Introduction

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In 1827 the artist and illustrator George Cruikshank published a sequence of engravings under the title Illustrations of Time. Comprising an allegorical frontispiece and six numbered plates (each of which contains between five and seven separate vignettes), Cruikshank's Illustrations translate the everyday frustrations and consolations of time into a colloquial visual language. The experience of time is expressed through a range of comic and poignant scenes documenting some of the multifarious forms of change and duration, extension and contraction, recurrence and innovation. Plate 1, for instance, presents time as alternatively 'Short' or 'Long'; epitomised, on the one hand, by Shakespeare's Puck girdling the globe in 40 minutes, and, on the other hand, by a man fishing patiently in a meagre pond. The central image of Plate 2, under the caption 'Behind Time', features a flustered family arriving at a coaching inn with their luggage only to be told that their stage coach (symbolically named the 'Times') departed three quarters of an hour ago – and is timed 'to a minute'. This scene, however, is surrounded by a cluster of vignettes which, conversely, exhibit states of temporal excess: time is for 'killing', 'idling' or 'trifling' [Figure I.1]. Although Cruikshank does not feature the railway – by 1827 still in its infancy – as an illustration of the contemporary technological developments which were to have such a formative impact on Victorian 'time consciousness', an emphasis on the effects of speed, both marvellous and disorienting, and the precise measurement of time is nonetheless discernible in the Plates.[1] While continuing a long-established cultural tradition of representing the passage of time, Cruikshank's

[1] See Nicholas Daly for an account of the railway's impact in creating a 'new time-consciousness' in mid-Victorian Britain (46). Daly draws on Wolfgang Schivelbusch's seminal study, The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the Nineteenth Century (1977). As Ruth Livesey points out, though, the stage and mail-coach network was itself viewed as a 'symbol of modernity' in the 1820s, and continued to co-exist with the emergent railway network through to the 1840s (617).

Illustrations, then, are not in themselves timeless scenes, but offer glimpses of a distinctly modern, nineteenth-century preoccupation with time, which would have been familiar to William Makepeace Thackeray at the outset of his literary career.

[Insert Figure I.1 here]

Figure I.1 George Cruikshank. Illustrations of Time. London: Published by the Artist, 1827. Plate 2.

In a lengthy review of Illustrations of Time for *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, John Wilson Croker (alias 'Christopher North') reinforces this point by concluding his account of Cruikshank's reflections on time with an extended editorial eulogy (or 'puff') of the periodical in which he writes, which is itself viewed as an example of a new mode of temporal experience produced by the industrialisation of print culture. Croker defends the integrity of the periodical form against the prejudice of those 'men of education' who claim to 'always go, for every one single individual draught of knowledge, to the Fountain-Head' – in other words, to books. Likening 'Maga' to a 'clear and copious stream', one of the two archetypal tropes of 'Time' identified at the beginning of the review (the other being the figure of an 'Old Gentleman', as exhibited in the frontispiece to Cruikshank's Illustrations), Croker envisages the periodical as a medium which channels the sources of knowledge directly into the homes of every reader 'at the small expense of half-a-crown a month'. In this way, the monthly magazine is deemed superior to the book bound in 'calfskin': whereas the latter form is associated with old age and bodily decay, 'divine Maga … blooms in immortal youth. Custom cannot stale her infinite variety'. Croker implicitly presents Maga as a vehicle for the accelerated speed and novelty of modern life in contrast to the staid conservatism of the book. At the same time, Croker hints at the pressures of the periodical's requirement for

an ever-youthful flow of knowledge, ironically suggesting that he has been forced to shorten his article on Cruikshank in order to meet the publisher's deadline ('a devil is at the door'), thus conveying the haste and rapidity of circulation to which the writer must adapt (792).

