

17th September 2018

Dear Professor Leary and the Curran Fellowships committee,

I write in thanks for the Curran Fellowship awarded I was awarded in 2018 and to provide a brief report on the research I have undertaken as a result.

The fellowship has enabled me to make significant progress on my monograph, *Modes of Sensation: Press, Page and Stage in Victorian Culture*. This is an ongoing project which argues that sensation could not be consumed in a singular or self-contained way. As a set of tropes (murder, bigamy, arson, fraudulent identities, duplicitous women) and affective moments, it was available through a range of channels: weekly or monthly magazines, novels, theatre, the visual arts and music during the 1860s and 1870s. The book argues that sensation texts were specifically designed to activate connections, memories, and resonances across media some of which would be felt viscerally, some emotionally and some intellectually. By tracing out the complex networks of sensation across different cultural spaces, the book aims to more fully apprehend sensation as a cross-generic, cross-formal cultural phenomenon and to understand how the ways in which it created affect were dependent on intertwined networks of press and performance.

While the larger project includes work on well-known sensation writers such as Wilkie Collins and Mary Elizabeth Braddon, the research funded by the Curran Fellowship focussed on two lesser known writers, Henry J. Byron and Colin Hazlewood. The Hazlewood material at the University of Kent's Templeman library was very rich and the nine days I spent in Canterbury were fruitful. I was able to look closely at a number of his scripts adapted from serialised novels and began to appreciate his strategies for adaptation. Using a mixture of longhand, extracts cut and pasted from serials, and annotation, Hazlewood sometimes collaged material across formats, re-situating both visual and textual extracts from the press in his playscripts. The Templeman library also helped me to understand more about Byron's position as both an editor/contributor to key comic journals of the 1860-1880 period, (*Punch*, *Fun* and *Mirth*) and a well-known writer of stage burlesque, and his significance in understanding how sensation created and contained its own cross-genre parodies. Byron was a highly self-reflexive writer who often employed an intermedial approach, using strategies or tropes from one genre in another. For example his plays *Punch* and *Bow Bells* which I read in Canterbury not only centre around magazine production but also draw on the comic word play frequent in Byron's comic magazines (and in the many pantomimes he wrote). I may have distracted other readers with the groans elicited by the excesses of Byron's punning.



My research then moved to London which is a commutable distance from my home in Guildford, the travel time actually proving quite productive for processing ideas and tidying notes whilst on the train. The H. Beard Collection at the Victoria & Albert Museum, revealed Byron to have been a very well connected manager during his tenure at the Prince of Wales theatre utilising a network of literary and dramatic associates many of whom were nurtured through his periodical editorships. The Hackney Archives and London Metropolitan Archives shed some light on Hazlewood's business practices as an adapter and playwright. Here, he seems to have been less strategic and more concerned with the immediacies of remuneration. Moving to the British Library allowed me to track across from his business correspondence through to the dates Hazlewood submitted his adapted plays to the Lord Chamberlain. Further cross-referencing with dates of periodical publication revealed the astonishing speed at which Hazlewood worked and his ability to juggle multiple writing projects simultaneously. His working practices tie in nicely with the ways in which I am beginning to formulate the constructed nature of the 'presentness' (Beetham, 'Time: Periodicals and the Time of the Now', *VPR* 48:3 (2015), p.327) found in both periodical writing and on the Victorian stage.

Reading the archival materials for both writers led me to an interest in the relationship of their work to time. Burlesque texts often rely on the proximity of the pastiche to the original for their comic effect. The research uncovered the significance of Christmas in particular as a time at which the distinction between original and pastiche threatens to collapse. Hazlewood frequently and freely adapted from the Christmas stories of Dickens and others, the format of the short festive story seems particularly well-suited to his speedy adaptation processes. Byron's numerous festive plays and special issues again often overlap in terms of content and also sometimes share the 'review of the year' structure. I plan to return to this rich vein of research once my monograph is finished.

I am very grateful to RSVP for the opportunity to undertake this work and to forward the progress on my monograph significantly. I look forward to attending the annual RSVP conference in 2019 and reporting more fully on my findings.

Yours sincerely,



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