Thackeray in Paris, 1829-37 :
The Bohemian Years

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1. Introduction

One of William Makepeace Thackeray's historical significances comes from his essential part in introducing the concept and practice of literary bohemianism into the English-speaking world. *The Oxford English Dictionary* cites Thackeray's text as the first instance of the noun *bohemian* in the sense of "A gipsy of society ; one who either cuts himself off, or is by his habits cut off, from society for which he is otherwise fitted ; especially an artist, literary man, or actor, who leads a free, vagabond, or irregular life, not being particular as to the society he frequents, and despising conventionalities generally" ("Bohemian"). Today, the notion of bohemianism is associated with the kind of free lifestyle among young artists gathering in towns, with distant echoes of Giacomo Puccini's opera, *La Bohème* (1896), and possibly of its original story by Henri Murger, *Scènes de la vie de bohème* (1847-49 ; 1851), but it was originally meant to designate a distinct phenomonon that emerged in post-revolutionary Paris around 1830.

As Jerrold Seigel summarizes, the position of art and letters underwent drastic change against the backdrop of rapid bourgeoisification of French society ; while the patronage system declined and the new market for

cultural products grew with the emerging bourgois, some young artists chose to live free rather than to conform to the new master—hence a community of obscure artists who opposed the bourgeois ascendancy (Seigel 3-30). By a curious coincidence, Thackeray was present near the scene and very likely mixed with its actors while he stayed in Paris as an art student and journalist in the 1830s. Quite like the bohemians, he learned the pleasures of gambling and theatres as well as suffered from poverty and obscurity in the central part of Paris and, after he returned to London, sought and wrote about the London counterpart of its culture, notably in *Pendennis* (1848-50) and *Philips* (1861-62), and perhaps also in *Henry Esmond* (1852) set in Augustan London. The frequency with which he visited this subject suggests that his youthful experience of bohemian life in Paris had a lasting and significant impact on his career.

For all these circumstances, however, Thackeray's bohemian connection seems to have escaped its due attention. Of course, there is such a landmark study as Nigel Cross's *The Common Writer* (1985), in which Thackeray is described as "the master of the Bohemian novel" (110), but Cross's focus is on the English version of literary bohemia in nineteenth-century London. In most cases, Thackeray's Paris experience has attracted only short remarks, if any, in both Thackeray and bohemian studies. Gordon N. Ray, for example, in his voluminous biography of the writer spares only five pages for this topic (169-74), and D. J. Taylor, while conjecturing more about Thackeray's Paris days in his recent biography, stops short of considering their literary values (111-17). The historical or critical studies of nineteenth-century bohemianism, on the other hand, such as César Graña's *Bohemian versus Bourgeois* (1964), Jerrold Seigel's *Bohemian Paris* (1986), and Mary Gluck's *Popular Bohemia* (2005), are mainly concerned with Paris's art and literary scenes, in which Thackeray

plays no or a very minor part, while Peter Brooker's *Bohemia in London* (2007) starts its history of English bohemia only from the *fin de siècle.* Only recently did the critics begin to look into Thackeray's Paris years. Richard Pearson in *W. M. Thackeray and the Mediated Text* (2000) makes extensive research into the writer's early journalism and into his Paris years as a foreign correspondent, and Antonia Harland-Lang draws special attention to Thackeray's early experience of Parisian bohemia. While Harland-Lang is concerned with Thackeray's transformation of the theme in the contemporary print culture, my aim in the following is more down-to-earth : to explore Thackeray's possible contact with the emerging bohemian culture in Paris on the factual basis. It is a fundamental task, but it must precede more speculative discussion of the historical-political significance of Thackeray's writings in the time of bourgeois versus bohemian.

2. 1829 : "a curious chapter in the book of life"

The rapid bourgeoisification of French society that really started with the Revolution of 1789 was accelerated by the Revolution of 1830. Against the backdrop of the July Monarchy *alias* the Bourgeois Monarchy, the productive system of art and letters underwent drastic change. As the powers of aristocracy declined, the patronage system that had supported artists and writers since the middle ages ceased to function properly and was replaced by the market system that grew with the emerging bourgeois. While the growing public and the new literary media such as newspapers and magazines provided artists and writers with fair opportunities to pursue their art, free from the favours of their aristocratic patrons, some began to question the logic of commercialism behind the

system. The time was dominated by the romantic ideology of artistic autonomy, and young artists or would-be artists in particular chose to remain free and obscure while rejecting the bourgeois lifestyle and began to gather round the town and mix with students and various dark elements of society. Although the term *bohemian* to describe these people was not popular before the dramatization of Henri Murger's stories made a hit in 1849, it dates back to 1834 and the phenomenon it designates much earlier[1].

