Benjamin Disraeli: Writer With a Purpose

Throughout the course of history, there have been two kinds of people. The first group simply watched as events took shape. They did not do or say anything of importance in the grand scheme of things. They are not remembered for anything. The second group is comprised of the doers. They are the adventurers, explorers, soldiers, and politicians, who shaped both their country and the world with their actions. They brought their dreams to pass and did not settle for less. One such man was Benjamin Disraeli. Disraeli was one of those unique individuals, who wanted to forge his destiny with his own hands. He did not want a mundane and ordinary existence. He did not want to be just another average guy going to his boring job everyday only to go home, go to sleep, and get up in the morning and do it all again. He wanted to be famous. He wanted to be known and admired. He wanted his life to mean something. It took him some time, but he did gain his distinction as both a writer and a politician. This paper will focus on the connection between how he used his writing to reveal his social, political, and theological views, as well as express his personal feelings about things that happened to him.

Benjamin Disraeli was born on December 21st, 1804 in London. He was the second of five children and the oldest son, although one of his brothers, Naphtali, died in infancy.¹ His parents were Isaac Disraeli and Maria Basevi. His first taste of education came at a dame’s school at Islington taught by a Miss Roper. After that, he moved to a school in Blackheath,

taught by Rev. John Potticary. In 1817, he went to a school called Higham Hill in Walthamstow, where he learned classical languages and studied classical literature, under Rev. Eli Cogan. ²

After his schooling, his father began grooming him for a career in law, but Benjamin found that to be utterly boring and mundane. Disraeli was too determined to be stopped by his father’s prodding. He went on a trip with his father to Belgium and the Rhineland in 1824. ³ The beauty he saw, while traveling abroad, inspired him to abandon the law for other pursuits. He tried his hand at the stock exchange hoping to make a profit, but he failed miserably. This left him several thousand pounds in debt. Along with his partners, John Murray and J. D. Powles, he tried to establish a new newspaper called The Representative, but that also proved to be a complete failure. He went on to try his hand at writing. He wrote a number of works both fiction and nonfiction. It is hard to nail down just how many, because he wrote so many different things. He wrote at least eleven novels, such as Sybil, Coningsby, and Lothair. He also wrote three burlesques and a number of political pamphlets. After a series of love affairs, he eventually married Mary Anne Wyndham Lewis and settled down. In the early 1830’s, he began to campaign for a seat in Parliament. He would not be elected until 1837, when he joined the Tory Party. However, he would fight discrimination because of his Jewish heritage and have a difficult time making it up the ladder for a few years. Eventually, he became leader of his Party. He served two terms as Prime Minister. The first term was short, because he was simply finishing Lord Derby’s term, after Lord Derby stepped down. However, his second term would last for over six years. Not long after the end of his second term, he became ill, and a few months later, he died in April of 1881.

In American history, there have been forty-three Presidents so far. Some are more highly recognized than others based on their achievements or the times in which they were President. Some of these would be recognized worldwide, such as George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, or Abraham Lincoln. The same can be said for the Prime Ministers of England. Some are more well-known than others. For example, anyone with a little education would recognize the name Winston Churchill. One of these more well-known Prime Ministers is Benjamin Disraeli. Since his passing in April of 1881, a number of biographies of Disraeli have been written. Due to his unusual character and personality, there is not a single solitary mindset with which the biographers approach Disraeli. Some focus on his political achievements, while others focus on his literary skills. However, it is impossible to completely separate the two.

One of the earliest biographies of Disraeli was written in 1880 by a man named Georg Brandes and was entitled *Lord Beaconsfield: a Study*. According to Salo W. Baron, who wrote the book’s introduction, Brandes approached Disraeli as more of a literary historian than a political theorist. Perhaps because he was part Jewish himself, Brandes expressed more sympathy for Disraeli than most others of the day. Brandes himself experienced the same discrimination that Disraeli did, when he was rejected for a university position because of his Jewish heritage. Instead of having a lot to say about his writing style and literary techniques, as one would expect from a literary historian, Brandes is one of the first to recognize the inner meaning of Disraeli’s work. He pointed out that a Disraelian novel was merely a tool that Disraeli used to express his views on political, theological and social problems.⁴

