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**Long-Wellesley & Publicity: The Role of Celebrity in the Public
Sphere (1788-1832)**

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**Long-Wellesley & Publicity:
The Role of Celebrity in the Public Sphere (1788-1832)**

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Abstract

This thesis explores the relationship between celebrity and the public-sphere through a case study of the life of William Long-Wellesley (1788-1857). A junior member of the powerful and well-connected Wellesley family, Long-Wellesley married into the largest fortune in Regency Britain, became a Tory MP and enjoyed moderate success as an author. But he owed his celebrity status to public curiosity about his rakish and extravagant lifestyle.

A study of Long-Wellesley's celebrity history is important because it enables an investigation into the framework of the public sphere. In the second half of the eighteenth-century a new form of public sphere emerged, partly as a result of the rise of urban intellectual middle-class society in Western Europe, especially in England. It has been argued that the collective engagement of private people, coming together in a 'public sphere', resulted in the formulation of 'public opinion' for the purpose of acting as a corrective authority to the state. The general scholarly consensus has therefore argued that public opinion belongs to the *political* sphere. This thesis sets out to challenge that premise, and the assumptions that underpin it, by demonstrating that public opinion was more culturally derived, and found its inspiration in publicity.

The parameters of the public sphere in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century were more broadly defined than the traditional political focus suggests. Instead, it will be established that audiences were stimulated through a wide variety of sources, including spectacle, novelty, and celebrity. This thesis aims to re-position celebrity in the

public sphere, showing how it impacted upon public opinion. It focuses on the life of Long-Wellesley because he offers many examples of how celebrity was represented in Britain during the Regency period. His decision to create and distribute his own sensational narrative makes Long-Wellesley a worthy case study; not least because he was the chief purveyor of, rather than a helpless victim of, malicious rumour and gossip. He is a prime example of how non-political spectacle influenced public opinion and helped to change the moral climate.

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PRIMARY SOURCE ABBREVIATIONS

This thesis relies heavily upon two key primary source documents, and therefore deserve early clarity.

HIRAM STEAD COLLECTION (Stead)

Hiram Stead Collection (Newham Heritage and Archives) comprises of two scrapbooks containing press cuttings and other print ephemera relating to Wanstead House, with a focus upon William Long-Wellesley. The larger volume (un-named) will be referred to as 'Stead' in the footnotes. The smaller book, entitled *Some Material on Wanstead House*, will be cited as 'Stead, *Wanstead*'.

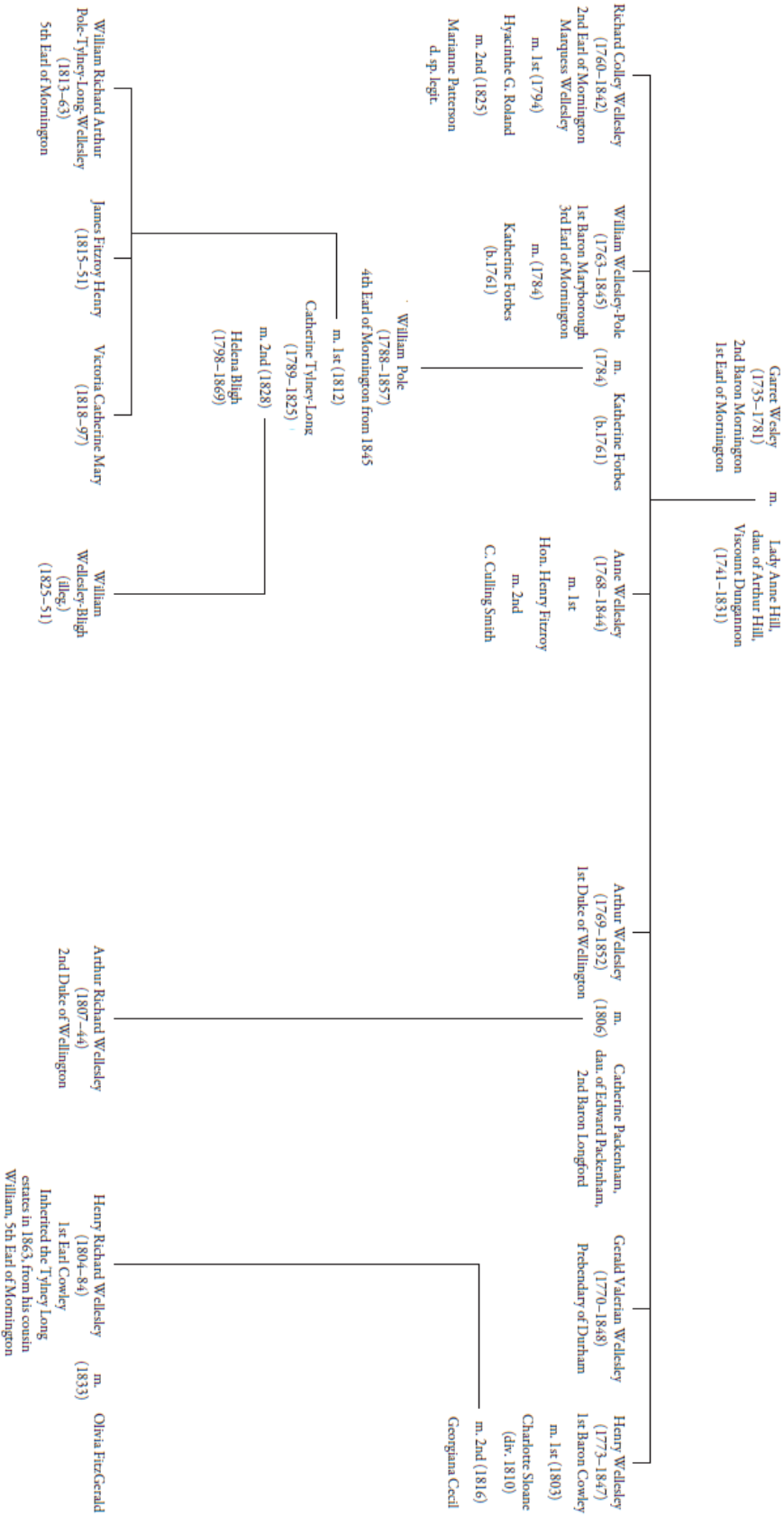
WANSTEAD HOUSE LETTERS (Long-Wellesley MS)

This collection of over 1000 documents, stored in four boxes at Redbridge Information and Heritage, loosely relates to Wanstead House between 1750 and the 1870s. It contains four bound volumes of correspondence plus 24 envelopes stuffed with loose paperwork. Because the bulk of these records relate to Long-Wellesley, his wife, and children this resource will be referred to as 'Long-Wellesley MS'.

As these manuscripts were uncatalogued prior to my research, I have created a catalogue record to assist future scholars. This relies on stating the Box (B), Volume (V) or Envelope (E) number followed by specific Letter number (L). Therefore, for example, George Dallas' belief that Long-Wellesley resembled a viper (see Chapter 5) is recorded as 'Long-Wellesley MS E14-L3' (Envelope 14, letter 3).

WILLIAM POLE TYLNEY LONG WELLESLEY (née William Pole)

FAMILY TREE



Adapted from *The Angel and the Cad* (2015) kind permission of Geraldine Roberts

William Long-Wellesley – A Brief Timeline

1788	Born June 22 nd , Baptised William Pole at St Georges Hanover Square
1800-04	Tutored at Hawkedon Parsonage (Suffolk) by Reverend William Gilly
1804-05	Travels to Constantinople, via Vienna with Charles Arbuthnot
1806	24 th May, Arbuthnot has a breakdown following the death of his wife in childbirth
1806-7	Becomes Secretary to the Embassy, in charge of UK-Ottoman diplomacy
1807	British embassy evacuated and burnt after Long-Wellesley declares war on Turkey
1808-09	Joins British delegation in Denmark following siege of Copenhagen
1809	Returns to Suffolk to train as an army ensign, runs up £1000 debt
1809	Joins British expeditionary force to Portugal as ADC to Arthur Wellesley
1809	Fights with distinction at Rolica and Vimeiro (August)
1809	Declares ‘celebrity’ is all he ambitions, dismissed from army as ‘idle and ignorant’
1809-10	Secretary to Marquis Wellesley’s expedition to Spanish Junta (Cadiz)
1810-12	Employed at Foreign Office after Marquis Wellesley becomes Foreign Secretary
1810-12	Courtship with heiress Catherine Tylney-Long, becomes a ‘man of fashion’
1811	Builds reputation as a dancer, fights first duel, regularly satirised in print
1812	Marries Catherine Tylney-Long, adopts surname Pole-Tylney-Long-Wellesley
1812-13	Elected as MP for St Ives, becomes Lord Warden of Epping Forest; revives Epping Hunt
1812-24	Oversees the destruction of Tylney-Long fortune including loss of Wanstead House
1812-16	Undertakes lengthy court case to preserve his privacy at Wanstead Park
1818	Elected MP for Wiltshire: relying on Wellesley family connection
1820	Obligated to go abroad to escape creditors, following dissolution of Parliament
1822	Becomes Gentleman Usher to George IV but has to quit following arrest for bad debt
1822-25	Wanstead House auction and demolition, death of Catherine Tylney Long
1825-29	<i>Wellesley v Beaufort</i> court case, leads to pivotal reform of women’s custodial rights
1825	Prosecution for Criminal Conversation with Mrs Bligh (whom he marries in 1828)
1827-33	Campaign of court cases and press interaction to publicise his activities
1827-30	Publishes two books, and a pamphlet libelling Prime Minister Wellington
1828	Fights duel with a priest on the sands at Calais
1831	Kidnaps daughter, claiming Parliamentary immunity from prosecution
1831	House of Lords responds with significant reform of Parliamentary Privileges
1830-32	Election campaigns on an anti-Wellesley platform, advocating electoral Reform
1833	In Calais to escape debts; France changes law removing his immunity from arrest
1834	Abandons Mrs Bligh, seizes control of son’s estate following his coming of age
1834-42	Living in Brussels, plundering younger children’s funds
1842	Returns to London, becoming Lord Wellesley upon death of Marquis Wellesley
1845	Becomes 4th Earl of Mornington after the death of his father (who leaves him nothing)
1857	Dies ‘redeemed by no single virtue’ at a lodging house in Marylebone, London (4 th July)

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Thank you to all the staff at the many archives I visited, for being so helpful. In particular, I must credit the archivists at Redbridge and Newham, and at Essex Record Office for allowing me access to their Wanstead-related material. This study relies on a mass of

contemporary press reports, which would not have been accessible but for the hard work of all those who have digitised the vast array of nineteenth-century newspapers at the British Library.

I owe a debt of gratitude to all my friends and colleagues at E.J Roberts Roofing Limited, who have indulged me in my studies, and covered for me during my absences writing up.

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I dedicate this work to his memory.

I declare that this thesis and the work presented within it are my own.

Introduction:

Beyond Politics – Characteristics of the New Public Sphere c.1800

The public sphere is not the realm of civic dialogue... it is simply a space of appearances... In effect the main event of the public sphere is spectacle, which is fundamentally something visual, inegalitarian and asymmetrical. The public sphere, because it abandons all its contents to the gaze of anyone, cannot but objectify anything that appears in it.¹

Ari Adut's definition of the public sphere as a 'reign of appearances' [2018] issues two challenges to prevailing theories regarding the composition and operation of the new public sphere, which is considered to have emerged in Western European societies during the eighteenth century. Firstly, it seeks to liberate the public sphere from a purely political interpretation; whereby public opinion was spawned by collective rational thought on matters of civic importance, and then gained power thanks to a correspondingly rapid growth in mass communication technology.² Because the public sphere is a finite object, it lacks capacity to consider in detail everything that is made public. Consequently, subjects entering the public sphere must compete for attention and can do so by using 'spectacle' to cultivate greater interest.³ Adut interprets spectacle as the ability to generate publicity, which he considers to be the key determinant for consequentiality of events in the public

¹ Ari Adut, *Reign of Appearances: The Misery and Splendor of the Public Sphere* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p.X.

² Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An enquiry into a category of Bourgeois Society*, (Originally published in German, 1962 – Subsequently translated by Thomas Burger, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1989); Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Viking Press, 1965).

³ Adut, *Reign of Appearances*, p.74 - contends that spectacle been used throughout history to 'affirm power'.

sphere. By ‘publicity’ he means attention on a focus by a public – collectively consisting of strangers who realise each other as spectators of the same thing’.⁴ Publicity increases visibility, which serves to engage public opinion; a process that also invites some form of collective judgement.

During the eighteenth-century fascinating events that fell under the public gaze were not necessarily politically derived. However, some hot topics for conversation may have become politicised through the process of exposure to public opinion. Audience response was the key; the longer a subject engaged public attention the more likely it was to develop civic attributes. This is not to say that the new public sphere performed an exclusively political role.⁵ In fact the public sphere was open to almost any subject capable of generating mass publicity – ranging from flash-in-the-pan triviality to issues of long-term social significance. When sufficiently aroused, public opinion certainly did possess an ability to pressurise the business of government. But a great deal of public sphere traffic was (and remained) culturally-orientated; enabling public opinion to wield its influence upon popular concerns; such as trends in fashion, rules of etiquette, the promotion of leisurely pastimes, and regulation of taste.

Adut’s second point follows on from his visualisation of the public sphere as a stage where events competed with each other for attention. Despite state efforts to supervise content and restrict group or individual access, it was the audience themselves who ultimately determined the order of precedence given to events arising in the public sphere. Rather than being passive and unseen, audiences initiated, gathered up and then sustained

⁴ Ari Adut, ‘The Theory of the Public Sphere’ in *Sociological Theory* (Vol 30/ 4, Dec 2012), pp.244-245.

⁵ Adut, *Reign of Appearances*, ix-x ; and Peter Lake & Steven Pincus, *The Politics of Public Sphere in Early Modern England* (Manchester University Press, 2007); pp.1-31.

public opinion to such a degree that their ‘spectatorship [was] the very essence of public life’.⁶ Clara Tuite says the common tendency to assume consumer disinterest belies their ‘productive creative genius’.⁷ Publicity seeks an audience: the size, constitution, level of engagement, and duration of audience interest was determined by exposure to publicity. Adut finds spectacle ‘inegalitarian’ because some public sphere ‘appearances’ will naturally have more impact than others. This contrasts with (yet does not counter) the prevailing view of the public sphere as a democratising space in terms of accessibility.⁸ Also public opinion was never homogenous. It was an unstable and disparate realm comprising of a multitude of conflicting and competing social groups and interests.⁹ The public sphere reached beyond politics, embracing events derived from other spheres such as private, religious, royal, artistic, fashionable, legal, leisure, sporting, and even scandal and criminality. Anything capable of creating spectacle (provided it was not suppressed by political, editorial or moral restrictions) gained access to the public sphere with the resultant opportunity of igniting public opinion. In short, notwithstanding obstacles of censorship (and perhaps sometimes because of it) the public sphere in eighteenth century Britain offered a rich and varied menu, giving a wide spectrum of choice for an interested and discerning audience.¹⁰

⁶ Adut, *Reign of Appearances*, p.XXI.

⁷ Clara Tuite, ‘Tainted Love and Romantic “Literary Celebrity”’ in *English Literary History* (Vol 74/1, Spring 2007), p.79.

⁸ Leo Braudy, *The Frenzy of Renown: Fame and Its History*, (Oxford University Press, 1986), p.313 – Jeremy Bentham was one of the first to equate public opinion with democracy – see Fred Cutler, ‘Bentham and the Public Opinion Tribunal’ in *The Public Opinion Quarterly* (Vol 63/3, Autumn 1999), pp.321-322; Others making this connection include Christian Emden & David Midgely (Eds.), *Beyond Habermas: Democracy, Knowledge & The Public Sphere* (New York: Berghahn, 2013); Luke Goode, *Habermas: Democracy & The Public Sphere*, (London: Pluto Press, 2005).

⁹ Harold Mah, ‘Phantasies of the Public Sphere’ in *Journal of Modern History*, (Vol 21/1, March 2000), p.155.

¹⁰ Jeremy Black, *The English Press in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Croom Helm, 1987), pp.157-8 suggests that government action often served to increase newspaper sales.

Adut's contention that publicity was crucial to the operation of a new public sphere, rendering its subjects liable to objectification, implies the existence of an eighteenth-century form of celebrity culture. As far back as 1950 Herbert Goldhamer correlated public opinion with personality when he wrote 'there is no public opinion without public objects'.¹¹ Stella Tillyard describes celebrity appearing at 'the moment private life became a tradable public commodity'.¹² This transformation of people into products was surely a unique characteristic of the new public sphere. However, until very recently, the notion of celebrity has been absent from most historiographies of the public sphere. Before tackling this oversight head on (see Chapter One) it is necessary to begin with an analysis of what constitutes the new public sphere.

The origins and composition of the new public sphere were first theorised by Jürgen Habermas (1962). Since that time there has been a tendency for historians to fixate upon Habermas' public sphere components, proposing the inclusion (or exclusion) of certain social groups, the existence of rival 'counter-publics'; and raising the vexed question of separate spheres.¹³ In general terms these arguments relate to qualification requirements for accessing the public sphere, rather than tackling its actual mechanics of operation. Adut, however, suggests an alternative approach by contending that civic dialogue did not create public opinion, rather it *was* public opinion after it was initiated by spectacle. Instead of dissecting and re-making the public sphere we should try to understand how visibility

¹¹ Herbert Goldhamer, 'Public Opinion and Personality' in *American Journal of Sociology* (Vol 55/4, January 1950), p.346.

¹² Stella Tillyard, 'Paths of Glory: Fame and The Public in Eighteenth Century London' in Martin Postle (Ed.), *Joshua Reynolds - The Creation of Celebrity* (London: Tate Publishing, 2005), p.64.

¹³ Robert Asen & Daniel Brouwer (Eds.), *Counterpublics and the State* (Albany: University of New York Press, 2001), p.7 credits Rita Felski and Nancy Fraser 'as prominent articulators of this concept'.

(publicity) facilitated the mass collective response we have come to recognise as ‘public opinion’.¹⁴

Over the past decade historians have uncovered a wealth of evidence supporting the presence of celebrity as a distinct form of fame in eighteenth century Western European societies.¹⁵ Where the word ‘celebrity’ was once introduced with caution, it has nowadays become common currency in biographies covering that era.¹⁶ As yet, however, the phenomenon of celebrity has been treated too much in isolation with far too much emphasis upon individual cases. There is a growing patchwork of one-off celebrity experiences, but insufficient understanding of the prevailing market conditions which made celebrity status possible. Furthermore, despite being deeply rooted in the production of spectacle, celebrity lacks presence in the debate about the origins and development of public opinion.

The main aim of my thesis is to redress this by aligning celebrity culture within the development of the new public sphere in Britain between 1788 and 1832. This task needs to begin by uncoupling the public sphere from its narrower political perspective to place it at the heart of popular cultural concerns. Conversely celebrity must be relocated from marginalia into the full text of eighteenth-century life: to a centre ground where it could

¹⁴ Adut, *Reign of Appearances*, passim.

¹⁵ These will be explored more fully in Chapter One, but notable general texts are Fred Inglis, *A Short History of Celebrity* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2010); and Antoine Lilti, *The Invention of Celebrity* (Cambridge: Polity, 2017).

¹⁶ Recent biographies focussing on celebrity attributes include: Postle, Editor, *Joshua Reynolds – The Creation of Celebrity*, Tom Mole, *Byron’s Romantic Celebrity*, (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2007), Antoine Lilti ‘Rousseau and the Paradoxes of Celebrity’ in *Representations* (Vol 103/1, Summer 2008), Ghislain McDayter *Byromania and the birth of Celebrity Culture* (University of New York, 2009); Janine Barchas, *Matters of Fact in Jane Austen: History, Location, and Celebrity*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins, 2012), Quentin Colville & Kate Williams, *Emma Hamilton: Seduction & Celebrity*, (London: Thames & Hudson, 2016); Heather McPherson, *Art and Celebrity in the Age of Reynolds and Siddons* (Pennsylvania University Press, 2017).

influence and even actively participate in political affairs. I deliberately opt for Britain as a whole, because the Act of Union with Ireland in 1801 placed an unprecedented strain upon existing mechanisms of patriarchy, which had underpinned the system of ‘old corruption’ – one of the key areas that newly emergent public opinion sought to question and undermine.¹⁷ When Pitt the Younger became Prime Minister in 1784, his personal integrity and commitment to fiscal prudence was warmly welcomed by moral reformers who considered him an antidote to the financial mismanagement of the American war years. Philip Harling contends that Pitt’s economic reforms may have succeeded over the long-term had they not been halted by the onset of war. Hostilities with France caused state spending to spiral, and Pitt retained power by acquiescing in a fresh wave of office, pension, and closed contract awards to political allies and friends.¹⁸ This sparked off a rapid rise in popular radicalism, and the public sphere was to host a lengthy but sporadic campaign against grace-and-favour government.

For ease of reference, I will refer to the years 1788-1832 as the ‘Regency period’. Although the British political Regency lasted just 9 years between 1811 to 1820, ‘Regency period’ is a phrase often employed to describe society over much wider timescale; beginning as early as 1788 (the year of the first Regency Crisis) and finishing as late as 1837 (the accession of Queen Victoria). I have chosen my parameters for four reasons. Firstly, it spans the years when George IV was politically active. King George III’s first serious bout of madness in the summer of 1788 proved to be a pivotal point in his reign. Prior to this event

¹⁷ Between 1790 and 1810 a large number of Irish politicians and administrators transferred to Westminster following the abolition of the Irish Parliament. These included Lord Castlereagh and the Wellesley family. Here were examples of career politicians willing to work their way up the political scale, in contrast to the many Members of Parliament, Lords and placemen of the existing order, who had little concern in the business of Government.

¹⁸ Philip Harling, *The Waning of ‘Old Corruption’: The Politics of Economical Reform in Britain 1779-1846* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), p.56.

the King was largely unpopular, not least due to his role in the loss of Britain's American colonies.¹⁹ 'The bulk of the people... despise his Majesty... with a perfect hatred,' wrote John Wesley in 1775.²⁰ However, the King's illness created a constitutional crisis, raising the spectre of his profligate son George (then Prince of Wales) taking over as unrestricted regent. After the King's recovery the nation heaved a sigh of relief and took him to their hearts as never before. But there was a pervasive feeling that the Prince of Wales was waiting in the wings, ready to assume power the moment his father's health relapsed – which he eventually did, becoming Regent (1811) and King George IV (1820) – looming large in the public sphere right up until his death in 1830.

My second reason concerns standards of behaviour in public life. Through his Royal Proclamation against vice in June 1787 George III initiated a debate about the perceived decline of morality in high society. His diatribe against people of immoral tendencies, who should be shunned by loyal subjects and hounded from society, was a thinly veiled response to publicity surrounding the behaviour of the Prince of Wales. King George III was also influenced by evangelical converts such as William Wilberforce (1759-1833) who believed that corruption and profligacy amongst the rich was in danger of spreading its influence and destruction through the whole body of the people. Boyd Hilton cites the publication of Edward Gibbons' *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1781) as a metaphor for the gathering perception that Britain was in a state of decay through 'the corruption of [its] virtue by commerce, and its concomitant, effeminate luxury'.²¹ According to Ben Wilson, after the King's Proclamation a polarising tendency began to emerge in Britain: with some

¹⁹ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation* (London: Yale, 1992), p.206.

²⁰ *Ibid*, p.208.

²¹ Boyd Hilton, *A Mad, Bad, and Dangerous People: England 1783-1846* (Oxford; OUP, 2006), p.1.

sections of society remaining in the grip of unquestionably dissolute habits, whilst others professed almost puritanical intolerance.²² This situation continued in some degree right up until 1832, as print and visual media contributed to an unprecedented rise in the power of public opinion, which was to play a decisive role in the outcome of the moral debate.

Between 1788 and 1832 the public sphere became a battleground for moral reform, where popular ideals of decency and etiquette began to take hold. Arguments raged about who was authorised to set these new standards, leading to accusations of inauthenticity and hypocrisy – in what was dubbed ‘the age of cant’. King William IV’s proclamation in 1830 ‘for the encouragement of piety and virtue, and for the preventing and punishing of vice, profaneness, and immorality’ fits the boundary to my study.²³ By this stage the ascendance of virtue, at least in the public arena, seemed all but assured and an age of middle-class inspired ‘respectability’ was dawning. A third reason to study this period is that it affords the opportunity to analyse the growth of public opinion in Britain between the outbreak of the French Revolution (1789) and the passing of the Great Reform Act (1832). It will show that Government attempts to control political aspects of the public sphere after 1790 merely served to strengthen the latter’s ability to challenge authority and effect change by the 1820s. Harling cites the impeachment of Lord Melville for financial mismanagement at the Admiralty (1806) as a watershed moment in the campaign against Old Corruption because, after this, ‘irregular emoluments’ were more publicly scrutinised. This resulted in a reduction in such costs from £200,000 in 1810 to just £17000 by the early 1830s.²⁴ The

²² Ben Wilson, *Decency and Disorder*, (London: Faber, 2007), p.107-108.

²³ This tract, printed in London in 1830, was distributed to Church of England ministers to be read out in all parishes.

²⁴ Harling, *Old Corruption*, pp.91-99, 121-23.

campaign for honest government shows that public opinion was politically potent well before the resurgence of radicalism resulting from economic hardship after 1815.

Finally, and rather conveniently, the subject of my case study, William Long-Wellesley, was born in 1788, in London, in the heart of an urban environment considered prerequisite to the formation of the new public sphere, as well as (I will argue) to the appearance of a modern form of celebrity.²⁵ Long-Wellesley's London was a vast consumerised community, with ample public platforms (both physical and virtual) for spectacle to unfold and opinions be formulated. A product of his environment, family background, and the age he lived in, Long-Wellesley sought fame because he considered celebrity a legitimate career choice. His success in this regard enables us to track his celebrity through until 1832, when his public life abruptly ended.

As stated, the primary intention of this thesis is to confirm that celebrity was a fully embedded characteristic of the new public sphere, in the hope that future historical and sociological analyses will no longer preclude celebrity or the new public sphere (as concepts) from inclusion in each other's realm. I will also address two secondary questions. First of all, Long-Wellesley's public life offers political and cultural spectacle in equal measure. His promotional activities reveal self-awareness as a brand capable of appealing to a mass audience, indicating the existence of a public sphere serving more than a political role; performing commercial functions that both facilitated and supported a celebrity industry. Secondly, celebrity has for too long been treated as implicitly modern. Shedding light upon publicity, privacy, authenticity, public image, and scandal during the Regency period, will reveal celebrity structures comparable to those we encounter today. Long-Wellesley's case

²⁵ Born William Pole, his name changed constantly throughout his life. For ease of reference I will refer to him as 'Long-Wellesley' – his married name from 1812 and for the majority of his 'celebrity' years.

offers us a chance to bridge the gulf that has arisen dividing an overtly politically-orientated public sphere and the long-assumed inconsequentiality of celebrity culture. I will argue that Regency period celebrity was not necessarily ephemeral and unimportant in nature, because its ability to arouse public opinion gave it the power to effect permanent political and social change.

Correlating 'celebrity' with the 'public sphere' requires preparatory groundwork. Being the broader of the two concepts (and the subject of historical analysis far longer) my introduction concentrates on the origins, theories, and operation of the public sphere during the eighteenth century. I will investigate the political, technological and social developments contributing to its creation; and trace the subsequent emergence of public opinion as an organ of power in civic (and social) society. An account of Vincenzo Lunardi (1754-1806) will be used to demonstrate how spectacle operated in the public sphere by the 1780s. This chapter concludes with a brief examination of factors affecting the public sphere after 1790; a decade when attempts to curtail its political function instead encouraged an unprecedented expansion, both in subject range and depth, of news reportage produced for public consumption.

In 2008 Antoine Lilti observed that 'as an object of historical enquiry, celebrity has not received enough attention'.²⁶ Since it became a distinct field for research in the early 1990s celebrity studies have been dogged by self-imposed barriers caused by the almost myopic refusal to accept celebrity as anything other than a modern phenomenon.²⁷ Chapter 1 provides an overview of celebrity, looking at its definition, etymology, and historiography

²⁶ Lilti, 'Rousseau and Celebrity', p.55.

²⁷ Leading proponents of celebrity as exclusively modern are Chris Rojek, *Celebrity* (Reaktion, London: 2001), and Graeme Turner, *Understanding Celebrity* (London: Sage, 2013). These arguments will be investigated further in Chapter One.

for the purpose of establishing the extent of its presence in the public sphere by the end of the eighteenth century. The four facets of celebrity as defined by Olivier Dreissens (2013) will be used to measure the extent and influence of celebrity culture in the workings of the new public sphere.²⁸ This chapter will introduce William Long-Wellesley as a case study through which some of the themes of so-called 'modern' celebrity will be explored.

Chapter 2 provides a biography of Long-Wellesley explaining why his background, connections and, most importantly, his conscious pursuit of 'celebrity' status make him a worthy example of Regency celebrity in the public sphere. Chapters 3-6 adopt a thematic approach, beginning with Long-Wellesley's acquisition of celebrity, public reception, and subsequent fight for privacy. Chapter 4 looks at Long-Wellesley's political career focussing on his public image, exploitation of his own (and other's) celebrity status, and his use (and abuse) of privilege. Public character was integral to Long-Wellesley's projection of self, especially regarding his ideals of honour and gentlemanly conduct. Chapter 5 is a study of duelling, an ancient form of combat revived by the public sphere, in which Long-Wellesley was a frequent participant. Celebrity status granted Long-Wellesley the power of direct communication, which he utilised to make his private affairs public. Long-Wellesley's published letters and works will be discussed in Chapter 6. This will show how Long-Wellesley was able to create a sense of drama, both via his letters and throughout the court process, and the various trials he was involved in, where he carefully choreographed his public image. According to David Lemmings, early modern criminal proceedings were like a 'state theatre' where behaviour of the crowd could have a decisive influence upon

²⁸ Olivier Driessens, 'Celebrity Capital: Redefining Celebrity using Field Theory' in *Theory and Society* (Vol 42/5, September 2013), p.569.

decisions.²⁹ Publications such as the *Old Bailey Sessions Papers* (c.1670) and the proliferation of newspapers after 1700 served to transfer audience participation to the wider public sphere. Print and visual media fascination with sensational cases made courtrooms a key location for scandalous celebrity, also creating opportunities for melodramatic personae. By 1790, Lemmings claims ‘even the most successful lawyers... were also ego-driven populists... advertising their exploits to the broader public at large’.³⁰ Long-Wellesley’s lust for litigation proved to be one of the most important outlets for the production of his scandalous celebrity.

These four themed chapters will shed light on the celebrity industry during the Regency period, with particular emphasis upon print and visual media, providing examples of the ways that individuals (or groups) seeking fame were simultaneously exploited as consumable commodities. The public sphere enabled celebrity culture to harness public opinion, not only for the ongoing debate about moral standards in public life but also extending to the implementation of political and social reform.

My concluding chapter rounds up Long-Wellesley’s public life as a study of celebrity culture in the public sphere, suggesting that his notoriety arose from conditions unique to the Regency period. In fact, the decline of Long-Wellesley’s brand of scandalous celebrity coincided with the ascendancy of middle-class inspired ideals of respectability. Long-Wellesley vanished from sight when the public turned its gaze elsewhere; an early example of transient nature of celebrity status. I will demonstrate that despite limitations in mass media, a railway network, or the benefit of photographic imagery, there was a vibrant

²⁹ David Lemmings, *Crime, Courtrooms and the Public Sphere in Britain, 1700-1850*, (London: Routledge, 2010), pp.2-4.

³⁰ Ibid.

celebrity culture at the heart of Regency Britain. Its industry was in rude health; meaningfully contributing to political and civil society. It was also structurally ready to absorb future technological innovations.

A study like this would be impossible without tremendous advances in the methodology of historical research. Digitisation of newspaper archives provides modern historians unprecedented powers to search and manipulate colossal databases within a matter of seconds. Our understanding of history increases whenever new collections of printed ephemera, images, and manuscripts become available for inspection. However, it is important to avoid conclusions based purely on digital sources. Only a small fraction of primary source information survives to the modern day, and what remains may not be truly representative of bygone times. In the case of print media, due allowance must be made for editorial or political bias affecting the veracity of texts. Kevin Williams also warns of the pitfalls of building a history upon an ephemeral product ‘which is not usually held in high regard’ and whose role, power and influence cannot be easily determined.³¹ Although my thesis will rely heavily on contemporary newspaper reports, it will be supported by reference to visual media, court and legal records, bank and other financial paperwork, public and correspondence, plus a host of hitherto unpublished private documents including a trove of personal correspondence stored at Redbridge Heritage and Archives, and Hiram Stead’s scrapbooks on Wanstead House, which can be found at Newham Heritage and Archives.

³¹ Kevin Williams, *Read All About It: A History of the British Newspaper* (London: Routledge, 2010), p.VII.

ORIGINS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE NEW PUBLIC SPHERE

From the mid-eighteenth-century onwards Britain underwent a period of seismic change. The effects of four distinct ‘revolutions’ laid the foundation for the emergence of an authentic new public sphere. Firstly there was political revolution, influenced by liberal Enlightenment ideals and sustained by the impact of actual revolutions in America (1776) and France (1789). Secondly, a range of manufacturing and agricultural improvements during the so-called ‘first Industrial Revolution’ (1750-80), now generally considered to have been more a random, sporadic and long-term event than fits that generic label, but one that undoubtedly caused a population shift to urban environments.³² Thirdly, there was a revolution in manners; part-driven by the move away from courtly influence; and also by an explosion in publication of polite literature which was available to wide sections of the community. Finally, and most importantly, Britain underwent a consumer revolution. The sudden growth in domestic consumption after 1750 fuelled the production of ideas (political), goods and services (‘industrial’); and generated new theories upon politeness and civility (moral revolution).³³ Consumerism was more than just the buying and selling of goods; it was the market-place for ideas and ideals, the expansion of luxury, leisure, fashion and taste: in short it was a conduit for political, industrial and social advancement; and this is where the new public sphere emerged. The consumer revolution enabled what Kirk Wetters describes as ‘a conception of opinion... to arise’.³⁴ Public opinion, which was to

³² See for example Maxine Berg and Pat Hudson ‘Rehabilitating the Industrial Revolution’ in *Economic History Review* (XLV/1, 1992), pp.24-50, containing a concise historiography of the English Industrial Revolution, countering the gradualist arguments by illustrating a strong contemporary viewpoint of transformative change.