It was amid the formative years of this new urban culture of bohemianism that the young Thackeray visited Paris for the first time. He had been at Trinity College, Cambridge, since February 1829, and was apt to be distracted from his studies in mathematics by wine parties, debates, and extensive reading in literature ; at the end of the Easter term, he was allowed to go abroad by his parents and took his mathematics tutor William Williams to Paris. The exact date of their arrival is not clear, but he sent a letter to his mother on 18 (?) July 1829, telling her that after spending some nights near the rue de Rivoli they had moved to a boardinghouse chez Madame La Baronne de Vaude on the rue Louis le Grande (*Letters* 1, 84). Their new abode was situated some hundred metres north of the Jardin des Tuileries and near the Opéra le Peletier (now moved to the place de l'Opéra), and this choice was well advised because Thackeray was—and would ever continue to be—an ardent theatre-goer. During his stay he not only went to see Rossini's opera but also thought of taking dancing lessons from a professional dancer at the Opéra.

His letter tells more about the benefits he got during his stay at the rue Louis le Grand. His description of the area is particularly interesting : "The situation is noisy but cheerful, of an evening particularly so, when

the Snobs male & female who look all like Lords & Ladies appear in their gay costume either walking or sitting round little tables drinking eau sucré & small beer" (*Letters* 1, 84-85). It is no wonder that Thackeray witnessed the fashionable people around there not only because it was near the Opéra but also because the boulevard des Italiens nearby was the mecca of the cafe culture in Paris at the time. His firsthand knowledge of the famous cafes lining the boulevard as well as of the French snobs who haunted there must have provided rich materials for his later works. Another aspect of the area that fascinated him was undoubtedly the easy access to the Bibliotheque du Roi situated on the rue de Richelieu. "After I have finished my letter I shall go read at the Bibliotheque du Roi," writes he to his mother, and continues boastfully, "As there are only seven hundred thousand volumes there I may finish them easily before I get home again—I have seen already some of the prints of wh. there are a most superb collection of 5 thousand vols" (*Letters* 1, 86). If he was a little braggart, he by no means told a lie about his thirst for books. His letter sent on 28 August, by which time Thackeray and Williams had moved to the nearby rue neuve de St Augustin, tells of his growing passion for art and letters rather than mathematics : "My taste for Mathematics does not increase, my taste for old books and prints much" (*Letters* 1, 93). It was arguably the cultural environment of the Opéra and the Bibliotheque that alienated the young Thackeray from mathematic studies and directed him instead toward art and letters.

In 1829, Henri Murger was still a child of seven, but another important chronicler of the bohemian culture, Honoré de Balzac, was coming to the delayed maturity at the age of thirty. He had just published his first novel set in the near past, *Le Dernier Chouan ou la Bretagne en 1800,* and was

struggling for his next step with short tales dealing with contemporary life. It was two years before he made a great success with his first novel of contemporary life, *Le Peau de Chagrin* (1831). The story opens with the scene of a gambling room in the Palais Royal, in which the young hero, Raphaël de Valentin, loses the game and goes out into the Jardin des Tuileries. His lonely walk through the crowd presents one of the earliest examples of flânerie that Charles Beaudelaire would record and Walter Benjamin theorize in later years. Raphaël's blind feet take him across the bridge and into the maze of shops on the Left Bank, in one of which, an antique shop, he is to encounter the fateful magic skin.

