

BRITISH PERIODICALS AND
ROMANTIC IDENTITY

Nineteenth-Century Major Lives and Letters

Series Editor: Marilyn Gaull

The nineteenth century invented major figures: gifted, productive, and influential writers and artists in English, European, and American public life who captured and expressed what Hazlitt called “The Spirit of the Age.” Their achievements summarize, reflect, and shape the cultural traditions they inherited and influence the quality of life that followed. Before radio, film, and journalism deflected the energies of authors and audiences alike, literary forms such as popular verse, song lyrics, biographies, memoirs, letters, novels, reviews, essays, children’s books, and drama generated a golden age of letters incomparable in Western history. *Nineteenth-Century Major Lives and Letters* presents a series of original biographical, critical, and scholarly studies of major figures evoking their energies, achievements, and their impact on the character of this age. Projects to be included range from works on Blake to Hardy, Erasmus Darwin to Charles Darwin, Wordsworth to Yeats, Coleridge and J. S. Mill, Joanna Baillie, Jane Austen, Sir Walter Scott, Byron, Shelley, Keats to Dickens, Tennyson, George Eliot, Browning, Hopkins, Lewis Carroll, Rudyard Kipling, and their contemporaries. The series editor is Marilyn Gaull, PhD from Indiana University. She has served on the faculty at Temple University, New York University, and is now Research Professor at the Editorial Institute at Boston University. She brings to the series decades of experience as editor of books on nineteenth century literature and culture. She is the founder and editor of *The Wordsworth Circle*, author of *English Romanticism: The Human Context*, publishes editions, essays, and reviews in numerous journals and lectures internationally on British Romanticism, folklore, and narrative theory.

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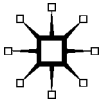
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BRITISH PERIODICALS AND
ROMANTIC IDENTITY
THE “LITERARY LOWER EMPIRE”

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*In memory of Nancy Levit and Leslie Schoenfield
For Sarah, Josh, Michael, and Diana,
Voices Together*

[A] slight hectic flush passes over his cheek, for he sees the letters that compose the word FAME glitter on the page, and his eyes swim, and he thinks that he will one day write a book, and have his name repeated by thousands of readers, and assume a certain signature, and write Essays and Criticisms in the LONDON MAGAZINE, as a consummation of felicity scarcely to be believed. Come hither, thou poor little fellow, and let us change places with thee . . .

—W.H. [William Hazlitt], “The Dulwich Gallery” *The London Magazine*, January 1823, VII:13

Egotistical they [Elia’s essays] have been pronounced by some who did not know, that what he tells us, as of himself, was often true only (historically) of another; . . . If it be egotism to imply and twine with his own identity the griefs and affections of another—making himself many, or reducing many unto himself—then is the skilful novelist, who all along brings in his hero or heroine, speaking of themselves, the greatest egotist of all . . .

—PhiloElia [C. Lamb] “A Character of the Late Elia, by a Friend” *The London Magazine*, January 1823, VII:19–20

CONTENTS

<i>Preface</i>	xi
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xiii
<i>Abbreviations</i>	xv
Introduction	1
Part I Culture Wars in the Lower Empire	
1 Skirmishes in the Lower Empire	13
2 Incorporating Voices: The <i>Edinburgh Review</i>	49
3 Proliferating Voices: Founding the <i>Quarterly Review</i> and <i>Maga</i>	79
Part II Soldiers of Fortune in the Periodical Wars	
4 Repeating Selves: Hume, Hazlitt, and Periodic Repetition	111
5 Lord Byron among the Reviews	129
6 Abraham Goldsmid: Financial Magician and the Public Image	181
7 Spying James Hogg's Bristle in <i>Blackwood's Magazine</i>	201
<i>Notes</i>	239
<i>Works Cited</i>	267
<i>Index</i>	281



Sir Walter Scott and His Literary Friends at Abbotsford (ca. 1848); engraving by James Faed after a painting by Thomas Faed (image courtesy of Dumfries and Galloway Museums Service—Stranraer Museum). My verbal reconstruction of the figures draws from Mary McKerron (94–5), George Napier (173–5), and William Maxwell (95–6).

