



Research School of Humanities, ANU and University of Melbourne Conference

Reworking the Regency

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**ABSTRACTS IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER
BY AUTHOR**

'Awake, Bold Bligh: Alas! It is too late': Romantic belatedness in Byron's *The Island* (1823)

Judith Barbour
University of Sydney

In April 1789 in the South Pacific Ocean off the Tongan archipelago, the crew of a British warship HMS the *Bounty* mutinied and commandeered the ship. Led by the Master's mate, Fletcher Christian, they forced its commander, Lieutenant William Bligh R.N. and eighteen of their shipmates into the ship's launch, and set it adrift, thousands of sea miles from a safe port. Bligh survived the ordeal and returned to England to raise the hunt against the fugitive mutineers.

In July 1790, the Admiralty published Bligh's *Narrative of the Mutiny*, a version of his fateful voyage that blamed the mutiny on the venereal lure of Tahiti. A historical painting by Robert Dodd showing Bligh and his companions in the cockle-shell launch was widely reproduced. Dodd's ideological schema linked the mutiny and the looming threat of revolutionary Jacobinism.

When the poet Lord Byron crossed the Channel into European exile in April 1816, a caricature by George Cruikshank extended Dodd's technique of splicing sexual scandal and political paranoia. Like Dodd's heroic Bligh, Byron stands legs akimbo for balance in the rocking boat. But now he wears a bulging codpiece and has a young lovely under his right arm. His mother and wife each clings to one of his legs, as he points with his left hand towards his half-sister Augusta high on the white cliffs of Dover – " 'Fare thee well!'—thus disunited/Torn from every narrow tie." The libel on Byron encodes incest and buggery, and mischievously conflates Bligh and Christian, each man the secret sharer and ultimate ruin of the other.

In 1823 Byron, now a permanent expatriate and about to embark on another revolutionary war, revived the antebellum drama of the Mutiny on the *Bounty*, and reworked it for a dream sequel. *The Island* ceremoniously hails Bligh in the dedicatory verse: 'Awake! Bold Bligh'. A Dying Gladiator salutes dead Caesar from the shores of the ever wakeful Bosphorus.

'The horrid slaughter in the metropolis': Smallpox, inoculation and plebeian childcare in Regency London

Michael Bennett
University of Tasmania

The first decade of the nineteenth century saw national mobilisation on an unprecedented scale. One largely unregarded facet was the spread of vaccination, driven largely by elite networks, professional and lay, and involving the immunisation of a quarter of a million British children between Jenner's 'discovery' in 1798 and 1810. The high watermark of this phase of expansion, symbolically at least, was the establishment of the National Vaccine Establishment in 1809. The Regency period, strictly defined, was a time of de-mobilisation in this respect as more generally. Despite its continuing success in Napoleonic Europe, vaccination lost momentum in Britain and, for its supporters, the city of London was the heart of the problem. A number of apothecaries continued to offer the older and more hazardous practice of smallpox inoculation (variolation), in which patients were infected with the disease itself, and through which the disease itself was propagated rather than eradicated. In spring 1814, when the leaders of the victorious allies assembled in the British capital, they were keen to meet Jenner, who, it was claimed, had saved more lives across Europe than had been lost in the Napoleonic Wars. Ironically, at this very time, the House of Lords rejected another bill to inhibit variolation and, close to Jenner's lodgings in Marylebone, an outbreak of smallpox occasioned by the practice led to the death of eight infants.

This paper examines popular attitudes to smallpox in Regency London and the evidence that many ordinary people retained a preference for variolation over vaccination. It shows how the failure of the vaccination lobby to secure legislation to inhibit variolation set the scene for the attempt to achieve this end through the common law by an indictment of public nuisance. The focus of the study is the indictment of Sophia Vantandillo, a working mother, in King's Bench in 1815 for "unlawfully and injuriously" exposing her child, infective with smallpox after inoculation, "to the great danger of infecting" the neighbourhood. The affidavits in mitigation and aggravation, all lodged by working class women, include a great deal of circumstantial detail, providing unusual insights on the lives of women and children in the crowded tenements of Paddington. Mrs Vantandillo was sentenced to three months' imprisonment for her role in inadvertently spreading smallpox among her neighbours, with fatal consequences. The case made legal history, but it did not reflect well on the vaccination cause. It is argued, from the evidence of the affidavits, that Mrs Vantandillo merits neither the condemnation nor the condescension of posterity.