It is curious to imagine that the young Thackeray might have come across Balzac's hero around the Palais-Royal. Thackeray was also one of the earliest flâneurs that ever wandered in the Restoration Paris : "I took a walk almost round half Paris the other day" (*Letters* 1, 86). Although he did not mention the gambling halls in the Palais-Royal, he confesses to his mother his passion for gambling that possessed him at Frascatis, which is, according to the editor of his letters, "A gaming house on the Rue de Richelieu, famous for its sumptuous *décor* and aristocratic clientele" (*Letters* 1, 90n) :

> We went a party of four of us to Frascatis the other night—had I stopped at one time I should have come away a winner of 200 Francs as it was I neither one or lost—one of the party one 25 francs the other two lost 35—I should have lost most likely had I not in the hour of prosperity lent the money I took with me to my friends—The interest in the game Rouge et Noir is so powerful that I could not tear myself away until I lost my last piece—I dreamed of it all night—& thought of nothing else for several

days, but thank God I did not *return* The excitement has passed away now, but I hope I shall never be thrown in the way of the thing again, for I fear I could not resist⸺Of course I shall ⟨not⟩ go there again⸺I was not much affect‹ed at› losing but winning⸺ I am told that there w⟨ere some of⟩ the men of the table watching us the whole time, evidently expecting to make something by our party. There is however a game wh. they say is infallible, it requires a capital of 75000 Francs wh. I have not about me just now. . . . (*Letters* 1, 90-91)

If we take Thackeray's account at face value, he did not go overboard for the bad habit ; yet his ever entering into the den of gambling was enough to rouse his mother's anxiety and anger. Thackeray was surprised to find his mother's strong words in her next letter and had to defend himself immediately : "It was a sight wh. I perhaps might never have another opportunity of seeing, it was a curious chapter in the book of life, the perusal of wh. has done me the greatest good⸺it has taught me not to trust so much in myself as before my pride or my ignorance would have led me to do" (*Letters* 1, 96). He must have been disconcerted by his mother's reaction ; after he closed the letter with his signature, he added that he was not going to "the low gaming houses" without her permission (*Letters* 1, 98). Curiously, the editor notes that these gaming houses are located "for the most part in or near the Palais Royal" (*Letters* 1, 98n), where Thackeray might have anticipated the fate of Raphaël if it had not been for his mother's admonition.

3. 1832 : "In the morning reading in the evening play"

After returning to England, Thackeray went back to Cambridge to complete, or more precisely to abandon, his studies. He is supposed to have made a surreptitious trip to Paris during the Easter vacation of 1830, and in July he left for Germany for a long stay, during which he visited Goethe in Weimar. On returning in March 1831, he entered the Middle Temple to study the law, but his passion for legal science did not last. He enjoyed "Leisure-class bachelor life in London" (Ray 153), reading literature, playing games, and imitating dandies. It was in this idle period that he set off to France again, at the end of July 1832, to spend four months in "a routine," according to Ray, "that did not differ greatly from his life in London" (Ray 158). Both Ray and Taylor pass through these "fruitless" days quickly, but to our great advantage Thackeray kept a diary during this period and lets us have a look into his everyday life and feelings in Paris.

It was on 8 August, a week after he landed the continent, that he reached Paris, and the 12 August entry provides a curious episode. He tells of his awkward experience of having his money stolen from his hotel : "I instantly set off to the Prefect of Police but he was not at home then to Vidocq who cd. give me no help then back again to the Prefect who made many enquiries on Saturday but to no purpose" (*Letters* 1, 223). The person mentioned as "Vidocq" is none other than François Eugène Vidocq (1775-1857), the original of Balzac's Vautrin and the famous detective who wrote *Mémoires* (1828) (*Letters* 1, 223n). Four days later, he subscribed to a place in the Palais Royal "where is a very good collection of books a pleasant look out and quiet rooms to read in" (*Letters* 1, 224) and took up

reading Balzac's *Peau de Chagrin,* just published in the previous year. His comment on this new novel is severe and perhaps mixed with a little jealousy : "[*Peau de Chagrin*] possesses many of the faults & the beauties of this school─plenty of light & shade, good colouring and costume, but no character" (*Letter* 1, 225).

The Palais Royal, of course, had an irresistible charm for Thackeray besides that of a good library. The 17 and 18 August entry reads : "In the morning reading in the evening play wh. after a little good luck had left me as I begun or nearly so" (*Letters* 1, 225). He might have recalled his promise he had made to his mother three years before. He renewed his vow, saying "May Almighty God give me strength of mind to resist the temptation of play, & to keep my vow that from this day I will never again enter a gaming house─" (*Letters* 1, 225) but his resolution proved precarious. In the next day entry, Thackeray begins by remembering the vow he made only the day before : "I broke the vow I solemnly made yesterday─& thank God lost the last halfpenny I possessed by doing so─ At first I had won back nearly all my losings & went away but the money lay like fire in my pocket & I am thank heaven rid of it─" (*Letters* 1, 225). Far from repenting afterwards, he seems to have had a heavy dinner in the evening at Trois Freres, "a famous restaurant in the Palais Royal" (*Letters* 1, 225 n). His life around the Palais-Royal thus tended to be an odd mixture of extensive reading and desperate spending. As the palace was itself an ambiguous place famous for its high society and low company, intellectual culture and bad habits, the young Thackeray frequenting it came to show his ambiguous aspect as an ardent scholar in the morning and an addicted gambler in the evening. On one occasion, when he read Victor Cousin's *Cours de l'histoire de la philosophie* (1827), he admired the book with a queer rhetoric : "The excitement of