In 1890, Frederick Carroll Brewster came out with his biography on Disraeli called *Disraeli in Outline*. Like Brandes, Brewster did a fantastic job of covering Disraeli as both a

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political figure and literary artist. However, Brewster had a much different point of view than Brandes did a decade earlier. Brewster saw Disraeli as a common man, who had simply overcome the odds through patience and perseverance. In the introduction, he refers to Disraeli’s literary talent as moderate. He says that Disraeli overcame both his difficulties, as well as his station in life, by sticking to his purpose and not backing down.\(^5\)

In 1906, William Flavelle Monypenny began working on his multivolume biography of Disraeli: *The Life of Benjamin Disraeli: Earl of Beaconsfield*. Monypenny had been commissioned by the trustees of the Beaconsfield estate, mostly Lord Rothchild, to produce an official biography of Benjamin Disraeli. Monypenny received permission from a number of individuals to print in the volumes certain documents that they had in their possession. Monypenny took the approach of trying to make the most accurate and detailed biography of Disraeli that was possible. He included quite a number of letters and documents to validate the facts, which he presented. By 1910, the first volume was completed. However, Monypenny would not live to see the project’s completion. Shortly after the second volume was published in 1912, Monypenny died. A number of individuals applied for the job of finishing the work. Rothchild chose George Earle Buckle to finish the work. While Monypenny did not leave behind unfinished manuscripts, he had organized all the documents, so that they were in sequence. Buckle set out to finish the work that his friend, Monypenny, had started. He tried to the best of his ability to stay true to the way Monypenny had started writing the biography.\(^6\)

Another man, who had applied for the job of completing Monypenny’s work, was Sir Edward Clarke. In 1926, he wrote his own version of Disraeli’s biography. In hindsight, he

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\(^5\) Frederick Carroll Brewster, *Disraeli in Outline* (London: Cassell & Company, 1890), Google Books
recognized that Rothchild chose the better man for the job. Clarke was very impressed with the work of Monypenny and Buckle. However, he also realized that the work was so huge that not everyone could afford the cost, nor did they have the time to read it. His first priority with his work was to make a more compact version of Disraeli’s biography, which was both more affordable and took less time to read. As far as the style with which he approached it, he tried to keep from expressing opinions as much as he could. He did not go into a deep discussion of Disraeli’s literary style or attempt to prove Disraeli right in his political decisions. Instead, he used Disraeli’s own words as much as he could. He wanted to make it as much like an autobiography as possible. His goal was to express Disraeli’s own views, instead of using the book as a tool to express his own.⁷

Another biography of Disraeli came out in 1926. It was different than any other biography of Disraeli, and it was written by D. C. Somervell. Somervell was an admirer of both Gladstone and Disraeli and studied the official biographies of each. He remarked that each biography makes the one it is primarily about look like the greatest Victorian statesman and the rival look like a mischievous politician. Somervell set out to make his work a duo-biographical work of the two Victorian statesmen. He entitled it Disraeli and Gladstone: A Duo-Biographical Sketch. He believed that the two men were not the hero and villain that they were painted as in their respective biographies. Instead, he focused on the similarities of the rise of the two individuals. For example, they ran for Parliament for the first time in the same year, though their results were different. He pointed out how much each man’s actions affected the other.⁸

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⁸ D. C. Somervell, Disraeli and Gladstone: a Duo-Biographical Sketch (Garden City, New York: Garden City Publishing Company, 1926), ix-xiii.
A year later, a Frenchman named André Maurois published his biography of Disraeli. Maurois was very unusual for a Frenchman, because he loved England and English culture. He also took an unusual approach to how he wrote his biographies. He believed that writing biographies was as much an art form as anything else. When he wrote a biography of someone, he studied them as thoroughly as he could. He wanted the portrait that he drew of them through his biography to be as accurate as possible. He believed that the worst things that a biographer could do were to either omit evidence that did not support their view or to make a person look worse than they really were. Disraeli’s life, personality, and accomplishments gave him the perfect character for his writing style. In fact, Maurois’ style of writing draws out Disraeli’s personality in every detail.  