Authenticity, Surrogacy and Value in Regency Britain

David Blaazer

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During 1810-11, British politicians and intellectuals were forced to debate the ways in which a surrogate could serve for the nation's most important institution. For the second time in a generation profound questions arose over how or even whether its essential meaning and value could be defined and expressed; over the limits and scope of its representation; whether politicians could or should place limits on the power of its surrogate; how its surrogate's integrity (or lack thereof) could shape the moral worth of the nation and determine its international standing; and how a corrupt surrogate might anger the common people. The theoretical conclusions of the debates were clear: the institution could be represented only in limited ways and surrogacy was to be avoided if at all possible. The practical consequences were equally clear: the pressure of circumstances made surrogacy an inescapable necessity for the time being.

The return to authenticity became possible a decade later. In 1821 Bank of England notes once again became convertible into gold – 24 years after the Bank Restriction crisis of 1797 had 'temporarily' given Britain a system of inconvertible paper money. As before, banknotes could now only represent bullion coin, not substitute for it.

In this paper I will explore the cultural and social dimensions of the bullion debate of 1810-1811 as it unfolded in the parliament, the press and the pamphlet literature. I will focus on the difficulties protagonists in the debate faced in locating the essence of money, and the ways in which the value of money was discursively linked with the value of Britain and its constituent nations. As a coda, I will examine Sir Walter Scott's nationalistic inversion of the debate's conclusions in the Scottish small notes controversy of 1826.

Dancing around Jane Austen: adventures in reading and re-enactment

Laura Carroll
La Trobe University

Music, dress, and dance are significant elements of the social and psychological world in Jane Austen's novels – never less than interesting, and often the arena where imagination and feeling receive public expression and acknowledgement. But the novels hardly ever describe or explain music, dress and dance: the reader is expected to draw on her own knowledge and experience, and this is the kind of embodied experience that explanatory footnotes are not very good at conveying. Reading, as Karin Littau has recently argued, is a labour of the body as well as the mind. If we don't know how to read dance in Jane Austen, what might we be missing?

This paper reports on the findings of interviews conducted with a group of Australian women who combine passionate appreciation of Austen's novels with re-enactment of 'Regency era' leisure activities, especially playing music, making and wearing costume, and dancing. It draws on recent work on Janeite culture, on fandoms, and on the historical morphology of reading to explore the ways contemporary readers make, view and articulate mutually enriching links and resonances between reading and re-enactment.

The paper will conclude with a few remarks about the author's own recent initiation into the mysteries of fully-frocked English country dancing, and how this experience of communal, embodied, mobile, and rhythmic structures has contributed another dimension to her reading of *Pride and Prejudice*.

Keynote address:

Maria Edgeworth and the Science of Fashionable Life

James Chandler

University of Chicago

James Chandler is Barbara E. and Richard J. Franke Distinguished Service Professor in the Department of English, University of Chicago. His current project is *The Sympathetic Eye: A Brief History of Sentiment*. (This project aims to set the work of Frank Capra—and of "golden age" Hollywood more generally—in much longer perspectives of cultural and intellectual history than one finds in the existing scholarship: e.g., perspectives that open out to the long-evolving conventions of the sentimental novel, the Romantic-period conception of sympathy and spectatorship in the literary public sphere, and, ultimately, the emergence of what I call "sentimental probability" in the commercial theory of Adam Smith.)