metaphysics must equal almost that of gambling" (*Letters* 1, 225).

His double life as reader and gambler continued as long as he stayed in Paris, and in the meantime he read a wide range of books as well as saw many stages, about which he made detailed records in the diary. He was particularly lucky when he was present at the premiere of Victor Hugo's *Le Roi s'amuse* on 22 November, just a few days before he left Paris, for the play was banned on the same night and never brought on the stage again. Hugo was then a provocative playwright, whose *Hernani* (1830) had made a sensation two years before, and gathered around him young artists and writers who formed the romantic movement in France. Thackeray witnessed this movement close at hand and came to entertain literary ambitions of his own : "find my ideas verging toward a novel. the plot is not yet conceived─but still I think something witty is coming─ Amen─" (*Letters* 1, 228). Perhaps, his idea of "A Gambler's Death," a story of a ruined gambler collected in *The Paris Sketch Book* (1840), might have originated in this period.

4. 1833-35 :

"The artists . . . are the happiest fellows in the world"

Thackeray reached maturity in July 1832, and learned to invest his capital now at his disposal. In January 1833 he associated himself with a billdiscounting firm, and in the spring he bought part of the editorship of a twopenny paper, *The National Standard and Journal of Literature, Science, Music, Theatricals and the Fine Arts,* which he was to run until the next year. One benefit of this business was that it gave him an opportunity─or a pretext─to revisit Paris as a foreign correspondent. Actually, he had been attracted to the cultured society of Paris during his

previous visits, and took the first occasion to witness "the great progress made by the Parisians since last year," as he reported in his first "Foreign Correspondence" (*OT* 1, 32)[2]. What he saw in the 1833 Paris was the movement of "La jeune France" who completely beat the English : "all creeds, political, literary, and religious, have undergone equal revolutions, and met with equal contempt. Churches, theatres, painters, booksellers, kings, and poets, have all bowed before this awful spirit of improvement, this tremendous 'zeitgeist.' In poetry and works of fiction, this change is most remarkable" (*OT* 1, 32)[3]. As a foreign correspondent and co-editor of the periodical, he not only contributed a number of reviews and articles to report this cultural "revolution" but also sent as many woodcuts to decorate the pages. In his letter to Mrs Carmichael-Smyth on 2 May, just as he began to take responsibility for the paper, he boasted of his "pretty good" (*Letters* 1, 259-60) artistry in the caricature of Louis Phillippe, the first fruit of his lifelong devotion to engraving art.

His business stay in Paris lasted from June to August of the same year, but during this period was growing a new idea. In the letter sent to his mother on 6 July, while he puts stress on the significance of his position as a Paris correspondent, he refers to a different prospect entertained in his mind : "I have been thinking very seriously of turning artist—I think I can draw better than do anything else & certainly like it better than any other occupation why shouldn't I?" (*Letters* 1, 262). He was encouraged by an artist friend to make a try at it since it did not cost so much to rent an atelier. In addition, "An artist in this town is by far a more distinguished personage than a lawyer & a great deal more so than a clergyman" (*Letters* 1, 262). The would-be artist was so much inclined toward the artistic world of Paris that he complained in a letter sent from London in September about "a great change between this [London] and Paris, where

one makes friends, & here though for the last three years I have lived, I have not positively a single female acquaintance,"—adding, "I shall go back to Paris I think, & marry somebody" (*Letters* 1, 264).

