CATHERINE GORE AND THE FASHIONABLE NOVEL: A REEVALUATION

by

APRIL NIXON KENDRA

(Under the Direction of Tricia Lootens)

ABSTRACT

This dissertation is both a genre study and an attempt to recover a marginalized British woman writer. Despite her success as a commercial playwright, historical novelist, and essayist, Catherine Gore (1799-1861) is best known for her "silver fork" novels, which describe in lavish detail the lifestyles of the London fashionable world. Although Gore was the most prolific author in this genre, scholars have diminished her contribution in two important ways: first, by basing the definition of the fashionable novel on works by male authors, primarily Edward Bulwer and Benjamin Disraeli, and second, by continuing to use the designation "silver fork," which necessarily confers a negative critical judgment. This dissertation uses the example of Catherine Gore to challenge existing definitions and assumptions about the fashionable novel, to propose a more accurate and helpful definition of the genre, and to re-examine the relationship between the fashionable novelist and more canonical authors like Frances Burney, Maria Edgeworth, and William Thackeray. Contrary to the popular assumption that all fashionable novels, as mass-produced commodities, are virtually identical, this dissertation identifies two important subcategories: the dandy novel (most closely associated with Bulwer and Disraeli) and the society novel (popularized by Gore). The dandy novel grows out of the German Bildungsroman and the English picaresque tradition; the influences of Goethe, Godwin, and

Byron are particularly evident. Because of its literary ancestry and the values it affirms—independence, ambition, physical strength, competition—the dandy novel may be considered a masculine form of the fashionable novel. In contrast to the hero-centered dandy novel, the society novel includes a large cast of characters whose lives are clearly interdependent, and the plot of the society novel tends to be complex rather than episodic. The feminine fashionable novel places greatest value on community, family, and gradual social reform. Gore's society novels are much influenced by the *familienromans* of Jane Austen and Maria Edgeworth, whom Gore claimed as literary models, and they anticipate the great Victorian multiplot novels: *Bleak House*, *Vanity Fair*, *Middlemarch*. This dissertation discovers that the fashionable novel has persisted into the 21st century and identifies several of Gore's literary descendents.

INDEX WORDS: Catherine Gore, Mrs. Gore, Fashionable novel, Silver fork novel, 19th century British women writers, History of the novel, Genre, Recovery, Popular literature, Edward Bulwer, Benjamin Disraeli

CATHERINE GORE AND THE FASHIONABLE NOVEL: A REEVALUATION

by

APRIL NIXON KENDRA

B.A., The University of Georgia, 1990

M.A., The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, 1995

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2003

CATHERINE GORE AND THE FASHIONABLE NOVEL: A REEVALUATION

by

APRIL NIXON KENDRA

Major Professor:	Tricia Lootens
Committee:	Roxanne Eberle
	Anne Mallory
	John Vance

Electronic Version Approved:

Maureen Grasso
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
December 2003

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The process of writing "Catherine Gore and the Fashionable Novel: A Reevaluation," from the first "aha!" moment to the actual defense, took almost exactly four years. During that time, I got married, made two interstate moves, conducted research at three state university libraries, and taught at four different academic institutions. I could not have stayed with this project during all this upheaval or finished it while maintaining any semblance of sanity without the assistance and encouragement of the following individuals and institutions.

I want to thank Tricia Lootens for encouraging me to choose a dissertation topic that engaged my passion rather than one that appeared "safe" or "marketable," for asking provocative questions and steering me towards secondary works that would help me find the answers, and for challenging me to meet her high standards for academic rigor, which I did not always appreciate as it deserved. I especially appreciate Tricia's exorcism of the Devils of Others' Expectations by reminding me that there was no point in breaking some rules if I considered myself bound by the rest. She exhorted me to read Margaret Atwood's story "Bluebeard's Egg" and to adopt the feminist moral of the Bluebeard legend: if you're going into the forbidden room, put down the damn egg first!

I also want to thank Roxanne Eberle, Anne Mallory, and John Vance for serving on my committee. Their interest in my project and their enthusiastic suggestions for the next step have revived my original fervor. I must admit that in the final months of working on the dissertation, I experienced a crisis of faith. Perhaps no one else had done a book-length study on Gore and the

fashionable novel because it wasn't worth doing. Who would care? My committee made it clear that they care, and their approval has been a great validation.

I was very fortunate to conduct the bulk of my research at the University of Georgia and the University of Delaware, both of which have an impressive number of Gore titles in their library collections. The phenomenal Interlibrary Loan staff at UGA deserve a special note of thanks: I was simply amazed by their success in borrowing texts more than a hundred years old. I was in the final stages of dissertation writing when I moved to Denton, Texas, but I must also acknowledge the library staff at the University of North Texas, who helped me finish the job. I believe the New York Public Library owes *me* a debt of thanks for my visit in January of 2002. My request to see many of their books by Catherine Gore afforded the librarians an opportunity to update their records; these titles hadn't been requested in many decades and their call numbers belonged to a long-abandoned catalog system.

I owe a special thank you to my parents, William Joseph Nixon and Mary Louise Genet Nixon, for their love and generous support, both emotional and financial. The "Nixon Fellowship" gave me the gift of a full year in which to conduct my research and concentrate on composition. Even more important, this gift afforded me valuable time to think about the implications of my argument and think out several important concepts. Shelby Steele claims that families and communities produce Ph.D.'s; the process is too long and consuming for individuals working alone to succeed. I wholeheartedly agree, and I credit my completion of the dissertation and of my graduate career to the prayers and loving support of my parents, Joe and Dee Nixon; my grandmother, Clyda Nixon; my brother, Bill Nixon; my sister in law and in love, Rendy Nixon; and my precious nephews, Joshua Nixon and Caleb Nixon. Special thanks go to my cousin Joyce Genet Lapointe, who was a captive audience for my "thinking out loud" sessions

about the dandy and society novels while she was confined to bedrest. It is truly remarkable that Joyce and her husband, David, were able to work up genuine sympathy and concern for my dissertation-related woes while they were caring for infant triplets.

I also want to thank my good friends for their prayers, support, positive energy, and encouragement: Charlene Derda, Debbie Bailey Helwig, Beth Ann Way, the Reverend Doug Job, Tricia Wachtendorf and David Satran, Jo Angela Edwins, Kathleen Costello Soukup, Marcella Fleischman Pixley, Viviana Fino, the Reverend Bernard "Skip" Keels, the Reverend Randy Wein, and the congregation of Newark United Methodist Church in Newark, Delaware.

I don't even know how to express my thanks to Sandra Hughes, Kathryn Locey, and Angela Pfile, who constituted my support group not only for the dissertation, but for the qualifying exam, the comprehensive exams, and every other personal or professional crisis I have experienced in the last seven years. Kathryn provided me with tea, sympathy, shelter, and strength during a most painful ordeal; in a manner of speaking, I owe my life to her. Sandy and Angela read draft upon draft of dissertation chapters, offered critique and praise in generous amounts, accepted countless late-night phone calls, and temporarily adopted my obsessions as their own. There is a special place in heaven for friends like these.

Finally, I wish to thank my husband, James Kendra, for his unwavering faith in me, his constant loving support, and his utter refusal to put up with any self-deprecation on my part. He has read (or listened to) every word of this dissertation, he has been a willing auditor of innumerable monologues about genre construction, and he has celebrated the completion of every chapter as if it were Christmas, Valentine's Day, and my birthday all rolled into one. On June 6, 2001, Jim promised me that he would always, always be on my side . . . and he has.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

LIST OF TABLES

Page

CHAPTER 1: AN INTRODUCTION TO CATHERINE GORE

I began this dissertation with the sole intention of recovering Catherine Gore, whom I usually describe as the most famous 19th-century British woman writer no one's ever heard of. Mrs. Gore was best known to Victorian readers as the prolific author of "silver fork," or fashionable, novels. Although this genre was both popular and profitable, it was sharply criticized for its close attention to the material lifestyles of the London *bon ton*, that exclusive group set apart from the rest of society by an ineffable quality of fashion and "tone." Perhaps the most influential contemporary critics were William Hazlitt and Thomas Carlyle, who chastised fashionable novelists for their inattention to greater social evils; Carlyle's attack in *Sartor Resartus* is particularly fierce, denouncing fashionable novels as unreadable and bitterly contrasting the outrageous clothing of dandies with the rags of Irish beggars.

Aware of the silver fork's dubious reputation, I planned to redeem Mrs. Gore by challenging the common characterization of her as a mere fashionable novelist. I would call attention to her other, more deserving works, especially her short fiction and her plays, which achieved notable commercial success on the London stage. Realizing, however, that any discussion of Gore, the Queen of the Silver Fork, would be incomplete without some mention of the genre that made her famous, I embarked on a course of fashionable reading. A careful examination of works by Maria Edgeworth, Susan Ferrier, Edward Bulwer, Benjamin Disraeli, Letitia Landon, and T. H. Lister, as well as by Gore, soon revealed that none of these texts I read was accurately represented by the scholarly definitions of the "silver fork novel." I had always believed that Gore's literary reputation had been tarnished by her close association with the

fashionable novel. Now it appeared that the fault lay not in the actual texts but in the critical construction of the "silver fork" subgenre.

The mysterious disappearance of a best-selling author from literary history is inseparable from the story of how the fashionable novel became *un*fashionable; Mrs. Gore and the silver fork must be recovered and re-examined together. Therefore, *Catherine Gore and the Fashionable Novel: A Reevaluation* is both a reevaluation of the fashionable novel as a genre and an attempt to recover a marginalized woman writer whose career and work offer new ways of looking at 19th-century literature.

Who is Mrs. Gore?

The *Edinburgh Review* called her "one of the liveliest, cleverest, wittiest, and most prolific of our female writers."[1] *A New Spirit of the Age* (1844) announced that she "has distanced nearly all her contemporaries by a rapid succession of some of the most brilliant novels in our language" (Horne 232). Other reviewers went even farther, comparing her versatility and talent with those of Shakespeare and Horace.[2] In 1844, she won a contest for the best original English comedy and her play was performed at the Haymarket Theatre in London. Her obituary in *The Athenaeum* declared that "The writings of Mrs. Gore deserve to live," but instead they have fallen into obscurity.[3] In fact, most of us have never heard of Catherine Gore, and those familiar with her name are likely to know her only as a writer of fashionable novels whose work was parodied and eclipsed by Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*.

Who was this Mrs. Gore? How did a writer of such critical and popular acclaim disappear so completely from the literary landscape? What place might she hold in the canon of nineteenth-century literature as it expands to accommodate recovered women writers? This

dissertation joins a small but growing body of scholarship attempting to answer these questions. Given the broad range of her work and the length of her publishing career, which spanned more than three decades, the recovery of Mrs. Gore should be meaningful for scholars in a number of areas: the nineteenth century, women's writing, popular culture, history of the novel, theatre history, canon formation, and critical reception.

Angela Leighton has argued that "feminist criticism, by its very nature, needs to ask 'Who is this author?' . . . . To ignore the authorial name, and all the historical and biographical information that goes with it, would be to lose, not only an already lost history of women's writing, but also the rationale for writing about women [authors] at all" (4). In the case of Catherine Gore, however, this information proves elusive. While Gore seems to have been a sociable woman who enjoyed her celebrity, she must have guarded her privacy well; little was known about her personal life even at the height of her popularity, as evidenced by the obituaries lamenting "that brilliant and unknown personage" ("Obituary" 196). The year of Gore's birth, her husband's employment (or lack thereof) after their marriage, and the circumstances surrounding the premature deaths of eight of her ten children are shrouded by controversy and mystery.

Even an authorized biographical sketch of Gore, prepared by publisher Charles Griffin in 1860 for inclusion in a biographical dictionary, fails to resolve these mysteries. The original draft states that the author was born in the county of Nottingham in 1799, but Gore amended it to read "born in London in 1800."[4] In the absence of any definitive birth records, scholars have had to make individual decisions about which information seems most plausible (see Table 1). It is possible that Gore, a savvy marketer of her own works, claimed to have been born in 1800

because that is when her parents moved to London from the country: the metropolis was a more fitting birthplace for a chronicler of the London fashionable world.

We do know that Gore's maiden name was Catherine Grace Frances Moody, and her father was a wine merchant. After his death, Gore's mother married a Dr. Nevinson, and Gore seems to have entered society using her stepfather's name; her obituary in the *Athenaeum* cautiously states, "We have heard that she was a Miss Nevinson" (196). While still in her teens, Gore wrote an additional canto to *Childe Harold* and sent some early poems to Joanna Baillie, who encouraged her to continue writing. Gore's early literary activities earned her the nickname "the Poetess" from her friends, and an undated letter from Mary Russell Mitford to Mrs. Hofland suggests that Gore's wit and assertiveness (which would later become her trademarks) were already in evidence:

> Did I ever mention to you, or did you ever hear elsewhere of a Miss Nevinson, poetess, novelist, essayist, and reviewer? I have just been writing to her in answer to a very kind letter, but writing in such alarm that I quivered and shook, and looked into the dictionary to see how to spell *The*, and asked mama if there were two t's in tottering. You never saw anybody in such a fright. It was like writing in chains . . . and so alarming a lady is Miss Nevinson, so sure to put one on the defensive, even when she has no intention to attack. This is no great compliment to my fair correspondent, but it is the truth. Miss Nevinson is a very extraordinary woman; her conversation (for I don't think very highly of her writings) is perhaps the most dazzling and brilliant that can be imagined. (qtd. in Rosa 119).

In 1823, the brilliant Miss Nevinson married Lieutenant Charles Arthur Gore, who clearly encouraged his wife's literary pursuits; she published *The Two Broken Hearts* (a long poem) and *Theresa Marchmont* (her first novel) the following year. The marriage may have been a happy one; at least there is no evidence to suggest otherwise. Matthew Whiting Rosa speculates, "The married life of the couple was probably pleasant, although the excessive literary labor points towards straitened circumstances" (119). Rosa provides a calculation of Gore's "excessive" literary production rate: "she produced some two hundred volumes during a writing career of thirty-five years, with an average annual production of six volumes running to about three hundred pages apiece. This reduces itself to six pages a day, Sundays and holidays omitted, for a third of a century" (127). Given the furious pace at which she wrote, and the fact that her husband resigned from the army the same year they were married, it appears that the couple depended largely on Gore's income as a writer. Lorna Sage further suggests that Gore was forced into a literary career to pay her husband's debts,[5] and Janet Todd describes him as an invalid (282); however, Charles Gore may not have been such a burden to his wife. According to Michael Sadleir's account in *The Strange Life of Lady Blessington*, Charles was in the diplomatic service, which would explain the family's residence in Paris and Brussels (188).

The Gores might well have needed two incomes to support their family, for they had ten children, although only two survived their parents: Cecilia Anne Mary Gore, later Lady Thynne, and Augustus Wentworth Gore, who became a captain in the British army.[6] The circumstances surrounding the other children's deaths, or even the ages at which they died, are unknown. Bonnie Anderson says of Gore, "she seems to have been prouder of her children's entry into high society than her own prodigious literary output" (407), although the grounds for this assertion are

unclear. It is true that Cecilia Gore married into the aristocracy, but a letter from Thackeray to Sarah Baxter (dated July 5, 1853) strongly suggests that Gore was not pleased by the match:

> One of the letters was from Mrs. Gore . . . . Miss C. yesterday was married to the Lord— — [Edward Thynne] . . . a sad scapegrace I'm afraid ruined long ago. How can such a couple get on? How could I write a congratulatory letter to Mamma? I tried & it was glum as a funeral. All I could say by way of consolation was Marriages that seem to augur very well often turn out very unhappy—therefore this that looks so bad *may* turn out quite the reverse. (*Letters* 3.285)

If Gore required such consolation, it is unlikely that she was enough of a tuft-hunter to rejoice in her daughter's marriage to a wastrel, even if he was a lord.

Charles Gore died in 1846, and Catherine struggled gamely on, although a letter written to her publisher the following year reveals her growing fatigue and sense of defeat:

> I hope you will find my 'Castles' [*Castles in the Air*, published by Bentley 8 June 1847] sell well; but it is impossible for me to decide whether the book is better than average. 'Cecil' my best book did not sell well. 'The Ambassador's Wife'—which Miss Edgeworth cites as my best, was a dead failure; and of the unhappy 'Debutante' which you call all sorts of ugly things, the Princess of Orange (one of the ablest women in Europe) wrote to me that she 'lived with that book as with a friend'—The 'Castles' appear to me to be easy pleasant reading, for the circulating libraries: —I have given up pretending to more. (qtd. in Ray, "Bentley Papers" 190)

Given the biographical context, Ray's interpretation of this letter as proof that Gore "had no authorial vanity" or emotional investment in her work is unconvincing (*Uses of Adversity* 394). Gore's tone of resignation sounds like the very natural discouragement of an author who had been publishing almost twenty years and felt her audience slipping away from her.

In 1850, Gore was finally able to relax her frantic pace of writing; she inherited a large sum of money from a member of her mother's family and retreated into the country, where she continued to publish, but at a more leisurely rate. Rosa points out, "She published only two full-length novels and one short tale between 1849 and 1855" (121). (The word "only" speaks volumes about Gore's normal rate of production.) Unfortunately, she was forced to resume writing for her life in 1855 when her banker, Sir John Dean Paul, embezzled nearly £19,000 pounds from Gore, £6,000 of which she was holding in trust for her daughter. This event is eerily similar to one described in Gore's novel *The Banker's Wife* (1843), in which the villain is an unscrupulous banker who embezzles his clients' money. Ironically, she had dedicated this novel to Sir John's father, who had also been her banker. Rosa comments on this instance of life imitating art: "What actually happened to Mrs. Gore twelve years later is so close to the novel in general outline that if the chronology were reversed, the commentator would be forced to believe that the novel was founded on fact" (122). Gore re-issued *The Banker's Wife* in 1858, canceling the original dedication. Little else is known about Gore's latter years. She published her last book in 1860, the same year in which she lost her eyesight, and died in Hampshire on January 29, 1861.

Leighton's argument that feminist criticism necessarily includes close attention to women's lives tempts us to speculate whether Gore would have been recovered at an earlier date if a biography or memoir, collection of letters, or even a hint of personal scandal had existed.

Given the scarcity and dubious nature of the historical information regarding Catherine Gore, we must turn to her work rather than her life to discover the rationale for writing about her.

Literature Review

The conflicted presentation of Gore in R. H. Horne's *A New Spirit of the Age* (1844) in many ways shaped twentieth-century critics' uneasy response to Catherine Gore and her work. Horne's collection of essays offered biographical sketches of living authors who, in the editor's opinion, best represented the spirit of early Victorian England. As we might expect, Mrs. Gore is portrayed primarily as a writer of very popular novels whose greatest value is their verisimilitude:

> As a painter of society, possessing knowledge of human nature, she leaves the Richardsons and Brookes far behind. The elasticity of her manner is perfectly unrivalled. If she rarely reaches the quiet humour of Madame D'Arblay, and never realizes the Dutch fidelity of Miss Austen, she preserves, upon the whole, a more sustained flight than either. (Horne 236-37)

However, Horne undermines the claim that Gore might be compared favorably with such august literary figures as Richardson and Austen in an editor's footnote: "We hardly feel at ease in the above classification of Richardson with the author of the "Fool of Quality." We also think that Miss Austen preserves a very sustained flight: it may be near the ground, but she never flags in a feather.—Ed." (237). The cautious tone of this footnote, in contrast to the enthusiasm of the passage, indicates either that Horne himself was torn about the previous claim or that another, unidentified author wrote the chapter on Gore. In either case, the damage was done; more than a century would pass before another critic would suggest that Gore might belong to an older and more respectable literary movement than the silver fork school.

Taking his cue from Horne's *New Spirit of the Age*, Matthew Whiting Rosa devotes a chapter of his *Silver-Fork School* (1936) to Mrs. Gore but takes a markedly patronizing tone. After all, to be the most popular of a group of writers whose work shows little artistic merit is a dubious distinction at best. The subtitle of Rosa's work, *Novels of Fashion Preceding* Vanity Fair, demonstrates Gore's transformation from a popular author in her own right to a minor writer whose work paved the way for more valuable, canonical texts. Alison Adburgham's excellent book *Silver Fork Society: Fashionable Life and Literature between 1814 and 1840* (1983), which offers a chronological narrative of the rise and fall of the silver fork novel, presents a more comprehensive and appreciative view of Catherine Gore, depicting her rapid literary production as characteristic of early Victorian authors rather than of tired hacks.

Perhaps the most insightful and appreciative evaluation of Gore's novels appears in Michael Sadleir's *Nineteenth-Century Novels*:

> They have humour, epigram, and a perceptive malice which is almost frightening. She pin-pointed for especial dissection those people who in her own words "exulted in the consciousness of superior self-possession and knowledge of the world; and of that nameless something, or nothing, which constitutes the airy elegance of *bon ton*" . . . . Her tongue is as witty as it is cruel, and oblivion can never be the fate of a woman who coined such epigrams as "the sort of society in which a lord is always a lord, even if the Lord knows whom." (qtd. in Adburgham 317)

Gordon N. Ray's massive *Thackeray* and Robert Colby's *Thackeray's Canvass of Humanity* reveal Gore's complicated relationship with the author of *Vanity Fair*, who both envied and admired his rival even as he mocked her. Both Ray and Colby caution the reader against taking

"Lords and Liveries," Thackeray's burlesque of Gore, as evidence of his contempt for her abilities. To the contrary, Ray argues that Thackeray's parody of Gore was affectionate and good-natured, and Colby carefully traces the influence of Gore's novels and literary sketches on Thackeray's representations of society. In *Fiction with a Purpose: Major and Minor Nineteenth-Century Novels*, Robert Colby speaks of Gore as a satirist in her own right. In *Yesterday's Woman: Domestic Realism in the English Novel*, Vineta Colby devotes an entire chapter to Catherine Gore's shaping of the fashionable novel, whose preoccupation with material signifiers of social status made a significant contribution to the rise of domestic realism.

Although they focus on only one of Gore's works, *Cecil; or, The Adventures of a Coxcomb,* Winifred Hughes, Andrew Elfenbein, and Claire Nicolay represent a recent shift in the scholarly attitudes toward the silver fork novel, regarding it as a legitimate literary text as well as cultural artifact. In her discussion of *Cecil* and its sequel, *Cecil, A Peer,* Hughes suggests that Gore's reliance on a Regency setting is neither a crutch nor a worn-out convention, but a strategy for commenting on the politics and social mores of Victorian era. Elfenbein elaborates on this idea, pointing out that Cecil's Byronic pose and the inclusion of Byron himself as a character in the novel allow Gore to contrast corrupt Romantic libertinism with more wholesome Victorian values and to reconstruct Byron's Turkish tales from a woman's point of view. Nicolay traces the influence of Gore's *Cecil* on Thackeray's *Pendennis*, particularly in both authors' use of the dandy figure as a model of upward social mobility.

Rebecca Lynn Baird's primary interest is the silver fork novel's accurate depiction of Regency society. Her dissertation compares Gore's *Mothers and Daughters* (for which Baird provides extensive annotations in an appendix) with *Vivian Gray* and *Pelham* to examine the ways in which Gore conforms to, shapes, or departs from the conventions of the silver fork

novel. Interestingly, Bonnie Anderson holds Gore largely responsible for establishing these conventions. Her 1976 article "The Writings of Catherine Gore" traces Gore's influence as a proponent of what Anderson calls "womanly ideology" on both nineteenth- and twentieth-century popular culture.

It is gratifying to see Gore included in so many literary dictionaries, encyclopedias, and reference guides. She appears in *An Encyclopedia of British Women Writers*, edited by Paul Schlueter and June Schlueter (1988); *British Women Writers: A Critical Reference Guide*, ed. Janet Todd (1989); *The Feminist Companion to Literature in English: Women Writers from the Middle Ages to the Present*, ed. Virginia Blain, Patricia Clements, and Isobel Grundy (1990); *The Oxford Guide to British Women Writers*, ed. Joanne Shattock (1993); and *The Cambridge Guide to Women's Writing in English*, ed. Lorna Sage (1999). Unfortunately, all but the last of these books were published before Winifred Hughes's and Andrew Elfenbein's thoughtful and careful analyses of Gore's masterpiece, *Cecil*. Therefore, most of the available information on Catherine Gore is heavily influenced by Anderson's article, which is flawed by the author's personal biases and factual errors. Almost every one of these reference guides lists Bonnie Anderson as a source, and every one who uses Anderson accepts her evaluation of Gore as a reactionary and an anti-feminist. Such a characterization virtually guarantees that Gore will never be any more than a marginal figure because feminist scholars, the champions of neglected women writers, are not likely to devote the time, effort, and resources to recover a writer whose works are antithetical to one of the scholars' primary objectives in recovering women authors in the first place: i.e., to find early indications of feminist thought in 19th-century women's writing. Instead, these editors and scholars seem to be casting Gore as a kind of *exemplum in malo*, as if to say, "Here we see

the kind of conventional, backwards-thinking hack work that kept real women artists from being taken seriously and early feminist thought from being accepted."

This characterization is undeserved. Very few of the compilers of these reference books appear to have read more than a small sample of Gore's enormous corpus—Virginia Blain's discussion of Gore fails to mention a single novel by name—yet they declare with confidence that "most" of her novels are Regency romances, advocating female submissiveness. We can not even say with certainty how many novels Gore wrote (see Table 1). Although Rosa, Adburgham, Schlueter and Schlueter, and Baird provide bibliographies of Gore's works, these lists give only the titles of her works and the year of their publication without identifying the genre for each.

Determining genre from the titles is especially problematic because not all of Gore's novels are conveniently identified as such. Gore frequently characterizes narrative fiction ranging in length from 300 to 1,000 pages as "tales" or "romances." For example, the subtitle of *Mothers and Daughters*, a novel published in three volumes, is *A Tale of the Year 1830*. Should Gore's "Christmas stories" be classified as novels, novellas, or short fiction? And even if we agree that the title work in each collection of short fiction (such as *A Courtier of the Days of Charles II and Other Tales*) is long enough to be considered a novel, we must look at the actual text to find what other "tales" are included and whether they would also qualify as novels or novellas. Perhaps Rosa is wise not to attempt to number Gore's works according to individual genre; instead, he contents himself with one lump sum of 200 volumes (300 pages to a volume), which includes fiction, non-fictive prose, poetry, and drama. In contrast, Janet Todd (1989) claims that Gore wrote 70 volumes (which seems far too small, since Gore wrote a minimum of 37 novels,[7] each in 3 volumes); Joanne Shattock (1993) estimates over 70 novels (which seems

an exaggerated number); Cynthia Merrill, in Schlueter and Schlueter (1988), claims that Gore wrote more than 60 fashionable novels, suggesting that Merrill recognizes no generic distinction among Gore's novels; and Blain, Clements, and Grundy (1990) state that Gore wrote 70 "very successful novels."

Suppressing Catherine Gore

How is it that such a popular and prolific woman writer, whose works dominated booksellers' shelves for three decades, is so little known today? This dissertation will focus on Gore's damaging association with the fashionable novel, but it is clear that gender bias has also played a role in Gore's marginalization. The effect of this bias is easiest to trace in Gore's career as a playwright. Catherine Gore was one of the very few women to achieve success as a playwright in London after the heyday of female dramatists (1780-1820). As Ellen Donkin points out in *Getting Into the Act*, by 1831, the time of Gore's first theatrical production, a backlash against women playwrights was in full force. Joanna Baillie and Elizabeth Inchbald, who might have been role models, had both died, and no managers offered themselves as paternal mentors, willing to train and sponsor aspiring female dramatists as David Garrick had done. Even women's claims to comedy, long the province of writers like Aphra Behn, Susanna Centlivre, Elizabeth Inchbald, and others, were challenged. Although the plays of Catherine Gore seem to have been quite popular, the critical reviews were often lukewarm and decidedly grounded in the issue of gender. It is possible that Mrs. Gore was somewhat protected by her reputation as a popular novelist, by her status as a wife and mother, and by the absence of any scandal in her personal life, but she was far from invulnerable. The reviewer for *Figaro in London*, for example, seems to have conceived a particularly vicious dislike not only for her

plays but for Gore herself, frequently suggesting that the lady had forfeited her right to courteous treatment by becoming a playwright. The following excerpt from a review of *The Maid of Croissey* is typical of *Figaro in London*'s response to Gore:

> Mrs. Gore has translated a piece for the Haymarket which has been very successful, though she has had a hand in it, and it has been successful for one of the best reasons in the world, *because it is not original.* This is a most ambiguous compliment, but it is one that is well merited and the best that we can possibly pay, though the object of it being a lady, we would rather have said something more savouring of gallantry. (qtd. in Franceschina, *Gore on Stage* 14; italics original)

The backlash Donkin describes was in full swing in 1844 when Benjamin Webster, the manager of the Haymarket Theatre, announced a competition for the best original comedy in an effort to re-establish a British national drama. All submissions were anonymous, but controversy erupted when Catherine Gore was discovered to have written the winning play, *Quid Pro Quo: or, The Day of Dupes*. Drama reviewers (many of whom had been Gore's competitors in the contest) were severe in their criticism of the selection process and of Gore's play.

Not surprisingly, reviewers of Gore's non-dramatic work were equally distracted by gender, frequently attacking or praising the woman rather than the artist. Two selected reviews of Catherine Gore's fashionable novels illustrate the prevailing attitudes about the proper subjects for male and female authors. In his review of *Women as They Are* for the *Edinburgh Review*, T. H. Lister praises Gore for choosing to exercise her talents upon a suitably feminine subject:

> There are some things which women do better than men; and of these, perhaps, novel writing is one. Naturally endowed with greater delicacy of taste and feeling, with a moral sense not blunted and debased by those contaminations to which men are exposed, leading lives rather of observation than of action, with leisure to attend to the minutiae of conduct, and more subtle developments of character, they are peculiarly qualified for the task of exhibiting faithfully and pleasingly the various phases of domestic life, and those varieties which chequer the surface of society. (qtd. in Baird 114-115)

In contrast, a reviewer for *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, believing Gore to be a man, expresses his disappointment that the author should waste his talents on writing *The Fair of Mayfair* when "he" is

> evidently equal to the accomplishment of something better and more enduring; when, instead of the fantastic fopperies and contemptible extravagancies of fashionable society, he might give us pictures of general life, and sketches of the first specimens of humanity, one does regret to see him tied down to employment so little congenial to his taste, and scarcely consistent with what his reflection must whisper is the right and proper as well as the lasting and the noble.[8]

The charge that her potential was greater than her achievements was to plague Catherine Gore throughout her career, just as it had Joanna Baillie and Letitia Elizabeth Landon.

Gore's conservative views on gender politics—or, more accurately, scholars' perceptions of her conservatism—may also have retarded Gore's recovery. A common complaint among recent scholars is Catherine Gore's alleged anti-feminism. Anderson, Adburgham, and Baird insist, as if in chorus, "She was no feminist," pointing to an often-quoted statement from the

preface to the 1848 edition of *Mrs. Armytage, or Female Domination* for proof: "I still believe that a woman of first-rate faculties would constitute only a third-rate man; and that such great names as those of Mrs. Somerville, Miss Edgeworth, Miss Martineau, and Mrs. Browning, serve only to confirm my rule" (viii). It would be fruitless to attempt to defend this statement, although my personal belief is that Gore wrote it in great bitterness, recognizing toward the end of her career that her work had indeed been regarded as equivalent to that of third-rate male writers like Theodore Hook. I do recommend, however, that we juxtapose this statement with the text of the novel it introduces and with the rest of Gore's sizable corpus. The protagonist of *Mrs. Armytage* is indeed a tyrant, but the novel does little to persuade the reader that her actions would be any more justifiable in a man than in a woman. Indeed, Mrs. Armytage, a domestic despot whose autocratic manner presents an obstacle to her relationship with her children, has a close parallel in George Hamilton, Lord Laxington (*The Hamiltons*): both characters are presented sympathetically, even as the narrator holds them accountable for the tragic consequences of their misrule.

Furthermore, Mrs. Armytage, like many of Gore's female characters, proves that she certainly has intellectual ability equal to the men around her. Even as Mrs. Armytage's son chafes under her authority, he admires the ease with which she manages her estate and converses knowledgeably on agriculture and politics with important men:

> She knew all, in short, which an extensive landed proprietor ought to know . . . . Arthur, who had only recently devoted *his* attention to such studies, felt that her views were clearer, her judgment more accurately based, than his own; and was proud of the respect paid to her opinion by every man present, three of whom

> were senators, and one *more* than a senator—an enlightened and upright divine. (240-41; italics original)

Mrs. Armytage may be haughty, imperious, and misguided, but her failings do not include lack of intellect or an inability to comprehend political issues. It is worth noting that the only overt criticism of "petticoat government" in the novel is made by a character whose credibility is severely compromised. In an undated letter to an admiring reader, Gore complains that "the vulgar second title of 'Female Domination,'" chosen by her publisher, "implies a lesson I did not intend to teach" (qtd. in V. Colby 79).

Gore is not a radical by any stretch of the imagination, but neither is she a reactionary. Her novels consistently emphasize the need for improved education for women, particularly in economics and national politics, and she presents several women characters whose abilities far exceed the acceptable limits for their use. Although she is never as explicit or polemical as Mary Wollstonecraft, Gore agrees that if women were given greater scope for their intellectual energies, they would not be reduced to the petty maneuvering (Wollstonecraft calls it "cunning") that characterizes the fashionable world. The outspoken narrator-heroine of *Diary of a Désennuyée* laments this waste of talent in her fashionable friend Lady Cecilia: "She has prodigious tact; always some little scheme or other on foot, and which invariably succeeds. But, after all, the objects she accomplishes are comparatively trifling; and, to spend one's life in such manoeuvres, seems like devoting a forty-horse power engine to cutting chaff"(8). It is dangerous to select a single statement from the more than 60,000 pages of Gore's published prose and to extrapolate from that statement Gore's views on domestic ideology: one might argue that Gore *is* a feminist, based on the passage from *Diary of a Désennuyée*, with the same validity that the statement from *Mrs. Armytage* has been used to demonstrate that she is *not*.

My point is not to declare Gore a closet feminist but to demonstrate that any sweeping generalities about Gore's social politics or evaluations of her artistic worth are at best premature. A prolific writer with such diverse talents and interests, particularly one who seems to have enjoyed mystifying her readers by publishing anonymously and pseudonymously, must be approached with caution.[9] Before we can determine her literary and historical value, we must become better acquainted with Gore's actual works than with the famous critiques and parodies of those works. We must look beyond the individual achievement of *Cecil* in our discussion of her artistic development. Finally, we must take the time to discover and assimilate the clues lurking in other people's letters, in other authors' biographies, in studies of the novel, of realism, of theater history, and of publishing, before we frame an answer to that excellent question: Who is Mrs. Gore?

Notes to Chapter 1

---

[1] [Abraham Hayward], "Selected Novels—*Cecil and de Clifford,*" *Edinburgh Review* 73 (July 1841): 205.

[2] "[Review of] *Polish Tales,*" *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* 3 (Jan. 1833): 234. "Memoir of Mrs.Gore," *Colburn's New Monthly Magazine* 49: 434-35.

[3] "Obituary: Mrs. Gore," *Athenaeum* 1737 (9 Feb. 1861): 196.

[4] Gore's corrections to this short biography are dated January 23, 1860, one year before her death. Rebecca Lynn Baird includes transcripts of Griffin's original draft and Gore's amendments in Appendix B of her dissertation, *Catherine Frances Gore, the Silver-Fork School, and* Mothers and Daughters: *True Views of Society in Early Nineteenth-Century Britain* (U of

Arkansas, 1992), 342-49. The originals of these documents are in the British Museum, Additional Biographical MSS. 28510.

[5] Lorna Sage, *The Cambridge Guide to Women's Writing in English* (Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1999) 283. Sage is the only recent scholar to suggest this motivation for Gore's writing. She may have been influenced by Gordon N. Ray's description of Charles Arthur Gore as "a vacuous ex-officer of the Guards who was constantly in financial straits." See Ray, "The Bentley Papers," *The Library* 7.3 (Sept. 1952): 190.

[6] Sometimes Gore's husband is mistakenly referred to as "Captain Gore," possibly a result of confusing the father, Lieutenant Gore, with his son.

[7] Thirty-seven is my own very conservative estimate, not including "Christmas stories" or collections of "tales" which may well include one or more work of novel-length.

[8] "Mrs. Gore's *Fair of Mayfair*," *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* 1 (July 1832): 390.

[9] For example, Gore insisted on publishing *Cecil; or, The Adventures of a Coxcomb* (1841) anonymously, and further misled her readers by publishing a series of article in *Bentley's Miscellany* under the male pseudonym of "Albany Poyntz," identified in the same magazine as "The Author of 'Cecil.'" Gore refused to acknowledge *Cecil* even when close friends accused her of writing it, and she was delighted by the guessing games that followed.

Table 1: Scholarly Presentations of Gore's Biography and Works

	Biographical Information for Catherine Gore					Characterization of Gore's Fashionable Novels	
Scholar/ Resource	**Birth Year**	**Birthplace**	**Husband's Rank**	**Literary Output**	**Feminism**	**Name**	**Primary Definition**
Dictionary of National Biography (1890/1968)	1799	East Retford, Nottingham-shire	Captain	70 works, nearly 200 volumes	_____	Romance of high society and fashionable life	Faithful picture of the life and pursuits of the English upper classes, using satire and observation
Rosa (1936)	1800	London	Lieutenant	Some 200 volumes	Frequently calls Gore "conventional"	Fashionable novel; silver fork	Story of man's adjustment to his environment [sic]
V. Colby (1974)	1799	_____	_____	_____	_____	Fashionable novel; silver fork	Historically accurate and circumstantial novel; leads to rise of domestic realism
Anderson (1974)	1800	London	Captain	50 volumes of novels, poetry, and plays by 1837	"She was no feminist" (407); cautions against female independence	Silver fork	Domestic romance; guide to fashionable life
Adburgham (1983)	1800	London	Lieutenant/ Captain*	60 books	"She was no feminist" (266)	Fashionable novel; silver fork	Faithfully depicts fashionable lifestyles; handbook for the beau monde
Schlueter and Schlueter (1988)	1800	London	_____	More than 60 fashionable novels	Approves womanly submission; female independence leads to disaster	Fashionable novel	Portrays the romances, manners, and scandals of high society
Todd (1989)	1799	East Retford, Nottingham-shire	Captain	70 volumes	_____	Silver fork	Depicts contemporary high society

Blain, Clements, and Grundy (1990)	1799	East Retford, Nottingham-shire	Captain	Some 70 very successful novels	Extols virtues of male domination and female submissiveness	Silver fork	Romance in Regency period; great attention to detail
Baird (1992)	**	**	Lieutenant	200 volumes	_____	Silver fork	Guidebook to beau monde
Shattock (1993)	1799	East Retford, Nottingham-shire	Captain	Over 70 novels	_____	Silver fork	Novel of fashionable life; focuses on social class, social mobility, and money
Hughes (1995)	1799	_____	Captain	_____	Escapes from stringent requirements of female propriety	Silver fork; fashionable	"Regency Romance"; elegiac form
Hughes (1996)	1799	_____	Captain	_____	Gore prefers bold Regency heroines to meek Victorians	Silver fork; fashionable	"Regency Romance"
Elfenbein (1999)	____	_____	_____	_____	Challenges Byronic/Regency fantasies by using a woman's point of view	Silver fork	Representation of aristocratic Regency life, shown to be inferior to middle-class domesticity
Sage (1999)	1800	_____	Lieutenant	_____	*Mrs. Armytage* is an "antifeminist" novel	Silver fork	Realistic portrayal of consumer trends and fashionable enthusiasms

* Adburgham introduces Charles as Lieutenant Gore, but later uses "Captain Gore" (211).
** Baird gives both sets of birth information in discussion of controversy.

CHAPTER 2: THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE SILVER FORK

> I don't believe a word you say about impartiality in reviewing because the thing is impossible. With the best and purest intentions no one can help being biassed by personal predilections.
>
> –Catherine Gore, letter to Edward Bulwer[1]

Catherine Gore's literary career is inextricably linked to the fate of the "silver fork" novel. Without Gore's numerous contributions, the popular but frequently vilified novel of fashionable society and manners might well have vanished from the literary scene long before 1847, when William Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* both pilloried and immortalized the genre. Although Gore first experimented with historical romance, drama, poetry, and short fiction, her initial success came with the fashionable novels *Women as They Are; or, Manners of the Day* (1830) and *Mothers and Daughters* (1831). With these works, she quickly established possession of a field that had, at least in the recent past, been dominated by men, most notably Theodore Hook, Robert Plumer Ward, Thomas Henry Lister, Benjamin Disraeli, and Edward Bulwer.[2] (Together with Gore, these authors might be considered the "Big Six" of the silver fork novel.) Although she is often described as a latecomer to the genre, Catherine Gore was to become the leading producer of silver fork novels, and she sustained her popularity in this field until her final novel was published in 1858, more than two decades after Bulwer had declared the demise of the fashionable novel in his cultural study, *England and the English* (1833). By the time of Gore's death in 1861, however, the tide of literary taste had turned decidedly in favor of works depicting

"everyday," middle-class life, and a popular and critical backlash against fashionable novels and novelists had well begun.[3] Despite her numerous productions in other genres, Catherine Gore is known today primarily as the representative of the "silver fork school" so famously parodied by Thackeray; however, this school has been defined in inconsistent and contradictory ways. Therefore, any serious attempt to recover the works of Catherine Gore must begin with a careful examination of the genre with which she is most closely associated. Paradoxically, the example of Catherine Gore challenges the validity of the assumptions on which the category of "silver fork novel" is constructed. This chapter will explore the history, critical reception, and construction of the silver fork novel, using the works of Catherine Gore as a touchstone for testing the limits of the current definition of the genre.

