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From Empiricism to Bohemia:

The Idea of the Sketch from Sterne to Thackeray

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements

for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Graduate Department of English

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From Empiricism to Bohemia:

The Idea of the Sketch from Sterne to Thackeray

Ph.D. 1997

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Abstract

The first three chapters situate the origin of the literary sketch in the age of Sterne, analyze its affinities with British empirical philosophy (that of Hume in particular), and trace the further development of the fictional and travel sketch in the nineteenth century as a form that remains predominantly empirical (that is, nominalist, inductive, and skeptical) but is now, after Kant and romanticism, nostalgic as well. The fourth chapter is a reading of the idea of the sketch in Thackeray’s The Irish Sketch Book, Vanity Fair, and The Newcomes. In particular I explicate the early subtitle of Vanity Fair, “Pen and Pencil Sketches of English Society.” which few critics have discussed, and in my reading of The Newcomes establish the sketch as the medium of literary Bohemia.
Acknowledgments

I am grateful to Professor Peter Allen for his kindness, encouragement, and rigour, to Professor David Shaw for his prompt and thorough criticism of drafts of several chapters, and to my wife Aphrodite for her patience. I also gratefully acknowledge the support of four successive University of Toronto Open Fellowships.
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Introduction. The Aesthetics of Logic: Patterns of Inference and the Literary Sketch

If you will not look at what you see, if you try to put on brighter or duller colours than are there, if you try to put them on with a dash or a blot, or to cover your paper with “vigorous” lines, or to produce anything, in fact, but the plain, unaffected, and finished tranquillity of the thing before you, you need not hope to get on. Nature will show you nothing if you set yourself up as her master. But forget yourself, and try to obey her, and you will find obedience easier and happier than you think. (Ruskin, Elements of Drawing 47)

I began the research for this dissertation to answer a few basic questions about Thackeray’s novels. What is the significance of the early subtitle of Thackeray’s Vanity Fair (1847–48) as it appeared in serial parts. “Pen and Pencil Sketches of English Society”? What is the significance of the fact that Clive Newcome’s “drawing was better than his painting . . . : his designs and sketches were far superior to his finished compositions” (939), and how are these facts related? What is it about the sketch that the Victorians could have seen as valuable or heroic?
Critics have devalued Thackeray’s subtitle, just as they have denigrated and even suppressed his illustrations (Harvey; Williamson). Kathleen Tillotson writes that the subtitle “well describes the main mass of his earlier writing, but is ludicrously inadequate to the novel” (224). Robert A. Colby sees it as a “trace of the ‘writer for the magazines’” (628) and says that “Thackeray’s publishers Bradbury and Evans wanted to align the new novel with the travel books, suggesting that he was now applying his well-known gifts as an observer of foreign lands to his own land” (632). Catherine Peters writes that the subtitle “suggests Thackeray’s earlier style, and the kind of satirical approach that was channeled into The Snobs of England” (144-45). That the subtitle would have reminded Victorian readers of Thackeray’s earlier travel books, and of a certain class of travel writing in general, is certainly true. But the implication of all these suggestions is that the sketch metaphor has little to do with Thackeray’s novel as a work of literary art: as the following chapters will demonstrate, this is not the case.

We have neglected the sketch, tending to agree with Fred Lewis Pattee that “a sketch book is a random receptacle for first impressions, materials collected for a work and not the
work itself” (6). One reason for this is that the aesthetic paradigm\(^1\) exemplified by many of the great works of the period, the deductive paradigm, was necessarily hostile to the inductive aesthetic of the sketch. In this introduction I outline an aesthetic and epistemological theory of the literary sketch and argue that our unwillingness to come to terms with the idea of the sketch is a consequence of the victory of one paradigm over another. The question of whether and how we generate and justify new knowledge, as old as Plato’s Meno paradox,\(^2\) parallels that of whether and how we perceive and represent reality in visual and verbal artistic works. Since neither question has ever been answered in a way that satisfies all those concerned with it, the two have tended to influence each other. As I demonstrate in Chapter

\(^1\) Thomas Kuhn defines “paradigms” as “coherent traditions of scientific research” (10).

Paradigms. Kuhn writes, “may be prior to, more binding, and more complete than any set of rules for research that could be unequivocally abstracted from them” (46).

\(^2\) The Meno paradox is as follows:

\[ M: \text{How will you look for it, Socrates, when you do not know at all what it is? How will you aim to search for something you do not know at all? If you should meet with it, how will you know that this is the thing that you did not know?} \ (\text{Plato 69. 80d}) \]

On induction and the Meno paradox, see Blachowicz 441-44.
2. the literary sketch is one of the many by-products of this influence. Arriving at an understanding of the two rival paradigms will allow us to understand a mode of writing, literary sketching, with greater precision than has yet been attained. The purpose of this dissertation is to provide a history of the sketch metaphor from about 1750 to 1850 and to theorize it so as to explain its importance to the fiction of the period, particularly that of Sterne and Thackeray.

1. opposing attitudes toward the idea of the sketch

Pride and Prejudice (1813) represents an aesthetic paradigm unfriendly to the idea of the sketch. In the following exchange Darcy and Bingley are discussing the latter’s style of letter writing, which Darcy condemns for exactly the qualities for which the sketch is often celebrated: rapidity, carelessness, and humility:

“Nothing is more deceitful,” said Darcy. “than the appearance of humility. It is often only carelessness of opinion, and sometimes an indirect boast.”

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3 See Gerson and Mezei, Post-Lauria 50-51. Pauly, Wegner, and especially Sha. Sha discusses the sketch’s “resistance to generic essence” (122).
"And which of the two do you call my little recent piece of modesty?"

"The indirect boast;--for you are really proud of your defects in writing, because you consider them as proceeding from a rapidity of thought and carelessness of execution, which if not estimable, you think at least highly interesting. The power of doing anything with quickness is always much prized by the possessor, and often without any attention to the imperfection of the performance. (93)

The vulgar Collins, in direct contradiction of Darcy’s observations on carelessness, always tries to flatter with "as unstudied an air as possible" (112), he says. Darcy, on the other hand, says to Elizabeth. "I could wish, Miss Bennett, that you were not to sketch my character at the present moment, as there is reason to fear that the performance would reflect no credit on either" (136). Sketching is associated with "first impressions," likely the title for an early draft of the story (47). The arbitrariness of Elizabeth’s habit of character sketching is the whole problem in Pride and Prejudice. The term "sketch" is used once more in Pride and Prejudice without suspicion (187), but here it refers to a plan of future events, not to an interpretation of nature. One other passage comes to mind as well: at Pemberly Elizabeth seems to prefer drawings to paintings (271). Her vulgar preference is explained as ignorance. though: "Elizabeth knew nothing of the art." None of the Bennett daughters, in fact, has learned to draw (199).
Austen's novel portrays a world in which valuing the first sketches of an artist is scarcely possible to imagine. George Eliot, in *Adam Bede* (1859), similarly dismisses the notion that careless first drafts might be preferable in some way to finished works:

How is it that the poets have said so many fine things about our first love, so few about our later love? Are their first poems their best? or are not those the best which come from their fuller thought, their larger experience, their deeper-rooted affections?

The boy's flute-like voice has its own sweet charm, but the man should yield a richer, deeper music. (547)

She argues that just as finished paintings are preferable to sketches, a mature love is preferable to an impetuous first fling. But as these chapters will demonstrate, preferring paintings to sketches was by no means universal in the nineteenth century: it was simply the establishment view.

Ruskin appreciated the sketch in a way that Austen and Eliot seem not to have, but like them he rigidly maintains the painting/sketch hierarchy. He is particularly impatient with the popularity of sketches and the possibility of their being ends rather than means: he denounces popular sketching in the fifth volume of *Modern Painters* (1860):

Charmed, and justly charmed, by the harmonious sketches of great painters, and by the grandeur of their acquiescence in the point of pause, we have put ourselves to
produce sketches as an end instead of a means. and thought to imitate the painter's scornful restraint of his own power, by a scornful rejection of the things beyond ours.

(175)

Ruskin has in mind a conception of the sketcher similar to that Coleridge parodies in “The Delinquent Travellers” (1824):

Keep Moving! Steam. or Gas. or Stage.

Hold. cabin. steerage. hencoop's cage--


Skim. Sketch. Excursion. Travel-talk--

For move you must! T'is now the rage.

The law and fashion of the age. (16-21)

But Paul Kane’s Wanderings of an Artist, an account of the Canadian painter and buffalo hunter's journey west in 1845, gives a different view of the sketch artist from that of Ruskin and Coleridge. one that perhaps better accounts for the popularity of sketches in the mid-nineteenth century. In it, as the following excerpt illustrates. sketching hardly seems characterized by scornful restraint or rejection:

I again joined in the pursuit; and coming up with a large bull. I had the satisfaction of bringing him down at the first fire. Excited by my success. I threw down my cap
and galloping, soon put a bullet through another enormous animal. He did not.

however, fall, but stopped and faced me, pawing the earth, bellowing and glaring savagely at me. The blood was streaming profusely from his mouth, and I thought he would soon drop. The position in which he stood was so fine that I could not resist the desire of making a sketch. I accordingly dismounted, and had just commenced, when he suddenly made a dash at me. I hardly had time to spring on my horse and get away from him, leaving my gun and everything else behind.

When he came up to where I had been standing, he turned over the articles I had dropped, pawing fiercely as he tossed them about, and then retreated toward the herd.

I immediately recovered my gun, and having reloaded, again pursued him, and soon planted another shot in him: and this time he remained on his legs long enough for me to make a sketch. (59)

The act of sketching Kane describes is neither whimsical nor scornful: he is not, like Will Ladislaw, the sketcher in Middlemarch, “taking all life as a holiday” (239). Rather, he is a heroic if somewhat quixotic artist engaging earnestly and empirically with the natural world.

A similar, more explicitly quixotic adventure is described at the end of Canto VI of William Combe’s The Tour of Doctor Syntax, in Search of the Picturesque (1812).
Kane is working within the broad but distinct aesthetic and epistemological paradigm that I detail in Chapter 2 as nominalist, inductive, and ultimately skeptical. This inductive paradigm, which I identify in Chapter 4 as Thackeray’s as well, is the basis of the aesthetic of the sketch. The paradigm exemplified in the passages from Austen, Ruskin, and Eliot above, by contrast, is the deductive paradigm, the whole purpose of which is the abstraction of the empirical. This is not to suggest that one had to be wholly or consistently either inductive or deductive, despite Mill’s insistence that “[E]very Englishman of the present day is by implication either a Benthamite or a Coleridgian” (On Bentham and Coleridge 102-03). Both Ruskin and Eliot wrote in both these modes at different times. Ruskin cites the authority of Locke several times throughout Modern Painters, particularly in Volume I. As Patricia Ball has argued, “To the end Modern Painters upholds the place of fact, especially natural fact, in art, and the duty of the artist to respect it totally” (62). His definition of artistic greatness as the greatest number of the greatest ideas (I.11) is pure Lockean nominalism. He writes in The Elements of Drawing, “The whole technical power of painting depends on our recovery

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4 “Nominalism.” J. R. Milton writes, “is best understood as the thesis that everything which exists is an individual or a particular, and realism as the denial of this” (70). “Hobbes, Locke, Berkeley and Hume were all quite unambiguously nominalists” (70).
of what may be called the *innocence of the eve*" (5). Eliot claims earlier in *Adam Bede* that she is "obliged to creep servilely after nature and fact" (221) and chastises an imaginary reader for suggesting that she depart from them. But induction and deduction, as Mill explains, are radically different styles of thought, and they have different implications for aesthetics. They were one's epistemological choices in the mid-nineteenth century.

Furthermore, sketching is an inductive, not a deductive, mode of description.

2. induction and deduction. sketching and painting

The relative merits of induction and deduction over which Mill and Whewell disagreed continue to be debated today. more than two centuries after Hume posed the problem of the justification of induction. now known as "Hume's problem." in its modern form. I consider the two patterns of inference as choices made on aesthetic as well as logical grounds. The fundamental analogy of the dissertation is my relation of the

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5 See, for example, Goodman's *Fact, Fiction, and Forecast* (1955) and the annotated bibliography of research inspired by it in Stalker. 281-457. The grue predicate debate comprises only one branch of the induction debate.
induction/deduction opposition to the sketch/painting binary I establish in Chapter 1:
sketching tends to be inductive and painting deductive. The purpose of the analogy is to
clarify the different epistemological assumptions involved in both creating and appreciating
sketches and paintings.

Inductivism assumes a Lockean tabula rasa, a mind as innocent and pure as the
heroines and heroes at the beginnings of so many eighteenth-century novels, and an ability to
transform experience into knowledge. The inductivist is David Simple or Rasselas, whose
historical predecessors are Bacon and Locke. In the Novum Organum (1620), an important
eyearly treatise on the scientific method of induction, Francis Bacon writes as follows:

There are and can only be two ways of inquiry into and discovery of truth. The one
flies from the senses and particulars to axioms of the most general kind, and from
these principles and their [supposed] immutable truth, proceeds to judgment and to
the discovery of intermediate axioms. And this is the method now in use. The other
derives axioms from the senses and particulars by a gradual and continuous ascent, to
arrive at the most general axioms last of all. This is the true but untried way. (I.19)

"The one hope," Bacon writes, "lies in true induction" (I.14). Induction is the inferential
mode of empiricism, according to which there are no innate ideas or defensible general rules
and therefore no basis for deduction. Rather, we reason from experience:
our experience of the world is such that properties do not seem genuinely randomly distributed. Every property does not occur with equal frequency with every other; there is a radical coherence of properties with one another. Properties tend to nest or cohere, to appear together in different contexts, and this fact suggests that there are structural, ontological or causal properties which unite or relate properties to one another. (Shaw and Ashley 427)

The imaginative lure of induction is that it is “ampliative” (Blachowicz 438; Medawar 23; Pera 142). Inductive inferences “have conclusions with content not in their premises” (Ju 75), and induction, therefore, is the logic of discovery. Induction, however, has its problems. An important consequence of generalizing from particulars is that “An induction is always an invalid inference” (Da Costa 50); induction “cannot be a logically rigorous process” (Medawar 24). Induction therefore, as I show in Chapter 3, entails skepticism. My account of the literary sketch as inductive is based on David Hume’s *Treatise on Human Nature* (1739-40) because Hume embraces skepticism as a consequence of induction: the *Treatise* shows induction and skepticism to be inseparable.

The deductivist, on the other hand, is a scientist, critic, or artist with affinities to Kantian idealism: one who maintains with Karl Popper that “there is no such thing as
induction” (40). validity is the lure of deduction: a deduction is valid if it is impossible for the premises to be true and the conclusion false. The deductive paradigm involves the reassuring assumption that there are general truths and that complete and systematic knowledge is a possibility. Kant’s Introduction to Logic begins, “Everything in nature, whether in the animate or inanimate world, takes place according to rules” (1), and Coleridge preached “The advantages of a life passed in conformity with the precepts of virtue and


A necessary element of Popper’s argument is his insistence that “every discovery contains an irrational element”, or “a creative intuition”, in Bergson’s sense” (32). Discovery, he maintains, has its origins in what Coleridge called in the Logic “the light-headedness and light-heartedness of human life” (8). Medawar agrees: a good methodology must “make room for luck” (41). Others have rejected Popper’s thesis on discovery: Pera, for example, writes, “There do not nor can there exist two distinct thought episodes--first blind invention and then the intervention of the plausibility considerations; there is rather a single argumentative act: a hypothesis springs from the very same argument which provides the initial reasons of its plausibility” (158). Cf. Reichenback 383-85. For other accounts of the inadequacies of Popperian deductivism, cf. Miller 234-37. Ju 79-82. Nickles, and Reichenbach 372-75.
religion"(XXXIV.7) in Aids to Reflection (1825). The Hare brothers write in Guesses at Truth (1826) of modern times,

when the idea of the unity of mankind had become more vivid and definite.--when all the speculations of History and Science and Philosophy were bringing it in greater fullness.--when poetry was becoming more and more conscious of its office to combine unity with diversity and multiplicity, and individuality with universality . . .

(63)

The goal in deduction. Popper explains, is an “axiomatized system” that is “free from contradiction” and “independent” and whose axioms are “sufficient” and “necessary” “for the deduction of all statements belonging to the theory” (72-72). The source of Popper’s formulation is the writings of Kant: it is not Hume’s problem but what he calls “Kant’s problem,” the problem of demarcation, that Popper wants to solve (34). Kant’s achievement in The Critique of Pure Reason (1781) was a reconciliation of deduction with empiricism that subordinated the latter to the former. Kant made it possible for a century of British writers who had inherited the empiricism of Bacon and Locke, even opponents such as Whewell and Mill, to subsume induction within a deductive framework and consider Hume’s problem solved.
But empiricism remained alive in such genres as popular travel writing and in the literary sketch in particular, as I show in Chapter 3. A sketcher sketches in the immediacy of the particular scene, subject, or conception and does not generalize. Since deduction subordinates empirical particulars to general forms, deductive sketching is impossible. Despite the possibility of deductive art that may seem sketch-like. To call something deductive a sketch would be to disregard genesis and method and see only appearances, as Darcy does. The case of inductive paintings is similar. One may sketch in any medium as Kay M. Fisher has noted, even copper plate etching was done out of doors in the presence of nature with the aid of portable presses (Lalanne xiii). An oil sketch or watercolor is of course a painting, but if it is inductive, "sketch" is a much more precise and less superficial term for it. In practice it is often difficult to separate sketching from painting and induction from deduction. Nothing stops one from relying on one mode until it is no longer useful and then switching to the other, as Ruskin, Eliot, and Henry James did. Furthermore, it is often impossible to determine whether a particular drawing or painting is empirical or not. These difficulties in no way invalidate the analogy, however. As well as being logically necessary, it is consistent with a wide variety of literary sketch books, and I introduce it for the sake of theoretical clarity.
3. encyclopedic and synthetic modes

The induction/deduction opposition has several profound implications for writers and painters. I will emphasize two. First, the status of reality is vastly different in the two paradigms. In induction, particular observations are real, while general maxims are fictional. In the deductive paradigm, on the other hand, general truths are real. Empirical observations are only used to fine-tune the system of general rules: thus Coleridge writes of the thrill of chemistry in "On Method." "It is the sense of a Principle of connection given by the Mind, and sanctioned by the correspondency of nature" (10). To an inductivist, of course, it would be the other way round.

Second, the concept of completion manifests itself differently in each paradigm. The completed work of the inductivist, the literary sketch book, for example, will tend toward the encyclopedic. John Theodore Merz, writing at the end of the nineteenth century, calls the age previous to the nineteenth century "the age of encyclopædic treatment of learning" (I.34):

Lord Bacon was the father of it, but neither he nor the most encyclopædic intellect of modern times, Leibniz, did much to realize the idea, and it was reserved for the genius and labours of Diderot and d’Alembert in France, in the middle of the eighteenth century, to carry out the plan, foreshadowed in the ‘Novum Organum,’ of collecting
all knowledge, which had been accumulated ever since science had been liberated
from the fetters of theology, into one comprehensive whole.7 (I.34-35)

7 This is not to say that all encyclopedias are in fact what Merz would call “encyclopedic.”

Coleridge saw the Encyclopedia Metropolitana as a synthetic project, for example: “that
which unites, and makes many things one in the Mind of Man, must be an act of the mind
itself, a manifestation of intellect, and not a spontaneous and uncertain production of
circumstances” (“On Method” 1); he designed the project “rather by the principles of unity
and compression, than by those of variety and extent” (22). Those who completed the project
seem not to have shared Coleridge's vision, however. The 12-volume Fourth Division of the
Encyclopedia Metropolitana was encyclopedic:

Alphabetical, Miscellaneous, and Supplementary:—containing a Gazetteer, or
complete Vocabulary of Geography: and a Philosophical and Etymological Lexicon of
the English Language, or the History of English Words:—the citations arranged
according to the Age of the Works from which they are selected, yet with every
attention to the independent beauty or value of the sentences chosen, which is
consistent with the higher ends of a clear insight into the original and acquired
meaning of every word. (I.x)
The literary sketch is usually encyclopedic: many are miscellaneous, such as Blake’s Poetical Sketches (1783), Thomas Gent’s Poetical Sketches (1808), Sarah Morton’s My Mind and Its Thoughts (1823), and Thackeray’s Paris Sketch Book (1840). Mary Mitford’s Our Village: Sketches of Rural Character and Scenery (1824-32) and Belford Regis: Or Sketches of a Country Town (1835) are among the most finished examples of the encyclopedic literary sketch book: they contain brief chapters on particular persons and places and lack unity and coherence, except insofar as they share a common inductive narrator.

In the deductive paradigm, on the other hand, completion takes the form of “synthesis.”⁸ “Mere plurality, without unity, cannot satisfy us.” Kant writes in the Introduction to Logic (30). Synthesis is hostile to induction. Kant calls a person with mere “encyclopedic learning” a “cyclops” (36). In “On Method” Coleridge denigrates encyclopedic endeavors:

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⁸ By “synthesis” Kant means “the act of putting different representations together, and of grasping what is manifold in them in one [act of] knowledge” (Critique of Pure Reason 111): “Synthesis of a manifold (be it given empirically or a priori) is what first gives rise to knowledge” (111). Synthesis is “the mere result of the power of imagination, a blind but indispensable function of the soul” (112).
what is Botany at the present hour? Little more than an enormous nomenclature: a huge catalogue, *bien arrangé*, yearly and monthly augmented, in various editions. each with its own scheme of technical memory and its own conveniences of reference!

The innocent amusement, the healthful occupation, the ornamental accomplishment of *amateurs*: it has yet to expect the devotion and energies of the philosopher. (9)

Kant writes in the first *Critique* that rules grounded on induction "would be merely fictitious and without genuinely universal validity" (223). Shelley calls Hume and Locke "mere reasoners" in the "Defense of Poetry" (515 n.). and Nietzsche calls empiricism "the English-mechanistic doltification of the world" (*Beyond Good and Evil* #252). After Kant, "synthesis" attained a legitimacy it had not had before: "Kant's great influence on romanticism was . . . the systematization of the mind as synthetic and creative, and not merely associative and selective" (Wheeler 46).⁹

Many have seen the nineteenth century as a shift from empiricism to idealism. Mill sees "the Germano-Coleridgian doctrine" as "the revolt of the human mind against the

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⁹Kant did not perform this systemization single-handedly, however. One important factor in the enthusiastic reception of Kantianism was the development of chemistry, which was seen as demonstrating "the intellectual unity of the cosmos" (Levere 193).
philosophy of the eighteenth century" (108), and Merz sees the nineteenth century as a shift from the encyclopedic to the synthetic. Philosophy, he says later,

may be said to have grown out of these vague and scattered beginnings by the attempt to conduct them according to some method, and to unite them into a complete and consistent whole. Philosophy may thus be defined as speculation carried on according to some clear method, and aiming at systematic unity. (I.64-65)

The difference between the "comprehensive whole" of the first passage I quoted and the "complete and consistent whole" of this one reflects the opposition of induction and deduction of the encyclopedic and the synthetic. As Larry Laudan has shown, induction was by Sterne's day nearing the end of its reign as a theory of scientific method--by the 1820s and 1830s, the period of the most general and willful misunderstanding of Lockean empiricism (Aarsleff 408 ff.), it was to be fully replaced by what is called the Hypothetico-Deductive approach (Laudan 180). Induction has tended over the past two centuries to be either subsumed under a deductive framework or simply dismissed--it is now often seen as "the childhood method of science" (Pera 152).

This shift in establishment thinking from induction to deduction favored the painting, not the sketch. Painting had been thought of as involving general truths before Kant:

Reynolds writes in the fourth Discourse (1771) that "perfect form is produced by leaving out
particularities, and retaining only general ideas” (71). But such painting, which would tend to be seen as artificial fiction under the inductive paradigm that was dominant in the eighteenth century, as Reynolds’ strenuous rejection of Bacon (55-56) and defense of “the great manner” (84) make clear, attains greater epistemic legitimacy after the shift to deduction. The quick pencil sketch, by contrast, which would have a certain appreciable truth to the inductivist, as I explain further in Chapter 2, would seem inadequate to the deductivist. Thus we see Eliot and Ruskin devaluing the sketch and endorsing synthesis, completion, system, and form. In Modern Painters Ruskin requests, “on the part of the people of England,” that the artist “not spend time on slight or small pictures, but give to the nation a series of grand, consistent, systematic, and completed poems” (II.155). Eliot would agree:

The growth of higher feeling within us is like the growth of faculty, bringing with it a sense of added strength: we can no more wish to return to a narrower sympathy, than a painter or a musician can wish to return to his crude manner, or a philosopher to his less complete formula. (Adam Bede 574)

Induction and the sketch have suffered similar fates. As the above quotations from Austen, Eliot, and Ruskin demonstrate, the drawing, likewise, as Jacques Derrida observes in
Memoirs of the Blind, “is indeed put down: put down, subordinated in the hierarchy of the arts” (44). The literary sketch has been “put down” along with it.

4. epistemological paradigms and fiction

As one purpose of this dissertation is to contribute to our understanding of Sterne and Thackeray I will discuss one representative of each paradigm here in the realm of fiction, both from authors. Henry James and Washington Irving, who take pains to explain how their works are to be read.

Henry James’s The Turn of the Screw (1898), a framed literary painting.¹⁰ is a work of Kantian deductive synthesis. It is a tale, he writes in the New York Preface, of a governess’ “anxieties and inductions” (Art of the Novel 174). The impossibility of the apparitions, which she induces, must be the ghosts of Quint and Jessel, necessitates a desperate Kantian process of abstracting the empirical:

Here at present I felt afresh--for I had felt it again and again--how my equilibrium depended on the success of my rigid will, the will to shut my eyes as tight as possible

¹⁰ I have discuss this in Frames in James, Chapter 2.
to the truth that what I had to deal with was, revoltingly, against nature. I could only get on at all by taking “nature” into my confidence and my account, by treating my monstrous ordeal as a push in a direction unusual, of course, and unpleasant, but demanding, after all, for a fair front, only another turn of the screw of ordinary human virtue. No attempt, none the less, could well require more tact than just this attempt to supply, one’s self, all the nature. How could I put even a little of that article into a suppression of reference to what had occurred? How on the other hand could I make a reference without a new plunge into the hideous obscure? (80)

The governess’ “attempt” to reject her perceptions and make reasonable inferences from them is an effort of transcendental logic. She must transcend the empirical madness, here manifested as the ghosts, in the same way that Kant does in the first Critique: “The laws of nature, indeed, one and all, without exception, stand under higher principles of understanding. . . . What experience gives is the instance which stands under the rule” (195). Kant writes.

Thus the order and regularity in the appearances, which we entitle nature, we ourselves introduce. We could never find them in appearances had we not ourselves, or the nature of our minds, originally set them there. (147)
The understanding, Kant argues, is “the lawgiver of nature” (148). “Nature,” both for Kant and for James’s governess, is not what is perceived but what is a priori.

Moreover, her deductive paradigm is the same as the aesthetic paradigm James employs in his preface. James’s ghosts are not those of popular fiction, he says, who reduce to “some particular brutality, some particular immorality, some particular infamy” (Art of the Novel 176)—particulars, that is, that might form a basis for induction. Instead, James proffers the art of vagueness, leaving it, he says, to the reader’s “own imagination, his own sympathy (with the children) and horror (of their false friends)” to “supply him quite sufficiently with all the particulars” (176). Reading the novel is therefore a deductive process: one in which particulars must be deduced, if the reader should require them, from the general “exquisite mystification” (172-73) of the tale and are of secondary importance to it. The novel provides.

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11 In fact, the use of the term “induction” itself within the novel supports this thesis. The New York edition has, “If it was a question of a scare my discovery on this occasion had scared me more than any other, and it was essentially in the scared state that I drew my actual conclusions” (53). but in all previous editions the term “inductions” was used in place of “conclusions” (94). “Conclusions” is less specific and more vague and mysterious, precisely because it does not give away the governess’ logical orientation quite so clearly.
James says, "prompt retort to the sharpest question that may be addressed to it"—hence its "perfect homogeneity" (169). Deduction is the paradigm within which the story is to succeed: James writes, "I had to decide in fine between having my apparitions correct and having my story 'good'" (174).

Washington Irving's *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon* (1819-20) is an example of inductive, encyclopedic fiction. The book is a curiosity shop of more or less polished, more or less organized fragments of humble empirical description: Irving compares Constable's agreeing to publish his *Sketch Book* to "trading with a gypsy for the fruits of his prowlings, who may have at one time nothing but a wooden bowl to offer, and at another time a silver tankard" (6). In "The Author's Account of Himself." Crayon writes.

I have wandered through different countries and witnessed many of the shifting scenes of life. I cannot say that I have studied them with the eye of a philosopher, but rather with the sauntering gaze with which humble lovers of the picturesque stroll from the window of one print shop to another; caught sometimes by the delineations of beauty, sometimes by the distortions of caricature and sometimes by the loveliness of landscape. As it is the fashion for modern tourists to travel pencil in hand, and bring home their portfolios filled with sketches. I am disposed to get up a few for the entertainment of my friends. When I look over, however, the hints and
memorandums I have taken down for the purpose. my heart almost fails me at finding how my idle humour has led me aside from the great objects studied by every regular traveller who would make a book. I feel I shall give equal disappointment with an unlucky landscape painter, who has travelled on the continent, but following the bent of his vagrant inclination, had sketched in nooks and corners and bye places. His sketch book was accordingly crowded with cottages, and landscapes, and obscure ruins: but he had neglected to paint St. Peter’s or the Coliseum: the cascade of Terni or the Bay of Naples: and had not a single Glacier or Volcano in his whole collection.

(9-10)

This passage is less an apology than a modest description of seeing and writing within a specific paradigm: one that is more concerned with humility and variety than with greatness and the sublime. The writer’s approach is nominalist insofar as it sees the world as an aggregate of particular things and ignores vague a priori notions of greatness or beauty. It is inductive insofar as the author will personally observe and generalize from his own personal experience where necessary, resisting any system-building impulses. And it is skeptical, not only of the conventional ranking of great paintings, buildings and sights but also of the author’s own ability to generalize with certainty. This reluctance to commit is indicated by the humble tone of the passage, the miscellaneous quality of the Sketch Book, which contains
fictions that could hardly be mistaken for facts, and the narrator, Geoffrey Crayon, whose sentiments the book contains.

Crayon presents his Sketch Book, furthermore, as an encyclopedia—a Baconian one. differing structurally from Chambers’ Cyclopedia (1728) and the Encyclopédie of Diderot and D’Alembert (1751-72) only in that it is happily incomplete and uncompletable. In Kantian terms the Sketch Book, like Thackeray’s Paris Sketch Book (1840), is an unsynthesized manifold of sentimental travel: a collection of periodical essays, stories, and sentimental scenes arranged in no particular order. In “The Voyage” Crayon repeatedly emphasizes the encyclopedic character of his book by stressing the analogy between the book and the world: the Atlantic Ocean is seen as a “vacancy.” “a blank page in existence” (11) between continents. He says of the ship on which he is sailing, for example.

Sometimes a distant sail, gliding along the edge of the ocean would be another theme of idle speculation. How interesting this fragment of a world, hastening to rejoin the great mass of existence. What a glorious monument of human invention: which has in a manner triumphed over wind and wave; has brought the ends of the earth into communion; has established an interchange of blessings—pouring into the sterile regions of the north all the luxuries of the south; has diffused the light of knowledge and the charities of cultivated life. and has bound thus together those
scattered portions of the human race, between which nature seemed to have thrown an insurmountable barrier. (12)

Irving continues relentlessly with the metaphor of the world as book. The ship is a metaphor for the sketcher himself. drifting over the void between pages and volumes of the book: “it seemed as if I had closed one volume of the world and its concerns, and had time for meditation before I opened another” (11). He says that he “might fill a volume with the reveries of a sea voyage” and that “there is a volume of associations with the very name” of Europe (14). continually using the word “volume” to mean both the book he is writing and the world. Sterne does this as well in A Sentimental Journey (1768). which, as I argue in Chapter 3, is also an empirical sketch book:

--What a large volume of adventures may be grasped within this little span of life by him who interests his heart in every thing, and who, having eyes to see, what time and chance are perpetually holding out to him as he journeyeth on his way. misses nothing he can fairly lay his hands on.-- (28)

Since the modern world is now navigable via the ship. the volumes of the world comprise an encyclopedia of fragments. as do the traveler’s observations of them.
5. sketches and paintings in Thackeray’s novels

Thackeray is another encyclopedic sketcher who experimented with the literary sketch all his life. The Virginians (1857-59), for example, is a digressive book, incidentally, whose narrator and ostensible author is a skeptic (572, 621, 905) and a friend of Hume (890). The novel is a painting from sketches: the family letters that are his source, the narrator writes.

are hints rather than descriptions—indications and outlines chiefly: it may be that the present writer has mistaken the forms and filled in the colour wrongly: but, poring over the documents. I have tried to imagine the situation of the writer, where he was.

and by what person surrounded. I have drawn the figures as I fancied they were ...