It was 1952, when the next biography of Disraeli was published. In *Benjamin Disraeli: Earl of Beaconsfield*, Cecil Roth took a completely new viewpoint. It may have been alluded to by others, especially Brandes, but it was definitely not the focus of their writing. Roth chose to look at the aspect of Disraeli being Jewish. He wanted to know how much it affected everything about his life. He wanted to know if it was a guiding force for him, a source of torment, or no affect at all.

In 1967, Paul Smith, a lecturer at the University of London, released a book on Disraeli. Instead of being a complete biography of Disraeli’s entire life, he shifted his focus to the final fifteen to sixteen years of his life. It was the time, when Disraeli enjoyed the highest prominence. It included both his terms as Prime Minister, as well as time spent as Leader of the Opposition. Clearly, Smith was more interested in Disraeli the statesman, instead of Disraeli the

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literary figure. He saw Disraeli first and foremost as the founder of the modern Conservatism. Throughout the book, Smith talks about the development of the Tory Party, as well as Disraeli himself. He wanted to examine how much affect Disraeli had on the development of the party. He would later write a condensed biography of Disraeli, but the formation of the party was his primary concern.¹¹

A full biography of Disraeli was also published in 1967 by Robert Blake. He believed that the primary work on Disraeli was the official biography written and compiled by Monypenny and Buckle. However, many more had published their own biographies of Disraeli since then. Many of them had taken newer perspectives on Disraeli’s life. He believed that it was time for a new biography that took into consideration the newer findings, as well as the old works. He believed that it was necessary to fully examine Disraeli’s life and political career, through the works of all the writers before him, to get a newer and more accurate picture of the man that had inspired so many people. If he thought any part of Disraeli’s life was more important, it was definitely his political career, but, for the reader to fully understand, it was necessary to look at his whole life as much as possible to make all the pieces fit together.¹²

In 2000, Edgar Feuchtwanger came out with his biography on Disraeli. Following in the footsteps of his predecessors, he introduced a new viewpoint on Disraeli. He pushed the idea that a number of events in Disraeli’s life were more about Disraeli finding himself. His early literary work was his attempt to identify his own personality. Feuchtwanger argues that, even though Disraeli hid himself in a shroud at times, he never truly denied himself.¹³

¹² Blake, *Disraeli*, xxi-xxii.
Benjamin Disraeli was a man whose literary career and political career went hand in hand. Throughout his political career, he continued to work on his writing as well. Though he went through ups and downs, he never left either behind. Instead, he used his writing as a tool to further both his political career and his personal beliefs. It all started in 1826, when he published his first novel *Vivian Grey*. Disraeli read the novel *Tremaine*, which was written anonymously by Robert Ward. He was convinced he could take the style and write a better novel than Ward had. He set to work on the novel. The novel was autobiographical in nature and expressed Disraeli’s frustration over the failure of *The Representative* and the blame he received, especially from John Murray and J. G. Lockhart. After it was completed, he sent it to Sarah Austen. The Austens were friends of the Disraeli family. Disraeli used his charm to convince Mrs. Austen that he was someone she should help. She recopied the manuscript in her own handwriting and negotiated with Mr. Colburn in person.\(^{14}\)

With the first printing, *Vivian Grey* met with favorable criticism. In fact, the people amused themselves, by making guesses as to who the characters might represent. However, the author’s name could only be kept secret for so long. William Jerdan, the editor of the *Literary Gazette*, was one of the first to suspect Disraeli. He was a friend of Murray and knew the story of *The Representative*. When the word got out that the author was a twenty-one year old young man, the public attacked Disraeli with no mercy. They hit him hard with all manner of ridicule they could think of. One such example came from the pages of the Examiner on November 18\(^{th}\), 1827 by a man named William Hazlitt. Hazlitt described the character of Vivian Grey as “an egotistical dandy-hero who looks down upon the rest of the species with indifference,

