

Silver Fork Novels, 1826–1841

Thomas Henry Lister,
Granby: A Novel (1826)

Edited by
Clare Bainbridge





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Volume 1

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General Editor: Harriet Devine Jump
Consulting Editor: Gary Kelly
Volume Editors: Clare Bainbridge
Edward Copeland
Ann R. Hawkins
Andrea Hibbard
Harriet Devine Jump
Jeraldine R. Kraver
Cynthia Lawford
Marie Mulvey-Roberts

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Where did the silver fork novel come from, and when did it begin? It seems likely that, as several recent critics have suggested, Byron's *Don Juan* (1818–24) was a powerful influence, especially its later cantos in which English society is subjected to comic but perceptive satire. The omnipresent figure of the dandy in these texts seems to owe something to Byron's persona, too. The influence of a rather different author, Jane Austen, has also been detected.¹ Originally known as fashionable novels, these works became quickly established in the mid 1820s and attracted a good deal of adverse criticism. Robert Montgomery's satire *The Puffiad*, published in 1828, is typical:

[D]uring the last few years, a new and titled order of novelists has arisen, and these patrician scribblers pretend to lash the follies and immoralities of high life – no! – What do they more than buzz around the temple of fashion, and now and then dart their little stings into some celebrated idol??²

Like many of the genre's opponents, Montgomery's satire rests on the assumption that fashionable novels were written by fashionable people – that the aristocrats themselves were satirising their friends and acquaintances. Certainly many of the earliest of the fashionable novels were deliberately marketed as being authored by members of the aristocracy. Henry Colburn, whose publishing house was responsible for a large number of these, managed to recruit some titled authors: Constantine Phipps, Lord Mulgrave (and later Marquis of Normanby) whose *Matilda: A Tale of the Day* was published by Colburn in 1825, as was his follow-up, *Yes and No* in 1828, and Lady Charlotte Bury, daughter of the Duke of Argyll, whose three-volume novel *Flirtation*

¹ For a discussion of the origins of the silver fork novel, see Matthew W. Rosa, *The Silver-Fork School* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1936); Richard Cronin, *Romantic Victorians: English Literature, 1824–1840* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 115–25; Alison Adburgham, *Silver Fork Society: Fashionable Life and Literature from 1814–1840* (London: Constable, 1983); Winifred Hughes, 'Silver-Fork Writers and Readers: Social Contexts of a Best Seller', *Novel: a Forum on Fiction*, 25:3 (1992), 328–47; April Nixon Kendra, 'Gendering the Silver Fork: Catherine Gore and the Society Novel', *Women's Writing*, 11:1 (2004), 25–38.

² Anon [Robert Montgomery], *The Puffiad: A Satire* (London: Samuel Maunder, 1828), p. 12.

Colburn published in 1827. If not actually written by aristocrats, the earliest of these novels were generally presented to the public as works which provided an insider's insight into the privileged world of high society. Some were published anonymously, like Marianne Spencer Hudson's *Almack's*, 3 vols (London: Saunders & Otley, 1827), for a brief period 'the grand object of attraction in the reading world'¹, which was the subject of numerous conjectures (Lady Westmorland was a contender, as was Lady Blessington's sister) based on the assumption of 'its author's having evidently witnessed and been a participator in the scenes which it describes' (ibid). In all these cases, it was the accuracy of the picture of fashionable life that provided the greatest selling point. The publishers' advertisements for *Almack's* quoted a puff from the *Monthly Review*: 'The author of this work has contrived to exhibit the most ample, the most animated, and, we suspect, the most accurate picture of what is called "High Life" in this country, which has ever yet met the public eye.'² At the same time, however, the reviewers generally seem to have accepted that such pictures should be viewed as corrective:

The value of a work of this kind is inestimable. Inasmuch as it exposes to the public gaze the puerile and inconsequential usages, the numerous follies and mean intrigues, which form the whole business of the 'Exclusives,' it may perhaps assist to reform and improve that order.³

This reviewer rather disingenuously asserted that readers of these novels would become more, rather than less, satisfied with their humbler station in life:

To those classes of society which are immediately below the 'Exclusives,' this work will afford an inexhaustible fund of consolation, and even of instruction. Living as they very generally do in domestic habits, employing their leisure hours in circles equally removed from dissipation and ennui, accustomed to intellectual intercourse, and to look upon the affairs of life with a calm and discerning eye, they will conclude, from a perusal of this work, that their condition is, perhaps of all others that society can present, really the most enviable.⁴

Clearly, then, readers of these novels could view them through many perspectives, which did not necessarily cancel each other out. The aristocratic writers could certainly be seen as celebrating the exclusivity of their spectacularly self-indulgent and privileged life of luxury and consumption. However, they could also be said to be both

¹ *La Belle Assemblée*, 3rd series, 5 (January 1827), p. 36.

² *Monthly Review*, n.s., 4 (January 1827), p. 100, quoted in *Morning Chronicle* (22 February 1827).

³ Review of *Almack's*, *Monthly Review*, n.s., 4 (January 1827), p. 101.

⁴ Ibid.

laying it bare for those aspiring social climbers who wished to emulate it and demonstrating its essential emptiness and the hypocrisy of its values. Their middle-class readers, meanwhile, occupied a similarly ambivalent position, aspiring to join a class they both envied and feared, or rejoicing in the follies of an aristocracy they despised. The novelists fed their fantasies while providing the promise of satire to collude with the mistrust of their readers.

In addition, the very need to celebrate such a frivolous existence so publicly suggests that the aristocratic authors felt themselves to be under threat from the middle class audience they were courting: what better mode of defusing such a threat could there be than that of taking a satirical stance? Certainly the aristocracy of England in the late 1820s and early 1830s had good reason to feel insecure. This was the era of parliamentary reform, and the middle classes were – or hoped they were – on the rise. In the politically dramatic years leading up to the passing of the Reform Act in 1832, it was the interests of the middle class that formed the primary focus. Supporters of the Act sought to change the existing electoral system, not only by ridding it of so-called rotten boroughs and of corrupt practices, but also by including the previously disenfranchised middle classes in the system of government. Some of the more idealistic Whig ministers undoubtedly believed that reform was desirable because it accorded with Whig principles, and were genuinely concerned to bring about a better balance between the distribution of seats and the wealth of the population. Others, both Whig and Tory, took a more pragmatic view, seeing the Act as a pre-emptive strategy, designed to prevent revolution by placating the middle classes and separating them from the lower classes, thereby strengthening the forces of order.

In fact the Reform Act, when it was finally passed, achieved very little in the way of real change. Nevertheless members of the bourgeoisie undoubtedly had their aspirations, and welcomed works of fiction that taught while they entertained – taught those indefinable manners and modes of exclusivity which, while they may have appeared forever out of reach, might perhaps be acquired by the assiduous student of the silver fork genre. And yet at the same time it seemed that the novels asserted the utter impossibility of ever attaining the goal of admission. By showing that rank, and taste, and *ton*, were either yours by virtue of your birth or never to be gained, perhaps the aristocratic authors were cocking a snook at the commercial and industrial classes who longed in vain to rise up the social scale.

All this may be true of the fashionable novels whose authors were genuinely members of the upper classes of society, but in fact the most interesting examples – including those included in this set – were written by authors who had originated from rather lower down the

social scale. Even Marguerite, Countess of Blessington, despite her title, was a middle-class Irish woman who had married well but was not accepted by London society owing to the scandal and rumour that surrounded her private life, and it would be over thirty years before Edward Bulwer was raised to the peerage as Lord Lytton of Knebworth. The first of Colburn's long run of fashionable novels was *Tremaine, or the Man of Refinement*, 3 vols (1825), whose author, Robert Plumer Ward, was not a member of the aristocracy, although he certainly lived luxuriously enough in his Hertfordshire country seat. And indeed, although his early fictions were short stories rather than full length novels, a strong contender for the role of founder of the silver fork genre is the editor of the *John Bull* newspaper, Theodore Hook (1788–1841). But Hook, despite his high Tory views, was far from being an aristocrat. He was the son of a London musician, and when he wrote his three-volume collection of stories *Sayings and Doings* (London: Colburn, 1824) was confined for debt in a London sponging-house. Hook's stories may have been, as an early twentieth-century critic put it, 'flimsy, vulgar and trivial',¹ but they were undoubtedly influential. They were also indirectly responsible for the introduction of the term 'silver fork', which came to be applied to these kind of fictions. William Hazlitt's review of the collection sneered at Hook's ignorance of the world he attempted to depict: 'these privileged persons are not surely thinking all the time and every day of their lives of that which Mr Theodore Hook has never forgotten since he first witnessed it, viz., that *they eat their fish with a silver fork*'² and within a few years the term had been transferred to the texts themselves ('those contemptible productions of the silver fork school, which are called "fashionable novels"').³

Certainly in early 1826, when Thomas Henry Lister's *Granby* appeared, the genre had become well enough established for one reader to describe the novel as 'one of that very difficult class which aspires to describe the actual current of society; whose colours are so evanescent that it is difficult to fix them on the canvas'.⁴ By the time

¹ A. W. Ward and A. R. Waller (eds), *Cambridge History of English Literature*, 18 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1907–16), vol. xii, p. 251.

