," from Barry of Barryogue through Simon de Barry and Rory Barry to Roaring Harry Barry, recapitulates the sanguinary history of Anglo-Irish relations down through the ages. Before Barry's Irish eyes, his loyal ances-
tors were "puling knaves who bent the knee to Richard II"; Oliver Cromwell was a "murderous ruffian"; "Our unhappy race had lost its possessions a century earlier, and by the most shameful treason"; "the dastardly English had prevented the just massacre of themselves by falling upon the Irish" (chap. 1). Thackeray himself was fresh from a rapid retrospect of Irish history in the course of reviewing books for the *Morning Chronicle*, which included J. Venedey's *Ireland* and D. Owen Madden's *Ireland and Its Rulers since 1829.* His review of the Venedey book opens with the observation that one "visited Scotland for its romantic recollections and beauty—England for the wonders of its wealth—Ireland for the wonders of its poverty. For poverty and misery have, it seems, their sublime, and that sublime is to be found in Ireland. What a flattering homage to England's constitutional rule over a sister country." At the same time he complains that the author "makes too little allowance for the difficulties attending the linking together of two such unequally advanced countries... and, instead of making it a matter of historical research, he treats it as a romance, personifying England as the villain of the tale, and Ireland as the heroine and the victim." The drift of Thackeray's own "romance" is to reverse the relation through the English heiress Lady Lyndon and the usurping Barry. The Madden book, described as "a somewhat irregular history of Irish politics, from the passing of the Catholic Relief Bill to the time of the Mulgrave government," is praised for its eloquence and faulted for its dogmatism in exposing the causes of the current agitation in Ireland and accounting for the seemingly irreconcilable differences among his countrymen. Also related to *Barry Lyndon* is an earlier book that Thackeray had reviewed, *Memoirs of Joseph Holt, General of the Irish Rebels in 1798,* a "lively and picturesque account," in his opinion, by an eyewitness to the late revolt that had brought about the Act of Union.

Barry was born long before this insurrection, but his first readers were well aware that the resultant forced marriage between the two nations (like that between Barry and Lady Lyndon) was a turbulent and unstable one. In fact, the troubles were flaring up again just as *Barry Lyndon* was beginning its run in *Fraser's*, despite several conciliatory moves by Parliament during the years immediately preceding. In 1838 the Irish Poor Law extended the privileges of the New Poor Law, recently passed in England, to the sister nation, and the Commutation of Tithes ended the forced payment by Irish Catholics to support the Anglican Church. In 1840 Catholics in Irish cities were given a share in municipal government. Nevertheless, the Repeal Association was founded in the spring of that year.
and carried on a campaign for the dissolution of the Union under the leadership of the newly elected Lord Mayor of Dublin, Daniel O'Connell, of which readers of Fraser's Magazine were kept informed. Particularly during the six months before "The Luck of Barry Lyndon" was introduced, there was not an issue that failed to touch in some way on the Irish situation. "God forbid that we should witness a civil war!" wrote one of the more alarmed commentators. "God forbid that the scenes of 1798 should ever again be enacted in that unhappy land... All things are tending to that point, and if that point be not reached ere long, both England and Ireland will be very mercifully dealt with." In the next issue a political article entitled "Parliamentary Pickings; or the Wonders and Marvels of the Session of 1843," took that body to task for its ineptitude in dealing with the Irish problem. In the November issue, the article "O'Connell and the Government" expressed relief over the ending of the agitation for Repeal as the result of a government proclamation. At year's end the perennial question was raised, "What is to be done with Ireland now?" and Parliament was strongly urged to make a "searching inquiry" into the state of affairs there.

This threat was temporarily removed with the quelling of the repeal agitation and the arrest of O'Connell at the end of 1843. However, in 1844, while O'Connell was in prison, the movement for repeal of the Union was sustained by the Young Ireland Party, and O'Connell himself eventually reverted to this position (after briefly entertaining the compromise position of the Federalists). Barry Lyndon is made to comment laterally on this new outburst of shillelagh rattling. Returning to his homeland from the glamorous continent, he finds that Dublin in the year 1771 "was as savage as Warsaw almost, without the regal grandeur of the latter city." He looks down his patrician nose at the ragged people and the ruffians who roam the streets, to say nothing of the squalid houses and run-down inns. "I know this description of them will excite anger among some Irish patriots, who don't like the nakedness of our land abused, and are angry if the whole truth be told concerning it," he adds. His readers were perusing these lines at a time when O'Connell's fanatical intolerance of any criticism of Ireland or the Irish (which extended even to Charles Lever's novels) was a frequent object of ridicule among journalists. Barry returns to the topic later when he describes his travels in connection with his status as landed gentleman:
I went to reside at the Trecothick estate and the Polwellan Wheal, where I found, instead of profit, every kind of pettifogging chicanery. . . . I passed over in state to our territories in Ireland, where I entertained the gentry in a style the lord-lieutenant himself could not equal; gave the fashion to Dublin (to be sure it was a beggarly, savage city in those days, and, since the time there has been a pother about the Union, and the misfortunes attending it, I have been at a loss to account for the mad praises at the old order of things, which the fond Irish patriots have invented); I say I set the fashion to Dublin, and small praise to me, for a poor place it was in those times, whatever the Irish party may say. (Pt. 2, chap. 1)

In one adroit stroke, Thackeray indirectly has his say about the Young Ireland Party and allows Barry unconsciously to deflate his own pretensions. Thackeray the urbane traveler as well as to Thackeray the detached political and social commentator. Simultaneously it offers further scope to his abilities as literary parodist and critic. A generic connection has been established between Barry and the hero of Fielding's Jonathan Wild ("the dreadful satire" mentioned at the end of the serial version of Catherine in connection with which the narrator, Ikey Solomons, comments that "no reader is so dull as to make the mistake of admiring, and can overlook the grand hearty contempt of the author for the character he has described"), though it suits Thackeray's specific satirical purpose that his "hero" is not a professional criminal and pays lip service to the code of genteel society. Also hovering in the background of Barry Lyndon are Smollett's Ferdinand Count Fathom and Peregrine Pickle. But whatever are its links with rogue literature on both sides of the Irish Sea, the first readers of The Luck of Barry Lyndon undoubtedly connected it with the heroes of Charles Lever, Samuel Lover, and other Irish novelists then in vogue. Barry himself announces at one point that "once free [of military service], with my fine person and good family, I will do what ten thousand Irish gentlemen have done before, and will marry a lady of fortune and condition" (chap. 8). To Thackeray's contemporaries, "ten thousand Irish gentlemen" meant Hardress Cregan, Valentine McClutchey, Rory O'More, Ned Corkery, Harry Lorreuer, Tom Burke, Charles O'Malley, and their rapidly proliferating literary tribe.