(2)

The Virginians is a novel, furthermore, whose characters clearly prefer the sketch to the painting—to paintings by Reynolds in particular—and it is also illustrated by sketches, as this paragraph from the last page makes clear:

Shall I ever see the old mother again. I wonder? She lives in Richmond, never having rebuilt her house in the country. When Hal was in England, we sent her pictures of both her sons, painted by the admirable Sir Joshua Reynolds. We sat to him. the last year Mr. Johnson was alive, I remember. And the doctor peering around the studio, and seeing the image of Hal in his uniform (the appearance of it caused no little excitement in those days). asked who was this? and was informed that it was the famous American general—General Warrington, Sir George’s brother. ‘General Who.’ cries the doctor. ‘General Where? Pooh! I don’t know such a service!’ and he turned his back and walked out of the premises. My worship is painted in scarlet, and we have replicas of both performances at home. But the picture which Captain Miles and the girls declare to be most like is a family sketch by Mr. Bunbury, who has drawn me and my lady which Monsieur Gumbo following us, and written under the piece. ‘SIR GEORGE, MY LADY, AND THEIR MASTER.’ (1001)
Opposite this passage is the novel’s final illustration: an etching, it is implied, of the “sketch” described by Bunbury, the “second Hogarth” (Walpole 233) who illustrated *Tristram Shandy* (Riely: Voogd). The sketch is not “put down” in Thackeray’s empirical, sentimental fiction.

Rather, it is the painting that is “put down.” *The History of Henry Esmond, Esq.* (1852) is an inductive book. “I can’t but accept the world as I find it” (16). Esmond says: later, his response to Holtz’s deductive reasoning is that he will “take my country as I find her” (322). “To see with one’s own eyes men and countries, is better than reading all the books of travel in the world” (199), he writes, recalling the first page of Sterne’s last novel. And his inductive orientation necessitates an eventual renunciation of paintings. Vision and vivid memory set Esmond’s whole life in motion. As a young boy he is struck by the painted glass at Castlewood and the Viscountess’s painted face: “Upon her the boy’s whole attention was for a time directed. He could not keep his great eyes off from her” (34). This is the beginning of what becomes an infatuation with Beatrix—a fascination with colour, brilliance, and beauty. Beatrix is compared to a painting throughout the novel, from her first appearance to Esmond as a young woman, which is described feature by feature and color by color and in which her “dazzling completeness of beauty” and “perfect symmetry” are stressed (217), to her distraction at the end: “My fate is my fortune. Who’ll come?—buy. buy. buy!” (342). Beatrix “was born to shine in great assemblies, and to adorn palaces, and to command
everywhere” (337), like a masterpiece. In the end, however, Esmond must acknowledge that Beatrix is “not worth winning” (314).
Chapter 1. Origin of an Idea: The Painting/Sketch Binary

the first and earliest seekers after truth, with better frankness and better success. were
in the habit of casting the knowledge which they gathered from their study of things.
and which they intended to keep for use, into aphorisms, short and scattered
sentences, not linked together by a rhetorical method of presentation; nor did they
pretend or profess to embrace the entire art. (Bacon, Novum Organum I.86)

This chapter concerns the beginnings of the literary sketch—by which I simply mean,
in this chapter. a literary object referred to by its author as a “sketch.” According to the
Eighteenth Century Short-Title Catalogue on CD-ROM the earliest book with the words
“sketch” or “sketches” in the title was published in 1717 (Allibond). There was one more in
the twenties (A Sketch and Design of a General Act of Parliament, for the Building,
Repairing, Enlarging, and Finishing of Halls, Goals, ... In Their Respective Counties), and
there were 11 in the thirties, 8 in the forties, 16 in the fifties, 26 in the sixties, 52 in the
seventies, 131 in the eighties, and 361 in the nineties, including 1800.  

13 I counted titles, not volumes: a book published in multiple editions was only counted once.
increase could be shown to be equaled or exceeded by the increasing numbers of published books in general these numbers would clearly show that by the end of the century the idea of the sketch was a marketable one.

Though the numbers increase rapidly, furthermore, the titles also indicate that the character of the literary sketch book does not seem to change much over the last five decades of the century. For example, according to my records of the titles listed in the ESTC, in about 60\% of the books listed the word "sketch" seems to mean outline, overview, or plan (see Table 1, p. 82) The word "sketch" is used to signify biography or character description in about 25\% of the titles. One such book, *A Slight Sketch Of Some Insignificant Characters* ... (1749) by "Impartial Hand." satirizes the vices of various prominent public figures.

About 10\% of "sketches" are travel sketches of some sort, and about 10\% are poems, plays, or novels. As the numbers of "sketch" books increased through the decades they continued to take various forms, as these figures illustrate. At the same time, the above percentages remain fairly constant to the end of the eighteenth century. It is for this reason that I speak of the idea of the sketch rather than discussing it as a literary genre: the term "sketch" seems to have had a fairly constant array of connotations.

The fact that the word "sketch" seems to refer to actual drawings or paintings in so few of these titles would seem to indicate a certain translatability inherent in the idea of the
sketch. One might expect, therefore, to classify the literary sketch under the rubric of what Jean Hagstrum calls "pictorialism," a mode of description like that of Thomson's *The Seasons* (1730) that is "capable of translation into painting or some other visual art" (xxii).

In fact, however, as I will argue in this chapter, it would be more accurate to say that the literary sketch is a deliberate reaction against pictorialism. The sketch and the painting emerge in the eighteenth century in binary and hierarchical opposition to each other, with the literary sketch defining itself largely through a rejection of the painting analogy and the whole painterly aesthetic.

In this chapter I examine several of the earliest literary sketch books and discuss, for comparison, the use of the term "sketch" in novels by Henry Fielding, John Cleland, Samuel Richardson, and Laurence Sterne in order to compile a list of connotations of the term "sketch." The list includes outline, biography, brevity, non-seriousness, modesty, the ephemeral, and most significantly a peculiar overdetermined vagueness of relationship between form and content. I will then discuss two broad themes of eighteenth-century British literature and aesthetics, the "non-finito" and the literature-as-painting analogy, that relate to the rise of interest in the idea of the sketch as an alternative metaphor to the painting.
1. eighteenth-century literary sketches

A survey of the uses of the term "sketch" in eighteenth century sketch books reveals a complex system of obvious and less obvious connotations. *Dictionary Anglo-Britannicum* (1708) and *An Universal Etymological English Dictionary* (1766) both define the noun "sketch" as "the first Draught of a Fancy, especially in Painting or Drawing" and the verb as "to chalk out, to design": this definition of "sketch" as first drawing seems to remain constant throughout the eighteenth century. The word "outline," however, also occurs with near ubiquity in eighteenth-century definitions of the word "sketch."[14] *A General Dictionary of the English Language* (1780) and *A Critical Pronouncing Dictionary* (1791) define the verb form in greater detail: a sketch is "An outline, a rough draught, a first plan": to sketch is "To draw, by tracing the outline: to plan, by giving the first or principal motion." Launcelot Temple's book on rhetoric, *Sketches: Or, Essays on Various Subjects* (1758), exemplifies both these definitions. His brief essays are called "sketches." the author explains in the preface. because "the least imperfect amongst them is to a laboured Treatise what the Painter's Outlines, or his first rude Draughts, are to a finished Picture" (iii-iv).

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Many sketch books were broad overviews, such as the anonymous *A Sketch of the Beau Monde* (1764), the basic idea of which is that

The world, believe me, ever was the same:

'Tis Fashion, Fashion only is to blame:

Nature, that gives the substance, owns no more:

'Tis Fashion stamps the value on the ore:

'Tis Fashion draws the model of police.

Makes Justice yield the balance to Caprice:

Fashion that dubs the wisest of us fools.

Subverts all order, tramples on all rules.

Assumes a rank superior to the throne.

And claims the insense due to Heav'n alone. (anon. 5-6)

Here the term “sketch” in the title has what is still perhaps its most common meaning: the author gives a quick and general summary of the world. This notion of “sketch” as outline is reflected in other titles of the period, as is the sense of “sketch” as fragment. Both senses of the word, for example, are illustrated by the title of *A Short Sketch of the Wonderful Life, and Surprising Adventures of that Renowned Hero, Robinson Crusoe* . . . Adorned with Cuts (1790).
Brevity and non-seriousness, two other common connotations of the term "sketch," are epitomized in the character description, "An Imperfect Sketch of her Niece the fair INCOGNITA," the ninth chapter of the short anonymous pamphlet entitled A Particular Description of a Certain Lady at Present Conceal'd. Her Person, Dress, Temper, and Dispositions (1752). This work is a description of a notorious felon and her niece: the title page reads, "Whoever detects and brings them to justice before the first of March. shall be entitled to a Reward of Five Pounds. to be paid by the Publisher hereof." Following is the complete "Sketch" of the niece, which I will continue to refer to in the following pages:

1. Her Complexion is repeated Lyes.

2. Blue Females are often seen in her Cheeks.

3. Her Hair is a blind Negro led by a Dog.

4. Her Eyes are a fine Orator dying of a Consumption.

5. Her Lips are a grumbling Wife and a well known Author.

6. Her Features are Kate and I in a little Valley.

7. Between her Head and Breast she is finical.

8. Below her Neck are two silly Clowns.

9. She is mimick'd by a Cambro-Briton.

10. Her Arms are some Hands revers'd.
11. Her Fingers are a Bandage for Parchment and a Circle.

12. Her Legs and Feet are smart Repartees.

13. She is like a Grazier's Meadow.

14. She is a Dish serv'd up twice.

15. She is a Bait for a Fish.

16. She is after before.

17. She is a good Fire.

18. She is a borrowed Sigh.

19. She is the Song of a Bee and a Cow's Companion.

20. She is the Support of a Physician.

21. She is the companion of Ἐσωπ.

22. She is like a Deer in a Forest.

23. She has an uncommon Fortune in a certain town in Berkshire, which whoever can get the Possession of, must be a very happy man. (16-17)

This entertaining "sketch," presented as a piece-by-piece visual description of the niece's person, is manifestly not visually descriptive: it proceeds from a coy refusal to describe to series of riddles. The refreshing nonseriousness of the literary sketch manifests itself in
various ways but most notably in the sort of denial of mimesis exemplified here. The overt rejection of "pictorialism" in the above passage is the whole joke.

The description of Incognita’s niece illustrates another important characteristic of the eighteenth-century literary sketch. There is no discernible difference in style between the above "sketch" and the previous eight chapters of the book--the word "sketch" could seemingly have been applied to each of them or to the whole. This careless vagueness of the term’s usage was not unusual: the term often flaunts its refusal to signify precisely. One of the chapters of Fielding’s Tom Jones (1749) is called “A short Sketch of that Felicity which prudent Couples may extract from Hatred” (II.7), and the fourth chapter of Francis Burney’s Cecilia (1782) is called “A Sketch of High Life”: neither of these usages of the term seems to signify anything that is peculiar to the chapters in particular. although the term does seem vaguely appropriate to the authors’ styles in general.

So from a survey of the early literary sketch books themselves we infer that “sketch” meant both drawing and outline or plan and connoted brevity, non-seriousness, antimimesis, and vagueness. One way of gauging the term’s meaning more accurately still is to note that

15 According to my perusal of the titles, the word “sketch” in the title of a book seems to have applied to the whole work about 60% of the time, to a single section or appendix about 40%. 
the terms "sketch" and "painting" were by no means interchangable: the differences between
the meanings and connotations of the two terms is made clear in works in which both words
are used metaphorically.

John Cleland’s Fanny Hill (1748-49) provides a remarkable illustration of the
difference between the sketch and the painting as metaphors for literary description. First.
the narrator provides the following literary "painting" of a young man asleep: the piece-by-
piece "Incognita" sketch above seems to be satirizing exactly this sort of description:

Oh! could I paint his figure as I see it now still present to my transported
imagination! A whole length of an all-perfect manly beauty in full view. Think of a
face without a fault. glowing with all the opening bloom and vernal freshness of an
age in which beauty is of either sex. and which the first down over his upper lip
scarce began to distinguish.

The parting of the double ruby pout of his lips seemed to exhale an air sweeter and
purer than what it drew in: ah! what violence did it not cost me to refrain the so
tempted kiss!

Then a neck exquisitely turned. graced behind and on the sides with his hair playing
freely in natural ringlets. connected his head to a body of the most perfect form. and
of the most vigorous contexture. in which all the strength of manhood was concealed
and softened to appearance by the delicacy of his complexion, the smoothness of his skin, and the plumpness of his flesh.

The platform of his snow-white bosom, that was laid out in a manly proportion, presented, on the vermilion summit of each pap, the idea of a rose about to bloom. . . .

(Cleland)(81-82)

Only a few pages later in the novel we find a narrative “sketch,” and there are several important differences between it and the “painting”:

A sketch of [Mrs Jones’] picture and personal history will dispose you to account for the part she is to act in my concerns.

She was about forty-six years old, tall, meager, red-haired, with one of those trivial ordinary faces you meet with everywhere, and go about unheeded and unmentioned.

In her youth she had been kept by a gentleman, who, dying, left her forty pounds a year during her life, in consideration of a daughter he had by her; which daughter, at the age of seventeen, she sold, for not a very considerable sum neither, to a gentleman who was going an envoy abroad and took his purchase with him, where he used her with the utmost tenderness, and, it is thought, is secretly married to her; but had constantly made a point of her not keeping up the least correspondence with a mother base enough to make a market of her own flesh and blood. However, as she had no
nature. nor indeed any passion but that of money. this gave her no further uneasiness
than as she thereby lost a handle of squeezing presents, or other after-advantages, out
of the bargain. (88-89)

The differences between these two descriptions are important. Cleland's "sketch"
describes the ordinary, his "painting" the ideal. The painting is sensually descriptive and
manipulates the imagination, but it can also be read as an inventory of body parts that is
appropriately sectioned into staccato paragraphs as though the narrator were butchering the
body--there is a static, morbid quality to the painting. Nelson Goodman, describing a bronze
bust in *Languages of Art* (1976), describes the morbidity of a vivid image from life: "The
very fixation of such a momentary phase embalms the person much as a photograph taken at
too short an exposure freezes a fountain or stops a racehorse" (20). Mimesis that must kill
what it represents becomes a gruesome kind of ekphrasis. 16 The literary sketch, I suggest

16 Murray Krieger sees ekphrasis as the use of "a plastic object as a symbol for the frozen.
stilled world of plastic relationships which must be superimposed upon literature's turning
world to 'still' it" (107). W. J. T. Mitchell's thesis is similar: "The ekphrastic image acts. in
other words, like a sort of unapproachable and unpresentable 'black hole' in the verbal
presents itself as an alternative to such ekphrasis. Little visual description is even given in
the sketch of Mrs. Jones; the passage is rather an outline of her history and character. The
“painting” reads with the weight of flesh. the “sketch” with the lightness of recollection. The
sketch is more manifestly diegetic than the painting: it tells rather than trying to show.

The sketch/painting binary was employed in other novels of the period. I will cite two
more particularly interesting examples. First, Richardson makes the distinction in Sir Charles
Grandison (1753-54), in which painterly description is repeatedly associated with
licentiousness and sensuality. Greville, one of Harriet Byron’s earlier admirers, gives a
description of Miss Byron in a letter to Lady Frampton that, though it is not referred to as a
painting, is strikingly similar in form to that in Fanny Hill: he comments in turn on Harriet’s
between this description and Cleland’s painting, though, is that Greville’s description, unlike
Fanny’s of her sleeping lover, is not at all visual: Greville’s description is in this sense
similar to the Incognita sketch, except that it is devoid of the irony. Richardson is purveying

structure, entirely absent from it, but shaping and affecting it in fundamental ways’”

(“Ekphrasis and the Other” 700).
a softened version of Cleland's painterly sensuality: this tantalizing introduction of his heroine has the form of a sensual, ekphrastic description without the content. Furthermore, the vulgarity of the piece-by-piece method of description is here emphasized by the extent to which Greville himself tries to supplement it: he prefaces the description by insisting, "I defy the greatest Sensualist on earth not to admire her mind more than her person" (I.9) and concludes that "women have souls" (I.13). There is another piece-by-piece description, the tone of which is equally licentious. later on in the novel when Miss Byron goes to the masquerade as "an Arcadian Princess" (I.115). Richardson's use of the term "sketch" in the same work scarcely bears comparison with this quasi-painterly mode of description, although it is in agreement with eighteenth-century usage. Miss Byron gives Lucy "a sketch of what I might suppose the Company at Lady Betty's would say of your Harriet" (I.68). Her speculations comprise a catalogue of light parodies of her relatives and friends.

Richardson clearly preserves a hierarchy in which the painting is of greater interest. simply on the basis of the associated emotional intensity, than the sketch. Fielding's characterizations in Tom Jones, which invert this hierarchy, tend to resemble Cleland's
description of Mrs. Jones rather than his "painting" of the young man asleep. Tom Jones paints the vulgar Molly Seagrim, while the narrator sketches the heroine Sophy Western.

Chapter 2 of Book IV, "A short Hint of what we can do in the Sublime, and a Description of Miss Sophia Western." is the best example--this is the chapter in which he introduces Sophia Western. First he endeavors to introduce his heroine, Sophia Western, with "solemnity" and "elevation" (153) -- "Hushed be every ruder breath," he begins (153). He emphasizes that the picture he gives will be "a copy from nature" and compares Sophia to various paintings and to the Venus de Medicis. "[B]ut most of all," the narrator says, "she resembled one whose image can never depart from my breast" (154): Sophia is not a painting but a living person.

and visual description and comparison, the narrator insists, can never do her justice. The narrator does describe her, as he must, but he makes a point of admitting that "our highest

17 See for example, his "Character of Mrs. Western" in the beginning of VI.2. A still more interesting example is Fielding's account of Squire Western's wife in VII.4, titled "A Picture of a Country Gentlewoman taken from Life." The phrase "taken from life" certainly indicates an affinity to the sketch rather than to the finished painting, as does Fielding's characteristic intention "to deal honestly with the reader" (310)--that is, to maintain the proper relationship between representation and empirical reality.
abilities are very inadequate to the task" (154). By this admission he not only refuses to vulgarize his heroine with sensual description but also reasserts his own presence on the scene—as though to undermine any strictly pictorial description and preclude the sort of absorption that the Cleland passage encourages.

That the description of her that he does give is meant to be thought of and appreciated as a sketch is emphasized by the casual roughness of style. the fact that the narrator specifically mentions the "pencil" as his implement.18 and by its contrast with the high and

18 The word "pencil" often signifies the sketch. Gilpin, for example, writes in his Three Essays. "In sketching. black-lead is the first instrument commonly used. Nothing glides so volubly over paper. and executes an idea so quickly." (26). According to the OED. the definition of "pencil" as "A black lead pen. with which. cut to a point. they write without ink" in Johnson’s dictionary dates back to the seventeenth century. Johnson also. however. defines "pencil" as "A small brush of hair which painters dip in their colours." Another source gives a more specific definition of "pencil" as brush. The OED defines "pencil" as "An artist’s paint-brush of camel’s hair. etc." (1a) and refers us to a passage in Gullick and Timbs’ Painting Popularly Explained (1859) that is worth quoting in full:
The smaller kinds of brushes are still sometimes termed “pencils:” but the use of the word “pencil” instead of “brush,” as distinctive of and peculiar to water-colour painting, has become almost obsolete; and with reason, for to cover rapidly with floating colour the large surfaces of modern works in water colour, requires brushes almost as large as those needed for painting ordinary pictures in oil; although, to avoid abrading the more delicate texture of paper, the brushes must not be made (at least for all ordinary practice) of anything so coarse as hog’s bristles. The word “pencil” still, however, retains its place in a semi-metaphorical sense, as generally allusive to the artist’s work, whether he be painter or draughtsman, and in a still more figurative manner it is applied to anything delicately marked, as “pencilled eyebrows.” (291-92)

That a “pencil” was specifically a watercolor brush strengthens its association with the idea of the sketch. As the Redgraves point out in 1866, watercolor “began with the tinted representations of antiquarian remains and ancient buildings, and was chiefly the offspring of the spirit of antiquarianism of the latter part of the last century” (146). Watercolor, an important manifestation of the idea of the sketch, was an empirical form with origins in “the meager truthfulness of the topographer” (147). Clearly, “pencil,” whether it means lead
finished rhetoric that has just collapsed under the weight of satire. What he achieves by undercutting his pictorialism with conceit is an acknowledgment of the fact that Sophia’s “mind was every way equal to her person” (156): mimesis cannot do justice to this equality. The difference in dignity between a painting and a sketch is made clear by the way Fielding uses the word “paint” in describing Tom’s feelings for Molly Seagrim: “While his wanton fancy roved unbounded over all her beauties, and his lively imagination painted the charming maid in various ravishing forms, his warm heart melted with tenderness” (239, V.10). Sophy, the heroine, is sketched, while Molly, the local temptress, is painted. Tom Jones paints:

Henry Fielding sketches.

2. Tristram Shandy and the overdetermined

The preference of sketches to paintings in eighteenth-century literature, implicit in Tom Jones, is nowhere more explicit than in Tristram Shandy (1759-67), the most complex pencil or brush. connotes the act of drawing or painting rather than the product and in this sense signifies the quick sketch more forcefully than the finished painting. Thackeray uses both senses of the word in Vanity Fair (336, 414, 454, 546, 622).
First, Hogarth is mentioned and alluded to in Sterne’s novel (II.9, II.17), and Sterne chose Hogarth to illustrate his novel. Sterne described what he wanted from Hogarth in a letter: “no more than ten Strokes of Howgarth’s wity Chissel. to clap at the Front of my next Edition of Shandy” (Halsband 359). Sterne continued in the same letter: “The Loosest Sketch in Nature. of Trim’s reading the Sermon to my Father. &c; w[oul]d do the Business--& it w[oul]d mutually illustrate his system and mine” (359). The word “sketch” is not being used in any vague or casual sense in Sterne’s letter: Sterne wanted sketches. as opposed to finished works of art.

In Tristram Shandy literary sketching is the whole endeavor. One of the first Shandyisms the reader comes across is the famous “tight, genteel dedication” (10. I.9) in I.8. Tristram. “happening. at certain intervals and changes of the Moon. to be both fiddler and painter” (8. I.8). gives an encomium on it in the following chapter. a satire of painting:

My Lord. if you examine it over again, it is far from being a gross piece of daubing. as some dedications are. The design. your lordship sees. is good. the colouring transparent.------the drawing not amiss;------or to speak more like a man of science.------and measure my piece in the painter’s scale. divided into 20.------I believe.
my Lord. the out-lines will turn out as 12.----the composition as 9.----the colouring as 6.----the expression as 13 and a half.----and the design.----if I may be allowed.

my Lord. to understand my own design. and supposing absolute perfection in designing. to be as 20.----I think it cannot well fall short of 19. (10. 1.9)

Tristram itemizes the dedication’s value in the same way that the Fanny Hill narrator sections the sleeping Adonis in her “painting.” He exposes the vulgarity of the piece-by-piece method of composition and appreciation in much the same way that the “Incognita” narrator does.

The butt of Tristram’s satire is the authors who sell dedications and the lords who buy them.

The basis of the association between dedications and paintings in Sterne’s satire of Roger de Piles (Brissenden 97-98) is that both exemplify base flattery and the monetary value of pretension. Tristram is satirizing an entire aesthetic here--a mode of perceiving and representing the world. a mode of which paintings are only a consequence.

Immediately after the implicit dismissal of painting as a metaphor for his craft.

Tristram turns to the sketch: he provides a two-chapter “sketch” of Parson Yorick’s “life and conversation” (15. 1.10). The sketch of Yorick is a satire of heraldry--it contains Tristram’s account of Yorick’s descendence from Hamlet’s jester. The various meanings of the word “sketch” all vaguely apply here: the passage is light and witty; the term could connote outline.

“Sketch” could be taken as an acknowledgment of the fact that the description is
biographical: it could also be seen as emphasizing the charm of Sterne’s rambling and
digressive style.

Sterne also makes use of the ambiguity I have noted in other works as to whether the
term “sketch” applies to a part of the work or to the whole. to the means of describing a
character or the character him- or herself. This pleasing plenitude of connotation is central to
the idea of the sketch. The word “sketch” is appropriate not only to the style of Chapters 1.11
and 1.12 (and to Sterne’s writing generally) but to the nature of Yorick’s character as well.
Yorick is himself as like a sketch as the various learned buffoons portrayed in the novel are
like paintings (for example. those portrayed in the Author’s Preface. which I will discuss in
detail in the next chapter). He is “unpracticed” and “unsuspicious”--he has “as much life and
whim. and gaité de cœur about him. as the kindest climate could have engendered and put
together” (17. 1.11). Yorick. later to become the first person narrator of A Sentimental
Journey. has “an invincible dislike and opposition in his nature to gravity” and is “an enemy
to the affectation of it.” holding “That gravity was an errant scoundrel” (18. 1.11):

In the naked temper which a merry heart discovered. he would say. There was no
danger.-----but to itself:-----whereas the very essence of gravity was design. and
consequently deceit;-----’twas a taught trick to gain credit of the world for more than a
man was worth . . . (18. 1.11)
We recall that the dedication scored higher in design than in any other category: the association of design with deceit makes Yorick’s character unamenable to the aesthetic of painting. So Tristram gives a “sketch” of Yorick as opposed to a “painting” as a narrative performance of the fact that Yorick is “in plain truth . . . a man unhackneyed and unpracticed in the world” (18. I.11): Yorick has “an honesty of mind” and a “carelessness of heart” (19. I.12): he is “truly honest and sportive” (20. I.12).

Thus the literary sketch, in Tristram Shandy as in other texts, is overdetermined: language not so much describes reality as illustrates it. Form and content mimic each other, so it becomes difficult to determine whether the connotations of the term “sketch” apply more aptly to the form or the content of the description. Another manifestation of this curious vagueness of the term is the anonymous Sketches from Nature, in High Preservation, by the Most Honorable Masters (1779), a volume of satirical descriptions of eminent persons in the guise of a critique of an exhibition of paintings—the subject’s names are printed with the vowels removed above each description. The book’s title makes it impossible to tell
whether the “sketches” are the paintings supposedly described or the prose critiques of them.\textsuperscript{19}

Overdetermined descriptions bear some superficial similarity to “performative utterances” (Austin 6) insofar as they have no truth value.\textsuperscript{20} but their effect is not so much to produce or transform a situation (Derrida, “Signature Event Context” 13) as to at once diminish objectivity and control and maximize emotional response: they constitute an excess of descriptive expression. The word “red” printed in red ink would be a simple example of

\textsuperscript{19} The term was commonly used with deliberate vagueness in titles. Beckford’s \textit{Italy, with Sketches of Spain and Portugal} (1834) and Hazlitt’s \textit{Sketches and Essays} (1839) are later examples: in the former there is no stylistic or generic difference between the descriptions of Italy and those of Spain and Portugal: in the latter there is no way of telling the sketches from the essays. A more recent example of the literary sketch than those I have been discussing is John Leavey’s “Sketch: Counterpoints of the Eye: Hand-Eye Coordination: Translation and ....” which could be read as either a literary sketch or a series of sketches and which is also a reflection on sketching.

\textsuperscript{20} W. David Shaw has noted the similarities between Austin’s performatives, poetic truth as Mill understands it, and the poetry of Hopkins (“Mill on Poetic Truth” 29-35).
this overdetermination: an idea is so fully expressed and impressions given by both content and form at the same time that the form and the content of the description become equal partners in a relationship of representation and interpretation. To put it another way, the sketch makes use of "the POETIC function of language," which "projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination" (Jakobson 69, 71). The overdetermined sketch projects the principle of mimesis from the axis of content to that of form. One manifestation of this overdetermination is the sketcher seeking scenes to describe that themselves exhibit the qualities of the sketch, as William Gilpin recommends picturesque tourists do (see p. 161 below), in which case the scene is in a sense the sketch and the drawing only a representation of it.\(^\text{21}\) This formal overdetermination is of course not unique to literary sketches, but it is a common characteristic of them. The reason for this is a

\[^{21}\text{It involves locating and "correcting" scenes in nature: "Essentially, what Gilpin suggests is a kind of 'gestalt' of the perfect landscape which the viewer could employ to guide him both in the selection and the correction of those views" (Finley 193-94). Gilpin advocated "the employment of a hammer on objects, in order to assist them in realizing appropriately picturesque states" (194).}\]
fundamental affinity: formally overdetermined description is not necessarily descriptive in the ordinary sense at all. just as the sketch is not.

The overdetermination of the literary sketch is employed two more times in Volume I. in the death of Yorick and the sketch of Uncle Toby. It is most manifest in the death of Yorick at the end of Tristram’s sketch: the sketcher’s reluctance to describe performs Yorick’s death. while at the same time the death scene becomes emblematic of the obscurity and also the ephemerality of the sketch. Of the death-bed scene there is no visual description at all. but the sketch does end with a fragile, fleeting image: Eugenius sees “a stream of lambent fire lighted up for a moment in his eyes:----faint picture of those flashes of his spirit. which (as Shakespear said of his ancestor) were wont to set the table in a roar!” (22. I.12). Then with the framed sigh “Alas. poor YORICK!” and the black leaf opposite Sterne uses both the visual and the verbal to preclude mental imagery. The effect of Sterne’s almost palpably anti-mimetic ending to the chapter is a performative excess of pure sentiment. unencumbered by image and bolstered by blindness. So ends the sketch of Yorick: negativity. the reluctance to describe. is given positive value.

Later on in Volume I is a second literary sketch. Tristram begins to “enter first a little into [Uncle Toby’s] character, the outlines of which I shall just give you” (45, I.21): this is the diminutive rhetoric of the literary sketch. He tries to deliver the sketch many times but
must continually digress—it is here that he interrupts himself to tell the story of aunt Dinah. who married and became pregnant by her coachman (47. I.21). Tristram returns to the sketch of Toby in the next chapter, but he must then also explain the digression:

For in this long digression which I was accidentally led into, as in all my digressions (one only excepted) there is a master-stroke of digressive skill, the merit of which has all along. I fear, been over-looked by my reader.---not for want of penetration in him.---but because 'tis an excellence seldom looked for, or expected. indeed in a digression:---and it is this: That tho' my digressions are all fair, as you observe.---and that I fly off from what I am about, as far and as often too as any writer in Great Britain: yet I constantly take care to order affairs so, that my main business does not stand still in my absence.

I was just going, for example, to have given you the great outlines of my uncle Toby's most whimsical character:---when my aunt Dinah and the coachman came a-cross us, and led us a vagary some millions of miles into the very heart of the planetary system: Notwithstanding all this. you perceive that the drawing of my uncle Toby's character went on gently all the time:---not the great contours of it.----that was impossible.----but some familiar strokes and faint designations of it, were here
and there touch'd in, as we went along, so that you are much better acquainted with

my uncle Toby now than you was before. (51-52. 1.22)

Tristram's "familiar strokes and faint designations"--"not the great contours"--are "touch'd
in" so "gently" that he must point them out to avoid the reader's missing them altogether. As

in the sketch of Yorick. furthermore. the primary characteristic of the description. here its
gentleness. is also the primary characteristic of the person described (one need only
remember the fly episode in II.12). The digressive sketch is a manifestation of Toby's gentle
nature. just as Toby's nature is a manifestation of many of the more interesting qualities of
the sketch.

