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The History of Henry Esmondの中の「歴史」について

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William Makepeace Thackeray の *The History of Henry Esmond* における history は興味深い機能を果たしているといえる。特に history と body との関係はこの History (物語=歴史) において作者 Thackeray が middle-class の ideology の代弁者的位置を占めているという経緯もあり、Esmond、Isabel、Rachel、Beatrix に見られる domestic/public sphere との絡み合いという点からも、この History の大切な要素をなしていると思われる。この論文では Esmond と Beatrix の対立的 ideology をも含めていかに *The History of Henry Esmond* の中で body が historical process (歴史的過程) に関わっているかを論じてみた。

Body and History in *The History of Henry Esmond*

There are numerous passages in *The History of Henry Esmond* in which the narrative's development is intricately interwoven with the various conditions of the body. Beatrix's abortive marriage to the Duke of Hamilton, for example, is attributable to the unexpected occurrence of the duel in which the latter is eliminated both physically and textually. Another example, although more subtle, is found when Esmond, upon assuming the responsibility of bringing James Edward Stuart to England—a task that necessitates his absence from the Castlewoods—explains the need for his temporary disappearance from London society by “giving out ere he left...that he himself was sick, and gone to Hampshire for country air.”¹ Indeed, the seemingly insignificant role the body plays is closely related to the narrative progression that takes place on the historical level:² Esmond joins the army and fights in the war of the Spanish Succession as a result of his involvement in the duel between Francis and Mohun, which is itself an indirect result of Esmond's infecting Lady Castlewood with smallpox; Esmond brings the Pretender to London and installs him in Rachel's house because of his physical resemblance to Frank—“it seemed to Mr Esmond that the Prince was not unlike young Castlewood, whose age and figure he resembled” (368); and the chance of Stuart's introduction to Queen Anne's Court does not depend so much on the calculations of the conspirators but on the death of the queen. Although Thackeray treats the details of these incidents as being hinged upon coincidence, he interjects the material condition and presence of the body into the center of historical action. In fact in *Henry Esmond* there is a constant conflation between the body and the process of history.

We can regard the ubiquity of the body as an indication of how important a status Thackeray assigns it: it is the site at which the private sphere—composed of desires, friendships, and mundane transactions of the life of the middle-class family—and the public sphere—composed of sovereigns, politics, and historical events—interpenetrate. Thackeray uses the body to insert what would otherwise be only one family's story into a process of national history. What might be, for example, as insignificant as Esmond's poor health becomes an excuse for his engagement in an affair that, if successful, would actually make

history. Thackeray incorporates Hamilton both as a world-historical individual and as a person of some importance in the "private" memoirs of the Castlewoods, i.e., a body, the annihilation of which has repercussions doubly on the history of a nation and the life of Beatrix and Esmond. Hamilton's death, Esmond reflects, shatters the "thousand great schemes, hopes, ambitions, that were alive in the gallant heart, beating a few hours since, and now in a little dust quiescent" (434). Because of the great promise Hamilton showed before his death, particularly in the political field, Esmond is at least expected to regret the loss as a terrible blow to the nation. However, instead of immersing himself in the reflections on the wasted potentials of a public figure, Esmond writes of the effect Hamilton's death has had on one person only:

Thus, for a third time, Beatrix's ambitious hopes were circumvented, and she might well believe that a special malignant fate watched and pursued her, tearing her prize out of her hand just as she seemed to grasp it, and leaving her with only rage and grief for her portion (434).

Therefore, Beatrix, although persistently desired throughout this history because of her pulchritude, is prevented from attaining a social status with its promise of physical indulgence. At a point where the body is brought to the fore the ambitions of the public and the private follow the same path, and are in the end unfulfilled.

Thackeray links the body, which comprehends such attendant categories as dress, adornment, desire, and sickness, to a process of history that tends to develop a force which encroaches upon the individual. History becomes something which Esmond, in the chronological flow of the story in which the ethos shifts from that of the eighteenth century aristocratic family towards another of the nineteenth century middle-class family, attempts to escape. (In fact *Henry Esmond* is a historical fiction intended to differentiate between the emerging middle-class family from its predecessor.³) The nascent ideology that arises from the shift from the old to the new order could be related to the metaphorization of the historical discontinuity Thackeray uses towards the end of the novel concerning the body and the domestic sphere.

We can find in *Henry Esmond* some evidence to suggest, in the words of Foucault, that the body is "totally imprinted by history" and is implicated in "the process of history's destruction" of it. But in contrast to Foucault, who argues that the body as "the inscribed surface of events" is "the locus of a dissociated self (adopting the illusion of a substantial unity),"⁴ Thackeray subscribes to the "illusion" and makes it the basis of a residual belief in historical continuity. The body in *Henry Esmond*, as a site of entanglement with history, helps consolidate individual identity and joins it to the process of history.

There is a scene in the novel in which Henry Esmond reminisces about the time he spent in prison after the duel between Castlewood and Mohun:

[W]e...look back on those times, as on great gaps between the old life and the new. You do not know how much you suffer in those critical maladies of the heart, until the disease is over and you look back on it afterwards... Esmond thought of his early time as a novice, and of this past trial as an initiation before entering into life (211-12).