³³ Although the term consumer in its modern sense did not really enter the lexicon until 1900; Georgian Britain was fully immersed in material culture sufficiently to warrant using this phrase in context. See Frank Trentmann (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Consumption* (Oxford University Press, 2012), p.3.

³⁴ Kirk Wetters, *The Opinion System: Impasses of the Public Sphere from Hobbes to Habermas* (New York:

become a serious force in political affairs as well as an organ of mass societal influence by the mid-nineteenth century, was the direct progeny of mass commercial activity.

The role played by consumer culture deserves further explanation. Neil McKendrick was the first to argue that consumer society was not a post-Second-World-War phenomenon invented by the affluent United States, but was already evident in Georgian England. Consumerism came about through the presence of choice, markets, fashion, and a rise in discretionary income.³⁵ McKendrick uncovered evidence of a heavy demand for consumer goods, such as tea and cotton throughout mid-century society, overturning Marxist notions that mass production begat mass consumption. Marketing media such as newspaper advertising and product brochures were as much stimulant to production, as a reaction to increased product availability. The study of consumer culture, or ‘consumption’ really began in earnest after 1990 with the publication of *Consumption and the World of Goods*, edited by John Brewer and Roy Porter.³⁶ In that volume Jean-Christophe Agnew set historians a challenge to prove that ‘consumer society’ deserved consideration as an independent historical discipline by suggesting better investigation of connections between alterations in consumption patterns and other sociocultural changes – such as moral, intellectual, or political concerns.³⁷ Since the turn of the Millennium multiple new theories have emerged. Some historians move consumption’s timeline back to the Middle-Ages; whilst others champion the influence of social customs, reciprocity and gifting upon buying

Fordham University Press, 2008), p.2.

³⁵ Neil McKendrick, *The Birth of a Consumer Society: Commercialization of Eighteenth Century England* (London: Harper Collins, 1984); Lorna Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain, 1660-1760* (London: Routledge, 1986).

³⁶ John Brewer and Roy Porter, *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London: Routledge, 1994).

³⁷ Woodruff D. Smith, *Consumption & the Making of Respectability 1600-1800* (New York: Routledge, 2002), p.1.

choices generally.³⁸ The study of celebrity history has especially benefitted from consumption studies where the commodification of individuals is highlighted. For example Olivier Driessens [2013] describes the transformation of a personality into a tangible product as the creation of ‘celebrity capital’.³⁹ By 1800 consumer culture was fully embedded into the new public sphere; because it delivered an audience willing to spectate and reflect upon what was on offer.

Before examining its preconditions, the ‘new public sphere’ requires definition. Since its translation into the English language (1989) Jürgen Habermas’s *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962) has provoked intense debate across a broad spectrum of historical, political and cultural studies. He first used the phrase *Öffentlichkeit* (public sphere) to describe social arenas where individuals or groups met to discuss issues of the day and via that process were enabled to exert influence in the political realm.⁴⁰

Habermas contended that this new form of public sphere first emerged in the eighteenth century, associating it with the rise of modern urbanised bourgeois society in Western Europe, especially England.⁴¹ Prior to 1700 society consisted of two separate realms; a public one ‘coextensive with public authority’ – i.e. the ruling class structure; and a private one that ‘comprised civil society in the narrower sense, that is to say, the realm of commodity exchange and of social labour’, which also included the family and the domestic

³⁸ See Trentmann, *Consumption*, pp.4-19. Trentmann also directed *Cultures of Consumption* a 5-year research project for the Economic and Social Research Council from 2002-2007 which sought to ‘deepen our understanding of consumption and consumers, past and present’.

³⁹ Driessens, ‘Celebrity Capital’, p.545.

⁴⁰ Habermas, *Public Sphere*, passim.

⁴¹ Hannah Barker and Simon Burrows, *Press, Politics and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), p.11 states that England’s ‘strength of liberal capitalism and a lack of censorship allowed for a freer formulation of the public sphere than was possible under the heavy censorship of ‘continental variants’.

domain.⁴² But when 'private people were able to come together as a public they soon claimed the public sphere... [engaging] in a debate over general rules [of governance].... The medium of this political confrontation was peculiar and without historical precedent: peoples' use of their reason'.⁴³ This political public sphere spanned both public and private realms, and 'through the vehicle of public opinion it put the state in touch with the needs of society'. By 'public' Habermas meant 'open to all, in contrast to closed or exclusive affairs'.⁴⁴ He emphasised the importance of urban coffee houses as places in which opinions could be voiced.⁴⁵ Such openly accessible venues had to be both informal and inclusive. The emphasis was on participation without coercion, contribution to debate, willingness to find common ground, and ultimately the achievement of consensus: thereby creating a public opinion.

⁴² Habermas, *Public Sphere*, p.30-31.

⁴³ *Ibid*, p.27.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, pp.1-2.

⁴⁵ Smith, *Consumption and the Making of Respectability*, p.146.



Satire c.1733 linking coffee-house discussions of newspaper content to the formulation of public opinion

For Habermas the public sphere was a 'corrective to the authority of the state', but one that required suitably qualified citizens, such as scholars and capitalist businessmen. He emphasised the importance of 'a reading public... which more than any other was affected and called upon by mercantilist policies' becoming aware of itself as a form of opposition 'as the public of the now emerging *public sphere* of civil society'.⁴⁶ The significance of print media as the driver for public awareness cannot be understated. From guidebooks to

⁴⁶ Craig Calhoun (Ed.) *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1992), p.5 and specifically David Zaret's essay 'Religion, Science and Printing in the Public Spheres of England', pp.214-216.

novels, religious tracts to newspapers, periodicals and magazines – there was practically no aspect of Georgian life beyond the reach and influence of the written word. Even literacy itself was no barrier thanks to bridging processes such as reading aloud at public gatherings.⁴⁷ There was also a correspondingly vibrant visual culture. From mid-1700s portraiture became very fashionable. Artists such as Richard Cosway produced miniature likenesses on ivory, and Joshua Reynolds painted 6 sitters per day at his studio in Leicester Square during the London season.⁴⁸ Many original portraits were subsequently copied for commercial distribution. Caricatures and satires were equally popular and their spread extended far beyond the London metropolis. Visual media afforded the possibility of instant public recognition.⁴⁹

Although Habermas' approach was influential it also put in train a flurry of criticism. David Zaret [2000] stated that public opinion was already 'centre stage for many major events during the English Revolution'. A collection of academic responses edited by Craig Calhoun [1992], attests to the existence of a multiplicity of alternative contemporary groups and classes, excluded by Habermas but believed to equally capable of forming their own public spheres.⁵⁰ Nancy Fraser [1990] and Mary Ryan [1992] have questioned the lack of female perspective.⁵¹ On that score Amanda Vickery has rejected suggestions that women

⁴⁷ Roy Porter, *English Society in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Penguin, 1991), p.167.

⁴⁸ Nicholas Penny, *The Ambitious Man* (London: Royal Academy Exhibition catalogue, 1986), pp.17–18.

⁴⁹ Vic Gatrell, *City of Laughter, Sex and Satire in Eighteenth-Century London*, (London: Atlantic, 2006), pp.501-508. See also Mike Rendell, *In Bed with the Georgians: Sex, Scandal and Satire in the Eighteenth-Century*, (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2016); Diana Donald, *The Age of Caricature* (London: Yale, 1997); Ian Heywood 'The Transformation of Caricature: A Reading of Gillray's The Liberty of the Subject' in *Eighteenth-Century Studies* (Vol 3/ 2, 2010), pp.223-242; and James Baker, *The Business of Satirical Prints in Late-Georgian England* (London: Palgrave, 2017).

⁵⁰ Calhoun, *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, pp.109-132.

⁵¹ Ibid, chapter by Mary P Ryan 'Gender and Public Access', p.263 & Nancy Fraser 'Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy' in *Social Text* (Volume25/26, 1990).

operated exclusively in their own separate sphere.⁵² Steven Pincus [2007] countered this trend by observing that alteration of Habermas' bourgeois public sphere was futile given that it was proposed as an ideal, not a concrete reality.⁵³

Lawrence Klein sees 'a new kind of culture' after the mid eighteenth century resulting from increased commercialisation, printed matter, and the twin decline of court and religious influence, creating 'an English cultural history... defined by its politeness'.⁵⁴ This implies a new public sphere derived by consumer-related activities, sweeping aside previously ascendant spheres. But the reality was more complicated, because traditionally prominent spheres became assimilated by this new commercially-inspired public domain. Hannah Greig has shown that a regular timetable of events and celebrations were hosted in all the royal palaces, which were regularly promoted and reported in many of the London newspapers. Royal Court attendance remained an essential ingredient of elite metropolitan life as the century wore on, and were as integral to the developing public sphere as coffee-houses and other public spaces.⁵⁵ During the 1780s the royal sphere openly fragmented due to tension between King George III and the Prince of Wales. Their disagreements created factions along political lines, with disaffected Whig Members of Parliament (MPs) attending events hosted by the Prince in defiance of the King and his Tory Ministry. Events such as these increased rather than diminished royal presence in the public sphere. Religion, another bedrock of the old established order, was similarly visible in the new public sphere.

⁵² Amanda Vickery, 'Golden age to separate spheres? A review of the categories and chronology of English women's history', *The Historical Journal* (Cambridge University Press, 1993), p.36; See also Ann Mari May, *'The Woman Question' and Higher Education: Perspectives on Gender and Knowledge Production in America*, (London: Edward Elgar, 2008), p.39; and Ann Fernald, 'A Feminist Public Sphere? Virginia Woolf's Revisions of the Eighteenth Century' in *Feminist Studies* (Vol 31/1, spring 2003), pp.158-182; Johanna Meehan (Ed.), *Feminists Read Habermas: Gendering the Subject of Discourse* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

⁵³ Steven Pincus in Pincus & Lake, *The politics of the public sphere*, p.215.

⁵⁴ Lawrence Klein, 'Coffeehouse Civility, 1660-1714' in *Huntington Library Quarterly* (Vol 59, 1996), p.51.

⁵⁵ Hannah Greig, *The Beau Monde* (Oxford University Press, 2013), pp.106-109.

Methodists, who urged reform by way of a return to the Gospel, were most vocal. Missionaries such as John Wesley (1703-1791) drew huge crowds at open-air meetings throughout the country, asking the people to abandon materialism (consumerism) in favour of charity. This religious revival helped convert and influence a generation of well-meaning do-gooders, not least William Wilberforce (1759-1833), who understood the power of public opinion in the battle against vice. The extent of Church engagement with the public sphere is shown by the fact that on average three new sermons were published each week during the 1790s; and the predominant subject for new books was theology.⁵⁶ This upturn in religious fervour may also have been a symptom of the widespread fear that revolutionary war posed a threat to the order of things.

In the late 1990s, Habermas updated his work, conceding that his ‘liberal model’ of the public sphere was not accessible to all.⁵⁷ Yet, despite all the disagreements over the composition and multiplicity of the public sphere, the preconditions put forward by Habermas have never been seriously undermined. His ‘bourgeois public sphere’ has become the template for rival paradigms because few historians question the social factors he defined as prerequisites for the first formulation of public opinion as we understand it today.⁵⁸

This thesis broadly accepts the Habermasian timeline and location of the new public sphere. But Habermas’s vision of a political public sphere whose primary function was ‘criticism of public authority’ underplays commercial or cultural motivations behind the

⁵⁶ John Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Harper Collins, 1997), p.172.

⁵⁷ Cited in Calhoun, *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, p.422.

⁵⁸ Kirk Wetters succinctly sums up: ‘The underlying disagreement between Habermas and many sociological perspectives... is the result of different definitions of public opinion’. *Opinion System*, p.6.

dissemination of information, and wrongly assumes that all subjects entering the realm of public opinion were, or needed to become, politicised.⁵⁹ Scandal and notoriety were as much if not more susceptible to public opinion than politics, and those involved just as vigorously held to account. Public opinion could turn its attention to behavioural practice or social inequality – encouraging reform (on an individual or collective basis) without becoming overtly political. Equally public opinion was capable of judging spectacle from multiple perspectives. For example, the trial of would-be Queen Caroline of Brunswick for adultery in 1820 provided political intrigue and sexual titillation in equal measure.⁶⁰ Likewise, the openly corrupt sale of army commissions by courtesan Mary Ann Clarke in 1809 had clear political and royal repercussions, but was transformed into a spectacle for humorous entertainment after the public got hold of it. This shows that despite all efforts to control the dissemination of news, audience reaction – akin to the traditional English mob – was frustratingly impossible to predict. Sometimes opinion might be dangerously aroused (such as after the Peterloo ‘Massacre’ in 1819), yet at other times it remained curiously stoic (for example after the assassination of Prime Minister Spencer Perceval in 1812).⁶¹ The only certainty is that public opinion made audiences present and their ‘productive creative genius’ (as described by Tuite) adjudicated upon the importance and duration of interest in specific events hosted in the public sphere.⁶²

⁵⁹ Quoted in Calhoun, *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, p.216.

⁶⁰ GA Cranfield, *The Press and Society: From Caxton to Northcliffe* (London: Longman, 1978), p.112 says that Sunday newspaper circulation shot up after salacious reports about Caroline’s love life, indicating titillation was more important than constitutional issues.

⁶¹ Robert Morrison, *The Regency Revolution* (London: Atlantic, 2019), pp.10-11 states that public reaction to Perceval’s death was unexpectedly joyous. See also Gordon Pentland, ‘“Now the great Man in the Parliament House is dead, we shall have a big Loaf!” Responses to the Assassination of Spencer Perceval’ in *Journal of British Studies*, Volume 51 No 2 (April 2012), pp. 340-363.

⁶² Tuite, ‘Tainted Love’, p.79.

Elaine Chalus contends that politics in eighteenth-century Britain had a social dimension in which women played a pivotal role, and sometimes even voted.⁶³ The rise of polite society encouraged greater interaction between men and women, making politics a feature of the private domestic sphere. Some aspects of the political realm always remain secret; thereby excluded from the public and private spheres, such as issues of national security and (more recently) the secret ballot. At this time it was believed that over-intrusion of the public sphere into politics could damage the machinery of state. During his Peninsular War campaign in 1813, the Duke of Wellington often complained that excessively detailed press reportage posed a risk to military strategy.⁶⁴ In John Stuart Mill's words: too much publicity 'rivet[s] the yoke of public opinion closer and closer round the necks of all public functionaries'.⁶⁵ The public sphere envisioned by Habermas operated in the space between government and society and was populated by individuals from the private sphere who, through the benefit of exposure to print and image media, began to exercise control over the state through the pressure of public opinion.⁶⁶ But this cultivation of discourse must also include matters of business, morality, religion, and the arts – because public opinion was not forged purely for tackling weighty matters of state.⁶⁷

I will define the new public sphere as any space capable of staging an event that could be experienced by a multitude of others in way that permitted the manufacture of opinion. This space could be physical; such as public assembly, theatre, and spectator

⁶³ Elaine Chalus, 'Elite Women, Social Politics, and the Political World of Late C18 England' in *Historical Journal* (43/3, Sept 2000), pp.669-697.

⁶⁴ Arthur Aspinall, *Politics and The Press c1780-1850* (London: Home & Van Thal, 1949), pp.35-6.

⁶⁵ Cited in Edward Alexander, *Matthew Arnold and John Stuart Mill* (London: Routledge, 2010), p.237.

⁶⁶ Habermas, *Public Sphere*, pp.30-31, James Curran 'Rethinking the Public Sphere' in Peter Dahigren & Colin Sparks (Eds.), *Journalism and the Public Sphere* (London: Routledge, 1991), p.27.

⁶⁷ Paula R. Backscheider & Timothy Dykstal (Eds.), *The Intersections of the Public and Private Spheres in Early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 2014), p.14.

sports; or virtual; as in print and visual media. Above all, the public sphere represents shared participation, which might be experienced simultaneously or develop over time during the process of dissemination.

Adopting a consumerist approach goes beyond Habermas' framework towards a broader concept of the public sphere; embracing non-political issues such as questions of respectability, and including individual or collective forms of celebrity. Habermas correctly attributes the politicisation of public opinion to powerful and influential elements within the wealthy mercantilist middle classes. However, both inside and parallel to this was what might be described as a 'purchasing class', covering all levels of society that were capable of buying non-essential goods and services. Subject to the restrictions of state and editorial censorship, this extensive purchasing class experienced political, moral, religious, artistic, as well as scandalous spectacle through the public sphere; and public opinion embodied their collective feedback.

LONDON AND THE PUBLIC SPHERE (1660-1800)

Habermas envisaged the new public sphere emerging in Western European metropolitan society. The British version is considered to have been more liberal due to its capitalist culture and relatively lax censorship laws.⁶⁸ It centred upon London, which by 1700 was already a behemoth. Its population, estimated to be around 500,000, was about 10% of Britain as a whole; sixteen times greater than second-largest city Bristol.⁶⁹ In 1801 the first national census recorded almost one million Londoners out of a total of 7.7 million citizens.

⁶⁸ Notes taken from Antione Lilti 'Public Figures and Private Lives: the Invention of Celebrity' (QMUL History of Celebrity Conference, London, March 29th 2017).

⁶⁹ Jerry White, *London in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Bodley Head, 2012), p.3.

It also recorded a fivefold increase in numbers of people living in towns (excluding London), meaning that one-third of the populace now resided in urbanised areas⁷⁰ Hilton pinpoints a significant upturn in birth-rates after the 1770s which had the effect of creating a noticeably younger country. Some historians attribute this demographic shift to improving living standards, whereas others see it as symptomatic of industrial proletarianisation, causing men to marry younger because they needed children to augment wages.⁷¹ What does seem certain is that this proliferation of youth began to dismantle traditionally rigid class structures, and to search beyond church and state for their cultural and political needs.

London was an incredibly wealthy centre for trade, insurance and finance. Its economy demanded educated, highly-skilled and intelligent workers and that workforce in turn were invested in obtaining and distributing information relevant to their needs. Knowledge could be acquired through conversation at London's innumerable coffee-houses, taverns, clubs and societies, assembly rooms; or via social parties and balls; where there was ample scope for the transmission of news.⁷² Newspaper presence at, and access to, almost all places where conversation occurred made them pivotal for initiating debate. Daniel Defoe regarded conversation as 'the brightest and most beautiful part of life' and it was held to be a highly-valued personal attribute as well as a marker for judging polite behaviour.⁷³ However, conversation was not universally appreciated, because there was

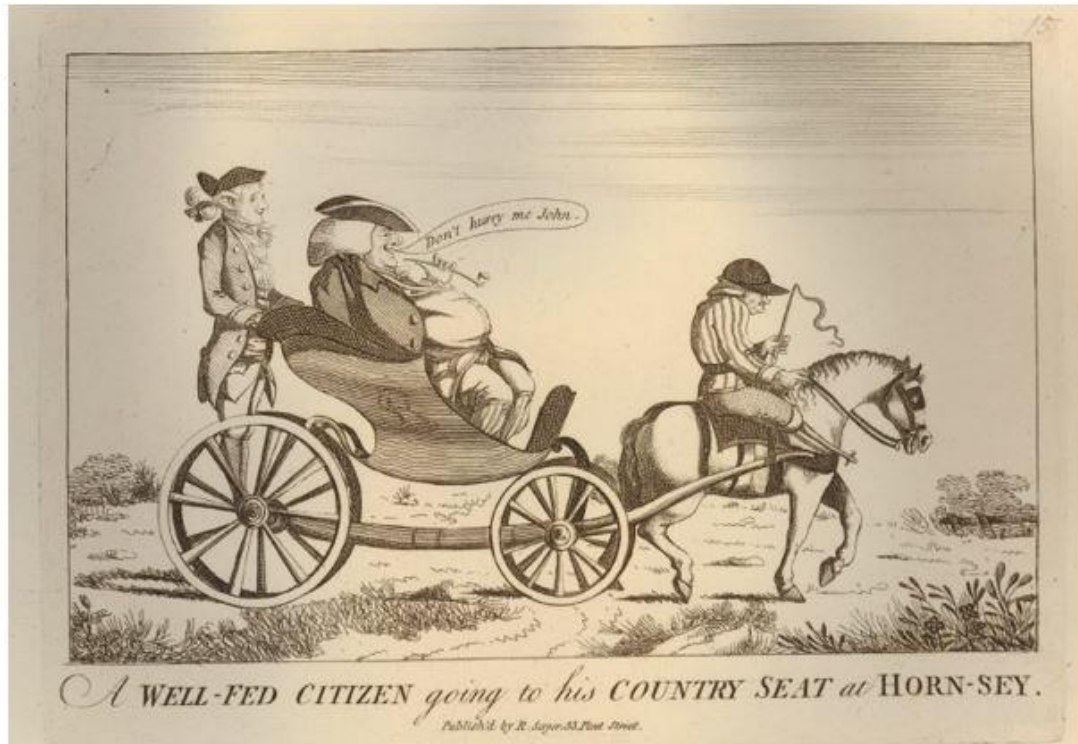
⁷⁰ Francis Sheppard, *London: A History* (Oxford University Press, 2000), p.205.

⁷¹ Hilton, *Mad, Bad, and Dangerous People*, p.5.

⁷² Keith Thomas, *In Pursuit of Civility: Manner and Civilization in Early Modern England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), p.58.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

considerable concern that places such as coffee-houses and taverns were fermenters of seditious discourse.⁷⁴



London ‘Cits, typically portrayed as uncultured nouveau riche, helped to export metropolitan culture to the provinces

Jerry White says that from the first half of the eighteenth century London ‘exercise[d] an irresistible tidal pull on the national psyche’, and living there was considered by many to be ‘an indispensable credential of civilised life’⁷⁵ He also records growing numbers of affluent Londoners removing to outlying areas, such as Woodford in Essex which had 162 mansions by 1762.⁷⁶ These emigrants, or ‘cits’, were disliked locally for

⁷⁴ Williams, *Read All About It*, p.57.

⁷⁵ White, *London*, p.39.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p.34.

spreading the ‘lowest cockney vulgarisms’, and ridiculed nationally in both print and visual media⁷⁷ But their presence helped to spread London cultural habits out into the provinces.

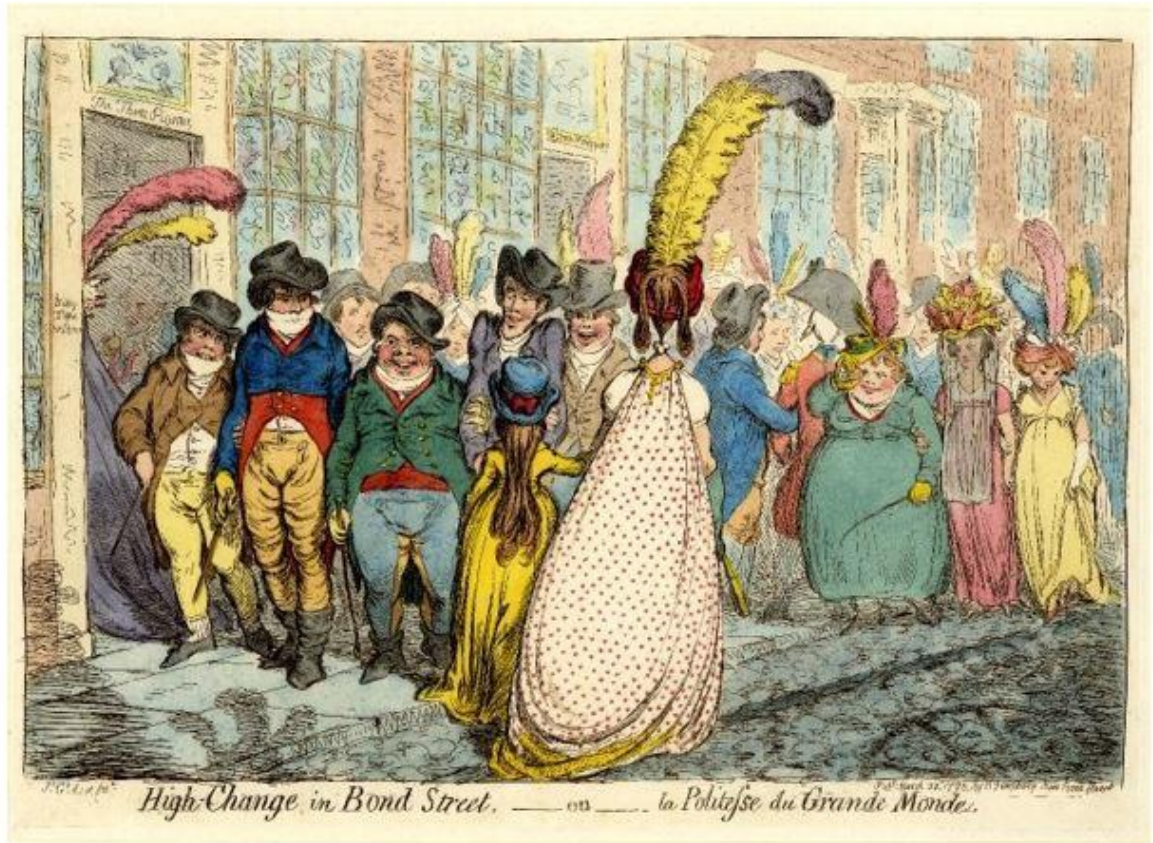
One of London’s primary pull factors was its comparative modernity. A building programme sparked off by the Great Fire in 1666 gained impetus following new developments around Westminster; pushing west towards Chelsea and north into Marylebone. Despite competition and jealousies, the cities of London and Westminster, together with the borough of Southwark, melded into broad collective recognition as ‘London’. Besides housing, over 50 new churches were constructed in the half century following the Great Fire, including St Paul’s Cathedral (1714). A number of significant public buildings were erected soon after, such as Custom House (1723) and the Bank of England (1734). The clearance of buildings from London Bridge (1762), new Thames crossings at Westminster (1750) and Blackfriars (1769) bound London further; with the fields and villages dividing Westminster and the City finally completely absorbed. Importantly, however, open spaces were not sacrificed during this process of urban expansion and renewal. London retained four royal parks which were popular for visitors. As early as 1710 St James’ Park was considered a world-famous attraction.⁷⁸ There was also a thriving theatre and opera scene (albeit constrained by royal monopoly after the 1730s); outdoor pleasure gardens at Vauxhall, Marylebone and Ranelagh; and sporting venues such as Tattersall’s near Hyde Park - which auctioned horse and hunting-dog livestock from a nearby coffee shop and tavern.⁷⁹ Like its crowded streets and thoroughfares most of London’s open

⁷⁷ *Gazetteer*, August 31st 1775.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, p.10, and Emrys D. Jones & Victoria Joule (Eds.), *Intimacy and Celebrity in Eighteenth-Century Literary Culture* (London: Palgrave, 2018), pp.5-6.

⁷⁹ *London Evening Post*, May 3rd 1777.

space was accessible to all – creating a genuine sense of mass collective involvement, and providing a stage for displaying novelties.⁸⁰



London social status became governed by rules of etiquette and fashion

The London 'season' was a primary factor of its cultural dominance. After the 1690s the House of Commons began to have regular annual sittings between the months of November and June.⁸¹ Political business at Westminster soon spawned a yearly cycle of social engagements, as aristocrats and landed gentry arrived *en masse* to savour the delights of the new 'West End', accompanied by an entourage of their servants and families. This in turn stimulated service industries including builders, artisans, transporters, clothiers,

⁸⁰ Maxine Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford University Press, 2005), p.247

⁸¹ Greig, *Beau Monde*, pp.4-5.

grocers, and victual suppliers. It also incentivised the realms of fashion and public entertainment to innovate - utilising novelty to attract and retain custom. Greig sees this annual influx as indicative of elite-level ambition to join the 'beau monde'; which she defines as a new form of social recognition arising from emergence of an urban, primarily metropolitan 'world of fashion' - where 'fashion' meant more than appearing a la mode because it also involved distinct forms of consumption and public display.⁸² But the London 'season' served a clearer more serious purpose, because it effectively operated an aristocratic breeding ground. Linda Colley argues that in the century up to the 1770s there was a crisis amongst the landed classes caused by a failure to produce male heirs. Almost a third of estates changed hands as land passed to distant cousins or was merged into other estates to create mega-holdings owned by a small number of powerful families. Consequently, the landed and titled gentry began to marry outside their class, and they tended to recruit new blood during the social season at London, which was considered a vital opportunity to display wealth and civility.⁸³ Brewer describes London in this period as a 'cultural magnet [where] wealth was traded for urban sophistication, modern fashion and refined taste.'⁸⁴

London was a society where the wealthy jostled for prominence and the fashions and pastimes they pursued subject to emulation down the social ranks, to the middling classes and below.⁸⁵ By 1750 it was estimated that at least one sixth of the entire population had lived for some time in London, to which must be added multitudes of short-term

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Colley, *Britons*, pp.157-162.

⁸⁴ Brewer, *Pleasures*, pp.494-95.

⁸⁵ Vic Gatrell, *The First Bohemians: Life and Art in London's Golden Age* (London: Penguin, 2013), p.XV; Thomas, *Civility*, p.112; McKendrick, *Consumer Society*, pp.9-11.

visitors coming to savour its fayre.⁸⁶ It was clear that new distinguishing markers were required to facilitate cultivation of influence and advancement of social status. There was a growing need for individuals to find ways of setting themselves apart from the crowd. Therefore, personal recognition was no longer tied to titles and honours. Instead it began to be judged by 'good breeding' which involved showing polite and considerate behaviour, the expression of exquisite taste and sophisticated conversation. There was a rise in connoisseurship within the worlds of fashion, luxury goods, the arts and in pleasurable pursuits. Expertise helped promote individual singularity – which could be amplified (if desired) via appearances in the public sphere.

After the 1770s the word 'urbane' began to be commonly used to describe polish and refinement. Derived from the Latin *urbanatis*, meaning belonging to a city, it also meant being polished, cultivated and refined in style. Its antonym *rusticus* represented rural life and was associated with the boorish, uncivilised and coarse. Brewer attributes the rise of arts and sciences to the creation of London's urbane class.⁸⁷ The rise of arts and sciences enabled metropolitan society to enjoy an unprecedented number of theatrical and musical performances, books and paintings. Naomi Miyamoto's observation that creative products cannot be regarded as 'artwork' without requisite publicity reinforces the vitality of public sphere appearances to the development of popular arts and literature.⁸⁸ This process of appearance via publicity led to the formulation of public opinion that served both commercial and artistic purposes, and was distinctly rooted in the urban environment.

⁸⁶ Edward Wrigley, 'A Simple Model of London's Importance in Changing English Society and Economy 1650-1750', in *Past and Present* (Volume 37, July 1967), pp.44-70.

⁸⁷ Brewer, *Pleasures*, pp.XX-XXI.

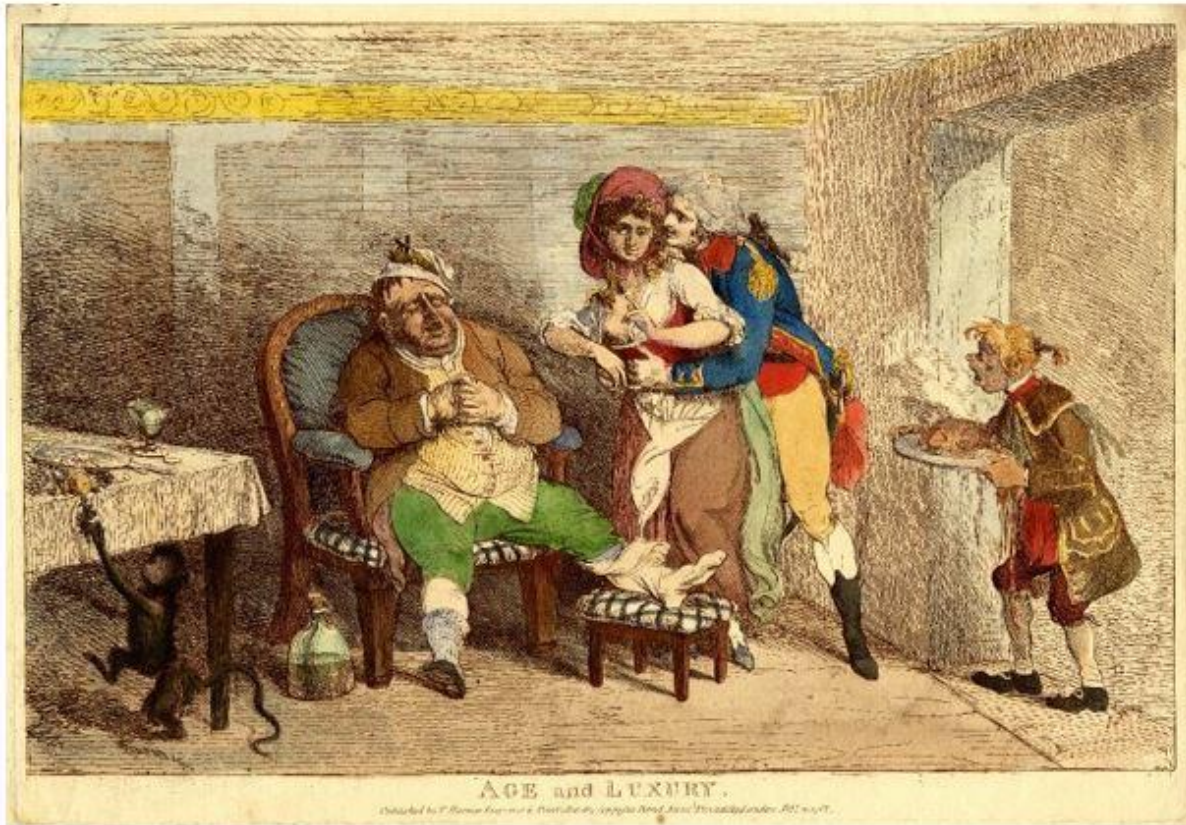
⁸⁸ Naomi Miyamoto, 'Concerts and the Public Sphere in Civil Society' in *International Review of Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* (Vol 44/1, June 2013), p.102.