\(^{14}\) Christopher Hibbert, *Disraeli and His World* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1978), 18-19.
abhorrence, or contempt.”\textsuperscript{15} The book angered the people most, because he was not a man of fashion. The public believed they had been deceived. They accused Disraeli and Mrs. Austen of deceiving Mr. Colburn to get a higher advance for the book. They also criticized Disraeli for making discrediting comments against members of high society.\textsuperscript{16}

Murray and Lockhart both made accusations against Disraeli over \textit{Vivian Grey}. Not only did they believe that characters in the book were based on them, but they also believed that they were wrongly portrayed. To them, it represented a betrayal of their confidence and trust. For the rest of his life, Disraeli denied that any character represented Murray. According to Blake, the character of the Marquess of Carabas must be Murray, despite Disraeli’s claims to the contrary. Lockhart and Disraeli never settled their differences. In fact, Lockhart refused to even speak to Disraeli on the few occasions that they were in the same room. As for Murray, the two maintained a business relationship, but they were never friends again.\textsuperscript{17} In spite of the criticisms by some members of the upper classes, it must have been a success, because Colburn gave Disraeli five hundred British pounds for part two of \textit{Vivian Grey}, in addition to the two hundred pounds he paid for part one.\textsuperscript{18} In years to come, Disraeli began to look at his first book as a juvenile mistake, but he never managed to outrun it for the rest of his life.

Disraeli spent the next few years fighting depression and illness. During one of the rare periods of good health, he wrote \textit{The Voyage of Captain Popanilla} in 1828. In this short novel, Disraeli writes his first political essay. He especially mocks the Utilitarians, a group on the rise in England. However, he also uses it to speak out against the Corn Laws and the colonial

\textsuperscript{16} Blake, \textit{Disraeli}, 40-42.
\textsuperscript{17} Blake, \textit{Disraeli}, 38-39, 42-43.
\textsuperscript{18} Clarke, \textit{Benjamin Disraeli}, 20-21.
system among other things. Although the work drew attention from a select few, it went mostly overlooked.\textsuperscript{19}

On his return from a trip abroad, he carried with him the manuscripts for a new novel, which was almost completed. The year 1832 would prove to be a significant year for Disraeli. The first event of importance would be his new book, \textit{Contarini Fleming}. This novel must have been very special to Disraeli, perhaps more than any other. In Disraeli’s own words, he said, “I am desirous of writing a book which shall be all truth: a work of which the passion, the thought, the action, and even the style, should spring from my own experience of feeling.”\textsuperscript{20} Disraeli wrote this book with the purpose of it being an autobiographical work. A short glance at the basic layout of the book’s storyline just screams Disraeli. It is an almost perfect parallel of what happened to Disraeli in his life, with the exception of the ages. Young Contarini Fleming goes through the same thing that Disraeli did, when he was ostracized because of his first book. Disraeli used his newest novel to express the feelings that he held inside for several years. In one passage, he says, “With what horror, with what supreme, appalling astonishment, did I find myself for the first time in my life the subject of the most ruthless, the most malignant, and the most adroit ridicule.”\textsuperscript{21} He expressed the hurt he felt through the character of Contarini Fleming. Sadly, he fought the discrimination and ridicule for the rest of his life. As far as the book, it did not receive the hammering criticism of its predecessor, \textit{Vivian Grey}, but it did not meet with great success either. In response, Disraeli remarks, “It was almost still-born, and having written it with deep thought and feeling, I was naturally discouraged from further effort.”\textsuperscript{22}

