

Beauty and tragedy

Violet Manners (married name Lindsay)

1856-1937

A talented, intelligent and beautiful noblewoman whose social status and gender were sometimes a burden.

Despite a lack of formal training, her drawings of members of her social circle were widely exhibited and admired.

In 1882 she married Henry John Brinsley Manners, the future Duke of Rutland.

He loved hunting and the chorus line, while her favoured pursuits were intellectual and artistic.

The couple remained married but went their own ways.

After providing heirs she proceeded to have further children by fathers reputedly including Benjamin Disraeli's former private secretary.

Lady Granby (as she was known until becoming Duchess of Rutland in 1906) was regarded as the central figure of a group of aristocratic avant-garde intellectuals known as the Souls.

Slender and pale, she was widely admired.

But the death of her eldest son Lord Haddon, aged just nine, left her distraught.

Lady Granby devoted herself to sculpting a tomb which featured an effigy of the boy's recumbent figure and relief portraits of her family.

She considered it to be her finest work and kept it in her own home until shortly before her death, when it was accepted by the Tate Gallery.

- Read the Oxford DNB biography here: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/public/dnb/49527.html>.