Thackeray directly recalled Croker's 'famous article' for *Blackwood's* Magazine when writing his own critical appreciation of Cruikshank for the Westminster Review, published over a decade later in June 1840 ('George Cruikshank' 312) – by which date, Thackeray was collaborating with Cruikshank on the publication of his own 'illustrations' of time, as I discuss in Chapter 1. More generally, however, Thackeray's intense and sustained 'preoccupation with time' throughout his career has long been recognised by modern critics (McMaster 66). In his landmark study Thackeray the Novelist (1954), Geoffrey Tillotson observed that the characteristic narrative form of Thackeray's longer fiction was directly related to the temporal conditions of its original serial publication: 'Essentially a novelist of a thousand brilliant spurts, it is probable that no vast work would have come from him at all if the system of publishing in parts, whether separately or in magazines, had not allowed him to write in lengths timed beyond dispute by the public clock' (15). In the 1960s and 70s, essays on Thackeray's historical and philosophical conception of time were published by Jean Sudrann and Juliet McMaster, and a chapter of John Carey's well-known study Thackeray: Prodigal Genius (1977) was similarly devoted to documenting Thackeray's fascination with the subject. During this period, however, critical recognition of Thackeray's individual time-consciousness was not directly connected to the broader socio-cultural contexts of 'modernity'.[2] Often, to the contrary, critics have read Thackeray's fascination with the passage of time, whether viewed in a destructive or recuperative guise, as a mode of nostalgia indicative of a pre-modern, or anti-modern, perspective. While suggesting that the 'feeling of rapid transience' was 'vital to his genius' (130), Carey firmly

[2] For an historical account of the concept of 'modernity' which traces its origins to a new form of temporal self-consciousness in the eighteenth century, see Habermas (5–11).

distinguished the 'circlings of time' characteristic of Thackeray's later fiction from the 'advanced literary structures' of Modernism. The disruption of linear progression expressed by Thackeray's favoured style of narration was seen, rather, as backward-looking 'efforts to redeem and outmanoeuvre time', from which he was in 'retreat' (147–8). Likewise, Sudrann insisted on the 'essential conservatism' of Thackeray's temporal thinking (361). For much of the early and mid-twentieth century, as Gordon N. Ray was perhaps the first to note, Thackeray's writing was 'judged by the standards of a narrowly defined modernism', and often taken to exemplify an outmoded or unsophisticated Victorian past (12). The image of Thackeray as an uncomplicatedly nostalgic and/or conservative writer, preoccupied with his own society's past yet (paradoxically) representative of a certain style of gentlemanly middle-class Victorianism, still persists in some broad popular and academic accounts, if no longer in straightforward terms within more specialized Thackeray studies.

More recent critical work within the field of Victorian literary studies has begun to examine the 'time-consciousness' of various contemporary authors and genres within the conceptual framework offered by socio-historical theories of cultural modernity. Nicholas Daly, for instance, has argued that the 'sensation novel' of the 1860s 'provides a species of temporal training', which 'through its deployment of suspense and nervousness … synchronizes its readers with industrial modernity' (37).[3] The work of Charles Dickens is often cited in relation to similar accounts of the industrial and technological 'shock' of modernity, and its psychological effects on consciousness. According to Juliet John's recent survey, Dickens's critical association with the 'modern' – as distinct from his more obvious popular association with the 'Victorian'– extends as far back as the 1940s (3–4). John Ruskin's famous assertion that Dickens was 'a pure modernist … a leader of the steam-whistle party par excellence' (Qtd in John 65) was a precursor to this interpretation, although,

[3] For a similar recent approach to Victorian 'time-consciousness', which includes discussion of a number of contemporary writers but makes no reference to Thackeray, see Zemka.

as John suggests, the notion of Dickens's modernity may be as much of a 'critical fiction' as the alternative sentimentalised (or 'Christmassy') Dickens (4). Thackeray, however, does not so readily fit into the dominant critical accounts of Victorian modernity which have been produced over the past two decades. Thackeray's fiction is not notable for cultivating narrative suspense or for its use of sensationalism: indeed, in later novels such as The Adventures of Philip (1861–2), he self-consciously critiqued and parodied such techniques. Other narrative or textual forms that have been associated with the aesthetics of modernity, however, are central to Thackeray's literary production – most notably (as the work of Tillotson had already implied), his writing for periodicals. In W.M. Thackeray and the Mediated Text (2000), Richard Pearson suggests that Thackeray:

> emerged onto a faultline between the declining notion of writing as a gentlemanly and aristocratic pursuit, and the modern age of commercial publishing. More than any other writer of the period, he exemplifies a transitional figure, continuously renegotiating between the ideal and the reality of authorship. (1)

Pearson thus adumbrates Thackeray's ambivalence towards the 'modern' commercialised forms of authorship which professional writers in the mid-nineteenth century were required to practise. While the purpose of this volume is not to insist on a 'modern' Thackeray, substituting one reductive myth of the author for another, the essays collected here extend recent critical work by exploring Thackeray's 'preoccupation with time' – as well as his own status and position within time – within a range of broader literary, historical, cultural, technological, and biographical contexts.

