



William Makepeace Thackeray (1811-1863)

Context

Born in 1811 in Calcutta, India, where his father worked for the East India Company. First and only child of Richmond Thackeray and Anne Becher Thackeray. Sent to school in England, as was the fashion for colonial-born children. His father had died in 1815 and his mother remarried to her first love, Captain Henry Carmichael-Smyth. They joined William in England in 1820. Like most English children, William was miserable at school but he developed two habits: sketching and reading novels. Thackeray attended Cambridge, where he lost a poetry contest to one Alfred Tennyson, though several of William's satirical poems were published around this time. During 1831-33 Thackeray studied law at the Middle Temple, London, but had little enthusiasm to continue his studies. He also began to study art, while he supported himself by selling sketches and working at a bill discounting firm.

Thackeray abandoned his studies without taking a degree, having lost some of his inheritance of twenty thousand pounds through gambling. In the beginning of the 1830s he visited Germany, where he met Goethe. In 1833 he brought with a large heritage the *National Standard*, but lost his fortune a year later in the Indian bank failures and other bad investments.

His mother and stepfather, mostly broke due to an economic collapse in India (where they'd left most of their money), scraped together all of the funds they could find and started a newspaper called the *Constitution*. William was appointed the paper's Paris correspondent at £450 per year. He'd also had a little book of satirical essays on the ballet published.

In 1836 he married a poor Irish girl, Isabella Shawe; they had three daughters. The birth of their first child, nee Thackeray Ritchie (1837-1919) who became a writer and whose impressionistic texts impressed Virginia Woolf, was followed by the collapse of the *Constitution*.

William began writing as many articles as humanly possible and sending them to any newspaper that would print them. This was a precarious sort of existence which would continue for most of the rest of his life. He was fortunate enough to get two popular series going in two different publications. Thackeray began to contribute regularly to *Fraser's Magazine*, *Morning Chronicle*, *New Monthly Magazine* and *The Times*. His writings attracted first attention in *Punch*, where he satirized English snobbery. These sketches reappeared in 1848 as *The Book of Snobs*, stating in it that "he who meanly admires mean things is a Snob." In 1840 Isabella Thackeray suffered a mental breakdown, from which she never recovered, though she survived Thackeray by thirty years. The author was forced to send his children to France to his mother. The children returned

to England in 1846 to live with him. In the 1840s Thackeray started to gain name as a writer. In *Vanity Fair* he gave a panoramic picture of high life in England, and created one of the most fascinating immoral female characters, Becky Sharp. "I think I could be a good woman if I had five thousand a year." (from *Vanity Fair*) The book brought him prosperity and made him established writer and popular lecturer in Europe and in the United States. His increasing love for Jane Brookfield, the wife of an old Cambridge friend, led to a rupture in their friendship. *The History of Henry Osmond* appeared in three volumes in 1852, and reflected the melancholic period in the life of the author. "'Tis strange what a man may do, and a woman yet think him an angel." By the end of his career, Thackeray's disillusionment with contemporary culture seems to have deepened. In *The Adventures of Philip* (1862) the protagonist, Philip, is out of place in a world that does not accommodate his vision of masculinity.

His personal life, however, wasn't going so well. His second daughter died at less than a year old. S third daughter was born but his wife fell victim to some sort of mental illness. After she tried to drown three-year old Annie, and she was so suicidal that she was placed in a private institution where she remained for the rest of her life. She outlived her husband by thirty years. Continually ill with recurrent kidney infections caused by a bout with syphilis in his youth, Thackeray still managed to have an impressive house built and settle generous dowries on his daughters.

In 1859, he and a friend named George Smith started an inexpensive monthly called the *Cornhill Magazine*, which set a first issue sales record at over 110,000 copies. William, besides editing, contributed a great series of essays called the *Roundabout Papers*.