PREFACE

Thomas Faed painted, and then his brother James etched, a gathering of extraordinary gentlemen. *Sir Walter Scott and His Literary Friends at Abbotsford* (ca. 1848) depicts seventeen luminaries congregated in Scott's study, summoned by the lure of a reading from his latest novel. So monumental was the occasion that William Wordsworth and Francis Jeffrey deign to sit, a bit stiffly, next to one another, despite the latter's crushing and condescending reviews of the former's poetry. John Wilson leans over, seeming to read ahead in the manuscript, as if already formulating the review he would compose in *Blackwood's Magazine* under his pseudonym Christopher North or speculating to whom he would assign the review so that "North" could write a rebuttal; or perhaps, as George Napier suggests, he glances past Scott to James Hogg, stalwart of his writing coterie (*Homes and Haunts* 174). A young John Lockhart, biographer and son-in-law to Scott, and eventual editor of the *Quarterly*, sits in the middle of the figures, apparently bewildered as to where to look. To the far left, Humphry Davy, Scott's cousin by marriage and president of the scientific Royal Society, is distracted by the hilt of a sword, whether because of its artistry or metallic composition is unclear. James Ballantyne, the Edinburgh publisher of the *Quarterly Review* and the printer of *Blackwood's Magazine*, leans confidentially toward Archibald Constable, publisher of the *Edinburgh*. Both published Scott's work (and reviews of it) and perhaps hear the jangle of profits in his words. Just behind the two publishers, heads also tilted together as if to emphasize parallels between publishers and painters as keepers of the public record, the artists David Wilkie and William Allan confer; both men painted portraits of Scott and illustrations of his novels and no doubt recognize the artistic possibilities of this grouping. James Hogg alone wears Scottish garb, even though almost everyone present is Scottish; the "Ettrick Shepherd," as Hogg was known in the literary realm, sits on a stool, one of two figures whose entire body is visible (his hulking figure starkly contrasting Adam Ferguson's thin, demurely crossed legs, officer's boots, and

posed thoughtfulness), and yet Hogg's face is the most obscured by its angle, turned intensely on his friend and rival, Walter Scott.

Only Byron was missing, and yet in a later reassembly, Byron did make his appearance, accompanied by Washington Irving, while Constable and Ballantyne, who had led, or were led by, Scott into grievous financial difficulties, were disinvited from the painting. From the *painting*, I say, rather than from Scott's reading, for the event never took place. It could not have. Not only did Scott carefully guard the secret of his authorship, but at any given time, these men were scattered across Great Britain. The chronology was also impossible; Lockhart complained to Wilson, "All ages are jumbled. . . I am twenty-five and you are sixty or thereby. This will never do" (Lang II:278; Lockhart was a decade younger than Wilson).

The scene is an act of painterly imagination, like Raphael's *School of Athens*, in which the great scholars of Greek antiquity gathered unhampered by time or death or politics. (Faed contributed *Shakespeare and His Contemporaries* [1851], a collection of Renaissance literati at the Mermaid Tavern, to this genre of imaginary gatherings.) Born in 1826, Faed never met most of Scott's "Literary Friends," and knew them through the narratives and artistic iconography that solidified their personalities. He brought together figures in a virtual space, intimated their characters and shaped their identities by citing earlier paintings and by posing their bodies and juxtaposing their positions.

The periodical press, the subject of *British Periodicals and Romantic Identity*, created similar virtual meetings, of words and voices: Charles Lamb, or Elia, obliquely arguing with William Hazlitt on the pages of *The London*; Francis Jeffrey befriending Lord Byron through the *Edinburgh Review*, although the two probably never met; the "Satirist" stumbling accidentally upon Hewson Clarke (who actually was the Satirist). The *Noctes Ambrosianae*, the wildly successful, imaginary dialogues of *Blackwood's Magazine*, usually took place at Ambrose's Tavern, although if necessity required transportation to the continent to speak with Byron, then off the cohorts went. In the December 1825 "Noctes," Christopher North (an imaginary figure, the corporate identity for John Wilson, but composed by multiple hands) describes a dream encounter with a doppelganger; like Faed's painting, the dream is an emblem for the play of identities:

North: The moment I saw him, I knew that he was the editor of the Imaginary Magazine—the non-existing Christopher North of a non-existing Maga; and what amused me much was, that I saw from

the expression of his countenance that he was under prosecution for a libel.

Shepherd: Had he advised any man to commit murder?

The Ettrick Shepherd's reply is comic, signaling an extreme of periodical power (as when Reviews were alleged to have killed Keats), but also poignant, recalling the bungled disputes between the *London* and *Blackwood's* that ended in a duel fatal to John Scott, editor of the *London Magazine*. His first question about murder unanswered, the Shepherd next asks about literary pay, "What did he offer you per sheet?" North responds, "Kinga men kulish abattoon. These were his very words." Can these be his "very words" when they are not words at all? As the "imaginary editor" spoke them, how can their spelling and transcription be validated? Is it a sentence as the printed punctuation suggests? How in the dream do such sounds signify exact meanings? Is it an offer of payment, and what does it mean to be paid imaginary wages? For the modern reader, encountering the periodicals of the Romantic period is a bit like hearing such a strange uncanny voice; allusions, subtlety, and meanings are blunted or lost. Yet familiarity lingers as the quarterlies, magazines, and newspapers rehearse economics and politics, as they parade celebrities for admiration and then bring them down, and as they train their readers in the ways of their empire and watch warily for insurgency.

