CHAPTER V 'A'

DEVICES OF CHARACTERIZATION

A novelist needs characters to act out his story and explain his viewpoint, and employs various devices to make them effectively serve his purpose. He has a right to choose his own technical methods, though it is not denied for a moment that the efficiency and cogency of his devices are open to condemnation or approval. "When Thackeray is reproached with 'bad art' for intruding upon his scene, the reproach is chiefly the recommendation of a
different technic. And each man's technic is his own and that of a master may be accepted as possessing some inner principle of propriety which any suggested improvement would compromise.¹

The success of a novel depends considerably upon the novelist's art of portraiture, the ability to build up a person and a personality through various devices. Depending on his purpose, the portrait may be drawn in bold, broad strokes or through a series of delicate hints and suggestions. And, once again, depending on the novelist's purpose, there would be a varying proportion between the degrees of individuality and typicality that characters are to exhibit. To this end every writer who presents human beings adopts various devices for creating a picture of them in the minds of the reader.

While discussing the devices used by Thackeray for character portrayal, first of all we may see how he has introduced his characters. This he does in two ways — by describing the character's physiognomy or by detailing their habits and manners. This is analogous to what the producer of a play does in
choosing an actor of a certain "suitable" physical appearance, and having him dress in a particular manner to suggest simplicity or vanity or even virtue and vice. Perhaps the first example of the use of physiognomy and dress to achieve 'concreteness' as well as to bring out a flavour of the character can be seen in Chaucer, where every item of physiognomy or dress makes a significant contribution — where build, complexion, hair or hair — style, the very texture and cut of the cloth, tell us of the man or woman within. Thackeray is also fond of describing the character's physical features. He has given a beautiful description of Laura in the following words: 'At that age (sixteen) she had attained her present altitude of five feet four inches, so that she was called tall and gawky by some, and a Maypole by others, of her own sex, who prefer little women. But if she was Maypole, she had beautiful roses about her head, and it is a fact that many swains were disposed to dance round her. She was ordinarily pale, with a faint rose tinge in her cheeks; but they flushed up in a minute when occasion called, and continued so blushing ever so long, the rose remaining after the emotion has
passed away which had summoned those pretty flowers into existence. Her eyes have been described as very large from her earliest childhood, and retained that characteristic in later life. Good natured critics (always females) said that she was in the habit of making play with those eyes, and ogling the gentlemen and ladies in her company; but the fact is Nature had made them so to shine and to look, and they could no more help so looking and shining than one star can help being brighter than another. It was doubtless to mitigate their brightness that Miss Laura's eyes were provided with two pairs of veils in the shape of the longest and finest black eye lashes, so that, when she closed her eyes, the same people who found fault with those orbs said that she wanted to show her eye lashes off; and indeed, I dare say that to see her asleep would have been a pretty sight. Through these details author creates a "solidity of specification", the feeling of actual people in real locations and situations. Sometimes these descriptions give more than a mere visual image of the characters. They suggest what is within, and, in this sense, become symbolic. The following description of Becky is an
example of this sort: "She was small, and slight in person; pale, sandy haired, and with eyes habitually cast down; when they looked up they were very large, odd, and attractive; so attractive that the Reverend Mr. Crisp, fresh from Oxford, and...... the Reverend Mr. Flowerdew, fell in love with Miss Sharp; being shot dead by a glance of her eyes which was fixed all the way across Chiswick Church from the school - pew to the reading desk."3

Besides description of physiognomy, Thackeray has introduced characters also through detailing their habits and manners. Amelia, in Vanity Fair, is first presented to us in the following words: 'For she could not only sing like a lark, or a Miss Billington, and dance like Hillisberg or Parisot; and embroider beautifully; and spell as well as a Dictionary itself; but she had such a kindly, smiling, tender, gentle, generous heart of her own, as won the love of everybody who came near her...... she had twelve intimate and bosom friends out of twenty - four young ladies.'4 We can easily multiply such examples.
Beaky Sharp gets the most remarkable of all introductions. Here we find Thackeray's economy of expression. Here it is behaviour which gives the clue to the character; in a few sentences he has created the 'dixonomical scene', and the reader gets a vivid impression as to the sort of character he is going to meet throughout the novel.

Even in the case of minor characters, Thackeray is not content with short introductions. For example in *Pendennis*, Thackeray gives the detailed background of Captain Ned Strong and various traits of his character while he hardly plays any significant part in the scheme of the story. In *The Newcomes*, Hobson Newcome, the banker, has quite some space devoted to the description of his person. Thus we have many such minor characters described precisely. It may not be unreasonable to conclude that quite apart from his other interests - satire, didactic zeal, the desire to tell a story or to present a picture of the times - Thackeray had a distinct interest in characters as people. This must account for the fact that his characters do not impress us as devices but as persons though they may be made to serve
one purpose or the other of their creator.

Is there any relation between the appearance and the character's moral standing or psychological qualities? Such a connection is not unusual in literary presentation. Description not only provides "solidity of specification" but often serves as an index to the character's temperament. In some cases it may be very obvious as in melodramatic writing; or still considerable as, for example, in Chaucer who employs the theory of "humours" with their influence on both physiognomy and temperament, as well as other beliefs in regard to the connection between physical features and inner character. Mrs. Oliphant wonders why Thackeray gives Dobbin splay feet. Is it essential for a virtuous man to be plain looking or even rather ugly? Whitwell Elwin defends Thackeray after explaining the relationship between appearance and character in general, and writes about Dobbin: "If Dobbin had had nothing to keep him humble, if he had been an Apollo or an Adonis, he would probably have ceased to be 'good Dobbin with his faithful heart.' The notion is not peculiar to Mr. Thackeray..... If
ever anybody was free from the reproach of attempting to lower the respect for moral excellence through bodily defects, Mr. Thackeray is that man. In his present tale (The Newcomes), J.J. Ridley, the most contemptible in appearance, is the one genius of the book. With all his tendency, in fact, to satire, Mr. Thackeray has nowhere employed it in his novels upon improper objects.

........ Calamity, physical and mental, is safe from his lash; he would as soon think of striking a woman."

The critic is certainly granting the existence of a connection between physiognomy and inner character in Thackeray's work. It is, of course, perfectly possible that Thackeray, like Hardy and many others (and Mr. Elwin endorses it) felt that the strikingly handsome or fleshily beautiful types among men and women would not do for a specially virtuous character. A certain lack of colour, as in Amelia, if not actual plainness and homeliness, was felt to be more in keeping with a good character. Beauty has always been a suspect quality in fiction. Gabriel Oak, of Hardy's Far From the Madding Crowd is also very plain and simple. Like Dobbin, he was unable to win the love
of Bethsabe as she was readily attracted by the handsome Sergeant Troy. She realises, only much later, like Amelia, the worth and virtue of Oak. In the end constancy won in Vanity Fair as it does in Far From the Madding Crowd.

No doubt, Dobbin is plain and good, but it is not always so with all Thackeray's virtuous characters. Many of his good characters are beautiful and attractive like Amelia, Laura, Helen, or Rachel. But the point is to be noticed that there is not that verve and energy in the good characters which we find in the baser characters. This is, of course, natural, for virtue or decency is always in danger of appearing dull (in life as well as in literature), and energy and vitality characterise the more active nature of the wicked who plan and plot and fight.

Another device of characterisation is the names given to the persons in the novels. Like parents selecting names for their children the novelist does for his characters, since he can convey some meaning or an impression through the names. In many novels and plays we find more or less direct
relationship between the names and the moral or intellectual qualities of the characters. This is often perhaps unconscious, but is as often deliberate, and the device is mainly used in the Comedy of Humours. Among the Victorians, it was Dickens who used such almost directly descriptive or suggestive names more frequently than any other novelists. It is possible that Dickens had acquired this practice as he used to act in Ben Jonson's plays as a boy.

Besides these there are also few names which have no direct bearing upon the character. While they do not have any obvious significance, we do find something suggestive and evocative, and we have a feeling that those names are not given for nothing. Quite often the very sound of the name of a person conveys something of his character.

In Thackeray we have all these devices of conveying meaning through names. For minor and flat characters he has used direct names. His Captain Broadfoot could not dance properly and tumbled over this or that person. Ned strong is a very robust and self-willed person, and governed the opinion and even
the way of life of his patron, Lord Clevering.

Miss Roundle is a woman of very large proportions; Mrs. Worsoop is the housekeeper at Castlewood.

Dr. Goodenough is a very amiable, polite, and efficient practitioner. The modern taste perhaps does not quite relish such names, but they have their own utility and place in the novel.

Now we will take up names which do not apparently have any meaning. On close scrutiny we find that they do have some significance. First of all comes Rebecca Sharp. Rebecca means a noose; a snare or a running knot which ties the firmer the closer it is drawn. The character does fit the name. She really is a snare or a trap for the rich males all around her. She is a knot which once tied around anyone cannot be loosened easily. Sharp also denotes "severe, keen, alive to one's interest, barely honest and keen and quick perception." Becky is, undoubtedly, such a person, and was really sharp in these senses of the word. And the name calls to mind, very appropriately, the term sharper. On the other hand the name Amelia Sedley suggests an altogether different kind of
person as she herself was the opposite of Becky Sharp. The name *Amelia* means "toiling and wearisome". She does appear toiling when she tried to win the affection of George; and, she is wearisome when Dobbin's persistent efforts made no impression upon her. Even the reader is tired of her. The sound of *Sedley* gives the impression of sadness and gloom. *Amelia* sounds very soft because of the last syllable 'lia'. In the same way *Crawley* gives the suggestion of a creeping and cringing sort of person, as Rawdon really was. He always depends upon the superior intellect of his wife, and managed to 'live upon nothing a year' because of the bounty of rich persons. Dobbin, provides an excellent example of this device. The name is used, colloquially, to denote a cart-horse. In his good-natured patience, serviceability and a certain docility and a general lack of spirit, Dobbin deserves his name, and it fits him only too well. And it is very unlikely that the author’s choice of his name was entirely a matter of chance. Other names like George Osborne, Joe Sedley etc, do not seem to have any bearing upon their characters.
In *Pendennis*, the name *Laura* again has a certain indescribable sweetness, perhaps because of the soft and sweet-sounding first syllable. *Laure* suggest laurels, and she was a girl who would have really won laurels wherever she went because of her sweet and amiable disposition. *Laura* also means an early kind of monastic community, its cells separate structures and the inmates living in solitude. Laura was also leading a secluded life at Priorsick. *Helen* means light, which shines or is brilliant. As far as her physical features are concerned she was a simple woman but her sweet temperament, her devotion for her son, and her soft manners, made her shine among the people around her. Figuratively *Helen* means mental or spiritual illumination or enlightenment. She is not an intellectual or a philosophical woman. Everything in her is of the earth, but there is something noble her.

In 'Pamond' *Beatriz* means the one who makes everybody happy. No doubt she enchants all with her dashing beauty, and makes people all around her happy; but she is unable to give lasting happiness. *Rachel* is an ewe; a meek, gentle and harmless creature which
Rachel certainly is. Henry is a home-ruler and Henry, though a bit late, commanded and ruled the whole house. Francis suggests freedom, and Sir Francis really was very free and loose in his talks, manner and behaviour.

Likewise we find such meaning-ridden names in the other novels. We cannot say that Thackeray deliberately picked up such names. Many of them probably came to him unconsciously. As he was thoroughly English and was steeped in English culture and heritage, these names came to him automatically. All these names have their origin in the Bible or are derived from Greek or Latin. Therefore it may or may not be a conscious effort but these names sometimes do convey a meaning and help the author to present his characters.

Occasionally Thackeray hands the story over to be narrated by one of the characters. Barry Lyndon has been written in a biographical style so the narrator is Barry himself. Vanity Fair and Pendennis has been narrated in third person by Thackeray. Henry Esmond is again an autobiographical novel so the narrator is Harry. Arthur Pendennis of Pendennis is the supposed editor of the materials that make The Newcomes. Thackeray starts
The Virginians in third person and with the progress of the story he shifts over to first person through the character of George.

This device of narration becomes also a device of characterization. Through his comments on events and people and even by his very language, the narration gives us an insight into his character and temperament. Thackeray's narration of an incident from *Vanity Fair* explains ironically everything about Becky. Becky paid a compliment about Jos's appearance to Amelia and she asked her to convey it to Jos directly. "Darling, not for the worlds," said Miss Sharp, starting back as timid as fawn (what an epithet for her). She had previously make a respectful virgin-like curtsy to the gentleman and her modest eyes gazed so perseveringly on the carpet that it was a wonder how she should have found an opportunity to see him.

Besides narration, Thackeray's language is enough to reveal all about the characters: 'Sir Pitt Crawley was a philosopher with a taste for what is called low life.' This is an apt sentence to provide an insight into Sir Pitt's habits and temperament.
Thackeray's direct comments on the characters also help in better understanding. He comments on Catherine: 'She was a reprobate, clear-sighted, keen woman, that did not love money, but loved to be rich and push her way in the world'; 'it did not seem, indeed, in the young woman's nature to care for anybody.'

As we have noticed, Thackeray comments unhesitatingly in his own person on his characters. Occasionally we have a slight variation of this device, when he entrusts this task to one of the other characters. Thackeray makes Lady Keew consent upon herself: "I am a dreadful plague to you. I know, and my death would be a release to you (Julie—her sizzling daughter)." She said it in anger but how revealingly it is true of her character. Again Mrs. Mackenzie got enraged when Ethel ignored her at Clive's house, and burst out: "An insolent, proud, impertinent thing. Does she take me for a house-maid. Am I dust to be trampled beneath her feet? Am I dog that she can't even throw me a word."

Mrs. Mackenzie estimated her own worth truly; and her estimate of Ethel is also partially correct. Ethel used to neglect the people of low stratum of society.
In general, the character's actions, behaviour and the unfolding of the plot is enough to bring out the whole of a character. But Thackeray is of the opinion that if he leaves his characters as such, the reader might fancy it was I who was sneering at the practice of devotion, which Miss Sharp finds so ridiculous; that it was I who laughed good-humouredly at the reeling Old Silenus of a baronet—whereas the laughter comes from one who has no reverence except for prosperity, and no eye for anything beyond success. Such people there are living and flourishing in the world—Faithless, Hopeless, Charityless; let us have at them, dear friends, with might and main. Some there are, and very successful too, mere quacks and fools; and it was to combat and expose such as these, no doubt, that Laughter was made. This passage can be called a sort of theatrical earnestness on the author's part. Thackeray is much too keen to explain his character's behaviour.

