

THE PICKERING MASTERS

The Early Novels of Benjamin Disraeli

Vivian Grey (1826-7)

Edited by
Michael Sanders



ROUTLEDGE


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Volume 1

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General Introduction: Daniel R. Schwarz

Volume Editors: Geoffrey Harvey

Ann R. Hawkins

Miles A. Kimball

Jeraldine R. Kraver

Charles Richmond

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 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2004 by Pickering & Chatto (Publishers) Limited

Published 2016 by Routledge

2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017, USA

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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BRITISH LIBRARY CATALOGUING IN PUBLICATION DATA

Disraeli, Benjamin, 1804–1881

The Early Novels of Benjamin Disraeli. – (The Pickering masters)

I. Title

823.8[F]

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOGING-IN-PUBLICATION DATA

A catalogue record for this title is available from the Library of Congress

ISBN-13: 978-1-85196-736-0 (set)

DOI: 10.4324/9781003192473

Typeset by P&C

CONTENTS OF THE EDITION

VOLUME 1

General Introduction
by Daniel R. Schwarz

Vivian Grey (1826–7)
edited by Michael Sanders

VOLUME 2

The Young Duke (1831)
edited by Miles A. Kimball

VOLUME 3

Contarini Fleming (1832)
edited by Charles Richmond

VOLUME 4

The Wondrous Tale of Aloy (1833)
edited by Geoffrey Harvey

VOLUME 5

Henrietta Temple (1837)
edited by Jeraldine R. Kraver and Ann R. Hawkins

VOLUME 6

Venetia (1837)
edited by Ann R. Hawkins and Jeraldine R. Kraver

Index



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CONTENTS

Textual Policy	viii
General Introduction	ix
Acknowledgements	xxxvi
Introduction	xxxvii
<i>Vivian Grey</i> (1826–7)	1
Book the First	5
Book the Second	27
Book the Third	93
Book the Fourth	139
Book the Fifth	171
Book the Sixth	289
Book the Seventh	389
Book the Eighth	495
Editorial Notes	531
Textual Variants	565
Appendix: The ‘Keys’ to <i>Vivian Grey</i>	685

TEXTUAL POLICY

The novels reprinted in this collection have been prepared using the first editions, with textual variants noted to subsequent authorized lifetime editions. As such we have reproduced the inconsistencies of spelling, use of foreign accents and punctuation which appeared in the first editions. We have also followed the original divisions of the novels, which accounts for inconsistencies between volumes in the separation into books or parts.

Some minor stylistic changes have been made in order to maintain consistency throughout the set. For example, chapter openings are consistently in small capitals and are not indented. Poems and quotations within the text are indented and set in a smaller font than the main text. Where lines originally existed between book and chapter headings these have been indicated by a single line, but inconsistencies in this practice within a volume, or use of double lines, have not been reproduced. Double quotation marks have been used throughout the novels, and spaced en-dashes have been used in place of closed em-dashes.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

I

Disraeli's career as a novelist gives an important if partial insight into his elusive but evolving personality and character. His novels are imagined worlds that reflect and parody aspects of nineteenth-century life, but they are also the psychic and linguistic gestures of a major historical figure. It was while considering Disraeli that Sir Isaiah Berlin wrote: 'A man may not be sincere in his political speeches or his letters, but his works of art are of himself and tell one where his true values lie'.¹ Reading Disraeli's novels we read the biography of his soul. Particularly in the period between 1826 and 1836, the novels are his most revealing *actions* in the sense that they most accurately reflect his doubts and anxieties, his hopes and aspirations. In the novels, Disraeli presented various aspects of his complicated personality as he imagined it at a particular time and place; the novels stand as metaphorical vehicles for which his mind and psyche are the tenors. Coexisting within the novels are conflicting aspects of Disraeli's character: Disraeli the stern moralist and Disraeli the optimist; Disraeli the imaginative man seeking refuge in his fantasies and Disraeli the pragmatist; Disraeli the private man who enjoys introspective moments, and Disraeli the public figure who hides his emotions beneath a façade of nonchalance, and, of course, Disraeli the Jew; Disraeli the victim of anti-Semitism, Disraeli the aggressive spokesman for the Jewish perspective as he saw it. The figure that emerges is not only multidimensional and complex, but almost larger than life. Disraeli as an artist not only captures our imagination because he is a major political figure, but because we recognize, as did his contemporaries, that he was one of the remarkable figures of his era.

Disraeli's literary career spans over half a century, from 1826 to 1880. He published the first volumes of *Vivian Grey* when Scott, Blake, Wordsworth and Coleridge were still alive and before any of the major Victorians, excepting Carlyle, were published. He concluded his career in 1880, a year when Dickens and Thackeray were dead and George Eliot was to die, and Thomas Hardy had already published *Far From the Maddening Crowd* and *The Return of the Native*.

Disraeli's novels tell us something about the history of taste in the nineteenth century. His early novels – *Vivian Grey* (1826–7), *The Young Duke* (1831), *Contarini Fleming* (1832) – met the middle-class desire for revelations of aristocratic life, for romances about bizarre characters in strange lands, and for extreme behaviour on the part of wilful egoists posing as latter-day Byrons. As an outsider, as a man who savoured his own feelings and sought

unusual sensations, the youthful Disraeli saw himself as an heir to Byron and Shelley. But in the later 1830s, Disraeli, like Dickens, responded to audiences who wanted sentiment and sweetness; in *Henrietta Temple* (1837), Disraeli wrote about love between virginal young women and idealistic young men whose motives are temporarily misunderstood because of circumstances beyond their control. Even when he wrote of Byron and Shelley in *Venetia* (1837), he threw the mantle of Victorian respectability over them in spite of his empathy with their unconventionality. In the late 1840s, he met the demand for serious novels that addressed major moral and political ideas. In *Lothair* (1870) he drew upon the public's fascination – rekindled by the conversion of the Marquess of Bute – with the journey from Anglicanism to Roman Catholicism, while in *Endymion* (1880) he responded to the interest in character psychology created by Browning, Eliot and Hardy, which was really part of an inward turning and questioning as the Victorian era passed its high tide of confidence. Throughout his career his fiction fulfilled the nineteenth-century fascination with heroic men; this fascination reflected a need for larger-than-life personalities in an age of uncertainty.

In all his novels, Disraeli revelled in the infinite variety of human personality and enjoyed setting major and minor characters in motion in a dramatic situation for the sheer joy of hypothesizing how they would behave. Young Disraeli particularly admired independent people who, like himself, had dashing, dynamic and idiosyncratic personalities. He wished to experience every conceivable emotion and play every possible role. Thus, in his art, he experimented with kinds of mimesis, ranging from cartoons and stereotypes to psychological realism. He tested a wide range of styles and voices; and even when he was not entirely successful, as in the union of prose and poetry in *Alroy*, we are not sorry he made the attempt. Just as Disraeli tested and discarded a number of political positions as he sought his public role, so as an artist he experimented with a variety of styles and wrote in a multitude of genres. He wrote silver-fork novels (*Vivian Grey*, *The Young Duke*), *Bildungsromane* (*Coningsby* and *Lothair*), a satiric imaginary voyage (*Popanilla*), a *Künstlerroman* (*Contarini Fleming*), a novel of purpose (*Sybil*), an historical romance (*Alroy*) and an historical reminiscence (*Endymion*). In *Coningsby* and *Sybil*, he virtually invented the genre of the political novel in English.

To the reader accustomed to novels constructed upon recurring images and mythic parallels, to novels in which the verbal texture is the crucial ingredient of organization, Disraeli's novels will seem even more loose and unwieldy than the longer novels of Dickens or Eliot. Disraeli's novels are not tightly woven prose poems, but spacious forms in which the author's eye and mind have room to move about. While we read Joyce, Nabokov or Kafka, our attention is focused on every detail because we know that the only possibility of understanding what we are reading depends upon thinking reflectively about the significance of every word. Reading Disraeli's novels is not that kind of experience. It is more like moving from room to room in a large

museum than studying a single painting for hours. The ample length of his novels gives him space to digress when he feels the urge and to develop his characters over a period of years. Despite his penchant for the epigrammatic sentence, Disraeli's unit is not the sentence or even the paragraph, but the dramatic episode. Although his 1840s work focused more upon theme, Disraeli conceived his novels primarily in terms of a central character who is tested by crucial episodes. This is true whether he creates versions of himself or whether he is exploring secondary figures. His imagination functions most effectively when it is engaged by dramatic scenes, particularly those that have a strong visual component: the Young Duke in the gambling den, Lothair's visitation by Theodora's ghost, Coningsby's bold refusal to run for office at Lord Monmouth's behest, the women and children at Diggs's tommy-shop.

Disraeli's novels have been frequently misinterpreted by readers who do not understand the way Disraeli's imagination works. As we shall see, the logic of the first four novels is directed by the moods and values of their creator, and depends not on the separation of author from text, but on the felt presence of the author within the text. If, in a sense, Disraeli at times competes with his characters for his reader's attention, this sets up a fruitful tension. Until the political trilogy, Disraeli's protagonist is usually the outlet for his unique fantasies and passions, while the narrator is usually the objectification of his conscience – his social and moral self – which censors his atavistic energy and impulses. The exuberance of Disraeli's early style cannot fully mask its tendency to pleonasm and pomposity. As he matures, however, he learns to use his style to reflect the psyche of the characters he is describing and, when he wishes, to step aside and comment ironically on that character's thought processes. Yet, until the political trilogy – *Coningsby* (1844), *Sybil* (1845) and *Tancred* (1847) – Disraeli does not submerge his personality and, like a puppeteer on stage, deflects attention from his characters to his own often dominant presence.

II

Disraeli's career as artist and politician should be seen in the context of the Romantic movement. As Harold Fisch has remarked,

Insofar as his novels are the expression of his personal life, his feelings, his scarcely avowed hidden ideals, he achieves an appropriately resonant statement. His novels have the subtle egoism of all true romantics, of Shelley, of Wordsworth, of Milton. His subject is himself: he is Coningsby; he is Contarini Fleming; he is Alroy; he is Tancred; and he is the Wandering Jew, Sidonia. From these varied characters we are able to reconstruct the inner vision of Disraeli, the rich landscape of his dreams, his irrepressible vision of grandeur, of power, but power used for glorious and elevating ends ... Disraeli is certainly an egoist, but if that means that he is impelled by a sense of personal dedication, of election, of being favored and gifted to an almost unlimited degree, and of being charged

with grand tasks and opportunities, then it is the sort of egoism which finds its parallel in the lives of the great romantic poets and dreamers, of Milton, Wordsworth and Shelley.²

In the early novels, Disraeli could dramatize himself as a version of the Romantic figure that tantalized his imagination without sacrificing the public image that he wished to cultivate. To be sure, he might dress unconventionally and play the dandy, but this kind of socially sanctioned rebelliousness was different in kind rather than degree from the imagined social outlawry of Vivian Grey, Alroy and Contarini.

Contarini Fleming and *Alroy* are meant as visions rather than restatements of known truths. Disraeli tries to extend into prose the fusion of politics and philosophy – as well as the range and imaginative energy – of the Miltonic epic and the Romantic masterworks such as Blake’s prophecies, *The Prelude*, *Prometheus Unbound* and *Don Juan*. While Disraeli’s works at times seem bathetic when viewed in the context of this tradition, there can be no doubt that he saw himself in the line of Romantic visionaries that M. H. Abrams has described:

The Romantics, then, often spoke confidently as elected members of what Harold Bloom calls ‘The Visionary Company’, the inspired line of singers from the prophets of the Old and New Testament, through Dante, Spenser, and above all Milton ... Whatever the form, the Romantic Bard is one ‘who present, past and future sees’; so that in dealing with current affairs his procedure is often panoramic, his stage cosmic, his agents quasi-mythological, and logic of events apocalyptic. Typically this mode of Romantic vision fuses history, politics, philosophy and religion into one grand design, by asserting Providence – or some form of natural teleology – to operate in the seeming chaos of human history so as to effect from present evil a greater good.³

Describing the process of writing *Death in Venice*, Thomas Mann recalled:

Originally the tale was to be brief and modest. But things or whatever better word there may be for the conception *organic* have a will of their own, and shape themselves accordingly ... The truth is that every piece of work is a realization, fragmentary but complete in itself, of our individuality; and this kind of realization is the sole and painful way we have of getting the particular experience – no wonder, then, that the process is attended by surprises.⁴

Mann reminds us that the author both creates a text and discovers an aspect of his or her self during its creation. In Disraeli’s first four novels – *Vivian Grey*, *The Young Duke*, *Contarini Fleming* and *The Wondrous Tale of Alroy* – he ‘realized’ aspects of his individuality. Not only did he create imagined worlds in his novels, but the novels played a crucial role in creating his character and personality. In discussing Disraeli’s first four novels, I shall argue that understanding the symbiotic relationship between author and text is an essential condition to appreciating his art.

An 1833 entry in Disraeli's 'Mutilated Diary' shows that the novels compensate for his failure to excel even as they protest against accepted English conventions and manners:

The world calls me 'conceited' – The world is in error. I trace all the blunders of my life to sacrificing my own opinion to that of others. When I was considered very conceited *indeed*, I was nervous, and had self-confidence only by fits. I intend in future to act entirely from my own impulse. I have an unerring instinct. I can read characters at a glance; few men can deceive me. My mind is a continental mind. It is a revolutionary mind. I am only truly great in action. If ever I am placed in a truly eminent position I shall prove this. I could rule the House of Commons, although there would be a great prejudice against me at first. It is the most jealous assembly in the world. The fine character of our English society, the consequences of our aristocratic institutions, renders a *career* difficult.⁵

The subsequent passage in the diary makes it clear that literature is a compensation for the frustration he feels at not being given the opportunity to play a major role in public events: 'Poetry is the safety valve of my passions – but I wish to *act* what I *write*. My works are the embodiment of my feelings. In *Vivian Grey* I have portrayed my active and real ambition: In *Alroy* my ideal ambition: [*Contarini Fleming: A Psychological Romance*] is a development of my poetic character. This trilogy is the secret history of my feelings – I shall write no more about myself.'⁶

Vivian Grey is about the precocious and ambitious title character's efforts to attain political influence through Machiavellian manoeuvres that ultimately fail. If Vivian portrays Disraeli's 'active and real ambition', it was because Disraeli recognized that one aspect of himself savoured power for its own sake. Vivian's sensational and erratic school career has striking parallels to Disraeli's. Vivian's dependence on the cooperation of others reflects Disraeli's own view, in 1826, that a man without wealth, family and power required help to rise to a position of responsibility.

Beckendorff, the major figure in books VI and VII, has a philosophy that Disraeli himself might have articulated at most stages of his career:

A man's Fate is his own temper; and according to that will be his opinion as to the particular manner in which the course of events is regulated. A consistent man believes in Destiny, a capricious man in Chance ... Man is not the creature of circumstances. Circumstances are the creatures of men. We are free agents, and man is more powerful than matter. I recognize no intervening influence between that of the established course of Nature, and my own mind. (VI.7, see this volume, pp. 378–9)

Beckendorff believes a man may shape his own destiny by the sheer force of his will and personality. Beckendorff is the successful version of the egoistic alternative that Vivian, but not his creator, had put behind him. While the

melancholy, disillusioned Grey sees Beckendorff's philosophy as a version of the false principles he once held, Disraeli's narrative voice is impatient with Vivian's ennui and is sympathetic with the bold, idiosyncratic minister.

Disraeli's fiction is never inhibited by those aesthetic conventions that stipulate that differing kinds of mimesis cannot coexist in the same work. The reader's aesthetic pleasure derives in part from the dexterous movement from one kind of narrative to another, and the arousing of expectations that are not fulfilled in the expected way. *Vivian Grey* does not always benefit from its hodge-podge of genres, but in it Disraeli shows how the *pícaro* tale and romance form need not be incompatible with scenes of psychological realism. An example is the scene in which Mrs Felix Lorraine tries to poison Vivian. Gothic melodrama presents the occasion for exploring psychological complexity in a way that recalls Jacobean tragedy. Disraeli may have lacked the vocabulary of modern psychology, but he knew how obsessions, fixations and darker impulses determine human behaviour. In this important regard, Disraeli parted company with the novels of manners and morals that Austen and Fielding had written and put himself in the tradition of Richardson, Emily Brontë and Hardy.

Despite his flamboyant personality (embodied within the text in the narrative voice), Disraeli is quite a conventional moralist in *Vivian Grey*, particularly for one who speaks in the guise of a Byronic iconoclast. Even in this early novel the voice of the unconventional dandy and the passionate romantic is restrained by Disraeli's sense of propriety and a respect for moderation in passions. The early novels show hints of the self-control, intellectual discipline, pragmatism and deference to historical traditions that characterized Disraeli's behaviour in political circles.

In 1826 Disraeli considered himself as Byron's heir, and he wished to be thought of as the New Byron. However, in the 1853 edition, Disraeli made changes to emphasize his condemnation of Vivian by stressing the ironic distance between the narrator and Vivian. Part of Disraeli's embarrassment with Vivian Grey derives from Vivian's abuse of political power and his subsequent disgust with public life. Yet, Disraeli is indebted to Byron's *Don Juan* for his eccentric, arrogant and delightful narrator.

In *The Young Duke*, again we see Disraeli, the dandy and self-styled heir to Byron, imposing traditional standards upon his hero. In *The Young Duke*, Disraeli dramatizes a rebellious temperament only to show that such a temperament must adjust to community standards and renounce some of its individuality. In temperament as well as in politics, the man who first ran as a Radical before converting to Toryism was even in the early 1830s far more conservative than he thought himself.

While Disraeli did not regard *The Young Duke* as part of 'the secret history of his feelings', it is difficult to separate Disraeli from the young Duke's conflict between self-indulgence and responsibility. Disraeli's surrogate, the

narrative voice, vacillates revealingly from a worldly jaded tone to a self-consciousness about his own situation. Disraeli had experienced and enjoyed the extravagant world in which the Duke lives. Thus it may have been crucial to Disraeli's own self-image to show that the Duke's inherent quality protected him from permanent corruption. In any case, the Duke's real self seems immune to the effects of drinking, gambling and adultery. The narrator's self-denigration may be related to Disraeli's disgust with the vapid social world in which he has been living, a world which Disraeli's narrator implies that he, to his regret, belongs. Disraeli's chameleonic speaker is alternately performer, virtuoso and Byronic hero; we attend to his presence and ventriloquism as surely as we do to Thackeray's puppeteer in *Vanity Fair*.

As B. R. Jerman has remarked, *Contarini Fleming: A Psychological Romance* is Disraeli's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. 'Disraeli's fictionalized autobiography ... reflects his own reveries, doubts, miseries, failures and despair, dredged up out of the past and only slightly disguised'.⁷ Disraeli's third novel, published in 1832 when he was still only twenty-seven, mimes his poetic and psychological development. In *Contarini*, external events are a correlative to Contarini's state of mind. Yet, Disraeli is most concerned with creating words and images that reflect his own inner feelings.

Contarini may nominally have an independent existence but he is inseparable from Disraeli's own complex personality and character. Disraeli does not succeed in creating a sufficient distinction between himself and his character. While Contarini is meant to be Disraeli's version of the poetic personality, he is really a representation of Disraeli's own psyche. Disraeli the romantic uses Contarini to dramatize how his own imagination will free his soul from conventions, traditions, systems and false knowledge.

What Disraeli has done is to create a mask whose superficial social circumstances and biography differ from his own, but whose subjective life mirrors his own life. Contarini is born with the advantages Disraeli lacked: nobility, wealth and a politically prominent family. Visions, dreams and fictions occupy young Contarini's mind. In a passage that echoes the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*, Contarini says that he writes in search of 'relief from the overwhelming vitality of Thought in the flowing spirit of Creation' (I.1, see Volume 3, p. 5). Just as he now finds an outlet for his feelings in creative activity, throughout Contarini's life his imagination provides him with solace from stress and turmoil. As Jane Ridley notes, 'Both Vivian Grey and Contarini thrash their enemies, become unpopular, and leave [school] soon afterwards ... At school, Disraeli was taunted, bullied and persecuted for his Jewishness.'⁸

In *Contarini Fleming*, Disraeli divides himself into two characters: Contarini, the imaginative man who responds to impulses, passions and unacknowledged psychic needs, and Contarini's father, Baron Fleming, the pragmatic, rational self who commits himself to public affairs despite his

cynical view of mankind. If Disraeli objectified his imagination in the son, he transferred his will for power to the father. He himself believed in the ability of a forceful individual to shape his own destiny and the course of external events. Disraeli's political philosophy was often based less upon principles than upon the belief that he could act in the best interest of those less perspicacious, intelligent and informed than himself. He believed that the 'natural aristocracy' of ability had the responsibility to lead and to do so in ways that served the interests of the entire people rather than the special interests of privileged classes.