Veterans of the Napoleonic Wars: moving past the dandy in understanding Regency masculinity

Karen Downing

The Australian National University

Historians often treat the Regency as a transitional period between the Georgian and Victorian eras and we would expect it to be treated as such in the historiography of masculinity. However, its most familiar male figure is the Regency dandy, the last manifestation of the iconic Georgian aristocratic rake, who does little to help us understand the ascendancy of the middle-class patriarch of Victorian family and business. This paper will argue that a consideration of the veterans of the Napoleonic Wars gives the Regency a pivotal place in the histories of changing ideals of manliness. The third of a million discharged soldiers and sailors who returned home following the signing of 'General Peace' in April 1814 faced a collapsed economy and rising national debt. They increased the pressure on an already pressured labour market and added pensions and half-pay provisions to the state's financial burden. Large numbers of men with military experience and a social grievance were present in subsequent agitation among rural and semi-skilled urban workers, but returned service men also formed a large part of Peel's Irish Constabulary of 1814, his Metropolitan Police of 1829 and the ranks of the growing civil services. The ending of the Napoleonic Wars highlighted both the perennial problem of managing militarised masculinity in times of peace, and new negotiations of traditional expectations of manliness with a commercialising, industrialising and politer society.

Society, femininity and masquerade: reading Letitia Landon's *Romance and Reality*

Claire Knowles
La Trobe University

The silver-fork, or "fashionable," novel is synonymous with the Regency period. Populated by rakes, dandies, and ingénues, and obsessed with detailing the minutiae of the lives of the upwardly mobile, the genre has come to exemplify the excesses associated with Regency high society. Letitia Landon, better known to contemporary readers as the poet "L.E.L.," may not have moved in the same aristocratic circles as famous silver-fork novelists like Lady Caroline Lamb and the Countess of Blessington. Nonetheless, she had an insider's knowledge of the London literary scene and this knowledge comes to the fore in one of her contributions to the genre, *Romance and Reality* (1831). I argue in this paper that Landon's preoccupation with what Joan Riviere famously terms, the "masquerade of femininity," is reflected in her continual evocation of "masks" and performances throughout her diverse body of work. Nowhere is this more apparent than in *Romance and Reality* which, with its focus on masked balls and fashionable soirees, presents masquerade as an essential element of normative feminine behaviour.

From neoclassical simplicity to romantic complexity

Roger Leong
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the fashions of English women were beginning to reflect the austere neoclassical styles worn by their more fanatical French counterparts. Women's clothes had never been quite so revealing of the female form nor made of such flimsy materials. These high, Empire-waisted dresses were made from diaphanous white muslin and cut to drape close to the body like the dress of the ancient Greeks or Romans, at least in theory. By the beginning of the Regency, English fashions had developed a distinctly ornamental character reflecting the eclectic nature of British architecture and design. The hybrid of styles and enthusiasms during this period such as the neoclassical, historical and the exotic surfaced in fashionable dress. Details from medieval, Elizabethan and Tudor costume were popular as were the legacies of Britain's battles and imperial ambitions abroad. This paper examines the changes in Englishwomen's fashion before, during and after the Regency and includes discussion regarding changes in the structure, ornamentation and construction of women's clothes.

Celebrity and debt in the journal of Sir Walter Scott 1825–1832

Melinda Graefe
Flinders University

Walter Scott commenced writing his journal in late 1825, just as the impact of the financial crisis was becoming apparent. An avid memoirist ("I am enamoured of my Journal"), Scott recorded the mundane goings-on of work and domesticity for posterity. But the journal was also a kind of "private domestic therapy" (J. H. Alexander) to ease the stress of, among other things, his financial woes. Underlying these more conscious motivations, I will argue, was a need to write daily of coming to terms with the responsibility of his celebrity, which had inevitably become entwined with debt (both monetary and literary). Due to the financial fall-out of his publishing ventures, Scott's anonymity as novelist, while always tenuous, was significantly compromised when his identity as the author of the *Waverley* novels was revealed to a select group of financial trustees as an assurance against his debts, and as a means to retain his livelihood and his cherished home Abbotsford.

While the journal at times dithers in fruitless longing for a simpler past it is fascinating for its exploration of celebrity, which provides the text with a levity and Scott with an opportunity to portray spirited and complex characters. Peppered with anecdotes about Byron (including a tantalising reference to having seen some volumes of Byron's recollections) and shadowing the career of Napoleon Bonaparte (whose life Scott was engaged in writing) Scott is entranced with the appeal, moral capabilities and spirit of the personality that shapes public displays of fame, while grappling with his own inclinations for privacy, so instinctively at odds with his desire to be celebrated.