Thackeray certainly points us in this direction through having dedicated The Irish Sketch Book to Charles Lever, "a good Irishman (the hearty charity of whose visionary redcoats, some substantial
personages in black might imitate to advantage) . . . a friend from whom I have received a hundred acts of kindness and cordial hospitality." The original version of this dedication, which he cut down for publication, says more about Lever's popularity:

It was pleasant in travelling through the country to see in a thousand humble windows the familiar pink wrapper which covers the gallant adventures of Harry Lorrequer and Tom Burke; to hear their merits canvassed by rich and poor; and to find that there was, at any rate, one subject in Ireland about which parties were disposed to agree. While political patriots are exposing the wrongs under which the people labour, and telling them as in duty bound to quarrel for their rights, you have found a happy neutral ground, whither you lead them to repose between their quarrels, and where you keep a nation in good humour.

In the honour of their craft, all literary men are surely bound to admire your kind of patriotism and its effects.23

Indeed, when he first apprised James Fraser of his forthcoming novel, Thackeray wrote: "I want to write and illustrate it, and as you see how Harry Lorrequer succeeds both in the Dublin Magazine & out of it, why should not my story of BARRY-LYNN (or by what name so ever it may be called) answer in as well as out of Regina."24

As happened more than once with Thackeray, admiration and envy are compounded with mockery as Barry Lyndon develops, Lever becoming more a butt than a model. Superficially Barry Lyndon's adventures follow the course pursued by Lever's heroes—escape from poverty, depression, and oppression in Ireland, soldiering on the continent, return to "that land of punch, priests and potatoes," as Harry Lorrequer calls it, capped by an affluent marriage. However, as Thackeray tells the story, Lorrequer's high spirits are somewhat dampened; his military bravado is undercut, and his sentimentality is purged with an acid shower bath. This antiromantic approach to the kind of material that had offered all too ample leeway for Irish gusto and capacity for exaggeration is anticipated in the omnibus review "A Box of Novels" that Thackeray published in Fraser's along with the second installment of Barry Lyndon.

In his article Thackeray sets out to correct some of the stereotyped notions held by the English with respect to the Irish, owing to lack of direct contact with them. He denies, in refutation of popular representations of them, that the Irish are unvaryingly gay and high-spirited either in their writing or in real life. "All Irish stories are sad, all humorous Irish songs are sad," he declares;
“there is never a burst of laughter excited by them but, as I fancy, tears are near at hand; and from *Castle Rackrent* downwards, every Hibernian tale I have ever read is sure to leave a woeful tender impression.” Moreover, Thackeray discovers this plaintive note not only in a serious writer like William Carleton and a melodramatic one like Gerald Griffin, but even in so basically humorous a one as Lever. One understands, therefore, why Barry Lyndon’s gaiety proves to be merely on the surface, with an undercurrent of melancholy. In other ways Thackeray drives home his point by exaggeration. He makes Barry sentimental to the degree of mawkishness; with his tendency to burst into tears over memories of his land, people, mother, and family, and his histrionic emotionalism over the death of his son Bryan rivals Dickens at his most lachrymose.

Thackeray finds the vaudeville Irishmen then enjoying wide popularity partially to blame for the spread of false ideas about Dubliners. The success of such farces as *The Irishman in London*, he complains, has “led Cockneys to suppose . . . that Paddy was in a perpetual whirl of high spirits and whiskey; for ever screeching and whopping mad songs and wild jokes; a being entirely devoid of artifice and calculation.” For the benefit of those to whom Handy Andy and such naïfs represented the typical Son of Erin, he offers Sheridan’s Sir Lucius O’Trigger as a stage character closer to life—a complete hypocrite, “and his fun no more real than his Irish estate.” Sir Charles Lyndon may mistakenly address Barry as “my artless Irish rustic” (chap. 14), but Fitz-Boodle is not so taken in, nor are we likely to be, as we see what unscrupulous, deep-laid intrigues Barry is capable of.

Barry Lyndon is Thackeray’s “real Irishman” in contrast with the “sham Irishman” he denounces in his review. He holds novelists as responsible as farce writers and actors for the distorted image, and certain details of Barry’s character and adventures were intended to offset in particular the Lever-Lover kind of Irish hero with whom his readers had grown familiar. Thackeray was especially amused at the stolid incorruptibility of Lever’s young men: “there is no reader of Mr. Lever’s tales but must admire the extreme, almost woman-like delicacy of the author, who amidst all the wild scenes through which he carries his characters; and with all the outbreaks of spirits and fun, never writes a sentence that is not entirely pure.” Moreover, life does nothing to quench the “spirits and fun” of Lever’s heroes. Like Barry Lyndon, Lever’s Harry Lorrequer is “now—alas that I should say it—somewhat in the ‘sere and yellow’” though looking back nostalgically over his salad days.
However, as Harry remembers these times, “I gained all my earlier experiences of life in very pleasant company—highly enjoyable at the time, and with matter for charming souvenirs long after.”

The men and women with whom Barry Lyndon mingles, it has already been suggested, are not “very pleasant company,” and “charming” is hardly the word for his scandal-ridden past. Lever’s heroes, besides, are more patriotic than Barry Lyndon. Lorrequer recalls with fervor his return to Cork with His Majesty’s 4th Regiment after eight years of war, “the tattered flag of the regiment proudly waving over our heads, and not a man among us whose warm heart did not bound behind a Waterloo medal.” As for that soldier in spite of himself, Barry Lyndon: “I am not going to give any romantic narrative of the Seven Years’ War. At the close of it, the Prussian army, so renowned for its disciplined valour, was officered and under-officered by native Prussians, it is true, but was composed for the most part of men hired or stolen, like myself, from almost every nation in Europe. The deserting to and fro was prodigious” (chap. 7).