² William Hazlitt, 'The Dandy School' [1827], *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. by P. P. Howe, 21 vols (London: J. M. Dent, 1934), vol. xx, p. 146.

³ *The Times*, 15 December 1831.

⁴ *The Journal of Sir Walter Scott*, ed. by W. E. K. Anderson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), p. 121.

Edward Bulwer's *Falkland* came out in 1827, reviewers were confidently classifying it as one of

the pretended fashionable novels, that have lately been manufactured – all symptoms of the odious love of private scandal which characterises the reading public of the present day.¹

But it was Bulwer's next novel, *Pelham; or The Adventures of a Gentleman* (3 vols, London: Colburn, 1828) that arguably created the greatest stir. Although the *Monthly Review* described it as 'the very best novel we have seen of the class to which it belongs',² Tory reviewers detected radical sentiments beneath its satirical and entertaining surface veneer. Walter Scott was worried by 'a *slang* tone of morality which is immoral and of policy void of every thing like sound wisdom',³ while Thomas Carlyle famously satirised the novel in his *Sartor Resartus* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1831). Two years after the publication of *Pelham* Bulwer was subjected to a violent attack by William Maginn in *Fraser's Magazine* for being of 'the same die' as the 'pseudo-fashionable class' of novelist, 'this degenerate spawn, engendered from the overflowings of that majestic Nile – hight romantic fiction'.⁴

Clearly by now these novels were no longer seen – if indeed they ever had been – simply as trifles to be quickly read and as quickly disregarded. They had taken on a political colouring. As Bulwer himself wrote in his collection of critical essays *England and the English* (1833):

In these works, even the lightest and most ephemeral, something of the moral spirit of the age betrayed itself. Novels of fashionable life illustrate feelings very deeply rooted, and productive of no common revolution ... the three-year run of fashionable novels was a shrewd sign of the times; straws they were, but they showed the upgathering of the storm ... Few writers ever produced so great an effect on the political spirit of their generation as some of these novelists, who, without any other merit, unconsciously exposed the falsehood, the hypocrisy, the arrogant and vulgar insolence of patrician life. Read by all classes, in every town, in every village, these works ... could not but engender a mingled indignation and disgust at the parade of frivolity, the ridiculous disdain of truth, nature, and mankind, the self-consequence and absurdity, which, falsely or truly, these novels exhibited as a picture of aristocratic society.⁵

¹ *Monthly Review*, n.s., 5 (June 1827), p. 262.

² *Monthly Review*, n.s., 9 (September 1828), p. 52.

³ Letter from Walter Scott to John Gibson Lockhart (20 November 1828), *The Letters of Sir Walter Scott*, ed. by H. J. C. Grierson; assisted by Davidson Cook, W. M. Parker, et al, 12 vols (London: Constable, 1932–7), vol. xi, p. 45.

⁴ Anon [William Maginn], 'Mr Edward Lytton Bulwer's Novels; and Remarks on Novel-Writing', *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country*, 5:1 (June 1830), p. 510.

⁵ Edward Bulwer Lytton, *England and the English*, ed. by Standish Meacham (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1970), pp. 287–8.

Although he is apparently disassociating himself from the genre, and writing as if the vogue for these works has already passed, Bulwer's comments here are shrewd, and bring into focus many of the issues that have remained the most interesting aspect of the silver fork novel.

From the time of their original publication up to the present day, much critical discussion has revolved around the question of how these texts should be read. For the radical critic and reviewer William Hazlitt, fashionable novels were shallow and narrow, written only to encourage in their readers 'the admiration of the folly, caprice, insolence and affectation of a certain class'. The danger, for him, seemed to be the fact that fashionable novels sowed the seeds of discontent and envy in their less privileged readers:

Literature, so far from supplying us with intellectual resources to counterbalance immediate privations, is made an instrument to add to our impatience and irritability under them, and to nourish our feverish, childish admiration of external show and grandeur. This rage for fashion and for fashionable writing seems becoming universal, and some stop must be put to it ...¹

For Bulwer, however, the opposite effect is produced: in his view, far from holding the aristocracy up for admiration, the purpose of these novels is to satirise 'the follies and vices of the great'.² These conflicting views provide a useful demonstration of what has interested many recent critics most about silver fork novels: Winifred Hughes has described this as their 'radical instability of tone'. By exhibiting the 'insolence' of the upper classes, she argues:

[w]hat the silver fork formula did was to allow both writers and readers to revel in that insolence and to partake of its power while simultaneously mocking or trivialising its aristocratic exponents. Even the most reform-minded reader could surrender himself or herself to its decadent titillations while preserving a sense of moral and class superiority.³

So much for the general background of the silver fork genre. However, the novels that are included in the present set do not appear to conform in many respects to the criteria that have been discussed so far. As far as their subject matter is concerned, none is as superficial as hostile criticism of the genre had suggested, nor do they conform to

¹ Hazlitt, 'The Dandy School' [1827], p. 148.

² *England and the English*, p. 288.

³ Winifred Hughes, 'Silver-fork Writers and Readers: Social Contexts of a Best Seller', *Novel: a forum on fiction*, 25:3 (1992), 328–47, p. 330.

the self-parodic 'receipt' for writing such a novel that Disraeli included in his *The Young Duke* (1831):

Take a pair of pistols and a pack of cards, a cookery book and a set of new quadrilles; mix them up with half an intrigue and a whole marriage, and divide them into three equal portions.¹

Equally, it would not be wholly accurate to describe any of them as 'a sort of London Directory of fashionable tradespeople', as one reviewer of Catherine Gore's *Pin Money* (1831) put it,² though readers can undeniably discover from them a great deal about the shops, clothes, restaurants and hairstyles that were in vogue in Regency London. Yet there are certainly common threads running through all the works that make them very definitely classifiable as products of their particular age and genre. Certainly all the six novels in this collection deal with 'high life', and certainly all can be said to deal with it satirically. The virulence of the satire varies from novel to novel, and is undoubtedly affected by the particular agenda of each novelist.

Lister's introduction to *Granby*, the earliest of the six, disclaims any agenda whatsoever:

I have no system to announce – no tale of authorship to relate, that can reasonably excite the least curiosity... It was my intention merely to try if I could frame a tale which, taking an unexaggerated view of the surface of society, and without deviation from the possible incidents of modern life, should excite an interest in its readers.³

As Clare Bainbridge points out in her introduction to the novel, however, *Granby* is considerably more politicised than Lister would have his readers believe. The work touches on issues that were in the forefront of discussion in the pre-Reform era, including rotten boroughs, political corruption and threats to the supremacy of the aristocracy. Class anxiety frequently rears its head, often in comic situations. Above all, perhaps, the novel is about discrimination. Minor characters are generally concerned with discriminating between various levels of social status, but for Henry Granby it is more a matter of working out for himself how to be a man, and indeed an aristocratic man, in a society which is in a state of social flux and turmoil. Both Granby and his beloved Caroline are forced to negotiate their way through the confusing pitfalls of silver fork society against a backdrop of country house-parties, the London season, visits to the opera, trips to the continent, sojourns in stately homes and nights in gambling dens. Both must learn to discriminate between true and false, genuine

¹ Benjamin Disraeli, *The Young Duke* (London: Peter Davies, 1926), p. 132.

² Review of *Pin Money*, *Westminster Review*, 15 (October 1831), p. 433.