LUXURY, CONSUMERISM AND THE PUBLIC SPHERE (1750-1800)

A second tenet of the Habermasian public sphere relates to consumption, in terms of its reliance upon news (and other shared information) to attract audiences of sufficient size for the formation of public opinion. London's public and private spaces provided ample opportunities for conversation and debate, but mass collective experience mostly relied on the virtual platforms provided in print and by visual media. Through these virtual platforms absent readers were transformed into concerned participants. Consumption of information was, of course, just one strand in the practice of purchasing goods. Maxine Berg describes the boom in general consumption to be the untold story of the industrial revolution.⁸⁹ She argues that eighteenth century industrialisation and commercial modernity was primarily about consumer products; on the one side products were revolutionised through technological innovation; but on the other there were a mass of people who bought 'new luxury'.⁹⁰ Greasing the wheels between these was the realm of marketing and advertising, informing retailer and purchaser alike, helping to arbitrate fashionable taste and influence manufacturing output. As the primary outlet for promotion of goods and services, newspapers were vital to the development of consumer culture. They operated uniquely; being both consumable items, and facilitators for the buying and selling of other products.

⁸⁹ Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, preface.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, p.6.



Satire from London (1788) blaming luxury for instigating immorality and vice

In 1776 when Adam Smith wrote that ‘consumption is the sole end and purpose of all production’ he was acknowledging that British society was increasingly driven by the desire to purchase and consume luxuries.⁹¹ Advancing materialism, which was assisted by rising levels of wealth across a wide spectrum of society, sparked debate concerning the ethical role of commerce. Bernard Mandeville (1723) argued that contemporary society was motivated by self-interest, rather than civic responsibility or morals, resting upon ‘reciprocal services which men do to each other’.⁹² But David Hume (1752) proposed a new attitude towards luxury, reasoning that it was not simply excess, but could serve ‘as a great

⁹¹ Cited in Trentmann, *Empire of Things*, p.2.

⁹² Thomas, *Civility*, p.191.

refinement in the gratification of the senses'.⁹³ He was suggesting that consumer practices were making people more refined in habits and behaviour. However, others still believed that consumption corrupted manners; encouraging idleness and deceit.⁹⁴ Consumer culture became interwoven into arguments about a perceived decline in standards of manners and morality thought by some to be engulfing Georgian society.⁹⁵ One observer in 1778 blamed the loss of the American colonies on indifference caused by 'luxury and dissipation... in all ranks', against which 'religion has lost much of its force... morality has no sanctions'.⁹⁶ Henry Fielding attributed rising crime levels after 1760 to 'immorality and vice' among rich and poor alike, with the poor led astray by the lure of luxury.⁹⁷

The commercialisation of the public sphere in the final decades of the eighteenth century enabled public opinion to become the chief arbiter of behavioural standards. In fact, the appearance of public opinion within the new public sphere mirrored the rise in prominence of advocates for moral and religious reform. However, the 'spectacle' of public appearances presented audiences with both good and bad behaviour, meaning that activities such as pornography, scandal, criminality, and gossip also thrived, receiving at least as much, if not more, public attention.⁹⁸ Wilson describes British society between 1789 and 1815 as polarised by the forces of 'decency and disorder'. If this was the case, then public opinion clearly served moral, social, cultural as well as political concerns.⁹⁹ Stacey Margolis succinctly states 'even when most closely aligned with rational debate [public opinion] never completely shakes its association with the unthinking prejudices... reflected

⁹³ Matt Erlin, *Necessary Luxuries* (New York: Cornell University, 2014), p.27.

⁹⁴ Thomas, *Civility*, pp.188-9.

⁹⁵ Trentmann, *Empire of Things*, p.18.

⁹⁶ *St James Chronicle*, July 14th 1778.

⁹⁷ Clive Emsley, *Crime & Society In England 1750-1900* (London; Pearson Longman, 2005), pp.68-69.

⁹⁸ Thomas, *Civility*, p.64.

⁹⁹ Wilson, *Decency and Disorder*, passim.

in the world of gossip'.¹⁰⁰ Emrys Jones and Victoria Joule link the expansion of print media during this period to 'the professionalisation of public discourse' – whereupon the public acquired a new sense of itself – and also became aware of its own credit.¹⁰¹ It is clear therefore that the commercialisation of the public sphere in the latter decades of the eighteenth-century granted the public a voice they felt empowered to exercise, albeit with limitations as to outcome. Moreover public opinion was quickly legitimised as a source of power by print media and establishment alike.¹⁰²

THEATRE, CIVILITY AND THE PUBLIC SPHERE (1750-1800)

Audience comprised the final strand of the Habermasian public sphere, and the evolving role of crowds in public spaces needs consideration. A common theme of histories of Georgian Britain is the sense that theatre pervaded society.¹⁰³ Frank O'Gorman highlights the ritualistic format of general elections, drawing upon ceremony and involving participation from the whole community, most of whom were not entitled to vote.¹⁰⁴ Publication of proceedings from the Old Bailey, which began in 1674 and ended in 1913, reflected a long tradition of public interest in the theatre of law. Although judges and juries presided over justice, it was a long-held belief in the English legal system that the authorities needed people to participate; that their acts of 'counter-theatre' were essential to the

¹⁰⁰ Stacey Margolis, 'The rise and Fall of Public Opinion: Poe to James' in *ELH* (Vol 76/3, 2009), p.722.

¹⁰¹ Jones & Joule, *Intimacy and Celebrity in Eighteenth-Century Literary Culture*, pp.2-3.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Richard Sennett, *The Fall of the Public Man* (New York: Norton, 1974), p.64 states that 'the theatre makes sense of public life in the eighteenth century'.

¹⁰⁴ Frank O'Gorman, 'Campaign Rituals and Ceremonies: The Social Meaning of Elections in England 1780-1860' in *Past and Present* (No 135, May 1992), pp.79-115 – Election rituals and practices will be examined more fully in Chapter 4.

decision-making process.¹⁰⁵ Esther Snell describes trials as a perpetual struggle between publicity and privacy –the court demanding full disclosure of events but the plaintiff fighting to maintain discretion.¹⁰⁶ As the eighteenth-century progressed, however, there was a drive to progressively silence lay voices in the courtrooms.¹⁰⁷ Paul Langford also acknowledges the role of the mob in public punishment, such as the pillory and executions, the popularity of attending dissections, and the propensity to display corpses publicly.¹⁰⁸ Clive Emsley describes public punishment as ‘melodrama of the rudest sort’ but believes that crowds ceased to play their role to the satisfaction of the authorities.¹⁰⁹ Rather than reinforcing the delivery of justice and viewing punishment as their deterrent to crime, public punishments increasingly became venues for civil unrest and demonstration. Increased publicity after the 1750s meant that crowds became ungovernably large, and often unsupportive of sentences carried out. Consequently public hangings were transferred to a yard outside Newgate Prison (1783), and other punishments such as the whip (which was made private in 1779) were increasingly withdrawn from the public stage. Michel Foucault interprets the gradual removal of publicly-staged torture in early modern Western societies as symbolising a shift away from physical punishment through public acts of violence, towards privately administered retribution based on incarceration. He reasons that these reforms were as much about the state’s need to maintain their authority over the masses, as about humanitarian concerns.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵ Lemmings, *Crime, Courtrooms and the Public Sphere*, p.4.

¹⁰⁶ Esther Snell ‘Trials in Print’, in Lemmings, *Crime, Courtrooms and the Public Sphere*, Chapter 2.

¹⁰⁷ David Lemmings, ‘Criminal Trial Procedure in Eighteenth-Century England: The Impact of Lawyers’ in *Journal of Legal History* (Vol 26, 2005), pp.76-80.

¹⁰⁸ Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England 1727-1783* (Oxford University Press, 1998), pp.297-298.

¹⁰⁹ Emsley, *Crime & Society*, pp.254-265.

¹¹⁰ Meghan Kallman & Rachele Dini, *An Analysis of Foucault’s Discipline and Punish* (London: Macat, 2017).

It has also been argued that the intervention of lawyers in criminal trials signalled disengagement of ordinary folk from participation in courtroom theatre.¹¹¹ Lemmings suggests that the explosion in newspaper trial reporting after the 1770s meant that the theatre and counter-theatre of audience participation in criminal justice, which had been stifled by the introduction of lawyers, was, at least partly, relocated to the 'public sphere'.¹¹² The role of the press in the reporting of legal matters will be examined in more detail in chapter 6. However, it is important to recognise that traditionally important outlets for the expression of public sentiment were beginning to be channelled into the public sphere via virtual space. Newspapers and other print media offered public access to private concerns, but on a much greater scale than physical attendance ever could – bringing civic 'theatre' to the masses.

The growing taste for pageantry, and the royal court preoccupation with fetes, masked balls, mock battles, and other staged events ensured 'theatre' an active role in high society. Politicians likewise became more theatrical in their appeal for public approval.¹¹³ Hilton draws comparisons between the 'politics of theatre' and the 'theatre of politics', which he envisages as a cross-pollination of spheres.¹¹⁴ The success of John Gay's *Beggars Opera* (1728) alerted government to the political influence of theatre, and, despite regulation and censorship during the 1730s, theatre content continued to reflect and recreate topical fashions and events. Langford says that contemporary theatregoers considered the stage a reflection of national character.¹¹⁵ Even the divergence of acting styles, between John Kemble's stultifyingly deliberate method and David Garrick's

¹¹¹ Lemmings, *Crime, Courtrooms and the Public Sphere*, p.3.

¹¹² *Ibid*, p.4.

¹¹³ Hilton, *Mad, Bad, and Dangerous People*, pp.33-36.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*.

¹¹⁵ Langford, *Polite and Commercial People*, pp.609-610.

melodramatic 'realistic' approach, had political overtures. Brewer credits Garrick with the introduction of important structural changes including physically separating stage from audience, and the provision of lighting to illuminate the stage and darken the auditorium.¹¹⁶ These changes were intended to assist in the suspension of belief enabling the audience to feel the emotions portrayed. Actors and actresses alike, who long endured a reputation for dishonesty, now began to earn more widespread respect. But the promotion of inauthenticity in any form ran counter to traditional values of honesty and integrity, already seen to be under attack from other quarters.

The years 1760-1820 have been described as the 'age of courtesy books', denoting a change of emphasis from rigid observance of polite codes towards the merits of morality.¹¹⁷ Klein labels politeness as a 'master metaphor' for a range of social and cultural practices such as civility, good breeding, manners, easiness, gentility, and decorum.¹¹⁸ It is importantly different from earlier versions of rigid, ceremonial and self-gratifying refinement which had been a feature of the royal court. Rapidly rising population and the novelty of new urban arenas called for the creation of rules to maintain class distinctions. The aim was to synthesise purity of thought with outward polish – to demonstrate virtuous sociability. Brewer believes that ideas of politeness spread far and wide and 'may have embraced almost everyone who was literate'.¹¹⁹ However, in the last quarter of the eighteenth-century polite theorists were challenged by an alternative version of refinement; namely sensibility. Its advocates were inspired by a fear that politeness was just for show and opened the door to hypocrisy. This debate about false behaviour intensified after the

¹¹⁶ Brewer, *Pleasures*, pp.325-328.

¹¹⁷ Philip Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society, Britain 1660-1800* (London: Longman, 2001), p.33.

¹¹⁸ Lawrence Klein, *Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), p.8.

¹¹⁹ Brewer, *Pleasures*, p.102.

publication of Lord Chesterfield's letters to his son in 1774.¹²⁰ These instructional letters, written decades earlier, were widely condemned for advocating a duplicitous code of social refinement for personal advancement. However they were also extremely popular, going through eleven editions by 1800. In essence Chesterfield advocated that gentlemen prioritise self-interest over morality, with manners an essential artifice upon which to build one's reputation.¹²¹ Practicing deceit extended to commercial activity:

It is hard to say which is the greatest fool: he who tells the whole truth, or he who tells no truth at all. Character is as necessary in business as in trade. No man can deceive often in either.¹²²

Despite its many detractors, there was a general acceptance that Chesterfield's observations were accurate. In 1774 the merchant Jedediah Strutt gave a copy of Chesterfield's *Letters* to his son, urging him to acquire 'the manners, the air, the genteel address, and polite behaviour of a gentleman' because this would prove essential when he came to do business.¹²³

The debate about sensibility was closely mirrored throughout society as public sphere 'appearances' began to shape and influence the ways in which 'spectacle' was projected. One key characteristic of the public sphere echoing Chesterfield's cynicism was the necessity to construct an outward image for audience interpretation. Spectacle needed to be dressed up for presentation in a manner most likely to attract maximum attention.

¹²⁰ David Roberts (Ed.), *Lord Chesterfield's Letters* (London: Oxford University Press, 2008)

¹²¹ *Ibid*, p.X-XI.

¹²² Philip Stanhope, Lord Chesterfield, *The Works of Lord Chesterfield: Including His Letters to His Son, Etc'*, (New York: Harper, 1860), p.621.

¹²³ Cited in Thomas, *Civility*, p.84.

Whether it was stage performance, fashion, art and literature, or trading of luxury goods – a shop window was required to showcase a new form of public truth capable of commodification. Daniel Roche says that fashion made ‘clothes weapons in the battle of appearances’, revealing the fickleness and artifice of human nature.¹²⁴ Rousseau thought the desire for things turned free men into slaves, alienated from their true selves.¹²⁵

This was an increasingly urbane society, where appearances could be socially and financially advantageous, built upon rules of politeness. Keith Thomas’ definition of politeness as a form of social distinction and self-advertisement –implies that a certain degree of inauthenticity was required to make oneself appear agreeable.¹²⁶ But he says that the conventions of civil behaviour were subject to incessant changes of fashion, which could be interpreted as pressure applied from the public sphere; with the audience participating in the refinement of manners.

The rise of public opinion could not have occurred without reference to the inauthentic, because this was present in some degree throughout all aspects of public life. For example satirical prints relied upon caricature and exaggeration, maximising recognition of those targeted by creating publicly recognisable versions of their characters. Gatrell contends that satire was rooted in the here-and-now, reacting to a market hungry for un-moralised humour.¹²⁷ Audience participation in the Habermasian public-sphere implies the presence of theatre. Its development owed much to the increasing theatricality of society, as public discussion and debate were stimulated by commercial activity, the shifting of

¹²⁴ Daniel Roche, *The Culture of Clothing: Dress and Fashion in the Ancien Régime* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp.6-7.

¹²⁵ Trentmann, *Empire of Things*, pp.100-101.

¹²⁶ Thomas, *Civility*, pp.26-28.

¹²⁷ Gatrell, *The First Bohemians*, pp.315-317.

public theatre into print media, and the arrival of new urban forms of civility. Appearing in the public sphere required the loss of privacy simultaneous to the creation of an outward (possibly less truthful) 'public' character. When Habermas despaired that commercialisation of the public sphere destroyed its authenticity, he overlooked the fact that public opinion came about in the first place through interpretation of manufactured or sculpted versions of the truth. George Boyce's description of newspapermen as 'actors rather than neutral spectators' in the political process, implies that audiences consumed a mixed diet of gossip, speculation and truth – and then formed their opinions accordingly.¹²⁸

According to Thomas differing codes of civility were practised down through the ranks of society. In the middling classes certain trades sought to associate themselves with being 'genteel' as opposed to 'vulgar' common trades which had 'no stimulus to ensure civility'. This was achieved by employing 'dress, furniture, deportment &c' and also in language. Lower down the scale, the poorest had never been one homogenous class; and were traditionally divided between 'honest poor' i.e. those employed with a fixed abode; and those without work or dwelling. In the industrial age, the distinction between 'respectable' and 'rough' became fundamental to working-class culture.¹²⁹ To be 'respectable' the poor required honesty and hard-work, and during the last decades of the eighteenth-century numerous friendly societies were formed, offering an outlet for ordinary folk to learn 'good manners and conversation'.¹³⁰ Additionally the Sunday school movement, first set up in the 1780s in England to 'humanize and civilize' working children, sought to initiate the poor into understanding their place in the pyramid of polite manners.

¹²⁸ George Boyce, James Curran & Pauline Wingate (Eds.), *Newspaper History: Seventeenth Century to the Present Day* (London: Constable, 1978), pp.1-20.

¹²⁹ Thomas, *Civility*, p.93.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

For radical thinkers this brand of ‘respectability’ was merely an attempt to reinforce deference and acceptance of the established unjust order.¹³¹ By the 1790s the concept of ‘respectability’ was on the move. Once used as a barrier to exclude undesirable participation in civic and popular culture, it was now more of an aspirational ideal.¹³² Woodruff Smith argues that ‘respectability [now] gave meaning – moral and political as well as social and economic – to consumption’, its appearance resulting from ‘the aggregation of several sets of [pre-existing] cultural traits’.¹³³ Ideas consistent with respectability, i.e. behaving in a reputable manner, certainly were long-since embedded in popular culture, and can be linked back to the early Georgian decades when questions of civility and politeness first began to be aired. The British Library’s extensive newspaper database first records the phrase ‘respectability’ as late as 1774, used in an anonymous letter addressed to a Mr Piper, accused of ‘being a mere nonentity in importance or *respectability*’.¹³⁴ Prior to 1790 ‘respectability’ appears just 53 times, rising to 544 in the century’s final decade. The increasing number of newspapers in circulation as the eighteenth-century wore on would have led to a natural increase in incidents of ‘respectability’ in print. However, it witnessed a dramatic upturn after 1800; 3723 (1800s), 9178 (1810s), 19340 (1820s) peaking above 32000 in the 1850s. The phrase ‘respectable’ (which has a far wider range of application than ‘respectability’) is similarly scant until the 1780s; despite first usage in 1685 and it does not appear in Johnson’s famous dictionary (1755).¹³⁵ By the 1820s however over 70000 newspaper articles include the word ‘respectable’, peaking at 190232 in the 1850s.

¹³¹ See Craig Calhoun, *The Roots of Radicalism* (University of Chicago Press, 2011).

¹³² Brewer, *Pleasures*, p.94.

¹³³ Smith, *Consumption and the Making of Respectability*, p.3.

¹³⁴ *Middlesex Journal*, Sept 10th 1774 – In all statistics I have made due allowance for the tendency to print ‘s’ as ‘f’ in eighteenth century newspapers, including both versions in statistic provided.

¹³⁵ Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language* (London: Knapton, 1755).

Smith contends that consumption was not an autonomous concept prior to 1800, particularly as there was no contemporary consciousness of it.¹³⁶ However, Langford's view that 'a history of luxury and attitudes to luxury would come very close to being a history of the eighteenth century' is a more accurate reflection of the importance of non-essential (luxury) purchasing in that period.¹³⁷ Furthermore, consumerism was very closely aligned to aspects of respectability. The desire to learn about one's betters, emulate them and be recognised as 'respectable' was undoubtedly part of the new public sphere. Social improvement demanded the deployment of manners, and attendant suppression of vice. Almost all the middling and professional classes strove for acceptance as 'gentlemen'. Taste and refinement was acquired through consumption of goods, whose cultural value was often determined following exposure to public opinion.

POLITICS, THE PRESS AND THE PUBLIC SPHERE 1750-1800

When Parliament allowed the Licensing of the Press Act (1662) to lapse in 1695, it put an end to government control over printing presses. For the first time anyone could establish their own printing business; leading to an explosion in production of books, pamphlets, prints, and most importantly newspapers. Whilst political control over the press continued, it did not prevent the appearance of a great many regular newspapers, and the establishment of a nascent news-gathering network throughout the nation.¹³⁸ According to Anthony Smith, by 1750 London's newspapers had a combined circulation of 100,000 copies (up to one million readers) a week. Because of affordable prices, the occasional newspaper

¹³⁶ Smith, *Consumption and the Making of Respectability*, pp.15-16.

¹³⁷ Langford, *Polite and Commercial People*, p.3.

¹³⁸ Tillyard, 'Paths of Glory', p.63.

was well within the reach of all but the poorest workers.¹³⁹ These figures seem high given London's estimated population in 1770 was around 700,000.¹⁴⁰ Nevertheless it does demonstrate the scale of penetration that newspapers had made by this time.

Arthur Aspinall's study of *Politics and The Press* (1949) rejects the notion of an independent press prior to 1800 on the grounds that the vast majority of London newspapers accepted political subsidies, either from Government or Opposition.¹⁴¹ This view is expanded by Williams (2010) who considers newspaper history to be a history of censorship.¹⁴² Stamp Duty undoubtedly restricted wider dissemination of news, and successive Governments did harness the press for propaganda purposes.¹⁴³ But, as Jeremy Black points out, there was also a thriving and widespread provincial press serving 'the bulk of the population' where religious and aristocratic influence remained steadfastly prominent.¹⁴⁴ Furthermore, whenever urban newspapers hawked their patronage to the highest bidder, they provided readers more than one perspective of ongoing affairs. Finally, the provincial press regularly copied reports verbatim from London newspapers, enabling topics for conversation to be routinely exported and consumed nationally, albeit on a staggered timescale.¹⁴⁵ Newspaper historians often concentrate on the relationship between the press and politics, to the detriment of acknowledging that their primary function was to obtain (and subsequently retain) readership for the purpose of earning

¹³⁹ Anthony Smith, *The Newspaper: An International History*, (London: Thames & Hudson, 1979), pp.56-7.

¹⁴⁰ Porter, *English Society*, p.40 – London comprised 12% of the entire population.

¹⁴¹ Aspinall, *Politics and The Press*, preface.

¹⁴² Williams, *Read All About It*, preface.

¹⁴³ Between 1712 and 1815 Stamp Duty increased by 800% - described by Williams as a tax on knowledge – see *Read All About It*, p.62; As early as the 1720s Prime Minister Robert Walpole's well-organised propaganda campaign included a heavily subsidised government press – and this practice was continued by subsequent ministries, see Langford, *Polite and Commercial People*, p.47.

¹⁴⁴ Black, *The English Press*, p.114.

¹⁴⁵ Colley, *Britons*, p.41.

money.¹⁴⁶ Of course politics (and political subsidies) were important to newspaper content and finances; but always secondary to their commercial survival. In any case Treasury control over newspapers was neither guaranteed nor failsafe, as their patronage could be withdrawn at any time. In 1788 when the Whig candidate was elected at Westminster despite having a virtual monopoly of Tory-paid newspapers lined up against him; the Government learned that the public were never that easily led.¹⁴⁷

Williams defines newspapers' historic relationship with readers as a dichotomy between education and popular amusement.¹⁴⁸ Whereas political matters satisfied the former, they seldom gratified the latter. Entertainment required more fertile material than dry governmental concerns, and consequently enjoyed equal access to the public sphere. Vital to the spread of popular consumption, newspapers were themselves tradeable commodities but also acted as marketing devices for a host of other goods and services. Through their power to publicise, the press brought spectacle to the masses.

H. T. Dickinson credits press encouragement of 'popular involvement in national affairs' for drawing politics 'out of the restricted arena of court and parliament' and into the public sphere.¹⁴⁹ From 1670-1738 summaries of debates were published during times when Parliament was in recess, under the guise of being of 'historical' interest. After 1738 this practice was outlawed because Members of Parliament feared being misreported, risking national security, and disliked being made publicly accountable for their conduct in the Commons. Newspapers' preference to focus upon especially controversial debates rendered

¹⁴⁶ See Black, *The English Press*, preface – which argues that a more flexible approach is required for assessing the political and social influence of the press.

¹⁴⁷ Cranfield, *The Press and Society*, p.76.

¹⁴⁸ Williams, *Read All About It*, p.12.

¹⁴⁹ HT Dickinson, *The Politics of the People in Eighteenth Century Britain* (London: Macmillan, 1994), pp.204-205.

them dangerously seditious from the Government's perspective.¹⁵⁰ When these restrictions came into force politicians and statesmen continued to submit speeches for publication, and politics remained a chief source of news, but the reputation of the press as a reliable and trustworthy counter to officially sanctioned announcements began to suffer. From Walpole onwards successive ministries built up a formidable stable of bought newspapers to peddle their own propaganda, using the Post Office to block distribution of Opposition papers.¹⁵¹ These barriers to independent political engagement encouraged print-media to improvise. Editorial emphasis swung away from education towards readers' entertainment. Hannah Barker contends that the breadth and depth of British newspaper coverage indicates that it 'catered for a unique form of public sphere and political arena'.¹⁵² This supports my contention that the new public sphere evolved on a much broader platform than just politics.

As G. A. Cranfield observes, 18th century newspapers could not have remained economically viable if they relied solely on publication of official notices.¹⁵³ This was especially true after the 1730s when proprietors, exploiting a loop-hole in the Stamp Act (limiting number of pages) began to use broadsheet paper.¹⁵⁴ This extra column space demanded a regular supply of more news, which was often gathered from highly unreliable sources. These included gossip from coffee-houses and other public spaces, privately submitted innuendo, alleged eye-witness reports from distant events and places, and rumours leaked from both royal and legal courts. Letters from correspondents were actively encouraged and, when all else failed, editors resorted to pure invention. Given that their

¹⁵⁰ Stephen Taylor & Clyve Jones, *The Parliamentary Papers of Edward Harley*, (Suffolk: Boydell, 1998), p.XV.

¹⁵¹ Cranfield, *The Press and Society*, p34; Black, *The English Press*, p.138.

¹⁵² In Barker & Burrows, *Press, Politics and the Public Sphere*, p.93.

¹⁵³ Cranfield, *The Press and Society*, p.32.

¹⁵⁴ Williams, *Read All About It*, p.63.

commercial priorities were often at variance to the truth, it is hardly surprising that Brewer termed the press by the 1760s as ‘an alternative structure of politics [where] a newspaper proprietor was too often willing that a nation be ruined, that a newspaper may sell’.¹⁵⁵

Barker argues that newspaper editors and proprietors maximised readership appeal and increased sales through the widest canvassing and airing of opinions, together with an effective use of advertising.¹⁵⁶ As the eighteenth-century wore on newspapers came to depend more and more upon advertising revenues. In April 1776 the *Reading Mercury* judged the ‘great variety of advertisements which make their daily appearance [as] proof of their utility to all ranks of people’.¹⁵⁷ They were referring to widespread use of classified sections prominently displayed across the front pages of most papers. A secondary but also lucrative form of advertising involved the acceptance of bribes to promote or suppress information. Articles published endorsing individuals or group interests were called puffs; whilst news deliberately excluded was often the fruit of editorial blackmail.¹⁵⁸ Over-use of puffs could be harmful: In 1736 the *Grub Street Journal* accused rival publication *The Prompter* of using ‘false and scurrilous puffs’ which damaged their impartiality.¹⁵⁹ *The Times* (1797) saw it as a diminishing resource when overly employed

¹⁵⁵ John Brewer, *Party Ideology and Popular Politics at the Accession of George III* (University of Cambridge: 1981), pp.139-40.

¹⁵⁶ Hannah Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and Public Opinion in Late Eighteenth Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), p.4.

¹⁵⁷ Cited in Black, *The English Press*, p.59.

¹⁵⁸ Cranfield, *Press & Society*, pp.71-73.

¹⁵⁹ *Grub Street Journal*, May 20th 1736.

The fulsome puffs in one of the Morning papers, respecting Miss Goddard, are likely to do as much injury to that actress [because] the writer is in the pay of so many actors... that his puffs are too cheap to be useful.¹⁶⁰

Restrictions in political reportage seem to have had no impact on the spread of literacy and the printed word. In the 1730s there was a boom in publication of cheap editions and digests, and the appearance of monthly journals such as *Gentleman's Magazine* (1731) whose subject range was vast – attracting sales above 15000 a month by the mid-1740s.¹⁶¹ According to Cranfield the 1750s saw a revival in humorous periodicals specialising in gossip and scandal whose advertisements were often risqué.¹⁶² That same decade welcomed literary review papers such as the *Annual Register* reflecting a surge in interest in literature that Langford sees as peculiarly characteristic of the English middle class at that time.¹⁶³ Because the Copyright Act of 1710 offered just 28 years of protection, an industry grew up supplying cheap copies of old works which were distributed to a willing readership, and contributed to a four-fold increase in book sales between 1780 and 1800.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁰ *The Times*, 14th November 1797.

¹⁶¹ Langford, *Polite and Commercial People*, pp.90-91.

¹⁶² Cranfield, *The Press and Society*, pp.53-5.

¹⁶³ Langford, *Polite and Commercial People*, p.93.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid*, In 1774 Copyright holders tried to amend the law without success.



John Wilkes embodied newspaper portrayals of themselves as defenders of English liberty

The accession of George III in 1760 coincided with a revival of public interest in political affairs. According to Langford, British success in the Seven Years War meant that for the first time her language and culture were deemed to be pre-eminent.¹⁶⁵ Britain was looking at herself, and being looked at by others, as an exemplar of sound national character. In this spirit of confidence, the press renewed their challenge on Government by publishing Parliamentary accounts in spite of fines and threats of imprisonment. Radical journalist and expelled-MP for Middlesex John Wilkes (1725-1797) played a major role in the campaign to grant press access to Parliament.¹⁶⁶ His rhetoric emphasised the liberty of the press as defenders of the people's freedom and independence, against the secretive and hostile Establishment. The press had a long tradition of recalling the Glorious Revolution

¹⁶⁵ Paul Langford, *Englishness Identified, Manners & Character 1650-1850* (Oxford University Press, 2000), p.6.

¹⁶⁶ ODNB, John Wilkes.

(1688), stressing their role as defenders of civil rights won by free-born Englishmen.¹⁶⁷ As early as 1712 *The Medley* warned statesmen against ‘concealment’ of information that might restrain press independence.¹⁶⁸ In May 1763 the *London Evening Post* published a verse illustrating the exalted status the press assumed for itself in the eyes of the public

What mighty blessings do we owe to thee!

That keep fair liberty, our sweetest flower

From lawless will and arbitrary power...

Though friend of truth! Thou friend of liberty!¹⁶⁹

Although government controls were finally relaxed in 1771, verbatim reporting of Parliamentary debates did not occur until 1789.¹⁷⁰ Primary source political news returned to a far more extensive and vibrant print culture, serving the needs of a diverse audience that were used to receiving political information, as well as social and cultural entertainment through the apparatus of the public sphere. Barker says newspapers had by now assumed a ‘powerful position’ in society because they were read by (and represented the views of) sections of the community outside the ruling elite – that were able to exercise ‘a growing level of political influence through the medium of organised public opinion’.¹⁷¹ This came about when newspapers positively encouraged the public to exercise their constitutional rights by participation in vigorous debates upon matters of topical interest, thereby

¹⁶⁷ Boyce, Curran & Wingate, *Newspaper History*, p1-20 contends that the Fourth Estate is commonly thought to have been the outcome of ‘the heroic struggle against state control of the press’.

¹⁶⁸ *The Medley*, June 6th 1712.

¹⁶⁹ May 28th 1763.

¹⁷⁰ Williams, *Read All About It*, p.71 – before 1789 it was not permissible to take notes in the Commons.

¹⁷¹ Barker, *Newspapers*, p.2.

changing the dynamic from reader passivity to the formulation of public opinions.¹⁷² Most historians agree that the 1780s was a pivotal period when the press became capable of gathering and harvesting large-scale public opinion.¹⁷³ It is unlikely this happened purely for political reasons. There is plenty of evidence to suggest that once newspaper output expanded to meet consumer demand, public opinion gathered strength on the back of increased public sphere activity. More likely it was the advent of specialised news in the public sphere that led to structural changes in the press. Barker pinpoints a preoccupation with economic and commercial news driven by the new moneyed classes, leading to greater coverage of shipping and trade news, stocks and shares, and lists of bankruptcies.¹⁷⁴ This was complemented by expanded focus on sporting events, literary reviews, poetry, readers' correspondence, and social events.¹⁷⁵ Readers were now signposted to sections for topics of special interest, and newspapers began to look more like their modern counterparts. Public opinion could now be effectively corralled but it was not harnessed to any political agenda.

Cranfield says that the expansion of commerce and industry promised the advent of a truly independent press, but that this was derailed by the 'unprecedented corruption and venality' of scandal sheets.¹⁷⁶ He attributes this development to Henry Bate, editor of *The Morning Post* from 1772, who understood that society gossip and scandal appealed to middling and lower classes who loved to be amused by tales of their betters.¹⁷⁷ Most newspapers followed suit. For example, from December 1790 the *Morning Chronicle*,

¹⁷² Ibid.p.4.

¹⁷³ Cranfield, *The Press and Society*, pp.71-73 credits Rev. Henry Bate of the *Morning Post* for creating the formula for society gossip – appealing to the middling and lower orders; Black, *The English Press*, p.27; Williams, *Read All About It*, pp.75-96; Michael Harris 'The structure, ownership and control of the Press, 1620-1780', in Boyce, Curran & Wingate, *Newspaper History*, p.97; Barker, *Newspapers*, p.2.

¹⁷⁴ Barker, *Newspapers*, pp.32-37.

¹⁷⁵ Williams, *Read All About It*, p.68 – says that newspapers became businesses in their own right.

¹⁷⁶ Cranfield, *The Press and Society*, pp.71-73.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

inspired by a quote from *Hamlet*, commenced a regular column entitled ‘The Mirror of Fashion’ dedicated to social commentary. Their choice of title has interesting overtures for celebrity culture since the ‘glass of fashion’ (to which it alludes) describes Hamlet as a ‘man observ’d by all observers’.¹⁷⁸ Regular daily newspapers arrived in 1788, around the same time as the appearance of London evening newspapers. This sharp increase in newspaper titles added a greater sense of immediacy to published content. Sunday newspapers were also pivotal. First printed in 1779, these weekly digests were obliged to omit advertising on the Sabbath, relying on a variety of sex, crime, and scandal to support sales. By 1803 *Bell’s Weekly Messenger* was circulating 6000 copies per week.¹⁷⁹ It is clear that audiences, in the face of a deluge of information for public consumption, were compelled to choose between topics for engagement and discussion – and did so by selecting appearances arising from the public sphere.

Michael Harris contends that British society by this time stirred towards a substantial shift in the structure of political power following the American War of Independence. The press played ‘an important but elusive’ role as intermediaries between Parliament and the people, because they had not quite attained critical importance in terms of scale and influence.¹⁸⁰ The moral debate proved an inherent obstacle to legitimacy of the press. On the one side, newspapers boasted of their ability to call the government to account on behalf of the people. But on the other, print media was blamed for perpetuating immoral activities and were capable of deception, which could incite unrest.¹⁸¹ The 1780s saw a revival in pornographic literature, such as *The Rambler* (1783). This was also the age of the

¹⁷⁸ William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (Act III, Scene I, Lines 167-8).

¹⁷⁹ Cranfield, *The Press and Society*, p.86.

¹⁸⁰ Harris ‘The structure of the Press’, p.97 – sees this as entirely middle-class driven.

¹⁸¹ Barker, *Newspapers*, p.179.