Silver fork is the least respectful name given to a group of novels which enjoyed huge popularity in the late 1820s and throughout the 1830s. Because these texts attempted to portray London fashionable society, they were also known as fashionable novels, society novels, novels of fashion or fashionable manners, and novels of ton or high life. The name *silver fork* derives from William Hazlitt's scathing review in *The Examiner* (Nov. 18, 1827) of what he mockingly called "The Dandy School":

> A writer of this accomplished stamp, comes forward to tell you, not how his hero feels on any occasion, for he is above that, but how he was dressed . . . . Then he gives you the address of his heroine's milliner, lest any shocking surmise should arise in your mind of the possibility of her dealing with a person of less approved taste, and also informs you that the quality eat fish with silver forks. (146)

As this passage demonstrates, the silver fork novel was, from the beginning, defined in pejorative terms. Following the appearance of Hazlitt's review, critics were quick to adopt the

descriptive tag "silver-fork novel." Perhaps the term was originally applied only to those works which shared the failings Hazlitt described, but it soon came to refer to all fashionable novels. This is the sense in which Harriet Martineau uses the term in explaining her difficulties in finding a publisher for her novel *Deerbrook* (1837): "I was not aware then how strong was the hold on the public mind which 'the silver-fork school' had gained . . . . Youths and maidens in those days looked for lords and ladies in every page of a new novel" (qtd. in Adburgham 294-95). That the designation continued to serve as a term of derision may be seen in Thackeray's apology to Mrs. Gore in 1850: "[I] believe it was only a secret envy & black malignancy of disposition w^{h} made me say in former times this author is talking too much about grand people, this author is of the silver fork school, this author uses too much French &c." (*Letters* 2.724-25).

In defining the silver fork novel, modern critics agree that it was a product of the 1820s and 1830s, aimed primarily at middle-class readers and attempting to portray, in dazzling and exhaustive detail, the manners, material possessions, and lifestyles of the *beau monde*, that is, the "world" of fashionable society. Agreement ends at this point. Francis Russell Hart argues that the silver fork novel is a literary descendant of the social critiques of Frances Burney, Maria Edgeworth, and Susan Ferrier, but Michael Sadleir makes a sharper distinction between the earlier texts and the fashionable novel, claiming that the latter does not carry out a didactic project. Richard Altick supports this claim. Although he acknowledges that the genre was influenced by the pamphleteering novels of Robert Bage and William Godwin, and by Edgeworth's moral tales, Altick insists that the fashionable novel was more concerned with reflecting high society than censuring it: "Soon abandoning whatever slight pretense of ideology or edification it had borrowed from those other forms, it devoted itself to the presentation of glittering life in high society, a kind of fictionalized gossip-column or jet-set journalism"

(*Presence of the Present* 34-35). Bonnie Anderson claims that romance was a staple ingredient of these best-selling novels, stressing that their audience was primarily female,[4] but Sadleir contends:

> Heroics, adventures, even love episodes were not essential to its completeness or its popularity. It set out to portray the ordinary lives of contemporary aristocrats; and the greater the detail in which the gilded leisure, the foreign travel, the informal talk, the houses, rooms, carriages, clothes and aspirations of these enviable folks were set forth, the more acceptable the "tale" to a public greedy for just such luxurious precision. (*Bulwer* 124)

Sadleir's definition is often quoted by more recent scholars, but his claim that the fashionable novel portrayed the lives of contemporary aristocrats is a controversial one. June and Paul Schlueter, Bonnie Anderson, Winifred Hughes, and Vineta Colby all associate the silver fork novel, especially those by Catherine Gore, with the Regency period.[5] Hughes argues that "the original silver fork novel was inherently an elegiac form, produced and marketed during the volatile interim of the 1820s and 1830s but set back in the already legendary period of the Regency" ("Elegies for the Regency" 191), and Colby agrees, calling the silver fork novel the "literary mirror" of the "Rake-and-Regency era" (46). Alison Adburgham attempts to reconcile the disagreement about chronological setting by suggesting that "a true silver fork novel . . . [is] a reflection of society in the silver fork decades" (135) of which the endpoints (according to the subtitle of her study) are 1814 and 1840. Therefore, a silver fork novel may be set in the present day or the Regency period, but not earlier.

Altick expands the historical scope of the fashionable novel still further, although he clearly favors Sadleir's bias towards the contemporary setting:

> Theoretically, silver fork novels could be set in past 'fashionable' backgrounds, the court of Louis XIV, for instance, or that of Charles II, as some of them were. But a great majority were distinguished by their contemporaneity, and a fashionable novel could never be mistaken for an example of the historical romance which flourished at the same time. (*PP* 36)

To explain the essential difference between a fashionable novel set in the past and a "historical romance," Altick quotes Sir Walter Scott's preface to *Waverley* (1814). However, Scott seems to draw a greater distinction between his novel, set "sixty years hence," and a modern fashionable tale:

> [I]f my Waverley had been entitled, 'A Tale of the Times,' wouldst thou not, gentle reader, have demanded from me a dashing sketch of the fashionable world . . . a heroine from Grosvenor Square, and a hero from the Barouche Club or the Four-in-Hand, with a set of subordinate characters from the elegantes of Queen Anne Street East, or the dashing heroes of the Bow-Street Office? (*Waverley* 34).

The distinction Altick wishes to draw between legitimate historical novels and historical silver fork novels seems to be grounded in his greater respect for Scott than for Bulwer and Gore, but it is clear that Altick and Scott both regard the fashionable novel as a modern production. Altick justifies placing the fashionable novel under the umbrella of the "modern tale" by listing several titles testifying to its contemporary nature, including these works by Mrs. Gore:

> *Women as They Are, or The Manners of the Day (1830)*
>
> *Mothers and Daughters: A Tale of the Year 1830 (1831)*
>
> *The Dowager; or The New School for Scandal (1840)*
>
> *The Dean's Daughter; or, The Days We Live In (1853)* (*PP* 37-39)

My own survey of Gore's novels shows that Gore used contemporary, Regency, and earlier historical settings, but her favorite periods seem to be the French Revolution and the decade leading up to the passage of the First Reform Bill. In defining the historical moment presented in the fashionable novel, it might be more helpful and accurate to consider the function rather than the precise period of a setting: Gore, for one, favors those time periods in which the social hierarchy was directly threatened by agitation for reform. Such historical settings clearly afford her the opportunity to portray class conflict, to examine the legitimacy of the fashionables' insistence on exclusivity, and to satirize their efforts to maintain a separate and privileged existence.

In any case, scholars agree that the essential feature of the fashionable novel is not historical setting but verisimilitude. Not content merely to convey an impression of privilege and luxury, authors took great pains to record the minutiae of fashionable existence: the ornaments in the parlor, the pomades and powders on the dressing table, the buttons on the coat, the pattern of the upholstery. Altick observes, "Silver fork fiction was notorious in its time for its item-by-item inventories of costume which turned their characters into elegantly talkative clotheshorses, and for the recital of viands served at dinner parties which turned some pages into elaborate, French-flecked menu cards" (*PP* 48). While some readers may have been satisfied by such thorough description, others objected to what they considered unnecessary and undiscriminating detail. In reviewing Ward's *De Vere* for the *Quarterly Review* (1827), J. G. Lockhart complained that "mere observation, without the 'high faculties of imagination,' could not achieve an 'artist-like unity of form and purpose'" (qtd. in Hart 133). Theodore Hook was especially prone to "counting the spots on the tablecloth," as Vineta Colby puts it, regardless of

where that cloth was laid. She cites an example from *Sayings and Doings* (1825), in which Hook catalogs the shortcomings of a London inn:

> He then proceeded to exhibit a pewter tea-pot, with a Davenanted spout, a small jug, containing three or four tablespoonsful of a light-blue liquid, professing to be milk, which, with some half-dozen lumps of dingy sugar, recumbent in a basin, and attended thereon by a pair of brown japanned tongs, shared the board with a bit of salt butter, and a French roll, three inches long by two inches in circumference. (qtd. in V. Colby 22)

No doubt, it was this kind of precise weighing and measuring that led Hazlitt to call Hook "the most wearisome of interminable writers" and to protest: "What a dearth of invention, what a want of interest, what a fuss about nothing . . ." (148).

The fashionable novel's preoccupation with shopping was considered another "fuss about nothing." In order to highlight the conspicuous consumption of the *bon ton*, novelists habitually included the names of specific products and vendors—tailors, milliners, jewelers, grocers, caterers, booksellers, et cetera. For example, Pelham debates the merits of a coat made by Stultz, a well-known tailor, and Cecil declares that the activity at Gunter's, the fashionable caterer, is a reliable calendar for the London season. Hazlitt deplores this commodification of literature: "You dip into an Essay or a Novel, and may fancy yourself reading a collection of quack or fashionable advertisements:—Macassar Oil, Eau de Cologne, Hock and Seltzer Water, Otto of Roses, Pomade Divine glance through the page in inextricable confusion, and make your head giddy" (144).

Such name-dropping was so common that the *Westminster Review* suggested that fashionable authors were entitled to compensation from the vendors mentioned by name in their works:

> A book like *Pin Money* is, in fact, a sort of London Directory . . . and it has sometimes occurred to us, that the persons who are really at the bottom of these singular productions, are no other than a certain set of dealers in articles of luxury, who know the value of getting notoriety, and of having their names in the mouths of the fashionable and titled. We are not sure the authoress of this work has made any bargain with her tradespeople; but we are very certain she might. . . . None of the persons commemorated would hesitate to give a popular authoress the run of the shop, for the sake of being down in her list; we are too much out of the world to know whether what we are suggesting may be quite common practice; and we may be recommending what is done every day, and what would really seem to be done on every page. If not, what can be meant by such advertisements as these?
>
> > "Twice she rose and seized the embossed blotting-book (that prettiest of Harding's importations)."
>
> This is a puff assuredly worth an embossed blotting-book; and of course Mr. Harding has or had sent one to the authoress; if not, we, who see the advantage of this new kind of advertisement *orné*, would advise Mrs. Gore to strike the ungrateful wretch from her list.[6]

Although this review might lead us to regard such dense peppering of names, shops, and products as an indicator of poor artistry, Altick refers to such time-specific details as topicalities, "references to people, events, or places that were present in the public consciousness" (*PP* 2),

and suggests that they were an invaluable tool for authors wishing to give their fictions greater authenticity and relevance. Altick further posits that these topicalities were a hallmark of nineteenth-century fiction, popularized by Sir Walter Scott. Lister defended Scott's use of "such matters of mere detail as the description of costume, of equipments, or of furniture . . . . [which] if we try them on a question of taste, will be admitted to be tedious" by arguing that "we must view them in another light, and accept them as affording information which we could not have obtained, but at an expense of trouble and research, for which their real value would scarcely compensate" (qtd. in Altick, *PP* 47-48). Such specific description was clearly instrumental in the author's recreation of a world long since passed away, but Vineta Colby claims that an aesthetic shift made the use of elaborate detail just as acceptable in fiction set in the present: "The mass public was at last discovering what realistic novelists from Defoe onwards had known, namely, the pleasure of recognition and identification, the appeal of homely detail, precise and specific and recognizable to the average reader" (13).

Thus the use of topicalities broadened the appeal of the fashionable novel, which enjoyed a diverse readership. The members of the *beau monde* who read silver fork novels to gaze upon their own reflection could enjoy "the pleasure of recognition and identification," while those farther down the social ladder relied on the wealth of detail to realize a world as fantastic and remote from their own experience as those depicted in Scott's historical romances. However, scholars claim that fashionable novels functioned not just as escapist entertainment but also as guide books for the socially aspiring middle class, particularly manufacturers from the industrial North of England and merchants and bankers from the city, whose new wealth formed an introduction to fashionable society. Alison Adburgham argues that these readers were in a position to benefit from the instruction of the silver fork novelists:

> for the *nouveaux riches*, the novels were a valuable source of information about everything they wanted to know . . . in what London square it was stylish to rent a house for the Season, and when exactly the Season started; what shops and supplies to patronise; at what time of day it was elegant to drive in the park, to make calls, to dine, to arrive at the Opera and to leave the Opera. The novels were handbooks to the language of the beau monde, to the etiquette of chaperonage, to permissible and impermissible flirtations, to extra-marital affairs, to all modish attitudes and affectations . . . (1 -2)

The problem with regarding silver fork novels as guidebooks is that most of them were, or purported to be, satires of the fashionable society they described. Perhaps thinking of a novel like *Pin Money*, Vineta Colby remarks that, "The value of such novels . . . was moral and satirical. They were warnings to the climbers not to emulate the folly of their betters" (57). Although critics like Richard Altick and Ian Jack regard instances of actual censure as rare, Gore claimed, "The only apology admissible for a fashionable novel is the successful exposure of vices and follies daily and hourly generated by the corruptions of society" (qtd. in V. Colby 57). For example, some of the best known and most influential fashionable novels, including *Pelham*, *Vivian Grey*, and *Granby*, are explicit in their warnings about the dangers of gambling. It is significant that in all three novels, the villain endangers others and eventually brings about his own destruction through gambling. The heroes, in contrast, never become addicted to play; indeed, they would prefer to abstain and only participate at the urging of their friends (which might itself be an indictment of fashionable peer pressure). Despite the gossipy appeal of the fashionable novel, these books vilify scandal-mongering as well. Trebeck, the dandy-villain in Lister's *Granby*, manages to separate Granby from the woman he loves for the better part of

three volumes by circulating false reports about both parties, and Vivian Grey's promising political career is sabotaged by carefully placed rumors.

It is true, however, that the satirical presentation of aristocratic manners was so often leavened with obvious admiration for members of high society that readers frequently mistook censure for praise. *Pelham* is perhaps the best example of this kind of mixed message. In an essay on "Fashionable Society," the *Westminster Review* (January 1829) praises the novel's "good-humoured satire," but suspects that the author is emotionally invested in the ideas he attempts to undermine:

> *Pelham*, indeed, is in many respects, a satire on the world of fashion which it assumes to pourtray, as well as upon the dandyism which is to be apparently exalted. There is, however, a keen although playful earnestness in much of the observation, that proves the anxiety of the author to mix up a portion of Epicurean dignity, in his abstract notions of the finished gentleman of the day. (qtd. in Sadleir, *Bulwer* 382)

The *Edinburgh Review* (April 1832) accuses Bulwer of mixed motives: "under the guise of satire in *Pelham* there [is] an anxiety to enlarge our sympathies and enlist our prejudices on behalf of the man of fashion" (qtd. in Rosa 82). Of course, other silver fork novels really do contain more eulogy than satire. Hook's flattery of the fashionable world has already been noted, and Ward and Disraeli are unabashed apologists for aristocratic prerogatives.[7] Ward insists that an "indescribable something" separates the *bon ton* from the rest of society; his disciple Disraeli suggests that social change in England can best be effected through the leadership of a regenerated aristocracy.

In his social history *England and the English*, Bulwer claims that the fashionable novel's greatest popularity and influence lasted only three years. He does not specify, but we can assume that this period included his own novel *Pelham* (1828). Accepting Bulwer's self-gratifying claim, Matthew Rosa and Vineta Colby assert that the rage for fashionable novels had already peaked when Catherine Gore entered the scene in 1830. However, it is more difficult to assign a time of death. In the same review which announced the arrival of the silver fork novel, William Hazlitt called for its abolishment. His denunciation was the more ironic for appearing the year before the publication of *Pelham*, which would set off a positive mania for fashionable novels. Similarly, in Gore's first production of this kind, the hero muses, "We have perhaps had more than enough of fashionable novels . . ." (*Women as They Are* 2.233). Many scholars, reluctant to suggest a precise date, state that the silver fork novel was out of vogue by the mid-1840s, although Rosa claims that *Vanity Fair* dealt the death blow in 1847. Clearly, to borrow Kathleen Tillotson's phrase, the silver fork novel took some killing; there were a number of premature announcements of its death. In 1845, Blackwood's gleefully inquired: "Where now are all the novels portraying fashionable life with which the shops of publishers teemed, and the shelves of circulating libraries groaned, not ten years ago? Buried in the vault of all the Capulets" (qtd. in Tillotson 86). Tillotson points out "The ghost of the aristocratic novel was still walking in the eighteen-fifties" (87), but this dissertation will argue that it continued to make its presence felt even after Gore's death in 1861.

The silver fork novel is often described as a fad, a word associated with trifles that enjoy a brief period of intense popularity, followed by a longer period of equally intense ridicule, and ending with a faintly embarrassed nostalgia. Fittingly, the silver fork novel, so well known for its commitment to time-specific detail, has itself become a topicality, both a product and symbol

of the 1820s and 30s. But we can hardly characterize the era of the fashionable novel as brief when we realize that the fashionable novel was already so well established in 1808 that Charles Maturin was able to recite its formula in the preface to *The Wild Irish Boy*,[8] and that its sway over the novel-reading public was still great enough in 1856 to attract George Eliot's derision in "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists." Nor can a genre that remained competitive in the literary marketplace for more than four decades be dismissed as a fad. But, as contemporary reviews show, critics have always regarded the fashionable novel as embarrassing evidence of the public's deplorable lack of taste; indeed, the classification of silver fork necessarily confers a negative critical judgment of artistic merit. Thus modern scholarship has preferred to consider the silver fork novel as a sociological rather than a literary genre.

Canonical Condemnations

One significant reason for the marginal status of fashionable novels is that these works faced formidable contemporary opposition from now-canonical authors. Vineta Colby observes, "In their lifetime they were bitterly denounced by Carlyle and devastatingly satirized by Thackeray; with such powerful ammunition fired on them, it is small wonder that they failed to survive" (53). These attacks, and the additional salvos fired by Hazlitt and George Eliot, have been instrumental in shaping twentieth- and twenty-first-century critical reception of fashionable novels. Apart from the authority literary canonicity has invested in these authors, what gives these criticisms such power? One answer would certainly be their memorable and sophisticated humor. The writers' arguments may have been fueled by moral or aesthetic outrage, but their tone is witty, urbane, smooth, and controlled. Ridicule and hyperbole diminish the object of their attack, so the fashionable novel appears small, trivial, foolish, in contradistinction to the

critics, whose power to judge elevates them to a higher plane. Ironically, the critics who were so expert in their use of satire and comic exaggeration seem unwilling or unable to discover the same qualities in the subjects of their review. Perhaps they did the most considerable damage to the reputation of the fashionable novel by appropriating the novelists' most valuable stock in trade: wit.

Hazlitt

The most influential of these canonical condemnations may be Hazlitt's damning review of "The Dandy School." The following passage proved so memorable that it christened the silver fork novel and established the basis for its criticism:

> [The author] informs you that the quality eat fish with silver forks. This is all he knows about the matter: is this all they feel? The fact is new to him: it is old to them. It is so new to him and he is so delighted with it, that provided a few select persons eat fish with silver forks, he considers it a circumstance of no consequence if a whole country starves: but 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*. (Hazlitt 146; italics original)

Embedded in this passage are all the charges that would be leveled against the fashionable novel both by contemporary critics and by modern scholars. First, the author is not an aristocrat but an interloper who does not belong to the rarified society he writes about; therefore, his credibility and motives are suspect. Indeed, Hazlitt speculates that the author has attained his knowledge of the fashionable world as a servant rather than a bona fide member of

the *bon ton*: “It is really as if, in lieu of our royal and fashionable ‘Society of Authors,’ a deputation of tailors, cooks, lacqueys, had taken possession of Parnassus, and had appointed some Abigail out of place perpetual Secretary” (147).

Second, as an outsider, the author is only able to describe the external realities of fashionable life rather than the feelings of individuals. He can provide documentation, but not insight. To illustrate, Hazlitt comments on an excerpt from Hook’s *Sayings and Doings* which describes an unappetizing and badly organized dinner given by parvenus striving (and failing) to achieve the elegance of true fashionables. “It is here,” gloats Hazlitt, “the cloven-foot, the under-bred tone, the undue admiration of external circumstances breaks out and betrays the writer. Mr. Hook has a fellow-feeling with low life or rather with vulgarity aping gentility, but he has never got beyond the outside of what he calls *good society*” (147).

Third, in focusing so exclusively on the privileged few, the author ignores the suffering of the masses. Hazlitt argues that such misplaced attention is a failure to achieve art’s purpose of improving society: “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” (148). Thus, the fashionable novel is frivolous at best, callous at worst, and it forfeits consideration as literary art.

Finally, such attention to the minute details of fashionable luxury betrays a toadying subservience to wealth and rank. We see Hazlitt at his most acidic in his condemnation of this self-abasement: “At first it appears strange that persons of so low a station in life should be seized with such a rage to inveigh against themselves, and make us despise all but a few arrogant

people, who pay them ill for what they do. But this is the natural process of servility, and we see all valets and hangers-on of the Great do the same thing" (147).

Hazlitt's famous review on "The Dandy School" responded to two specific works, Hook's *Sayings and Doings* and Disraeli's *Vivian Grey*. While the contemporary influence of these works is undeniable, they are far from the best of their class.[9] However, modern scholars have routinely applied Hazlitt's remarks on these inferior texts to define and evaluate a much larger group of novels, ignoring the fact that Edward Bulwer and Catherine Gore (who would publish more fashionable novels than any other author) had not even entered the field when Hazlitt wrote his review in 1827. This is not to say that Hazlitt's observations about *Sayings and Doings* and *Vivian Grey* were invalid or his attack undeserved. Rather, I wish to point out that the centrality of Hazlitt's comments to scholarship on the silver fork novel has grounded the definition and criticism of an entire genre in the work of two unskillful and (in Disraeli's case) inexperienced writers.

Indeed, the authority of Hazlitt's review serves to set up the dandy novel, as exemplified by *Vivian Grey* and later by *Pelham*, as the model for all silver fork fiction in Matthew Rosa's *The Silver Fork School*. But not all fashionable novels focus on a dandy protagonist and his progress from foppishness to destruction (*Vivian Grey*) or reform and redemption (*Pelham*), and this bias tends to skew the evaluation of those fashionable novels which do not follow this model. For example, Rosa claims that the apex of Gore's career was 1836-1841, during which time she produced some of her best novels. It is significant that of the ten novels Gore wrote during this period, at least seven have male protagonists and four—*The Cabinet Minister*, the *Cecil* books, and *Greville*—might be considered dandy novels. The preeminence of the dandy novel (which, as I argue in Chapter 2, should be regarded as a subset rather than a synonym of

the fashionable novel) also affects the reception of the fashionable authors. Because Gore's novels frequently deviate from the accepted silver fork "standard," Rosa tends to group her with Lady Charlotte Bury and Lady Blessington, who shared her material but not her talent, and later scholars like Ian Jack and Francis Russell Hart have ignored her completely.

Carlyle

Thomas Carlyle is another contemporary whose judgments have guided scholarly reception of silver fork novels. Like Hazlitt, Carlyle was similarly outraged by what he saw as the moral irresponsibility of fashionable novels, and his *Sartor Resartus* singles out Edward Bulwer's *Pelham* as the primary offender. In his chapter on "The Dandiacal Body," Carlyle defines the dandy in its simplest terms, stripping away the nobility of intellect and philosophy which Bulwer and Disraeli sought to invest in him: "A Dandy is a Clothes-wearing Man, a Man whose trade, office, and existence consists in the wearing of Clothes. Every faculty of his soul, spirit, purse, and person is heroically consecrated to this one object, the wearing of Clothes wisely and well: so that as others dress to live, he lives to dress" (207). Carlyle's sense of style is unerring; the repetition of "wearing," "clothes," and "dress" mimics the fashionable novel's tedious attention to superficialities, and the inappropriately earnest, even reverential, tone makes its subject appear even more ridiculous. Dandyism is thus elevated to a mystical cult devoted to "Self-Worship," fashionable novels become its sacred texts, and Pelham the spiritual leader whose maxims for dress are accepted as articles of faith. When Teufelsdröck compares the fantastic dress of the dandies with the bizarre costume of the Irish poor, it becomes clear that Carlyle shares Hazlitt's view: literature should attempt to alleviate suffering rather than celebrating luxury and waste.

It is also clear that Carlyle entirely misses Henry Pelham's epiphany, which is the crux of the novel; the hero repents of his former triviality and embarks on a course of reformation. Rosa apologizes for Carlyle's heated attack on Bulwer as unfair but understandable: "With England on the brink of revolution, the mere mention of other clothes than those for the spirit angered him into forgetting the duty of a critic to read carefully the work to be criticized. A second reading of *Pelham* might have saved him from the rather grudging admission of error which he made years later after having become acquainted with Bulwer" (18).

Indeed, evidence suggests that Carlyle read no more of *Pelham* than the excerpts which appeared as part of a review in *Fraser's Magazine*,[10] a journal whose antagonism towards Bulwer is well known. Teufelsdröckh admits that he was unable to finish the one fashionable novel he tried to read:

> In vain that I summoned my whole energies . . . and did my very utmost: at the end of some short space, I was uniformly seized with not so much what I can call a drumming in my ears, as a kind of infinite, unsufferable Jew's-harping and scrannel-piping there; to which the frightfullest species of Magnetic Sleep soon supervened. And if I strove to shake this away . . . came a hitherto unfelt sensation, as of Delirium Tremens, and a melting into total deliquium:--till at last, by order of the Doctor, dreading ruin to my whole intellectual and bodily faculties, and a general breaking-up of the constitution, I reluctantly but determinedly forbore. (210)[11]

Happily, Teufelsdröckh lights upon "the outcast fraction of some English Periodical, such as they name Magazine" on which appears "something like a Dissertation on this very subject of Fashionable Novels" (211), which may be Carlyle's way of acknowledging *Fraser's* as a source.

Most compelling, *Sartor Resartus* only quotes those passages from *Pelham* or *The Disowned* (which Carlyle mistakenly calls *Devereux*) which appear in the *Fraser's* review.

Rosa notes that Carlyle's invective appeared too late to damage *Pelham*'s initial popularity; in fact, his critique may have stimulated sales for a later edition. However, Carlyle's condemnation has certainly been influential with later critics:[12]

> While the world has not always agreed with the fervent prejudices of the Scotch Puritan, in this case not only Carlyleans, but also literary historians, have agreed in denouncing or ignoring those human documents known as "fashionable novels." Although Carlyle had read some of them [apparently with the exception of *Pelham*], it is to be feared that the critics have read Carlyle first. (Rosa 4)

Thackeray

The critics are still more likely to have read "the supreme example of the fashionable novel" (Rosa 12), whose author is, ironically, credited with laughing the genre out of existence—William Makepeace Thackeray. I will discuss *Vanity Fair*'s complex relationship with its predecessors in a later chapter, but it is impossible to discuss the critical reception of the silver fork novel without including the man whose parodies would sully its reputation (never of the cleanest to begin with) for the next century. Thackeray's most pointed and developed attacks appear in the series of burlesques titled "Novels by Eminent Hands" published in *Punch* in 1847. The germ of these burlesques, later called "*Punch*'s Prize Novelists," was the opening of *Vanity Fair*'s Chapter VI, "Vauxhall," in which the author mentions various novelistic styles he considered and rejected for presenting his story: "We might have treated this subject in the genteel, or in the romantic, or in the facetious manner" (60). His illustrative parodies of Bulwer,

Gore, and even Dickens are far more developed in the manuscript of *Vanity Fair* than in the finished project, indicating that Thackeray chose to save this material for *Punch*, where he could expand it with greater freedom. The fashionable targets of Thackeray's satire were transparent enough: "'George De Barnwell' by Sir E. L. B. L., Bart." (Bulwer); "'Codlingsby' by D. Shrewsberry, Esq." (Disraeli); "'Lords and Liveries,' by the Authoress of 'Dukes and Déjeuners,' 'Hearts and Diamonds,' 'Marchionesses and Milliners,' etc. etc." (Gore).

Critics frequently refer to the "Lords and Liveries" parody as savage and devastating. Kathleen Tillotson even claims that the parody, which is "as accurate as absurd," makes Gore's actual novels superfluous (4), and that it may be regarded as evidence of the "critical disesteem" in which the fashionable novel was held (85). However, Thackeray scholar Gordon N. Ray draws a very different conclusion, viewing "Lords and Liveries" not as a savage critique but as a "friendly imitation" of Gore's novels (*Uses of Adversity* 390). Rather surprisingly, Ray declares that all of the burlesques in the "Novels by Eminent Hands" series, except the one directed at Bulwer, were intended as collegial ribbing of authors Thackeray respected and enjoyed: "Only in the first and best of these 'Prize Novels' does Thackeray depart from a predominantly playful tone which implies that he is grateful to these traditional story-tellers for the pleasure that they have given him, even while he makes good-natured fun of them" (391).

My own reading of "Lords and Liveries" supports Ray's conclusion. Although it is difficult (as Thackeray intended) to wade through the French phrases sprinkled liberally throughout, the story itself is innocuous and rather amusing. In the last month of the Season, the Earl of Bagnigge (who is, "like too many of our young men of ton, utterly *blasé*, although only in his twenty-fourth year") wagers that he will reside for a week in a London town house with a beautiful heiress, Amethyst Pimlico, despite the fierce protection of her guardians, the

formidable Fitzbattleaxes. Bagnigge's friends congratulate themselves on having won their bet when the dandy breaks his arm and is confined to bed rest. Bagnigge's bad luck is compounded by the heroics of a handsome servant, Jeames, who first saves Amethyst from a carriage accident and then dispatches her noble suitor, Prince Borodino, by dropping an "*assiette* of *vermeille ciselé*, with its scalding contents, over the prince's chin, his Mechlin *jabot*, and the grand cordon of the Legion of Honour which he wore." The romantic Jeames is immediately sacked (*chasséd*). However, we learn in the final scene that Bagnigge shammed his injury and assumed the role of "Jeames" to spend a week in Amethyst's home. He wins the bet and the lady's hand, and they settle down to be happy and do what good they can, despite having "not more than nine hundred thousand a year."[13]

The surprise ending is similar to that in Gore's 1831 novel *Pin Money*, in which an aristocratic young lady wins the love of her reluctant fiancé by disguising herself as his mother's companion and nurse. The parody does throw some well-aimed barbs: the excessive use of French, the huddle of dandies speaking slang and several languages at once, and the gratuitous paeans to "excellent principles." Still, "Lords and Liveries" appears positively affectionate in comparison to the other "Prize Novels." This burlesque of Gore contains nothing equal to the anti-Semitic slurs in the text and illustrations of "Codlingsby" or to the savage mockery of Bulwer's veneration of the Beautiful and the Ideal in "George De Barnwell." We may assume that Gore herself found "Lords and Liveries" inoffensive, since she was the only "eminent novelist" who failed to retaliate or respond to Thackeray's laugh at her expense.[14]

Eliot

Gore is also the only one of the "Big Six" silver fork novelists who might be vulnerable to George Eliot's gendered attack on "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists." Although Eliot does not mention Gore or any of her works by name, this essay may be more damaging to her than any of the other canonical condemnations; in many ways, it is harder to defend against a general criticism than a specific one. Gore was very near the end of her long career when the anonymous essay appeared in the *Westminster Review* (1856), but Kathleen Tillotson clearly finds her guilty by association: "[Eliot's essay] supplies more than one text for the forties. Of that decade, the most popular "lady novelist" was Mrs. Gore, who published twenty-four novels" (4). The essay begins:

> Silly Novels by Lady Novelists are a genus with many species, determined by the particular quality of silliness that predominates in them—the frothy, the prosy, the pious, or the pedantic. But it is a mixture of all these—a composite order of feminine fatuity, that produces the largest class of such novels, which we shall distinguish as the *mind-and-millinery* species. (Eliot 140)

Eliot does mention certain offending novels by name, but the more specific discussions are often left out of the edited versions appearing in anthologies of nineteenth-century literature. Left to take the place of more focused commentary is the standard means of collapsing a genre (or perhaps, since the mind-and-millinery species is a composite, several genres) into its lowest common denominator: a formula. While Eliot uses the formula to great comic advantage in her essay, she sets some dangerous precedents: later critics would regard her collective description as absolute, and fashionable novels would come to be judged entirely on their adherence to or departure from similar formulas.

Eliot begins her summary: “The heroine is usually an heiress, probably a peeress in her own right, with perhaps a vicious baronet, an amiable duke, and an irresistible younger son of a marquis as lovers in the foreground, a clergyman and a poet sighing for her in the middle distance, and a crowd of undefined adorers dimly indicated beyond” (140). On the authority of this passage, twentieth-century critic Bonnie Anderson asserts that the fashionable novel is primarily aimed at women readers and its plot is always a domestic romance, in the modern sense of the word (406).

In case the shoe doesn’t fit, Eliot provides an alternative formula, which further associates the mind-and-millinery species of silly novels with the fashionable novel: “Or it may be that the heroine is not an heiress—that rank and wealth are the only things in which she is deficient; but she infallibly gets into high society, she has the triumph of refusing many matches and securing the best, and she wears some family jewels or other as a sort of crown of righteousness at the end” (140). An echo of Eliot’s recipe may be found in Cynthia Merrill’s rather limited definition of the fashionable novel as written by Catherine Gore: “In *Women As They Are* and dozens of subsequent novels of fashion, G.[ore] depicts the gay leisure class of Regency England, complete with strutting dandies, arrogant parvenus, scheming mamas, and hopeful girls decked out in the family jewels” (199).

Eliot justifies her method of criticizing these novels en masse by pointing to the novelists’ remarkable conformity in employing the same diction—“the lover has a manly breast; minds are redolent of various things; hearts are hollow; events are utilized”—and rehearsing the same useful platitudes, for instance: “It is a fact, no less true than melancholy, that all people, more or less, richer or poorer, are swayed by bad example” (147-48). Thus fashionable novelists

are also made to fit a formula. Their grammar is deplorable, their philosophies simplistic, and they write from vanity rather than necessity:

> The fair writers have evidently never talked to a tradesman except from a carriage window; they have no notion of the working classes except as "dependants"; they think £500 a year a miserable pittance; Belgravia and "baronial halls" are their primary truths; and they have no idea of feeling interest in any man who is not at least a great landed proprietor, if not a prime minister . . . . they must be entirely indifferent to publishers' accounts, and inexperienced in every form of poverty except poverty of brains. (141-42)

It is clear that Eliot is attacking fashionable novelists on grounds already made familiar by Hazlitt and Carlyle—the author deems only high life worth representing; the author is not writing from her own observation or is misrepresenting what she observes.

But certainly the criticism most damning (because applicable) to Gore is Eliot's observation that the ability to write, even in great quantities, is not the ability to write well: "Every art which has its absolute technique is, to a certain extent, guarded from the intrusions of mere left-handed imbecility. But in novel-writing there are no barriers for incapacity to stumble against, no external criteria to prevent a writer from mistaking foolish facility for mastery" (163). Even though her production rates had slowed to a mere trickle by 1856, the word "facility" would surely bring Catherine Gore's name to mind. Gore wrote so rapidly that it happened on more than one occasion that two of her novels were brought out at the same time and she was forced to compete against herself. Rosa ends his testimonial to Gore's tireless production (averaging 1800 pages per year) with an evaluation that sounds similar to Eliot's: "Is it any wonder that some of her books seem to have been written with her left hand, especially when we

remember that she bore ten children during a period of twenty-three years?" (Rosa 127). Although Rosa simply wishes that Gore had written less and polished more, a reader of Hazlitt's "The Dandy School," Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*, Thackeray's "Lords and Liveries," and Eliot's "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists" might well conclude that the prolific Gore was one of those women writers whose labor was mere "busy idleness" (Eliot 35).

Fashionable Formulas and Selective Categorization

Despite the weight of critical disapprobation, the fashionable novel persisted. Rosa argues:

> the fashionable novels displayed the tenacity of life possessed by any widely popular form of literature, and, it may be added, the same resistance to outward change. Once a formula was developed it was never modified. . . . One result of this unyielding front to innovation was an ultimate fate resembling that of the one-hoss shay—virtually complete annihilation. (7)

Rosa goes on to define this persistent formula:

> Complexities of plot and characterization were avoided; the overload of thesis carried by so many novels of the 1790's was discarded, and an exclusive preoccupation with verisimilitude became the distinguishing mark of the fashionable novel. Social etiquette at the ball, the dinner, the hunt, the club, and the opera; conversation which seldom extended beyond the shallow conventionalities of polite discourse; and a zealous attention to the details of food and clothing supplied the material for hundreds of novels by dozens of novelists. (8)

It is amazing how quickly the observed similarities harden into a set of required generic elements which become the only criteria by which fashionable novels will be judged. For example, Rosa begins his discussion of Lister's *Granby* by announcing: "There are better fashionable novels than *Granby*, no doubt, but few that fulfill all the requirements of the genre more adequately" (70). Of course, a long list—including politics, balls, parties, gambling, and gossip—follows. It is no longer necessary or even desirable to discuss the literary merits of a fashionable novel; it is enough to check items off a grocery list.

Similarly, Adburgham introduces her discussion of every novel with a statement about the standard elements it includes and the new ones, if any, that it introduces:

> [Lister's] *Granby* contains all the essential facets that were to become endemic to the silver fork genre: there are some politics, some gambling scenes and a duel . . . . But above all, there are semi-flirtatious drawing-room conversations and dinner-table repartee. At these Lister excelled. (92-93)

> In 1836 Mrs. Gore published a forceful novel entitled *Mrs. Armytage or Female Domination*, a novel which, while retaining all the essential silver fork ingredients, broke new ground. For one thing, the story is set in the provinces, a new departure for Mrs. Gore; and then she introduces a quite new character to the English novel—a rich American in search of an aristocratic wife. (261)

> No doubt its attack on the legal establishment and the introduction of real persons, boosted sales; but novel readers who had no political interest nor acquaintance with the personalities introduced, people who just enjoyed a good read, found in

> [Bulwer's] *Paul Clifford* all the expected ingredients of a fashionable novel *per se,* plus the intriguing new element of the hero being a criminal adventurer pretending to be a well-born gentleman. (160)

Once established as absolutes in the minds of literary scholars, these preconceived formulas interfere with careful reading of specific texts. For example, Bonnie Anderson claims that Gore's novel *The Hamiltons* compares the experience of two sisters, Marcia and Susan Berkley, to demonstrate the importance of marrying for love rather than money or position. While love-versus-money is a favorite theme of fashionable novelists, it is a gross misreading of the *Hamiltons* plot. It is true that their mother encourages Susan's attachment to a suave dandy while she disapproves of Marcia's partiality for a brilliant but unmannerly lawyer; however, both sisters clearly marry for love. Bewitched by Augustus Hamilton's practiced gallantries, Susan refuses to heed her sister's warnings and finds, to her regret, that her attentive lover becomes a callous and neglectful husband. The fault lies not in Susan's motive for marrying but in her inability to see beyond an attractive veneer of manners. Gore's novel may be formulaic, but it follows a different formula than the one Anderson identifies.

It is interesting that Alison Adburgham and Matthew Rosa allow the same formula to misdirect their readings of another Gore novel, *Mothers and Daughters*. Rosa's summary is both succinct and cavalier: "There was nothing new to be said on the subject [of the marrying mother], and true to form, the daughter who marries for love wins the happiness denied her more calculating sisters" (129). Adburgham's discussion is more developed than Rosa's but no less reductive:

> The main theme of *Mothers and Daughters* is the manoeuvring of selfish and ambitious Lady Frances [sic; Maria] Willingham, well-connected but widowed

> and impoverished, to get her two daughters married to men of wealth and position. The elder, Claudia, beautiful and hard as nails, first sets her cap at a Duke; but she has to lower her sights again and again and again . . . . Eleanor, in contrast, views society with a wry humour and cynicism. . . . The honest appraisal with which she views the family situation and what seems to be the only way to improve it [marrying a tedious but rich and powerful man], makes her more likeable than Claudia. (173)

While she lacks Eleanor's intellect and clear vision, Claudia is not the heartless mercenary Adburgham describes. She does more than set her cap at the Duke; she falls hopelessly in love with him and is nearly destroyed by grief when he abandons her at the urging of his family, who have their own self-serving reasons for discouraging the match. Eleanor, concerned for her sister's well-being, decides that she cannot afford the luxury of accepting the addresses of the man she loves, as his means are too slender to support her family. When his fortunes improve, Eleanor tries to encourage him again, but he is disgusted by her apparent avarice, unaware of her feelings for him or her desire to provide for her sister.