³ *Granby*, Volume 1, pp. 000–000.

and hypocritical, as they encounter a bewildering series of characters who mostly seem bent on deception and self-interest. In this they typify what a recent critic has suggested is one of the chief characteristics of the genre:

the fundamental principle – and the scandal – of the silver-fork novel, as a specific type of the novel of manners, sentiment, and emulation, is that the intrinsic importance of the topic of discrimination matters less than the act of discrimination, the exercise of personal taste within a social discourse of discrimination and distinction.¹

In Landon's *Romance and Reality*, too, social gatherings – ballrooms, parties, dinner tables – are the backdrop against which the novel's plot and themes must be worked out. Landon herself was a middle class outsider, and felt distinctly anxious about having agreed to write about a fashionable society from which she was largely excluded² although her literary fame had enabled her to have some glimpses of it. Thus she writes from the perspective of a detached and frequently cynical observer, a viewpoint that shocked contemporary critics who expected something very different from the adored love poet 'L. E. L.', whose yearning verses had won her a crowd of admirers. While critics and readers could be forgiven for doubting Lister's didactic intentions, there could be no doubt in anyone's mind that *Romance and Reality* set out to expose the 'follies and vices' of the exclusive world it depicted. Indeed, as Cynthia Lawford points out in her introduction to the volume, the plot often appears secondary to the satirical authorial asides with which Landon peppered her text. Although not overtly political, the novel frequently touches on many of the hotly debated topics of its day: the politics of reform, ministerial corruption, social welfare and political economy, as well as the revolutions, wars and uprisings that were taking place around Europe. That Landon had more than a passing familiarity with these issues is unsurprising given that the period of writing the novel coincided with her close friendship with Edward Bulwer, who makes a brief and flattering appearance in the text. Landon wrote an article on his early life and works for the *New Monthly Magazine*,³ and could hardly have avoided a familiarity with his radical politics, though as a Tory she did not necessarily agree with all his views. She seems, in fact, to have based her hero Edward Lorraine's political aspirations on those of Bulwer,

¹ Gary Kelly, *English Fiction of the Romantic Period, 1739–1830* (Harrow: Longman, 1989), p. 225.

² Letitia Landon, Letter to Rosina Bulwer (February–March 1830), Ms., Folder I, Box 48, Collection 100, University of California at Los Angeles.

³ Anon [Letitia Landon], 'Living Literary Characters, No. V, Edward Lytton Bulwer', *New Monthly Magazine*, 31 (May 1831), 442–4.

whose first entry into parliament as Member for St Ives in Huntingdonshire would coincide with the publication of *Romance and Reality*.

Landon's references to, and covert use of, the character of one of her own close friends signals another feature of the novels of this genre: their penchant for the methods of the *roman à clef*. Most of the novels in the present collection contain elements at least of this tendency. Lister's *Granby* contains a character named Lady Harriett Duncan who is widely believed to be based on Lady Caroline Lamb, while his 'intellectual dandy' Trebeck has often been thought to be a representation of George 'Beau' Brummell. Bulwer's *Godolphin* also includes a number of characters who would have been immediately identifiable by those in the know. Most notably, not only did he tactlessly base the character of the eccentric peer Lord Saltream on that of John William Ward, 1st Earl of Dudley, who died in a private asylum in 1833, but his central female protagonist, Constance, Countess of Erpingham, was clearly modelled in many respects on his new and much admired friend Marguerite, Countess of Blessington. Indeed it is Constance's sceptical view of the aristocratic circles in which she is an unwilling participant – a view which has much in common with Blessington's own opinions, both private and public – that provide the basis for much of this novel's scathing critique of the modes and manners of 1830s society. If Lister and Landon introduced politics into their novels somewhat indirectly, the same cannot be said to be true of Bulwer. Written during its author's first heady months as a member of parliament, the novel recounts the events leading up to the final passing of the Reform Act almost blow by blow as they were actually occurring. Bulwer was at his most radical at this era, and in many places the novel seems less like a work of fiction than a pamphlet of political philosophy. Like Lister, Bulwer follows the mould set by early fashionable novels by including a dandy figure in the text, in this case the amoral and callous Augustus Saville, who seems in many ways to typify the worst failings of the world of the exclusives.

Marguerite Blessington did not respond to Bulwer's complimentary portrait of her in *Godolphin* by including him in *The Victims of Society*, which she published some three years later. In fact she had included a fulsome tribute to Bulwer and his wife Rosina in her earlier novel, *The Repealers*, 3 vols (London: Bentley, 1833), a novel which contains many thinly disguised portraits of living persons.¹ In the preface to *Victims* she went to some lengths to disclaim the new work's status as *roman à clef*:

¹ See 'Key to the Repealers', in R. R. Madden, *The Literary Life and Correspondence of the Countess of Blessington*, 2 vols (New York: Harper, 1855), vol. i, p. 219.

Those who move in a highly artificial state of society acquire ... a kind of family resemblance: and every general description is susceptible of personal application ... It is not then a superfluous precaution seriously to declare, that the characters of this work are invented, not copied, as the representatives of a class, or agents of a moral ... (Volume 4, p. 000).

No doubt some readers may have felt she was protesting too much, but there is in fact little indication in the novel that her satire has any personal targets, or indeed that the virtuous characters are based on any real life models. Far from being a flaw, this fact merely demonstrates Blessington's purpose in this work, which is to lay bare the selfishness and hypocrisy of London society as a whole. There is not just one victim of society in this text: Blessington's plural 'Victims' should alert the reader to the fact that both the virtuous Augusta and the tarnished Caroline are meant here. False rumour destroys Augusta's reputation – a demonstration of the novel's main premise that society cares only for appearance, and never for the real facts of the case. But Caroline, who has been subjected at far too young an age to the dark underside that is society's true face, has succumbed to the immorality and vice that lie just below the glittering surface. Indeed, though not a *roman à clef*, the novel could be said to have a personal application of a rather different kind. Blessington herself was, after all, a victim of a society that rejected her on the grounds both of her past reputation as what she privately admitted to having been, 'that despised thing, a kept mistress' before her marriage, and of her continuing relationship with her son-in-law Alfred d'Orsay.¹ By creating these two divergent women characters – one falsely accused, the other corrupted by vicious associates – she could be said to be having it both ways: whichever truth one chose to believe about her own life, society was itself to blame.

If Blessington was making a general point about the corruption and hypocrisy in society as a whole, Rosina Bulwer had targets in view which were wholly specific. Primarily intended as a weapon in her continuing feud with her estranged husband Edward Bulwer, *Chevelley* managed to encompass character assassinations of just about everyone in his family and social circle. The accuracy of her thinly disguised and wickedly funny portraits is evident from the panicky letters written by Bulwer to John Forster at the time of the novel's

¹ 'Draft of a memorandum of a conversation between Dr Madden and Lady Blessington. Dated 1843', Alfred Morrison (ed.), *The Collection of Autograph Letters and Historical Documents: The Blessington Papers*, (Printed for Private Circulation, 1895), p. 169. Blessington's relationship with Count d'Orsay has been much discussed. For the most recent assessment, including new evidence of the true nature of their relationship, see Nick Foulkes, *Last of the Dandies: The Scandalous Life and Escapades of Count d'Orsay* (London: Little Brown, 2003).

publication.¹ But although the novel is certainly a *roman à clef* writ large, and as such of enormous interest to anyone interested in the political and social history of the period, it has a great deal more to offer to today's readers. Rosina's feminism – inherited from her campaigning mother Anna Wheeler (1785–1848) – permeates the text through her heroine Julia's comments on women's oppression. Above all, the novel demonstrates the extraordinary breadth of Rosina's knowledge and the keenness of her intelligence. Although she was mocked by reviewers for the inaccuracy of some of her Latin and French quotations (quite likely to have been the fault of the compositor rather than the author) she demonstrates a remarkable grasp not only of languages (Greek, German and Italian also feature) but also of reading matter in those languages as well as in English. In an era which denied all but a minimal education to women, Rosina was clearly making a point by this display: attempting to prove herself, in other words, to be at least Bulwer's intellectual equal. How successfully she proved this may be a matter of dispute, but there is no doubt that she was more than his equal in one way – her wit. This quality, which was remarked on by all who met her in her early London days, is manifest in the novel's many entertaining character assassinations as well as in the author's asides. It is indeed noticeable that Bulwer's novels cease to be funny after his break-up with Rosina, so much so that it is tempting to think that the humour that has been so much admired in *Pelham* may have owed more to Rosina than to Edward.