He died in Christmas Eve, 1863 of a cerebral effusion (a burst blood vessel). Minnie, Thackeray's younger daughter, married Leslie Stephen who became editor of the *Cornhill Magazine*. After Minnie's sudden death at 35 he remarried and became the father of Virginia Woolf.

Works

THE YELLOWPLUSH PAPERS, 1838

THE PARIS SKETCH BOOK, 1840

THE HISTORY OF SAMUEL TITMARSH AND THE GREAT HOGGARTY DIAMOND, 1841 -

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THE IRIS SKETCH BOOK, 1843

THE LUCK OF BARRY LYNDON, 1844 - film 1975, dir. by Stanley Kubrick- starring Ryan O'Neal, Marisa Berenson, Patrick Magee, Hardy Kruger.

NOTES OF A JOUNEY FROM CORNHILL TO GRAND CAIRO, 1846

THE BOOK OF SNOBS, 1848

VANITY FAIR, 1847-48 - film *Becky Sharp*, dir. by Rouben Mamoulian, 1935, starring Miriam

Hopkins, Cedric Hardwicke, Frances Dee

THE HISTORY OF PENDENNIS, 1848-50

REBECCA AND ROWENA, 1850

THE HISTORY OF PENDENNIS, 1850

THE ENGLISH HUMOURISTS OF THE 18TH CENTURY, 1851

HENRY ESMOND, 1852, 3 vol. -

THE ENGLISH HUMORISTS OF THE 18TH CENTURY, 1853

THE NEWCOMES, 1853-55

THE ROSE AND THE RING, 1855

MISCELLANIES, 4 vol., 1855-57
THE VIRGINIANS, 1857-59 THE FOUR GEORGES, 1860 LOVEL THE WIDOWER, 1860
POEMS AND ESSAYS, 1860 THE ADVENTURES OF PHILIP ON HIS WAY THROUGH THE
WORLD, 1862 ROUNDABOUT PAPERS, 1860-63 DENIS DUVAL, 1864 COLLECTED ED.,
1867-69 LETTERS AND PRIVATE PAPERS, 1945-46

Key Facts

Type of work – Novel

Genre - Satire of manners

Language - English

Time and place written - England, between 1845 and 1847

Date of first publication - In 20 monthly parts between 1847-8

Narrator - Third-person omniscient

Climax - The closing years of wars with Napoleon alter the economic life of the two heroines.

Protagonist - Becky Sharp and Amelia Sedley

Antagonist - Snobbish class-consciousness (epitomized by William Dobbin and Mr. Osborne)

Setting (time) - The closing years of the Napoleonic Wars, from the battle of Leipzig to Wellington's triumph at Waterloo.

Setting (place) - London and Brighton.

Point of view - Omniscient

Falling action - When Becky leaves for the Continent

Tense - Past tense

Tone - Satirical

Themes - Snobbery; Love; Reputation; Class

Motifs - Womanhood; Marriage; Journeys

Symbols - The novel is light on symbolism.

Plot

The tale of two heroines, rebellious Becky Sharp and innocent, gentle-reared Amelia Sedley, who have just graduated from Miss Pinkerton's academy –a finishing school for young ladies. Before taking up an appointment as governess in the household of Sir Pitt Crawley, Becky stays in the Sedley home, where she makes an immediate play for Amelia's physically and financially ample brother, Jos. He, though enchanted, is manoeuvred away from making a proposal by George Osborne, Amelia's snobbish fiancé, who does not want to marry into a family with low connections.

Becky is thus compelled to take up her employment at the Crawleys. The Crawley household includes the comically mean baronet Sir Pitt, his neglected wife, and his sons Pitt and Rowdon. Becky captivates Rowdon and even his rich aunt and benefactress.

After the death of his wife, Sir Pitt proposes to Becky, who is now forced to confess that she is already married –to his son, Rowdon. Sir Pitt is driven "insane with baffled desire", and Rowdon is cut out of his aunt's will.