Seemingly, scholars like Anderson, Rosa, and Adburgham are unwilling to believe that one may fall in love with a rich man, preferring to regard the romantic plots of fashionable novels through the lens used by Hazlitt and Carlyle: only the (comparatively) poor and obscure deserve our sympathy and attention. Unfortunately, such careless or willful misreadings of the text serve to oversimplify individual plots and to reinforce assumptions about the facile and formulaic nature of fashionable novels as a group.

Perhaps the reason Rosa and others see no change in the formula of the fashionable novel is that any act of defamiliarization (if it is recognized as such) tends to remove the text from the

genre altogether. When Disraeli begins to emphasize politics over fashion, he "abandons" the fashionable novel and moves into his political phase. When Thackeray satirizes the silver fork novel, he is perceived as writing outside the genre, although the fashionable novel is traditionally parodic and satirical. However, Gore's attempts to defamiliarize the fashionable novel have been completely ignored. For example, *The Hamiltons* traces the political and social changes leading up to and attending the passage of the First Reform Bill with a specificity utterly lacking in the fashionable novels of Bulwer and Disraeli, but Gore is not considered a political writer. Two of her early novels, *Pin Money* and *Mothers and Daughters*, move the dandy off center stage, establishing a heroine in his place; many of her works subvert the courtship plot by beginning rather than ending with a marriage, and *The Diary of a Désennuyée* is narrated by a recent widow who rejoices to find herself freed from an unhappy marriage. Thus Gore simultaneously rejects the recent models of Bulwer and Disraeli on one side and the precedents for the female Bildungsroman on the other, but this surprising act of initiative and independence is neither hailed as an innovation to the genre nor accepted as evidence that she has left it.

It is clear that some 1936-vintage sexism has contributed to Rosa's construction of the silver fork novel, which in turn has colored later modern scholarship.[15] He thinks most highly of Gore when she follows the templates created by Bulwer and Disraeli. Thus Rosa dismisses *The Diary of a Désennuyée*, whose narrator-hero is female, and praises *Cecil*, told from the male point of view, even as he declares that the two novels tell essentially the same story: "Mrs. Gore . . . had greatly increased her scope between the early and late versions. The first book is a woman's for women; *Cecil* is concerned with men mainly, the sort of novel Jane Austen would never have attempted" (136). Thus we see that Rosa's measure of literary quality is firmly grounded in gender. He regrets that Gore should so often address herself to women readers—

"The novelist who writes for a group restricted by sex or age, does so at his own peril, and in so far as he succeeds, robs his work of universal appeal" (129)—neglecting ample evidence from Thackeray, Leigh Hunt, and George IV that men also read and enjoyed Gore's fashionable novels.

The "silver fork" category has been stretched to include fashionable novels written both before and after the appearance of Hazlitt's review in 1827, although carefully exempting the works of Maria Edgeworth and Susan Ferrier on one end and Thackeray on the other. Bulwer and Disraeli are also said to have abandoned the form, although Thackeray, for one, regarded Disraeli's "political" novels just as dandified as his earlier works.[16] Thus it appears that the "silver-fork school" is constructed of such elasticity that it may exclude any authors we know and respect while conveniently including (and thereby obscuring) any unfamiliar writers we are content to dismiss as minor.

Ian Jack's brief discussion of fashionable novelists in *English Literature, 1815-1832* is an admirable example of the kind of genre construction I describe. Jack defines his category so as to fit the least skillful and entertaining writers: "The essential characteristic of the Fashionable Novelists was that their aim was to describe fashionable life for the benefit of readers outside it, or on the fringes; and the most typical writer of this class was Theodore Hook" (250). It is significant that Hook is the primary target of Hazlitt's withering review, which plays a key role in establishing low expectations for the "typical" fashionable novel. Like Hazlitt, Jack is struck by Hook's exposure of his own vulgarity in insisting upon the superiority of the *bon ton*: "Hook excels in the art of making people outside feel that at last they are learning the truth about the people inside . . . . He flatters his readers by making them feel superior to the common herd, while in fact he plays on the most vulgar attitudes and prejudices" (250-51). Jack's category also

includes Robert Plumer Ward, although the scholar notes the sharp contrast between Hook, a flashy entertainer, and Ward, an old-fashioned pedant. Certainly Jack's criticism of the two is strikingly different. In speaking of Ward's first fashionable novel, Jack remarks, "The trouble with *Tremaine*, which is a sort of literary equivalent of a vegetable marrow, is that it is extremely dull. After the first volume it becomes simply a very slow-moving love story, the only obstacle to the hero's happiness being that he has some doubts about Christianity" (252). Apparently, the great similarity between Hook and Ward is that they praise fashionable society in equally irritating, though different, ways.

Surprisingly, Jack's construction of the fashionable novel excludes the works of Thomas Henry Lister, "a minor novelist of real ability who has too often been loosely classified with men greatly his inferiors" (248), the implication being that only novelists of little or no ability should be classified as fashionable novelists. Rosa and Adburgham do consider Lister a fashionable novelist but agree with Jack that he is far more compelling than Ward and has been undeservedly overshadowed by the better-known Bulwer and Disraeli.[17] Jack finds Lister's sly wit strongly reminiscent of Jane Austen: the hero of *Herbert Lacy* (1828) is "rather proud of the sturdiness of his principles, in not being dazzled by the outward charms of the grand-daughter of an iron-monger" (qtd. in Jack 248). Lister further distances himself from Jack's criteria for "true" fashionable novelists (like Hook) by criticizing as well as describing high society: "Lister is seriously concerned with human nature and with moral values, while Hook's aim is simply to write an entertaining tale calculated to appeal to the socially aspiring" (251). Jack acknowledges that Hook also preaches morals, occasionally with seriousness, but "they are never more than a secondary concern" (251).

In short, Lister does not write fashionable novels but "genuine novels" that "deal with fashionable life" (248). This is precisely the argument usually made to distinguish Edgeworth, Ferrier, and Thackeray from "minor" popular novelists like Bulwer, Lister, and Gore.[18] Incidentally, it is worth noting that Jack does not discuss Bulwer or Disraeli in the "Fashionable Novelists" section, presumably because they transcend the low standards for this category. Gore does not appear in Jack's survey at all, save in a quotation from R.H. Horne which, ironically, attests to her significance.

Relying on such subjective standards to determine an author's or work's inclusion in a generic category is uncomfortable. However, the use of standard formulas and lists of required elements to categorize novels of fashion also carries disadvantages, as it tends to skew the evaluation both of specific texts and of the genre as a whole. Not only does the application of formulas and lists limit criticism of individual works, focusing attention on the least valuable aspects of a text, but it lumps together an enormous number of texts on the basis of superficial similarities and then evaluates them according to the lowest common denominator. Moreover, as we have seen, critics are so conditioned to find familiar formulas that when they encounter a deviant novel, they are likely either to ignore the differences and impose a formula-based reading on the text or to dismiss the novel altogether.

I propose that we discard the currently used model of the silver fork novel, which is based on a set of required elements whose derivation is suspect, whose applicability is questionable, and whose utilization serves to stigmatize novels as formulaic and unreadable. To this end, I also recommend abandoning the term silver fork with its pejorative connotations and returning to the broader denomination of "fashionable novel" as a more value-neutral term. From this point forward, I will refer to novels of fashion or fashionable novels, only using silver

fork novels in quoted material that contains the term or in reference to the generic construction this dissertation challenges and seeks to overturn. In the next chapters, I propose new ways of looking at the fashionable novel, which challenge the notion that all such texts are virtually identical, overturn assumptions about the dominant function and mode of the genre, and identify links to the didactic novel and social satire. This new construction of the genre will facilitate new readings of individual texts and enable scholars to view the fashionable novel as an evolving form rather than a static period novelty.

Notes to Chapter 2

[1] Qtd. in Sadleir, *Bulwer* 301. The letter is dated July 4, 1832.

[2] Edward Bulwer did not change his name to Bulwer-Lytton until 1843, long after he had established himself as a fashionable novelist and man of letters. Following scholarly precedent, I use the shorter name "Bulwer" throughout the dissertation for ease and historical accuracy. However, the author is listed as "Bulwer-Lytton" in the works cited section because this name appears on the title page of recent editions of his works.

[3] For a discussion of this reaction against fashionable novels in favor of bourgeois realistic fiction, see Vineta Colby's *Yesterday's Woman: Domestic Realism in the English Novel* (Princeton U P, 1974) and Kathleen Tillotson's *Novels of the Eighteen-Forties* (Clarendon, 1971).

[4] "The Writings of Catherine Gore," *Journal of Popular Culture* 10.2 (1976) 405, 408.

[5] Interestingly, these critics claim very different functions for the Regency setting. Anderson asserts, "The glamour, fashion, and elegance of the period were appealing to women who yearned for a Regency without the licentiousness, drunkenness, and corruption which marred the

Regency in Victorian eyes. Mrs. Gore's creation of a fashionable Regency world which recognized Victorian middle-class values was uniquely satisfying to women who wanted both glamor and respectability in their reading" (420). Hughes contradicts this view of a sanitized Regency for fastidious readers, suggesting instead that it was through the influence of the fashionable novels that "the Regency period, as they embalmed it, became the central, if increasingly negative, point of reference—both moral and historical—for the new Victorians" ("Elegies for the Regency" 191). Hughes argues that Victorians wanted to read about the licentious Regency, warts and all, in order to reassure themselves of the greater wholesomeness of their own era.

[6] *Pin Money*" [review], *Edinburgh Review* 15 (Oct. 1831) 433-34.

[7] Adburgham observes that "What shines through [Ward's] novels, despite all the philosophising, is his unquestioning belief in the innate superiority of the aristocracy" (79).

[8] "The fashionable materials for novel-writing," said Charles R. Maturin in the preface to his own novel *The Wild Irish Boy* (1808), "I know to be a lounge in Bond-street, a phaeton-tour in the Park, a masquerade with appropriate scenery, and a birthday or birthnight, with dresses and decorations, accurately copied from the newspapers. He who writes with a hope of being read must write something like this" (qtd. in Altick, *PP* 35).

[9] My evaluation of these novels is supported by Rosa and by Adburgham, who calls *Vivian Grey* "a wildly improbable, outrageously overwritten novel, with some very Gothic descriptions . . . . and crimson passages" (89-90).

[10] To my knowledge, Ellen Moers is the first to make this argument. See *The Dandy: Brummell to Beerbohm* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1960).

[11] Teufelsdröck's agony is very similar to my own experience of reading *Vivian Grey*, which I only managed to complete in the spirit of doctoral research.

[12] For example, Vineta Colby and Kathleen Tillotson both follow Carlyle's lead in pronouncing fashionable novels "unreadable."

[13] "Lords and Liveries," *The Works of William Makepeace Thackeray*, 26 vols. (London: Smith, Elder, 1886) 15.60-71.

[14] Ray's explanation that Gore was not offended because she had no authorial vanity to wound (*Uses* 394) is invalidated by Gore's passionate letter to Bulwer (July 4, 1832), then editor of the *New Monthly Magazine*. In response to an unflattering review of *The Fair of Mayfair*, Gore defends her work with spirit: "I could not have written *Eugene Aram*. Why attempt it? I *could* write the *Divorcee* and if you were not a doctrinaire you would admit that it has far more truth, tenderness and power and passion" (qtd. in Sadleir's *Bulwer*, p. 302).

[15] I do not mean to suggest that later scholars have inherited Rosa's sexism; rather, Rosa's gender bias has led him to dismiss certain novels and commend others, and later scholars have depended heavily on the evaluations recorded in Rosa's seminal *The Silver Fork School.* For example, Rosa praises *Cecil* above all of Gore's other novels, and *Cecil* (now regarded as Gore's masterpiece) has received more attention than any of her other works.

[16] In his review of *Coningsby* for the *Morning Chronicle* (May 13, 1844), Thackeray declares: "It is the fashionable novel, pushed, we do really believe, to its extremest verge, beyond which all is naught. . . . Dandies are here made to regenerate the world. . . . It is a dandy-social, dandy-political, dandy-religious novel" (*Contributions* 39-40).

[17] Adburgham calls Lister's novels delightful, and Rosa says "there can be little doubt that [Lister's] *Granby* is a better novel than *Vivian Grey*," although the latter has been considered

more important because of Disraeli's later political fame (69). I fully concur with both of these appraisals.

[18] The following statement is a typical example of this kind of distinction: "The fashionable novel, as opposed to the novel which for didactic or romantic reasons uses fashionable people, was firmly established by Lister's *Granby*" (Rosa 70).

CHAPTER 3: GENDERING THE FASHIONABLE NOVEL

Modern scholarship on the fashionable novel is dominated by two competing definitions of the genre. In *The Silver Fork School: Novels of Fashion Preceding* Vanity Fair, Matthew Whiting Rosa claims that the fashionable novel continues the traditions of the 18th-century picaresque and the German apprentice novel. For Rosa, the prototypes of the genre are Benjamin Disraeli's *Vivian Grey* (1826-27) and Edward Bulwer's *Pelham* (1828), which focus primarily on the moral and intellectual development of the dandy hero. In contrast, Bonnie Anderson identifies Catherine Gore as the most representative fashionable novelist, pointing out that she "virtually single-handedly" sustained the popularity of the genre for three decades (406). Anderson further argues that fashionable novels were written for and about women:

> Although fashions in women's novels change, from Ouida to Georgette Heyer, from Mrs. Oliphant to Mary Stewart, they are all love stories. Whatever the setting or the style, the plot turns on falling in love, courtship, and marriage. Heroines in a culture which espouses the womanly ideology [a conservative domestic ideology which Anderson argues Gore both shapes and perpetuates] . . . can only be the protagonist of love stories. . . . Mrs. Gore's novels, like much popular literature written for a female audience, are "formula stories." Their formula is that of the familiar domestic romance, whose central event is the heroine's winning of the hero. (406)

Anderson's claim that Gore's novels are typical romances for a female audience is misleading: Gore's narrative voice often implies the expectation of male readers, and many of her best

known novels begin rather than end with the heroine's marriage. In fact, Vineta Colby argues that Gore is more concerned with match-making than love-making: "Mrs. Gore herself never made the plunge and never wrote what could be called a romantic love story . . . . she tended to emphasize other facets of human relationships—most especially family love" (78-79). Despite these objections, Winfred Hughes joins Anderson in characterizing fashionable novels, particularly Gore's, as literary forebears of the twentieth-century "Regency romances."[1]

Strangely, little note has been taken of the fact that Anderson's characterization of the fashionable novel as a Regency romance, written by women for a female audience, contradicts Rosa's model of a male Bildungsroman. In fact, scholars frequently claim that fashionable novels, adhering to familiar formulas, are virtually indistinguishable from one another. Andrew Elfenbein remarks that "Like today's Harlequin romances, silver fork novels assimilated the mentality of the assembly-line to artistic production" (79).

Because all fashionable novels are presumed to be more or less identical, discussions of the fashionable novel tend to emphasize Gore's similarities and debts to Bulwer and Disraeli.[2] The three authors knew one another socially as well as professionally, and their mutual influence is undeniable, but Gore's association with her more famous male colleagues has further obscured an already marginalized writer, diminishing her own contributions to popular literature and suggesting that she was a mere imitator of her male contemporaries. Important differences exist between Gore's work and that of Bulwer and Disraeli, differences which require a restructuring of the fashionable novel as a genre. A closer examination of the works of Edward Bulwer, Benjamin Disraeli, and Catherine Gore challenges the familiar constructions of the silver fork novel and suggests a new generic model which includes two subcategories: the dandy novel and

the society novel, which we may consider, respectively, as masculine and feminine fashionable novels.

The dandy novel, exemplified by Disraeli's *Vivian Grey* and Bulwer's *Pelham*, records the adventures of a swaggering male protagonist whose experiences lead him to greater self-awareness and maturity while confirming his sense of superiority. Since the dandy is a man of sophistication, the dandy novel always has an urban setting, for it is only in the metropolis that the hero's powers can be fully displayed and appreciated. The action of the novel is largely episodic and centered on the hero; few, if any, scenes take place without him, and his absence at these times is remarked upon. As William Hazlitt notes with irritation: "Whatever is going on, he himself is the hero of the scene; the distress (however excruciating) derives its chief claim to attention from the singular circumstance of his being present; and he manages the whole like a piece of private theatricals with an air of the most absolute *nonchalance* and decorum" (145). For example, when Henry Pelham, who tells his own story, is obliged to relate an episode in which he does not figure, he excuses himself from the action in such a way as to remind us forcibly of his narrative presence—"suffer me to *get rid of myself,* and to introduce you, dear Reader, to my friend, Monsieur Margot" [italics original]—and is always delighted "to return to myself—for which dear little person, I very seldom, even in imagination, digress" (*Pelham* 57, 77). The dandy is shamelessly egocentric, but his author justifies the hero's vanity by loading him with superior abilities and attractions of every kind. According to his biographer, Vivian Grey is a marvel of precocity in both intellect and tact: "It was a rule with Vivian Grey never to advance any opinion as his own. He had been too deep a student of human nature, not to be aware that the opinions of a boy of twenty, however sound, and however correct, stand but a poor chance of being adopted by his elder, though feebler, fellow-creatures" (*VG* 1.41).

Similarly, Pelham takes great delight in demonstrating his breadth of knowledge when his uncle suggests that a little reading would do him good: "Little, poor man, had he thought, from my usual bearing and the character of my education, that in general literature there were few subjects on which I was not to the full as well read as himself" (*Pelham* 145). Not only are dandy heroes largely self-educated, but the dandy novel frequently asserts that self is the most significant subject of study.

In contrast to the hero-centered dandy novel, the society novel includes a large cast of characters whose lives are clearly interdependent, frequent shifts of narrative focus to highlight these different characters (rather than telling the story through the perceptions of a single narrator or central consciousness), and emphasis on family and community relationships. Perhaps the best example of the society novel is Catherine Gore's *The Hamiltons* (1834), which drew praise from such demanding readers as William Thackeray and Charlotte Bronte. Because of the number of protagonists, the plot of the society novel tends to be complex rather than episodic. The society novel may use a variety of settings to stress the connections between rural and urban life. Gore creates a comic effect in *The Hamiltons* by transposing the snobbish attitudes of the *bon ton* to the middle class in the obscure borough of Laxington. Penelope Smith, the attorney's sister, finds fault with Lady Leighton's family connections: "What *is* she, I should like to know,—and what *was* she?—Grand-daughter to a retired grocer at Southampton, and first cousin to the great haberdasher in Pall Mall!" (*Hamiltons* 30). More dramatically, Gore uses both rural and urban settings to show how the groundswell of public opinion in the country influences the balance of power in the nation's capital and, conversely, how the social hierarchy of Laxington is transformed by the passage of the First Reform Bill.

The society novel may include a heroine among its most central characters, but her author treats her with less favoritism than dandy heroes receive. For example, Disraeli assures us that Vivian Grey, twenty years old, is "too cunning a master of the human mind, not to be aware of the quicksands upon which all greenhorns strike" (*VG* 1.57), although this master of human psychology is repeatedly duped, betrayed, and attacked by those he thought were his friends, or even his tools. Gore is much more willing to admit to her protagonist's flaws; in fact, we are somewhat surprised to discover that Susan Berkely, "inert, timid, and endowed with limited capacities of mind" (21), is to be the heroine of *The Hamiltons*, despite her sister Marcia's superior claims: "Of a temper less docile than her sister, she had twice the energy to serve, to defend, to inspire, to reward" (22). In Susan, Gore gives us a heroine more capable of winning our pity than our admiration. She marries Augustus Hamilton, an egregious coxcomb, and remains quite blind to her husband's notorious affair with another woman, despite Marcia's warnings. The injured Susan is a sympathetic figure, but the carefully drawn contrast between Susan's naiveté and Marcia's quick observation makes it hard to believe that Gore intends us to applaud her oblivious heroine. We realize, however, that the independent Marcia would be a less fitting emblem for the society novel, which preaches the necessity of domestic affections and supportive communities.

The dandy novel may well be considered a masculine fashionable novel, not because of the gender of author or protagonist (although both are usually men), but because the text values the individual, autonomy, physical strength, and conflict. The hero must overpower all obstacles and defeat many skilled and devious opponents to reach the top of the social hierarchy. As we might expect, the feminine fashionable novel places greater value on community, family, cooperation, and patience than on individual success in finance, politics, or fashion; in fact, the

society novel argues that such success often requires a sacrifice of domestic affections which will become the source of regret. Both genres view society as hostile, treacherous, and potentially violent, but the hero of the dandy novel survives these dangers by outmaneuvering his enemies or vanquishing them in combat (neither Vivian Grey nor Henry Pelham ever loses a duel or an argument), whereas the success of a society-novel protagonist depends on an ability to forge and maintain strong relationships. The dandy is a stock figure in both genres, but he is too self-centered and combative to be the hero of a society novel. More often he appears as a comic figure, like the charming but irresponsible William Launceston in Gore's novel *Pin Money* (1831), or even a villain, in the style of the callous and unprincipled Augustus Hamilton.

These differences in style, structure and temperament may be owing to the separate literary ancestries of the dandy and society novels. The dandy novel inherits its loose, episodic structure from Goethe's Bildungsroman and Byron's *Don Juan*; its philosophy and intellectualism from the thesis novels of William Godwin and Robert Bage; its machinery and sensationalism from the Gothic novels of Ann Radcliffe and Monk Lewis; and its glamorous melancholy not only from *Childe Harold* but from the popular myths of Byron's life as well. The society novel, grounded in domestic realism, rejects many of the fantastic and exotic influences on the dandy novel. Instead, the society novel seems closely related to Anne Mellor's conception of feminine romanticism, which "insists on the primacy of the family or the community" and promotes a gradual social change (rather than an apocalyptic political revolution) that "extends the values of domesticity into the public realm" (3). Feminine romantics such as Frances Burney, Maria Edgeworth, and Jane Austen are often cited as literary mothers of the fashionable novel, but their influence, particularly relating to domestic and social

responsibility, is far more evident in the works of Catherine Gore than in those of her male contemporaries.[3]

A closer look at the texts of *Vivian Grey*, *Pelham*, and *The Hamiltons* will clarify the distinctions between the dandy and society novels. The central figure of the male fashionable novel is of course the dandy, but he is not the fantastic, useless creature Carlyle describes in *Sartor Resartus*. In the hands of Bulwer and Disraeli, the coxcomb becomes more physically and intellectually forceful than the effeminate and ineffectual comic fops of Burney's novels. The dandy hero is indeed fastidious about his costume (Pelham goes so far as to lay out his maxims for dress to benefit his fellow man), but he regards himself as the master rather than the slave of fashion, and he is eager to prove his ability to lead in other areas as well. Despite his outrageous appearance, the dandy hero is "less vain than ambitious" (*Pelham* 340). For example, Vivian Grey deliberately crafts his dandiacal persona to draw attention to himself, the crucial first step on the road to power: "In England, personal distinction is the only passport to the society of the great" (*VG* 1.26). While Pelham also attracts notice, he cultivates the image of a superficial fop in order to disguise his powerful intellect and ambition. When a friend begs him to be serious and listen to a proposal of great importance, Pelham redoubles his affectation: "My Lord Vincent . . . there is, in your words, a depth and solemnity which pierce me, through one of N---'s best stuffed coats, even to the very heart. Let me ring for my poodle and some *eau de Cologne*" (*Pelham* 215). This languid pose enables him to gather information about the society he means to conquer while masking the threat he poses to those currently enjoying power.

The dandy usually appears in company, but he is nonetheless a lonely figure, for he dares not trust even his closest friends. Family members generally make their presence felt through

letters, a device which emphasizes their physical and emotional distance from the hero. Vivian's father frequently offers thoughtful, if conventional, advice, which seems opposed to the tenets of the dandy novel:

> Is it not obvious, my dear Vivian, that true Fame and true Happiness must rest upon the imperishable social affections? I do not mean that coterie celebrity which paltry minds accept as fame; but that which exists independent of the opinions or the intrigues of individuals: nor do I mean that glittering show of perpetual converse with the world which some miserable wanderers call Happiness; but that which can only be drawn from the sacred and solitary fountain of your own feelings. (*VG* 1.203)

Mr. Grey's homily on imperishable social affections seems out of place in a novel whose motto is "A smile for a friend, and a sneer for the world, is the way to govern mankind" (1.57). Perhaps Disraeli intends Mr. Grey's philosophy as an antidote to Vivian's suspicion, but there is no evidence that it contributes to the hero's moral education: he neither responds to his father's letters nor reflects upon their lessons.

In comparison to Mr. Grey's sermons, Lady Pelham's counsels to her son are hilariously superficial and mercenary:

> Remember, Henry, that the acquaintance (*not* the friends) of second or third-rate people are always sure to be good: they are not independent enough to receive whom they like . . . . Nothing, my dear son, is like a *liaison* (quite innocent of course) with a woman of celebrity in the world. In marriage a man lowers a woman to his own rank; in an *affaire de coeur* he raises himself to her's [sic] . . . .

> Never talk much to young men—remember that it is the women who make a reputation in society. (*Pelham* 15)

Although Pelham is initially a much more attentive listener than Vivian, his growing maturity leads to an emotional estrangement from his worldly mother. Facetiously, Pelham begs God to forgive him for his "filial impiety" in recognizing that his mother's social ambitions give "a sort of demi-vulgarism to her ideas" (333). As in *Vivian Grey*, the hero's progression to manhood requires his separation from his family.

Despite the dandy's isolation, Vineta Colby states, "For all their worldliness, there is not a single novel in which virtue does not triumph and in which the values of simple domestic life are not ultimately confirmed" (56). Colby explains that most fashionable novels end in marriage, and the misery of the characters who remain single affirms the value of domesticity. Surprisingly, romantic interests are often peripheral rather than central to the story. Pelham remarks "After all, women are a great bore" (*Pelham* 73), and indeed they play but minor roles in the twin plots of Pelham's rise to social and political power and his quest to clear his best friend of a murder charge. Pelham easily makes and abandons a string of conquests, but only falls in love once, with Emily Glanville, the sister of the accused man. However, friendships between men appear stronger and more binding than heterosexual romantic attachments. After Glanville's innocence is proven and Pelham is free to marry Emily, Pelham offers instead to accompany his friend, who is suffering from a debilitating illness, to the continent and to attend him there. Only after Glanville refuses this offer does Pelham marry Emily. Despite this affirmation of domestic bliss, Emily virtually disappears from the novel, and Pelham declares that marriage has focused rather than diminished his political ambitions. At the novel's close, he has withdrawn to the country to continue his studies preparatory to launching a new campaign.

Unlike *Pelham*, *Vivian Grey* cannot conclude the hero's adventures with a return to romance and domesticity because Vivian's only real love affair, with the angelic Violet Fane, ends with her death. Vivian reads this catastrophe as proof that he unintentionally destroys anyone to whom he attaches himself, an interpretation borne out by the plot. In the final episode of the novel, Vivian leaves a friend's wedding only to be caught in a terrific storm in which his horse, startled by a lightning bolt, throws him violently to the ground. Here the novel abruptly ends, denying Vivian the opportunity to redeem himself by re-entering a domestic space. Indeed, a careful reading of the overwritten conclusion reveals that it is not Vivian but domesticity itself that is destroyed: the hurricane has completely demolished the village where the wedding took place, but the narrator pledges to relate more of Vivian's adventures in another volume should the public desire it. Vivian, who has declared himself "a confirmed wanderer," appears to be a Cain figure, outcast but indestructible (*VG* 2.276).

In the society novel, which places its greatest value on social and familial relationships, such an estrangement from the domestic circle is the worst fate a character can endure. The tragic hero of Gore's novel *The Hamiltons* is a statesman who has allowed his ministerial responsibilities to take precedence over his family obligations. Steeped in officiality, Mr. Hamilton has taught his children nothing but self-interest and cannot be affectionate even in offering a wedding gift to his son, Augustus:

> "My man of business will draw out proposals such as ought to content the mother. You will reside in my house, if it suit your convenience; and your wife must content herself with two hundred a year pin-money . . . . You may order five hundred pounds' worth of jewels on my account at Storr and Mortimer's; and let your new carriage be built by my coachmaker: a barouche, if you please,—for

> Mrs. Hamilton will have the use of my town equipage while she lives under my roof."
>
> These gratuities, which, between any other son and father, would have been accorded with grace and received with gratitude, were announced by the arid-minded Hamilton in the tone of a Chancellor of the Exchequer giving out the items of the budget, and accepted with a misgiving air by his supercilious son. (*Ham.* 76)

On his first appearance in the novel, Gore stresses the irony that a Privy-Councillor should be so "sadly to seek in the presidency of his family politics" (18), foreshadowing later tragedy. Basking in the glow of a successful speech and the hope that the Tory party will yet recover its strength, Hamilton (now Lord Laxington) irritably dismisses Susan's fears that Augustus has been challenged to a duel and refuses to search for his absent son until morning, when he discovers that Augustus has been fatally wounded. Mourning over his son's ruined life and his daughter's ingratitude, Laxington realizes that he has neglected his responsibilities as a father and gains new appreciation for strong domestic ties. At the end of the novel, he creates a new family by encouraging his daughter-in-law, Susan, to marry his former ward, Lord Claneustace.

The Hamiltons affords a striking example of the interdependence not just between individuals but between domestic and political crises. The novel is set in the tumultuous period leading up to the passage of the First Reform Bill. The Tory administration has just been turned out and Susan Hamilton's husband and father-in-law have lost their official positions and financial security. Worried that her husband may be exposed to the violence of a mob, Susan is reading Augustus's most recent letters for clues to his whereabouts when she discovers evidence of his long-standing affair with Caroline Cadogan. She is devastated by his rejection and

outraged by his deceit: not only has Augustus imposed his mistress on his wife as a friend and traveling companion, but Susan has pledged herself as godmother to his illegitimate child. Her first impulse is to leave the house and end the marriage, but then she realizes that people will attribute her desertion to Augustus's loss in fortune and political power. Susan can only justify leaving her husband by exposing the scandal, which would punish not only the guilty parties but many innocent persons as well: Caroline's injured husband, who would certainly divorce his wife; the Cadogan children (including Susan's godson), who would be stigmatized by the divorce and deprived of their mother; Caroline's mother, an elderly woman in ill health; Susan's brother, a soldier in the Guards who would feel honor-bound to challenge Augustus to a duel; and Augustus's father, Lord Laxington, who is already suffering from the public disgrace and private financial ruin of being turned out of office. Hurt by the knowledge that Augustus and Caroline have mocked her as "a poor-spirited, cold-blooded thing, whose selfishness had justly forfeited her husband's affection" (286), Susan fears to act in a way that will benefit only herself.

Modern readers are more likely to regard Susan's decision as a sign of weakness rather than altruism. Indeed, Bonnie Anderson has argued that, by endorsing her heroine's resolution to continue in a miserable marriage, Gore perpetuates a dangerous "womanly ideology" that advocates feminine self-sacrifice and passivity (413-14). However, one must consider not only the values of the society novel, but also the political climate at the moment Susan must make her choice:

> At that moment, just as she had steeled her heart to the courage of quitting the house and departing for Green-Oak [her mother's estate], a sudden roar proclaimed the entrance of the mob into Spring Gardens. They were advancing to attack Lord Laxington's house. At every attempt made by the police constables to

> repel their approach, the name of Laxington, coupled with a thousand offensive epithets and frightful threats, reached the ear of the bewildered Mrs. Hamilton . . . . Every living soul was in a state of panic. The very nation was undergoing a grand crisis of its history. Its guardians were harassed and undecided. Blood had perhaps been spilt, or was still spilling. The liberties of the people were at stake. Had she a right,—she, poor Susan Hamilton—to dwell at such a moment upon private grievances of her own! (*Hamiltons* 287)

Ultimately, Susan stays out of concern for her father-in-law, who is being attacked, rather than for Augustus, whom she no longer considers her husband. Long estranged from her own family by political differences (her sister has married the leader of the opposition), Susan is able to recognize Lord Laxington's loneliness and need for the filial affection his own children have denied him.

Perhaps the differences between the dandy novels of Bulwer and Disraeli and the society novels of Gore are most clearly seen in the treatment of politics. Richard Altick points out that the fashionable novel often had a political component, featuring electioneering and party struggles. However, Altick denies that the genre has any real political significance, as the novels show "aristocratic disdain for the principal instrument of democratic governance," advance no political ideals, and accept corruption as a matter of course (*PP* 671). Certainly this criticism applies to the dandy novel. Vivian Grey discovers early that his ambition is to be a leader of men, and he cultivates the Marquess of Carabas as a tool to help him reach this end. Vivian insinuates himself into political life by urging the Marquess to form the Carabas party. Significantly, the platform of the party is never made explicit. Vivian gives a speech outlining its principles, but Disraeli does not articulate them:

> He developed the new political principles, demonstrated the mistake under the baneful influence of which they had so long suffered, promised them place, and power, and patronage, and personal consideration, if they would only act on the principles which he recommended, in the most flowing language and the most melodious voice in which the glories of ambition were ever yet chaunted. There was a buzz of admiration when the flattering music ceased; the Marquess smiled triumphantly, as if to say, "Didn't I tell you he was a monstrous clever fellow?" and the whole business seemed settled. (*VG* 1.135)

Despite Vivian's skill in manipulating others, his oratorical gifts, and his masterful knowledge of the human heart (which the narrator repeatedly asks us to accept with little supporting evidence), Vivian is betrayed, the Carabas party disintegrates, and Vivian abandons England and his hopes for a political career. However, in the second volume, another ambitious figure arises and applies Vivian's maxims for gaining power with great success. Beckendorff, the prime minister of a fictional European state, is manipulative, treacherous, and opportunistic, yet Vivian and the narrator clearly admire his intellect, his ruthlessness, and his skill in turning every situation to his advantage. *Vivian Grey* is less concerned with political change than with the chess-playing of politicians.

Pelham is more optimistic but takes a similar view of politics as a constant power struggle between individuals rather than ideologies. Competing in an election for the representative of the borough of Buyemall, Pelham introduces himself to the voters in a letter as free from political convictions as Vivian's speech to the Carabas party: "One word upon the principles I espouse: they are those which have found their advocates among the wisest and the best; they are those which, hostile alike to the encroachments of the crown, and the

licentiousness of the people, would support the real interests of both" (*Pelham* 137). Pelham takes great pride in this statement: "for, as my mother sagely observed, it did not commit me in a single instance" (137).

After he is elected, Pelham embarks on a study of political economy and ethics with his uncle, who introduces Henry to the works of John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham to demonstrate "how inseparably allied is the great science of public policy with that of private morality" (148). Perhaps it is poetic justice that Pelham's competitor brings a petition against him for improper electioneering, and Henry is turned out of office before he assumes it. However, his new education allows Pelham to acknowledge the justice in this affair, and he devotes himself to supporting a party, presumably for moderate reform, headed by Lord Dawton. Strangely, Pelham demonstrates adherence to his uncle's principles not by acting but by refraining from action. He refuses to join a friend's new political party because several of its members are notoriously corrupt; he refrains from avenging himself on Dawton, who has reneged on his promise to give Pelham an official position; and at the end of the novel, he declines Dawton's new offer of patronage, preferring to stand for election as an independent candidate. *Pelham* hints at the effect of political struggles on the commonweal, but restricts its focus to the men jockeying for position within the government.

The Hamiltons is much more specific in its historical moment and explicit in its discussion of political strife than either *Vivian Grey* or *Pelham*. Characters are identified as Tory, Whig, or Radical; actual platforms and issues are discussed in detail, although they may well be sentimentalized; and the climax of the novel is the change in administration that clears the way for reform. Although Gore, like her male colleagues, is fascinated by the individual power struggles, she is careful to illustrate the effects of these struggles on domestic and

community life. Gore makes her own political stance clear by placing her most morally attractive, thoughtful, and sympathetic characters in support of reform—Bernard Forbes, the radical; Marcia Berkely Forbes, Susan's strong-minded sister; and Lord Claneustace, who leaves the Tory party and, under Forbes's influence, begins to enact reform on his own property. A fashionable woman scornfully describes Claneustace's activities as "all sorts of things unbecoming his rank in life . . . . he goes over his estate like a surveyor,—projecting railroads,—laying down plans for new villages,—lowering his rents,—resigning his tithes as lay-impropriator;—and all the follies which men commit who hunt after popularity" (*Hamiltons* 205). However, Susan retorts that Claneustace is not running for office and attributes his efforts to "pure patriotism" (205). This pure patriotism is contrasted with the interested efforts of those Tories who attempt to remain in power by switching their allegiance to the Whig party.

It is also significant that Claneustace demonstrates his patriotism by caring for his tenants rather than restricting himself to his parliamentary duties (although his speeches in the upper house have been well received). Gore consistently derides otherwise respectable English gentleman for their political ambitions, which lead them to exaggerate their own leadership abilities and, even more destructive, to ignore their nearer responsibilities to their community, their business, and their family. Augustus Hamilton abandons his long-suffering wife and dying child to keep an anxious eye on his political interests as the passage of the First Reform Bill grows nearer. Similarly, the heroes of *Pin Money* (1831) and *The Popular Member* (1844) jeopardize their financial security and marital stability by immersing themselves in parliamentary life. Gore's argument is not that politics are inherently corrupt, but that few men, however talented and virtuous, can best serve their country through holding office. Their roles as husbands, fathers, and businessmen, though less glamorous, are more vital. Bernard Forbes (*The*

Hamiltons) is the exception that proves the rule. A gifted lawyer and fervent radical, Forbes is one of the few who belongs in a leadership position, but even he finds that marriage to a loving and supportive wife makes him a better statesman.

As this extended discussion of *The Hamiltons* is intended to show, the true hero of the society novel is the society itself, in this case the borough of Laxington. The novel begins and ends with a description of the neighborhood's character and activities, and Laxington serves as a touchstone throughout the text for the political tensions between the Whigs and Tories played out in London and for the growing agitation for reform sweeping the nation. The opening pages emphasize that Laxington, a rotten borough long accustomed to "pique itself on its gentility" (1), is satisfied with its limitations, indeed quite comfortable in its narrowness. There are no factories, no garrisons, no reading rooms: "Newspapers and magazines would have been productive of political discussions;—political discussions, of squabbles among neighbours hitherto united. Things were better as they were. The borough could not be kept too quiet" (2).

The transformation of Laxington indicates that not all the changes attending the passage of the First Reform Bill are pleasant. Although the narrator triumphantly informs us that the borough is no longer rotten and the one representative is now freely chosen, the spirit of serene gentility is utterly gone. Two factories are established, continually belching smoke into the formerly pure air. The town's quiet is disrupted by the regiment quartered there and by the vehement political debates born in the reading room: "Laxington became divided against itself. . . . In the days of its close boroughhood, it had owned but one mind, and that a little one; it had now a thousand; and each, in its own conceit, gigantic" (353). To emphasize the new strife, Gore ends the novel with an argument over the benefit of the supposed "reforms." Mrs. Mangles, the vicar's wife, expresses satisfaction with the town's increased activity and improved

conditions of the poor. (Her satisfaction is not entirely disinterested, as she is a relation of the most powerful Whig in the borough). Her friend Penelope Smith has less reason to rejoice; her brother, former agent of the Earl of Tottenham, has lost his authority and she her reflected glory. Penelope laments the loss of gentility (and her own status) in the town:

> But, lord bless us, look at the place *now*!—All smoke, and filth, and noise: meetings here, and associations there; and anti-this and anti-that societies in every ale-house, as if every-man-Jack were Lord Chancellor Brougham, and more! And what better are we off, I should like to know, for all this tumult and vulgarity, than when poor, dear, good, old Lord Tottenham was so kind as to take the trouble of thinking and acting off our hands, by finding gentlemen to sit in parliament, and think and act *for* us? (355)

Of course, the answer is in the question. Gore stoutly maintains that it *is* better to think and act for oneself and *The Hamiltons* clearly endorses the principles of reform; however, the author acknowledges that change is often disruptive, even painful, putting unusual stress on the community. It is important to recognize that although the society novel values harmonious social relationships, it does not advocate maintaining a corrupt status quo to avoid discomfort. Progress towards a more democratic society will not be smooth or continuous, nor can it be accomplished at a stroke. The society novel's rejection of a quick and easy reform in social customs, attitudes, and structures recalls Anne Mellor's conception of feminine romanticism, which insists on gradual changes towards a more perfect social order.

Vineta Colby argues that the best fashionable novels "are those which are the most typical" (53), but when we consider the great differences between the works of Disraeli, Bulwer, and Gore, how do we determine what is most typical of the genre? We must begin by changing

our construction of the fashionable novel to accommodate the innovation and diversity of individual texts. The dandy and society novels are more specific and helpful subdivisions than the meaningless formulas and lists associated with the silver fork novel, but even these categories should be regarded as ideas with which individual novels show an affinity rather than pigeonholes into which texts may be neatly filed. Although I have gendered the dandy and society novels, I want to stress that the society novel is *a* female fashionable novel rather than the *only* form of fashionable novel grounded in feminine values, just as the dandy novel is only one form of male fashionable novel. I expect that a greater examination of the fashionable novel genre will discover a number of subgenres not identified here, and that the dandy and society novels will occupy only two positions on a larger spectrum. Such a model, free of the bias against popular and women's literature, is likely to assign new value to previously neglected texts and to discover important connections between fashionable novelists and more canonical authors. Hopefully, a restructuring of the fashionable novel will secure a reading for the works of Catherine Gore and lead to a new evaluation of a woman author who has long languished in the shadow of her male colleagues.