Scott explores the identity of celebrity in an (arguably) feminine form which at the time held the ambiguous status of private musing for public delectation, and it seems that Scott favoured the journal for his explorations of the private complexities of celebrity in a text he was not compelled to publish. Unlike his novels and reviews, the journal was not a "task" as he called it, but a retreat from the vigorously "manly" pursuit of raising an income and meeting the debts for which he felt so deeply and publicly responsible.

Foreshadowings of Alice: Magic Lanterns, Reading and the Regency Child Consumer

Helen Groth
Macquarie University

This paper takes as its focus two early nineteenth illustrated books for children Elizabeth Semple's *The Magic Lantern; Or, Amusing and Instructive Exhibitions for Young People* (1806) and Jane and Ann Taylor's *Signor Topsy-Turvy's Magic Lantern: or, The World Turned Upside Down* (1810). Both use the serial form of the magic lantern sequence as an organising motif. Both volumes also materialize what Alan Richardson usefully describes as "new technologies of the self" that took the education of the child as their primary object. By tracing an arc from Semple and the Taylors' volumes to Lewis Carroll's engagement with the sphere of popular visual media in the Alice books this paper provides a historical basis for theorising the model of interactive reading that emerges out of this confluence of visual and textual media and its various transformations in the intervening decades; a period characterised by unprecedented interest in the character of the child, the problem of mass literacy and the psychological and material affects of reading. Illuminating and projecting sequences of words or episodic narrative sequences, the magic lantern became part of the mnemonic technology of nineteenth century reading practices, normalising the process of reading parts rather than wholes and the inevitable oscillation between periods of attention and distraction synonymous with what Q.D.Leavis would scathingly refer to as the "penny-in-the-slot machine principle" of popular serialized nineteenth century narrative forms. It is little wonder then that the lantern, in particular, became such a popular motif and device in the early nineteenth century, a period of revolutionary changes in the social functions of reading and that this extends and expands as the century progresses to the point where Lewis Carroll can exploit, while artfully dismantling, the intrinsically coercive devices designed to instructively entertain and socialise the Victorian child.

Keynote address:

Opening Gambits: Austen and the Risk of Conversation

Jon Mee
Warwick University

Jon Mee is Professor of Romanticism Studies at Warwick University. He is currently writing a book on literature, conversation, and contention 1711-1832 funded by a Phillip J. Leverhulme Major Research Fellowship from the Leverhulme Trust.

Conference respondent

Iain McCalman
University of Sydney

Iain McCalman is Professorial Research Fellow and ARC Federation Fellow at the University of Sydney. One of his current research projections is 'Seeing Change: Science, Culture and Technology in the Antipodes from the age of Darwin: a multi media research collaboration'.

Courting the 'Charitable Influence of Time': The Reworking of Character in Thomas Moore's *Life of Lord Byron*

Eleanor Morecroft
University of Queensland

Thomas Moore and fellow poet Lord Byron had what has been acknowledged as an important literary relationship, as well as a deep friendship. Moore was to become Byron's biographer, with his multivolume *Notices of the Life of Lord Byron, with his Letters and Journals*, first published in 1830: a work that would influence subsequent biographies of the poet. Moore had burned the autobiography that Byron left him when he died in 1824, amid fears that it would prove too scandalous. His highly personal *Notices* served as an attempt to soften, even sanitize Byron's public character, distancing it from the controversy the poet had attracted in his lifetime. This is not to say that controversial subjects were not addressed (though the subject of his alleged affair with his half-sister is notably avoided), but they were carefully reworked in Byron's favour. The *Life* followed biographical conventions, detailing his noble lineage, the formation of character in childhood, and the inclusion of anecdotes from various friends (including Moore himself) emphasizing the positive aspects of his personality and actions without, for the most part, denying what could be construed as negative. This paper will examine this *early* reworking of a major Regency character, which may be said to have prepared it for Victorian morality. Byron was, of course, an influential model for the Victorian antihero: an appealing yet dark, and above all *multidimensional* character. By publishing a work that was positive yet not hagiographical, Thomas Moore arguably helped facilitate the evolution of Byron's image in British public culture as the Regency faded into the Victorian period.