Becky's social difficulties and marital problems are paralleled, in a more sombre key, by Amelia's. Her impending marriage to George Osborne is threatened when her family sinks into financial ruin and George's father refuses to countenance a union between his son and Amelia. However, inspired by his friend William Dobbin, who is himself in love with Amelia and always selflessly thinking of her happiness, George rebels against his father and marries her.

George is killed at the battle of Waterloo, and Amelia is so poverty-stricken that she is forced to entrust the welfare of her beloved on, Georgy, to her despised father-in-law. Dobbin remains devoted to her, but Amelia is blindly attached to George's memory.

Meanwhile, Becky is skilfully managing a difficult entrance into high society. However, her husband is apprehended for his debts and Becky seems reluctant to bail him out of the spunging-house (where debtors were held before prison). When Rawdon is freed, thanks to the generous intervention of his sister-in-law, he arrives home to find his wife in a compromising situation with the sinister Lord Steyne. Their marriage is over and Becky's fortune declines.

Old Osborne dies leaving a substantial inheritance for his grandson and restoring guardianship of the boy to Amelia. Becky leaves for the Continent, where she is shunned by polite English society and she gambles...

Characters

Rebecca (Becky) Sharp – The daughter of a penniless artist and a French dancer. She uses her wits to promote herself in society, with no regard to principles. She has sparkling green eyes and a superb acting ability. Her treacherous nature is offset by an admirable toughness and good humour.

Amelia Sedley – sensitive, demure and a dutiful daughter, destined to become a model wife but an ambiguous heroine. Her wilful attachment to George's memory leads her to abuse Dobbin's genuine feelings for her, and earns her the novelist's final stinging epithet of "tender little parasite".

William Dobbin – a grocer's son. Socially clumsy and self-effacing, his personal and military courage make him the novel's closest approximation to a hero. Lispering, gauche and shy is a shining example of strength and honesty, yet even he is flawed by his adoration to the "unworthy" Amelia.

Rawdon Crawley – Becky's husband. His bluff, inarticulate nature conceals a lonely, courageous spirit and a proud heart.

George Osborne – Amelia's husband and Dobbin's fellow-officer. His snobbishness and pomposity are fostered by his City-rich father. He is famous in field-sports, at a song, on parade, popular with men and patronizing with women. Vain and superficial his undoubted physical courage is seen as a substitute for moral strength. He dies at Waterloo.

Jos Sedley – Amelia's brother, timid, self-indulgent and magnificently affected. He flees both romantic and military campaigns when they become too dangerous.

Mis Crawley – Rawdon's overfed and worldly aunt, courted by all her relations for her money. A free-thinking reprobate old lady, she despises yet plays upon her sycophants and adores Becky's malicious and irreverent humour.

Sir Pitt Crawley – Becky's first employer and subsequent suitor, a cunning, mean, selfish and disreputable old man.

Themes

Snobbery – the novel is about people who feel superior to others simply because of their social background. As a boy at public school, Dobbin suffers grievously because of this attitude. He is ridiculed and victimized by his school fellows for no other reason than that he is the son of a grocer, rather than that he is a son of a gentleman.

It is also about people who bow and scrape to those of higher rank, and seek to emulate them. This trait is most savagely portrayed in the person of old Mr. Osborne who, "whenever he met a great man he grovelled before him, and my-lorded him, as only a free-born Briton can do". Nearly all the cruelty, treachery, vanity and hypocrisy in the novel comes from this disease of snobbery, which itself arises from the hilarious but unseemly scramble for money and social position.

Portrayal of Womanhood – Thackeray makes two women the pivot of the novel, and through them examines two differing visions of womanhood, the one ideal, the other seriously flawed. Amelia is passive, loving and loyal in true Victorian style. Becky is the opposite –treacherous, greedy and dangerously dynamic. Where Amelia is a doting mother, Becky is a cold and selfish one.