3. the non-finito and the incoherence of painting

Tristram avoids giving the "great contours" of Toby's character and

person--this avoidance is in fact the whole problem of Volume I of the novel. What he is

avoiding is painting. As if to leave no room for doubt on this point. Tristram later writes that

the missing chapter (IV.24) has been removed because it was a narrative "painting" of a

journey to "*****" (221, 219 [IV.25]), a description that was "so much above the stile and

manner of anything else I have been able to paint in this book. that it could not have remained
in it, without deprecating every other scene” (221. IV.25). The one “painting” Tristram did write, in other words, he has discarded. I will endeavor in the rest of this chapter to offer two explanations for the rise of interest in the idea of the sketch in Sterne and in the eighteenth century generally. The first involves the positive appreciation of the unfinished, the second the incoherence of several works that represent themselves as literary paintings. I will address a third explanation, British empirical philosophy, in the next chapter.

One explanation of the general interest in the sketch in the eighteenth century, and in Sterne in particular, involves the popular fondness for the unfinished. Sterne’s Tristram does explain, ironically or not, that his negative narrative technique will have positive aesthetic value—primarily, it seems, because of the variety it ensures:

Digressions, incontestably, are the sunshine—-they are the life, the soul of reading—-take them out of this book for instance—-you might as well take the book along with them:—-one cold eternal winter would reign in every page of it; restore them to the writer;—-he steps forth like a bridegroom.—-bids All hail; brings in variety: and forbids the appetite to fail. (52. I.22)

The digression is not yet a characterization, just as the sketch is not yet a painting—-it is negative. And yet Tristram’s digressive sketching is the book itself, and the pleasure it gives is real.
Liking pencil drawings for their own sake, and even preferring them to finished paintins, was not uncommon or new. Its origins have been traced back to Michelangelo (Allentuck 146: Stafford 26). And the enthusiasm was by no means limited to the range of Pope's ambivalent acknowledgment of the value of the sketch at the beginning of the "Essay on Criticism" (1711):

But as the slightest Sketch. if justly trac'd.

Is by ill Colouring but the more disgrac'd.

So by false Learning is good Sense defac'd .... (ll. 23-25)

Since Sterne makes such elaborate use of the idea of literary sketching it is necessary to clarify his relationship to this aesthetic tradition.

I will cite only a few revealing passages from earlier writers. First. Hildebrand Jacob. in The Sister Arts (1734), writes:

Poets. and Painters. never gratify more the Observers of their Works. than when they express themselves not so fully. but that these may find Matter enough to exercise their own Imaginations upon: We are agreeably flatter'd by such Discoveries: and it is for this Reason. that the Sketches. or unfinish'd Designs of some great Masters. which are but lightly touch'd, seem sometimes to have more Spirit. and often please more than such as are perfect. (55)
Toward mid-century we find Edmund Burke expressing a similar sentiment in *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757):

The spring is the pleasantest of seasons; and the young of most animals, though far from being completely fashioned, afford a more agreeable sensation than the full grown: because the imagination is entertained with the promise of something more, and does not acquiesce in the present object of the sense. In unfinished sketches of drawing, I have often seen something which pleased me beyond the best finishing: and this I believe proceeds from the cause I have just now assigned. (77. II.IX)

Fielding also acknowledges the aesthetic of the unfinished in his description of Sophia in *Tom Jones*:

But as there are no perfections of the mind which do not discover themselves, in that perfect intimacy, to which we intend to introduce our reader, with this charming young creature: so it is needless to mention them here: nay, it is a kind of tacit affront to our reader's understanding, and may also rob him of that pleasure which he may receive in forming his own judgment of her character. (156, IV.2)

This last passage, which concerns Sophia's character rather than her appearance, illustrates Fielding's reluctance, for the sake of the reader's satisfaction, to finish his rendering of his heroine: his use of the term "sketch" to describe his portrayal is clearly related to this
reluctance. All three of these writers profess and theorize a liking for the unfinished quality of a sketch--the "non-finito." The pleasure derives from the freedom with which the viewer is permitted to complete the work, and this is clearly a completely different pleasure from that afforded by an already completed work--one that was to become so marketable, in fact, that preliminary sketches of Hogarth's paintings were forged and sold to eager buyers who believed them to be authentic.22

22 The Redgraves, in A Century of British Painters (1866), reproduce this quotation from J. T. Smith's Nollekens and his Times (1828):

I am also credibly informed that there is, even at this moment, an artist who finds it a rather successful occupation to make spirited drawings from Hogarth's prints, which he most ingeniously deviates from by the omission of some figure or other object, or insertion of an additional one, in order to give the drawing the appearance of a first thought upon which Hogarth is supposed to have made some alteration in his plate as an improvement. These drawings are discoloured, put into black frames, and then, after passing through several hands, are finally sold, accompanied with a very long story, to those over-cunning collectors destitute of sufficient knowledge to enable them to detect the forgery. (7-8)
That an eighteenth-century reader with a fondness for the unfinished would be likely to respond favorably to *Tristram Shandy* is a point few would dispute. Marcia Allentuck has discussed Sterne's novel in the context of the non-finito: she suggests that it "can even be said to have been his hobby-horse" (153). Whether or not we see *Tristram Shandy* as a finished work, however, there are several instances of the unfinished in it. There is the unfinished ode of the "courteous Diego" (195) at the end of "Slawkenbergius's Tale," for example.23 and also the fragment on whiskers (V.1). The aesthetic of the unfinished also influenced Sterne's thinking about characterization. The sketch of Yorick is one example: another, in which Sterne appeals more explicitly to the aesthetics of the unfinished, is Tristram's picture of Dr. Slop at the beginning of II.9:

Imagine to yourself a little, squat, uncourtey figure of a Doctor Slop, of about four feet and a half perpendicular height, with a breadth of back, and a sesquipedality of belly, which might have done honour to a Serjeant in the Horse Guards.

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23 In *Original Letters of the Late Reverend Mr. Laurence Sterne* (1788), William Combe, author of the Doctor Syntax tours, has Sterne write that "The unity of the episode would have been wounded, if I had added another line" (57). Combe has Sterne imply, furthermore, that this preference of the unfinished is an obvious and popular idea.
Such were the outlines of Dr. Slop's figure, which—if you have read Hogarth's analysis of beauty, and if you have not. I wish you would:—you must know. may as certainly be caricatur'd, and convey'd to the mind by three strokes as three hundred.

Imagine such a one.—for such. I say, were the outlines of Dr Slop's figure, coming slowly along, foot by foot, waddling thro' the dirt upon the vertebrae of a little diminutive pony, of a pretty colour:—but of strength.—alack!—scarce able to have made an amble of it. under such a fardel. had the roads been in an ambling condition.—They were not.—Imagine to yourself, Obadiah mounted upon a strong monster of a coach-horse, prick'd into a full gallop, and making all practicable speed the adverse way. (74-75)

Tristram twice uses the word "outline" in this passage, which indicates, as I have shown, that he is thinking of this as a sketch. More to the point, he implores the reader repeatedly to imagine the scene—to finish the picture that he has drawn in three strokes rather than 300.

Since Sterne's relationship to this aesthetic tradition is complex I will have more to say about it in the next chapter. Clearly, however, the novel appeals in a general way to a tradition of the aesthetic appreciation of the unfinished, as do most literary sketches.

A second explanation for the rise of interest in the sketch metaphor is that it seems a natural alternative or even reaction to a particular inadequacy of the traditional notion of
literature as painting. I will end this chapter by reading several important works of the
period. Johnson’s *Rasselas*, Thomson’s *The Seasons*, and Burney’s *Evelina*, all works that
make metaphorical use of the painting. I conclude that an alternative to the literature-as-
painting analogy was in a sense inevitable, and the sketch analogy would have been for many
a welcome alternative to it.

Samuel Johnson’s attitude toward painting is characterized by nostalgia. In “London”
(1738) the poet longs for

some happier place.

Where honesty and sense are no disgrace:

Some pleasing bank where verdant osiers play.

Some peaceful vale with nature’s paintings gay (ll. 43-46)

In “The Vanity of Human Wishes” (1749) he writes.

From every room descends the painted face.

That hung the bright palladium of the place.

And smoked in kitchens, or in auctions sold.

To better features yields the frame of gold:

For now no more we trace in every line

Heroic worth, benevolence divine:
The form distorted justifies the fall

And detestation rids th' indignant wall. (ll. 83-90)

In the first passage painting is associated with pleasing honesty and peace; in the second with the wisdom and heroic worth of the past.

Painting takes on an entirely different set of connotations, however, when it is used as a metaphor for imagination in *Rasselas* (1759). When Rasselas meets the poet Imlac, “he thought himself happy in having found a man who knew the world so well, and could so skillfully paint the scenes of life” (520). Soon after, Imlac says to Rasselas, “I am less unhappy than the rest, because I have a mind replete with images, which I can combine and vary at pleasure” (534, Chapter 12). The poet, then, is one whose mind is “replete with images” and who can “successfully paint.” But despite the soothing effect of images on the mind, *Rasselas* seems intended as a warning of the dangers of imaginative power. Early in the book, while the prince is still in the valley of happiness, his efforts to amuse himself with his imagination lead him to mistake fantasy for reality:

One day, as he was sitting on a bank, he feigned to himself an orphan virgin robbed of her little portion by a treacherous lover, and crying after him for restitution and redress. So strongly was the image impressed upon his mind, that he started up in the
maid's defense, and run forward to seize the plunderer with all the eagerness of real pursuit. (513)

Later on, Imlac tells Rasselas, Nekayah, and Pekuah of a learned astronomer who has been deluded by his studies into thinking he is the master of the world's weather:

Disorders of intellect, answered Imlac, happen much more often than superficial observers will easily believe. Perhaps, if we speak with rigorous exactness, no human mind is in its right state. (595)

This leads the princess to regret having laughed at the astronomer's madness, and she makes the following confession:

I have often soothed my thoughts with the quiet and innocence of pastoral employments, till I have in my chamber heard the winds whistle, and the sheep bleat; sometimes freed the lamb entangled in the thicket, and sometimes with my crook encountered the wolf. I have a dress like that of the village maids, which I put on to help my imagination, and a pipe on which I play softly, and suppose myself followed by my flocks. (597)

The dangers of an overpowerful imagination, Imlac explains to Pekuah, involve moral consequences as well as madness:
The evil of any pleasure that Nekayah can image is not in the act itself, but in its consequences. Pleasure, in itself harmless, may become mischievous, by endearing to us a state which we know to be transient and probationary, and withdrawing our thoughts from that, of which every hour brings us nearer to the beginning, and of which no length of time will bring us to the end. (607)

The problem with painting is that it does not reliably connect the mind with the outside world: though actual paintings are venerable, their imaginative counterparts lead one to madness. Johnson's novel presents a view of the world with serious implications in the realm of the sister arts. It certainly puts Cleland's painting of the young Adonis in perspective.

Fielding and Sterne make it clear in their works that painting is simply not an adequate metaphor for their art. Rasselas provides reasons why this might be the case, but James Thomson's The Seasons, in which the incoherence of the painting metaphor is made manifest, is a work that could have taught them this lesson in another way. Here the poet's and the reader's aesthetic vision paints the world but cannot paint the female: doing so leads to madness.

In The Seasons painting is presented as an adequate analogy for the imaginative process upon which descriptive poetry depends, and the poem is presented as a verbal
painting of the natural world. In *Winter* Thomson gives what can only be read as a summary of his poetic intentions in a discussion of the poets one reads on winter nights:

With them would search if nature's boundless frame

Was called. late-rising. from the void of night.

Or spring eternal from the Eternal Mind:

Its life. its laws. its progress. and its end.

Hence larger prospects of the beauteous whole

Would gradual open on our opening minds:

And each diffusive harmony unite

In full perfection to the astonished eye.

Then we would try to scan the moral world... (ll. 575-83)

Thus through poetry. via the poet's genius. it is possible to unite "diffusive harmonies" and "scan the moral world" as a "beauteous whole." The poetic process described is visual for both reader and writer—the poet continuously refers to vision in the poem. most notably. perhaps. in *Autumn* 773 ff.. where the poet's genius enables his "searching eye" (785) to see beneath the surface of the earth. In *Spring* Thomson describes the country around him as "One boundless blush. one white-empurpled shower / Of mingled blossoms; where the
raptured eye ‘Hurries from joy to joy’ (Spring 110-12). The Seasons is a relentlessly visual poem.

The idea of vision in the poem, furthermore, is continuously expressed through visual arts metaphors: the poet makes it clear that his project is to “paint” nature--despite the fact that this is an impossible task:

Behold yon breathing prospect bids the Muse

Throw all her beauty forth. But who can paint

Like nature? Can imagination boast.

Amid its gay creation, hues like hers?

Or can it mix them with that matchless skill.

And lose them in each other, as appears

In every bud that blows? If fancy then

Unequal fails beneath the pleasing task.

Ah, what shall language do? ah, where find words

Tinged with so many colours and whose power.

To life approaching, may perfume my lays

With that fine oil, those aromatic gales

That inexhaustive flow continual round? (Spring 467-79)
The poet admits here that he is twice removed from any possibility of complete success at word-painting by the inadequacies of both fancy and language. But this admission is clearly a gesture of humility: the poet has acknowledged that painting with words is possible just a few lines above:

There let the classic page thy fancy lead

Through rural scenes, such as the Mantuan swain

Paints in the matchless harmony of song:

Or catch thyself the landscape, gliding swift

Athwart imagination's vivid eye .... (Spring 455-59)

So although the limitations of language make word-painting seem impossible. painting with words remains an aesthetic fact. Thomson alludes to Virgil’s Eclogues here as an example of word painting for which no apology is required: elsewhere he mentions Chaucer’s “native manners-painting verse” (Summer 1577). On two occasions the poet asks who could possibly “paint” the scene he beholds (Spring 554, Summer 217). but the majority of the occurrences of the word “paint” in the poem imply no doubt whatsoever as to the viability of the idea. The Seasons is a painterly poem.

The poem exemplifies, furthermore, the way the painting metaphor can lead writers into contradiction. Thomson’s troubles with coherence begin with his representations of
people--particularly females. Thomson’s sensual pastoral description of a virgin in spring. for example, is painterly indeed:

Flushed by the spirit of the genial year.

Now from the virgin’s cheek a fresher bloom

Shoots less and less the live carnation round:

Her lips blush deeper sweets: she breaths of youth:

The shining moisture swells into her eyes

In brighter flow: her wishing bosom heaves

With palpitations wild: kind tumults seize

Her veins. and all her yielding soul is love.

From the keen gaze her lover turns away.

Full of the dear ecstatic power. and sick

With sighing languishment. (Spring 963-73)

Like the sensual “painting” in Fanny Hill, the description here is part by part, detail by detail.

The poet’s description appeals to the reader’s imagination--it is as though the reader is seeing what the young lover is seeing. But the lover “turns away.” sick with the beauty with which the poet is entrancing the reader--who is given no encouragement to turn away. The
immediacy. in other words. is false: young men are encouraged not to be taken in by this
deceitful beauty as the reader consumes it.

A few lines later Thomson makes the connection between beauty. madness. painting.
and death explicit:

And let the aspiring youth beware of love.

Of the smooth glance beware: for 'tis too late

When on his heart the torrent-softness pours.

Then wisdom prostrate lies. and fading fame

Wrapt in gay visions of unreal bliss.

Still paints the illusive form. the kindling grace.

The enticing smile. the modest-seeming eye.

Beneath whose beauteous beams. belying Heaven.

Lurk searchless cunning. cruelty and death:

And still. false-warbling in his cheated ear.

Her siren voice enchanted draws him on

To guileful shores and meads of fatal joy.

Even present. in the very lap of love

Inglorious laid--while music flows around.
Perfumes, and oils, and wine, and wanton hours--

Amid the roses fierce repentance rears

Her snaky crest: a quick-returning pang

Shoots through the conscious heart, where honour still

And great design, against the oppressive load

Of luxury, by fits, impatient heave. (983-1003)

Here fancy's paintings are illusions, like those with which Rasselas deceives himself--they are not to be trusted. The painting representing the pleasures of love, which the poet himself has provided for the reader's pleasure, is suddenly to be resisted as "gay visions of unreal bliss." The drama of this passage distracts the reader from the question that must be asked: why is it that the lover's pleasure causes his fancy to paint false paintings and amounts to madness while the reader's pleasure, which the poet endeavors to make equivalent to the lover's through verbal painting, does not? How is it that the woman's singing is dismissed as so much "false-warbling in his cheated ear" while Thomson's poem, which could also be called an "oppressive load / Of luxury." is not? Either the idea of the painting is incoherent or the poem itself is. But it comes to the same thing: the poem is a series of paintings, and the poet a self-proclaimed painter.
The Seasons is an excellent example of the problems of the painterly aesthetic and the
duplicity it can lead to. One is left in confusion as to the truth, value, and purpose of poetry.
Thomson’s implicit equation of the terms “fancy” and “imagination” suddenly appears
problematic: when we read do imagination and genius allow us to “scan the moral world”?
Or do we merely

play the shapes

Of frolic fancy: and incessant form

Those rapid pictures. that assembled train

Of fleet ideas. never joined before.

Whence lively Wit excites to gay surprise.

Or folly-painting Humour. grave himself.

Calls laughter forth. deep-shaking every nerve. (Winter 610-16)

This is the question that Locke, Berkeley. and Hume all struggled with. The answer. in
Thomson. is that it depends what we are looking at. and this. from the point of view of the
sketcher. which. as I will argue in Chapter 2, is that of the empirical philosopher. this is

24 James Sambrook notes that “‘Imagination’ (459) and ‘fancy’ (455) are synonymous” for
Thomson (217. n.).
insufficient. Thomson presents his poem as an unproblematic reading and painting of nature without proving his case. As I will argue in the next chapter, the sketch explicitly acknowledges this problem if it does not solve it.

In Francis Burney's _Evelina, or the History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World_ (1778) we find the same inconsistency. Here the problem is not the perception but the objectification of women. As in _Rasselas_ and _The Seasons_, the idea of painting is consistently associated with the imagination. For example, Lady Howard writes. "When young people are too rigidly sequestered from [the world], their lively and romantic imaginations paint it to them as a paradise of which they have been beguiled" (17). Mr. Villars warns Evelina that London is "a place which your imagination has painted to you in colours so attractive" (25)--Evelina here, at the onset of her "Entrance Into the World." is thus stepping into a painting--or so she thinks. In fact, though, she is stepping out of a painting, her idyllic childhood, and into the vulgarity of the world: a world that gradually becomes less and less painterly, so that by Volume II she is already recalling even her introduction to the beau monde as though it were a dream or ideal fantasy:

Tell me, my dear Maria, do you never retrace in your memory the time we past here when together? to mine, it recurs forever! And yet, I think I rather recollect a dream, or some visionary fancy, than a reality.--That I should ever have been known to Lord
Onille.--that I should have spoken to--have danced with him.--seems now a romantic illusion: and that elegant politeness. that flattering attention. that high-bred delicacy. which so much distinguished him above other men. and which struck us with such admiration. I now re-trace the remembrance of. rather as belonging to an object of ideal perfection. formed by my own imagination. than to being of the same race and nature as those with whom I at present converse. (172)

Lord Orville seems now an "object of ideal perfection" created by her "imagination"--in other words. a painting. a "romantic illusion" she "retraces." The romance structure of the book. then. can be seen as a journey in which the heroine steps down from one painting into the world and then steps into another painting at the end of the novel--one equally pleasing and stable but more truthful and resolved.

The connection between painting and the imagination involves not only Evelina's view of the world but also the reader. whose role is played out in the novel by the Reverend Mr. Villars. Burney's novel. like Thomson's poem. represents itself as a painting: Villars. who not only reads all Evelina's letters but also judges her actions and those of everyone she encounters as though the letters gave him an interaction with her world that amounts to immediate presence: the assumption is that these letters constitute a true representation of her
world. Evelina writes, "could I have painted him to **you** as he appeared to me ..." (117)--her letters are attempts to paint, to represent her world fully to Villars' imagination. 25

But like The Seasons, Evelina, a book in which taste is the proof of wisdom, is a scene of aesthetic discord. The novel’s exposure of the foolish vulgarity of the way all the men in the novel except Lord Orville regard women as art works seems quite at odds with the willingness to romanticize the painting as a model of literary perception and representation.

"Softness itself is painted in your eyes" (41), says Mr. Lovel to Evelina, and Miss Mirvan considered by Sir Clement to be "an amiable piece of still-life" (334). That the metaphor is

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25 The word "sketch" is never used in the novel--though she says that her letters are attempts to paint rather than successful word-paintings. it is clear that her emphasis is on the paintings rather than on the attemptedness. That the emphasis is rather on the wholeness of feeling rather than the fragmentedness of representation is made clear by the anonymous verses written in Evelina's praise. In presenting them to Evelina Sir Clement Willoughby says.

"Here, loveliest of women, you will see a faint, a successless attempt to **paint** the object of all my adoration! yet. weak as are the lines for the purpose, I envy beyond expression the happy mortal who has dared to make the effort" (333). The poetic rendering is a "weak."

"successless" attempt at painting, but it is not, at least to Sir Clement, a sketch.
invalid in the realm of gender relations does not necessarily affect its validity as a model of perception. of course, but nonetheless one cannot help feeling a certain discord here.

It is exactly this discord, I suggest, that the literary sketch is in part a response to. Painting is associated with madness and spiritual death in both Johnson and Thomson and with vulgar insensitivity in Burney. The fact that literary artists should require a new visual metaphor for their work thus seems inevitable. But the various negative connotations of painting are only half the problem. The painterly aesthetic. if these three works may be taken as representative of it. involves two distinctions that from a certain point of view seem unsavory and unnecessary: between physical and mental imagery and between images of scenery and those of persons (especially female persons).

Burney wants to claim the vividness of painting and reject the cheap thingness of the actual works at the same time. This is what all writers of literary “paintings” want to do--it is. of course. what most painters want to do as well. The possible solutions for both writers and painters are the same. One is to persevere: to continue the pictorialist endeavor and attempt to reconcile or transcend the contradictions. One thinks, for example, of Reynolds, whose mission as president of the Royal Academy was to teach artists to think in narrative
terms as well as merely visual, sensual ones. and whose portrait of Mrs. Siddons Henry James had in mind when writing *The Tragic Muse* (Falk 152 ff.). But there is another solution, one in which image and narrative are subordinate to empirical mimesis: to discard the painting metaphor in favor of that of the sketch. This last solution is my concern here. It is this solution. I will argue. that is Sterne’s particular legacy to nineteenth century fiction and travel writing—to that of Thackeray in particular. Sterne’s response, as I have shown, is to reject the painterly aesthetic altogether, in favor of the one based on the sketch, as a way of avoiding such problems as those encountered by Thomson and Burney. The idea of the sketch is thus a reactive phenomenon of early romanticism: it is a manifestation of the need

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26 Reynolds espouses in the *Discourses* an aesthetic directly opposite to that of Sterne: “Thus figures must have a ground whereon to stand: they must be clothed; there must be a background: there must be light and shadow: but none of these ought to appear to have taken up any part of the Artist’s attention” (Reynolds)(IV, 74). His highest genre is history painting. which derives its glory from its narrative quality. Thus he recommends idealizing the figures of heroes who happened to be short, such as Alexander: “In conformity to custom, I call this part of the Art of History Painting; it ought to be called Poetical, as in reality it is” (IV, 75). “Painting,” he writes. “is not merely a gratification of the sight” (IV, 94).
to achieve aesthetic, psychological, and intellectual consistency in the face of what Thomas McFarland has called "the diasparation of actual life" (10)—even if this can only be accomplished, as it is in Sterne, by embracing the fragment.
Table 1: Eighteenth-Century Literary Sketch Books

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Total number of &quot;sketch&quot; books</th>
<th>&quot;Sketch&quot; refers to the whole work</th>
<th>&quot;Sketch&quot; refers to a part of the work</th>
<th>&quot;sketch&quot; is plural (&quot;sketches&quot;)</th>
<th>Biographical or Character &quot;sketch(s)&quot;</th>
<th>Outline, Overview, Plan, or Abridgment</th>
<th>Travel/Geographical/Topological &quot;sketch(s)&quot;</th>
<th>Poem(s), Play(s), or Novels</th>
<th>Fragments/Miscellaneous</th>
<th>&quot;Sketch&quot; means Drawing or Painting</th>
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<tr>
<td>1710-30</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>1731-40</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>63.6</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>1741-50</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>1751-60</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1761-70</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>61.5</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>7.7</td>
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<td>0.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>1771-80</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>69.2</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1781-90</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>64.9</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1791-1800</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>56.2</td>
<td>41.0</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>7.2</td>
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Chapter 2. The Method and Form of the Literary Sketch

The reports of perception are written to order: whatever detail interests us is immediately brought into focus and reported on. When this occurs one is not scanning some mental image or sense-datum. One is scanning the outside world—quite literally. (D. C. Dennett, Content and Consciousness, 139)

In this chapter, on the basis of the previous one, I take Sterne’s Tristram Shandy as synecdochic for the literary sketch tradition so as to examine the method or genesis of the sketch rather than its form. I argue that the preference of the “sketch” over the “painting” detailed in the previous chapter is best explained as a manifestation of British empirical philosophy. The sketch is an empirical form and remains so even into the nineteenth century due in large part to the influence of Sterne, as I demonstrate in Chapter 3. Sterne’s extravagance with the idea of the sketch and with the epistemological debate alone justifies an inquiry into the relation between the two. But there is a more fundamental reason for connecting Sterne with the philosophers in this context. Simply put, perception, knowledge, and representation are parallel problems, and for this reason Sterne deliberately confuses them.
One reason for Sterne’s emphasis on the idea of the sketch, in addition to those detailed in the previous chapter, is the difficulty of observation and description—this is the basic problem of empiricism. In Chapter 1.33 Tristram’s topic is the difficulty of taking a man’s character: it is impossible to see into and therefore to describe the soul (though he does conjecture that this may be possible on Mercury). To “sketch” for Sterne means not merely to copy appearances but to have direct access to the soul or essence of a person. The impossibility of direct observation necessitates a medium. Sterne’s ambiguity here is that which I have shown to be typical of literary sketches. His examples make it difficult to tell whether he needs the medium for observation or for representation: his examples include Fame’s trumpet, the examination of the “Non-naturals” (54) by medical men, and the camera obscura: these are ways in which people have tried to “draw” or “sketch” men’s characters. he says (54). Tristram describes his own medium, his “pencil” (54) but then says, with the hallmark vagueness of the literary sketch, “I will draw my uncle Toby’s character from his HOBBY-HORSE” (55). Tristram’s confusion of visual perception makes a basic empirical point about perception and representation: “Imagining is depictional or descriptional, not pictorial”: “the end product of perception, what we are aware of when we perceive something, is more like the written Tolstoy than the film” (Dennett 135, 136).
My primary concern in this chapter is the affinities between *Tristram Shandy* and the *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-40) of David Hume. who says in a letter to William Strahan (July 30. 1773) that “The best Book. that has been writ by any Englishman these thirty Years (for Dr Franklyn is an American) is Tristram Shandy. bad as it is” (Greig v. ii. 269). I will establish important parallels between the two texts and then use some of the current thinking that “Hume’s Problem” continues to engender to theorize the sketch/painting binary outlined in the previous chapter with greater breadth and precision. Reading *Tristram Shandy* through Hume’s *Treatise* allows us to add significantly to the list of eighteenth-century connotations of the term “sketch” by providing a rationale for the carelessness of the sketch. the quickness of its production. and the difficulty of appreciating it.

David Hume has been called a “red herring” for Sterne scholars (Harrison 1991 76). but Sterne may have read Hume.27 The two writers met in Paris in 1764. and Hume quizzed

27 It is impossible to establish this with any certainty. None of Hume’s works are mentioned in the novel (see Judith’s Hawley’s “‘Hints and Documents’ I: A Bibliography for *Tristram Shandy*”) but A Catalogue of a Curious and Valuable Collection of Books. Among which are Included the Entire Library Of the late Reverend and Learned Laurence Sterne. A. M.,
Sterne on miracles at a dinner party after hearing him preach (Cross v. ii. 33); and Sterne seems eager to deny that they had quarreled in a letter, emphasizing Hume’s “gentle and placid nature” (Cross v. ii. 34). Hume is mentioned, furthermore, in *A Sentimental Journey*: Yorick calls him “a man of excellent heart” (30). Yorick calls that book “an essay upon human nature” (28)—probably a reference to Hume’s *Treatise*.

Prebendary of York, &c. &c., Author of *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gent.*, and several other Works of Wit and Humour (1768) lists the second volume of the *Treatise* (1739. #2412), two copies of *Essays, Moral and Political* (1741 and 1742. #1708 and #1573). *Essays on the Principles of Morality* (1751. #988). Hume’s *Essays on Several Subjects* (1758. #545). and the fourth volume of *Essays and Treatises* (1754. #2446). Though the book has been misleadingly retitled “A Unique Catalogue of Laurence Sterne’s Library” by its twentieth-century editors, the original title of the catalogue makes it impossible to guess what percentage of the books were owned by Sterne. There is also the question of whether Sterne read all the books he owned (Cash 203 ff.). The purpose of my argument here, however, is to establish affinity, not direct influence.
The question has always been what to do with this information. Responses have varied. John L. Traugott states that “The undermining skeptical arguments of Hume (which recommend his doctrine of sympathy) find almost a descriptive statement in *Tristram*” (19). and Arnold Davidson has argued that though Locke is referred to throughout *Tristram Shandy*, Tristram’s narration does not “illustrate his posited epistemology” (17): rather, “[Hume’s] thought, more than Locke’s, pervades the novel” (18). Davidson has also suggested that Sterne’s hobby-horse idea is related to Hume’s insistence that the basis of association is habit (18). A. D. Nuttall, on the other hand, writes that after Berkeley “English philosophy underwent a major transformation at the hands of David Hume, but Sterne, like most of his countrymen, seems not to have noticed the fact” (45). Nuttall does see various parallels in Hume and Sterne but sees Sterne as far less extreme than Hume: “Sterne has merely achieved a vague echo of that more incisive irony of Hume’s whereby the completed principles of empiricism were to quell the ambitions of empirical science” (71). Bernard Harrison rejects the traditional notion that Sterne offered “merely a dramatized literary version of the standard philosophical sentimentalism of his age” (Harrison 1994, 70). *Tristram Shandy*, he writes, “is not a dramatic reworking of Hume’s thoughts on sympathy as the cement of a social bond” (90):
We are not just dealing here, it seems to me, either with a Hume-inspired polemic against moral rationalism or, more generally, with the kind of sub-Humean "sentimentalism" which has been so relentlessly attributed to Hume since the 1770s. Sterne is satirizing a theory-inspired outlook much older and more deeply rooted in English thought than Hume: and I doubt if it is even very important to the issues as Sterne sees them that the stance in question is one with which Hume’s philosophy is very much complicit. (95)

I agree with Harrison that the connection between Hume and Sterne is not to be found in an identification of Sternean sentimentality and Humean sympathy. But there is a more solid basis for comparison between the two authors--one that to my knowledge has not been explored and which will clarify the aesthetic of the sketch.

This chapter is concerned with the relationship between two facts. First, both authors make analogies between their work and the endeavor of the visual artist, and in doing so both define their own endeavors by contrasting them with that of the painter. I have discussed Sterne’s analogy in Chapter 1 (pp. 50 ff. above); Hume’s, with which he concludes his \textit{Treatise}, is as follows:
The anatomist ought never to emulate the painter: nor in his accurate dissections and portraitures of the smaller parts of the human body, pretend to give his figures any graceful and engaging attitude or expression. There is even something hideous, or at least minute, in the view of things, which he presents; and 'tis necessary the objects shou'd be set more at a distance, and be more cover'd up from sight, to make them engaging to the eye and imagination. An anatomist, however, is admirably fitted to give advice to the painter; and 'tis even impracticable to excel in the latter art, without the assistance of the former. We must have an exact knowledge of the parts, their situation and connexion, before we can design with any elegance or correctness.