Although Catherine Gore – perhaps the most celebrated practitioner of the fashionable novel – was not a member of the circle to which Bulwer, Landon, Blessington and Rosina belonged, she began a correspondence with Bulwer in July 1832 following a review in the *New Monthly Magazine* which she mistakenly supposed him to have written. The following year Bulwer paid a tribute to her 'lively novels' as giving 'a just and unexaggerated picture of the intrigues, the manoeuvres, the plotting and the counterplotting' of the English marriage market.² Their correspondence continued sporadically for the rest of her life and after she died he bundled her letters together with a note of his own:

She was a remarkably clever woman, and her novels have a merit that has never been sufficiently appreciated. She preceded Thackeray, and as she knew good society infinitely better than he did, her satire makes his look like caricature.³

¹ See Marie Mulvey-Roberts's introduction to *Cheveley*, Volume 5.

² *England and the English*, pp. 85–6

³ Quoted in Michael Sadleir, *Bulwer and His Wife: A Panorama 1803–1836* (London: Constable, 1931), p. 303.

April Nixon Kendra's recent essay on Gore suggests a subdivision of fashionable novels into two classes, male-authored dandy novels and female-authored society novels, with Gore's work being placed in the second category.¹ However, *Cecil*, and its sequel *Cecil: A Peer*, are self-evidently dandy novels written by a female author. Although they were written almost a decade after the Reform Act, around which most of the earlier novels had centred, they are equally politicised. By setting the action of *Cecil's* plot back some eighteen years, Gore was able to satirise the worst excesses of the Regency period while simultaneously mourning its decay. The London to which Cecil has returned after a protracted stay on the continent typifies the worst of Victorian Toryism, with the high hopes of the Whig aristocracy in the last throes of a sad decline. Anonymous publication, which caused much wild speculation among readers and reviewers and gave secret pleasure to its author, allowed her narrator to claim a friendship with Byron, who appears as a character in the text. This appearance is peculiarly fitting, of course, given that Byron has long been recognised as one of the major influences behind the silver fork novel: indeed, Colburn's advertisement for Disraeli's *Vivien Grey* (1826) had puffed the novel as 'a sort of Don Juan in prose'.² Gore's grasp of the historical moment of the mid-1820s is impressive, and allows her, among many other satirical asides, to take several swipes at Marguerite Blessington, whose travels in Italy with her husband and son-in-law/lover had fed London society's appetite for scandal, and whose *Conversations of Lord Byron* (1834) Cecil criticises for its lack of authenticity.

Although Gore continued to publish novels until the late 1850s, fashionable novels had by then become distinctly unfashionable. Relentless parodies throughout the 1830s and 40s certainly hastened their decline. Dickens was responsible for one of the most memorable:

'Cherizette,' said the Lady Flabella, inserting her mouse-like feet in the blue satin slippers, which had unwittingly occasioned the half-playful half-angry altercation between herself and the youthful Colonel Befillaire, in the Duke of Mincefenille's *salon de danse* on the previous night. 'Cherizette, ma chere, *donnez moi de l'eau de cologne, s'il vous plait, mon enfant.*'

'*Mercie* – thank you,' said the Lady Flabella, as the lively but devoted Cherizette plentifully besprinkled with the fragrant compound the Lady Flabella's *mouchoir* of finest cambric, edged with richest lace, and

¹ April Nixon Kendra, 'Gendering the Silver Fork: Catherine Gore and the Society Novel', *Women's Writing*, 11:1 (2004), 25–38.

² *New Monthly Magazine* (1 April 1832). For a discussion of the influence of Byron on the silver fork genre, see Andrew Elfenbein, 'Silver-Fork Byron and the Image of Regency England', in Frances Wilson (ed.), *Byromania: Portraits of the Artist in Nineteenth-and Twentieth-Century Culture* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), pp. 77–92.

emblazoned at the four corners with the Flabella crest, and gorgeous heraldic bearings of that noble family. *'Mercie – that will do.'*

At this instant, while the Lady Flabella yet inhaled that delicious fragrance by holding the *mouchoir* to her exquisite, but thoughtfully-chiselled nose, the door of the *boudoir* (artfully concealed by rich hangings of silken damask, the hue of Italy's firmament) was thrown open...¹

Written just a year after the publication of *Victims of Society*, and a year or two before Dickens was introduced into the Blessington social circle,² this parody irresistibly recalls some of Blessington's less happy stylistic habits.

It is William Makepeace Thackeray, however, who is often credited with killing off the silver fork novel. His early burlesques, originally published in *Punch*, often return to the subject. The satire of the burlesque novel *Lords and Liveries, by the authoress of 'Dukes and Dejeuners', 'Hearts and Diamonds', 'Marchionesses and Milliners'*, with its relentless lists of meals, wines and London shops, and its plentiful sprinkling of foreign languages, not to mention its dandies and its duchesses, seems to be directed at Catherine Gore, while the eponymous 'fashionable authoress' Lady Fanny Flummery may owe something to Marguerite Blessington.³ But it is his major work, *Vanity Fair* (1847–8), which could be described as the ultimate self-parodying silver fork novel, that perhaps drove the final nail into the coffin of this already dying genre. In the preface, Thackeray objectifies the barriers of class hierarchy as:

doors so great and tall that the beloved reader and writer hereof may hope in vain to enter at them. Dear brethren, let us tremble before those august portals. I fancy them guarded by grooms of the chamber with flaming silver forks with which they prong all those who have not the right of the *entrée*.⁴

That even as late as 1848 Thackeray thought the silver fork novel had enough life left in it to be worth satirising testifies to its remarkable staying power. But for all their undoubted virtues, the world these novels depicted was one which was no longer relevant to readers of the Victorian period, who could by this time be immersing themselves

¹ Charles Dickens, *Nicholas Nickleby* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 359.

² See Michael Sadleir, *Blessington-d'Orsay: A Masquerade* (London: Constable, 1933), p. 263.

³ William Makepeace Thackeray, *Miscellanies: Prose and Verse*, 3 vols (London: Bradbury & Evans, 1836), vol. iii, pp. 419–29, 463–76.

⁴ William Makepeace Thackeray, *Vanity Fair* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987), p. 583.

in the more profound and socially conscious pleasures of Dickens, Gaskell and the Brontës.

Catherine Gore should perhaps be allowed to have the final word on the subject:

We have perhaps had more than enough of fashionable novels, but as the amber which serves to preserve the ephemeral modes and caprices of the passing day, they have their value. They will prove to a following generation what the comedies of Congreve, and Cibber, and Farquhar, have proved to ourselves ... A novel of fashionable life does not presuppose a tissue of puerile vulgarity.¹

¹ *Women as they Are* (1830) quoted in Alison Adburgham, *Silver Fork Society: Fashionable Life and Literature from 1814–1840* (London: Constable, 1983), pp. 170–1.

INTRODUCTION

‘The fashionable novel was firmly established with Lister’s *Granby* in 1826’, according to Matthew Whiting Rosa;¹ but what is it about this novel in which ‘there are absolutely no events, nobody runs away, goes mad, or dies’² to have encouraged a flood of imitators?

Thomas Henry Lister was, not, on the face of it, the most likely silver fork novelist. Sadleir claims that he was a Tory, a notion accepted by Rosa, who uses this supposed Toryism to account for Bulwer’s dislike of Lister’s work.³ This supposition cannot be correct, however. Lister was, as a young man, an inmate of that haunt of Whiggism, Holland House.⁴ Furthermore, he wrote reviews for the Whiggish *Edinburgh Review* one of his sisters married Lord John Russell, and he accepted preferment from Whig governments. He was born in 1800, the eldest son of a country gentleman with family connections among the aristocracy. He went to Westminster School and then to Cambridge, though he left without taking his degree. He held various government offices, including that of Registrar General for England and Wales (1836). He took part in Commissions set up to look at the state of education in Ireland (1834), and at religious education and provisions for worship in Scotland (1835). But he found time to write three silver fork novels: *Granby* (1826), *Herbert Lacy* (1828) and *Arlington* (1832), as well as a verse drama, *Epicharis*, presented at the Drury Lane Theatre on 14 October 1829 and published by Colburn and Bentley in the same year, and the biography of Clarendon (1838) discussed below. He also wrote a number of reviews of fiction, including an interesting early critique of Dickens, for the *Edinburgh Review*. Details of this and his other periodical writings are given in the List of Author’s Works.

¹ Matthew Whiting Rosa, *The Silver-Fork School: Novels of Fashion Preceding Vanity Fair* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1964), p. 55.

² [Sydney Smith], Review of *Granby*, *Edinburgh Review*, 43 (February 1826), p. 396.

³ Rosa, *The Silver-Fork School*, p. 71.