In his preface to *Charles O’Malley*, Lever accounts for the prominence of warfare in his fiction: “When . . . my publishers asked me could I write a story in the Lorrequer vein, in which active service and military adventure could figure more prominently than mere civilian life, and where the achievements of a British army might form the staple of the narrative—when this question was propounded to me, I was ready to reply: Not one—but fifty.” And he came close to keeping his word. The success in turn of *Charles O’Malley* led Lever to attempt in *Tom Burke of “Ours,”* the particular novel that Thackeray reviewed for *Fraser’s*, “a great tableau of the Empire from its gorgeous celebrations in Paris to its numerous achievements on the field of battle.” In protest against “the Lorrequer vein,” Thackeray chose to reverse the proportion of civilian to army life.

Later on, in one of his Punch’s Prize Novels, “Phil Fogarty. A Tale of the Fighting Onety-oneth. By Harry Rollicker,” Thackeray caricatured Lorrequer’s unabashed swagger, braggadocio, and name-dropping. In *Barry Lyndon* he simply has his blatantly unmilitaristic hero remark: “Were these memoirs not characterized by truth, and did I deign to utter a single word for which my own personal experience did not give me the fullest authority, I might easily make myself the hero of some strange and popular adventures, and, after the fashion of novel-writers, introduce my reader to the great characters of this remarkable time” (chap. 5). Barry
reminds his readers that a poor, lowly corporal, such as he was, is not generally privileged to enter into the company of commanding officers. Nevertheless:

I saw, I promise you, some very good company on the French part, for their regiments of Lorraine and Royal Cravate were charging us all day; and in that sort of mêlée high and low are pretty equally received. I hate bragging, but I cannot help saying that I made a very close acquaintance with the colonel of the Cravates; for I drove my bayonet into his body, and finished off a poor little ensign, so young, slender, and small that a blow from my pigtail would have dispatched him, I think, in place of the butt of my musket, with which I clubbed him down. I killed, besides, four more officers and men, and in the poor ensign's pocket found a purse of fourteen louis-d'or, and a silver box of sugar-plums, of which the former present was very agreeable to me. If people would tell their stories of battle in this simple way, I think the cause of truth would not suffer by it. (Chap. 5)

So much for Lorrequer's gaiety under fire, his picnics on the battlefield with provender ransacked from corpses, and his numerous decorations by distinguished generals for bravery in bloodless battles.29

The military satire in Barry Lyndon was motivated by Thackeray's objection to what he called "the pugnacious and horse-racious parts of the Lorrequer novels." He lodged a similar complaint in his review article against £. S. D., Samuel Lover's "romance of war, and love, and fun, and sentiment, and intrigue, and escape, and rebellion... with war's alarms ringing in the ear the whole way, and we are plunged into sea-fights, and land-fights, and shipwrecks, and chases, and conspiracies without end." With Lover's story Thackeray in addition made fun of its historical setting in the time of Bonnie Prince Charlie. This was a period, Thackeray remarks, "when men, instead of bandying compliments and congées in Belgrave Square, flying thither in hack-cabs, with white kid gloves on, and comfortable passports in their pockets, turned out on the hillside, sword in hand, and faced Cumberland's thundering dragoons, and saw the backs of Johnny Cope's grenadiers... O vanitas! O woeful change of times! Who dies for kings now?" That Thackeray had his tongue in his cheek is obvious from Barry Lyndon, subtitled "A Romance of the Last Century" in its first version, and set, in fact, in the very period of Lover's romance. Yet what does Barry choose to remember about these fateful times? "We wore silk and embroidery then," he recollects happily. "Then it took a man of fashion a couple of hours to make his toilette, and he
could shew some taste and genius in the selecting it. What a blaze of splendour was a drawing room, or an opera, of a gala night! What sums of money were lost and won at the delicious faro-table! . . . Gentlemen are dead and gone. The fashion has now turned upon your soldiers and sailors, and I grow moody and sad when I think of thirty years ago" (pt. 2, chap. 1).

In £. S. D., Lover defines the character type that Thackeray imitated and satirized in *Barry Lyndon*—the Irish Heir—and also indicates the type of "luck" he enjoys. "There is nothing to be said of a man who inherits a fortune smoothly, lives a regular respectable life, and dies decently and quietly in his bed," asserts Lover in his preface. "Out on all such! Were the world made up of these, what an unromantic world it would be! As Irish Heirs seldom have the luck to be such uninteresting persons as those who have raised my indignation, they are heirs after an author's heart; and as their patrimonies mostly departed with their forefathers, waifs and strays and money found must be considered legitimate Irish Heirships." The fortunes of Thackeray's fugitive hero are indeed repaired, like those of Lover's pauper-heir Ned Corkery, by "money found" in the viable form of a wealthy young lady, except that Thackeray has Barry win by guile what good-hearted Ned wins by selfless courage and devotion.30

Ever the eclectic as well as the antiromantic, Thackeray took what appealed to him in the Irish novel of his time—its humor, liveliness and adventure—while rejecting its chauvinism and toning down its excess euphoria. He also brought discipline to a genre that was threatening to run amuck. Some of the tales in his "Box of Novels" he found too wanton in their picaresqueness. While praising £. S. D., for example, for its narrative interest and descriptive power, he found fault with its author's garrulousness, as well as with the proliferation of incident and too frequent change of scene in the novel. No wonder that he has Barry remark with unusual peremptoriness, as he is about to return to the "ould sod":

I find I have already filled up nearly half of the space which is usually allotted to modern authors for their books, and yet a vast deal of the most interesting portion of my history remains to be told, viz., that which describes my sojourn in the kingdoms of England and Ireland, and the great part I played there; moving among the most illustrious of the land, myself not the least distinguished of the brilliant circle. In order to give due justice to this portion of my memoirs, then—which is more important than my foreign adventures can be (though I could fill volumes with interesting descriptions of the latter),—I shall cut short the account of my travels in
Europe, and of my success at the Continental courts, in order to speak of what befell me at home. Suffice it to say that there is not a capital in Europe, except the beggarly one of Berlin, where the young Chevalier de Balibarri was not known and admired; and where he has not made the brave, the high-born, and the beautiful talk of him. (Chap. 14)

With Lever's stories, Thackeray admitted to enjoying the Irish episodes, but concluded that these novels "show no art of construction; it is the good old place of virtue triumphant to the end of the chapter, vice being woefully demolished some pages previously." The chapter titles of Barry Lyndon in themselves indicate the structure that Thackeray imposed on the traditionally loose-woven rogue's tale: "In which the hero Makes a false start in the Genteel World"; "More Runs of Luck"; "In which the Luck goes against Barry"; "Barry provides for his family and attains the Height of his Luck"; "Barry appears at the summit of Fortune"; "In which the Luck of Barry Lyndon begins to Waver," and so forth. The plot thus turns upon the rise and fall of the "hero," his changes of fortune, to which all the episodes contribute their part.