Here Esmond recognizes discrepancy between the past self and the present self, and perceives

the lack of a coherent, continuous personal identity. The rhetoric of “gaps” and the imagined separation between the Henry Esmond who experienced imprisonment and the other who recalls and writes about that time also provide insight into a narrative strategy structuring Esmond’s history. De Certeau suggests that “[f]rom the moment of a rupture between a subject and an object of the operation, between will to write and written body (or a body to be written), this writing fabricates Western history.”⁵ Indeed this rupture within the self becomes a foundation of the historiographic process of *The History of Henry Esmond*. Henry Esmond assumes both the role of the will to write, to know, and to order the past, and the role of the body that is written. The effect of this rupture becomes most apparent when he turns his another self, a “noviciate,” into a third person.

However, the effort to split the Self into a will to write and a written body is often strained in Esmond’s history as shown in such sentences as: “My lady used to have boxes of new plays from London, and Harry was forbidden, under the pain of a whipping, to look into them. I am afraid he deserved the penalty pretty often, and got it sometimes” (76). Indeed, the effort to conquer the body of history is never complete. The opposition between the mute body that (paradoxically enough) speaks and the body that is spoken is never stable, for each of them can be heard at every moment of the history, although the former mostly remains residual and muffled. In *Henry Esmond* the “gaps between the old life and the new,” however, could be filled in by the body: “Long ago he has forgiven and blest the soft hand that wounded him; but the mark is there, and the wound is cicatrized only—no time, tears, caresses, or repentance, can obliterate the scar” (211). The body tends to transgress the limitations imposed by the discontinuity, as the mark on the body connects the two moments of history. The scar somehow becomes a historical record that functions as a deterrent from the irreparable split between the past and the present: “the wound I had at Blenheim, and of which I wear the scar, hath become a part of my frame and influenced my whole body, nay spirit subsequently.... Our great thoughts, our great affections, the Truths of our life, never leave us. Surely, they cannot separate from our consciousness” (429). This inseparability of the two selves of one Subject becomes a key to implicating the historian in the historical process.

There is a view that problematizes the body. According to Judith Butler the body is constituted through discourse, and the material reality it is ordinarily invested with becomes negligible. Drawing on Mary Douglas’ *Purity and Danger* she suggests that “what constitutes the limit of the body is never merely material, but that the surface, the skin, is systematically signified by taboos and anticipated transgressions.”⁶ Rather than understand the surface of the body as biologically determined prior to discursive or cultural intervention, Butler defines the body as a site of power struggle, or “the limits of the socially hegemonic” (*Gender Trouble*, 131). The ontologically skeptical view of the body or gender leads to the denial of the naturalness of gender identity.

[A]cts, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this *on the surface* of the body, through the play of signifying absences that suggest, but never reveal, the organizing principle of identity as a cause. Such acts, gestures, enactment, generally construed, are *performative* in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained

through corporeal signs and other discursive means. That the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality.... [A]cts and gestures, articulated and enacted desires create the illusion of an interior and organizing gender core, an illusion discursively maintained for the purposes of the regulation of sexuality within the obligatory frame of reproductive heterosexuality (136).

Thus the surface of the body is a site where cultural, normative and hegemonic representations are forged. In this context the relationship between biology and sexual hegemony can be regarded as an elaborate construct or fiction that illuminates the way the patriarchal discourse attempts to dominate the Other.

Butler's observation is pertinent to explain the transformation of the body in *The History of Henry Esmond*. Esmond is infected with smallpox, and wounded in duels and battles, but the damage to his corporeal integrity does not weaken his male identity. As he recovers from his illness he gains something that makes him a better man in a social sense: he notes that within "the last few months [of his recuperation] he himself had grown from a boy to be a man, and with his figure, his thoughts had shot up, and grown manly" (128). Disease is a cordial that makes Esmond more acceptable to a body of men. the female body, on the other hand, is a passive entity that needs to be protected. It is characterized not by regeneration, but by dissolution. In contrast to Esmond's experience Rachel's bout with smallpox entails different effects:

[H]er ladyship's beauty was very much injured by the small-pox. ...the delicacy of her rosy colour and complexion were gone: her eyes had lost their brilliancy, her hair fell, and her face looked older. It was as if a coarse hand had rubbed off the delicate tints of that sweet picture, and brought it, as one has seen unskilful painting-cleaners do, to the dead colour. ...with her beauty her reign had ended, and the days of her love were over (124, 130-31).

By juxtaposing the two bodies that are affected by the same disease we can detect the way the two are in fact unequally treated to produce dissimilar meanings. In the one the disease produces a discontinuous, disintegrative body that is reflected by the loss of physical beauty and marital bliss while in the other smallpox increases virility and raises masculine stature. In its biologizing distinction the reader tends to overlook the normalizing force operating behind the historical inscription.