These comments are sometimes direct, and in the first person, and quite often reflect upon the characters. At times, Thackeray has been garrulous and he writes page after page elucidating, commenting,
justifying and accusing his characters. We find words and small phrases which enhance our understanding of them. He uses the term 'chartered libertine' for Catherine; 'faded and insipid' for Amelia; 'veteran moralist' for Major Pendennis; 'severe nymph' and 'untameable young creature' for Ethel. Thackeray is also fond of elucidating his characters through his ironical, piquant and forceful language. 'Thus doings at the Hall were the great food for conversation at the Rectory, and Mrs. Bute's bright eyes spied out everything that took place in the enemy's camp — everything and a great deal beside.' Such a short phrase as 'a great deal beside' explains the whole character of Mrs. Bute. In the same way, he writes about Becky ironically: 'she recollected herself, and paused, like a modest creature, as she was.' This ironical 'as she was' highlights her lack of modesty.

These comments may be limited only to a few words or be quite long and even garrulous. The character of Beatrice is very accurately summed up in the following words: 'Thou wilt forsake an old friend for a new one'; 'she will make no man happy who loves her'; 'Beatrice loves admiration more than love, and longs, beyond all things, for command.' These are short phrases
and sentences but well illuminate the character.
Thackeray is explicit also in characterising Ethel; 'a
countenance somewhat grave and haughty, but on occasion
brightening with humour or beaming with kindliness and
affection. Too quick to detect affectation or
insincerity in others, too impatient of dullness or
pompous, she is more sarcastic now then she became
when after-years of suffering had softened her nature.
Truth bursts out of her bright eyes, and rises up armed,
and flashes scorn or disdain perhaps too readily when
she encounters flattery, or meanness, or imposture.'

In such comments, Thackeray defends as well as
accuses his characters. He seems to be very anxious that
the reader must see them through his eyes. For example
he gives his opinion about Becky: "the girl's sense of
ridicule was far stronger than her gratitude", "the
little artful minx", "though young in years our heroine
was old in life and experience", "Rebecca was a young lady
of too much resolution and energy of character to permit
herself much useless and unseemly sorrow for the
irrevocable past..........." etc. Harry Ramond, in
Thackeray's words, "was a staunch young jacobite, like
the rest of his family gave himself airs of loyalty......."
He "had a fond affectionate heart, tender to weakness, that would fain attach itself to somebody, and did not seem at rest until it had found a friend who would take charge of it."

Modern critics consider such direct description and comment a defect in the art of characterisation. Whibley says that Thackeray "forgets the impartiality of the artist, and goes about babbling with his own puppets." The impartiality which is essential for the novelist is nowhere found in Thackeray. He gets involved in the life of his characters, and approves and condemns their actions without hesitation. Whibley says: "Thackeray acts the sheep-dog to his own characters. He plays propriety before them, very much as Miss Briggs ensured the public respectability of Becky Sharp. And when he is angry with them, he scolds them with almost a shrewish tongue. In such cases, the author is like the chorus in drama, supposed to reflect the feelings of an ideal spectator.

These intrusions of the author were part of the conventional prerogatives, and even obligations, of the novelist in Thackeray's time. This is certainly responsible for some of the shrewd and often witty
passages in his novels, which make good reading, though
the practice is not to the taste of the modern reader.
The critics tend to frown at it and, in so far as we
prefer presentation to description, we can not praise it.

In almost all of his novels, except *Harry Lyndon*
and *Vanity Fair*, Thackeray creates two incarnations of
himself - one is a young person and the other is older by
ten or twelve years. In *Pendennis*, the younger is Pen
himself and the other is Warrington - wiser, less romantic
and less impulsive than Pen. In *The Newcomes* and *Philip*,
Pendennis is the older incarnation, and, Clive and Philip
are younger ones. In *Esméond* he achieves something like
the same effect by turning the book into memoirs, the
memoirs of a mature Harry, looking back upon his younger
self; and part of his dissatisfaction with *The Virginians*
was very likely due to his not being able to do the same
sort of thing there. Even in that novel, however, he
gropes after it. Although the heroes are twins, George
Warrington is shown throughout as a good deal more
mature than Harry, the 'Fortunate Youth.' Harry in many
ways resembles the improvident and gullible Thackeray of
the thirties; George, the Thackeray of the forties, when
misfortunes have sobered and aged him.
This has been taken to be a device whereby Thackeray is able at once to present his own experiences as a young man and to comment upon them from the distance of years and experience. However that may be, as a means of characterisation, it is somewhat more acceptable than the practice of direct comment by the author himself. Another advantage is that the older character who comments on the younger character thereby reveals as much about himself as about the object of his remarks.

It became second nature of Thackeray to exhibit faults even in the most virtuous characters. According to him, virtue is never unalloyed; hence he is fond of showing the skeleton in every closet. Lewes rightly says: "He (Thackeray) passes among illusions only to show them to be follies; he turns round upon you while the tears are standing in your eyes, only to laugh at your emotion; he stands at the feast only to declare its vanity; he recites a noble sentiment only to connect it with some ignoble motive."13 This has always been Thackeray's attitude towards characters. If a character, at first, makes a favourable impression, Thackeray tries
his best to find an early opportunity to make his reader aware of his faults and foibles. This realism is employed in the case of bad characters also; he never misses any chance to show some spark of goodness even in them. John Forster rightly says about *Eamond* (and it is true of his other novels also): "There is not a character in *Eamond*, not the most spotless, over which we do not constantly feel that Mr. Thackeray is bending with a smile of pity; turning up now and then the prettiest coat to show some dirt upon the lining; exhibiting to us something adorable, that may aggrivate our perception in it of something detestable; laying down for us such consolatory doctrine as that kindness and meanness are both manly; producing for his own satisfaction, in a word, mere distortions and unnatural defects, - all because the wires are held by him, and it is his sovereign will and pleasure to show the working of his men and women thoroughly." 14

The whole of Forster's consent does not seem justified. It is true that Thackeray deliberately exposes the faults in his good characters, but these faults are not "distortions" and "unnatural defects". We
hardly find any man or woman who is a saint or an
angel even in real life. The vices, if those can be
called vices, in virtuous characters are shown as
weaknesses; and, keeping in the mind the fact that to err
is human, he prepares his reader to forgive them. This
goes to make his characters 'round' and life-like.
Again, Forster says that this fault-finding is done
'because the wires are held by him' and that he makes
his characters do whatever his fancy dictates. This is
also not so. Thackeray himself has declared: 'once
created, they lead me, and I follow where they direct.'
Charles Whibley also confirms it.\(^{16}\) In the last phrase
of Forster's comment, he himself seems to present an
unconscious justification for Thackeray's method. We do
not find any conventional faultless hero and heroine in
his novels, because of this scrupulous concern on his
part to present realistic characters.

Thackeray is extremely fond of giving a
genealogical description of his characters. He never
introduces a character major or minor, without telling
us about his or her family history. This also leads
him to digress. He forgets the main stream of the story
for the time being and indulges freely in the description of that character and his father and forefathers. After describing them to his heart's content, he once again picks up the left threads of the story.

Another of his methods is that of connecting one character to the other. This can also be called a habit of the author. As Wagenknecht rightly comments: "He is fond of beginning his narrative in medias res, and then going back to relate antecedental adventures. Like Balzac, Trollope, Zola, and Howells, he links his novels to one another. He has the upper-classman's interest in genealogy; and he dislikes branching out on something new." Lord Steyne of *Vanity Fair* is the cousin of Lady Ker of *The Heirloom*. Arthur, the hero of the *Pendennis* is the supposed narrator of *The Heirloom* and *Philip*, and is the senior school-fellow of Clive and Philip. Laura of *Pendennis* is again a sincere friend and confidant of Clive and Philip. Caroline of *A Shabby Gentleman* reappears in *Philip* as Little Sister. Beatrice of *Esmond* is the Baroness Bernstein in *The Virginians*. These are the major characters but Thackeray connects the minor ones also and brings a
character from one novel into another, so as to give a feeling of continuity. This has the effect of giving a greater "solidity of specification" to the characters and to the novels.

Thackeray failed to create an altogether new character. Once he had created a character he tried variations upon it. Samuel Philips gives a detailed account of it: "All our friends that entertained us for so many months in Vanity Fair and Pendennis have their facsimiles in Mr. Raymond's volume. The Colonel himself is just such another creature as Dobbin — as kind-hearted as self-denying, as generous, as devoted, and, must we add? Almost as weak and simple. Captain Crawley, the roué, belongs to the same family as Castlewood, for all the lords of that same indulge in his propensities. Miss Amory is the very embodiment of intrigue and selfishness; so is Beatrice Castlewood, who sets her cap at great people without caring a straw for them, precisely like the other lady.-------- The Aramata; personae of Pendennis bore not only a great resemblance to the characters of Vanity Fair, but some of them were actually reproduced in the second production, or
referred to by name............. 17 This habit of reviving old characters is so marked in him that *Vanity Fair*, *Pendennis*, *Newcomes* and *Philipp* all seem to be parts of one novel. After some time the reader forgets, at least, in regard to the minor ones, as to which character was in which novel. He hardly remembers whether the best description of Lord Steyne's red whiskers or Mr. Segg's rude joke occurred in *Vanity Fair*, or *Pendennis* or whether the favourite dialogue between Laura and Arthur took place in *Pendennis*, *The Newcomes* or in *Philip*.

"Whenever two Thackeray characters in two Thackeray novels could by any possibility have been contemporary, Thackeray delights to connect them. He makes Major Pendennis nod to Dr. Firmin, and Colonel Newcome ask Major Dobbin to dinner." 18

If two characters are not contemporaries, he finds some means to connect one to the ancestor of the other. The Warringtons are the outcome of this habit. He connects the 'blue-bearded' b-homian journalist to Harry Femand. Some critics have found fault with Thackeray's incapacity for creating new characters, but this does not perhaps constitute fair criticism.
whitwell Elwin defends Thackeray by quoting Fielding's and Richardson's methods, saying that it is hardly just to expect a novelist to be master of his craft in all its variety: "Mr. Thackeray sometimes dips his bowl in old wells; but the new springs he has opened are many in number, deeper in their source, and the waters that flow from them more fresh and sparkling." 

Thackeray makes use also of some old classical figures or some imaginary characters not related to the story, to elucidate his characters. We may, perhaps, describe it as the analogical device: 'You can fancy Lord and Lady Macbeth concocting a murder, and coming together with some little awkwardness, perhaps when the transaction was done and over; but my Lord and Lady Skinflint, when they consult in their bedroom about giving their luckless nephew a helping hand, are determined to refuse, and go down to family prayers and meet their children and domestics, and discourse virtuously before them, and then remain together and talk nose to nose, what can they think of one another? and of the poor kinsmen fallen among thieves, and groaning for help unheeded? How can they go on with those virtuous airs?'
How can they dare look each other in the face?*21 In this description, to say nothing of Lord and Lady Macbeth, even Lord and Lady Skinflint are not characters of *The Virginians.* With the help of these fictitious characters, (Lord and Lady Macbeth and Lord and Lady Skinflint) Thackeray describes the heartlessness of Lord and Lady Miles Warrington towards their nephew, Harry. We may note that he uses also the Jonsonian device of characterisation—giving them names which indicate traits. Thackeray describes Harry's worthless life when he was living under the protection of his brother, in this elaborate manner: 'why, in the case of Achilles himself, when he was sent by his mother to the court of King Helen, d'ye call it in order to be put out of harm's reach, what happened to him amongst a parcel of women with whom he was made to idle his life away? And how did Pyrrhus come into the world? A powerful mettlesome young Achilles ought not to be bond stringed by women too much; is out of his place dawdling by distaffs or bending coffee-cups; and when he is not fighting, depend upon it, is likely to fall into much worse mischief.'*22 Descriptions of this sort are to be found in almost all of his novels.
He presents characters also by the method of contrast. This has certain obvious advantages. One character comes out most strikingly in contrast to the other. We have in every novel pairs of characters which are foils to each other. In *Vanity Fair* we have three such notable pairs - Becky and Amelia, Dobbin and Osborne or Newdon, and, Sir Pitt, the baronet and his son, Pitt. Similarly we have Laura and Blanche in *Pendennis*; Rachel and Beatriz, and Harry and Lord Castlemo in *Lamond*; George and Harry, and Theo and Hetty of *The Virginians*. In *The Newcomes* we have Colonel and his money-minded brothers. For Ethel we have a contrast in the character of Rosa, the girl whom Clive married. Her character itself before and after the elopement of her brother's wife presents a contrast. She had been an altogether different person from what she grew to be later on. This method heightens the effect, and explains the character more pointedly.

Thackeray has been acclaimed by critics for his realistic character presentation; and, these are some of the devices which he has used for character portrayal. These methods enhance our knowledge of the
characters, and persuade us to view them as real persons operating in a real setting, and behaving as we may expect people to do in real situations.
Notes and References.