‘scandal sheet’ – described by Lucyle Werkmeister as ‘characterised by unprecedented corruption’.¹⁸² Contemporary observer Vicesimus Knox thought that newspapers defended and prolonged venality by taking advantage of the ‘more ignorant classes’ acceptance of their word as truth.¹⁸³ Although print media was immersed in the moral debate, Stuart Allen says that by 1800 its position as a vitally important forum for public discussion, debate and dissent was assured’.¹⁸⁴ If we accept the argument that print media helped to drive public discourse regarding standards of behaviour, it becomes impossible to confine public opinion to the political realm. Newspaper circulation was primarily driven by commercial considerations, which meant they strove for popular appeal. This enabled the practice of close (and sometimes intense) interest in the private lives of individuals and groups as they emerged in the public sphere.

SPECTACLE AND THE PUBLIC SPHERE

As we have seen, the predominance of metropolitan culture in the second half of the eighteenth century, with a matching rise in consumption of goods and services, paved the way for the Habermasian public sphere. In a society of increasingly shared information and experiences, Britain forged what Benedict Anderson terms ‘an imagined community’ whose members ‘never know all of their fellow-members, meet them or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each live the image of their communion’.¹⁸⁵ The occurrence of spectacle in the public sphere inspired a public collective consciousness that was recognised and understood

¹⁸² Lucyle Werkmeister, *The London Daily Press 1772-1792* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1963), p.4.

¹⁸³ Vicesimus Knox, *The Spirit of Despotism* (London: William Hone, 1821), p.16.

¹⁸⁴ Stuart Allen, *News Culture* (London: Open University Press, 2004), p.11.

¹⁸⁵ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983), pp.11-15.

by the people and ruling elite alike. Guy Debord envisaged 'spectacle' as the product of modern capitalist societies, emerging when 'all that once was directly lived [became] mere representation'.¹⁸⁶ For Debord mass collective audiences were the key prerequisite for spectacle: 'the decline of being into having, and having into merely appearing' having occurred at the 'historical moment commodity complete[d] its colonization of social life'.¹⁸⁷ Jen Luc Nancy this argument a step further by suggesting that there can be no 'society without the spectacle because society is the spectacle of itself'.¹⁸⁸ This indicates that spectacle, in all its shapes and forms, should be considered intrinsic to the public sphere.

Increased commercialisation of the public sphere by the latter decades of the eighteenth-century enabled vast tranches of the population to routinely utilise spectacle to enjoy shared inauthentic versions of contemporary life. Their interest led to greater objectification of the individuals and groups who captured public attention. Vincent (Vincenzo) Lunardi's exploits between 1784 and 1786 offer a good example of how spectacle performed in the public sphere.

Lunardi's place in ballooning history has been widely written about, but never from the perspective of publicity which was pivotal to the phenomenal level of public engagement he garnered as an individual.¹⁸⁹ The year 1784 was marked by a national obsession with ballooning. What began as a scientific endeavour to replicate the first manned flights engineered by the Montgolfier brothers (over Paris in October 1783) quickly

¹⁸⁶ Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* (London: Zone Books, 1995), Thesis 1.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid, Theses 17 & 42.

¹⁸⁸ Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), p.67.

¹⁸⁹ These include Clare Brant, *Balloon Madness: Flights of Imagination in Britain, 1783-1786*, (London: Boydell, 2017); Michael R. Lynn, *The Sublime Invention: Ballooning in Europe 1783- 1820* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010); Leslie Gardiner, *Man in the Clouds: The Story of Vincent Lunardi* (London: Chambers, 1963), & B. L. Koltar & J. E. Gessler, *Ballooning: A History, 1782-1900* (London: McFarland, 2011).

became a topic for mass ‘public curiosity’.¹⁹⁰ Paul Keen describes this phenomenon as transforming science into show-business, citing Horace Walpole’s contemporary observation that ‘balloonomania’ revealed more about the public’s fascination with its own ability to be fascinated, than about the outcome of the race to the skies.¹⁹¹



Vincenzo Lunardi (1754-1806)

Italian-born Lunardi was a virtual unknown, working in a minor capacity for the Neapolitan Ambassador in London, but he rapidly created a frenzy of interest through the medium of publicity. Firstly a series of advertisements announced the construction of a

¹⁹⁰ William McCarthy & Olivia Murphy (Eds.), *Anna Letitia Barbauld: New Perspectives*, (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2014), p.92.

¹⁹¹ Paul Keen, ‘The “Balloonomania”: Science & Spectacle in 1780s England’ in *Eighteenth Century Studies* (Vol 39/4, 2006), pp.508-509.

balloon '33 feet in diameter [containing] 13000 cubic feet of air'.¹⁹² The public were invited to view 'the machine in a floating state' at the Lyceum on the Strand for the cost of one shilling.¹⁹³ Mindful of his outsider status, Lunardi declared he would be accompanied by an 'English Gentleman' thereby entitling him to rebrand his venture to the 'English Balloon'.¹⁹⁴ Secondly, Lunardi scheduled regular press conferences with updates on the balloon's construction, and detailing scientific discussions held with the Royal Society. There was intense speculation about the mystery co-pilot, whose identity he refused to divulge.¹⁹⁵ Lunardi also read aloud titbits from female fan letters desirous to 'visit the higher regions' with him.¹⁹⁶ Boasting 'I am Lunardi – who the women all love', he habitually associated the inflation of his balloon with masculine prowess, making himself the subject of widespread sexualised humour.¹⁹⁷ Lunardi's final marketing approach involved addressing his public directly. Letters in the press highlighted his charitable generosity, made arrangements for the launch date at the Artillery Grounds, and directed the nobility to set their carriages down in Bunhill Row.¹⁹⁸ This extraordinarily successful campaign owed a great deal to Lunardi's timing, because he latched onto a national ballooning craze that was likened to a form of contagion.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹² This began with *the Morning Post*, July 26th 1784.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ *Morning Herald*, August 13th 1784.

¹⁹⁵ For example the *Morning Herald* on August 16th 1784 named Lord Mahon as the mystery co-pilot.

¹⁹⁶ Such as *Morning Post* (August 12th), *Morning Herald* (August 13th) *General Advertiser* (August 21st) and *Morning Chronicle* (September 6th), 1784.

¹⁹⁷ Richard O. Smith, *James Sadler: The Man With His Head in The Clouds* (Oxford: Signal, 2014), p.63; Lynn, *Ballooning in Europe*, pp.78-9; & Brant, *Balloon Madness*, p.78 – describes Lunardi's ability to excite female attention.

¹⁹⁸ *Daily Advertiser* (August 21st), *Public Advertiser* (September 6th), and *Morning Herald* (September 14th).

¹⁹⁹ *Public Advertiser*, September 14th 1784, found 'every person... infested with the Balloon influenza'.



Several sides to Lunardi's character were presented to the public, ranging from solidly patriotic to overtly sexual

On September 15th up to 200,000 people thronged to London for the launch.²⁰⁰ Hotels were fully booked and nearby houses advertised for rent 'having no obstruction for the view into the ground'.²⁰¹ Other buildings erected scaffolding 'and all those windows which the commutation tax had blocked up, were re-opened for the purpose of accommodating spectators'.²⁰² Within the Artillery Grounds spectators crammed together 'like a cluster of bees'.²⁰³ Crowds attracted criminals too, with an estimated 2000 pick-pockets active, demonstrating how the underbelly of society also capitalised.²⁰⁴ The traditional correlation between consumer society and the public sphere was in operation, whereby events involving spectacle were routinely monetised as part and parcel of civic

²⁰⁰ *The General Advertiser*, September 16th 1784, calculated 150,000 attendees with Lunardi claiming 200,000.

Almost all contemporary accounts acknowledge that the crowd was vast.

²⁰¹ *Morning Chronicle*, *Morning Post*, September 13th and 14th 1784.

²⁰² *General Evening Post*, September 16th 1784.

²⁰³ *Morning Herald*, September 16th 1784.

²⁰⁴ *Morning Chronicle*, September 17th 1784.

activity. Broadsheets, squibs, ballads, satires and other print culture ephemera commonly appeared simultaneous to the events they described, with a range of trades and services extracting economic gain from those attending.²⁰⁵

Before the balloon was fully prepared Lunardi impulsively cut loose stranding his human passenger George Biggins, but with his lapdog and cat safely on board. Outrage about the abandonment of his English cargo soon subsided when it was learned that Lunardi travelled 24 miles into the Hertfordshire countryside, stopping briefly to release the cat. Prime Minister Mr Pitt was said to have watched from a rooftop in City Road, and King George III viewed through a telescope at Windsor Castle.²⁰⁶

The moment Lunardi's balloon touched down his 'spectacle' became public property.²⁰⁷ Control was wrested from him by a combination of rampant commercial exploitation, press coverage, and the unpredictability of public reaction. In the frenzy of fame that followed Lunardi was presented with a gold watch by the Prince of Wales and he attended numerous civic dinners. Lunardi's achievement was quickly commodified via a plethora of commemorative goods such as pottery, prints, bonnets and brooches.²⁰⁸ There was also cultural appropriation: Lunardi songs and ballads were written, dozens of printed

²⁰⁵ Aaron Skirboll, *The Thief-Taker Hangings: How Daniel Defoe, Jonathan Wild, and Jack Sheppard Captivated London and Created the Celebrity Criminal* (London: Lyons Press, 2014) provides a detailed account of Defoe's practice of interviewing prisoners 'that truly changed the face of journalism' (From book cover).

²⁰⁶ *St James' Chronicle*, September 16th 1784.

²⁰⁷ Keen, 'Balloomania', p.508 says it was 'tainted with hints of commercial excess'.

²⁰⁸ Lunardi spawned a range of merchandise including miniature engravings fetching half a guinea in London, Lynn, *Ballooning in Europe*, p.148. Lunardi hats, which were balloon-shaped and made of straw, following a tradition of naming headwear after people – see Mirella Billi, 'Ladies Fashion Magazines in Nicholas Browlees (Ed.), *New Discourse in Early Modern Britain* (Bern: Peter Lang; 2006), p.141.

images appeared, alongside several stage reviews, and he was even mentioned in Robert Burns' poem *To a Louse* (1786).²⁰⁹

Despite being an accomplished self-publicist, Lunardi was unable to regulate press portrayal of events or the perspectives they conveyed. When a series of letters were published castigating the credibility of Lunardi's so-called experiments, attention drifted from scientific technicalities towards estimating how many bottles of wine Lunardi had downed during his flight, raising questions about his private character. The general public also began to focus on Lunardi's cat who, in early news reports, was stated to have been summarily jettisoned. Horace Walpole echoed widely-held sentiments when he wrote that 'so far from respecting [Lunardi], I was very angry with him: he had full right to venture his own neck, but none to risk the poor cat's'. Within days the *Morning Herald* mused that the cat acquired ample 'share in the conversation' about Lunardi.

To quell public disquiet Lunardi announced the return of his 'cat', which he insisted was unharmed having had been gently dropped into the arms of an old woman.²¹⁰ Despite its dubious provenance Lunardi's 'cat' became an astonishingly popular public attraction. According to Jonas Drylander this 'fashionable pleasure' earned Lunardi £100 per day.²¹¹ However, to appease his public Lunardi never again took pets aboard balloon flights.²¹²

²⁰⁹ There are over two dozen extant images of Lunardi held at the British Museum in London. Keen, 'Balloonomania', pp.510-12 lists several contemporary theatrical productions inspired by Lunardi, poems, and a series of watercolour paintings by George Woodward. *Morning Herald*, September 23rd 1784, advertises 'Lunardi in the Clouds' a comic sketch at Richmond Theatre.

²¹⁰ Vincent Lunardi, *An Account of the First Aerial Voyage in England* (London: Bell, 1784), pp51-54.

²¹¹ Cited in Davies, *King of all Balloons*, chapter 2.

²¹² *Ibid.*



Lunardi's cat was the surprising focus of public attention

Unfortunately for Lunardi the novelty of balloon flight quickly wore off.²¹³ The *Critical Review* predicted that 'this childish spectacle will soon be forgotten' – labelling it as a form of entertainment rather than of serious scientific merit.²¹⁴ Lunardi completed at least a dozen flights across Britain over the following two years, attracting large crowds until an unfortunate accident at Newcastle-Upon-Tyne on September 19th 1786, which resulted in the death of a young man taken up by the balloon's trailing ropes.²¹⁵ Fearful that 'bad news is generally conveyed with more Velocity than Good', Lunardi immediately wrote to the London papers informing 'the public of the real truth', blaming the victim for encroachment, and callously concluding: 'I think it was his destiny and his appointed hour was come'.²¹⁶ *The*

²¹³ Smith, *James Sadler*, p.63.

²¹⁴ Keen, "Balloonomania", p.522.

²¹⁵ *Morning Chronicle*, September 21st 1786.

²¹⁶ *St James Chronicle*, September 23rd 1786 contains a full transcript of Lunardi's letter.

Times angrily responded that the only way for Lunardi to placate the public was to ‘never again to renew his nonsensical exhibitions’. The *Morning Chronicle* called him an ‘object of pity’ to all but the many who loved to joke about him.²¹⁷ Lunardi left Britain shortly afterwards and he never returned.

Tracing Lunardi’s ‘spectacle’ from start to finish enables us to grasp at a hitherto unmentioned, yet crucial factor regulating his public sphere appearance; namely the apparatus of celebrity. Lunardi used publicity to trigger initial interest – which was consolidated by creating a public version of himself upon whom audiences became attached. He sold them the image of a dashing patriotic and highly sexualised genius. Making himself the focus for public attention commodified Lunardi to such an extent that by the time he climbed into the balloon at Artillery Fields he undoubtedly was a celebrity. His subsequently successful flight guaranteed Lunardi would be more than a nine-day-wonder. But celebrity denied Lunardi commercial exclusivity, invaded his personal privacy, and forced him to fight for his reputation. Celebrity also enabled Lunardi’s public persona to exceed his aeronautical reputation. He became a consumerised product, exploited through a wide range of artistic, fashionable and commercial mediums. Lunardi tried to use his celebrity to manipulate public opinion but, despite undoubtedly benefitting financially from celebrity stature, he also experienced its fragility. Ultimately Lunardi’s fall from grace was almost a metaphor for public opinion’s tendency to move on to the next ‘spectacle’.

Without the distinction of ‘celebrity’ individuals such as Lunardi could not have become commodified. People appearing in the public sphere in the final decades of the eighteenth-century came under surveillance by the first truly mass audiences; consumers of

²¹⁷ Both published September 30th 1786.

spectacle whose engagement sparked conversation and debate. Audience reaction to spectacle not only created public opinion, but was also regulated subsequent consumption, determining the level and duration of celebrity that would be attained. To progress this argument further it is necessary to delve deeper into the definition, concepts and origins of celebrity itself. Creating a framework that encapsulates its individual, commercial and audience attributes will enable us to encounter celebrity face-to-face as a component of the new public sphere. If celebrity can be shown to be the embodiment of consumer culture within the public sphere, then the historiography of public opinion must be re-evaluated along the lines suggested by Adut; namely to include audience's engagement with 'spectacle' of any description; and to judge public opinion on the basis of publicity not politics.

CONCLUSION

This introductory chapter has measured the roles of urbanisation, consumer culture, and audience in the creation of the Habermasian public sphere. The evolving nature of politics, codes of civility and print media both shaped and regulated the rise of public opinion, which in turn served a purpose reflective of the diversity of public sphere appearances available for inspection. Lunardi's balloon exploits have shed light on the parameters of the public sphere that were in place by the 1780s.

However, the French Revolution in 1789 wrought great change, driving a wedge between the press and government who feared that the upsurge in reading habits encouraged the British mob to follow their French counterparts into violence and

insurgency.²¹⁸ Williams argues that the French Revolution broke the link between the bourgeoisie and the working classes, because the upper and emerging middle classes aligned their interest with the status quo to prevent revolution in Britain.²¹⁹ After France declared war in February 1793, worries about invasion became the new national concern. Porter observes that Britain remained peaceful because, once the nation was under threat patriotism was more popular than Paine.²²⁰ Brewer detects a voracious interest in French politics after 1790, and literature certainly became an ideological battleground over the following decade.²²¹ Popular discussion books included Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), Thomas Paine's counter-argument *Rights of Man* (1791), together with Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). Paul Keen sees these rival arguments creating a crisis in literature during the 1790s.²²² Some saw printing presses as a celebration of democratic public opinion, but others such as Hannah More, who flooded the market with cheap instructional guides, sought to suppress opinion by 'train[ing] up the lower classes in the habits of industry and piety'.²²³ Such was the flow of information entering the public sphere at this time that by 1800 the *Edinburgh Review* abandoned the practice of noticing every new publication.²²⁴ An age of selectivity was dawning as public appearances faced severe competitive pressure, and print media stood on the frontline mediating between subject and audience.

In 1793 Prime Minister Pitt enacted laws severely curtailing the freedom of the press, and augmented this by restrictions on corresponding societies and 'seditious'

²¹⁸ Cranfield, *The Press and Society*, p.89; Brewer, *Pleasures*, p.196.

²¹⁹ Williams, *Read All About It*, pp.77-8.

²²⁰ Porter, *English Society*, p.352.

²²¹ Brewer, *Pleasures*, pp.590-1.

²²² Paul Keen, *The Crisis of Literature in the 1790s* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp.4-5.

²²³ Williams, *Read All About It*, p.81.

²²⁴ Mole, *Byron's Romantic Celebrity*, pp.11-14.

meetings. Around the same time Charles James Fox's Libel Act (1792), granted juries the right to decide libel actions. This emboldened the press to publish more scandal and gossip. This was very timely for both press and public; politically censored, socially and culturally deprived by war, demand for home-grown entertainment rocketed. British arts and leisure flourished during this lengthy period of national isolation. Within the milieu of this new public sphere fame and luxury began to overturn long-standing immoral connotations to become legitimately aspirational.

Emulation was an important characteristic of consumer culture as taste, fashion, and social graces were often imitated down the social orders. As the new public sphere developed, elite society ceased to be the sole provider of role models, as singularity of personality and public recognition began to deliver alternative, more democratic icons. Because of the publicising strength of scandal and notoriety celebrity status was never a marker for respectability. But it was an outlet for the expression of public opinion regarding standards of behaviour in public life, which in turn influenced the path of cultural, political and social change.

Thomas sees a decisive separation between manners and morality by 1800 brought about by the realisation that 'social cohesion required a degree of hypocrisy', with normal courtesies relying on necessary 'petty falsehoods'.²²⁵ Wilson describes this as a time of 'great boredom... [in which] many of the upper classes led lives dead to any aspiration beyond a few easily sated pleasures'.²²⁶ A contemporary writer bemoaned the loss of individuality brought about by mass society, creating a need to escape from 'mortifying insignificance... hence men glory even in their vices; anxious to be distinguished for anything, rather than to

²²⁵ Thomas, *Civility*, p.318.

²²⁶ Wilson, *Decency and Disorder*, p.173.

remain in obscurity'.²²⁷ As popular culture began to advance, aspirants to fame used print media to enter the public sphere. Readers yearned for eccentric, interesting and light-hearted news to relieve their ennui; and the press responded accordingly. According to Jane Rendell, London had witnessed an increase in awareness of style, and a heightened desire to project a sense of identity through distinctive, individualist, consumption. She pinpoints the area around St James as the most important hotspot for male leisure and entertainment because it offered an unrivalled selection of venues in which to display oneself.²²⁸ Lilti concludes that 'all of the elements of celebrity discourse were assembled by 1795'.²²⁹ For him the cult of portraiture and image dissemination, coupled with a 'new urban fascination with individuals and personalities' created 'a kind of permanent public surveillance' and a taste for the singularity of individuals.²³⁰ The deliberate and conscious search for public recognition which characterised British society during the final years of the eighteenth-century is described by Inglis as the 'first formula of celebrity'.²³¹ What constitutes 'celebrity' and its precise relationship with the Habermasian public sphere will be explored in the next chapter.

²²⁷ Hugh Murray, *Enquiries Historical and Moral* (London: Longman, 1808), p.25.

²²⁸ Jane Rendell, *The Pursuit of Pleasure* (London: Athlone Press, 2002), p.6 & p.26.

²²⁹ Lilti, *Celebrity Conference*, March 29 2017.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*

²³¹ Inglis, *Celebrity*, p.52.

CHAPTER ONE

Repositioning Celebrity in Regency Britain (1788-1832)

In the public sphere, a cluster of individuals are given greater presence and a wider scope of activity and agency than those who make up the rest of the population... We tend to call these overtly public individuals celebrities

P. David Marshall, 1997.¹

Boyd Hilton describes Britain at the turn of the nineteenth century as a place where 'men especially strove to fashion, promote, and advertise themselves in public life... not everyone could amass great wealth, but there was endless scope for celebrity'.² Participation in public life was no longer contingent upon aristocratic values such as property, possession and patronage. Lewis Namier's model of mid-century Georgian politics, in which Parliamentary activity tended to be motivated by petty self-interest, was gradually superseded by a society where 'everything seemed to become political' and calls for reform were no longer considered to be 'meaningless rhetoric'.³ Publicity rendered all public sphere appearances liable to politicisation, depending on public reaction. But audiences were very broad-shouldered, with the public sphere hosting spectacle arising from consumer and popular culture; which would have stimulated interest, entertained and generated collective responses in non-political ways.

¹ P. David Marshall, *Celebrity and Power* (University of Minnesota, 1997), preface.

² Hilton, *A Mad, Bad, and Dangerous People*, p.37.

³ *Ibid*, p.31 See also Lewis Namier, *The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III* (London: Macmillan, 1982).

During the Regency era public opinion began to thrive within a public sphere teeming with diversity. Aside from politics, print and visual media promoted a range of pastimes. These included fashion, literature, luxury goods and entertainment, while being endlessly fascinated with crime and other misdemeanours. Lilti argues that news was fed 'as much by gossip and scandal as by treaties and battles' and that readership of such stories was vital to 'shaping the public consciousness of the urban middle class, who constituted the public sphere'.⁴ The commodification of the public sphere supplied a natural habitat for celebrity, and enabled celebrity culture to permeate the political realm. As the eighteenth century drew to a close politicians and statesmen alike became increasingly conscious that their outwardly projected 'public image' had important reputational value requiring nurturing and protection. In 1775 Lord North's observation that 'the private opinions of the people in power being made public had been attended with bad consequences' acknowledged the extent of public sphere encroachment into the arena of political affairs, reflecting a contemporary awareness that public figures were being closely monitored by an informed audience.⁵ John Adams (1790) saw the developing 'passion for distinction' in men as troublesome; but considered it to be a basic human desire for personal esteem that governments should 'harness and regulate to command obedience to the laws'.⁶

Hilton's placement of celebrity in the heart of public life by 1800 mirrors current developments in the study of celebrity history. It is no longer valid to assert that celebrity is a purely 20th century phenomenon reliant on mass-media, imagery and audiences.⁷ Over the past two decades historians have at first tentatively, but with increasing authority driven the

⁴ Lilti, *Invention of Celebrity*, pp.51-52.

⁵ *London Evening Post*, January 19th 1775.

⁶ Cited in Richard Allen Ryerson, *John Adams' Republic* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2016), p.328.

⁷ Richard Schickel, *Intimate Strangers: The Culture of Celebrity in America* (London: Dee, 2000), p.23 declares 'there was no such thing as celebrity prior to the beginning of the twentieth century'.

timeline for the origins of modern concepts of celebrity back to the eighteenth-century; with some theorists contending for earlier periods still.⁸ This means that whilst writing my thesis, it has become almost routine for historians to locate celebrity culture in Regency Britain. Celebrity theorists have long since understood its pivotal role in ongoing processes of commercialism, democracy, the cult of personality, and the growth of apostasy.⁹ One of the biggest proponents of celebrity as a 20th-century creation, Chris Rojek perceives that celebrities 'humanize the process of commodity consumption'.¹⁰ This widespread acceptance of celebrity as a fixture of modern consumer culture makes it baffling to understand why it currently remains ill-considered as a contributor to the commercially-inspired Habermasian public sphere, from where public opinion is believed to have originated.

Concepts of celebrity have long been hampered by perceptions of its ephemerality, which has rendered it immaterial to the historiography of mass public discourse and surveillance.¹¹ But celebrity-derived spectacle, which was both exciting and unpredictable, was regularly experienced and consumed by audiences throughout the Regency period, and its resultant impact upon society demands far greater attention. Catharine Lumby visualises today's public sphere to be 'inclusive and diverse... airing socially important issues once deemed trivial'.¹² Her parameters could equally apply to the Habermasian public sphere.

⁸ Notable pre-18th century theorists include, Robert van Krieken, *Celebrity Society* (New York: Routledge, 2012) traces celebrity to the 12th century when society first began to be theatricalised by the mechanisms of royal courts, relying heavily on the theories set down in Norbert Elias, *The Court Society* (London: Pantheon, 1983); Ariane Fichtl 'Antique Parallels to Eighteenth-Century Concepts of Celebrity' (Celebrity Conference, March 2017); Rebecca Tierney-Hynes, 'Farcical Politics', in Jones and Joule, *Intimacy & Celebrity*, pp.141-42

⁹ See Marshall, *Celebrity & Power*; Nick Couldry, *The Place of Media Power* (London: Routledge, 2000); and Turner, *Understanding Celebrity*.

¹⁰ Rojek, *Celebrity*, p.14.

¹¹ Tuite, 'Tainted Love', pp.60-61 considers that celebrity has been regarded as 'trivial' until relatively recently.

¹² Quoted in Elizabeth Berry, 'Celebrity, Cultural Production and Public Life' in *International Journal of Cultural Studies* (Volume 1/3, 2008), p.252.

Then, rather than being dismissed as a sideshow, celebrity (or rather the celebrity industry) could be shown as an active agent in the formulation of public opinion; making key contributions to moral, social and political questions that epitomised and shaped the day. This chapter builds upon the growing canon of eighteenth-century celebrity studies to propose that celebrity (and the broader notion of private made public) be re-cast from its present bit-part towards a more central role in the emergence of mass public opinion.

PROBLEMS WITH DEFINING CELEBRITY

In *A Short History of Celebrity* Fred Inglis remarks that celebrity is ‘everywhere acknowledged but never understood’.¹³ Since the mid-1990s when it first became recognised as a distinct field of study, an ever-expanding range of academic approaches to celebrity has created what Olivier Driessens terms a ‘definitional vagueness’ making this cultural phenomenon difficult to grasp.¹⁴ In terms of British etymology the word ‘celebrity’ has been linked with concepts of fame since the mid-eighteenth century.¹⁵ In 1753 *The Rambler* bemoaned that ‘man has made celebrity necessary to his happiness,’ cautioning that such aspirations placed ‘satisfaction in the power of the weakest’.¹⁶ It was almost a century later before ‘celebrity’ became a possessive noun.¹⁷ The *Oxford English Dictionary* dates the practice of referring to people as ‘celebrities’ to 1849, but it remained relatively

¹³ Inglis, *Celebrity*, p.4.

¹⁴ Driessens, ‘Celebrity Capital’, pp.542-543.

¹⁵ My search of British Library Newspapers (1600-1900) found that ‘celebrity’ first appeared in print in 1731 in relation to a religious sermon. From the 1750s it became more frequent and was widely used by the 1770s.

¹⁶ *The Rambler*, August 10th 1751. This was one of a typical set of newspaper editorials associating the pursuit of fame with a breakdown in moral and religious values.

¹⁷ The earliest example I found was *Hampshire Advertiser* September 12th 1857, eulogising George Stephenson as a ‘self-made celebrity’.

uncommon until the 1890s.¹⁸ Antoine Lilti credits Charles Pinot Duclos (1751) with first expounding French 'celebrity'; being 'the desire to be somebody in the eyes of the public'.¹⁹ According to Lilti, France understood 'celebrity' in a similar way to the British until 1789, when the Revolution signalled a pause in its development.²⁰

As a word in its own right, 'celebrity' has faced two important hurdles clouding its precise meaning. In the first instance 'celebrity' is often measured against established traditional markers of fame and public recognition which may be achieved, attributed or ascribed through heroic achievement, public office or social position.²¹ Since Leo Braudy's exhaustive *Frenzy of Renown* (1986), set a benchmark for categorizing routes to fame since ancient times, theorists have sought to pin down what characterises celebrity as a new variant of public recognition.²² Some, such as John Thompson, believe that the age of multimedia has 'reinvented publicness'; breaking existing narrow elite definitions of renown and democratizing fame into a different format: 'celebrity'.²³ However, the perceived status and social value of media-created renown is an age-old question. As early as 1722 Alexander Pope aspired to recognition but not at all costs: 'Oh, grant an honest Fame, or grant me none'.²⁴ The rise of consumer society in eighteenth-century Britain altered attitudes towards luxury and personal ambition. Human characteristics of egoism and greed, which were traditionally frowned upon as anti-social and morally wrong, began

¹⁸ Tillyard, 'Paths of Glory', p.61.

¹⁹ Lilti, *Invention of Celebrity*, pp.93-96.

²⁰ Ibid, p.102.

²¹ Rojek, *Celebrity*, p.17 first set out these three categories of how celebrity is earned.

²² Braudy, *Frenzy of Renown* – states that celebrity did not appear until the 1920s. Amongst others, Lilti has expressed his admiration for Braudy's work 'while remaining sceptical about the result: [asking] what is the use of such a broad concept of celebrity?' - Lilti, *Invention of Celebrity*, pp.2-3.

²³ John Thompson, *Media and Modernity*, (Cambridge: Polity, 1995), pp.236-237.

²⁴ From *The Temple of Fame* (1715), lines 523-524.

to be deemed natural and even desirable.²⁵ In the 1770s Adam Smith wrote that ‘the uniform, constant and uninterrupted effort of every man [is] to better his condition’, arguing that private economic selfishness benefitted the commonwealth.²⁶ The rapid expansion of print and image media after 1750 fertilized the commercialisation of personality, providing more egalitarian routes to public notice. Yves Citton coined the phrase ‘attention economy’ to describe methods developed for the production and marketing of celebrity, suggesting that the evolution of post-industrial advertising and publicity machinery has created an ‘attention arms race’.²⁷ Commercial and ambition-driven competition manifested itself through the tool of publicity, which fuelled both spectacle and novelty within public sphere venues.

Nicholas Dames finds ‘celebrity’ impossible to pin down without firstly defining what it is *not*.²⁸ Throughout history man has sought to create a historical foothold from which his life and achievements can resonate. This desire for renown, usually described as ‘fame,’ was the preserve of rulers, favoured courtiers, or military heroes. It was often posthumous: associated with memorable success or status in society. According to Fred Inglis, renown ‘brought honour to the office, not the individual and public recognition not so much of the man himself as of the significance of his actions for the society’.²⁹ By contrast celebrity is often considered to be possessive—specific to individual or personal character – rather than a confirmation of status in society *per se*.

²⁵ Erlin, *Necessary Luxuries*, p.27.

²⁶ Porter, *English Society*, p.258.

²⁷ Yves Citton, *The Ecology of Attention* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017), pp.55-56 ; see also Van Krieken, *Celebrity Society*, pp.60-61.

²⁸ Nicholas Dames, ‘Brushes with Fame: Thackeray and the Work of Celebrity’ in *Nineteenth Century Literature*, (Vol 56/10, Jun 2001), p.28.

²⁹ Inglis, *Celebrity*, p.4.

Being constantly associated with contemporary and the living, celebrity has acquired a finite and extinguishable quality often considered to be the biggest demarcation line between itself and authentic (traditional forms of) fame.³⁰ Samuel Coleridge associated celebrity with financial reward – something worth obtaining prior to chasing the purity of lasting fame.³¹ William Hazlitt thought genius ‘the heir of fame’ granting the dead immortality, and far-removed from ‘popularity, the shout of the multitude [and] the idle buzz of fashion’ that he experienced in contemporary Regency society.³² Thomas Carlyle used ‘lionism’ to describe what he witnessed as ‘the ordinary... transformed into the known’ via the public sphere.³³ William Makepeace Thackeray, on the other hand, believed that celebrity lacked power outside a specific field of recognition: ‘a man may be famous in the Honour-lists and entirely unknown to the undergraduates: who elect kings and chieftains of their own’.³⁴ In 1776 a medic writing to the *Morning Chronicle* tried to bridge this gap by enclosing a list of his famous clients to help ordinary readers ‘form some judgement of my celebrity’.³⁵ Anthony Elliott and Ross Boyd’s vision of celebrity ‘constantly on the brink of obsolescence’, echoes Hazlitt but falls into the same trap of under-appreciating that occasionally celebrities can (and do) successfully migrate, during their lives or posthumously, to more enduring forms of recognition such as glory, heroism and fame.³⁶

Looking back over a quarter of century of scholarly debate in 2011, Braudy succinctly

³⁰ James Harriman-Smith, ‘Garrick Dying’ in Jones & Joule, *Intimacy & Celebrity*, p.98; Hannah Hamad, ‘Celebrity in the Modern Era’ in Anthony Elliott (Editor), *Routledge Handbook of Celebrity Studies*, (London: Routledge, 2018), p44-57, Lilti, *Invention of Celebrity*, p.6.

³¹ Mole, *Byron’s Romantic Celebrity*, preface.

³² William Hazlitt, *Lectures on the English Poets* (London: Templeman, 1841), p.276.

³³ Dames, *Thackeray*, p.30.

³⁴ William Makepeace Thackeray, *Pendennis* (London: Doolady, 1867), p.118 – Thackeray frequently used ‘notable’ to describe celebrity.

³⁵ *Morning Chronicle*, August 6th 1776.

³⁶ Anthony Elliott and Ross Boyd, ‘Celebrity and Contemporary Culture’ in Elliott, *Celebrity Studies*, p.3.

concluded that further attempts to distinguish between celebrity and fame are a ‘fruitless task’ because there is no possibility of finding a governing rule for all scenarios.³⁷

The second obstacle rendering ‘celebrity a slippery concept [eluding] any real sense of definition’ is its often confusing relationship with a clutch of reciprocal nouns used to describe well-known people.³⁸ These include heroes, stars, icons, VIPs and superstars. Although there have been attempts to apply sub-terms to specific areas of endeavour; such as ‘stars’ belonging to sport, film or music; the overarching fact is that these words collectively allude to media-generated fame, making it compelling that ‘celebrity’ should become the chosen master-metaphor for this genre of recognition.³⁹

This thesis will adopt the approach of treating celebrity as a cultural apparatus similar to Richard Dyer’s three original components (1986): namely, celebrity text, industry, and audiences.⁴⁰ It has since been suggested that ‘media’ is a more appropriate heading than ‘industry’.⁴¹ Turner (2010) tried to end this debate by emphasising that promotional and publicity industries are undeniably intrinsic to the realm of media.⁴² However, Driessens (2013) persuasively extols the virtue of making media a distinct fourth building block because its functions are not necessarily aligned with the celebrity industry. Whereas commercial media seeks maximum circulation and advertising revenues from high audiences, celebrity media is dominated by managers and agents whose object is to sell the

³⁷ Leo Braudy, ‘Knowing the Performer from the Performance: Fame, Celebrity, and Literary Studies’ in *PMLA* (Volume 126/4, October 2011), p.1071.