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\textsuperscript{19} Feuchtwanger, \textit{Disraeli}, 8.
\textsuperscript{20} Monypenny, \textit{The Life of Disraeli}, 186.
\textsuperscript{21} Monypenny, \textit{The Life of Disraeli}, 88.
\textsuperscript{22} Monypenny, \textit{The Life of Disraeli}, 196.
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Later that same year, Disraeli began a campaign to try for his first seat in Parliament. He declared his candidacy for the seat representing the borough of Wycombe. For reasons unknown, the man, who previously held the seat, resigned to run elsewhere. Disraeli took the chance to solidify his claim. Several biographies say he ran as an Independent, but others refer to him as a Radical. Whatever the case may be, he ran with no party affiliation. Perhaps, some of them labeled him a Radical based on beliefs, instead of party affiliation. In spite of his stand against joining a party, the Tories supported him anyway. They believed that it was better to have Disraeli than to have a Whig occupying that seat. The Whigs fought against Disraeli’s election to the best of their ability. They chose as their candidate Colonel Grey, who was the second son of the current Prime Minister. Disraeli arrived in Wycombe to make his speech adorned in the fancy clothes that he was known for. He shocked the crowd with his inspiring speaking ability. However, the popularity of the people was not enough to ensure the victory. On the morning of June 26th, 1832, Disraeli made a rousing speech, where he referred to himself as “the man who wore the badge of no party.” He spoke of lofty ideas, such as the improvement of the condition of the poor. Despite his inspiring speech, it proved impossible to disable the Whigs hold on the borough. He lost to Colonel Grey. The loss angered Disraeli, but there was very little he could do about it.

The book entitled Whigs and Whiggism is a compilation of some of Disraeli’s major political writings. Disraeli wrote most of them through the period of the 1830s. The first of these is a short political pamphlet called What is He? Disraeli wrote it in 1833. In the pamphlet, Disraeli pushed for the establishment of a National Party. He believed that England was at a crossroads. It would adapt to the changing times, or it would fall. Disraeli claimed that there

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must be a central principle to guide the government. He went on to say that England must either return to the old Aristocratic principle or move forward to the Democratic principle. After this remark, he made his central argument. He explained all the reasons that a return to the Aristocratic principle simply cannot work. If they tried force, the factories could produce weapons quickly enough that the takeover would be very short-lived. If the two aristocratic parties formed a coalition, it would cause a rift to form between the ones in power and the people. Therefore, England must make a change to become more Democratic in nature.25

He called the next of his writings *The Crisis Examined*. In the past, Disraeli had quarreled with the Whigs many times over various issues, but this publication proved beyond doubt that Disraeli would never and could never come to any kind of alliance with the Whigs. Disraeli still did not identify himself as a Tory, but he did make an alliance with them necessary. In *The Crisis Examined*, Disraeli criticized the Whigs on a number of issues. The first, of which, was the Whigs control of Parliament. He believed the Whigs sought to solidify their control to the point that their political opponents had no power at all. He believed that a system of checks must be in place to protect the people from a turn into despotism. He also used the document to push for tax relief for the people, another measure that the Whigs opposed. He also criticized the Reform Ministry. He believed that the Reform Ministry was made up of a bunch of hypocrites. They put up a front of being united, but some of the original members became so disgusted that they resigned feigning sickness to maintain their honor. Disraeli made his hatred of the Whigs clear beyond question.26

Disraeli made several more attempts to get a seat in Parliament, after his first try in 1832. By 1835, he realized that his chance of being elected as an Independent was essentially zero. Disraeli considered joining the Tory Party the only viable possibility. It was his desire to join the party and turn it into the National Party he had always wanted. In that same year, he wrote The Vindication of the English Constitution. The long exposition begins with an attack on Bentham’s Utilitarianism, a belief that right be defined by what causes pleasure and wrong defined by what causes pain. After tearing into Bentham for his ultra-radical point of view, he turned his attention to his eternal enemies, the Whigs. First, he addressed the issue of the House of Lords. Some people had been making a push for the House of Lords to be done away with. In an ironic twist, Disraeli defended the House of Lords. He said that the House of Lords was in its way more democratic than the House of Commons. According to Disraeli, the House of Lords was truly only responsible for representing itself. The House of Commons should represent the rest of the people, but only those that come from the proper birth can actually be elected, as long as the vote is not universal. Disraeli believed that anyone should be able to run for the House of Commons and get elected. After that, Disraeli moved on to his central point in the work. He stated that the Whigs tried to bring themselves to power and good standings at the expense of the people and the Crown. Disraeli used this statement to stress his desire to join the Tory Party. He said that the Tory Party must join with the people and the Crown to bring down the Whigs.27

In 1837, Disraeli finally achieved his goal of getting elected to Parliament, after five failed attempts. Around the same time, William IV died. Disraeli began his official political career at the same time that Victoria took the throne. The new session of Parliament began on November 20th, 1837. A few weeks later, Disraeli made his first address to the House of Commons.