2. Pendennis.

3. Vanity Fair.

4. Ibid.


6. 'He is the true moralist who asserts its superiority over corporeal attributes, and refuses to believe that a virtuous man is less deserving of admiration because his limbs are clumsy, as certain Athenians considered Socrates and object of ridicule because he had prominent eyes, thick lips, and a protuberant belly. But there is another answer to the question although there is not an invariable correlation between men's persons and their virtues, it frequently happens that those whose appearance is the least advantageous are remarkable for amiability, from the simple cause that they escape many temptations and vanities which beset the well-favoured.' - Elwin, W.; *Quarterly Review*, Sept. 1866.
7. ibid.
8. *Vanity Fair* : ch. VIII
9. *Vanity Fair*
10. *The Newcomes*
11. Whibley, C.; *William Makepeace Thackeray*
12. ibid
13. Lewis, G.H. ; from a review in *The Leader*, 21 December 1850, 1, 928-30
14. from a review in *The Examiner*, 13 November 1852, 723-6
15. Whibley, C.; 'the majority of his characters grew without his knowledge, and even his will' page 70, 246, 2
16. Wegenerknecht ; *Soundings of the English Novel*, 79, 3
17. Philips, S.; from Mr. Thackeray's New Novel', *The Times*, 22 December, 1852, 8.
19. 'What novelist who has written more than a single great work has not in some degree retrodact the circle in which he first walked with success?'
Is it Fielding, Richardson, Smollett or Scott?
In truth, it is to complain that genius in itself
is so rare, is not multiplied indefinitely in the
same individual, that a man has one mind instead
of fifty, and that a dozen dissimilar fruits cannot
be gathered in successive crops from the same tree.
Those who, ambitions of the praise of variety,
have endeavoured altogether to change their hand,
have usually failed in the attempt, or have been
reduced to copy from existing models." Whitewell
Elwin; a review in the Quarterly Review,
September 1855, xcvi, 360 – 78

20. Elwin, W.; cf. as above
21. The Virginians; Vol. II, 102
22. The Virginians.
23. Ibid.
24. Elwin, W.; – from a review in Quarterly Review,
   September 1855, xcvi, 360 – 78
CHAPTER V "B"

DEVICES OF CHARACTERISATION

After this general discussion of the major devices used by Thackeray for character—portrayal, we may take up some of his important characters and see how these devices are actually employed. Rebecca Sharp, the most famous not only of Thackeray's characters but of the whole range of English fiction, would qualify for first attention. Nothing can illustrate Thackeray's genius more than the creation of this probable, reasonable and entirely natural woman whose progress through life is admirably managed.
In the beginning, Thackeray wanted to fashion Becky as a female counterpart of Barry Lyndon, an adventurer 'who consciously reveals her own rascality'. But by the end of the first chapter she acquires a personality of her own, and the author's proposed plan of work goes to shreds. "Thackeray soon saw that Barry Lyndon formula was too narrow for his purpose even though he allowed Becky to retain to the end something of the outlaw's point of view that she had learned from her clever and dissolute father." But the purpose for which she has been created is amply fulfilled by her career: "Certainly Becky's extraordinary social mobility is most useful to Thackeray in exploring the whole range of a rigid society in which the respectable and conventional individual could rise only slowly and painfully out of the rank in which he was born." Seymour Betsy also confirms it.

Thackeray is in the habit of giving his important characters a striking entrance but he has introduced Becky in a post-script sort of passage. Soon he creates a scene which highlights Becky's
character. With the help of the 'pushes' referred to by Tillotson, Thackeray makes Becky life-like. In the very first chapter, through the dictionary scene he imparts life to Becky. "Perhaps a hundred words, so far, have been expended on her, but already she has a name and as suggestive a name as ever novelist hit on, and already we have seen her act - she has thrown back over the garden wall the copy of Johnson's Dictionary, the gift of which has cost the younger Miss Pinkerton so much contriving - and we have already felt it ominous that a personage who could become so real at so small a cost of words, and who could act to such purpose, should not already be accorded more prominence - prominence is felt to be already owing her."6

As for her physical appearance, she was not very beautiful; but she was extremely attractive: 'she was small, and slight in person; pale, sandy-haired,...........(eyes) were very large, odd and attractive.'7 Beauty was certainly not her asset; she attracted through sex - appeal, and had hardly any hesitation in trying it on males. Catherine Beach Ely has written in detail about her appearance: "Some
years ago there hung in one of our public galleries an imaginative portrait of Becky Sharp. She is represented as a plump, phlegmatic little morsel, fair-skinned and red-headed, with a commonplace sensuous face, and wearing a red gown. This is a shallow conception of Becky. From her deep-set eyes should have beamed a radiance which dazzles but does not warm; a subtle mobile little face had Becky, changing at every caprice of her active mind, a small, graceful head crowned with pale yet flaming locks, each hair instinct with vitality. She does not need a red gown, there is red enough in her hair. Give her flying draperies of vivid green to match the green of her eyes, and on her tiny feet but pointed shoes such as Puck might wear when he skims the forest glades in Midsummer Night's Dream. This is a very just account of the impression that Becky makes on the reader, and does credit to Thackeray's presentation of Becky as well as to Miss Fly's sympathetic imagination. Each of her features indicates a trait of her character. Thackeray uses here also the device of mingling virtues and defects. Becky has been presented as altogether bad but even then Thackeray endows her with certain admirable qualities, which were denied to Amelia. She
had a fine sense of humour, and was never unnecessarily mean. If goodness could have given her the things she desired, she would not perhaps have been what she was. Though she was bored with the dull life of Queen's Crawley, she preferred its pure atmosphere to that of London. She knew that, in society, cheats generally prosper, and people like Amelia and Dobbin pine and suffer. She was not, moreover, incapable of appreciating goodness. She praised Dobbin for his constant and selfless devotion for Amelia. "What a noble heart that man has and how shamefully that woman ( Amelia ) plays with it." She upbraided Amelia for neglecting him. It was she who brought about the marriage between them. Dobbin had not concealed his dislike for her; still she had the spirit and goodness to admire him.

She has been described as personification of intellect without virtue. Fassau Senior elaborates on this point: If virtue indicates the "qualities which we love, the qualities which arise from the sympathy of their possessor with others and therefore occasion them to sympathise with him," Becky is without them. "She has no affection, no pity, no disinterested benevolence. She is indeed perfectly selfish. She
wants all the virtues which are to be exercised for the benefit of others. She has neither justice nor veracity. She treats mankind as mankind treats the brutes, as mere sources of utility or amusement, as instruments, or playthings, or prey. But many of the self—regarding virtues she possesses in a high degree. She has great industry, prudence, decision, courage, and self-reliance. These are the qualities which, when under the direction of a powerful intellect, unbiased by sympathies, and unrestrained by scruples, have produced many of the masters of mankind. In a higher sphere Becky might have been a Semiramis or a Catherine. As might be expected in a person of her good sense and self-control, she is mistress of the smaller virtues, good temper and good nature; she always wishes to please, because it is only by pleasing that she can subjugate. She is not resentful or spiteful, because she despises those around her too much to waste anger on them, and because she knows that petty injuries are generally repaid with interest....

Thackeray has certainly given her some good qualities, but he had not the nerve to treat her with greater generosity. "He seems to fear that he will make us like her so much that we forgive her faults."
Can we not suspect that Thackeray has perhaps blackened Becky's record (e.g. the affair with Lord Steyne; neglect of her child; the suggestion that she was responsible for the death of Jos Sedley in order to get the insurance—money etc.) around the middle of the novel, out of nervousness because she has become more attractive than was permissible for a "bad" character? The reader feel sympathy for her in her situation, appreciation of her spirit and energy, and admiration for her cleverness and her gambler's philosophy (or sporting spirit) in the case of the early Becky. At that rate, she bids fair to become the heroine of the novel. And an attack of moral nerves might well have induced Thackeray to blacken her character, to make her a morally reprehensible creature instead of a clever and somewhat unscrupulous rogue, in order that the "moral order" may not be disturbed. Does he not perhaps "kill" the character in his own way, as Shakespeare is said to have killed Mercutio in Romeo and Juliet, since he was getting too interesting to be accommodated conveniently in the play? This must be considered a grave fault in Thackeray's art of characterization. Though immoral, she was getting more and more attractive in the eyes of the reader, and
Thackeray could not ignore the taste of the Victorian reading public and perhaps could not, himself, tolerate the situation.

Thackeray has chastised Becky over her vices but he seems to be enchanted by his own creation: "In fact Thackeray has almost an affection for the Becky puppet. Compared with the figures he detests Thackeray shows littleanimus towards her. Her sins, the most terrible sins in Thackeray's code, are that she is incapable of affection, love or loyalty. But he does not make her suffer deeply." Other characters of this novel — old Osborne, old Sedley, Sir Pitt — do suffer for the wrongs done by them. "But Becky after a pleasurably dirty relapse into the Bohemian world, suffers no such fate." Rebecca, Lady, Crawley, chiefly hangs about Bath and Cheltenham, where a very strong party of excellent people consider her to be a most injured woman. She has her enemies, who has not? Her life is her answer to them. She busies herself in works of piety. She goes to Church, and never without a footman. Her name is in all the Charity lists."

Quite apart from the author's attitudes,
reeders themselves also follow her life and career with keen interest. She was morally mean and degraded; but 'she gains our sympathy nevertheless — not our approving admiration but our human fellow-feeling — just as Heathcliff does, and she too gains it not in spite but because of her rebellion.'

This sympathy cannot be called sentimental as we feel for Analia. "Thackeray the Victorian gentleman, may tone down her rebellion by ambiguous adverbs and a scandalised tiptoe, but the energy he has put into her is more profound than his moral or his philosophy, and she sweeps him along." Thus she evokes our admiration, which leads us to sympathise with her, or, at least sympathetically understand her point of view. When Thackeray has gone some distance with Becky, he seems suddenly to have realised that he has been led on, and soon returns to his original position of a moralist, and intentionally adds some unattractive traits and makes some comments by way of exonerating himself.

Thackeray is anxious to make the reader aware of her parentage and her early environment. Her father was a drunken artist from whom she inherited brilliant mental powers, and an artistic temperament, and the desire to enjoy all forms of excitement. She also
inherited from him the reckless capacity for debt. From her mother, an opera—dancer, she acquired gaiety, vivacity and dramatic qualities. Thus she was well equipped to fight her own battle, which she did admirably. Besides parentage, the environment did little to improve her qualities. She had to use her talents, if those be talents and attainments, since her childhood and, by the time she entered society, she had become perfect in her arts. 'She never had been a girl,' she said; she had been a woman since she was eight years old.'

Thackeray does explain, if not altogether justify, Becky's character by reference to her parentage and her circumstances. But has he abandoned moral judgement? Does he not assign defects to her that are not necessitated by her background and her situation? Her lack of love for her child, her flirtations which do not have even the excuse of self—advancement—these appear to be unlovely aspects of her nature and do detract from the sympathy and the admiration we may feel for her. 'She represents a type common enough at the time of the Renaissance, especially in the South of Europe, where the keenest intellectual development might be not accompanied by moral atrophy, producing characters not so
much immoral as immoral, devoid of spiritual perceptions, and dead to all sense of right and wrong."

Becky's character has been made more prominent by the creation of Amelia, who stands as a foil to her. All the good qualities given to Amelia are totally absent in Becky, and this makes Becky more vile and mean. In the matter of love and in many other things, we find a great difference between these two. Becky knew no defeat, and Amelia lost heart even at the failure of minor efforts.

Thackeray has shown Becky incapable of real love and she remains so to the end. "To have made such a woman really in love would have been a mistake. Her husband she likes most — because he is, or was, her own. But there is no man so foul, so wicked, so unattractive, but that she can fawn over him for money and jewels. There are women to whom nothing is nasty, either in person, language, scenes, actions, or principle, — and Becky is one of them; and yet she is herself attractive." Even at the end of her career, she never for a moment regretted the absence of love, as we find Beatriz doing.
Thus Thackeray was bent upon making her self-centred and self-sufficient in the matter of feeling. It does seem ironical—though not at all incredible—that Rawdon should have found purification in loving this unloving woman.

No doubt her character is homogeneous but in order to give a semblance of life Thackeray makes her act in some peculiar ways—otherwise she might have become a 'flat' character. The most remarkable phase of Becky's personality we find when she was caught red-handed by Rawdon. Tillotson justly remarks: "We are surprised at Becky's spasm of admiration for the despised Rawdon as he stands over the unconscious Lord Steyne—surprised not because it was unforeseeable but because it was unforeseen by us." 20 Very likely, it was unforeseen by Becky herself. She could very well have been surprised both at Rawdon's spirited response, and her own reaction to it. This is the happy sort of surprise which makes a character come alive.

Thackeray gives Becky a chance to justify her own actions. This device is not very different from that of eulogistic description, except that we come to know
what the character thinks from the character himself.
First of all she explains her attempt to get Joe or some
other rich man to marry her. She says: 'It isn't
difficult to be a country gentleman's wife. I think I
could be a good woman if I had five thousand a year.'
She thinks about it seriously but we know that she was
not a woman for home and hearth. Arnold Kettle has
remarked: "In other words she could have been, with
luck, someone not unlike Mrs. Elton in Emma, though she
would have played her cards a good deal better. She
could alternatively, of course, have had a shot at being
Amelia ......." But we do not, however, feel that
this truly represents Becky's character. She had too
much spirit, too much of an adventurous temperament to
have been satisfied with being a country gentleman's
wife and with five thousand a year.

It has been remarked by many critics that the
chief preoccupation of Becky's life was to climb up the
social ladder and secure all possible comforts. At the
outset, no doubt, this can be described as Becky's ruling
passion. But Thackeray is not satisfied with this alone.
She is more than a parasite who wanted sustenance. She
has been given a temperament that enjoyed mischief for
its own sake, not for gain but for the fun of it. She loved admiration for its own sake and did everything with gay abandon. She would not have been happy with Jos: "She would have fled with her mocking laugh to resume her moth like whirl about the flame of a happiness which always eluded her and which she never really expected to attain."23 This seems to be a kind of depth analysis by Miss Ely.

Some have criticised Thackeray for making Becky immodest. The reason is manifest. In the case of Becky there is none to look after her interests. She has to do the exploration herself. She rightly says: "I am alone in the world. I have nothing to look for but what my labour can bring."24 The desire to hook the richest man is not an unusual one. "She had built for herself a most magnificent castle in the air, of which she was mistress, with a husband somewhere in the background."25 This does appear somewhat shocking. For her, husband was merely a means through which she could attain her real purpose of living a rich and comfortable life. This can easily be perceived in her relations with Rawdon. Just after marriage, she at least recognised the existence of the husband but later
she considered him an obstacle in the way of her social progress. It is because of this that she did not attempt to release Rawdon from prison. Those were days in which she had the fullest liberty.