Notes to Chapter 3

[1] See Winifred Hughes, "Silver Fork Writers and Readers: Social Contexts of a Best Seller," 328-47.

[2] Hughes calls *Cecil* "Gore's ultimate homage to Bulwer" ("Elegies" 196). However, Benjamin Disraeli complacently regarded Gore's novel as "an imitation of the 'Vivian Grey' school" (Adburgham 314).

[3] Rosa mentions Burney, Edgeworth, and Ferrier as influences on the fashionable novel. Similarly, Francis Russell Hart argues that Burney and Edgeworth establish a social mythology inherited by fashionable authors. See Hart, "The Regency Novel of Fashion," 84-133. In her preface to *Pin Money*, Gore herself claims Austen as a literary model (see V. Colby 73).

CHAPTER 4: A NEW DEFINITION OF THE FASHIONABLE NOVEL

The distinction between masculine and feminine forms makes it clear that all fashionable novels are not alike, but what identifies a text as a fashionable novel? It is very difficult to frame an accurate and satisfying definition for a group of texts that is both vast and inaccessible; with the exception of the works of Bulwer and Disraeli, all of these novels have been out of print since the nineteenth century, and most are available only in rare book rooms or on microfilm.[1] Thus any scholar who attempts to discuss the fashionable novel as a genre is necessarily extrapolating from a relatively small and arbitrary selection of works, which accounts for the wide variance in definitions and evaluations not only of the genre but even of individual authors. In framing a generic definition for the fashionable novels in my sample set, I have chosen to focus on the shared functions of these texts for their readers. Unfortunately, it is very difficult to gauge the common reader's response to the nineteenth-century fashionable novel; readers who were also rival authors, such as Thackeray, can hardly be considered "common," and commentators like Hazlitt and Carlyle were too hostile to the genre to identify its function or value for more appreciative readers. Therefore, this chapter takes two different approaches to identifying the function of the fashionable novel. First, I apply Frances Russell Hart's idea of a "social mythology" to the novels of Frances Burney, Maria Edgeworth, Susan Ferrier, and Catherine Gore to demonstrate the relationship between fashionable novels and earlier depictions of fashionable society. Then I examine the experience of reading popular women's fiction, using Janice A. Radway's *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature* and

Margaret Ann Jensen's *Love's Sweet Return: The Harlequin Story*, and explore the implications of these studies for the fashionable novel.

Social Mythology

In *The Art of Darkness*, Anne Williams argues that "we recognize genres because we sense that a particular group of works shares, more or less completely, an implied organizing principle. Other works, manifesting some but not all of its elements, may properly be seen in relation to the myth" (16). Frances Russell Hart has discovered that focus on a shared "social mythology" reveals a strong relationship between fashionable novels and earlier, more canonical works:

> For literary historians it is debatable whether Burney's followers from Edgeworth to the early "Silver Fork" novelists constitute a single generic development. For contemporaries it was less doubtful. A *New Monthly* reviewer saw *Tremaine* (1825) as in "the movement inaugurated by Maria Edgeworth"; *Vivian Grey* was a deliberate successor to *Tremaine*, and *Pelham* took both for antecedents. . . . I will suggest that the lineage is—as an evolution in social mythology—clear and meaningful. (106)

For Hart, Burney's *Evelina* is the "first predominantly *social* novel in English [because of] its obsessive preoccupation with being in society" (95). Evelina finds herself in new and unexpected situations with little trustworthy guidance for negotiating "an unstable, intricately codified sphere of scenes, ceremonies, specious 'manners'" (95). She admits "I seldom, till too late, discover how I ought to act" (*Evelina* 334) and is frequently bewildered and ashamed of her own mistakes. Hart claims that Evelina's bewilderment and shame, resulting from ignorance of

the appropriate behavioral codes whose transgression will bring punishment, are persistent elements in the social mythology of fashionable novels. These codes are both elusive and dangerous because of fashion's restless mutability and obsession with appearances:

> It lives from moment to moment, keeps up with "the times," substitutes "establishment" for estate, status for name, credit for inheritance. Thus it fosters a false independence, a neglect of hereditary obligations, a worship of novelty and instability. . . . Most important, fashion worships "society," yet is antisocial. It is obsessed with etiquette, and an obsessive etiquette supplants true manners, a purely "public" life merely masks as society. The social dialectic of fashion generates its own antitheses: sentimental imprudence, cynicism, antisocial withdrawal. (Hart 85)

Novels of fashion are particularly concerned with these dangers and assert positive social virtues to combat them. Thus Hart defines the social mythology of fashion as a system of objectives:

> The affirmation of . . . real virtues in a time of social confusion and transformation, the search for new stabilities in a period of revolutionary change, the striving to articulate a proper balance of personal autonomy and responsible worldliness: these become the objectives of the novelists of fashion. . . . We can trace their emergence if we begin with Fanny Burney, glance next at her successors Maria Edgeworth and Susan Ferrier, turn then to Hook, Ward, and Lister, and end with early Bulwer and Disraeli. (86)

Hart does not include Catherine Gore in this line of descent because the endpoint of his study is 1828, two years before Gore's first fashionable novel was published. However, a search for

these objectives in Gore's novels shows a greater affinity between Gore, Burney, Edgeworth, and Ferrier than most scholars have observed, and these similarities lead to a surprising new definition of the fashionable novel.

In the past, critics and scholars have admitted only superficial similarities between the works of Burney and Gore, primarily focusing on wit, lightness of tone, and an ability to appreciate as well as condemn London society. For example, the *Westminster Review*'s essay on "The Lady Novelists" (July 1852) makes this comparison:

> Mrs. Gore, again, who might perhaps, with more care bestowed upon her works, have been the Fanny Burney of our age, exhibits in every chapter the marvellous finesse and quickness of Observation, winged with a certain airy gaiety of style which, if it not be wit, has half the charm of wit; and this faculty of Observation has allowed her to write heaps of fashionable novels, as fugitive as the fashions they reflect, yet as gay and pleasant. (75)[2]

Rosa also hears echoes of Fanny Burney in Gore's novels, particularly *Cecil*. He points out that Burney, like Gore, participated in London's literary and musical coteries and describes the earlier writer's presentation of high society as "light-hearted caricature," some of which was "recaptured by the fashionable novelists" (11).

However, using Hart's objectives—the search for virtue in social confusion, stability in an era of change, and balance between autonomy and "responsible worldliness"—we can see stronger, more thematic parallels between the works of Burney and Gore. One of the stories most central to the mythology of the society novel is that of the newcomer, the stranger at the gate. How does the outsider gain entrance to society and how can she win acceptance without losing her own integrity? Those outsiders termed *parvenus* are strangers not only to London

society but to the leisured class; thus the division may not be one of mere geography, but of class and class markers, such as dress, speech, education, and manners, as well. In Burney's novels, the newcomer is usually an outsider by virtue of her youth and inexperience rather than of her birth. To borrow from the famous subtitle of *Evelina*, the novels are histories of a young lady's entrance into the world: a very complex adult society in which behavior and etiquette are heavily coded in systems the heroine does not know how to interpret. For example, at her first London ball, Evelina mortally offends Mr. Lovell by refusing him but accepting Lord Orville for the same dance. Unaware that etiquette requires her to wait until the next number after refusing one partner, Evelina unwittingly insults one man and embarrasses herself by broadcasting a preference for another.

Gore inventively subverts Burney's myth of the newcomer by beginning, rather than ending, many of her novels with the marriage of the heroine: *Women as They Are, Pin Money,* and *The Popular Member*, for example, all begin with the marriage of the young heroine and her subsequent entrance into the worlds of adulthood, fashionable life, and matrimonial difficulties. Thus, the heroine may re-enter a society already known to her, but her changed status as a married woman creates unfamiliar social situations and introduces dangerous new acquaintances within that society.

Lady Frederica Rawleigh, the heroine of Gore's novel *Pin Money*, is a perfect example. She is not new to London; her mother, Lady Launceston, has kept a house in town for many years, and Frederica appeared as a debutante the year before her marriage, so Almack's, the theater, and the opera are already familiar to her when the novel begins. But Lady Launceston, an amiable hypochondriac in the style of *Emma*'s Mr. Woodhouse, did not move in a fast set or allow Frederica to keep late hours, so the young bride has more freedom than she enjoyed as a

single woman; her past experience has not prepared her for the temptations and difficulties she will encounter as a married woman.

Not only are Burney's heroines newcomers, but they are isolated, cut off from the guides they trust, unable to trust the guides at hand. Separated from her guardian, Evelina is at the mercy of the vulgar Madame Duval and the ineffectual Mrs. Mirvan. The orphaned Cecilia must choose between a bewildering array of guardians and admirers, all of whose interests oppose the heroine's in some way. The Incognita of *The Wanderer* is the most isolated. The product of the late Lord Granville's secret first marriage, Juliet dares not claim her father's name until his family recognizes her legitimacy. Even then, Juliet cannot own a last name until she can be assured of the invalidity of the marriage into which she has been compelled. Unable to trust anyone with the knowledge of her name and family identity, Juliet is forced to perform a number of humiliating roles; unable to present herself truthfully, she must submit to constant misrepresentation.

Gore's heroines are also adrift in society, although their separation from family is often emotional and intellectual rather than physical. After her marriage to a busy politician, Helen Willersdale (*Women as They Are*) is left to enter London society under the chaperonage of her unscrupulous and power-hungry sister-in-law, Lady Danvers. Fearing that Helen's influence over Lord Willersdale may exceed her own, Lady Danvers deliberately sabotages the younger woman's reputation by encouraging her to accept a libertine's services as a *cavalier servente* whenever her husband is unable to attend her. This of course places Helen in a compromising position which threatens the health of her marriage. Even after he discovers his sister's machinations, Lord Willersdale devotes himself to his ministerial duties, leaving his

inexperienced bride alone to cope with the attentions of social climbers and would-be seducers, as well as her new role as chaperone to a young Irish woman.

Both Burney and Gore identify domestic affections as a source of stability in a changing society, although this positive view is complicated by the fact that family members often pose a danger to the protagonist as well. For example, Evelina and Juliet feel magnetically drawn to strangers who later turn out to be close relatives, suggesting a kind of subconscious recognition or spiritual affinity; however, Evelina is subject to the self-interested schemes of her grandmother, and Juliet's estranged brother attempts to seduce her into an incestuous relationship. Similarly, Gore's "happy endings" usually center on a family reconciliation, but this resolution does not always erase the negative effects of the conflict. For example, *Mothers and Daughters* is essentially the story of a mother's quest to secure her own financial comfort and social status by arranging brilliant marriages for her daughters, particularly the two eldest. Acting upon their mother's lessons, Claudia and Elinor gain a reputation for avarice and heartlessness that effectively prevents them from marrying the men they love or, indeed, anyone at all. Although the youngest daughter, Minnie, becomes an heiress and insists upon establishing her mother and sisters in her home, their domestic circle does not promise to be a comfortable one. Lady Maria cannot stop scheming for her best advantage, despite having achieved her goal, and Minnie's sisters, although young women, cannot look forward to any change in their dependent status.

Burney finds her true ideal in elegance of mind (as opposed to dress) and old-fashioned courtesy, displayed not only by the more mature heroes but also by older men who take a paternal interest in the heroine: e.g., Giles Arbe, Sir Jaspar, and the Admiral in *The Wanderer*; Mr. Villars in *Evelina*. Gore's novels also include some chivalrous older men, such as Lord

Willersdale in *Women as They Are* and Lord Laxington in *The Hamiltons*, but these figures are flawed by their preoccupation with politics which prevents them from developing strong familial relationships. Burney's ideal relationship is clearly modeled on a father-daughter bond, but Gore's is a marriage of partners who communicate openly and support one another's goals rather than pursuing separate interests. Gore demonstrates that this kind of partnership is the product of deliberate effort rather than the automatic reward for arriving at the end of courtship: throughout most of *Pin Money*, the married protagonists struggle with misunderstanding, mistrust, jealousy, financial difficulty, and increasing estrangement. However, in their final declaration that their relationship is more important than success in fashion or politics, and in their commitment to a new program of joint decision-making, Gore holds out hope that this marital ideal may be recognized.

Hart's discussion of the search for stable values in the confusion of fashionable society also allows us to see the close relationship between Gore and didactic moralists like Maria Edgeworth and Susan Ferrier, although scholars have generally drawn a clear distinction. The following passage by Michael Sadleir gives the most common arguments for separating Edgeworth and Ferrier from later fashionable novelists:

> But Miss Edgeworth and Miss [Ferrier][3] . . . were writers not of "fashionable novels" but of novels about fashionable people. And the two genres were not identical. The high-life romances of the tens and 'teens, whether flattering to the ton, hostile to it or merely satirical, introduced pictures of fashionable life which bore no necessary relation to fact; their authors squandered refinements, estates, titles, affectations and debaucheries as freely as ghosts, monks and banditti were squandered by gothistic terrorists, and with the same

> intention of creating a desired atmosphere. But the "fashionable novel" in the orthodox sense aimed before anything else at verisimilitude. It might be dull and silly, but it must appear correct. (*Bulwer* 125)

Most critics have followed Sadleir's lead in accepting verisimilitude as the hallmark of the fashionable novel. Matthew Whiting Rosa and Vineta Colby uphold the distinction between the novel of education and the novel of fashion, pointing out that Edgeworth had little opportunity to observe London high society first-hand, so her pictures of fashionable life are necessarily vague.[4] Furthermore, Richard Altick's definition of fashionable novels as "a kind of fictionized gossip-column or jet-set journalism" which valued verisimilitude over ideology posits Edgeworth's vagueness as a virtue rather than a failing (*PP* 34-35).

However, the disqualification of Edgeworth as a fashionable novelist is arbitrary and ill-founded, as the example of Benjamin Disraeli will show. Like Edgeworth, Disraeli had little first-hand knowledge of high society when he began his literary career, yet *Vivian Grey* is widely accepted as a premier example of the fashionable novel. Edgeworth drew heavily on the experiences of her family and friends for her pictures of fashionable life, whereas Disraeli relied almost entirely on his own invention for the scenes and characters he described in such lavish detail. In his "Advertisement" to the 1853 edition of *Vivian Grey*, Disraeli makes the following excuse: "Books written by boys (1825-26) which pretend to give a picture of manners, and to deal in knowledge of human nature, must necessarily be founded on affectation. They can be, at best, but the results of imagination, acting upon knowledge not acquired by experience . . ." (qtd. in Frietzsche 7).

It is true that Edgeworth's drawing rooms and assemblies are less fully realized than those of Bulwer, Lister, and Gore, but this has less to do with the former's experience than with

her powers of description. Marilyn Butler acknowledges bluntly that "Maria had little visual imagination, and knew it" (143).[5] Edgeworth's descriptions of fashionable life may be incomplete, but they are not inaccurate; at least, she says nothing about the *bon ton* that her successors disprove. Edmund Gosse, although an apologist for Disraeli, can make no such claim; indeed, he admits that the modern reader's greatest objection to *Vivian Grey* is its lack of verisimilitude. Gosse describes the novel as "a sort of social fairy-tale, where everyone has exquisite beauty, limitless wealth and exalted rank, where the impossible and the hyperbolic are the only homely virtues" (xv). Unless we agree to dislodge *Vivian Grey* from its place in literary history as one of the most sensational and influential of fashionable novels, verisimilitude cannot be the litmus test by which Edgeworth is differentiated from the fashionable novelists.

However, Sadleir, Rosa, Altick, and Vineta Colby further attempt to distinguish Edgeworth and Ferrier from Gore and her colleagues by insisting that the fashionable novel carries out no didactic project and that its portraits of the *bon ton* are blandly approving. For example, Rosa argues that Edgeworth's "shuddering, fanatical horror" at the evils of the metropolis disqualifies *Belinda* as a fashionable novel (11). However, Hart disagrees with the critical consensus. Although he defines fashion as "the specious extreme of worldliness," Hart warns that its antithesis "is not unworldly withdrawal, but domesticity," and he takes *Belinda* as a primary example of Edgeworth's performance of a "secular ministry": "Her problem is not to discover the hollowness of fashionable life; she knows it from the beginning, for Lady Delacour tells her. Her problem is to work within such a fallen world, to keep faith with its victims, yet to realize her own integrity as she heals them—not of their sins, but of their cynicism and despair" (107). If we accept that the purpose of a fashionable novel is not to represent the *beau monde* with perfect verisimilitude but to "keep faith" with its denizens, then Edgeworth is quite similar

to Gore, whose protagonists struggle to create a healthy and satisfying domestic space without completely withdrawing from high society.

Indeed, Gore recognizes this similarity to Edgeworth in a letter dated July 4, 1832, to Edward Bulwer, then editor of the *New Monthly Magazine*. Convinced that an unfavorable review of her fashionable tales was inspired by the reviewer's prejudice against the genre, Gore declares: "I will not attempt a defence of fashionable novels. I leave it to *Grandison*, *Clarissa*, *Belinda*, *Ennui*, *The Absentee*, *Vivian Grey*, etc. to plead their cause . . ." (qtd. in *Bulwer* 301-302). Gore's inclusion of her own works and those of the young Benjamin Disraeli in the same category with novels by Samuel Richardson and Maria Edgeworth demonstrates that she saw the fashionable novel as part of an old and respectable family of literature and herself as the inheritor of Edgeworth's legacy.[6] The association also suggests that Gore saw herself as a moralist and educator. Sadleir's characterization of Gore's novels as "meticulous, witty but never censorious" is at odds with the author's statement: "The only apology admissible for a fashionable novel is the successful exposure of vices and follies daily and hourly generated by the corruptions of society" (qtd. in V. Colby 57).

Perhaps scholars have failed to recognize the extent of Edgeworth's legacy to Gore because they have examined the wrong texts. Critical attention to Gore's novels has focused on *Cecil; or, The Adventures of a Coxcomb* and its sequel *Cecil, a Peer*, works that recall the dandy novels of Bulwer and Disraeli. However, most of Gore's novels of fashion are society novels, in which Edgeworth's influence is clearly visible. The similarity between Edgeworth and Gore is most clearly seen in a comparison of Edgeworth's *Patronage* (1814) and Gore's *Preferment; or, My Uncle the Earl* (1840). Both texts contrast two families, one following the worldly precepts of ambition and patronage, the other adhering to values of honesty, integrity, and domestic

affections, in order to demonstrate the hollowness of the fashionable social code. Edgeworth's novel juxtaposes the ambitious Falconer family, who attempt to better their social standing by courting the wealthy and powerful, with the independent Percys, who trust that their own merit will secure them the honor they deserve. Edgeworth's plot is so schematic as to leave the reader in little suspense as to the outcome. Of course, the Percys encounter a few obstacles but eventually flourish, whereas the Falconers are ultimately destroyed by their own incompetence and overreaching.

Gore develops the same theme in *Preferment*, examining two branches of the same family: the Egertons of Hurley House and their fashionable cousins, the Egertons of Tiverton Castle. The Honourable William Egerton scandalizes his aristocratic family by marrying his tutor's daughter and refusing to enter the church, despite the many valuable livings in his father's gift. William's great contentment with his loving family and simple life as a gentleman farmer is sharply contrasted with his older brother's anxious attempts to maintain his family's standing in the unstable world of London fashion and politics.

Patronage and *Preferment* both illustrate the conflict between ambition and domestic affections by presenting the dilemma of a young man who must choose between two families representing these competing values. Buckhurst Falconer, the most complex character in Edgeworth's novel, struggles against his ambitious father's desire to place him in the church and appeals to Mr. Percy for help. Concerned that Buckhurst will be forced into a false position as a clergyman in order to pay his debts, Mr. Percy loans the young man some money and advises him to exert himself in a more congenial profession. Unfortunately, Buckhurst, unaccustomed to the sacrifice of ease and pleasure, soon breaks his promises to his benefactor and enters the church after all, seduced by the prospect of easy advancement through the patronage of his

fashionable acquaintances. Buckhurst is partially redeemed by his respect for the Percy family, his unrequited love for Caroline Percy, and his recognition of the corruptions of his father's system. As Rosamond Percy says, "there is such a mixture of good and bad in his character, as makes one change one's opinion of him every half hour" (*Patronage* 166). However, Buckhurst's own participation in that system identifies him with the wrong family in this highly polarized text. It is clear from the earliest pages of the novel that all the Falconers, including Buckhurst, are doomed because of their faulty education, which has privileged patronage over merit and social status above independence.

Julius Egerton in Gore's *Preferment* must make a similar choice between two family groups, but his decision is the more difficult because, at least biologically, he belongs to both. Although Julius respects his father's unworldly preference for humble domestic affections, the young man is impressed by the grandeur of his uncle's establishment at Tiverton Castle and by the respect that wealth and status can purchase. However, he does his best to conquer his attraction to fashionable life by devoting himself to his clerical duties. Like Buckhurst, Julius has been persuaded to enter the church to escape his financial difficulties, but he tries to compensate for his feelings of unworthiness through fervent preaching and zealous attention to his parishioners. Confusing his desire for his fashionable cousins' esteem with normal family affections, Julius is gratified when his long-estranged uncle offers him a living as rector of Burthwaite and invites him to live in the castle as a member of the family. In striving to win Lord and Lady Tiverton's approval and his cousin Henrietta's love, Julius sacrifices his independence and becomes their dupe. His aunt and uncle appreciate the value of a handsome young clergyman, bearing the family name, as a tool for bolstering their reputation for respectability, much damaged by their son Dick's notorious affair with the wife of a member for

the county. However, when Dick's indiscretions erupt into a scandal too visible to be papered over, Lord Tiverton announces his intention of taking his family to France, where they will prepare for Henrietta's wedding to a young dandy. He carelessly dismisses Julius from the castle, recasting him as a paid dependent rather than a favored nephew and potential son-in-law. Indignant at his uncle's arrogance and Henrietta's duplicity, Julius resigns his position as rector and falls into a dangerous fever. Julius's eagerness to identify himself with his affluent relations and sell himself into patronage results in a broken heart, damaged health, and loss of his career, all of which are remedied only after he is returned to his family.

In its adoption of the earlier novel's moral lesson, plot structure, and preoccupation with families, *Preferment* appears to be both a tribute and a response to Edgeworth's *Patronage*. Like Edgeworth, Gore insists on the efficacy of strong familial relationships in combating pernicious social influences and in bringing about gradual political reform; at the same time, she challenges Edgeworth's ideal pictures of family life and complicates the symmetrical precision of her binary contrasts. Edgeworth suggests that better education would have enabled Buckhurst, like Mr. Percy's three sons, to embark on a profession and to enter society without becoming corrupted. Gore also points to flaws in Julius's education, but she argues that experience is equally important in preparing young people to balance the demands of society with the dictates of personal integrity.

Susan Ferrier, most frequently characterized as a regionalist and a didactic novelist, is usually considered to be the Scottish counterpart to Maria Edgeworth.[7] However, her views on education and experience bear greater similarity to those of Catherine Gore. It is true that Ferrier disapproves of the levity and prodigality of London fashionable life, but she insists that virtue and wisdom are gained through experience of temptation rather than avoidance of it: "If it is

dangerous to be too early initiated into the ways of the world, it is perhaps equally so to live too long secluded from it" (*Marriage* 193). Unlike Edgeworth, Ferrier maintains that education alone cannot prepare individuals against folly. Only experience can discipline the impulsive nature of youth: "Experience *cannot* be imparted: We may render the youthful mind prematurely cautious, or meanly suspicious; but the experience of a pure and enlightened mind is the result of observation, matured by time" (222).

Ferrier published three novels which excited great interest and admiration—*Marriage* (1818), *The Inheritance* (1824), and *Destiny* (1831)—but her name did not appear on the title page until Bentley published a new edition of her works in 1841. However, her authorship of these very successful novels was an open secret, and her work was strongly endorsed by Sir Walter Scott, who negotiated the terms for her third novel himself.[8] Although she portrays English fashionable society as trivial, superficial, and jejune, Ferrier's pictures of Scottish rural society are equally narrow and petty. Moral authority is not vested in Scotland or England, country or town life, but in Christian scripture and individual reason. Ferrier's brand of didacticism is explicitly religious, although her biographers insist that Ferrier did not follow a particular creed or system.[9] Instead, she expects individuals to receive religious instruction from the Bible and then to use their own powers of reason and judgment to apply its teachings to their own lives.

Although she believes in the value of experience, Ferrier also advocates an education grounded firmly in religious principle and shows the importance of early instruction by comparing the histories of twin sisters in her novel *Marriage*. Mary Douglas, the heroine, grows up in Scotland, supervised by her devout aunt; in contrast, Adelaide is brought up by her mother, Lady Juliana, in England. Mrs. Douglas is the moral center of the novel; we learn that she owes

her superiority of mind to her governess, who "early instilled into her a deep and strong sense of religion; and to it she owed the support which had safely guided her through the most trying vicissitudes" (74). These include an emigration from England to Scotland, the sacrifice of her first love to principle, and a marriage to a man for whom she felt no warmer regard than respect. When Mrs. Douglas adopts the infant Mary, whose sickly appearance has disgusted her fashionable mother, she decides upon a religious system of education, founded entirely upon the Bible:

> Mrs. Douglas had read much, and reflected more; and many faultless theories of education had floated in her mind. But her good sense soon discovered how unavailing all theories were, whose foundations rested upon the inferred wisdom of the teacher; and how intricate and unwieldy must be the machinery for the human mind, where the human hand alone is to guide and uphold it. To engraft into her infant soul the purest principles of religion, was therefore the chief aim of Mary's preceptress. (158)

In contrast, Lady Juliana chooses to educate her daughter Adelaide according to the latest and most fashionable theories: "As the first step, she engaged two governesses, French and Italian; —modern treatises on the subject of education were ordered from London—looked at, admired and arranged on gilded shelves, and sofa tables" (185). Still worse, according to Ferrier, is Lady Juliana's failure to include "THE BOOK" in her collection of pedagogical materials: "She *had* heard of the Bible, however, and even knew it was a book appointed to be read in churches, and given to poor people, along with Rumford soup, and flannel shirts; but as the rule of life—as the book alone that could make wise unto salvation, this Christian parent was ignorant as the Hottentot or Hindoo" (185).

Sadly, Lady Juliana's mania for education only lasts for three days, and Adelaide receives no religious instruction whatsoever. Therefore, we are not surprised when the adult Adelaide makes an interested match with a tedious duke, runs away with her handsome cousin shortly thereafter, and is finally abandoned by both husband and lover. Mary is deeply shocked when she learns of the elopement, but she refrains from censure: "She thought, with humility, of the superior advantages she had enjoyed, in having principles of religion early and deeply engrafted in her soul; and that, but for these, such as her sister's fate was, hers might have been" (433-34).

There is no single work in which Gore appears to emulate or respond to Ferrier, although Gore admired the Scottish writer's work. In fact, Gore had hoped to adapt *The Inheritance* for the stage but was forestalled by another dramatization, which she considered inferior.[10] In her didactic practice, Gore is more similar to Ferrier than to Edgeworth in that her moralizing is explicitly Christian. For example, the narrator of *Preferment* contrasts worldly authority with God's omnipotence: "But, while Helstone Rectory seemed to forget that there was a will in the world mightier than that of the countess . . . the Power in whose sight kings are but dust and ashes, was preparing a fearful reverse for the haughty lady of Tiverton Castle" (1.14). Like Ferrier, Gore also emphasizes the importance of "principles" in education.[11] For example, Lord Willersdale (*Women as they Are*) faults himself for neglecting his duties to his young and inexperienced bride: "she had principles which might have been fostered into excellence, and which he had endangered by the society to which he had too carelessly, too confidingly committed her guidance" (1.268). Indeed, Gore's reliance on "excellent principles" as a character feature prompts Thackeray's parody in his "Lords and Liveries": "Blest, luckily with a mother of excellent principles (who had imbued his young mind with that Morality which is so

superior to all the vain pomps of the world!) it had not been always the young earl's lot to wear the coronet for which he now in sooth cared so little" (*Works* 15: 60-61).

Ferrier's heroines find their stability in Christianity, but each young woman must interpret its teachings for herself. Upon hearing that Mary wishes to go to church, Lady Juliana warns her daughter than she will abide no Methodists in the house and flatly forbids her to attend services. Mary struggles with the biblical commandments to "Honor thy father and mother" and "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together," which seem in this instance to be in contradiction, and finally decides that she owes a higher duty to God than to her mother. However, Mary does not allow this act of disobedience to excuse her from following her mother's dictates in other matters. In each case in which Mary's will is opposed to her mother's, she must decide anew to whom she owes obedience; for example, Mary refuses to marry a man her mother has selected for his wealth and status, but she also refuses to marry the man she loves without her mother's permission.

Angela Esterhammer correctly observes, "Virtually all of Susan Ferrier's commentators, including her few modern critics, agree in seeing her work as conflicted, marked by an ongoing struggle between her talent for robust humor and her inclination toward a conservative, pious Christianity" (61). For example, in his introduction to *The Inheritance*, James E. M. Irvine states that Ferrier's "boisterous sense of fun" was at odds with her "sense of responsibility and moral purpose," and he encourages readers to skip over the "sententious digressions" (viii). But why should humor and piety, satire and didacticism, be viewed as antithetical aims and impulses? After all, the standard definition of satire is a work that uses humor, either gentle or mocking, in order to correct folly and vice. That Ferrier wished to correct is indubitable. Her discussion of

sacred and secular art in *The Inheritance* makes it clear that Ferrier felt truly great art always seeks to uplift readers and bring them closer to God. At the same time, her novels explicitly challenge the notion that Christianity is opposed to laughter. In *Marriage*, Lady Emily is puzzled by her cousin Mary, who takes her Christian duties very seriously but does not "behave like a Methodist"—groaning, praying and disapproving of all levity. The hero of *The Inheritance* demonstrates to the heroine that it is possible to laugh at one's neighbors even as one learns compassion for them.

Nevertheless, this perceived opposition between a lively sense of humor and a didactic program has figured largely in the construction of the silver fork novel. Studies of the genre tend to emphasize the seriousness of Edgeworth and Ferrier and the levity of Bulwer and Gore, conveniently forgetting the earlier authors' delight in creating ridiculous characters and the latter's fondness for prescriptive moralizing. However, the shared social mythology of fashionable novels shows that the genre is concerned with the moral education of its readers. What has frequently been perceived as the fashionable novel's conservatism may be the text's search for stable values in a period of social change, not its denial of change itself.

Romance Reading and the Function of the Fashionable Novel

Studies of twentieth-century popular literature aimed at women may also be helpful in determining the function of the fashionable novel. The modern romance novel has several important parallels to the nineteenth-century fashionable novel, including its popularity among women readers, low reputation as formula literature, and scornful reception by critics and scholars. However, I wish to stress that it is anachronistic to conflate the fashionable novel with the Regency Romance, as Bonnie Anderson and Winifred Hughes have done.[12] Indeed,

fashionable novels are not what modern readers would consider romances at all. The typical romance follows a courtship plot, in which the heroine and hero meet, experience a growing attraction, encounter at least one major obstacle to their relationship, and finally overcome it in order to make a commitment to marriage.[13] Based on her intensive study of the Smithton readers, a community of romance enthusiasts in the American Midwest, Janice Radway further refines this definition: "To qualify as a romance, the story must chronicle not merely the events of a courtship but *what it feels like* to be the *object* of one. . . . In all of their comments about the nature of the romance, the Smithton women placed heavy emphasis on the importance of *development* in the romance's portrayal of love" (64-65; italics original). As shown in the previous chapter's discussion of *Pelham*, *Vivian Grey*, and *The Hamiltons*, the fashionable novel usually includes some element of romance, but the love story is only one of several plots and is rarely central to the main action. Marriage may be more important in the society novel than in the dandy novel, but the former's concern with communities rather than individuals does not allow for the "resolute focus on a single, developing relationship between heroine and hero" which the Smithton readers find so essential to an ideal romance (Radway 122).

Despite this difference, Radway's and Jensen's studies of romance readers have significant implications for scholarship on the fashionable novel. The most important of their findings is that women value romances primarily for the *experience* of reading them. Radway explains that she was forced to give up her "preoccupation with the text" because

> it became clear that romance reading was important to the Smithton women first because the simple event of picking up a book enabled them to deal with the particular pressures and tensions encountered in their daily round of activities. . . . the early interviews were interesting because they focused so resolutely on the

> significance of the *act of romance reading* rather than on the meaning of the romance. (86; italics original)

Radway asked the women in her study to rank order the three most important reasons (from a list of eight) they read romances. In order, the most popular answers were "for simple relaxation," "because reading is just for me; it is my time," and "to learn about faraway places and times" (61). On the basis of these answers, Radway concludes that the romance is compensatory literature: not only does it provide emotional gratification for women whose roles as wives, mothers, and employees allow them little time for self-indulgence, but it also "reconstitutes" them. As Nancy Chodorow has observed, a mother's accepted role is to nurture her family, but there is no member of the American family whose function is to nurture the mother. Radway argues that the romance fills this need by allowing the reader to identify with a heroine who becomes the passive object of a tender and nurturing love: "Ultimately, the romance permits its reader the experience of feeling cared for and the sense of having been reconstituted affectively, even if both are lived only vicariously" (97).

Jensen also discovers the importance of the act of romance reading, although her study is restricted to category romances published by Harlequin Enterprises. She notes that "reading formula fiction allows women to be physically present but mentally absent" and likens this event to the "removal activities" Erving Goffman has observed among inmates in institutions (146). Women use romance fiction as a means of separating themselves temporarily from the demands of their families or work environment. Because their reading is subject to frequent interruption, romance fans appreciate the accessibility and familiarity of formula fiction. Jensen records, "Two-thirds of the women mention that they like Harlequins because they can 'pick them up and put them down' with ease" (145). While the fashionable novel is longer, more complex, and less

prescriptive than the Harlequin romance, scholars may have been too quick to dismiss the "formulaic" qualities of the fashionable novel without an appreciation of the conditions of the reading experience.

Jensen and Radway both identify two major functions of romance reading, escapism and education, which might also be fulfilled by reading fashionable novels. Romance readers want to escape from the routines and experiences of their daily lives, which is why they prefer to read about women who enjoy unusual careers or who live in faraway places or who belong to another culture or class background. The reader knows perfectly well that her life is different from the heroine's; in fact, she deliberately seeks out that difference in choosing her reading material, although she expects to identify with the heroine. Because the women read romances to achieve a positive emotional state, they avoid "pessimistic" novels that dwell on social problems. A young woman named Susan explains her preference for historical romance: "I don't want to read about people who have all the problems of today's world" (98). Another reader, Joy, claims that "perfection's not the main thing," but she doesn't like to see a romance "dwelling on handicaps or disfigurements . . . I find that distasteful and depressing" (98). Similarly, Radway observes:

> At least four of the women mentioned Colleen McCollough's best-selling novel, *The Thorn Birds*, as a good example of a tale that technically qualified as a romance but that all disliked because it was too "depressing." When urged to specify what made the story pessimistic, none cited specific events in the plot or the death of the hero. Rather, they referred to the general tenor of the story and to the fact that the characters were poor. "Too much suffering," one reader concluded. (99)

It is likely that fashionable novels were popular with nineteenth-century audiences because they provided a similar escape from the awareness of poverty, disease, inequity, and suffering—the very subjects that Hazlitt and Carlyle felt literature ought to address.[14] It is certain that, then as now, readers used popular fiction as a means of self-medication, judging that novels were as effective as alcohol, opium, or sugar in altering one's mood.[15] In his essay "On a Peal of Bells," Thackeray reflects on the power of a favorite novel to restore one (temporarily) to one's youth: "Oh, delightful novels, well remembered! Oh, novels, sweet and delicious as the raspberry open-tarts of budding boyhood!" (252). He expands on this theme in "On a Lazy, Idle Boy": "Novels are sweets. All people with healthy literary appetites love them—almost all women;—a vast number of clever, hard-headed men" (5). Only gluttons and sots dislike novels, Thackeray argues, for it is only by over-indulgence that one loses one's taste for them. He concludes his argument by switching metaphors: "But as surely as the cadet drinks too much pale ale, it will disagree with him; and so surely, dear youth, will too much novels cloy on thee" (6).[16] Although Samuel Smiles takes a dimmer view of the novel's value, he affirms that nineteenth-century audiences read for escape: "how much of our reading is but the indulgence of a sort of intellectual dram-drinking, imparting a grateful excitement for the moment" (271). Jenny Uglow describes Elizabeth Gaskell's compulsive reading and rereading of novels as an "escape into literature" (44),[17] which parallels Radway's discovery that, for the Smithton women, "rereading is an activity engaged in expressly to lift the spirits" (62). Thus Victorian readers, charged with reluctance to encounter serious human problems in fiction, might respond as one of Radway's subjects does: "Why should we read depressing stuff when we have so much responsibility?" (98).

Jensen also finds that romance readers want books that leave them with a feeling of optimism and empowerment. She argues that readers use romance novels to fantasize not just about love, but about a kind of independence and luxury of choice that has been denied them: "the luxury of creative, challenging work, the luxury of being able to choose to work or not, the luxury of part-time work with flexible hours, the luxury of shared work that will bring them closer to their husbands. . . . Women who read romances are fantasizing about freedom" (153). However, they are in little danger of confusing these fantasies with reality.[18] Jensen concludes:

> I did not find much evidence that women attempt to model themselves after Harlequin heroines. Nor did I find widespread support for the notion that romances unrealistically shape women's expectations about relationships. The vast majority of readers—the casual readers—keep their romances imaginatively separate from reality. One woman who told me that she preferred reading Harlequins to reading about World War II added: "Yet I know . . . that's happened and it's reality whereas this is not reality." . . . Still others commented that romances are "make-believe" or "adult fairy tales" that do not carry over into reality. (156)

To argue that the fashionable novel functioned primarily as a handbook to the *beau monde* is to assume that the early Victorians were less sophisticated readers than modern consumers of romance. Although Hazlitt and Bulwer expressed concern that fashionable novels would make readers dissatisfied with their own lives, the analogue of romance reading suggests that this concern is misplaced; adult readers are well able to distinguish between the imaginative realm of fiction and the reality of their own lives. Servants in well-to-do households and middle-class citizens in urban areas would have had ample opportunity to observe the clothes, carriages,

and other commodities available to wealthy consumers. These observations seem a far more likely source of dissatisfaction than the choice of reading matter.

Although the romance reader wants to escape to a fantasy realm, she also expects the world described in the romance to be congruent with her own: she expects all historical accounts, mention of current events, and place descriptions to be accurate so that she can feel that she is "learning something." Both Radway and Jensen observe that readers place great value on the "factual information" they glean from romances, particularly as it relates to other nations and cultures.[19] Radway notes that romances teem with material details like the fabric, style, and color of women's fashions, the furnishings and decorations of the heroine's apartment, and brand-name commodities. Like fashionable novels, romances rely heavily on topicalities to convey a sense of verisimilitude, which the readers accept as knowledge they can share with others to demonstrate the educational value of their reading. Radway remarks on the apparent contradiction in readers' engagement with romance novels:

> If it seems curious that the very same readers who willingly admit that romances are fairy tales or fantasies also insist that they contain accurate information about the real world, it should be noted that the contradictory assertions seem to result from a separation of plot and setting. . . . The fact that the story is fantastic . . . does not compromise the accuracy of the portrayal of the physical environment within which the idealized characters move. (109)

Clearly, the fashionable novel performs both functions of escape and education. The text describes a group of privileged persons whose wealth, leisure, social and political authority, and opportunities for travel are so far beyond the reach of the middle-class reader as to appear fantastic; at the same time, the details of this privileged lifestyle are rendered with such

meticulous care that the reader can feel she has gained very precise knowledge about fashionable society. This does not mean, however, that the reader is now equipped to enter this society, any more than a romance reader feels that her relationship should follow the pattern laid out in a Harlequin novel.