⁴ If Alison Adburgham (*Silver Fork Society: Fashionable Life and Literature, 1814–1840* (London: Constable, 1983)) is right. She cites a letter from Creevey to Miss Ord, listing the young gentlemen supposed to be of the Holland House set, in which Lister’s name appears (pp. 94–5). The name of the house has been erased.

It seems that the whole Lister family was involved in writing at one time or another. His father, Thomas, and his grandfather Nathaniel were both poets accomplished enough to receive mentions by Anna Seward, a neighbour in Staffordshire. One of his sisters, Harriet Cradock, wrote a novel, *Anne Grey*, which was published as 'edited by the Author of Granby'. Mary Berry thought highly enough of Lister's wife, Lady Maria Theresa Villiers, that she left her letters and journals to her and her father. Lady Maria Theresa published a well-regarded selection of these in 1865. She married the distinguished politician and writer Sir George Cornwall Lewis after Lister's death in 1842, and published in 1852 *The Lives of the Friends and Contemporaries of Lord Chancellor Clarendon*. Lister himself wrote a biography of Clarendon, Lord Chancellor and Chancellor of the Exchequer to Charles I and II, whose descendant through the female line was Lady Maria Theresa. This biography was well received by the *Edinburgh Review*, though it was attacked so energetically by Croker in the *Quarterly Review* that Lister felt called upon to publish a response. He was also goaded into replying, in the form of a preface to the 1836 edition of *Granby*, to the *Quarterly's* allegations of plagiarism in that novel.

The critical response to Lister's *Life of Clarendon* gives us an insight into the kind of political thinking which underlies *Granby*, and other silver fork novels. Written in a world in which aristocratic hegemony is challenged as never before, they turn back to the history of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to find justification for the control of the state by the upper classes. In the novels, this justification is used with some finesse, but in the writing (and the reception) of the biography of a figure as significant to the history of England as Clarendon, ideological thinking is made manifest. Thus, for example, the *Quarterly* takes issue with Lister after making its own position clear:

No writer and few statesmen have been subjected to more numerous, more virulent, and more insidious attacks than Lord Clarendon. All the enemies of the monarchical constitution of England have been, and still are, *his*. The rigid fanaticism of the presbyter, the unctuous bigotry of the Jesuit, and the fraudulent candour of the sceptic, suspend, for a moment, their mortal feuds, in a common enmity to CHURCH AND STATE, and to the Noble Historian whose immortal work – whether as a body of facts or as a code of principles – is the strongest bulwark of both that literature has ever erected.¹

For Croker, clearly, any revision of Clarendon's reputation is next door to blasphemy. Unsurprisingly, Sydney Smith, responding to Croker's attack in the *Edinburgh Review*, sees the situation very dif-

¹ [J. W. Croker] 'Lister's *Life of Lord Clarendon*.' *Quarterly Review* 62, (Oct 1838), p. 506.

ferently. He admires Lister's work as an attempt to 'place before us an honest portrait, with all its excellencies and defects'.¹ But for him too, the period of the Civil War, the Restoration and the Glorious Revolution is one in which objectivity is impossible. 'And, so enduring still are the interests and affections of that period, that a fair and reasonable estimate of these men was an event not much more improbable in the year 1674 ... than at the present day.'² Neither Croker nor Smith refers explicitly to the bitter and divisive debates on the British constitution which raged around the subject of Reform in the 1820s and 1830s, and yet it is clearly this political context which makes the (re)writing of Clarendon so contentious. As in the novels, there are key words in the review which alert the careful reader to the eighteenth-century political sub-text. 'He [Clarendon] was not educating for a *patriot*', claims Smith, and 'Clarendon had the honour ... of being hated by as many of his contemporaries as hated *liberty* and *virtue*' (my italics).³ It is this kind of sub-text, drawing on eighteenth-century political terms, that we can look for in *Granby* to discover the political and ideological work it discreetly performs. Not that discretion is always and inevitably necessary: Sir Thomas Jermyn 'could utter many undeniable truisms about "Church and King"', we are told,⁴ and this statement should be read in the context of Croker's furious capitals above.

But to grasp the context in which ideological terms such as 'Church and King' could be deployed, it is necessary to examine how the novel was received, and it must be said that if *Granby* is one of the novels which established the fashionable genre, it was not received critically with any great excitement.⁵ Reviewed in the *Quarterly Review* along with Robert Plumer Ward's *Tremaine* and Lord Normanby's *Matilda*, it is taken to task, as mentioned above, for being a mere copy of Normanby's work, an accusation denied in the preface to the reprinting of the novel in Colburn's 'Modern Novelists' series in 1836. The reviewer, William Stewart Rose, finds all three novels 'marked by a healthy tone of moral and religious feeling,'⁶ however, which in itself elevates them above the 'broad distaste' usually expressed both in the *Quarterly Review* and in the *Edinburgh Review* for what they categorised

¹ [Sydney Smith], *Lister's Life of Lord Clarendon*, *Edinburgh Review*, 68 (January 1839), p. 461.

² *Ibid.*, p. 460.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 462, 486.

⁴ *Granby*, vol. i, p. 22.

⁵ Although Sydney Smith found that it had the essential characteristics of a novel: it 'produces unpunctuality, makes the reader too late for dinner, impatient of contradiction, and inattentive', Smith, *Review of Granby*, p. 395.

⁶ [W. S. Rose], 'Novels of Fashionable Life', *Quarterly Review*, 33 (March 1826), 474–90.

as ‘the common “female” novel.’¹ Peter Garside notes the derogatory use of gendered language in the reviewing of the period, tending to identify the fashionable novel with women writers and women readers, despite the fact that the majority of silver fork novels, like *Granby*, concern themselves with the development of the male hero, not the female heroine.² But while Normanby’s story, like *Granby*, remains an enjoyable, witty tour of the fashionable world of 1826, Ward’s *Tremaine* is now only slightly more readable than his *De Vere*, accessible to only the most devoted scholar, its third volume grinding to a standstill under the burden of a prolonged discussion of the duties of an English gentleman.

Lister’s work is far closer to what modern readers expect of fiction. And it is ideologically engaging, for at the novel’s heart is the conflict between two different value systems, the Regency and the (proto) Victorian, played out through the two main male characters, Granby himself and his cousin Tyrrel, and to some extent in conversations between Granby and his young friend Courtenay, who is nearly ruined by the card-sharpers led by Tyrrel. Lister has a sharp ear for dialogue: the exchanges between the Brummell-like dandy and the artless heroine at their first meeting are fresh and funny, as is the lively nonsense of his Lady Harriet (drawn from Lady Caroline Lamb). He is a naive writer, of course: the portrait of Lady Harriet is no more than a *jeu d’esprit*; relationships between the characters are scarcely developed; time is often handled without any attempt at art, as it is at the beginning of chapter 7 in volume iii; and new characters are introduced without warning towards the end of the novel, in a manner which contributes nothing to its structural coherence.

If all this seems to amount to reasons for *not* reading *Granby*, there is a great deal to engage the reader, such as its sense of fun, and its – merciful – freedom from didacticism. But most of all, the particular literary failings of silver fork novels (and *Granby* is no exception in this) tend to expose the ideological work they perform. The literary scholar, then, so far from using the novels as a mine for social-historical study, must read them as dynamically engaged with the politics, economics, literary markets and gender tensions of their historical moment, both shaped by and shaping the society Britain was becoming. Thus, while noting that *Granby* contains overt reference to

¹ Peter Garside, ‘The English Novel in the Romantic Era’, in P. Garside, J. Raven, and R. Schöwerling (eds), *The English Novel 1770–1829: A Bibliographical Survey of Prose Fiction Published in the British Isles*, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), vol. ii, p. 17.

² Ward’s *Tremaine* (1826) and *De Vere* (1827), Bulwer’s *Pelham* (1828), Disraeli’s *Vivian Grey* (1826–7) and *The Young Duke* (1831) and Catherine Gore’s *Cecil* novels (1840), for example.

contemporary political debates – the Game Laws, Catholic Emancipation and so on – we need to be alert to the way political tensions are displaced onto (for example) representations of masculinity, or of architecture. Such a reading shifts the debate away from questions of quality and hierarchy – Is this a ‘good’ book? How ‘good’? Is it ‘important’? – towards questions of how it engages in a dialectic with other texts, other discourses, to produce the cultural world of the 1820s. Read like this, *Granby* appears at once to be deeply implicated with both politics and class, with the influence of fashion on these, and, most importantly, with the changing role of the English gentleman.