The plot dramatizes, to quote from Contarini's concluding homily, that 'Circumstances are beyond the control of man; but his conduct is in his own power' (VII.2, see Volume 3, p. 294). But Disraeli really believed that circumstances could be significantly influenced by character. The novel's last paragraphs make clear that creativity is not necessarily limited to poetry and may include unspecified activities relating to 'the political regeneration of the country to which I am devoted' (VII.2, see Volume 3, p. 294). For Contarini that is Italy; but within the novel Disraeli uses Italy as a metaphor for England. Disraeli's prophetic tone is an outgrowth of a strain of moral seriousness. Nor must we forget that the 1830s were the period when Brown- ing and Carlyle were self-appointed legislators for the world, a view that owed much to the influence of Shelley. Finally, Disraeli understood that the Reform Act of 1832, which extended the franchise to the middle class, opened the door to people of ability and energy like himself.

The novel is built upon the romantic premise that is voiced to Contarini by the oracular figure Winter: 'Never apologise for showing feeling ... when you do so, you apologise for truth' (I.13, see Volume 3, p. 39). Disraeli may have set the novel in Europe to place it in the tradition of European novels (including Goethe's *Werther* and *Wilhelm Meister* and the works of Chateaubriand and Sénancour) where feeling has epistemological value as the avenue to truth. Indeed he may have tentatively modelled himself on Goethe, who had recognized Disraeli's genius.⁹ Disraeli implies that each man has the capacity to discover his own truth by means of experience, if he is aided by an active imagination. Speaking through Contarini, Disraeli reaffirms the Romantic view that a major source of knowledge is an individual's experience; truth is not in the world outside, but within the self:

I am desirous of writing a book which shall be all truth, a work of which the passion, the thought, the action, and even the style, should spring from my own experience of feeling, from the meditations of my own intellect, from my own observation of incident, from my own study of the genius of expression ... When I search into my own breast, and trace the development of my own intellect, and the formation of my own character, all is light and order. The luminous succeeds to the obscure, the certain to the doubtful, the intelligent to the illogical, the practical to the impossible, and I experience all that refined and ennobling satis-

faction that we derive from the discovery of Truth, and the contemplation of Nature. (I.1, see Volume 3, p. 4)

Contarini's therapeutic and expressive theory of art shows a rare but acute recognition on Disraeli's part of the reasons he wrote fiction. Fiction became for Disraeli the means of ordering and controlling his personality. As he wrote, he rescued what he believed were his real values and emotions from a host of contradictory roles he played as political aspirant, dandy, scandalous novelist and Byronic iconoclast – to say nothing of his private relationships.

For Disraeli, the Jews were a romantic and spiritual people unlike the pragmatic and utilitarian British. Thinking of Disraeli's version of his ancestry stressing his Marrano heritage, Jane Ridley notes: 'He loved to imagine his ancestors as Spanish nobles, privately adhering to the laws of Moses'.¹⁰ *Alroy* is Disraeli's ultimate heroic fantasy. He uses the figure of the twelfth-century Jewish prince, Alroy, as the basis for a tale of Jewish conquest and empire. Disraeli found the medieval world in which Alroy lived an apt model for some of his own values. He saw in that world an emphasis on imagination, emotion and tradition; respect for political and social hierarchies; and a vital spiritual life. *Alroy* anticipates Disraeli's attraction to the Middle Ages in Young England. Writing of the flowering of medieval Jewry under Alroy enabled him to express his opposition to rationalism and utilitarianism.

In fact, the historic Alroy was a self-appointed messiah in Kurdistan during a period of severe tribulation and unusual suffering for the Jews.¹¹ Alroy's father claimed he was Elijah and that his son was the Messiah. Although his actual name was Menahem, young Alroy took the name David, the appropriate name for a king of the Jews, and promised to lead his followers to Jerusalem where he would be their king. Apparently learned in Jewish mysticism, Alroy managed to convince his followers that he could perform supernatural acts. While he scored some victories before he was murdered, probably by his father-in-law, his successes were hardly of the magnitude of his victories in Disraeli's romance.

Since completing *Vivian Grey*, Disraeli had been fascinated by Alroy, the Jew who had achieved power and prominence during Jewish captivity. But perhaps he needed the inspiration of his 1831 trip to Jerusalem to finish *Alroy*. Disraeli wrote in the preface to *The Revolutionary Epick* (1834) that the purpose of *Alroy* was 'the celebration of a gorgeous incident in the annals of that sacred and romantic people from whom I derive my blood and name'.¹² Undoubtedly the tale of a Jew becoming the most powerful man in an alien land appealed to Disraeli, who at the age of twenty-nine had not yet made his political or artistic reputation. Indeed David Alroy's first name evokes visions of the David and Goliath legend, which embodies another victory for a Jewish underdog. Disraeli uses the factual Alroy as a basis for his romance, but extends Alroy's power and prowess and introduces supernatural machinery and ersatz Cabalistic lore and ritual.

Doubtless Disraeli's journey to Jerusalem stimulated his fantasies of revived Jewish hegemony. Moreover, he believed that the Jews are not only an especially gifted race but the most aristocratic of races.¹³ He also believed that the Jewish race is the source of all that is spiritual in European civilization, most notably Christianity. Disraeli's only historical romance, except for *The Rise of Iskander* (1833), resulted from his desire to depict Jews on a heroic scale. But it also derives from the discrepancy between his aspirations and his position in the early 1830s. In Alroy's hyperbolic self-dramatization is the thinly disguised voice of the young frustrated Disraeli who has not yet begun to fulfil the 'ideal ambition' of which he wrote in his diary. Yet with typical Disraelian – and Byronic – emotional resilience, Alroy's early self-pity and ennui give way to the vision of a transformation of his condition: 'I linger in this shadowy life, and feed on silent images which no eye but mine can gaze on, until, at length, they are invested with all the terrible circumstance of life, and breathe, and act, and form a stirring world of fate and beauty, time, and death, and glory' (I.1, see Volume 4, p. 14).

In *Alroy* the evolving pattern of events and circumstances depends upon Alroy's moral health, whereas in *Contarini Fleming* that the character's visions and dreams, and on occasion actual events, depend on his psychological life. Alroy's moral status *determines* the action. Such a pattern, in which a man's behaviour shapes the world, enables Disraeli to reconcile the conflict between his own poetic and political ambition. If Contarini vacillates erratically between imagination and action, Disraeli shows in *Alroy* that the life of action is not incompatible with the imaginative life. For Alroy's political success is dependent upon visions that show how a life of action need not exclude poetic and imaginative impulses. Alroy uses his imagination in the service of his political goals. For example, the catalyst for his original act of rebellion is his insight that, as 'the long posterity of sacred kings', he is not suited for a life of activity (I.1, see Volume 4, p. 15). His imagination creates the fiction of Jewish and personal glory. Killing the city governor Alschiroch who harassed his sister, Alroy's alter ego throughout the novel, is the necessary heroic action which takes him from the imaginative world into the public world. We recall that Disraeli's sister, Sarah, was often his alter ego.

Disraeli wants to create a context where the marvellous is possible. Moreover, he wishes to present himself as an original artist and to flout conventional expectations as to what a work of prose fiction should be. His use of rhythm and rhyme is part of his rebellion against artistic captivity, a captivity created by standards he did not recognize and by what he felt was failure to appreciate his genius. In the original preface to *Alroy*, Disraeli stressed the genius of his achievement, particularly the prose poetry. To stress *Alroy's* kinship with the visionary tradition of the Bible, Disraeli writes in a prophetic tone and biblical rhythms as if he were proposing this text as his contribution to Jewish lore.

Interweaving personal recollections of the East with informed if rather abstruse knowledge of Jewish lore, Disraeli's notes mediate between the text and the audience. The notes become part of the reading experience and give *Alroy* an authenticity as Jewish myth that it lacks as personal fantasy. *Alroy* fuses the myths of the Chosen People, of return to the homeland, and of the long-awaited Messiah. As is appropriate in Judaic tradition, *Alroy* turns out to be a heroic man, but not without human limitations. His demise may be Disraeli's unconscious affirmation of the Jewish tradition that the Messiah has not yet come to redeem mankind. When Jabaster rebukes *Alroy* for not following his mission ('you may be King of Bagdad, but you cannot, at the same time, be a Jew'), a spirit shrieks 'Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin', the words that Daniel interprets upon the wall to mean that God had weighed Belshazzar and his kingdom and found them wanting (VIII.6, see Volume 4, p. 156). Significantly, *Alroy* regains the Jewish title, Prince of Captivity, after he is overthrown as Caliph. In his final suffering and humility, he has achieved the stature that the Jewish exiled prince, Disraeli's metaphor for himself, deserves.

The Jewish desire for a Messiah is not finally fulfilled, but *Alroy* has significance for others, and particularly other Jews, as a historical figure. Miriam's epitaph suggests Carlyle's notion of the value of an heroic figure:¹⁴ 'Great deeds are great legacies, and work with wondrous usury. By what Man has done, we learn what Man can do; and gauge the power and prospects of our race ... the memory of great actions never dies' (X.19, see Volume 4, p. 236). Disraeli the imaginative poet is the heir to *Alroy* the imaginative man. Perhaps, by telling his story of the Jew who rose to prominence in a foreign land, it became more plausible to imagine himself as a political leader. But if *Alroy* is an objectification of Disraeli's ambition, does he not also reflect Disraeli's anxieties and doubts, specifically his fear of his own sensual weakness and a certain paranoia about betrayal? Perhaps he wondered whether, like *Alroy*, he would be found wanting when his opportunity came.

Yet *Alroy* indicates Disraeli's commitment to his Jewish heritage. His surrogate, the narrator, glories in the Jewish victories and in the triumph of the Prince of Captivity over his oppressors. Disraeli's notes show both his knowledge of Jewish customs and his wide reading in Jewish studies. His notes not only demonstrate both to *himself* and his readers that he has the intellectual and racial credentials to narrate Jewish history and legend, but they also give us the perspective of a Jewish scholar who is trying to provide an authoritative edition of the *Alroy* legend. Indeed, Miriam had anticipated the possibility of such a poet-editor: 'perchance some poet, in some distant age, within whose veins our sacred blood may flow, his fancy fired with the national theme, may strike his harp to *Alroy's* wild career, and consecrate a name too long forgotten!' (X.19, see Volume 4, p. 236).

Disraeli's first four novels mime his psyche. His emotions, fantasies, aspirations and anxieties become fictional names, personalities and actions. These novels are moral parables told by himself for himself about ambitious egoists. He dramatizes the political rise and setback of an unscrupulous young man; the moral malaise and subsequent enlightenment of a young English Duke; the flamboyant career of a young Count who is torn between politics and poetry as well as between feeling and intellect; and finally the biography of Alroy, a Jewish Prince who conquers much of Asia only to lose his kingdom and his life as he compromises his principles.

Disraeli uses his early novels, in particular *Alroy* and *Contarini*, as a means of controlling himself, of understanding himself, and of exorcizing flamboyant postures and forbidden emotions. For example, Alroy reflects Disraeli's fantasies of conquest and his will to attain power. In his early novels, the distinction between the external events and the interior visions of the title character blurs. The reason is that both are reflections of the author's subjective life and both are dramatizations of his evolving imagination. In *Alroy*, both the divine machinery and the title character's adventures are the metaphorical vehicles for Disraeli's attitudes and states of mind, and have as little to do with the phenomenal world as William Blake's prophecies.

Like a later self-defined dandy, Oscar Wilde, Disraeli used his literary creations as masks to disguise his wounded sensibilities and as devices to objectify aspects of himself that society would not tolerate. In his fiction, he freed himself from conventions and traditions, from priggishness and condescension, and found room for his fantasies. He discovered an alternative to the turmoil of his personal life in the *act* of creating the imagined worlds of his novels. But Disraeli's early novels are more than the creations of an egoistic, ambitious, yet frustrated young man who found a temporary outlet for his imagination in the fictions he created. For the roles we imagine are as indicative of our real selves as supposedly 'sincere' moments, intense personal relationships, or daily routines. In the early novels the title character and the narrator represent the two sides of Disraeli. While the title character embodies Byronic fantasies of passionate love, heroism and rebellion against society's values, the narrator judges him according to standards that represent traditional values and the community's interest. In the first four books of *Vivian Grey* and in *The Young Duke*, the narrator represents the political and social health of England; in *Alroy*, the narrator speaks for the interest of the Jews even after Alroy has betrayed them. In *Contarini* and in the later books of *Vivian Grey*, Disraeli speaks for a commitment to public life based on ideals rather than cynical self-interest.

III

Venetia (1837) is a thinly disguised novel about fictional versions of Shelley and Byron: Disraeli was in desperate financial straits when he wrote *Venetia*, in part because *Henrietta Temple* (1837), although his most successful novel since *Vivian Grey*, did not produce anything like the revenue he required to pay his debts. He chose for his subjects England's most unconventional recent poetic geniuses, Shelley and Byron, because they gave him an opportunity to embody in fiction his pique that major artists, like himself, were unappreciated if not ostracized. Disraeli saw himself as heir to the tradition of genius which those figures represented to him. By creating fictional versions of Byron and Shelley, he was reaffirming his ties to the Romantic tradition. Because Shelley and Byron were both regarded as disreputable and immoral geniuses by the early Victorian establishment, his choice of subject was both a ploy to attract a voyeuristic audience and a statement about the kind of imaginative and personal life that intrigued him. His major figures, Lord Cadurcis and Marmion Herbert, are modelled respectively on Byron and Shelley. (In the novel Shelley is a generation older, although he was actually three years younger.) The novel fuses the melodrama of the Gothic plot with Disraeli's intensifying interest in the inner workings of the psyche.

In the guise of his fictional counterparts, Herbert and Cadurcis, Disraeli presents both Shelley and Byron as sympathetic figures and extenuates their unconventional conduct. Of course, by giving them other names, Disraeli could have it both ways; Herbert and Cadurcis do not parallel Shelley and Byron, except in the broad outlines of their careers.¹⁵ While Herbert is nominally Shelley after he finally emerges late in the novel, his energies are rather reduced. He becomes both the typical Disraeli wisdom figure and the surrogate father who fulfils the emotional needs of Cadurcis. Cadurcis may be based on Byron, but he is also a recognizable successor to the tempestuous, impulsive, passionate hero of Disraeli's prior novels, the man whose energies are never fully controlled and threaten to undermine their possessor; I am thinking of Contarini, Alroy, Vivian Grey, and even Ferdinand. Shelley and Byron provide Disraeli with models of the rebellious over-reacher to whom he was attracted, without exposing him to possible criticism for creating dissatisfied social misfits. They do so at a time when he was gaining increasing political recognition and when he knew that he was finally close to gaining the seat in Parliament that he had sought and which, after a number of setbacks, he won in 1837. These poets dramatize the direction that he was turning his back upon. Herbert and Cadurcis are the literary and imaginative *Übermenschen* of his imagination.

Both the younger Herbert, and Lord Cadurcis prior to meeting Herbert, represent the self that Disraeli, rather reluctantly but quite consciously, is in the process of putting behind him, while the mature Herbert represents the idealized philosophic, mature man that Disraeli is trying to become. After the

most tumultuous, unconventional life, Herbert discovers that human happiness resides in family ties. The dialogue between Disraeli's two surrogates, Cadurcis and Herbert, is really a dialogue between two aspects of himself. Cadurcis's iconoclastic view, that 'men have always been fools and slaves, and fools and slaves they always will be' (VI.4, see Volume 6, p. 327), parallels one strand of Disraeli's own thinking. Yet, like his character, Disraeli had experienced the erratic fluctuation of public opinion and knew what it was to be in public disfavour (for example, when *Vivian Grey* was ridiculed and lampooned). Herbert, the man who carries individualism to an extreme, renounces his Byronic quest and speaks for Disraeli's commitment to community values.

The ambitiousness of Herbert's vision, if not its profundity, testifies to the kind of cosmic and prophetic view to which Disraeli aspired in the 1830s. If the younger and unseen Herbert is Shelley the rebel and iconoclast, the mature Herbert gives us an insight into the visionary and imaginative pretensions of Disraeli's mind at this time. Like the descent of the angel in *Tancred*, the actual details are unimportant as predictions, but illustrative of the kind of fantasy that Disraeli could articulate and temporarily believe. Yet, as Blake writes, Disraeli was 'one of those actors who enter so deeply into their role that for the time being they suspend belief and really live the part which they enact'.¹⁶

It is extremely significant that Disraeli has the mature Marmion Herbert quote Shelley's famous statement that 'poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world' (VI.8, see Volume 6, p. 344). Self-conscious about his failure to make any mark as a poet, after the first three books of *The Revolutionary Epick* (1834) had been unenthusiastically received, Disraeli wished to establish the legitimacy of his novels. His original preface to *Alroy* in 1832, which boasted of an innovative merging of prose and poetry based on the use of rhyme and rhythm in his romance, reflected his desire that he be taken seriously as an artist, even though he was writing prose.¹⁷ Disraeli evokes Shelley's words to convince both his father and himself of the importance of his creative endeavours. When Herbert says of Cervantes's work, '[Cervantes] is the same to this age as if he had absolutely wandered over the plains of Castile and watched in the Sierra Morena' (VI.1, see Volume 6, p. 311), he is applying Shelley's words that only a poem is 'universal, and contains within itself the germ of a relation to whatever motives or actions have place in the possible varieties of human nature'.¹⁸ Through his character, Disraeli is claiming the same position for prose as Shelley did for poetry.¹⁹ When Herbert quotes Shelley, Disraeli the novelist includes himself in the vast claims for imaginative literature implied by the invocation of Shelley's spirit. Nor is it accidental that Herbert is moved, not by a poet's, but by a novelist's vision of the golden age. It is Disraeli's position that the *imaginative writer*, not merely the poet, combines the roles of legislator and prophet. He would certainly have insisted on the inclusion of novelists in the following statement that

Shelley made of poets in *A Defence of Poetry*: ‘For he not only beholds intensely the present as it is, and discovers those laws according to which present things ought to be ordered, but he beholds the future in the present, and his thoughts are the germs of the flower and the fruit of latest time’.²⁰

Yet in *Venetia* and *Henrietta Temple* (1837), more conventional artistic control and more consistent point of view are achieved at the sacrifice of the double focus upon the teller as well as the tale that was so prominent a feature of the early novels. In the mid-1830s Disraeli moved from rewriting Byron in prose to more traditional concepts of prose fiction. Disraeli was influenced by the eighteenth-century novel with its uneasy balance between romance and realism, between comedy and tragedy, between seriousness and burlesque, between satire and sentimentalism. The *artistic* influence of Byron, particularly *Don Juan* with its undisciplined and extravagant speaker and impulsive and uninhibited energy, virtually disappears (although that influence had played a much lesser role in *Contarini Fleming* and *Alroy* than in *Vivian Grey* and *The Young Duke*). In these middle novels Disraeli wanted his narrator to assume the stance of worldliness and urbanity that he now thought appropriate for tales of aristocratic manners and passions. Such a stance contrasts with the passionate excesses of Lord Cadurcis, Marmion Herbert and Ferdinand Armine, and implicitly comments on their extravagant behaviour until each of these characters is modified by experience to conform to the narrator’s values. On occasion, Disraeli’s former propensity to present himself in his novels as a dramatized personality and performer overwhelms the ironic detachment that he sought.