Arnold Kettle has also tried to give an explanation for Becky's behaviour on psychological grounds. He is of the opinion that Becky was not different from Amelia or Jane Fairfax of Emma and many others. What could a young woman of intelligence do in the so-called civilised but barbarous atmosphere of bourgeois society? There are only two ways before her. One is of passive resignation and the other is of active rebellion. "The only hope of a compromise solution is the lucky chance of finding an understanding man like Mr. Darcy or Mr. Knightley, rich enough to buy certain civilized values and kind enough to desire them; but the snag is that the Mr. Knightleys require something. Becky by her very fate (she had a harder fight than Jane Fairfax) can never have 'true elegance of mind'. You cannot pick that up in Soho or slaving for Miss Pinkerton." In the circumstances, attitudes and behaviour like Becky's are perhaps inevitable.
In conclusion we can say that she is easily the most prominent character of *Vanity Fair* and, in a way, superior to all the other characters because of the 'absence of ill humour, meanness or savagery intensity in her self-interest, an attitude urged on her by a situation in which she begins with nothing, has nothing to lose and everything to gain......... Unlike others Becky is at her best when she miscalculates seriously, is able to laugh at disastrous miscalculation and then bounce right back."27

Becky Sharp is something new in fiction. She is different from all other heroines. Since Defoe's Roxana we have had a horde of dull conventional heroines of romance and caricatures of Smollett. Here was an adventurer with the world as her oyster, a study in instinctive trickery, inherent duplicity and the supple energy of the eternal feminine – the adventurers who scandalized and conquered her world."28

No better illustration can be found for Thackeray's power of characterisation than Becky. She is the sort of woman who would have become a monster or a caricature in the hands of other artists. Under the
deft hands of Thackeray she never loses her humanity, and is not for a moment grotesque or hideous. She stands before us, an eloquent sermon on the possibilities of evil latent in human nature, but requiring certain conditions to develop as they do in the protagonist of Vanity Fair. 29

We may take up first the most sentimentally virtuous of all characters, Amelia Sedley of Vanity Fair. Thackeray has created her as a foil to Becky, and as a model of a good woman. Thackeray's plan was to provide a simple and straight character who remains constantly good. With the development of the story, however, there is clearly a change in Thackeray's attitude towards Amelia. She emerges less as a virtuous woman than as a foolishly and even selfishly sentimental type. If in some respects she is superior to Becky, she is not altogether admirable, and is seen even to some disadvantage. Thackeray's irony does not spare even her. In a way "Thackeray gives her the selfishness of a deeply rooted parasitic vine; or, in using Dobbin, the selfishness that luxuriates in admiration without the responsibility of reciprocity. Again, Amelia uses her passive helplessness as a weapon, indistinguishable, in
crises from contemptible cowardice. Nor is Amelia given any conscious, reflecting intelligence - we see this to be true of virtually all of Thackeray's 'good' women - so that she is almost entirely a passive receptacle of damaging experience."30 It may be due to Thackeray's method of adding unfavourable to favourable. It is one of the devices through which he creates life-like characters.

Thackeray has an aversion to the sentimental heroines of the romances. But his own Amelia has become oversentimental in spite of himself. If she had accepted Dobbin just after George's death, realising his true worth, there would not have been any injured self-respect on Dobbin's account. In that case, the author's purpose would have been defeated. Thus the need of the story and Thackeray's motto - vanitas vanitatum made him fashion Amelia as a silly romantic being.

Thackeray finds amusement in Amelia's foolish infatuation for George and at length pities her. He makes the reader aware that Amelia was wasting her energy and love on George. We are unable to appreciate her devotion for George and in a way it becomes tiresome.
"The author evidently has his misgiving about Amelia Osborne, (see Sedley,) for although she is clearly a favourite, he declares it necessary occasionally to appeal to the reader in favour of her weakness. But there is rarely weakness without vice; and though the extreme attachment of Amelia to a selfish, worthless, neglectful young man, may be forgiven as so natural, yet the manner in which she yields to it, and nurses her sentiment to the neglect of her duties, as well as her subsequent shilly-shally conduct to her obsequious admirer Major Dobbin, is rather meekish than interesting. In the beginning of the novel he terms her as one of the 'best and dearest creature' ever lived. He is sure that the man who wins her will be happy indeed. With the development of the story Amelia starts exasperating him and he comments: 'She is fade and insipid.'

Thackeray gives Amelia an elaborate introduction: 'She was a young lady of this singular species, and deserved not only that Miss Pinkerton said in her praise, but had many charming qualities.'

'She had such a kindly, smiling, tender, gentle, generous heart of her own, as won the love of everybody who came...
near her. Through such descriptions the reader knows from the very beginning in detail about her temperament. Thackeray does not forget to point out her habits and manners also. He has very aptly summed up: 'she had twelve intimate and bosom friends out of twentyfour young ladies.' This is a shade ironical but it certainly has a truth.

Thackeray has glorified motherhood, his favourite theme, in Amelia. She 'is also a mother in a sense in which Becky is not a mother at all. There was something about maternity that fascinated Thackeray, apparently because it broke down the crust of egotism and selfishness in a woman and left her vulnerable to circumstances.' Thus the elaboration of any of her traits (which Thackeray has aptly done) helps the reader to visualise her.

It is believed that Thackeray's personal life has infiltrated into the character of Amelia. 'She was drawn in large part from his memories of his wife, and he reaches the height of his eloquence in the passages of his novel which are coloured by the pathos of her suffering.'
Amelia presents a contrast to Becky, but is not altogether different from Becky. Becky achieved her ends through selfishness and unscrupulousness. Amelia has also become selfish in her relations with Dobbin. Amelia is weak, humble and subdued for sure; but, these qualities surprisingly prove to be her weapons. Arnold Kettle appreciates Thackeray's presentation of her characters: "it is Thackeray's merit that he shows us Amelia as she is, a parasite, gaining life through a submission that is not even an honest submission, exploiting her weakness, deceiving even herself." As remarked by Kettle, she really deceived herself while Becky was at least honest with herself.

Amelia has been considered Thackeray's failure. It is said to be one of the weaker characters of Vanity Fair. This may be due to the fact that the reader expects too much out of her. She has been confined by the theme and plot, and hence this weakening of characterisation. 'Certainly, too, there is a recurring ambiguity in Thackeray's attitude to her.' In the initial stages of the novel, Thackeray treats her as a heroine but later Becky snatches the role. "No, Amelia is no more the heroine of Vanity Fair than Becky. She
is, rather, the opposite possibility, the image that Becky might have chosen to become."41

We can summarise her character in the words of E.R. Neill: "She is tender, sentimental, stupid, and loving — all feminine characteristics Thackeray greatly admired — along with 'adorable purity', maternal love, lack of self-confidence, an angelic ignorance of men's ways and a proper touch of female jealousy."42 Thus Amelia's character is convincingly drawn.

'If Thackeray has an ideal in mind, then Amelia and Becky are both far (though not equally far) removed from it; of the disproportion between heart and brain possible to the feminine character they provide extreme instances."43 As a starting point, Thackeray clearly makes use of Amelia as a contrast to Becky. But he soon gives up undue emphasis on the contrast, and Amelia is seen as a person — not as a pattern of female virtue — with defects that make her a more realistic character instead of a melodramatic fiction.
Dobbin is Amelia's male counterpart except for the reason that he exacts more of our admiration. Thackeray has contrasted him with George Osborne and Rawdon. Both the younger men are light-hearted, fickle-minded, pleasure-loving and of very loose character. In contrast to their traits Dobbin's steadfastness, dependability and moral earnestness come out more strikingly.

Arnold Kettle has found the cause of the novel's weakness in Amelia: but, while discussing Dobbin, he admits that the reason lies more in the character of Dobbin. 'It is he who lets down the novel, not merely because he is in the psychological sense unconvinced, but because he fails to bear the weight of positive values implicit in the pattern of the book...'

The incongruities which Kettle identified in Amelia's character are found even more in Dobbin's. In the beginning, Thackeray has shown him as a timid, sheepish and edgy schoolboy who receives neglect and contempt from his class fellows. But as the novel proceeds he becomes a sort of clothes-horse of the...
respectable middle class virtues. As he was neglected by his tutors and mates, he became an introvert and constructed a wall around himself into which George was the only welcome intrusion. Only once did Becky try to break his shell but soon realised her incapacity. The neglect which he experienced during childhood made him sensitive and shrewd. He was always conscious of others' intentions. This is how he came to know Becky's real self very early. But one point remains unexplained, that is, how he was mistaken in his estimation of Amelia while his judgment has been shown to be remarkably accurate in other cases. 'How any man of such sense and character could remain utterly in love, in quite an adolescent way, with Amelia all those years Thackeray can neither explain nor convince us. Perhaps his is a case of arrested development in the emotional sphere? But no, there is no such suggestion to be found.'

This point about his character needs more explaining than Thackeray perhaps realised or was willing to do.

Thackeray has presented a man of real virtue, in the person of Dobbin, who lives unspoiled among the worldly and selfish people, 'he dissociates himself from the gambling - drinking - dwelling - whoring -
baggart — snob set in the army, and shows courage under fire. He earns his promotions. He is a gentleman with a strong sense of a gentleman's word in friendship (even though that friend is the entirely despicable George Osborne), in the engagement vow (even though his meddling precipitates a disaster), and in marriage (even to so foolish a woman as Amelia)." Perhaps it gave Thackery some pleasure to conceive of such an excellent and noble character.

Thackery, certainly, has given Dobbin many virtues which we do not find in any of Vanity Fair's characters. Still Dobbin lacks some of the qualities of a conventional virtuous character of fiction. "Thackery in depicting him was determined to run counter to the recognised taste of novel readers." Trollope finds fault with Thackery's characterisation of Dobbin. Trollope recognises the existence of the vicious — undignified and ridiculous in Vanity Fair but his viewpoint is that "let the virtuous, the dignified and sublime be in ascendant." Thackery aimed at creating life-like characters and for this it becomes essential to alloy the virtue with some weaknesses. Thus he makes Dobbin, though a virtuous one, a very common and normal man. "A Dobbin seemed to him
to be such a one as might probably be met within the world, whereas to his thinking a Ravenwood was simply a creature of imagination." So Dobbin remains unheroic and this makes him more life-like.

Dobbin seems to present a "wooden sort of norm, average but good man, certainly not a rebel yet just untainted by the values of Vanity Fair." Besides this, he appears somewhat "useless to the pattern of the novel" and remains a "psychologically unconvincing character." Like Amelia he appears dull and colourless. This may be due to the fact that virtue in literature as well as in life seems dull in comparison to the vices.

In the novel **Pendennis**, Thackeray for the first time planned to present the real inner history of a young man. He was averse to eulogising any character believing "that in everybody there is some part bad, and that for truth's sake the bad portion must not be kept out of sight........" Thackeray himself declared his scheme of presenting Pen's character: "You will not sympathise with this young man of mine, this Pendennis, because he is neither angel nor imp. If it
be so, let it be so. I will not paint for you angels or imps, because I do not see them. The young man of the day, whom I do see, and of whom I know the inside and the out thoroughly, him I have painted for you; and here he is whether you like the picture or not."55 Thus Thackeray was intent on presenting a young man having the virtues and vices common to his age.

He has been shown negligent in his studies, caring more for enjoyment than for his books, and extravagant without considering how his mother provided for him. Thackeray does not limit Pen's traits only to this. He gives Pen a sympathetic heart, generous disposition and good understanding. When the daughter of a certain poor gilder came to him in need of money as her father was ill with fever, "Pen in anguish of remorse rushed away, pawned his grand watch and every single article of jewellery."56 to help them. Thus Thackeray has presented Pen as a young man of some good and some bad parts.

As usual, he has given a detailed account of Pen's physical appearance and habits; "Arthur was about sixteen years old, we have said, when he began to reign;
in person, he had what his friends would call a dumpy, but his mammas styled a neat little figure. His hair was of a healthy brown colour, which looks like gold in the sunshine, his face was round, ...... freckled, and good humoured, his whiskers were decidedly of a reddish hue; in fact, without being a beauty, he had such a frank, good - natured kind face, and laughed so merrily at you out of his honest blue eyes .......... Between the age of sixteen and eighteen he rose from five feet six to five feet eight inches, at which altitude he paused.  

Besides giving this physical description, Thackeray has shown him fond of adoring his own person. At college, he lived and dressed in a manner befitting the nobility. At parties or social gatherings he used to appear in a most dandified manner 'with a black crepe to his white hat, and jet buttons in his shirt front, and a pink flower in his coat ...... with the tightest lavender coloured gloves seen with black and the smallest of canes.  

Thackeray has made Pen fall in love with four girls to bring out his character. Through these
four experiences, Thackeray has shown Pen's judgment and views about life grew to maturity.

At a very early age Miss Fotheringay, a stage actress, attracted him. She was many years senior to him, but he was blind to this disparity. 'Trembling with passionate emotion, his heart beating and throbbing fiercely, tears rushing forth in spite of him, his voice almost choking with feeling, poor Pen had said those words which he could withhold no more, and flung himself and his whole store of love, and admiration and ardour at the feet of this mature beauty. It was Pen's first love. He had read so much about love and passion in various novels and plays that he wanted feverishly to feel this tumultuous passion of life — Love. When he saw Miss Fotheringay on the stage, she charmed him, and he at once realised that after all he had found the long desired object on whom he could lavish his store of love. 'He felt that he was engaged in the only passion of his life, and that Death alone could close it.' These bubbling sentiments were the outcome of his being green in matters of love.

The next girl who came into his life was
Blanche Amory, the step-daughter of Sir Francis Clevering. With the termination of his first love-affair, he felt quite grown-up, and it also dried up the gushing stream of feeling and passion in him. Pen, undoubtedly loved Blanche but the zeal, the novelty of the feeling was no longer there. He was attracted by her youthful beauty and literary talents which appeared to him more striking in the contrast with the rather elderly and uneducated Miss Fotheringay. Thackeray remarks: "Perhaps neither party was in earnest...... (They) were only playing at being in love, and the sportive little Undine (Blanche) was humouring you (Pen) at the same play." This affair was suspended for a time because Pen went to London for studies and Blanche remained in the country. When they met again in London, their feelings for each other had cooled down. Pen had seen the world, and Blanche was busy with parties and dances. It was by the Major's efforts that this affair was renewed. Pen also wanted to advance through this match. Blanche was satisfied with Pen as she had no other suitable bachelor in view. Later Pen is made to realise that he would not be happy with this girl, but his promise was already given. He felt mightily
relieved when Blanche freed him, as she got another man, Poker, richer than Pen.

When Pen was in London, a porter's daughter, Fenny Bolton, came into his life. After the Fotheringay Affair, he had grown too wise to marry a girl below his station. But he felt attracted towards her in spite of himself. He decided in his cooler moments not to play with the poor girl's feelings; but thoughts about her revolved in his mind. He tried to forget her but thoughts of her returned to him with intensified force.