I would like to interpret the smallpox episode as a case potentially generating multiple levels of meanings centered around the body. The illness can also be grasped as a site of desires and class conflict. Rachel seizes upon Esmond's illness as a way to ostracize the boy for his illegitimate status in the Castlewood family. However, this attitude is contrasted by Rachel's inordinate desire for and affection towards Esmond. Indeed she vacillates between her rejection and acceptance of Esmond as instanced by her refusal to approach the smallpox-stricken boy and her exaggerated ardor to take his hand to the consternation of Francis. The signifying process started by the infected body continues onto Francis' further reaction when he expresses his ambivalence towards Rachel. While her anger with Esmond reduces Francis' desire for her, he at the same time cannot refrain from observing, "Damme, Lady Castlewood,

you look dev'lish handsome in a passion" (119). As a locus of ideological manifestation the pathologically involved body illuminates the significance of class consciousness in *Henry Esmond*. Francis, Rachel, and Doctor Tusher all understand that when Esmond took the blacksmith's boy on the lap he had committed an irreversible social transgression. As if to emphasize the degenerative nature of the boy, Rachel repeatedly alludes to the "alehouse," which helps the reader establish the essential connection between the boy and ideologically charged attributes of the word Rachel utters. The class implication is further confirmed in the passage that describes Doctor Tusher's reminiscence, "we all ought to be thankful," Doctor Tusher said, 'that my lady and her son were spared, while Death carried off the poor domestics of the house'; and rebuked Harry for asking, in his simple way for which we ought to be thankful—that the servants were killed, or the gentlefolks were saved?" (124).

Tusher's reminiscence then figures as an ideological ploy that helps constitute the dominant familial identity of the middle-class at the expense of the working-class bodies. Another example of the ramification of the body can be found when Esmond and Rachel visit the blacksmith who has lost two of his children to smallpox. Their mission of mercy is met with a stereotypically callous behavior: "he showed no softness, or desire to speak.... He wanted for nothing-less now than ever before, as there were fewer mouths to feed" (127). If Thackeray must valorize the ideological identity of the middle-class family, he can achieve that objective by circulating and condemning an image of the selfishly economic and apathetic relationship between parents and children of the working class. No sooner has the blacksmith buried his children than "his own name was upon [their grave]stone" (127). As annihilation of the body of the proletarian class opens a way to a greater dominance of the middle-class hegemonic values, Thackeray in a sense allows the sickened body to function as a tropological site of signification, making it possible for the body to generate a range of culturally charged meanings.

Thackeray's view on historical representation can be reconstructed fairly easily. His lecture on Richard Steele begins with a series of questions: "What do we look for in studying the history of a past age? Is it to learn the political transactions and characters of the leading public men? is it to make ourselves acquainted with the life and being of the time?" As a novelist who pays little attention to conventional historical details such as dates, names, and geographical locations in *Henry Esmond*, Thackeray demonstrates a conception of history that is definitely not based on archival meticulousity: "where is the truth, and who believes that he has it entire...? [I] say to the Muse of History, 'O venerable daughter of Mnemosyne, I doubt every single statement you ever made...! You bid me listen to a general's oration to his soldiers: Nonsense! He no more made it than Turpin made his dying speech at Newgate.'" What he advocates here is a kind of narrative history that is infused with a life of its own by imagination. Commenting on Douglas Jerrold's *Mrs Caudle's Curtain Lectures*, Thackeray writes:

There must be thousands of Caudles in this town who drank punch and annoyed their wives with tobacco-smoke last night. The couple have become real living personages in history, like queen Elizabeth, or Sancho Panza...or any other past character, who, false or real once, is only imaginary now, and for whose existence we have only the word of a book.

And surely to create these realities is the greatest triumph of a fictitious writer.⁸ Instead of one reality there are millions of realities constituted by the individuals who impose discursive power on the past, or even on the present that is incessantly becoming the body or the object of the narrating subject (according to de Certeau's interpretation of history described above). This is a type of historical approach that relativizes reality. As Harry Shaw argues, Thackeray privileges, at the expense of a "socially-based ontology," an "individual epistemology" that reinforces what today is the contested notion of an essential "human condition."⁹

However, what is deducible from Thackeray's observation quoted above is his apparent awareness that discourse inevitably intervenes between a present investigation of the past and that past which is investigated. For him discourse is not something that is opposed to the real but a mode of organizing it. As he puts it, "fiction carries a greater amount of truth in solution than that volume which purports to be all true."¹⁰ A statement such as this finds its complement in post-structuralist theories of history, which themselves are derived from earlier writers: "fiction is hardly a stranger to the 'real.'" On the contrary, as Jeremy Bentham already noted in the eighteenth century, 'fictitious' discourse may be closer to the real than objective discourse."¹¹ In conjunction with this post-structural view of history Thackeray's attempt to portray the "life" and not the "political transactions" of a time could be interpreted as his recognition of the limits discourse places on both the conscious will and the object that is retrieved by it.

Indeed, despite his interest in manners and morals Thackeray characterizes his historical efforts as lacking any particular social or political significance. In his "By Way of Preface" to *The Four Georges* (1860), Thackeray describes the kind of historical project he has in mind:

I have been taken to task for not having given grave historical treatises, which it never was my intention to attempt. Not about battles, about politics, about statesmen and measures of state, did I ever think to lecture you: but to sketch the manners and life of the old world; to amuse for few hours with talk about the old society; and, with the result of many a day's and night's pleasant reading, to try and while away a few winter evenings for my hearers.¹²

Nevertheless, Thackeray should not be taken lightly, for what he accomplishes through such "amusement" is far from insignificant. In his lectures and historical fiction he consistently surveys the past from a chronological vantage point and manages to construct an image of middle-class Victorian society that is different from the ascendant culture of the preceding age. Based on the difference between the past and the present he creates a narrative space in which the past is made to show what the present is not. At the beginning of his lecture on George III Thackeray observes that the king "is to be alive through all these varied changes...to survive out of the old world into ours." In fact Thackeray consistently aims his lectures about the past at the present world. He may repeatedly express a nostalgic desire to hear "the voice of the dead past; the laughter and the chorus; the toast called over the brimming cups,"¹³ but this desire never prevents him from speaking throughout his historical lectures to and about the collective and silent voice of his own day.