IV

In order to give a substantive context for the early fiction, we need to turn to Disraeli’s political fiction. In 1834, with his sister Sarah, Disraeli wrote *A Year at Hartlebury: or, The Election*. Published under the pseudonyms Cherry and Fair Star, it is based on Disraeli’s two unsuccessful 1832 election campaigns. The major character, Aubrey Bohun, based on Disraeli, is a Radical who allies himself with the Tories against the Whigs. Bohun’s brilliant maiden speech, his victory against great odds, his ability to captivate able women, and his conviction that he is a great man show how the novel expresses Disraeli’s ‘ideal ambition’. Yet the novel has a darker side that may explain why it was published pseudonymously. Bohun not only enters into an adulterous relationship with a woman, Helen Molesworth, whom he has wooed under false pretences, but is murdered by a jealous rival who had also been his political aide.

Disraeli’s romanticism deeply influenced his political fiction. Writing on Disraeli’s imaginary voyage *Popanilla* (1828), Lucien Wolf has remarked,

Indeed, it is in the anti-Benthamism and anti-Ricardoism of *Popanilla* that we have the first glimpse of the Romanticism which afterwards inspired the ‘Young

England' party, and was turned into channels of practical politics by the struggle against Peel's surrender to Free Trade. There are whole pages of *Popanilla* – especially Chapter IV – which are clearly the raw material out of which was ultimately evolved the anti-Utilitarianism preached by Sidonia in *Coningsby* and by Gerard in *Sybil*.²¹

Although later Disraeli became an advocate of particular positions that he satirizes in *Popanilla*, such as the Corn Laws and the colonial system, this early novella foreshadows many of Young England's values, especially its dislike of materialism and expedience. For example, *Tancred* develops *Popanilla*'s disdain for a culture that reduces man to a machine and that glorifies reason and logic at the expense of mystery and imagination.

As Blake has observed, Young England was 'a sort of nostalgic escape from the disagreeable present to the agreeable but imaginary past'.²² Young England was a movement in the early 1840s which despised utilitarianism, middle-class liberalism and centralized government. It sought to return England to the feudal and monarchical antecedents of its national youth. While its other two leaders, George Smythe and Lord John Manners, were primarily young aristocrats, Disraeli was the central figure. Now close to forty, Disraeli for the first time had some political importance. George Smythe was a man of great gifts, but uncertain judgment, who was at least in part the model for Coningsby. Lord John Manners lacked Smythe's extraordinary potential and scintillating intellect, but he was a kindly, high-principled man who epitomized the integrity and idealism of Young England. Manners was the model for Lord Henry Sidney in *Coningsby*. Alexander Baillie-Cochrane, the next most prominent figure after Disraeli, Smythe and Manners, was the model for Buckhurst in *Coningsby*. A Scotsman of Disraeli's age, Baillie-Cochrane played a lesser role but was the fourth member of the founding group. Although Disraeli wrote that he was 'the leader of a party chiefly of the youth and new members',²³ Young England was never a numerical factor, only including about a dozen at best; even Disraeli, Smythe, Manners and Baillie-Cochrane, the four central members, did not always agree on major issues.

They sought to form a party composed of the younger, more vigorous members of the Tory party, but Young England never became more than a small group of like-minded Tories who, as Disraeli put it in the 1870 general preface to the collected edition 'Living much together, without combination ... acted together'.²⁴ Although on occasion some of Peel's supporters voted with them on certain issues, Young England never achieved a specific legislative programme. For example, Young England stood firmly for the Corn Laws, even after Peel had begun to waver. As Stephen Graubard has written, 'Young England took upon itself the task of bringing the party back to a greater consciousness of his historic traditions'.²⁵ Typical not only of the kind of community for which Young England longed, but of the romantic nostalgia that formed the basis of their political programme, are the following lines by Manners:

Each knew his place – king, peasant, peer, or priest –
 the greater owned connexion with the least;
 from rank to rank the generous feeling ran
 And linked society as man to man.²⁶

Young England argued that the poor should be cared for by conscientious aristocrats and a responsive Church rather than administrative structures created by Poor Laws. They idealized the role of the Pre-Reformation Catholic Church in creating community ties and in fulfilling community responsibilities.

For Disraeli, Young England was a sustaining personal fiction, a political programme that provided an alternative not only to Chartism and Utilitarianism, but to the practical considerations of advancing his position. Like Disraeli's dream that a coterie of youth would revive England, *Coningsby* reflects a mixture of idealism, fantasy and escapism. But in *Sybil*, Disraeli comes to grips with the economic deprivation experienced by the rural and urban poor and seems to be ambivalent about the notion that one heroic man can make a substantive difference.²⁷

By the time Disraeli wrote *Tancred* in 1846, Young England had virtually disintegrated following the controversy over the funding of the Maynooth Seminary in late 1845. Disraeli sharply disagreed with Peel's proposal to increase the government grant to Maynooth, whose purpose was the education of Catholic priests. Influenced by the Oxford Movement and their family ties to Ireland, Smythe and Manners supported Peel. Disraeli took the opposing position but used the debate as the occasion for a devastating attack on Peel, whom he had never forgiven for passing him over for office in 1840 and whose conduct and politics he attacked in *Coningsby* and *Sybil*.

Disraeli's Young England novels – *Coningsby, or The New Generation* (1844); *Sybil, or The Two Nations* (1845); *Tancred, or The New Crusade* (1847) – are a radical departure from his earlier fiction. Politics were more than a vocation for Disraeli. In the 1840s, his political life seemed to fulfil for him what George Eliot speaks of in *Scenes of Clerical Life* as 'that idea of duty, that recognition of something to be lived for beyond the mere satisfaction of self'.²⁸ For the first time since he began his parliamentary career in 1837, he returned to fiction because he understood the potential of presenting his ideas in an imaginative framework.

Disraeli's general preface, written in 1870, should be understood as a retrospective statement of intention, not as a substantive critical commentary. In that preface, he writes:

The derivation and character of political parties; the condition of the people which had been the consequence of them; the duties of the Church as a main remedial agency in our present state; were the principal topics which I intended to treat, but I found they were too vast for the space I had allotted to myself.

They were all launched in 'Coningsby' but the origin and condition of political parties, the first portion of the theme, was the only one completely handled in that work.

Next year (1845), in *SYBIL, OR THE TWO NATIONS*, I considered the condition of people ...

In recognizing the Church as a powerful agent in the previous development of England ... it seemed to me that the time had arrived when it became my duty to ... consider the position of the descendants of that race who had been the founders of Christianity. Familiar as we all are now with such themes, the House of Israel being now freed from the barbarism of mediaeval misconception, and judged like other races by their contributions to the existing sum of human welfare, and the general influence of race on human action being universally recognized as the key of history, the difficulty and hazard of touching for the first time on such topics cannot now be easily appreciated. But public opinion recognized both the truth and sincerity of these views, and, with its sanction, in *TANCRED OR THE NEW CRUSADE*, the third portion of the Trilogy, I completed their development.

Disraeli's trilogy presents both a political geography and a historical survey of England, and simultaneously suggests how England could experience a political and moral rebirth.

Despite the 1870 preface, we should not forget the intensely personal tone of his later letters. The following comment is quite typical: 'My books are the history of my life – I don't mean a vulgar photograph of incidents, but the psychological development of my character' (27 September 1875).²⁹ Like Tennyson, Carlyle, Mill and Newman, Disraeli responded to a world of moral turmoil with a desperate search for absolutes. That Disraeli's narrators and major characters speak *ex cathedra* in generalizations and abstractions may derive from his desire to emulate in the fabric of his fiction the scope and seriousness of Victorian philosophical and religious tracts. The trilogy of the 1840s is his *Apologia*. Behind the dramatization of the education of Tancred, Coningsby and Egremont lies Disraeli's quest for the principles with which he could structure his public life. He continually asserted dogma to convince himself of its value, although as with Newman, the nature of the dogma was continually in flux. The political ideals discovered by his Young England heroes became, for a time, the tenets of his own political and moral creed.

Disraeli's motives for writing the political trilogy were complex. He undoubtedly wanted to articulate political and moral principles, in part no doubt to erase the notoriety that he had acquired, owing to, as Blake puts it, 'the continued refusal of the *Quarterly Review* even to mention his name, the alleged tergiversations in his early political career, his rickety finances, the extravagancies of his novels ... his mysterious half-foreign appearance, and the virulent abuse, much of which stuck, hurled at him by malignant journalists'.³⁰ He also wanted to establish the importance of Judaism to western civilization.³¹ He created Sidonia as a mouthpiece to argue for the historical significance of the Jewish people in *Coningsby* and in the first two books of *Tancred*. But it is Tancred's pilgrimage to Jerusalem for 'Asian spirituality' and his discovery of the Hebraic basis of Christianity that dramatize Disraeli's

intense personal need to reconcile his Jewish origins with the Christian religion. He believed that Christianity was completed Judaism, although he may have unconsciously taken this position because of his need to justify his own conversion. He argued in *Lord George Bentinck* (1852) that a Jew converted to Christianity professes the 'whole Jewish religion and believes in Calvary as well as Sinai'.³² In his study of Disraeli's Jewish aspect, Cecil Roth writes:

But it seems as though the Christianity which he professed, quite sincerely, in his own mind was not that of the established Church, but a Judaic ethical monotheism, of which the Jew Jesus was the last and greatest exponent. As he put it, Christianity was a developed Judaism and Judaism a preparation for Christianity. Jesus was the ideal scion of the Jewish people ... in whose teachings the Mosaic faith received its culmination, the New Testament being the perfection, and climax, of the Old.³³

Disraeli's self-confidence in part depended upon his belief that the Jews deserved esteem as an especially gifted race. Often, and with considerable justification, Disraeli is accused of political expedience and intellectual legerdemain. But the defence of Jews was an article of faith. Disraeli risked his chances for leadership when he insisted in 1847 that his friend Baron Lionel de Rothschild be allowed to take his seat in Parliament without taking the Parliamentary oath 'on the true faith of a Christian'.³⁴ On that occasion, he invoked arguments similar to those that appeared in both *Tancred* and later in *Lord George Bentinck* to support the Baron's position.

The trilogy explored the possibilities of heroism in an age which is epitomized for Disraeli by Vavasour, a secondary character in *Tancred*, who 'is the quintessence of order, decency, and industry' and who complacently expresses the Benthamite creed that civilization is 'the progressive development of the faculties of man' (*Tancred*, II.14, p. 146–8).³⁵ Coningsby's ambition is admirable and necessary because the adult world into which he is born is corrupt and hypocritical. For Disraeli, as for Carlyle, ambition is not self-intoxication, but a noble quality that directs a man to follow in the heroic footsteps of the great men of history.³⁶

In each novel of the trilogy, Disraeli's persona speaks out as an enlightened and perceptive aristocrat. One implicit premise of the trilogy is that a prophetic voice could arouse the sensibilities of his fellow aristocrats to the spiritual and economic plight of the people and to the need for restoring the monarchy and the Church to their former dignity. Disraeli's surrogate self, the narrator, is implicitly one of those 'primordial and creative mind[s] ... [that could] say to his fellows: Behold, God has given me thought; I have discovered truth; and you shall believe!' (*Coningsby*, II.3, p. 109). The comprehensive political consciousness of the speaker is the intellectual and moral position toward which the hero of each volume of the trilogy finally develops. The narrator empathetically traces the quest of the potential hero (Egremont, Coningsby or Tancred) to discover the appropriate values by

which he can order his own life and fulfil the prominent public role that he feels himself obliged to play. (The complete absence of irony toward the protagonist occasionally has the negative effect of neutralizing Disraeli's wit and vivacity.)

According to Disraeli's intended argument, each of the protagonists overcomes dubiety and anxiety because he convinces himself that he possesses the unique intellectual and moral potential to shape not merely his own life, but the very fabric of historical process. Each protagonist's journey is conceived as an heroic quest to discover the values essential for a new breed of political leaders who will recognize the supremacy of the monarchy and the importance of serving the common people. Coningsby's ambition and self-confidence, Egremont's compassion and consciousness of the miseries of others, and Tancred's spiritual faith and willingness to act on behalf of his beliefs are the ideals to which others (and others for Disraeli meant his aristocratic audience and hence potential political leaders) must strive. The quest for values takes place against the background of Tadpole's and Taper's political expedience; the self-indulgence and arrogance of such aristocrats as Marney and Monmouth; the spiritual emptiness of entire communities such as Wodgate; and the recurring episodes depicting poverty. The trilogy satirizes a decadent aristocracy lacking vitality and a sense of responsibility, and a parliamentary system that seems divorced from the people for whom it is responsible. The satire also focuses on those who, despite their pretensions, are without principles or faith: men like Rigby, Morley and Fakredeem, who betray the protagonists.

Tancred develops some of the social and political themes begun in *Coningsby* and *Sybil*. Tancred journeys to Jerusalem after convincing himself of the superficiality of contemporary English civilization and the futility of its politics. The political world of the Middle East parodies the intrigues of English politics; the major difference is that weapons rather than votes are the method of settling political disagreements.

Tancred is a fictional version of the Victorian spiritual autobiography, epitomized by Newman's *Apologia*, Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* and Tennyson's *In Memoriam*. Along with *Tancred*, several examples of the genre were published within a few years, including Charles Kingsley's *Yeast* (1848), James Anthony Froude's *Shadows of the Clouds* (1847) and Newman's *Loss and Gain* (1848). Mimesis in *Tancred* is based on entirely different assumptions from the rest of the trilogy. As in *Popanilla* and *Alroy*, verisimilitude of time and space is virtually absent. *Tancred* reflects Disraeli's continued admiration of romantic plots. Like Byron's heroes, Childe Harold and Don Juan, or Scott's heroes in his historical romances, Tancred inhabits an imagined world where diurnal details rarely intrude into his quest.³⁷ An imaginary voyage, *Tancred* is loosely held together by the hero's physical journey, which introduces him to incredible people and fantastic places. The novel begins in the present tense in England, but Tancred's crusade is virtually a journey backward in time; he

discovers remote cultures which have religious beliefs and political customs that were in 1847 regarded condescendingly by Christian England: Judaism, pagan worship of the Greek gods and feudalism.

Disraeli may well have believed that the art of *Tancred* demonstrated the ‘imagination’ that was lacking in England. As Blake notes, ‘Disraeli ... belongs to the same strand in nineteenth-century English thought as Coleridge and Carlyle, the romantic, conservative, organic thinkers who revolted against Benthamism and the legacy of eighteenth-century rationalism’.³⁸ As early as *Popanilla*, *Contarini Fleming* and *Alroy*, we can see his distrust of excessive logic and reason. In *Sybil*, Morley illustrates the emptiness of utilitarianism; once his own private designs are thwarted, the greatest good for the greatest number has little appeal, and repressed and unacknowledged atavistic impulses manifest themselves.

Tancred is the most introspective of the trilogy’s heroes, a man who confides in no one and bears the burdens of self-consciousness most acutely; neither drawing-room activities nor contemporary political issues of the day interest him. As a Romantic hero, he pursues what Geoffrey H. Hartman calls ‘the lure of false ultimates’ in the expectation that he will find a ‘final station for the mind’.³⁹ Tancred never finds the resting place he seeks. The process of searching for ‘ultimates’ is his consuming activity. Because he does not really find solace or direction from the angel’s visitation, the novel’s second half dissolves into a spiritual myth of Sisyphus where each new adventure puts him back at the start.

Disraeli’s belief that a man could not fulfil himself in private life, but rather required a position with defined responsibilities to give life meaning, is contrary to the emphasis on private fulfilment through love or communion with nature that pervades much nineteenth-century literature. Egremont fulfils himself as a public man. Although not possessing the heroic potential or personal magnetism of Coningsby or Tancred, he is a more successful representative of the aristocratic resurgence for which Disraeli hoped, because he continually demonstrates his integrity, sympathy and judgement.

Sidonia – note the play on Disraeli’s name – is a Romantic version of the Jewish polymath: if Disraeli the man of action imagines himself as Coningsby, Disraeli the artist views himself as Sidonia, the Jewish polymath who sees more profoundly than his fellows. If Coningsby embodies the romance of youthful political success, Sidonia is the romance of the Jewish outsider who, despite having no position in government, is one of the most important, sophisticated and knowledgeable figures in all Europe. He plays the role that Disraeli most enjoys imagining. Brilliant, worldly and influential, he becomes Coningsby’s intellectual guide.

Sidonia articulates Disraeli’s creed; Coningsby evolves into the man who will carry it out. Often Coningsby articulates ideas that he has learnt directly from Sidonia; in turn they become the thoughts of Coningsby’s friends and followers. Sidonia enables Disraeli to dramatize Coningsby’s education within

the novel's action; for Coningsby is profoundly affected by his conversations with a man who not only knows the history of civilization but is familiar with the intricacies and secrets of every European government. Moreover, Sidonia enables Disraeli to make provocative statements without fully committing himself to them.

Through Sidonia, Disraeli not only establishes the position of Jews, but acknowledges his own Jewish heritage. His readers would have recognized immediately that the first three letters of Sidonia's name reversed the author's and that Sidonia, like his creator, had a three-syllable name with the accent on the second syllable. Disraeli describes Sidonia the way he himself might have been described by one who was favourably disposed to him:

He was ... of a distinguished air and figure; pale, with an impressive brow, and dark eyes of great intelligence ... He spoke in a voice of remarkable clearness; and his manner, though easy, was touched by a degree of dignity that was engaging (*Coningsby*, III.1, p. 114).

Sidonia instils in Coningsby the belief that a young man can be a great leader and that heroism and greatness are possibilities for him.

V

Disraeli's final novels, *Lothair* (1870) and *Endymion* (1880), are generally consigned to oblivion or treated as footnotes to his later years as a political figure. Not only has their merit been ignored, but their importance to students of Disraeli and the Victorian era has been underestimated.⁴⁰ *Lothair* is Disraeli's last effort to cope with the pluralism and dubiety which was becoming so much a part of Victorian life in the late 1860s, while his final novel *Endymion* is an elder statesman's nostalgic reminiscence of what seemed the less complex period of his youth.

Disraeli had ceased writing novels when his imagination found an outlet in directing and organizing his own career, his political party, and the legislative issues before the House of Commons. When we learn of Disraeli's involvement in the political manipulations that preceded the Second Reform Bill (1867), and see him savouring his role as an historic figure, another side of his creativity emerges.⁴¹ If ever a man created an identity it was Disraeli. Disraeli's last novels rediscover the imagination, playfulness and fantasy that had become increasingly submerged during his political odyssey. In these novels, it may be that the creative process – the activity of making fiction – became as important to him as the subject of his fiction, just as the processes of governing and the art of gaining and holding power intrigued him as much as his political goals.

Disraeli's later novels are radical departures from the Young England trilogy of the 1840s that sought to urge a moral and political reformation, while articulating the political and spiritual values on which he wished to predicate

his career. In contrast to the trilogy of the 1840s, these novels do not try to propose a coherent political programme or religious philosophy.⁴² Unlike the dramatization of political and social views in *Coningsby* and *Sybil*, where the correctness or errors of the political views that a character holds are often (but not always, as *Sybil's* Morley illustrates) an index of the character of the man who holds them, in *Lothair*, Disraeli tentatively and dispassionately explores major nineteenth-century epistemological positions. He also resumes his interest in character psychology that we see in the novels of the 1820s and 1830s, but he does so from the perspective of an objective mature observer of the quirks and idiosyncrasies of human behaviour.

In Disraeli's novels prior to the 1840s' trilogy, his interest in character psychology was most prominent when he wrote of Romantic protagonists whom he imagined as surrogates for himself, as he did in *Vivian Grey*, *Contarini Fleming* and *Alroy*. In his early novels, Disraeli had difficulty in detaching himself sufficiently from his protagonists to examine them as fully developed human beings. Because he could not move from immersion to reflection, they turned out to be thinly veiled versions of himself. The trilogy of the 1840s became a means for Disraeli to articulate the political and spiritual values on which he wished to predicate his public career. Not only did age and experience mellow his Byronic impulses, but the Victorian novel's masterful use of the omniscient narrator to probe characters' psyches and its focus on the darker recesses of the mind undoubtedly affected his art in his last two novels. The increased subtlety of Disraeli's character psychology in these novels typifies the developing Victorian awareness – particularly in Browning, George Eliot and, later, Hardy – of the distinction between the public self that one presents to the world and the barely understood, dimly acknowledged private self. Yet since Disraeli had spent his career reconciling disparate aspects of his psyche, and knew from his own experience how the private self had demands that were incongruous with his public identity, he was a precursor of this awareness. In his last novels Disraeli objectively and detachedly examines the psyche of his characters – particularly some of the secondary characters – in terms of obsessions, fixations and compulsions that heretofore were unrecognized in his novels. Even in *Endymion*, which like the earlier works mimes aspects of his life, he is often fascinated with the human psyche for its own sake.