A month and a half later, Thackeray was back again in Paris, from where he wrote to his mother about his happy apprentice life at an atelier —presumably an atelier owned by the landscape painter Edmond le Poittevin who had attracted art students around him (*Letters* 1, 266n). Thackeray writes about his fellow apprentices as "merry fellows enough, always singing, smoking, fencing, & painting very industriously besides" (*Letters* 1, 266). The frugal yet gay atmosphere of the atelier peopled with young would-be artists in high spirits and with lean purses will be best illustrated by Thackeray's description in his letter sent to his mother on 31 October :

> The artists with their wild ways & their poverty are the happiest fellows in the world—I wish you could see the scene every day in the Atelier Yesterday we had a breakfast for five consisting of 5 sausages 3 loaves & a bottle of wine for 15 sous ; there were no plates or knives accordingly the meat was carved by the fingers— afterwards pipes succeeded & then songs imitations of all the singers in Paris they are admirable musicians—& all this obstreperous gaiety grew out of the sum of three pence wh. had been expended by each man—

(*Letters* 1, 267)

The picture of the poor yet happy company devoted to art and pleasure resembles the romantic tableau depicted and staged by Murger and Puccini of the bohemians of the Quartier Latin. Although there are scarce documents extant to show his artistic development during his stay at Le Poittevin's, he was "very well satisfied" with his progress and convinced that he should "make I daresay many thousands a year in a short time" (*Letters* 1, 266, 268).

It was, however, not until a year later that Thackeray settled in Paris to study art in earnest. While he was attending Le Poittevin's atelier, the bad rumours about the Indian bank the Thackerays were deeply associated with began to reach, and by the winter of 1833 Thackeray was back in London to discover his patrimony to be almost lost. Disappointed yet not really depressed, he stayed over winter to improve the sale of *The National Standard,* but finally had to put an end to its publication with the February number. All the while he never abandoned his wish to go back to Paris, revealing his intention once to his former friend at Poittlevin's, "j'espere de retourner bientot a Paris, etudier les arts, en artiste & pas en amateur" (*Letters : A Supplement* 1, 13), and the chance came when his grandmother Mrs Butler settled in Paris in September 1834. Thackeray accompanied her first to the rue Louis le Grand, then to

the rue de Provence, and finally to the grande rue de Chaillot where they stayed until June 1835 when he parted with her. The rue de Louis le Grand was the place he had known well since he took his lodging there in 1829, a walking distance from the Opéra and the Palais Royal ; the rue de Provence was (and is) situated a little north of the Opéra, not far from his haunting place ; but Chaillot was a village about two kilometres west of the central Paris, not integrated to the capital until 1860.

When he began to live with Mrs Butler, often in the company of his aunt Mrs Ritchie as well, he earnestly visited the Louvre and the Life Academy to study old masters (*Letters* 1, 272-74). Compared with them perhaps, the "elite" in modern French art appeared to his eyes below the standard while "in return, the sketches in the novels, the penny magazines &c are full of talent" (*Letters* 1, 276), a curious judgment for the young artist who would succeed in illustrating his own novels. In November he mentioned going to "Lafond's" atelier (*Letters* 1, 277). Charles Nicholas Lafond (1774-1835) was a renowned painter at the time and described by Thackeray as "a venerable man" and "an excellent man, & a good father of family" but for "the extreme bathos of his blackguardism" (*Letters* 1, 277). Thackeray was not happy there because he found the model and the apprentices there quite in bad manners. In April next year, he owned to his artist friend in London that he was "in a state of despair"—"I have got enough torn-up pictures to roast an ox by . . . and I have become latterly so disgusted with myself and art and everything belonging to it, that for a month past I have been lying on sofas reading novels, and never touching a pencil" (*Letters* 1, 279). One diary entry in the same month reads : "In these last five months I am puzzled to think what good I have done except a small, very small progress made in my profession—having read nothing but a few dull

novels, & painted nothing worth looking at for a moment" (*Letters* 1, 283). Still, he continued to keep up his motivation in art studies and rejoiced at the reopening of the old masters corners at the Louvre after an interval of five months. "It is very pleasant & calm to the eye to see the old pictures after the flaring gaudy exhibition," writes he into his diary on 11 June, and in the same entry he adds a word of farewell to Chaillot where he spent some of his happiest and bitterest days : "I am sorry to lose this most beautiful view—though I shall be happy enough in my little den in the Rue des Beaux Arts, where I intend to work hard & to lead a most pious sober & godly life" (*Letters* 1, 286).