(620-21)

Though there are obvious differences between the diagrams of the anatomist and the painter's preliminary sketches, there are important similarities as well: neither has anything to do with the palliative nature of representative painting; both, for different reasons, are often difficult to appreciate; and both emphasize interpretative interaction with the empirical world.

Second, Sterne and Hume share a common concern with and response to the empirical problems of nominalism, inductive inference, and inductive skepticism--all ideas that, as I will show, relate to the idea of the sketch as well as to that of the anatomical diagram.
1. nominalism

Sterne's aesthetic of the sketch is consistent with the nominalist metaphysics of John Locke and the empiricists in general. Locke's nominalism, that is, his emphasis on particulars and his rejection of innate notions and general rules, is consistent with the epistemology of Sterne's novel. Locke's use of the term "sentiment" in the *Essay*, as in this passage at the beginning of the fourth book, is probably a source of the title of Sterne's last novel:

> It is the first act of the mind. when it has any sentiments or ideas at all. to perceive its ideas; and so far as it perceives them. to know each what it is, and thereby also to perceive their difference. and that one is not another. This is so absolutely necessary, that without it there could be no knowledge. no reasoning, no imagination. no distinct thoughts at all. By this the mind clearly and infallibly perceives each idea to agree

28 On Sterne's use of Locke, cf. Ernest Tuveson's "Locke and Sterne" and Peter M. Briggs' "Locke's Essay and the Tentativeness of *Tristram Shandy*."
with itself, and to be what it is: and all distinct ideas to disagree, i.e. the one not to be the other: and this it does without pains, labour, or deduction; but at first view, by its natural power of perception and distinction. And though men of art have reduced this into those general rules. "What is, is;" and. "It is impossible for the same thing to be and not to be." for ready application in all cases, wherein there may be occasion to reflect on it: yet it is certain that the first exercise of this faculty is about particular ideas. A man infallibly knows, as soon as ever he has them in his mind, that the ideas he calls "white" and "round" are the very ideas they are: and that they are not other ideas which he calls "red" or "square." Nor can any maxim or proposition in the world make him know it clearer or surer than he did before, and without any such general rule. (424-25. IV.i.4)

Locke clearly invokes a hierarchy of particular over general here: "in particulars our knowledge begins, and so spreads itself by degrees to generals" (515. VI.vii.11). "[T]he immediate perception of the agreement or disagreement of identity being founded in the mind's having distinct ideas," Locke writes, "this affords us as many self-evident propositions as we have distinct ideas" (506. IV.vii.4). Since "truth properly belongs only to propositions" (491. IV.v.2), this means that perceptions can be true and that truth can be
perceived—at least where propositions concerning identity and diversity or mathematical axioms are concerned. Thus Locke insists that reasoning must rely solely on the perception of particulars, on simple ideas. As long as this is done the link between understanding and truth will not be severed.29

Locke denounces deductive reasoning in the long passage I quoted above and also in his chapter on maxims. Maxims and axioms “are not the truths first known to the mind” (508. IV.vii.9): “the ideas first in the mind, it is evident, are those of particular things” (509. IV.vii.9). Abstract ideas are necessary, he admits (307-08. II.xxxii.6), but they are “marks of our imperfection” (509. IV.vii.9). Locke argues that general rules are not of any use in proving or confirming self-evident propositions, are not the foundation of science, and are “not of use to help men forward in the advancement of sciences, or new discoveries of yet unknown truths” (511. VI.vii.11): they are useful only as pedagogical tools and in scholastic debates. And general rules are not only useless but also dangerous: they “most commonly make men receive and retain falsehood for manifest truth, and uncertainty for demonstration:

29 Locke’s model, in other words, is that of the camera obscura—cf. Crary, Chapter 2.
upon which follows error, obstinacy, and all the mischiefs that can happen from wrong reasoning” (517. IV.vii.15).

Sterne clearly makes parodic use of Lockean nominalism in Tristram Shandy. In the beginning of Volume III Tristram writes, “Matters of no more seeming consequence in themselves than, ‘Whether my father should have taken off his wig with his right hand or with his left.’----have divided the greatest kingdoms” (Sterne 113. III.2). In this case the only consequence is that Toby is reminded of his fortifications and distracted from the conversation, but the passage recalls the fact that the association of one particular with another in Mrs. Shandy’s mind has led to the peculiarities of Tristram’s conception as well as to his character and life as “Sport of small accidents” (118). The hinges in III.21-22 are another example of the exaggerated importance of the particular in Sterne that seems to underline that in Locke.

But Sterne’s treatment of the particular is not solely parodic. The particular may be said to be the main concern of the sermon on conscience in Volume II, which mentions a crafty old sinner who has blinded himself to all but the law:

----Conscience looks into the Statutes at Large:----finds no express law broken by what he has done:----perceives no penalty or forfeiture or goods and chattels
incurred:----sees no scourge waving over his head, or prison opening his gates unto him:----safely entrenched behind the Letter of the Law: sits there invulnerable.

fortified with Cases and Reports so strongly on all sides:----that it is not preaching can dispossess it of its hold. (93)

The sermon concludes. “your conscience is not a law” (101). And this warning against reliance on laws is then immediately followed by Walter Shandy’s deductive method of reasoning (II.19): the dangers of false deduction are dramatized when Walter brutally concludes. on the basis of Descartes’ “hypothesis” (107) concerning the physical location of the soul in the medulla oblongata and the pressure put on it in childbirth. in favour of “the Caesarian section” (109). More importantly, however. as Bernard Harrison has noted. “the revelation of one’s own naked particularity, or the apprehension of the naked particularity of another. is always seen as the most fundamental kind of honesty” in Tristram Shandy (Harrison 1991. 78). Tristram sketches from nature--his subjects, after all, are his parents and neighbors and the places he visits. His concern is with their “naked particularity.” not the character types they may exemplify, as in other writers.30 Many of Sterne’s episodes have

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30 Fielding, for example. writes in Joseph Andrews.
this "naked particularity" as well--Toby's reluctance to "retaliate upon a fly" (80: II.12) is one memorable example: the sketch of Yorick is another.

So far, then. Locke and Sterne seem to be in agreement: a possible aesthetic emerges according to which finished paintings, like Locke's "abstract ideas," would be seen as "marks of our imperfection." Both painting and general rules are products of hindsight and design rather than experience and are associated with error. Sterne is both a nominalist and a sketcher: Sterne and Locke both prefer the particular to the general for the same reason that Sterne prefers sketches to paintings.31 Thus, the relation between particularity and the sketch in Sterne is not merely circumstantial: the sketch metaphor in Tristram Shandy emphasizes

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I describe not Men, but Manners: not an individual, but a Species. Perhaps it will be answered. Are not the Characters taken from Life? To which I answer in the

Affirmative: nay, I might aver, I have writ little more than I have seen. (148. III.1)

31 Reynolds, on the other hand, praises Raphael for setting aside his "dry, Gothic, and even insipid manner, which attends to the minute accidental discriminations of particular and individual objects" in favor of "great style of painting, which improves partial representation by the general and invariable ideas of nature" (7).
the intimacy with the particular that, as Harrison has shown, is such an important aspect of Sterne’s endeavor. One common implication of the term “sketch,” as I have shown in the previous chapter, is that the relationship between the artist and either the subject or the inspiration is unmitigated—providing a sense of particularity of place and moment and also of style (as Mikel Dufrenne notes, “In the sketch, craft does not efface style” [107]). The sketch exchanges the sense of “ideal presence” a finished painting attempts to provide (Rothstein 307-11) for what one might term “actual presence,” for the sense that there was nothing mediating the artist’s encounter with the object or scene and that the object is real in a way that eludes perception.

2. induction

But Locke, though necessary, is insufficient for an understanding of Sterne’s aesthetic. The reason for this has to do with two major consequences of nominalism that
Locke himself did not address and that both Hume and Sterne insist on: induction and skepticism.  

For Hume the real epistemological question is not of the importance of the particular but of the nature of the inferences that can be made from it. If the particular is all that we can know with certainty, and Locke, Berkeley, and Hume each maintain some version of this, then induction, or reasoning from the particular, is the only viable mode of inference. Induction was the primary model of scientific reasoning in the late eighteenth century. Its credibility was much enhanced by the publication of Bayes' Theorem in 1763, as Tristram Shandy was appearing: Richard Price, Bayes' posthumous editor, writes that Bayes' problem "is necessary to be considered by anyone who would give a clear account of the strength of analogical or inductive reasoning" (Bayes 372).  

and Harrod has argued Bayes' theorem "is

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32 On Hume as nominalist, see Robison. Donald Wehrs calls Tristram Shandy "a narrative in which the techniques of Richardson and Fielding, carried to comic extremes, subvert naturalized interpretation by offering multiple inductive possibilities" (129).

33 Price explains Bayes' Theorem as follows. De Moivre had shown that: "if a great number of trials be made concerning any event, the proportion of the number of times it will happen.
the only fundamental theorem that has been rigidly proved, which enables the occurrence of a

particular fact to extend our knowledge beyond the realm of that fact” (16).34

Hume is the first of the empiricists to follow Bacon in insisting on induction as the

basis of the new science of human nature.35 In the introduction to the Treatise he writes.

to the number of times it will fail in those trials, should differ less than by small assigned

limits from the proportion of the probability of its happening to the probability of its failing

in one single trial” (372-73). This is basic probability. But Bayes’ problem is different: “the

number of times an unknown event has happened and failed being given, to find the chance

that the probability of its happening should lie somewhere between any two named degrees of

probability” (373).

34 He also notes, however, that Bayesian probability requires too much background

information to be considered pure inductive logic (17). Miller has argued that Bayesianism is

“the best version of positivist confirmation theory” but that it “has not resolved, even

temporarily, a single fundamental scientific dispute” (268-69).

35 Like Bacon and Locke. Hume ridicules the deductive tendency of his predecessors,

advertising his “prudence in avoiding that error, into which so many have fallen. of imposing
their conjectures and hypotheses on the world for most certain principles” (xviii). But while Locke follows Bacon in denouncing general rules, there is nowhere in Locke the sense that “the hope . . . lies in a true induction” (Bacon l.14). For Locke, induction is simply the way the mind works: a child, he writes, “when a part of his apple is taken away, knows it better in that particular instance, than by this general proposition. ‘The whole is equal to all its parts’” (515; IV.vii.11). Berkeley is even more ambivalent about induction. At times Berkeley mentions induction as a solution to a problem: “To this I answer that there is not any one phenomenon explained on that supposition which may not as well be explained without it, as might easily be made appear by an induction of particulars” (539. §50); but he also writes, “It is a hard thing to suppose that right deductions from true principles should ever end in consequences which cannot be maintained or made consistent” (510, Introduction, §3). He appeals to “the truth and certainty of those things which may be proved a priori, with the utmost rigor of demonstration” (543, §61): “there are certain general laws that run through the whole chain of nature; these are learned by the observation and study of nature, and are by men applied as well to the framing artificial things for the use and ornament of life as
We must therefore glean our experiments in this science from a cautious observation of human life and take them as they appear in the common course of the world, by men's behaviour in company, in affairs, and in their pleasures. Where experiments of this kind are judiciously collected and compared, we may hope to establish on them a science, which will not be inferior in certainty, and will be much superior in utility to any other of human comprehension. (xix)

Hume's Treatise bears the subtitle "An Attempt to introduce the experimental Method of Reasoning into Moral Subjects" (xi). His endeavor, he says in the introduction, is based on "experience" and "observation" (xvi): "'tis certain we cannot go beyond experience" (xvii).

The "experimental method" is inductive reasoning. Thus Hume concludes one series of explaining various phenomena—which explication consists only in showing the conformity any particular phenomenon hath to the general laws of nature" (544. §62).

36 As David Owen points out, "Hume's problem," which Kant wrote the first Critique in order to solve (Prolegomena 9), is often stated in terms of "induction," a word that the author rarely used and never used as it is used today (Owen 179). The term "induction" did have its current meaning in the eighteenth century, however—see note 43 below.
examples in Book II with the following insistence that he is reasoning soundly from the
particular:

As every new instance is a new argument, and as the instances are here without
number, I may venture to affirm, that scarce any system was ever so fully prov’d by
experience, as that which I have here advanc’d. (II.i.10; 311)

The case is proven for Hume, in other words, simply on the basis of the number of instances
that do not contradict it—that is, by simple enumerative induction. A few pages later he
performs a series of eight “experiments” to test his system of the passions (II.i.2): he
demonstrates his thesis on the causes of belief with a series of experiments as well (I.iii.8).

Induction is a problem not only for the philosopher but for the artist as well. William

Whewell, in Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences (1840), argues that seeing is an act of

inference:
All that is seen is outline and shade, figures and colours on a flat board. The solid angles and edges, the relation of the faces of the figure by which they form a cube, are matters of inference. (112)⁷

Derrida agrees: this is Derrida’s “hypothesis of sight” in Memoirs of the Blind (2. 60). the inductive inference of vision. Representation is generalization from perceived particulars. and it is the generalization, not the particulars, that the viewer or reader apprehends. But a preparatory sketch is different from a painting in this regard: appreciating a sketch is appreciating neither particularity nor a generalization so much as a generalization-in-process from particulars—an inductive inference. The following passage from Hume’s Treatise makes the precise connection between induction and sketching:

"Each new experiment is as a new stroke of the pencil, which bestows an additional vivacity on the colours, without either multiplying or enlarging the figure." (135: I.iii.12)

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⁷ Whewell, despite his insistence that perception is inductive, is nonetheless a Kantian deductivist—see p. 180 below.
As the passage shows, both induction and the sketch are incomplete—inductive inference sacrifices completeness and certainty in exchange for empirical legitimacy, just as the sketch does.

William Gilpin makes a similar point in his essay "On Picturesque Travel" (1792):

He who has seen only one oak-tree, has no complete idea of an oak in general: but he who has examined thousands of oak-trees, must have seen that beautiful plant in all its varieties: and obtains a complete idea of it.

From this correct knowledge of objects arises another amusement; that of representing, by a few strokes in a sketch, those ideas, which have made the most impression on us. A few scratches, like a short-hand scrawl, legible at least to ourselves, will serve to raise in our minds the remembrance of the beauties they humbly represent: and recall to our memory even the splendid colouring, and force of light, which existed in the real scene. (23)

Induction and sketching are humble but reliable. Gilpin says "thousands" of trees here, though surely two or three would suffice for a general idea that would give pleasure—just as two or three lines might for a sketch that would give pleasure.
Ruskin, in the empirical first volume of *Modern Painters*, offers the following inductive explanation of the power of the sketch:

The first five chalk touches bring a head into existence out of nothing. No five touches in the whole course of the work will ever do as much as these, and the difference made by each touch is more and more imperceptible as the work approaches completion. (31)\(^38\)

Ruskin's account of the sketch as a process of scratching down the minimum number of particulars required for a general impression explains the appeal of both sketching and induction. To put it another way, induction, like the sketch as Ruskin describes it, is ampliative (see p. 12 above), as is analogy (North 136). The sketch is ampliative for both artist and spectator. Ampliativity, intriguingly bolstered by any knowledge, however vague.

\(^{38}\) "[T]he least sensation of power." Ruskin writes. "is received from the most perfect work" (31). Ruskin also argues, though, that "There is in reality greater power in the completion than in the commencement; and though it be not so manifest to the senses, it ought to have higher influence on the mind" (31)---he is careful to secure painting's hierarchical prominence over the sketch.
of Bayes' theorem.\textsuperscript{39} or even by the lure of a possible justification of induction. is the aesthetic of the sketch. Ampliativity is the possibility of discovery. The sketch is discovery--this is its appeal. Ann Radcliffe makes a point of this in The Mysteries of Udolpho when Emily observes the arrival of a group of strangers from the ramparts:

Their figures seemed so well suited to the wildness of the surrounding objects, that, as they stood surveying the castle, she sketched them for banditti, amid the mountain-

\textsuperscript{39} Miller writes.

The question. "what is the probability of $H$ given $e"$ sounds like the question of to what level the probability of $H$ should be revised, if $e$ is observed. Bayes' Theorem seems to give a rule connecting that revised probability, should $e$ be observed, with present ones, prior to the observation of $e$. (275)

The problem. Miller argues. is that "The axioms. the definitions and the informal rationale for the theorem say nothing about the revision of beliefs. indeed. nothing about time at all" (275). His "cagery locutions about what Bayes' Theorem 'seems to express'" (275), however. indicate the appeal of the theorem to those interested in a logic of discovery.
view of her picture. when she had finished which. she was surprised to observe the
spirit of her group. But she had copied from nature. (276)

The figures' harmony with their surroundings provides the impetus for the sketch. but the
meaning. or "spirit" of the group. is discovered in the process of sketching. It surprises her
when she has finished.

Sterne makes unique and extravagant use of induction. or "reasoning upwards." in Tristram Shandy (115). He speaks of his sketching as "short-hand," as Gilpin does. in A
Sentimental Journey. for example (see p. 146 below). In Tristram Shandy.

"Slawkenbergius's Tale." a satire of the way deductive thinking tempts us to ignore the facts.
contains the following exchange:

----It happens otherways----replied the opponents.----

It ought not. said they. (187: S. T.)

Satirizing deduction is not necessarily the same as espousing induction. of course. but
Tristram asks in the chapter on chapters. "is a man to follow rules------or rules to follow
him?" (204: IV.10). implying not merely the suspicion of general rules that is common to
empiricism but also an insistence on the inductive method of generating rules. Sterne sides
with Bacon and Hume here and against Locke and Berkeley. More particularly, in addressing
the problem of representation in the way that he does Sterne makes it clear that Locke's nominalism is insufficient as an explanation of what he is doing--and here the similarity between Sterne and Hume becomes apparent.

The most complex treatment of induction in Tristram Shandy is the chapter in which Tristram writes his famous "Author's Preface" (III.20), a difficult and important passage that contains Sterne's only explicit criticism of Locke and also the first use of the term "induction" in the novel. Tristram's topic in the preface is wit and judgment, and his target is Locke, who mentions in the Essay the "common observation" that "men who have a great deal of wit and prompt memories, have not always the clearest judgment or deepest reason" (102, II.xi.2). Sterne's point in this complex passage, as it has to do with the proper relationship between illustration and argument, is clearly of the utmost importance to our understanding of the relationship between inference and the literary sketch:

"for wit and judgment in this world never go together: inasmuch as they are two operations differing from each other as wide as east is from west."----So. says Locke.

"----so are farting and hickuping, say I. But in answer to this, Didius the great church lawyer. in his code de fartandi et illustrandi fallaciis, doth maintain and make fully appear. That an illustration is no argument."----nor do I maintain the wiping of a
looking-glass clean, to be a syllogism;----but you all. may it please your worships. see
the better for it----so that the main good these things do. is only to clarify the
understanding. previous to the application of the argument itself. in order to free it
from any little motes. or specks of opacular matter. which if left swimming therein.
might hinder conception and spoil all. (141. III.20)

Sterne criticizes Locke for defending what he calls a "common observation" (that is not an
observation at all) instead of verifying its truth with experience\textsuperscript{40}--for adopting an opposition
that is not based on perception. Locke does not say. as Sterne says he does. that wit and

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{40} Toward the end of the chapter Tristram indicts Locke again. calling the way he takes facts
for granted in this passage "the \textit{Magna Charta} of stupidity" (147):

instead of sitting down coolly. as such a philosopher should have done. to have
examined the matter of fact before he philosophised upon it;----on the contrary. he
took the fact for granted. and so joined in with the cry. and halloo'd it as boisterously
as the rest. (147)
\end{quote}
judgment are "two operations differing from each other as wide as east is from west." But Locke does say that wit lies in putting together ideas and judgment distinguishing between them (102. II.xi.2). The opposition, Tristram asserts, is a false one--it is an illustration masquerading as an argument, a use of visually vivid rhetoric, such as syllogisms, to the detriment of discovery and truth. Such syllogisms and unempirical oppositions, he says, are useful only "to clarify the understanding, previous to the application of the argument itself, in order to free it from any little motes, or specks of opacular matter"--not for argument itself.

Tristram's interest, he says, is in reasoning that is previous to illustration: not in artificial image but rather in perception, not in "syllogism" (deduction) but in induction, an ampliative process of "the wiping of a looking-glass clean."

That the passage Sterne chooses to satirize seems at first to be hardly representative of Locke's method need not concern us here--it is doubtless part of the joke: one might compare Tristram's "Preface" to Derrida's "Parergon," a long essay inspired by a footnote in Kant.

Sarah Fielding's citation of this passage in Book II, Chapter IV of David Simple is perhaps an indication of its influence on the popular imagination.
That induction is in fact Sterne's remedy for Locke's negligence is made explicit by the demonstration that follows. He then takes the reader on a tour of discovery through Scandinavia, the Baltics, and Russia, and then to England, comparing the relative proportions of wit and judgment in the inhabitants of each place. In this tour he addresses the reader in the second person, repeatedly emphasizing the reader's own seeing, observation, and perception, just as Thomson does in *The Seasons*. There is, however, no rich visual description at all in this tour—no verbal "painting." The idea is that the accumulated observations, Locke's simple ideas, will form the basis of an inductive generalization that will serve as an explanation of the erratic character of English intellectual history. Tristram says so himself:

It is by these observations, and a wary reasoning by analogy in that kind of argumentative process, which Suidas calls dialectick induction----that I draw and set up this position as most true and veritable. (144)\(^43\)

\(^{43}\) Ephraim Chambers's *Cyclopaedia* gives the following explanation, taken from Suidas:

"dialectic induction" is that "which concludes or infers some general proposition from an enumeration of all the particulars of a kind" (Chambers). (Suidas's other kinds of induction
Sterne’s alternative to Locke’s opposition, which he renames “illustration” and which obscures truth with image, is not an argument but an “argumentative process” of induction and analogy; Tristram insists upon a line of reasoning that proceeds from the experience of the particular through a propaedeutic process of induction which, while not rigorously outlined, is acknowledged to the more truthful analogy of the chair:

----I am this moment sitting upon one. Will you give me leave to illustrate this affair of wit and judgment by the two knobs on the top of the back of it.----they are fasten’d on, you see. with two pegs stuck lightly into two gimlet-holes. and will place what I have to say in so clear a light. as to let you see through the drift and meaning of my whole preface. as plainly as if every point and particle of it was made up of sun beams. (146. III.21)

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are “Socratic” and “rhetorical,” both of which are inferior insofar as they are modes of persuasion rather than reasoning). The editors of the Florida Edition of Tristram Shandy note that “Suidas” was once thought to be the author of a lexicon but is now known to be the book’s title. Cf. Oxford Classical Dictionary, s.v. SUDA.
This analogy is an image, of course, but with two important differences besides that of the inductive process that precedes it. First, it is tentative and speculative: Tristram begs the reader’s permission to proceed with the comparison. And second, it is empirically present in the world in a way that the illustration is not: Tristram is “this moment sitting upon” it. This gives it a complexity that Locke’s image lacks: it is an analogy, an “interesting clash of paradigms” in the words of one recent writer on analogy (North 131). Tristram’s example of analogical reasoning is quite in harmony with Hume’s remarks on analogy and also with current philosophical research on induction. The difference between the sketch and the

44 Treatise 142. 147: Enquiries 104.

45 An analogy is a kind of hypothesis: as John D. North writes in an article on the significance of analogy in the sciences, analogy “allows us to grasp ‘a clear physical conception, without being committed to any theory founded on the physical science from which that conception is borrowed’” (127, quoting Maxwell). Marcello Pera has argued that “hypotheses are derived by induction” (155-56); “a hypothesis is not an a-logical or pre-logical guess but the plausible conclusion of an inference and hence the result of an induction” (157).
painting is the difference between Locke's "illustration" and this ironic painting on the one hand and the chair analogy on the other.

Before the chair analogy, where a philosopher or psychologist would be obliged to provide a rigorous explanation of inductive or analogical reasoning (such as that of Holland et al., for example), we find instead what might best be thought of as an ironic painterly interlude. This passage is an important and complex manifestation of Sterne's investment in the painting/sketch binary. The two pages or so immediately following the reference to "dialectick induction" contain an extraordinary outburst of sarcasm reminiscent of the Democritus passage at the beginning of "The Vanity of Human Wishes." Tristram here proceeds to paint an elaborate ironic picture of a world in which there is enough wit and judgment for all:

I tremble to think how many thousands for it. of benighted travellers (in the learned sciences at least) must have groped and blundered on in the dark, all the nights of their lives.----running their heads against posts. and knocking out their brains without

46 Holland et al. describe the inductive organism using a rule-based quasi-homomorphic model (Chapters 1-2).
ever getting to their journeys end:----others horizontally with their tails into kennels.

Here one half of a learned profession tilting full butt against the other half of it. and then tumbling and rolling one over the other in the dirt like hogs.----Here the brethren. of another profession. who should have run in opposition to each other. flying on the contrary like a flock of wild geese. all in a row the same way.----What confusion!----what mistakes!----fiddlers and painters judging by their eyes and ears.----admirable!---- trusting to the passions excited in an air sung. or a story painted to the heart.----instead of measuring them by a quadrant. (144. III.20)

That this passage is properly read as a painting is clear. It is vast and panoramic: a Hogarth series comes to mind. Remove the irony and you have a visual field not unlike the description of the sleeping Adonis in Fanny Hill. Furthermore. verbal painting is mentioned in the passage itself. which facilitates the association. as does the increasing pictorialism of the description:

In the foreground of this picture. a statesman turning the political wheel. like a brute. the wrong way round--against the stream of corruption.----by heaven!----instead of with it.
In this corner, a son of the divine Esculapius, writing a book against predestination: perhaps worse.----feeling his patient’s pulse instead of his apothecary’s----a brother of the faculty in the back ground upon his knees in tears,----drawing the curtains of a mangled victim to beg his forgiveness;----offering a fee, instead of taking one. (144. III.20).

Thus the painting-story association is embedded in a grotesquely ironic description of people who are supposed to be good actually being so. Sterne here places the entire tradition of verbal painting in this pastoral hell of the ideal but impossible. It is in the context of this painterly interlude, before the completion of his Preface, that Sterne emphasizes trusting the senses and the passions and ridicules Locke for “measuring” wit and judgment “by a quadrant.” When Sterne is explaining how things have actually been found to be—that “the height of our wit and the depth of our judgment, you see, are exactly proportioned to the length and breadth of our necessities” (143)—he employs inductive reasoning. When he is waxing ironic about how things are not, on the other hand, he is most extravagantly a painter.

In concluding my discussion of the sketch/induction association I will mention one important article that allows us to treat the analogy with greater delicacy. The question of whether and how the sketch has aesthetic value is parallel. I argue, to the question that
researchers in the philosophy of science are asking. "Is discovery epistemologically relevant to justification?" (Nickles 194). An article by James Blachowicz entitled "Discovery and Ampliative Inference," which builds on Thomas Nickles' work, helps us to treat the deduction/induction opposition, more fruitfully rendered as an opposition between justification and generation, and therefore also the painting/sketch binary, with a greater degree of precision and objectivity: Blachowicz's analysis of discovery and my analysis of creation and appreciation are fruitfully parallel.

Blachowicz himself compares the "generation" of an explanation and the consequentialist "justification" of a theory (452) to "the different tasks of the artist and the art critic." but I suggest that Blachowicz's system is more analogous to the sketch/painting binary. In between these two extremes in Blachowicz's system are "justified generation," which "does not involve justification of a hypothesis one has already entertained, but the positive selection of a hypothesis that one will come to entertain seriously" (Blachowicz 455) and which is "ideally deductive" (Nickles 204), and "generative justification," or "post-hoc

47 To many the answer, especially since Popper, is simply no. Cf. Medawar 24. But Popper's account has been challenged--see n. 6 above.
generation of an already discovered theory" (Blachowicz 453). I suggest that these terms are more analogous to the sketch and the painting (respectively) than the extremes. The advantage of this analogy is that it provides a way of thinking about a finished sketch and an unfinished painting. Generative justification and justified generation are also more appropriate to the ambiguous cases that will be my subject in Chapter 4: I would compare Thackeray's wood-cuts in *Vanity Fair* to Blachowicz's justified generation and his copper plates to generative justification. Blachowicz's point is that both justified generation and generative justification are ampliative. The lesson to be learned from this is that both paintings and sketches, in their different ways, are genuine creations. Blachowicz's system does, however, at the same time, preserve the distinction, clarifying, I think, the point of view of the sketcher. Blachowicz notes, for example, the dangerous similarity between generative justification and "subterfuge" and "deception" (453) that is a primary worry of the eighteenth-century literary sketcher.

3. skepticism and the sketch
Induction is the method of the sketcher. But its form is skeptical. "Skepticism" comes from "skepsis"—it means to look out or watch as well as to disbelieve: Derrida writes at the beginning of *Memoirs of the Blind*. "Before doubt ever becomes a system, skepsis has to do with the eyes." with "the difference between seeing and believing" (1). And it has to do with the sketch as well: the peculiar urgency of Hume's inductive skepticism in the *Treatise* is frequently expressed, as in the above passage, in terms of a suspicion of painting. Like Johnson. Hume emphasizes the dangers of imaginative painting:

'Tis difficult for us to withhold our assent from what is painted out to us in all the colours of eloquence: and the vivacity produc'd by the fancy is in many cases greater than that which arises from common experience. We are hurried away by the lively imagination of our author or companion; and even he himself is a victim to his own fire and eloquence.

Nor will it be amiss to remark, that as a lively imagination very often degenerates into madness or folly, and bears it a great resemblance in its operations; so they influence the judgment after the same manner, and produce belief from the very same principles. When the imagination, from any extraordinary ferment of the blood and spirits, acquires such a vivacity as disorders all its powers and faculties, there is no
means of distinguishing betwixt truth and falsehood: but every loose fiction or idea.
having the same influence as the impressions of the memory, or the conclusions of the
judgment. is receiv'd on the same footing, and operates with equal force on the
passions. Every chimera of the brain is as vivid and intense as any of those
inferences. which we formerly dignify'd with the name of conclusions concerning
matters of fact. and sometimes as the present impressions of the senses. (123. I.iii.10)
Belief. Hume writes. “is a more vivid and intense conception of an idea. proceeding from its
relation to a present impression” (103. I.iii.8)--beliefs and philosophical systems are like
paintings. and it is exactly for this reason. it turns out. that one cannot believe them. The
colors and shapes of a painting. like the impressions of the Humean mind. are mere
distractions. “loose fictions” allowing “no means of distinguishing between truth and
falsehood” or “chimera” and “fact.” I have not yet broached the real value of Hume's
Treatise for understanding the literary sketch: that it demonstrates and performs the
inseparability of induction and skepticism. Induction and skepticism each entail the other.
Hume is known, of course, not so much for his inductive method as for being

"perhaps the first and certainly the greatest of all inductive skeptics" (Milton 49).48 In the

Treatise he writes.

In all the incidents of life we ought still to preserve our skepticism. If we believe, that

fire warms, or that water refreshes, 'tis only because it costs us too much pains to

think otherwise. (270: I.iv.7)

Sterne is skeptical of induction in "Slawkenbergius's Tale," in which he uses the term

"dialectick induction" a second time with just as much satire as he has previously treated

deduction. The problem here is the temptation to make hasty inductions that are false. This

is in a story about a wandering stranger with "so sweet an air of careless modesty" (185. S.

T.):

Whilst the unlearned, thro' these conduits of intelligence, were all busied in getting
down to the bottom of the well, where TRUTH keeps her little court----were the

learned in their way as busy in pumping her up thro' the conduits of dialect

48 This view has been challanged in recent years (Beauchamp and Mappes); it has, however.

also been defended (Parush).
induction----they concerned themselves not with facts----they reasoned---- (186. S. T.)

The context here is that various Strasburgers are expounding their theories as to the nature of the courteous stranger's huge nose. The term "dialect induction" is ironic here: the learned townspeople have only seen the courteous stranger's nose. They have not touched it: they are performing enumerative inductions\(^{49}\) that are neither valid nor strong because they lack sufficient particulars and have had to proceed from induction to deduction too hastily. This illustrates not only the need for rigor in induction but also the impossibility of induction: there are never enough particulars to warrant a generalization. Tristram expresses his skepticism toward induction categorically toward the end of Volume VII: "I think it wrong. merely because a man's hat has been blown off his head by chance the first night he comes to Avignon----that he should therefore say. 'Avignon is more subject to high winds than any town in all France'" (375). This is clearly what the "learned" Strasburgers are doing.