VI

Disraeli's ultimate romantic triumph was his political career. Before he was elected to Parliament, he spoke of the day when he would become Prime Minister. His career was predicated on his ability to imagine himself in a position and then to find the resources to attain that position. Disraeli's career tells us something about the continuities between life and art. Disraeli used his novels

not only to create the political figure he became but also to define his essential character and personality. His first six novels – *Vivian Grey*, *The Young Duke*, *Contarini Fleming*, *Alroy*, *Henrietta Temple*, *Venetia* – were outlets for his fantasies, fears, hopes and doubts. The novels provided him with the sense that he could impose an order on the recalcitrant flow of events. Were it not for his first six novels – his romances about young heroes – written prior to his election to Parliament, he would not have discovered the self he wanted to be. Indulging his fantasy in heroic exploits and passionate love affairs provided a necessary outlet for his frustrated energies. Moreover, he objectified in his protagonists parts of himself that he wanted to exorcize, while creating in his more mature narrator the balance, judgement and character he required to fulfil his political and social ambitions. The early novels compensated for the disappointment at not achieving prominence. In the late 1820s and 1830s he felt that, although he had aristocratic blood and deserved to be esteemed on the grounds of birth as well as merit, his heritage and accomplishments were patronized. As Paul Smith puts it:

What relieved the tension between limitless aspiration and circumscribed prospects was the romantic mode of thought and feeling, whose cult of introspection, fascination with ‘genius’, and sense of preternatural vision presented Disraeli not simply with a handy set of stylistic conventions but with a pattern of self-realisation and with the means to transcend the limitation and frustrations of his position through the power of the romantic imagination to transform the terms of relation to the external world. To Disraeli, with that sense of apartness from his fellows which he seems to have acquired very early in life, romanticism offered a home, membership of a European confraternity, a sense of special election and spiritual aristocracy which may have been a translation of the chosenness he felt, or came to feel, as a Jew.⁴³

Dandyism was another kind of self-dramatization for Disraeli; it fulfilled his need for public attention at the same time as it enabled him to show himself that he was unique. His arrogance, self-assertiveness and flamboyance made him unpopular; yet his novels and his behaviour show that he needed to have love and companionship. When Disraeli created characters within fiction, he created, tested and often discarded tentative models for the various selves which he brought to the disparate social and private roles he was called upon to play.

Disraeli’s compulsion for self-dramatization, extravagance and hyperbole finds an outlet in his political career. When, after he was first elected to Parliament in 1837, he required a forum to articulate his social, political and spiritual principles, he returned to fiction and wrote the Young England trilogy – *Coningsby* (1844), *Sybil* (1845) and *Tancred* (1847). The trilogy was a testing ground for his political and moral philosophy. Young England itself was another of Disraeli’s romantic fictions and, like his novels, enabled him to voice extravagant aspects of his complex and often contradictory political views. As the climax to the trilogy, *Tancred* emphasizes the need to discover

faith and mystery as the bases for political health and proposes a theocracy as the way to reunite man with God and to make government sublime. But *Tancred* is a fairy tale; even in the trilogy, except for most of *Sybil*, Disraeli is still using his novels as escapes from the frustrating world of responsibilities. When he actually achieved power, he ignored the romantic, visionary nostalgic tenets of Young England. Even in these final novels, his personality looms as larger than life. Just as he created a splendid public figure who lived a fantastic career, he created in all his novels characters who often play roles, adopt disguises and undergo radical transformations of status and personality. His novels, like his public career, are about the *art* of creating life.

Daniel R. Schwarz

NOTES

1. Isaiah Berlin, 'Benjamin Disraeli, Karl Marx, and the Search for Identity', *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society*, 22 (1968-9), p. 8.
2. Harold Fisch, 'Disraeli's Hebraic Compulsions' in H. J. Zimmels, J. Rabbinowitz and I. Finestein (eds), *Essays Presented to Chief Rabbi Israel Brodie on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday* (London, Soncino Press, 1967), p. 91.
3. M. H. Abrams, 'English Romanticism: The Spirit of the Age' in Harold Bloom (ed.), *Romanticism and Consciousness: Essays in Criticism* (New York, Norton, 1970), pp. 102-3.
4. Thomas Mann, *A Sketch of My Life*, trans. H. T. Lowe-Porter (1930; 1st American edn New York, Knopf, 1960), pp. 43-4.
5. 'Mutilated Diary', Oxford, Bodleian Library, Hughenden Papers (hereafter Hughenden Papers), box A/III/C. Others who have commented on this crucial entry include: Robert Blake, *Disraeli* (London, Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1966); B. R. Jerman, *The Young Disraeli* (Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1960); William Flavelle Monypenny and George Earle Buckle, *The Life of Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield*, 6 vols (London, John Murray, 1910-20).
6. Hughenden Papers, box A/III/C.
7. Jerman, *The Young Disraeli*, p. 136.
8. Jane Ridley, *The Young Disraeli, 1804-1846* (New York, Crown Publishers, 1995), p. 22.
9. See Monypenny and Buckle, *The Life of Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield*, Vol. I, p. 176.
10. Ridley, *The Young Disraeli, 1804-1846*, p. 10.
11. *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 16 vols (New York, Macmillan, 1971-2), Vol. I, pp. 750-1.
12. Quoted in Monypenny and Buckle, *The Life of Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield*, Vol. I, p. 194.
13. See chapter 24, 'The Jewish Question', in Disraeli's *Lord George Bentinck* (8th edn, revised, London, Archibald Constable & Co., 1905), pp. 314-30.
14. For an extensive discussion of similarities between Disraeli and Carlyle, see Morris Edmund Speare, *The Political Novel: Its Development in England and in America*

- (New York, Oxford University Press, 1924; reissued New York, Russell & Russell, 1966), pp. 170–1.
15. The novel was originally entitled *Venetia, or the Poet's Daughter*; for more on the Byron and Shelley parallel, see Monypenny and Buckle, *The Life of Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield*, Vol. I, pp. 360–4. See also the introduction to Volume 6 in this series.
 16. See Blake, *Disraeli*, p. 288.
 17. With characteristic immodesty, Disraeli speaks of the ‘artist’s’ difficulty in using such a style: ‘[This] style ... is a delicate and difficult instrument for an artist to handle ... He must alike beware the turgid and the bombastic, the meagre and the mean. He must be easy in his robes of state, and a degree of elegance and dignity must accompany him even in the camp and the market-house. The language must rise gradually with the rising passions of the speakers, and subside in harmonious unison with their sinking emotions’ (see Volume 4, p. 8. Also quoted in Monypenny and Buckle, *The Life of Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield*, Vol. I, p. 198). This preface was omitted in later editions.
 18. *Shelley: Selected Poetry, Prose and Letters*, ed. A. S. B. Glover (London, Nonesuch Press, 1951), p. 1030.
 19. Nevertheless, Disraeli probably appreciated the review of *Henrietta Temple* in the *New Monthly Magazine* which observed: ‘In any other age than the present, or even now, had he lived less in society, Mr. Disraeli would have been a poet. He has essentially the poetic temperament – the intense self-consciousness, the impetuosity, and the eye for beautiful’ (quoted in R. W. Stewart (ed.), *Disraeli's Novels Reviewed, 1826–1968* (Metuchen, NJ, Scarecrow Press, 1975), p. 155).
 20. *Shelley*, pp. 1026–7.
 21. Lucien Wolf, introduction to the centenary edition of *The Young Duke* (London, Alexander Moring, 1904–5), p. xiv.
 22. Blake, *Disraeli*, p. 171. Much of this paragraph is indebted to Blake’s chapter 8, entitled ‘Young England’.
 23. This 11 March 1842 letter to his wife is quoted in both Blake, *Disraeli*, p. 173, and Monypenny and Buckle, *The Life of Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield*, Vol. II, p. 130.
 24. The general preface precedes *Lothair* in the Hughenden edition.
 25. Stephen Graubard, *Burke, Disraeli, and Churchill: The Politics of Perseverance* (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1961), p. 115.
 26. Quoted in Alice Chandler, *A Dream of Order: The Medieval Ideal in Nineteenth-Century English Literature* (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1970), p. 161.
 27. See Sheila M. Smith, ‘Willenhall and Wodgate: Disraeli’s Use of Blue Book Evidence’, *Review of English Studies*, n.s. 13 (November, 1962), pp. 368–84; and Sheila M. Smith, ‘Blue Books and Victorian Novelists’, *Review of English Studies*, n.s. 21 (February, 1970), pp. 23–40.
 28. George Eliot, *Scenes of Clerical Life*, Cabinet Edition (Edinburgh, Blackwood and Son, n.d.), pp. 162–3.
 29. *The Letters of Disraeli to Lady Bradford and Lady Chesterfield*, ed. Marquis of Zetland, 2 vols (New York, D. Appleton & Co., 1929), Vol. I, p. 372.
 30. Blake, *Disraeli*, p. 265.
 31. *Ibid.*, p. 202.
 32. Disraeli, *Lord George Bentinck*, p. 324.

33. Cecil Roth, *Benjamin Disraeli* (New York, Philosophical Library, 1952), p. 79.
34. See Blake, *Disraeli*, pp. 258–61.
35. Page references to Disraeli's novels not reprinted in this edition refer to the readily accessible Hughenden Edition (London, Longmans & Green & Co., 1882).
36. See above, n. 14.
37. See Walter Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830–1870* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1957), pp. 325–6.
38. Blake, *Disraeli*, p. 210.
39. Geoffrey H. Hartman, 'Romanticism and Anti-Self-Consciousness' in Bloom (ed.), *Romanticism and Consciousness*, p. 54.
40. While the final novels have been given short shrift, there have been exceptions. Indeed, Robert Blake's *Disraeli* makes exaggerated claims for *Lothair*, regarding it as 'the best of all Disraeli's novels' (p. 518). Marius Bewley has praise for *Endymion*: 'The great trilogy of the 1840s, *Coningsby*, *Sybil*, and *Tancred*, and his last completed novel *Endymion* ... exhibit a comprehensive engagement with life on a very large stage, and a remarkable sympathy with it, to which Disraeli could only have come through his ardent lifelong pursuit of a political career' ('Towards Reading Disraeli', *Prose*, 4 (1972), pp. 5–23). Yet Bewley's essay never again mentions *Endymion*. My discussion takes issue with John Holloway's implicit assumption that Disraeli's chronological development is immaterial. See his penetrating chapter on Disraeli in *The Victorian Sage: Studies in Argument* (New York, Macmillan, 1953).
41. See Blake, *Disraeli*, chapter 21, pp. 450–77.
42. Neither does the fragment *Falconet* on which Disraeli was working in his last months.
43. Paul Smith, 'Disraeli's Politics', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th series, 37 (1987), pp. 71–3.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I should like to thank Lancaster University for allowing me a term's research leave to complete this volume. Thanks are also due to all my colleagues in the Department of English and Creative Writing, particularly Dr Alison Easton, for the support and encouragement which they have given me. The British Academy gave me a research grant which enabled me to consult the manuscript of *Vivian Grey* (MS Eng 840) at the Houghton Library, Harvard. Material from this manuscript is reproduced by kind permission of the Houghton Library, Harvard University, and I should like to thank the librarians and other staff at the Houghton Library for their unfailing courtesy and helpfulness. Thanks are also due to the librarians at the Widener Library, Harvard, the British Library, Lancaster University Library and the public library at Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire. I should also like to thank Melanie Parry, Jenny Marsh, M. Bremser and G. Speake, who are the respective editors of *Chambers Biographical Dictionary*, *Cassell Dictionary of Classical Mythology*, *International Dictionary of Ballet* and *A Dictionary of Ancient History*, and a number of colleagues from VICTORIA-list for their assistance in compiling the notes to this edition. I should like to thank Julie Wilson at Pickering & Chatto for her editorial advice (and patience). Finally, I should like to thank Cathy Cundy, who has had to live with *Vivian Grey*, as well as myself, for the past two years. I am conscious of the fact that this acknowledgement is but scant reward for such an effort!

Michael Sanders

INTRODUCTION

GENESIS AND COMPOSITION OF THE NOVEL

In England, personal distinction is the only passport to the society of the great. Whether this distinction arise from fortune, family, or talent, is immaterial; but certain it is, to enter into high society, a man must either have blood, a million, or a genius. (I.8, p. 21)

The young Benjamin Disraeli was as eager as his fictional creation, Vivian Grey, to effect his entry into high society. Unable to press his claims on the grounds of blood, he had, at first, pursued the route of 'fortune'. Some time in 1824, at the tender age of twenty, Disraeli, in association with two partners, began speculating on South American mining shares.¹ In the late summer of 1824 he also became a central figure in attempts by the publisher John Murray to set up a daily newspaper called *The Representative*.²

Both schemes ended calamitously for Disraeli. Changed market conditions meant that by June 1825 the combined losses of the speculating trio had reached £7,000. The failure of this financial speculation meant that Disraeli was unable to fulfil his obligation to provide a quarter of the capital required to start *The Representative* and his direct involvement with the scheme appears to have come to an end around December 1825.³ Having failed to garner riches and thereby acquire political influence, only the avenue of genius remained open to Disraeli. The origins of *Vivian Grey* can be traced to Disraeli's need to repair some of the damage caused by his initial attempts to enter 'high society' and to find another avenue by which he might gain the public recognition he believed to be his due.

Part *Bildungsroman*, part political novel, part silver-fork, part picaresque and part travelogue, *Vivian Grey* is a novel which defies ordinary generic conventions.⁴ It is also a novel which has a far from conventional publishing history. Originally conceived as a two-volume novel (comprising four books), *Vivian Grey* was published in this form in 1826. Its success, combined with his own pressing financial needs, persuaded Disraeli to write a sequel in three volumes (again comprising four books) which was published in 1827.⁵ (For the rest of this essay 'Part One' refers to the first two volumes and 'Part Two' to the final three volumes of *Vivian Grey*.) Later editions of the novel are a heavily revised and edited combination of Parts One and Two.

Part One begins with Vivian's school career and subsequent self-education in his father's library. Book I closes with Vivian's decision to embark upon a

political career. Book II deals with Vivian's efforts to persuade the Marquess of Carabas, a disaffected and rather ineffectual politician, to form a political faction capable of seizing power. At Château Desir, the residence of the Marquess, Vivian encounters a selection of the rich and powerful (including the enigmatic Mrs Felix Lorraine, the Marquess's sister-in-law), most of whom he succeeds in charming. Book III details Vivian's mission to persuade Frederick Cleveland, a ferocious but brilliant politician and enemy of the Marquess, to become the leader of the proposed faction. Vivian's diplomatic skills convince Cleveland, and the 'Carabas Party' appears to be on the brink of success. However, in book IV, Mrs Felix Lorraine (who has conceived an antipathy towards Vivian) sabotages his work and the Carabas party collapses. Cleveland considers himself betrayed by Vivian and challenges him to a duel. During this duel Vivian accidentally kills Cleveland and afterwards falls into a life-threatening illness. Following his recovery, Vivian departs for the European mainland.

Vivian Grey Part Two deals with Vivian's adventures in Europe. Book V finds Vivian, now purged of ambition, travelling in Germany where he is befriended by Baron von Königstein, a German diplomat. At Frankfurt, Vivian also encounters the conjuror Essper George who inexplicably decides to become Vivian's (unpaid) servant. Vivian, von Königstein and Essper journey to Ems, a fashionable Spa resort, where they meet a travelling English party which includes the aristocratic Lady Madeleine Trevor and her cousin Violet Fane. Vivian falls in love with Violet and succeeds in rescuing her brother from a scheme hatched by the Chevalier de Boeffleurs (a card sharp), and his reluctant accomplice von Königstein. It is clear that Violet returns Vivian's love but his hopes are blighted when she dies at the end of book V. Book VI follows Vivian and Essper as they continue their journey across Germany. After escaping from the alcoholic denizens of the 'Palace of Wines', Vivian rescues the Prince of Little Lilliput from a wild boar. He then becomes the Prince's confidant and adviser during the latter's negotiations with Beckendorff, the eccentric but extremely capable Prime Minister of the state of Reisenberg. Book VII sees Vivian in the Reisenberg capital, where he meets Dr von Spittergen and his daughter Melinda and then is introduced to the Grand Duke of Reisenberg and his consort Madame Carolina. At the Grand Duke's court, Vivian also meets a woman of mysterious origins known only as 'the Baroness'. Vivian and the Baroness fall in love, but their love too is doomed as she is really an Archduchess who is secretly visiting the court of her future husband. The final book, book VIII, sees Vivian leave Reisenberg, ostensibly with the purpose of going to Vienna. After an encounter with an unscrupulous landlord and a corrupt judge, Vivian (still accompanied by Essper) arrives at a castle during wedding festivities. It turns out that the celebrations are for his friend Eugene von Königstein (the nephew of Baron von Königstein). The day following the wedding, Vivian and Essper leave the cas-

tle and are caught up in an apocalyptic storm which destroys the castle and leaves Vivian stranded in its midst.

Critics have generally agreed that coherent plotting is not one of the strengths of *Vivian Grey* as a novel. M. E. Speare, for example, notes ‘the improbability of plot and the incongruities of character ... [the novel makes] no more pretension to probability than does a nursery tale’, while Robert Blake in his biography of Disraeli notes both the improbability and thinness of the plot.⁶

It is certainly the case that the plot of *Vivian Grey* has a decidedly provisional feel. Indeed, rather than talk of ‘plot’ it makes more sense to think of the novel as a text which is organized around a series of dramatic episodes and narrative ‘set pieces’ which are not always successfully integrated into a coherent whole. It is tempting to argue that much of *Vivian Grey* is of an improvised nature, not least because of the number of hints which the text itself throws out on this point.⁷

Early in the novel the reader is told that Vivian possesses ‘the singular faculty of being able to *improvise quotations*, that is, he could unpremeditatedly clothe his conceptions in language characteristic of the style of any particular author’ (II.1, p. 30). Indeed, it is precisely his ability to improvise ‘a whole passage of Bolingbroke’ (II.1, p. 30) which is central to his rescue of his future political patron, the Marquess of Carabas. Later he improvises the (non-existent) romantic contents of letters from Cleveland in order to torment Mrs Felix Lorraine. She in turn, upon realizing his deception, warns him ‘not [to] improvise Parliamentary papers!’ (IV.3, p. 153) in his intended future career.⁸

The improvised nature of *Vivian Grey* becomes readily understandable when one considers the speed at which the novel was composed. In later life, Disraeli claimed that he had completed the novel before his twenty-first birthday (i.e. before 21 December 1825). This claim is rejected by Blake on two main counts. Firstly, Blake argues that it is inconceivable that Disraeli would have had the time to write an 80,000-word novel given the demands on his time between August and December 1825. Secondly, Blake notes that as books III and IV are thinly fictionalized accounts of Disraeli’s involvement in the *Representative* affair it makes more sense to assume that they were written after the events they depict had played themselves out.⁹ Lucien Wolf suggests that the first part of *Vivian Grey* (some 80,000 words) was written in just over three weeks early in 1826.¹⁰ Jerman has calculated that the novel’s plot begins in the summer of 1825 and ends in February 1826. He also observes that one of the narrator’s digressions suggests that he has been at work on the novel for six months.¹¹ Furthermore, Jerman notes that Sara Austen’s letters to Disraeli ‘tell us that he was occupied on it [the novel] from at least late February until about the third week in March – a minimum of three and a half weeks’.¹²

THE MANUSCRIPT

Almost the entire manuscript of *Vivian Grey* survives (in the possession of the Houghton Library at Harvard University) and it provides much useful evidence concerning the composition process.¹³ The manuscript is heavily revised in parts, particularly Part Two, but the text is substantially that of the first edition.¹⁴ The Part One manuscript is, in the main, a fair copy. The handwriting is neat and legible and appears to be unhurried until the end of book III, chapter 6, when it becomes noticeably more rushed. The Part Two manuscript appears to be, for the most part, far more hurriedly written than Part One. It contains many more revisions than Part One and a striking feature of the manuscript is the number of times Disraeli uses the verso to add riders to the existing text (a practice which rarely occurs in the Part One manuscript).¹⁵ On the basis of this evidence, it would appear that Part One is a fair copy of a pre-existing second draft whilst Part Two is either a second draft or a draft from notes.