The first part of the collection, 'Time, Modernity and Literary Culture', focusses on some of the distinctive temporal forms and experiences of authorship and print culture in the mid-nineteenth century. Much of Thackeray's literary work, especially during the early part of his career leading up to the publication of Vanity Fair (1847–8), was shaped in the specific context of periodical publication, the magazines and newspapers to which he

contributed extensively during the 1830s and 40s. The medium of the periodical, and the culture which developed within particular periodicals of the time, often produced a self-consciously 'ephemeral' form of writing, which attracted considerable criticism and anxiety amongst Victorian commentators. In Chapter 1, I examine Thackeray's conflicting attitudes towards the ephemeral, as manifested in his prevalent use of the journalistic form of the 'sketch' and his early satirical writing on the idea of literary 'fashion', a term etymologically associated with the origins of 'modernity'. As Amanpal Garcha demonstrates, the form of the sketch (which, for Thackeray, has both verbal and visual dimensions) played an important role in his early development as a professional writer: Thackeray's sketches were initially tailored for magazine publication, then later collected in volume form (e.g. The Paris Sketchbook [1840] and Comic Tales and Sketches [1841]), or appeared as the basic narrative unit of serialised novels – most famously, in Vanity Fair: Pen and Pencil Sketches of English Society. The ephemeral and provisional nature of the sketch lends itself not only to the medium of periodical and serial (part-issue) publication, but also to self-reflexive commentary on the process of literary fashion. Despite the fact that Thackeray regularly lampooned the 'fashionable novels' of Catherine Gore and Edward Bulwer Lytton, the temporality of fashion holds a persistent fascination for him, as indeed critics such as Robert Colby and John Carey have previously recognised. In this respect, I argue that Thackeray's modernity can fruitfully be compared to that of his contemporary Charles Baudelaire, whose celebrated essay 'The Painter of Modern Life' (1859–60) defines 'modernity' in art as 'the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent, the half of art whose other half is the eternal and the immutable' (13).

The periodicals with which Thackeray was most closely associated during his early career – *Fraser's Magazine* in the 1830s and Punch in the following decade – have often been figured as masculine homosocial communities, a 'brotherhood of the press' to which the

individual contributor developed a sense of personal belonging. More broadly, the sub-culture of journalism in the nineteenth century came to be associated with the figure of the 'Bohemian' writer or artist, and with the assorted cultural 'myths' surrounding the lifestyle of this figure. As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick memorably remarked in Epistemology of the Closet (1990), it was Thackeray who 'half invented' and 'half merely house-trained' the myth of 'Bohemia' for English-speaking readers, transposing the term from its early-nineteenth century French origins (193). In Chapter 2, Antonia Harland-Lang provides a more thorough account of Thackeray's influential role in the mythologizing of 'Bohemia', tracing his shifting usage of the term from the narrator's characterisation of Becky Sharp to Arthur Pendennis's depiction of the lost fraternal sociability of his youth in The Adventures of Philip. Thackeray's representation of the Bohemian writer, she shows, is bound up with the concrete forms of nineteenth-century literary culture and with emerging institutions of male homosociality amongst the gentleman's clubs of London. The twentieth-century writer V.S. Pritchett called the mid-Victorian characterisation of 'Bohemia' the 'myth of the century', indicating not only its popular dissemination but also its status as a distinctly modern myth of the artist – albeit one that by the end of the nineteenth century was already viewed in some quarters as vulgar and somewhat passé.