Another more fundamental reason to be skeptical of induction is that it seems to always involve deduction. In *Elements of Logic* (1826) Archbishop Whately reduced

\(^{49}\) That is. "dialectical" induction--see p. 110, n. 43 above.
inductive inference to "enthymeme." a syllogism in which "one of the premises is suppressed" (207-13. 24). In other words, an induction from one's observations of a state of affairs tends to be based upon the tacit assumption of the uniformity principle (Friedmann 3: Owen). the principle that the world is basically the same in one place as in another and that the future will resemble the past. In Fact, Fiction, and Forecast (1955) Nelson Goodman shows that deduction and induction are always hopelessly intertwined:

An inductive inference, too, is justified by conformity to general rules, and a general rule by conformity to accepted inductive inferences. Predictions are justified if they conform to valid canons of induction: and the canons are valid if they accurately codify accepted inductive practice. (67)

Pure induction is practically impossible: "Induction involves deduction. Deduction involves induction" (Chattopadahyaya 2).50

50 In Chapters 2 and 3 of Induction, Probability, and Skepticism Chattopadahyaya surveys several prominent solutions to the problem of the justification of induction and finds that all of them are either deductive, and therefore fail, or inductive, and therefore beg the question. Harrod's system. Chattopadahyaya argues, is unique in contending that "the validity of
Tristram seems to write his cynical chapter on Calais (VII.5) to demonstrate this point. He describes the city even though he has seen very little of it:

For my own part, as heaven is my judge, and to which I shall ever make my last appeal----I know no more of Calais, (except the little my barber told me of it, as he was whetting his razor) than I do this moment of Grand Cairo; for it was dusky in the evening when I landed, and dark as pitch in the morning when I set out, and yet by merely knowing what is what, and by drawing this from that in one part of the town, and by spelling this and that together in another----I would lay any travelling odds, that I this moment could write a chapter upon Calais as long as my arm: and with so distinct and satisfactory a detail of every item, which a stranger’s curiosity in the town----that you would take me for the town clerk of Calais itself... (338. VII.4)

Tristram’s knowledge of the various parts of town, however reliable, is assimilated through his “merely knowing what is what”—that is, by his general knowledge of how a town is likely to be. A general knowledge that is not based on anyone’s experience of this particular town.

induction can be established without making any basic assumption whatever about probabilities in nature” (Harrod 22-23). and it too fails.
His chapter is therefore in fact deductive. This illegitimate form of induction is both so easy and so generally satisfactory that we tend to accept it in lieu of more rigorous inferences.

Hume points to exactly this problem in the Treatise:

I paint the universe in my imagination, and fix my attention on any part of it I please.

I form an idea of ROME, which I neither see nor remember; but which is connected with such impressions as I remember to have received from the conversation and books of travellers and historians. This idea of Rome I place in a certain situation on the idea of an object, which I call the globe. I join to it the conception of a particular government, and religion, and manners. I look backward and consider its first foundation: its several revolutions, successes, misfortunes. All this, and every thing else, which I believe, are nothing but ideas: tho' by their force and settled order, arising from custom and the relation of cause and effect, they distinguish themselves from other ideas, which are merely the offspring of the imagination. (108. I.iii.9)

His ideas of Rome. Hume writes, are brushstrokes of the imagination, different from other ideas only in "their force and settled order," and because of the ease with which the mind attains and manipulates them they are not reliable representations of the world.
The fact that Sterne, like Hume, makes skeptical arguments in *Tristram Shandy* is only one reason to see inductive skepticism and the literary sketch as being connected.

Another is that Hume is as skeptical of skepticism as he is of induction--this is the formal overdetermination of Hume's text and the main element of its affinity with Sterne's. In l.iv.1. "Of scepticism with regard to reason," he argues that "all knowledge degenerates into probability" (180), and this leads him to "a total extinction of belief and evidence" (183). He says, though, that "neither I. nor any other person was ever sincerely and constantly of that opinion" (183): in the first *Enquiry* he writes. "the Pyrrhonian cannot expect, that his philosophy will have any constant effect on the mind" (160). Hume's theory has, in effect, no substance, no being--it is an impossible opinion: "whoever has taken the pains to refute the cavils of this total scepticism. has really disputed without an antagonist" (183). Thus we are left with an inductive and skeptical approach to both reason and skepticism. The book's form, like its content, is inductive and skeptical: it expresses the frustration it describes.

Hume's *Treatise* exhibits the overdetermination of the literary sketch, the empirical mimesis of "scepticism with regard to the senses."

Hume's overdetermination, furthermore, is sentimental--just as Sterne's is. Hume's *Treatise* continues to reduce epistemology to a choice between two impossible opposites--that
is, in effect, to a Sternean sentimentality. Hume mentions two theories of perception in the next section. "Of scepticism with regard to the senses." First is the assumption of the "vulgar" that perceptions are our only objects (193). This is the "fiction of a continu'd existence" (209)--Derrida's "hypothesis of sight" in Memoirs of the Blind, a book framed by skepticism (1. 117). The vulgar system is, Hume writes, "a consistent system, which is perfectly convincing" (210): he mentions, however, "a few of those experiments, which convince us, that our perceptions are not possest of any independent existence" (210). The philosophers, therefore, have invented another system: "they change their system, and distinguish (as we shall do for the future) betwixt perceptions and objects" (211). But this new system, inevitable as it may be, is "only a palliative remedy" that has, he argues, "no primary recommendation either to reason or to the imagination" (211), while of the vulgar assumption he says, "Tho' this opinion be false, 'tis the most natural of any, and has alone any primary recommendation to the fancy" (213). The problem is that one system is rational while the other feels natural--it becomes clear that the rational and the sentimental have equal weight with Hume.
This insistence separates Hume from other empiricists and allies him with Sterne.

Hume, like Sterne, is an inductive writer of sentimental fiction: he writes in his famous skeptical conclusion to Book I of the *Treatise*:

> Having thus given an account of all the systems both popular and philosophical, with regard to external existences. I cannot forbear giving vent to a certain sentiment, which arises upon reviewing those systems. I begun this subject with premising, that we ought to have an implicit faith in our senses, and that this wou’d be the conclusion. I shou’d draw from the whole of my reasoning. But to be ingenuous, I feel myself at present of a quite contrary sentiment, and am more inclin’d to repose no faith at all in my senses, or rather imagination, than to place in it such an implicit confidence. I cannot conceive how such trivial qualities of the fancy, conducted by such false suppositions, can ever lead to any solid and rational system. (217. l.iv.2)

Two rational systems for explaining our interaction with the sensuous cancel each other out, and we are left with a skepticism that is purely sentimental, impossible, and even negligible.

Thus he casts all his thought in doubt. He suddenly sees himself as on a “voyage” in a “leaky weather-beaten vessel” (263), not unlike Tristram as he races around Europe with death at his heels:
The wretched condition, weakness, and disorder of the faculties. I must employ in my enquiries. increase my apprehensions. And the impossibility of amending or correcting these faculties, reduces me almost to despair, and makes me resolve to perish on the barren rock, on which I am at present, rather than venture myself upon that boundless ocean, which runs out into immensity. (264)

Hume thus ends Book I with a narrative performance of inductive, sentimental skepticism.

His fictionalization of himself as a sentimental skeptic is a narrative performance of his thesis: that there is only induction, that anything that is not induction is fictional, and that inductions also are fictions. The literary sketch, in Sterne and others, is a manifestation of the Humean skeptical stance.

The affinity between Hume and Sterne also allows us to make three observations about Tristram Shandy itself. First, while the sketch is an acknowledgment of skepsis it is also at the same time a remedy for its symptoms. The sketch is inductive because of its link with the particular and its ampliative character, but Hume's skepticism toward belief accounts for what we most appreciate in a sketch: its carelessness. Carelessness in Hume "is not . . . simply a concession to one's weakness or spleen, but the most appropriate way for a skeptic to do philosophy" (Sitter 30). Hume writes,
This sceptical doubt. both with respect to reason and the senses, is a malady. which can never be radically cur’d, but must return upon us every moment. however we may chace it away. and sometimes may seem entirely free from it. . . . As the sceptical doubt arises naturally from a profound and intense reflection on those subjects. it always encreases, the farther we carry our reflections. whether in opposition or conformity to it. Carelessness and in-attention alone can afford us any remedy. (218. I.iv.2)

Hume is saved from the complete despair of skepticism by merriment:

Most fortunately it happens. that since reason is incapable of dispelling these clouds, nature herself suffices to that purpose. and cures me of this philosophical melancholy and delirium. either by relaxing this bent of mind. or by some avocation. and lively impression of my senses. which obliterate all these chimeras. I dine. I play a game of back-gammon. I converse. and am merry with my friends; and when, after three or four hours of amusement. I wou’d return to these speculations. they appear so cold. and strain’d. and ridiculous. that I cannot find in my heart to enter into them any farther. (269. I.iv.7)
As these two passages make clear, levity, perhaps the most appreciable characteristic of the sketch, is a remedy for the incurable malady of *skepsis*. This carelessness has its roots in Pyrrhonism. The following passage from Sextus Empiricus's *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, an important summary of ancient skeptical philosophy, is yet another that makes clear the connection between carelessness, skepticism, and the sketch:

The skeptic, in fact, had the same experience which is said to have befallen the painter Apelles. Once, they say, when he was painting a horse and wished to represent the horse's foam, he was so unsuccessful that he gave up the attempt and flung at the picture the sponge on which he used to wipe the paints off his brush, and the mark of the sponge produced the effect of a horse's foam. So, too, the skeptics were in hopes of gaining quietude by means of a decision regarding the disparity of the objects of sense and thought, and being unable to effect this they suspended judgment: and they found that quietude, as if by chance, followed upon their suspense, even as a shadow follows its substance. (24-25, I.xii)

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51 Incurable before Kant, that is.
Like Hume's *Treatise* in many ways, *Tristram Shandy* is a "careless kind of a civil, nonsensical, good-humoured Shandean book, which will do all your hearts good" (307. VI.28). Its levity is a response to the malady of inductive skepticism.

Second, like Hume, Sterne is radically skeptical of the elements of his craft and expresses this skepticism through formal overdetermination. A measure of Sterne's use of skepticism to insure aesthetic distance is his attitude toward the non-finito. Tristram gives the reader the following advice in II.9, and few would doubt its truth or overlook its relevance to Sterne's novel: "The truest respect which you can pay to the reader's understanding, is to halve this matter amicably, and leave him something to imagine, in his turn, as well as yourself" (77). Clearly, though, Sterne's acknowledgment of the non-finito is parodic, and this complicates the applicability of this aesthetic to Sterne's work. Tristram's use of "Aposiopesis" in II.6 is perhaps the most memorable example of this parody (Rothstein 325): Toby conjectures that his sister "does not care to let a man come so near her ****" (71). Tristram then asks the question about this sentence that we must always ask when appreciating a sketch: is it finished or not? Assuming it is not, he extols the beauty of the unfinished in a passage that seems to have been taken from Hogarth's *Analysis of Beauty* (Brissenden 105):
Just heaven! how does the Poco piú and the Poco meno of the Italian artists determine the precise line of beauty in the sentence, as well as in the statue! How do the slight touches of the chisel, the pencil, the pen, the fiddle-stick, et cetera----give the true swell, which gives the true pleasure! (71-72)

After the apophasis doctrine it is impossible to take such a passage as simple authorial opinion. Sterne's parody of the aesthetic of the sketch he is relying on his readers to partake in is distracting. But if Sterne's parody decreases the effect of the non-finito as a positive aesthetic pleasure, it increases its effect as overdetermined skepticism.

Third, and most important, Hume offers an aesthetic explanation of formal overdetermination: the sublime. Hume's remarks on contiguity and distance in II.iii.7 ff. establish both a model for an appreciation of visual and verbal sketches and at the same time an explanation of the peculiar charm of the Shandean style of writing from the aesthetic rather than the metaphysical point of view. Hume writes, toward the end of Book II.

When we reflect, therefore, on any object distant from ourselves, we are oblig'd not only to reach it at first by passing thro' all the intermediate space betwixt ourselves and the object, but also to renew our progress every moment; being every moment recall'd to the consideration of ourselves and our present situation. ‘Tis easily
conceiv'd. that this interruption must weaken the idea by breaking the action of the mind. and hindering the conception from being so intense and continu'd. as when we reflect on a nearer object. The fewer steps we make to arrive at the object. and the smoother the road is. this diminution of vivacity is less sensibly felt. but still may be observ'd more or less in proportion to the degrees of distance and difficulty. (428. II.iii.7)

He is talking about "those objects. which we regard as real and existent" (428). but the same principle applies to representations of objects (and also to fictional characters and to moral and epistemological truths): sketches impose a greater distance between the representation and the viewer than the painting would seem to do. And this is a positive: it obliges us "to renew our progress every moment; being every moment recall'd to the consideration of ourselves and our present situation." The phenomenological difference between distant and contiguous objects is so great, Hume argues, that there are in effect "two kinds of objects. the contiguous and the remote; of which the former. by means of their relation to ourselves. approach an impression in force and vivacity; the latter by reason of the interruption in our manner of conceiving them. appear in a weaker and more imperfect light" (428).
In section II.i.7 Hume explains "Why distance weakens the conception and passion" (432): in II.i.8 he shows "Why a very great distance encreases our esteem and admiration for an object" (432). The reason is that "Opposition not only enlarges the soul: but the soul, when full of courage and magnanimity, in a manner seeks opposition" (434): "The mind, elevated by the vastness of its object, is still farther elevated by the difficulty of the conception" (436). Hume is talking here about the objects like "A wide plain, the ocean, eternity, a succession of several ages" (432): it is difficult to imagine that a slight pencil sketch would have the same effect on the imagination. But while the sketch as object can hardly be sublime, the sketch as representation of object can be. Hume writes, "as the fancy passes easily from one idea to another related to it, and transports to the second all the passions excited by the first, the admiration, which is directed to the distance, naturally diffuses itself over the distant object" (433).

Hume's explanation of the sublime also explains formal overdetermination. First, the vagueness of the overdeterminate imposes a distance between reader or viewer and both the object that is represented and the representation of it. This distance is difficult: drawing attention to nebulous relationships between form and content makes for a difficult aesthetic experience. Second, the relation between the idea of distance and the distant object makes us
transfer our admiration of distance to the object itself: our admiration "naturally diffuses itself over the distant object." In this way an overdetermined text can perform not only the interpretation but the appreciation of its subject as well.

Thus like Hume's "hideous" and "minute" anatomical diagrams that are often not "engaging to the eye." Tristram's empirical, skeptical inquiry into his origins and circumstances is motivated by the need to respond positively to the grotesqueness of his experience. Dr. Slop's bag of obstetric equipment, tied shut with "good, honest, devilish tight. hard knots. made bona fide." (119. III.10), serves as well as the marble page as an emblem for Sterne's novel as a whole--the knots inspire the reading of Ernulphus's extravagant curse (III.11) and later a chapter on knots. The knotty Shandean style, admirable in itself, increases our admiration for Yorick's and Toby's good nature and Tristram Shandy's life and opinions--of which the novel is a sketch.

Hume's radical skepticism toward the very cause he champions makes his Treatise a fundamentally ironic text: his simultaneous reliance on and skepticism toward philosophical induction places Sterne's use of the idea of the sketch and the development of the literary sketch in perspective. Tristram Shandy is an inductive book not only because it parodies deduction constantly but because its erratic form is the consequence of an inductive
process--Tristram proceeds from the quotidian scene and accidental speech, and he is not willing to sacrifice or even, he says, to manipulate these atoms of narrative. This erratic form, however, while the result of inductive procedure, is sustained by an aesthetic that is fundamentally skeptical. It is left unrevised--in fact its negativity is no doubt exaggerated--by an author whose attitude toward narrative and belief is entirely compatible with Humean skepticism. The sketch is a skeptical form in all the senses of that term: it is a looking out that is at the same time a hesitancy to commit.
Chapter 3. Cyclops Sketchers: The Sentimental Travel Sketch

But the best guide-book that ever was written cannot set the view before the mind’s eye of the reader. and I won’t attempt to pile up big words in the place of those wild mountains, over which the clouds as they passed, or the sunshine as it went and came, cast every variety of tint, light, and shadow: nor can it be expected that long, level sentences, however smooth and shining, can be made to pass as representations of those by which we took our way. All one can do is lay down the pen and ruminate, and cry, “beautiful!” once more: and to the reader say, “Come and see!” (Thackeray, *Irish Sketch Book* 208)

I will focus in this chapter on the continuity of the empirical sketch as theorized in the two previous chapters in the first half of the nineteenth century and on subsequent nineteenth-century innovations and developments. Nineteenth-century authors added significantly to the list of connotations of the term “sketch” I have gleaned from earlier usage. To the eighteenth-century connotations, which include outline, biography, brevity, non-seriousness, modesty, the ephemeral, overdetermination, induction, and skepticism they added a concern with youth, nostalgia, and most significantly the picturesque, which was to be of great
importance to Thackeray. In the last decade of the eighteenth century the picturesque combined with Sternean sentimental empiricism to form the narrative mode in which Thackeray wrote nearly all of his works.

As the two previous chapters have demonstrated, the literary sketch is not mimetic in the ordinary sense: it is not generally a mode of simple description. Rather, it subverts description: it is an alternative to it. But the literary sketch interprets and represents scenes and characters in the world: it does so by assuming the characteristics of those scenes and characters itself while at the same time deferring description of them. This phenomenon is what I have referred to as the overdetermined nature of the literary sketch (see pp. 53 and 125 above), and it remained the most interesting characteristic of the sketch through the first half of the nineteenth century.

Derrida writes in *Memoirs of the Blind*.

Even if drawing is, as they say, mimetic, that is, reproductive, figurative, representative, even if the model is presently facing the artist, the trait must proceed into the night. It escapes the field of vision. Not only because it is not yet visible, but because it does not belong to the realm of the spectacle, of spectacular objectivity--and so that which it makes happen or come [advenir] cannot in itself be mimetic. (45)
The title of this chapter comes from a pun in Kant: Kant says in the Introduction to Logic that a person with mere "encyclopedic learning" is a "cyclops" (36). Mill calls Bentham a "one-eyed man" (65), and Crary writes of the "cyclopean eye" of the camera obscura (47). As the recurrent cyclops metaphor illustrates, the sensitivity and depth of empiricism are often doubted. This doubt led to transcendentalism: "the Germano-Coleridgian doctrine . . . expresses the revolt of the human mind against the philosophy of the eighteenth century" (Mill, "On Coleridge" 108). In my view empiricism has been underestimated. My opinion of empiricism is drawn not from metaphors but from its most interesting manifestations, which include the literary sketches cited here. As I have shown in Chapter 2, induction entails radical skepticism, and the richness of this entailment inspired a tradition of travel literature and mimetic fiction that is continuous from Sterne to Thackeray.

This, like Chapter 1, is an encyclopedic chapter. I discuss a variety of texts in this chapter, but my focus here is on the influence of the writings of Sterne and William Gilpin on Washington Irving, James Hall, Charles Dickens, Nathaniel Parker Willis, Francis Parkman, and others, including Thackeray. I deal with the influence of Sterne on nineteenth-century literary sketchers, the contribution of picturesque theory to this empirical mode, the prevalence of formal overdetermination in nineteenth-century sketch books, and the fate of induction in the nineteenth century.
1. the nineteenth-century empirical literary sketch

The nominalist orientation of Sterne’s literary sketching was to continue well into the nineteenth century. Silas B. Holbrook, for example, writes in *Sketches, by a Traveller* (1830), that his book is to be a simple record of particular observations. The term “sketches” in his title seems to be an apology for this:

Sir--In complying with your request, I shall need all your indulgence. The duty of a sailor is too hard, and his deficiency in general knowledge too great, to enable him to describe well, even his own wanderings.

My journal is but a log-book, filled with the courses of the winds and the aspects of the skies. It was commenced in my sixteenth year, when, impelled by a thirst for adventure which amounted to a passion. I shipped myself as a green hand, for a long voyage. (1)

Edmund Dana’s *Geographical Sketches on the Western Country, Designed for Emigrants and Settlers: Being the Result Of Extensive Researches And Remarks: To Which is Added a Summary of All the Most Interesting Matters On The Subject, Including a Particular Description of the Unsold Public Lands, Collected from a Variety of Authentic Sources.*
Also, a List of the Principal Roads (1819) is another such book, as its title indicates. The basic idea of such books, clearly, is that a person is traveling the world noting particular impressions from which both traveler and reader may infer real knowledge. These are inductive, encyclopedic sketch books: all their assumptions place them within what I have called the inductive paradigm.

Thackeray insists on a nominalist, inductive approach in the advertisement to his encyclopedic Paris Sketch Book (1840): most of the articles, he says, "have been written upon facts and characters, that came within the Author's observation during a residence in Paris" [xxvi]. The preface to Nathaniel Parker Willis's Hurry-Graphs: or, Sketches of Scenery, Celebrities, and Society, Taken from Life (1853), makes the nominalist orientation of the sketch most explicit.\(^{53}\) Willis writes.

\(^{53}\) Willis's prose style is perhaps best summarized by James Russell Lowell's comment on Willis in A Fable for Critics (1848):

'T is not deep as a river, but who'd have it deep?

In a country where scarcely a village is found

That has not its author sublime and profound.

For someone to be slightly shallow's a duty.
One extraneous value may attach to these sketches. They are copies from the kaleidoscope of the hour. They are one man's imprint from parts of the world's doings at one place and time. New York, and what interested it in the middle of the nineteenth century, will be a chapter for History to which this volume will contribute.

The author, long ago, made up his mind that the unreal world was overworked—and that the Immediate and the Present, and what one saw occurring, and could truthfully describe, were as well worth the care and pains of authorship as what one could only imagine or take from hearsay. He has written, therefore, upon topics as the Hour

And Willis's shallowness makes half his beauty. (Smith 179)

But Lowell was far from being wholly approving of Willis: he notes in "Literature and International Copyright" (1887) that "Willis was frittering away a natural and genuine gift" (Smith 235). Poe also recognized Willis's talents in The Literati of New York City (1846):

As a writer of "sketches," properly so called, Mr. Willis is unequalled. Sketches—especially of society—are his forte, and they are so for no other reason than that they afford him the best opportunity of introducing the personal Willis—or, more distinctly, because this species of composition is most susceptible of impression from his personal character. (11)
presented them: and though his impressions and opinions might have been modified
by keeping and re-considering, they have the value. as he hopes they will be allowed
the apology. of hurry-graphs of life as it went by. (iii-iv)

Willis’s “Hurry-Graphs” are fragments of an incomplete encyclopedia: they are “copies from
the kaleidoscope of the hour” that comprise a rejection of transcendental romanticism: he
feels that “the unreal world was overworked” and is interested only in “what one saw
 occurring, and could truthfully describe.” In such books there tends to be more observation
than inference. but induction is the mode of inference most naturally suited to the nominalist
literary sketch.

2. Sterne and the nineteenth-century sketch

Empiricism was a centuries-old tradition that since Locke had pervaded all levels of
educated society (Howell 264-98). but the travel writers’ most immediate source of empiricist
thought was not Locke’s Essay but Sterne’s novels, especially A Sentimental Journey, an
empirical literary sketch book. A Sentimental Journey differs from Tristram Shandy in that it
does not directly entertain philosophical problems, despite the fact that it is “an essay upon
human nature” (28) by “a piece of a philosopher” (33). But nominalism, not dealt with
explicitly, is dramatized in Sterne’s last book, the influence of which is felt throughout
nineteenth-century travel writing.

The term “sentiment” is used by Sterne, as by Locke, as a synonym for idea (see p. 90
above, for example), and the source of ideas, according to empiricism, is perception. In A
Sentimental Journey, as in Tristram Shandy, the narrator acts on the basis of immediate
experience rather than according to rules: “I am governed by circumstances--I cannot govern
them” (78). he writes. As a result of Yorick’s nominalist orientation, the book is inductive
and encyclopedic:

--What a large volume of adventures may be grasped within this little span of life by
him who interests his heart in every thing, and who, having eyes to see, what time and
chance are perpetually holding out to him as he journeyeth on his way, misses nothing
he can fairly lay his hands on.-- (28)

“I generally act from the first impulse” (22). Yorick says. “I had never less reason to repent
of the impulses which generally do determine me, than in regard to this fellow” (32). he
writes of La Fleur. Yorick’s habit of acting on the basis of perception, sentiment, and
impulse is wholly consistent with Lockean empiricism: Yorick employs the faculty of
judgment, the function of which is “to supply the want of clear and certain knowledge” (554.
IV.xiv.3). This is not to say that Locke would have approved Yorick’s reasoning here, which
he might have likened to enthusiasm.\textsuperscript{54} but only to point out that Yorick's reasoning is both vaguely empirical and utterly untranscendental: "The 'self' of Locke is transformed into the 'sensibility' of Sterne" (Tuveson 262). Sterne developed the character of the sentimental tourist in response to the arrogance of travelers who would pretend to observe the world without intimacy with it: of Smollett Yorick says, "every object he pass'd by was discoloured or distorted" (29): of Samuel Sharp, author of Letters from Italy (1766), he says, "he had travell'd straight on looking neither to his right hand or his left. lest Love or Pity should seduce him out of his road" (29). Yorick criticizes the two for allowing their pre-determined assumptions to dilute the immediacy of their perceptions. He writes, "I walked forth without any determination where to go--I shall consider of that. said I. as I walk along" (50): "I seldom go to the place I set out for" (78).

As Hume's Treatise makes clear, however, nominalism entails induction, which entails skepticism. and recognition of this entailment has perhaps been more general among literary sketchers than among philosophers themselves. Because of their skepticism toward

\textsuperscript{54} Locke writes of enthusiasts. "whatever odd action they find in themselves a strong inclination to do. that impulse is concluded to be a call or direction from heaven. and must be obeyed" (591. IV.xix.6).
the induction they continue to rely on literary sketch books tend to involve more than just nominalist description. *A Sentimental Journey* is a skeptical book: while Yorick acts and infers on the basis of his perceptions, he in no way claims that his actions and inferences are rational. Yorick is a wanderer, and he wanders because he is profoundly skeptical of reason: "Mechanical as the notes were." he says of the enslaved starling’s song, "yet so true in tune to nature were they chanted, that in one moment they overthrew all my systematic reasonings upon the Bastile" (72): "One must *feel*, not argue in these embarrassments" (100). Yorick’s skepticism is not only of general rules, which have no place in the book, but of induction as well: "I felt such indescribable emotions within me, as I am sure could not be accounted for from any combinations of matter and motion" (114). This skepticism of the only possible reliable source of knowledge leads to the sentimental approach to the world, one whose radical epistemological and mimetic skepticism is expressed through a distant, difficult, and cheerful overdetermined style.

In addition to being inductive and skeptical, the rhetoric of *A Sentimental Journey* clearly identifies Yorick’s inductive and skeptical writings as literary sketches as opposed to paintings: the novel is to be read as a literary sketch book, like *Tristram Shandy*. Yorick writes,
There is not a secret so aiding to the progress of sociability, as to get master of this short hand, and be quick in rendering the several turns of looks and limbs, with all their inflections and delineations, into plain words. For my own part, by long habitue. I do it so mechanically, that when I walk the streets of London. I go translating all the way; and have more than once stood behind in the circle. where not three words have been said, and have brought off twenty different dialogues with me. which I could have fairly wrote down and sworn to. (57)

The whole Sternean endeavor is this process of literary sketching, as it were, of quickly translating humble, quotidian scenes and characters into “short hand.” These accidental moments, like hobby-horses in Tristram Shandy, we are told, give him an accurate understanding of the world. After his encounter with the French barber he writes.

    I think I can see the precise and distinguishing marks of national characters more in these nonsensical minutiae, than in the most important matters of state . . . (50)

And of course there is a certain appropriateness of Sterne’s style to the narration of these “nonsensical minutiae”: this term seems to apply to the form as well as the content of his observations. In a dense extended metaphor, Yorick uses the term “sketches” to refer to sentiments and accidental truths themselves:
It is for this reason. Monsieur le Compte. continued I. that I have not seen the Palais royal--nor the Luxembourg--nor the Façade of the Louvre--nor have attempted to swell the catalogues we have of pictures, statues, and churches--I conceive every fair being as a temple. and would rather enter in. and see the original drawings and loose sketches hung up in it. than the transfiguration of Raphael itself. (84)

This peculiar sentence is yet another indication of the overdetermined quality of the sketch: the term "sketches" seems to refer to the "nonsensical minutiae" of the quotidian scene insofar as Yorick prefers sketches to great art works such as the transfiguration of Raphael. to the human sentiments inspired by them insofar as these sketches are inside "every fair being," and to the form appropriate to their representation insofar as the term "sketches" recalls the "short hand" of the earlier passage describing the method of the sentimental traveller. The sketch in A Sentimental Journey. like the hobby-horse in Tristram Shandy (see p. 84 above). is in the complexity of its signification both the medium of sentimental observation and the form of sentimental representation. As I have argued. Sterne's novels emphasize the peculiar intimacy of form and content that is so unique a feature of the literary sketch.
Sterne’s influence on the developing literary sketch is felt throughout the nineteenth century. Andrew Becket’s A Trip to Holland. Containing Sketches of Characters: Together with Cursory Observations on the Manners and Customs of the Dutch (1786), for example, advertises itself as being “in imitation of Sterne’s Sentimental Journey” ([I.iii]). Becket takes his imitation of Sterne—“with whose exquisite touches of nature and true passion I am at all times delighted” (36)—so far as to include writing a preface in one of his early chapters. Wordsworth, in Descriptive Sketches (1793), explains what he means by a “fountain” in a footnote, clearly invoking Sterne in his explanation:

Rude fountains built and covered with sheds for the accommodation of the pilgrims. in their ascent of the mountain. Under these sheds the sentimental traveller and the philosopher may find interesting sources of meditation. (104. n.)

55 On the influence of Sterne’s writings on the popular imagination, see J. C. T. Oates. Shandyism and Sentiment, 1760-1800: “to judge from the book lists and magazines, all England, and most of Europe during the last thirty years of the eighteenth century were infested with sentimental travellers, their pencils poised to record in carefully distraught English, French, or German their instantaneous emotions at whatever lugubrious sights they might encounter” (14).
James Hall, author of *Letters From the West: Containing Sketches of Scenery, Manners, and Customs; and Anecdotes Connected with the Western Sections of the United States* (1828) and *Sketches of History, Life and Manners in the West* (1835), writes as a sentimental traveller (*Letters* 15, 351), and in Chapter 3 of Pierce Egan's *Life in London* (1821), entitled "A Short Sketch of the Author's Talents in Taking a Likeness: or, in other words (and perhaps far more appropriate), a Pen-and-Ink Drawing of CORINTHIAN TOM." we are told that "MANKIND were his hobbyhorse" (72). Later in *Life in London* there is "a fine sketch of real life" (217) in a gin house followed by a sentimental story about a street-walker and a cabman, of which the narrator says,

Indeed, it was a fine scene altogether. It was one of Nature's richest moments.

Description, either from the pencil or the pen, must fall short of communicating it.

My Uncle Toby would have hobbled on crutches one hundred miles to have witnessed it: and Corporal Trim would never have related the circumstances without blubbering over it for an hour. Sterne would have made a complete chapter of it. The Dead Ass at Nampton--the Friar--and Maria of Moulins, were not finer pictures of the human heart, either in richness of colouring, grandness of design, or softness of touch, than the eloquence of Nature displayed in the unfortunate Cyprian's case at Bow Street.

(226)
The event Egan describes, he says, was indescribable and is a finer picture of the heart than even a chapter from Sterne. The extravagance of this claim is worthy of Sterne himself—Egan is remarketing an urban version of the sentimental overdetermined sketch that Sterne popularized.

