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978-0-521-51333-3 - The Silver Fork Novel: Fashionable Fiction in the Age of Reform

Edward Copeland

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THE SILVER FORK NOVEL

In the early nineteenth century there was a sudden vogue for novels centring on the glamour of aristocratic social and political life. Such novels, attractive as they were to middle-class readers, were condemned by contemporary critics as dangerously seductive, crassly commercial, designed for the 'masses' and utterly unworthy of regard. Until recently, silver fork novels have eluded serious consideration and been overshadowed by authors such as Jane Austen. They were influenced by Austen at their very deepest levels, but were paradoxically drummed out of history by the very canon-makers who were using Austen's name to establish their own legitimacy. This first modern full-length study of the silver fork novel argues that these novels were in fact tools of persuasion, novels deliberately aimed at bringing the British middle classes into an alliance with an aristocratic programme of political reform.

EDWARD COPELAND is Emeritus Professor of English at Pomona College, Claremont, California.

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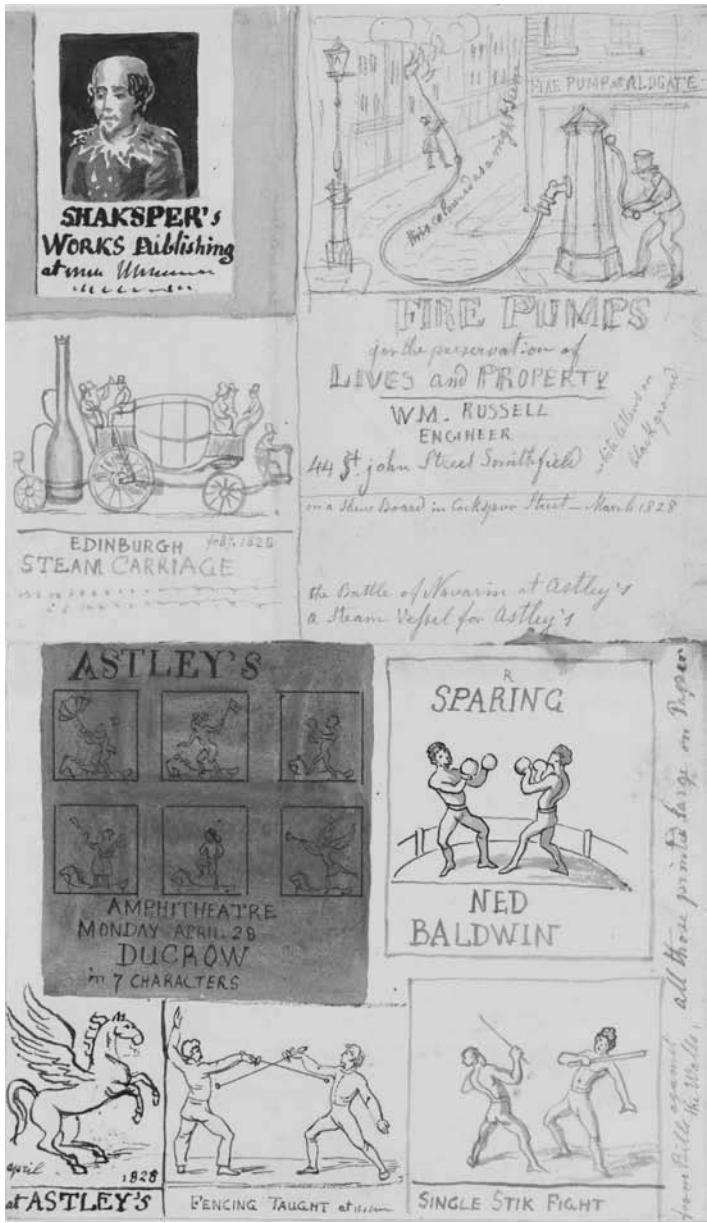
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