Yet Thackeray makes his two main characters more complex than a simple contrast between good and evil would allow. Becky's disloyalty to the admirable Rawdon may be reprehensible, but Amelia's unthinking fidelity to the memory of the unworthy George is equally wrong. Becky, unlike Amelia, is intelligent and sees people for what they are. We are glad that she finally punctures Amelia's illusions about George, "that selfish humbug, that low-bred cockney, that padded booby". In so doing she get belated revenge for George's sabotaging of her relationship with Jos. It is Becky's malicious sparkle and her resilience which make her attractive despite her total lack of principle. She is intrepid where Amelia is insipid.

Class – Thackeray makes very clear the reasons for Becky's unscrupulous actions-namely, the "dismal precocity of poverty", which in a world governed by money, privilege and pedigree has spurred her to fight for those very goals herself.

Amelia is equally the product of her class and upbringing, and her goal of husband-getting forms the fabric of her life, even though the idea is swathed in romance.

A novel without a hero – this subtitle to *Vanity Fair* acquires many meanings as the novel progresses. It refers to the two heroines with their respective capacity to twist men around their little finger (Amelia thus exploits the incorruptible Dobbin, and Becky exploits every man but Dobbin, for all other men are eminently corruptible).

The novel questions the whole notion of the hero, and so implicitly criticizes Amelia for hero-worshipping George. Part of the fascination of *Vanity Fair* lies in its deliberate reversals of the conventions in which the morally censorious Victorian age gloried. Thus the ideal of woman is shown up in all her inadequacies, and neither marriage nor death provides a comfortable solution to life's problems. Thackeray refuses to explain or justify dubious actions or circumstances, nor does he believe in poetic justice. He pays his readers the compliment of being able to make their own judgements, and wants them above all to question rather than to accept.

Quotations and Questions from our Web Page

Leer el texto

Temas

Tarea

Discuss the following quotation. (A sample-answer is provided; answer other questions similarly)

"Vanity Fair is a very vain, wicked, foolish place, full of all sorts of humbugs and falseness and pretensions"

Answer

The quotation comes from the introduction to the novel, a novel which is about people who feel superior to others simply because of their social background. One of the characters, for instance, Dobbin, is ridiculed and victimized by his school fellows for no other reason than that he is the son of a grocer, rather than that he is the son of a gentleman.

📖Tarea

The novel is also about people who bow and scrape to those of higher rank, and seek to emulate them. This trait is most savagely portrayed in the person of old Mr. Osborne who "whenever he met a great man he grovelled before him, and my -lorded him, as only a free-born Briton can do". Locate this quotation and give other examples of snobbery in the novel.

Perspectivas

Tarea

Discuss the following quotation. (A sample-answer is provided; answer other questions similarly)

"Darkness came down on the field and city; and Amelia was praying for George, who was lying on his face, dead, with a bullet through his heart".

Answer

The passage corresponds to Thackeray's brutal description of George Osborne's inglorious death. The startling realism of this passage is Thackeray's weapon for attacking the false heroism of contemporary novels. Remember that the novel is subtitled "a novel without a hero".

📖Tarea

Thackeray refuses to explain or justify actions or circumstances, nor does he believe in poetic justice. He pays his readers the compliment of being able to make their own judgements and wants them above all to question rather than to accept. Justify this assessment with quotations from the text.

Retórica y discurso

Tarea

Vanity Fair, like Dickens's *Hard Times* is built around a few very simple contrasting thematic ideas. A major source of influence on both writers was Scott's method. Read about it in our

Teoría and in Guías de Lectura. What are some of these contrasts and how do they function in narrative? Use quotations and references from *Vanity Fair* to support your findings.

Personajes

Thackeray builds his characters through a combination of description and dialogue, but there are two other facets of his art that bring his characters to life: his authorial comments and his illustrations.