His concern with the present notwithstanding, Thackeray does not conceive of historical fiction in terms of praxis.¹⁴ In 1844 he approvingly noted "how astonishingly Sir Walter Scott

has influenced the world; how he changed the character of the novelist, then of historians, whom he brought from their philosophy to the study of pageantry and costume."¹⁵ This remark can be taken to reflect Thackeray's view that his own lectures are devoid of social or political contents as he imagines that "historians" who simply recreate how the social body (placed at the level of the pageantry) and the individual (placed at the level of the costume) displayed themselves are politically indifferent. He assumes that the work of reproduction that results from such a definition of history does not implicate the writers in Marxist praxis:

We stand already committed as to our idea of the tendency and province of the novel. Morals and manners we believe to be the novelist's best themes; and hence prefer romances which do not treat of algebra, religion, political economy, or other abstract science. We doubt the fitness of the occasion, and often...the competency of the teacher.¹⁶

Thackeray is obviously convinced that if a writer of romance remains within a category such as the pleasant or amusing he can avoid political contagion.

However, Thackeray does not always keep this posture of discursive, or representational, neutrality. As I have argued, Thackeray was aware how discourse intervenes in the process of retrieving the past by its constitutive power. This awareness is incompatible with Thackeray's assumption that depicting the "morals and manners" of a society is a socio-politically inconsequential activity. With the recognition of inconsistency in his reasoning he later reevaluates Scott on exactly the grounds that had earlier led Thackeray to praise him. In our quest for the "authentic" account of the past, Thackeray asks,

When shall we have a real account of those times and heroes—no good-humoured pageant, like those of the Scott romances—but a real authentic story to instruct and frighten honest people of the present day, and make them thankful that the baker governs the world now in place of the baron?¹⁷

Whether Thackeray recognized it or not, he had already begun formulating a solution to the problem his contradictory statements regarding the achievements of historical fiction suggested. He develops a historical discourse in which he simultaneously satisfies his fondness for "pageantry and costume" while he "instructed" his readers by way of those very representations of dress, consume and the body that wore them.

His early work *The Paris Sketch Book* (1840) demonstrates how Thackeray approaches historical figures via the sartorial. Ultimately the book becomes an originary point for his later writing in which the body is implicated in the process of history. In the chapter "Meditations at Versailles," Thackeray makes "a few moral and historical remarks" upon that famous palace, touching upon the issues of dress, behavior and historical figures.¹⁸ In these remarks costume is transformed into a metaphor for or sign of a body that is involved in politics, and of a relationship that is somewhat illusively formed between the individual and the public; in other words, Thackeray imbues clothes, jewels, and wigs with discursive significance.

When Majesty came out of his chamber, in the midst of his superhuman splendours, viz. in his cinnamon-coloured coat, embroidered with diamonds; his pyramid of a wig; his red-heeled shoes, that lifted him four inches from the ground...; when he came out, blazing upon the dukes and duchesses that waited his rising,—what could the latter do, but cover their eyes, and wink, and tremble? And did he not himself believe, as he stood

there, on his high heels, under his ambrosial periwig, that there was something in him more than man—something above Fate? (280)

Fashion for Thackeray is not mute but significative. As he reproduces the sycophantic atmosphere of Louis XIV's court he ends up multiplying the king's body by making ornaments, wigs, and other bodies mirror it:

A quarter of a million of noble countenances, at the very least, must those glasses have reflected. Rouge, diamonds, ribands, patches, upon the faces of smiling ladies: towering periwigs, sleek-shaven crowns, tufted moustaches, scars, and grizzled whiskers, worn by ministers, priest, dandies, and grim old commanders. —So many faces, O ye gods! And every one of them lies! (282)

Then what is the relation between the external ornaments and the man who is defined by them? Does something exist beneath the accumulated layers of one's historical specificity? Or has the body been totally obliterated under the weight of the all powerful sartorial significations? In Thackeray's description of the king, the "little lean, shrivelled, paunchy old man, of five feet two," and of no majestic appearance, is located between his clothes of state and his image molded by those clothes (284-85). Here Thackeray obviously does not eliminate the bodily presence, although the body is largely defined by the external layers of sigification. As he preserves both the body and the clothes, Thackeray is enabled to take a perspective from which he exposes artificiality of the king while pitying a people who worship only the imaginary figure of that king. It is at this juncture that we can find a dual nature of Thackeray's narrative: the author conflates historiographical elements to moralize on "historical" events and people.