The End of the Wartime Alliance: Public Opinion and British Foreign Policy, 1814 to 1821

Rory Muir
University of Adelaide

The visit of the Allied Sovereigns to London in 1814 marked a high point of Britain's involvement in Europe and popular enthusiasm for her wartime allies. Over the next few years support for an active engagement with Europe evaporated: a casualty of the sour disillusioned atmosphere of postwar politics and of Castlereagh's inability to express his policies in terms which would fire the imagination. Gradually the Continental Powers came to be seen as 'despotisms' and even as posing a threat to British liberty. The reaction of the 'Holy Alliance' to the Revolutions of 1820 provoked outrage in Britain and led to a further sharp deterioration of relations. British foreign policy was both deeply influenced by, and reinforced, the shift in public opinion as wartime solidarity gave way to a new more liberal outlook.

Cain versus Heaven and Earth: the Wrong Scandal

Gregory Olsen

University of Auckland

The publication of Byron's biblical drama *Cain*, in December of 1821, precipitated a literary scandal, with numerous critics condemning what they perceived as the drama's criticisms of 'sacred history'. Such was the reaction against the work that even state protection of its copyright was endangered, 'impious' productions being deemed unworthy of defence by the Crown. For nearly two hundred years, the drama has commonly been read as an assault upon the religion of the day.

In the same month, Byron produced *Heaven and Earth*, a related, unfinished biblical drama, which the poet described to his publisher as 'pious enough', a judgement shared by most critics then and since.

However, a closer reading of the two dramas presents a radically different view. *Cain*, for all that it does contain some arguments which challenge contemporary official religious dogma, is rather more sophisticated than the simple attack upon Christianity for which it has been taken. Most significantly, its challenges are undermined by the rhetorical construction of the drama itself. In stark contrast, *Heaven and Earth* is more ironically pious than sincerely so, and it actually delivers a stronger attack upon contemporary religion than does *Cain*, largely by undermining the very pieties which it appears to present.

Cain is pious, *Heaven and Earth* is impious, and the scandal over *Cain* was a scandal over the wrong drama. This calls into the question the way in which contemporary responses to Byron's works are commonly read by modern critics.

Thomas Horner's Colosseum and Regency London's 'Second Life'

Peter Otto

University of Melbourne

This paper focuses on Thomas Horner's remarkable panorama of London, which was based on sketches he made from the top of St Paul's cathedral in 1821, and the equally remarkable Colosseum, in which it was exhibited. Designed by Decimus Burton, the Colosseum was opened to the public in 1829. Horner's panorama represents the culmination of his experiments in point of view and panoramic space, most notably: *Description of an improved method of delineating Estates* (1813), which claimed to reunite the plan and the prospect ('panoramic chorometry'); the series of superb verbal/visual album she produced between 1816 and 1820, such as 'Sketch of a Ramble in South Wales' (1820); his *Prospectus. View of London and the Surrounding Country* (1823); and so on. At the same time, Horner's panorama (painted by E. T. Parris and his assistants) and the Colosseum together mark the culmination of the first phase of the panorama's development, and the beginning of the second, in which virtual realities are used to compose a milieu within which consumers construct, and display to others, their own rich 'second life'. The romantic traveller here becomes romantic consumer, actualising the various possibilities opened by the Colosseum's diverse spaces (which include art galleries, conservatories, landscapes, three-dimensional models, a gentleman's club, and so on, as well as the panorama itself). In the course of the nineteenth century the panorama is displaced by technologies such as the diorama, photography and cinema, which tend to frame the relation between first order and second order (actual and virtual) realities as a question of representation rather than poesis. During the same period, cultural practices emerge that (drawing on romantic thought) claim to mediate between first order and second order realities by locating the latter in relation to 'the Quasi-transcendentals' of Life, Labour, and Language'. The paper concludes by noting that this in part explain why it is only in the late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century, as faith in these 'quasi-transcendentals' begins to falter, that the Colosseum's virtual realities can be seen once again as a paradigmatic product of the modern, a striking anticipation of our own (arguably now dominant) second lives.