In order to drive her out of his mind, he engrossed himself in physical and mental work. In this effort he exhausted his strength and fell ill. After the illness, he quite recovered also from his attachment to Fanny. This can be termed the black phase in Pen's love - life.

Pen appeared quite a changed man in his relationship with Laura. His love for her was very deep and sober, and he never declared his love for her in stormy passionate words. But the reader feels that, while on the surface, there were many waves which carried Pen along with them in other directions, at
bottom he was constant to Laura. He realised his own feelings quite late. In the beginning we find only a glimpse of Pen's feelings for Laura in his jealousy on hearing Lady Rochester's comment that Laura would find 'somebody' someday. If he had not loved her "why did Pen......... begin to feel angry and jealous of the invisible somebody with the right to take her away?"

On getting his release from Blanche, he brooded: "Here is the end of hopes and aspirations....... of romance and ambition....... Say I had taken her; forced on me as she was, Laura would never have been an angel to me. I could not have given her my heart at another's instigation; I never could have known her as she is had I been obliged to ask another to interpret her qualities and point out her virtues." Here in this affair we feel a depth, a constancy and a purity without any selfishness. This sort of love has been generally rewarded in fiction. Even in Fielding's novel, Tom Jones married Sophia Western and not the other girls who attracted him. It was apparently Thackeray's plan to introduce these four girls in Pen's life to show the gradual development from green youth to a sober mellowed maturity.
In the character of Pen, Thackeray's own life has also perhaps crept in. Pen is what Thackeray was in his school days, hating Charter House in which he studied as a slaughter house. He himself was dull at studies and left the college without securing a degree. "Arthur Pendennis is recognisably William Makepeace Thackeray, but Thackeray the author has been able to withdraw to a suitable distance from Thackeray the green youth of 1829 – 30 and to look at him with critical sympathy, but without illusions." Pendennis is, in essence, an autobiography. Thackeray himself admits: 'He (Pen) is a very good – natured and generous young fellow and I begin to like him considerably I wonder whether he is interesting to me from selfish reasons, and because I fancy we resemble each other in many points.' Thus Thackeray remembered his youth when Pen was being created. Greig also finds the similarity but refused to attach too much importance to it: "what he does or fails to do, his relations with other characters, his ideas and feelings – these are determined by the novel itself, not by the private experiences of Thackeray some twenty years before." We are also conscious of the fact that, while Thackeray's
personal life might have been reflected in Pen here and there, Pen is a character who acquires his own identity in the novel away from the personality of his creator.

Thackeray has not created a contrast for Pen on the same scale as he does with Amelia and Becky, Laura and Blanche, George and Dobbin. Warrington can be considered, to an extent, a contrast to Pen. But Warrington is senior in years and maturer in judgment. One may wonder whether Warrington is the elder Thackeray looking upon faults and foibles of Pen - the younger Thackeray.

Thackeray himself makes many comments about Pen, to help the reader understand his character. Pen has been shown vain and conceited in the beginning, and Thackeray has duly described him as 'Prince of Fairoaks', 'his Highness of Fairoaks', Sultan etc. These are occasional phrases; Thackeray also comments in detail on Pen: 'Mr. Pen was a gentleman, and by nature and education polite to every woman high and low; but he spoke lightly and lazily of women in general; was less courteous in his action than in his words .......'
't under his waywardness and selfishness, indeed, there
was a kind and generous heart. He was of such a generous disposition that he would give away anything to anyone. Such examples can be multiplied.

Now we may take up the point of Pen's character which is most argued about by many critics—that is Pen's relationship with Fanny. Most of the critics are unable to swallow it. They find fault with Thackeray's way of presenting things between Fanny and Pen. Tom Jones was always in the background of Thackeray's mind when he created Pen, and he thought it "incumbent upon him to introduce it (Fanny - Pen - affair) as one of the shadiest incidents of adolescence." But Thackeray himself was alarmed when this incident was leading him to prohibited areas: "He could not face the truth; so he hurriedly changed his plan and turned the affair into the bogus tragedy which it is." Thackeray was of the opinion that the nude cannot be touched without outraged the sense of decency. "He could not understand how great sculptors like the Atheniens were so abandoned as to leave their statues undraped. When he set himself to describe a man with all his appetites and passions, he pleaded that 'we must drape him.' So, in handling a delicate situation, he pointedly shirked
the truth and the result is worse than if he had treated it with brutal frankness. 72

Baker again comments upon Thackeray's professed aim to present life faithfully: "Such compromise with truth as he tried to justify by these excuses were obviously a derection of his professed resolve to draw character faithfully and depict life as he saw it, without any bias. It was a tame surrender to the pretences which he was continually denouncing. He went astray in dragging in the Bolton episode at all; this was not the sort of entanglement into which young Pendennis was likely to fall." 73 Here we are unable to agree with Baker. Pen has been seen to be prone to fall prey to any sort of temptation specially a romantic one which leads often towards the weakness of the flesh. Besides, Pen was at that time in a disturbed mental state. His first attachment for the actress, Miss Fotheringay, had come to an end. Blanche might have helped him to climb the social ladder but he realised painfully that she would not be able to give him lasting happiness. Laura had already rejected him. So, if we consider Pen's temperament and his situation, it might seem very natural for him to fall prey to that sort of
Tillotson does not question the validity of this affair: "His account of the frustrated affair of Pen and Fanny is a complete one; it is complete for the physiologist—Pen is 'hot and eager' and Fanny, who has 'a great deal of dangerous and rather contagious sensibility', 'toss (es) upon her mattress'—and there is a wealth of material for the psychologist, moralist and social historian." What annoys Tillotson is Thackeray's attitude towards the whole of this episode: "Thackeray seems too much to condone the attitude adopted by Pen himself. He sees the weaknesses of Pen, the title page hints that he is his own worst enemy; a hint confirmed as we read on. He is shown too selfish. And a part of that failing makes him callous towards Fanny's feelings; there is a touch of one-sided calculation,.... as well as of self-denial, discomfort and 'manliness' in his resistance of temptation. This philandering callousness is too much condoned by Thackeray." If this is so then what is the explanation for the following lines from *The Newcomes*:

"Sin in men is so light, that scarce the fine of a penny is imposed; while for women it is so heavy, that
no repentance can wash it out." This clearly shows Thackeray's sympathy for women. This change of feeling may be due to the reception of *Pendennis* had in Thackeray's time. Thackeray has remarked in this connection: "Many ladies have remonstrated and subscribers left me because, in course of the story, I described a young man resisting and affected by temptation."78

Thus Thackeray seems to take the side of Pen. He is too ready to forgive him without giving a thought to Fanny. The reason for this may be a too crude distinction common in that age between consummated and un consummated love. He thinks Pen is too innocent of blame because Fanny is not in danger of bearing him an illegitimate child. He insists on Pen's "purity", by which he means no more than his not committing any offence that society would take note of. What is not pleasing is the assumption that whatever happens on the safe side of the line is alike innocent. We should have expected Thackeray to draw the obvious distinctions - as he does in *Vanity Fair*, for instance, when Rawdon knows that if Becky is not "guilty", "she's as bad as guilty."79 Tillotson feels strongly that Thackeray
should have drawn the clear line of demarcation between what was right and wrong; and what actually happened.

G.N. Ray has also commented upon this affair. He affirms that "a young man in Pen's situation would in all probability have made Fanny, his mistress." He is also of the same view. Then what prevented Thackeray from dealing plainly in the matter, as it might have happened in real life with any young man? Ray goes on to explain it: "But as a character in a novel, by seducing Fanny Pen would have become a villain, and since he is Thackeray's hero, not an expendable secondary figure like Steerforth, this is impossible. Hence nothing happens. Pen compares himself with Lovelace and Faust, but behaves like Sir Galahad. The incongruity is so marked, the anticlimax so extreme, that this episode has become a locus classicus of Victorian reticence." David Cecil also thinks on the same lines.

In the end it can be said that Pen has come out as an actual living person except in the author's presentation of the Pen - Fanny affair. If he had dealt with this episode with the frankness which we find in
French novels, it would have certainly been another
Tom Jones.

Major Pendennis is one of the most
fascinating characters in Thackeray's whole range.
Thackeray has introduced him 'as one of the finest
judges of wine in England, and a man of active,
domineering, and enquiring spirit.'
He has been
shown tremendously vain of his dress and appearance.
'He could not have faced the day without his two hours'
toilette.'
He 'did not like to be seen at a surprise,
and required a little preparation before he cared to be
visible.'
He dressed so gaily and youthfully that
it was hard to guess his age from a distance. From very
close range 'the factitious nature of his rich brown hair'
and 'a few crow's feet round about the somewhat faded eyes of his handsome mottled face' were
visible. Through this description the reader is made
aware that the Major is a vain and snobbish person, a
man of fashion and of worldly attitudes. Wagenknecht
rightly comments: "Major Pendennis, the hero's uncle,
is a wonderful characterisation, the most famous snob in
English fiction." Thackeray's main interest was in
attacking snobbery, and in the character of the Major
he does it marvellously. He has created a thoroughly worldly man. And to make him represent his class, he has given him all the possible qualities belonging to the men of fashion.

The Major has been shown to have an affection for his nephew Pen, but only till Pen made demands on his purse. He loved Pen in his own worldly fashion. When his friends praised Pen for his manners and looks Major adored him; and, also neglected him cruelly when Pen disgraced himself in the university. He could not have tolerated any derogatory remarks from his friends on account of Pen. Pen rightly comments: "Your practise ( is ) not more benevolent than your theory, who live with dukes and magnates of the land, and would take no notice of a poor devil like me."80

The Major, being the representative of higher society, liked all those enjoyments which were prevalent among them. Like others he has been shown fond of reading his name in the newspapers in the list of the guests who attended a party at the house of a lord or lady. "Getting on in 'society' is the chief end of man to Major Pendennis - it is the grand vocation and duty
of life. The Major devotes himself to securing an invitation to Gaunt House, or a gracious recognition from the Marquis of Steyne. His vanity was tickled by invitations from fashionable people. His chief occupation was to dance attendance upon the lords and the ladies. A smile of recognition from such persons was a tonic for his old bones. He always dreaded that they might refuse to meet him if something went wrong. He was alarmed by the very thought of such a calamity: "(my) nephew marry a tragedy queen! Gracious mercy, people will laugh at me so that I shall not dare show my head." He did stop Pen from marrying that actress, not because it would have ruined Pen's chances in life but because of the disgrace it would have brought to his name. Here Thackeray acquaints the reader with the Major's calculating mind and his skill in arranging matters prudently.

The Major is utterly worldly, but Thackeray has added something favourable to his character to prevent his being totally disliked by the readers. He is made to recognize family connections. He had a regard for Helen and at first he could not approve of Laura as a probable wife for Pen. Later we find that he was
charmed by Laura's sweet, amiable disposition, and started loving her. Thus he has been endowed with the capacity to admire goodness and virtue wherever they existed. It is quite another thing that he did not find it necessary to practise them.

In this case, Thackeray has utilised all his skill in presenting a character affectively. "There is one character in Pendennis whom Mr. Thackeray has surpassed only in his own Becky; we mean, of course, the Major. On him the author has lavished all his resources."93 The Major's portrait as a man of the world has come out vividly. Thackeray has devised many incidents to show his skill in worldly matter. He is the person who put an end to the Pen — Fotheringey affair. He is the one who suggested Pen to advance in the world through marrying Blanche, a rich heiress. It was again he who showed Pen how to take advantage of the situation and contrives to snatch the seat of Clevering from the dissipated lord. This last aspect of the Major does not find favour with some critics: "The Major Pendennis described to us would not have stooped to an intrigue so sullying as the one by which
he tries to secure the Clavering seat and the Begum's fortune for his nephew. To suppress all knowledge of the existence of a felon father with the purpose of grasping a fortune and extorting a settlement - is a villainous meaness, too near hennel - practice for the average club man, be he ever so selfish, to stoop to. This is not very just. Among the social climbers, which the Major certainly was, this practice is very common. To get on in the world, to attain the name and wealth this sort of things become inevitable and the Major did it to advance Pen in his career.

Though it really outrages the reader's sense of decency this is not an unnatural thing. But we have a feeling that "it would be a pure waste of sympathy, in author or readers, to console with the loveless, joyless condition of this old man of fashion. Loves and joys are out of the Major's way - they would simply embarrass and annoy him, these troublesome emotions; the Major has his pleasures instead, and his place in society, which he fills in a manner perfectly becoming the high end he has in view." Thackeray does not appear to approve of such characters, but he likes to portray them, and is extremely deft in painting snobs.
like the Major. This is one of the reasons that the Major's portrait has come out so well.

After *Vanity Fair*, Thackeray has often been criticised for his incapacity to create a good and virtuous woman with brains. His Amelia is virtuous, no doubt, but she badly lacks intellect as well as common sense. She is so foolishly sentimental that she evokes our dissatisfaction instead of admiration. Thackeray has painted womanhood in Laura with all its good and weaknesses. Here, for the first time, Thackeray has given a share of brain and sense to his good woman. R.S. Rintoul comments upon her: “Laura combines all that goes to make up a good and charming woman, - tenderness, high spirit, (witness her first rejection of Arthur, ) clear sense, and self - respect; and these characteristics, united with unfeeling good-humour, and a delicate appreciation of the ridiculous, form a portrait that completely rescues Mr. Thackeray from the reproach of not being able to draw a good woman without making her silly and uninteresting. Even Laura's temporary outbreak of jealousy and cruelty to poor Fanny Bolton only makes her more thoroughly flesh -
and—blood woman; a creature whom, in our present
mundane imperfection, we prefer to an angel."98
Fildley also appreciated Thackeray for his presentation
of Laura: "We are glad that Mr. Thackeray has given
us Laura, a woman so perfectly womanly; amiable and
gentle, yet with plenty of sense and spirit; not a
mere heroine, but a good looking, lady-like,
sensible girl."97 The appreciation is indeed well-
deserved.