As Thackeray contrives Barry Lyndon's history, his "luck," including his marrying a lady of fortune, proves his undoing. This is among the contrivances by which Thackeray upsets the formula of the popular Irish novel, along with imposing a "tragic" plot on comic subject matter. In keeping with his antiheroic nature, Barry's fate takes a series of devious turns that make mockery of his ambitions. Just as Barry is constantly making virtue out of vice, it is fitting that when he thinks his fortunes are on the rise, they are actually on the downgrade. It is this series of upsets that keeps his villainy on the side of the comic and makes him, to our eyes, a worm instead of a snake. When Barry leaves the military service, he proclaims as his goal in life: "I sighed to be out of slavery. I knew I was born to make a figure in the world" (chap. 8). As it turns out, his moves to cast off his chains only fasten them on more securely. He does succeed in wiving it wealthily in Dublin, but this marriage leads him into debt, poverty, and imprisonment. His denunciation of women as the cause of all the mischief in the world proves only too true in his case, for the sons of his childhood sweetheart, Nora Brady, and his wife, Lady Lyndon, help to bring about his downfall. The formula for the "luck" of Barry Lyndon, as it develops, is that whenever fortune appears to be with him (the supposed killing of Captain Quin, escape from the army, the wooing of the Countess Ida, the attempted blackmail of de Magny, the wooing and winning of Lady Lyndon, running for Parliament, establish-
ment in London society, the “deaths” of Lord Poynings and Viscount Bullingdon), it is really against him. Barry observes of the intrigues at the court of Ludwigslust: “Those sharp tools with which great people cut out their enterprise are generally broken in the using” (chap. 13). However, he is too obtuse to apply this wisdom to his own situation, and his own arrows fly back in his face. “Alas! we are the sport of destiny,” exclaims Barry in one of his sententious moments. “When I consider upon what small circumstances all the great events of my life have turned, I can hardly believe myself to have been anything but a puppet in the hands of Fate, which has played its most fantastic tricks upon me” (chap. 4).

An antiheroic hero, a comic figure with a tragic fate, Barry Lyndon is the most deliberately paradoxical character in the Thackerayan cabinet of oddities. Compounding the curious mixture, he is a moral fool given to offering moral advice to readers, presumably because he deems it obligatory to do so. “These books were evidently written before the useful had attained its present detestable popularity,” Titmarsh had written of the collection of tales that diverted him in a Galway inn. “There is nothing useful here, that’s certain: and a man will be puzzled to extract a precise moral out of the ‘Adventures of Mr. James Freeny’; or out of the legends in the Hibernian Tales.” This prompts him to ask the perennial question, “But are we to reject all things that have not a moral tacked to them? ‘Is there any moral shut within the bosom of the rose?’” And he has his reply ready: “And yet as the same noble poet sings (giving a smart slap to the utility people the while), ‘useful applications lie in art and nature,’ and every man may find a moral suited to his mind in them; or, if not a moral, an occasion for moralising.”

Barry for one proves particularly adept at finding in his sordid past many “a moral suited to his mind”:

Some prudish persons may affect indigation at the frankness of these confessions, but Heaven pity them! Do you suppose that any man who has lost or won a hundred thousands pounds at play will not take the advantages which his neighbour enjoys? They are all the same. But it is only the clumsy fool who cheats, who resorts to the vulgar expedients of cogged dice and cut cards. Such a man is sure to go wrong some time or other, and is not fit to play in the society of gallant gentlemen; and my advice to people who see such a vulgar person at his pranks is, of course, to back him while he plays, but never—never to have anything to do with him. (Chap. 9)

I do not defend this practice of letter-opening in private life, except in cases of the most urgent necessity, when we must follow the
examples of our betters, the statesmen of all Europe, and, for the sake of a great good, infringe a little matter of ceremony. My Lady Lyndon’s letters were none the worse for being opened, and a great deal the better, the knowledge obtained from the perusal of some of her multifarious epistles enabling me to become intimate with her character in a hundred ways. (Chap. 17)

His ingenuity at making a virtue of opportunism is matched by his worldly code of ethics—on life adjustment, for example: “Many a gallant man of the highest honour is often not proof against these calamities of life, and has been known to despair over a bad dinner, or to be cast down at a ragged-elbow coat. My maxim is to bear all, to put up with water if you cannot get burgundy, and if you have no velvet, to be content with frieze. But burgundy and velvet are the best, bien entendu, and the man is a fool who will not seize the best when the scramble is open” (chap. 7). Or, on speculation as a way to wealth: “One never is secure in these cases; and when one considers the time and labour spent, the genius, the anxiety, the outlay of money required, the multiplicity of bad debts that one meets with (for dishonourable rascals are to be found at the playtable, as everywhere else in the world)—I say, for my part, the profession is a bad one; and, indeed, scarcely ever met a man who, in the end, profited by it” (chap. 9). And eventually on reward and punishment: “And now, if any people should be disposed to think my history immoral (for I have heard some assert that I was a man who never deserved that so much prosperity should fall to my share), I will beg those cavillers to do the favour to read the conclusion of my adventures, when they will see that it was no great prize that I had won, and that wealth, splendour, thirty thousand per annum, and a seat in parliament, are often purchased at too dear a rate, when one has to buy those enjoyments at the price of personal liberty, and saddled with the charge of a troublesome wife” (pt. 2, chap. 2).

Barry’s slippery life is made to yield its “useful applications” in the open-ended manner that Titmarsh had suggested to readers of the adventures of the free booter James Freeny “[in which] one may see the evil of drinking, another the harm of horse-racing, another of the danger attendant on early marriage, a fourth the exceeding inconvenience as well as hazard of the heroic highwayman’s life.” But in line with those “fable books, where you are obliged to accept the story with the inevitable moral corollary that will stick close to it,” that Titmarsh recalls from his youthful reading, Barry offers a bonus in the form of advice of the “don’t steal—it will land you in jail” sort. So his creator manages to attack
platitudinous morals while baiting the type of reader who expects them. The mess that Barry makes of his own life sufficiently points up how much easier it is to preach "wisdom" than to practice it.