One would expect that no novel written in the turbulent years of the 1820s could feign ignorance of the political situation, and there are certain themes and tropes which make regular appearances in silver fork fiction: the corruption and apparently endemic futility of the whole governing apparatus of Britain, the rottenness of its boroughs, the venality of many of its politicians, the cynicism of its small electorate. So, too, does the threat to the aristocracy’s supremacy. Thrusting city men, gaudily dressed women with suspect vowels, girls pushed relentlessly into the limelight by mothers who know the Peerage by heart, vulgar travellers who are treated as lords overseas, all make claims to equality to which the upper classes cannot accede.

In *Granby*, the threat to aristocratic hegemony and homogeneity appear both directly and indirectly. Sir Thomas Jermyn, for instance, father to the novel’s heroine, is depicted as a nonentity of a rather dangerous sort. Though given a slightly more sophisticated character than some, his is a stock figure in silver fork fiction.¹ He is Member of Parliament for Rottentown, a name to rank with the Buyemall of Bulwer’s *Pelham* and the Eatanswill of Mr Pickwick. His strategy of voting with the government while speaking out against it demonstrates a lack of political principle by no means superseded in the modern world, while the description of his activities as a landowner drips with irony. Kind to all who do as he wishes, he is managed by his servants and his wife, and acts vigorously only to conceal the fact that Caroline cannot inherit his wealth. He is superbly confident of his own importance. His utter unfitness for government is not stated directly, but is made apparent in the ‘character’ sketch with which he is introduced, as well as through the stupidity and selfishness with which he acts.

Apart from such overt commentary, political messages also seep into the text obliquely. References to that (still) politically sensitive early eighteenth century abound. Granby’s letter to Caroline² is sent

¹ Mr Dormer, in Normanby’s *Yes and No* (1828), for instance.

² *Granby*, vol. i, p. 13.

under cover to Sir Thomas openly, and without the appurtenances of romance: 'he had bribed no Abigail,' we are told, and the alert reader will note that the term 'abigail' for a serving-maid sets up some resonance with Queen Anne's famously venal confidante Abigail Masham, a reference which connects Sir Thomas with the corruptions of the early eighteenth-century court. A further reference to that period occurs when Lady Harriet fondly believes a snuff-box in her possession to have been the property of Marlborough's distinguished colleague in defeating the French at Oudenarde and Blenheim. Such discreet references to post-1688 politics are particularly significant in the context of the novel's treatment of masculinity, examined below.

Class anxiety, though not the main theme of this novel as it is of *Herbert Lacy*, is clearly evident. As so often in silver fork fiction, this tension appears overtly as well as covertly. Thus, Lady Jermyn's speculations on the reasons for Lady Daventry's failure to invite them involve a complex reflection on the kind of hospitality offered to people of various classes: is a general invitation, a 'do come at any time', one of the warmest or the coolest sort? As Lady Jermyn puts it: 'there are the Joneses, and the Gibbises, and the Robinses, and the Barkers: you never meet them but you make a speech about seeing them, and yet we never have them but once in two years.'¹ The plebeian names in this list indicate the status of these lowly guests. Can it be that to Lady Daventry, the viscount's wife, Sir John and Lady Jermyn seem equally undistinguished? Granby, too, is made uncomfortable on his first appearance in London as Lord Malton: he reflects that 'he did not know his place half so well as those about him.'² Less direct hints at a state of uncomfortable social self-consciousness come in the scene in which Granby attends a party at a house where he is not known, and in a variant of that regular silver fork joke, the guest who mistakes his host for the butler (or vice versa). When Trebeck claims that the Duke of Ilminster will lose his 'right-hand man', Lady Jermyn imagines he means his valet, and Trebeck, in (pretended?) horror, instantly corrects her: it is Rigby, the factotum – and model for Disraeli's Rigby in *Coningsby* – who is meant.³

Rigby's ambivalent status is spelled out in Trebeck's ironic response to Lady Jermyn's misunderstanding of his use of the word 'gentleman'.⁴ 'He has a great deal of confidence, without a grain of pride; he

¹ *Granby*, vol. i, p. 27.

² *Ibid.*, vol. iii, p. 332.

³ The origin of Disraeli's Rigby in Lister's was discovered by A. Griffiths, *Notes and Queries*, 1 (1954), p. 396, cited in Robert Lee Wolff, *Nineteenth-Century Fiction: a Bibliographical Catalogue*, 5 vols (New York: Garland, 1986), vol. iii, p. 44.

⁴ *Granby*, vol. i, p. 52.

has perfect subserviency, without any unnecessary formality; and he certainly possesses the art of flattering, without the least appearance of fawning; he has a bold, rough, honest style of toad-eating.' No gentleman, then, but an absolutely indispensable part of a contemporary Duke's entourage. The confusion generated by encouraging Lady Harriet to believe that among the 'provincial oddities'¹ Mrs Hawkins is as rare an eccentric as Lady Harriet herself also conveys a strong class message: a Lady Harriet may take great freedom for herself, while a Mrs Hawkins can never be anything other than a dull woman with no interests outside her home and family.

The acting-out of these political and social issues is displaced onto two opposed notions of masculinity. While Caroline, the book's heroine, has more to say for herself than the average silver fork young lady, she is not the main focus of the book's attention. This is the struggle between the hero Henry Granby and the villain Tyrrel, which encapsulates the changing notions of what it means to be a man – or at least an aristocratic man – at this period. Henry Granby appears to be a role model. At the novel's outset, Granby requests his uncle to allow him to train for some useful career. He has no expectation of wealth, and has no wish to be idle. He is religious: when his young friend Courtenay appears suicidal, when Tyrrel himself threatens to end his life, Granby's arguments are passionately Christian. Furthermore, Granby's responses to Tyrrel's outbursts are self-consciously religious: when almost unbearably insulted by Tyrrel, he feels ashamed not to issue a challenge, and yet 'He wrongs me in expecting it. This [Tyrrel's address which has been given him in the expectation that he will issue a challenge] shall assist me in performing a higher duty – a deed more worthy of a man and a Christian.'²

Granby is virtuous: he is disgusted by Tyrrel's suggestion that the lock of hair Granby preserves so religiously belongs to a mistress – 'some damsel, retired from the cares of the world, in a snug white house with venetian blinds, an easy mile or two out of town.'³ Domestic in his tastes, he is only briefly and superficially attracted to the witty and beautiful Miss Darrell, that season's society success. He is 'entertained, and perhaps dazzled' by her,⁴ but the narrator's assumption that 'the less dazzling, but more seductive sphere of her domestic circle'⁵ is where a woman's charms are seen most clearly, and Mr Duncan's comment that 'she [Miss Darrell] is one who would always

¹ *Ibid.*, vol. i, p. 62.

² *Ibid.*, vol. iii, p. 269.

³ *Ibid.*, vol. i, p. 118.

⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. ii, p. 138

⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. ii, p. 283.

enliven one's neighbour's party much more than one's own home – in one word, she is not domestic,'¹ appears to be Granby's view also.

Tyrrel, on the other hand, represents everything exciting and wicked about the Regency man-about-town. A gambler, a roué, a wastrel, he tries to insinuate himself into Caroline's favour for the sake of the fortune he believes she will inherit, and attempts to ruin Courtenay to revive his failed fortunes. After the death of Lord Malton, and the inevitable exposure of his own illegitimacy, he proposes to take himself off to the continent to live the life of a gentleman of fortune there. With an unmanageable temper, he quarrels bitterly with Granby, and finally commits suicide after the second of the book's two long dialogues on the subject. It seems curiously apt that the novel's classic plot should hinge on legitimacy: Granby's is indeed the model of manhood the Victorians would claim and by doing so make legitimate, Tyrrel's the one they would spurn and disinherit. It is important, though, not to exaggerate Granby's proto-Victorian aspects: like Tyrrel, for instance, he takes it for granted that denying repayment to the 'Jews' who have lent Tyrrel money against the inheritance he knows he will never have is perfectly acceptable, and the discovery that his cousin would have been bankrupted by the scale of his debts in any case relieves him: 'Granby, instead of robbing the son of his relation, was only rescuing a fine estate out of the hands of sharpers.'² Legitimacy, it seems, is a notion with a wider resonance than simply that of aristocratic immorality and family ambition, and one on which these two upper-class young men can at least partially agree.