5. 1835-37 :

"they enter rapins, but they may come forth prix de Rome"

With his move to his new abode in June 1835, Thackeray crossed the Seine to the Left Bank at last. The rue des Beaux Arts is situated in the quartier of Saint-Germain des Prés, just opposite from the Musée du Louvre and the Palais Royal area across the Seine. Although it is not exactly part of the Quartier Latin, it is geographically and culturally associated with it. The street name derives from L'École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts just across a lane, which already attracted many art students at Thackeray's time. Murger was still an early teenager who had begun to work as a tailor's apprentice in Montmartre (Moss ad Marve 25), but Balzac, in his 1842 novel *Un Ménage de garçon,* describes the area around the Ecole des Beaux Arts :

One of the worst corners in all Paris is undoubtedly that part of the rue Mazarin which lies between the rue Guenegard and its

junction with the rue de Seine, behind the palace of the Institute. The high grey walls of the college and of the library which Cardinal Mazarin presented to the city of Paris, and which the French Academy was in after days to inhabit, cast chill shadows over this angle of the street, where the sun seldom shines, and the north wind blows. The poor ruined widow came to live on the third floor of a house standing at this damp, dark, cold corner. Opposite, rose the Institute buildings, in which were the dens of ferocious animals known to the bourgeoisie under the name of artists, —under that of tyro, or rapin, in the studios. Into these dens they enter rapins, but they may come forth prix de Rome. The transformation does not take place without extraordinary uproar and disturbance at the time of year when the examinations are going on, and the competitors are shut up in their cells. To win a prize, they were obliged, within a given time, to make, if a sculptor, a clay model ; if a painter, a picture such as may be seen at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts ; if a musician, a cantata ; if an architect, the plans for a public building. At the time when we are penning the words, this menagerie has already been removed from these cold and cheerless buildings, and taken to the elegant Palais des Beaux-Arts, which stands near by. (Balzac, "The Two Brothers," Chapter 2)[4]

The rue Mazarin runs parallel with the rue de Seine, with which the rue des Beaux Arts joins on the east side, and L'Institute de France stands on the north corner of the rue Mazarin and the rue de Seine. Balzac's minute description of the area as a shabby yet magical factory of young artists has a romantic tone that is comparable with that of Murger's Quartier

Latin, and it is quite likely that Balzac's keen eye caught a glimpse of an English art student in the streetscape.

Despite his presence in this grotesquely creative area, however, Thackeray seems to have lost part of his passion for art by this time. His letters home made less and less references to his art studies while he applied for the post of a magazine correspondent in Constantinople (May 1835 ; *Letters* 1, 287) and planned to travel around Germany and Italy and possibly Turkey (September 1835 ; *Letters* 1, 295-96). The fact is that he fell in love with a girl "not in the Bohemian circle . . . but in the staid and sober world that the English middle class had made for itself in Paris," as the biographer describes (Ray 174). Isabella Shaw, whom he was going to marry in 1836, lived with her family in the village of Chaillot, where Thackeray had been with his grandmother. He frequented the circle of English émigrés in west Paris and distanced his mind from the bohemian quarter on the Left Bank. In winter he got the post of a correspondent for the newly established newspaper *The Constitutional* and by next July moved to the rue neuve St Augustin, the street where he once stayed in 1829. He married Isabella there in August 1836 and moved to London in March 1837. It was, perhaps as in many other cases, the woman of fate who finally put a period to Thackeray's bohemian years in Paris and in bachelorhood. Leaving Paris, he produced one small book of nine caricatures under the title of *Flore et Zephyr* (1836), his very first publication in book-form, in which his memories of bohemian years—exciting theatres, lovely ballerinas, and hard studies in art—were all compressed.

6. Conclusion

"I have lost my way to Bohemia," deplores Arthur Pendennis the narrator in Thackeray's last completed novel, *The Adventures of Philip* (*OT* 16, 60). Although Pendennis here does not exactly refer to the Parisian bohemia of the Quartier Latin but to its London counterpart, he gives an exact expression to the sentiment his author might have had towards his Paris years. Thackeray spent a considerable part of his late teens and early twenties in the French capital and came quite close to the scene where the new culture of bohemianism was coming into being ; he did relish the pleasant and intellectual and sometimes dangerous atmosphere of the Palais Royal and its environs and did mix with the young artists and students gathering on the Left bank ; he even enjoyed the intimate company of young artists at ateliers. But it seems that he did not really realize the potential values of the environments where he belonged. It was a few years before Balzac described the Quartier Latin of the 1820s in *Illusions perdus* (1837-43) and a decade before Murger eternized the place of the 1840s in *Scènes de la vie de bohème.* Thackeray had the firsthand experience of the culture which would acquire an enormous value in literary and art history and willingly left it with his new wife and his new book ; at the same time, he left behind the free life of a bachelor and the innocent passion of a would-be artist, unknowingly. It was too late if he recognized later the value of his Paris years and longed to go back when he had a family to support and a profession to pursue. Probably, the paradise of artists only appears in nostalgia, always as a lost place in memory for the middle-aged man.