Thackeray's interest in costume and details of dress have ramifications that go beyond the question of authenticity or of representing the true life of a historical period. In the Victorian period a changing "sartorial iconology"¹⁹ was transforming traditional view on gender and class. As Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall state, "By the 1840s, the success of the middle-class challenge to aristocratic leadership was as clear in standard masculine appearance as it was in the repeal of the Corn Laws."²⁰ When Thackeray repeatedly turns to the appearance of the historical individual, he may be responding to the prevailing ideology of the acceptable dress. Casey Finch argues that changing modes of fashion imposed new regulations on gender, privacy, and the public appearance of the body. He observes that in the Renaissance, "upon [the] emphatically creatural body, underwear and clothing were layered rather like supplementary coats of cultural meaning," whereas by the later Victorian period "the woman functions as a faint ideation conjured up by the sight of her underclothes."²¹ Placed in the context of Finch's argument, the way Thackeray produces the historical body in *The Paris Sketch Book* aligns him with an earlier mode of representation. He suggests that when the clothes are stripped away and the layers that history imposes upon the body are removed, something other than what had initially appeared there emerges. Here Thackeray obviously recognizes a body that exists prior to and in spite of the discursive marks of a reigning code of fashion.

Thackeray's definition of the position and appearance of the body found in *The Paris Sketch Book* is further developed in his construction of the middle-class family in *The History of Henry Esmond*. Isabel epitomizes the historical figures Thackeray depicts in "Meditations at

Versailles.” She represents the essence of the aristocratic family, and it is from what she personifies—an obsession with political intrigues exemplified by her dedication to the Stuart cause and by her disregard for family life—that Esmond distances himself by his retreat to his colonial estate. The contrast between the two characters elucidates why they can be attributed to two different spheres.

In Thackeray’s representation Isabel consists of layers of historical significations. Everything about her is a product of artifice, and the objects that define her, like those on Louis XIV; function as negative signs. Worst of all she is quite anachronistic. The manner in which she attires her body and decorates her room indicates how she is mired in history. When Esmond first enters Isabel’s apartment at Castlewood Hall he notices that “the chamber was richly ornamented in the manner of queen Elizabeth’s time” (67); later he remarks that “she wore the ringlets which had been in fashion in King Charles’s time” (223); she appears in “her grand tall headdress of King James’s reign” (347); and, before her capture by Captain Westbury, she is “for dying like Mary, Queen of Scots” (91). Isabel’s fanatic attachment to the past is ultimately pitiable.

My Lady Viscountess’s face was daubed with white and red up to the eyes, to which the paint gave an unearthly glare: she had a tower of lace on her head, under which was a bush of black curls—borrowed curls—so that no wonder little Harry Esmond was scared when he was first presented to her.... She sate in a great chair by the fire-corner; in her lap was a spaniel-dog that barked furiously; on a little table by her was her ladyship’s snuff-box and her sugar-plum box. She wore a dress of black velvet, and petticoat of flame-coloured brocade. She had as many rings on her fingers as the old woman of Banbury Cross; and pretty small feet which she was fond of showing with great gold clocks to her stockings, and white pantofles with red heels; and an odour of musk was shook out of her garments whenever she moved or quitted the room, leaning on her tortoiseshell stick, little Fury barking at her heels (67).

Through the cluster of unpleasant images connotative of the receding past we can even glimpse Thackeray’s antipathy to history. However, he manages to transform the images into “amusing” details while inserting a didactic voice that reflects “the will” of the inscriber.

Despite her link to grotesquerie Isabel is not assessed so much by her adornment as by the body that depends for its existence on its costume. Esmond repeatedly implies the excess of her adornment: “she was in bed with a nightcap on her head...looking none the less ghastly because of the red which was still on her cheeks, and which she could not afford to forego” (92-93). Isabel’s possible nothingness under the layers of external coverings is a tempting idea, particularly when it is juxtaposed with Thackeray’s description of George IV.

To make a portrait of him at first seemed a matter of small difficulty. There is his coat, his star, his wig, his countenance simpering under it.... And yet after reading of him in scores of volumes...you find you have nothing-nothing but a coat and a wig and a mask smiling below it-nothing but a great simulacrum. His sire and grandsires were men.... But this George, what was he...? I try and take him to pieces, and find silk stockings, padding, stays, a coat with frogs and a fur collar, a star and blue ribbon, a pocket-handkerchief prodigiously scented, one of Truefitt’s best nutty brown wigs reeking with oil, a set of teeth and huge black stock, underwaistcoats, more underwaistcoats, and

then nothing.²²

In this parody Thackeray reduces to nothing what is one of the most important ingredients in his conception of history. Even in his caricature of Louis XIV Thackeray was careful to retain the vestiges of the living body. When he treats George IV, however, ontological autonomy of the body is totally negated and it ceases to be present except as an illusion created by the external coverings such as "his coat, his star, his wig," etc. At the narrative level King George and Isabel are enabled to retain their identity only by dint of discourse. They are in fact mere costumes, and the product of the sartorial effect. Under no circumstances Isabel forgoes her sartorial ritual: "the mysteries of her ladyship's toilet were as awfully long on this day as on any other, and, long after the coach was ready, my lady was still attiring herself" (91). The truth is that she cannot be embodied in social space until she is properly made up, or covered.

Isabel is shown in such an unfavorable light that it is difficult to vindicate her even by resorting to the post-structural concept of constitutive discourse. If we follow Butler and reject the idea of body's givenness, then Isabel's dependence on her clothes would become more palatable. She evidently lacks the essential interiority that is a sign of traditional humanist discourse. In her the private self and the figure she dresses for public consumption are conflated. In other words, she is a site made up of culturally and historically signifying materials. But any nascent radical assertion of the power of discourse suggested by Isabel is relentlessly undermined in the novel by the ridicule with which she is treated. It is persistent derision that shatters any hope of interpreting Isabel through the signifying practice of discourse. A major obstacle to her recuperation through such an approach arises when Isabel is made to reveal her ludicrousness by her belief in unending fertility despite her old age. The novel affords her no opportunity in which the anti-essential, discursively fabricated individual can be valorized.