As a novelist, Thackeray makes his presence felt by his observations, be they satirical, droll, straightforward or ambiguous. His illustrations reveal his vivid and often hilarious conception of these "puppets".

📌Tarea

Do the characters in *Vanity Fair* represent types or do they have their own personality? Compare to Thackeray's and Dickens's modes of characterization.

Leer entre textos

Con voces críticas

Nursing severe doubts about the merits of monarchy, Thackeray learned to suppress his opinions rather than antagonize the royalists among his readers. However, the pointlessness of the Crimean War and its ultimate squalid horror so shook him that he was stirred to write the most savage of attacks against the King he held responsible. In "The Four Georges" he satirized all four monarchs, offering a savage portrait of George IV. As a result he was shunned for more than a year in England but became hugely successful in America where he gave a lecture to 25,000 in Brooklyn in 1855.

📌Tarea

Find examples in *Vanity Fair* that show Thackeray's attack on aristocracy and his views of the "the great game of war" where George Osborne is just "one of the players".

Con otros textos

Tarea

Thackeray's contemporaries thought of him and Dickens as competitors, although Thackeray himself insisted that they were quite different. Compare *Vanity Fair* and Dickens's *Hard Times*, a novel that you can find in these *Guías de Lectura*. (A possible answer is provided below)

Answer

Thackeray's sense of history was particularly strong but, unlike Dickens, he paid relatively little attention to specific social abuses of Victorian society that might be put right by human action. Dickens shows a romantic vein which is not present in Thackeray's text. *Vanity Fair* is essentially a portrait of life as a struggle between virtue and wrong-doing. "Earthy we are and of the earth" he wrote when attacked for passing no moral judgements on his characters. He found both good and bad (to varying degrees) in himself and everyone around him. In his youth he had succumbed to many vices.

Thackeray does not adopt tones of high moral censure, as Dickens does sometimes. His satire is a subtle, oblique form of criticism.

Tarea

Document the questions discussed above with quotations from both novels.

Por géneros

Tarea

What is a satire? It is interesting that the origin of the narrative genre goes hand in hand with the popularity of prose satire. Justify the relation between satire and narrative.

Some interesting works on the nature of narrative are:

Booth, Wayne C. *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961.

Boulton, M. *The Anatomy of the Novel*, London. Routledge, 1975

Forster, E.M. *Aspects of the Novel*, San Diego: Harcourt, 1947, 1954

Higbie, Robert. *Character & Structure in the English Novel*, Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1984.

Page, Norman. *Speech in the English Novel*, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan, 1988.

Paulson, N. *Satire and the Novel in the 18th-century England* New Haven: Yale U. Press, 1967

Watt, Ian, *The Rise of the Novel; studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding*.Hammondsworth: Penguin, 1963

You can find these books in our [library](#)

The following links are from Professor Amelia Sanz and her page on Boileau in [Guías de Lectura Horacio, Sátiras ; Epístolas ; Arte poética](#) ; edición bilingüe de Horacio Silvestre ; traducción de Horacio Silvestre , Madrid, Cátedra, 2000.

[Herman Tränkle](#), *Horace : l'oeuvre et les imitations : un siècle d'interprétation*, Genève : Fondation Hardt, cop. 1993

Junto a otras culturas

Tarea

The kind of human paradox, where a wrong course is pursued in preference to a right one is typical of Thackeray. Throughout his work he shows his understanding of the complex origins of human action, base or perverse as they may be. One of his gifts is his ability to express such insights with extraordinary simplicity.

Find examples of this in the novel. Compare *Vanity Fair* to George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss*, a novel that you can also find in these [Guías de Lectura](#). What changes had taken place in the late Victorian period that led to changes in the conception of human nature and motivations? Are these signs of the approaching crisis at the turn of the century?