Laura has been introduced as "a young little
red-checked girl with a quality of shining brown
ringlets."98 Thackeray does not give much attention to
her childhood. Unlike Dickens, Thackeray was not
greatly interested in children. Laura receives the
author's attention only when she has grown up into a
charming young woman, when she reaches the age of
sixteen. Thackeray "opens his paragraph by disclaiming
any skill at the description of female beauty;"99 then he
proves the truth of this by some twenty lines,
simmering and wordy.100: 'At that age she had
attained her present altitude of five feet and four
inches, so that she was called tall and gawky by some,
and a Maypole by others, of her own sex, who prefer
little woman. But if she was a Maypole, she had beautiful roses about her head, and it is a fact that many swains were disposed to dance round her. She was ordinarily pale, with a faint rose tinge in her checks; but they flushed up in a minute when occasion called, and continued so blushing ever so long, the rose remaining after the emotion had passed away which had summoned those pretty flowers into existence. Her eyes have been described as very large from her earliest childhood, and retained that characteristic in later life. Good natured critics (always females) said that she was in the habit making play with those eyes, and ogling the gentlemen and ladies in her company; but the fact is, that Nature had made them so to shine and to look, and they could no more help so looking a shining than one star can help being brighter than another. It was doubtless to mitigate their brightness that Miss Laura's eyes were provided with two pairs of veils in the shape of the longest and finest black eyelashes, so that, when she closed her eyes, the same people who found fault with those orbs said that she wanted to show her eyelashes off; and, indeed, I dare say that to see her asleep would have been a pretty sight. Thackeray does not even stop
here. In the next paragraph he goes on to detail her features. This description is quite enough to present Laura's image in the reader's mind.

The most confusing thing about the character is perhaps Thackeray's attitude. We are unable to ascertain what he wanted to present through her. His vision of Laura has been influenced by his cousin Mary, whom he met in France when he was on his way with Pendennis. Greig remarks in this connection: "With his new knowledge of her (Mary) as she was now, a highly sophisticated woman of thirty-four, he could no longer reconstruct the picture of her as she had been some sixteen or seventeen years before; nor could he quite decide what he wished to make her, in the capacity of heroine."102 Whibley calls both Laura and Helen "bottles of tears reverberating phonographs of sobs."

And Greig is not ready to accept it: "Laura sobs when it suits the author, and remains hard and dry—eyed when you might expect tears. She is alternately gushing and prim, forgiving and intolerably self—righteous, childish and mature, strong willed and feeble."104 She can not even be termed as a conventional heroine, a
stock character from the fiction of the day. "Stock characters are predictable being stereotypes. Laura is not. Characters in fiction, like people in real life, may be inconsistent and yet convincing. Laura is just inconsistent." Greig is unable to find a pattern in her characterisation. This is not just; she certainly is not merely a 'bottle of tears'; and, often, she shows a resolution which really does her credit. Her refusal of Pen is the most apt example of her discretion. She is also, no doubt, 'gushing, intolerably self-righteous and feeble.' She is first and foremost a woman and however strong she might be, there were moments in her life when she was desolate and helpless. She has been shown to have a deep underlying feeling for Pen. She has refused Pen once and, by virtue of that refusal, had no further claim on Pen. When he was bent on improving his chances by marrying Blanche, what could Laura have done except to suffer privately? We do expect tears at that time which she duly sheds.

Another objection raised by Greig is that "at no point in the book did he ever 'live' Laura, as he had lived Becky, as he was beginning to live Blanche."
This is perhaps correct. Laura lacks the verve, the spirit, the energy which is generally associated with life. When she is not on the scene, the reader easily forgets her. Though Helen has also been given identical traits, her presence is always felt throughout the novel even when Thackeray was in London with Pen and had left her at Fairoaks. Thackeray has not made Laura's life much of a thing to describe, and to compel the reader to take interest in her. But here again, in fairness to Thackeray, we might remember the old truism that characters seldom come alive without a dash of wickedness or, at least, some mischief in their composition.

One other point also invites the reader's criticism — that is, Thackeray's treatment of the relationship between Laura and Pen. J.R. Findley asks: "Does not Mr. Thackeray make a little too much of the sisterly and fraternal element in the relations between her and Pen, if he all along meant to arrange matters as they are finally?" Thackeray must have planned to unite Pen and Laura from the very beginning. In almost all of his novels, the love of the Laurens have been rewarded, however colourless they might be. So, the
union of Pen and Laura is the inevitable end of the novel. Findley is perhaps right in his criticism. Thackeray should have reduced the 'sisterly and fraternal element' in the Pen and Laura relationship, to make the end a logical conclusion of their behaviour.

When Pen decides to marry Blanche, Laura was so much distressed that she was ready to remain unmarried and to serve Pen and his wife even in the capacity of a slave. On the other hand, when Pen was having an affair with Fanny, Laura also shows a passing weakness for Warrington. If Pen could have his Fanny why should not Laura have her Warrington? This sounds out of tune with Laura's character. In one place she shows resolution and pride enough to refuse Pen; on the other, she wishes to become a slave to him; and, in the meantime, has a weakness for Warrington. Thackeray leaves it unexplained. There does seem to be some incongruity in her character, unless we choose to explain her behaviour in terms of moods and impulses rather than strictly in terms of a steady character pattern.

Thackeray has made both Laura and Helen bundles of sentiment. Sentiments do play a major part
in a mother's life but why has Laura been put in the same category? Baker rightly says: "they are drawn with such an overplus of sentiment that they do not placate a hard-headed reader." 108

Undoubtedly in Laura, "Thackeray endeavoured to refine and bring up to date 'the old high - flown romantic circulating library sort of love,'" 109 She may have had the attractions for the first readers but for the 'hard - headed reader' - as termed by Baker - her character is not which can excite interest or admiration.

Thackeray has created Blanche, a vile woman, to present a contrast to Laura and to provide temptation in the way of Pen's social progress. Like others of his young women Thackeray has made her beautiful, so that Pen could fall an easy prey to her charms: 'She was fair like a sylph. She had fair hair with green reflections in it. But she had dark eyebrows. She had long black eyelashes which veiled beautiful brown eyes. She had such a slim waist, that it was a wonder to behold; and such slim feet, that you would have thought the grass would hardly bend under them. Her lips were of the colour of faint rosebuds, and her voice warbled limpidly over a set of
the sweetest little pearly teeth ever seen....... two lovely little pink dimples, that nestled in either cheek.\textsuperscript{110} This introduction vividly creates an image of Blanche in reader's mind.

Blanche has been given all the qualities which could make her vile and detestable. She is unable to excite the reader's sympathy and fellow feeling as Becky does. We take interest in Becky's career and, in the same corner of our heart, we wish her success; but, never for a moment do we have the same feeling for Blanche.

She has been shown to have a perpetual attraction for the opposite sex: 'Blanche inspired this admiration,......... in many men. She tried to please them, and flung out all her graces at once; came down to them with all her jewels on, all her smiles, and caéleries, and coxing and ogles. Then she grew tired of them and of trying to please them, and never having cared about them, dropped them; and the men grew tired of her, and dropped her too.'\textsuperscript{111} This is the thing which makes her contemptible. Becky also did the same but because she wanted to climb the social ladder, and
here Blanche is already on the top of the ladder. She did it for satisfying her vanity and for the fun of it. Thackeray makes Pen comment upon her: "I think her the most confounded little flirt in London"\textsuperscript{112} and Pen is also correct when he says, "she is not a girl for love and cottage."\textsuperscript{113} Ned Strong, her step-father's friend, also remarks: "I never saw such a little devil in my life."\textsuperscript{114} Blanche also judges herself well: "I cannot live out of the world, out of the excitement. If I cannot have emotions, I must have the world."\textsuperscript{115} Through such statements, Thackeray provides the reader with a good understanding of the character.

Vile she is, no doubt, but the verve which we find in Becky is nowhere to be found in Blanche. Becky engaged all her energy and her talents to achieve what she wanted. Blanche is comparatively subdued and dull, and we find less of life in her than in Becky. This may be due to the reason that Becky being the chief character of the \textit{Vanity Fair}, Thackeray has delineated her with all of his care and attention. Having a large canvas to work upon, Thackeray has all the opportunity to develop her in the most minute detail. Blanche is just a secondary character in career of Pen; and the frame in
which Thackeray has to fix her portrait is also smaller.

Mrs. Oliphant felt that Blanche was a blot on womankind and blamed Thackeray for it. "Blanche Amory is more detestable, because she is less clever than Becky. How much does Mr. Thackeray owe to the world of womankind, by way of reparation for foisting into their ranks such a creation as this? Nothing less than a Desdemona can atone for such an insult."\(^{116}\) This does not seem just. How can Blanche be an insult to womankind? In the works of almost all the novelists we have vile women like her. In real life also, we do not have all Laura's and Helens: Blaches and Becky's also exist, and play a significant part in the drama of human life.

After going through the novel, we do realise however, that Thackeray has enjoyed portraying this woman. Whibley comments: "When she unmask her battery she is more than a match in mere worldliness for the major himself and it is clear that Thackeray drew her after life and with genuine delight."\(^{117}\) Mrs. Carlyle has also appreciated the presentation: in Blanche Thackeray depicted the "new sophisticated sort of love that Victorians had come to associate with the novels
of George Sand. Though this brilliantly portrayed
effect is explored in composing a volume
of poetry entitled Mes Larmes, she is also a complete
worldling, whose knowingness ( "How droll they are les
moeurs!" ) is in pointed contrast to Laura.118 This
contrast heightens the individual characteristics of
both Blanche and Laura.

Thus Blanche’s character as a vile, depraved
woman has come out most successfully, and serves
Thackeray’s purpose accordingly. As is perhaps inevitable,
the virtuous Laura appears colourless, and Blanche
certainly is brilliant and fascinating though not to
the same extent as Becky Sharp.

Edmond has always been highly praised for its
host of life-like characters. In this novel Thackeray
has come out with his best in character presentation.
"In none of his books does he keep so firm a grasp
upon his characters as in Edmond, which is as consistent
in portraiture as it is in style and effect."119

We may consider first the character of Harry,
the hero, in order to see how Thackeray has presented
such a masterly character. Thackeray has concentrated
upon Harry from his very childhood. He has been shown a very simple, sober and melancholic lad. Thackeray has detailed his childhood: "He had a father and no father; a nameless mother that had been brought to ruin, perhaps, by the very father whom Harry could only acknowledge in secret and with a blush, and whom he could neither love nor revere." Thus Harry has been shown an illegitimate child and that too with full knowledge of it. The realization of this is shown to have affected the whole personality of Harry. Thackeray has accordingly made him create around himself a wall of seclusion which was later penetrated by the family of Sir Francis.

Thackeray has employed all the devices which he could in Harry's characterization. Wagenknecht explains Thackeray's method of character - painting very accurately in his book *The Cavalcade of the English Novel*. The whole of the novel is written in third person though Harry himself tells his own life. "The method, though dramatic involves no conflict with Thackeray's essentially subjective approach of fiction, for Esmond is as much given to moralizing as Thackeray himself. The novelist resists the temptation to make his hero a
mere chorus - character, however, Emond's judgment is sometimes at fault - as in his extreme contempt for Marlborough - and Thackeray adds footnotes written by other members of the family, to guide the reader's judgment and assist in creating verisimilitude. 121 Thus Thackeray has given Harry some speeches which may be called ' moreliving ' which help in revealing the character. Harry declares: "If you ( Lady Castlewood ) will have me stay, I will. What matters whether or no I make my way in life, or whether a poor bastard dies as unknown as he is now? ' Tis enough that I have your love and kindness surely; and to make you happy is duty enough for me." 122 This is quite sufficient to reveal Harry's devotion for his patroness; Lady Castlewood. Thackeray also steps in between the action and adds some sentences to define broadly the traits and sometimes inserts finer shades to Harry's personality. For example: 'Tis true that Harry both spent, gave and lent his money very freely'; 123 'The sight of these ( pox marks ) in Emond's heart always created a sort of rage of pity and seeing them on the face of the lady whom he loved best......' 124 and 'To love children and be gentle with them, was an instinct, rather than a
Such sentences enable the reader to form an image of Harry, and also help the author to present a life-like portrait of his hero.

Thackeray has painted him in very natural colours, and every aspect of Harry's character reflects life. His characterisation is so uniform that never for a moment does he ring false: Harry was an orphan, and there was none to love him. Even the servants of the house did not treat him on equal footing as 'he was no servant though a dependent, no relative though he bore the name and inherited the blood of the house.' Thus Harry has been shown to have a gloomy disposition knowing fully well his birth and status in the family. He wanted to give love and affection but there was none to receive it. Thackeray has himself explained it; Harry 'had a fond and affectionate heart, tender to weakness, that would fain attach itself to somebody, and did not seem at rest until it had found a friend who would take charge of it.' Thackeray provides Lady Rachel to bring out Harry's softer side of personality. The author has made Harry, devotee of his patroness, and does not leave the reader guessing. He
himself explains: 'It cannot be called love, that a lad of twelve years of age, little more than a menial, felt for an exalted lady, his mistress: but it was worship.'

This adoration later develops into a sort of love which led Harry to marry the woman. In the beginning it has been shown to be an almost filial love Harry's sole engagement at that time was to carry out Rachel's orders. 'Indeed the boy loved the catechiser so much that he would have subscribed to anything she bade him, and was never tired of listening to her fond discourses....' Harry was content with this life and considered it 'the happiest period of his life.' As he grew he started loving the daughter, Beatriz, though she did not respond. But the sort of love and regard which he had for Rachel never grew less.

Here we see Thackeray's craftsmanship. 'The transference of a man's love from daughter to mother is not a sympathetic motive for romance. But Thackeray insists so gravely that her surrender is not surprising, is even inevitable.' Thackeray has beautifully shown Harry's filial love transferred into sexual love. Harry
himself was least co-gnizant of it; he realised it very late when he was exasperated by Beatriz's deceits.

Baker appreciates Thackeray's skill in presenting Harry's passion for both, because Thackeray was cautious "so as not to offend against probability or against the most delicate feeling, which was, to show his hero in love with Beatriz and then with the mother of Beatriz. So firm is his grasp of the characters that the revelation comes without the least shock, but on the contrary, with the assurance that it is the right and the natural consummation of all that has preceded." 132

At first, Saintsbury could not accept the end. Later he realised that it was all very probable: "there is.........nothing for it but to confess that it is very shocking — and excessively human." 133 In Victorian times, this end certainly created a sensation. It was inconceivable to them that a man could marry the mother while he loved the daughter. It was a sort of blasphemy to their traditions and norms. But at least one of his contemporaries, George Brinley, was able to appreciate it, and was able to vouch for the psychological truth of it. The "record of Colonel Hamond's life is
throughout a record of his attachment to one woman, towards whom his childish gratitude for protection grows with his growth into a complex feeling, in which filial affection and an unconscious passion are curiously blended. So unconscious, indeed, is the passion; that, though the reader has no difficulty in interpreting it, Esmond himself is for years the avowed and persevering though hopeless lover of this very lady's daughter."