It is tempting to categorize Isabel and Beatrix together by, for example, the pure-impure binary. Even Sedgwick essentially follows this line when he claims that Beatrix "takes after her aunt Isabel and is growing up to be hell on wheels in the promiscuous old style. (By the time of *The Virginians*, it is patent that Beatrix, with age, has quite simply turned into Isabel)."²³ However, when we focus on Isabel's bodylessness this reading becomes inappropriate. Where Isabel, being no more than one layer of material after another, is but the sum of her costume, Beatrix, as the center of a great deal of masculine desire and anxiety in the novel, is undoubtedly in full possession of a body: she is emphatically imagined to be a real material existence. Esmond's recollection of his reunion with Beatrix after the Vigo Bay Expedition, for example, is filled with her body:

she was a brown beauty: that is, her eyes, hair, and eyebrows and eyelashes, were dark: her hair curling with rich undulations, and waving over her shoulders; but her complexion was as dazzling white as snow in sunshine; except her cheeks, which were bright red, and her lips, which were of a still deeper crimson. Her mouth and chin, they said, were too large and full, and so they might be for a goddess in marble, but not for a woman whose eyes were fire, whose look was love, whose voice was the sweetest low song, whose shape was perfect symmetry, health, decision, activity, whose foot as it planted itself on the ground, was firm but flexible, and whose motion, whether rapid or slow, was always

perfect grace.... So she came holding her dress with one fair rounded arm, and her taper before her, tripping down the stair to greet Esmond (257).

Page after page *Henry Esmond* is scattered with one part of Beatrix or another. It is true that she is invested with ribbons, dresses, and jewels in the same way as her aunt, but she is foremost a woman charged with corporeal (or even erotic) significance: " 'She hath put on her scarlet stockings and white shoes,' says [Frank].... Esmond...could look at nothing but her eyes" (257). For Esmond parity does not exist between Beatrix—a real substance, i.e., body—and her ornaments. The former, unlike in Isabel, always exceeds the latter in value, as demonstrated in Esmond's remark when he presents Beatrix with the family diamonds, "they are good enough for a duchess, though not bright enough for the handsomest woman in the world" (411).

When Esmond thinks of Beatrix he sentimentalizes his erotic desire and tries to turn her into an object of domestic love. That is why it is all the more difficult to resist the tendency to view Beatrix as the heartless enemy of all that is domestic when she makes such remarks as: "All the time you are worshipping and singing hymns to me, I know very well I am no goddess.... [Y]ou want a woman to bring your slippers and cap, and to sit at your feet, and cry, 'O caro! O bravo!' whilst you read your Shakespeares, and Miltons, and stuff" (408-09). However, Beatrix's opposition to Esmond can be interpreted at another level. It can be made to impact on Esmond's historical project to write the body of the Other with his desire that is implicated both in economics and politics. What is central to Beatrix the character is not the overt manner that constitutes her simply as another woman in, as Esmond remarks, a long literary tradition of "cheats, jades, jilts, and...other unmistakable monosyllables" (154), but the powerful deconstructive force that overturns Esmond's construction of the modern family and its founding assumption of apolitical privacy. Her critique follows most pointedly upon the entrance of the Pretender into her mother's house at Kensington.

The issue of public and private histories is foregrounded as a confusion arises when Esmond attempts to restore Pretender to the throne. When Esmond resolves to substitute James Francis Edward for Francis Castlewood, he subscribes to a history to which Isabel would not have objected. Esmond assumes, possibly just facetiously, that with the help of what is for Thackeray the very stuff of history—periwigs, coats, shoes, and swords—the identity of two different individuals can be melded. In the same sentiment Esmond produces a hybrid portrait of the Pretender qua Francis out of a supposed likeness of the Prince's head and Esmond's own version of the Viscount's "uniform and other accessories" (450). The conflation of identities goes further when Esmond effectively models his ill-fated political conspiracy on his own family history. He substitutes for one successful pretender, who has been fully invested with the title and estate of Castlewood, the real Pretender, for whom the potential reward is of national significance. But this underlying fusion of family and national history manifests at another level as a sovereign embodies both a body politic and a body personal. Therefore, when Esmond decides to lodge the pretender with Beatrix he overlooks one embodiment of the Prince.