Not the least of the feats of bravado practiced by Barry is his setting himself up, with his scrappy education, to be a writer. Yet, however unreliable he may be as a moral guide, his literary credo is not far removed from that of his creator. He too can put down sentimentality: "If the truth must be told—and every word of this narrative of my life is of the most sacred veracity—my passion for Nora began in a very vulgar and unromantic way," he recalls of his first love. "I did not save her life... I did not behold her by moonlight playing on the guitar, or rescue her from the hands of ruffians, as Alonso does Lindamira in the novel" (chap. 1). This allusion to the world of Mme de Scudéry, however incongruous, is Barry's way of reminding us that he is a flesh-and-blood, not an idealized, man. Where he does indulge himself in poetry and flowery rhetoric, for purposes of wooing, it is with a cynical calculation, about which he is characteristically blunt to the reader. He is quite open, for example, about his motive for pursuing the Countess Ida: "Was it on account of her personal charms or qualities? No. She was quite white, thin, short-sighted, tall and awkward, and my taste is quite the contrary... It was her estate I made love to" (chap. 11). As for his future wife, because "authors are accustomed to describe the persons of the ladies with whom their heroes fall in love... I perhaps should say a word or two respecting the charms of Lady Lyndon... truth compels me to say that there was nothing divine about her at all" (chap. 14). Candor, truth to life, freedom from illusion—these make up Thackeray's code as a writer no less than that of Barry Lyndon, even if Barry fails to apply it to himself as well as he does to others.

In other ways, as we have seen, Thackeray makes his hero something of a surrogate for himself as author. Barry refuses to write about what he has not known at first hand, so he forswears battle scenes, however much his readers may expect them. Though he has more than a trace of the Irish blarney in his composition, he generally avoids the temptation toward garrulousness and the telling of pointless stories. Among his other Thackerayan characteristics are his penchant for the memoir form and attraction to primary sources—eyewitnesses, letters, documents—even if in his own case he is willing to stoop to spying and intercepting mail to suit his purposes. And both Thackeray and Barry Lyndon, be it added, are iconoclasts. Thackeray then carries his literary joke to
the point of spoofing his own chosen vocation, making his hero-villain, among other things, a comic analogue of the society novelist and social historian.

Through George Savage Fitz-Boodle, who is more conspicuous in the serial version of Barry Lyndon than in the later revision, Thackeray mocks his other literary roles—the editor and the commentator on human affairs. In his own “Confessions” contributed to Fraser’s Magazine, a record of youthful indiscretions, Fitz-Boodle had written: “If I did not write with a moral purpose, and because my unfortunate example may act wholesomely upon other young men of fashion, and induce them to learn wisdom, I should not say a single syllable about . . . all the blunders I committed, nor the humiliation I suffered.” With a similar rationalization he offers up Barry as another “unfortunate example.” By now Fitz-Boodle has mellowed from man of the world to one of those “rigid moralists” whom Barry himself scoffs at. Thackeray utilizes him as another sop to the literal-minded (the “judicious reader” to whom Charlotte Brontë was to refer at the end of Shirley, “putting on his spectacles to look for the moral”). Fitz-Boodle’s interpolations vary from pedantic (“Mr. Barry’s story may be correct; but we find in the autobiography of Captain Freeny, that it was not he, but a couple of associates, who were acquitted from a bribe of five guineas distributed amongst the jury” [chap. 4]) to obtuse (“In another part of his memoir Mr. Barry will be found to describe this mansion as one of the most splendid palaces in Europe, but this is a practice not unusual with his nation” [chap. 1]) to simply gratuitous (“It never seems to have struck Mr. Barry that had he not represented himself to be a man of fortune none of the difficulties here described would have happened to him” [chap. 4]). In a discourse to his readers toward the end, he manages at once to pique their prurient curiosity: “It must be manifest to the observer of human nature that the honourable subject of these memoirs has never told the whole truth about himself, and, as his career comes to a close, perhaps is less to be relied on than ever. We have been obliged to expunge long chapters about his town and Paris life, which were by no means edifying; to omit numbers of particulars of his domestic career, which he tells with much naïveté” and to hit them over the heads with the “message” of the book:

But though, in one respect, he communicates a great deal too much, he by no means tells all, and it must be remembered that we are only hearing his, the autobiographer’s side of the story. Even that is sufficient to shew that Mr. Barry Lyndon is as unprincipled a personage
as ever has figured at the head of a history, and as the public will persist in having a moral appended to such tales, we beg here respectfully to declare that we take the moral of the story of Barry Lyndon, Esquire, to be—that worldly success is by no means the consequence of virtue; that if it is effected by honesty sometimes, it is attained by selfishness and rogery still oftener; and that our anger at seeing rascals prosper and good men frequently unlucky, is founded on a gross and unreasonable idea of what good fortune really is. (Pt. 2, chap. 2)

This sport with readers seems to have missed its point, both with those who found the story shocking, even with Fitz-Boodle's moral balm, and with those (including some of the present day) who have objected to Fitz-Boodle's comments as trite and obvious. It is easy to understand why, in the shorter and tighter version that appeared almost ten years later in the Miscellanies, Fitz-Boodle obtrudes much less and Barry is allowed to speak for himself more—so that one reviewer could observe: "The book has a moral . . . but it is kept in its proper place." If the early Fitz-Boodle may be taken as Thackeray's "unfortunate example" of a commentator—a superfluous one—by the time the revised version of Barry's memoir came out, he had demonstrated in the novels that followed the proper function of the "intrusive" narrator—to expose those whose deceit is not so obvious as that of the Chevalier de Balibarri né Redmond Barry, and to point out what is not evident from appearances.