³⁸ Ellis Cashmore and Andrew Parker, ‘One David Beckham? Celebrity, Masculinity, and the Soccerati’ in *Sociology of Sport Journal* (Volume 20/3, 2013), pp.214-231.

³⁹ James Monaco, *Celebrity: The Media as Image Makers* (New York: Delta, 1978) splits celebrity into three categories: The hero (someone who has actually done something spectacular); The star (one achieving recognition due to developing their public persona; and the ‘quasar’ (anyone becoming famous by chance).

⁴⁰ Richard Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars & Society* (London: Macmillan, 1986).

⁴¹ For example Marshall, *Celebrity & Power*; and Mole, *Byron’s Romantic Celebrity*, p.1.

⁴² Graeme Turner, *Ordinary People and The Media: The Demotic Turn* (London: Sage, 2010), pp.16-17.

specific celebrity image and its related merchandise.⁴³ Inspired by Pierre Bourdieu's field theory, Driessens proposes that celebrity be conceptualised 'as a form of capital' for the purpose of enabling future studies to 'integrate rather than juxtapose' its four definitional angles.⁴⁴ Although his arguments and conclusions will not bear upon this study, Driessens' categories: celebrity, celebrity industry, media, and public are a sound basis from which to proceed when searching for historical perspective. Robert van Krieken (2018) has already championed 'celebrity capital' as the best means to unravel the genuine history of celebrity, improving upon the superficial outcomes achieved by applying today's version of celebrity to the past, which thus far has 'yield[ed] a very shallow history'.⁴⁵

Elliott and Ross caution that celebrity is inherently dynamic, 'always in the process of becoming, unfinished and unfinishable' suggesting that its long continuity of existence is being underplayed in the 'rush to declare the emergence of [celebrity as] something new'.⁴⁶ Using Driessens' model minimises the risk of contaminating Regency celebrity by assessing it purely on today's terms, and also enables two key questions to be addressed. Firstly, where was celebrity situated in the structure of Regency society? And secondly, how closely can the role and functions of Regency-era celebrity be said to resemble its modern-day iteration?

⁴³Driessens, 'Celebrity Capital', p.546.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Robert Van Krieken, 'Celebrities' Histories' in Elliott, *Celebrity Studies*, pp.26-43.

⁴⁶ Elliott & Boyd, 'Celebrity and Contemporary Culture', p.4.

1. CELEBRITY

Elaine McGirr places great stress upon the physical person for the grounding and establishing of celebrity.⁴⁷ According to Driessens, however, there have been few attempts to define celebrity solely on the basis of inherent traits, such as personal charisma and talent; possessing an 'X-Factor' as we might say today.⁴⁸ The popular genre of star studies, accentuating the singularity of individual paths to celebrity, underlines the absence of a strict formula for success. Individuals are believed to play a major part in acquiring their stardom, but they are only one element in a long assembly-line created by the celebrity industry – which will build them up or knock them down according to public taste or commercial demand.⁴⁹ A contradictory impression of celebrities being exceptional on one level, but at the same time 'down to earth', operates during this process, instilling celebrity with uniquely democratising qualities that encourage a flow of new applicants.⁵⁰ Elliott and Boyd see the essential paradox of celebrity being its ability to enthral, whilst simultaneously making us dismissive of those who are celebrated.⁵¹ Decisions about an individual's suitability to qualify for (or to retain) celebrity go to the very core of its ambivalence as a social attribute.⁵² In the final analysis however celebrity status is all about opinion: public opinion.

Celebrity status is often assessed by sufficiency of public acknowledgement. It is certainly a truism that before anything can become public it requires an audience. However

⁴⁷ Elaine McGirr, 'Nell Gwynn's Breasts...' in Jones & Joule, *Intimacy and Celebrity*, p.15.

⁴⁸ Driessens, 'Celebrity Capital', p.546.

⁴⁹ Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies*, p.5.

⁵⁰ Richard Dyer, *Stars* (London: BFI, 1979), p.35.

⁵¹ Elliott & Boyd, 'Celebrity and Contemporary Culture', p.5.

⁵² Jones & Joule, *Intimacy and Celebrity*, p.2.

the barometer upon which an individual's celebrity is gauged seems to insist upon 'mass' recognition that includes familiarity with their physical characteristics. Looking at Regency Britain the task will be to determine whether its public space and image media – which included satires, portraits, ceramic models, and a multitude of other commercially available luxuries and mementoes – can meet the criteria. The vexed question of what constitutes 'mass', in terms of both media and audiences, will be examined further on.

Lilti sees the development of an eighteenth-century cult of personality, with newspapers making more space for 'rumours about the personal life of those in the public eye'.⁵³ New biographies appeared 'no longer reserved for great historical figures, but concerned with all sorts of individuals whose lives were of interest to the reader'. This implies there was a healthy interest in celebrity, and that its natural habitat was within the public sphere.⁵⁴

Elliott and Boyd's contention that celebrities must trade in novelty to battle for public renown fits neatly into Adut's re-definition of the Habermasian public sphere as a 'reign of appearances' where subjects competed for attention.⁵⁵ The pursuit of fame in Regency times relied on spectacle, often involving attention-grabbing publicity, which could only have been made possible by the existence of an inclusive public sphere.

⁵³ Ibid, p.68.

⁵⁴ Ibid, pp.73-79.

⁵⁵ Elliott & Boyd, 'Celebrity and Contemporary Culture', p.5; Adut, *Reign of Appearances*, passim.

2. CELEBRITY INDUSTRY

Marshall's 'double hermeneutic' theory locates the intention of celebrity not in the individual but in the culture industry – and its reception in audiences.⁵⁶ Celebrity is often presented in Marxist terms; being a mere commodity that has been produced by an attendant celebrity industry.⁵⁷ Gamson, among others, sees celebrities as 'carriers of the central commodity [and] celebrity performers are themselves products'.⁵⁸ Driessens thinks these Marxist approaches underplay the importance of audiences because celebrity industries cannot automatically impose a celebrity onto the market.⁵⁹ He refers us to Alberoni (1972) who points out that industry may be able to manufacture and market celebrities – but the customers will decide who is bought, and who remains on the shelf.⁶⁰

Mole asserts that celebrity did not acquire an industry until 1800.⁶¹ If, as Turner says, the whole point of publicity and promotion is to 'turn advertising into news', the suggestion that celebrity first appeared without any commercial mechanisms however seems unlikely.⁶² As has been illustrated in my introduction, eighteenth-century consumer and popular culture provided ample opportunities for individual commodification. The industries which cropped up around celebrity were not necessarily connected with, or even supportive of their chosen hosts. Third-party exploitation of the celebrated could be financially rewarding; with satirical prints, court reports, unauthorised memoirs, and the publication

⁵⁶ Cited in Mole, *Byron's Romantic Celebrity*, p.3-4.

⁵⁷ Driessens, 'Celebrity Capital', p.547.

⁵⁸ Joshua Gamson, *Claims to Fame: Celebrity in Contemporary America* (USA: University of California, 1994), p.64; Mole, *Byron's Romantic Celebrity*, p.5; Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies*, passim.

⁵⁹ Driessens, 'Celebrity Capital', p.547.

⁶⁰ Cited in *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Mole, *Byron's Romantic Celebrity*, p.1.

⁶² Turner, *Understanding Celebrity*, p.10.

of gossip and scandal all made easier by persistently weak copyright laws. Lunardi's loss of jurisdiction over the presentation of his ballooning adventures is but one example. Benjamin Franklin was another whose celebrity was plundered after a rush of unofficially sanctioned 'portraits escaped the control of the model'.⁶³

3. MEDIA

Thomson equates mediated communication as 'intimacy at a distance' whereby famous people are presented to the public who were made up of all those interested in the same thing at the same moment.⁶⁴ When media is used in conjunction with celebrity studies it is often taken to mean 'mass' or 'central media' which Couldry defines as 'television, radio and the press... sometimes film and music... and increasingly the internet'.⁶⁵ Driessens reminds us that other types of media, such as portraiture, should not be excluded, especially when looking at historical celebrity.⁶⁶ Boorstin and Turner both argue that celebrity can only be created through 'mass media' intervention.⁶⁷ In Turner's case celebrities are only born at 'the point at which media interest in their activities is transferred from... their public role... to the details of their private lives'.⁶⁸ It is generally accepted that celebrity always requires some form of mediation. Mass media may have power to convey individuals to widespread notice, but the notion of a specific 'cut-off' point implies a set of rules that celebrity does not have. Besides, becoming famous does not automatically entail trading in one's private life; celebrities can maintain fully public personas.

⁶³ Lilti, *Invention of Celebrity*, p.64.

⁶⁴ Thompson, *Media and Modernity*, pp.88-104.

⁶⁵ Nick Couldry, *Media Rituals: A Critical Approach* (London: Routledge, 2005), pp.2-3.

⁶⁶ Driessens, 'Celebrity Capital', p.547.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p.548.

⁶⁸ Turner, *Understanding Celebrity*, p.8.

Cornell Sandvoss makes the interesting point that 'shared belonging' works equally well on limited fields of interest, and does not have to be industrial in scale.⁶⁹ The exact level of shared belonging necessary to permit celebrity is difficult to ascertain. According to Lilti, by the start of the Regency period 'all of the elements of celebrity' were in place.⁷⁰ Britain by this time certainly possessed 'mass' media of sufficient strength to cause 'a deepening of the public sphere, so that it was populated by political propaganda, the culture industry, and marketing'. This was when public opinion changed; and it 'was no longer a tribunal of criticism carrying with it the ideal of freedom, but a passive entity easily manipulated'.⁷¹

4. PUBLIC

Sue Collins says celebrities can be 'an audience-gathering mechanism' not just in their own terms, but also in regard to the commodities and brands that become attached to them.⁷² Turner states that 'if the public is interested in this person, they are a celebrity'.⁷³ However, he concedes that there is a tendency to underestimate 'the importance of the interests of those who consume celebrity'.⁷⁴ Even when it is considered, the public's role in celebrity culture is blighted by arguments about what constitutes an audience and the level of interest required to speak of celebrity. The most obvious way to sidestep this debate is to

⁶⁹ Cornell Sandvoss, *Fans: The Mirror of Consumption* (Cambridge: Polity, 2005), p.55.

⁷⁰ Lilti, *Celebrity Conference*, March 29th 2017.

⁷¹ Lilti, *Invention of Celebrity*, pp.8-9.

⁷² Sue Collins, 'Traversing Authenticities' in Kristina Riegert (editor) *Politicainment* (New York: Palgrave, 2007), p.183.

⁷³ Turner, *Understanding Celebrity*, p.9.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p.24.

accept that 'celebrity is like the world of which it is part', meaning we should focus solely on the impact of audience as it reflected upon Regency society.⁷⁵

As with the public sphere, celebrity audiences are too often deemed disconnected; behaving reactively to the diet served upon them by the media industry. Lilti highlights the importance of eighteenth-century newspapers to the mechanisms of celebrity because they allowed audiences 'to develop a relation of intimacy with celebrities they didn't know directly'.⁷⁶ Kerry Ferris' ideal of celebrity as the 'few known by the many' encapsulates the anonymity of audiences, but their remoteness should not contradict Tuite's vision of their 'productive creative genius'.⁷⁷ Ultimately the way to evaluate audience dynamic within celebrity culture may require adopting Thomas Mathiesen's suggestion of augmenting the Foucauldian theory of panopticism (the few watching the many) with a fresh understanding of 'synopticism' (the many watching the few).⁷⁸

Public opinion was an outlet for audience response during the Regency era. Public space provided multiple sites and platforms for encountering the famous. The insularity of society whilst Britain remained isolated from continental Europe heightened symbiosis between media industries and the audiences they served. Mole suggests that there was a national drive to assert British individuality as a response to French Revolution collectivity.⁷⁹ Ghislain McDayter detects 'a diseased and hysterical presence in the national body' as the driver for popular culture at this time.⁸⁰

⁷⁵ Elliott & Boyd, 'Celebrity and Contemporary Culture', p.5.

⁷⁶ Lilti, 'Rousseau & Celebrity', p.78.

⁷⁷ Cited in 'Celebrity Capital', p.548; Tuite, 'Tainted Love', p.79.

⁷⁸ Thomas Mathiesen, 'The Viewer Society' in *Theoretical Criminology* (Volume 1/2, 1997), pp.215-224.

⁷⁹ Mole, *Byron's Romantic Celebrity*, pp.14-15.

⁸⁰ McDayter, *Byromania and the birth of Celebrity Culture*, p.21.

In Eric Dampierre's words 'there could be no scandal without an audience, but the public participated in its formulation'.⁸¹ Audiences were a democratising force; free to choose their own heroes and villains, whilst simultaneously delivering reciprocal feedback regulating the size and duration of individual celebrity appearances. But the public should never be seen as one homogenous unit. As Lilti explains, their curiosity was 'not always admiring and rarely unanimous'. Audiences no longer judged the famous only on the basis of talent, but also according to 'their ability to capture and maintain curiosity'.⁸²

THE EVOLUTION OF CELEBRITY STUDIES

As early as 1957 C. Wright Mills isolated celebrity as a specific category of social standing, drawing upon Max Weber's theories on 'status' and 'charisma' as the means to address it.⁸³ This approach has been the bedrock for subsequent sociological-based celebrity studies.⁸⁴ Another often-used early reference has been Daniel Boorstin's much-quoted interpretation of celebrity as a 'person well known for their well-knownness', first aired in 1962. Boorstin's uneasiness about the displacement of genuine fame (traditionally generated through distinguished acts) by a modern form of falsely-derived recognition awarded by 'trivia of personality', has been influential in highlighting the negative impact of celebrity culture.⁸⁵ For example Anthony Elliott and Ross Boyd see celebrity hinging on the

⁸¹ Cited in Lilti, *Invention of Celebrity*, p.35.

⁸² Ibid, p.6.

⁸³ Elliott & Boyd, 'Celebrity and Contemporary Culture', p.6.

⁸⁴ See Rojek, *Celebrity*; Marshall, *Celebrity and Power*; Kerry Ferris, 'The Sociology of Celebrity' in *Sociology Compass* Volume 1 (10), 2007), pp.371-384; Murray Milner Jnr, 'Is Celebrity a New Kind of Star System?', in *Society* (Volume 47/5, Sept 2010), pp 379-387; Edward Berenson & Eva Giloi, *Constructing Charisma* (New York: Berghahn, 2010); & Lorraine York, *Reluctant Celebrity: Affect & Privilege in Contemporary Stardom* (Cham: Palgrave, 2018).

⁸⁵ Daniel Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-events in America* (New York: Atheneum, 1971), p.65.

ability of individuals to create space from which to project themselves to others; thereby creating a culture of inauthenticity in which 'celebrity [becomes] fame emptied of content, or artistry'.⁸⁶ Gloomier still, Todd Gitlin likens today's intensity of media obsession with celebrity culture to an incurable disease, posing a threat to Western democracy.⁸⁷ Interestingly, Adut sees the same potential in the public sphere which by 'subjecting all its contents to the gaze of anyone.... can undermine law and morality'.⁸⁸

For some theorists Boorstin's 'knee-jerk negativity [has] continued to haunt the field of celebrity studies'.⁸⁹ They find a counter-balance in the work of Dyer, whose publication of *Stars* (1979) refuses to accept that celebrity is morally destitute and without cultural value.⁹⁰ Focussing on the significance of screen icons both individually and as a product of their industry, Dyer expresses disinterest whether film stars were good or bad, and his work is now considered by many as foundational to creating the discipline of celebrity studies.⁹¹ Dyer attempted to collate the many critical and analytical paths adopted by theorists of stardom, encouraging a raft of similar publications which sought to conceptualise celebrity.⁹² Of these perhaps the most dominant paradigm has been put forth by Chris Rojek, which insists on its modernity.⁹³ For Rojek, celebrity could not exist without a cocktail of mass-circulation newspapers, TV, radio, and film.⁹⁴ David Giles also contends celebrity is

⁸⁶ Elliott & Boyd, 'Celebrity and Contemporary Culture', p.4.

⁸⁷ Todd Gitlin, *Media Unlimited* (New York, Metropolitan, 2002).

⁸⁸ Adut, *Reign of Appearances*, p.IX.

⁸⁹ Katja Lee and Lorraine York, *Celebrity Cultures in Canada* (Canada: Wilfred Laurier University, 2016), pp.6-7

⁹⁰ Dyer, *Stars* (London: BFI, 1979).

⁹¹ Elliott & Boyd, 'Celebrity and Contemporary Culture', p.5.

⁹² These include Rojek, *Celebrity*; Gamson, *Claims to Fame*; Marshall, *Celebrity and Power*; David Giles, *Illusions of Immortality: A Psychology of Fame & Celebrity* (London: Macmillan, 2000); Richard Shickel, *Intimate Strangers*; Graeme Turner, *Understanding Celebrity*; and van Krieken, *Celebrity Society*

⁹³ Turner, *Understanding Celebrity*, p.11.

⁹⁴ Rojek, *Celebrity*, p.16.

‘essentially a media production’ of 20th century vintage.⁹⁵ Joshua Gamson and Alexander Walker add weight to these claims via their respective works examining the importance of image recognition. Gamson thinks that photography offered unrestricted access to events written about in the press, significantly increasing focus upon the individual.⁹⁶ Walker advocates the film close-up because it excited new forms of desire.⁹⁷ Other celebrity theorists have put forward various pivotal moments thought to have spawned modern celebrity. For example, Richard De Cordova looks at the advent of film credits (1910) and Richard Schickel the signing of the first \$1M dollar film contract (1916).⁹⁸ Modern celebrity theorists cite the fact that by 1922 over half the content of popular US magazines was devoted to the entertainment industry; being a four-fold increase on the previous decade.⁹⁹ Whilst this statistic indicates a marked acceleration in the growth of celebrity culture, it could also be skewed by the transformation from global war into a peacetime economy. Writing in 2013 Graeme Turner concluded that ‘celebrity is historically linked to the spread of mass media’ but could only have been made possible after the invention of public relations and the growth of publicity industries at the turn of the twentieth century.¹⁰⁰

Prior to 2005 celebrity studies received scant attention from historians.¹⁰¹ That is not to say that sociology or media experts completely ignored earlier precedents. As early as 1944 Frankfurt School philosophers Max Horkheimer and Theodore Adorno argued that

⁹⁵ Giles, *Illusions of Immortality*, pp.3-4; Ellis Cashmore claims that celebrity ‘is not an extension of historical forms’ and that the today’s formula for celebrity is less than twenty years old, see Cashmore, ‘Celebrity in the Twenty-First Century Imagination in *Cultural & Social History* (Volume 8/3, 2011), pp.405-413

⁹⁶ Gamson, *Claims to Fame*, p.21.

⁹⁷ Alexander Walker, *Stardom: The Hollywood Phenomenon* (London: Routledge, 1970).

⁹⁸ Richard De Cordova, *Picture Personalities: The Emergence of the Star System in America* (University of Illinois, 2001); & Schickel, *Intimate Strangers*.

⁹⁹ Boorstin, *The Image*, p.59.

¹⁰⁰ Turner, *Understanding Celebrity*, p.10.

¹⁰¹ Elliott & Boyd, ‘Celebrity and Contemporary Culture’, p.5, Lilti, *Invention of Celebrity*, pp.2-3 says that ‘historians hesitate to take an interest in it’.

reasoned thought was emancipated in the Enlightenment period, enabling the people to detach themselves from tradition and to create their own cultural gods through the medium of celebrity.¹⁰² Both Boorstin (1962) and Braudy (1986) have provided useful historical context, citing examples from contemporary literature to illustrate how traditional notions of fame were perceived as threatened by the arrival of a less authentic model.¹⁰³ Whilst these works served a useful comparative purpose, there was little indication that unveiling early prototypes for celebrity culture could lead to the construction of a grand narrative. However, there was a growing feeling that the range of celebrity studies was too narrow, with publications such as by Su Holmes and Matt Redmond (2006) making a distinct move away from its sociological boundaries.¹⁰⁴

When historians finally turned their attention to analysing celebrity, it was more due to advances in the wider field of eighteenth century studies, than any coordinated campaign to overturn celebrity's prevailing 20th century pedigree. As stated in my introduction, works by Plumb (1977), McKendrick (1984), Brewer & Porter (1994), and Trentmann (2012) have successfully transformed material culture ('consumption') into a separate field of historical study.¹⁰⁵ This in turn stimulated others to interrogate consumer-related activities in conjunction with ideas about luxury, the role of the press, politics, public opinion and popular culture.¹⁰⁶ Given that the consumption of goods and the manufacture of celebrity

¹⁰² Theodore Adorno & Max Horkheimer (translated by John Cumming), *Dialectics of Enlightenment* (London: Verso, 1979).

¹⁰³ Cited in Elliott & Boyd 'Celebrity and Contemporary Culture', p.7; Braudy, *Frenzy of Renown*, passim

¹⁰⁴ Su Holmes & Matt Redmond (Eds.), *Framing Celebrity: New Directions in Celebrity Culture* (London: Routledge, 2006).

¹⁰⁵ See Introduction pp.12-13; plus JH Plumb, *The Growth of Political Stability in England 1675-1725* (London: Macmillan, 1977) which states that consumer society was impossible without a settled ruling-class.

¹⁰⁶ Examples of eighteenth-century studies of material culture include: Charles Saumarez-Smith, *The Rise Of Design: Design and Domestic Interior in Eighteenth-century England* (London: Pimlico, 2000); John Styles, *The Dress of the People: Everyday Fashion in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Yale, 2008); Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009); Amanda Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors:*

seem to pivot upon a process of commodification; transforming both individuals and objects into saleable items, the delay in developing a parallel history of celebrity requires some explanation.

One possible reason may be that historians feared being labelled anachronistic if adopting the language of 'celebrity' a century or so before it was crystallised. Tillyard, who famously declared that 'celebrity was born at the moment private life became a tradeable public commodity', could not overlook its lack of extant terminology because 'in the absence of that noun lies the difference between our own culture of celebrity and that which was created in the eighteenth century'.¹⁰⁷ Fred Inglis, worthy of praise for being the first to write a dedicated 'history of celebrity' (2010), is equally reticent about linking 'the first formula for celebrity' to later sophisticated versions.¹⁰⁸

Another factor holding back historical analysis has been the erroneous claim that eighteenth-century celebrity was a short-lived episode. Tillyard says that after 1787, the 'culture of celebrity, like a brilliant hot-house flower, was beginning to fade'.¹⁰⁹ In her view, with the exception of a select few popular literary figures and military heroes, including Lord Nelson and the Duke of Wellington, celebrity died off until the 1850s.¹¹⁰ Inglis also portrays celebrity culture reaching 'a brief crest' before its fundamental decline.¹¹¹ This supposedly occurred during the 1790s after the first rash of celebrity characters (such as Joshua Reynolds) passed away. These individuals shared the common trait of being talented, thus

At Home in Georgian England (London: Yale, 2010); Greig, *The Beau Monde*; and Gatrell, *First Bohemians*
¹⁰⁷ Tillyard, 'Celebrity in 18th-Century London' in *History Today* (Volume 55/6, June 2005); Marshall *Celebrity & Power*, p.4; Lilti, *Invention of Celebrity*, p.8.

¹⁰⁸ Inglis, *Celebrity*, p.52.

¹⁰⁹ Tillyard, *Paths of Glory*, p.69.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, & Inglis, *Celebrity*, pp.58-71 also confers celebrity status to the Prince of Wales and Lord Byron.

¹¹¹ Inglis, *Celebrity*, p.58.

uniquely equipped to purposefully strive for fame and public notice.¹¹² Inglis sees the 1790s as an end-point for the first of three distinct phases in celebrity's history. It was born amongst the artistic elite in 1750s London; developed via the burgeoning fashion scene in 1850s Paris; and reached maturity by the 1890s through the world of mass-circulated newspapers in major American cities.¹¹³ This timetable fatally neglects the fact that a multitude of fashionable pastimes plus a thriving print and image media industry were *already on-tap* for large swathes of Britain's population by 1800. By underplaying the importance of the Habermasian public sphere in this way Inglis invokes the broader ongoing debate about the quantum of media and audience necessary for 'genuine' celebrity to exist.¹¹⁴ Too often there has been unwillingness to value the impact of print and visual media in its own cultural context; meaning that this issue remains a major stumbling block preventing consensus about celebrity's eighteenth-century heritage.¹¹⁵ Notwithstanding this, there is virtually no evidence to support the notion that celebrity culture hibernated, therefore entirely by-passing the Regency period. On the contrary, the early 1790s were febrile post-Revolutionary times when political and publishing censorship made it commercially exiguous for newspapers to intensify their focus on personalities. Gossip columns, such as 'Mirror of Fashion' in the *Morning Chronicle*, regularly published interesting or amusing *bon mots* about well-known people. Elsewhere, periodicals, satires and pamphlets found an endless supply of characters suitable for promotion and publicity. If anything, the Regency period was a golden age when people wanted to read the news, and also yearned to be *in* the news.

¹¹² Ibid, p56.

¹¹³ Ibid, pp.9-10.

¹¹⁴ Turner, *Understanding Celebrity*, p.10.

¹¹⁵ Jones and Joule, *Intimacy and Celebrity*, pp.1-2 says that the arguments about numbers makes the eighteenth-century 'both a pivotal juncture and a disputed terrain within narratives of celebrity's ascent'.

In 2007 Tom Mole adopted Dyer's pioneering star studies template by presenting a case study of Lord Byron which he set down as a marker for 'a history that is yet to be written of a phenomenon that has yet to be adequately theorised'¹¹⁶ He argued that during the Romantic period 'celebrity came to be understood as a distinctly inferior variety of fame'.¹¹⁷ 'Romanticism' is a tricky topic to define concisely, but is thought to have been an intellectually-driven movement emerging in Europe between 1770-1850 espousing the importance of emotion, aesthetic pleasure, and the celebration of heroic individualism; whose subjects could be drawn from antiquity or (importantly) from within contemporary fashionable, literary or artistic circles.¹¹⁸

Mole's annexation of celebrity for Romanticism belies its functionality across any type of public sphere appearance capable of attracting mass-scale attention. Nevertheless he convincingly dragged celebrity into the very heart of eighteenth-century popular culture, albeit as a very contentious ethical currency. It is certainly true that many observers believed celebrity was out of step with prevailing moral standards, rivalling Lord Chesterfield's civility code or the acting profession as symbols of falsity in public life. *The Rambler* said men who 'too soon aspire to celebrity... waste their days in vice and... perish by childish vanity'.¹¹⁹ *The Centinel* felt it encouraged envy and 'the poison of malevolence [for] the celebrity of one writer draws after it the abuse and aspersion of a thousand'.¹²⁰ The

¹¹⁶ Mole, *Byron's Romantic Celebrity*, preface.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Carmen Casaliggi & Portia Fermanis, *Romanticism: A Literary and Cultural History* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), pp.1-12.

¹¹⁹ *The Rambler*, April 9th 1751.

¹²⁰ *The Centinel*, January 27th 1757.

Morning Chronicle begrudged the apparent inversion of principles of fame because ‘the celebrity of military martyrs commences from their failures’.¹²¹

By the 1790s celebrity culture had the power to mobilise the public; calling individuals to account, setting new trends, challenging established practices, and possibly even acting (as theorised by Rojek et al) as a surrogate religion.¹²² During this decade the vast majority of newspaper editorials mentioning ‘the public opinion’ associated it with civil insurgency.¹²³ With regard to France, public opinion had been allowed to go too far, by inciting the Reign of Terror, and could only be ‘curbed by the use of armed forces’. At home public opinion was respectfully flattered - feted as the moderating ‘tribunal’ essential for maintaining Pitt’s war-time Government.¹²⁴ Public opinion was therefore exposed to the same forces of establishment-based suspicion and popular democratic enthusiasm that characterised celebrity culture. Given that celebrity and public opinion operated simultaneously within the public sphere, it seems reasonable to deduce that celebrity culture (through its audience-gathering abilities) did help shape public responses to popular, political and social concerns.

Over the past decade a great many biographers of eighteenth-century persons have consolidated Mole’s initiative by analysing their subject’s celebrity status. Consequently, the landscape of this period has become ever-more crowded by (sometimes dubious) claims for specific celebrity acknowledgement.¹²⁵ This has had the dual effect of painting a lively if

¹²¹ *Morning Chronicle*, February 8th 1780.

¹²² Rojek, *Celebrity; Giles, Illusions of Immortality*; Peter Ward *Gods Behaving Badly: Media, Religion and Celebrity Culture* (Texas: Baylor, 2011).

¹²³ British Library Newspapers search 1790-1800 reveals 63 editorials, 58 of which correlate public opinion with the threat of civil unrest.

¹²⁴ *The Times*, March 14th & September 10th 1795, September 24th 1797.

¹²⁵ For a list of these publications see introduction, footnote 16.

disparate picture of early-modern celebrity; and of encouraging some celebrity theorists to reconsider their positions. In 2013, when Rojek wrote 'the question of celebrity lends itself urgently and irresistibly to inter-disciplinary, mixed methods' this was in part an acknowledgement that the historiography of celebrity was still up for grabs.¹²⁶

Lilti's *Invention of Celebrity* (2015, first published in English in 2017) is the most important recent academic addition to the field of celebrity studies. Relying on a collection of biographic studies and a re-appraisal of the role of Habermasian public sphere, Lilti consciously avoids writing celebrity's history. Instead he states 'that the phenomena that are considered to be the result of recent technological and cultural revolutions... have roots that were sown two centuries before the invention of television, and were abundantly thought about, analysed, discussed'. Like Driessens, Lilti wants celebrity to be constructed as an analytical tool capable of designating and qualifying certain forms of *notoriety* (my italics).¹²⁷

The Invention of Celebrity has already become a watershed in the direction of celebrity studies. Lilti has not written celebrity's life-story, but he has completed its opening act. The culture of celebrity has been critically re-positioned making it impossible to ignore when considering the rise of public opinion. Celebrity is portrayed to be the product of a media revolution that democratised availability of literature and images, feeding off a growing taste for information on private lives. Lilti sees these new forms of 'publicity' as the catalyst for rational debate, extending past the Habermasian model of a politically-dominated public sphere, because it stimulated salacious public curiosity. The public sphere became a meeting-place for celebrities and their audiences, enabling the formation of para-

¹²⁶ Chris Rojek, 'Human Configurations' in *Celebrity Studies* (Volume 2/2, July 2013), p.1.

¹²⁷ Lilti, *Invention of Celebrity*, p.271 –See section below on 'Scandalous Celebrity'.

social relationships; i.e. the public encountering strangers on an intimate yet remote basis.¹²⁸ The glare of publicity subjected celebrities to a public reckoning, attracting supporters or critics alike; compelling them to forfeit control of their image.

Lilti's conclusions offer two avenues for future research; firstly the creation of an originating template for celebrity which can be drawn forward to construct a comprehensive timeline which will not omit time periods (such as has been suggested for the Regency era). For the first time we may learn something by looking at celebrity from the past forwards, rather than vice-versa. This may help overcome Sharon Marcus' warning that technological advances and the speed of change far too often invoke a 'radical disjuncture in the historical trajectory of celebrity'.¹²⁹ The astonishing growth of social media since the turn of this century has seen the advent of what Turner terms 'D-I-Y celebrities' who can create and maintain their publics without the requirement of traditional celebrity industry structures; making it increasingly obvious that celebrity has always undergone (and survived) radical changes without ever disappearing from sight.¹³⁰ Like Boyd & Elliott, Lilti appreciates that celebrity is 'unfinishable'. Therefore the priority should be to discover what insights the past and present can offer each other towards a greater understanding of celebrity culture.

The second avenue for future research arises from Lilti's re-positioning of celebrity in eighteenth-century Britain. This enables us to approach the public sphere on Adut's terms; as that of a 'reign of appearances' where public opinion was not only used for politics, but

¹²⁸ Ibid, pp.50-85.

¹²⁹ Cited in Elliott & Boyd, 'Celebrity and Contemporary Culture', p.5.

¹³⁰ Turner, *Understanding Celebrity*, pp.60-72.

also served and was serviced by a celebrity industry that could create spectacle, enabling individuals to both produce and themselves become commodities.

This study offers to provide a link between eighteenth-century and modern celebrity by bridging the gap in time and technology that exists between them. My examination of celebrity during the Regency period will not claim that it replicates the cultural phenomenon we encounter today – because if we have learned anything about celebrity it is that it is ‘unfinishable’ and always changing. The real task is to uncover the role played by celebrity culture and how it affected wider society. Vickery shows that public events happened in the moment, occurring in tandem with new forms of public representation.¹³¹ Only by appreciating its immediate impact; by looking at celebrity in its own time not retrospectively, can worthwhile comparisons be drawn.

SCANDALOUS CELEBRITY

Although Driessens concludes that ‘celebrity can be a means of power in many fields’ he excludes its negative connotations, such as notoriety, when constructing his ‘celebrity capital’.¹³² It seems a strange contradiction that celebrity studies can be so consumed by unfavourable calculations of its social value, whilst at the same time rejecting bad celebrity.¹³³ Tuite counters this tendency by accepting that scandal and notoriety are ‘primary features of celebrity as distinct from fame’. She contends the celebrity industry does not solely rely on positive publicity; in economic terms publicity can always turn ‘bad

¹³¹ Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, p.27.

¹³² Driessens, ‘Celebrity Capital’, pp.546-549.