A dilemma over the conflicting obligations of private and public duties becomes apparent in the third book of *Henry Esmond* when both Beatrix—who elides these two spheres—and

Esmond—who eventually devotes himself to the construction of a private family—are implicated in a quandary. Thackeray is concerned with the same issue when he finds fault with Swift's remarks in his *Journal*: "Lady Masham's eldest boy is very ill...she stays at Kensington to nurse him, which vexes us all. She is so excessively fond, it makes me mad. She should never leave the Queen, but leave everything, to stick to what is so much the interest of the public..."²⁴ It is not surprising that Thackeray, upholding middle-class values, disagrees with Swift on the question of where one's allegiance should lie. But at the beginning of his adventure with the Pretender Esmond embraces the Swiftian notion of duty. He is convinced that the Esmond family should undergo anything for the cause of the Prince: "the loss of the stake might involve a heavy penalty, but all our family were eager to risk that for the glorious chance of winning the game... No death or torture...would frighten [Rachel or Beatrix] out of their constancy" (454). Unfortunately for Esmond and others, however, the Prince has a different conception of his duty when he comes to live in Rachel's house. He demands a sacrifice of this family, but it is one intended to satisfy his personal, not his political, ambition. Esmond continues to distinguish between the private and the public man, but by now he, like Lady Masham, had turned his attention to the preservation of his family.

Beatrix, on the other hand, imperils the clear separation Esmond makes between the two bodies of the king:

Is it my fault that the Prince should, as you say, admire me? Did I bring him here? Did I do aught but what you bade me, in making him welcome? Did you not tell me that our duty was to die for him? Did you not teach me, mother, night and morning, to pray for the King, before even ourselves? (480).

When Esmond copes with her recalcitrance by responding "I would but remove from the Prince...a dangerous temptation; heaven forbid I should say you would yield" (480-81), he in fact resorts to what Mary Poovey suggests is a normative Victorian economics of desire. Poovey discusses the mid-nineteenth century writings of W.R. Greg, who acknowledges that men are responsible for "the moral laxity that perpetuates...sexual license." For Greg, the solution to this problem lies in controlling those women who are the objects, not the perpetrators, of this immoral practice. Removal or sequestration of those women sounds quite reasonable to Greg because he is convinced that "women are not dominated by the irrepressible drive that governs the sexual lives of men. Women's sexual desire is not a problem...men's sexual desire is."²⁵ For Greg the problem requires reduction in supply rather than curtailment of demand. Esmond follows this logic of desire when he apparently defines Castlewood Hall as a domestic sphere in which Beatrix, severed from intercourse with society and prohibited from partaking in an economy of exchange, can avoid contamination. Since Esmond assumes that the insular domestic sphere will surely guarantee against all the pernicious influences of the public domain, he is taken by surprise when Beatrix refuses to accept the limitations her ontological status imposes, and asserts her right to autonomy. While the dominant ideology tries to devalue Beatrix's recalcitrance as idiosyncratic promiscuity, a counter-ideology emerges in the person of Beatrix when she feeds the economy of desire that runs the dominant heterosexual society: "My face is my fortune. Who'll come?--buy, buy, buy!" (386). But she does more than just eroticize her body. By foregrounding her body and desire she debunks Esmond's belief in the separability of the public and the private. Her involvement with the

Pretender certainly blurs the line between the two spheres. In this light Esmond represents a conservative, static historical force that is opposed to the erotic one of the desire embodied by Beatrix.

In the books that are concerned with a new phase of the Castlewood family Esmond continues to believe in the separability of the public from the private. He derives this duality from his rejection of history. In an ahistoricizing move he resorts to a rhetoric of disembodiment, whereby those things which mark one's entanglement with the process of history—the body, desire, costume, illness—are devalorized. Esmond remains unaffected by history, for example, as Rachel Esmond Warrington writes of his father: "His courtesy was not put on like a Sunday suit, and laid by when the company went away; it was always the same" (40). It is as if Esmond discovers an essential identity, one not subject to the vicissitudes of history or public life but one that exists in spite of his body. He has a body, to be sure, but it is strangely exempt from the materiality on which history can be inscribed.²⁶ As Rachel the daughter remarks, "How well I remember it, and how little any description I can write can recall his image!" (38). Esmond's ahistoricization is also reflected in his marriage to Rachel. This marriage entails no involvement of the body, for it is essentially devoid of an erotic desire as is indicated by Esmond's motivation for conjugal relation with his former mother, to respectively "share [his] home" with "the tender matron" (513). It is true that Rachel is endowed with a peculiar material status that establishes her inherent biological homogeneity to Isabel. Particularly in the last two books of the novel (although some of the contents of which are transposed to the Preface), Rachel is consistently imagined to be ever younger; as her daughter says, "My dear mother possessed to the last an extraordinary brightness and freshness of complexion.... At sixty years of age she still looked young, and was quite agile" (38-39). When Rachel gives birth to a child in her mid-forties, she virtually personifies Isabel's wish for eternal vitality. However, even this supposedly bodily affair seems to be sublimated and deprived of its biological aspect when Esmond remarks "Heaven hath blessed us with a child" (513).

At the end of the history Esmond tries to reassert himself against Beatrix by placing her in the familial domain. This sentiment is reflected by his comment on the distance he believes he has traveled since his youthful adventurous days: "Our diamonds are turned into ploughs and axes for our plantation" (513). Those diamonds, which symbolize not only Esmond's erotic desire for Beatrix but also the insistence with which public history intrudes into the domain of the private, are supposed to have been repudiated. However, Beatrix emerges as a Machereyan unconscious that deconstructs the history by overturning, or at least disrupting, the dominant ideology represented by Esmond.²⁷ She circumvents the boundaries designed to exclude her from history. While Esmond awaits the Pretender on the morning he is to be declared king before the Queen's Council, Frank appears before him, "holding out a paper" (499). The paper transforms the historical relation between Esmond and Beatrix. The moment he reads the note Beatrix has written she assumes control of the Word and establishes a counter-history and begins to direct the narrative away from one body of writing—Esmond's plot to restore the House of Stuart—to another, i.e., her own. She interferes in a narrative of history at precisely the moment when Esmond tries to exclude her from it. In the end Esmond has no choice but sever himself from Beatrix: "His love of ten years was over; it fell

down dead on the spot, at the Kensington Tavern, where Frank brought him the note" (509).