Even Coleridge and Carlyle, two opponents of eighteenth-century British empiricism (Aarsleff 401-06. 408), preserve the association between Sterne, empiricism, and sketching. Coleridge’s *Biographia Literaria; Or, Biographical Sketches of my Literary Life and Opinions* (1817) is one example. The term “sketches,” a reference to the book’s Sternean form rather than its Kantian content, is a reference to *Tristram Shandy*, and in it Coleridge mentions episodes from *A Sentimental Journey* as “compositions universally and independently of all early associations beloved and admired” (208-09). Carlyle’s *Sartor Resartus* (1833), another site of the conflict between empiricism and idealism, is no “Biography or Autobiography” of Teufelsdröckh, who quotes from *Tristram Shandy* (49), but “at most some sketchy, shadowy, fugitive likeness of him” (61). The book is an attempt to synthesize the life and opinions of a sentimental literary sketcher—Teufelsdröckh (devil’s dung) is a descendant of Sterne’s Hafen Slawkenbergius, whose name “derives from Hafen, colloquial German for chamber pot. and Schackenberg, for a pile of manure” (*Tristram Shandy* 163, n.). Thus Carlyle’s editor refers
to a Teufelsdröckh fragment on modern fashion as a "sketch" (37), and Hofrath Heuschrecke.

the editor's correspondent. complains that Teufelsdröckh's travel sketches have been lost:

Certain only that he has been, and is, a Pilgrim. and Traveller from a far Country:

more or less footsore and travel-soiled; has parted with road-companions; fallen

among thieves. been poisoned by bad cookery. blistered with bugbites: nevertheless.

at every stage (for they have let him pass), has had the Bill to discharge. But the

whole particulars of his Route. his Weather-observations. the picturesque Sketches he

took. though all regularly jotted down (in indelible sympathetic-ink by an invisible

interior Penman). are these nowhere forthcoming? Perhaps quite lost: one other leaf

of that mighty Volume (of human Memory) left to fly abroad, unprinted. unpublished.

unbound up. as waste paper: and rot. the sport of rainy winds?" (59-60)

The "particulars" of Teufelsdröckh's journey. the "picturesque Sketches he took." are lost.

The editor also explains Teufelsdröckh's sketch-like prose style as follows. referring
to the anecdote of the painter Apelles that I have already cited (see p. 129 above):

Seems it not conceivable that, in a Life like our Professor's, where so much

bountifully given by Nature had in Practice failed and misgone, Literature also would

never rightly prosper: that striving with his characteristic vehemence to paint this and
the other Picture, and ever without success, he at last desperately dashes his brush.

full of colours, against the canvas, to try whether it will paint Foam? (222)

Carlyle's invocation of this anecdote from Sextus Empiricus's _Outlines of Pyrrhonism_ repeats the connection between Sterne, empiricism, skepticism, and the sketch I have detailed in the previous chapter. The fact that Sterne is invoked so consistently in connection with the sketch metaphor in romantic literature indicates a continuing association of sketching and Sternianism that, given Sterne's fluency in the inductive paradigm of David Hume in particular, is hardly surprising.

One reason why Sterne is cited so often by literary sketchers is that he invented one common facet of the form of the literary sketch book, the character of the narrator. Ironically, one of the literary sketchers most conscious of a debt to Sterne is probably the transcendental Henry James, who refers to himself on the first page of _Transatlantic Sketches_ (1875) as "our old friend the sentimental tourist" and continues to allude to Sterne throughout. Irving's Geoffrey Crayon is also an American Yorick of sorts. In particular, the vaguely lascivious quality of Sterne's sentimental narrators was iterated by nineteenth-century sketchers. Thackeray, who criticized Sterne heavily, betrays a Sternean influence in _The Irish Sketch Book_ (1843) when he writes of the end of a journey,
Here my companion suddenly let go my hand. and by a certain easy motion of the waist. gave me notice to withdraw the other too: and so we rattled up to the Kenmare Arms: and so ended, not without a sigh on my part, one of the merriest six-hour rides that five yachtsmen. one Cockney. five women and a child, the carman. a countryman with an alpeen. ever took in their lives. (116)

Here Thackeray. like Yorick. conducts an innocent affair of the heart with one of the natives as a way of experiencing the country.

James Hall’s narrator in *Letters from the West* is a particularly interesting example of the marketability of Sternian scandal. Hall has nothing at all to say about Cincinnati. for example--he has spent all his time talking with “a friend. and that friend a lovely female” (156). and writes: “I would not give one ‘merry glance of mountain maid.’ for the plaudits of the literary world” (157). But Hall’s publishers. it seems. made his text even more Sternean than even he intended. as becomes clear from the following excerpt from one of his letters:

I had written a series of letters under the assumed character of a youth. travelling for amusement and giving the rein to a lively fancy. and indulging a vein of levity. and rather extravagant fun. The whole affair was anonymous. and was intended to be kept so. My title page. as prepared for the London edition read ‘Letters from the West. By a Young Gentleman of Illinois.’ Of course there was none of the pruning which
would have taken place, in a work acknowledged as ones [sic] own. Imagine my dismay when the work appeared with the title ‘Letters from the West. By the Hon. Judge Hall.’ How this came about, I never found out. I became a Judge about the time I sent off the Mmss. and either some inconsiderate friend, who thought my new title would sound very grand, or the London publisher, who had found it out and thought it might help to sell the book, made this foolish charge. The English reviews took up the book and made all sorts of fun of it. They acknowledged a certain ability about it, and confessed that the author wrote very good English--but sneered at the levities and asked the English public what they would think of a learned judge who should lay aside the wig and the robe of office, and roam about the land in search quest of ‘black eyes’ and ‘rosy cheeks.’ dancing at the cabins of the peasantry, and ‘kissing pretty girls.’ The venerable Illinois judge they pronounced to be a ‘sly rogue,’ and wondered if the learned gentleman was as funny on the bench, &c &c. I never allowed the book to be republished--and was near to never writing another.

(Randall 138-39)

Judge Hall’s traveler acknowledges a debt to Sterne, but he is made even more Sternean than he intended to be by his publishers. The book is no more appropriate to Hall’s office as judge than A Sentimental Journey was to that of a country parson--there is something scandalous
about the idea of a judge writing sentimental travels, and it seems that the publishers intended
to use this scandal to sell the book.

3. aesthetics and the sketch: the sublime

The nineteenth-century literary sketch does not proceed wholly from the writings of
Sterne. however. Developments in aesthetic theory also affected and facilitated the success
of sentimental documentary travel fiction. No aesthetic category was ideally suited to the
visual or verbal sketch until the popularization of the picturesque in the 1790s, but sketchers
often sought the sublime in their travels. Though the link between the sublime and the sketch
is problematic, several eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literary sketch books contain
extended treatments of the sublime. Literary sketchers certainly seem more concerned with
the sublime than with the beautiful.

Crèvecoeur, for example, discusses the sublime in *Sketches of Eighteenth Century
America*:

A great thunderstorm; an extensive flood; a desolating hurricane; a sudden and
intense frost: an overwhelming snowstorm, a sultry day.--each of these different
scenes exhibits singular beauties even in spite of the damage they cause. Often whilst
the heart laments the loss to the citizen, the enlightened mind, seeking for the natural causes, and astonished at the effects, awakens itself to surprise and wonder. (39)

James Fenimore Cooper’s *Sketches of Switzerland* (1836) is an account of a sentimental journey in search of the sublime in the Swiss Alps: upon seeing Mount Blanc, he writes. “I have never before so ardently longed for wings, though their possession used to be one of the most constant of my youthful aspirations” (12-13). The following passage in Catherine Maria Sedgwick’s *A New-England Tale: or, Sketches of New-England Character and Manners* (1822) seems intended as instruction in the sublime:

“This young stream.” said Mr. Lloyd. “reminds one of the turbulence of headstrong childhood; I can hardly believe it to be the same we admired, so leisurely winding its peaceful way into the bosom of Connecticut.”

“Thou likest the sobriety of maturity.” replied Rebecca. “but I confess that there is something delightful to my imagination in the elastic bound of this infant stream: it reminds me of the joy of untamed spirits. and undiminished strength.” (29)

In Major Jones’s *Sketches of Travel: Comprising the Scenes, Incidents, and Adventures in his Tour from Georgia to Canada* (1848) the narrator describes a sublime night on a steamboat to Wilmington:
It was a butiful night. and the scene was jest the kind to set a man’s brains a thinkin.

The sea is a roomy place. and ther’s nothin thar to prevent one’s givin free scope to
his imagination--it’s a mighty thing. the sea is. and if a man don’t feel some sublime
emotions in its presence, it’s because his hed works is on a monstrous small scale. . . .

I felt alone on the vast ocean, and a feelin of isolation come over me, which. fore I got
rid of it. made the boat seem no bigger than a teapot. and myself about the size of a
young sea-tick. I could preached a sermon on the sublimity of creation. and the
insignificance of man and his works. but I had no congregation then. and it’s too late
now. (Thompson 37-38)

As I have already argued (p. 133 above), the vagueness of the sketch and the distance it
imposes between the reader and the object described suit the sublime scene.

But the obvious problem is that the sketch tends at the same time to concern the
ordinary and humble. One of the characters in Egan’s Life in London is Moreland. for
example. an artist whose backward insistence on sketching common scenes instead of
painting polite ones lands him constantly in debtor’s prison:

The ruder scenes of Nature were his hobby. Genteel Life was too dull, too insipid. for
his pencil. But a more independent mind never had an existence; and his good
qualities were numerous. The tap-room he preferred to the parlour. Too much
assumption of would-be politeness and self-importance he thought frequently
decorated the latter. while the former furnished nothing else but originality of
character. The coal-heaver cooking his own meat. and taking the lining out of a pot
of porter at one pull--the carman tossing off a glass of gin like water--and the needy
woman ballad-singer going from house to house attempting to get a halfpenny out of
some poor tradesman for a song, were the groups that fastened on the mind of
MORLAND. He never felt more happy than when he was seen amongst them: he
depicted their various traits and peculiarities in the most glowing colours: and he has
left them behind him. living as it were on his canvas. a monument of his unrivalled
talents in a peculiar style of painting. (173-74)

The sketcher's fascination with the humble and unremarkable seems often. in fact. to
accompany a rejection of the sublime. Crèvecoeur writes of his dramatic "Landscapes" at the
end of the Sketches that

My simple wish is to show you the vulgar thread of that canvas, once so rude and
neglected. the work of low and ignorant artists, but now transmuted into a wide
extended surface on which new and deceiving perspectives are represented. 'Tis now
surrounded with a superb frame; 'tis now covered with tinsel colours hiding the
course ligaments and texture beneath. My simple wish is to present you with some of
the primary elements and original component parts in their native appearances ere
they were artfully gathered, united, new-modeled, and polished by our modern
legislators. 'Tis not the soaring eagle, rivaling the clouds in height and swiftness. I
mean to show you; 'tis only the insignificant egg from which it is hatched. My pencil
wants not to sketch the august bird arrayed with majestic feathers: 'tis only the nest in
which it was hatched, composed of sticks and twigs cemented with dirt, lined with
clay, whence has sprung this new master of the sky. (250)

Thackeray's literary sketching, like Dickens' (p. 171 below), is also based on an
extravagant rejection of the sublime aesthetic. He is without patience for a place that Walter
Scott supposedly admired, for example, in The Irish Sketch Book:

May I confess that I would rather, for a continuance, have a house facing a paddock,
with a cow in it, than be always looking at this immense overpowering splendour. . . .
The long and the short of the matter is, that on getting off the lake, after seven hours'
rowing, I felt as much relieved as if I had been dining for the same length of time with
her Majesty the Queen, and went jumping home as gaily as possible; but those marine
lawyers insisted so piteously upon seeing Ross Castle, close to which we were at
length landed, that I was obliged (in spite of repeated oaths to the contrary) to ascend
that tower, and take a bird's-eye view of the scene. Thank Heaven, I have neither tail
nor wings. and have not the slightest wish to be a bird: that continual immensity of
prospect which stretches beneath those little wings of theirs, must deaden their
intellects. depend upon it. Tomkins and I are not made for the immense. We can
enjoy a little at a time. and enjoy that little very much: or if like birds. we are like the
ostrich--not that we have fine feathers to our backs. but because we cannot fly. Press
us too much. and we become flurried and run off. and so get rid of the din. and the
dazzle. and the shouting. (128-29)

Thackeray is similarly skeptical of the sublime in *Vanity Fair*. In one illustration. “A
Family Party at Brighton.” the ocean is an ironic presence. We see Rebecca and George on
the balcony looking at “the calm ocean spread shining before them” contemplating adultery:
“Scarce a week was past. and it was come to this!” (298). In another scene the sublime is
appreciated with sincerity. but only by the simple Briggs: “As for Briggs. and the quantity of
tears of happiness which she now shed as she pretended to knit. and looked out at the
splendid ocean darkling before the windows. and the lamps of heaven beginning more
brightly to shine . . .” (421). The sublime has no more dignity than anything else in *Vanity
Fair*. 
4. the overdetermined picturesque

The sublime and the sketch are clearly not a perfect fit. And beauty is no more appropriate to the sketch: to use Burke's formula, the sketch would be too rough for beauty and to small for the sublime. The romantic period, however, provided a third aesthetic category much better suited to it. the picturesque, of which the sketch, as Martin Price has argued, was the form:

The picturesque in general recommends the rough or rugged. the crumbling form. the complex of difficult harmony. It seeks a tension between the disorderly or irrelevant and the perfected form. Its favorite scenes are those in which form emerges only with study or is at the point of dissolution. It turns to the sketch, which precedes formal perfection, and the ruin, which succeeds it. Where it concentrates upon a particular object. the aesthetic interest lies in the emergence of formal interest from an unlikely source (the hovel. the gypsy. the ass) or in the internal conflict between the centrifugal forces of dissolution and the centripetal pull of form (ruined temples, aged men).

(274)
The form of the picturesque was the sketch, and a favorite subject was the ruin. Ann Berningham has explained the affinity of these two ideas in terms of the economic climate of the period:

The sketch at once demonstrates the shaping power of art and acknowledges by its unfinished status nature’s ability to resist such power; the ruin at once concedes the victory of nature over art and claims for art the power to transform waste into beauty.

The concerns brought into play by the sketch and the ruin both seem far enough from the dark satanic mills of the industrial revolution. This remoteness, no doubt, made part of their popularity. Yet to the extent that the sketch and the ruin both laid stress on the value of process, they administered to a sensibility that was perfectly consonant with the relentless forces of productivity unleashed by the industrial revolution. (84-85)

If the writings of Sterne were one great source of inspiration for literary sketchers, the picturesque was another. The ideas of William Gilpin, who popularized the broken roughness of the picturesque, were not new (Finley 194-99; Guentner 46; Pevsner; Raval 249), but they influenced generations of traveling sketchers. Among the literary sketch books concerned with the picturesque are G. Holmes’ *Sketches of Some of the Southern Counties of Ireland, Collected During a Tour in the Autumn, 1797* (1801), Dickens’s *Sketches by Boz*
Caesar Otway's *Sketches in Erris and Tyrawly* (1841). Morleigh's *Life in the West: Backwoods Leaves and Prairie Flowers: Rough Sketches on the Borders of the Picturesque, the Sublime and Ridiculous* (1842) and Henry James's *Transatlantic Sketches*. Gilpin's articulation of the picturesque aesthetic legitimated and popularized sketching, just as Sterne had done for sentimental travel.\(^{56}\)

Gilpin's influence on travel writing is well known. My concern here is not with Gilpin's travel sketches nor with his drawings but with the style and form of his essay "On Picturesque Beauty." which, I argue, is itself a literary sketch. The reason for Gilpin's influence likely had as much to do with his style as with his ideas. The problem with the term "picturesque" is that of overdetermination: the term often seems to apply vaguely to both the scene that is described and the style of the description at the same time. As Gilpin insists, the picturesque, like the sketch, is an overdetermination of content and form: a picturesque description is one that is itself picturesque—it is an act of description that is also a literalization of the qualities of what is being described. Rather than concluding that Gilpin's

\(^{56}\) On the "cult of the Picturesque." see Bicknell (xi). See Plate 93 in particular, the "Myriorama." a series of aquatints mounted on cards that could be arranged and rearranged side by side to produce millions of picturesque landscapes.
contribution to aesthetics is “Imprecise and amateurish” (Bicknell xiii). I suggest that

Gilpin’s “On Picturesque Beauty” (1792) is itself picturesque. The idea of the sketch and
that of the picturesque are inseparable; he defines the picturesque scene as being “properly
disposed for the pencil” (6). It is therefore, in a sense, a literary sketch itself.

Gilpin sets out in his preface to clarify the “general intention” (5) of studies of the
picturesque by accepting Burke’s notion of beauty as smoothness and contrasting the
picturesque to it: “From scenes indeed of the picturesque kind we exclude the appendages of
tillage. and in general the works of men: which too often introduce preciseness. and
formality” (6). He titles his essay “On Picturesque Beauty,” as though, as he writes in the
preface, the picturesque were a particular “species of beauty” (6), but he begins the essay by
making a “distinction . . . between such objects as are beautiful. and such as are picturesque”
(7). This casual attitude toward consistency continues throughout Gilpin’s essay. “The
question simply is.” Gilpin writes toward the beginning of his essay, “What is that quality in
objects, which particularly marks them as picturesque?” (7). He argues that smoothness and
neatness, characteristics of beauty in Burke, disqualify an object from being picturesque:

57 Unless otherwise noted, all page numbers are those of Andrews, ed., The Picturesque:

Literary Sources & Documents, volume 2.
picturesque objects are rough and broken: a building is not picturesque until it is a ruin (8).

But then he qualifies this thesis as too simplistic: the variety of smoothness and roughness together is also picturesque (14).

Toward the end of the essay Gilpin endeavors to explain why “roughness, either real or apparent, forms an essential difference between the beautiful, and the picturesque” (15). even though he has shown that this is not necessarily the case. But he does not address this question further: it becomes a new question all together, that of “why the quality of roughness should make an essential difference between the objects of nature and the objects of artificial representation” (15). Here the argument gets still more complex. “[W]e might answer.” Gilpin suggests, that “the picturesque eye abhors art, and delights solely in nature” (15)—this is one of the axioms of picturesque theory. But he rejects this solution as unsatisfactory: the picturesque eye “delights also in the images of art, if they are marked with the characteristics, which it requires” (16): in other words, the art/nature opposition can be bridged by mimesis.

He then explores other possible answers. The “great foundation of picturesque beauty” is “the happy union of simplicity and variety” (16). But he admits that “simplicity and variety are both sources of the beautiful, as well as of the picturesque” (16). He offers still more possible solutions to the problem. One involves seeing painting as an imitative art
and concluding that picturesque objects are the most easily imitated, presumably because less technical expertise is required (29); another is to say that painting is

not an art strictly imitative, but rather deceptive—that, by an assemblage of colours.

and a peculiar art in spreading them, the painter gives a semblance of nature at a proper distance: which at hand, is quite another thing—that those objects, which we call picturesque, are only such as are more adapted to this art—and that as this art is most concealed in rough touches, rough objects are of course the most picturesque.

(16)

But he rejects all these dubious solutions and ends his essay in flippant resignation: “Human understanding is not equal to the search” (18).

Gilpin’s contradictory and inconclusive speculations on the picturesque, which achieve closure only through a tone of mock-heroic resignation, are appropriate, if inconvenient, in an essay in which the roughness and brokenness of the picturesque is celebrated. This could be read as a performance of the fact that the picturesque was “supposed to resist artistic codification” (Bermingham 84), but also that Gilpin’s essay is itself imitative of picturesque sketches and scenes. “On Picturesque Beauty” is itself picturesque: its style is a deliberate imitation of its content, and it is a formally overdetermined text, like the literary sketches I have discussed above.
Furthermore, that "Human understanding is not equal to the search" is an empirical conclusion. Identical to that Hume comes to at the end of Book I of the Treatise. The reason for this stylistic affinity between Hume and Gilpin, as I have observed in the previous chapter (p. 102 above), is that both are primarily empiricists. And their approach is sentimental: Gilpin's concern, like Hume's and Sterne's, is to respond subjectively to the world in all its complexity, not to build a coherent theory. Thus despite its origins in Neoclassicist aesthetics, the picturesque is essentially an empirical mode. Gilpin himself articulates this empirical orientation in a footnote in the first edition of his Three Essays:

The stile of some writers resembles a bright light placed between the eye, and the thing to be looked at. The light shows itself: and hides the object: and it must be allowed. the execution of some painters is as impertinent, as the stile of such writers.

(18. n.)

This note makes it clear that Gilpin's quixotic style is a deliberate attempt to avoid the impertinence he mentions: a polished argument would act as a bright light between the author and the picturesque object or scene.

Price sees the relationship between the picturesque artist and the world as a dramatic struggle:
The center of attention is displaced from the work of art as we traditionally conceive it to the larger sphere in which it plays its role. and the drama is readily cast into the form of the energies of art wrestling with resistant materials or the alternative form of the genius of nature or time overcoming the upstart achievements of a fragile but self-assertive art. (274)

This is the same struggle I have pointed out in Hume and Sterne, and it manifests itself as a struggle between form and content. One has only to look at the form of the book in which Gilpin’s essay appeared. In the preface to Three Essays Gilpin tells of his troubles with literary form: “when I wrote verse. one friend called it prose: and when I wrote prose. another friend called it verse” [vi]. As a result there are three essays. an exchange of letters. various aquatints from drawings. and one poem in the volume.

5. formal overdetermination in the nineteenth century literary sketch

In addition to creating the sentimental sketcher. Sterne made use of the ephemeral quality of the sketch. as I have noted above. Whether through Sterne’s influence. however. or in response to the picturesque. formal overdetermination is the primary distinguishing characteristic of the literary sketch in the nineteenth century: the aesthetic result is that it
becomes difficult, as I have noted above, to distinguish our emotional response to the content from that to the form. The ephemerality of the sketch is used in the nineteenth century to express a concern with youth, death, the ephemeral itself, and nostalgia that remains constant in literary sketches. Both Tristram and Yorick are older men traveling to outrun death, and the sketch, with its associations with childhood drawing masters and its fragility and ephemerality, proved useful to Sterne as a representation of both youth itself and the fragility of human existence. Nineteenth-century sketch writers followed his example. An important aspect of the ephemerality of the literary sketch is the fact that so many of them, including those of Hall, Dickens, Thackeray, Parkman, and Willis, were published initially in periodicals: they describe scenes that have disappeared or will soon disappear forever, and they are written, ostensibly, as though to be read and then forgotten.

Treatment of youth and death together is of course not unique to literary sketches, but these sentimental descriptions exemplify a tendency of literary sketches to capitalize in particular on our emotional response to the ephemerality of youth and life and, furthermore, to represent this ephemerality with the overdetermined sketch form itself. Whether the authors and narrators of sketch books are young or old, youth is often what they are most affected by. Literary sketches commonly contain representations of death and youth emphasizing the ephemerality of youth: examples of this association abound. There are the
prose death-bed scenes ("The Couch of Death" and "Contemplations") in Blake's *Poetical Sketches* (1783), for example, and Wordsworth, in *Descriptive Sketches*, describes a "Grison gypsy" woman with a baby, who "Spontaneous wanders, hand in hand with Fear" (ll. 188, 200) and is threatened by wolves and bears (ll. 215-42). In *Vivian Grey* (1826) Disraeli refers to both his own writing and youth itself as a sketch:

> But we are to speak of one who had retired from the world before his time: of one, whose early vices, and early follies, have been already obtruded, for no unworthy reason, on the notice of the public, in as hot and hurried a sketch as ever yet was penned: but like its subject; for what is youth but a sketch—a brief hour of principles unsettled, passions unrestrained, powers undeveloped, and purposes unexecuted!

(256)

Dickens sentimentalizes youth and death in "A Visit to Newgate" in *Sketches by Boz* (1836-37):

> this near vicinity to the dying—to men in full health and vigor, in the flower of youth or the prime of life, with all their faculties and perceptions as acute and perfect as your own: but dying, nevertheless—dying as surely—with the hand of death imprinted on them as indelibly—as if mortal disease had wasted their frames to shadows, and corruption had already begun! (201-02)
Boz then proceeds to lament that class of persons "who have never known what childhood is" (205).

Dickens also treats youth as a sketch. In the first paragraph of "The First of May," adult life is described in vaguely painterly terms: the adult is continually in the presence of striking scenes and vistas both beautiful and sublime. These scenes, though, are dull when compared to "the old scenes of the recollections of his early youth":

Such are the deep feelings of childhood. and such are the impressions which every lovely object stamps upon his heart! The hardy traveller wanders through the maze of thick and pathless woods, where the sun's rays never shone, and heaven's pure air never played: he stands on the brink of the roaring waterfall. and, giddy and bewildered, watches the foaming mass as it leaps from stone to stone, and from crag to crag: he lingers in the fertile plains of a land of perpetual sunshine, and revels in the luxury of their balmy breath. But what are the deep forests, or the thundering waters, or the richest landscapes that bounteous nature ever spread, to charm the eyes, and captivate the senses of man, compared with the old scenes of the recollections of his early youth? Magic scenes indeed; for the fancies of childhood dressed them in colours brighter than the rainbow, and almost as fleeting! (169)
The memories of youth Dickens describes are less immediate and yet more affecting than those of adult life. in the same way that sketches, literary ones included, are more affecting in their ephemerality than grand, finished works. Twain utilizes this overdetermined expression of ephemerality in Chapter 17 of *Huckleberry Finn* (1884). At the Grangerford’s farm Huck gives a long account of the fireplace and the paintings in which he mentions some drawings on the walls: “There was some that they called crayons, which one of the daughters which was dead made her own self when she was only fifteen years old” (111-12). Twain is following a long tradition of employing the sketch as an embodiment of sentimentality.

Francis Parkman is another literary sketcher who employed the serial sketch to sentimentalize the ephemerality of objects in the world: many American travel sketches.

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58 Francis Parkman’s *The Oregon Trail* was titled *The Oregon Trail. Or A Summer’s Journey Out of Bounds. By a Bostonian* when it was serialized in the *Knickerbocker Magazine* in 1847-49. The word “sketches” was added when a revised edition was published in book form in 1849 as *The California and Oregon Trail: Being Sketches of Prairie and Rocky Mountain Life*. Another revised edition was published in 1872 as *The Oregon Trail*, and yet another in 1892, this one illustrated by Fredric Remington, as *The Oregon Trail: Sketches of Prairie and Rocky-Mountain Life* (Feltskog, “Editor’s Introduction,” 53a ff.).
especially. describe scenes that in time will no longer exist due to the speed with which the world is changing. The Indians were a common subject for American sketchers: Parkman describes an Indian village in *The Oregon Trail*, among most highly developed of the nineteenth-century literary sketch books, emphasizing the fact that they are soon to be extinct:

On the farther bank stood a large and strong man, nearly naked, holding a white horse by a long cord, and eyeing us as we approached. This was the Chief, whom Henry called “Old Smoke.” Just behind him, his youngest and favorite squaw sat astride a fine mule, covered with caparisons of whitened skins, garnished with blue and white beads, and fringed with little ornaments of metal that tinkled with every movement of the animal. The girl had a light clear complexion, enlivened by a spot of vermillion on each cheek: she smiled, not to say grinned, upon us, showing two gleaming rows of white teeth. In her hand she carried the tall lance of her unchivalrous lord, fluttering with feathers; his round white shield hung at the side of her mule; and his pipe was slung at her back. Her dress was a tunic of deer skin made beautifully white by a species of clay found on the prairie, ornamented with beads, arranged in figures more gay than tasteful, and with long fringes at all the seams. Not far from the chief stood a group of stately figures, their white buffalo robes thrown over their shoulders,
gazing coldly upon us; and in the rear for several acres, the ground was covered with a
temporary encampment. Warriors, women, and children swarmed like bees: hundreds
of dogs, of all sizes and colors, ran restlessly about; and, close at hand, the wide
shallow stream was alive with boys, girls, and young squaws, splashing, screaming,
and laughing in the water. At the same time a long trail of emigrants with their heavy
wagons was crossing the creek, and dragging on in slow procession by the
encampment of the people whom they and their descendants, in the space of a
century, are to sweep from the face of the earth.59 (96)

This description, vivid enough perhaps to be called a literary painting, is sketch-like in its
emphasis on the ephemerality of the people it describes: Parkman’s interest in the western
tribes is motivated largely by their imminent disappearance. The literary sketch, especially if
published serially, emphasizes the ephemeral nature of his subject: he has only just enough
time to sketch each scene before it fades away forever, like the Indians themselves.

59 Feltskog points to Parkman’s journals and notes that “Though this passage has the air of an
accomplished set piece—picturesque Indians in the foreground, laboring ox wagons in the
background—the scene actually occurred just as Parkman here describes it” (506).
Willis's description of a night in a country inn in "Letter from the Railroad" similarly exploits the ephemerality of the form itself in the description. It is one of the more memorable scenes in the volume:

the three of us were deposited on the stoop of a country tavern at the calamitous indoor hour of five in the morning. You image to yourself, at once, of course, the reluctant manners of the unshaved bar-keeper, and the atmosphere of the just-opened and un-swept bar-room! Where the lady was shown to, I did not inquire: but the Doctor and I were ushered into a small bed-room where the oxygen had been for some hours entirely exhausted, and where, on one of the two beds, lay asleep one of our promiscuous gender. "Don't mind him." said the bar-keeper, as we backed out from the intrusion. "it's only a friend of mine!"--but even with this expressive encouragement, and a glance at the sleeper's boots, which gave us a conventional confirmation that he was a man not "to be minded," we persisted in leaving the sleeper to his privacy. Our accommodator then offered to "bring us the fixins for a toilet in the entry, which we at once accepted, dressing with a murderous look-out upon the slaughter of the chickens for our breakfast. I daguerreotype these details. and similar ones, of things and manners as they are, foreseeing that railroads will soon
irrigate the country with refinements, in contrast with which these primitive sketches may be curious. (108-09)

This passage makes it clear that the hurry does not alone explain the roughness of the descriptions: "these primitive sketches." he anticipates, will later be pleasing because of their roughness—they will be a welcome contrast to the imminent modern "refinements." That is, the roughness is to have an intrinsic appeal of its own, the appeal of the picturesque. But also, Willis, droll as he is, is always conscious that he is among the last persons ever to see the things he sees just as they are, and he feels constant pressure to jot down his impressions before the scenes are lost for good. While the casual character of his prose reifies the wildness of the landscape, the ephemeral nature of the periodical format materializes the fleeting nature of the landscape in the modern world. The ephemeral character of the literary sketch is a mimetic reflection of both the instantaneous character of the memory of a landscape and the fact that the landscape is changing rapidly.

The following passage from Parkman, impressive for its dramatic vividness, is an ephemeral periodical representation of the lives of an ephemeral people that even utilizes the ephemeral light source:

The lodge of my host Kongra Tonga, or the Big Crow, presented a picturesque spectacle that evening. A score or more of Indians were seated round it in a circle,
their dark. naked forms just visible by the dull light of the smouldering fire in the
middle. The pipe glowed brightly in the gloom as it passed from hand to hand. Then
a squaw would drop a piece of buffalo-fat on the dull embers. Instantly a flame
would leap up. darting its light to the very apex of the tall, conical structure. where the
tops of the slender poles that supported the covering of hide were gathered together.
It gilded the features of the Indians. as with animated gestures they sat. telling their
endless stories of war and hunting. and displayed rude garments of skin that hung
round the lodge. --the bow. quiver. and lance. suspended over the resting place of the
chief. and the rifles and powderhorns of the two white guests. For a moment all
would be bright as day: then the flames would die out; fitful flashes from the embers
would illuminate the lodge. and then leave it in darkness. Then the light would
wholly fade. and the lodge and all within it would be involved again in obscurity.

(209-10)

His description of this "picturesque spectacle" fades off. like a vignette. It is an extremely
expert piece of description. but it is not a painting. The event itself. like the subjects of most
sketches, is an accidental and ordinary but unique occurrence. No one is saying anything
particularly worth recording. and there are no characters worthy of detailed description. And
it is ephemeral. like everything else described in the book--scenes like these will soon be
gone forever. as will the periodical description itself--unless it happens to be republished in book form for posterity.