The Military Author and Regency Britain

Neil Ramsey

The Australian National University

In this paper I examine an important, yet neglected, development in British literature of the Regency period: the rise to fame of the military author. While military writing was commonplace in Britain of the eighteenth century, the growing disassociation of civilian and military worlds through the later part of the eighteenth century had helped lend military writing an increasingly scientific and technical air that made it unfamiliar and dull to civilian tastes. Indeed, modern civilian literature itself had, in many ways, developed from the 1770s as a product of the Enlightenment reaction against the barbarism of war, which meant that military literature had grown to possess a questionable place in the domain of "civilised letters". Moreover, military officers were themselves associated with aristocratic vice and a reputation for being unlearned bores. In this paper, I detail how two military memoirs of the mid 1820s, Moyle Sherer's *Recollections of the Peninsula* and George Gleig's *The Subaltern*, transformed these perceptions of military writing. These books established a radically new way of representing war to the British reading public by offering a narrative of war that was structured around the picturesque travelogue. Exhibiting a degree of taste, virtue and refined feeling that was felt to be unprecedented in military writing these books both helped the military memoir to serve as a central element in Britain's memories of the Napoleonic Wars and established the military author as a significant new addition to British literature of the 1820s.

What was 'Regency' about the Regency theatre?

Gillian Russell

The Australian National University

This paper will outline questions of periodization in recent studies of late Georgian/Romantic period theatre and the role of 'Regency' as a category in relation to these questions before going on to explore the significance of an actual theatre in Tottenham Court Road, called the 'Regency'. I will examine representations of this theatre, particularly in *Londina Illustrata* (1819-1834) a collection of illustrations of London which culminated in a number depicting contemporary theatres, including the 'minor' theatres, of which the Regency was an example. Less well known than Ackermann's *Microcosm of London*, Wilkinson's intriguing text suggests a very different image of the Regency than the one usually associated with Ackermann. I will explore the significance of the representation of the London stage in *Londina Illustrata* comparing it with William Hazlitt's account of the minor theatres to suggest new ways in which we might approach the Regency theatre.

Radicalism and Reaction: The Enclosure Elegies of John Clare

Andrew Smith

University of Melbourne

For John Clare, the wave of parliamentary enclosure that began in the 1790s and continued throughout the Regency was less an attempt to support the war effort against France and consolidate Britain's economic position after Waterloo, as claimed by its proponents, than a ruthless exploitation of the land for the personal enrichment of landowning 'improvers'. His protests against enclosure in his 'enclosure elegies' have prompted much critical debate about the contrast between his apparent radicalism on this issue, and his avowed conservatism on religious or political reform. Clare's views on the impact of enclosure on rural society can sound very similar to those of William Cobbett in the *Rural Rides*, and appear fundamentally opposed to those of the Board of Agriculture, but in this paper I will suggest that Clare's poetry represents a third position in assessing the effects of enclosure. By attending to the recurrent imagery of ruin and waste in these poems, I will argue that Clare often views these Regency-era reforms through the lens of a seventeenth- and eighteenth-century discourse of ruin literature – a particularly interesting strategy given the traditionally close relationship of ruin appreciation with a social and political elite. Despite the apparently exclusive interest of these poems in Northamptonshire landscapes and their significance for the narrator or for his immediate community, the ruin imagery connects Clare's concerns for his local landscape with an established cultural discourse. In this way, Clare suggests that the enclosure of the Northamptonshire landscape is not simply a concern for the region's labouring-class inhabitants, but for Britain as a whole.

Agnes Strickland, the Death of Princess Charlotte and the Regency Roots of the *Lives of the Queens of England*

Mary Spongberg
Macquarie University

The writing of royal lives was one of the most lucrative and respectable modes of writing for nineteenth-century women and has long been associated with the reign of Queen Victoria. The works of Agnes Strickland and other royal biographers certainly appeared in the 1840s, but their roots can be traced to the last years of the reign of George III and the period of the Regency. The Regency particularly marked a formative time for writers of women's history, as women experimented with hybrid genres to explore the lives of queens and court life. I want to explore the idea that the sexual politics of the Hanoverian court were critical to shaping women writer's engagement with royal lives. The paper will also explore the connection between royalty and celebrity in this period and how this too may have contributed to the emergence of 'sympathetic histories' of royal women.