The temporal mode of early-Victorian print culture, however, was not solely conditioned by the demanding routines of weekly or monthly publication, the hand-to-mouth existence of the 'Bohemian' journalist. Other, less commonly discussed print genres to which periodicity of publication was an integral feature include the popular almanacs and Christmas books issued at the end of each year. As discussed in Chapter 1, the almanac took the form of a monthly calendar containing predictions for the coming year based on the interpretation of astrological configurations and meteorological signs, as well as marking significant dates such as public holidays. Thackeray devised two of his early stories to fit the calendrical

format of Cruikshank's Comic Almanack, a parodic twist on the genre. The annual Christmas Book was popularised, of course, by Dickens in the 1840s with A Christmas Carol, but as Kate Forrester demonstrates in Chapter 3 Thackeray also made a significant contribution to the genre, producing six volumes between 1847 and 1855. A characteristic feature of the genre was its more explicit use of fantasy and fairy tale, at the expense of realism, corresponding with the celebration of Christmas as a heightened temporal moment that transcends the everyday flow of time. Thackeray, however, objected to the tendency within some Christmas Books to offer moral sermons alongside popular entertainment, preferring instead to align Christmas stories with the tradition of pantomime and to celebrate their flagrant unreality. Focussing on his burlesque fairy tale, The Rose and the Ring (1855), Forrester argues that the fantastic temporality of 'Christmas time' functions for the reader as a carnivalesque release from temporal routine, creating an illusory world which Thackeray refuses to dismiss even while he recognises its impermanence.

In 'De Juventute', one of the Roundabout Papers (1860–3) first published in the Cornhill Magazine, Thackeray expressed an ironic sense of temporal dislocation on behalf of a middle-aged mid-Victorian generation which had lived to experience the transition from the 'prae-railroad world' of the early nineteenth century to the technological modernity of the 1860s: 'We who lived before railways, and survive out of the ancient world, are like Father Noah and his family out of the Ark' (233). For this generation, conscious of spanning the chasm between modern and pre-modern worlds, memories of youth ('juventute' is the Latin equivalent) come to seem like relics of ancient history: 'Waterloo is to you no more than Agincourt, and George IV than Sardanapalus' (233). This passage nicely exemplifies the way in which Thackeray's personal preoccupation with the passing of time is invariably also an exercise of historical imagination. Vast forces of historical change – the development of the railways, the Napoleonic wars – impact on the subjective apprehension of time, resulting in a

peculiar distortion of temporal perspective: relatively recent historical events seem remote, the distant horizon comes nearer. Elsewhere in The Roundabout Papers, Thackeray presents his nostalgic propensity to look back at the past in the context of the relentless forward march of 'Time, the white-wigged charioteer' ('On a Joke I Once Heard From the Late Thomas Hood' 261). Thackeray is indeed a writer for whom the retrospective mode is habitual, but the very form of his nostalgia exposes the modernity on which it depends. Thackeray's fascination with documenting large-scale social change at a 'microscopic' level of material observation, which reaches its apogee in the late autobiographical essays of The Roundabout Papers, is a pervasive feature of his historiography. Changing fashions in clothing, food, domestic interiors, districts of London, tastes in literature and art, and so on, form much of the substance of his historical fiction and lectures, though the boundary between 'historical' and 'contemporary' subjects in Thackeray is sometimes difficult to define.

During his lifetime, Thackeray's reputation as an historian (rather than just a novelist) was significant in its own right: he was, for instance, invited to complete the final volume of Thomas Macaulay's History of England after its author died prematurely in 1859. Thackeray cultivated a particular antiquarian knowledge of the Queen Anne and Georgian periods (what recent literary historians have termed the 'long eighteenth century'), an age whose relative proximity to his own time could be described, in the words of Henry James, as 'a palpable imaginable visitable past'.[4] In his influential study The Historical Novel (1937), Georg Lukács saw Thackeray as a leading exponent of the genre of historical fiction which developed across Europe in the wake of Walter Scott's popular Waverley novels. While Lukács admired Thackeray's 'critical realism' he critiqued the 'tendency to make history private', which he saw as the corollary of his microscopic attention to the details of everyday life motivated by the desire to demystify the 'false heroism' of the public historical record

[4] James was referring in his Preface to the New York Edition (1907-9) to the early-nineteenth century Romantic period evoked, though not directly represented, in his story The Aspern Papers (1888) (xxxi).

(200–2). Later critics have taken a more sympathetic view of Thackeray's mode of historical representation. For Robert Colby, Thackeray follows Macaulay's directive to attend to the 'history of the people as well as the history of government'; he is a 'memoirist' rather than an 'historian', but one who deliberately privileges the prosaic idiom of the former over the elevated discourse of the latter (315–18). Thackeray explicitly announced his historiographical principles on a number of occasions, most memorably in the opening chapter of Henry Esmond (1852), whose eponymous narrator declares an aversion to the 'stately Muse of History' and a preference for recording the every-day life of the past from a 'familiar rather than heroic' standpoint (13–14). As Andrew Sanders suggests, however, Thackeray was far more sceptical of the Whig narrative of historical progress than Macaulay: 'History emerges in Thackeray's disconcerting scheme as a series of arbitrary acts, not as a determined progress' (20). More recently, Felicia Bonaparte has read Henry Esmond as a sophisticated 'meta-historical' text, fully aware of the extent to which 'History' is constructed as a fictive narrative (135–60).

