



Royce Mahawatte (London)

## The Biography and the Beautiful: *Cecil, Or the Adventures of a Coxcomb* (1841) and the Biopolitics of the Fashioned Self

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Jahrestagung 2019 „Contrast and Complementary Figures for Portraiture and Biography“  
Vortrag Dienstag, 2. Juli, 17.00 Uhr

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### Abstract

In this presentation I will discuss Catherine Gore's *Cecil, Or the Adventures of a Coxcomb* it is a fashionable novel, an early nineteenth-century genre, and it also happens to be a fictional autobiography. I will explore this work as fiction of embodiment politics, as both the protagonist and the novel, more broadly, asks the question: who is worthy of biographical attention, who gets to make their mark in history? *Cecil* is particularly interesting, not least because of the witty prose style of the narrator, but for scholars of fashioned biopolitics Cecil Danby's wit is often physiognomical - he has a tendency to judge his social rivals, particularly his half-brother John, on their physical qualities (and shortcomings). In this novel, fashion, the conception of the beautiful body, are calibrated through autobiography. These elements are powerfully linked and they reveal a biopolitics, contained in satire that needs to be read against the historical and party political subject matter of the novel.