Explorations of different models of masculinity run through many different aspects of the novel. Minor characters like the virtuous and peace-loving parson, Mr Thornton, have a genealogy the length of English literature. The gossipy squireen, Mr Edwards, is another stock figure. Neither of these is an appropriate role-model for a hero such as Granby. Closer to home, there are landowners and heads of households, good and bad. Sir Thomas Jermyn represents one extreme. But Granby also notes the difference between the genuine grief his virtuous uncle's servants express at their master's death and the pretence at it he finds in Lord Malton's household. In religion, in morals, in their attitude towards their family, General Granby and Lord Malton are opposites: it is General Granby who frustrates Malton's plan to pass off his illegitimate son as legitimate, and he does so not for his own benefit, but for the sake of his dead brother's son, and out of his own dislike of fraud. General Granby brings up Henry to

¹ *Granby*, vol. iii, p. 290.

² *Ibid.*, vol. iii, p. 280.

become a thoughtful and considerate young man, while Malton encourages Tyrrel to become spoiled and selfish. General Granby lives quietly, out of the world and respected by his small circle, while Lord Malton is proud and disdainful of his less worldly relations.

Lord Malton's worldliness is representative of the world of fashion which, as so often in silver fork novels, is both the desired fantasy-world of the aspiring reader, the object of disapproval of the didactic novelist, and the ground on which contemporary social tensions are worked out. It has to be said that Lister is probably the least inclined to take a didactic anti-fashion stance of any silver fork novelist. Not for him the raddled face, showing its age at dawn as the party ends, the girls old before their time from hot rooms and too much rich food (except for those very minor figures, the Misses Clifton), the viscount who hesitates to pursue his dearest ambition of being promoted to an earldom because his sisters will demand larger dowries once they become 'ladies'.

However understated, fashion is at the heart of the novel: note the constellation of names dropped – all the Guccis of the 1820s – at the beginning of the country-house scene in which Caroline meets the world of the *beau monde* for the first time, and at Granby's arrival in Paris. In its depiction of Trebeck and of Tarleton, the novel revisits the question of desirable and undesirable forms of masculinity. And in its handling of reputation and celebrity it develops these issues from yet another perspective.

The dandy's fascination with clothes, of course, cuts right across the novel's representation of an ideal masculinity. To minimise the effect of this, dandyism is divided in two: 'the Hon. Mr Tarleton' has the merest walk-on part, but he serves, with his '*recherché* attire'¹ as a foil for the real dandy Trebeck, who 'sickened soon'² of the kind of dandyism Tarleton represents. Trebeck is not that kind of dandy at all: instead, he cultivates 'fashionable exclusiveness'.³ He pretends not to be aspiring: he is very specifically not trying to be noticed, while at the same time it is, of course, essential that he be noticed. His is in fact the sublime of aspiration, and a kind of Foucauldian internalisation of it: by expressing the social attitudes befitting a duke, he gives himself a duke's status. So effectively does he do this that he can speak of the Duchess of Ilminster as 'dear, good, civil, little woman,'⁴ without censure. Ironically, it was the Tarleton model of dandyism, not the

¹ *Granby*, vol. i, p. 32.

² *Ibid.*, vol. i, p. 42.

³ *Ibid.*, vol. i, p. 41.

⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. i, p. 51.

Brummell model on which Trebeck is closely based, which was current in the 1820s.¹

Dandyism, however, although adding spice to the novel, does not touch it nearly. Granby himself has no special interest in dress or fashion; Tyrrel is never described. The flashpoint for the conflict played out between these two men is not dress but that other fashionable curse, gambling. The suggestion that Tyrrel is a hardened gambler – ‘a choice union of the Palais Royale *roué* with the English blackleg’² is made early on, and Granby’s civil but determined refusal of a heavy betting session contrasts with the young Courtenay’s unfortunate fleecing by Tyrrel and his associates. The decency of Granby’s response to the invitation to gamble throws into relief the remarkably high incidence of speculations of various types throughout the book: indeed, his sense that an honest person earns a living sets him apart from almost all the other characters. Lady Jermyn, when she realises that the dull Lord Chesterton has added himself to Caroline’s list of suitors, imagines ‘a prospective coronet upon her daughter’s brow,’³ and Sir Thomas has himself forbidden Caroline to inform people that she will not be an heiress. Lord Malton runs huge risks to fraudulently establish an heir for himself. Estates, inheritances, heiresses; this is a dangerous world in which the young man as he grows up must learn to plot a safe course. He must avoid the kind of loss of reputation which has overtaken Tyrrel, as well as the heavy prosiness of Chesterton. His role-model cannot be either the gourmet Duke of Ilminster, the dandy Trebeck or the criminal Lord Malton; and yet the novel’s normative character, General Granby, is an old, and an old-fashioned man, at odds with the book’s pleasure in modernity.

This pleasure is evidenced in comments about the speed of modern travel, in Lady Harriet’s muddle-headed delight in various improbable uses of steam technology, and in its abundant intertextuality. It is often assumed that the Victorians were the first to comment on speed as a modern phenomenon. But silver fork novels already enjoy opposing the speed of the new macadamized roads and more efficient forms of stagecoach operation with the more leisurely methods of the past. As *Granby*’s narrator puts it: ‘the glories of the road are extinguished for ever’,⁴ an extinction produced by modern efficiency. The sense of living in a modern world is enhanced by Lady Harriet’s bluestocking

¹ Captain Jesse, Brummell’s biographer, claimed that Brummell recognised himself in Trebeck: ‘Lister must have know those who were intimate with me’ were his words. Jesse, *The Life of George Brummell, Esq.*, 2 vols. (London: Saunders and Otley, 1844, p. vii.)

² *Granby*, vol. i, p. 45.

³ *Ibid.*, vol. i, p. 81.

⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. i, p. 86.

hobby-horses: her conversation with Mrs Hawkins, for instance, is so funny precisely because no technological innovation seems impossible in 1826. Within this 'modern' world, however, the ideology of separate spheres, of domesticity for women and public life for men are safely naturalised. Caroline's (correct) understanding of her place in the scheme of things is conveyed quite subtly: at dinner at Hemingsworth, she looks around 'as much as was justifiable in her age and sex'.¹ Her astonishment at Lady Harriet, too, indicates her suitability for life as a peeress just as much as her faithfulness to Henry Granby. Lister's own views on women's participation in politics are made clear in his article on women's rights. Voting, he thinks, could never be possible for women: the 'ribaldry, calumny and intimidation' associated with the hustings would deter young single women, while 'we assume it is never contemplated that the right of voting should be claimed for married women during their husbands' lives; or for unmarried women living under the protection of their parents.'²

In the matter of product placement, Lister sets the tone for all future silver fork novels. Stultz the tailor, Maradon the milliner, Gunter the *traiteur*-in-chief for aristocratic party-givers, Colinet as the provider of music for these same parties all appear with the regularity of Happy Families cards in subsequent fashionable novels. So too do Pasta and Catalani the singers and Keen the actor. Note that all these figures provide the aristocracy with their London entertainment: there are no fashionable architects who might be employed about their country houses, apart from the two who figure so hilariously in Disraeli's *The Young Duke*. Can aristocratic life at this time really have been so wearisomely homogenised as *Granby* and others imply? Can there really have been no other caterers, musicians, florists, hat-shops? It seems unlikely. Rather, I think we should take the appearance of these stock figures, as we take the appearance of stock characters like Sir Thomas and Tyrrel, as markers for the novel's readers of the novel's quality. As branding, they have a kind of Marks & Spencer imprimatur which seems to imply high standards without any risk of (possibly dangerous) originality. To the well-bred reader, such references reassure: there are avid women out there desperate to know where to buy the right stuff. To the aspiring, they offer a reminder and an assurance of familiarity with the fashionable world.

But the greatest marker of modernity in *Granby* is its intertextuality. Terry Castle has commented on Ann Radcliffe's incorporation of

¹ *Granby*, vol. i, p. 34.