As I have shown, the sketch commonly performed the ephemeral. Sketches often contain no vivid visual description at all. although description is not precluded, but their peculiar charm is that they materialize for the reader the characteristics of the scenes and people they describe and interpret. This is due in large part to the influence of Gilpin. It can also, however, be traced back to Sterne. An anonymous article in the European Magazine (1782) exemplifies the association of literary sketching, the sentiment of the ephemeral. and Sterne: upon visiting Sterne's grave, Clarinda, composing an elegy on the spot, "expressed her veneration, with a pencil, on the stone" (325).

6. inductive nostalgia

The invocations of Sterne are nostalgic, of course, but a more general nostalgia is also common in literary sketch books: an interest in the ephemeral is always nostalgic. The sketch, as performance of the ephemerality of the modern scene, conveys the sense that by the time the reader attains the sketch the scene has already disappeared. I conclude this chapter by suggesting that the nineteenth century travel sketch is nostalgic in method as well
as in content: its concern is with youth and with scenes and people that will perhaps have permanently vanished by the time they are described, and its method, induction, "the childhood method of science" (Pera 152), was disappearing as quickly as the American Indian.

In the nineteenth century empiricism and induction are either rejected in favor of Kantian transcendentalism or subsumed within a deductive framework. Either way, induction is no longer a currently viable epistemological paradigm. Coleridge writes in Aids to Reflection that "All the evil achieved by Hobbes and the whole School of Materialists will appear inconsiderable, if it be compared with the mischief effected and occasioned by the sentimental philosophy of STERNE, and his numerous imitators" (XXXVII.7), and Julius Hare writes extravagantly against reliance on the senses in Guesses at Truth:

when the calculating, expediential Understanding has superseded the Conscience and the Reason, the Senses soon rush out from their dens, and sweep away everything before them. If there be nothing brighter than the reflected light of the moon, the wild beasts will not keep in their lair. And when the moon, having reached a moment of apparent glory, by looking full at the sun, fancies it may turn away from the sun, and still have light in itself, it straight away begins to wane, and ere long goes out
altogether, leaving its worshippers in the darkness, which they had vainly dreamt it would enlighten. (80)

Induction suffered at the hands of the logicians. As I have already mentioned. Whately reduces inductive inference to “enthymeme” in *Elements of Logic*. Hamilton criticizes Whately extensively in his *Lectures on Logic* but follows Kant in abstracting induction and ampliativity from logic: “Logic cannot with propriety be denominated a [Heuretic or] Art of Discovery” (III.36). He writes: logic is “not to be considered useful as a Material Instrument, that is, as a mean of extending our knowledge by the discovery of truths” (III.45).60

Whewell, another Kantian and “the greatest and most influential of the Victorian denigrators of Locke” (Aarsleff 414), follows suit in *The Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences* (1840). In Whewell induction remains prior to deduction: “a Theory is an Inductive Proposition” (I.24).

In fact. Whewell even maintains the association between induction and sketching. All seeing involves inductive inference (I.112): we perceive not objects but “outlines,” which do not exist in nature but “are the work of the mind itself” (I.25). Definitions and axioms, likewise, are “different views of the same body of truth” (I.71), “various lines of truth” that “suggest sufficiently to a fitly-prepared mind, the place where the idea resides, its nature, and its

60 Hamilton is echoing Kant here—cf. *Introduction to Logic* 10.
efficacy” (1.73): the idea “is disclosed but not fully revealed, imparted but not transfused” (1.73). At the same time, however, Whewell insists that “Ideas” are prior to observation (1.25, I.72). As I have mentioned, this shift in priority had vast implications for sketching and painting: the shift in paradigms clearly favored the latter.

This shift to deductive logic is part of a general shift toward the fallibilism later advocated by Popper:

Most 17th- and 18th-century writers were epistemic infallibilists: accordingly they looked chiefly to a logic of discovery rather than a logic of testing to provide the indubitable warrant for genuine science. Among the empiricists (especially Locke, Newton, and Hume), there was the added conviction that laws linking observables—rather than “transductive” theories explaining observables—were the hallmark of genuine science. This, too, conduced to make a justificatory logic of discovery plausible.

By the 1750s, the picture becomes murkier. Explanatory theories became fashionable again (subtle fluids, atoms, aethers, etc.). Accordingly, there was a distinct shift away from “inductive” logics of discovery towards self-correcting logics of theoretical discovery (these are prominent in the writings of Hartley, LeSage, and Priestley). Infallibilism, however, remained the epistemic orthodoxy.
By the 1820s and 1830s, infallibilism itself was crumbling. Herschel, Whewell and Comte all acknowledged that there is no formula for producing true theories. As fallibilism emerged, there was an unmistakable shift away from the analysis of genesis towards the post hoc evolution of theories. (Laudan 180)61

A possible exception to this trend is John Stuart Mill, an opponent of the "apriorist" school (Scarre 13). In one of the most remarkable and original moments of the debate on induction. Mill answers Whately's reduction and seems to justify induction by arguing that the uniformity principle, always the major premise when an inductive inference is rendered in syllogistic form, is "itself an instance of induction" (307)--not one induction, he says, but a "collective order," a "web" composed of separate inductive "fibres" (327). As Scarre has argued, however, neither Mill nor any of his predecessors and contemporaries really addressed Hume's problem (7. 21-22): Mill was rather assuming induction than justifying it (15 ff.).

Mill, despite his insistence on the inductive method, is a deductivist like the others I have mentioned. He argues that induction is an initial step in the deductive process, and one that it is not always possible or reasonable to perform (458): in cases of "plurality of causes"

61 Cf. Blackwell on the failure of the inductivist models of Herschel, Mill, and Jevons.
and “intermixture of effects.” Mill says that “The instrument of Deduction alone is adequate
to unravel the complexities proceeding from this source” (439); “it is seldom possible, in
these complicated inquiries, to go much beyond the initial steps, without calling in the
instrument of Deduction, and the temporary aid of hypotheses” (431). To the objection that
deduction may lead to error, he answers that the results of the deductive method need only to
be verified against the observable facts in order for errors to be detected and corrected. This
is deductive fallibilism.

Most importantly, once the viability of induction is assumed, the painting metaphor is
no longer epistemologically irrelevant. The difference between assuming induction and
addressing the problem of its justification is illustrated by the difference between Hume’s and
Mill’s use of mental imagery. In response to Whewell’s objection that it is impossible to
know that two straight lines cannot enclose a space by experience alone, Mill appeals to our
ability to make “mental pictures” of geometrical forms—to their “capacity of being painted in
the imagination with a distinctness equal to reality” (234). And our ability is not limited to
degmetrical forms alone, as his explanation makes clear:

I contend that we do not believe this truth on the ground of the imaginary intuition
simply, but because we know that the imaginary lines exactly resemble real ones, and
that we may conclude from them to real ones with quite as much certainty as we could
conclude from one real line to another. The conclusion, therefore, is still an induction from observation. And we should not be authorized to substitute observation of the image in our mind for reality, if we had not learned by long-continued experience that the properties of the reality are faithfully represented in the image; just as we should be scientifically warranted in describing an animal which we have not seen, from a picture made of it with a daguerreotype; but not until we had learned by ample experience, that observation of such a picture is precisely equivalent to observation of the original. (234)

In the previous two quotations Mill speaks of paintings and photographs—not sketches or anatomical diagrams. Hume's skepticism with regard to the senses is by Mill's time long forgotten: "the philosopher attains a state of mind in which his mental picture of nature spontaneously represents to him all the phenomena with which the new theory is concerned, in the exact light in which the theory regards them" (246).

In short, as I have argued in the Introduction, and as Larry Laudan has demonstrated, by Mill's day a paradigm shift had taken place, one that was to have far-reaching effects on theories of vision and conventions of descriptive prose. It was a shift from the premises, methods, and conclusions of Hume to those of Kant, a shift, Crary has argued, to a conception of vision that was subjective rather than objective, a shift from "geometrical
optics" to "psychological optics" (16). The literary sketch, which resists the painting analogy in literature, also resisted this paradigm shift, as I have shown here, remaining primarily empirical, skeptical, and sentimental. Thackeray inherited this empirical, nostalgic tradition and experimented within it throughout his career.
I think in my heart I am fonder of petty third-rate pictures than of your great thundering first-rates. (Thackeray, Paris Sketch Book 59)

In many ways Thackeray’s sketch books differ from the ones mentioned in the previous chapter as widely as those books differ from each other. Furthermore, each of his sketch books differs from the others. At the same time, however, these books all have many significant characteristics in common. Saintsbury’s remark in his preface to The Irish Sketch Book, that “the resemblance of The Paris Sketch Book and The Irish Sketch Book is merely verbal and titular” (vii), is not strictly true: both are illustrated, miscellaneous collections of periodical articles by a sensitive and skeptical traveler with a specific aesthetic orientation. as is Vanity Fair. My focus in this chapter is on The Irish Sketch Book and Vanity Fair as literary sketch books and on the idea of the sketch and the portrayal of the sketcher in The Newcomes.

1. Thackeray and Sterne
If Thackeray’s relationship to the tradition of literary sketching is to be understood, his affinity to Sterne’s sentimental empiricism must be explained at the onset. Sterne’s father appears in Esmond (325), and Sterne’s work is mentioned once in The Virginians (765). To one unfamiliar with Thackeray’s condemnation of Sterne in The English Humourists of the Eighteenth Century (1853) this paucity of reference to Sterne would seem surprising, given the numerous references to and appearances of so many of the other major eighteenth-century writers in Thackeray’s historical fiction. But the stylistic affinity between Thackeray and Sterne has been noted. Walter Bagehot made a strong case for an affinity between Sterne and Thackeray the year after the latter’s death:

Thackeray, like Sterne, looked at everything—at nature, at life, at art—from a sensitive aspect. . . . The visible scene of life—the streets, the servants, the clubs, the gossip, the West End—fastened on his brain: they pained his nerves; their influence reached him through many avenues, which ordinary men do not feel much, or to which they are altogether impervious. . . . He acutely felt every possible passing fact—every trivial interlude in society. . . . He could not help seeing everything, and

62 R. D. McMaster has compared Thackeray’s style to that of Sterne (2, 58), as has Juliet McMaster. Cf. Traill.
what he saw made so near and keen an impression on him that he could not again exclude it from his understanding; it stayed there, and disturbed his thoughts. (547)

Bagehot emphasizes not only that Thackeray, like Sterne, is a writer of sentimental fiction but also that he is entrenched in the empirical tradition. The common characteristic of the writings of Sterne and Thackeray is what I have called the encyclopedic quality of induction and of the sketch book (see p. 16 above): Thackeray, like Sterne, “could not help seeing everything.” Bagehot makes this point, not surprisingly, using terms reminiscent of Kant’s Critique: “More than most writers of fiction he felt the difficulty of abstracting his thoughts and imagination from near facts which would make themselves felt” (548). Seeing Thackeray as an empiricist sketcher explains Dickens’ problem with Thackeray, that “he too much feigned a want of earnestness, and that he made a pretense of undervaluing his art” (Collins 302): Bagehot writes, “Perhaps he could never take a grand enough view of literature, or accept the truth of ‘high art,’ because of his natural tendency to this stern and humble realism” (548). It also explains the melancholic tone of Thackeray’s writings: “The world poured in upon him, and inflicted upon his delicate sensibility a number of petty pains and impressions which others do not feel at all, or which they feel but very indistinctly.” (548).
Thackeray's quarrel with Sterne in *The English Humourists* is not with his sentimentality but with "false sensibility" (665). What he likes in Sterne is "picturesque and delightful" (657): in some passages he finds "wit, humour, pathos, a kind nature speaking, and real sentiment" (669). What he does not like he compares to an actor's paint: "How much of the paint and emphasis is necessary for the fair business of the stage, and how much of the rant and rouge is put on for the vanity of the actor?" (665). The fact that he both appreciates and criticizes Sterne in such similar terms to those in which Sterne himself criticized painting is indicative more of affinity than of difference between the two authors.

2. Thackeray’s *Irish Sketch Book* (1843)

A look at Thackeray's *Irish Sketch Book* will illustrate not only the inductive and sentimental qualities of his work that Bagehot points out but two additional qualities as well: Thackeray's use of the picturesque and his sceptical approach to description.

Thackeray's interest in *The Irish Sketch Book* is in the trivial and ephemeral, which he privileges over the grand: he begins his series of visual and verbal sketches by saying that to construct a "history of the present day" from the newspapers, students of the future should consult "not so much those luminous and philosophical leading articles which call our
attention at present by the majesty of their eloquence and the largeness of their type” but
“those parts of the journals into which information is squeezed in the smallest possible print.
to the advertisements. namely. the law and police reports. and to the instructive narratives
supplied by that ill-used body of men who transcribe knowledge at the rate of a penny a line”
(10). Thackeray’s refusal to categorize things as either grand or trivial is inductive: his
concern is not with categories and general rules but with the particulars of the world, the
things people are buying and the crimes they are committing. His concern with the trivial.
furthermore. is sentimental: of a story of parents and children. for example. he asks.

Does this story appear trivial to anyone who reads this? If so, he is a pompous fellow.
whose opinion is not worth having: or he has no children of his own: or he has
forgotten the day when he was a child himself: or he has never repented of the surly
selfishness with which he treated brothers and sisters. after the habit of English
gentlemen. (34)

Thackeray’s sketches challenge the reader’s willingness to respond to simplicity with honest
emotion.

Thackeray’s aesthetic orientation in The Irish Sketch Book, consequently, is clearly in
the picturesque. which he is quick to point out at every opportunity on his journey. As I have
argued in the previous chapter (pp. 159 ff. above). Thackeray’s negative interest in the
picturesque is based on a rejection of pomp and grandeur in art. He is far from being fanatical about the picturesque, however; he finds the beggars' cabins in Bantry too painful to draw and almost too painful to describe:

The wretchedness of some of them is quite curious; I tried to make a sketch of a row which lean against an old wall, and are built upon a rock that tumbles about in the oddest and most fantastic shapes, with a brawling waterfall dashing down a channel in the midst. These are, it appears, the beggars' houses; anyone may build a lodge against that wall, rent free, and such places were never seen! As for drawing them, one might as well make a sketch of a bundle of rags. An ordinary pigsty in England is really more comfortable. Most of them were not six feet long or five feet high, built of stones huddled together, a hole being left for the people to creep in at, a ruined thatch to keep out some little portion of the rain. The occupants of these places sat at their door in tolerable contentment, or the children came down and washed their feet in the water. I declare I believe a Hottentot kraal has more comforts in it: even to write of the place makes one unhappy, and the words move slow. But in the midst of all this misery there is an air of actual cheerfulness; and go but a few score yards off, and these wretched hovels lying together look really picturesque and pleasing. (103-04)
Though he does, almost in spite of himself, find the cabins "picturesque and pleasing."

Thackeray remains acutely aware of the misery of his subjects and the cruel irony of the picturesque.

Thackeray’s literary sketching is also characterized by a skeptical reluctance to describe, a reluctance that may seem particularly odd in a travel writer who is illustrating his own work. As Mill argues in his essay on Bentham, the inductive method is calculated for precision and clarity (54 ff.). It is for clear and precise knowledge that the sketcher has traveled to view the scenes first hand. This precision distinguishes the sketch from the general but perhaps seemingly sketch-like aphorisms of Aids to Reflection or Guesses at Truth. As I have shown, however, the sketcher often quickly either loses interest in objective accuracy or discovers its impossibility and thus resorts to giving a humble, sentimental account, as Thackeray does. In Limerick, for example, he writes.

All that one can hope to do is to give a sort of notion of the movement and manners of the people, pretending by no means to offer a description of places, but simply an account of what one sees in them. (148)

Descriptions of landscape are not real; they are fictions created to explain the world, like causes in Hume’s Treatise, and Thackeray rejects these fictions and does his best to avoid them, just as Hume and Gilpin do. A description is a “letterpress landscape,” not a real one:
After describing, as accurately as words may, the features of a landscape, and stating that such a mountain was to the left, and such a river or town to the right, and putting down the situations and names of the villages, and the bearings of the roads, it has no doubt struck the reader of books of travel that the writer has not given him the slightest idea of the country, and that he would have been just as wise without perusing the letterpress landscape through which he has toiled. It will be as well then, under such circumstances, to spare the public any lengthened description of the road from Waterford to Dungarvan.

... (54)

Thackeray is an empirical observer who is at the same time extravagantly skeptical of the truth and value of his descriptions:

Evergreens and other trees, in their brightest livery: blue sky: roaring water: here black, and yonder, foaming of a dazzling white; rocks shining in the dark places, or frowning black against the light, all the leaves and branches keeping up a perpetual waving and dancing around the cascade: what is the use of putting down all this? A man might describe the cataract of the Serpentine in exactly the same terms, and the reader be no wiser. (136)
His refusal to describe Ireland objectively is a part of a characteristic reluctance to endorse the efforts of his fellow laborers or the general dignity of his craft, which later made him infamous. This refusal, though, has an established epistemological basis in empirical philosophy. Thackeray’s prose, like that of so many other literary sketchers, is manifestly inductive, skeptical, sentimental, and picturesque. He is clearly writing in the tradition of Sterne.

3. skepticism in *Vanity Fair*

With these facts in mind I propose to answer my initial questions. What is the relevance of the subtitle “Pen and Pencil Sketches of English Society” to Thackeray’s *Vanity Fair*?

First, the subtitle can be explained negatively. *Vanity Fair*, like *Tristram Shandy* and so many other sketch books, is particularly skeptical of painting and the grandiose arts. “Painting” connotes vanity, falsity, and bitterness in the novel: of the Osborne family

63 Remarks in Chapter 34 of *Pendennis* led to the “Dignity of Literature” debate—the key texts are included in Peter Shillingburg’s edition of the novel.
portraits the narrator says, "what bitter satire there is in all those flaunting family-portraits, with their farce of sentiment and smiling lies. and innocence so self-conscious and self-satisfied" (282). Mr. Osborne epitomizes vanity and bad taste in acknowledging his son’s death by means of the sculpture in the church (441). Thackeray also emphasizes that paintings are ephemeral, despite the seeming permanence of their “gilt frames” (670. 824):

However much you may be mourned, your widow will like to have her weeds neatly made—the cook will send or come up to ask about dinner—the survivors will soon bear to look at your picture over the mantelpiece, which will presently be deposited from the place of honour. to make way for the portrait of the son who reigns. (769)

Osborne’s “great Iphigenia clock” continuously tolls “with mournful loudness” (539) the ephemeral vanity of gaudy art and worldly ambition.

This unequivocal skepticism toward painting manifests itself in various ways in Vanity Fair, one of which is a reluctance to describe like that in The Irish Sketch Book. Thackeray is skeptical not only of painting but of things that resemble it, such as verbal description. Of Amelia, for example, he says, “As she is not a heroine, there is no need to describe her person” (7). He repeatedly avoids describing her for several reasons. One is that “it is not much of a life to describe. There is not much of what you call incident in it” (134); another is that it is indescribable: “Her simple, artless behaviour. and modest kindness of
demeanor. won all their unsophisticated hearts; all which simplicity and sweetness are quite impossible to describe in print” (325-26). Another is that Amelia’s sensibilities are so tender:

we who have been watching and describing some of the emotions of that weak and tender heart, must draw back in the presence of the cruel grief under which it is bleeding. Tread silently round the hapless couch of the poor prostrate soul. (447)

There are other things he refuses to describe, and for other reasons. He is against describing things one does not fully understand, for example:

As I cannot describe the mysteries of freemasonry, although I have a shrewd idea that it is a humbug: so an uninitiated man cannot take upon himself to portray the great world accurately, and had best keep his opinions to himself, whatever they are. (627)

Victorian moral strictures comprise another reason. He also satirizes the Victorian readership for not allowing him to describe sin and vice:

a polite public will no more bear to read an authentic description of vice than a truly-refined English or American female will permit the word ‘breeches’ to be pronounced in her chaste hearing. (812)

Thackeray rejects description in Vanity Fair on grounds of competence, interest, and taste.

Another way of approaching Thackeray’s treatment of description in Vanity Fair is to note who does describe in the novel. Mrs. Bute tires Miss Crawley with “a catalogue” of
Rawdon’s sins: she “had all the particulars” of his duel; she “described with the most vivid minuteness the agonies of the country families whom he had ruined” (228). Miss Briggs “described and estimated with female accuracy” Lady Jane’s appearance to Miss Crawley (418), and James Crawley “described the different pugilistic qualities of Molyneux and Dutch Sam” while drinking too much wine at dinner with Miss Crawley and Pitt (430). Mr. John Paul Jefferson Jones, one of Thackeray’s fellow sketchers (Nathaniel Parker Willis, in fact), writes “a full and particular account of the dinner” at Lord Steyne’s; “He described the persons of the ladies with great eloquence; the service of the table; the size and costume of the servants: enumerated the dishes and wines served: the ornaments of the sideboard. and the probable value of the plate. “64 Jos Sedley, when Dobbin isn’t listening, describes the Battle of Waterloo (729). Swankey is discovered by Dobbin “describing the sport of pig-sticking” to Amelia (767). After Lord Steyne dies “An eloquent catalogue appeared in a

64 Willis engaged Thackeray to write for the Corsair, of which he was an editor, in 1839-40 (Daugherty 307). Thackeray whimsically reviewed Willis’s Dashes at Life with a Free Pencil, a collection of stories, in the Edinburgh Review of October 1845, but he admits that “Mr. Willis has actually written some rather clever books” (The Memoirs of Barry Lyndon, Esq. and the Miscellaneous Papers Written Between 1843 and 1847, 509).
weekly print, describing his virtues, his magnificence, his talents, and his good actions” (829). All description referred to in the novel, with the exception of that of Shakespeare (592), is vulgar, petty, self-indulgent, and often false. Description is a vanity—one that Thackeray is willing to indulge in occasionally but refuses to endorse.

Thackeray’s skepticism toward description extends to story. During Becky’s visit to Sir Pitt after Rawdon leaves her, she “went on with a perfectly connected story, which she poured into the ears of her perplexed kinsman” (694). Later on she tells Jos “her story—a tale so neat, simple, and artless, that it was quite evident, from hearing her, that if ever there was a white-robed angel escaped from heaven to be subject to the infernal machinations and villainy of fiends here below, that spotless being—that miserable, unsullied martyr, was present on the bed before Jos—on the bed, sitting on the brandy bottle” (834). Becky’s stories have the same characteristics as paintings and descriptions are shown to have in Vanity Fair: they tend to be elaborate, vain, and false. Jos develops a fatal addiction to Becky, but Rawdon doesn’t “believe a word of the whole story” (703).

A partial answer to my question, then, is that Vanity Fair was called “Pen and Pencil Sketches of English Society” because it rejects painting and what I have called the painterly aesthetic in general, including description and story. Nearly all the sketch books I have mentioned similarly reject painting: I will mention one more only because Thackeray owned
an autographed copy of it (Van Duzer 70). The book is Anne Grant’s *Memoirs of an American Lady: With Sketches of Manners and Scenery in America as they Existed Previous to the Revolution* (1808), a “desultory narrative” and “miscellany of description, observation, and detail” of which “truth, both of feeling and narration” are “its only merits” (iv): she warns the reader “not to look for lucid order in the narration, or intimate connection of its parts” (7). Her book is an alternative: the “authentic record of an exemplary life, though delivered in the most unadorned manner, or even degraded by poverty of style, or uncouthness of narration, has an attraction for the uncorrupted mind” (1-2). she writes. Grant acknowledges the value of history, but the problem is that

we may be at times dazzled with the blaze of heroic achievement, or contemplate with a purer satisfaction those ‘Awful authors of mankind,’ by whom nations were civilized, equitable dominion established, or liberty restored. Yet, after all, the crimes and miseries of mankind form such prominent features of the history of every country, that humanity sickens at the retrospect, and misanthropy finds excuse amidst the laurels of the hero, and the deep-laid schemes of the politician . . . (3)

Grant’s book is to be “the antidote to this chilling gloom left on the mind by these bustling intricate scenes” (3). “[V]ice, folly, and vanity are so noisy, so restless, so ready to rush into public view, and so adapted to afford food for malevolent curiosity,” she writes. but her book
is to be a "remedy" (4). Thackeray is of course no utopian. but the sketch is similarly
presented in Vanity Fair as an antidote to painterly vanity.

4. *Vanity Fair* as literary sketch book

The novel is sketch-like not only in its skepticism toward painting but in a more
positive sense as well. There are material similarities: as a monthly periodical its
installments were ephemeral. like newspapers and like a sketch. There is also the fact of the
sketch-like illustrations. Thackeray stopped framing his steel-plate etchings in part X of the
novel. As Pickwoad points out, he was thereafter "no longer obliged to fill the corners of the
frame with background details, over which he rarely took much trouble" (646). But the
design change was not only more convenient. It also made the etchings more sketch-like:
they were thus more like the wood engravings. This change in format was appropriate and
natural, since the unique appeal of etching, as Maxime Lalanne writes in his 1866 *Treatise on
Etching*, was precisely that it was so much like sketching:

65 On Thackeray's fondness for sketching and the applicability of the term to his own work
see Carey 34-38.
A bit of good luck and of inspiration often does more than a methodical rule, whether we are engaged on subjects of our own invention—capricci, as the Italians call them—or whether we are drawing from nature directly on the copper. The great aim is to arrive at the first onset at the realization of our ideas as they are present in our mind.

An etching must be virginal, like an improvisation. (5-6)

In addition to having many of the physical characteristics of the sketch, Vanity Fair is also an empirical book. The novel is inductive: the narrator is "an observer of human nature" (191), and the idea that "times are not changed" (526), one of the most recurrent ideas in Thackeray's fiction, is what I have already referred to as the uniformity principle, with which Mill and others have justified induction. The History of Henry Esmond is also decidedly inductive, as I have argued above (p. 31 above). Vanity Fair is also an encyclopedic book: it is a "novel without a hero," a look at a variety of personalities from various social stations. And it is a humble, sentimental novel as well: Jones, pictured reading the novel in his club in the first chapter, will find it "foolish, trivial, twaddling, and ultra-

66 The notion in The Newcomes that there is "nothing new under the sun" (5) becomes his repeated ironic insistence in The Virginians that "Manners, you see, were looser a hundred years ago" (158).
sentimental."

Furthermore, *Vanity Fair*, like so many literary sketches, is a formally overdetermined novel. Thackeray draws attention to appropriateness of form to content in the novel:

> When we come to the proper places we won't spare fine language--No. no! But when we are going over the quiet country we must perforce be calm. A tempest in a slop-basin is absurd. We will reserve that sort of thing for the mighty ocean and the lonely midnight.\(^67\) (96)

His style and tone, in other words, will reflect his subject matter. There are also times in *Vanity Fair* when Thackeray uses the novel's form to express the feelings and ideas he describes. In the following passage, for example, he uses the suspense he generates as a serial novelist to impress upon his readers the suspense felt by the friends and relatives of the Waterloo soldiers:

> Anybody who will take the trouble of looking back at the newspapers of the time, must, even now, feel at second-hand this breathless pause of expectation. The list of

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\(^67\) Thackeray, as I have shown, had no taste for the sublime--for his treatment of the ocean. See p. 159 ff. above.
casualties are carried on from day to day: you stop in the midst as in a story which is to be continued in our next. (438)

Later Thackeray renders Amelia’s sadness at relinquishing her son to Osborne in the last sentence of a monthly part: “His mother could not see him for a while, through the mist that dimmed her eyes” (633). Her blindness, like Yorick’s death, is materialized for the reader by the narrative’s monthly respite. As I have suggested, this overdetermined expression is not unique to literary sketches, but it is a technique sketchers frequently exploit because it allows them to conduct mimesis without description.

The narrator of *Vanity Fair*, famously flippant and ironic, is appropriate to a literary sketch book for similar reasons. Like Tristram and Yorick, he draws attention to the fact that he wanders and digresses (484, 602, 734). The narrator, furthermore, is an incoherent construction that necessitates skepticism on the part of the reader. Siegle considers three contradictory stances of Thackeray’s narrator, “the narrator as character, as historian and as omniscient novelist” (34), and this incoherence and inconstancy are both skeptical and positive: “As such contradictions multiply in the course of the novel, we are driven to recognize that the normal referential strategy to build a single coherent, consistent, unified entity from whom the narration may logically flow is being undercut by a reflexive marking of our need to constitute an authoritative being out of relatively few strokes of the pen” (35).
Thackeray's narrative strategy, as Siegle points out, makes reading the novel like viewing a sketch.

Even more appropriately, the narrator of *Vanity Fair* is a sketcher. This is nowhere stated, except insofar as it is implied by the novel's subtitle. But Thackeray leaves it for the reader to infer. In Chapter 62, "Am Rhein," the narrator suddenly says, "It was on this very tour that the present writer of a history of which every word is true, had the pleasure to see them first, and to make their acquaintance" (793). We naturally ask who this narrator is and look for clues. Looking back, we notice that the vivid visual detail with which the narrator describes the scene and catalogues the people on the ship over from England is a remarkable break from the dialogue and detached digression of the previous chapters. How is the narrator able to give such a detailed description of the scene? One possibility is that the omniscient novelist is describing it, not the narrator as character. On the other hand, the narrator could have learned of the voyage in Chapter 62 from Dobbin, from whom he learned the details of Amelia's wedding dress years later (263). But the degree of detail, unaccompanied by any explanation, seems more to encourage our inferring that the narrator was himself present: this explanation is not more likely so much as it is simpler and relies less heavily on facts not given. The narrator is, we assume, writing from personal memory, rather than from letters, hearsay, or omniscience.
So he was present on the ship. The narrator could, of course, have been traveling alone. but this seems unlikely: he is with a group of friends when he sees Amelia at the play in Pumpernickel (793). And if he is traveling with friends, would it not have been natural for him to include them in his catalogue of the ship's passengers? The passengers include “children.” “nursemadis.” “gentlemen in travelling caps.” “old veterans.” “young Cambridge men travelling with their tutor.” “Irish gentlemen.” “old Pall Mall loungers.” “old Methuselah” and his young wife. “young May” and “Mrs. Winter.” “Sir John.” the “great grandee Bareacres family.” a “gentleman from Houndsditch.” “a few honest fellows with moustachios and portfolios. who set to sketching before they had been half an hour on board.” “a groom or two.” and “Hebrew gentlemen” (783-84). If the narrator is included in one of these groups. it is clearly most likely that he is one of the “honest sketchers.” The subtitle itself, “Pen and Pencil Sketches of English Society,” sanctions this inference, as do the other characteristics of the narrator that I have outlined above. So does even the most cursory knowledge of Thackeray’s biography and earlier publications. So does the fact that the description of Pumpernickel in the next chapter could be taken out of a book of travel sketches (800 ff.).

There are, I admit, details of the weeks between the voyage and the time the narrator “first saw Colonel Dobbin and his party” in Pumpernickel that can only be described by the
narrator as either historian or omniscient author. There are also slight inconsistencies: he describes George playing on "the roof of Lord Methuselah's carriage" on the ship (786), and even includes an illustration of him doing so, but he then describes him as if for the first time "at the 'Erbprinz Hotel'" (793). The narrative persona is no more coherent in this chapter than in any other. But one of the narrator's three stances, that of character in the story, does receive significant clarification in Chapter 62. Thackeray has waited until this chapter to make full use of his subtitle.

In *Vanity Fair* Thackeray is skeptical of painting, description, and story. The novel is ephemeral, inductive, sentimental, encyclopedic, and overdetermined, and the narrator is flippant, incoherent, and a sketcher. The novel is undoubtedly a literary sketch book, whatever else it may be.

5. reading *Vanity Fair*

So far I have been discussing the form and aesthetic orientation of Thackeray's novel. The question of the use Thackeray made of the idea of the sketch as a novelist, of how its unambiguous status as an inductive, skeptical, and overdetermined literary sketch book affects our reading remains to be answered. There is one manifestation of the painting/sketch
binary in *Vanity Fair* that I have not yet mentioned: the representation of characters in the novel as either paintings or sketches. This is important in *The Newcomes* as well.

Characters are both compared to sketches and paintings and described such that their descriptions resemble either literary paintings or literary sketches. These comparisons tell us more about the idea of the sketch in Thackeray and influence our reading of the novel.