The second part of this volume, 'Historical Fictions: Genre and Place', contains three chapters that explore the complex pattern of relationships between past and present in Thackeray's historical novels set in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In Chapter 4 Richard Pearson considers the significance of the 'presence' of real eighteenth-century literary figures in Henry Esmond (Joseph Addison and Richard Steele) and The Virginians (1857–9) (Samuel Johnson). Drawing a suggestive analogy with wider nineteenth-century interest in producing simulacra of historical figures, as evidenced by the establishment of Madame Tussaud's Waxworks in 1835, Pearson views Thackeray's characterisation of these writers as a form of 'simulation' that is knowingly alert to the impossibility of gaining authentic knowledge of the originals. This indicates how Thackeray's historical novels differ from those of his contemporaries who used real-life models to validate the supposed

authenticity and historical truth of their works of fiction. The first edition publication of Henry Esmond, which Thackeray insisted should resemble the typographical form of an eighteenth-century book, can be seen as a literal example of this simulation, or 'fac-simile', of history. For Pearson, Thackeray's scepticism about historical knowledge pre-empts the postmodern theories of hyperresemblance and pastiche applied in Jean Baudrillard's analysis of Stanley Kubrick's 1975 film adaptation of Thackeray's Barry Lyndon (1844).

In Chapter 5 Jim Shanahan considers not just the eighteenth-century historical setting of Barry Lyndon, but, more specifically, its relationship to the mid-nineteenth-century literary sub-genre of the military novel, popularised by the Irish writers, Charles Lever and William Hamilton Maxwell. Reaching its height of popularity between the late 1830s and the mid-1840s, a period of extreme social and political turmoil witnessed at first hand by Thackeray during his extended tour of Ireland in 1843, the Irish military novel imagines the pre-Union Ireland of the eighteenth century as, contrastingly, a 'prelapsarian' world – or timeless space – removed from disturbing historical realities. In Thackeray's parodic contribution to this genre, however, the unsettling figure of Barry Lyndon projects a disruptive political energy from the present onto the past. By refusing to romanticise the martial exploits of the military hero, Shanahan suggests, Thackeray creates an anti-military novel, which expresses his ambivalent feelings towards Ireland and the Irish, mediated, in part, by the troubled circumstances of his marriage to Isabella Shawe. Genre and place are also key concerns of Matthew Ingleby's discussion of Vanity Fair as a 'local historical novel' in Chapter 6. Building on recent work in cultural geography and the 'spatial turn' in literary studies, Ingleby explores the representation of Bloomsbury in Thackeray's most frequently discussed novel, uncovering the history of a richly contested site of cultural meaning. First developed in the 1790s as a fashionable suburb for the gentry, Bloomsbury had already entered into relative social decline by the 1820s by virtue of its proximity to the mercantile City of

London, at which point it became a favoured location for the elaborate social manoeuvring featured (often satirically) in the 'silver-fork' novels popularised during that, and the succeeding, decade. In Vanity Fair, Thackeray's historical reconstruction of the shifting cultural topography of Regency and early-Victorian Bloomsbury, an area of London with which he was personally familiar, shows how the temporal displacements of historical fiction can operate on the most familiar spatial ground (in contrast to the self-conscious exoticism of many other Victorian historical novels), as well as, famously, bridging the perceived divide between events of local and world-historical significance. Taken together, the essays in this section suggest that Thackeray was equally mindful of the delusions of a naïve acceptance of historical progress and a nostalgic mythologizing of the past. Far from expressing an uncritical attachment either to past or present, Thackeray's historicism coexists, sometimes disconcertingly, with a broader epistemological scepticism towards the possibility of narrative change and development.