The surprising evidence that Edward Bulwer's novels were popular aboard nineteenth-century ships further challenges the notion that readers of fashionable novels valued them primarily as instruction manuals for entering society. In *Two Years Before the Mast*, Richard Henry Dana expresses delight at discovering a copy of *Paul Clifford* in a crewmember's sea-chest and spends three days "in a constant state of pleasing sensations" (206).[20] Similarly, in *The Nigger of the "Narcissus,"* Joseph Conrad describes Old Singleton's rapt absorption in reading *Pelham* as a common sight aboard ship:

> The popularity of Bulwer Lytton in the forecastles of Southern-going ships is a wonderful and bizarre phenomenon. What ideas do his polished and so curiously insincere sentences awaken in the simple minds of the big children who people those dark and wandering places of the earth? What meaning can their rough, inexperienced souls find in the elegant verbiage of his pages? What excitement?—what forgetfulness?—what appeasement? Mystery! (3)

Conrad's suggested explanations for *Pelham*'s appeal further support the idea that fashionable novels were escapist fare rather than guidebooks:

> Is it the fascination of the incomprehensible? is it the charm of the impossible? Or are those beings who exist beyond the pale of life stirred by his tales as by an enigmatical disclosure of a resplendent world that exists within the frontier of infamy and filth, within that border of dirt and hunger, of misery and dissipation,

> that comes down on all sides to the water's edge of the incorruptible ocean, and is the only thing they know of life, the only thing they see of surrounding land—those lifelong prisoners of the sea? Mystery! (3)

Even those critics who feared the potential use of fashionable novels as guidebooks for parvenus noted the futility of the effort. Hazlitt admitted that a novel reader might well learn how to imitate the habits of fashionable consumption, but he saw little educational value in the works of upstarts with pretensions of gentility like Thomas Hook and Benjamin Disraeli:

> So a young linen-draper or attorney's-clerk from the country, who had gained a thirty-thousand prize in the lottery and wished to set up for a fine gentleman, might learn from these Novels what hotels to put up at, what watering place to go to, what hatter, hosier, tailor, shoemaker, *friseur* to employ, what part of town he should be seen in, what theatre he might frequent; but how to behave, speak, look, feel and think in his new and more aspiring character he would not find the most distant hint in the gross caricatures or flimsy sketches of the most mechanical and shallow of all schools. (147)

Two years later, the *Westminster Review* chided readers whose interest in fashionable novels arose "much less from a rational desire to acquire a knowledge of human nature, as modified by the accidents of high birth and fortune, than from an anxiety to glean a few airs and graces" (qtd. in Rosa 15-16). Like Hazlitt, the reviewer predicted failure for the social aspirants, darkly warning that no sooner would "the toe of the peasant [intrude] upon the heel of the courtier" than new distinctions would be discovered to separate the exclusives from the parvenus.

Indeed, the struggle of the old guard to hold the line against newcomers forms the basis of a number of fashionable novel plots. Thus, the fashionable novel functions not as a handbook

but as a cautionary tale, emphasizing the near-impossibility of entering fashionable society, the great difficulty in maintaining one's place in it, and the dubious rewards for doing so. Robert Colby endorses this view of the fashionable novel as corrective satire rather than as a guidebook to fashionable life and manners:

> *The Fair of Mayfair* (1832) [a collection of fashionable "tales" by Catherine Gore] has a sternness of tone appropriate to the tags from Pope and other eighteenth-century didactic poets that head its chapters. . . . Mrs. Gore makes it quite evident in her introduction that these revels in the upper regions of the damned are not intended for mere entertainment. She thinks of herself as a modern Juvenal, castigating her contemporaries as Pope and Johnson did theirs, but in less lofty tones. She would re-dress that neglected muse Satire, "long accustomed to the graceful array of poetry" in "the homely garment of prose," to make her accessible to a new generation. (*FP* 164)

This satire is leveled not only at the denizens of the beau monde, but also at the roturiers and upper middle-class families who embarrass themselves by overreaching instead of recognizing that they are happier and more comfortable than the fashionables they strive to emulate. Fictional characters who attempt to cross class barriers are usually defeated; if they succeed, they discover that the cost outweighs the gain. A good example is the Forsythe family in *Women as They Are*. Anxious to establish themselves in the highest levels of society, they lose their heads entirely when Lord and Lady Willersdale accept a dinner invitation. Eager to display their intimacy with the new prime minister and his wife, the Forsythes invite everyone they know and spend an exorbitant amount of money on the food, furnishings, and new clothes. Unfortunately, their plans are dashed when Lord Willersdale sends word that business will

prevent him from attending. As the news spreads, excuses from the most fashionable guests come pouring in, the family scrambles to issue last-minute invitations, and Mr. Forsythe flees his own home. Not only is the ruinously expensive dinner a shambles, but those relations and former acquaintances who felt themselves slighted when the Forsythes were on the rise now revenge themselves by gloating over the collapse of the Miss Forsythes' expectations. Thus the Forsythes have gambled away their wealth, the only asset they possessed which might form an entrée to high society; they have made themselves ridiculous among the *bon ton*; and they have alienated everyone in their own social circle.

The experience of the Forsythes is typical of the fashionable novel's depiction of social aspirants: they generally find that the effort to breach the most exclusive circles of society is expensive and futile, and that they were happier and more respectable (not to mention more financially secure) before they made the attempt. This discouragement is not necessarily an indication of the author's snobbery or social conservatism (although in the case of Theodore Hook, it may be); rather, the fashionable novel contrasts the happiness of middle-class domesticity with the constant maneuvering and calculating of families who wish to maintain their standing in the treacherous world of fashion or politics. Catherine Gore asserts that close family ties and a strong marriage may form a protective barrier against the greatest evils of society (*Pin Money* is the most optimistic example), but most of her protagonists discover that it is easier to maintain these domestic ties at a distance from London.

Not only is Gore critical of the tedious whirl of fashionable activity, which leaves members of the *ton* jaded to all pleasures except scandal, but she consistently attacks those men who neglect their obligation to family and neighborhood in favor of political duties. For example, Gore describes Sir Brooke Rawleigh (*Pin Money*) as a man of modest abilities who can

best serve his king by remaining *out* of Parliament: "[H]is abilities were peculiarly adapted to the judicious management of a tolerably extensive landed estate, and the steady maintenance of those collateral links which unite the proprietor to his county, and his county to the kingdom" (10). Lord Claneustace (*The Hamiltons*) is another character more valuable at home than in London; no leader in the House, he leads by example instead, putting the theories of reform into practice: "projecting railroads,— laying down plans for new villages,—lowering his rents,— resigning his tithes as lay-impropriator" (205). We can see, therefore, that Gore's fashionable novels advocate social reform and concern with local as well as national politics.

A New Definition

Based on the foregoing discussion of the genre's dominant themes and functions, I propose a new definition of the fashionable novel to replace the faulty construction of the silver fork novel. The fashionable novel is primarily concerned with the experience of being in society, deciphering its codes, and navigating its dangers, which include the loss of personal integrity, reputation, and domestic affections, as well as financial ruin. The setting is not restricted to the metropolis, although London fashion and politics present important challenges to the protagonist. As in the works of Burney, Edgeworth, and Ferrier, the fashionable novel strives to identify stable values in a period of change, not to prevent such a change from occurring; it seeks a balance rather than a choice between personal autonomy and "responsible worldliness." Although the fashionable novel provides a mimetic representation of London society by relying heavily on topicalities, material descriptions, and thinly disguised analogues to well-known personalities, verisimilitude is not the genre's sole purpose or only defining characteristic. Nor is the fashionable novel a conduct manual for succeeding in fashionable

circles, as many scholars have claimed. Rather, it is a satire on fashionable morés, if not of fashionable society itself, combining humor, irony, and didacticism. The fashionable novel is escapist, inviting readers to participate vicariously in a world of luxury and privilege; ultimately, however, the novel affirms middle-class domestic values and allows the bourgeois reader to feel morally superior to the shallow and misguided denizens of the beau monde.

In framing a new definition of the fashionable novel, I have refrained from identifying a particular audience or moment of production; nor do I recognize conventions of plot, character, or setting. Such a loose construction makes it more difficult to distinguish the fashionable novel from the novel of manners (Burney), the didactic novel (Edgeworth and Ferrier), or, as we will see in the next chapter, the humorous social critiques of William Thackeray and Charles Dickens. This ambiguity is both deliberate and desirable. The definition of the silver fork novel, bound to rigid formulas and a specific historical moment, has led scholars to see it as a fad, a literary aberration, springing up like an unhealthy mushroom without literary ancestry or progeny. When fashionable novels are released from such limitations, we can see that they participate in a conversation between nineteenth-century texts that cross arbitrary lines of canonicity. Once the novels of Catherine Gore are deemed worth of study, it is possible that the designation of "fashionable novel" may itself be discarded as unnecessary and obsolete.

Notes to Chapter 4

[1] Happily, this state of affairs is changing. A new series of fashionable novels, including Gore's *Cecil*, is forthcoming from Pickering & Chatto.

[2] This evaluation appears more flattering when compared to the reviewer's judgment of Burney: "Miss Burney . . . had a quick Observation, notably of ridiculous details, and with a certain broad

vulgar gauge of human nature, contrived to write one or two novels that admirably reflected the passing manners of her age" (75).

[3] The sentence actually begins "Miss Edgeworth and Miss Clavering," but this is almost certainly a misprint since this passage is taken from a longer discussion of Edgeworth and Ferrier. Charlotte Clavering is said to have collaborated with Susan Ferrier on *Marriage* (1818), but her role seems to have been largely critical rather than creative. To the best of my knowledge, Clavering's only published work is the chapter in *Marriage* giving the history of Mrs. Douglas.

[4] Rosa argues, "Miss Edgewoth's early novels are unsuccessful because, while they deal with London society and anticipate the fashionable novels in form and content, she was not familiar with higher English society when she wrote them" (11). Vineta Colby agrees that Edgeworth's limited experience prevented her from writing a real fashionable novel: "She visited and knew the contents of Mayfair townhouses, but the only setting in which she was comfortably at home was the rambling English or Irish country house with a crowded nursery or the Irish peasant's hut. Her fashionable novels, therefore, are simply moral-exemplary tales dressed up and peopled with characters who move in high society" (127-28).

[5] Edgeworth's father told her she had "no taste—and no Eyes," a judgment the author admitted to be valid (qtd. in Butler 143).

[6] Rosa flatly denies the association, refusing to regard Gore as a moralist: "She was neither a Maria Edgeworth born to set the crooked straight by adherence to the latest and most approved methods, nor a Richardson seeking to bring back the age of innocence by following the dictates of Christian morality. Hers was a different, but not, perhaps, a lower aim—simply to be the 'amber which seeks to preserve the ephemeral modes and caprices of the passing day'" (117).

[7] Ferrier might not be flattered by her frequent comparison to Edgeworth. A letter to Charlotte Clavering suggests that she was not impressed with Edgeworth's brand of didacticism: "Have you read Edgeworth's "Fashionable Tales"? It is high time all *good ladies* and *grateful little girls* should be returned to their gilt boards, and as for sentimental weavers and moralizing glovers, I recommend them as penny ware for the pedlar" (qtd. in Cullinan 20).

[8] In his Epilogue to *The Legend of Montrose*, Scott refers to Ferrier as the inheritor of his legacy of the Scottish novel: "I retire from the [literary] field, conscious that there remains behind not only a large harvest, but labourers capable of gathering it in. More than one writer has of late displayed talents of this description; and if the present author, himself a phantom, may be permitted to distinguish a brother, or perhaps a sister shadow, he would mention in particular, the author of the very lively work entitled "Marriage" (qtd. in Cullinan 44).

[9] Although Ferrier was brought up in the Scottish Presbyterian church, she appears to have been influenced by the Anglican John Wesley, whose followers were called Methodists. In *Marriage*, several fashionable characters speak scornfully of Methodists as zealots and killjoys, but Ferrier's liberal quotation of Wesley in *The Inheritance* strongly suggests that she does not share this view.

[10] Gore vents her disappointment in abusing Fitzball, the playwright who had anticipated her, calling him "a writer of very low class" (qtd. in Cullinan 68). Cullinan notes: "Fitzball's play ran only briefly at Covent Garden, but its production is, at least, indicative of the initial popularity of the novel" (68).

[11] When the heroine of Ferrier's *The Inheritance* is moved to tearful prayer by a scene of natural beauty, the narrator denies that Gertrude's response bespeaks any true religious devotion: "it was merely the overflowing of a young, enraptured, and enthusiastic mind; no deeper principle was

felt or understood . . .” (16). Similarly, we know that Gertrude’s mother is not to be trusted when the narrator informs us that her graceful and polished manners owe nothing to “innate delicacy of thought or ennobling principle of action” (8).

[12] As I explain in Chapter 1, nineteenth-century fashionable novels are not always set in the Regency, and the main plot rarely focuses on a single romance. Furthermore, the twentieth-century Regency romance is frequently disparaged as inartistic and overproduced, so this association leads scholars who are unfamiliar with the fashionable novel to make negative, unfounded assumptions about the genre.

[13] A common variation on this plot reverses the order of courtship and marriage (usually for an improbable reason, unless the text is a historical romance), but the focus remains on the development of an emotional bond, discovery of a threat to the relationship, and a resolution to the problem which results in a stronger emotional commitment.

[14] This is not to say that fashionable novels avoid painful subjects altogether. Gore’s novels in particular dwell on common marital difficulties (arguments about money, breakdowns in communication, problems in reconciling different interests) and domestic tragedies (usually the death of a child) to which many readers might find a parallel in their own experience. However, difficulties like paying one’s debts of honor, being embarrassed by vulgar relatives in public, and worrying that one’s brother is marrying below his station might well be considered luxuries.

[15] Victorians were less certain than modern readers, however, that fiction is a more benign form of self-medication. Dorothy (“Dot”) Evans, author of a newsletter devoted to romantic fiction, regards romance reading as legitimate therapy. She began this practice when her doctor, concerned about Dot’s physical and mental exhaustion, urged her to spend at least one hour each day in an enjoyable leisure activity (Radway 51). Dot explains: “I know many women . . . who

need to read as an escape as I have over the years and I believe this is good therapy and much cheaper than tranquilizers, alcohol or addictive T.V. serials which most of my readers say bores them" (52).

[16] Despite the darkness of this warning, Thackeray sees no great danger to the reader's physical or mental health as a result of excessive reading. His greatest concern is that novels will lose their ability to charm the jaded reader who is too familiar with common character types and plot twists to be delighted and surprised by them any longer.

[17] Gaskell claimed to have read Bulwer's *Paul Clifford* at least twice by 1830 and Ferrier's *Destiny* three times in 1831, the year it came out (Uglow 42-43).

[18] Harlequin Enterprises' own research confirms that women's expectations are not warped by romance reading: "When asked if the books affect their everyday lives, all of the women surveyed by Harlequin's public relations firm of Dorf/MJH Inc. responded that romances have no influence beyond the prosaic: Readers said they sometimes spent too much time and money on the books" (Jensen 157).

[19] "Readers often choose to read a specific romance on the basis of its setting. They feel that while they are enjoying themselves, they are also learning about other countries, the people and their customs. The 'educational' aspect of the books is sometimes used by readers to justify their reading to outsiders or skeptics" (Jensen 149).

[20] Dana describes his pleasure in reading *Paul Clifford* over the course of three days while the ship enjoyed fine, calm weather: "I shall never forget the enjoyment I derived from it. To come across anything with the slightest claims to literary merit, was so unusual, that this was a perfect feast to me. The brilliancy of the book, the succession of capital hits, lively and characteristic

sketches, kept me in a constant state of pleasing sensations. It was far too good for a sailor. I could not expect such fine times to last long" (207).

CHAPTER 5: PARODY AND THE FASHIONABLE NOVEL

It is ironic that the parodies of the fashionable novel are far more familiar to modern scholars than the novels themselves. Very few fashionable novels have been reprinted in the twentieth century, whereas the "Lady Flabella" episode in Charles Dickens's *Nicholas Nickleby*, Thackeray's series of *Novels by Eminent Hands* (also called *Punch's Prize Novelists*), and of course *Vanity Fair* are easily accessible. Obviously, this state of affairs has given us a biased view of the value of fashionable novels; not only is our received picture of these novels an exaggerated one, but we tend to assume that a genre so frequently targeted must deserve mockery. However, Linda Hutcheon cautions against such an assumption in her study *A Theory of Parody*: "To say, quite simply, that any codified discourse is open to parody is more methodologically cautious and more true to fact than to assert, as some do, that only mediocre works of art can be parodied" (18). Parody attests not to the value of the original but to the power of its appeal: "It would seem that popular works of art are always parodied, whatever their quality" (18). After all, parody is only effective when the target text is established well enough to be familiar to the audience. This chapter explores the relationship between parody and the fashionable novel, applying Hutcheon's theory to discuss the ways in which Dickens and Thackeray imitate and invert (rather than ridicule or reject) the conventions of the fashionable novel.[1] I will pay particularly close attention to the parodies of Thackeray and his literary and personal relationship with Catherine Gore in order to discover the importance of scholarship on the fashionable novel to nineteenth-century studies.

In *Novels of the Eighteen-Forties*, Kathleen Tillotson asserts that the well-known parodies of the fashionable novel indicate the public's distaste for the genre. For example, she describes Dickens's *Nicholas Nickleby* as "a document of the reaction against the predominance of society novels, which was well under way by 1839" (Tillotson 74-75). Kate Nickleby reads an excerpt from *The Lady Flabella*, a fashionable novel borrowed from the lending library, to her employer, the languishing Mrs. Wititterly:

> "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 chère, donnez-moi de l'eau-de-Cologne, s'il vous plaît, mon enfant.*"
>
> "*Merci*—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 emblazoned at the four corners with the Flabella crest, and gorgeous heraldic bearings of that noble family; "*Merci*—that will do." (*Nicholas Nickleby* 340)

The passage ludicrously exaggerates those features of fashionable writing which are most frequently criticized: superabundance of adjectives, careful description of clothing, markers of great wealth and status, and a liberal seasoning of French words and phrases. Tillotson argues that Dickens's intent here is not merely to send up fashionable novels, but also to mock the taste of those who read them. Mrs. Wititterly, who prides herself on her sensibility, affects to be overcome by the "soft" and "voluptuous" passage and begs her employee to stop reading: "Close the book, Miss Nickleby. . . . I can hear nothing more to-day. I should be sorry to disturb the

impression of that sweet description" (340). The approval of such a pretentious and silly woman is enough to condemn *The Lady Flabella*, but Dickens further denounces the novel through the narrator's authoritative comment: "there was not a line in it, from beginning to end, which could, by the most remote contingency, awaken the smallest excitement in any person breathing" (340).

This short parody appears to support Tillotson's argument that the important authors of the period— Charles Dickens, Charlotte Brontë, Elizabeth Gaskell, and William Thackeray— preferred to ridicule the fashionable novel than to imitate it:

> [T]he great novelists were using the fashionable novel for their own purposes— purposes ironical, satirical, moral. Charlotte Brontë almost certainly had the fashionable novel as well as her own earlier romances in mind in her picture of what she saw as the high life of the visitors at Mr. Rochester's house party; the daughter's address to her mother "Baroness Ingram of Ingram Hall" has the very tone of Mrs. Gore (and of "Lords and Liveries"). (87)

Tillotson's equation of Gore's novels with Thackeray's parody of them illustrates Hutcheon's observation that parody may appear superior to its target because "it does everything the original does—and more" (76). Indeed, Tillotson claims that there is no need to read Catherine Gore at all, since "Lords and Liveries" is "as accurate as absurd" (4).

"Lords and Liveries" belongs to the *Novels by Eminent Hands* series that Thackeray wrote for *Punch* in 1847. These short pieces were presented as excerpts from longer novels and written in the style of well-known popular authors: Edward Bulwer, Benjamin Disraeli, Catherine Gore, Charles Lever, G. P. R. James, James Fenimore Cooper, and Thackeray himself.[2] This series ran between April and September of 1847, appearing concurrently with early numbers of *Vanity Fair*. Gordon N. Ray argues that, with the exception of the hit at

Bulwer, the parodies were intended as friendly; however, he describes the simultaneous publication with *Vanity Fair* as a carefully orchestrated assault: "Obviously he had planned his attack with care, bringing to bear at once the sixteen-inch guns of his great novel and the forty-millimeter artillery of his magazine parodies" (*Uses of Adversity* 389).

Scholarly conventional wisdom has long held that *Vanity Fair* (1847-48) was largely responsible for ending the fashionable novel's dominance in popular literature by simultaneously ridiculing and exhausting the genre's possibilities. Matthew Rosa claims that the "silver fork school" culminated in *Vanity Fair*, which serves as both a brilliant parody and "the supreme example" of the genre. (12) Tillotson asserts that Thackeray's use of conventional materials was primarily ironic and reactionary, but Robert Colby suggests a more complex relationship: "Thackeray at once parodied, imitated, and improved the so-called Silver Fork novel . . . . Unlike Dickens, who inverted the society novel for his own satiric purposes, Thackeray was temperamentally drawn to the type" (*FP* 155). Similarly, John Sutherland detects "a dangerously soft spot" in the satirist's professed disdain for his victims. In his introduction to the novel, Sutherland observes: "*Vanity Fair*, for all its show of repudiation, frequently conforms to the fiction it purports to chastise" (xi).

Thackeray's parody appears to distance *Vanity Fair* from the fashionable novel, but, as Winifred Hughes points out, "A disarming tendency to self-mockery and self-parody was in fact latent in the genre" ("Silver Fork Writers and Readers," 330). Fashionable novelists frequently ridicule their own artistic productions by affecting to reveal the secret formula of their success. In *Yes and No: A Tale of the Day* (1828), Lord Normanby playfully (but accurately) suggests that an aristocratic authorial name will ensure publishing success:

> Do you know the modern receipt for a finished picture of fashionable life? Let a gentlemanly man, with a gentlemanly style, take of foolscap paper a few quires, stuff them well with high-sounding titles—dukes and duchesses, lords and ladies, *ad libitum*. Then open the Peerage at random, pick a suppositious author out of one page of it, and fix the imaginary characters upon some of the rest; mix it all up with a *quantum suff* of puff, and the book is in the second edition before ninety-nine readers out of a hundred have found out that the one is as little likely to have written, as the others to have done, what is attributed to them.[3]

Benjamin Disraeli follows suit in *The Young Duke* (1829), giving his own facetious "receipt" for writing a fashionable novel: "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" (qtd. in Hughes, "Silver Fork" 328). Despite these humorous examples, parody is not synonymous with comic ridicule and attack. In fact, parody need not be comic at all; rather, it covers a wide range of intent, of which ridicule is one extreme. Hutcheon redefines parody as "imitation characterized by ironic inversion, not always at the expense of the parodied text" and as "repetition with critical distance, which marks difference rather than similarity" (6). To illustrate, she offers the following examples:

> Ironic inversion is a characteristic of all parody: think of Byron's *Don Juan*'s reversal of the legend (the women here chase after him) and of the conventions of the epic. Similarly, criticism need not be present in the form of ridiculing laughter for this to be called parody. Euripides was considered to have parodied Aeschylus and Sophocles when, in his *Medea*, he replaced the traditional male

> protagonist with a woman, and a woman who was an outsider rather than a member of a Greek family of renown. (6)

Using Hutcheon's definition, we may see that the fashionable novel, so often the target of parody, is itself a parodic form.[4] In tracing the development of the man of fashion, the dandy novel parodies the traditional Bildungsroman, which details the moral and intellectual maturation of a young man. In turn, the society novel parodies the dandy novel, which focuses on a single hero, by expanding its scope to include the larger community in order to demonstrate that the dandy novel's values—ambition, competition, and autonomy—are ultimately destructive and antisocial. Perhaps the best example of the parodic nature of the fashionable novel may be found in Gore's *Cecil; or, The Adventures of a Coxcomb* (1841). Andrew Elfenbein remarks admiringly that, in *Cecil*, Gore not only plays with the conventions of the genre but "forces her audience to confront in a way that few Victorian authors do the uncomfortable shallowness of their expectations in reading a fashionable novel" (86). Although modeled on *Pelham* and *Vivian Grey*, Gore's dandy novel inverts the fashionable Bildungsroman by presenting a hero who never reaches full emotional or moral maturity. After Cecil realizes that his cavalier treatment of Emily Barnet has indirectly led to her death and her father's madness, the dandy turns soldier and places himself in the most extreme danger, hoping to fall in battle and atone for his sins. However, this experience results in neither an honorable death nor a moral conversion, as we might expect; upon returning to England, Cecil discovers that his military career has made him more popular than ever, and he happily resumes his role as a social butterfly and (literal) lady-killer. Elfenbein observes:

> Cecil's relentless superficiality gives the novel a strangely compelling aura of bad faith, as if Gore were daring the reader to enjoy the vacuousness of this character

> and his world. This aura becomes particularly acute as the fatal effects that Cecil has on his female acquaintances grow increasingly evident and his regret at their demises seems increasingly mechanical. For all Cecil's lighthearted banter, his dandyism has a body count. Not even Thackeray in *Vanity Fair* so powerfully exploits the simultaneous attraction and repulsion of high society as a novelistic subject. (90)

Thus *Vanity Fair* does not remove itself from the fashionable novel by parodying the form; rather, Thackeray "elaborates the silver fork mode's potential for both satire and self-parody" (Hughes, "Silver Fork" 331).

It is important here to distinguish between parody, an ironic inversion of another text or genre, and satire, which employs mocking laughter to identify flaws in social systems and to suggest reform. Hutcheon observes that "even the best works on parody tend to confuse it with satire . . . which, unlike parody, is both moral and social in its focus and ameliorative in its intention" (16). The confusion is understandable as parody and satire are often combined. For example, the fashionable novel is both a satiric form (as discussed in the previous chapter) and a parodic form. Indeed, the declared intention of such novels is to mock and reform the society they describe. In his study *England and the English*, Bulwer testifies to the genre's success as a social corrective:

> The novels of fashionable life illustrate feelings very deeply rooted, and productive of no common revolution . . . . 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. (251-52)

Ray claims that the fashionable novelists regarded high society with "complacent satisfaction" (*Uses of Adversity* 416), but Gore's pictures of fashionable manners and morés are as savagely satirical as any productions of Dickens or Thackeray. For example, Adolphus Egerton, the aging roué of Gore's *Preferment*, warns his nephew-protégé that it is very bad *ton* to admit to any family connection:

> Apropos, my dear Dick, for the love of Gad, don't let me hear you talk again of your "father" and your "cousins." There is nothing more indecent than public allusions to family relationships. The world is not obliged to know anything of your connexions; the world is not supposed to know that you *have* a father. . . . Good Gad!—you will be calling *me* your uncle next!" (1.37)

Even Sir Leicester Dedlock and Major Pendennis are not so ridiculous in their pride as to deny their closest relatives.

With Hutcheon's definition of parody firmly in mind, let us return to the treatment of high society and the fashionable novel by Dickens and Thackeray. Amusing as the "Lady Flabella" parody is, we should not construe it as Dickens's utter rejection of the fashionable novel. He may laugh at the Lady Flabella's lace-edged hanky that bears her noble credentials, but Dickens is notorious for his own use of costume details and topicalities to lend greater authenticity to his tales and to place his characters with regard to class and geographical setting. In later novels, Dickens came to use the same materials as the fashionable novelists and to much the same end—mocking the shortsightedness of the exclusives who believed they comprised "the world" and demonstrating how intimately connected this rarified group was to the rest of society.

In *Fiction with a Purpose*, Robert Colby explains how Dickens's humor depends on his readers' familiarity with the conventions of the fashionable novel, which he applies to great effect in *Oliver Twist*:

> The barbed chapter headings scattered through the novel suggest that, but for the grace of God, Oliver "might have been" the hero of a "Silver Fork" novel. His apprenticeship in particular suggests an unlike likeness with the career of the dandy. Chapter III, which introduces Gamfield, "Relates How Oliver Twist was every near getting a Place, which would not have been a Sinecure"—like a seat in the House of Lords or a commission. . . . The next chapter, where Oliver meets Sowerberry, headed "Oliver, being offered another Place, makes his first Entry into public Life," suggests the fortunes of Disraeli's Young Duke. (114)

However, Colby warns us that Dickens's satire cuts both ways, attacking high society as well as the criminal underclass:

> But Dickens' satire is double-edged. Most of the episodes involving Fagin, Bill Sikes, their "associates" and their "protégés" have their counterparts in the "Exclusivism, fashionable novelism, Nashism, and fifty other fribbleisms of the West-end" recalled by one of Mrs. Gore's retired gentlemen.[5] For the schools of deportment and the dancing academies, substitute the public house in Saffron Hill where Fagin puts his "dear boys" through their paces. For the faro and gaming tables, substitute the whist matches of the Artful Dodger, Toby, and Tom. . . . Among their other "London Recreations" Dickens' would-be aristocrats of the lower classes like to "get up tavern assemblies in humble imitation of Almack's and promenade the dingy 'large room' of some second-rate hotel with as much

> complacency as the enviable few who are privileged to exhibit their magnificence in that exclusive haunt of fashion and foolery." (117)

Dickens' conflation of these two social extremes is reminiscent of Bulwer's *Pelham*, which similarly satirizes fashionables by likening them to criminals. Henry Pelham discovers that his training as a dandy is particularly useful when he descends into the criminal underworld to receive a confession that may prove the innocence of his best friend, who has been accused of murder. The hero attributes his facility in learning "Flash" (thieves' cant) to the "slang part" of his Cambridge education (408); similarly, his theatrical abilities, finely honed in the theater of public life, enable Pelham to perpetrate a double disguise, a con man dressed as a "pater cove" (a parson); his lessons with a French dancing master enable him to slip noiselessly from room to room; and his skill with a sword comes in handy when he must fight his way out of the thieves' den. Pelham flatters himself that a man of the world can make himself at home in any station of life, but Bulwer's novel, like *Oliver Twist*, discovers a startling likeness between the ladies and gentleman of the *ton* and the criminal underclass.

Dickens's later novels show a greater tendency to analyze the world of fashion than to mock its denizens. *Bleak House* offers a surprisingly sympathetic portrait of a fashionable woman, Lady Dedlock, and her persecution by a public thirsty for the details of her life. Dickens no longer berates the fashionable world, admitting: "There is much good in it; there are many good and true people in it; it has its appointed place" (*Bleak House* 55). Rather than ridiculing the *beau monde*, Dickens employs it in a "procedure of indication," which J. Hillis Miller, in his introduction to *Bleak House*, has identified as the basic structural principle of the novel:

> This procedure is "allegorical" in the strict sense. It speaks of one thing by speaking of another, as Dickens defines the Court of Chancery by talking about a

> rag and bottle shop. Everywhere in *Bleak House* the reader encounters examples of this technique of "pointing" whereby one thing stands for another, indicates another, can be understood only in terms of another, or named only by the name of another. (17)

Thus Dickens describes the world of fashion—its meaningless rituals, its complacency, its constant movement that achieves no progress, the ruthlessness with which the "fashionable intelligence" pursues Lady Dedlock, and above all its cold exclusivity—as a parallel to the Court of Chancery, which depends on the suffering of suitors like Miss Flite and Mr. Gridley, who are ruined and then dismissed. The second chapter, "In Fashion," begins by explicitly linking these two systems.

> Both the world of fashion and the Court of Chancery are things of precedent and usage; oversleeping Rip Van Winkles, who have played at strange games through a deal of thundery weather; sleeping beauties, whom the Knight will wake one day, when all the stopped spits in the kitchen shall begin to turn prodigiously! (*BH* 55)

Although the dandy figure is one of his favorite objects of satire and caricature, Dickens acknowledges the dandy's appeal in *Our Mutual Friend* by transposing him to the middle class and making him the hero of the novel. Eugene Wrayburn is stripped of a title and noble family but retains the dandy's world-weary pose, languid ennui (for which Eugene uses the more plebeian term *boredom*), lack of purpose, and often savage mockery of his social inferiors. Eugene derives his sense of lofty superiority more from intellect and ironic detachment than from birth or wealth, but (with the important exception of Lizzie Hexam) he always insists upon distinction from his inferiors. If one accepts a man of no profession as a gentleman, then Eugene

might well qualify; although he is nominally a barrister, he has never had a client and is therefore dependent upon credit and his father for financial support. Like a conventional fashionable hero, Eugene proves his disinterestedness by refusing to marry the moneyed bride proposed by his father, and he marries the woman he loves after undergoing a moral conversion in which he recognizes the vanity of his heretofore idle existence. As in *Pelham*, the dandy's metamorphosis is brought about through education (Lizzie and her friend Jenny Wren teach him to despise his own laziness by their own industry) and punishment (Eugene is brutally attacked by the schoolmaster he has so frequently taunted for social significance).

As he moves from *Nicholas Nickleby* to *Our Mutual Friend*, Dickens' parody of fashionable novels becomes less comic and more respectful; one has only to contrast *Nickleby*'s cartoonish Mr. Mantalini, with his beloved whiskers and his constant verbal tics, with Eugene Wrayburn, who is very nearly a tragic hero, to observe Dickens' change of heart concerning the social worth and dramatic possibilities of the dandy figure. To argue, as Tillotson does, that Dickens only reacted against fashionable novels is thus to ignore the many ways in which he borrowed, inverted, and transcontextualized its conventions.

In her analysis of *Novels by Eminent Hands*, Juliet McMaster makes a convincing argument that Thackeray learned from Bulwer, Disraeli, Gore, and the other popular novelists he targeted even as he parodied them. Indeed, McMaster argues, it is because Thackeray studied his "parodees" with such care that he absorbed their styles and techniques and later imitated his colleagues in his own work.[6] For example, Thackeray delighted in creating deliberate errors in "George de Barnwell" as a means of calling attention to the numerous mistakes in Bulwer's historical novels:

> In "George de Barnwell" the narrator alerts the reader that he may encounter "some trifling inaccuracies" in a following account of a meeting of eighteenth-century wits. The chapter title, "Button's in Pall Mall," contains the first error, since Button's was in Russell Street in Covent Garden, not Pall Mall. . . . Swift and Pope are flung together with Johnson and Savage as though they were exact contemporaries, and all are thrust into the post-Waterloo London of "Regent Street" and "Wellington Street." (312)[7]

Although Thackeray's criticism indicates intense concern for accuracy in detail, McMaster points out that his own historical novels are riddled with errors or anachronisms, yet they successfully reproduce "the *feel* of a past age" (313). Indeed, John Sutherland finds much to praise in the artist's slapdash style and devotes a chapter of his *Thackeray at Work* to "The Virtues of Carelessness."

Similarly, Thackeray mocks Gore's habits of name-dropping and of moralizing about the inability of material possessions to confer happiness by combining the two. The narrator of "Lords and Liveries" asks rhetorically: "With all this splendour, this worship, this beauty; with these cheers following her, and these crowds at her feet, was Amethyst happy? Ah, no! It is not under the necklace the most brilliant that Briggs and Rumble can supply, it is not in Lynch's best cushioned chariot that the heart is most at ease" (*Works* 15.64-65). McMaster notes with amusement that Gore may denounce worldliness, but "she certainly gives it the full treatment before rejecting it" (325). However, the critic reminds us that Thackeray is guilty of the same strategy, noting the similarity between "was Amethyst happy? Ah, no!" and the ending of *Vanity Fair*: "Ah! *Vanitas Vanitatum!* Which of us is happy in this world? Which of us has his desire? or, having it, is satisfied?" (*VF* 878).

Hutcheon argues that the intention of the parodist need not be to mock or diminish the target text; rather, the original text is established as the ideal or norm from which the new text departs. (5) It is in this sense that Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* is a parody of fashionable novels. For example, *Vanity Fair* parodies the fashionable novel's didactic tendencies by employing a moralizing tone but clouding the lesson. Is Becky Sharp an adulteress and murderer? Thackeray's refusal to answer definitively makes it difficult to determine the moral of her story. If she is guilty, her appearance as a successful matron in a booth at Vanity Fair is a condemnation of society's false value system that allows immorality to flourish. If, on the other hand, Becky has been falsely accused (and Thackeray is careful not to dismiss this supposition out of hand), then the novel indicts the gossip-mongering (in which the reader is a participant) that topples Becky from the height of fashionable society.[8] We are aware that Becky is rationalizing when she declares, "I think I could be a good woman if I had five thousand a year" (*VF* 532); at the same time, we acknowledge some truth of the narrator's cynical observation: "A comfortable career of prosperity, if it does not make people honest, at least keeps them so. An alderman coming from a turtle feast will not step out of his carriage to steal a leg of mutton; but put him to starve, and see if he will not purloin a loaf" (533).

Vanity Fair enters a conversation with earlier fashionable novels, making use of certain generic conventions even as it seeks to overturn them. For example, the narrator remarks that the aristocrats "talked in English, not in bad French, as they do in the novels" (637), weighing in on a long-running debate over the novelistic use of French dialogue to signal a character's aristocratic breeding (or pretensions). As early as 1813, Susan Ferrier had protested against this convention, insisting that lords and ladies of the present day certainly did not speak French as readily or often as popular novels indicated.[9] However, the practice of using French for social

placing was still prevalent when Bulwer published *Pelham* in 1828, as is evident from Lady Pelham's remark: "I could not help being exceedingly amused by a book written the other day, which professes to give an accurate description of good society. Not knowing what to make us say in English, the author has made us talk nothing but French" (103). Thackeray had similar strong feelings: one of his most consistent criticisms of Catherine Gore was her over-reliance on French dialogue to give her characters a fashionable and cosmopolitan air.[10]

In contrast to fashionable practice, Thackeray inverts the convention of using French for social placing in *Vanity Fair* by making the language indicative of a servant class. Becky herself speaks excellent French with a pure Parisian accent, but she is the daughter of an opera-girl and a painter and, at the opening of the novel, she earns her living as a French teacher. However, Thackeray appears to undercut his own argument in the letter Becky sends to Rawdon (directed to *"Mon pauvre cher petit"*) at the spunging-house:

> Ill as I was, I instantly called for the carriage, and as soon as I was dressed (though I couldn't drink a drop of chocolate—I assure you I couldn't without my *monstre* to bring it to me), I drove *ventre à terre* to Nathan's. . . . He would have all the money, he said, or keep my poor *monstre* in prison. I drove home with the intention of paying that *triste visite chez mon oncle* (when every trinket I have should be at your disposal though they would not fetch a hundred pounds, for some, you know, are with *ce cher oncle* already), and found Milor there with the Bulgarian old sheep-faced monster. . . . everybody with *foison* of compliments and pretty speeches—plaguing poor me, who longed to be rid of them, and was thinking *every moment of the time* of *mon pauvre prisonnier*. (672)

Becky's use of French here appears gratuitous, affected, and insincere, perhaps another indication that Becky has finally arrived in fashionable society. If she is aping the manners of the great, then it appears that, despite Thackeray's protestations, the *beau monde* is indeed characterized by a liberal sprinkling of French in one's conversation.

Just as *Vanity Fair* is an historical novel with "gaping, but evidently carefully placed, holes" (Sutherland, *VF* xv), it is a fashionable novel conspicuously lacking in the usual signifiers of fashionableness. Thackeray alludes to common elements of fashionable novels, such as duels and the weekly balls at Almack's, but he deliberately refrains from creating such scenes, calling attention to their absence. For example, Thackeray lays the groundwork for a duel when Rawdon sends a challenge to Lord Steyne and leaves tearful messages for his son, but Steyne's representative, Mr. Wenham, manages to put an end to the fight. Thackeray slyly substitutes a duel of wit for the exchange of pistol shots, and Rawdon, unequipped for such a battle, is outmaneuvered. Similarly, Becky attends Almack's, to which admission was notoriously difficult, but her triumph in breaching the defenses of exclusive society is curiously muted. We learn only that "the great Lady Fitz-Willis, the Patron Saint of Almack's . . . . chose to acknowledge Mrs. Rawdon Crawley [and] made her a most marked curtsy at the assembly over which she presided" (636).[11] The narrator declines to elaborate further on Becky's elevation to the *bon ton*, calling attention to Thackeray's belief that authors should choose their subjects from their own experience and observation: "As I cannot describe the mysteries of freemasonry, although I have a shrewd idea that it is a humbug: so an uninitiated man cannot take upon himself to portray the great world accurately, and had best keep his opinions to himself whatever they are" (637). By placing his narrator just beyond the pale of fashionable knowledge,

Thackeray attempts to distance himself from other fashionable novelists who betray their own humble origins through inaccurate depictions of scenes which they have never observed.

Thackeray's treatment of Becky's debut is extremely important in demonstrating his parodic technique. Thackeray inverts convention in two important ways: not only does he allow Becky, a parvenu and a Bohemian, to enter the last bastion of the Exclusives with relative ease, but he deliberately downplays this amazing success, which would be the climax of any other fashionable novel. In this way, Thackeray seems to be confirming the truth of Lord Steyne's warning that Becky's expectations for high society are too high; she will find the *bon ton* disappointing, even boring. However, modern readers may not realize that Steyne's accurate prediction would not have surprised Victorian audiences. Becky's trajectory—"Her success excited, elated, and then bored her" (637)—is a familiar one to the readers of Edgeworth's *Belinda* and Gore's *Women as They Are*.[12] I emphasize this brief episode in *Vanity Fair* because it illustrates how essential knowledge of the fashionable novel is for Thackeray scholars who wish to analyze his parody. Without an understanding of Almack's and its representation in the fashionable novel, the social significance of Becky's entrance and Thackeray's deliberate choice *not* to emphasize it are utterly lost on the reader.