En otros códigos

Thackeray's early promise lay not in writing but in drawing and painting. In the summer of 1833, he resolved to set up in Paris as an artist, having left Cambridge without a degree. For three years he studied and copied old masters until he took a job as Paris correspondent with the *Constitutional and Public Ledger* in 1836. Yet art remained an interest throughout his life and he often illustrated his letters and works. However, he did not rise above caricature.

📖Tarea

Look at Thackeray's illustration of Napoleon's defeat at Leipzig. In *Vanity Fair* these closing years of the wars with Napoleon are linked with the personal histories of Becky Sharp and Amelia Sedley. "In the month of March, Anno Domini 1815, Napoleon landed at Cannes, Louis XVIII fled, and all Europe was in alarm, and the funds fell, and old John Sedley was ruined" reads the novel. Thackeray had visited Waterloo field, near Brussels, and wrote in *Fraser's* that he would "not forget it", but he also claimed that "a man of peace has no right to be dazzled by the red-coat glory, and to intoxicate his vanity with those remembrances of carnage and triumph..." Look for instances in the novel where history becomes part of the story. Justify Thackeray's pacifist inclination with quotes from the text.

Hacia la escritura creativa

📖Tarea

On the Eve of Waterloo, while Napoleon's army was launching its first attack on the allies, barely 20 miles away from Brussels, the English were fighting for tickets to the Duchess of Richmond's glittering ball and, in *Vanity Fair*, Becky was flirting with George, who was to die later in the battle. In the early hours of the morning, many soldiers left the ball for the battle. This is just an example of the criticism Thackeray directs to those aristocrats who rule the country and get involved in a war for glory which is as unreal as the hollowness of their lives. The novel teems with life and detail, and the very energy of satire counteracts the pessimism of its outlook. Our own world continues to be full of stupid illusions, and if "a title and a coach and four are toys more precious than happiness in *Vanity Fair*", appearing on TV seems to be today's way of living up to false pretensions. While we are "having a ball" someone somewhere is dying in yet another stupid war. Have things changed much? Write a paper giving your own personal opinion.

En otros tiempos

Tarea

Thackeray is unusual among his contemporaries in being a commentator rather than a moralizer. He presents the truth as he sees it, and leaves the reader to ponder the moral issues involved. You can read about similitudes and differences between Dickens and Thackeray in our Teoría Compare Thackeray's use of satire to Swift's or Fielding's. You can read about them in these Guías de Lectura. Is Victorian satire different to the satires written in the 18th-century?

Further reading

Chapters from some Memoirs by Anne Thackeray Ritchie (1894);

Thackeray: The Uses of Adversity by Gordon Ray (1955);

Thackeray: The Age of Wisdom by Gordon Ray (1958);

The Exposure of Luxury by Barbara Nathan Hardy (1972);

Prodigal Genius by John Carey (1977); Thackeray's Canvass of Humanity by Robert A. Colby (1979);

The Idea of the Gentleman in the Victorian Novel by Robin Gilmour (1981);

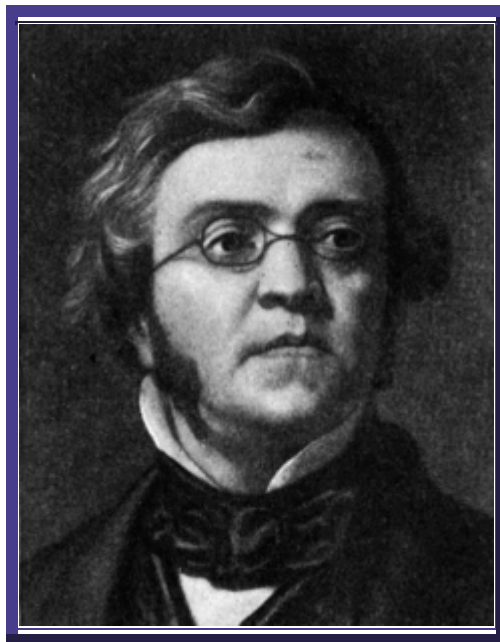
Reading Thackeray by Michael Lund (1988)

Thackeray's Cultural Frame of Reference by Rowland McMaster (1991)

Thackeray and Slavery by Deborah A. Thomas (1993)

Thackeray and Women by Micael M. Clarke (1997)

William Makepeace Thackeray Links



(1811-1863)

Major Works

Four or five of Thackeray's novels are available from Oxford World's Classics or from Penguin.