British Periodicals and Romantic Identities explores the intersection of an industrial product, the magazine, and a social or philosophical construct, the self. It argues that the economic and social values that the periodical press disseminated shaped romantic identity and consequently recrafted the space of literary selfhood. Faed portrays a rarified atmosphere of intellectual stimulation—seventeen prominent literary men gathered to hear, and perhaps comment upon, the latest production of the most prominent among them. Such a concentrated dose of genius, which the viewer is invited to fantasize sharing to his eternal betterment, is a Victorian retrospective fantasy. This book delves not an achieved harmony but rather, akin to the haphazard *Noctes Ambrosianae*, the messy tactical engagements and strategic battles through which Romantic authors and public figures imagined themselves and constructed others.

This text adheres to the convention that, in cases of potential ambiguity, "Review" with a capital R refers to the journal, and review, with a lower-case r, refers to the article. Primary sources cited in the text may be accessed at <http://hdl.handle.net/1803/1172> in DiscoverArchive (<http://DiscoverArchive.Vanderbilt.edu>), a digital repository provided by Jean and Alexander Heard Library at Vanderbilt University.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book, about voices joined together, has been built from conversations, emails, telephone calls, classroom dialogues, instant messages, interlinear comments on drafts, notes scrawled back and forth in the audience of MLA talks, round-table colloquia at INCS, and even occasionally the kind of formal letters that my grandparents expected to receive, and therefore my mother and father taught me to write, or at least to impersonate. With a sense of awe for all the voices that contributed to mine, I can only thank by name a small portion. I hope they will not mind serving as metonymies for others, and that those others will be pleased by their representatives.

At Vanderbilt, colleagues of remarkable insight and unending goodwill have helped to sharpen my thinking and my sentences. These include Jay Clayton, Mark Jarman, Leah Marcus, Tina Chen, Mark Wollaeger, Jonathan Lamb, Sean Goudie, Carolyn Dever, Kathryn Schwarz, Vereen Bell, Cecelia Tichi, Dana Nelson, Dahlia Porter, and finally Paul Elledge, for whom Emeritus status may have given him a respite from formal classes but who will ever be a teacher most valued. Special, inevitably inadequate, thanks to Teresa Goddu who, although a great reader and critic, is an even better friend. Just as important have been students whose fresh eyes and new voices reinvigorate; Andrea Bradley Hearn, Lauren Wood, Brian Rejack, Jeongoh Kim and so many students like them, both graduate and undergraduate, have taught me what my words mean, or might mean with a little more revision. Extra thanks to Lauren and Brian for help with the digital archive of primary sources, and to Ronee Francis, Digital Collections Archivist, for guiding that part of the project.

Clare Simmons and Peter Manning began this book, and I was pleased to be able to overhear that conversation; in the intervening years it has become my own, but only because of their unending support, sanity, generosity, and clarity. Jerome Christensen has provided counsel and encouragement, so often finding the sparkling potential in the unfinished ore of talk. Vivian Siegel offered sound advice and saving support time and again. Kristin Samuelian's friendship and guidance are everywhere evident. Andrea Henderson, Kari Winter,

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Finally and always, I thank Sarah, and our children Josh, Diana, and Michael, for all the music, both heard and unheard.

ABBREVIATIONS

BOOKS

- BLJ *Byron Letters and Journals*, Ed. Leslie Marchand.
- CHP Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*; cited by canto, stanza, line from Volume Two of CWB.
- CWB *Complete Poetical Works of Lord Byron*, Ed. Jerome J. McGann; all of Byron's poems are quoted from this edition except where otherwise noted.
- DJ Byron, *Don Juan*; cited by Canto, stanza, and line from Volume Five of CWB.
- GLB John Galt, *Life of Lord Byron*.
- Hours Byron, *Hours of Idleness*; cited from CWB.
- HP Francis Horner, *The Horner Papers*.
- LBS Jerome Christensen, *Lord Byron's Strength*.
- LLJ Henry Cockburn, *Life of Lord Jeffrey: With a Selection from His Correspondence*.
- LW *The Letters of Dorothy and William Wordsworth*, Ed. Ernest de Selincourt.
- MFH *Memoirs and Correspondence of Francis Horner*, Ed. Leonard Horner.
- MJH James Hogg, *Memoir of the Author's Life*, Ed. Douglas Mack.
- RR Donald H. Reiman, *Romantics Reviewed, Part B: Byron*.
- Selection *Blackwood's Magazine, 1817-25: Selections from Maga's Infancy*, Ed. Nicholas Mason.
- Smiles Samuel Smiles, *A Publisher and His Friends: Memoirs and Correspondence of John Murray*.

PERIODICALS

- AJ *The Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine; or, Monthly Political and Literary Censor*
- AJW *The Anti-Jacobin, or Weekly Examiner*
- BM *Blackwood's Magazine*

EM	<i>Edinburgh Magazine and Literary Miscellany</i>
ER	<i>The Edinburgh Review, or Critical Journal</i>
GM	<i>The Gentleman's Magazine, or Historical Chronicle</i>
QR	<i>The Quarterly Review</i>
Sat	<i>The Satirist, or Monthly Meteor</i>
WR	<i>The Westminster Review</i>