27 Brandes, Lord Beaconsfield, 88-93.
Commons on December 7th, 1837. Parliament was in the midst of discussing the “Spottswoode Subscription.” The measure was meant to support Protestant elections in Ireland and oppose the Catholic elements. The Whigs and Radicals opposed it on the grounds of the religious and political freedom of Ireland. The Tories moved in favor of it, because they thought of it as a weapon against the encroachment of Catholicism. When given a chance, Disraeli stood and began to give the “maiden speech,” as it has been called. He had scarcely begun to speak, when laughter began to ring out across the assembly hall. Disraeli tried to keep his composure, but the laughter soon became so loud that he simply went back to his seat.²⁸ Before he did, he made the declaration that, “I will set down now, but the time will come when you will hear me.”²⁹ After this incident, Disraeli made several more speeches in the House of Commons. They began to take him seriously and stopped laughing. His perseverance paid off.

In 1841, the Tories won enough seats to take power away from the Whigs. The new Prime Minister was Sir Robert Peel. Disraeli had been a part of Peel’s shadow cabinet. However, when Peel chose the members for his cabinet, he gave no position to Disraeli. Disraeli felt that he had earned a position for his loyalty to the party. He wrote to Peel, but his plea went unheard. Disraeli took the humiliation he suffered hard. At the same time, Disraeli was drawn to a group of young men, who had recently been elected to the House of Commons. Disraeli was just young enough to appeal to them and yet to still have enough experience to mentor them. They began to be referred to as Young England, although it is unclear if that was an insult by those that opposed them or a name they chose themselves.³⁰

²⁸ Brandes, Lord Beaconsfield, 105-110.
²⁹ Brandes, Lord Beaconsfield, 110.
In the year 1844, Disraeli released his newest novel *Coningsby*. The inspiration for the book came from Disraeli’s friend, Henry Hope. Hope and Disraeli discussed the political situation in England. Hope thought it would be a good idea to put the political situation in England into a literary form to get the ideas out to the public. Disraeli dedicated the book to Henry Hope. In the dedication, Disraeli laid out his objectives for the book. He said, “if I have generally succeeded in my object: to scatter some suggestions that may tend to elevate the tone of public life; ascertain the true character of political parties; and induce for us the future more carefully to distinguish between facts and phrases, realities and phantoms.”

It was the first of Disraeli’s truly political novels. In *Coningsby*, Disraeli paints a vivid picture of England between the passing of the Reform Bill in 1832 and the rise of the Tories to power in 1841. He used the book to promote the political views that he and the other members of Young England shared. They believed that the aristocracy should feel a sense of personal responsibility to the poor. They also believed that the Church should act as the shepherd to its people, instead of the complacency it had fallen into. Finally, they thought whoever wore the Crown should have real power and influence.

Like most of Disraeli’s work, his political views were not the only reason for his writing. He also used *Coningsby* to express personal hurts he had endured. Unlike his earlier works, the main character was not based on him, but he did use the character to express his feelings over past hurts. He makes a reference to how he was treated, when he gave his maiden speech. In the words of Disraeli from *Coningsby*, he said, “Music, artillery, the roar of cannon, and the blare of trumpets, may urge a man on to a forlorn hope; ambition, one’s constituents, the hell of a

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previous failure, may prevail on one to do a more desperate thing – speak in the House of Commons.”\textsuperscript{33} In the long run, Coningsby was one of Disraeli’s biggest literary successes. All the people of that day read it. It received rave reviews from just about everyone that read, or everyone that is recorded anyway. Disraeli’s connection to Young England caused some of the popularity, because the public considered it a Young England Manifesto.\textsuperscript{34}