Rebecca treats Amelia like a painting at one point. we are told: “She continued her raptures about little Amelia, talked about her before her face as if she were a doll, or a servant, or a picture” (170). And Dobbin has “but one idea of a woman in his head”:

> there was but this image that filled our honest major’s mind by day and by night and reigned over it always. Very likely Amelia was not like the portrait the major had formed of her: there was a figure in a book of fashions which his sisters had in England and with which William had made away privately, pasting it into the lid of his desk and fancying he saw some resemblance to Mrs. Osborne in the print. whereas I have seen it and can vouch that it is but the picture of a high-waisted gown with an impossible doll’s face simpering over it—and, perhaps, Mr. Dobbin’s sentimental Amelia was no more like the real one than this absurd little print which he cherished. (549)
This passage shows Amelia being thought of as a painting, and there is much in the novel to facilitate this association. Amelia is called Venus (491), and both Georges are called Cupid—they are compared thereby to paintings and sculptures. Her father in law epitomizes cheap grandeur and bad taste. Her husband is described in painterly terms as well. The narrator chides the reader for possibly taking George’s “dullness as manly simplicity.” “his selfishness as manly superiority.” and “his stupidity as manly gravity” (148) as Amelia herself does. George reads of his disinheritance with “a pompous martyr-like air” (302); he marches to collect his patrimony “with his hat on one side, his elbows squared, and his swaggering martial air” (322) and pays his bills “with the splendour of a lord” (324). Before the battle he is “lost in pompous admiration of his own irresistible powers of pleasing” (351). George and Amelia seem a perfect pair of paintings.

But George is not of course the hero he seems to be. Nor is Amelia a heroine, as the narrator constantly reminds us: Dobbin’s mental “portrait” is reduced by the narrator to the equivalent of an “absurd little print.” In other passages Amelia is also described in terms usually associated with the sketch rather than the painting: some of these I have already quoted. “Her simple, artless behavior, and modest kindness of demeanor,” for example. “‘won all their unsophisticated hearts; all which simplicity and sweetness are quite impossible to describe in print’” (325-26). She is “a natural and unaffected person” who has “none of
that artificial shamefacedness” (338). Amelia’s primary characteristic is her weakness: “Her sensibilities were so weak and tremulous, that perhaps they ought not to be talked about in a book” (489): “her nature was to yield” (497):

She was not brilliant, nor witty, nor wise overmuch, nor extraordinarily handsome.

But wherever she went she touched and charmed every one of the male sex. as invariably as she awakened the scorn and incredulity of her own sisterhood. I think it was her weakness which was her principal charm: a kind of sweet submission and softness. which seemed to appeal to each man she met for his sympathy and protection. (489)

Amelia’s weakness has positive appeal. at least to men: “almost all men who came near her loved her” (489). Derogative descriptions of her also employ the terms used to describe and devalue sketches: Amelia is “rather a pleasing young person--not much in her. but pleasing. and that sort of thing” (766). Amelia is in fact sketch-like: those who treat or view her as a painting, including the reader. are shown to be wrong. Amelia has many of the same qualities of the sketch that the novel itself has, and we must appreciate her and the novel in the same ways.

Rebecca is also described as being somewhat sketch-like. She represents herself successfully as an “artless little creature” (556)--Lord Steyne calls her a “poor little
earthenware pipkin” (607). She is diminutive in both size and beauty and therefore succeeds in appearing modest: “She was small and slight in person: pale, sandy-haired, and with eyes habitually cast down . . . By the side of many tall and bouncing young ladies in the establishment. Rebecca looked like a child” (16-17). Rebecca is “the picture of youth, unprotected innocence, and humble virgin simplicity” to Jos (29); she is characterized by “simplicity and activity, and gentleness and good humour” (167). She is even discussed by her detractors in the postscripts of letters (116-17).

But the idea of the sketch is as inappropriate to Becky’s character as that of the painting is to Amelia’s. Becky has never been young: “she never had been a girl, she said: she had been a woman since she was eight years old” (17). This is in fact the tragedy of her character. Becky is unable to transcend the cheapness of the painting, and is often treated as if she were one. She is a painting to Miss Crawley, for example—“She liked pretty faces near her: as she liked pretty pictures and nice china” (169)—and to Squills she is “Green eyes, fair skin, pretty figure, famous frontal development” (233). With cheap objecthood, however, comes a certain degree of power. Becky is as domineering as a painting to her son:

68 This term is borrowed from Michael Fried, who argues that “modernist painting has come to find it imperative that it defeat or suspend its own objecthood” (120).
“Sometimes--once or twice a week--that lady visited the upper regions in which the child lived. She came in like a vivified figure out of the *Magasin des Modes*--blandly smiling in the most beautiful new clothes and little gloves and boots” (477). On one occasion little Rawdon is painting soldiers: “When she left the room an odour of rose, or some other mythical fragrance lingered about the nursery. She was an unearthly being in his eyes, superior to his father--to all the world: to be worshipped and admired at a distance” (477).

She is at these moments a “beautifully-dressed princess”: her own bedroom is “the abode of a fairy to him--a mystic chamber of splendour and delights” (477). She is distant and fantastic to her son, like a painting. Still, though, the narrator’s rhetoric reduces this painterly image of Becky to “figure out of the *Magasin des Modes*,” just as he reduces Dobbin’s mental portrait of Amelia to “absurd little print.” Becky, like Moll Flanders, has only ever wanted to be a gentlewoman, a figure in a painting: “so to be, and to be thought, a respectable woman. was Becky’s aim in life. and she got up the genteel with amazing assiduity, readiness. and success” (600).

Thus like those who take Amelia as a painting, those who regard Becky as a sketch find that they are mistaken. The problem, though, is that while Becky is by far the more interesting character, Thackeray associates her with painting, the subordinated form.

Likewise with Amelia: though she is less interesting, she has qualities that the aesthetic
orientation of the novel justifies and that the novel itself embodies. The result is that the two
women are radically different: they appeal to different aesthetic and epistemological
paradigms and demand our attention equally in different ways. In orchestrating his aesthetics
and his characterization in this way so as to maintain radical difference Thackeray ensured
that his novel would in fact be without a heroine.

6. The Newcomes: from empiricism to bohemia

My second initial question was why Thackeray would have chosen for the hero of The
Newcomes a young man who was a failed painter but a brilliant sketcher: what about the
sketch is heroic? Towards the end of volume one of The Newcomes, when Clive Newcome
and J. J. Ridley are in Rome, the narrator criticizes the two young artists for toiling over
grandiose historical paintings instead of simply sketching what they see around them. And
the narrator himself proceeds to sketch what they are missing:

In every street there were scores of pictures of the graceful characteristic Italian life,
which our painters seem one and all to reject, preferring to depict their quack
brigands. Contadini. Pifferari and the like. because Thompson painted them before
Jones. and Jones before Thompson, and so on. backwards in time. There were the
children at play. the women huddled round the steps of the open doorways. in the kindly Roman winter. grim portentous old hags. such as Michael Angelo painted.
draped in majestic raggery; mothers and swarming bambins; slouching countrymen. dark of beard and noble of countenance, posed in superb attitudes, lazy, tattered and majestic. There came the red troops. the black troops. the blue troops of the army of priests: the snuffy regiments of Capuchins. grave and grotesque: the trim French abbés: my lord the bishop. with his footmen (those wonderful footmen); my lord the cardinal. in his ramshackle coach. and his two. nay three. footmen behind him!
flunkeys that look as if they had been dressed by the costumier of a British pantomime: coach with prodigious emblazonsments of hats and coats of arms, that seems as if it came out of the pantomime too. and was about to turn into something else. (463-64)
The Roman street scene is encyclopedic and picturesque, and the comparison with a scene in a pantomime blurs the distinction between life and art, between mimesis and ekphrasis. Though Clive does not do what Pendennis suggests, which would be to stay in Rome and sketch the picturesque quotidiant scene as Michaelangelo had done, he does continue sketching: in the second volume of The Newcomes Clive gradually becomes less successful as a painter but more proficient at sketching. Later we are told that Clive "had
considerable talent. and a good knack at catching a likeness. He could not paint a bit. to be sure. but his heads in black and white were really tolerable; his sketches of horses very vigorous and life-like" (577). And Clive’s "sketches" do not include only his drawings: in his letters to Pendennis Clive. like the Vanity Fair narrator. sketches Ethel “with pencil and pen”: he “was for ever drawing the outline of her head. the solemn eyebrow. the nose (that wondrous little nose). descending from the straight forehead. the short upper lip. and chin sweeping in a full curve to the neck. &c. &c. &c.” (569). His letters to his father. written in what the Colonel calls “the modern and natural style” (518). are literary sketches too: “your sketch of the old Russian Princess and her little boy. gambling. was capital. Colonel Buckmaster. Lord Bagwig’s private secretary. knew her. and says it is to a T” (518). Thus we see the Colonel both enjoying the sketches and verifying their accuracy. Clive is never conscious of the significance of his ability to make sketches. The narrator notes that “His drawing was better than his painting (an opinion which, were my friend present. he of course would utterly contradict): his designs and sketches were far superior to his finished compositions” (939). This is consistent with the humble. apologetic tenor of most literary sketch books.

Clive is a sketcher. in part at least. because The Newcomes is a Bohemian novel. In general Thackeray has been seen as being ambivalent toward Bohemia. Laura Fasick writes
that "J.J.'s undeniable seriousness as a painter separates him from the raffish Bohemians against whom Thackeray directs penetrating, though not ferocious, satire" (75, n). Ray argues that Thackeray had some reservations about Bohemian life because he chose a wife from other circles (174-76). and Christopher Kent writes that "since it was part of his own youth he could not disown it, yet he could not view it as the sine qua non of art" (366). As I will suggest here, however, Bohemians are picturesque, and the sketch, the medium of the Sternean sentimental traveller, became that of the Bohemian artist.

Bohemianism, which Thackeray himself introduced to the English-speaking world in the "Vagabond Chapter" of Vanity Fair, received considerable attention in mid-Victorian periodicals. A Westminster Review article by Justin McCarthy called "The Literature of Bohemia" (1863), published in the year of Thackeray's death, is still one of the best treatments of the subject. McCarthy attempts, while tolling the death knell of Bohemianism in France and Britain, to give a sympathetic account of what the Bohemians had accomplished. After illustrating the difference between the "ideal Bohemian," the "true practical philosopher, raising himself, his enjoyments, his hopes, and his ambitions into an

69 Thackeray had described Bohemians in The Paris Sketch Book (43 ff.), but he did not use the term "Bohemians" until Vanity Fair.
atmosphere entirely above that of the common race of men around him,” and the popular conception of that character. “a reckless, ruined person, possessed of some flashes of genius or intellect which give little light to the world, and only lead their owner astray.” McCarthy writes that “A true Bohemian is simply an artist or littérateur who, consciously or unconsciously, secedes from conventionality in life and in art” (32-33). The essentials of Bohemianism, he writes, are “to be young, at least at heart, to be devoted sincerely to art or letters, to be fond of pleasure, and a foe to dullness, monotony, thrift, gentility, and rule of every kind” (35). 

Bohemianism is wholly consistent with empiricism: it rejects general rules, is at least ostensibly nonserious, and is associated with youthful naivete. The word “Bohemian” applied to a wide variety of persons and circumstances, and it was even applied to Thackeray himself: as Anthony Trollope notes in his biographical chapter on the novelist. “Thackeray was a literary Bohemian in this sense.—that he never regarded his own status as certain.

70 Patrick Brantlinger shows that like Bohemia the “New Grub Street” Gissing portrays is also “a condition rather than a place” (25) and offers an illuminating comparison of the two states.
While performing much of the best of his life's work he was not sure of his market, not certain of his readers, his publishers, nor his price: nor was he certain of himself" (17).

Fred Bayhem, as his name is perhaps meant to imply, is a Bohemian sketcher:

"Perhaps Thackeray's Fred Bayhem is the nearest approach Modern English literature affords to a Bohemian." McCarty writes (45). When the Colonel asks Bayhem his profession in Chapter 12 of The Newcomes, he replies: "A barrister, sir, but without business--a literary man, who can but seldom find an opportunity to sell the works of his brains--a gentleman, sir, who has met with neglect, perhaps merited, perhaps undeserved, from his family. I get my bread as best I may" (168). Bayhem plays the role of a court jester in the early chapters of The Newcomes:

He can imitate any actor, tragic or comic: any known Parliamentary orator or clergyman. any saw, cock, cloop of a cork wrenched from a bottle and gurgling of

71 Mudge and Sears call Bayhem "a jolly Bohemian" (13) and refer us to Edmund Yates' Recollections and Experiences, where Yates notes, in explaining an allusion in a poem, that William Proctor Bolland, "a big, heavy, handsome man, of much peculiar humor" was "the original of Fred Bayhem in The Newcomes; and I ventured to reproduce him as William Bowker in Land at Last" (238, n. 16).
wine into the decanter afterwards, bee buzzing, little boy up a chimney, etc. He
imitates people being ill on board a steam packet so well that he makes you die of
laughing: his uncle the Bishop could not resist this comic exhibition, and gave Fred a
cheque for a comfortable sum of money. (162)

Weighing in at "fourteen stone" (161). Bayhem is reminiscent of that hero of the Bohemians
Jack Falstaff, described by his Bohemian biographer Robert Brough in 1858 as that "work-a-
day or journeyman hero, who has had to establish himself in the heroic line from small
beginnings" (1).

And Bayhem is himself a literary sketcher. Later in the novel we learn that he is the
author of "Pulpit Pencillings." "Slight sketches, mental and corporeal, of our chief divines
now in London--and signed Laud Latimer" (578). Bayhem also writes "Art criticisms" and
occasionally "takes a minor theatre, or turns the sportive epigram, or the ephemeral
paragraph" (579). He also enjoys sketches: "What is this? I fancy a ludicrous picture of
myself--he had taken up the sketch which Clive had been drawing--'I like fun, even at my
own expense, and can afford to laugh at a joke which is meant in good humour" (169).

Bayhem is not the only nineteenth-century Bohemian sketcher. McCarthy compares
Henri Murger's descriptions in *Scènes de la Vie de Bohème* (1847-49), which he says is "as
remarkable a life-picture as 'Vanity Fair'" (39), to sketches: the book
does not present a photograph which is literal and truthful in all its details, but a humorous and spirited sketch, true in outline if exaggerated in proportion. As some of the drawings in *Punch*, while obvious caricatures, yet contrive to present really admirable likenesses of most of our public men: so the Bohemian sketches of März, while filled with exaggerations, present, on the whole, a picture as faithful in spirit as it is admirable in execution, of the fantastic corner of Parisian life which they profess to illustrate. (39-40)

Many London Bohemians also wrote sketches. As Kent points out, one reason for this may be that "English Bohemia did not renounce politics in disgust" (366), as the Parisian one did: Dickens and many other hack writers earned their livings as Parliamentary reporters writing character sketches of the politicians. But there were other sorts of Bohemian sketchers. George A. Sala, for example, became well known for his urban sketches in *Household Words*: he also wrote *Twice Round the Clock* (1858), a series of twenty-four chapters on quotidian London in which his "sternest, strongest aim it is to draw from Life.

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72 The most prominent illustrator of *Punch* in its early days was Richard Doyle, who later illustrated *The Newcomes* after resigning from *Punch* for reasons having to do with religion.

73 Sala republished several of these as *After Breakfast; or, Pictures Done with a Quill* (1864).
and from the life only" (103). This is not to suggest that all mid-Victorian sketches were by
Bohemians, but many Bohemians sketched for a living, as Clive does after the dissolution of
his great expectations.

The connection between sketches and Bohemia is that both are essentially
picturesque. Sala’s “A Tour in Bohemia” (Household Words, 1854) makes the association:

“Long hair, and a threadbare coat,” he continues, “are rather picturesque than otherwise”

(500). Another article, “Bohemians and Bohemianism” (Westminster Review, 1865) states
that the Bohemian it will describe is picturesque: it is concerned with “that section of society
... which lives outside of society: the Bohemians, not of Bohemia, but of that world of
which, first in French books, and afterwards in English books, we have lately heard so much”

(241). The writer of this article equates authentic Bohemianism with the picturesque:

“Indeed, the Bohemian who lives out of the world only because he is not fit for it— who
dignifies his natural exile from polite life with the name of Bohemianism—is not picturesque.
and is not—at least for the most part—the kind of man we are to hear of in this essay” (241).

Thus in The Newcomes the Bohemian everyman Dick Tinto, with his “darkling
swagger” and “romantic envelope,” has an instinct for the picturesque:

British art either finds her peculiar nourishment in melancholy, and loves to fix her
abode in desert places; or, it may be, her purse is but slenderly furnished, and she is
forced to put up with accommodations rejected by more prosperous callings. . . . A
boardinghouse, mayhap, succeeds the physician, who has followed after his sick folks
into the new country; and then Dick Tinto comes with his dingy brass-plate, and
breaks in his north window, and sets up his sitters' throne. I love his honest
moustache, and jaunty velvet jacket. his queer figure, his queer vanities, and his kind
heart. Why should he not suffer ruddy ringlets to fall over his shirt collar? Why
should he deny himself his velvet? it is but a kind of fustian which costs him
eighteenpence a yard. He is naturally what he is, and breaks out into costume as
spontaneously as a bird sings, or a bulb bears a tulip. And as Dick, under yonder
terrific appearance of waving cloak, bristling beard, and shadowy sombrero, is a good
kindly simple creature, got up at a very cheap rate, so his life is consistent with his
dress: he gives his genius a darkling swagger, and a romantic envelope, which, being
removed, you find, not a bravo, but a kind chirping soul; not a moody poet avoiding
mankind for the better company of his own great thoughts, but a jolly little chap who
has an aptitude for painting brocade gowns, or bits of armour (with figures inside
them), or trees and cattle, or gondolas and buildings, or what not; an instinct for the
picturesque, which exhibits itself in his works, and outwardly on his person; beyond
this. a gentle creature. loving his friends. his cups. feasts. merry-makings and all good things. (214-15)

Thackeray’s narrator loves Dick Tinto so well. he says in this sentimental description. because he is so sketchable: Tinto has “an instinct for the picturesque” and is himself picturesque: the picturesque “exhibits itself in his works. and outwardly on his person.”

Thackeray’s Bohemianism has the overdetermined quality of Gilpin’s picturesque and of the sketch. A Bohemian. as this passage shows. is one in whom appearance. vocation and character are united—his “life is consistent with his dress.” and his portrayal by the artist is similarly in harmony with both his livelihood and his character. This picturesque aspect of the Bohemian is also emphasized in Scènes de la Bohème. in which Mademoiselle Musette is called a “living poem of youth” (90). At the end of that work. when the ephemeral Bohemia has already passed into the realm of fiction and memory and become tawdry and artificial. Marcel and Musette. out for one last fling. “looked like a bad copy of a masterpiece” (391).

The expression of this overdetermined quality of the Bohemian is one of the primary functions of the overdetermined sketch in The Newcomes. Chapter 24 is the chapter in which the hero and heroine of the novel are unveiled in their fully developed adult forms. and here. appropriately. we find a literary sketch of each of them accompanied by Doyle’s illustration of their reunion. The first is of Clive. who is himself a Bohemian sketcher. “Mr.
Clive is not a Michael Angelo or a Beethoven" (513). the narrator notes: “He for his part had painted no pictures. though he had commenced a dozen and turned them to the wall: but he had sketched. and dined. and smoked. and danced. as we have seen” (513). The "sketch” (304) of this sketcher emphasizes the same sort of care-free Bohemian jolliness that characterizes the sketches of Fred Bayhem and Dick Tinto:

A florid apparel becomes some men. as simple raiment suits others; and Clive in his youth was of the ornamental class of mankind--a customer to tailors. a wearer of handsome rings. shirt studs. mustachios. long hair and the like; nor could he help. in his costume or his nature. being picturesque. and generous. and splendid. He was always greatly delighted with that Scotch man-at-arms in “Quentin Durward.” who twists off an inch or two of his gold chain to treat a friend and pay for a bottle. He would give a comrade a ring or a fine jeweled pen. if he had no money. . . . His laughter cheered one like wine. (303)

Clive Newcome is not the stereotype Bohemian artist. to be sure. for he is wealthy for most of the novel. Though Clive may seem to be what Murger calls an “amateur” Bohemian74 in the first volume. however. he does not desert his craft later on when his

74 Murger describes the “amateur” Bohemian as follows:
father's money is gone. and poverty is the real test of a Bohemian. Clive, as hero, comes to represent the aesthetic ideal of the sketch both in his appearance and in his effect on those around him. His mustachios and long hair give him the extravagant appearance of an artist.

Bohemian life is full of attraction for their minds—to have doubts as to whether each day will provide a dinner, to sleep out of doors while the clouds shed tears of rainy nights, and to wear nankeen in December would appear to make up the sum of human felicity. To enter that paradise they leave their home, or the study which would have brought about a sure result, turning their backs abruptly on an honorable career for the quest of adventures and a life of uncertain chances. But since the most robust can hardly cling to a mode of life which would send a Hercules into a consumption, they throw up the game before long, scamper back in hot haste to the paternal roast, marry their little cousin, set up as notaries in some little town of thirty thousand inhabitants, and of an evening by the fireside they have the satisfaction of telling 'what they went through in their artist days,' with all the pride of a traveller's tale of his tiger hunt.'

(xxvii-xxviii)
and his generosity and sincerity make him instantly liked by all who meet him. But like a sketch there is nothing profound or grand about him. Clive not only sketches and is presented via sketches but is an embodiment of the virtues of the sketch. As with Amelia Osborne, what we and the characters in the novel like about Clive is what we like about the novel. His particular appreciability is made manifest by the form of the novel itself and the narrator's chosen mode of description. This is why it is not enough to say that Thackeray was simply ambivalent towards Bohemianism.

This is not to imply, however, that all the sketches in the novel are of Bohemians. Following this "sketch" of Clive is a long description of Ethel, also referred to explicitly as a sketch by the narrator:

And now let the artist, if he has succeeded in drawing Clive to his liking, cut a fresh pencil and give us a likeness of Ethel. She is seventeen years old; rather taller than

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75 Only Barnes Newcome dislikes Clive. This is clearly related to the fact that the aristocracy consider themselves above looking at sketches (561, 632).

76 This is the opening sentence from the first edition. Thackeray changed it for the 1864 edition to "We must now say a word respecting the rise and progress of Miss Ethel" (1013).
the majority of women; of a countenance somewhat grave and haughty, but on
occasion brightening with humor or beaming with kindliness and affection. Too
quick to detect affectation or insincerity in others, too impatient of dullness or
pomposity, she is more sarcastic now than she became when after-years of suffering
had softened her nature. Truth looks out of her bright eyes, and rises up armed, and
flashes scorn or denial, perhaps too readily, when she encounters flattery, or
meanness, or imposture... Her hair and her eyebrows were jet black (these latter
may have been too thick according to some physiognomists, giving rather a stern
expression to the eyes, and hence causing those guilty ones to tremble under her lash).
but her complexion was dazzlingly fair and her cheeks were as red as Miss Rosey’s
own, who had a right to those beauties, being blonde by nature. In Miss Ethel’s black
hair there was a slight natural ripple, as when a fresh breeze blows over the melan
hudor—a ripple such as Roman ladies nineteen hundred years ago, and our own
beauties a short time since, endeavored to imitate by art, paper, and I believe
crumpling irons. Her eyes were grey; her mouth rather large; her teeth as regular and

presumably because the idea of the sketch was at odds with the aesthetic of the grand
multivolume novel.
bright as Lady Kew's own: her voice low and sweet; and her smile, when it lighted up
her face and eyes, as beautiful as spring sunshine: also they could lighten and flash
often, and sometimes, though rarely, rain. (307-08)

As in the sketch of Clive, the narrator describes Ethel's appearance and gives her
primary character traits, hauteur, sarcasm and truthfulness, in quick and simple strokes. As
this sketch draws to a close we see Thackeray's narrator, as if to demonstrate the liberties
commonly taken by sketch writers such as Sterne, practically undressing Ethel in his
imagination and encouraging the reader to do the same:

As for her figure--but as this tall slender form is concealed in a simple white muslin
robe (of the sort which, I believe, is called demi-toilette), in which her fair arms are
enveloped, and which is confined at her slim waist by an azure ribbon, and descends
to her feet--let us make a respectful bow to that fair image of Youth, Health, and
Modesty, and fancy it as pretty as we will. (308)

As it ends, the sketch of Ethel, like the one I quoted from The Irish Sketch Book in the
previous chapter (p. 153 above), has the delicately lascivious quality of the Sternean sketch.

But though Ethel is portrayed in the same sketchy tone as Clive is, she is described
more as the sublime heroine of a painting, which is the way Clive never ceases to see her.

Here there is none of the overdetermined picturesque that characterizes sketches of
picturesque Bohemians. Rather, Ethel’s character is so unlike that of the sketch as to constitute irony. This is a sketch not of beauty but of severity and judgment: “The young women were frightened at her sarcasm” (307). The difference in suitability to the narrator’s descriptive mode performs their incompatibility.

7. irony and the ethics of aesthetics

But the portrayal of the Bohemian Clive in picturesque sketches is in fact no less ironic than the sketch of Ethel. Clive is never conscious of the value of the sketch, though he has “a whole gallery of Ethels” “in pencil and pen” in his studio at one point (569). Clive is oblivious to the aesthetic of the sketch and thinks of Ethel as a work of high art. He thinks what a fine historical painting she would make:

‘If I painted her hair. I think I should paint it almost blue, and then glaze it over with lake. It is blue. And how finely her head is joined on to her shoulders!’--And he waves in the air an imaginary line with his cigar. ‘She would do for Judith, shouldn’t she? Or how grand she would look as Herodia’s daughter sweeping down a stair--in a great dress of cloth of gold like Paul Veronese--holding a charger before her with white arms, you know--with the muscles accented like the glorious Diana at Paris--a
savage smile on her face and a ghastly solemn gory head on the dish--I see the picture.

sir. I see the picture!’ (314)

Clive sees women as pictures, and the problem with this aestheticization is made more clear by his remarks to Pendennis about Miss Sherrick, the daughter of the wine merchant:

Why shouldn’t the Sherrick be stupid, I say! About great beauty there should always reign a silence. . . . To be beautiful is enough. If a woman can do that well, who shall demand more from her? You don’t want a rose to sing. And I think wit is out of place where there’s great beauty: as I wouldn’t want a Queen to cut jokes on her throne. (315)

Clive’s habit of regarding women as grand works of art, as Ethel herself makes poignantly clear to her grandmother Lady Kew in their stroll through a picture gallery, is ethically suspect:

The cases of Ethel and Miss Sherrick, however, are by no means equivalent—the latter is compared to the Venus de Milo, while Ethel is considered most suitable for a painting of great action and energy (she is compared repeatedly to “the statue of ‘Huntress Diana’ at the Louvre” [700]).
“I think, grandmamma,” Ethel said. “we young ladies in the world, when we are exhibiting, ought to have little green tickets pinned on our backs, with ‘Sold’ written on them: it would prevent trouble and any future haggling, you know. Then at the end of the season the owner would come to carry us home.” (361).

Later that day Ethel appears with “a bright green ticket pinned in the front of her white muslin frock” and says to her father, “I’m a tableau-vivant, papa. I am No. 46 in the Exhibition of the Gallery of Painters in Water-colours” (362).

The problem Ethel faces here is that thinking of women as works of high art today results in their being sold as such tomorrow. The results of this system are dramatized the later chapters when Lady Clara Pulleyn, who is in love with Jack Belsize, is married off to Barnes Newcome, only to be battered for years before leaving him and her children in disgrace. Clive’s aesthetic, the aesthetic of the masterpiece, is wholly culpable. The ideal he glibly espouses, represented by the grand historical paintings he is always trying to finish, is artificial and dangerous. Lady Kew haughtily explains this to Barnes:

She [Clara] was as gentle and amenable to reason, as good-natured a girl as could be; a little vacant and silly, but you men like dolls for your wives; and now in three years you have utterly spoiled her. She is restive, she is artful, she flies into rages. she fights you and beats you. He! he! and that comes of your beating her! (682)
Barnes beats his wife because she does not turn out to be the doll he thought he married. He wanted a pretty picture who reigns in detached silent majesty over all the proceedings of his house. Can it be anything but ironic that when Barnes's servants come to him with their resignations after his final beating of Clara he is sitting "over his breakfast the next morning--in his ancestral hall--surrounded by the portraits of his august forefathers--in his happy home" (768)?

Every mention of a framed, noble painting in Thackeray's text is to be read as an ironic symbol of hypocrisy in exactly the same way that the grotesque silver coconut tree is an omen signifying the eventual failing of the Colonel's bank (823). Only luck prevents all marriages based on women as paintings from ending as Barnes's does.

If Clive is a failure it is not because his historical painting does not win the prize but because he has naively inherited the logic of Clara's abuse. His characterization, too, is ironic: the difference between what we are led to appreciate in him by Thackeray's style and his appreciation of others is vast. The picturesque overdetermination of his character, the seemingly unified appropriateness of his sketches, his appearance, the mode with which he is described, and Thackeray's style in general, is superficial only: his own actions and

78 More bitterly ironic still, of course, and approaching the sarcastic, is the fact that he later curries favor among his constituents by giving public lectures on women's poetry (860).
aspirations contradict it. Clive marries Rosey for the same reason that Barnes marries Clara—because she is pretty and dull and unlikely, therefore, to cause him much trouble. And his marriage to her, though the circumstances are of course much different, is not much happier than his cousin’s.

Far from being mere decorations in Thackeray’s text, the sketch functions in Thackeray’s text as a tacit alternative to this problem. If the finished painting represents the jaded adult in *Vanity Fair*, the sketch, from the quick urban sketches of Thackeray’s contemporaries to the literary sketches in Chapter 24 to Clive’s own pen and pencil sketches of Ethel, represent an aesthetic of the young and the true rather than of the noble and pretentious: they are the infancy of the fully developed work of art that is the cause of such suffering in the last quarter of Thackeray’s novel. The sketches I have discussed here remind us that a painting, like the little boy in Wordsworth’s Immortality Ode who will soon see the vision “Fade away into the light of common day,” comes first into the world “trailing clouds of glory” (stanza 5). The bright light of the gilt-framed painting shines down on Vanity Fair at midday, but the sketches are those clouds of the dawn.

Neither of the characters who embody the qualities of the sketch, Amelia in *Vanity Fair* and Clive in *The Newcomes*, is particularly admirable or heroic. Sketchers like Paul Kane and Francis Parkman were heroic, but the sketch is not heroic in Thackeray: despite the
deficiencies of the painterly aesthetic. Becky is more exciting than Amelia. and J. J. Ridley is more successful and enviable than Clive. In this way the somber melancholy of Thackeray’s art heightens the appeal of the sketch. The sketch, the better option, gives way to painting, as youth must give way to adulthood, as Bohemia must to business, as the “naked particularity” of Sterne must to the seriousness of Kant. But as Christopher Kent remarks, “regular obituaries are the surest sign that Bohemia still lives” (360).
Conclusion.

Literary sketching is a mode of writing practiced continuously from the empiricists of the eighteenth century through the picturesque travel writers to the Bohemians and periodical essayists of the Victorian period. It is a nominalist, inductive, and skeptical mode that defines itself against notions of literary painting and also against deductive logical patterns. Writing as a sketcher never precluded writing as a painter or a deductivist on other occasions. Ruskin wrote as an empiricist in *The Elements of Drawing* and the first volume of *Modern Painters* but was clearly a deductivist elsewhere. Nor did it entail loyalty to other sketchers: Thackeray satirized Willis, denounced Sterne, and wrote sketches all his life. He clearly did not see Willis and Sterne as being only or simply sketchers--nor was he himself one. Nevertheless, literary sketching is not a vague, undefinable endeavor: sketching is consistently inductive, skeptical, picturesque, and formally overdetermined. Generations of authors committed to empiricist aesthetics wrote literary sketches. Our neglect of the sketch is a consequence of the fact that empiricism has been largely out of fashion since Kant and romanticism.


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