Byron, Regency Scandal and the Proverbial Notorious

Clara Tuite

University of Melbourne

'Twenty years before he was officially declared Prince Regent, George Frederick Augustus of Hanover's indulgences ... ushered in the glittering froth of brilliance, luxury, and vice we know as the Regency.'

(Benita Eisler, *Byron: Child of Passion, Fool of Fame* [1999])

The association between Lord Byron, George Gordon and scandal is both exemplary and banal – Byron's fame a proverbial signifier of a compound of literary genius and bad behaviour. So too is the Regency period proverbially and interminably linked with scandal, where, in routinely sensationalising conjurations, "the Regency" as a period signifier would seem to all but exhaust its historicity in a tautological conjugation with vice and scandal.

Working against the tendency to subsume the Regency's historical specificity within its status as a synonym for scandal, this paper seeks to understand Regency scandal historically, and does so by engaging celebrity not as a mere symptom of scandal but as a category of analysis.

The paper argues that Byron's proverbial notoriety, a specifically scandalous form of celebrity, can be understood as a mode of Regency publicity, sociability and social ritual that emerges through the particular cultural, social and political stresses of this poignant historical moment. In particular, scandalous celebrity functions as an ambivalent culture of spectacle and forum of public opinion across the domains of state, law, social culture and literary and popular print culture. In this way, I argue that Regency scandal signifies not merely as mute glittering froth but as eloquent testimony to the vital processes of social, political and cultural transformation that constitute Regency public culture.

“very unpleasant, and a violation of [...] modest propriety”: Regency Reviewers' Encounters with Bonaparte in Robert Bloomfield's 'The Shepherd's Dream: or, Fairies' Masquerade'

Angus Whitehead

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It is widely accepted that by 1812, the year he left London for Shefford, Bedfordshire, Robert Bloomfield was experiencing a steady decline in popularity from which neither he nor his works would ever recover. Simon White's recent critical study of Bloomfield's poetry (2007) concludes by suggesting that the labouring class poet's final collection, *May Day with the Muses*, "has been neglected because, unlike *The Farmer's Boy* (1800), it was not a best seller and received not attention from contemporary reviewers."

In this paper I demonstrate that *May Day* was eagerly anticipated and enjoyed a largely positive reception from a significant number of reviewers on its publication in 1822. A reviewer for *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* even compared the work favourably with James Hogg's popular success *The Queen's Wake* (1813). Bloomfield, contrary to the assertions of White and earlier scholars, was not forgotten by reviewers and readers of the early 1820s. We must therefore consider other causes for *May Day's* subsequent neglect. A close reading of other contemporary reviews reveals that in Bloomfield's *May Day* poem 'The Shepherd's Dream, or, Fairies' Masquerade' a post-Waterloo readership recognized (as modern scholars have not) a playful, pointed, and suggestively radical exploration of Napoleon's career and ultimate fate.

The paper also reveals evidence of a hitherto unknown book-length topographical poem by Bloomfield. Composed c. 1815-19, the poem is dedicated to a previously unidentified patron: prominent politician, Bedfordshire landowner and admirer of Napoleon, Samuel Whitbread II. Whitbread's suicide in June 1815 stunned Regency London, and dashed Bloomfield's hopes of regaining financial security. The discovery of this work will prompt scholars and biographers to re-evaluate the eleven years between the poet's composition of *The Banks of Wye* (1811) and *May Day with the Muses*, hitherto accepted as a 'dry period', symptomatic of Bloomfield's decline. The poet's innovative revisions for *The Banks of Wye* (1813), coupled with his well-publicized ongoing composition of a lengthy "descriptive poem" in the mid-1830s suggests that during the Regency Bloomfield was creating some of his finest poetry.