Vanity Fair and the Society Novel

Vanity Fair's true relationship to fashionable novels has been obscured by the mistaken assumption that all such texts are dandy novels, like Edward Bulwer's *Pelham* and Benjamin Disraeli's *Vivian Grey*. But, as I argue in an earlier chapter, the dandy novel is not a synonym for fashionable novel but a subset of the larger genre. In his preface to the Oxford World Classic

edition of *Pendennis*, John Sutherland gives us an important clue that *Vanity Fair* has been compared to the wrong models:

> *Vanity Fair* had been panoramic in method, a sweeping picture of a whole society. . . . Ask who the hero(ine) is, and you come up with at least four candidates. *Pendennis* was to be narrower in its perspective. Thackeray intended his new novel to follow the moral and sentimental education of an *homme sensuel moyen* (as George Saintsbury puts it)—an average young man of normal sensibility. (x)

In other words, *Pendennis*, written in the tradition of the Bildungsroman, is the true successor to *Pelham* and *Vivian Grey*, whereas *Vanity Fair*, "a sweeping picture of a whole society," belongs to a different category altogether: the society novel, popularized by Catherine Gore.

Robert Colby, Vineta Colby, and Winifred Hughes have all noted striking similarities in plot and character between *Vanity Fair* and *The Hamiltons*, one of Gore's best society novels. Vineta Colby writes:

> The parallels between *The Hamiltons* and *Vanity Fair* are coincidental but remarkable.[13] In both there are pairs of foils—a sweetly innocent heroine and a worldly woman who seduces the other's husband; a "playboy" hero who betrays his wife and dies in a duel; and a stolid family friend who patiently woos and wins the now widowed heroine. In both novels the corrupt scene of the last days of the Georges is the background, and the destinies of the characters are to a degree affected by political developments. (83-84)

The "playboy" Augustus Hamilton is by no means the hero of *The Hamiltons*, but otherwise Colby accurately traces these fundamental similarities. However, *The Hamiltons* and *Vanity Fair* share more than a basic plot structure and character types.

In writing a novel without a hero, Thackeray borrows the form of the society novel itself, which emphasizes families and communities rather than individuals. Although some protagonists are more central than others, none is permitted great moral superiority. Both *Vanity Fair* and *The Hamiltons* work to undermine the claims of even the most convincing candidates for a hero. Dobbin is more generous and decent than most of the citizens of Vanity Fair, but he lacks the personal attractiveness, proper manners, and self-assurance to be a conventional hero. Bernard Forbes, the hero-candidate for *The Hamiltons*, presents a number of parallels to Dobbin: his unprepossessing appearance and brusque manner repulse the woman he loves, who prefers a lesser man with greater polish and suavity. Bernard has no tolerance for smooth hypocrisy, but his own rough honesty makes him unpopular. Although both men suffer in seeing their beloved marry a self-involved dandy, Bernard is more fortunate in that he discovers another young woman more capable of valuing and returning his love. After his marriage to Marcia, Susan's sister, Bernard loses his roughness and becomes Gore's version of a perfect politician, one who gives equal weight to his domestic and parliamentary duties. Gore presents the reform-minded Bernard Forbes as a foil to Lord Laxington, the inflexible Tory minister, and to Augustus Hamilton, the corrupt placeman; however, Bernard hovers around the periphery of the text, never becoming central enough to qualify as a true hero.

Gore also anticipates Thackeray in challenging the conventional qualities of a heroine—softness, naïveté, submissiveness—in her protagonist Susan Hamilton, who bears a striking resemblance to Amelia Osborne. Susan has a very limited understanding of politics (damning in

such a political novel); she resents her husband's neglect but sacrifices herself to his idealized memory after his death; and she is slow to recognize the obvious merit of the most heroic men in the text, Bernard Forbes and his disciple Lord Claneustace.[14] We have sympathy for Dobbin, Susan, and Amelia because they are gentle, kind, and long-suffering, but Thackeray and Gore never let us forget that these characters are largely responsible for creating their own misery; they are sinning as well as sinned against. Thus Thackeray remains well within the tradition of the society novel in writing his novel without a hero.

Thackeray's scornful attitude towards dandies is frequently cited as further evidence of *Vanity Fair*'s departure from the convention of the fashionable novel. However, the society novel is critical, even to the point of hostility, of the dandy, whose egotism, ambition, and competitive nature are at odds with the values of the female fashionable novel. Augustus Hamilton, the villain of Gore's *The Hamiltons*, is used for sinister rather than comic effect, but otherwise he is quite similar to George Osborne—handsome, carelessly flirtatious, socially ambitious, indolent. In both cases, the dandy is persuaded to marry the milk-and-water heroine by flattering himself that she is dying for love of him and that defying his disapproving father would be a grand, noble gesture. However, neither Augustus nor George settles willingly into domestic life, which redeems the dandy in masculine and feminine fashionable novels alike. Both die violently, seemingly as punishment for their resistance to domesticity: Augustus is killed in a duel with his mistress's husband, and George dies in battle soon after asking Becky to run away with him. Ironically, after their deaths, Augustus and George are elevated into household gods, at last contained in the domestic space.

In contrast, Rawdon Crawley is especially happy early in his marriage to Becky, and his relationships with his son and sister-in-law give him new appreciation for home life and

domestic affections. Rawdon's reform is also consistent with society novel conventions. For example, William Launceston, the heroine's brother in Gore's novel *Pin Money*, makes a convincing bid for heroic status only after he drops his dandiacal pretensions and acknowledges the primacy of home and family.[15] By making Rawdon's domestic goddess a saintly sister-in-law instead of a wife, Thackeray invests his dandy's salvation with greater pathos and religious resonance than William's romantic rescue, but both Gore and Thackeray comply with the society novel's insistence that the dandy must be absorbed into domesticity or perish outside its gate.[16]

Kathleen Tillotson declares, "Becky is a wholly new kind of heroine . . . . one of those characters—like Chaucer's Pardoner—who can fully engage our aesthetic sympathies while defying most of our moral ones" (246). Becky is scheming, deceitful, self-centered, and callous; she cheerfully sacrifices her husband and son to her social ambitions, and she may well be an adulteress. Yet she captivates our interest and, like the narrator, we prefer to shroud Becky's actions in mystery, wanting to believe her claim that, with five thousand pounds a year, she could have been a good woman. Long before *Vanity Fair*, however, readers discovered that Catherine Gore's bad girls were far more complex, entertaining, and attractive than her domestic angels.[17] For example, Minnie Willingham is the intended heroine of Gore's 1831 novel *Mothers and Daughters*, but this Cinderella figure is consistently upstaged by her mother, Lady Maria, who piques our interest from the novel's opening statement:

> Lady Maria Willingham was a person who, with indifferent features, had always managed to be called pretty; with very moderate abilities, had maintained the reputation of being extremely clever; and with a narrow selfish heart, was continually cited as the most excellent woman in the world. The tact which had

> thus universally enabled her to assume a virtue where she had it not, was of course a qualification of no feeble force. (1)

Lady Maria's careful manipulation of appearances, skillful gamesmanship, and resourcefulness make her a kind of proto-Becky Sharp. We are pleased that Minnie's loyalty, generosity, and unaffected kindness are finally rewarded with a sudden inheritance and marriage to a deserving young man, but we are more anxious to discover whether Lady Maria's schemes will succeed or her machinations will be discovered and denounced.

Like Becky, Lady Maria is frequently characterized as a military strategist and associated with Napoleon. Eleanor's appreciation of her mother's "generalship" parallels Rawdon Crawley's sincere belief that his wife is "fit to be Commander-in-Chief."[18] Indeed, the two women's professionalism in conflict is one of their most attractive shared traits. They can appreciate a worthy opponent (Lady Maria rejoices at an opportunity to "rub the rust from her obsolete weapons of offence and defence") and admire the skill of the victor even as they are bested (Becky recognizes Dobbin's attempt to separate her from Amelia as "an open move in the game, and played fairly").[19] Lady Maria's struggle with her sister-in-law, Mrs. Joseph Willingham, for pride of place in old Sir Claude Willingham's will is described in martial terms, similar to Becky's contest with Mrs. Bute Crawley and Miss Briggs for the favor of wealthy Miss Crawley. Ultimately, both household battles are won by superior finesse rather than brute strength or domestic competence. Their bourgeois opponents cannot compete with Lady Maria and Becky, who can amuse an elderly aristocrat with Continental glamour and fashionable gossip. After the death of her husband and son, Lady Maria realizes that her own future security depends upon the matrimonial prospects of her daughters, two of whom will soon be of age. The narrator's comment on Lady Maria's new appreciation for her long-neglected daughters might

serve as well for Becky Sharp: “It is astonishing with what facility selfish people can transfer such affections as they have to bestow to the objects best calculated to advance their interests and favour their views” (44).

Lady Maria and Becky Sharp represent a striking feature of the society novel: the most fully realized and engaging characters are usually not heroic; indeed, they are often not even likable. But they represent the dialogic nature of this genre, opening up the text to alternative views and reminding the reader that no happy ending can comprehend and satisfy an entire community. The process of reform entails discomfort, uncertainty, and in some cases loss of privilege. Although Thackeray’s lament “Which of us has his desire? or, having it, is content?” (*VF* 878) appears cynical, it is a fitting motto for the open-ended society novel, which admits that the text must conclude before society reaches that stage of perfection towards which it is slowly moving.

Pendennis **and the Dandy Novel**

In beginning *Pendennis*, Thackeray was aware of a profound shift in his sentiments away from *Vanity Fair*. He confessed to a friend, “I am beginning to see the folly of my ways & that people are a hundred times more frank, kind and good-natured than a certain author chooses to paint them. He shan’t wear yellow anymore: it is he who is jaundiced and not the world that is bitter” (qtd. in R. Colby, *FP* 139). One indication of Thackeray’s mellowing is a new sympathy for dandies, a group savagely satirized in *Vanity Fair*. Pen’s fastidiousness of dress is frequently but affectionately mocked as a typical and ultimately harmless affectation of youth. Similarly, Thackeray’s laughter at Major Pendennis’s pains to maintain his dandiacal standards into old age is more gentle and rueful than unkind. For all his superficiality, the major is a sympathetic

character, capable of sincere attachment. As Warrington observes to Pen, "There is kindness about the old heathen . . . . He cares for somebody besides himself, at least for some other part of himself besides that which is buttoned into his own coat;--for you and your race" (899).

Critics have suggested that Thackeray was more disposed to be generous to his rivals and to society at large after the success of *Vanity Fair*. Robert Colby observes, "Juvenal has given way to Horace. Now accepted by the public that had ignored or been indifferent to him, Thackeray could relax his indignation" (*FP* 139). I suggest that Thackeray had shifted his novelistic mode as well, and that *Pendennis* is written in the tradition of the dandy novel as modified by Catherine Gore. Robert Colby and Claire Nicolay lay the groundwork for this assertion. Colby has argued that *Pendennis* is more characteristic of the fashionable novel "as it eventually developed" than *Vanity Fair*, and in support of this argument, he carefully draws parallels between *Pendennis* and *Vivian Grey*, *Pelham*, *Cecil,* and T. H. Lister's *Granby*.[20] (Clearly, Colby considers the dandy Bildungsroman the dominant type of fashionable novel.) Claire Nicolay, focusing on the similarities between *Cecil* and *Pendennis*, also notes their debt to the masculine fashionable novel: "Like *Pelham* and *Vivian Grey* a generation before, these novels use the dandy as a convenient example of upward mobility and pre-modern cultural values. They also present dandyism as a technique to be employed by the individual male fighting for prestige in a relatively fluid society" (291).[21] However, Nicolay stresses that Thackeray's greatest debt is to Gore: "*Pendennis* directly responds to *Cecil*'s intellectual provocations in an almost conversational way, often reinforcing or building upon Gore's ideas" (290).[22] Perhaps the most important strategy Thackeray receives from Gore is the ability to play the masculine and feminine forms of the fashionable novel against one another.

Like the *Cecil* books, *Pendennis* achieves a parodic effect by applying the values of a society novel to the universe of a dandy novel. In many ways, Pen and Cecil are typical dandy heroes: they initially appear as vain, self-centered coxcombs, but their experience and moral growth (limited in Cecil's case) promise the fulfillment of their ambition to become "great men," although the texts define a "great man" in different and ironic ways. However, the larger narrative privileges the values of feminine fashionable novels: ultimately, the domestic affections are more important than social or professional success, integrity is nobler than ambition and victory, and the hero works to secure the good of others rather than his own selfish desires.[23]

The dandy novel identifies a seat in Parliament as the great signifier of personal success and moral worth. Vivian Grey, Henry Pelham, and Arthur Pendennis all fail in their initial attempts because, according to the dandy novel conventions, they are not yet worthy of the place. After the collapse of Vivian's Carabas party (which articulates no platform except to convince its members of Vivian's suavity and eloquence), Vivian gives up and retreats to the Continent, where Beckendorff chides him for being so faithless to his own ideas of greatness. Similarly, Pelham and Pendennis are unsuccessful because they regard their campaigns solely as popularity contests and attempt to sway voters by force of wit, condescension, and personal charm.[24] Chastened by experience and impressed with the seriousness of governance, Pelham and Pendennis retreat to the country with their wives to study political economy and prepare for another, more successful election.[25]

Cecil also enters Parliament, taking his seat in the Upper House after succeeding to the title of Lord Ormington. The tarnished hero redeems himself by condemning the Tory party and the beau monde (of which he is an emblem) and praising the movement towards reform. Cecil also praises William IV, "by whose concessions, the country was secured from a revolution, and

the cause of Civil and Religious Liberty advanced more surely than by the precipitate enfranchisements of all the revolutions in the world" (*Peer* 1.131). In espousing gradual reform rather than violent revolution and admiring, if not participating in, domestic life, the narrator reveals the values of the society novel underlying the veneer of the dandy novel.[26]

Pen does not declare intentions of specific reform (except a vague desire to come out strong upon the Sanitary and Colonization questions), but Laura and his mother ultimately persuade him to accept the society novel's view of politics. Like Vivian Grey, Pen only wants to enter Parliament in order to distinguish himself, but Laura demands action: "I suppose such a clever man as you intend to do a great deal of good in the country, by going into Parliament, or you would not wish to be there. What are you going to do when you are in the House of Commons?" (864). During his canvassing, he walks past his childhood home, Fairoaks. The cottage's association with his dead mother provokes feelings of doubt and shame about his present course of ambition and the hypocrisy with which he has been ingratiating himself with the community:

> There still used to be a light in the windows of the room which he remembered so well, and in which the saint who loved him had passed so many hours of care and yearning and prayer. He turned away his gaze from the faint light which seemed to pursue him with its wan, reproachful gaze, as though it was his mother's spirit watching and warning. (842-43)

Although we know little about Pen's second candidacy, we are led to believe that he is successful because he has learned the lessons of the society novel; he has become a genuine member of the community to which he once believed himself superior, and his old rival Bowes is his most avid supporter and canvasser.

Vineta Colby claims that "Mrs. Gore lacked the judicial wit, objectivity, and urbanity of Thackeray, but she had an eye as coolly critical as his, though her voice was shriller" (47). Gore's satire seems sharper and angrier than Thackeray's and less frequently softened by sentimentality. Thackeray makes allowances for good intentions; Gore focuses on consequences. The narrator gently mocks Pen's egotism and the Major's self-delusions, but Cecil consistently incriminates himself through his narrative and his behavior. When Pen acts callously towards women, they suffer for a time, turn to a sympathetic friend, and recover their cheerful equanimity. Fanny Bolton consoles herself with Sam, and Laura is only prevented from marrying Warrington by the unhappy fact that his estranged wife is still living. Cecil's cavalier behavior, on the other hand, has far more destructive consequences. Not only does he pride himself on "woman-slaughter," which unfortunately turns out to be literal, but he is implicated in the deaths of his nephew, his sister-in-law, and his brother as well. Although he is only accidentally and indirectly responsible for each tragedy, there is no escaping the fact that Cecil plays a role in disposing of all of the people who would prevent him from becoming Lord Ormington.

Gore ultimately punishes her dandy hero by allowing him to succeed according to the dandy novel's values: he becomes a peer, enters Parliament, and is at liberty to study his favorite subject—himself—at length, only to discover the superficiality of his desires.

The illegitimate product of a corrupt society, Cecil destroys the family he loves and dooms himself to isolation. A confirmed bachelor, he is cut off from the domesticity he has learned to appreciate. A walking anachronism, Cecil has outlived his era and the values it represented—artifice, exclusivism, refined sensual appetites, and glorious inutility. Cecil finally withdraws to his estate, where he can do no more damage to society.

Pendennis does not insist upon the dandy's inutility and show his desires to be antithetical to the good of society, as *Cecil* does. The dandy may be domesticated, harmless, even useful, if he can chasten his ego and rein in his ambitions. Rather than insist that his old flames break their hearts over his desertion, Pen does what he can to further their domestic happiness. He declines any opportunity to damage Lady Mirabel's (the former Emily Costigan) reputation in society by exposing her drunken father, he counsels Blanche to reveal her secrets to her wealthy fiancé, and he persuades Mr. Huxter to accept Fanny Bolton as his daughter-in-law. After declining Sir Francis's seat in Parliament as a bribe, Pen enters a legitimate election and becomes the member for the county. He is even granted approval for his dandyism.

> Warrington looked with good-natured interest at the young fellow dandifying himself up to a pitch of completeness; and appearing at length in a gorgeous shirt-front and neckcloth, fresh gloves, and glistening boots. . . . "Well, young un," said he simply, "I like you to be a buck, somehow. When I walk about with you, it is as if I had a rose in my button-hole. And you are still affable. I don't think there is any young fellow in the Temple turns out like you; and I don't believe you were ever ashamed of walking with me yet." (900-901)

Claire Nicolay observes: "As long as Pen remains 'affable' to his fellow man, his devotion to dress may be considered acceptable, even desirable. It is a charming if unnecessary flourish, and a cultural link to the past" (295-96). Thus Thackeray discovers that by upholding the values of the society novel, he is able to make the dandy novel respectable.

Thackeray and Gore

As this chapter has shown, Thackeray's literary relationship with Catherine Gore is a vexed one. Although Rosa claims that the canonical author "despised" her novels, and Thackeray himself denied her influence on several occasions, scholars have begun to recognize the ambivalence of admiration, irritation, collegiality, and professional jealousy with which Thackeray regarded the older and (initially) more successful novelist. For example, Vineta Colby calls Thackeray "Mrs. Gore's most distinguished novelist-disciple . . . who met her on her own fictional ground" (83). Catherine Peters opines that Thackeray "was sharper in his attack on Mrs. Gore, whose literary concerns were closer to his own" (134), than on Charles Lever and G.P.R. James, all of whom he parodied in his series of *Novels by Eminent Hands*. Lever's works focused on military exploits and James was a popular historical novelist, but as a close observer of class struggle in contemporary English society, Gore was the greatest rival and potential threat to Thackeray's own literary identity. Robert Colby agrees that "Mrs. Gore was actually the novelist of his time with whom Thackeray felt the closest affinity" (*FP* 163), which accounts for both his earlier envy and their later friendship.

A comparison of Thackeray's critical responses to Gore before and after the success of *Vanity Fair* in 1847 reveals the truth of these assertions. Thackeray's ambivalence is most evident in an 1846 review of *Sketches of English Character*. His essay begins with somewhat backhanded praise: "How Mrs. Gore can write so much, so often, and so well, must have been a question often ere this asked with wonder by every frequenter of the circulating library" (*Contributions* 139)—but not, we notice, by literary reviewers and critics. He continues in a more complimentary vein:

> She is the most productive of English writers . . . . And what surprises one is not merely the quantity but the quality of her performances. How does she come by her knowledge is the wonder. She knows things which were supposed hitherto to be as much out of the reach of female experience as shaving, duelling, or the bass viol. (139)

However, Thackeray turns the tables by using Gore's "perfectly frightful" knowledge of male territories and pursuits (such as clubs and gambling) as evidence that her mind is "coarse and utterly worldly" (140). Finally, he professes great weariness with Gore's subject and finds little humor or pleasure in her treatment of it:

> Supposing that Pall-mall were the world, and human life finished with the season, and Heaven were truffled turkies and the Opera, and duty and ambition were bounded in dressing well and getting tickets to Lady Londonderry's dancing teas, Mrs. Gore's "Sketches of Character" might be a good guide book. And we are wrong in saying it has no moral: the moral is that which very likely the author intended—that entire weariness, contempt, and dislike which the reader must undergo after this introduction to what is called the world. If it be as here represented, the world is the most hollow, heartless, vulgar, brazen world, and those are luckiest who are out of it. (142)[27]

However, when *Sketches of English Character* was reprinted in 1852, Thackeray praised the realism and accuracy of her satire:

> I also think I perceive likenesses of myself in the Standard Footman, in Sir Oswald Moody, in the Plausible Man, in Felix Flutter, and the Linkboy. Cruel woman! Why do you take off our likenesses in that way? Reddicule you know I

> can't abear—except at other people's expense. Them books are like meddicle whirks[.] You can't read 'em but you fancy you have every one of the maladies written about. (*Letters* 3.74).

Similarly, in 1845, Thackeray obliquely characterized Gore as a kind of fashionable pimp: "Whenever this clever author writes fictions, she is sure to introduce us to the very best of company. We move in a select circle of lords and ladies . . . and who would not pay five shillings to be presented to such 'distinguished society'?" (*Contributions* 104).[28] However, a mere six years later, Thackeray repented his earlier harshness and offered a retraction:

> And I think some critics who carped at some writers for talking too much about fine company ought to hold their tongues. If you live with great folks, why should you not describe their manners? There is nothing in the least strained in these descriptions as I now think—and believe it was only a secret envy & black malignity of disposition w^{h} made me say in former times this author is talking too much about grand people, this author is of the silver fork school, this author uses too much French &c. (*Letters* 2.724)

Although his parody of Gore is well-known, only a few scholars have acknowledged Thackeray's warm friendship with Gore; he visited her family in the country, commiserated with her about writer's block and financial difficulties, flirted with her daughter, and wrote a letter of introduction for her son when the young man traveled to America. Nevertheless, he continued to tease Gore about her fondness for French phrases and stoutly denied any hint that she had influenced his writing. In a letter dated August 27, 1860, Thackeray demands:

> What is this about a Preface to a Certain 'Banker's Wife' the author of wh[ich] novel, the girls tell me, hints that I took Colonel Newcome from one of her

> characters? Half of Colonel Newcome is down stairs now—the other half is in London and as for the Banker's wife, Madam, I would have you to know that I have no more read it than I have read Newton's Principia. (*Letters* 3.196)[29]

Despite his protestations, however, it is clear that Thackeray borrowed heavily from Gore and from the fashionable novel. Robert Colby argues that even the title of *Vanity Fair* is a pastiche of Gore's popular works: "Put together some of these—*The Fair of Mayfair, The Sketch Book of Fashion, Sketches of English Characters*—and one has just about arrived at the original title of Thackeray's first masterpiece: *Vanity Fair: Pen and Pencil Sketches of English Society*" (*FP* 164). Rather than challenge Gore and her colleagues directly, however, *Vanity Fair* sets up a straw figure of "the popular novelist." For example, Thackeray congratulates himself on avoiding the narrative strategy of ending a heroine's story with a wedding:

> As his hero and heroine pass the matrimonial barrier, the novelist generally drops the curtain, as if the drama were over then: the doubts and struggles of life ended: as if, once landed in the marriage country, all were green and pleasant there: and wife and husband had nothing but to link each other's arms together, and wander gently downwards towards old age in happy and perfect fruition. (*VF* 319)

Thackeray claims to be unique in relating a heroine's unhappy experience after marriage, conveniently forgetting about Catherine Gore's novels, in which domestic infelicity is a favorite theme. Indeed, Gore's common practice, established in her very first fashionable novel, *Women as They Are; or, The Manners of the Day* (1830), is to begin rather than end with the heroine's marriage. Peters commends Thackeray for his commitment to a "realistic" portrayal of marriage, but Gore deserves similar credit; she is especially deft in showing how easily misunderstanding and miscommunication can escalate into seemingly insurmountable obstacles. And although

Gore is more committed to conventional happy endings than Thackeray,[30] she is more skillful in depicting marital discord without casting one spouse as a villain and the other as a doormat.

Gore may also deserve credit for anticipating another of Thackeray's novelistic "innovations" to the fashionable novel: using the historical setting for resonance and social commentary rather than as an excuse to introduce famous personalities into his text. In his Introduction to the *Vanity Fair*, Sutherland observes:

> Thackeray dwarfs a major novelistic event (the marriage of two principal characters) by throwing gigantic historical shadows across their bridal path. Examples can be found where—for artistic effect—he does just the opposite . . . . the dizzying European crisis of 1813 –14 is shrunk by reflection in Amelia's preoccupation about her engagement to George. (xviii)

Gore anticipates Thackeray in using the same techniques to show the interplay between significant historical events and private lives. For example, the major crisis in the plot of *The Hamiltons*—Susan's discovery of her husband's long-standing affair and illegitimate son—is overshadowed by the social upheaval accompanying the passage of the First Reform Bill. Susan feels the insignificance of her own pain at such a critical moment in national history; reluctantly, she decides that she cannot leave the house of her father-in-law, the Tory minister, at the moment of his most crushing blow, nor can she abandon her husband to the very real threats of violence from a long-oppressed underclass. At other times, the personal trumps the political. The passing of George IV is diminished by Susan's (and the narrator's) preoccupation with the death of her child.

Even though Thackeray scholars like Gordon N. Ray, Robert Colby, and John Sutherland have attempted to do justice to Catherine Gore, a double standard of criticism still exists.

Thackeray's use of time-specific details is applauded as an effective means of establishing historical setting and commenting on social change, whereas Gore's use of the same strategy is described as "name-dropping" and deplored as evidence of her consumerist snobbery. Discussions of Gore's works invariably include reference to the *Westminster Review*'s dismissal of *Pin Money* as a "London directory." Although the review itself is quite witty at Gore's expense, it utterly fails to recognize Gore's comic use of topicalities as a means of characterization.

Although both Gore and Thackeray depended on their writing for income, Thackeray is usually said to have served a long apprenticeship, whereas Gore is commonly described as a hack writer.[31] Vineta Colby writes:

> The "intention" of the "silver-fork" novelists was probably no more than to sell books to a public hungry for reading about fashionable life. They were, to a man (and a woman), literary hacks—whether aristocratically born like young Edward Bulwer Lord Lytton, or ambitiously climbing into society like young Disraeli, or exploiting it from some special inside knowledge like Lady Charlotte Bury, or clinging to its outer fringes like Lady Blessington, or simply in need of money for their families like Theodore Hook and Mrs. Gore. Their perceptions about life were therefore probably more accidental and intuitive than the result of careful scrutiny. The value of these perceptions, however, is in no way diminished, for these novelists were conscientious, shrewd, and sophisticated. They recognized, long before the professional psychologists and sociologists did, that a life style reflects human character and often shapes human destiny. (55)

One might ask why a professional writer's perceptions about life should be "more accidental" than a dilettante's. Colby seems very unwilling to admit that someone writing for money might have a carefully thought out philosophy, wish to convey any kind of social or intellectual message, or deliberately create a work of artistic value. It is interesting that Colby stresses Thackeray's artistry while conveniently forgetting that he too was a professional writer anxious to make money.

As professional authors, both Gore and Thackeray occasionally became resentful of the exigencies of the literary marketplace. However, scholars apologize for Thackeray's disparaging comments about authors by pointing to his anxiety about social status: Thackeray had been born a gentleman, but his family's reduced fortunes obliged him to earn his living. Thackeray's well-known statement in *Pendennis* that "there are no race of people who talk about books, or, perhaps, who read books, so little as literary men" (440) is accepted as momentary irritation rather than a self-incriminating statement.[32] On the other hand, Gore's self-effacing remark "I was a reader of rubbish long before I became a writer of it" is commonly read as an admission that Gore was ashamed of her fashionable novels (qtd. in Gettmann 71).[33] However, the context of this statement leads to a very different interpretation. In a letter to her publishers Colburn and Bentley, Gore explains why she will not provide a key for her novel *Mothers and Daughters*: "As I was a reader of rubbish long before I became a writer of it, I beg to assure you that these 'Keys' are very injurious things" (71). In explaining how the key might actually damage the sale and reputation of her novel, Gore deliberately adopts a self-deprecating tone in order to lessen the sting of a flat refusal to comply with her publishers' demands. In this context, Gore's statement suggests that, far from disparaging her novels, she took pride in her work and was anxious to secure its success.

Linda Hutcheon defines parody as "repetition with critical distance, which marks difference rather than similarity" (6), but our old ideas of parody as comic ridicule have led us to insist too strenuously upon Thackeray's difference from Gore and her colleagues. Indeed, we know so little about the fashionable novel that we cannot even recognize its similarities to Thackeray's works or accurately measure Thackeray's critical distance from his models.[34] Let us return to Juliet McMaster's study of *Novels by Eminent Hands* for an example of how our ability to decode Thackeray's parody is hampered by Catherine Gore's marginalized status. Despite her painstaking efforts as an annotator, McMaster is not familiar enough with Gore's work to discuss Thackeray's engagement with it in the same detail she devotes to similar discussions of Bulwer and Disraeli. Unsure of which of Gore's novels is the primary target, McMaster erroneously includes Thackeray's parody of her in the list of original novels: "I am necessarily discussing not only *Novels by Eminent Hands*, but *Eugene Aram*, *Coningsby, Lords and Liveries, Charles O'Malley,* and so on . . ." (311). McMaster explains Thackeray's method of attacking the parodees' sins against realism—"various kinds of inflation and distortion" (311)—and their characteristic abuses of syntax and vocabulary, but Gore is conspicuously absent from both of these discussions, although the critic lists specific examples from the other authors' works.

McMaster's discussion of "Lords and Liveries" further betrays her lack of familiarity with Gore's admittedly large corpus. She identifies *Peers and Parvenus* (1846) as the most specific target of the parody, but Thackeray is actually imitating Gore's earlier works.[35] As explained in Chapter 1 of this dissertation, the plot of "Lords and Liveries" is very similar to that of *Pin Money* (1831), and the opening line of the parody is almost plagiarized from the Gore's first novel, *Women as They Are*, as the following comparison will show:

> "Who in heaven's name was that beautiful creature to whom Harberton was talking last night in Lady Danvers's box?" inquired Lord Barton of General Ross—a gossip established on the *pavé* for the last three generations—as they lounged together in the window of the most exclusive club in all St. James's Street. (*Women* 1.64)

> "Corbleu! What a lovely creature that was in the Fitzbattleaxe box to-night!" said one of a group of young dandies who were leaning over the velvet-cushioned balconies of the "Coventry Club," smoking their full-flavoured Cubas (from Hudson's) after the opera. (*Works* 15.60)

McMaster correctly identifies Gore's literary excesses—a gratuitous use of foreign phrases, a fondness for actual brand-names and merchants, and a tendency towards conventional moralizing—which Thackeray both spoofs in "Lords and Liveries" and imitates in his own work. However, the scholar fails to recognize that Gore's actual practices are closer to Thackeray's than to his exaggerations. McMaster wishes to address "an important aspect of intertextuality in Thackeray's major work" (311), but how is this possible when scholars are unacquainted with Gore's novels?

My purpose here is not to find fault with McMaster's valuable essay but to point out the ways in which Thackeray scholarship has been compromised and left incomplete by readers' lack of familiarity with Gore and the fashionable novel. Furthermore, the equation of parody with ridicule has led scholars to assume that the fashionable novel, so famously parodied by Dickens and Thackeray, is worthy of mockery but not of study. However, as Hutcheon submits, the relationship between parody and original text is not antagonistic; rather, the texts are

mutually dependent: "[Parody's] two voices neither merge nor cancel each other out; they work together, while remaining distinct in their defining difference. In this sense parody might be said to be, at heart, less an aggressive than a conciliatory rhetorical strategy, building upon more than attacking its other, while still retaining its critical distance" (xiv).

Because the pejorative definition of the silver fork novel is constructed on the contemporary criticisms of the genre, a revaluation of the fashionable novel depends upon a new interpretation of its parodies. If Dickens is indebted to the fashionable novelists for the Lady Flabella, he also owes them a debt for Lady Dedlock. Thackeray's novel without a hero gives us a new appreciation for Gore's society novels. At the same time, greater knowledge of Gore and the fashionable novel will give scholars a fuller understanding of the complexities and nuances of *Bleak House*, *Our Mutual Friend*, *Vanity Fair*, and *Pendennis*.

Freedom from prejudice against the fashionable novel allows us to see the genre's important role in the development of the nineteenth-century novel. We no longer feel compelled to insist on a *cordon sanitaire* of legitimacy between canonical authors and fashionable novelists in order to protect "great" writers from contamination. Robert Colby writes that we have had a myopic view of the great authors of the past: "Any appraisal of the major novelists of the nineteenth century is incomplete if it fails to take into account their apprenticeship to fiction as readers, critics, even satirists, of their contemporaries" (*FP* 8). Scholarship on Catherine Gore may be especially valuable in completing our appraisal; as she produced the majority of her works in that murky period between the Romantic and Victorian eras, her corpus acts as a kind of double-hinged door, swinging back to admit the influence of earlier writers like Burney and Edgeworth, and opening forward to anticipate the subject matter and style of later novelists like Dickens and Thackeray.

Notes to Chapter 5

[1] Although Hutcheon's study focuses on twentieth-century art forms, her definition of parody as ironic inversion rather than comic ridicule is applicable to earlier texts. Hutcheon offers a convincing argument that the concept of ridicule is neither included in nor required by the Greek noun *parodia* (usually translated as "counter-song"): "The prefix *para* has two meanings, only one of which is usually mentioned—that of 'counter' or 'against.' Thus parody becomes an opposition or contrast between texts. . . . However, *para* in Greek can also mean 'beside,' and therefore there is a suggestion of an accord or intimacy instead of a contrast" (32).

[2] According to Ray (*Uses of Adversity* 391), Thackeray considered a parody of Dickens as well but decided against it. Dickens himself notes the omission in a letter dated January 9, 1848, after the "Novels by Eminent Hands" had completed its run: "It is curious, about Punch, that I was so strongly impressed by the absurdity and injustice of my being left out of those imitations, that I several times said at home here I would write to you and urge the merits of the case. But I never made up my mind to do so, for I feared you might misunderstand me" (*Letters* 2.336). Dickens further confesses that he does not "admire the design" of the series: "I think it is a great pity to take advantage of the means our calling gives us with such accursed readiness, of at all depreciating or vulgarizing each other—but this seems to me to be one of the main reasons why we are generally more divided among ourselves than artists who have not those means at their command—and . . . I thought your power thrown away on that series, however happily executed" (2.336-37).

[3] Qtd. in Adburgham 70-71. Adburgham dryly quips, "Whether Lord Normanby was aware how neatly this fitted his own work, one can only guess" (71).

[4] Richard Altick regards Gore's late novels as parodies of the fashionable novel, although he notes that they are "sometimes read as genuine examples of the genre" (*PP* 35).

[5] *Cecil, a Peer*, 1.23.

[6] Although McMaster concludes that Thackeray is a practitioner as well as a parodist of the fashionable novel (325), her characterization of his literary education as absorption suggests that any imitation of the fashionable novelists was unconscious. Indeed, the influence of Gore and her colleagues is described as a kind of taint or after-taste: "As the parodies, even when he is most fully immersed in his borrowed identity, smack of Thackeray, so thereafter, even when he is most himself, his own writing has fleeting flavors of Mrs. Gore, of Disraeli, of Charles Lever" (310).

[7] McMaster admits "These are jokes for the cognoscenti" (312), not for the casual reader.

[8] For a discussion of *Vanity Fair*'s use of gossip as narrative model, see G. Armour Craig's "On the Style of *Vanity Fair*" (61).

[9] Rosa's observation that "all the French words in [Ferrier's] *Marriage* and *Inheritance* combined would hardly serve for a single chapter in *Evelina* or *Belinda*" (59) is somewhat misleading. Although Ferrier declared in a letter to her friend and collaborator Charlotte Clavering "I disapprove very decidedly of Frenchifying Lady Ju's conversation . . . it is not, nor has been, I'll answer for it, the least the mode this century" (qtd. in Rosa 58-59), many of her fashionable characters do indulge in this practice. The libertine in *The Inheritance* makes a point of speaking in French or Italian whenever he wishes to pay a compliment, and the narrative voices in *The Inheritance* and *Marriage* rely on French words and phrases like *bouleversement* and *coute qu'il coute* much more frequently than one might expect from Ferrier's declaration.

[10] Even after he had ceased to attack her in print, Thackeray continued to tease Gore about her fondness for Gallicisms. In a letter written in September 1852, he predicts that she will yawn over his latest book: "when you read it you will remark Bon Dieu (you know you often speak French)—in what a state of mind this man must have been when he wrote these thousand dismal pages!" (*Letters* 3.74)

[11] Lady Fitz-Willis, whose name recalls Mr. Willis, the proprietor of Almack's, is clearly meant to be one of the patronesses who issued the much-coveted tickets to the weekly balls. Admittance to Almack's was notoriously difficult and served as the imprimatur of the highest fashion.

[12] Lady Delacour (*Belinda*) and Lady Danvers (*Women as They Are*) both confess that fashionable life, once so exhilarating, has now become tedious. However, these ladies are unwilling to retire from London society because, unlike Becky, they depend entirely upon their status in the *beau monde* to give them identity and self-worth.

[13] Colby accepts Thackeray's claim not to have read *The Hamiltons* until 1850, when it appeared in a new edition, and calls the similarities between Gore's novel and *Vanity Fair* coincidental. However, Winifred Hughes is skeptical of Thackeray's denial, pointing to the detailed knowledge of Gore's works that Thackeray displays in his reviews and parodies prior to the publication of *Vanity Fair*. See Hughes, "Mindless Millinery: Catherine Gore and the Silver Fork Heroine," 176. Since Thackeray admits in the autobiographical *Pendennis* that his works were frequently influenced by forgotten or unacknowledged sources, it is possible that he did read *The Hamiltons* earlier. Thus Gore may well have exerted far greater influence than Thackeray acknowledged or scholars have discovered.

[14] Since the society novel questions heroism, it may be more appropriate to call Forbes and Claneustace the least blameworthy (rather than the most heroic) men in the text.

[15] Early in the novel, Launceston announces to his mother that he must marry an heiress to save himself from debt: "I shall come to town early in the winter, get a card for the city-assembly, and bring you home a daughter from Aldermanbury, with a dowry of a Persian princess and the dialect of a hackney-coachman" (*Pin Money* 12). Launceston's financial condition does not change, but his priorities do: ultimately, he refuses to marry anyone but "Miss Elbany," whom he believes to be the daughter of a clergyman in reduced circumstances.

[16] In a way, Rawdon does both. Early in his marriage to Rebecca, Rawdon delights in their domestic life, which begins his transformation from a dandy-caricature to a sympathetic character. However, when Rawdon discovers evidence of Becky's treachery, their domestic arrangements are destroyed and he accepts an appointment as Governor of Coventry Island. Thus, Rawdon is quite literally "sent to Coventry," a polite phrase used in fashionable novels to mean wishing someone in hell.

[17] This trend is also apparent in early fashionable novels like Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda*, in which the dashing, cynical Lady Delacour completely overshadows the prudent and reserved heroine.

[18] *Mothers and Daughters*, 55; *Vanity Fair*, 190.

[19] *Mothers and Daughters*, 25; *Vanity Fair*, 853.

[20] T. H. Lister's *Granby* is not a typical dandy novel, since the essential dandy figure is not the hero but one of his antagonists. The machiavellian Trebeck, modeled on Beau Brummell, consistently upstages the less glamorous hero, Henry Granby.

[21] Winifred Hughes and Claire Nicolay both treat the sequel to *Cecil* as if it were part of the original novel, and other scholars conflate the two novels without realizing it. For example, Rosa mistakenly places the deathbed confession of Cecil's illegitimacy in *Cecil* although it actually sets the plot of *Cecil, a Peer* in action. *Vivian Grey* (the second volume of which was published one year after the first) establishes a precedent for regarding *Cecil* and *Cecil, a Peer* (both published in 1841) as a single text.

[22] Thackeray's letters show that he was in the habit of visiting and corresponding with Gore during the composition of *Pendennis* (*Letters* 2.694-95, 699, 724-25; 4.425).

[23] Admittedly, it is only in the sequel, *Cecil, a Peer*, that Gore's dandy hero begins helping others rather than destroying them, and he frequently provides assistance without any conscious intent to do so. Still, *Cecil, a Peer* demonstrates allegiance to the altruistic values of the society novel in that Cecil's self-serving schemes are consistently thwarted and redirected to benefit others instead.

[24] In point of fact, the personality-based platforms prove quite successful with the voters, but Thackeray and Gore carry out their moral by preventing their immature heroes from entering Parliament. Pelham wins the election but is turned out almost immediately by his opponent, who charges him with "irregular" electioneering practices. Pendennis, ashamed of his plan to sell himself to Blanche for her stepfather's seat in Parliament, withdraws his candidacy.

[25] *Pelham* actually concludes before the hero begins his new campaign, but the text gives us reason to expect that Pelham will succeed in his next attempt.

[26] *Cecil* and *Cecil, a Peer* uphold the dandy novel's value for political leadership primarily through the figure of Cecil's brother, John Danby, who functions as the moral center of both *Cecil* novels and becomes a powerful, if largely invisible, influence in Parliament. A serious and

thoughtful man, capable of thinking for himself as well as inspiring others, John Danby is one of the very few characters in Gore's corpus whose entry into politics is fully endorsed by the author.