Esmond's act of severance is part of his endless attempt to assert his control over the narrative of history and the narrative of his life. However, the disruptive force incarnated by Beatrix continually reappears in this history, supposedly, of Henry Esmond. In other words, just when Esmond imagines he is the uncontested author of his own history, his writing rebels against him. Esmond writes that "our diamonds are turned into ploughs and axes," but that is not the end of the transformation; they are also turned into "negroes." Esmond may feel that by consolidating a new family in a distant land he has left behind or at least marginalized the problematic body of public history that Beatrix has come to signify. But in the nameless, voiceless, numberless slaves of the Castlewood estate, the body, and with it a process of history far more destructive than the one experienced in the old world, reappears to challenge the founding political ideology of a middle-class family.

Notes

- ¹ William Makepeace Thackeray, *The History of Henry Esmond*, ed. John Sutherland and Michael Greenfield (London: Penguin Books, 1970), 445. This edition is used throughout the paper.
- ² The history here alluded to is obviously not the Lukacsian kind in which class conflicts give rise to a definite historical process, but another kind in which "intrigues of the upper classes" produce institutionally or conventionally defined historical events. See Georg Lukacs, *The Historical Novel*, tr. Hannah and Stanley Mitchell (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 202-06.
- ³ There is also a passage that indicates Thackeray's awareness of historical difference: "We can't tell-you would not bear to be told the whole truth regarding those men and manners. You could no more suffer in a British drawing-room, under the reign of Queen Victorian, a fine gentleman or fine lady of Queen Anne's time, or hear what they heard and said, than you would receive an ancient Briton. It is as one reads about savages, that one contemplates the wild ways, the barbarous feasts, the terrific pastimes, of the men of pleasures of that age." *The English Humourists of the Eighteenth Century* (1853), vol. 23 of *The Works of William Makepeace Thackeray* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1879), 195.
- ⁴ Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 83.
- ⁵ Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, tr. Tom Conley (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), xxvi.
- ⁶ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 130-31.
- ⁷ *The English Humourists of the Eighteenth Century, The Works of William Makepeace Thackeray*, vol. 23, 192-93.
- ⁸ *William Makepeace Thackeray: Contributions to the Morning Chronicle*, ed. Gordon N. Ray (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1955), 94 -95.
- ⁹ Harry Saw, "Uses of the Past in Eliot and Thackeray: A Question of Power," *Victorians Institute Journal* 15 (1987), 20-21.

- ¹⁰ *The English Humourists of the Eighteenth Century, The Works*, vol. 23, 193.
- ¹¹ Michel de Certeau, *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other*, tr. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 219.
- ¹² *The Four Georges, The Works*, vol. 23, 6.
- ¹³ *The Four Georges, The Works*, vol. 23, pp. 59, 61.
- ¹⁴ I am thinking of praxis in the context of what Marx observes in the "Theses on Feuerbach" such as "it is men who change circumstances" and the now famous "The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to *change* it." Robert C. Tucker ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1978), 143-45.
- ¹⁵ As quoted in Gordon N. Ray, *Thackeray: The Uses of Adversity, 1811-1846* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1955), 331.
- ¹⁶ *Contributions to the Morning Chronicle*, 77-78.
- ¹⁷ As quoted in *Notes of Journey from Cornhill to Grand Cairo* (1846), Ray, *Thackeray: The Uses of Adversity*, 269.
- ¹⁸ *The Paris Sketch Book, The Works*, vol. 16, 278-79.
- ¹⁹ The phrase is Casey Finch's in "'Hooked and Buttoned Together': Victorian Underwear and Representations of the Female Body," *Victorian Studies* 34, 3 (1991), 339.
- ²⁰ Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780 -1850* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 410.
- ²¹ "Victorian Underwear," *Victorian Studies*, 338.
- ²² *The Four Georges, The Works*, vol. 23, 90.
- ²³ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 149.
- ²⁴ *The English Humourists of the Eighteenth Century, The Works*, vol. 23, 142.
- ²⁵ *Uneven Developments*, 5. The issue of economics of desire seems to be related to the system of rules to control marital relations discussed by Foucault in a chapter entitled "Economics" in *The Use of Pleasure*, tr. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 141-184.
- ²⁶ D.A. Miller writes that disembodiment is the culmination of a "course in body *Bildung* that instructs [the male protagonist] on how to withdraw from the pleasures and dangers of visibility, from an object position where he might be desired, circulated, wounded." *Bringing Out Roland Barthes* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 29.
- ²⁷ According to Macherey a dominant ideology tries to smooth over contradictions in a text, but a text always retains lapses and omissions that remain unsaid. The literary critic is not concerned to show how all the parts of the work fit together. Like a psychoanalyst, the critic attends to the text's unconscious-to what is unspoken and repressed. See *A Theory of Literary Production*, tr. Geoffrey Wall (London: Routledge, 1978), 85-89.

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