In 1845, Disraeli produced his next novel, Sybil. Sybil was also known as The Two Nations. The phrase, the two nations, refers not to different countries but to the rich and the poor. As such, Sybil is much more of a social work than political. He dedicated the book to his wife, Mary Anne, for her quality to sympathize with the suffering. In Sybil, we find two major themes. The first is Disraeli’s beliefs on the poor and what should be done about it. Throughout Disraeli’s life, one of the major issues he always stressed was the need to help the poor. He consistently appealed to the common man and tried to improve their living conditions. One particular subject he points out in Sybil is how the poor that his main character, Charles Egremont, meets in the course of his journey are living in poverty and struggling with starvation, in direct contrast to those living the life of luxury in Mowbray Castle.

In the second theme, Disraeli promoted another of his lifelong themes, the proper place of the aristocracy. Disraeli believed that it was the responsibility of the good aristocrat to see to the wellbeing of his people. He illustrates this in the comparison between the main character, Charles Egremont, and the character of John Warren. Charles Egremont’s family received their title and land from Henry VIII for plundering church lands. John Warren also makes his fortune through dishonest means. While in India, he sees the signs of a famine coming on. He buys up

\textsuperscript{33} Masefield, Peacocks and Primroses, 127.
\textsuperscript{34} Monypenny, The Life of Disraeli, 597-598
the rice and waits. His actions bring on the famine faster, and, when it hits, he sells the rice back to the people at extremely high rates, thereby making his fortune. The difference being that Charles is a descendant of the Egremonts, who perpetrated the act, and not the perpetrator himself. In spite of his family history, Charles is a caring individual, who sees the conditions of the poor and tries to help. Meanwhile, John Warren and his descendents live lavishly in their castle. The point that Disraeli illustrated throughout the work is that a person of the aristocracy can overcome their family’s past, if they try to do all they can to help the poor since they have the capability to do so.\textsuperscript{35}

On its release, \textit{Sybil} was more highly acclaimed by the critics. It became popular with the critics as well as the elite of society. The critics called it the sincerest and most valuable work that Disraeli ever wrote. It was also of utmost interest to the students of social history. However, it was never as widely read by the general public as \textit{Coningsby} before it. According to Monypenny, “it suffers from being a novel with a purpose, even though the purpose is so high and inspiring.”\textsuperscript{36}

In 1847, Disraeli published the third novel of his 1840s trilogy, \textit{Tancred}. By this time, Young England no longer existed, and some of their political views disappeared with their disbanding. While \textit{Coningsby} focused on the political and \textit{Sybil} focused on the social, the true purpose of \textit{Tancred} lay in the theological realm. While Disraeli was a faithful Anglican, the treatment of the Jewish people, to which his heritage belonged, bothered him greatly. In the early 1840s, events outside of England took their toll on Disraeli’s mind. The people, in Damascus and Rhodes, blamed the Jews living there for a couple of mysterious disappearances

\textsuperscript{35} Suzanne Daly, “Spinning Cotton: Domestic and Industrialized Novels,” \textit{Victorian Studies} 50 (Winter 2008), 275-276

\textsuperscript{36} Monypenny, \textit{The Life of Disraeli}, 650.
that had taken place. The Jews were innocent, but they suffered heavy persecution anyway. There is no doubt that these events were on Disraeli’s mind, as he wrote *Tancred*.³⁷

Disraeli used *Tancred* to express his theological viewpoints at the time. Some of his ideas were actually right, but some of them at least bordered on the radicalism he had been accused of in the past. Disraeli also believed that the Christians, at that time, were shallow. He implied that their faith came from their mouths but not from their hearts. At the time, it was commonplace among some Christians to blame the Jews for the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Disraeli believed that this was the wrong way to look at things. Disraeli also touched on a common belief that the Jews’ dispersion was their punishment for crucifying Christ. Disraeli points out that even by Jesus’ day, many of the Jews were already scattered across the known world. Hence, all the Jews cannot be blamed for Christ’s crucifixion. Disraeli makes his second point on the basis that the beliefs about the Jews punishment are not doctrinally sound. Disraeli stated that the Apostles were Jews, and that all the early churches were founded by Jews. Up to that point, his views are sound, but then he starts to head in a more radical direction. Through the character of Eva, Disraeli goes so far as to say that the Christians should bow to the Jews instead of persecute them.³⁸