One of the most distinctive aspects of Thackeray's historical fiction, by comparison with the novels of Walter Scott and some of his early-Victorian successors, is its emphasis on the subjectivity of personal recollection. As Sanders notes, for Henry Esmond 'history is an act of memory', and the same could be said, to varying degrees, of Thackeray's other eighteenth-century narratives: Barry Lyndon, The Virginians, and the unfinished Denis Duval (1863) (20). In their Introduction to a collection of essays on long nineteenth-century discourses of memory, Matthew Campbell et al suggest that '[c]onceptions of memory are grounded in history, as much as memory is posited as the grounds of history itself' (5). This intricate symbiosis between individual and collective acts of remembrance, which acknowledges both the contingency of personal memory on objectively-determined historical circumstances and the reliance of historical narrative on the living witness of memory as a putative source of truth, can be encountered in Thackeray's historical fiction par excellence.

Thackeray's fascination with the workings of memory – a posture which encompasses both pleasurable nostalgia and a more severe melancholy – has long been recognised, although critics have disagreed as to whether it is best conceived as a post-Romantic or proto-Modernist trait, or, as Nicholas Dames has more recently claimed, a peculiarly mid-Victorian form of 'amnesia' (126–8; 148–63).[5] Thackeray frequently adopted the narratorial persona of the 'old fogey' who reminisces nostalgically on the lost sensory world of childhood with a Wordsworthian double consciousness of past and present, most self-consciously in The Roundabout Papers (236). His writing thus articulates an acute sensitivity to the successive stages of individual life, from childhood and adolescence to maturity and old age. The form of the Bildungsroman, invoked by novels such as The History of Pendennis (1848–50) and Philip, reflects this thematic concern with organic development, even though it is one that Thackeray employed sceptically, as Judith Fisher has observed.[6] Given the intensities of Thackeray's faculty of memory, it is perhaps not surprising that for readers of succeeding generations Thackeray himself has exerted a powerful nostalgic appeal. During the late-Victorian and Edwardian periods, in particular, readers who had imbibed Thackeray in their youth saw him as the embodiment of a fading, but still imposing, literary past. In 1913 G.K. Chesterton memorably wrote that 'Thackeray is the novelist of memory – of our memories as well as his own ... Thackeray is everybody's past – is everybody's youth' (Qtd. in Dames 148).

The final Part of the collection, 'Memory and Legacy', considers the questions of memory and memorialisation raised by Thackeray's work within four very different, but complementary, contexts. Thackeray's own absorption by memories of childhood in later life leads onto the subsequent memorialisation of Thackeray by his familial descendants and to

[5] For an influential reading of Henry Esmond which argues for its Wordsworthian affinities, see Miller (74-94).
[6] Fisher argues that in Pendennis – despite the form of the narrative –Thackeray questions 'the concept of character development' through which it is assumed that the individual self grows organically over the course of time (103).

the potential of digital technology for preserving and enhancing Thackeray's print archive in the future, and finally to the critical legacy perpetuated by generations of literary scholars. In Chapter 7 Alice Crossley offers a close reading of The Roundabout Papers, Thackeray's most evocative autobiographical text and a sustained meditation on the experience of living through time. Crossley emphasises Thackeray's ironic awareness of the temporal distortions of nostalgia, a form of retrospection which conjures the simultaneous experience of childhood and middle age through the associative power invested in objects. Childhood, in fact, is not remembered as a site of untainted innocence in The Roundabout Papers, but rather one of initiation into the rules of adult sociability and economic exchange. At the same time, Thackeray's self-indulgence in his sensory memories of childhood is the source of the text's appeal for adult readers of the Cornhill Magazine, becoming a stimulus for shared experience and collective memory. After his premature death in 1863, the responsibility for preserving Thackeray's memory (in both senses of the term) fell to his surviving daughters, and in particular his eldest child Anne Thackeray Ritchie. Inheriting an extensive archive of correspondence and manuscripts, but also her father's injunction against the publication of any biography, Anne at first saw her role as both custodian and protector of Thackeray's legacy and reputation. In Chapter 8 John Aplin tells the story of how Anne gradually revised her understanding of this role in the decades leading up to the Centenary celebrations of Thackeray's birth in 1911. Relinquishing a promising independent career as a novelist, who achieved significant critical acclaim during the 1860s and 70s, Anne reconciled herself to the task of memorialising her father through the series of prefaces which she wrote for the monumental Biographical Edition of the Works of William Makepeace Thackeray (13 volumes, 1898–9) and the revised Centenary Edition of 1911–12. At the beginning of the twentieth century, then, Anne was arguably the most important single figure involved in the

construction of Thackeray's literary legacy, and in cementing his cultural status for future generations.