His memory of his Paris years, however, would haunt his career all his

life. After he returned to London, his reflection on his Paris experience and his search for the London counterpart of the Parisian bohemia started. While he continued to draw sketches and caricatures, he took a pen to write reviews and criticisms about English and French art ; while he began to write burlesques and fictions for cheap publishers and magazines, he came to know London's underworld of literary culture, narrowly comparable to Parisian bohemia ; and while he wrote about contemporary and historical English life, he occasionally took up French themes and wrote French stories, which eventually established his fame when they came out together as *The Paris Sketch Book.* In one essay in the collection, for example, he recollects the life of French artists :

> The life of the young artist here is the easiest, merriest, dirtiest existence possible. He comes to Paris, probably at sixteen, from his province ; his parents settle forty pounds a-year on him, and pay his master : he establishes himself in the Pays Latin, or in the new quarter of Nôtre Dame de Lorette (which is quite peopled with painters) ; he arrives at his atelier at a tolerably early hour, and labours among a score of companions as merry and poor as himself. Each gentleman has his favourite tobacco-pipe ; and the pictures are painted in the midst of a cloud of smoke, and a din of puns and choice French slang, and a roar of choruses, of which no one can form an idea that has not been present at such an assembly. (*OT* 2, 43)

It was this kind of memory, perhaps purified through the passage of time and later in the trend of bohemianism, that lay behind Thackeray's repeated use of the artist theme as well as his own lifelong search of dirty

merry life in bohemia.

Notes

⑴ About the historical background of bohemianism, see Jerrold 3-30.

⑵ Quotations from Thackeray's works are from The Oxford Thackeray (*OT*). After each quotation are indicated the volume and the page numbers.

⑶ Unquestionably, another important figure in the early history of bohemianism is Théophile Gautier (1811-72), exactly of the same age with Thackeray, whose *Les Jeunes-France* (1833) is a collection of stories based on the life of young artists, in a way anticipating Thackeray's *Paris Sketch Book* and Murger's *Scénes*.

⑷ Quoted from *The Two Brothers,* trans. by Katharine Prescott Wormeley, in *Collected Works of Honore de Balzac.*

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——文学部教授——

Thackeray was born in Calcutta in 1811. As a young man, he attended Cambridge but left without a degree, then drifted through a variety of professions. He tried studying law, then decided to become a painter. While studying art in Paris, he met his future wife, a penniless Irish girl named Isabella, with whom he had two children. After his marriage, Thackeray returned to England and applied himself to a career in journalism. His satiric sketches were very popular. Thackeray wrote many other stories, novels, and sketches for humor magazines, but his best-known work remains Vanity Fair, the story of the manipulations of the wily Becky Sharp in London during the Napoleonic Wars. Thackeray died in London in 1863. Citation Information. In 1829 Thackeray entered Trinity College at Cambridge University, where he was only an average student. He left the university the next year, convinced that it was not worth his while to spend more time in pursuit of a second-rate degree under an unsuitable educational institution. At the age of twenty-one Thackeray rejected law and went to Paris, France, to study French, to draw, and to attend plays. The inheritance he acquired at that age soon disappeared into bad business ventures, bad investments, and loans to needy friends. In the years of his success he openly took great pleasure in the comforts of the society that he portrayed so critically in his novels. Thackeray died on December 24, 1863, in London, England. In 1829 Thackeray entered the University of Cambridge. Leaving the university without taking his degree, he attempted to develop his literary and artistic abilities, first as the editor of a short-lived journal and subsequently as an art student in Paris. In 1840 Thackeray produced The Paris Sketchbook, a series of reprints of his contributions to various literary journals. After joining the staff of the humorous journal Punch in 1842, he published the Irish Sketchbook in 1843 and Cornhill to Cairo in 1847. Thackeray began the serial publication of his great satirical novel Vanity Fair early i