[27] Although he seems scornful of it in Gore's book, Thackeray adopts the same moral in *Vanity Fair*, as he explains in a letter to his mother dated July 2, 1847: "Dont [sic] you see how odious all the people are in the book (with exception of Dobbin)—behind whom all there lies a dark moral I hope. What I want is to make a set of people living without God in the world (only that is a cant phrase) greedy pompous mean perfectly self-satisfied for the most part and at ease about their superior virtue" (*Letters* 2.309).

[28] This statement is taken from a review of Gore's "The Snow Storm, a Tale of Christmas" for the *Morning Chronicle* 31 December 1845.

[29] Thackeray refers to the reissue of Gore's *The Banker's Wife*, first published in 1843.

[30] Despite the conventionally happy endings, Gore's best novels conclude with a sense of discomfort and uncertainty, as Thackeray's do. Although the miserable heroine of *The Hamiltons* is rewarded in the final pages with a seemingly ideal second marriage, the novel itself concludes with a discussion of the pains of reform. The buoyant narrator of the *Cecil* books announces that he has reached the pinnacle of his frivolous ambitions, but the wreckage in his wake makes the reader hesitant to applaud his success. Even the light-hearted *Pin Money*, which ends with an engagement (of the secondary characters) and a reconciliation (between the protagonists), emphasizes the difficulties rather than the joys of married life.

[31] In *Yesterday's Women*, Vineta Colby warns us "It is easy, but unwise, to dismiss [Mrs. Gore, Mrs. Trollope, and Mrs. Oliphant] as mere hacks" (44), yet Colby applies this epithet to Gore not once but twice in this same study.

[32] In his notes to the Oxford edition of *Pendennis*, Sutherland remarks that "it is clear that Thackeray was unusually bad-tempered in this chapter," and he suggests several reasons for this emotional outburst: surprise at Mrs. Brookfield's pregnancy (apparently Thackeray had expected that she would honor his platonic love for her by remaining celibate); irritation with Colburn, who had kept the manuscript of *Vanity Fair* for several months before refusing to publish it; and jealousy of Dickens, whose *David Copperfield* attracted more attention than *Pendennis* (1041).

[33] The entry for Catherine Gore in June and Paul Schlueter's *Encyclopedia of British Women Writers* insists that Gore was deeply ambivalent about her fashionable novels, ashamed of their triviality but dependent on the income they provided (199-200).

[34] As Hutcheon notes, "Of course, parody is clearly a formal phenomenon—a bitextual synthesis or a dialogic relation between texts—but without the consciousness (and then interpretation) of that discursive doubling by the receiver, how could parody actually be said to exist, much less 'work'?" (xiii).

[35] This might well explain why Gore made no response to Thackeray's parody; she may have been flattered rather than offended that he reminded the public of novels more than fifteen years old.

CHAPTER 6: CODA

I have become a champion for Catherine Gore, but I must admit that my first attempt at reading her novels was not an unmixed delight. Although the characters were captivating and the narrative witty, I was uncomfortably aware that I was missing a large part of the joke. I complained at length to my dissertation support group about the difficulty of comprehending, without the benefit of footnotes, a novel as densely peppered with topicalities as any work by Dickens or Thackeray. Encouraged by my auditors' sympathy, I announced melodramatically, "I can't go on until I've read a social history of the early 19th century. The novel's full of all these references to places I've never heard of, and I can't keep stopping to find out why Almack's is so important and what happens at Tattersall's." My friend Angela suddenly brightened. "Tattersall's was where fashionable people bought their horses," she offered helpfully. "And Almack's was an assembly hall where weekly balls were held every Wednesday, but they were very difficult to get into because a group of patronesses like Lady Jersey and Princess Esterhazy were responsible for deciding who could attend, and they were very exclusive." She trailed off when she realized we were all staring at her. I knew she was right; I'd already looked up these particular references. "How do you *know* this?" I demanded. "How do *you* know this?" Not that Angela isn't extremely well-informed, sometimes frighteningly so, but one really doesn't expect medievalists to start spouting factoids about Regency London at the drop of a hat. Looking faintly embarrassed, Angela admitted, "When I was younger, I used to read a lot of Georgette Heyer novels."

Eureka! I forgave my friend her superior knowledge and immediately began a crash course in Georgette Heyer's historical romances. (It is worth noting that the local public library, which boasts an entire shelf of Heyer novels, was of far greater assistance than the University of Georgia library.) After devouring *Regency Buck*, *Bath Tangle*, and *Friday's Child*, I was an expert in Regency matters and manners. I understood the function of a tiger and the significance of Carlton House; I apprehended that someone who is "doing it too brown" is exaggerating, perhaps because he is "foxed" or "disguised" after imbibing too heavily at White's; I knew the difference between a Corinthian and a Cyprian and could tell you that the latter was likely to wear muslin, whereas the former would doubtless appear in a coat by Weston. Armed with my wealth of new knowledge, I returned to Gore and was pleasantly surprised at how intelligible now seemed the numerous topicalities that had so frustrated me. I told my colleagues jokingly that I had to read early 20th-century popular literature in order to understand early 19th-century popular literature, little realizing the truth and implications of that statement.

In my conversations about my dissertation project with laypersons (by which I mean anyone who is not a professor of literature), I have come to expect the question: "So what's the fashionable novel like?" by which they mean "What is the modern-day parallel to the fashionable novel?" Professors of literature, by contrast, don't ask the question because they feel they know the answer. The traditionalists mention Danielle Steele and Judith Krantz, politely suppressing a sneer; twentieth-century Americanists nod wisely and say, "Ah, like Edith Wharton." Those who suspect a likeness to Harlequin romances register surprise and then remember pressing business elsewhere.

As Neil Postman (borrowing heavily from I. A. Richards) has argued in *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, metaphors are the way in which we make meaning; our choice of metaphor

both facilitates and limits our understanding by determining what we see and, perhaps more important, what we can *not* see. As I point out in chapter 1, our dominant metaphor for understanding the nineteenth-century fashionable novel has been the Regency romance, as suggested by Bonnie Anderson and Winifred Hughes. Even though this dissertation challenges the validity of this analogue, there are several important parallels between Georgette Heyer and Catherine Gore, particularly in their popular reception and reputation, that make the specific example of Heyer worth exploring.

Georgette Heyer and Catherine Gore

Like Gore, Georgette Heyer wrote in several genres but became so closely associated with one that her other work (including her much-praised detective fiction) has been largely forgotten. That Heyer cannot escape her association with the Regency is evident from the cover art of recent editions of *These Old Shades* and *Devil's Cub*, both of which feature a couple dressed in Regency costume although the novels are set in earlier periods. Inexcusably, A Book for All Reasons (ABfAR), an online bookseller specializing in "popular fiction from the first half of the 20th century, notably Georgette Heyer," falls into similar error; the website bibliography incorrectly identifies *These Old Shades*, *The Black Moth*, *Devil's Cub*, and *The Transformation of Phillip Jettan* (published later as *Powder and Patch*) as Regency novels, although all are clearly set in the 18th century.

Both women began their literary careers quite early (Heyer published her first novel at age 19) and were compelled by financial necessity to keep up an exhausting rate of production. Although Heyer's husband was an attorney, his business was not a lucrative one and the couple frequently struggled under a heavy tax burden. Aware that her romances sold more consistently

than her other works, Heyer relied on them to pay the bills: "I can see the Bankruptcy Court looming. . . . I must think out a Typical Heyer Romance for instant sale" (qtd. in Hodge 100). Such rapid production pleased fans but not reviewers, who greeted the arrival of each new book with a groan of "another Georgette Heyer." Often, the authors were their own most severe critics: Gore characterized her novels as "rubbish," good enough only to please the patrons of circulating libraries, and Heyer identified herself as "a scribbler of trivial romances" (Hodge 101). It is likely that these writers disparaged their work preemptively, frustrated with readers who appreciated the wrong books or, worse, who liked the right books for the wrong reasons. However, both women were very capable of defending themselves against attack, as Gore did in her letter to Edward Bulwer, and in identifying the most praiseworthy features of their works. Disgusted by her publisher's proposed blurb for *False Colours*, Heyer issued the following directions:

> Talk about my humour if you must talk about me at all! . . . I don't know about my historical *feeling*: I'd prefer a timely word about my exact detail! . . . talk about it's being just the job for people who are fed-up with kitchen sinks and perverts, and want a gay romance, *with* authentic period detail[.] I know it's useless to talk about technique in these degenerate days—but no less a technician than Noel Coward reads me because he says my technique is so good. I'm proud of that. (qtd. in Hodge 152-53)

Kate Fenton, a romance novelist herself, argues that Heyer would have been better received if she had limited herself to writing mysteries: "Any novelist foolhardy enough to write about love is liable to be coupled with Barbara Cartland, particularly if there are bonnets and breeches involved" (par. 11). Indeed, general audiences fail to make any great distinction

between Heyer, Cartland, and a host of less skillful imitators whose novels tend to be in the "bodice-ripper" strain. Certain of these imitators did even more damage to Heyer's reputation by plagiarizing her outright during her most productive years. In 1961, a fan letter warned Heyer that another romance novelist was borrowing rather extensively from her. After she read the work in question, Heyer wrote to her publishers: "I feel compelled to protest against the injustice done me by the author in omitting my name from her list of the works to which she declares herself to be indebted. . . . she owes to me plot, incidents, character, several surnames, and such examples of Regency slang as she has used" (qtd. in Hodge 140-41). Indeed, among the plagiarist's borrowings were the phrase "to make a cake of oneself," which Heyer had discovered in a private letter, and a fictional incident between Beau Brummell and the Prince Regent, which Heyer had wholly invented. Heyer was especially outraged that her fans should accuse her of "publishing shoddy stuff under a pseudonym" (141), but her dislike of publicity made her shrink from bringing a lawsuit or alerting the press.

Jane Aiken Hodge describes three such incidents in her biography of Heyer, but she refrains from identifying the alleged plagiarists. However, Barbara Cartland is a prime suspect. More than one Heyer fan has noted that Barbara Cartland's *Love Me Forever* (1953) closely parallels *These Old Shades* (1923), one of Heyer's most popular novels, in terms of plot and character.[1] While Roger Sales gives no specific example of Cartland's appropriations, his characterization of her as a "literary magpie" certainly lends credence to the charge of plagiarism: "She self-consciously offends against good taste not just by telling the same story over and over again, but also by borrowing details from a whole range of other texts. She clearly does not regard her own texts as being unique or sacred, and appears to feel the same about ones written by other authors" (179). It is no wonder, then, that Cartland claimed to produce as many

as twenty novels a year. Her association with Barbara Cartland, frequently described as camp, eccentric, and artistically limited, has done nothing to assist Heyer's reputation.

Reaction to Heyer is strangely mixed, even among those who claim to appreciate and value her. For example, Joan McGrath's entry on "Georgette Heyer" begins: "Everyone knows—and almost no one enjoys—the kind of historic fiction that has aptly been described as 'writing forsoothly,' in which modern sentiments are thinly concealed in a contrived form of contemporary speech peppered with 'thee' and 'thou.'" Although McGrath is quick to distinguish Heyer's novels from this category, the critic's dismissive summary of her heroines appears to conflate Heyer's romances with the worst of her imitators:

> Her women lead lives of decorative uselessness, fussing endlessly with the matching of ribbons and reticules, finding the latest novel in the lending library, sending and receiving invitations to this and that, or—horrors!—not receiving them, and, always and above all, marrying to advantage. There was, after all, nothing else for a lady to do . . . (316)

Such women do exist in Heyer's novels, but only as foils to the heroines, who prove that they *can* find something else to do: Léonie (*These Old Shades*) and Pen Creed (*The Corinthian*) assume masculine clothes and identities in order to enjoy greater freedom and adventures; in order to protect her sister from a sexual predator, Mary Challoner (*Devil's Cub*) "elopes" with him herself and wards off his advances with a gun; Sophia Stanton-Lacy (*The Grand Sophy*) is not only an astute businesswoman, but she actually manipulates an unscrupulous moneylender into surrendering his claims to her (male) cousin's property.[2]

Perhaps it is owing to the strength of her heroines and her penchant for subverting romantic plots that Heyer has won some unexpected advocates. Kate Fenton relates her surprise upon learning that her fondness for Heyer is shared by some very distinguished writers:

> Germaine Greer recently disclosed on BBC2 that her sexual fantasies are stalked to this day by Heyer's Byronic heroes - yup, Germaine Greer.
>
> On the same programme, *Reading the Decades*, A S Byatt, no less, pronounced Miss Heyer's books 'wonderful'. I nearly fell off my chair. The only other person I've ever seen on telly admitting to being a Heyer fan was Hyacinth Bucket - and doesn't that say everything about the popular perception of Georgette Heyer? Her name alone is good for a laugh.
>
> (pars. 5-6)[3]

Despite the ambivalence of critics, numerous websites and listservs devoted to Heyer attest to her continuing popularity. There is a waiting list to join the Georgette Heyer Mailing List, membership of which is capped at 500. The manager of the listserv, who identifies herself as "The Patroness," warns prospective members that they can expect to receive 30 emails per day. Heyer is also referenced on websites devoted to general romance, historical romance, and research into the Regency period, where she is appreciated for her rendering of early 19th-century slang as much as for her storytelling abilities.[4]

Heyer's meticulous research, witty dialogue, and well-developed characters have also drawn praise from popular novelists who claim Heyer as a major influence on their own writing.[5] Notably, Harlequin has recently released new editions of Georgette Heyer's historical novels, featuring forewords by novelists like Catherine Coulter and Kay Hooper: women who began their careers as writers of category romances but now command impressive expanses of shelf

space at libraries and bookstores. Each novel includes the recent author's testimonial to Georgette Heyer, acknowledging her as an important influence, fondly recalling the pleasure of reading her novels, and praising her for setting the standard against which all historical romances would be judged. For example, Linda Howard praises Heyer's deft use of language to depict character or add a touch of humor: "What that woman could do with a sentence was breathtaking" (i). Stephanie Laurens, a prolific Regency novelist herself, also testifies to Heyer's subtlety, calling her "a master at emotional development that never quite breaks the surface, that shimmers just beneath the stated actions and words" (iii). Thus, Harlequin's savvy promotion not only introduces Georgette Heyer to a new generation of readers, lured by the imprimatur of their favorite authors, but it uses Heyer's credentials and those of Coulter et al. (category romance writers who made it to the big time) to lend Harlequin much-needed legitimacy.

An examination of Georgette Heyer allows us to see the process by which an author inspires a trend that simultaneously propagates and devalues her work, just as I have argued that Catherine Gore's novels became tainted by association with inferior fashionable novels. Strangely, Gore and Heyer are accepted both as representatives of an often-disparaged group of novelists *and* as notable exceptions whose work transcends that of their peers. Readers have found Heyer's recreations of Georgian and Regency England inspiring and educational as well as entertaining. In her foreword to *The Black Moth*, Diana Palmer writes: "Georgette Heyer taught me to love history. . . . so much that, in 1991, I went back to college as a freshman and spent four wonderful years getting an honors degree in the subject" (iii). Daniel Cottam credits Georgette Heyer with making more canonical literature accessible to him:

> Victorian and Georgian prose became comprehensible. Instead of being fazed by an out-moded style of writing and huge mouths of dialogue, I now understood it

> with ease. In fact, Georgette Heyer's novels acted like a Rosetta Stone for me. Her literary references to Shakespeare (especially in *The Unknown Ajax* and *Venetia*), Jane Austen, and other authors of the day made me want to read them. And having read Heyer, I understood Austen and her contemporaries with greater ease. (par. 3)

Even scholars like Matthew Rosa and Vineta Colby who see little artistic merit in Gore's fashionable novels acknowledge that they are rich in material details; Adburgham, Elfenbein, Sadleir, and Hughes have testified to their ability to charm and delight as well. If novels like *Pin Money* and *Cecil* were made accessible to those who have already learned to appreciate Georgette Heyer, these readers might discover in Gore a new source of edifying entertainment.

Modern Fashionable Novels

Although Heyer's historical novels can shed valuable light on 19th-century fashionable novels, the best modern analogues to the novels of Bulwer, Lister, and Gore are not Regency romances at all. They are another group of novels, not yet recognized as a subgenre, including recent bestsellers like *The Nanny Diaries* by Emma McLaughlin and Nicola Kraus, *The Devil Wears Prada* by Lauren Weisberger, and *Trading Up* by Candace Bushnell. We might call these books modern fashionable novels because they perform all the functions I identify in chapter 3. They provide escape from familiar problems, create a mimetic representation of the world of high society (now located in New York City rather than London), satirize the lifestyles of the rich and famous, and affirm middle-class domesticity. Although each of these texts does contain at least one love story, the romance never becomes the central plot. Instead, these novels focus on the relationship between ambition, money, social class, and the domestic affections.

The Nanny Diaries is told in first person by Nan ("Nanny" to her employers and charges) who takes on part-time childcare work to support herself while writing a thesis on Jean Piaget. The action of the novel takes place during Nan's last year at NYU, during which time she works for Mr. and Mrs. X, caring for their son, Grayer. Although it is a work of fiction, *The Nanny Diaries* presents itself as roman à clef through the use of "X" to stand in for the name of Nan's employers, the numerous topicalities (the text is peppered with references to actual restaurants, schools, museums, playgrounds, and children's programs), and the short bio of the authors, which highlights their work as nannies in New York City.

The marketing of *The Nanny Diaries* directs readers to respond in the same way nineteenth-century audiences responded to the fashionable novel. The obligatory disclaimer on the first page states that no character has been taken from real-life, but the reviewers quoted on the book jacket clearly regard the novel as undercover journalism, an exposé of Park Avenue families:

> Reading it was an incredibly compelling voyeuristic thrill. Getting a glimpse behind the thick stone walls of those Park Avenue apartment buildings and into the excessively rich families who live in them (how much child-care help they have [a lot]; how badly they treat their child-care help [badly, very badly]; how often these children see their actual parents [almost never]) is fascinating and, at times, impossibly funny.
>
> —Laura Zigman, author of *Dating Big Bird* and *Animal Husbandry*

> The authors have perfect pitch, and their every observation rings true. *The Nanny Diaries* is social satire that's as moving as it is funny.
>
> —Jane Heller, author of *The Secret Ingredient* and *Female Intelligence*

The blurbs on the back cover sound eerily familiar to a scholar of the fashionable novel. The verisimilitude of *The Nanny Diaries*, as of Gore's *Pin Money*, leads readers to accept the novel's pictures of high society as accurate; the wealth of material detail conveys a voyeuristic thrill even as readers condemn the characters described. *The Nanny Diaries* evokes a mixture of envy and scorn for women who wear $400 shoes to interview a potential employee and who leave a child suffering from a fever of 104 degrees so they can spend a weekend at the spa. The novel contrasts the selfish and eccentric behavior of the over-privileged ladies "who neither work nor parent" with the values of middle-class domesticity.

In keeping with the fashionable novel tradition, our heroine moves in the same circles as the targets of her satire; Nan's father has a huge black-tie birthday party, complete with orchestra, and her grandmother pulls some strings to get the Xes a last-minute reservation at Lutèce for Valentine's Day. But Nan's close-knit family is posited as morally and intellectually superior to the dysfunctional Xes: her father is a professor, her mother runs a women's shelter, and Nan is paying for her education by raising children for parents who can't be bothered to do it themselves. Thus our guide to the *beau monde* of Manhattan is both an insider and an outsider; Nan's own privileged background affords her credibility as a subject matter expert, while her close family ties and strong work ethic shield her from the criticisms she levels at the leisured classes. Although Gore's heroines don't work, they occupy a similar insider/outsider position vis-à-vis the fashionable world. For example, Lady Frederica (*Pin Money*) enters into the London social whirl with great enthusiasm, but her attachment to her husband and family makes

Frederica something of an oddity. If this domestic circle causes the heroine some embarrassment, it also protects her from the *bon ton*'s vices; Lord Calder's attempts to seduce Frederica are repeatedly thwarted by her unfashionable preference for the company of her husband and her brother. Frederica's concern for the well-being of her subordinates (she is convinced that her own clandestine financial transactions have prompted her servant's misdoings) further distances the heroine from the "world" of high society, which is sublimely indifferent to all social classes below its own.

The heroines of *The Devil Wears Prada* (Andrea Sachs) and *Trading Up* (Janey Wilcox) do not share Nan and Frederica's moral superiority. Because these novels conflate the worlds of business and fashion (Andrea works at a fashion magazine and Janey is a Victoria's Secret model), the protagonists cannot hold themselves aloof from a corrupt and corruptive environment characterized by destructive ambition, petty maneuvering, and obsession with superficial appearance. Despite its focus on a single protagonist, *The Nanny Diaries* follows the model of the society novel, but *The Devil Wears Prada* and *Trading Up* are updated dandy novels with a gender twist. Like Henry Pelham and Vivian Grey, Andrea declares her ambition to achieve greatness; fresh out of college, she intends to become a famous writer for *The New Yorker*. As a first step towards her goal, Andrea accepts a position as junior assistant to Miranda Priestly, the powerful and notoriously demanding editor of *Runway* magazine. The unofficial terms of Andrea's contract are that if she manages to get through an entire year at *Runway* without being fired, Miranda will secure Andrea a place at any magazine she chooses. Although she is frequently assured that hers is a job "a million girls would die for," Andrea discovers that the world of fashion journalism is a dangerous place where alliances are formed and dissolved at a dizzying rate, personal relationships are strained to the breaking point, and failure to wear the

correct shoes results in disgrace, if not outright dismissal. At first, Andrea prides herself on resisting the pressure to drop ten pounds and give up her Banana Republic wardrobe, but she comes to recognize that her credibility as a staff member at *Runway* is dependent on her appearing in Jimmy Choo boots and Prada skirts. Becoming a female dandy (or fashionista, in modern cant) is only the first step of Andrea's move away from the domestic values that the novel will ultimately affirm.

Miranda makes outrageous demands that range from the nearly-impossible (Fed-exing two copies of the newest Harry Potter book to France *before* it appears in bookstores) to the merely obscure ("I'll be needing the address and phone number of that antique store in the seventies, the one where I saw the vintage dresser"); however, she flies into a rage when her assistants fail to comply and maliciously invents grounds for complaint if they miraculously succeed. Despite the indignities and humiliations she is forced to endure daily, Andrea begins to adopt the skewed values of the *Runway* universe and, true to the tradition of the dandy novel, she becomes estranged from her domestic circle. Although her original goal was simply to endure her year of servitude in order to win the coveted recommendation, she becomes increasingly invested in protecting and bettering her place in the hierarchy; meanwhile, she neglects her long-suffering boyfriend and ignores her best friend Lily's downward spiral into alcoholism and self-destruction.

The tension between professional/fashionable success and domestic affections reaches its crisis while Andrea is in Paris, assisting Miranda at the most important fashion show of the year. Miranda tells Andrea that she is "reasonably competent" (extravagant praise from a woman who is never satisfied) and vaguely promises to contact *The New Yorker* on her behalf if the rest of the Paris trip goes well; hours later, Andrea learns that Lily has sustained life-threatening injuries

in a car accident and is currently in a coma. Reluctant to sacrifice her year of hard work when she's so close to her goal, Andrea decides that she can do nothing for Lily at this point and she should honor her professional commitments. Miranda praises her decision, saying "You remind me of myself when I was your age" (338). Horrified by the comparison to her cold, manipulative, supremely egotistical boss, Andrea quits her job and returns home. Although she is reconciled to her family and to a recovering Lily, the novel's conclusion suggests that her romantic relationship has been damaged beyond repair. However, Andrea is rewarded for her return to domesticity by a promising career as a freelance journalist and a new mentor who is as warm and compassionate as Miranda was icy and cruel. Like Henry Pelham and Arthur Pendennis, Andrea achieves her professional ambitions only after she has demonstrated greater commitment to domestic affections and personal integrity than to her career.

Candace Bushnell's novel, *Trading Up*, is the darkest and most disturbing of the three recent novels. The heroine, Janey Wilcox, is unabashedly ambitious, egocentric, trivial, and vain.[6] A model for Victoria's Secret, Janey believes that her beauty entitles her to fame, wealth, and respect, even though she barters her body to a different man every summer for the privilege of living in his house in the Hamptons and driving his car. The "respect" Janey covets most consists of being ushered to the most prominent banquette at a crowded restaurant: "The attention never failed to gratify her, reminding her that beauty was indeed its own reward—and during these titillating moments, it crossed Janey's mind that she hardly needed 'real' accomplishments when she could command the best table at the most exclusive restaurant in Manhattan" (C. Bushnell 202). Janey regards sex as sufficient payment for financial security, and every man with whom she involves herself is a means to an unspecified end. Janey's ambition is insatiable because its object is unidentified. She feels the want of a mysterious

something, which is not mere celebrity, a husband, or children. Unlike Becky Sharp, who declares that she could be a good woman on five thousand pounds a year, Janey sets no limit to her desires. Shortly after marrying a successful, socially prominent man who is unaccountably besotted with her, she casts her net for a wealthier and more powerful husband; after achieving hard-won success as a model in her thirties, she decides what she really wants is to produce. At the end of the novel, Janey leaves New York for Los Angeles, believing that Hollywood provides greater scope for her ambitions.

Janey herself is the worst of dandy heroes, deserving of the same opprobrium Hazlitt heaps upon Vivian Grey: "Whatever is going on, he himself is the hero of the scene . . . . the great business of life is a kind of masquerade or melo-drame got up for effect and by particular desire of the Great" (145). Her former lovers scoff when she identifies herself as an actress, but Janey does have a gift for composing effective visual scenes in which to display herself. Finding herself alone at a Memorial Day party, she designs a spectacle to attract notice:

> Having moved away from the crowd for a moment, Janey situated herself to her best advantage, in a three-quarter pose facing the ocean. Her hands rested on the balustrade, and she leaned over slightly, pushing out her chest and arching her back, so that her breasts were more prominently displayed. She tilted her head back a bit and closed her eyes, breathing in the night air and knowing as she did so that she was creating the impression of a lovely young woman who was lost in thought. (26)

Janey also resembles Vivian Grey in her emotional isolation. Unlike Nan, who is outraged and bewildered by the Xes' lack of familial affection, and Andrea, who is only temporarily seduced away from her family and best friend, Janey has broken off all ties to her

parents and values her sister, Patty, primarily as a stage prop. Recognizing the material value of friendship with Mimi Kilroy, New York's most important socialite, Janey deliberately stages a sisterly tête-à-tête at a front table in a trendy restaurant where Mimi will be lunching. She wants Mimi to see her in the role of a sympathetic confidante: "And indeed, with their blond heads bent together in familial intimacy, there couldn't have been a prettier picture of sisterly affection. Of this, Janey was happily aware—it was exactly the image she wished Mimi to see, knowing that it would cast her in a broader, more human light" (38-39).

Trading Up is reminiscent of *Cecil* in presenting what Elfenbein calls an "aura of bad faith." Despite, or perhaps because of, their callousness, Cecil and Janey reach the ends of their stories unscathed, even though they leave destruction in their wake. Although there is little to redeem Janey as a character, she survives humiliation, scandal, the loss of her modeling career, and a divorce. In the penultimate chapter of the novel, Bushnell invites, even demands, our suspicion that Janey is about to be punished by telling us that she is flying from New York to L.A. on American Airlines in September of 2001. However, Janey is untouched by the events of September 11; indeed, she does not even seem aware of them. The reader is left to wonder if Bushnell has created an alternate reality in which the Twin Towers remain standing or if Janey is so self-involved that even an international tragedy cannot penetrate her consciousness. In either case, Bushnell's carefully-placed allusions to 9/11 put all of Janey's difficulties into proper perspective and lead us to question why this woman, so superficial and lacking in human sympathy, should be spared and allowed to succeed when others, more deserving, fail and perish. Bushnell suggests that Janey's life is a story about redemption, "Sin and salvation, over and over again . . ." (387), but Janey's is a very worldly, not a spiritual, salvation.

The function of *The Nanny Diaries*, *The Devil Wears Prada*, and *Trading Up*, like that of the fashionable novel, is to indulge the reader's desire for insight into the private lives of the privileged class while reinforcing middle-class domestic values. As in the novels of Catherine Gore, the heroine learns that the price of ambition is the sacrifice of domestic affections, but without friends and family, the signifiers of wealth and status are not only unfulfilling but unstable. Even Janey, who turns down her husband's plea for reconciliation in order to attend the *Vanity Fair* Oscar night party, recognizes that there is something missing in her life, in herself, but she doesn't know what. The numerous topical references—to Prada, Versace, F.A.O. Schwartz, Starbuck's, Martha's Vineyard, *Star* magazine, and VH1's "Behind the Music"—do more than construct a mimetic representation of the contemporary world, firmly placing characters in space, time, and social status. As in *Pin Money* and *Women as They Are*, such name-dropping highlights the superficial quality of the exclusive society and rebukes the voracious consumerism displayed by the fashionable elite.

The identification of *The Nanny Diaries*, *The Devil Wears Prada*, and *Trading Up* as modern instances of the fashionable novel proves that the subgenre did not die with the publication of *Vanity Fair* or with the rise of bourgeois realism or even with the end of the nineteenth century. Rather, this dissertation's definition of the fashionable novel, grounded in function rather than formula, reveals a hitherto unrecognized literary tradition reaching from Fanny Burney to Catherine Gore to Edith Wharton to Candace Bushnell. The readiness with which audiences have compared Bushnell's depictions of New York society to Wharton's treatment of the same community proves that the barrier between popular and canonical texts is permeable, after all. Recognition of the fashionable novel as a legitimate participant in the

history and development of the novel should open new critical connections not only among nineteenth-century novels, but between these works and their twentieth-century counterparts.

Suggestions for Future Research on Catherine Gore

The last five years have seen a surge of interest in Catherine Gore in the fields of women's writing, popular culture, history of the novel, theatre history, canon formation, and critical reception. The most rapid growth of Gore scholarship has been in the area of theatre studies. John Franceschina has published all of Gore's plays in his collections *Gore on Stage* and *Sisters of Gore*. A full-text online version of *King O'Neil* is available at the *British Women Playwrights about 1800* website < http://www-sul.stanford.edu/mirrors/romnet/wp1800/editions/king/index.html >, and Gore's prize-winning play *Quid Pro Quo* is included in *A Broadview Anthology of British Women Playwrights, 1777-1843* (Thomas C. Crochunis and Michael Eberle-Sinatra, editors), forthcoming Winter 2003. For many years, Gore's only prose work in print was a 1978 facsimile edition of *The Book of Roses*, but two of her short stories were anthologized in 1998: "The Red Man," a Gothic tale set in revolutionary France, is included in *The Vampyre and Other Tales of the Macabre* (edited by Robert Morrison and Chris Baldick), and "Lady Evelyn Savile's Three Trials" appears in *Nineteenth-Century Short Stories by Women* (edited by Harriet Jump). Pickering and Chatto will soon publish a new edition of *Cecil*; *or, The Adventures of a Coxcomb* (edited by Edward Copeland and Andrea Hibbard), making this the first Gore novel in print in more than a century. Gore is also featured on *The Victorian Web* <http://65.107.211.206/index. html> and Sheffield Hallam University's *Corvey Women Writers on the Web* <http://www2.shu.ac.uk/corvey/CW3/>.

The next steps in Gore scholarship should be to compile her letters (many of which are sitting neglected in various library collections), use those letters to construct a more complete biography, and create an annotated bibliography of primary and secondary works. Of these tools, the bibliography is perhaps the most valuable in overcoming the three great challenges facing any scholar interested in Catherine Gore. The first of these challenges is her enormous and varied corpus, which may be even larger than the 200 volumes Rosa estimates; we know that Gore produced novels, short stories, essays, dramas, poems, travelogues, and a manual on rose-gardening, but it is not clear that we have identified all of her works. For example, no list of Gore's works includes *The King of the Cobblers*, a comedy published in *Bentley's Miscellany* after the *Quid Pro Quo* fiasco; nor are the poems, short stories, and sketches she produced for the annuals mentioned in these lists.[7] It is difficult for a scholar who knows little or nothing about Gore to determine from a list of unfamiliar titles which works would be of greatest relevance to his or her interests; indeed, the titles frequently offer no clue as to the genre of the work. The second challenge has to do with accessibility of the texts. While a growing number of Gore texts are available on microfiche (thanks to the Corvey Project), the actual books are more than 150 years old and many are quite fragile. Thus they are difficult, though not impossible, to obtain through inter-library loan. Since locating and reading one of Gore's texts involves a certain difficulty at present, scholars will not want to take this trouble unless they are reasonably sure the text will be helpful to them. Thus a bibliography of Gore's primary works will be quite valuable.

An annotated bibliography of secondary works relating to Catherine Gore is also necessary to meet the challenge of finding scholarship on Gore and the fashionable novel. Although there are two important studies of the genre (Rosa's *The Silver Fork School* and

Adburgham's *Silver Fork Society*), there are only a handful of recent articles, book chapters, and dissertations on Catherine Gore, so a search of the MLA bibliography is of limited usefulness. The most helpful information is hidden in biographies of Gore's contemporaries (Bulwer, Thackeray, and Lady Blessington) and studies of genres, issues, and trends in the 19th-century novel, which explains why recent scholars looking for a quick summary of Gore's life and works have relied so heavily on the *Dictionary of National Biography* and Rosa's carefully researched but somewhat biased account.

The collection of letters, biography, and annotated bibliography will allow scholars to explore the wide range of Gore's literary productions and make informed, valid assertions about Catherine Gore's agenda, style, influence, ideology, and place in nineteenth-century literature and social history. An accurate picture of Gore as a literary artist must take into account the breadth of Gore's writing: fashionable novels, parody, historical fiction, tales, essays, and drama. Future research on Gore should include an examination of a larger and more varied sample of her writing than has been attempted heretofore; a careful reading of the presentation of women in her works; and particular attention to the relationship between Gore's fiction and drama. A more specific line of inquiry might focus on Gore's use of performance and masquerade not only as tropes in her drama and fiction, but also as rhetorical strategies for succeeding in the literary marketplace.

When I began this dissertation, it seemed that the best hope for stimulating interest in Catherine Gore would be to avoid the fashionable novel, so tainted by illegitimacy and triviality. But the recent revival of interest in Gore may encourage scholars to examine fashionable novels more closely and to find new value in them. It seems fitting that the woman who almost single-

handedly sustained the popularity of the fashionable novel well into the Victorian era should be the instrument for breathing new life into a long discredited genre.

Notes to Chapter 6

[1] On August 25, 1999, a member of a Georgette Heyer listserv posted: "After I finished TOS [*These Old Shades*], it occurred to me (back in 1974) to go back and re-read a recently-completed Barbara Cartland, since I was shocked to recognize not only the plot of TOS but all of the characters as well! When I was quite young, I actually read Barbara Cartland, but when I discovered that obvious piece of plagiarism, she went straight into the trash." Two amateur reviews of Harlequin's 2003 reprint of *These Old Shades*, posted on www.Amazon.com, comment on the strong similarities between Heyer's novel and Cartland's *Love Me for Ever*.

[2] The figure of Léonie, who reappears in *Devil's Cub*, suggests that Heyer's heroines do not settle down into conventional matrons after marriage. Although she is now a duchess with a son of marriageable age, Leonie has not yet learned polite forms of speech and she is as volatile and eager for an adventure as ever.

[3] Hyacinth Bucket (who insists that her last name is pronounced "Bouquet") is the pretentious heroine of the situation comedy *Keeping Up Appearances*.

[4] These websites support Janice Radway's finding that romance readers place great value on historical accuracy and expect authors to do the necessary research. For example, Laura Wallace's webpage on Heyer's life and works presents a table of the inconsistencies between the UK and US printings of *The Grand Sophy* to demonstrate that certain errors (such as referring to the daughter of an earl as "The Honourable Eugenia Wraxton" instead of "Lady Eugenia") were committed by Heyer's publishers, not Heyer herself.

[5] Margaret Ann Jensen notes, "The one characteristic that seems to apply to all romantic fiction writers is that they are romance *readers*. So many writers have sprung from the ranks of readers that one how-to-get-published manual advises aspiring writers to identify themselves as readers to the publisher when they submit their work" (72).

[6] Janey Wilcox first appears in Bushnell's *4 Blondes*.

[7] "Complete" lists of Gore's works are given in Alston, Schlueter and Schlueter, and Baird.

APPENDIX A: "THE DANDY SCHOOL," BY WILLIAM HAZLITT

This essay first appeared in The Examiner, November 18, 1827.[1] *"The Dandy School" reviews Theodore Hook's collection of tales* Sayings and Doings *and Benjamin Disraeli's anonymously published novel* Vivian Grey.[2] *This review is especially significant as the source for the name "silver fork novel," which quickly passed into common usage, and for articulating the criticisms on which the silver fork genre is constructed.*

Vivian Grey is dedicated to the Best and Greatest of men, as if the Illustrious Person who will take this compliment to himself approved of the sentiments contained in it. Are ushers odious to the Best and Greatest of men? Does he hate the great mass of his subjects, and scorn all those beyond Temple-bar? Is he King only of the Dandies, and Monarch of the West? We scarcely believe it. This volume with its impertinent dedication is no more expressive of the sentiments of his heart than the *Austrian Catechism*, dedicated in like manner, would be characteristic of the principles of his reign. Oh! Mr. Grey, you should have been more humble—you should have inscribed your work to the best-dressed Man in his Majesty's dominions—or to Jack Ketch.

It was formerly understood to be the business of literature to enlarge the bounds of knowledge and feeling; to direct the mind's eye beyond the present moment and the present object; to plunge us in the world of romance, to connect different languages, manners, times together; to wean us from the grossness of sense, the illusions of self-love;--by the aid of imagination, to place us in the situations of others and enable us to feel an interest in all that strikes them; and to make books the faithful witnesses and interpreters of nature and the human

heart. Of late, instead of this liberal and useful tendency, it has taken a narrower and more superficial tone. All that we learn from it is the servility, egotism, and upstart pretensions of the writers. Instead of transporting you to faery-land or into the *middle ages*, you take a turn down Bond Street or go through the mazes of the dance at Almack's. You have no new inlet to thought or feeling opened to you; but the passing object, the topic of the day (however insipid and repulsive) is served up to you with a self-sufficient air, as if you had not already had enough of it. You dip into an Essay or a Novel, and may fancy yourself reading a collection of quack or fashionable advertisements:--Macassar Oil, Eau de Cologne, Hock and Seltzer Water, Otto of Roses, *Pomade Divine* glance through the page in inextricable confusion, and make your head giddy. Far from extending your sympathies, they are narrowed to a single point, the admiration of the folly, caprice, insolence, and affectation of a certain class;--so that with the exception of people who ride in their carriages, you are taught to look down upon the rest of the species with indifference, abhorrence, or contempt. A school-master in a black coat is a monster—a tradesman and his wife who eat cold mutton and pickled cabbage are wretches to be hunted out of society. That is the end and moral of it: it is part and parcel of a system. The *Dandy School* give the finishing touch to the principles of paternal government. First comes the political sycophant, and makes the people over to their rulers as a property in perpetuity; but then they are to be handled tenderly, and need not complain, since the sovereign is the father of his people, and we are to be all one family of love. So says the *Austrian Catechism*. Then comes the literary sycophant to finish what the others had begun; and the poor fools of people having been caught in the trap of plausible professions, he takes off the mask of *paternity*, treats them as of a different species instead of members of the same family, loads them with obloquy and insult, and laughs at the very idea of any fellow feeling with or consideration towards them, as the height of

bad taste, weakness, and vulgarity. So say Mr. Theodore Hook and the author of *Vivian Grey*. So says not Sir Walter. Ever while you live, go to a man of genius in preference to a dunce; for let his prejudices or his party be what they may, there is still a saving grace about him, for he himself has something else to trust to besides his subserviency to greatness to raise him from insignificance. He takes you and places you in a cottage or a cavern, and makes you feel the deepest interest in it, for you feel all that its inmates feel. The *Dandy School* tell you all that a dandy would feel in such circumstances, *viz.* that he was not in a drawing-room or at Long's. Or if he does forfeit his character for a moment, he at most brings himself to patronise humanity, condescends to the accidents of common life, touches the pathetic with his pen as if it were with a pair of tongs, and while he just deigns to notice the existence or endure the infirmities of his fellow-creatures, indemnifies his vanity by snatching a conscious glance at his own person and perfections. Whatever is going on, he himself is the hero of the scene; the distress (however excruciating) derives its chief claim to attention from the singular circumstance of his being present; and he manages the whole like a piece of private theatricals with an air of the most absolute *nonchalance* and decorum. The WHOLE DUTY OF MAN is turned into a butt and bye-word, or like Mr. Martin's bill for humanity to animals, is a pure voluntary, a caprice of effeminate sensibility: the great business of life is a kind of masquerade or melo-drame got up for effect and by particular desire of the Great. We soon grow tired of nature so treated, and are glad to turn to the follies and fopperies of high life, into which the writer enters with more relish, and where he finds himself more at home. So Mr. Croker (in his place in the House of Commons) does not know where Bloomsbury Square is: thus affecting to level all the houses in the metropolis that are not at the court-end, and leaving them tenantless by a paltry sneer, as if a plague had visited them. It is no wonder that his *protégés* and understrappers out of doors should

echo this official impertinence—draw the line still closer between the East and West-end—arrest a stray sentiment at the corner of a street, relegate elegance to a fashionable square—annihilate all other enjoyments, all other pretensions but those of their employers—reduce the bulk of mankind to a cypher, and make all but a few pampered favourites of fortune dissatisfied with themselves and contemptible to one another. The reader's mind is so varnished over with affectation that not an avenue to truth or feeling is left open, and it is stifled for want of breath. Send these people across the Channel who make such a fuss about the East and West-end, and no one can find out the difference. [3] The English are not a nation of *dandies*; nor can John Bull afford (whatever the panders to fashion and admirers of courtly graces may say to the contrary) to rest all his pretensions upon that. He must descend to a broader and more manly level to keep his ground at all. Those who would persuade him to build up his fame on frogged coats or on the embellishments of a snuff-box, he should scatter with one loud roar of indignation and trample into the earth like grasshoppers, as making not only a beast but an ass of him.