² T. H. Lister, 'Rights and Condition of Women', *Edinburgh Review*, 73 (April 1841), p. 203.

poetry into her fictions, suggesting that it ‘says a great deal about the new pre-eminence of the novel genre at the end of the eighteenth century.’¹ She notes the tendency of novelists throughout the early nineteenth century to follow Radcliffe’s example, and Lister is no exception in this. Each chapter is headed by a quotation, mainly drawn from the English and French classics, Spenser, Shakespeare, Jonson and Johnson, La Bruyère and Molière. But beyond this, the text itself is peppered with quotations and pseudo-quotations, as well as references to contemporary literature. ‘I hope you like nothing of Miss Edgeworth’s or Miss Austen’s’, observes Lady Harriet chattily, in what must be *Granby*’s only well-known sentence. ‘They are full of common-place people, that one recognizes at once.’² In the rapid *tour d’horizon* of the contemporary literary marketplace which follows, Lady Harriet puts Trebeck out of countenance for the first and only time with her accusation that he might have ‘put naughty things into the John Bull.’³ To be associated with a newspaper so famous for its excesses and its vulgarity (not to mention its origin in the Court’s desire to attack Queen Caroline during the crisis of 1820) leaves Trebeck speechless, much to Lady Harriet’s satisfaction. The constant borrowings of silver fork novelists from one another can be seen in the sketch of Lady Gabbleton,⁴ who perhaps influenced Bulwer’s Lady Babbleton in *Pelham*, just as the name Tyrrel recurs there as appropriate for a villain, though Bulwer may have been influenced rather by Godwin’s use of the name for the villain of *Caleb Williams*, a book he is known to have admired.⁵ The sense of the social and literary worlds as discontinuous, fragmented, and in a state of constant flux is of course emphasised in the jumbled and incoherent speeches of Lady Harriet.

This fragmentary nature extends to other areas of the cultural world. Architecture can work metonymically to reinforce the narrative’s ideological imperative. Hemingsworth, for instance, is a pastiche of the Gothic. Lord Daventry has turned it into ‘a baronial castle’. It appears to be ‘of formidable extent’, since the servants’ quarters are all crenellated too. Comedy is produced by Daventry’s determination to ‘cloak the most peaceful purposes under the most menacing exterior. The white cotton cap of his French cook, seen between the stanchions of a broad Gothic window, betrayed that one

¹ Terry Castle, ‘Introduction’ to Ann Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (Oxford: Oxford World’s Classics, 1998), p. xiii.

² *Granby*, vol. i, p. 56.

³ *Ibid.*, vol. i, p. 56.

⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. i, p. 45.

⁵ I am indebted to Harriet Devine Jump for this information, which reinforces the sense of profoundly self-conscious intertextuality in this period.

INTRODUCTION

massy wing contained a kitchen.’¹ The absurdity of having a draw-bridge leading to a coal-hole is also highlighted. The implication here is of an aristocracy which has lost its way, which no longer remembers the public purpose of the great country house, which plays at feudalism. Country houses and parks ought to be *legible*, in the way that Granby reads Tedsworth’s ‘proud arched gateway’, ‘varied extent of park-like ground’, and ‘fat and lazy deer’² as forming the perfect setting for the peer he is about to become.

This ideologically sensitive overlay adds to the reader’s sense that in *Granby* reality and illusion are curiously confounded. Fictional characters are drawn from ‘real life’; they are also drawn from other fictional characters. The novel is the modern vehicle for writing about contemporary life; it also draws happily upon the most basic and hackneyed elements of romance (as *Granby* does in its plotting). Unstable, insecure, it reflects its historical moment back upon itself.

¹ *Granby*, vol. i, p. 30.

² *Ibid.*, vol. iii, p. 260.



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LIST OF AUTHOR'S WORKS

NOVELS

- 1826 *Granby*, 3 vols (London: Colburn, 1826). 2nd and 3rd edns in the same year; also published in New York
- 1828 *Herbert Lacy*, 3 vols (London: Colburn, 1828)
- 1829 French translation of *Granby* published by Paquis in Paris, 5 vols, as 'from the English of Lord Normanby', a misunderstanding corrected in the Preface to the 1836 edition
- 1832 *Arlington*, 3 vols (London: Colburn, 1832)
- 1833 *Granby* appears as one of Colburn's Modern Novelists Series, actually reprints using Colburn's 'stock of unwanted sheets' according to Sadleir's *Nineteenth Century Literature*, 114.
- 1836 *Granby* reissued in Colburn's Modern Standard Novelists series, with a new preface denying that the book was a copy of Lord Normanby's *Matilda*

PLAYS

- 1829 Lister's tragedy *Epicharis* acted at the Drury Lane Theatre, 14 October. It was well-received and a repeat was planned. It was published in the same year. It deals with the conspiracy of the nobles against Nero, and uses much of the language of liberty identified with eighteenth-century political thought

NON-FICTION

- 1838 *The Life and Administration of Edward, First Earl of Clarendon; with Original Correspondence and Authentic Papers Never Before Published*, 3 vols (London: John Murray, 1837–8)

REVIEWS

- 1830 In the *Edinburgh Review*: 'Delavigne's *Marino Falieri*: Anglo-French Drama', 51 (April 1830), 225–46; 'Mrs Gore's *Women as they Are*', 51 (July 1830), 444–62; 'Tales of Military and Naval Life', 52 (October 1830), 119–38
- 1831 In the *Edinburgh Review*: 'Novels Descriptive of Irish Life', 52 (January 1831), 410–31; 'Reade's Poems', 53 (March 1831), 105–19; 'Southey's *Uneducated Poets*', 54 (September 1831), 69–84
- 1832 In the *Edinburgh Review*: '*The Waverley Novels*', 55 (April 1832), 61–79
In the *Foreign Quarterly Review*: 'American Poetry', 10 (August 1832), 121–38; 'Chateaubriand's *Works*', 10 (October 1832), 297–333
- 1833 In the *Edinburgh Review*: 'Affairs of Belgium and Holland', 56 (January 1833), 412–60; 'Mr. Sheridan Knowles's *Wife of Mantua*: State and Prospects of the Drama', 57 (July 1833), 281–312; 'Lady Morgan's *Dramatic Scenes*: Illustrations of the State of Ireland', 58 (October 1833), 86–113
In the *Foreign Quarterly Review*: 'Rush's *Residence in England*', 12 (July 1833), 209–35; 'D'Haussez' *Great Britain in 1838*', 12 (October 1833), 334–52
- 1834 In the *Edinburgh Review*: 'Miss Aikin's *Memoirs of Charles the First*', 58 (January 1834), 398–422; 'Cunningham's *Lives of the British Artists*: Progress and Prospects of British Art', 59 (April 1834), 48–73 and [probably], '*Journal of a West Indian Proprietor*', 73–86; 'Taylor's *Philip van Artevelde*', 60 (October 1834), 1–24
In the *Foreign Quarterly Review*: 'Madame de Staël', 14 (August 1834), 1–30. Lister writes here about de Staël's letters and political writings as well as her fiction
- 1835 In the *Edinburgh Review*: 'Appropriation of Church Property: Irish Catholic Clergy', 60 (January 1835), 483–522; 'State of the Irish Church', 61 (July 1835), 490–525
- 1836 In the *Edinburgh Review*: '*Ion*: a Tragedy', 63 (April 1836), 143–56. This review of Talfourd's drama includes some interesting general observations on the theatre
- 1838 In the *Edinburgh Review*: 'Dickens's *Tales*', 68 (October 1838), 75–97

LIST OF AUTHOR'S WORKS

- 1839 In the *Edinburgh Review*: 'Miss Martineau's *Deerbrook*', 69 (July 1839), 494–502
- 1839 'An Answer to the Misrepresentations Contained in an Article on the Life of Clarendon in No. CXXIV of the *Quarterly Review*', pamphlet (London, 1839), in which Lister answered Croker's attack
- 1841 In the *Edinburgh Review*, 'Rights and Condition of Women', *Edinburgh Review*, 73 (April 1841), 189–209



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CHRONOLOGY

- 1800 Lister born, the eldest son of Thomas Lister of Armitage Park, Staffordshire, and of his first wife, Harriett Anne Seale, of Mountboone, Devonshire.
- 1826 *Granby* is published. 2nd and 3rd editions appear in the same year.
- 1828 Thomas Lister dies.
Herbert Lacy is published.
- 1830 (November 30) Lister marries Lady Maria Theresa Villiers, sister of the Earl of Clarendon.
- 1832 Lister's only child, Thomas Villiers Lister, born.
Arlington is published.
- 1833 *Granby* appears as part of Colburn's Modern Novelists series.
- 1834 (4 June), Lister 'appointed a commissioner for inquiring with respect to the state of religious and other instruction then existing in Ireland' (*DNB*).
(19 July), Lister was appointed 'a commissioner for inquiring into religious education and provisions for worship in Scotland' (*DNB*).
Anne Grey, a Novel is published by Saunders and Otley, as 'edited by the author of *Granby*'. It was written by his sister Harriet Grove, afterwards Cradock.
- 1836 Lister appointed Registrar General for England and Wales.
Granby is reprinted in Colburn's Modern Novelists series, with a Preface.
- 1842 (5 June) Lister dies at the South Kensington home of his brother-in-law, the Earl of Morley.