¹³³ Turner, *Understanding Celebrity*, pp.26-28.

fame' into 'good fame'¹³⁴ Mole concurs that scandal should not be problematic for celebrity because transgressive behaviour can be 'almost instantly reclaimed and made to function in its service'.¹³⁵

Anthropological studies have found that scandal has an important function in analogous societies in the sense that it can reinforce the status quo, bringing the majority together, often at the expense of the protagonist.¹³⁶ As Henry Fielding once wrote 'the morals of the people depend... entirely on their publick diversions'.¹³⁷ The eighteenth-century public, liberated by Enlightenment ideals, looked for exemplars amidst the public sphere subjects upon which they focussed their attention. This search for moral guidance in many ways enabled scandal to accelerate the social impact of celebrity. For example Richard Brinsley Sheridan's popular play *The School for Scandal* (1777) highlighted the ways in which the press was able to spread scurrilous gossip, leaving audiences with 'no suspicion whence they came'.¹³⁸ Becoming notorious did not signal the expiration of celebrity. It was certainly possible that public exposure could enable a person to emerge from a scandal 'dishonoured and greater than ever'.¹³⁹ For example Caroline of Brunswick's adulterous behaviour after her separation from the Prince of Wales (1800-1820) made her extremely popular, and she was adopted by the people as a symbol of protest against state oppression.

Scandal was also useful as a mechanism of state control, superseding the rituals of public punishment. Widely disseminated celebrity-related scandals could be presented as

¹³⁴ Tuite, 'Tainted Love', p.78.

¹³⁵ Mole, *Byron's Romantic Celebrity*, p.115.

¹³⁶ Lilti, *Invention of Celebrity*, p.35.

¹³⁷ Henry Fielding, *The Works of Henry Fielding, Volume 4* (London; Murray, 1783), p.171.

¹³⁸ Michael Cordner (Ed.), *Richard Brinsley Sheridan The School for Scandal & Other Plays*, (Oxford University Press, 2008), p.210. Quote is from Act 1, Scene 1.

¹³⁹ Lilti, *Invention of Celebrity*, p.36.

cautionary tales for the purpose of educating the public about the consequences of dishonour.¹⁴⁰ Scobie says that eighteenth-century society was convinced that it was enduring 'an exceptional age of deception' and that this belief informed perceptions of celebrity.¹⁴¹

The same righteous principles governed the function of gossip as a regulator of acceptable standards of behaviour. Joke Hermes' study of women's gossip magazines (1995) found that the publication of personal or private information enables readers 'to live in a larger world'. 'Serious gossip' using a 'repertoire of melodrama' allows a reader to learn about themselves.¹⁴² In Regency times there were considerable risks when 'daring to rise above other people'.¹⁴³ Scandal could invoke a wide range of response: empathy from those experiencing similar private dilemmas; collective rage and condemnation; or lead to public derision. Whatever its ultimate outcome there were clear commercial benefits from providing audiences with dramatic or titillating information about celebrities.

Adut contends that attention from others is 'profitable, yet scarce, and subject to competition'. The pursuit of notice is not just about conveying ideas, but at least equally the acquisition of fame.¹⁴⁴ Both Lilti and Adut consider scandal to be a 'quintessentially public event'. It is normally episodic in nature, but will only exist as long as there is public interest.¹⁴⁵ Within the public sphere scandals can be very potent; ensuring that 'norms are

¹⁴⁰ Elliott & Boyd, 'Celebrity and Contemporary Culture', p.10.

¹⁴¹ Ruth Scobie, 'Foote, Fox and the Mysterious Mrs Grieve: Print, Celebrity and Imposture' in Jones & Joule, *Intimacy & Celebrity*, p.253.

¹⁴² Joke Hermes, *Reading Women's Magazines: An Analysis of Everyday Media Use* (Cambridge: Polity, 1995) pp.80-128.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Adut, *Reign of Appearances*, p.12.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid; and Lilti, *Invention of Celebrity*, p.278.

solidified, problematized, and transformed'.¹⁴⁶ Often scandals remain deeply personal, driven by self-interest on one side and audience voyeurism on the other; unlikely to involve civil or civic debate. However, on certain occasions their longevity can 'contaminate the public... discredit institutions [and] depress general morale'.¹⁴⁷ Adut rejects the conventional perspective that scandals symbolise the degradation of the public sphere, on the grounds that they can also give rise to social causes and encourage debate upon acceptable behavioural values.¹⁴⁸ Whenever scandal does become politicised, celebrity must bear heavily upon the direction of public opinion. Gatrell's observation that coffee-houses were locations for scandal as much as political conversation, locates celebrity culture at the very sites where the Habermasian public sphere is thought to have emerged.¹⁴⁹ If scandal and politics shared the same venues, then late eighteenth-century celebrity must be re-positioned before its true cultural impact can be measured.

In the BBC's *Age of the Do-Gooders* presenter Ian Hislop credits the Regency era for a 'moral revolution' whose impact was 'as great as the French or even the Industrial Revolution'.¹⁵⁰ In social terms the public had acquired what Jones and Joule term 'a radically new sense of itself... aware of its own credit [and] of that credit's limitations'. It is certainly true that the debate about acceptable codes of conduct in both private and public life was played out in the public sphere.

¹⁴⁶ Adut, *Reign of Appearances*, p.12.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Gatrell, *First Bohemians*, pp.93-95.

¹⁵⁰ First shown 29th November 2010.

Adut says that ‘politics being inevitably about appearances, no wonder scandal is integral to it’.¹⁵¹ If scandal and politics go hand-in-hand then celebrity culture exists at the very heart of the public sphere, capable of providing moral input to the formulation of public opinion.

On the basis that scandalous behaviour attracts greater public attention, selecting a notorious individual such as Long-Wellesley will prove fruitful to the task of unpacking Regency celebrity in the public sphere.

CASE STUDY: LONG-WELLESLEY

From an early age Long-Wellesley’s primary ambition was to acquire ‘celebrity’.¹⁵² He sought public notice in a variety of ways; playing on his name, background, sexual reputation, wealth, perception of manliness, political career, constant legal wrangling, and a multitude of official (and unofficial) published works. Though Tillyard says ‘rise, stardom, fall, and rise again’ is a twentieth century narrative, Long-Wellesley followed this pattern to the letter, succeeding, without having any discernible talent, in retaining his celebrity status for over three decades.¹⁵³ Although he is now largely forgotten, Long-Wellesley’s actions did have permanent repercussions. His hedonistic life helped to shape the landscape of modern east London, and instances of his outrageous conduct directly influenced important social and political reforms. Despite his awful reputation a generation of nineteenth-century poets and writers associated Long-Wellesley with celebrity. Riven with personal contradictions, Long-Wellesley’s values were out-dated: steeped in patronage, ancient codes of honour,

¹⁵¹ Adut, *Reign of Appearances*, p.83.

¹⁵² Long-Wellesley MS, B4-V4-L36 Letter from Mary Bagot, September 1808.

¹⁵³ Tillyard, *Paths of Glory*, p.61.

aristocratic largesse, he was not adverse to bullying, blackmail and bribery. But he was also an innovator who adroitly embraced print media, set fashionable trends, carried out his own adversarial litigation, and ultimately advocated for parliamentary reform. Above all Long-Wellesley was conscious of gathering an audience, and he always played to the crowd. That he chose to place so much of his private life in the public domain overcomes the fact that he has left no personal archive. My intention is to examine Long-Wellesley through the window he opened for public inspection— by considering his impact as a man famous in his own time, rather than reclaiming him from today’s perspective.¹⁵⁴

My personal interest in Long-Wellesley springs from the fact that I grew up in east London close to the site of Wanstead House, a magnificent and architecturally important Palladian mansion built by Colen Campbell around 1720.¹⁵⁵ Largely due to Long-Wellesley’s profligacy and mismanagement, Wanstead House was torn down in 1824. Its formal gardens and parkland became subject to a long-running legal dispute which was not finally resolved until 1880. ‘Wanstead Park,’ as it is now known, was created under the first piece of legislation in Britain to preserve land on behalf of the public; its lakes and walkways remain pretty much today as they were two centuries ago. In the mid-1960s Redbridge Council purchased approximately 1000 uncatalogued letters relating to Wanstead House spanning the years 1760-1860. Intrigued by the untimely loss of Wanstead House, I first began to transcribe and catalogue these letters in 2003. I soon found further correspondence in other collections, including the British Library and Essex Record Office. But it was only after visiting Newham Archives that a vast new resource came to light. In

¹⁵⁴ Fichtl, ‘Antique Parallels’, says that ‘the past is always referred to from the present perspective’.

¹⁵⁵ Colen Campbell’s *Vitruvius Britannicus*, (1717) in which Wanstead House features prominently, was the first English architectural book since Elizabethan times.

1928 the library paid an enthusiastic local curio-collector, Hiram Stead, the sum of £10 for some scrapbooks containing extraordinarily detailed newspaper reports about Wanstead House and in particular Long-Wellesley.¹⁵⁶ Given that the British Library lost a vast number of old provincial newspaper records during the Blitz, Hiram Stead's collection was unique – with snippets cut from long-defunct titles.

Over the course of my research a pattern began to emerge whereby ostensibly personal letters I had seen and transcribed were routinely published *verbatim* in the columns of contemporary newspapers. This also occurred when cross-referencing trial transcripts and books authored by Long-Wellesley. It was clear that Long-Wellesley (and others) had regularly supplied the press with information about his private life, creating a dialogue in the public sphere. Given that documents published were as likely to condemn Long-Wellesley as to praise him, the implication was that publicity was the weapon of choice in a battle to decide Long-Wellesley's reputation. The dramatization of Long-Wellesley's private life was public theatre, and his ability to scandalise fuelled a unique brand of celebrity recognition – forcing public opinion to examine and challenge existing boundaries of decency and honour.

Geraldine Roberts, my wife, often accompanied me to the archives as she was researching the life of Catherine Tylney-Long. This resulted in her book *The Angel and the Cad* (2015), which shows that Long-Wellesley's first wife Catherine was perhaps the greatest victim of his scandalous behaviour. Roberts' biography makes a convincing case for the Long-Wellesleys being Britain's first celebrity couple. But my approach will be thematic, aimed at evaluating Long-Wellesley as a commodified product, whose regular interactions

¹⁵⁶ Unless otherwise stated all references to Hiram Stead ('Stead') will be drawn from the larger volume of press cuttings.

with press and public can offer broader understanding of celebrity culture within Regency society.¹⁵⁷

CONCLUSION

This chapter has set out to re-position celebrity in the Habermasian public sphere by treating celebrity as a cultural apparatus and then identifying its components in eighteenth century Britain. It has traced the development of celebrity studies to shed light on why celebrity has been so long disregarded in the historiography of public opinion, and shown how recent publications have encouraged its re-assessment.

At the beginning of the Regency period the public sphere paid host to a visible, recognisable and utilisable celebrity industry that was available for individuals aspiring to public recognition. Scobie says this period witnessed ‘a new idea of fame – commodified, commercial, scandalous... bearing a striking resemblance to modern celebrity culture’.¹⁵⁸ When celebrity is treated as a form of capital along Driessens’ lines it becomes both a discursive effect and a commodity.¹⁵⁹ Fame-seeking individuals faced the same competitive pressures typifying any trading enterprise operating in a limited market-place. Would-be celebrities required significant visibility via the public sphere in order to command notice from public opinion. But celebrity in the public sphere was not a rarity because public opinion relied on the publicity of spectacle; which was as essential to popular culture and social cohesion as it was to political concerns. Adut’s theory of a public sphere that ‘cannot

¹⁵⁷ Geraldine Roberts, *The Angel & the Cad* (London: Macmillan, 2015), p.74 and passim.

¹⁵⁸ Ruth Scobie, *Celebrity Culture and the Myth of Oceania in Britain 1770-1823* (Suffolk: Boydell, 2019), cover.

¹⁵⁹ Andrew Wernick, *Promotional Culture: Advertising, Ideology and Symbolic Expression* (London: Sage, 1991).

but objectify anything that appears in it' suggests that celebrity should no longer be dismissed as irrelevant to the history of public opinion.¹⁶⁰

The following chapter provides a biography of Long-Wellesley to create a reference-point for subsequent themed chapters, which will examine how aspects of celebrity culture operated during Regency times.

¹⁶⁰ Adut, *Reign of Appearances*, p.X.

CHAPTER TWO

BIOGRAPHY OF WILLIAM LONG-WELLESLEY



A man's honour is 'paramount to all other considerations, and when publicly assailed demands a public defence'

William Long-Wellesley¹

He has this peculiar disposition of laying all his private transactions of whatever nature they may be before the public

Duke of Wellington²

¹ William Long-Wellesley, *A View of the Court of Chancery*, (London: Ridgeway, 1830), preface.

² Wellington Archive, Hartley Library, University of Southampton, 2/15/50.

William Pole-Tylney-Long-Wellesley (1788-1857) was one of the most widely recognised characters of the Regency period. His rollercoaster life played out like a primordial soap opera via satirical images, newspaper reports, books, pamphlets, and journals. Rojek considers 'the illusion of intimacy' as a key differential between celebrity and its 'pre-figurative' versions.³ Long-Wellesley thrived on the disclosure of personal information, and by doing so created spectacle that attracted and maintained public interest. His intimate revelations could be judged in Boorstin's terms as 'pseudo-events' because they were intended to propagate a public version of his private self.⁴

The constant airing of Long-Wellesley's personal affairs garnered him an attentive (though not necessarily appreciative) audience. When he was at his most arrogant, crowds pursued him through the streets baying for blood. Yet, on other occasions, when he appeared beaten down by his opponents, elements within the press and public rallied to his defence. His celebrity delivered a repertoire of drama upon which gossip thrived, and public opinion participated. The commodification of Long-Wellesley made him a highly visible exemplar for acceptable standards of behaviour in public and private life. His scandalous celebrity became politicised in the public sphere because his behaviour challenged the legitimacy of aristocratic hegemony upon codes of morality and respectability in civil society. But it also made him a cultural icon who influenced fashionable consumerism, and

³ Rojek, *Celebrity*, pp.17-19.

⁴ Boorstin, *The Image*, passim.

provided entertainment and titillation to the ranks of the reading public throughout Britain, and further afield.⁵

As early as 1811 the engravings of George Cruickshank emphasised Long-Wellesley's public reputation as a rake.⁶ Samuel Johnson's Dictionary (1755) defines a rake as 'a loose, disorderly, vicious, wild, gay, thoughtless fellow: a man addicted to pleasure'.⁷ The English rake, first thought to have appeared around 1660, was originally associated with cold-hearted womanisers; conceited, usually aristocratic men who were quick to seek redress in duelling.⁸ In art and literature rakishness was often the focus for moralistic tales.⁹ By the Regency period, largely thanks to Romantic ideals, the rake was portrayed as immoral rather than violent; combining sexual prowess, seduction and a passion for hedonistic living.¹⁰ Fergus Linnane argues that the Prince Regent and his set represented a last heyday for the rakes, before such behaviour was swept away by 'what later become known as Victorian values'.¹¹

Despite spending many years in the public eye, Long-Wellesley has received scant attention from historians.¹² In 1876 William Pitt Lennox reminisced about Long-Wellesley's sense of style in *Celebrities I Have Known*.¹³ But in the decades following his death the recollection of Long-Wellesley's dissolute conduct was clearly an anathema to Victorian

⁵ It was not unusual for Long-Wellesley's affairs to be published on the Continent, but they were also reported in America, South Africa and India.

⁶ See Chapter 3.

⁷ Johnson's *Dictionary* (1755).

⁸ Fergus Linnane, *The Lives of the English Rakes* (London: Portrait, 2006), p.1.

⁹ For example Hogarth's series of prints *A Rake's Progress* (1732-34).

¹⁰ Christopher Murray (Ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the Romantic Era, 1760-1850* (London: Fitzroy-Dearborn, 2004), p.889 cites John Polidari (1795-1821) as an example of the 'rake' being re-worked into a fatally attractive figure.

¹¹ Linnane, *English Rakes*, p.1.

¹² When Long-Wellesley's name does crop up it is usually in passing, typically a footnote in studies of the period.

¹³ William Pitt Lennox, *Celebrities I Have Known* Volume 1 (London: Hurst & Blackett, 1867), pp.305-306.

sensibilities. So much so that in 1899, when Octavia Barry published a memoir of Lady Victoria (Long-Wellesley's daughter), she avoided mentioning his misdemeanours by drawing 'a veil over facts too sad to dwell upon, and feelings too sacred to record'.¹⁴ Louis Melville's *Beaux of the Regency* (1908) devotes a chapter to Long-Wellesley, restricted to underlining his credentials as a Regency dandy.¹⁵ Most twentieth-century studies concerning Long-Wellesley relate to his role in the destruction of Wanstead House, for which he is probably best known today.¹⁶ Only in recent decades have historians begun to examine Long-Wellesley's character and public behaviour, usually within broader studies, uniformly pigeon-holing him as a 'black sheep' of the Wellesley family.¹⁷ In 2015 Roberts published the first detailed narrative of Long-Wellesley's life.¹⁸ However, the extent which Long-Wellesley pervaded the public sphere still remains unexplored, and his celebrity aura is un-measured. Viewing Long-Wellesley through the prism of public opinion and the press can help to demonstrate the inter-relationship of 'spectacle' (publicity) and audience reaction (opinion) in the public sphere during the Regency period.

BIRTH AND BACKGROUND

Long-Wellesley was born 'William Pole' in Hanover Square, London on 22nd June 1788. His father William Wesley-Pole was the second son of Garret Wesley, 1st Earl of Mornington (1735-1781), changing his name to Wesley-Pole after inheriting the estate of an

¹⁴ Octavia Barry, *The Lady Victoria Tylney Long Wellesley: A Memoir* (London: Skeffington, 1899), p.48.

¹⁵ Louis Melville, *Beaux of the Regency* (London: Hutchinson, 1908), pp.125-150.

¹⁶ See Wanstead House section of this chapter.

¹⁷ Elizabeth Longford, *Wellington: Pillar of State* (London: Harper and Row, 1972), Chapter 17; Tim Couzens, *Hand of Fate* (Wiltshire: ELSP, 2001), Chapter 4; & Christopher Sykes, *Black Sheep* (New York: Viking Press, 1982, Chapter 8. An ITV drama broadcast in 1985, entitled *Number 10* reconstructed Wellington's prime-ministership, and featured Long-Wellesley played by Gawn Grainger.

¹⁸ Roberts, *Angel and the Cad*.

uncle, William Pole of Ballyfin, in the Queen's County in 1778. Wesley-Pole left Eton aged 13 to join the Royal Navy, where he remained until his coming of age. Whilst working in an administrative capacity in London, Wesley-Pole met and married Katherine, twin-daughter of Admiral of the Fleet John Forbes (1714-1797) and Lady Mary Capell (1722-1782), 2nd daughter of the Earl of Essex. They had one son and three daughters: Mary (1786-1845) married Sir Charles Bagot and spent the majority of her life in diplomatic service; Priscilla (1793-1879) married John Fane, 11th Earl of Westmoreland, who was also a diplomat. Finally, Emily (1792-1881) married Lord Fitzroy Somerset, 1st Lord Raglan, military secretary to her uncle the Duke of Wellington.¹⁹ The birth of their only son coincided with Wesley-Pole's decision to relocate from Ballyfin to London, which he said was triggered by living an extravagant lifestyle.²⁰ He had grown tired of 'leading an idle life' which had placed him in debt, and saw an opportunity in the patronage of older brother Richard, who was a close friend and ally of Prime Minister William Pitt.²¹ When the family changed their surname to the more anglicised 'Wellesley' around 1790, Wesley-Pole followed suit.²²

The Wellesleys were an ancient family of Anglo-Irish stock, who were traditionalist Tories in outlook, placing law, order and loyalty to the Establishment above all other considerations. Like many of their contemporaries the Wellesleys rejected their political liberalism once the French Revolution produced a tangible threat to the status quo. The Wellesley brothers rose from comparative obscurity to the pinnacle of British society during the Regency period. Richard (1760-1842) was the oldest, making his name as Governor-

¹⁹ ODNB, Sir Charles Bagot, John Fane (11th Earl of Westmoreland) and Lord Raglan.

²⁰ Long-Wellesley MS, B4-V3-L24, February 2nd 1807.

²¹ R Thorne (editor), *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1790-1820*, Vol 5. (London: Secker, 1986), p.512.

²² Iris Butler, *The Eldest Brother: The Marquess Wellesley 1760-1842* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1972), p.35.

General of India between 1797 and 1805, where he advanced and consolidated the British Empire. William [Wellesley-Pole] (1763-1845) served at the Admiralty and as Secretary to Ireland, before being appointed Master of the Mint in Lord Liverpool's Cabinet from 1814 to 1823. Arthur (1769-1852), first Duke of Wellington, was an outstanding military commander. Beginning in India in 1797 and culminating at Waterloo in 1815, he never suffered a significant defeat. After the peace he played a major role at the Congress of Vienna, becoming Prime Minister 1828-1830, and for a short period in 1834. Henry (1773-1847) was a renowned diplomatist, and Gerald (1770-1848) became a chaplain to the Royal Household.²³ (See Family Tree).

Of these brothers, the Duke of Wellington is naturally best known. In 2002 a BBC survey ranked him the 15th Greatest Briton; just ahead of Margaret Thatcher, but six places behind his famous contemporary Lord Nelson.²⁴ There have been innumerable studies of Wellington's military career.²⁵ Extensive volumes of Wellington's letters and despatches have also been published.²⁶ Some historians have focussed on his later diplomatic and political careers.²⁷ Between 1969 and 1972 Elizabeth Longford published what was thought

²³ Not to be confused with Henry's son Gerald Valerian Wellesley (1808-1882), who became Queen Victoria's Chaplain.

²⁴ See http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/tv_and_radio/2208671.stm Report 21st August 2002, accessed May 12th 2019.

²⁵ For his campaigns in India 1797-1805, see P.E Roberts, *India under Wellesley* (London: Bell & Sons, 1929); Simon Miller, *Assaye 1803: Wellington's Bloodiest Battle* (London: Osprey, 2006); Jac Weller, *Wellington in India* (Barnsley: Greenhill, 1993). Notable studies of the Peninsular War Campaign includes Charles Esdaile, *The Peninsular War: A New History* (London: Penguin, 2003); & Stuart Reid, *Wellington's History of the Peninsular War: Battling Napoleon in Iberia 1808-1814* (London: Frontline, 2019); Nick Lipscombe, *Wellington's Eastern Front: The Campaign on the East Coast of Spain 1810-1814* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2016); For Waterloo it is hard to look beyond Jeremy Black, *Waterloo: A New History* (London: Icon, 2010).

²⁶ See Gurwood, J, *The Despatches of Field Marshal the Duke of Wellington during his various Campaigns*, (12 volumes - London, Murray, 1834-38) and *Wellington Supplementary Despatches*, (10 Volumes - London: Murray, 1871); and Charles Webster, 'Some Letters of the Duke of Wellington to his brother Wellesley-Pole' in *Camden Miscellany* Volume XVIII, (London: Camden, 1948).

²⁷ For example, S. Buchan, *The Sword of State: Wellington after Waterloo* (New York: Houghton, 1928); Edward Du Cann, *The Duke of Wellington: And His Political Career After Waterloo - The Caricaturists' View* (London: Antiques Collector's Club, 1999) which is an excellent visual study of

to be the definitive study of Wellington.²⁸ A familial connection granted Longford unprecedented access to private papers, from which she produced a comprehensive biography; which has become the cornerstone of most subsequent Wellington-related publications. In 2013 Lord Douro (now 9th Duke of Wellington) remarked that, ‘after Longford there could not possibly be anything new to say about Wellington’.²⁹ Yet the books kept coming since the bicentennial of Waterloo. Of these, the most ground-breaking is Rory Muir’s two-volume biography spanning Wellington’s military and political career, offering fresh insight into his innermost thoughts.³⁰

Iris Butler’s *Eldest Brother* studies Richard’s life, illuminating the shifting balance of power within the Wellesley family.³¹ Henry’s diary and correspondence was published in 1846.³² John Severn’s *Architects of Empire* (2007) attempts to embrace all five brothers without success because Gerald is scarcely mentioned and William (Wellesley-Pole) summarily dismissed as a ‘hanger-on’.³³ Severn concurs with many Regency historians, alongside as a number of contemporary observers, by depicting Wellesley-Pole as a hot-tempered excitable man, an inept politician, and insignificant in comparison to his brothers.³⁴ But there is ample evidence to prove that Wellesley-Pole was a kind, loyal and considerate man on a personal level, and a talented and capable administrator in public

Wellington’s treatment by the popular press.

²⁸ Elizabeth Longford, *Wellington: Years of the Sword* (London: Panther, 1971) and a year later.

²⁹ Private conversation, July 8th 2010.

³⁰ Rory Muir, *Wellington: The Path to Victory 1769-1814* (London: Yale, 2015) & *Wellington: Waterloo and the Fortunes of Peace 1814-1852* (London: Yale, 2015).

³¹ Butler, *The Eldest Brother*; See also H. Jenkins (Ed.), *The Wellesley Papers – Two Volumes* (London: Jenkins, 1914).

³² F.A Wellesley (Editor) *Henry Wellesley: Diary and Correspondence 1790-1846*, (London: Hutchinson, 1930).

³³ John Severn, *Architects of Empire: The Duke of Wellington and his Brothers* (Oklahoma: Norman, 2007).

³⁴ See for example Charles Webster, *The Foreign Policy of Castlereagh 1815-1823* (V2, London: Bell, 1925) p.16, which describes Wellesley-Pole as a ‘nonentity’. He is similarly dismissed by Butler and Longford in their respective biographies of Richard and Arthur Wellesley (see fns 22 & 28).

life.³⁵ These positive attributes have been forgotten largely because Wellesley-Pole shared his family's inability to harness the rising power of print media. His steadfast refusal to speak to the press resulted in a one-sided narrative of mainly negative, sometimes inaccurate and unfounded, reportage which became the basis upon which he was judged. Wellesley-Pole's obituary in *The Times* is considered one of the most brutal ever published

From an early period... he was by no means destined to fulfil so prominent a position in public life as his brothers... His spirit quailed before a crisis... At no time... did he display Parliamentary talents... [He] was simply angry- angry at all times with every person and about everything.; his sharp, shrill, loud voice grating on the ear... an undignified ineffective speaker, an indiscreet politician... advancing in years without improving in reputation.³⁶

This damning portrait forms the backbone of Wellesley-Pole's current ODNB entry, demonstrating the power of the press to make or break reputations.³⁷

Long-Wellesley's father and uncles were always deeply mistrustful of the press. William Cobbett was a particular thorn in their side, lambasting 'that damned infernal family' after a motion to impeach Richard Wellesley for corruption in March 1807, and delighting to see 'the Wellesley pride a little lowered' after Arthur faced censure for the Cintra Convention.³⁸ In Cobbett's view the Wellesley family epitomised Old Corruption.

³⁵ Greg Roberts, *The Forgotten Brother*, (unpublished Masters Dissertation, QMUL, 2009).

³⁶ *The Times*, February 24th 1845 – See also Harriet Bridgeman & Elizabeth Drury (Eds.), *The Last Word* (London: Deutsch, 1982), pp.43-44 which describes this obituary as 'unbridled invective against a harmless... member of a famous family'.

³⁷ ODNB, William Wellesley-Pole, unluckily still for Wellesley-Pole his biography is authored by John Severn.

³⁸ Herbert Maxwell (Ed.), *The Creevey Papers Volume 1* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), p.89; Wellesley, *Henry Wellesley's Correspondence*, p.46

Their self-serving sinecures and lofty positions cost the nation £23,767 annually, equivalent to the taxes paid by 72 parishes.³⁹

Despite their ineptitude in handling the press, both Richard and Arthur (Wellington) managed to sufficiently endear themselves in the hearts of the people, to avoid the level of disdain meted out to Wellesley-Pole. At crucial times Richard's fortunes took a downward spiral as a direct result of bad publicity, such as James Paull's accusations of corruption in 1806, which thwarted his hopes to succeed Pitt as Prime Minister. However, after the press instigated Richard's final political downfall in 1812, a process of rehabilitation led to him being portrayed in a gentler light.⁴⁰ Just weeks after labelling him 'utterly incapable of conceiving any political project wisely' the *Morning Chronicle* light-heartedly recounted the hijacking of Richard's carriage in the Strand by a mob of revellers who carried him triumphantly home 'amidst the applauses of a very large concourse'.⁴¹ Over the years a stream of *bon mots* attributed to Richard ensured he was laughed *with* as much as laughed at by the press.⁴²

Wellington's aversion to print and image media was legendary, but at least he understood that publicity was not always contrary to his own interests. Newspapers drummed up public support for the long and arduous Peninsular campaign (1807-1814), but also gave away his position and other vital military information to the enemy. Wellington complained that he could not succeed if 'those admirably useful institutions, the English

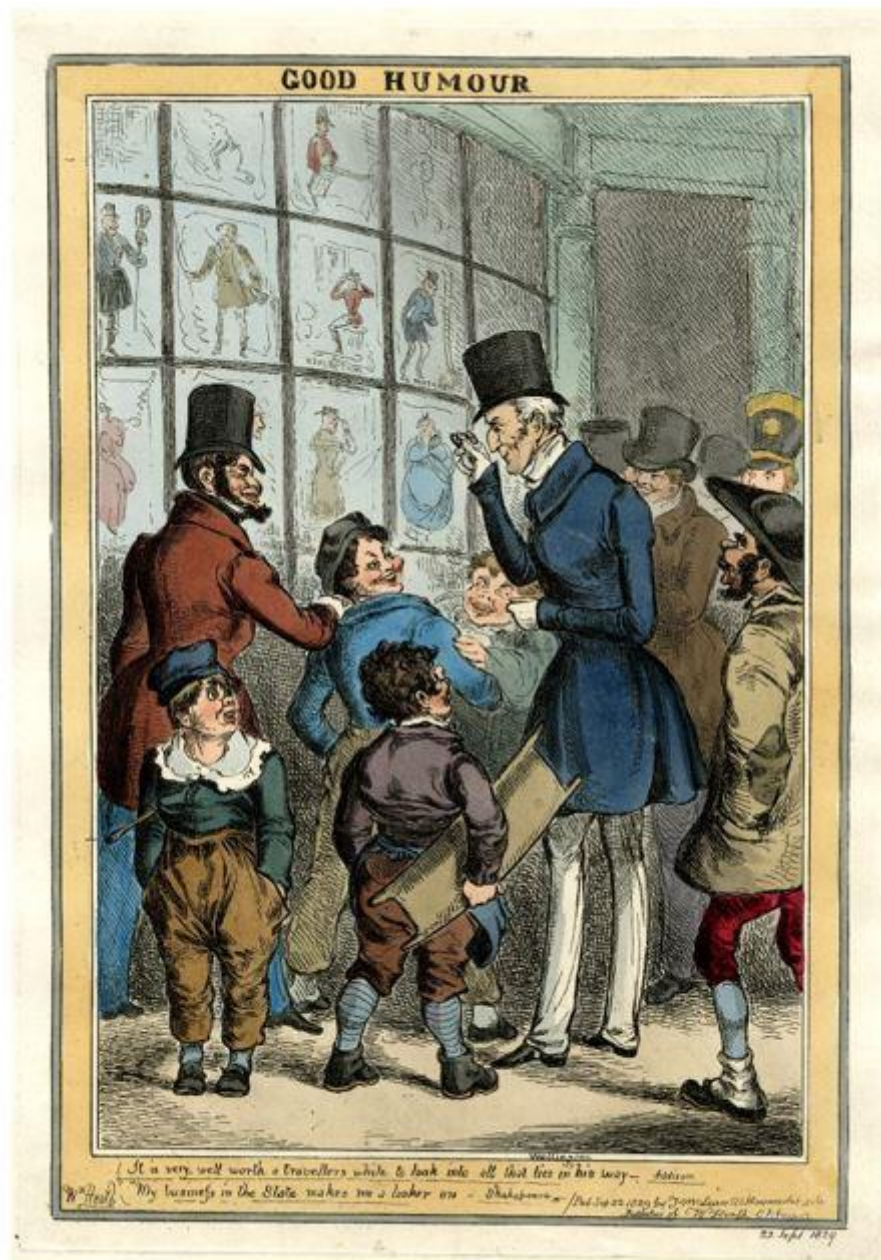
³⁹ *Weekly Register*, November 5th 1808.

⁴⁰ Richard's letter citing his reasons for wanting Perceval to resign was published simultaneously to the report of Perceval's assassination with the result that other Ministers refused to serve alongside him.

⁴¹ *Morning Chronicle*, June 1st and August 18th 1812.

⁴² Wilfred S Dowden (Ed.) *The Journal of Thomas Moore* (Volume 2), (University of Delaware, 1985), pp.211-212; Byron, who detested the Wellesleys, considered Richard to be an engaging and clever man

newspapers, should have given Bonaparte the alarm'.⁴³ Post-Waterloo, Wellington enjoyed public adulation despite declaring he would never have anything to say to 'the gentlemen of the press'.⁴⁴ In his view their blackguard editors [threaten our] 'reputation by their vulgar insinuations'.⁴⁵



Wellington seen examining his own caricatures in a print-shop window (1829)

⁴³ John Gurwood, *Wellington Supplementary Dispatches* VII, (London: Murray, 1871), p.348.

⁴⁴ John Croker, *The Croker Papers* (London: AMS Pr, 1957), p.397.

⁴⁵ Gurwood, *Wellington Supplementary Dispatches*, IX, p.467.

Such was Wellington's resistance to dialogue that for a short time during his premiership no newspaper was recognised as the mouthpiece of government, something which had not occurred in living memory.⁴⁶ As a result when he was forced to resign as Prime Minister in November 1830, the Duke openly acknowledged he had 'too much neglected the press'.⁴⁷ This admission signified Wellington's grudging acceptance that press influence over public opinion could not be shaken. As Lord Ellenborough observed '[Wellington] relies upon the support of 'respectable people' and despises the rabble, but the rabble read newspapers'.⁴⁸ The Duke reflected in October 1831

I have frequently lamented the influence of the Press... Their system is one of entire falsehood or of exaggeration and misrepresentation for the purpose of a particular political object. It cannot be denied that it would be very desirable to counteract this system. But I confess that I don't see my way clearly to the attainment of the object.⁴⁹

Wellington's views were hopelessly out of step because by this time the battle for a legitimate, independent and responsible press was already won and, when stamp duty on papers fell from *4d* to *1d* in 1836, mass public access to newspapers was complete.

The Wellesleys' bunker mentality towards the press might seem fatalistic today but it must be remembered that journalists at that time were generally regarded with disdain. It was considered an unworthy profession populated by hacks and demagogues, either in the

⁴⁶ Richard Gaunt, 'Wellington, Peel and the Conservative Party' in *Wellington Studies*, Volume 5 (Southampton: Hartley Institute, 2010) pp.262-85.

⁴⁷ Cited in Aspinall, *Politics and the Press*, p.261.