In total, the manuscript contains just over forty major revisions and these may be gathered under the following three headings: late additions to the text, the reworking and/or rearranging of material, and suppressed material. It is worth noting that in each of these categories the bulk of the examples are provided by the second part of *Vivian Grey*.¹⁶ This provides further circumstantial evidence for considering the novel's final three volumes to be less planned and more hurried in their composition than the first two volumes.

However, the most significant late additions occur in the first part of *Vivian Grey*, where they have a major impact on the reader's experience of the narrative. One such addition occurs in book I, chapter 10, where Horace Grey counsels his son against 'endeavouring to be a great man in a hurry', advising him instead to wait until the great social changes currently under way have been effected and to spend that time 'preparing your mind to take advantage of the [new] system, when that system is matured and organized' (I.10, pp. 25–6). Horace Grey also attributes Vivian's desire for immediate success to the 'thirst for sudden wealth ... [which] fosters that wild spirit of speculation which is now stalking abroad ... like the Dæmon in Frankenstein' (I.10, p. 26).¹⁷

The preceding chapter has indeed shown Vivian contemplating the best way of obtaining his 'magnificent ends' and settling on politics as the quickest and surest route to success: 'how many a powerful noble wants only wit to be a Minister; and what wants Vivian Grey to attain the same end? That noble's influence' (I.9, p. 24). The chapter which follows book I, chapter 10, 'The Marquess of Carabas', sees Vivian's 'seduction' of its titular aristocrat (II.1). Without the late addition of chapter 10 the narrative reads like simple wish fulfilment: the desire to find a needy aristocrat (I.9) followed by the acquisition of such a figure (II.1). The addition of chapter 10 not only disrupts this sequence (making it more akin to narrative rather than fantasy), but also

breaks the reader's identification with Vivian. By requiring the reader to consider Horace Grey's opinions (which reflect orthodox social morality), the moral nature of Vivian's ambition is problematized. Finally, Horace's intervention introduces the possibility of failure and thus foreshadows the end of volume two, thereby imparting a greater sense of aesthetic unity to the first part of the novel.¹⁸

Two more significant late additions are made to the epistolary chapter, 'The Vivian Papers' (III.8), and these provide further evidence of the improvisatory nature of parts of *Vivian Grey*. The first consists of an additional comic scene in Hargrave Grey's letter. The second and far more important addition is the letter from Horace Grey which closes the chapter. Earlier in the chapter the manuscript records postscripts to the letters from Cynthia Courtown and Hargrave Grey. Both of these postscripts are crossed through and both concern the receipt of letters (with a clear implication of some kind of scandal concerning the content or the receipt of those letters). Given this conjunction, it is tempting to speculate that the two postscripts were part of a sub-plot subsequently abandoned by Disraeli and that this abandonment necessitated the late addition of the letter from Horace Grey.¹⁹

Horace's interpolation is functionally similar to that in book I, chapter 10 in that he once more offers a warning to his ambitious son. Horace also predicts, far more definitively and presciently, the ultimate collapse of Vivian's scheme: 'The machinery by which you have attained this unnatural result, must be so complicated, that in the very tenth hour, you will find yourself stopped in some part where you never counted on an impediment; and the want of a slight screw, or a little oil; will prevent you from accomplishing your magnificent end' (III.8, p. 136).

The reworking of textual material is a much more noticeable feature of Part Two (again strengthening the case that it was more hurriedly composed than Part One).²⁰ The manuscript shows that Disraeli took particular care over the description of two of his main characters, Essper George and Beckendorff.²¹

In addition, Disraeli reworked three key episodes: Baron von Konigstein's account of his own 'conversion', Violet Fane's death and Beckendorff's speech on Fate. In the case of the Baron's moral regeneration, the revisions tend towards greater detail and ornament. The manuscript's first draft reads:

It was one of those nights which we witness in Italy. The sea was sleeping and the orange and lemon trees which hung over the water from their green banks of myrtle but added fresh lustre to the glistening city.

This passage is then rewritten as follows:

It was one of those nights which we witness in the south. The sea was sleeping and the moon not only shed its light over the orange and lemon trees which hung over the water and their green banks of myrtle but added fresh lustre to the white domes and glittering towers of the city and flooded the distant coast with

light as far as Capua. Behind rose Vesuvius almost without smoke. The man of whom I am speaking had passed this spot on many nights when the scene was not less enchanting but to-night – to-night – something irresistible impelled him to stop – What a contrast to the artificial light and heat and splendour of the Cardinal’s palace. Would it not be wiser to forget the world’s injustices in gazing on scenes like these than in discovering in the licentious halls of Naples the baseness of that tyrant who form the world’s power? (see pp. 629–30)

Finally, it is embellished further:

It was one of those nights which we witness only in the South. The blue and brilliant sea was sleeping beneath a cloudless sky; and the moon not only shed her light over the orange and lemon trees, which, springing from their green banks of myrtle, hung over the water, but added fresh lustre to the white domes and glittering towers of the city; and flooded Vesuvius and the distant coast with light, as far even as Capua. The individual of whom I am speaking, had passed this spot on many nights when the moon was not less bright, the waves not less silent, and the orange trees not less sweet; but to-night – to-night something irresistible impelled him to stop. What a contrast to the artificial light, and heat, and splendour of the palace to which he was returning. He mused in silence. Would it not be wiser to forget the world’s injustice, in gazing on a moonlit ocean, than in discovering in the illumined halls of Naples, the baseness of the crowd which forms the world’s power? (V.8, p. 229)

By way of contrast when Disraeli writes the death of Violet Fane, his revisions alternate between greater embellishment and the excision of ‘poetic’ flourishes.²²

Beckendorff’s speech (which is often seen as an expression of Disraeli’s personal political philosophy) is also revised.²³ It is interesting to note that the revisions increase the daring scepticism of Beckendorff’s philosophy.

Not true: man is not the creature of circumstances. Circumstances are the creatures of men. I recognise no intervening influence more powerful than the human mind. Truth may be stifled – may be distorted – We may be deceived by the invention of cunning deceits as Fates etc, be prevented from using our own powers but that mind that dares to extricate itself from vulgar prejudices dares to believe itself what in this world it in fact is omnipotent – that master mind will invariably find that circumstances are its slaves. (see p. 666)

Sir, I deny it. Man is not the creature of circumstances. Circumstances are the creatures of men. We are free agents, and man is more powerful than matter. I recognize no intervening influence between that of the established course of Nature, and my own mind. Truth may be distorted – may be stifled – be suppressed. – The invention of cunning deceits may, and in most instances does, prevent man from exercising his own powers. They have made him responsible to a realm of shadows, and a suitor in a court of shades. He is ever dreading authority which does not exist, and fearing the occurrence of penalties which there are none to enforce. But the mind that dares to extricate itself from these vulgar prejudices, that proves its loyalty to its Creator by devoting all its adora-

tion to his glory – such a spirit as this becomes a master-mind, and that master-mind will invariably find that circumstances are its slaves. (VI.7, pp. 378–9)

The sceptical nature of this passage is hardly offset by the invocation, a few lines later, of a ‘Creator’.

PUBLICATION AND RECEPTION OF THE FIRST EDITION

In spite of minor disagreements over the exact amount of time taken to write *Vivian Grey*, commentators are agreed on two salient points. Firstly, the novel was indeed, as its narrator claimed, ‘As hot and hurried a sketch as ever yet was penned’ (V.1, p. 172). Secondly, Sara Austen (wife of the solicitor Benjamin Austen, through whom the Disraelis rented Hyde House) played a key role in both its completion and publication. Blake comments that she acted as ‘reader, amanuensis and agent’ and, in the latter capacity, persuaded Henry Colburn to accept *Vivian Grey* for publication.²⁴

Henry Colburn was an unashamedly commercial publisher with a rather dubious reputation. In a striking anticipation of the strategies of twenty-first century publishing conglomerates, he believed that marketing rather than literary quality was the key to good sales. In accordance with this belief he had built an effective ‘puffing machine’. This he set to work fostering a sense of expectation concerning the contents, and an air of mystery concerning the authorship, of *Vivian Grey*.²⁵ Early reports of the novel began to appear from 25 March 1826 onwards and it was published anonymously on 22 April.²⁶

The essence of Colburn’s marketing strategy is made clear by the advance notice given to the novel in the *New Monthly Magazine*, which was owned by him. This notice sought to titillate prospective readers by hinting that the novel was closely drawn from real life: ‘nearly all the individuals at present figuring in fashionable society are made to flourish with different degrees of honour, in the pages of this new work’.²⁷ The obvious inference to be drawn from this – that the author of *Vivian Grey* was intimately connected to ‘fashionable society’ – was also encouraged by Colburn.²⁸

Blake describes *Vivian Grey* as ‘an instant *succès de scandale*’.²⁹ In fact it was a two-fold sensation. Speculation as to who had authored, and who was depicted in, the pages of *Vivian Grey* began immediately. *John Bull* gave the names of six possible authors whilst the *Star Chamber* (a short-lived periodical with which Disraeli was connected) mischievously identified five potential authors and, in addition, published a ‘key’ to its characters.³⁰ However, once the identity of the real author was made known, excitement quickly turned to execration as critics turned their attention to the deception which they felt had been perpetrated upon them by publisher and author alike.³¹

Perhaps the most vicious attack came in the columns of the *Literary Magnet* (published by one of Colburn’s rivals) which, with the unforgiving

certainly of hindsight, ridiculed what it considered to be the pretensions of novel and novelist alike:

The constant aim of the author of *Vivian Grey* is to appear to have mixed in what he calls fashionable society. Hence the most ludicrous affectation of good breeding. Hence ... all the slang and commonplace verbiage peculiar to those pretenders who derive their notions of good society from the housekeeper's room and the servant's hall.³²

Even more wounding was its accusation that Disraeli's 'method' closely resembled the combination of blackmail and literary prostitution practised by Harriette Wilson (the courtesan who had published her own *Memoirs* in 1825). This charge is made twice in the course of the article:

[The author] might, in that spirit of liberal courtesy which distinguished the famous epistle of Harriette Wilson to Mr. Ellice, give his victim the option of buying himself out of his would-be satirical hotch-potch. Here then would be a source of profit open to the adventurer, independently of the forced sale of his lucubrations ... Mr. D'Israeli promises a continuation, and, in the meantime will, if he is industrious turn a penny, although not an honest one, by giving persons the option of buying themselves out of his book.³³

If Disraeli was injured by these attacks (and, as many critics have pointed out, his own fictionalizing of this episode in *Contarini Fleming* suggests that he was) they did little to damage the novel's popularity with the reading public. *Vivian Grey* continued to sell well (Part One went into its third edition just as Disraeli was completing Part Two in manuscript) and in 1853 a revised edition of the novel appeared as the first volume of a new uniform edition of Disraeli's novels produced by the publisher David Bryce.³⁴

SUBSEQUENT REVISIONS

The revised edition of *Vivian Grey* which appeared in 1853 (and which was edited by Benjamin's sister, Sarah) differs markedly from the first edition of 1826–7.³⁵ Literally hundreds of changes were made. Many of these were of minor importance, such as the radical overhaul of the punctuation, a changed policy concerning the use of abbreviations and a relatively systematic pruning of the descriptive excesses of the first edition (in particular Disraeli's habit of employing 'very' as if it were an adjectival prefix). But there are, in addition, somewhere in the region of fifty major textual revisions.³⁶ In the main these changes involve cuts to the text which between them remove approximately 230 of the 1,520 pages of the first, Colburn, edition.³⁷

These major textual revisions vary enormously both in terms of their length and significance. The shortest amounts to around half a paragraph whilst the longest is a full seventy-five pages. A few might be described as incidental, other changes concern literary gossip current in the 1820s but decidedly stale by the 1850s, and some can be seen as the judicious removal of

textual padding.³⁸ Some revisions involve minor adjustments to the plot. In the first edition it is made clear that the Clevelands leave Buckhurst Lodge because of Mrs Felix Lorraine's offensive behaviour (IV.3, p. 152) and that Mr Sherborne inadvertently bears some of the responsibility for Violet Fane's untimely death by encouraging her to dance at the picnic (V.15, p. 284). These points are lost to later editions, as is a minor comic sub-plot concerning Vivian's health (VII.1, pp. 391–3).

Many more revisions involve the excision of comic interludes. Hargrave Gray's letter suffers particularly in this respect, with later readers having to forego the tale of a stolen pork pie, an account of a provincial theatrical performance and a no less shambolic courtroom scene (all of which anticipate Dickens with their sharp eye for mounting absurdity within an ostensibly ordered framework). Other comic episodes involving Beckendorff, Dr von Spittergen and the 'judge from the Danube' are similarly removed from later editions. The comedic element of the novel is further vitiated by the systematic editing out of minor characters. In particular, the loss of Daniel Groves and Mr Sherborne (as well as the 'deaf' inhabitants of the Castle) reduces the comic vitality of the novel. Given the importance of comedy within *Vivian Grey*, the collective importance of these changes is rather more than the sum of their individual parts.

A number of the omitted passages deal with questions of artistic taste. The longest of these occurs when the arrival of Mr Brinkel (an art dealer of dubious reputation) gives the narrator an opportunity to discourse on the formation and organization of the National Gallery (V.2, pp. 184–5). This is immediately followed by a long speech in which Baron von Konigstein questions the reputation of Michelangelo (V.2, pp. 183–9). Later in the novel (V.15, pp. 276–9), Mr Adolphus St John offers his somewhat more frivolous opinions on painting followed, a few pages later, by the narrator's ironic comments on architectural controversies. Finally, Mr Sievers gives Vivian a guided tour of the 'Hall of Sculpture' in Reisenberg (VII.2, pp. 400–2). These passages are more than simple narrative padding. The discourses of both von Konigstein and Sievers are in effect 'mini-lectures', studded with critical discussions of named artists and specific works.³⁹ An example is von Konigstein's opinion of Michelangelo's 'The Last Judgement':

the Gothic conceptions of the middle ages are again served up in the favourite temple of modern Rome, and in a manner in which crude composition seems only to be exceeded by confused arrangement – in which the distracted eye turns to a thousand points, and is satisfied by none – wearied with tints, which though monotonous, are not subdued, and which possessing none of the attractions of colour, seem cursed with all its faults. (V.2, p. 187)

These mini-lectures are likely to have appealed to the 'aspirational' amongst *Vivian Grey*'s first readers.⁴⁰ They impart the kind of knowledge and 'cultural capital' associated with the Grand Tour. The attentive reader of *Vivian Grey*

would at least be able to demonstrate more than a passing knowledge of art and be capable of sustaining a conversation on such matters for a few minutes at least (which in terms of ordinary social intercourse is usually more than sufficient).

Another cluster of omissions deal with philosophy and cultural theory and are, in some respects, functionally similar to those discussed in the preceding paragraph. However, they also shed some interesting light on the young Disraeli's attitudes and ideas, offering glimpses of a lively, sceptical intellect which may explain, in part, the 'radicalism' of his early political career.⁴¹ In VI.6, the narrator offers the following ironic digression on cultural relativism:

The Prince of Little Lilliput thought that mankind were solely created to hunt and to fight; and unless you could spear a boar or owned a commission, you were not included in his list of proper men. We smile at what we consider the narrow-minded ideas of a German Prince; yet, perhaps, if we enquire, we shall find that mankind, on an average, are influenced in all countries by the same feelings, and in the same degree; and the definition of a *gentleman* by a hero of St. James's-Street, if not exactly similar, will not be less unwise and less ridiculous, than the Prince of Little Lilliput's description of a *proper man*. An officer in the guards once told me, that no person was a gentleman, who was not the son of a man who had twenty thousand a year landed property. Convinced that his declaration was sincere, I respected his prejudices, and did not dispute his definition. I should have behaved the same, had I been in Africa, and had a Hottentot dandy declared, that no person was to be visited who dared to devour the smoking entrails of a sheep in less than a couple of mouthfuls. (pp. 365–6)

The passage is daring, even subversive, in equating the attitudes and practices of a 'German Prince', an 'officer in the guards' and a 'Hottentot dandy' (it also suggests the intellectual superiority of the narrator, who is capable of perceiving this fact). In a discussion of philosophy, Mr Sievers sounds like a precursor of the Derridean anti-foundationalist school with his observation, 'Believe me, that the foundations of true philosophy are admissions. We must take something for granted' (VII.3, p. 410).⁴² In the same chapter, Sievers criticizes the 'philosophical historians' who believe that human society is governed by 'an uniform and natural process' which operates independently of human will and agency, and to whom, consequently, 'man is a machine'. His main criticism is this school's refusal to consider 'Accident, and individual character', which Sievers asserts to be 'the two most powerful springs of revolution' (pp. 411–12). While these views are expressed by the narrator and a fictional character, they go some way towards explaining the 'enigma' of Disraeli's early political attitudes. These examples share a sense of a world/social order which is inherently contingent, unstable, uncertain and ever-changing, which in many ways is the antithesis of a 'Tory' world-view with its emphases on the value of unchanging, permanent institutions and hierarchies underpinned by similarly immutable values. Such daring scepticism might shed

some light on the young Disraeli's flirtation with radicalism (and might also explain why these key passages were omitted in later editions).

The final group of textual revisions are those which affect the reader's interpretation of the novel. These usually involve alterations to plot and characters, or the relationships between characters. The first of these concerns the relationship between Vivian and his father, Horace. Book I, chapter 7 of the first edition, which traces the intellectual relationship between the two, is entirely omitted in subsequent editions. This chapter emphasizes the important role played by Horace in Vivian's intellectual development; it is Horace, for example, who introduces Vivian to modern European thought. Its exclusion from the later editions increases the reader's sense of Vivian as an entirely autonomous, self-fashioned, individual.

Similarly, the first edition is far more explicit regarding Vivian's social origins: book I, chapter 8 declares that Horace Grey belonged both by birth and fortune to 'the middling classes' (p. 21). All subsequent editions remove this unambiguous declaration and note instead that Horace Grey's 'reputation ... had always made him an honoured guest among the powerful and great' (see p. 570). The effect of the revision is to render Vivian's precise social location rather more ambiguous. The final alteration to the father-son relationship occurs in book II, chapter 3. Here Horace Grey complacently contemplates his son's progress. His remarks that 'Vivian's new system works rather better than I conceived it would' (p. 39), serves to lower the reader's estimation of the perspicacity of the father. Its omission from later editions greatly strengthens the case, made by some critics, for regarding Horace as the novel's moral touchstone.⁴³

The depiction of the Marquess as an inebriate of limited intellectual ability is also modified in later editions (although these changes came too late to mollify John Murray, who had died in 1848 and who considered the character of the Marquess a defamation of his own character). Two scenes in book II, chapter 17 concerning the formation of the Carabas party are substantially revised. In the first edition the Marquess's opening speech, which is intended to outline the reasons for the formation of the Carabas party, is politically vacuous and more concerned with the passage of alcohol around the table. From the 1853 edition onwards all but one reference to alcohol is expunged and the speech is made more coherent and given a much sharper political focus as the following extracts show:

I naturally ask myself what right, what claims, what, what, what, – I repeat, what right, these governing interests have to the influence which they possess? (Vivian, my boy, you'll find Champagne on the waiter behind you.) (II.17, p. 88)

The question then naturally arises, why a certain body of individuals, who now represent no opinions, should arrogate to themselves the entire government and

control of the country? A second question would occur, how they contrive to succeed in such an assumption? (1870, see p. 590)

It is also one of the rare occasions when a later revision adds material to, rather than excises it from, the text. Later in the chapter the meeting ends with a moment of slapstick comedy as the drunken Lords experience great difficulty on leaving the dinner table, followed by a rambling, incoherent address from the ‘terrifically tipsy’ Marquess to his young protégé. Subsequent editions remove the slapstick and place a far more coherent speech in the mouth of an ostensibly sober Marquess.