Frank O'Connor has explained this phenomenon in terms of the author's life, and has also tried to explore the psychology of Thackeray's mind. "It is not too much to say that Esmond succeeds because it is the perfect solution of an Oedipal situation that underlies all Thackeray's work. That sort of situation is not at all unusual, for Stendhal analyzed it very acutely in himself, nor is it in the least abnormal; it is the way in which life resolves an inescapable conflict between a boy's love of his mother and of the woman who will be his children's mother. It is, perhaps, more important in Thackeray because it requires something of the kind to account for a quality that every critic perceives in
him. For Cecil, in his excellent essay, it is a 'false
tone.' For me it is a despondency more deeply rooted
than Hardy's, a truly Nordic gloom. I do not think it
far fetched to suggest that this gloom originated in
the years when Thackeray, a boy of six, welcomed his
mother's remarriage in the hope that it would hasten
her return to him. 136

As far as the identification of an Oedipal
situation is concerned, it seems tenable; but it also
seems scarcely necessary or even profitable to trace
it to the author's early life. If we ignore the
relationship between the mother and the daughter for
the time being the matter becomes simpler. The dazzling
youthful beauty, no doubt, tempts more and Harry was
duly charmed by it. The mellowed elegance affects more
only when one comes into closer contact for a
considerable period which Harry did realise on seeing
the difference in temperament of Rachel and Beatriz.
He came to know that simple domestic virtues can give
him the lasting happiness which he wanted. So he selects
Rachel for marriage. It may be called coincidence that
these two women, Rachel and Beatriz, happen to be mother
and daughter.
Thus the end may come like a shock but this end is the only string which threads the whole book. It unites each and every incident. If we read it carefully, we certainly find a very gradual change of feeling in Harry, which has been justified by Thackeray.

Beatrix Fawond, the heroine of this piece is one of Thackeray's triumphs. It is the only character which imparts some glamour to the novel otherwise it would have been a dull reading. It is her dazzling beauty which outshines the rest of the characters and even the creator gets overwhelmed with her elegance and charm. Thackeray has introduced her in the following words: she is 'agile as a nymph, lofty as a queen — now melting, now imperious, now sarcastic, there was no single movement of hers but was beautiful';

'a pair of bright eyes with a dozen glances suffice to subdue a man; to enslave him, and inflame him; to make him even forget; they dazzle him so that the past becomes straightway dim to him and he so prizes them that he would give all his life to possess';

Such statements clearly show that Thackeray relishes his creation and is himself enchanted by her beauty. This is not the language of the one who is describing her
beauty indifferently but of one who seems to bask in the warmth of her charms. Roscoe rightly comments: "No novelist, no poet, has produced a fuller effect of it: Beatriz is, perhaps, the finest picture of splendid, lustrous, physical beauty ever given to the world." Thackeray has shown this girl with all those qualities which go to make a beautiful woman vile, but, at the same time, pleasing also. Brimley has aptly said: "Miss Beatriz Ramond — familiarly and correctly termed 'Trix by her friends — is one of those dangerous young ladies who fascinate everyone, men or women, that they choose to fascinate everyone, but care for nobody but themselves; and their care for themselves simply extends to the continued gratification of a boundless love of admiration, and the kind of power which results from it." She has been shown to be extremely selfish. She was engaged all the time in feeding her vanity or advancing her interests. Her brother Frank rightly says: "I can't make out Beatriz; she cares for none of us — she only thinks about herself........." It is just because of her personal advancement that she ignored Harry's suit; and, deceived her own family in the conspiracy to restore the Pretender. She has also
been given jealousy, and this she had from her very childhood. She could not tolerate her parents' attention towards her brother. This jealousy goes to the limit when she is unable to tolerate her father loving her mother more than her.

The main stress is on her coquettish behaviour. Thackeray has shown it as the axis on which the whole of her character revolves. It was her desire to be admired by all the males around her. She even tried to tempt them with the aid of her beauty. "She had been (shown) a coquette from the earliest times trying her frisks and fancies." Her father strikes the keynote of her character by saying: "Thou wilt forsake an old friend for a new one, Trix." This she did many a time. She knew no obligation or duty which could restrain her impulses. The whole life of Beatriz is the story of her going from one man to another, and this ambition to get the highest was not fulfilled. Thackeray has made her suffer at the end of the novel. She is forced to leave England as there was none to support her after all her deceptions and treacheries. In the later novel, *The Virginian*, she reappears as
Baroness Bernstein. On the Continent she has been shown to have married twice; she got the money and the title but was lonely and could not get lasting happiness. At her death—bed Thackeray makes Beatriz repent her refusal of Harry's love. At the end she is made to realise that it was only Harry who truly loved her, and that it was wrong and foolish of her to have rejected him.

Thackeray uses the device of making direct or indirect comments upon Beatriz. All the characters are made to help the author in presenting the character of Beatriz. Harry remarks about her; "I don't think Trix will break her heart about him (Blandford). Whenever she sees a man, she makes eyes at him."143

"She likes your face well enough and she likes your person. But this is not enough. She wants a commandant—chief, not a Colonel. Were a duke to ask her, she would leave an earl whom she had promised,"144 says her mother about her. Thackeray made Rachel also his own mouth-piece, in saying, "Her headstrong will frightens me; whose jealous temper and whose vanity no words or prayers of mine can cure—only suffering, only experience and remorse afterwards. Oh, Henry, she
will make no man happy who loves her." 146 Thus Thackeray, in a way, passes judgement against her character. There are many such remarks made by other characters upon her. In his own person also, Thackeray describes her habits, traits and temperament: "She was imperious, she was light-minded, she was flighty, she was false, she had no reverence in her character." 146 He also compares her with the Greek goddess 'Diane - haughty, rapid, imperious with eyes and arrows that dart and kill." 147 In this manner Thackeray utilises all the available characters to aid him in presenting Beatrix.

Even Beatrix herself is made to remark upon her own actions and manners. She analyses herself more than her predecessors - Becky and Blanche. She is shown to explain her neglect of Harry in his very presence: "if you had not been down on your knees and so humble, you might have fared better with me & a woman of my spirit is to be won by gallantry and not by sighs and rueful faces". 148 "I like flattery and compliments and you give me none" 149 She says also that she never loved the Duke to whom she was betrothed.
but the Duke has the capacity to extract gratitude, obedience and admiration. At the same time she admits: "in eight years, no man hath ever touched my heart. Yes.... you did once for a little ....... You are too good for me somehow. I could not make you happy, and should break my heart in trying and not being able to love you......."158 Thus she had very accurately viewed the whole situation and was certainly correct in her surmise that she was not suited to Harry. Thackeray has shown her to be selfish and unreliable but she has been also given admirable intelligence.

Through all such descriptions, Thackeray is able to present the character remarkably. She is certainly an extraordinary woman but we do find such women in society who have their eyes all the time on the main chance. Each of Thackeray's sentence imparts reality to Beatriz's character. However, Charles Whibley is not ready to consider this character life-like: "Mrs. Beatriz is not so successful (as Lady Rachel). She, indeed, does not come into her own, until she appears in later life as Heder de Bernstein. Her ca-prices are too vain for belief; her rejection too heartless."151 To Whibley she is a "picturesque
apparition rather than a real woman." This is perhaps rather extreme. She has flashes of good nature if not any conspicuous virtue. And G. H. Lewes is nearer the mark when he says that, "in the portrait of the coquette Beatrix, he has thrown so much real impulsive goodness, that she becomes a new creation — and, let us add a true one." 

Mrs. Oliphant draws attention to Thackeray's habit of imparting distinctness to his protagonists but he could not make Harry's as distinct as he had made Beatrix's character. To make up for his deficiency in the case of Harry, "there is more distinctness than is desirable in the character of Beatrix. This bold, unscrupulous, and daring beauty, in whom the passion for admiration and the delight of conquest seem to possess, the full power of passions more gross in their nature, is another of Mr. Thackeray's special belonging. Her triumph in her own dazzling charms, and the mischief they make everywhere — the impetus with which her magnificent vanity carries her on the trickery to which she stoops, and the intrigues into which she enters — never because her own heart is interested, but solely from an insatiable longing to madden everyone about her—are combined with a singular
power. This splendid creature not only obeys her natural impulse to destroy, but glories in the havoc she makes, and goes forth to new conquests in exulting power over the graves of her victims. All of Thackeray’s important bad characters tend to step forward in prominence and this prominence is as much the result of the author’s accustomed care and deliberation, as the result of the natural tendency of the wicked to steal the limelight from the virtuous.

Beatrix is created generally on the model of Becky Sharp. But we find a difference in the conception: "she ( Beatrix ) is selfish and hard, but she knows her faults as well as we do, and she sees out and beyond her to a higher plane of being toward which she knows she can never aspire. Becky, was always sure that she could attain whatever she wished. On the contrary : "If Miss Rebecca Sharp had really been a Montmorency, and a matchless beauty and a maid of honour to a queen she might have sublimated into a Beatrix Esmond...."

Thus Beatrix is certainly a variation from Becky though the genus is the same. Becky has been certainly acclaimed by the critics but Beatrix’s portrait is, perhaps, mellowed and more refined. Brisky does not
find much difference in the temperaments of Beatriz and Becky. The difference lies in their unequal birth and station of life.

Lady Rachel is also typical of Thackeray's good women. She has been fashioned more after Laura and Helen, than after Amalia. We do not find much difference between these good women except that at first Rachel had not been intended for the pedestal of heroine, which she occupies later on in spite of the author.
(The relationship between her and Harry which is the most striking factor of her life, has been discussed in detail under Harry's character.)

We may next consider Colonel Newcome from the novel of *The Newcomes*. He is the most sentimental and tragic of Thackeray's characters. He has been shown as a very simple and straightforward person. His first entry in the novel is graphically painted: 'There came into the 'Cave' a gentleman with a lean brown face and long black mustachios, dressed in very loose clothes, and evidently a stranger to the place. At least he had not visited it for a long time. He was pointing out changes to a lad who was in his company; and, calling
for sherry - and - water, he listened to the music, and
twirled his mustachios with great enthusiasm. Even
after this introduction, Thackeray has never missed a
chance to add something more to the character of the
Colonel; for example: 'It is the nature of such a simple
soul as Thomas Newcome to see but one side of a question,
and having once fixed Ethel's worldliness in his mind... to
allow no argument of advocates of the other side to
shake his displeasure.' Thus Thackeray has shown
the Colonel to be so simple as to believe everybody.
But once he was annoyed with anyone, no one could
mitigate his displeasure. He was bent upon disapproving
Ethel's behaviour, and no argument of Clive's was strong
enough to change his attitude.

The Colonel has been shown to be ignorant of cunning and deceit. Clive is correct in saying: 'He
knows nothing about it, his politics are all sentiment
and kindness....' Thackeray himself comments on
the Colonel's behaviour: 'I protest it is with pain and
reluctance I have to write, that the good old man was in
error....' It is all very evident from the
Colonel's course of action that his election campaign
was not correct, still Thackeray does not leave the reader to make his own assessment.

Thackeray has presented him as a man of very generous and sympathetic nature. He was pained by the fact that it was due to his folly that his friends and relatives lost their money. The realisation of this made him bear all insults and cruelties at the hands of Mrs. Mackenzie. Thackeray made Clive remark upon his father: "He would make away with himself, but he deems this is his punishment, and that he must bear it as long as it pleased God."182 After declaring himself bankrupt, he could have led an easy life with his pension, but Thackeray has given him that sense of honour which forbade him to take any money till the debts were paid. Thackeray has fashioned Colonel Newcome after the image of Sir Charles Grandison. "There has been no nobler sketch than that of the Colonel. The innocent heart and simple honour of this old man, and his horror of all falsehood and impurity, are enough to cover a multitude of Mr. Thackeray's sins......... The key - note of the story is struck high and sweet in this character, which is at once so lofty and so childlike; and we cannot pass it by without..... admiring Mr. Thackeray's skill in
retrospective story - the record of Thomas Newcome's misfortunes and troubles in his boyhood, which is almost as well done as the corresponding period in the history of Henry Fasmond.\footnote{233}

Thackeray intended to make Clive the hero; but the way he has portrayed the characters, the Colonel steals the show. Greig considers it a failure in design: "As an agent in the main plot, Colonel Newcome had four tasks to perform; he had to behave as a fond and foolish father to Clive, as an affectionate and then disapproving uncle to Ethel, as an uncompromising enemy to Barnes, and as a victim of the horrible Mrs. MacKenzie. But obviously, as the book developed, he acquired far more prominence than his functions in the plot justified."\footnote{234} This by the way, constitutes the very definition of a round, living character. Thackeray may have planned to make Clive the hero but after a chapter or two it becomes manifest that Thackeray's attention is more on the father than on the son.

The qualities which Thackeray has given to the Colonel cannot be said to belong to any group. He
is altogether human and nothing else. "Colonel Newcome is conceived and executed in a spirit that has never been excelled. He is a noble creation, worthy of any age, or of any reputation past or present. He never bores, or flags, or proses, and notwithstanding the evident care which Mr. Thackeray takes of him, we are solicitous of the great-hearted gentleman to the last; and when the last does come, and he is discovered in the robes of a poor brother of Charterhouse, we may say what Scott said of certain scenes in Clarissa Harlowe, that 'few, jealous of manly equanimity, should read them for the first time in the presence of society.' Upon the creation of this character Mr. Thackeray may rest his fame."185

Ethel is the heroine of the novel, The Newcomes, and is fashioned altogether differently from Thackeray's earlier heroines. His advancing years have certainly influenced Ethel's portrait. As for as physical appearance is concerned, Thackeray could never create an ordinary looking heroine. Ethel has been given a fair amount of physical charm and grace. She is the 'fair image of Youth, Health and Modesty.'186 Like others
among Thackeray's characters, she gets a detailed introduction. From the beginning she has been shown 'a haughty girl of highest spirit, resolute and imperious.' She had many brothers and sisters, but her temperament and behaviour was such that she was unable to adjust among them: 'at home she was alone, foroucha, and intractable; and did the battle with the governess, and overcame them one after another.' Thackeray has led us also to infer that the lack of congenial environment and the influence of worldly relatives spoiled her.