⁴⁸ Barker, *Newspapers*, p.26.

⁴⁹ Aspinall, *Politics and the Press*, pp.469-487.

pocket of politicians or engaged in agitating the people against their established rulers.⁵⁰

Like many of their peers the Wellesleys considered it demeaning to consort with a section of society believed to be immoral and unethical. They therefore chose to suppress where possible anything that could serve to undermine their position. The Wellesley brothers believed that recognition could only be achieved through toil. But Long-Wellesley was different from his father and uncles because he understood celebrity could be gained through the medium of publicity. He chose to embrace news media primarily because he realised it was a fast-track to personal recognition. He was the offspring of the Regency metropolitan environment; which regarded display as a crucial component in the manufacture of public identity. This inspired him to infiltrate the public sphere using all means at his disposal to achieve celebrity, including the appropriation of his family's hard-earned public renown.⁵¹

Before recounting his biography, it is useful to begin with a brief overview of Long-Wellesley's character. His brand of masculinity, class, relationship with his wife and children, and sense of Englishness combined to create the public persona through which his celebrity was consumed. During the Georgian era 'manliness' was considered a national trait exemplifying English mental strength and bodily vigour.⁵² John Tosh sees it as a cultural representation rather than a true reflection of masculine life.⁵³ However Joanne Begiato contends that manliness was fully embedded in society acting as 'a primary elevator of masculine identity and behaviour'.⁵⁴ Beyond its military connotations manliness typified and

⁵⁰ Boyce, Curran & Wingate, *Newspaper History*, Introduction.

⁵¹ Rendell, *Pursuit of Pleasure*, p.6 & p.26.

⁵² Langford, *Englishness*, p.72.

⁵³ John Tosh, 'What Should Historians do with Masculinity?' in *History Workshop*, (38/1994), p.181.

⁵⁴ Joanne Begiato, *Manliness in Britain 1760-1900* ((Manchester University Press, 2020), p.5.

popularised muscular physique to make it 'part of the market for male spectacle'.⁵⁵

Manliness gauged male performance within the work and domestic spheres, but was also instrumental in calling out masculine wickedness.⁵⁶ Mistreatment of women, effeminess, the pursuit of luxury, underhandedness in any form, immorality and vice were just some of the male behaviours deemed to be 'unmanly'. However, manliness was never solely reserved for the virtuous. Coarse language and habits in military men were often overlooked in deference to their manly professionalism. Likewise men of talent, like Lord Byron, became icons of manliness despite physical disabilities. Similarly unmanly men; such as criminals, gamblers, or scandalous celebrities; in possession of attractive masculine dispositions could overturn their ugliness of character through their ability to fascinate the public.

Long-Wellesley's masculinity was a curious blend of machismo and sensitivity. A keen sportsman, he was an accomplished dancer, orator and duellist. His softer side included an innovative sense of fashion, taste for luxury goods, and willingness to display emotion in the public sphere. Giving the superficial impression of being widely read, he often quoted Shakespeare and the Classics during normal conversation. But he also loved to swear and sought 'low company' despite treating those below him in the social scale contemptuously.⁵⁷ Long-Wellesley valued his honour above all, using this as a regular trope to justify or defend his reputation. Firmly believing his elite-class membership and 'public character' exempted him from adherence to standards of morality, Long-Wellesley employed these same rules of polite conduct to highlight shortcomings in others. Explaining an adulterous liaison, Long-Wellesley said he was 'a slave of passion from which I cannot

⁵⁵ Ibid, p.6.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ *The Age*, November 5th 1826.

emancipate myself'. But the woman with whom he intrigued was nothing more than 'lewd and abandoned' [having] given herself up to the grossest gratification'.⁵⁸ This masculine hypocrisy was far from unusual because it highlighted a sexual double standard which had been embedded in British society for centuries. According to Kate Barclay, by 1800 reportage of private affairs had turned readers into 'arbiters of public morality'.⁵⁹ However, their ability to judge men and women on an equal basis was impossible because their social constructs were vastly different.

Although feminist historians have made a convincing case for the presence of women in the political public sphere, there were very opportunities for female celebrity.⁶⁰ Outside the realm of theatre the arts women were expected to be reserved and discreet, hardly conducive to the production of spectacle. Even when women did achieve success, such as Jane Austen or Mary Shelley, polite convention obliged them to remain anonymous. This exclusion meant that women were distinctly disadvantaged when it came to scandal. Unlike men, whose carnal adventures were often treated with levity, promiscuous women faced social ostracisation. Whether a woman spoke up or remained silent, her modesty was surrendered ensuring her celebrity determined negativity. Male libertinism, on the other hand, was often considered a laudable testament to manly virility thereby avoiding public wrath. This ingrained inequality in the treatment of sexualised scandal whereby women were disgraced but men applauded enabled Long-Wellesley carve his reputation as a *roué*, acquiring a stud-like charisma that undoubtedly boosted his celebrity.

⁵⁸ *The Times*, January 25th 1827.

⁵⁹ Cited in Sally Holloway, *The Game of Love in Georgian England* (Oxford University Press, 2019), p.143.

⁶⁰ Ann Brooks, *Women, Politics and the Public Sphere* (Bristol University Press, 2019), pp.13-22.

Long-Wellesley was a womaniser but not a lover of women because he considered them inferior creatures. Having pronounced his new-born son and heir 'an ugly little wretch' Long-Wellesley was obsessed with protecting him from female influence.⁶¹ In order to undermine his wife, Long-Wellesley counselled his boys to curse, hunt and mingle with blackguards if they wanted 'to become Gentlemen of England'.⁶²

Son and heir to his father's Irish estates, Long-Wellesley was directly in line for the family earldom of Mornington. Raised expecting to be part of London's *beau monde*, Long-Wellesley rejected his father's ancestral roots. He always asserted, "I am an Englishman born and educated, - not an Irishman".⁶³ Long-Wellesley preferred his maternal Englishness, not setting foot in Ireland before he was twenty years old, and scarcely returning afterwards.⁶⁴ Long-Wellesley believed he was endowed with 'cool, honest [and] warm-hearted' English attributes, in contrast to the 'hot hair-brained' impulsiveness he associated with Irishmen.⁶⁵ However, as will be shown, Long-Wellesley's opinion of himself as an honest politician and 'mild and considerate' Englishman was largely delusional because his celebrity persona was steeped in the very personality traits and political malpractices he claimed to abhor.⁶⁶ The ideals underpinning Long-Wellesley's celebrity will be explored further over the course of this study.

⁶¹ Kent Archives, U1371 C9; Stead, p.108.

⁶² Stead, p.108.

⁶³ *An Observer, Kaleidoscopiana Wiltoniensia* [afterwards *KW*] (London: Brettell, 1818), pp.29-30.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, pp.326-331.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p.342

⁶⁶ Long-Wellesley MS B4-V3-L36

EDUCATION AND EARLY CAREER

In Long-Wellesley's formative years the Wellesley-Poles London and Blackheath households became important meeting places for distinguished royal and political visitors. Whilst Richard, Arthur and Henry were in India, Wellesley-Pole handled their domestic and political business, leaving the matter of gossip and social entertaining to his wife. 'Mrs Wellesley-Pole was reckoned one of the most clever and agreeable women of the day & therefore everything that was most distinguished in the society of London at that time proved very glad of being admitted to her house.'⁶⁷ Her hospitality did not just extend to political allies such as Pitt and Canning. Sheridan, who often ridiculed the Wellesleys in Parliament, was also a guest.⁶⁸ Another important connection at Blackheath was Caroline, Princess of Wales, who lived nearby after parting from her husband. When Princess Charlotte came to Blackheath the Wellesley-Pole girls were often sent for to play with her, laying the foundation for her constant intimacy with them up to her death.⁶⁹ The Wellesley-Pole children were comfortable mixing in the very highest circles because their social standing transcended their comparatively low status and wealth; and because they were the focal point for the Wellesleys at a time when the family were rapidly rising in profile.

Little is known about Long-Wellesley's early years. According to Priscilla, the girls 'had no regular governess – a French woman brought them up & taught them French & they had a tutor who came to read with them regularly & masters besides'.⁷⁰ Long-Wellesley's proficiency in French suggests that his education also began at home as there is no record of

⁶⁷ Kent Archives, F18.

⁶⁸ Despite their lifelong political differences Wellesley-Pole often invited fellow Anglo-Irishman Sheridan to his house and was a pall-bearer at his funeral.

⁶⁹ Kent Archives, F18.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

formal education elsewhere. Porter contends that many Georgian families avoided public school and university education, due to its 'diet of birch, boorishness, buggery and the bottle'.⁷¹ Wellesley-Pole, who spent just two years at Eton, may have thought the same. At the age of 11 his boy went to Hawkedon Parsonage near Bury St Edmunds, to be tutored by Reverend William Gilly (1763-1838). Whilst there Long-Wellesley declared his hatred for 'poring over books, & writing like a fat citizen's clerk' because he preferred learning fashionable pleasures from of the 'loungers of Bond Street and Rotten Row'.⁷²

As the oldest legitimate male in the next generation, expected to succeed to the Earldom of Mornington, Long-Wellesley held a privileged position within the Wellesley family.⁷³ His youth can be summarised as a clash between their constant entreaties for him to knuckle down and gain a reputation, and Long-Wellesley's intention to acquire celebrity via easier means. It is necessary to go into some detail here to illuminate how the lure of instant celebrity may have regulated Long-Wellesley's conduct, preventing him from capitalising on the career opportunities that passed his way.

In his youth Long-Wellesley was already displaying many of the characteristics of celebrity. He was obsessed about public appearance, which he cultivated through rabid consumerism. His account at Meyer and Mortimer in Savile Row reflects a preference for 'drab' coloured suits and coats, confirming that he adhered to the low-key dandy fashions of the day.⁷⁴ By the age of 16 he had already run up debts with a number of London's shopkeepers and tradesmen.⁷⁵ Wellesley-Pole was awakened to his son's extravagances when

⁷¹ Porter, *English Society*, p.163.

⁷² Long-Wellesley MS, B4-V4-L18, January 19th 1807.

⁷³ Kent Archives, F18.

⁷⁴ Taken from Meyer & Mortimer ledgers (Nov 25th 2013). See also Chapter 5 section on dandyism.

⁷⁵ Long-Wellesley MS, B4-V4-L18, January 19th 1807.

Chapter Two: Biography of Long-Wellesley

bailiffs appeared, compelling him to clear debts approaching £500. He subsequently prevailed upon family-friend Charles Arbuthnot to take the boy to Constantinople as his Private Secretary. Long-Wellesley's departure from Harwich on August 8th 1804 gave his parents hope that the responsibility of office would show their son a nobler path towards fame.

The year-long overland journey to Constantinople included a lengthy stopover in Vienna where Long-Wellesley learned an innovative new dance called the Waltz. This talent stood him in good stead when Waltzing became fashionable in London.⁷⁶



Portrait of Long-Wellesley, Vienna (1804)

⁷⁶ See Chapter 5 – Long-Wellesley was considered to be one of London's finest dancers (1811).

Arbuthnot considered Constantinople 'beautiful...but you can have no idea of the exterior wretchedness of the society', as there were so very few English people 'to see to discuss scandal'.⁷⁷ When his wife Marcia died in childbirth on 24th May 1806, Arbuthnot became 'inactive and at last broken down by the severest domestic affliction'.⁷⁸ Tendering his resignation Arbuthnot took to his bed, but his request to 'quit this odious country' was rejected by Britain's new government - the 'Ministry of All the Talents', which had been formed after Pitt's death in January.⁷⁹ As the only person on the spot, Long-Wellesley stepped into the vacuum and he was soon carrying on all political intercourse on behalf of Great Britain.⁸⁰

In July the London newspapers stated that the *de facto* British Ambassador had emphatically warned the Reis Effendi (Turkish Foreign Minister) that 'if the Porte did not, within a few days, come to a determination to renew its treaties with England, the English squadron would certainly make its appearance'.⁸¹ Because Long-Wellesley was in control acting on his own initiative Arbuthnot wrote to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Charles Fox recommending his promotion. In November 1807, 18-year-old Long-Wellesley was made Secretary to the Embassy.

Wellesley-Pole's congratulatory letter informed Long-Wellesley that his annual salary was £800, with an additional £300 for equipage and 300 ounces of plate 'made to any form you please'. An agent was appointed on the understanding that 'he will not allow you to

⁷⁷ BLM 48398, f.203 October 10th 1805.

⁷⁸ Aberdeen University, MS 3029/4.

⁷⁹ BLM 49398, f.221 May 5th 1806.

⁸⁰ John Cam Hobhouse, *Journey through Albania* (London: Murray, 1818), Addenda.

⁸¹ *Caledonian Mercury*, July 3rd 1806.

overdraw. You have seen the bad effects of that practice sufficiently to be aware of the necessity of avoiding it... You have, by your own exertions placed yourself in [a] distinguished situation'.⁸² Gilly told Long-Wellesley this was 'the first cornerstone to the pinnacle of fame ... I predicted your success, whenever you would turn off your companion, *idleness*'. This appointment would provide 'more substantial pleasure in one week, than... [a year's] indulgence of dash & fashion... If [Loungers] would speak honestly... they would gladly exchange their boasted voids... for the honour of one leaf of [your] laurels.'⁸³

Wellesley-Pole's delight at his son's advancement was tempered by successive incoming letters. The first contained a long list of clothes and uniform to be bought at London's finest establishments, which Long-Wellesley's equipage money 'would not by any means cover'.⁸⁴ In the second, Long-Wellesley announced he had received the gift of a snuff box worth 500 guineas, and wished to reciprocate. Wellesley-Pole was desperate to accentuate the positive when he replied

It is with extreme pain that I am forced to place any limits to the natural generosity of your temper, which I will not call extravagance for I am sure it deserves a better name... You say... you must, at your private expense, return a present of equal value. Surely nothing can be more ridiculous... [Confine] your expenses to the just bounds of propriety. The best present you can make us... is for a continuance of your *celebrity*.⁸⁵ (My italics)

⁸² Long-Wellesley MS, B4-V3-L2 October 6th 1806.

⁸³ Ibid, B4-V4-L18 January 19th 1807.

⁸⁴ Ibid, B4-V3-L24.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

On 21st January 1807 the British Embassy recorded that discussions between Long-Wellesley and the Reis Effendi were proceeding favourably. Yet within a week the British Fleet were sent into action against the Turks. Given that the British squadron numbered a mere 12 ships the outcome was inevitable. 'Immense stone shots, weighing from 300 to 800lb' were fired from the shore. The *Royal George* of 110 guns was nearly sunk by one shot, which carried away her cut-water, and another cut the main mast of the *Windsor Castle* nearly in two. The British retreated with heavy losses; 29 sailors were killed, and over 200 injured.⁸⁶ Arbuthnot and his suite were forced to escape from Constantinople aboard the *Endymion*. British merchant inhabitants of the city fled for their lives, leaving behind their homes and possessions.⁸⁷

The political effects of this event were short-lived. On 7th of July France signed the Treaty of Tilsit withdrawing her support for Turkey against Russia. It was therefore expedient for both Britain and Turkey to resume diplomatic relations, and the conflict between them was quickly forgotten. Arbuthnot lost his diplomatic career, but his reputation was salvaged thanks to a change of government. Incoming Foreign Secretary Canning awarded Arbuthnot a pension, and Long-Wellesley's role in the incident was suppressed from the subsequent enquiry.⁸⁸ This piece of political expediency owed much to Wellesley family dominance of the Duke of Portland's new ministry.⁸⁹ Long-Wellesley's complicity in this affair was not made public until 1818 when John Cam Hobhouse published an account, partly for the purpose of blackening Long-Wellesley's name during the Wiltshire

⁸⁶ *Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol 3, (1835) p.407.

⁸⁷ Greg Roberts, *The Forgotten War*, (unpublished paper) provides a full account of Long-Wellesley's role in the brief hostilities with Turkey.

⁸⁸ In fact it did not become public knowledge until 1818 (see Chapter 4).

⁸⁹ Butler, *Eldest Brother*, p373 identifies this as a high-point in power and influence for the Wellesley brothers

election, but also boosting sales of the second edition of his book *Journey Through Albania*.⁹⁰

Conceding that Long-Wellesley was unfit for diplomacy, Wellesley-Pole then sent his son to the Suffolk Regiment to train as an Ensign and 'keep him out of mischief'.⁹¹ Although Long-Wellesley was deemed 'very wild' he exuded rank and urban sophistication.⁹² His appearance impressed local tradesmen, who fell over themselves to offer credit and then deceived Long-Wellesley with exorbitant charges.⁹³ When Gilly visited in June 1808 he was aghast to discover that Long-Wellesley had amassed debts exceeding £1000.⁹⁴ 5 horses had been acquired, one of which was abandoned in the marshlands when Long-Wellesley took flight from his creditors. One local horse-dealer had supplied a 'rather shabby' curricule and innumerate saddles totalling £600 for which 'William by his honour has pledged to pay for by the 24th'.⁹⁵ Long-Wellesley was also employing 5 staff ranging from a professional soldier to a local prostitute - whom Gilly thought 'must have been artless in her profession [because] her bill might have been £50 instead of £9!' Gilly concluded: 'I see him standing on a dangerous precipice, from which he looks like a young prodigal, who must soon fall & be dashed to pieces'.⁹⁶

Wellesley-Pole was in a difficult situation. If he ignored these claims, Long-Wellesley faced the shame of debtor's prison. Yet if he cleared them, the problem could recur. After

⁹⁰ Hobhouse, *Journey Through Albania*, was originally published in 1813 but Hobhouse added an addenda discrediting Long-Wellesley in 1818. See Chapters 4 and 6.

⁹¹ George Elers, *Memoirs* (London: Heinmann, 1903), pp.247-8.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ Wilson, *Decency and Disorder*, pXXI says that outsiders frequently played on 'the snobbishness of a small town' and were 'received into the best company'.

⁹⁴ This would have been sufficient to keep 20 Suffolk families for a year.

⁹⁵ Long-Wellesley MS, B4-V4-L41.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

careful consideration Wellesley-Pole asked Gilly to strike deals with Long-Wellesley's creditors to avoid adverse publicity. The cost of keeping this quiet came to £700, which Gilly blamed on 'rapacious tradesmen taking in young men'.⁹⁷

A month later when Sir Arthur Wellesley was chosen to lead a British expeditionary force to Portugal, Long-Wellesley joined his uncle's staff as an aide-de-camp. This was a prestigious role for a novice, involving personal or secretarial assistance to the military leadership, and was clearly a huge family favour.⁹⁸ William saw action in a hard-fought victory at Rolica on 17th August 1808, and four days later participated in the defeat of a larger French force under General Junot at Vimeiro.

The day after Rolica Long-Wellesley scribbled a note confirming the action 'was most severe and cost many lives' owing his safety to Arthur being 'cool and collected' under fire.⁹⁹ Arthur in turn thought Long-Wellesley did 'very well'.¹⁰⁰ *The Courier* stated that Long-Wellesley

displayed a steadiness and a courage truly characteristic of the family. He seemed to feel the influences of the auspice under which he fought, and the hopes he had to fulfil.¹⁰¹

Arbuthnot wrote to Long-Wellesley: 'I trust and hope you have put your follies behind you' and Gilly exalted 'your late noble conduct has brought you from wretchedness to joy'. But this was another false dawn because relations between Arthur and Long-

⁹⁷ Ibid, B4-V4-L42.

⁹⁸ The two other aide-de-camps: Fitzroy Somerset and Lord Burghersh were later to become Long-Wellesley's brother-in-laws, marrying Emily and Priscilla respectively.

⁹⁹ Long-Wellesley MS, B4-V4-L10.

¹⁰⁰ Raglan MS, 19th August 1808.

¹⁰¹ *The Courier*, September 2nd 1808, see also *Daily Advertiser*, September 16th which goes further and praises William for his 'great abilities' in Constantinople!

Wellesley quickly deteriorated. Just days after a truce was signed at Cintra, Arthur wrote a long letter to Wellesley-Pole, castigating his errant nephew.¹⁰²

He is the most extraordinary person altogether... There is a mixture of steadiness and extreme levity, of sense & folly in his composition such as I have never met with... I see clearly that he is heartily tired of his new line of life, that he is dying to return to England, & that he will make any pretext to get away... He is lamentably ignorant and idle... He talks incessantly and I hear of his topics from the others which sometimes do not appear to have been judiciously chosen... I don't know what to recommend you do with him... I have an opportunity of talking to him seriously of his situation; for he is [absent] without Leave, which I must notice... In short I don't know what to say about him. To educate him would be a desideratum. If that can't be done... you should take him to your house in London; let him see good company, & the sense he has will probably teach him that he will never be on a upon a par with the rest of society till he shall have educated himself.¹⁰³

By coincidence Long-Wellesley simultaneously wrote home describing his situation. That letter has not survived but his sister Mary's reply sheds light upon his sentiments. He complained that Arthur treated him off-handedly, that he wasn't given enough to do, he was the object of mirth, and above all he thought he deserved more public recognition. Referring to these grievances Mary assured Long-Wellesley that Arthur 'is notoriously distant with all of his officers' and that if he showed favour it would 'make you hated and an

¹⁰² Having been superseded as commander of the British Army after the Battle of Vimeiro, Wellington was castigated for signing the subsequent truce which was far too lenient upon the defeated French army. Therefore his mood was already very dark when he wrote this letter about Long-Wellesley.

¹⁰³ Raglan MS, September 6th 1808.

object of jealousy'. She refuted Long-Wellesley's claims about being idle, and listed a number of newspaper reports where his contribution was suitably noticed.¹⁰⁴ To the charge of being ridiculed Mary bluntly stated 'You are just 20... many of those you are with have a right to take the piss out of you not only from superiority of years, but from rank, length of service & a thousand other things'. She concluded by laying out the bare facts of his situation

Many work hard for years without gaining the credit you have gained in one month... You are now with a high character, in the road to honour, if you choose it to celebrity, which is that you ambition most... Do you think you can be supposed to have any steadiness of character if you now give up the army as you have done other things... Persevere, my dear William, & take my word for it, you will reap the rewards.¹⁰⁵

Mary's acknowledgement of his over-riding wish for celebrity encapsulates the difference between Long-Wellesley and his older relatives. Long-Wellesley desired fame but rejected the Wellesleys' credo of patience and persistence required to attain it. For him the pathway to celebrity involved finding ways to accentuate his singularity, and using publicity to commodify himself for public consumption.

As soon as Long-Wellesley was returned to London, his father grasped another chance to send him abroad. This time he accompanied Richard Wellesley, who had accepted the role of Special Ambassador to the Spanish Junta at Cadiz. Long-Wellesley now found

¹⁰⁴ Perusal of these the newspapers in question shows Mary exaggerated about the amount of publicity William earned probably to keep him from doing anything rash.

¹⁰⁵ Long-Wellesley MS, B4-V4-L36.

himself alongside a family member who was also habitually profligate. Richard spent recklessly on art and other items during his sojourn in Spain.¹⁰⁶ Sir William Knighton recorded in his diary how captivating Richard could be at this time: 'It is impossible to serve under his direction without loving him'.¹⁰⁷

Long-Wellesley's stay in Spain was curtailed by Castlereagh and Canning's famous duel at Putney Heath - precipitating Richard's return to England to become Foreign Secretary in Perceval's ministry (October 1809). Prior to departure, Richard assured Wellesley-Pole, 'William is very diligent... you will find him improved. I have no doubt that he will listen to my advice. I shall bring him home with me'.¹⁰⁸

Despite his failures as a diplomat and soldier, Long-Wellesley returned to London with new social skills and an air of worldliness that set him apart from his contemporaries, few of whom had experienced Europe due to the war with Napoleon. Richard's decision to retain his nephew proved to be pivotal because Long-Wellesley gained access to the pinnacle of London society, enabling him to challenge a prince of the realm for the hand in marriage of the most sought-after heiress of a generation.

COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE TO CATHERINE TYLNEY-LONG

Whilst at the Foreign Office, Long-Wellesley frequently attended elite social gatherings, exhibiting his dancing prowess to enhance his dandy reputation.¹⁰⁹ On one such occasion he met wealthy heiress Catherine Tylney-Long, at whose palatial mansion in Wanstead Essex members of the exiled French royal family resided. Chapter 3 examines

¹⁰⁶ Butler, *Eldest Brother*, pp.409-18.

¹⁰⁷ Sir William Knighton, *Memoires*, Vol 1 (London: Bentley, 1838), p.127.

¹⁰⁸ Josceline Bagot, *Canning and His Friends* (London: Murray, 1909), p.338.

¹⁰⁹ Margaret Norris Cloake (Ed.), *A Persian at the Court of King George: 1809-10: The Journal of Mirza Abdul Hassan Khan* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1998), pp.235-236.

media representations of Catherine's search for a husband and Long-Wellesley's ultimate victory. Chapter 5 explores the role of dancing and duelling in the construction of Long-Wellesley's public persona at this time; and chapter 6 investigates the appropriation of their celebrity status by contemporary popular culture.

It is important to record that Long-Wellesley only became nationally famous after he latched onto the celebrity of Catherine Tylney-Long, who was one of the most talked about women of the era. Martin Postle has written about how Joshua Reynolds strengthened his celebrity by cultivating friendships with those who could 'contribute to the elevation of his own reputation and status'.¹¹⁰ In the same way Long-Wellesley used Catherine's fame as a stepping-stone towards achieving his own celebrity.

For Catherine, celebrity had become something of a burden placing a strain on her privacy.¹¹¹ When she agreed to marry Long-Wellesley, Catherine was exhausted by the glare of publicity which engulfed her; wishing to marry without ceremony and retire from public life. However, her plans clashed with Long-Wellesley's wish to become a celebrity icon. Hence, whilst lengthy legal negotiations continued to ring-fence Catherine's assets as much as possible from Long-Wellesley's reputation for profligacy, he persuaded her to transform their impending nuptials from a quiet affair into the society event of the decade.¹¹² *The Lancashire Gazette* enthused that the wedding 'created more fashionable conversation and conjecture than any marriage project that has been on the *tapis* for many years past'.¹¹³ The public were entertained by titbits of information in the weeks preceding the wedding.

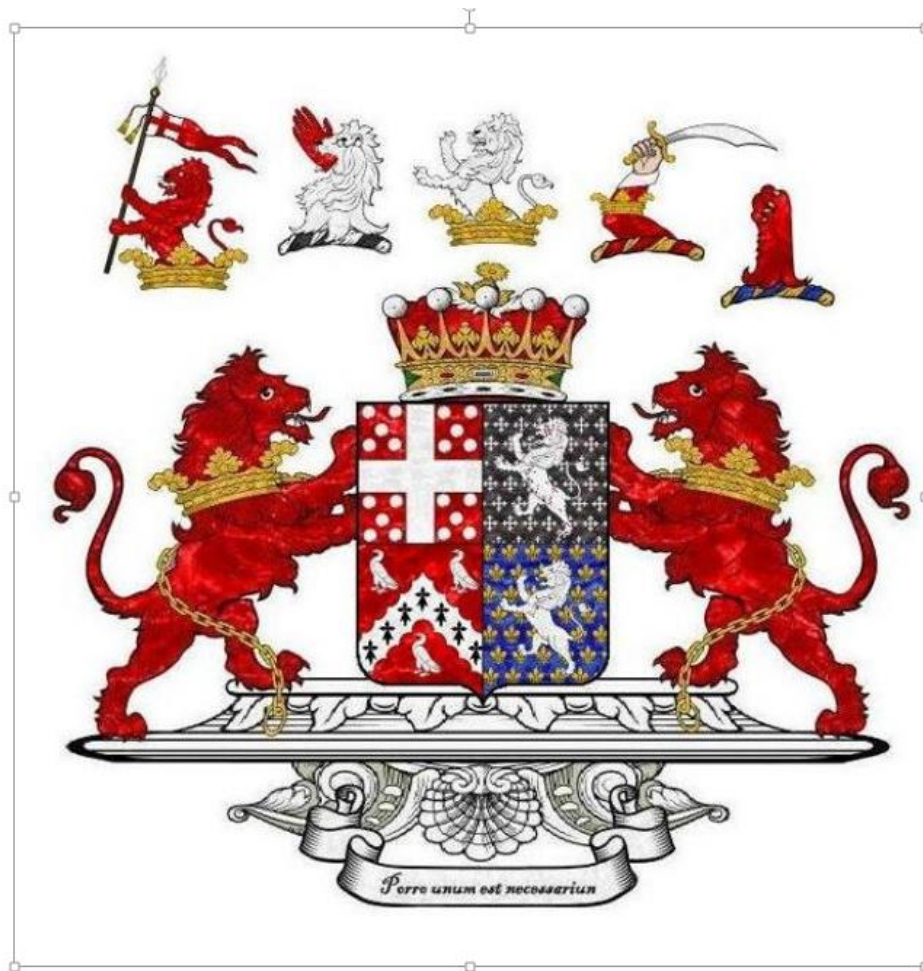
¹¹⁰ Martin Postle, 'The Modern Appelles' in Postle (Editor), *Joshua Reynolds – The Creation of Celebrity*, p.21

¹¹¹ See Chapter 3.

¹¹² *London Gazette*, January 28th 1812 said 'the settlements [are] so vast is their extent, it is estimated that they would cover all of Lincoln's Inn Fields.

¹¹³ January 18th 1812.

Catherine's wedding gown was said to cost 6000 guineas and her necklace 30000 guineas.¹¹⁴ Queues formed outside her robe-makers and milliners hoping to catch a glimpse of Catherine's wedding garments which had excited 'much female curiosity'.¹¹⁵ The Long-Wellesley marriage became a media phenomenon, with in-depth accounts of the bride and groom, the ceremony and their departure to Blackheath.¹¹⁶ It is now considered an important milestone in the history of weddings because Catherine's gown established the tradition for brides to wear white dresses to symbolise romantic love and purity.¹¹⁷



Pole-Tylney –Long-Wellesley coat of arms (1812)

¹¹⁴ *Morning Chronicle*, February 26th.

¹¹⁵ *Leeds Mercury*, March 14th.

¹¹⁶ Stead, p.65.

¹¹⁷ Roberts, *Angel and the Cad*, p.71; Edwina Ehrman, *The Wedding Dress: 300 Years of Bridal Fashions* (London: V&A Publishing, 2014), pp.43-59.

BECOMING A 'WELLESLEY'

A central element of Long-Wellesley's construction of public image at this time was the conscious decision to capitalise on his Wellesley heritage. Catherine brought wealth to the table, which Long-Wellesley wanted to bolster through power and reputation. Prior to 1812, his full name was William Pole because of his of father's 'Pole' inheritance. Additionally, convention stated he adopt Tylney-Long in recognition of joining a wealthier land-owning family, with their first-born son reverting 'Tylney-Long' to maintain that ancestry.¹¹⁸ 'Pole' diminished these obligations by changing his name to 'William Pole Tylney Long Wellesley' by Royal Licence in January 1812.¹¹⁹ Not only was he laying claim to 'Wellesley' for the first time in his life, but cemented it as the most important element of his new public character.

This important declaration underlines Long-Wellesley's intention to ground his celebrity inside the Wellesley stable, building on the platform already established by his father and uncles. A coat of arms was created legitimising his quadruple-barrelled name; adopting the motto *porro unum est necessarium*, translated as 'but one thing is by necessity', alluding to the fact that 'Wellesley' was not strictly legitimate, but was nevertheless essential to his identity.¹²⁰ Long-Wellesley also attempted to create a Wellesley brand by promoting 'Wellesley blue' and yellow for the family colours.¹²¹ On his wedding day Long-Wellesley wore 'a plain blue coat, with yellow buttons'.¹²² His carriage

¹¹⁸ Barry, *Lady Victoria*, p.32.

¹¹⁹ His children were baptised in the same style.

¹²⁰ Interestingly, Napoleon once used this phrase to describe Wellington – where the 'one thing' was ambition.

¹²¹ Long-Wellesley also used 'Wellesley-Blue' as his election colour on the hustings.

¹²² *Hull Packet*, March 24th 1812.

was emblazoned in Wellesley livery, monogrammed with his initials.¹²³ Wedding favours were distributed along the same corporate-style lines. In June 1812, Long-Wellesley placed a large order with Rundell & Bridge at Ludgate Hill for 'Wellesley' personalised plate.¹²⁴ Later on, one of the greatest expenses incurred in refurbishing Wanstead House involved laying Axminster carpets throughout with the family crest embroidered into each corner.¹²⁵

My themed chapters examine specific aspects of Long-Wellesley's public persona. Broadly speaking, his celebrity career had two phases. In the first period (1811-1824) it was sustained by a combination of his exhibiting his new-found wealth, status in fashionable society, and the Wellesley family name. His insolvency and descent into disrepute marked the second phase. From 1824 to the mid-1830s Long-Wellesley predominantly relied upon his position as an established public figure to appeal directly to the public, sharing intimate details about his private life and that of others to stimulate continuing interest. His written word, multiple legal cases and public appearances became a kind of performance to stir mass prurient curiosity. Sharon Marcus contends that the public likes to debate its values, and celebrities are a good way to do that because they either embody or challenge accepted norms.¹²⁶ Through making a drama out of his celebrity, Long-Wellesley dragged elite male behaviour into the spotlight, investing public opinion into the broader campaign for moral reform. The first phase of Long-Wellesley's celebrity encapsulates his wish to be admired and emulated; and the second is essentially a plea for public support and empathy by conscious acts aimed at manipulating public opinion.

¹²³ *Caledonian Mercury*, March 19th.

¹²⁴ ERO, D/DGn 441.

¹²⁵ Stead, p.68.

¹²⁶ Sharon Marcus, *The Drama of Celebrity* (New York: Princeton University Press, 2019), p.220.

MARRIED LIFE

The over-riding theme of Long-Wellesley's celebrity between 1812 and 1820 was his prodigious spending. Under the terms of the marriage settlement Long-Wellesley had only a life interest in Wanstead and its Essex estates, which were secured for the first-born son.¹²⁷ However, with the exception of £11000 'pin-money' exclusively reserved to Catherine, Long-Wellesley commandeered all revenue due to the estates.¹²⁸ From the start of their marriage Wanstead was the epicentre of Long-Wellesley's expenditure, but its proximity to London was problematical because it was not far enough away to be considered a country seat, and too large and remote to operate as an urban villa.¹²⁹ Attracting the beau monde to Wanstead for organised events required ingenuity; so he presented spectacle in ever-increasing scale to enhance his celebrity pretensions.