Also, *Vanity Fair* is in a Norton Critical Edition, edited by Peter L. Shillingsburg.

Yellowplush Papers (1837).

Samuel Titmarsh (1841).

Luck of Barry Lyndon (1844).

The Book of Snobs (1846; 48).

Vanity Fair: A Novel Without a Hero (1848).

The History of Pendennis (1849-50).

The History of Henry Esmond (1852).

The English Humorists of the Eighteenth Century (1853).

The Newcomes (1853-55).

The Rose and the Ring (1855).

The Virginians (1857-59).

The Four Georges (1860).

The Adventures of Philip (1861-62).

The Roundabout Papers (1863).

Denis Duval (1864-67).

Letters and Private Papers. Four Volumes. Edited by Gordon N. Ray. Harvard, 1945-46.

Reprinted by Octagon, 1980.

Selected Letters. Edited by Edgar F. Harden. New York, 1997.

About Thackeray

Gordon N. Ray, *The Buried Life: A Study of the Relation between Thackeray's Fiction and His Personal History*. Harvard, 1952.

Geoffrey Tillotson, *Thackeray the Novelist*. Cambridge, 1954.

[William "Snob" Makepeace Thackeray](#). Breezy biographical sketch.

[William Makepeace Thackeray](#) from The Victorian Web.

[Thackeray Criticism](#) from Internet Public Library.

From the Internet Public Library

Online Literary Criticism Collection

Sites about Vanity Fair

by [William Makepeace Thackeray](#)

The story of two young women -- one humble, the other scheming and social-climbing--who meet in school and embark on their own lives. As their fortunes rise and fall, Thackeray satirizes the values of his society, reserving the most pointed barbs for the upper class.

Characters: Becky Sharp, Rawdon Crawley, Amelia Sedley, William Dobbin

Read Online: [Location 1](#) | [Location 2](#)

Critical sites about Vanity Fair

[Kiss me, stupid: Sophistication, sexuality, and Vanity Fair](#)

<http://library.northernlight.com/ZZ19971224100189315.html>

"In William Thackeray's 'Vanity Fair,' homophobia masks itself as (and models itself on) a set of anxieties not about sexuality but about class. Thackeray's anxious awareness of sophistication's homosexualizing potential is examined."

Contains: Content Analysis

Author: Joseph Litvak

From: *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* Winter 1996; Vol. 29 No. 2; p. 223

Keywords: homosexuality, social classes

["Mon pauvre prisonnier": Becky Sharp and the triumph of Napoleon](#)

<http://library.northernlight.com/PC19970927440006849.html>

"The use of the French language by the character Becky Sharp in William Thackeray's 'Vanity Fair' allows the rise of Becky to mimic the effect of Napoleon's campaigns against the English."

Contains: Character Analysis

Author: Marks, Patricia

From: *Studies in the Novel* Vol. 28 No. 1 Pg. 76

[Vanity Fair, by William Makepeace Thackeray](#)

<http://www.theatlantic.com/unbound/classrev/vanityfa.htm>

This highly complimentary review asserts that "*Vanity Fair*, though it does not include the whole extent of Thackeray's genius, is the most vigorous exhibition of its leading characteristics. In freshness of feeling, elasticity of movement, and unity of aim, it is favorably distinguished from its successors...." The review goes on to praise the novel's style, characterizations, and its "raciness".

Contains: Review

Author: Edwin Percy Whipple

From: *The Atlantic Monthly* May, 1865

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[Back to The English Novel](#)