One hundred years on from the 1911 Centenary commemoration, the question of how best to preserve the 'legacy' of nineteenth century authors, in danger of being misrepresented or simply forgotten, has migrated to current debates around the digital curation of print and manuscript archives. As Clare Horrocks reminds us in Chapter 9, an important part of Thackeray's literary legacy, which generations of scholars have invested considerable labour in attempting to catalogue, is bound up in his contribution to periodicals, which were, by definition, multi-authored and partly anonymous publications. Building on the work of Edgar Harden and other earlier scholars, Horrocks's project of creating a digital archive for the Punch Contributor Ledgers, a resource previously only accessible to users of the British Library, aims to facilitate analysis and attribution of texts (both verbal and visual) published in the magazine Punch, including those supplied by Thackeray. Horrocks concludes from new analysis of data enabled by digital conversion that Thackeray's contributions to Punch were more extensive and their positioning within the periodical of greater significance than has previously been thought. At the same time, her study is careful to leave open the possibilities for future analysis and interpretation of the archive, a flexibility and interactive capacity which distinguishes the project from earlier, more static types of digital repository.

In the final chapter of this volume, Judith Fisher traces the history of Thackeray's critical reception from Victorian assessments written in the decades after his death, through the emergence of professional academic studies in the mid-twentieth century, to the most recent trends within Thackeray scholarship. Necessarily focussing on 'key moments' in this history, Fisher nevertheless offers a richly detailed account of the vicissitudes of Thackeray's critical reputation. After undergoing a period of decline around

the peak of early twentieth-century Modernism, Thackeray's status was gradually rehabilitated by successive waves of critical thought more receptive to his distinctive use of narrative form, authorial irony and ambivalence, and resistance to closed aesthetic structures. Readers influenced by critical methodologies as diverse as textual scholarship, structuralism, deconstruction, Marxism and feminism have found their interests positively refracted in the 'cracked mirror' of Thackeray's art. Thackeray thus offers a useful lens for studying the broader shifts and trajectories of critical value and opinion over the past century. In comparison with the popular and critical stature which he enjoyed during his own lifetime (and through the Victorian period as a whole), however, even this restoration of Thackeray's fluctuating fortunes during the second half of the twentieth century looks partial and insecure. During his career, Thackeray was routinely heralded by reviewers as a rival to Dickens, both in terms of artistic achievement and popular influence; for such celebrated contemporaries as Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot and Anthony Trollope, Thackeray was unquestionably the greatest novelist of his age. Over the past half century, as public familiarity with his novels has dwindled (barring the singular exception of Vanity Fair), Thackeray's position within the canon of Victorian literature has also become less certain. Barbara Hardy remarked on this shift in her 1972 study The Exposure of Luxury: Radical Themes in Thackeray, declaring that it 'seems impossible to take for granted either the extent or the depth of knowledge' of Thackeray's writing by students in comparison with authors of similar stature such as Eliot, Dickens, and Thomas Hardy (13). Broadly speaking, this observation remains true some four decades on from Hardy's study. While Thackeray's critical reputation no longer suffers from the predominance of Modernist aesthetics, F.R. Leavis's 'Great Tradition', or Jamesian accounts of the 'art of fiction', his place on the university syllabus, not to mention wider public familiarity, can no longer be taken for granted. It is suffice to say that the bicentenary of Thackeray's birth in 2011 passed without much of the media attention which surrounded

the equivalent commemoration of Dickens a year later – and the recognition which it did attract pales in significance beside the extensive public commemorative events organized a century earlier.

Whether Thackeray's current position within the academy and within the wider culture should be viewed as one of relative neglect or of surprising endurance (and how far either of these positions can be judged to be deserved) is not the primary consideration of the essays in this collection. Rather, this volume casts the question of Thackeray's place in time – in terms of his critical reception, biographical memorialisation, and the very preservation of his texts – in the light of his own consciousness of time, a pervasive characteristic of Thackeray's writing which speaks to larger debates on the modernity of nineteenth-century print culture, the historical self-consciousness of the Victorians and their unprecedented fascination with personal development, childhood and memory.

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