In the second part of *Vivian Grey*, three major areas of revision impact on interpretations of the novel, namely changes to the characterization of Baron von Königstein, the deletion of the von Spittergen sub-plot and changes which affect our understanding of Vivian. In respect of von Königstein the revisions tend to increase the ambiguousness of his character. In the first edition, shortly after the Baron is introduced, the reader learns that he is ‘generally in want of money’ and has hatched ‘a very crafty and splendid plan’ to remedy this state of affairs (V.2, p. 184). A further hint that the Baron enjoys a somewhat dubious reputation is given in book V, chapter 7. The excision of both passages in later editions serves to increase uncertainty regarding the Baron’s moral character.⁴⁴ Similarly, in the first edition, when the Baron insists that he is guiltless in respect of Captain Fane’s suicide, he asks Vivian, ‘Dare I ask if you believe me?’ and receives an unambiguous assurance, ‘I do believe you’ (V.13, p. 266). Encouraged by this response, the Baron gives an account of events leading up to Fane’s suicide following which Vivian is seized with anguish upon realizing that he has misread the Baron’s character – ‘[Vivian] had imagined [the Baron] to be a systematic, a heartless villain –’ (V.13, p. 269). Later editions remove Vivian’s clear assurance of his belief in the Baron’s innocence as well as excising details which help to corroborate the Baron’s version of events, leaving the Baron a more ambiguous figure.

The removal of the von Spittergen sub-plot is the single most significant change between the first and subsequent editions. Three entire chapters (book VII, chapters 5–7), amounting to some seventy-five pages, are cut from the later editions.⁴⁵ Whilst the excision of Dr von Spittergen can be seen as the removal of another minor comic character, the disappearance of his daughter, Melinda, has far more serious implications for the novel’s moral scheme. Through his contact with Melinda, Vivian experiences those two tropes of moral rehabilitation, the restorative encounter with Nature and the rediscovery of the importance of familial duty. Intriguingly, and perhaps appropriately given the novel’s historical location, the first of these tropes is characteristically ‘Romantic’ whilst the second is quintessentially ‘Victorian’. Equally intriguing is the fact that, although Vivian recognizes the content of both lessons, he acts on neither. Vivian’s first act on leaving the von Spittergens is to attend a ball at the Royal Palace in Reisenberg (a return to social

artifice) and despite recognizing the claims of duty – ‘Never, until this moment, had he felt how precious, how invaluable, were the possession and the performance of a duty!’ (VII.6, p. 431) – he chooses, ultimately, to continue his travels away from, rather than return to, his home and family. The deletion of this portion of the novel in later editions has serious implications for those critics, such as Wolf and Schwarz, who argue for the presence of a moral scheme in *Vivian Grey*.⁴⁶

The final cluster of revisions to be considered are those affecting our understanding and interpretation of Vivian as a character. All of these changes occur in Part Two of *Vivian Grey*, which suggests that Disraeli found it more difficult to write a penitent, reflective hero than an ambitious, active one. In the opening chapter of book V, the narrator observes that Vivian’s altered view of both the world and himself is founded ‘on a new error’ (V.1 p. 175). This explicit statement, which emphasizes the difference between the narrator and the hero, is missing from later editions. This omission is significant given the importance which the question of the relationship between narrator and hero has assumed in debates surrounding *Vivian Grey*.⁴⁷

The next significant revision occurs at the end of book V, chapter 7. In the first edition, the narrator underlines the extent of Vivian’s psychological recovery and attendant social reintegration. The omission of these remarks in later editions obscures the extent of Vivian’s recovery. A few chapters later, (V.10, p. 239) a long and rather morbid conversation between Vivian and Violet Fane on the subject of illness and death ends with Vivian contemplating Violet’s beauty. Both the conversation and its conclusion strengthen the credibility of the romantic sub-plot which later develops between these two characters. Yet this is followed in the succeeding chapter by romantic confusion – ‘When Vivian awoke ... he found himself in love – with whom, however, was perhaps still doubtful’ (V.11, p. 241). Both passages are omitted in later editions and the novel seeks to present Violet Fane as the sole object of Vivian’s romantic feelings. The effect on the reader is doubly bemusing; firstly because the ‘cross-currents’ of Vivian’s attraction to Lady Madeleine remain in play and secondly, because Violet is rendered a far less substantial character in the later editions, thereby making Vivian’s attraction to her all the more surprising.

The final revision which affects our interpretation of Vivian’s character involves the relocation and revision of what Schwarz describes as a ‘*contemptus mundi*’ passage from book VII, chapter 6 in the first edition to book VI, chapter 7 in subsequent editions. The significance of this change is given an extended analysis in Schwarz’s *Disraeli’s Fiction*.⁴⁸

CRITICAL HISTORY

Discussions of *Vivian Grey*'s literary antecedents often focus on its relationship to two specific genres, namely the 'silver-fork' or 'fashionable' novel and the *Bildungsroman* (or novel of education/development). The silver-fork novel (exemplified by the work of Theodore Hook, T. H. Lister and Mrs Gore) offered tales of the fashionable, aristocratic world to a predominantly middle-class readership. Alison Adburgham has argued that the 'socially ambitious wives' of the rising bourgeoisie (especially manufacturers, City merchants and bankers) were avid readers of this fiction which, in effect, served as guide books or manuals of etiquette.⁴⁹ Andrea Hibbard endorses this view of both the readership and the function of the genre, commenting that '[middle-class readers] consumed silver-fork novels to learn taste and manners vicariously from the authors' lived accumulations of cultural capital'.⁵⁰ However, Winifred Hughes offers a somewhat different account, emphasizing the extent to which the silver-fork novel appealed to its readership's sense of fantasy.⁵¹ In this reading it is as much the aristocracy's exemption from (or disregard for) middle-class strictures as its sumptuous lifestyle which is the object of readers' fascination.

Vivian Grey, with its detailed descriptions of dinner parties, banquets and courtly entertainments, its tales of aristocratic vice and political intrigue, contains many narrative elements familiar to readers of silver-fork novels. However, Daniel Schwarz considers it to be a 'parody' of the genre, whilst Frances Russell Hart argues that it represents the silver-fork novel in a 'phase of self-mockery and self-exploitation'.⁵²

However, if we turn from the issue of content to consider the ideological function of its subject matter, it becomes possible to reconceive *Vivian Grey*'s relationship to the silver-fork novel. One of the most striking aspects of the genre is its ability to articulate the ambivalences attending the historical situation of its middle-class readership. For example, as Hibbard notes, the desire for 'inside knowledge' which would permit emulation of aristocratic behaviour simultaneously underlined middle-class readers' exclusion from such circles.⁵³ Similarly, tales of aristocratic excess and moral latitude allowed readers a vicarious delight in transgression whilst ultimately condemning such behaviour. In short, the silver-fork novel demonstrates the fascination which the aristocracy held for the middle classes. It is no accident that the peak of the genre's popularity (mid-1820s to mid-1830s) coincided with the period of the first Reform Act (1832) which, at least symbolically, marked the end of aristocratic dominance and admitted the middle classes to the political stage.⁵⁴ *Vivian*'s intended political career might also be read as an anticipation of the political settlement reached in 1832 with middle-class talent admitted to the country's ruling circles under an aristocratic hegemony. In this manner the state of Reisenberg, nominally ruled by its Grand Duke but in fact governed by Beckendorff, can be seen as a model polity.

The other generic model often used to characterize *Vivian Grey* is that of the *Bildungsroman*, which first emerged as a distinct literary form in Germany in the second half of the eighteenth century. Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (*Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, 1795–6), often thought of as the exemplary *Bildungsroman*, had been translated into English by Thomas Carlyle in 1824, and given Disraeli's interest in German Romanticism it is possible that he had read Goethe before embarking on *Vivian Grey*. Stanley Weintraub argues that *Vivian Grey* was intended as a similar narrative, describing it as 'a sentimental education into manhood', whilst Charles Richmond suggests that 'Disraeli's emphasis on self-knowledge, self-mastery and self-realization between 1827 and 1832 owes much to *Wilhelm Meister*'.⁵⁵ The novel certainly deals with a young man's quest to find his proper profession. Furthermore, as Daniel Schwarz observes, *Vivian Grey* does represent a new development in English literature as:

one of the earliest examples of a novel in which a person's fundamental character is changed by experience. The more usual stress in prior English fiction was upon experience bringing out latent qualities that had been temporarily in eclipse.⁵⁶

However, *Vivian Grey* is by no means a conventional *Bildungsroman*, not least because Vivian never succeeds in finding his proper place in the world. In particular, both parts of the novel end inconclusively with the hero unmarried and still undecided as to his vocation, which is to say radically unreconciled to the world by the terms of nineteenth-century fiction. To that extent, Schwarz has suggested that *Vivian Grey* is best thought of as a 'parody' of the *Bildungsroman*.⁵⁷ More recently, the critical focus has shifted towards the idea of 'self-fashioning' as the key to understanding the novel. Both Schwarz and Paul Smith have drawn attention to the way in which the novel can be read as an attempt by its author to discover rather than describe his 'true' identity.⁵⁸ Smith, for example, argues that, in his early novels, 'Disraeli was trying ... to fashion [his personality] through the play of intellect and will upon a self extended and objectivized so that work could be done on it'.⁵⁹

Critics have expended considerable energy on the extent to which *Vivian Grey* draws on Disraeli's own experiences. It is generally agreed that Horace Grey is modelled closely on Isaac Disraeli and many other characters are considered to be drawn from life.⁶⁰ Some have speculated on the relationship between Vivian's formal education and that undergone by Disraeli himself. Stanley Weintraub's biography of Disraeli notes that the authorities at the Reverend Cogan's school (which Disraeli attended from 1817 to 1819) wrote to Isaac complaining that his son possessed a 'foreign and seditious mind, incapable of acquiring the spirit of the school'.⁶¹ The language used by the school authorities here is strikingly similar to that used in book I, chapter 4. It is also the case that Disraeli, like Vivian, completed his schooling in his father's library rather than at university.

Lucien Wolf notes that the plot line concerning the formation of the Carabas party is the *Representative* affair ‘transposed to the political key’, and further comments that Vivian’s visit to Cleveland ‘is a close parody of Disraeli’s own mission to Lockhart and Scott as described in his letters to Murray’.⁶² Most critics concur with Wolf’s assessment, with the notable exception of Braun who draws attention to the differences between the life and the fiction in this respect.⁶³ In an undated letter, William Meredith (writing to congratulate Disraeli on *Vivian Grey*) comments:

Of course [the novel] has for me double attraction seeing as I do in each page some event commemorated some conceit embodied in which I have participated or the secret history of which I know.⁶⁴

Part Two draws heavily on Disraeli’s own continental tours (the first undertaken with his father and William Meredith in 1824, the second with the Austens in 1826) and certain passages are almost verbatim quotations from his letters home during these travels.⁶⁵

The question of *Vivian Grey*’s literary value has divided critics. Some recognize the technical weaknesses and failings of *Vivian Grey* while also arguing that the novel possesses many positive features. Schwarz, for example, considers the first edition to be formally innovative, especially with regard to the figure of the narrator.⁶⁶ Other critics, whilst being less positive in their overall account of the work’s merits, have pointed to Disraeli’s ‘genius for creating minor characters’ or have concurred with Schwarz’s assessment that ‘Disraeli’s unit is not the sentence or even the paragraph, but the dramatic episode’.⁶⁷ In contrast, Thom Braun has considerable difficulty in seeing beyond the novel’s failings. After noting that *Vivian Grey* has ‘rightly been ignored by literary critics’, Braun offers the following assessment of Disraeli’s style in the novel:

The style has an undeniably engaging quality, but it also marks out its author to be a novelist limited by his own lack of restraint. It is too much an exercise in artificial extravagance, and its appeal is not so much that of a novel as rather that of a novelty.⁶⁸

The question of the narrative pleasures which *Vivian Grey* offers its readers is equally vexed. On one level *Vivian Grey* is the early nineteenth-century equivalent of contemporary celebrity lifestyle magazines. Part of the pleasure which it offered its original readership is analogous to the pleasures afforded to the readers of such magazines: a glimpse of the lifestyles of the rich and famous. It shares a preoccupation with those commodities which signify success with its references to ‘Nugee coats’, ‘Mantons’ and fashionable resorts.

However, the history of the novel suggests that it offers its readers other forms of narrative pleasure. *Vivian Grey* survived the revelation of its real author, and the persistence of its popularity perplexed even Disraeli, as he admitted in his general preface to the collected edition of his novels published in 1870.⁶⁹ Schwarz, however, sees nothing remarkable in the novel’s success.

He argues that, as a text, it addresses three key aspects of middle-class reading habits in the 1820s: namely, 'a desire for revelations of aristocratic life, for romances about bizarre characters in strange lands, and for extreme behaviour on the part of wilful egoists posing as latter-day Byrons'.⁷⁰

In addition, Schwarz identifies two other sources of readerly pleasure in *Vivian Grey*. The first is generated by the:

ironic relationship between style and substance, between voice and plot, [which] makes the reader question whether moral certainty is possible or desirable and prevents him from feeling confident about his own judgements. Part of the *aesthetic* pleasure in reading *Vivian Grey* is our own inability to gain a moral foothold, our continuing quest for positional assurance.⁷¹

Schwarz also suggests that the generic instability of *Vivian Grey* provides a further (and related) source of pleasure; 'The reader's aesthetic pleasure derives in part from the dextrous movement from one kind of narrative to another, and the arousing of expectations that are not fulfilled in the expected way'.⁷² However, it is far from certain that these pleasures (although undeniably real for academically-trained readers of the present day) were valorized by the novel's nineteenth-century readership.

One source of readerly pleasure in *Vivian Grey* which has gone largely unnoticed is the comic nature of much of the novel. Particularly in its first edition, it abounds with almost every conceivable sub-genre of comedy. It offers social satire in its portrayal of 'London dinners' (II.1, pp. 28–9) and the relationship between the nouveau-riche Mrs Millions and the established aristocratic order. The narrator, by turns sardonic, irreverent and wry, provides another abundant source of humour: 'Mr Boreall ... possessed such a thirst for knowledge, that he never allowed an opportunity to escape him of displaying his ignorance' (II.14, p. 70). At times, Vivian's conversation shares the characteristics of the narrator's discourse. For example, when he is explaining the relationship between culture and economy to Cleveland, he observes:

National prejudices revive, as national prosperity decreases. If the Consols were at sixty, we should be again bellowing, God save the King! eating roast beef and damning the French! (IV.1, p. 143)

Disraeli has a keen sense of the immanent absurdity of formal situations and a subversive streak often surfaces in his representation of officialdom. Baron von Konigstein's 'magnificent gold snuff-box' is, we learn, a present from the King of Sardinia, given in recognition of the Baron's efforts in negotiating the marriage of the King's niece and settling 'the long agitated controversy about the right of anchovy fishing on the left bank of the Mediterranean' (V.2, p. 179)!

Essper George, with his irreverent wit, physical dexterity and skill of mimicry is the novel's finest comic creation. Many of the novel's minor characters are essentially comic figures: from Daniel Groves with his twin catchphrases, 'That's the ground I stand upon' and 'That's my maxim', through Mr

Sherborne with his detestation of the habits, attitudes and tastes of contemporary youth, to Dr von Spittergen who prescribes wine in lieu of medicine. Disraeli also has a sharp eye for comic situations. The culinary chaos which follows Vivian's late arrival for the banquet at Château Desir (II.12, p. 69) and the bamboozling of Mr Mackaw (III.7, p. 121) are two good examples. In both cases the comedy depends largely on the reader's identification with Vivian, whose greater intellectual and verbal dexterity enables him to outwit more literal-minded characters.⁷³

In addition to such linguistic comedy, the novel also contains many examples of 'slapstick' humour, such as Dr Fancia's disruption and destruction of the ceremonial forms and paraphernalia of a leisurely aristocratic breakfast (III.7, p. 123). Physical humour is more predominant in the second part of *Vivian Grey*; particularly in the 'Palace of Wines' sequence, which begins with a drunken porter and proceeds through a variety of physical grotesques (the 'mighty nose' of the Grand Duke of Schloss Johannisberger, the dwarfish Palsgrave of Geisenheim), before culminating in an insane chase in the finest traditions of slapstick comedy (VI.1, pp. 305–6).

One aspect of *Vivian Grey* which deserves greater critical scrutiny is its representation of women characters. In his study, Fritzsche notes two interrelated dynamics in Disraeli's oeuvre, 'the increasing passivity of the hero ... and the increasing importance of the female characters, particularly the heroines'.⁷⁴ In line with this formula, *Vivian Grey* contains an active hero. Admittedly, Vivian himself is far more active in Part One than he is in Part Two, where the increased geographical movement of the hero is in contrast to his own diminished agency. The cast of female characters ranges from his almost invisible mother, through a variety of vain and shallow women such as the Marchioness and Mrs Million, to the beautiful but dying Violet Fane and the equally beautiful but unattainable Archduchess. The only active female characters in the novel are Madame Carolina (whose influence is circumscribed by Beckendorff) and the malicious Mrs Felix Lorraine (whose motivation remains a mystery).

Disraeli is careful to make Vivian irresistible to women. While still in his teens he is conducting 'amourettes' with 'half a score of dames of fashion' (I.8, p. 21). Later in the novel Julia Manvers, Violet Fane and the Archduchess Sybilla all fall in love with Vivian, who returns their feelings. In each case, however, romantic consummation is thwarted: Lady Manvers removes Julia from Château Desir, Violet Fane dies in Vivian's arms, and the Archduchess is already pledged to marry another.

There is a sense then in which the novel's 'romantic plot' mirrors its 'political plot'. In both, Vivian's hopes and expectations are ultimately thwarted by unforeseen circumstances. The novel notes a further connection between the romantic (or more properly the 'erotic') and the political. From the start of his political career Vivian recognizes the importance of seduction. Figuratively speaking, he seduces the Marquess with his talk of a 'Carabas party'.

On a more literal level, he is careful to cultivate the female members of those families which are to form the Carabas party. The correctness of Vivian's course of action in this respect is confirmed by Beckendorff who, according to Mr Sievers, 'as a man, has the greatest contempt for women – as a statesman, looks to them as the most precious of political instruments' (VI.4, p. 341). More tellingly, Vivian views the 'erotic' and the 'political' as competing arenas for the investment of his own libidinal energy:

[Vivian] looked upon marriage as a certain farce in which, sooner or later, he was, as a well-paid actor, to play his part; and could it have advanced his views one jot, he would have married the Princess Caraboo tomorrow. But of all the wives in the world, a young and handsome one was that which he most dreaded; and how a statesman, who was wedded to a beautiful woman, could possibly perform his duties to the public, did most exceedingly puzzle him. (II.10, p. 52)

The novel resists the form of conventional closure which might be provided by the marriage of its hero. In the penultimate chapter Vivian arrives in the midst of the marriage celebrations of his friend Eugene von Konigstein and the end of the chapter sees Vivian experience a quasi-epiphanic moment as he remembers Lady Madeleine Trevor:

Lady Madeleine recurred to him. Suddenly he observed a wonderful appearance in the sky. The moon was paled in the high heavens, and surrounded by luminous rings – almost as vividly tinted as the rainbow – spreading, and growing fainter, till they covered nearly half the firmament. It was a glorious, and almost unprecedented halo! (VIII.4, p. 521)

This eirenic moment, which hints at a possible romantic ending to the novel, is however, immediately followed by Vivian's departure from the castle on a literally pointless quest (he mentions 'the East' as a possible destination) which is interrupted by the apocalyptic storm which closes the novel.