"Our anger at seeing rascals prosper" is properly diminished as we recognize that the luck of Barry Lyndon proves to be misfortune. Along with his lady of fortune he loses his estate, which reverts eventually to Lady Lyndon's heirs. "The trees in Brackton Park are all about forty years old," Fitz-Boodle informs us in a postscript, "and the Irish property is rented in exceedingly small farms to many thousands of the thrifty, cleanly, orderly, loyal peasantry of Ireland, who still entertain the stranger with stories of the daring, and the devilry, and the wickedness, and the fall of Barry Lyndon." Barry's story then becomes part of the public domain to the tenants of the rack-renters, along with the "Galway Night's Entertainments" and other lore of Hibernia. We are reminded of the Irish tendency toward hyperbole by the narrator of The Virginians, who recalls:

My happy chance in early life led me to become intimate with a respectable person who was born in a certain island, which is pronounced to be the first gem of the ocean by, no doubt, impartial judges of maritime jewellery. The stories which that person im-
parted to me regarding his relatives who inhabited the gem above mentioned, were such as to make my young blood curdle with horror to think that there should be so much wickedness in the world. Every crime which you can think of; the entire Ten Commandments broken in a general smash: such rogueries as Thurtell or Turpin scarce ever perpetrated;—were by my informant accurately remembered and freely related, respecting his nearest kindred to any one who chose to hear him. . . . The family of Atreus was as nothing compared to the race of O’What-d’ye-call-em, from which my friend sprang; but no power on earth would, of course, induce me to name the country whence he came. (Chap. 38)

Our hero is effectively put down by George Warrington who, toward the end of this same novel, gives us a passing glimpse of “A notorious adventurer, gambler, and spadassin, calling himself the Chevalier de Barry, and said to be a relative of the mistress of the French king, but afterwards turning out to be an Irishman of low extraction,” who “was in constant attendance upon the Earl and Countess [of Castlewood] at this time, and conspicuous for the audacity of his lies, the extravagance of his play, and somewhat mercenary gallantry towards the other sex, and a ferocious bravo courage, which, however, failed him on one or two awkward occasions, if common report said true” (chap. 92).

In The Book of Snobs, Barry and his countrymen are eventually assimilated among the “small great” of the world. “The Irish snobbishness develops itself not in pride,” Thackeray wrote here, “so much as in servility, and mean admirations and trumpery imitations of their neighbours.” Moreover, “Two penny magnificence, indeed, exists all over Ireland and may be considered as the great characteristic of the snobbishness of that country.” Barry Lyndon, the very model of the “two penny” hero, takes his place in Thackeray’s long procession of those who “meanly admire mean things.” As a representative of vulgar conceptions of gentility, Barry ultimately crosses national borders. It is most significant that he is more interested in looking like a gentleman than in being one. As he candidly admits: “The great and rich are welcomed, smiling, up the grand staircase of the world; the poor but aspiring must clamber up the wall, or push and struggle up the back stair, or pardi, crawl through any of the conduits of the house, never mind how foul and narrow, that lead to the top. . . . What is life good for but honour? and that is so indispensable, that we should attain it any how” (chap. 11). No wonder that he is dazzled by the mere accoutrements of class, such as clothes and jewels, and knows the price of everything but the value of nothing as he sets about “im-
proving” Hackton Hall, the ancient residence of the Lyndon family, and gets swindled for his pains. To our persistent questioning of his pretensions to aristocracy he has a ready retort: “I warrant the legends of the Heralds’ Colleges are not more authentic than mine was” (chap. 10). We are left to infer that ours is a world where appearance is generally taken for reality, as one of Thackeray’s early masters, Isaac Watts, had warned, and where bogus and authentic nobility are pretty much interchangeable.

Such certainly is the purport of Fitz-Boodle’s peroration in the original version (“Is it the good always who ride in gold coaches, and the wicked who go to the workhouse? Is a humbug never preferred before a capable man? Does the world always reward merit, never raise mediocrity to distinction?”). With his “story of Barry-Lynn,” accordingly, Thackeray shifted to the debatable land between sin and virtue, moving up the scale of “the edifice of humanity” from the outright criminal to the demirep, from those who cheat others to those who also delude themselves. More to the point, however, are Fitz-Boodle’s concluding words to his readers, for here we may be sure that he speaks for the true begetter of Barry Lyndon in forecasting things to come:

If this be true of the world, those persons who find their pleasure or get their livelihood by describing its manners and the people who live in it are bound surely to represent to the best of their power life as it really appears to them to be; not to foist off upon the public figures pretending to be delineations of human nature,—gay and agreeable cut-throats, otto-of-rose murderers, amiable hackney-coachmen, Prince Rodolphos and the like, being representatives of beings that never have or could have existed. At least, if not bounden to copy nature, they are justified in trying; and hence in describing not only what is beautiful, but what is ill-favoured too, faithfully, so that each may appear as like as possible to nature. It is as right to look at a beauty as at a hunchback; and, if to look, to describe too: nor can the most prodigious genius improve upon the original. Who knows, then, but the old style of Molière and Fielding, who drew from nature, may come into fashion again, and replace the terrible, the humorous, always the genteel impossible now in vogue? Then, with the sham characters, the sham moral may disappear. The one is a sickly humbug as well as the other. I believe for my part Hogarth’s pictures of “Marriage a la Mode” in Trafalgar Square to be more moral and more beautiful than West’s biggest herorical piece, or Angelica Kaufmann’s most elegant allegory!

Thackeray seems to be signaling to his readers, through his alter ego, his intention to “paint” the world they know rather than artificially reconstruct the past and to replace “the genteel impossible” with the domestic and the familiar.
Thackeray does not cease his games with his audience, certainly, but he does make more conscious efforts to catch their hearts and consciences along with their pennies. Toward this end he was prompted alike by a vanity of his own and by conviction. Fitz-Boodle's question, "Does the world always reward merit, never raise mediocrity to distinction?" could well have been his own as he continued to find himself cast in the shade in favor of lesser rivals. A case in point is "The Luck of Barry Lyndon," which was widely ignored by the public and by critics alike. It received acclaim enough when it appeared in book form in America in 1853 and in its later version in the *Miscellanies* in 1856, by which time Thackeray was the celebrated author of *Vanity Fair*, *Pendennis*, *Henry Esmond*, and *The Newcomes*. Some of the praise perhaps is attributable more to hindsight than to perspicacity. "Bears the image and superscription of Thackeray, and this is enough to recommend it," wrote a reviewer in Washington, D.C. According to the *Saturday Review*, it was "in some respects . . . the most characteristic and best executed of Thackeray's works." One is not surprised that this tour de force was highly regarded by Thackeray's fellow writers. "And if Dickens showed the best of his power early in life, so did Thackeray the best of his intellect," proclaimed Anthony Trollope in the first extended biography. "In no display of mental force did he rise above Barry Lyndon. I hardly know how the teller of a narrative shall hope to mount in simply intellectual faculty above the effort there made." William Dean Howells called it "the most perfect creation of Thackeray's mind . . . a stupendous feat in pure irony." Such tributes testify to the appeal of *Barry Lyndon* to the connoisseur. Thackeray himself doubted its popular appeal. "My father once said to me when I was a girl: 'You needn't read *Barry Lyndon*, you won't like it,'" recalled Anne Thackeray in her introduction prepared for the Biographical Edition of the collected works. "Indeed it is scarce a book to like," she continued, "but one to admire for its consummate power and mastery." Her very encomium suggests why her father's miracle of rare device did not exactly grab hold of the common readers of the time—those, that is, who only know what they like and are not particularly equipped to admire virtuosity.