*Tancred*, like *Sybil* before it, was not as successful as *Coningsby* was. In spite of this, Disraeli described it as his favorite, of the novels he had written. In general, the critics did not criticize it too hard, with the exception of a few points that they considered to be irreverent. However, the general public did not like it very much, because they simply did not understand

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it.\textsuperscript{39} Brandes stated that some thought it was ridiculous the first time they read it and had to read it again to really get it.\textsuperscript{40}

Due his rise to higher prominence in the party, Disraeli had not had the time to write in many years. He rose to leadership in the party and became Prime Minister for the first time in 1868. However, his administration lasted less than a year. After his fall from Prime Minister, he went into a state of semi-retirement. He returned to his first love, which was writing. Twenty-three years after the publication of \textit{Tancred}, Disraeli finally released his newest novel, \textit{Lothair}, in 1870.\textsuperscript{41}

In \textit{Lothair}, Disraeli produced another novel with theological leanings. It was far different than \textit{Tancred}, in that it had less to do with Jews and more to do with Christians. The main subject of \textit{Lothair} rested in the struggle between different spiritual forces at work in England in those days. The forces are the Church of Rome, the international revolutions going on in the outside world, and the Church of England. Each of these is represented in the story by a girl that the main character, Lothair, falls in love with. The character of Clare Arundel represents the Church of Rome. Disraeli felt drawn to the Church of Rome because of her historical tradition and the extravagant forms of worship. However, he also believed that the Church of Rome put its followers under a type of bondage. Clare, along with other members, tries to use trickery to get Lothair to join the Church of Rome. Although tricked at first, Lothair sees the inconsistencies in their argument and leaves, while Clare returns to the convent. This represented Disraeli’s knowledge of the methods that they would take to keep their members and gain new ones. The character of Theodora Campain represents the international revolutions.

\textsuperscript{39} Monypenny, \textit{The Life of Disraeli}, 864-865.
\textsuperscript{40} Brandes, \textit{Lord Beaconsfield}, 170.
She was the wife of an American Colonel, but she was also of Italian descent. Theodora loved the country she came from and would gladly give her life to free it from the chains of the Church of Rome’s control. In a huge battle, she gave her life for what she believed in. This illustrated that Disraeli understood the revolutionary mindset as well as had sympathy for it, but it also showed that he realized the futility of that path. Lady Corisande represented the Church of England and the English way of life. Although the wedding is not actually held, the ending of *Lothair* implied that Lothair and Lady Corisande were going to marry. Disraeli used this to illustrate his loyalty to the Church of England and England herself.\(^\text{42}\)

*Lothair* proved to be one of Disraeli’s most popular novels. *Coningsby* was the only other one that compared with *Lothair* in popularity. Each printing sold out nearly as soon as it hit the shelves. After several printings, there were nearly fifteen thousand copies in circulation. The general public loved it. The book was translated into several different languages and sold around the world. Eighty thousand copies sold in the United States in just a few months. Even though the public adored it, the reviewers looked on it with unfavorable eyes. *The Times* was one of the few, who gave it good marks. *The Athenaeum* claimed “that the book would have gone unnoticed if written by anyone else.”\(^\text{43}\)

This paper has been an analysis of Disraeli’s writing, through the eyes of some of his most famous works. Most writers do not write with a purpose like Disraeli did. He used his writing to express everything from his own personal pain to his theological beliefs and many other things. Disraeli was undoubtedly a complex individual. Anyone, who tried to sum him up in a single word, would unquestionably fail. Even so, he definitely left his mark on England and

\(^{42}\) Monypenny, *The Life of Disraeli* vol. II, 491-495.
the world, through writing as well as his political career. Many go through this life without
doing anything of consequence. Not so for Disraeli. He will be remembered, when many others
from England are long forgotten. No one could forget such a unique individual. His writing will
continue to influence those, who read it for a long time.
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