A writer of this accomplished stamp, comes forward to tell you, not how his hero feels on any occasion, for he is above that, but how he was dressed, and makes him a mere lay-figure of fashion with a few pert, current phrases in his mouth. The Sir Sedley Clarendels and Meadowses of a former age are become the real fine gentleman of this. Then he gives you the address of his heroine's milliner, lest any shocking surmise should arise in your mind of the possibility of her dealing with a person of less approved taste, and also informs you that the quality eat fish with silver forks. This is all he knows about the matter: is this all they feel? The fact is new to him: it is old to them. It is so new to him and he is so delighted with it, that provided a few select persons eat fish with silver forks, he considers it a circumstance of no consequence if a whole country starves: but 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.* What then are they thinking of in their intervals of leisure—what are their feelings that *we* can be supposed to know nothing of? Will Mr. Theodore Hook, who is "comforted with their bright radiance, though not in their sphere," condescend to give us a glimpse of these, that we may admire their real elegance and refinement as much as he does a frogged coat or silver fork? It is cruel in him not to do so. "The *court*, as well as we, may chide him for it." He once criticised a city feast with great minuteness and bitterness, in which (as it appears) the side-board is ill-arranged, the footman makes a blunder, the cook has sent up a dish too little or too highly seasoned. Something is wanting, as Mr. Hook insinuates is necessarily the case whenever people in the neighbourhood of Russell Square give dinners. But that something is not the manners or conversation of gentlemen—this never enters his head—but something that the butler, the cook or the valet of people of fashion could have remedied quite as well (to say the least) as their masters. It is here the cloven-foot, the under-bred tone, the undue admiration of external circumstances breaks out and betrays the writer. Mr. Hook has a fellow-feeling with low life or rather with vulgarity aping gentility, but he has never got beyond the outside of what he calls *good society*. He can lay the cloth or play the buffoon after dinner—but that is the utmost he can pretend to. We have in *Sayings and Doings* and in *Vivian Grey* abundance of Lady Marys and Lady Dorothys, but they are titles without characters, or the blank is filled up with the most trite impertinence. So a young linen-draper or attorney's-clerk from the country, who had gained a thirty-thousand pound prize in the lottery and wished to set up for a fine gentleman, might learn from these Novels what hotel to put up at, what watering place to go to, what hatter, hosier, tailor, shoemaker, *friseur* to employ, what part of the town he should be seen in, what theatre he might frequent; but how to behave, speak, look, feel and think in his

new and more aspiring character he would not find the most distant hint in the gross caricatures or flimsy sketches of the most mechanical and shallow of all schools. It is really as if, in lieu of tailors, cooks, lacqueys, had taken possession of Parnassus, and had appointed some Abigail out of place perpetual Secretary. The Congreves, Wycherleys, and Vanbrughs of former days gave us some taste of gentility and courtly refinement in their plays: enchanted us with their Millamants, or made us bow with respect to their Lord Townleys. It would seem that the race of these is over, or that our modern scribes have not had access to them on a proper footing—that is, not for their talents or conversation, but as mountebanks or political drudges.

At first it appears strange that persons of so low a station in life should be seized with such a rage to inveigh against themselves, and make us despise all but a few arrogant people, who pay them ill for what they do. But this is the natural process of servility, and we see all valets and hangers-on of the Great do the same thing. The powdered footman looks down on the rabble that dog his master's coach as beneath his notice. He feels the one little above him, and the other (by consequence) infinitely below him. Authors at present would be thought gentlemen, as gentlemen have a fancy to turn authors. The first thing a *dandy scribbler* does is to let us know he is dressed in the height of the fashion (otherwise we might imagine him some miserable garretteer, distinguished only by his poverty and learning)—and the next thing he does is to make a supercilious allusion to some one who is not so well dressed as himself. He then proceeds to give us a sparkling account of his Champagne and of his box at the Opera. A newspaper hack of this description also takes care to inform us that the people at the Opera in general, the Mr. Smiths and the Mr. Browns, are not good enough for him, and that he shall wait to begin his critical lucubrations, till the stars of fashion meet there in crowds and constellations! At present, it should seem that a seat on Parnassus conveys a title to a box at the Opera, and that

Helicon no longer runs water but champagne. 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, unless it cures itself by its own excessive folly and insipidity.

It is well that the Editor of the *John Bull* wrote the *Sayings and Doings*. It solves the problem with how small a quantity of wit a person without character or principle may set up for a political mouthpiece. Nothing but the dullness of the one could account for the impudence and the effect of the other. No one who could write a line of wit or sense could bring himself from any inducement to repeat the same nickname, the same stale jest, for weeks and months together. If the Editor of the *John Bull* had any resources in himself beyond the most vulgar *slang* and hackneyed abuse, if he had any sense of shame at resorting ot the same wretched pun or more wretched calumny, week after week, as he is paid for it, he would be unfit for his task: he would no longer be the complete and unequivocal organ of the dulness, prejudices, malice, and callous insensibility of his party. No argument tells with a minister of State like calling a man a Jacobin and a Reformer for the fortieth time; the sleek Divine chuckles at a dirty allusion for the fortieth time with unabated glee. Mr. Hook, among wits, might be called *the parson's nose*: or perhaps the title of Mr. Vivacity Dull would suit him as well.[4] What a dearth of invention, what a want of interest, what a fuss about nothing, what a dreary monotony, what a pert *slipslop* jargon runs through the whole series of the author's tales! But what a persevering, unabashed confidence, what a broad-shouldered self-complacency, what robust health, what unrelenting nerves he must possess to inflict them on his readers! Not one ray, not one line—but all the refuse of the *Green-*

room, the locomotions of a booth at a fair, the humours of a Margate hoy, the grimace of a jack-pudding, the sentimentalities and hashed-up scandal of a lady's maid, the noise and hurry of a chaise and four, the *ennui* and vacancy of a return post-chaise! The smart *improvisatori* turns out the most wearisome of interminable writers. At a moment's warning he can supply something that is worth nothing, and in ten times the space he can spin out ten times the quantity of the same poor trash. Would the public read *Sayings and Doings*? Would Mr. Colburn print them? No, but they are known to be the work of the Editor of the *John Bull*, of that great and anonymous abstract of wit, taste, and patriotism, who, like a Ministerial trull, calls after you in the street, dubs Mr. Waithman Lord Waithman, cries *Humbug* whenever humanity is mentioned; invades the peace of private life, out of regard to religion and social order; cuts a throat out of good nature, and laughs at it; and claps his Majesty familiarly on the shoulder, as the best of Kings! Do you wonder at the face, the gravity, the impenetrable assurance required to do all this, and to do it not once, but once a-week? Read *Sayings and Doings*, and the wonder ceases; you see it is because he can do nothing else! He will feel obliged to us for this character: his patrons were beginning to forget his qualifications.

Notes to Appendix A

---

[1] The version of "The Dandy School" printed here is taken from *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, edited by P. P. Howe (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1934) 20.143-49.

[2] Hazlitt's review responds only to the first volume of *Vivian Grey*. The second volume, usually bound together with the first in modern editions, was not published until 1828.

[3] [Author's note:] It is amusing to see an English woman in the streets of Paris looking like a dowdy, and scarcely able to put one foot before another for very awkwardness and shame, who

but a week before she left home had perhaps trampled on a dress brought home to her, in a fit of uncontrollable rage, thrown a cap into the fire, and kicked her milliner down stairs for bringing her such unfashionable trumpery. One would scarcely believe that a mere change of place would make such an alteration in behaviour. When we see our country-women so unpleasantly situated, we are naturally both ashamed and sorry for them: but, as in this case, we pity many of them more than they deserve.

[4] Mr. Vivacity Dull appears in Disraeli's *Vivian Grey*, but according to the novel's key, this character is modeled on Horace Twiss, not Theodore Hook. Hook is represented in the novel as "Stanislaus Hoax."

APPENDIX B: HENRY COLBURN'S DANGEROUS INFLUENCE

The influence of publisher Henry Colburn is central to the construction and critical reception of the silver fork novel. Either by himself or in partnership with Richard Bentley, Colburn published the majority of these novels and was perhaps most responsible for the genre's popularity. If Henry Colburn invented the silver fork novel, his reputedly poor taste, scurrilous business practices, and shameless advertising made him also responsible, in no small part, for its poor reputation. "Gentleman publishers" like John Murray and William Blackwood looked down upon the vulgar Colburn, regarding him as a disgrace to the world of publishing. Although they were prejudiced against his "trade" background, Colburn's business dealings with his partner Bentley provided grounds for his competitors' suspicions. Colburn and Bentley's stormy partnership lasted only three years and was dissolved in 1832 with the agreement that Bentley would buy Colburn's share of the firm and that Colburn would not publish new books "in or within twenty miles of London, Westminster, or Edinburgh" (Gettmann 20). Colburn soon broke the spirit if not the letter of this agreement by withdrawing to Windsor, only three miles outside the stated limit, and establishing another publishing house there. Despite Bentley's justifiable outrage at Colburn's underhanded behavior, he finally agreed to a settlement under which Colburn was allowed to purchase his release from the original agreement and to resume publishing in London.[1] Colburn and Bentley remained bitter rivals throughout their careers, and their acrimonious parting and undignified scrambling to secure the most popular writers of the day became legendary. Richard Bentley was soon tarred with the same disreputable brush as Henry Colburn, not only because of their history and the similarity of their stock, but also

because Bentley imitated the advertising practices that had given Colburn such success. Catherine Gore, who walked a dangerous line in maintaining professional relationships with both men, aptly referred to them as the "Scylla and Charybdis of the novel craft" (Oliphant 2.349). Enjoying a safer distance from the dangerous duo, Thackeray was able to view their rivalry as comic: *Pendennis* includes a lengthy satire on Bentley and Colburn, respectively, as Bacon and Bungay, the dueling publishers.

The energetic Colburn assured himself of a forum for advertising his wares by founding the *New Monthly Magazine* (1814), *Literary Gazette* (1817), and the *Athenaeum* (1818). At first, the *New Monthly* focused on political events, taking a firm conservative stance, while the *Literary Gazette* devoted itself to discussions of current literature; however, in 1820 the *New Monthly* became a literary journal as well. Despite his protestations, Colburn must have found it awkward to sponsor two journals with opposite political leanings (the Tory *New Monthly Magazine* and the Whiggish *Athenaeum*), particularly when he did not possess the controlling interest of either one. The editors of both journals shrilly insisted on the independence and impartiality of their published views, but the experiment was not successful. It is not clear when Colburn sold his interest in the *Athenaeum*, but Alison Adburgham remarks that the journal continued to review Colburn's books favorably until 1830. Undaunted, Colburn founded yet another periodical, the *Court Journal* (1829), whose title seems chosen to appeal to middle-class readers' interest in the goings-on of the royal family and the nobility.

Colburn exploited the advertising potential of his journals by placing "puff" paragraphs to stimulate sales. Although Colburn was known as the "prince of puffers" (Gettmann 55), he was far from the only publisher to benefit from this kind of promotion.[2] *Fraser's Magazine,* the *Athenaeum,* and the *Westminster Review* were vigorous in their denunciation of puffery, claiming

that the practice not only misled readers by praising unworthy books but it also cheapened more valuable works whose merit alone would guarantee an audience. However, Royal A. Gettmann notes that the reformers did not distinguish between "necessary and honest advertising" and "insidious puffery," exclaiming against all forms of promotion as equally offensive. Gettman cites an extreme case: "The *Athenaeum* of 4 September 1830 went so far as to attack the preliminary announcements of books to be published by Colburn and Bentley" (55). Gettmann further argues that William Maginn, who headed the attack, failed to recognize that a slump in the bookselling trade had made aggressive promotion necessary:

> During the three years of its existence the firm of Colburn and Bentley had printed 107,070 copies of new books, exclusive of the [Standard Novel] series. By the time the partnership was dissolved (31 August 1832), 31, 845 copies had been remaindered or sold as waste paper. In the face of such sales Colburn and Bentley could not be content simply to publish and announce: they had to puff or perish. (57)

Furthermore, puffs did not always lavish undeserved praise or make unsubstantiated claims. For instance, the paragraphs Catherine Gore prepared for her novel *Pin-Money* seem innocuous by today's standards in advertising:

> THE TRAVELLERS' CLUB. Broughley, the fashionable traveller in the new novel of *Pin Money*, is a sketch scarcely amounting to caricature of a race of beings whom the institution of the Travellers' Club has called into notice.
>
> A SCENE IN BOW STREET. Among the sketches introduced into the new novel of *Pin Money* is a scene which introduces some of the leading fashionables of the day into the Magistrates' Room in Bow Street.

> JEALOUSY. The Leontes of Young, and the Sir Brooke Rawleigh of the new novel of *Pin Money* may certainly claim a pre-eminence in displaying the irritations of a man of honour 'perplexed in the extreme' by the suggestions of a groundless jealousy.
>
> HOW TO SEAL A LETTER. *Fraser's Magazine* has pointed out objections to a scene in the new novel of *Pin Money* founded on the difficulties of sealing a letter. We confess we look upon the incident as original and humorous. (qtd. in Gettmann 69-70)

The final paragraph does misrepresent itself as an editorial comment, but otherwise the puffs seem designed less to praise the new novel than to draw attention to its relevance to current events and interests.

In addition to puffing, Colburn made a habit of sending review copies of new novels to journalists he felt he could trust to regard a work favorably. Again, this was not a unique practice; indeed, it was not unheard of for authors to review their own works. Although Catherine Gore is known for being a savvy marketer of her work, she expressed concerns about such flagrant self-advertising and refused to write flattering reviews for those of her own productions in which she felt little confidence. In response to Bentley's request that she review her collection of tales *The Tuileries*, Gore wrote:

> I have no scruple in praising any heavy book—witness *The Premier* [a novel by William Mudford]—which you think proper to publish, provided it is not my own; or in praising such of my own—witness *Pin Money*—as are really meritorious in their way. But *The Tuileries* is alas! a very dull work; and being

> more familiar with its veins of lead than the accidental reader, I could find little to say in its favour. (qtd. in Gettmann 70)

Edward Bulwer's sense of honor was even more rigorous; he refused to run puff paragraphs or reviews of any of his works (even those written by other critics) in the *New Monthly Magazine* during his tenure as editor. Michael Sadleir's praise of Bulwer's resolution not to profit personally from his editorial position suggests that such delicacy was highly unusual (*Bulwer* 267).

Colburn, on the other hand, was never known for his delicacy, and he was notorious for exploiting the social position of his authors. Not a gentleman himself, Colburn well understood the market value of an association with high society. He eagerly recruited aristocratic authors like Lord Normanby and Lady Charlotte Bury, anxious to capitalize on a title and an insider's views on high life, and strongly hinted that even his anonymous authors moved in the highest social circles. Aware that his readers were fascinated by the lives of famous or privileged persons, Colburn published "keys" to novels, disclosing the actual counterparts to the fictional characters, and often attempted puffed novels as exposés of the *bon ton* regardless of the authors' intentions. For example, Alison Adburgham explains the otherwise baffling demand for Robert Plumer Ward's *Tremaine*, a rather dull and moralizing tale utterly lacking in "humour, irony, satire, neat dialogue, or felicity of phrase," by noting Colburn's aggressive marketing of the novel by "arousing curiosity as to the identity of its author 'famous in political life,' 'brilliant in social circles' . . . . When they came actually to read it, many must have been disappointed to find no characters identifiable with living persons, no incidents that could be related to current politics" (76). As to the book's popularity, Adburgham muses, "Maybe it was intellectual snobbery that prevented people from declaring the book to be a bore" (76).

Despite the undeniable demand for *romans à clef*, Catherine Gore opposed them on practical grounds and refused to prepare a key for *Mothers and Daughters*. In a letter to Colburn and his partners, Gore declared that keys are actually damaging to book sales:

> As I was a reader of rubbish long before I became a writer of it, I beg to assure you that these 'Keys' are very injurious things. A large class of readers who pique themselves on being respectable and detesting personality, would not buy the Life of Locke if furnished with a key, while still a larger body, who delight in fixing every disadvantageous character in a novel on some person of their own acquaintance, lose interest in the work when their ill-nature is placed under limitation. When the solution of the enigma is once given, the zest of the mystery is lost; the Key sells while the original book stands still. (qtd. in Gettmann 71)

Gore also worried that positively identifying the targets of her satire would cause deep and unnecessary offense, which might well affect the author's future success. In light of the current marginal status of the silver fork novel, Gore's concerns appear prophetic. There is no doubt that rumor-mongering sold books, but it did nothing to assist the fashionable novel's reputation.

The construction of the silver fork genre appears to have been governed by a kind of guilt by association. For example, Ward's classification as a silver fork novelist was largely due to his timing and his choice of publisher. Fortunately for the sales of Ward's books, *Tremaine* appeared near the beginning of a heightened craze for fashionable novels and presented an unusually flattering portrait of the highest social classes, which Colburn exploited to the fullest. However, Thackeray may have been even more fortunate that Colburn did *not* accept one of his manuscripts for publication. If the notorious publisher of "trashy" fiction had brought out *Vanity Fair*, it might well have been accepted as a particularly fine example of the fashionable novel it

mocked so viciously, and Thackeray's masterpiece might share the dubious reputation, if not the obscurity, of the numerous books published and unavoidably tainted by Henry Colburn.

Notes to Appendix B

[1] Colburn's partnership with Bentley receives more detailed treatment in Royal A. Gettmann's *A Victorian Publisher: A Study of the Bentley Papers* (Cambridge U P, 1960), Matthew Whiting Rosa's *The Silver-Fork School: Novels of Fashion Preceding Vanity Fair* (Columbia U P, 1936), and Alison Adburgham's *Silver Fork Society: Fashionable Life and Literature from 1814 to 1840* (Constable, 1983).

[2] *Fraser's Magazine* consistently named Colburn as the worst offender, claiming that he "not only invented, but brought the present art and mystery of puff manufacture to its existing condition and consistence" ("The Dominie's Legacy," April 1830, p. 319). Gettmann objects that Fraser's gave Colburn too much credit, but he admits that Colburn did "develop the practice of originating and circulating praise of his books with a fulsomeness and ingenuity never before seen in publishing" (55).

WORKS CITED AND CONSULTED

Adburgham, Alison. *Silver Fork Society: Fashionable Life and Literature from 1814 to 1840.* London: Constable, 1983.

Alston, R. C. "Gore, Catherine Grace Frances." *A Checklist of Women Writers 1801-1900.* Boston: G. K. Hall, 1990. 165-66.

Altick, Richard. *The Presence of the Present: Topics of the Day in the Victorian Novel.* Columbus: Ohio State U P, 1991.

---. *Victorian People and Ideas: A Companion for the Modern Reader of Victorian Literature.* New York: Norton, 1973.

Anderson, Bonnie. "The Writings of Catherine Gore." *Journal of Popular Culture* 10.2 (1976): 404-23.

Austen, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice.* Ed. Donald Gray. New York: Norton, 1966.

Baird, Rebecca Lynne Russell. *Catherine Frances Gore, the Silver Fork School, and "Mothers and Daughters": True Views of Society in Early Nineteenth-Century Britain.* Diss. U of Arkansas, 1992. Ann Arbor: UMI, 1992. 9237344.

Baker, Christine. Introduction. *Wives and Daughters*. By Elizabeth Gaskell. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth, 1999.

Beesemyer, Irene A. "Romantic Masculinity in Edgeworth's *Ennui* and Scott's *Marmion*: In Itself a Border Story." *Papers on Language & Literature* 35.1 (Winter 1999): 74-96.

Blain, Virginia, Patricia Clements, and Isobel Grundy. "Gore, Catherine." *The Feminist Companion to Literature in English: Women Writers from the Middle Ages to the Present*. New Haven: Yale U P, 1990. 443-44.

Brontë, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*. 1847. Ed. Richard J. Dunn. 2nd ed. New York: Norton, 1987.

---. *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë, with a Selection of Letters by Family and Friends*. Ed. Margaret Smith. Oxford: Clarendon, 2000.

Bulwer Lytton, Edward. *England and the English.* 1833. London: George Rutledge and Sons, 1876.

---. *Pelham or The Adventures of a Gentleman.* Ed. Jerome J. McGann. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1972.

Burney, Frances. *Evelina*, *or The History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World.* Ed. Margaret Anne Doody. London: Penguin, 1994.

Bushnell, Candace. *Trading Up*. New York: Hyperion, 2003.

Bushnell, Nelson S. "Susan Ferrier's *Marriage* as Novel of Manners." *Studies in Scottish Literature* 5.4 (April 1968): 216-28.

Butler, Marilyn. *Maria Edgeworth: A Literary Biography*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1972.

Carlyle, Thomas. *Sartor Resartus.* Ed. Kerry McSweeney and Peter Sabor. Oxford: Oxford U P, 1987.

Christensen, Allan Conrad. *Edward Bulwer-Lytton: The Fiction of New Regions*. Athens: U of Georgia P, 1976.

Clarke, Micael. *Thackeray and Women*. DeKalb, IL: Illinois U P, 1995.

Colby, Robert A. *Fiction With a Purpose: Major and Minor Nineteenth-Century Novels.* Bloomington, IN: Indiana U P, 1967.

---. *Thackeray's Canvass of Humanity: An Author and His Public*. Columbus, OH: Ohio State U P, 1979.

Colby, Vineta. *Yesterday's Woman: Domestic Realism in the English Novel*. Princeton: Princeton U P, 1974.

Conrad, Joseph. *The Nigger of the "Narcissus."* 1898. Ed. Robert Kimbrough. New York: Norton, 1979.

Cottam, Daniel. "Georgette Heyer: Romance, Wit, and Talent." <http://www.geocities.com/SoHo/Suite/3088/Heyer.html>. Accessed Sept. 12, 2003.

Craig, G. Armour. "On the Style of *Vanity Fair*." Sundell 55-72.

Cruse, Amy. *The Englishman and His Books in the Early Nineteenth Century*. London: George G. Harrap, 1930.

Cullinan, Mary. *Susan Ferrier*. Boston: Twayne, 1984.

Dabundo, Laura, ed. *Jane Austen and Mary Shelley and Their Sisters*. Lanham, MD: U P of America, 2000.

Dana, Richard Henry. *Two Years Before the Mast: A Personal Narrative of Life at Sea*. 1840. Cleveland, OH: World, 1946.

Davis, Tracy C., and Ellen Donkin, eds. *Women and Playwriting in Nineteenth-Century Britain.* Cambridge U P, 1999.

Dickens, Charles. *Bleak House*. 1853. Ed. Norman Page. London: Penguin, 1988.

---. *Nicholas Nickleby*. 1838-39. Ed. Paul Schlicke. Oxford: Oxford U P, 1990.

---. *Our Mutual Friend*. 1864-65. Ed. Michael Cotsell. Oxford: Oxford U P, 1998.

Disraeli, Benjamin. *Vivian Grey: A Romance of Youth.* 1826-27. *The Works of Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield.* (New York: M. Walter Dunne, 1904.) Rpt. New York: AMS, 1976. Vols 1-2.

Donkin, Ellen. *Getting into the Act: Women Playwrights in London, 1776-1829.* London: Routledge, 1995.

---. "Mrs. Gore Gives Tit for Tat." Davis and Donkin 54-74.

Douglas, Sir George. *The "Blackwood" Group*. Famous Scots Series. Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson, and Ferrier, 1897.

Duff, David, ed. *Modern Genre Theory.* Harlow, England: Longman, 2000.

Dyson, A. E. "*Vanity Fair*: An Irony Against Heroes." Sundell 73-90.

Edgeworth, Maria. *Belinda*. 1801. Ed. Kathryn J. Kirkpatrick. Oxford: Oxford U P, 1999.

---. *Ennui*. 1809. *Tales and Novels*, vol. 4, 213-408.

---. *Manoeuvering*. *Tales and Novels*, vol. 5, 1-161.

---. *Patronage*. 1814. Ed. Eva Figes. New York: Pandora, 1986.

---. *Tales and Novels*. The Longford Edition. 10 vols. New York: AMS Press, 1967.

---. *Vivian*. *Tales and Novels*, vol. 5, 239-442.

Edwards, Barbara. *Corvey "Adopt an Author": Catherine Gore.* Part of The Corvey Project at Sheffield Hallam University. May 1998. <http://www.shu.ac.uk/corvey/corinne/1Gore>

Elfenbein, Andrew. "Silver Fork Byron and the Image of Regency England." *Byromania: Portraits of the Artist in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Culture*. Ed. Frances Wilson. New York: St. Martin's, 1999. 77-92.

Eliot, George. "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists." 1856. *George Eliot: Selected Essays, Poems and Other Writings.* Ed. A. S. Byatt and Nicholas Warren. London: Penguin, 1990. 140-63.

Elton, Oliver. *Survey of English Literature, 1780-1880.* 4 vols. New York: Macmillan, 1920. Vol IV: 1830-1880.

Esterhammer, Angela. "Susan Ferrier's Allusions: Comedy, Morality, and the Presence of Milton." Dabundo 61-71.

Etheridge, Kate. "Beyond the Didactic Theme: Public and Private Space in Maria Edgeworth's *Vivian*." *English* 46.185 (Summer 1997): 97-111.

Farrell, J. P. "Toward a New History of Fiction: The Wolff Collection and the Example of Mrs.Gore." *Library Chronicle of the University of Texas.* No. 37. 1986. 28-37.

Fenton, Kate. "Journalism - Georgette Heyer." <http://www.katefenton.com/journheyer.htm> Accessed Sept. 11, 2003.

Ferrier, Susan. *The Inheritance*. 1824. Mill Green, UK: Three Rivers Books, 1984.

---. *Marriage.* 1818. Ed. Herbert Foltinek. Oxford: Oxford U P, 1997.

Franceschina, John, ed. *Gore on Stage: The Plays of Catherine Gore*. New York: Garland, 1999.

---, ed. *Sisters of Gore: Seven Gothic Melodramas by British Women, 1790-1843.* New York: Garland, 1997.

Frietzsche, Arthur H. *"The Monstrous Clever Young Man": The Novelist Disraeli and His Heroes.* Logan: Utah State U P, 1959.

Gamer, Michael. "Maria Edgeworth and the Romance of Real Life." *Novel* 34.2 (Spring 2001): 232-66.

Garrett, Peter K. *The Victorian Multiplot Novel: Studies in Dialogical Form.* New Haven: Yale U P, 1980.

Gaskell, Elizabeth. *Wives and Daughters*. 1864. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth, 1999.

Gettmann, R. A. *A Victorian Publisher: A Study of the Bentley Papers.* Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1960.

Gilmour, Robin. *The Idea of the Gentleman in the Victorian Novel.* London: George Allen and Unwin, 1981.

[Gore, Catherine.] *Cecil: or, The Adventures of a Coxcomb: A Novel.* 1841. London: Richard Bentley, 1845.

---. *Cecil, A Peer.* 1841. Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1842.

---. *The Courtier of the Days of Charles II: With Other Tales*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1839.

---. *The Diary of a Désennuyée.* New York: Harper, 1836.

---. *Mothers and Daughters: A Novel.* 1831. London: Richard Bentley, 1834.

---. *Women as They Are; or, The Manners of the Day*. 2nd ed. London: Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1830.

Gore, Catherine. *The Book of Roses; or, The Rose Fancier's Manual*. New York: Earl M. Coleman, 1978.

---. "Lady Evelyn Savile's Three Trials." Jump 55-70.

---. "The Red Man." Morrison and Baldick 142-64.

Gore, Mrs. [Catherine]. *The Hamiltons: or, Official Life in 1830.* 1834. London: Richard Bentley, 1850.

---. *Mrs. Armytage; or, Female Domination.* 1836. London: Henry Colburn, 1848.

---. *Pin Money: A Novel.* 1831. London: George Routledge, 1854.

---. *The Popular Member, The Wheel of Fortune, Etc.* London: Richard Bentley, 1844.

Gore, Mrs. Charles. *Preferment*; *or, My Uncle the Earl*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1840.

Gosse, Edmund. "The Writings of Benjamin Disraeli." *The Works of Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield.* 1904. New York: AMS, 1976. Vol 1. xi-xxxiv.

Hale, Sarah Joseph. *Woman's Record*. 2nd ed. 1855. Rpt: New York: Source Book Press, 1970, 676-80.

Hart, Francis Russell. "The Regency Novel of Fashion." *From Smollett to James: Studies in the Novel and Other Essays Presented to Edgar Johnson.* Ed. Samuel I. Mintz, Alice Chandler, and Christopher Mulvey. Charlottesville: U P of Virginia, 1981: 84-133.

---. *The Scottish Novel from Smollett to Spark*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard U P, 1978.

[Hayward, Abraham.] "Selected Novels—*Cecil* and *De Clifford*." *Edinburgh Review* 73 (July 1841): 196-209.

Hazlitt, William. "The Dandy School." *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt.* Ed. P. P. Howe. Vol. 20. London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1934. 143-49.

Heyer, Georgette. *Bath Tangle*. New York: Putnam, 1955.

---. *The Black Moth*. 1929. Toronto: Harlequin, 2003. Foreword by Diana Palmer.

---. *Devil's Cub*. 1932. Toronto: Harlequin, 2003. Foreword by Linda Howard.

---. *Footsteps in the Dark*. 1932. New York: Berkley, 1986.

---. *The Foundling*. 1948. Toronto: Harlequin, 2003. Foreword by Kay Hooper.

---. *Friday's Child*. 1944. New York: Putnam, 1946.

---. *The Grand Sophy*. 1950. Toronto: Harlequin, 2003. Foreword by Catherine Coulter.

---. *Regency Buck*. 1935. New York: Dutton, 1966.

---. *These Old Shades*. 1926. Toronto: Harlequin, 2003. Foreword by Stephanie Laurens.

Hodge, Jane Aiken. *The Private World of Georgette Heyer.* London: Bodley Head, 1984.

Horne, R. H., ed. *A New Spirit of the Age.* London: Smith, Elder, 1844.

Hughes, Winifred. "Elegies for the Regency: Catherine Gore's Dandy Novels." *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 50.2 (Sept. 1995). 189-209.

---. "Mindless Millinery: Catherine Gore and the Silver Fork Heroine." *Dickens Studies Annual* 25 (1996). 159-76.

---. "Silver Fork Writers and Readers: Social Contexts of a Best Seller." *Novel* 25.3 (Spring 1992). 328-47.

Hutcheon, Linda. *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms*. 1985. Rpt. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2000.

Jack, Ian. *English Literature, 1815-1832.* Oxford: Clarendon, 1963. Series: The Oxford History of English Literature. Ed. F. P. Wilson and Bonamy Dobrée.

Jensen, Margaret Ann. *Love's $weet Return: The Harlequin Story*. Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State U Popular P, 1984.

Jump, Harriet, ed. *Nineteenth-Century Short Stories by Women: A Routledge Anthology*. London: Routledge, 1998.

Kádár, Judit. "Two English Authoresses on Hungary in the Early Victorian Age." *Neohelicon* 17.2. 213-28.

Kennedy, Carol. *Mayfair: A Social History*. London: Hutchinson, 1986.

Kestner, Joseph. "Defamiliarization in the Romantic Regional Novel: Maria Edgeworth, Walter Scott, John Gibson Lockhart, Susan Ferrier, and John Galt." *The Wordsworth Circle* 10.4 (Autumn 1979): 326-30.

Kettle, Arnold. "*Vanity Fair*." Sundell 13 -26.

Leighton, Angela. *Victorian Women Poets: Writing Against the Heart*. Charlottesville: U P of Virginia, 1992.

[Lister, Thomas Henry.] *Granby. A Novel.* 3 vols. 2nd ed. London: Colburn, 1826.

Loofbourow, John. "Form, Style, and Content in *Vanity Fair*." Sundell 91-106.

McGrath, Joan. "Heyer, Georgette." *Twentieth-Century Romance and Historical Writers.* Ed. Lesley Henderson. 2nd ed. Chicago: St. James, 1990.

McLaughlin, Emma, and Nicola Kraus. *The Nanny Diaries*: *A Novel*. New York: St. Martin's, 2002.

Meckier, Jerome. *Hidden Rivalries in Victorian Fiction: Dickens, Realism, and Revaluation*. Lexington: U P Kentucky, 1987.

"Memoir of Mrs. Gore." *Colburn's New Monthly Magazine* 49: 434-35.

Mellor, Anne K. *Romanticism and Gender*. New York: Routledge, 1993.

Merrill, Cynthia. "Catherine Grace Frances Moody Gore." *An Encyclopedia of British Women Writers.* Ed. Paul Schlueter and June Schlueter. New York: Garland, 1988. 199-201.

Moers, Ellen. *The Dandy: Brummell to Beerbohm.* London: Secker & Warburg, 1960.

---. *Literary Women.* Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976.

Morrison, Robert, and Chris Baldick, eds. *The Vampyre and Other Tales of the Macabre*. Title work by John Polidori. Oxford: Oxford U P, 1998.

"Mrs. Gore's *Fair of Mayfair*." *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* 1 (July 1832): 389-98.

Mullan, John. "The Imitation Game." *The Guardian* (Feb. 23, 2002). <http://books.guardian.co.uk/departments/generalfiction/story/0,6000,654292,00.html> Accessed May 16, 2002.

Nicolay, Claire. "Delightful Coxcombs to Industrious Men: Fashionable Politics in *Cecil* and *Pendennis*. *Victorian Literature and Culture* 30.1 (2002): 289-304.

Ó Gallchoir, Clíona. "Maria Edgeworth's Revolutionary Morality and the Limits of Realism." *Colby Quarterly* 36.2 (June 2000): 87-97.

"Obituary: Mrs. Gore." *The Athenaeum* 1737 (9 Feb. 1861): 196.

Oliphant, Mrs. *Annals of a Publishing House: William Blackwood and His Sons, Their Magazine and Friends*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1897.

Parker, W. M. *Susan Ferrier and John Galt*. Bibliographical Series of Supplements to "British Book News" on Writers and their Work, No. 185. Gen. ed., Geoffrey Bullough. London: Longmans, Green, 1965.

Patmore, P. G. *My Friends and Acquaintance: Being Memorials, Mind-portraits, and Personal Recollections of Deceased Celebrities of the Nineteenth Century*. London: Saunders and Otley, 1854.

Peters, Catherine. *Thackeray: A Writer's Life.* Gloucestershire: Sutton, 1999. First published as *Thackeray's Universe: Shifting Worlds of Imagination and Reality*, Faber and Faber, 1987.

"*Pin Money* [review]." *Edinburgh Review* 15 (Oct. 1831): 433-42.

"*Polish Tales* [review]." *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* 3 (Jan. 1833): 234-49.

Poovey, Mary. *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1984.

Radway, Janice. *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Culture*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1984.

Ray, Gordon N. "The Bentley Papers." *The Library*. 5th ser. 7 (1952): 178-200.

---. *Thackeray: The Age of Wisdom, 1847-1863.* New York: McGraw-Hill, 1958.

---. *Thackeray: The Uses of Adversity, 1811-1846.* New York: McGraw-Hill, 1955.

Rosa, Matthew Whiting. *The Silver Fork School: Novels of Fashion Preceding* Vanity Fair. New York: Columbia U P, 1936.

Romance Writers of America. "RWA – Honor Roll." http://www.rwanational.org/honor_roll.stm Accessed August 24, 2003.

Rosmarin, Adena. *The Power of Genre*. Minneapolis, MN: U of Minnesota P, 1985.

Russ, Joanna. *How to Suppress Women's Writing.* Austin: U of Texas P, 1983.

Sadleir, Michael. *Bulwer: A Panorama. Edward and Rosina, 1803-1836*. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1931.

---. *The Strange Life of Lady Blessington.* Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1933.

Sage, Lorna, ed. "Gore, Catherine." *The Cambridge Guide to Women's Writing in English*. Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1999. 283-84

Sales, Roger. *Jane Austen and Representations of Regency England*. London: Routledge, 1994/6.

---. "The Loathsome Lord and the Disdainful Dame: Byron, Cartland and the Regency Romance." *Byromania: Portraits of the Artist in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Culture*. Ed. Frances Wilson. New York: St. Martin's, 1999. 166-83.

Schwarz, Daniel R. *Disraeli's Fiction.* London: Macmillan, 1979.

Scott, Walter, Sir. *The Pirate.* Ed. Mark Weinstein and Alison Lumsden. Edinburgh: Edinburgh U P, 2001.

---. *Waverley.* Ed. Andrew Hook. London: Penguin, 1972.

Shattock, Joanne, ed. "Gore, Catherine Grace Frances." *The Oxford Guide to British Women Writers*. Oxford: Oxford U P, 1993. 184-85.

Sims, G. A. Michael. *A Book for all Reasons*. "Biographical Note and Bibliography (date order) - Georgette Heyer." <http://www.abfar.co.uk/bibliogs/gh_bib.html> Accessed Sept. 12, 2003.

Smiles, Samuel. *Self-Help, With Illustrations of Character, Conduct, and Perseverance*. 1859. Ed. Peter W. Sinnema. Oxford: Oxford U P, 2002.

Stephen, Sir Leslie, and Sir Sidney Lee, eds. 1967-68. *Dictionary of National Biography*. 22 vols. Oxford U P, 1963-64.

Stevenson, Florence. "The Regency Romance." *Words of Love: A Complete Guide to Romance Fiction*. By Eileen Fallon. New York: Garland, 1984.

Stewart, R. W., ed. *Disraeli's Novels Reviewed, 1826-1968.* Metuchen, N. J.: Scarecrow, 1975.

Sundell, M. G., ed. *Twentieth Century Interpretations of* Vanity Fair. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1969.

Sutherland, J. A. *Thackeray at Work.* London: U of London, Althone Press, 1974.

Sutherland, John. Introduction. *Pendennis* by William Makepeace Thackeray. Oxford: Oxford U P, 1999.

---. Introduction. *Vanity Fair* by William Makepeace Thackeray. Oxford: Oxford U P, 1983.

Thackeray, William Makepeace. ---. "Codlingsby." *Works* 15: 17-31.

---. *Complete Works of William Makepeace Thackeray.* 22 vols. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1889.

---. *Contributions to the* Morning Chronicle*.* Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1955.

---. *Contributions to* Punch, *etc.* New York: Harper & Brothers, 1898.

---. "George De Barnwell." *Works* 15: 3-16.

---. *The History of Pendennis: His Fortunes and Misfortunes, His Friends and His Greatest Enemy*. Ed. John Sutherland. Oxford: Oxford U P, 1999.

---. *The Letters and Private Papers of William Makepeace Thackeray*. Ed. Gordon N. Ray. 4 vols. Cambridge, MA: Harvard U P, 1945.

---. "Lords and Liveries." *Works* 15: 60-71.

---. "On a Lazy, Idle Boy." *Complete Works* 19: 1-7.

---. "On a Peal of Bells." *Complete Works* 19: 244-53.

---. *Vanity Fair: A Novel Without a Hero*. Ed. Geoffrey and Kathleen Tillotson. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1963.

---. *Vanity Fair: A Novel Without a Hero.* Ed. John Sutherland. Oxford: Oxford U P, 1983.

---. *The Works of William Makepeace Thackeray.* 26 vols. London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1886.

Tillotson, Geoffrey, and Donald Hawes, eds. *Thackeray: The Critical Heritage*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968.

Tillotson, Kathleen. *Novels of the Eighteen-Forties*. 1954. Oxford: Clarendon, 1971.

Todd, Janet, ed. "Gore, Catherine." *British Women Writers: A Critical Reference Guide*. New York: Continuum, 1989. 282-84.

Uglow, Jenny. *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Habit of Stories*. New York: Faber Straus Giroux, 1993.

Van Ghent, Dorothy. "On *Vanity Fair*." Sundell 27-39.

Wallace, Laura. *Notes on Georgette Heyer's Life and Novels*. <http://laura.chinet.com/html/eugenia.html> Accessed Sept. 12, 2003.

Weisberger, Lauren. *The Devil Wears Prada: A Novel.* New York: Doubleday, 2003.

Williams, Anne. *Art of Darkness: A Poetics of Gothic.* Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1995.