For sheer inventiveness *Barry Lyndon* is unsurpassed in Thackeray's canon. The creation by a genius of wide sympathies of his direct opposite, a complete egotist—self-centered, amoral, and stupid—is indeed a supreme act of imagination, but such a product by the same token cannot be very close to humanity. After this, he kept promise "not to foist off upon the public figures pretending to
be delineations of human nature,—gay and agreeable cut-throats.” By now his imagination had been stirred by a demirep closer to his experience—a female one this time, a grisette named Mlle Pauline who had known respectability as governess in an English household. He was also more inclined to temper scorn with compassion, as revealed by a stray confidence to be found in one of his art reviews contributed to *Fraser’s* six months after *Barry Lyndon* had ended its run: “I began to find the world growing more pathetic daily, and laugh less every year of my life. Why laugh at idle hopes, or vain purposes, or utter blundering self-confidence? Let us be gentle with them henceforth; who knows whether there may not be something of the sort *chez nous?”*46

His next novel is called in places a “comic history,” but also a “sentimental and cynical” one. It is to be a “Novel without a Hero,” but also without a villain passing himself off for a hero. He found his way to the general public through characters they could recognize, moving through a tangible world they knew. In the writing of *Barry Lyndon*, Thackeray was even more peripatetic than his hero, and his tale of Irish luck and cunning encompasses the Germany of his youth, Paris, where he began it, and the Orient, where he arduously brought it to its conclusion.47 The new novel is no less cosmopolitan, but when he first submitted it for publication, Thackeray pointedly gave it the subtitle *Pen and Pencil Sketches of English Life*. He had some second thoughts about the main title, as we know. Almost simultaneously with the issue of its first yellow-covered part, his audience could read in *The Snob Papers* then appearing in *Punch*: “Man is a Drama—of Wonder and Passion . . . Each Bosom is a Booth in Vanity Fair.”48

3. “The Luck of Barry Lyndon” ran in *Fraser’s Magazine* continuously from January through December 1844, except for October (when presumably Thackeray, who was working against deadlines, failed to supply copy). The first edition in book form, published in America (New York: Appleton, 1853) is based on the magazine version. It was first reprinted in England in 1856, considerably revised (whether by Thackeray or not is unknown), tightened, and retitled (*The Memoirs of Barry Lyndon, Esq.*). In this form it appeared both as a separate book and as vol. 3 of Thackeray’s *Miscellanies*. Subsequently most reprints have been based upon the later version, but the two versions are intercalated (with passages bracketed that were omitted in the second version) in the Oxford Thackeray, vol. 6. The Bison Book reprint on *The Memoirs of Barry Lyndon, Esq.*, ed. Robert L. Morris (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1962) brings together in an appendix many passages from *Fraser’s Magazine* left out of the revision. The
more recent critical edition of *The Luck of Barry Lyndon*, ed. Martin J. Anisman (New York: New York University Press, 1970), restores (imperfectly) the text as it appeared in *Fraser's*, with the passages bracketed that were cut in the book publication. This edition, although faulty, is the fullest one easily available, and my chapter references consequently will be based upon it.

6. Ibid., chap. 16; *Works*, 5:430.

7. Thackeray was a school friend of John Bowes Bowes, grandson of the victimized heiress, from whom he first heard of the affair (see *Letters*, 1:91.) He also had access to Jesse Foot’s detailed account, *Lives of Andrew Robertson Bowes and the Countess of Strathmore* (London, 1812).

8. *Letters*, 2:139. The main point of the digression (the story is related years later to Barry by a superannuated gentleman, besides its analogy with Barry’s own situation, is that it exposes his lack of moral feeling. His only reaction to this horrifying story is to remind his readers that this intrigue resulted in his leaving Ludwigsburg sooner than he had expected, with the consequence that he had to terminate abruptly his pursuit of the Countess Ida.

9. “Our Portrait Gallery—No. XXIV William Maginn, LL.D.” *Dublin University Magazine*, January, 1844, p. 72. The writer, Edward Kenealy, expressed deep regret that “the Hope, which in the morning of his manhood rose resplendently in the distance, and cast around his path imaginary triumphs, trophies and applause, had disappeared as he proceeded, and like the mirage of the desert, left only wretchedness and disappointment.” Thackeray’s comment appears in the letter to James Fraser quoted above (p. 201).

10. Captain William Jesse, *The Life of George Brummell, Esq., Commonly Called Beau Brummell* (London, 1844). Thackeray reviewed this book for the *Morning Chronicle*, 5 May 1844; rpt. in *Contributions*, pp. 31-39. “As for his wit,” Thackeray wrote of Brummell, “all his compositions show prodigious pains, but likewise that he was an entire ninny.” Barry writes disparagingly of the Beau from a contemporary viewpoint: “There is no elegance, no refinement, none of the chivalry of the old world, of which I form a portion. Think of the fashion of London being led by a Br——mm—Ill a nobody’s son! a low creature, who can no more dance a minuet than I can talk Cherokee” (chap. 14). It is possible that Thackeray drew also upon the memoirs of Casanova, whom Barry refers to in chap. 9. (See discussion of sources by Anisman in his edition, p. 29.)


12. This series is made up of “Mr. and Mrs. Frank Berry,” March 1843; “The Ravenswing,” April–June, August–September 1843; “Denis Haggerty’s Wife,” October 1843; and “The [Executioner]’s Wife,” November 1843.

13. “Professions. By George Fitz-Boodle. Being Appeals to the Unemployed Younger Sons of the Nobility,” *Fraser’s Magazine*, July 1843. This and the “Men’s Wives” series are collected together with *Barry Lyndon* in *Works*, vol. 4.