When, in later life, Disraeli was asked what had happened to his hero, he replied that he believed Vivian had survived (and that a coroner's inquest had returned a similar verdict!).⁷⁵ Inevitably, the question of the novel's literary afterlife is a matter for conjecture. Some lines of influence are clear. Blake, for example, contends that Bulwer Lytton's *Pelham* (1828) was 'largely inspired by *Vivian Grey*'.⁷⁶ Ruth Leigh Hudson has traced the literary relationship between Poe and Disraeli, noting in particular (following J. S. Wilson) that the former's short story 'King Pest' is a burlesque of the Palace of Wines episode in *Vivian Grey*.⁷⁷ Charles C. Nickerson, noting Oscar Wilde's teenage enthusiasm for Disraeli's novels, suggests *Vivian Grey* as a possible source for *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891). Nickerson points to the phonic similarities between the pairings of Vivian Grey/Violet Fane and Dorian Gray/Sybil Vane and notes the presence of a supernatural portrait in *Vivian Grey*.⁷⁸

More tentatively, Schwarz has proposed *Vivian Grey* as a possible influence on Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (1848).⁷⁹ With similar caution I would also like to suggest that *Vivian Grey*'s influence can be detected in Charles Dickens's *Little*

Dorrit (1857) and Anthony Trollope's *Phineas Finn* (1869). Mr Premium 'the celebrated loanmonger' who holds lavish receptions at which he is 'an object of observation from his very unobtrusiveness' (III.8, pp. 126–7), and whose fortune suddenly collapses (IV.1, p. 147), is a literary precursor of Mr Merdle. *Phineas Finn*, like *Vivian Grey*, is the story of a young, aspiring politician and his attempts to find patrons who will advance his career. There are some significant differences between the two novels. In particular, Trollope's sober and restrained narrator is the polar opposite of Disraeli's worldly and irreverent commentator, and Trollope's hero is far less morally ambiguous, and rather less entertaining in consequence, than Vivian Grey. However, there are some suggestive correspondences between the two texts. In both novels, the protagonist is forced, reluctantly, into a duel with a former friend. Similarly, where Vivian woos a Violet Fane, Phineas seeks to woo a Violet Effingham. Arguably the most important similarity between the two novels resides in the connection, which both posit, between the romantic and the political. Phineas, like Vivian, is immensely attractive to women (unlike Vivian, however, he is not at all conscious of his attractions), and Trollope, like Disraeli, offers his readers an account of Phineas's romantic as well as his political career. Indeed, Trollope handles both plots with greater skill than Disraeli. Trollope interweaves the romantic with the political, whereas Disraeli alternates between them. Ultimately, Phineas comes to the same conclusion as Vivian regarding the compatibility of romantic love and politics; he marries Mary Flood Jones and retires from the political stage. In terms of influence it is probably more accurate to describe *Phineas Finn* as written 'against' *Vivian Grey*. Certainly in his *Autobiography*, Trollope is scathing in his judgement: 'Vivian Grey has had probably as many followers as Jack Sheppard, and has led his followers in the same direction'.⁸⁰ In what may be seen as an oblique piece of literary criticism, Trollope takes the epigraph to *Vivian Grey* ('Why the world's mine oyster/ Which I with sword will open.') and puts it in the mouth of the unpleasant Mr Quintus Slide: "'I always look upon the 'Ouse as my oyster, and 'ere's my sword,'" said Mr Slide, brandishing an old quill pen'.⁸¹

However, the greatest long-term influence exerted by *Vivian Grey* was on Disraeli's own political career. Jerman argues that in the novel, Disraeli 'struck a pose which the world forever after insisted was the real Benjamin Disraeli, and Disraeli, at first shocked, then puzzled and confused, came nevertheless to cater to the whims of society and to hold this pose for the rest of his life, for his first creation dogged him to the grave'.⁸² Whilst Jerman perhaps exaggerates the extent to which *Vivian Grey* was turned from a fictional character into Disraeli's public persona, it is certainly the case that his 'first creation dogged him'. Blake comments on the deleterious effect of the novel on Disraeli's political career:

There can be little doubt that Disraeli's career was seriously affected not merely by the character of the book but by the offence which it gave to powerful people

INTRODUCTION

whose help would have been useful to him in the 'thirties, when he struggled to make his way into politics. He acquired a reputation for cynicism, double-dealing, recklessness and insincerity which it took him years to live down.⁸³

Braun notes that as late as March 1868 the novel was still being used against Disraeli and cites a letter which appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette* lamenting the fact that 'the writer of frivolous stories about *Vivian Grey*' was now the Prime Minister.⁸⁴

A few years later Disraeli's long-term political opponent, William Ewart Gladstone, noted in his diary for 9 March 1874, 'Finished *Vivian Grey*. The first quarter extremely clever, the rest trash.'⁸⁵ Many might consider this to be an accurate, if ungenerous, assessment of the novel. Writing more than a century later, Vincent offers a very different assessment of *Vivian Grey* declaring that '[its] very audacity breathes genius'.⁸⁶ Vivian Grey is, as the Marquess of Carabas insists repeatedly, 'a monstrous, clever young man'. As the novel's history shows, its hero's youth and cleverness continue to fascinate readers. However, we would also do well to attend to the 'monstrous' aspect of Vivian Grey, for there is a clear-eyed, cynical ruthlessness with regard to the pursuit of power which strikes a chill resonance in the contemporary world.

Yes! we must mix with the herd; we must enter into their feelings; we must humour their weaknesses; we must sympathise with the sorrows that we do not feel; and share the merriment of fools. Oh, yes! to *rule* men, we must *be* men; to prove that we are strong, we must be weak; to prove that we are giants, we must be dwarfs; even as the Eastern Genie was hid in the charmed bottle. Our wisdom must be concealed under folly, and our constancy under caprice ... Mankind, then, is my great game. (I.9, pp. 23–4)

Michael Sanders

NOTES

1. Full details of these financial speculations can be found in Robert Blake, *Disraeli* (London, Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 24–6.
2. For details of Disraeli's involvement with *The Representative* see *ibid.*, pp. 27–34.
3. Blake observes that the failure of these speculations constituted 'the origin of the financial embarrassments that were to encumber him for the rest of his life'. *The Representative* finally ceased publication on 29 July 1826, by which time John Murray had lost some £26,000 (*ibid.*, pp. 25–31).
4. 'In *Vivian Grey* we begin with a *roman à clef* of contemporary social artifice, move through political catastrophe to European wanderings of fantastic and farcical picaresque, and end in a satiric fantasy out of Voltaire and Juanesque Byronism' (James Russell Hart, 'The Regency Novel of Fashion' in S. I. Mintz, A. Chandler and C. Mulvey (eds), *From Smollett to James* (Charlottesville, VA, University of Virginia Press, 1981), pp. 129–30).

5. By the autumn of 1826 *Vivian Grey* (Part One) had gone through two editions, a third was planned for 1827, and Colburn was keen to publish a sequel. Colburn's keenness can be gauged by the fact that he paid Disraeli £500 for Part Two (he had only paid £200 for Part One). Following a continental tour with the Austens (August–October 1826), Disraeli completed the second part of *Vivian Grey* with Sara Austen once again acting as amanuensis, reader and agent. The three-volume novel was quickly completed and was published on 23 February 1827. Braun contends that Disraeli began writing Part Two of *Vivian Grey* during this continental tour (Thom Braun, *Disraeli the Novelist* (London, George Allen & Unwin, 1981), p. 40). The fullest account of the composition and reception of Part Two of *Vivian Grey* can be found in Jerman, who suggests that a start was made after Disraeli's return to Britain (B. R. Jerman, *The Young Disraeli* (Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1960), pp. 79–84. Part Two was generally, although not universally, more favourably received than Part One but appears to have generated much less public interest (*ibid.*, pp. 79–82). 'If the reviews were still not generous, they were, at least for the most part, free of the acid invective which had greeted the revelation of the author's identity', Braun, *Disraeli the Novelist*, pp. 40–1. Stewart reprints a particularly hostile review taken from the *London Magazine* (April 1827) which focuses on the extravagancies and grammatical inaccuracies of Disraeli's prose and describes the plot as 'a series of outrageous improbabilities, inconsistencies, and extravagances' (R. W. Stewart (ed.), *Disraeli's Novels Reviewed, 1826–1968* (Metuchen, NJ, The Scarecrow Press Inc., 1975), p. 121).
6. M. E. Speare, *The Political Novel: Its Development in England and in America* (London, Oxford University Press, 1924), p. 30. Thom Braun also draws attention to the importance of the Puss-in-Boots motif in the novel (*Disraeli the Novelist*, p. 32). 'The plot is highly improbable and too thin to sustain a book of that length' (Blake, *Disraeli*, p. 40).
7. Jerman also argues for the improvised nature of the text, commenting: 'If [Disraeli] had made more than an hourly plan for Vivian's activities, the novel does not show it. Vivian dances from intrigue to intrigue, cleverly manipulated by the author's moods rather than by any apparent preordained design' (*The Young Disraeli*, p. 55).
8. Elsewhere, in a beautifully realized comic scene, Vivian improvises a description of the (imaginary) Chowchowtow which bamboozles the ornithologist Mr Mackaw whilst simultaneously sending a covert warning to Mrs Felix Lorraine (as the description of the Chowchowtow is also her portrait) (III.8, p. 121). In her letter to Vivian, Cynthia Courtown praises Stanislaus Hoax's ability to improvise 'like a prophet' (III.9, p. 124).
9. Blake, *Disraeli*, p. 34.
10. Lucien Wolf (ed.), *Vivian Grey*, 2 vols (Centenary Edition, London, Alexander Moring Limited, 1904), Vol. 1, p. xl. Stanley Weintraub, however, suggests that Disraeli began *Vivian Grey* before the *Representative* affair, possibly writing the schooldays section of the novel (*Disraeli: A Biography* (New York, Truman Talley Books/Dutton, 1993), pp. 65–6).
11. Jerman, *The Young Disraeli*, p. 51. Jerman also notes that book II, chapter 10, contains a reference to a book by Major Denham which was not published until 1826 (he also notes that Disraeli spotted this discrepancy), *ibid.*, p. 51.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 55.
13. Part One of *Vivian Grey* was written in three octavo volumes (with the exception of book I, chapter 10 which is written on twelve unbound quarto leaves) whilst Part Two is written in two quarto volumes (with a few folded foolscap sheets and two slips). The following chapters are missing from the manuscript: book II, chapters 15–17 and book 3, chapter 1.
14. It should be noted that the relationship between the punctuation of the manuscript and the printed text is erratic.
15. Material written on the verso and/or as riders in the manuscript are indicated by the designation 'late addition' in the textual variants.
16. There are eighteen late additions (five of which occur in Part One): fourteen reworkings/rearrangements of material (two of which occur in Part One) and eight instances of suppressed material (only one of which occurs in Part One).
17. In the manuscript, book I, chapter 9 ends on p. 85 and book II, chapter 1 is initially numbered as p. 89; this, however, is crossed through and replaced by p. 98. As book I, chapter 10 ends on p. 97, this suggests that it replaces an earlier (and much shorter) chapter.
18. A similar sense of increased artistic control over the narrative attends the next major late addition to the text: book II, chapter 12, 'A Morning Visit'. The evidence of the manuscript suggests that the encounter with Daniel Groves occurred to Disraeli at a relatively late stage of the composition process. The purpose of this addition is that it provides a comic interlude between two more serious scenes: the thwarting of Vivian's romantic intentions regarding Julia Manvers and the desolation of John Conyer's cottage. This latter contrast is particularly effective because it allows Disraeli to move from a comic stereotype (the provincial farmer of decidedly reactionary views – a fictional descendant of Fielding's Squire Western) to a sobering depiction of the effects of an appropriation by bailiffs on a farmer and his family.
19. In the manuscript Horace Grey's letter is written on folded foolscap rather than quarto pages and in a seemingly more hurried hand. Furthermore, the quarto pages bear a dual numbering system (numbers in the top left-hand corner are crossed through and replaced by centrally aligned numbers) which is not shared by the foolscap pages. Thus the letter from Lady Scrope (which immediately precedes that from Horace Grey in the printed text) ends on p. 105/569 and chapter 9 (which follows Horace's letter) begins on p. 106/578. Horace's letter itself occupies pp. 571–7 inclusive.
20. In the second part of *Vivian Grey*, although the late textual additions are more numerous, they are far less significant both in terms of plot development and artistic control. These additions mostly fall into one of two categories. The first of these might be described as the amplification of existing material. Thus, for example, Mr Fitzloom's speculations on the political factors underpinning the apparent recall of Ambassador von Konigstein are extended in book V, chapter 14. Similarly, more detail is added to the Prince of Little Lilliput's account of the political situation in Reisenberg in book VI, chapter 3. The second category is that of the 'studied digression'; thus, for example, the narrator's comments on the formation of the National Gallery or the role of fashion in Court life (book V, chapter 2 and book VII, chapter 2 respectively).

The final category, that of suppressed or deleted material is, perhaps surprisingly given the controversy which surrounded the novel, the least significant. A number of the discarded passages are short comic interludes such as Violet's revelation of just how close Mr Sherborne came to being the owner of a monkey (V.7) or a running joke about the heraldic beast and motto of the final noble family encountered by Vivian in the novel. The longest of the excised passages occurs in book V, chapter 2 and features an addition to Prince Salvinski's tale of his escapades on Mont Blanc, a dispute over the veracity of his tale and a further tall story told by von Konigstein. One of the most notable suppressions concerns Sievers's comments on the Venus de Medici. Sievers begins, 'He who declares that his feelings on gazing on her are not exquisitely sensual is either no proper man or a shamefaced hypocrite' (see p. 669). In the first edition this is replaced by a passage which hints at Mr Sievers's appreciation of the statue's erotic potential but confines itself to the more prudish observation that '[Sievers's] language though highly philosophical, might, however, be misinterpreted in this precise age; and as this work is chiefly written for the entertainment of families, I have been induced to cut out the most instructive passage in the book' (VII.2, pp. 400–1). Arguably the most significant deletion occurs in the opening chapter of book IV, where the manuscript contains a snippet of gossip concerning the Duke of York (see p. 603)

21. The initial description of Essper George is amended on seven separate occasions in the manuscript, which also shows that Disraeli worked hard to achieve the desired effect in respect of both the tone of Beckendorff's letter and his physical appearance.
22. Details of these alterations are given in the textual variants.
23. W. F. Monypenny writes of Beckendorff's speech, 'The passage throws an illuminating flash on some of Disraeli's most cherished ideals of character', William Flavelle Monypenny and George Earle Buckle, *The Life of Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield*, 6 vols (London, John Murray, 1910–20), Vol. 1, p. 115.
24. For details of Sara Austen's involvement see Blake, *Disraeli*, pp. 34–6. Blake suggests that it is likely that she was 'at least half in love with Disraeli' (*ibid.*, p. 36). Thom Braun hints at the possibility of a sexual relationship between Sara and Benjamin, (*Disraeli the Novelist*, p. 29). Likewise Paul Smith, who notes that 'it is possible that he was the lover of Sara Austen', (Paul Smith, *Disraeli: A Brief Life* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 33). Jerman suggests that '[it] is not impossible that the introduction of Mrs. Felix Lorraine ... marks the point at which Mrs. Austen entered Ben's life' (*The Young Disraeli*, p. 51, n. 25).
25. For a general account of Colburn's methods and reputation see Braun, *Disraeli the Novelist*, p. 29. Adburgham offers a different assessment of Colburn's reputation by noting that he was the first to publish the diaries of Samuel Pepys and John Evelyn and was also the publisher of *Burke's Peerage* (Alison Adburgham, *Silver Fork Society: Fashionable Life and Literature from 1814–1840* (London, Constable, 1983), p. 24). For details of Colburn's extensive network of wholly and partly owned literary journals and personal contacts see Blake, *Disraeli*, pp. 36–7. For a more detailed account of the strategy which Colburn used to promote *Vivian Grey* see Jerman, *The Young Disraeli*, pp. 59–62. Some of the specific notices mentioned by Jerman can be found in Stewart (ed.), *Disraeli's Novels Reviewed, 1826–1968*. Braun estimates that Colburn spent around £100 puffing the novel, and also notes that he had only paid £200 for the manuscript itself (*Disraeli the Novelist*, p. 31).

26. Jerman traces the advance notices of *Vivian Grey* in the press (*The Young Disraeli*, p. 59). Blake notes that it was published in the same week as Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans* and Scott's *Woodstock* (Blake, *Disraeli*, p. 37).
27. *New Monthly Magazine*, 18 (1 April 1826), p. 173, quoted in Jerman, *The Young Disraeli*, p. 113.
28. Braun notes that, 'Colburn had claimed that the author was 'a man of high fashion – very high – keeps the first society' (*Disraeli the Novelist*, p. 30). The credibility of this claim was probably enhanced by the fact that, as Adburgham notes, Colburn had already published novels by two aristocratic authors: Constantine Henry Phipps (later Marquis of Normanby), whose first novel *Matilda* (1825) appeared shortly before Robert Plumer Ward's *Tremaine* (1825) (*Silver Fork Society*, pp. 69–75).
29. Blake, *Disraeli*, p. 40. Two letters from Robert Plumer Ward to Sara Austen, written shortly after *Vivian Grey*'s publication, give some idea of the novel's popularity (even allowing for the fact that Ward is not an entirely impartial witness):

All are talking of *Vivian Grey*. The opinion is entirely favourable, and the book seems regularly making its way into circulation and notice. Its wit, raciness, and boldness are admired. (6 May 1826)

Vivian Grey was amply talked of. The opinions, as a work, were various; but all agree, none but a very clever person could write it, and equally to its power of amusing. (25 May 1826)

(quoted in Aldburgham, *Silver Fork Society*, pp. 90–1).

30. *John Bull* noted that Croker, Hook, Lockhart, Maginn, Sir Roger Gresely and the Hon. Mr. Ashley had each been proposed as the novel's author. The *Star Chamber* noted the nominations of Lord Glengall, Lord Normanby, Mr Ward, Mr Hooker and A. J. Valpy as potential authors (Jerman, *The Young Disraeli*, pp. 59–62). Braun notes, 'While Lord Normanby spent his time writing to the newspapers to deny any connection with *Vivian Grey*, Lord Glengall was confessing to the authorship' (Braun, *Disraeli the Novelist*, p. 38). For details of Disraeli's involvement in *The Star Chamber* see Michael Sadleir, *Things Past* (London, Constable, 1944), pp. 248–61.
31. Both Jerman and Braun suggest that Colburn rather than Disraeli was the real object of critical ire. They argue, however, that Colburn's relative invulnerability and/or indifference to such attacks rendered Disraeli by far the more vulnerable target (Jerman, *The Young Disraeli*, pp. 65–6; Braun, *Disraeli the Novelist*, p. 38). Andrea Hibbard, however, argues that the reviewers' anger arose from the fact of their being duped as to the novel's authorship, precisely because this undermined their own authority in those matters of taste, class and authenticity which she sees as central preoccupations of the silver-fork genre (Andrea Hibbard, 'Vivian Grey and the Silver-Fork Etiquette of Authorship', *Genre – Forms of Discourse and Culture*, 32:4 (Winter 1999), pp. 260–1).
32. *Literary Magnet*, n.s. 2 (July 1826), pp. 1–6, quoted in Stewart (ed.), *Disraeli's Novels Reviewed, 1826–1968*, p. 117.
33. *Literary Magnet*, n.s. 2 (July 1826), pp. 1–6, quoted in Stewart (ed.), *Disraeli's Novels Reviewed, 1826–1968*, pp. 116, 118.