Ethel is the combination of good and bad traits. Whitwell Elwin remarks: "Mr. Thackeray is not, for the most part, a flattering painter of women. The clever are artful and wicked; the good are insipid. Ethel is a great exception, and has no counter part in Vanity Fair or Pendennis." She is worldly like his other heroines but her worldliness is not crude. It is tempered with her good and gentle nature. Becky, Blanche, Beatrix are all inherently worldly. Becky could not improve even while living with a girl like Amelia. The mothers of Blanche and Beatrix were gentle
and good natured; but, could not influence their
daughters. Here Thackeray has moulded Ethel from a
different clay. She was inherently good but was spoiled
by a worldly grand-mother. Other heroines were
beyond any influence. They were what their natures made
them. Ethel came out, not according to her nature but
as her grand mother had groomed her. Thackeray has so
pointed her that the reader is made of the good and
generous impulses in her in spite of all her worldly
behaviour.

She has been shown completely human, and
cannot be said to belong to any particular group or
class. All her faults and virtues are those which
belong generally to women. Before Ethel, we had Becky,
Amelia, Blanche, Laura, Helen, Beatriz and Lady Rachel -
in all those cases, Thackeray seems somewhat certain
about their virtues and vices. He is assured in
describing their traits. With Ethel he has not painted
clearly drawn - out virtues and vices. These are
intermingled in her character. This may perhaps show
that Thackeray's mind became more forgiving and tolerant.
He is able to recognise the true woman in Ethel. We can
say that Ethel represents an advance on Thackeray's conception of womanhood.

Thackeray has shown Ethel as an undecided sort of person. She was unable to decide what she really wanted. She was not sure of her feelings, when she listened to her heart, she was drawn towards Clive but worldly prudence forbade her any such sentimentality. Throughout the novel the inconsistency in her behaviour is manifest. She had thought such as these: "why should they (poor) not be as good as we are." or "will there be no day when this mammon worship will cease among us?" After this she declares that she loved worldly pleasures more than the beggarly love of Clive. When she was influenced by Lady Kew she is made to treat Clive scornfully but when she was herself she always repented of her neglect of him, and her inability to marry him. Clive himself says: "sometimes she seems to like me and then she leaves me, sometimes she is quite kind - kind she always is ....... you know what I mean and then up come the old Countess, or a young Marquis, or some fellow with a handle to his name and she whistles me off till the next convenient opportunity."
Thackeray has shown her loving Clive all the time though the world had dried up her natural impulses. In the moments of reflection she admitted: "whenever you and your father are, however I ever think of you but - but you know how? I always shall, always. There are certain feelings we have which I hope never can change; though if you please, about them I intend never to speak any more. Neither you nor I can alter our conditions but must make the best of them." She was exasperated by having to go after one rich suitor or another, in order to capture them. Her natural inclination was on some other side and she was dragged by her grandmother towards the worldly and vicious life. When Ethel reflected over this she said, "How I wish I was religious like Madam de Florac." But not long after this she said, "I who pretend to revolt (against Lady Kew) - I like it too; and I who rail and scorn flatterers oh, I like admiration. I am pleased when the women hate me and the young men leave them for me. Though I despise many of these yet I can't help drawing them towards me. This inconsistency in her behaviour brings Ethel closer to life.

For the first time Thackeray has shown the
development in a character. We do not find many changes or developments in his earlier characters. They do not grow. Here in Ethel's character three clear stages are through which she develops. In the beginning she has been shown a very gentle, simple, generous and honest girl, "endowed with beauty, talent, and artlessness, and blessed with an independent mind which lifts her above the sordid atmosphere in which she is bred." 176

The inherent haughtiness of her character is softened by her feminine gentleness. She admires whatever is good. While living with worldly parents and relatives she has the goodness and courage to sympathise with and love honest and poor relatives. In the second stage she comes under the influence of Lady Kew, her match—making grandmother. The company of that worldly society—woman begins to spoil her "she grew coquettish and wayward; but retains her generous impulses her proud spirit and indomitable will." 177 She still admired Clive but became worldly enough to decide not to marry him. Thackeray has very nicely shown the gradual influence of exaggerated importance attached to social distinctions on Ethel. Thackeray was not willing to let this image of Ethel last long. He brings two incidents
which are shown to have influenced Ethel and her course of life - the elopement of her brother's wife and her own marriage with Lord Farintosh. The first tragedy prevents the second one. She came to know the consequence of mercenary alliances. Beside, Thackeray plans for Lady Kay to die so as to release his heroine from her clutches. After this, she realises her mistake and views her past life with regret. She was also ignorant of Clive's marriage. The knowledge of it vexed her - "the servitude of taxes which she pays for the past weakness but she who has played so long with the hearts of others surpasses them all in schooling her own....."178 The woman which emerges out of this trial is more subdued, calm; she has been purified from the "stains contracted in her worldly time......"179 In this way Thackeray has shown her development marvellously in a convincing way.

As of old, Thackeray has used the device of commenting upon Ethel directly in his own person as well as making other characters comment upon her. Many of the characters accused Ethel of being so worldly and cruel as to refuse Clive. It appears that Thackeray is
in love with her and defends her. When Pen said, "she is a flirt, she can't help her nature. She tries to vanquish everyone who comes near her," Thackeray does not fail to remark: 'Ethel is very wrong certainly. But recollect, she is very young. She is in other people's hands. She has been bred up and governed by a very worldly family and taught their tradition — so if Ethel worships at a certain image which a great number of good folks in England bow to, let us not be too angry with her idolatry, and bear with our queen a little longer before we make our pronunciamento.' This does seem somewhat strange; and this sort of direct comment or defence must be considered a blemish in art of characterisation. A too constant and active guidance is scarcely relishable. Thackeray has also given her the capacity to reflect upon her course of action, the way of life she was leading. She remarks upon her situation in the society: 'We are sold. No, there is no freedom for us but everyday as I think of our slavery, I revolt against it more. That poor wretch, that poor girl whom my brother is to marry, why did she not revolt and fly?' But, with this chain of thoughts, Thackeray makes her conscious of what she was doing with Clive: 'I would if
I loved a man sufficiently, loved him better than the world, than wealth, than rank, than fine houses and titles — and I feel I love these best — would give up all to follow him.  

Greig finds fault with Thackeray's characterisation of Ethel: "It is one of the worst blunders in the book that Ethel, as presented by Thackeray, should ever have consented to betroth herself to Farintosh. But the reason for it is all too plain. Thackeray is so possessed by his theme that he is quite ready to play fast and loose with his characters."

This is not very just. Acceptance of Lord Farintosh by Ethel is just a phase in the development of her character. Thackeray made Ethel accept Lord Farintosh to show that she was completely influenced by society, rank and wealth from which she extricates herself later.

These are a few of the major characters. Thackeray has also taken the help of minor characters to create the effect of a social background. They do not contribute much to the plot and theme; they provide only a sort of background against which major characters are
developed. These minor characters may belong to a group or class or may be individualized. Some are merely introduced to create the feeling of a crowd, and some do perform significant jobs allotted to them by the novelist. These minor personages are generally just sketched in outline but are often developed in detail. They have not been given a large canvas as in the case of major ones but they are at least introduced with most minute details. Ned Strong, the friend of Sir Cleaverling is painted in such vivid colours as Thackeray uses for the major characters.

After The Newcomes Thackeray has written two more novels, The Virginians and Philip. In these novels we do not find any striking characters. All the characters are fashioned and shaped through the same devices which he has used in his earlier novels. Except the Baroness Bernstein, née Beatrix Esmond, all are insignificant in comparison to those which are discussed here. It is quite possible that his interest has shifted, and he could not give any striking portrait as he does in the earlier novels.
References and Notes.

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2. ibid.
3. ibid.
4. Betsky, Seymour; 'Becky enables Thackeray to offer a powerful indictment of his society that is yet closely controlled to the point almost, of ostensible negligence...'; from an article Society in Thackeray and Trollope.

5. "If a novelist's personas are 'alive', then - to use a term of Henry James's - a little 'push' here and there by the narrator and the story is made..... One or two pushes dealt to personages seemingly actual and you get a nouvelle such as 'Dennis Hoggarty's Wife'; ......... A hundred or two pushes and you get one of his vast novels ........." - Tillotson, Thackeray; The Novelist; p. 118, 1

6. ibid. p. 164, 2

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<td>O'Connor, Frank; <em>The Mirror on the Roadway</em>, p. 118.2</td>
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<td>38</td>
<td>Ray, G.F.; loc. cit., p. 424.3</td>
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<td>39</td>
<td>Kettle, A.; loc. cit., p. 166.2</td>
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<td>40</td>
<td>Ibid.; p. 165.2</td>
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<td>41</td>
<td>Ibid.; p. 166.2</td>
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<td>42</td>
<td>Neill, S.D.; loc. cit., p. 154.3</td>
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<td>43</td>
<td>Tillotson, Kathleen; <em>The Novel of Eighteen Forties</em></td>
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<td>44</td>
<td>Kettle, A.; loc. cit., p. 166.3</td>
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45. ibid.
46. ibid.
47. Betsy, B.; loc. cit.; p. 181.3
48. Trollope, A.; loc. cit.; p. 93.1
50. ibid.
51. Kettle, A.; loc. cit.; p. 167.1
52. ibid.
53. ibid.
54. Forster, John; a review in the Examiner,
    13 Nov. 1858, 723-6
55. Pandemia: The Profane
56. Pandemia
57. ibid.
58. ibid.
59. ibid.
60. ibid.
61. ibid.
62. ibid.
63. ibid.
64. Greig, J.Y.T.: Thackeray: A Reconsideration;
    p. 94.4
65. Correspondence
66. Greig, J.Y.T.: loc. cit.; p. 54.4
67. *Pendennis*
68. ibid.
69. ibid.

70. Baker, E.A.; *History of the English Novel*
    *Vol VII*
71. ibid.
72. ibid.
73. ibid.
74. Tillotson, G.; *loc. cit.*, p. 124,2
75. ibid.

76. *The Newcomes*, ch. xxviii

77. 'The reception of *Pendennis* taught Thackeray a lesson that he did not forget. Henceforth he was content to follow the method that he had adopted in narrating Becky's later career in *Vanity Fair*, and hint at what he could not describe in detail.'

    - Ray, G.N.; *loc. cit.*, p. 125,2

78. *Letters*
79. *Vanity Fair*
80. Ray, G.N.; *loc. cit.*, p. 125,1

81. 'No doubt he intended *Pendennis* to be a true "picture of a man". Indeed the character of Fanny Bolton does seem to have been introduced into
the story to provide him with the light intrigue
which was necessary to complete such a portrait.'
— Cecil, D., loc. cit., p. 101

Ray, G.N.; loc. cit., p. 125.1

"the moral views controlling Victorian fiction
prohibited any hero, even an imperfect hero,
from being represented as "living in sin" with
an unmarried girl. With the consequence that
Pendennis is presented to us as improbably
chaste," — Cecil, David; loc. cit., p. 101

84. Pendennis
85. ibid.
86. ibid.
87. ibid.
88. ibid.
89. Wagenknecht; Cavalcade of the English Novel
90. Pendennis
91. Mrs. Oliphant; 'Mr. Thackeray the Novelist',
Blackwood's Magazine, Jan. 1855
lxxvii, 86 - 89

92. Pendennis
93. Mrs. Oliphant; loc. cit.
94. From an unsigned review in Athenæum, 7 Dec.
1880, 1273 - 5
Mrs. Oliphant; loc. cit.

Rintoul, R.S.; 'Thackeray's Pendennis', the
Spectator 21 Dec. 1860 xxiii

Findley J.R.; Spectator, 18 Dec. 1860

Pendennis

'I am not good at description of female beauty;
and, indeed, do not care for it in the least
(thinking that goodness and virtue are, of
course, far more advantageous to a young lady
than any mere fleeting charms of person and
face), and so shall not attempt any particular
delineation of Miss Laura Bell at the age of
sixteen years.' — Pendennis

Greig, J.Y.T.; loc. cit.

Pendennis

Greig, J.Y.T.; loc. cit.

Whibley, C.; loc. cit.

Greig, J.Y.T.;

ibid.

ibid.

Findley, J.R.; loc. cit.

Baker, F.A.; loc. cit.

Ray, C.; loc. cit.
110. Pandemonia
111. ibid.
112. ibid.
113. ibid.
114. ibid.
115. ibid.
116. Mrs. Oliphant; loc. cit.
117. Whibley, C.; loc. cit.
118. quoted by Ray C.N., in Age of Wisdom
119. Whibley, C. loc. cit.
120. Eamond
121. Wagenknecht; loc. cit.; p. 275-4
122. Eamond
123. ibid.
124. ibid.
125. ibid.
126. ibid.
127. ibid.
128. ibid.
129. ibid.
130. ibid.
133. Saintsbury, C.
134. Brimley, C.
135. O'Connor, F.; loc. cit., p. 123.2
136. Esmond
137. ibid.
138. Roscoe, W.C.;
139. Brimley, C.
140. Esmond
141. ibid.
142. ibid.
143. ibid.
144. ibid.
145. ibid.
146. ibid.
147. ibid.
148. ibid.
149. ibid.
150. ibid.
151. Whibley, C.; loc. cit.
152. ibid.
153. Lewis, G.H.; from 'Thackeray's New Novel', LONDON
   6 Nov, 1882
154. Mrs. Oliphant; loc. cit.
165. ibid.
167. Cecil, David; loc. cit.
168. *The Newcomen*
169. ibid.
170. ibid.
171. ibid.
172. ibid.
173. ibid.
174. ibid.
175. ibid.
163. Mrs. Oliphant, loc. cit.
165. Unsigned review; *The Times*; 20 Aug. 1855, 5
166. *The Newcomen*
167. ibid.
168. ibid.
169. Elwin, Whitwell; *Quarterly Review*, Sept. 1855 xcvii, 350 - 78
177. ibid.
178. ibid.
179. ibid.
180. The Newcomen
181. ibid.
182. ibid.
183. ibid.