15. The reviewer of Drummond’s *Histories of Noble Families* complained in passing that the science of genealogy was being widely neglected by heads of great families. Barry, on the other hand, boasts: “My uncle, like a noble gentleman as he was, knew the pedigree of every considerable family in Europe. He said it was the only knowledge befitting a gentleman; and when we were not at cards, we would pass hours over Gwillim and D’Hozier, reading the genealogies, learning the blazons, and making ourselves acquainted with the relationships of our class!” He too complains: “Alas! the noble science is going into disrepute now; so are cards, without which studies and pastimes I can hardly conceive how a man of honour can exist” (chap. 10).

Despite his emphasis upon the preservation of great heritage, the reviewer points out that “mere birth is an accident not within the control of humanity.” His article concludes with a distinction pertinent to *Barry Lyndon*: “Let every one remember that a gentleman includes nobility. A nobleman may be made, a gentleman must be born so.”
16. 16 March 1844; 20 March 1844; Contributions, pp. 1-8, 9-13.
18. See above, p. 178.
19. August 1843, p. 242; September 1843, pp. 337-45; November 1843, pp. 615-30; December 1843, pp. 729-48. In his critical article "Jerome Paturot. With Considerations on Novels in General . . ." which he contributed to the September issue, Thackeray took occasion to refer to "Mr. O'Connell's Irish romances," in relation to that leader's polemics. A reviewer of The Irish Sketch Book for an Irish journal considered Thackeray's reporting prejudiced, representing the views of "an English liberal, a thorough Cockney, a Protestant, a hater of controversy . . . and Repeal" (Tablet, 13 May 1843, pp. 291-92).
20. Near the time when this episode ran in Fraser's, Thackeray reported to the Calcutta Star, an Indian paper he served briefly as European political correspondent: "We have been trying to get up some sympathy for O'Connell in his durance, but the old gentleman himself put an end to any tender feelings one might have had regarding him by his outrageous comfortableness and good humour" (7 August 1844; rpt. in "Letters from a Club Arm Chair . . ." ed. Henry Summefield, Nineteenth-Century Fiction 18 [December 1963]: 218). Thackeray goes on to speak of O'Connell's attempts at conciliation among the Irish factions and his good will, despite imprisonment. He was released the following month.
22. Thackeray reread Peregrine Pickle while he was composing Barry Lyndon, describing it in a letter as "excellent for its liveliness and spirit and wonderful for its atrocious vulgarity" (Letters, 2:144). Such characters as the swindling couple the Fitzsimons, whom Barry runs into on the road (chap. 4), and the pedantic German pastor whom he meets in the army (chap. 7) suggests Smollett. For the influence of Ferdinand Count Fathom, see Anisman, pp. 36-38. Another possible source is The Life of Tiger Roche that appears in a volume called Ireland Sixty Years Since (see Notes and Queries, 25 April 1936, p. 296, and Anisman, pp. 27-28).
23. Quoted by Anne Thackeray, from the manuscript then in her possession, in her introduction to The Irish Sketch Book, Works, 5:xxix.
26. Thackeray refers specifically to the actor Tyrone Power, who was virtually unrivaled during this period as a performer of Irish characters, particularly shrewd servants. He appeared on the London stage at the Haymarket, Adelphi, and Covent Garden theaters from the mid-1820s on in such roles as Murtoch Delany in The Irishman in London, Sir Patrick Plenipo in The Irish Ambassador, and Tim More, the traveling tailor, in The Irish Lion. He also wrote Irish farces such as Born to Good Luck, or the Irishman's Fortune (possibly echoed in the original title of Barry Lyndon).
28. Works, 6:489-500 (with general title changed to "Novels by Eminent Hands"). Thackeray meant the satire good-humoredly, but it strained the friendship that had existed between the two authors and led Lever to retaliate with the caricature of Thackeray as Elias Howle in Roland Cashel.
29. In reviewing The Memoirs of Joseph Holt (see above, p. 207), Thackeray praised that veteran for his accurate and vigorous descriptions of the horrors of battle and the plundering of corpses, with no attempt to flinch at actuality: "We may learn admirably to understand the character of this war by details such as these, which are told by honest Holt, as things of quite common occurrence." Barry emulates Holt's straightforwardness in his account of the Seven Years' War, though hardly the "strength, courage, and fortitude" that Thackeray also commends in this old soldier.
30. Reviewing this romance before its conclusion as a serial, Thackeray expressed a playful curiosity about its denouement. He wondered how the high-class heroine could take such a commonplace name as Corkery, and forecast that some way would be found to get her out of this predicament, either by the young people's dying before they can be married or by Ned learning that he is somebody else's son.
Thackeray proved to be right about the outcome, but failed to anticipate how it was brought about. Ned Corkery married Ellen, but takes her name. (Cf. Barry's adopting the name of Lady Lyndon.)

31. Lever himself described *The Confessions of Harry Lorrequer* as "little more than a farrago of absurd and laughable incidents" (see preface to *Charles O'Malley*).


33. Ibid., pp. 405–6.

34. Ibid., p. 405.


36. *Saturday Review*, 27 December 1856, p. 785. The reviewer is identified by Dudley Flann as James Fitzjames Stephen.


40. For the full text of this passage, see above, p. 21.


42. Fitzjames Stephen's review (see p. 220 and n. 36).


47. Here and there Thackeray manages to intrude references to the Eastern voyage that resulted in the book *From Cornhill to Grand Cairo*, published in the same year. During his sojourn in Ludwigslust, for example, Barry is accompanied sultan-like by a negro boy, Zamor, habited like a Turk, and his pavilion is "fitted up in the Eastern manner very splendid" (chap. 11). Back home in Ireland, Lord Tiptoff "issued his mandates as securely as if he had been the Grand Turk, and the Tippletonians no better than so many slaves of his will" (pt. 2, chap. 1). This exotic journey enters more subliminally into *Vanity Fair*, as will be brought out in the next chapter.

48. "Club Snobs, III," *Punch*, 16 January 1847; *Works*, 6:440. In its original appearance in *Punch*, this sketch is preceded by a squib entitled "The Triumph of Pantomime" illustrated with a clown figure, relating to the opening of Parliament, with the legend "Lord John Russell as Harlequin, jumping through the House of Commons hoop and sticking halfway, when Peel as Pantaloon comes behind him and pushes him through."