34. The novel remained a fashionable topic of conversation for some years, as the following extract from Winthrop Mackworth Praed's comic poem 'My Partner' (1828) suggests: 'I spoke of Novels:— *Vivian Grey*/ Was positively charming,/ And *Almacks* infinitely gay,/ And *Frankenstein* alarming' (quoted in Aldburgham, *Silver Fork Society*, p. 251).
35. For further details of Sarah's involvement in her brother's literary career see Michael Polowetzky, *Prominent Sisters: Mary Lamb, Dorothy Wordsworth, and Sarah Disraeli* (Westport, CT, Praeger, 1996). Wolf notes that Disraeli had also made some minor changes to the 'third edition' of Part One before he departed for the continent with the Austens (Wolf (ed.), *Vivian Grey*, Vol. 1, p. xlv).
36. A 'major change' refers here to alterations in excess of two lines of text.
37. This amounts to nearly 20% of the entire novel and is almost the size of the novel's shortest volume, volume 2, which has 236 pages.
38. Examples of the first category are the comments on ushers (I.4, p. 12) and the reference to the scandalous career of the Honourable Felix Lorraine (II.5, p. 43). Literary gossip is excised from III.8 and IV.1. Prince Salvinski's tale of his adventures on Mont Blanc (V.2, p. 180) can be seen as textual padding (the original manuscript sees the Prince giving an even more detailed account of his escapades) and there is a further example of what might be termed a studied digression in a chapter which bears the wonderfully inappropriate title 'Development of the Plot' (IV.2). In this chapter, a self-conscious, post-Sternean narrator spends some ten pages lamenting his inability to write. This is also textual padding, but to the reader's relief it is delivered by a narrator considerably more entertaining and lively than Prince Salvinski.
39. Baron von Konigstein's discourse, for example, discusses: Michelangelo's *Night and Day*, *Moses*, *Drunken Bacchus*, *Holy Family*, Sistine Chapel, *The Last Judgement*, the chapel of the Medicis and St Peter's. It also mentions in passing, da Vinci, Fra Bartolomeo, Brunelleschi and San Michele.
40. Alison Adburgham identifies the 'socially ambitious wives' of manufacturers and City merchants and bankers as an important audience for silver-fork fiction (*Silver Fork Society*, pp. 68–9).
41. Generally speaking, attempts to explain the young Disraeli's political career have either concentrated on his 'opportunism' or sought to discover an underlying consistency in his positions. For example, T. A. Jenkins argues that it 'would be very easy simply to dismiss Disraeli's early political career as an exercise in opportunism, and in a sense this view is undeniably true ... However, Disraeli's attempt to straddle radicalism and Toryism ... was not quite so absurd a position to adopt' (T. A. Jenkins, *Disraeli and Victorian Conservatism* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1996), pp. 7–8). Jenkins also points out that both Disraeli's radicalism and his Toryism are consistently anti-Whig. Disraeli's paternalistic concern for the poor (which would be a characteristic of the 'Tory-radicalism' of the 1830s and 1840s) is also apparent in *Vivian Grey* where, as Muriel Masfield notes, the John Conyers scene shows 'that even so early [in his career] Disraeli was alive to the distresses of the poor' (Muriel Masfield, *Peacocks and Primroses: A Survey of Disraeli's Novels* (Millwood, NY, Kraus Reprint Co., 1973), p. 46). However, the attitudes expressed by the narrator and Sievers, and Beckendorff's 'philosophy' and career, suggest another solution to the 'riddle' of Disraeli's politics. Put simply, Disraeli's thoroughgoing scepticism regarding the immanent legitimacy of the existing (and

- any possible) social order points inevitably towards either conservatism or nihilism. It is Disraeli's awareness of the ability of power to legitimize itself (the lesson of Beckendorff's career) which makes possible the active embrace of the existing social order and precludes nihilism.
42. Although it should be noted that Mr Sievers draws a resolutely anti-Derridean conclusion from these premises.
 43. Lucien Wolf sees *Vivian Grey* as 'the record of a struggle between two standards of conduct – the selfish ambition, the unscrupulousness and cynicism of Vivian Grey, and the altruism, the self-respect, and optimism of his father' (Wolf (ed.), *Vivian Grey*, Vol. 1, p. xxxviii).
 44. Thus, in the first edition, the reader knows that the Baron has financial difficulties and is involved in some unscrupulous dealings *before* witnessing his rebuff by Lady Madeleine Trevor (and this knowledge renders that rebuff explicable even before the revelation of the Baron's history). In later editions, the reader, initially, is only aware that Lady Madeleine possesses an antipathy towards the Baron, which Vivian simultaneously notices and finds inexplicable. This mystery is resolved for both Vivian and the reader when Lady Madeleine tells Vivian of the part which she believes the Baron played in causing the suicide of her cousin Captain Fane.
 45. The last of these chapters concerns an ostensibly comic but rather cruel and distasteful interlude in which Essper George tricks Master Rudolph into believing himself blinded before 'miraculously' restoring his sight.
 46. Schwarz suggests that *Vivian Grey* can be read as a monitory 'Book of Vices': books I–IV deal with the vice of intellectual arrogance, book V with gambling, book VI with drinking (chapter 1), political intrigue and pomp (chapter 3), vanity and fashion (chapter 7), book VII with intellectual pretentiousness (chapter 3), militarism (chapter 8), the wastefulness of fancy dress balls (chapter 9) (*Disraeli's Fiction*, pp. 10–11). Wolf recognizes that the later excision of the von Spittergens problematizes his moralistic reading of the novel and suggests that '[the] modest lesson they were introduced to teach had ceased to possess the same practical value, in a subjective sense, for Disraeli the ex-Chancellor of the Exchequer, that it had for Disraeli the young lawyer's clerk' (Wolf (ed.), *Vivian Grey*, Vol. 1, pp. lviii–lix).
 47. Wolf argues that the failure to distinguish between the narrator and Vivian Grey is largely responsible for the various misunderstandings of the moral purpose of the novel (Wolf (ed.), *Vivian Grey*, Vol. 1, pp. xxxvi–xxxvii). Braun, for example, assumes that the narrator and Vivian are interchangeable figures when he offers the later excision of 'some of [the] narrator's more embarrassing frankness' as evidence of Disraeli's intention to alter the attitude of his later readers towards Vivian (*Disraeli the Novelist*, p. 123).
 48. Schwarz, *Disraeli's Fiction*, pp. 18–19.
 49. Aldburgham, *Silver Fork Society*, pp. 68–9.
 50. Hibbard, 'Vivian Grey and the Silver-Fork Etiquette of Authorship', p. 253.
 51. Winifred Hughes, 'Silver Fork Writers and Readers: Social Contexts of a Best Seller', *Novel*, 25 (Spring 1992), pp. 328–47.
 52. Schwarz, *Disraeli's Fiction*, p. 19. Hart, 'The Regency Novel of Fashion', p. 132.
 53. Hibbard, 'Vivian Grey and the Silver-Fork Etiquette of Authorship', pp. 253–5.

54. For an account of the fascination exerted by the aristocracy on the middle classes in the nineteenth century see Martin J. Wiener, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit: 1850–1980* (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1985).
55. Weintraub, *Disraeli*, p. 67. Charles Richmond, ‘Disraeli’s Education’ in C. Richmond and P. Smith (eds), *The Self-Fashioning of Disraeli 1818–1851* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 182, n. 80.
56. Schwarz, *Disraeli’s Novels*, p. 12.
57. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
58. Daniel R. Schwarz, ‘Disraeli’s Romanticism: Self-fashioning in the Novels’ in Richmond and Smith (eds), *The Self-Fashioning of Disraeli 1818–1851*, p. 48.
59. Paul Smith, *Disraeli*, p. 18.
60. Lucien Wolf, for example, suggests that Horace Grey is modelled on Isaac Disraeli, Hargrave Grey on Nathaniel Basevi (Benjamin’s cousin), Mr and Mrs Premium on Mr and Mrs Powles (Wolf (ed.), *Vivian Grey*, Vol. 1, pp. xxxv–xxxvi). Most famously, John Murray believed that he was the model for the Marquess of Carabas and this caused an irreparable breach in relations between himself and the Disraeli family (see Blake, *Disraeli*, pp. 42–8 for further details). Various ‘Keys’ to the characters in *Vivian Grey* were produced and two of these are discussed in an appendix at the end of this volume.
61. S. Weintraub, *Disraeli*, p. 38.
62. Wolf (ed.), *Vivian Grey*, Vol. 1, pp. xxxv–xxxvi.
63. Braun, *Disraeli the Novelist*, p. 32.
64. Michael Selzer, ‘New Light on Sources for Disraeli’s *Vivian Grey* and *Contarini Fleming*’, *Notes and Queries*, 235:4 (December 1990), p. 424.
65. For example, the description of Ems (V.5), the character of Emilius von Aslingen (VII.2) and the account of the Reisenberg Opera (VII.10) are all drawn from Disraeli’s letters (for further details, see editorial notes 337, 491 and 529 respectively).
66. In addition, Schwarz also argues that *Vivian Grey* is one of the first novels ‘in which a person’s fundamental character is changed by experience’ and also contains ‘one of the earliest appearances of the double motif’ outside Gothic fiction (*Disraeli’s Fiction*, pp. 12–13, 19–21).
67. John Vincent, *Disraeli* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 60. Schwarz, *Disraeli’s Fiction*, p. 4. George Saintsbury was one of the earliest critics to observe that in Disraeli’s work ‘the parts surpass the whole’ (*Magazine of Art*, 9 (1886), pp. 221–7, quoted in Stewart (ed.), *Disraeli’s Novels Reviewed, 1826–1968*, p. 43). Muriel Masfield similarly comments, ‘[in] all Disraeli’s novels the incidentals are more striking than the theme or story’ (*Peacocks and Primroses*, p. 20).
68. Braun, *Disraeli the Novelist*, p. 35.
69. In the general preface Disraeli wrote, ‘*Vivian Grey* is essentially a puerile work, but it has baffled even the efforts of its creator to suppress it’ (quoted in Braun, *Disraeli the Novelist*, p. 139).
70. Schwarz, ‘Disraeli’s Romanticism’, p. 42.
71. Schwarz, *Disraeli’s Fiction*, p. 20.
72. Schwarz, ‘Disraeli’s Romanticism’, pp. 44–5.
73. It should be noted that this source of narrative pleasure so clearly depends on the reader’s identification with Vivian that it further undermines those ‘moralistic’ readings of the novel which depend on the reader’s non-identification with its eponymous protagonist.

INTRODUCTION

74. A. H. Frietzche, 'The Monstrous Clever Young Man': *The Novelist Disraeli and his Heroes* (Logan, UT, Utah University Press, 1959), p. 50.
75. Jerman, *The Young Disraeli*, p. 70.
76. Blake, *Disraeli*, p. 56.
77. R. L. Hudson, 'Poe and Disraeli', *American Literature*, 8 (January 1937), pp. 402–16; quoted in Stewart (ed.), *Disraeli's Novels Reviewed, 1826–1968*, pp. 81–7.
78. Charles C. Nickerson, 'Vivian Grey and Dorian Gray', *Times Literary Supplement* (14 August 1969), p. 909. Speare, Schwarz and Weintraub also discuss Disraeli's influence on Wilde.
79. Schwarz, *Disraeli's Fiction*, p. 10. Mortimer Collins writing in the *Quarterly Review*, 52 (July 1870), proposes Mrs Felix Lorraine as 'an elder sister of Thackeray's Becky Sharp' (quoted in Stewart (ed.), *Disraeli's Novels Reviewed, 1826–1968*, p. 29).
80. Quoted in Stewart (ed.), *Disraeli's Novels Reviewed, 1826–1968*, p. 39.
81. Anthony Trollope, *Phineas Finn* (Panther, St Albans, 1973), p. 241.
82. Jerman, *The Young Disraeli*, p. 45.
83. Blake, *Disraeli*, p. 48.
84. Quoted in Braun, *Disraeli the Novelist*, p. 36.
85. Quoted in Masefield, *Peacocks and Primroses*, p. 44.
86. Vincent, *Disraeli*, p. 58.



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VIVIAN GREY.

“Why the world’s mine oyster,
Which I with sword shall open.”^{1a}

VOL. I

LONDON:
HENRY COLBURN, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.
1826.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY S. AND R. BENTLEY, DORSET STREET.

TO
THE BEST AND GREATEST OF MEN²
I DEDICATE THESE VOLUMES.
HE, FOR WHOM IT IS INTENDED, WILL ACCEPT AND
APPRECIATE THE COMPLIMENT:
THOSE, FOR WHOM IT IS NOT INTENDED, WILL –
DO THE SAME.



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VIVIAN GREY.

BOOK THE FIRST.

CHAP. I.

THE CONSULTATION.^a

I^b AM not aware that the infancy of Vivian Grey was distinguished by any extraordinary incident. The solicitude of the most affectionate of mothers, and the care of the most attentive of nurses, did their best to injure an excellent constitution. But Vivian was an only child, and these exertions were therefore excusable. For the first five years of his life, Master Vivian,^c with his curly locks and his fancy dress, was the pride of his own, and the envy of all neighbouring establishments; but, in process of time, the horrible spirit of *boyism*^d began to develope^e itself, and Vivian not only would brush his hair “strait,”^f and rebel against his nurse, but actually insisted upon being – breeched! At this crisis it was discovered that he had been *spoiled*,^g and it was determined that he should be sent to school. Mr. Grey observed, also, that the child was nearly ten years old, and did not know his alphabet, and Mrs. Grey remarked, that he was getting very^h ugly. The fate of Vivian was decided.

“I am told, my dear,” observed Mrs. Grey, one day after dinner to her husband, “I am told, my dear, that Dr. Flummery’sⁱ would do very well for Vivian. Nothing can exceed the attention which is paid to the pupils. There are sixteen young ladies, all the daughters of clergymen, merely to attend to the morals and the linen – terms very moderate –^j 100 guineas per annum, for all under six years of age, and few extras, only for fencing, pure milk, and the guitar. Mrs. Metcalfe has both her boys there, and she says their progress is *astonishing*.^k Percy Metcalfe, she assures me, was quite as backward as Vivian. Ah! indeed, much backwarder; and so was Dudley Metcalfe,^l who was taught at home on the new system, by a pictorial alphabet,³ and who persisted to the last, notwithstanding all the exertions of Miss Barrett, in spelling A-P-E – monkey, merely because over the word, there was a monster munching an apple.”

“And quite right in the child, my dear – *Pictorial*^a alphabet! – pictorial fool’s head!” –

“But what do you say to Flummery’s, Grey?”^b

“My dear, do what you like. I never trouble myself, you know, about these matters;” and Mr. Grey refreshed himself, after this domestic attack, with a glass of claret.

Mr. Grey was a gentleman who had succeeded, when the heat of youth was over, to the enjoyment of a life-interest in an estate of about £2000 per annum. He was a man of distinguished literary abilities, and he had hailed with no slight pleasure, his succession to a fortune, which, though limited in its duration, was still a very great thing for a young *littérateur*⁴ about town;^c not only with no profession, but with a mind utterly unfitted for every species of business. Grey, to the astonishment of his former friends, the wits, made an excellent domestic match; and, leaving the whole management of his household to his lady, felt himself as independent in his magnificent library, as if he had never ceased to be that true freeman, A MAN OF CHAMBERS.⁵

The young Vivian had not, by the cares which fathers are always heirs to, yet reminded his parent, that boys^d were any thing else but playthings. The intercourse between father and son was, of course, extremely limited; for Vivian was, as yet, the mother’s child; Mr. Grey’s parental duties being confined to giving his son a glass of claret *per diem*,^{6e} pulling his ears with all the awkwardness of literary affection, and trusting to God “that the urchin would never scribble.”

“I won’t go to school, Mamma,”^f bawled Vivian.

“But you must, my love,” answered Mrs. Grey; “all good boys go to school;” and in the plenitude of a mother’s love, she tried to make her offspring’s hair curl.

“I won’t have my hair curl, Mamma; the boys will laugh at me,” rebawled the beauty.

“Now who could have told the child that?” monologised Mamma, with all a Mamma’s admiration.

“Charles Appleyard told me so – *his*^g hair curled, and the boys called him *girl*.^h Papa! give me some more claret – I won’t go to school.”

CHAPTER II.

PROGRESS.^a

THREE or four years passed over, and the mind of Vivian Grey most^b astonishingly developed itself. He had long ceased to wear frills, had broached the subject of boots three or four times, made a sad inroad during the holidays in Mr. Grey's aforesaid^c bottle of claret, and was reported as having once sworn at the footman.^d The young gentleman began also to hint during every vacation, that the fellows at Flummery's were somewhat too small for his companionship, and (first bud of puppyism!) the former advocate of *straight hair*,^e now expended a portion of his infant income^f in the purchase of Macassar oil,^g and began to cultivate his curls. Mrs. Grey could not entertain for a moment, the idea of her son's associating with children, the eldest of whom, (to adopt his own account,) was not above eight years^h old; so Flummery's,ⁱ it was determined, he should leave. But where to go? Mr. Grey wished Eton,^j but his lady was one of those women, whom nothing in the world can persuade that a public school is any thing else but a place where boys are roasted alive; and so with tears, and taunts, and supplications, the point of private education was conceded. As for Vivian himself, he was for Eton, and Winchester, and Harrow, and Westminster, all at once; the only point that he made was, 'not Rugby,⁸ it was so devilish blackguard.'^k

At length it was resolved that *the only hope*,^l should remain at home a season, until some plan should be devised for the cultivation^m of his promising understanding. During this year, Vivian became a somewhat more constant intruder into the library than heretofore; and living so much among books, he was insensibly attachedⁿ to those silent companions, that speak so eloquently.

How far the character of the parent may influence the character of the child, I leave the metaphysician to decide. Sure I am, that the character^o of Vivian Grey underwent, at this period of his life, a sensible, a prodigious^p change. Doubtless, constant communion with a mind highly refined, severely cultivated, and much experienced, cannot but produce a most beneficial impression, even upon a mind formed, and upon principles developed: how infinitely greater^q must the influence of such communion be upon a youthful heart, ardent, innocent and inexperienced!^f As Vivian was not to figure in the microcosm of a public school, a place for which, from his temper, he was almost better fitted than any young genius whom the "playing fields" of Eton, or "the hills" of Winton,⁹ can remember;^s there was some difficulty in fixing upon his future Academus. Mr. Grey's two axioms were, first, that no one so young as his son should settle in the metropolis, and that Vivian must

consequently not have a private tutor; and, secondly, that all private schools were quite worthless; and, therefore there was every probability of Vivian not receiving any education whatever.

At length, an exception to axiom second started up in the establishment of the Reverend Everard Dallas.^a This gentleman was a clergyman of the Church of England,^b a profound Grecian, and a poor man. He had edited the *Alcestis*,¹⁰ and married his laundress – lost money by his edition, and his fellowship by his match. In a few days, the hall of Mr. Grey’s London mansion was filled with all sorts of portmanteaus, trunks, and traveling cases, directed in a boy’s sprawling hand to “Vivian Grey, Esquire, at the Reverend Everard Dallas, Burnsley Vicarage, Hants.”

“God bless you, my boy! write to your mother soon, and remember your Journal.”

CHAPTER III.

PRIVATE EDUCATION.^a

THE rumour of the arrival of "a new fellow," circulated with rapidity through the inmates of Burnsley Vicarage, and about fifty young devils were preparing to quiz the new-comer, when the school-room door opened, and Mr. Dallas, accompanied by Vivian, entered.

"A dandy, by Jove!" whispered St. Leger Smith. "What a knowing set out,"^b squeaked Johnson *secundus*.^{11c} "Mammy-sick,"^d growled Barlow *primus*.^{12c} This last exclamation was, however, a most^f scandalous libel, for certainly no being ever stood in a pedagogue's presence with more perfect *sang froid*,^{13g} and with a bolder front, than did, at this moment, Vivian Grey.

One principle in Mr. Dallas' *regime*,^h was always to introduce a new-comer in school-hours. He was thus carried immediately *in medias res*,¹⁴ⁱ and the curiosity of his co-mates being in a great degree satisfied, at a^j time when that curiosity could not personally annoy him, the new-comer was, of course, much better prepared to make his way, when the absence of the ruler became a signal for *some oral conversation*^k with "the arrival."

However, in the present instance the young savages at Burnsley Vicarage had caught a Tartar;¹⁵ and in a very few days Vivian Grey was decidedly the most popular fellow in the school. He was "so dashing! so devilish good-tempered! so completely up to every thing!" The magnates of the land were certainly rather jealous of his success, but their very sneers bore witness to his^l popularity. "Cursed puppy," said^m St. Leger Smith. "Thinks himself knowing," squeaked Johnson *secundus*. "Thinks himself witty," growled Barlow *primus*.

Notwithstanding this cabal, days rolled on at Burnsley Vicarage only to witness the increase of Vivian's popularity. Although more deficient than most of his own age in accurate classical knowledge,ⁿ he found himself^o in talents, and various acquirements, immeasurably their superior. And singular is it, that at school, distinction in such points is ten thousand times more admired by the multitude, than the most profound knowledge of Greek Metres, or the most accurate acquaintance with the value of Roman coins. Vivian Grey's English verses, and Vivian Grey's English themes, were the subject of universal commendation. Some young lads made copies of these productions, to enrich, at the Christmas holidays, their sisters' albums; while the whole school were scribbling embryo prize-poems, epics of twenty lines on "the Ruins of Pæstum," and "the Temple of Minerva;" "Agrigentum," and "the Cascade of Terni."¹⁶ – I suppose^p that Vivian's productions at this time,