The marriage itself began to deteriorate almost as soon as Long-Wellesley assumed control of their finances. He refused to pay Catherine's sisters their portions from the estate and prevented them from visiting Wanstead, serving to isolate Catherine from her family.¹³⁰ She was also pressurised to write a new will in Long-Wellesley's favour (1815), and made changes to her marriage settlement that enabled Long-Wellesley to raise mortgages to fund expenditure (1816-1818). Three children were born: William (1813), James (1815) and

¹²⁷ John Habakkuk, *Marriage, Debt & the Estates System* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), p.243.

¹²⁸ Stead, p.64.

¹²⁹ Armstrong, *Reconstructing Wanstead*, p.287.

¹³⁰ Long-Wellesley MS, B2-E11-L44-47.

Vittoria (1818). Long-Wellesley's daughter, opportunistically named after one of the Duke of Wellington's most famous military victories, was re-christened as 'Victoria' in 1825.¹³¹

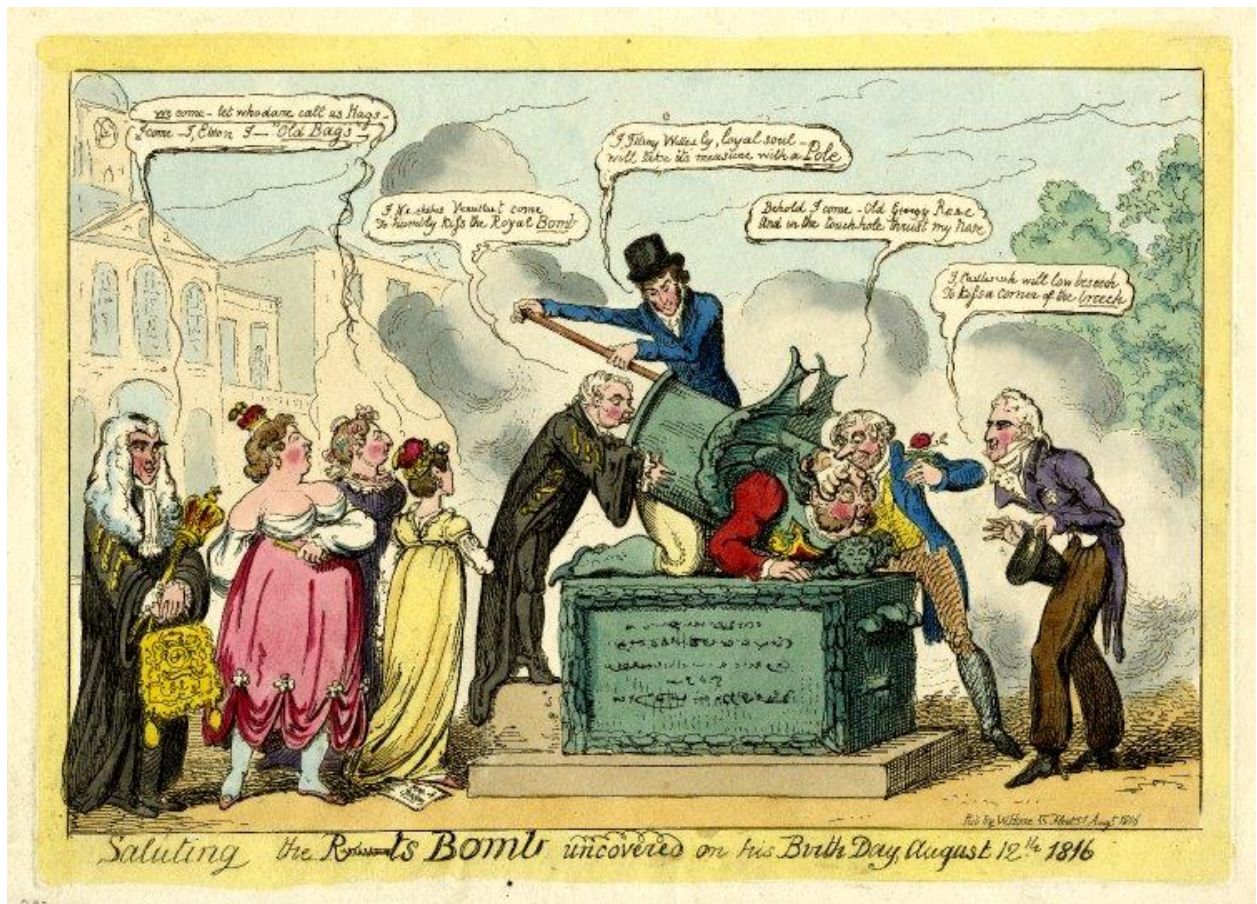
Long-Wellesley kept a London household in Dover Street which he used for regular entertaining. In 1812 he paid £5250 for a 21-year lease on a private box at Drury Lane Theatre, which he used to cement his social connections.¹³² After his election to Parliament in November 1812, Long-Wellesley spent more time at Westminster, leaving his wife and children at Wanstead whilst his womanising resumed. In 1818 Catherine was obliged to pay £600 per annum to Maria Keppel (Kinnaird), a long-time partner of Long-Wellesley's banker Douglas Kinnaird, on the condition she left London taking Long-Wellesley's illegitimate child with her.¹³³ Following this arrangement, Long-Wellesley paid for lodgings for 'Mrs Kinnaird' in Mayfair, taking groups of men to dine in her company.¹³⁴

¹³¹ Long-Wellesley named his girl Vittoria as a publicity stunt during his 1818 Wiltshire election campaign. Catherine, who always called her Victoria, changed the name officially just before her death.

¹³² ERO, D/DCw F1.

¹³³ Wellington MS, WP1/1185/33.

¹³⁴ *Wellesley v Beaufort*, Henry Bicknell.



Long-Wellesley (centre with Pole) in *The Regent's Bomb Uncovered* (1816)

George Cruikshank's satire *The Regents Bomb* (1816) features Long-Wellesley, wearing Wellesley blue, measuring the Regent with a 'Pole', while a cluster of courtesans look on. Whilst he is not the main subject of this print, and it is using an obvious pun on 'Pole', Long-Wellesley's reputation for fashion and promiscuity is clear.

THE LOSS OF WANSTEAD HOUSE

Chapter three provides a history of Wanstead House and its owners revealing that it was already a famous and much-loved landmark when Long-Wellesley assumed control.

Long-Wellesley spent prodigious amounts on entertainments and refurbishment at Wanstead. The Epping Hunt (1813), a grand fete for the monarchs of the victorious Allies (1814), and a christening party for second son James (1816) were widely acclaimed extravaganzas featuring incredible levels of hospitality, from which he derived little personal benefit.¹³⁵ Wanstead Park was also remodelled; with renowned landscape gardeners Humphry Repton and Lewis Kennedy commissioned to add new features.¹³⁶ A road was built at Long-Wellesley's expense to keep ordinary traffic away from his sight.¹³⁷ These projects, undertaken during years of severe national economic hardship, delayed urgent improvements required to the estates themselves, upon which his rental income depended.

After 1816, Long-Wellesley curtailed festivities at Wanstead and began borrowing heavily, at increasingly exorbitant rates, to bridge the gulf between his income and outgoings. By July 1819 finances had reached such a parlous state that he signed a deed with Earl de la Warr for a loan of £30000 on terms of 10.5% interest per annum.¹³⁸

All this came to a head in 1820, on the death of George III, when Parliament was dissolved and Long-Wellesley lost the MP's privilege of protection from debt. This forced his hasty departure in an open boat down the Thames to Calais. These facts were not reported in the press. It was not until May that public learned Long-Wellesley had signed the 'Wanstead Deed', an agreement with 30 of his creditors undertaking to sell contents from

¹³⁵ Roberts, *Angel and the Cad*, pp.81-194 provides a blow-by-blow account of Long-Wellesley's wastefulness during his tenure of Wanstead House

¹³⁶ The extent of works actually carried out by Repton (1813-1816) and Kennedy (1818-1819) are the subject of some conjecture, but it is generally agreed that at least part of their proposals were put into effect.

¹³⁷ The creation of 'Blake Hall Road' by-passing Wanstead Park in 1817 is discussed in Chapter 3.

¹³⁸ John Smith, *William Wellesley Pole and the Essex Estates of the Tylney Long Family* (sic) (unpublished thesis: E.R.O, T/Z 561/1/22, 1969).

the house after a period of two years *if* he could not settle these debts by other means.¹³⁹

At this stage there was no hint of the carnage to follow. That year Long-Wellesley arranged to rent Wanstead House fully-furnished to Queen Caroline of Brunswick (May) and the Duke of York (November), but both schemes foundered because rogue creditors threatened to force entry and seize property.¹⁴⁰ It was only after advertisements were placed inviting creditors to submit their claims that the full extent of Long-Wellesley's embarrassments emerged.¹⁴¹ At this point the promised auction became a reality, and the Long-Wellesleys realised they were going to lose the entire contents of the mansion.

According to Diana Davis the Wanstead auction represented 'a bonfire of Regency vanities', symbolizing a moment in time 'when conspicuous consumption wreaked devastating loss'.¹⁴² During their 8 years at Wanstead, the Long-Wellesleys invested heavily in luxury items. Wanstead's auction catalogue lists many Buhl furniture items most likely to have been acquired by Long-Wellesley.¹⁴³ Dennis Keeling's analysis of the library inventory reveals that the majority of Long-Wellesley's book collection was acquired after 1812, including several full sets of the works of Jane Austen amongst the many volumes never read.¹⁴⁴ These examples indicate the Long-Wellesleys' propensity for purchasing, which was sometimes carried out purely for the sake of purchasing.

¹³⁹ Stead, May 11th 1820.

¹⁴⁰ *Morning Chronicle*, June 6th 1820 and E.R.O, D/DB F116/1-4.

¹⁴¹ *The Times*, November 17th 1820.

¹⁴² Diana Davis, *British Dealers and the Making of the Anglo-Gallic Interior, 1785-1853*, (Unpublished thesis: University of Buckingham, 2016).

¹⁴³ For example Long-Wellesley attended Christie's auction of Beau Brummell's Buhl furnishings on May 22nd 1816. He was also in Paris in 1815 when a large number of items of French furniture came onto the market.

¹⁴⁴ Dennis F Keeling, *Wanstead House: The Owners and their Books* (Wanstead: Tynney Press, 1994).

Lorna Weatherill has shown the cultural and historic importance of household inventories as a snapshot of the life-cycle of consumer goods.¹⁴⁵ The manner of Long-Wellesley's departure, followed by the two-year moratorium laid down in the Wanstead Deed, presented auctioneer John Robins with the means to undertake a comprehensive room-by-room survey of one of the most significant art and furniture collections ever to come under the hammer.¹⁴⁶ For the main sale, commencing on 10th June 1822, and lasting 32 days, Robins produced a 400-page document describing thousands of items in fine detail, with their provenance to that point recorded. Because of this depth of information the Wanstead House Sale catalogue has become an important reference document for the art world today; frequently cited by the major auction houses when items come up for re-sale.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*, p.2.

¹⁴⁶ Wanstead House Sale Catalogue (1822), author's collection.

¹⁴⁷ In recent years items traced to Wanstead (1822) have come up at Bonham's, Christie's and Sotheby's.

SPLENDID LIBRARY OF CHOICE BOOKS,
THE VALUABLE
CELLARS OF FINE-FLAVOURED OLD WINES, ALES, &c. &c.

A CATALOGUE
OF THE MAGNIFICENT AND COSTLY

FURNITURE

OF THE PRINCELY MANSION,
WANSTEAD HOUSE,
CONSISTING OF GRAND

**COSTLY STATE BEDSTEDS, WITH RICH VELVET, SILK, DAMASK, AND OTHER FURNITURES;
WINDOW CURTAINS AND HANGINGS; EXCELLENT BEDDING;
*Splendid Suites of Drawing and Ball Room Curtains of Genoa Velvet, Damasks,
and Silks, trimmed with Gold Lace;***

**COUCHES, SOFAS, AND CHAIRS, TO CORRESPOND; BEAUTIFUL AXMINSTER CARPETS;
BRILLIANT PLATES OF GLASS; SET OF ORIENTAL EBONY CHAIRS AND SOFAS; SCREENS AND CABINETS;
RARE OLD CHINA, AND RICH CUT GLASS;**

**A Variety of Parisian and Buhl Cabinets and Bookcases; magnificent Library Tables; Cabinet Articles of every
Description; elegant Clocks; superb Chandeliers; full-sized Billiard Table;**

**SPLENDID SERVICES OF MASSIVE RICH-CHASED AND GILT SILVER PLATE,
ABOUT 22,000 OUNCES,
IN USEFUL AND ORNAMENTAL ARTICLES;**

Valuable Agate-Handle Knives and Forks; exquisite Carvings in Ivory, superbly mounted; magnificent Plateau, &c.

**COLLECTION OF FINE PAINTINGS AND SCULPTURE,
BY ITALIAN, FLEMISH, AND ENGLISH MASTERS;**

Bronzes, Casts from the Antique, splendid Gobelin Tapestry, Damask and Velvet Hangings, &c.

Library of Ancient and Modern Books,
**Elegantly Bound, embracing many early Specimens of Typography, continued by every Work of Celebrity to the present
Day; also abounding in the GRAPHIC ART, with the most choice Impressions from the Foreign and English Schools.**

The choice fine-flavoured OLD WINES, in Wood and Bottle;

CAPITAL HOME-BREWED ALE;

**Fixtures; Two Fire Engines; Brewing and Dairy Utensils; Garden Light and Tools; Green House Plants; Pleasure
Boats, Punts; capital Harness; and a Variety of other Articles;**

The whole forming an Assemblage of the most valuable Property ever offered to the Public:

**WHICH, BY ORDER OF THE TRUSTEES, WILL BE
SOLD BY AUCTION,**

BY MR. ROBINS,

(OF WARWICK HOUSE, REGENT STREET.)
**ON THE PREMISES, WANSTEAD HOUSE,
On MONDAY, 10th JUNE, 1822, and 31 following Days,
SATURDAYS AND SUNDAYS EXCEPTED, AT ELEVEN O'CLOCK.**

Hannah Armstrong says the two most fundamental reasons why the Wanstead House sale generated such interest were the status of the house, and its proximity to London which made it into a contemporary tourist attraction.¹⁴⁸ But the build-up of public curiosity over a decade of exposure to the Long-Wellesley's concerns must also be taken

¹⁴⁸ Hannah Armstrong, *The Lost Landscapes and Interiorscapes of the Eighteenth-Century Estate: Reconstructing Wanstead House and its Grounds* (unpublished thesis, Birkbeck College, 2016), p.4-5.

into consideration. Ordinary folk, familiar with Wanstead's historic prestige and conversant with the celebrity of its owners, seized this unique chance to glimpse inside a home of the rich and famous. According to one newspaper 'no public sale ever excited so much interest... on account of its magnitude... splendour... and the grandeur of the mansion'.¹⁴⁹ Reinforcements were called upon to control crowds exceeding 30000 on some days, after Robins had tried unsuccessfully to limit access to 'persons of distinction'.¹⁵⁰

This story also had a dramatic angle because both press and public believed they were witnessing the unfolding of a tragedy: on a personal as well as a cultural level. 'There was a kind of melancholy feeling recollecting that this was once the princely fortune of Miss Tylney-Long'. It was painful to witness the mansion being 'robbed of its rich contents... the eye wanders with amazement... whilst the mind is deeply impressed with the sudden dissolution of such splendour'.¹⁵¹

For a few months Wanstead became the epicentre for rival celebrity appearances. Daily reports listed the 'influx of fashionables' turning up to see and be seen.¹⁵² Even Long-Wellesley could not resist the publicity; popping over from Calais, reportedly in good humour despite the awful circumstances.¹⁵³ Robins took full advantage of the public frenzy, selling 20000 auction catalogues at 5 shillings each, making him the envy of the publishing world.¹⁵⁴

When the *Manchester Iris* labelled the Wanstead House sale as 'the last "nine days" wonder of the good people of the British metropolis' they recognised that popular culture

¹⁴⁹ Stead, p.68-75, some people made off with souvenirs from the gardens and grotto.

¹⁵⁰ E.R.O, D/DB F116/4.

¹⁵¹ Stead, p.68-75.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid, p.60.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, p.75.

was making a temporary visit to Wanstead.¹⁵⁵ The public sphere was a milieu of perpetual renewal, and within a few weeks *The Mirror of Literature* declared that the tide of curiosity ‘which at one time flowed so uninterruptedly to Wanstead’ had gone elsewhere.¹⁵⁶

Long-Wellesley was criticised but not universally condemned for the events at Wanstead.¹⁵⁷ It was not unusual for estate owners to fall on hard times, necessitating the sale of their goods and chattels.¹⁵⁸ The economic slump after 1815 brought about widespread aristocratic distress, with land-owners blighted by falling rents, defaulting tenants and poor harvests. Wanstead’s contents were sold off at a time when prices were extremely low, and there were few buyers about.¹⁵⁹ According to Roberts the auction yielded £32395, including sums paid by Long-Wellesley to retain some of his heirlooms, which came to less than half what was needed to satisfy all the creditors.¹⁶⁰

As with many country estates, Wanstead House was restricted from outright sale by marriage settlement. Ironically its fate was sealed due to the disposal of its splendid contents. The mansion was deemed unsuitable to let because it was too vast to be re-furnished economically. Therefore Long-Wellesley’s trustees, who had assumed control of his affairs following the auction in 1822, decided that the only way to extract further value was to remove the building entirely.¹⁶¹ Hence in May 1823 Wanstead House was sold off for

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ Cited in Armstrong, *Reconstructing Wanstead*, p.295.

¹⁵⁷ Most newspapers called him a spendthrift and a gambler, but some such as the *Chelmsford Chronicle* (16th May) were sympathetic: hoping ‘shortly to see the Honourable Gentleman again upon his native soil’.

¹⁵⁸ Rosie MacArthur and Jon Stobart, ‘Going for a Song? Country House Sales in Georgian England’ in Jon Stobart (Ed.) *Modernity & the Second-Hand Trade 1700-1900* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010), pp.175-195.

¹⁵⁹ E.R.O, D/DB F116/1-4 - Colonel Shawe (who was assisting with the disposal of his assets) warned Long-Wellesley ‘there is no one in Town and there is no cash in the country’.

¹⁶⁰ Roberts, *Angel and the Cad*, p.192.

¹⁶¹ Long-Wellesley MS, B3-E19-L11 The quartet of Trustees appointed to handle Long-Wellesley’s affairs were his father (Lord Maryborough), Colonel Merrick Shawe (who worked with the Wellesley family for many decades), Thomas Lightfoot (a solicitor), and Mr Forbes (possibly a relative on his maternal grandfather’s

scrap to a syndicate of builders with every vestige of its fabric removed from the site. This act of cultural vandalism fetched £10000 – just a fraction of the £360000 it was said to have cost to build.¹⁶²

According to Armstrong, Long-Wellesley is not entirely responsible for the sale of Wanstead's priceless art and treasures and its subsequent demolition.¹⁶³ Long-Wellesley himself blamed the loss of the house upon two factors. Firstly he declared, not without foundation, that the mansion was already encumbered and desperately in need of improvement when it came under his control.¹⁶⁴ Secondly he attributed the collapse in his finances to his Wiltshire election campaign in June 1818.¹⁶⁵ It is true that Long-Wellesley's political campaigning (examined in Chapter 4) exposed the estates to new levels of encumbrance; but these debts were contracted because Long-Wellesley indulged in the same reckless over-spending that epitomised his behaviour at Wanstead. There have been suggestions that Wanstead House was too costly to maintain, becoming too impractical by the Regency era.¹⁶⁶ It is impossible to tell whether Wanstead House could have survived over the long-term, but I contend that its destruction by 1825 is fully due to Long-Wellesley's publicity-seeking extravagances, and that it could have been avoided if he were less obsessed by celebrity.

side of the family).

¹⁶² *Chelmsford Chronicle*, 16th May 1823.

¹⁶³ Armstrong, *Reconstructing Wanstead*, p.2.

¹⁶⁴ See Chapter 3 for a history of Wanstead House and Long-Wellesley, *Two Letters* for his personal opinions

¹⁶⁵ Long-Wellesley's bank account at Goslings does reveal a severe depletion in working capital after 1818, in line with his assertions. (access courtesy of Barclays Bank Archive, Manchester).

¹⁶⁶ Hiram Stead, *Materials of Wanstead House*, p.18 quotes Richard Rush's diary that Long-Wellesley needed £70000 per annum to live at Wanstead and retain carriages and servants in Town for the London season, when he only had £60000 coming in. See also Armstrong, *Reconstructing Wanstead*, pp.297-300.

SCANDALOUS BEHAVIOUR

As stated, the Wanstead House auction failed to resolve Long-Wellesley's financial distress. Fearing this eventuality, Long-Wellesley's mother called in a favour from King George IV, and Long-Wellesley was appointed a Gentleman Usher, a largely ceremonial post offering the privilege of protection from creditors.¹⁶⁷ Despite this shelter of patronage, Mr Timberlake (a tallow chandler) had Long-Wellesley arrested in July 1822. Consequently Long-Wellesley resigned his position in the Royal household to avoid embarrassing the King.¹⁶⁸ As his affairs were placed under a trusteeship chaired by his father (now Lord Maryborough), Long-Wellesley embarked on a Grand Tour of Europe with his wife and family, intending to stay abroad until it was safe for him to return to England.

Whilst the Long-Wellesleys subsisted on Catherine's considerable pin-money, the trustees collected revenues and made great strides to resolve his debts. By August 1823 Maryborough forecast that if Long-Wellesley could wait 3 years, he could expect to return to England with his creditors fully satisfied and 'a clear income of £13000 a year'.¹⁶⁹

By the time Long-Wellesley received this information at Naples, he was in the throes of a very public affair with Helena Bligh, the wife of a Coldstream Guard. Helena, known to be a protégé of the Duke of Wellington (and rumoured to be his illegitimate daughter) sought Long-Wellesley's protection after she left her marital home. She was permitted to enter the Long-Wellesley household with Catherine's acquiescence.¹⁷⁰ Given that Catherine was fully aware of Long-Wellesley's adulterous habits, it is impossible to believe she would

¹⁶⁷ E.R.O, D/DB F116/1-4 – see also Chapter 4 on privilege.

¹⁶⁸ Long-Wellesley MS, B4-V4-L20.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, B4-V2-L16.

¹⁷⁰ *Wellesley v Beaufort*, Sir Richard Church.

have permitted this *ménage à trois* unless she was fully satisfied that Helena really was her husband's near-relation.¹⁷¹ Catherine later confirmed that a 'sad system of deception [had] been practised towards me throughout the whole of this dreadful business'.¹⁷² Before they left Naples for Florence Thomas Bligh challenged Long-Wellesley to a duel but he refused to fight on the grounds that acceptance might imply guilt when nothing had been proven against him.¹⁷³

It was not until December that Catherine's eyes were finally 'opened to the disgraceful situation in which she was placed' and she told Helena to quit their house.¹⁷⁴ Long-Wellesley responded by setting Helena up in rooms in another part of the same hotel behind Catherine's back, to the annoyance and embarrassment of his servants and staff who felt complicit in his ongoing deception.¹⁷⁵ When the family were at Paris in June 1824, Catherine discovered Helena and Long-Wellesley together in an open carriage in the Bois de Boulogne and returned to England to seek advice on effecting a legal separation.¹⁷⁶ Long-Wellesley permitted Catherine to leave with the children because he wrongly believed that Maryborough had guaranteed finalising his affairs by September 29th.¹⁷⁷ Maryborough subsequently clarified that he was 'unremitting in his endeavours' to conclude matters but was being hampered by Long-Wellesley's 'continually expressing such impatience to come home [which] keeps many of [your creditors] from agreeing to my proposition'.¹⁷⁸ At the

¹⁷¹ I have amassed a wealth of circumstantial evidence proving that Helena Bligh (1797-1869), nee Paterson, was almost certainly Wellington's daughter, and will be publishing a paper on this basis.

¹⁷² Long-Wellesley MS, B4-E10-L13.

¹⁷³ See Chapter 5 on duelling.

¹⁷⁴ Stead, p.81.

¹⁷⁵ *Wellesley v Beaufort*, Thomas Bulkeley, John Meara and John Pitman.

¹⁷⁶ Roberts, *Angel and the Cad*, pp.250-255.

¹⁷⁷ Long-Wellesley MS, B1-E9-L20.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid*, B4-V3-L21.

year-end Long-Wellesley was still in Paris, laid low by an attack of syphilis, and still involved with Helena.¹⁷⁹

Catherine's return to England signalled the commencement of Long-Wellesley's scandalous celebrity. Although the news had not broken in the press, his exasperated father warned him of the strength of public feeling

[From] the very highest to the lowest member in society here (and the thing has been, and continues to be, much talked of) there is but one opinion of your wife's conduct... her only fault has been bearing with your intolerable conduct to her too long... The whole world approves of your wife's separating from you and were you now to come to England... you would be driven out of society, no gentleman will assemble with you.¹⁸⁰

By the spring of 1825, Long-Wellesley's patience ran out and he dismissed the trustees. He then discovered that his father had structured the trust for a three-year period to September 1825, which could not be altered.¹⁸¹ In the face of fresh abuse, Maryborough returned Long-Wellesley's letters unopened and never spoke to his son again.¹⁸²

By June, Catherine came to the conclusion that Long-Wellesley could not reform his conduct. She appointed Julius Hutchinson, a solicitor, to make the children Wards of Chancery on the grounds that if Long-Wellesley reclaimed them 'their morals would be

¹⁷⁹ *Wellesley v Beaufort*, Robert Southcote.

¹⁸⁰ Long-Wellesley MS, B4-V3-L21.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid*, B3-V3-L25.

¹⁸² *Ibid*, B4-V2-L17, Long-Wellesley was also largely ostracised by his mother and sisters for the rest of his life.

utterly ruined'.¹⁸³ Catherine reached this point having endured continuous psychological manipulation from Long-Wellesley, in letters aimed at undermining her confidence and beliefs, which in modern parlance would be described as 'gaslighting'.¹⁸⁴ For example, in one letter he derided her ability to escape his control

If you expect happiness, you grasp at a shadow; no divorcing or divorced woman has yet enjoyed it. If you believe you will place yourself in a position that will enable you to advance the interests of your children, you are under delusion.¹⁸⁵

Catherine also severed paying Long-Wellesley an allowance from her pin-money. Being instantly starved of funds galvanised Long-Wellesley into action, and he returned to London (with heavily-pregnant Helena in tow) renting rooms in Seymour Place. On the evening of the 7th of July Long-Wellesley attempted to gain entry to a house in Clarges Street, where Catherine was staying with her sisters. He was carrying letters to that address for the purpose of proving they were still living together, which would have quashed Catherine's bid for a legal separation. Luckily Catherine had the presence of mind to escape undetected through a rear-window and then engaged a detective to follow Long-Wellesley back to his lodgings where he was served with fresh writs.¹⁸⁶ In his haste to avoid arrest, Long-Wellesley quit his lodgings without paying, leaving behind incriminatory documents

¹⁸³ Stead, p.88.

¹⁸⁴ Robin Stern, *The Gaslight Effect: How to Spot and Survive the Hidden Manipulation Others Use to Control Your Life* (New York: Broadway Books, 2018), is one of a plethora of recently (mainly self-published) books examining the effects of coercive behaviour, which is commonly associated with narcissism. See concluding chapter.

¹⁸⁵ Long-Wellesley MS, B4-V2-L23.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid*, p.98.

that were subsequently handed over to Catherine's legal advisors.¹⁸⁷ *The Age* likened Long-Wellesley to an extraordinary beast whose sudden reappearance in London had 'furnished food for talk'.¹⁸⁸

Catherine's health began to falter under the anxiety of Long-Wellesley's threats. She retired to Richmond and on 7th September effected a will revoking one she had signed in Long-Wellesley's favour in 1815, not out of malice 'but to service the interests of my dear children'. Catherine expressed her fear that she was about to die, and she was terrified that Long-Wellesley was on the verge of taking the children. On 10th of September a letter from Long-Wellesley arrived at the house, sending Catherine into spasms of anxiety. Two days later she died with 'agonies of the heart and in great distress'.¹⁸⁹

Catherine's death caused a national out-pouring of grief, and she was said to have been 'wept over by thousands', with her memory 'cherished with affection forever'. One newspaper wrote, 'let her fate be a warning to all of her sex, who, blessed with affluence, think the buzzing throng which surround them have hearts, when, in fact, they have none'. Another thought her marriage was not one of affection 'but of importunity'. It was generally contended that Long-Wellesley's 'heartless conduct led to the mournful tragedy'.¹⁹⁰

When Long-Wellesley learned that Catherine was dead he applied for the children to be sent to him at Calais, ordering Catherine to be 'buried without pomp or ceremony' on the grounds that he was 'not equal to the publicity'.¹⁹¹ These requests were ignored: because the children were now under the care of the Court of Chancery; and Catherine's

¹⁸⁷ See chapter 6.

¹⁸⁸ *The Age*, 10th July 1825.

¹⁸⁹ Stead, p.98.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁹¹ *Wellesley v Beaufort*, William Long-Wellesley.

funeral cortege to Draycot was attended by many thousands of well-wishers eager to express their respects.¹⁹² Long-Wellesley was advised to stay away on pain of arrest.

RETURN TO ENGLAND (1825-1833)

These years provide the richest source of Long-Wellesley's celebrity in the public sphere because he was scarcely out of the news, becoming a measure for moral standards in public life. In November 1825, Long-Wellesley returned to London purchasing a mansion at Hall Place, in St John's Wood near Regent's Park. One there he ensured that all outstanding creditors were satisfied, so as to prevent his embarrassments being used against him.¹⁹³ Within days he instigated proceedings in the Court of Chancery, demanding his paternal rights as their natural guardian. *Wellesley v Beaufort* was first heard in December 1825 and rumbled on until February 1827.¹⁹⁴ Nearly 100 affidavits were submitted in evidence, many of which were published verbatim in the press. The public found themselves embroiled in a vital moral question— namely whether a man could be deemed unfit to have custody of his children purely on the basis of disreputable character, or should one bad apple justify a law-change that would affect every father in the realm? Huge crowds attended the trial days and the matter was discussed throughout all levels of society. Long-Wellesley fully participated in this debate by choosing to air his private business so prominently into the public sphere. Although his behaviour was criticised, there were pockets of support and even some apologists for his predicament.

¹⁹² Roberts, *Angel and the Cad*, p.308.

¹⁹³ Long-Wellesley MS, B4-V3-L24, Long-Wellesley is likely to have borrowed money to settle these debts.

¹⁹⁴ The children were represented by the Duke of Beaufort nominally because he was named guardian for their interests in accordance with Catherine's marriage deed (1812) and her will (1815). In reality, those opposing Long-Wellesley publicly were members of Catherine's family, with the private support of relatives from the Wellesley side of the marriage –including Long-Wellesley's father & the Duke of Wellington.

Long-Wellesley's profile was magnified still further when Thomas Bligh issued Criminal Conversation proceedings in the Court of Common Pleas. This case publicly exposed Long-Wellesley's serial adultery, highlighting the pain it had caused to Catherine. Public reaction to *Bligh v Wellesley* (December 1826) profoundly influenced Lord Chancellor Eldon's judgement in *Wellesley v Beaufort*, which found that Long-Wellesley was morally unfit to have custody of his children.¹⁹⁵ *The Lady's Magazine* declared that Eldon set a precedent in law by 'avail[ing] himself of public prejudice against an individual, to usurp constitutional power'.¹⁹⁶

Losing *Wellesley v Beaufort* handed Long-Wellesley a celebrity niche, as almost all of his subsequent public appearances are linked to that outcome. After an unsuccessful appeal to the House of Lords (1828), Long-Wellesley challenged every Chancery decision taken concerning the children's care and education, and he persistently and openly defied their authority by tempting his children away from their guardians. He appealed for public sympathy as a caring father fighting to restore his family. However, he also conducted a vindictive campaign against those whom he considered responsible for his predicament. These ranged from the Duke of Wellington (who stepped in as a guardian to the boys), the Tynney-Long family and friends, various servants, agents and solicitors. One unfortunate landlady was forcibly incarcerated pending a perjury trial where Long-Wellesley carried out his own advocacy.¹⁹⁷ Between 1827 and 1830 he published two books about *Wellesley v*

¹⁹⁵ See chapter 6.

¹⁹⁶ *Lady's Magazine*, June 1830.

¹⁹⁷ *The Times*, March 31st 1829.

Beaufort, attacking the institution of Chancery and appending yet more personal documents for public consumption. These works will be discussed in chapter 6.

It is obvious that Long-Wellesley's primary motivation for attempting to overturn the custody ruling was that it denied access to his elder son's wealth. His constant acts of self-promotion to achieve this goal are strongly suggestive of a man who believed public opinion was the life-blood of his celebrity. This passion for public engagement is best exemplified by Long-Wellesley's audacious kidnap of his daughter from her guardians in July 1831 (see Chapter 4).

LATER YEARS

Long-Wellesley's public life was terminated by crippling debts and a failed political career. He left England at the beginning of 1833, spending a decade in Brussels and Paris. Scandal and controversy continued to surround Long-Wellesley. He abandoned Helena (who had become his second wife in 1828) on the pretext that they were never lawfully married, leaving her and their children destitute and reliant on handouts to survive.¹⁹⁸ Around the same time he was also reported to have seduced and carried off Miss Temple, a seventeen-year-old servant girl, and subsequently bought her like a consumable item from her father.¹⁹⁹

When Long-Wellesley became Viscount Wellesley in 1842 (after Richard Wellesley's death) he returned to London. He later assumed the title of 4th Earl of Mornington after the

¹⁹⁸ *Wellesley v Wellesley* (1839) was to rumble on until the 1850s.

¹⁹⁹ *The Satirist*, March 6th 1834. Miss Temple is named in Long-Wellesley's will (1857) and may be this woman, or the illegitimate product of their liaison.

death of his father in 1845. In his later years Long-Wellesley published several political books and pamphlets, and sat in the House of Lords.²⁰⁰ There was some rapprochement with the Wellesley family during this period, but Long-Wellesley was generally treated like a pariah by polite society – and his occasional public appearances were greeted with disdain. For many years he spent the winter at Mivart's Hotel in Piccadilly, causing *The Satirist* to warn unfledged tradesmen to be on their guard.²⁰¹

Long-Wellesley was embroiled in lawsuits concerning his dissipation and moral character right up until his death. Of these the most prominent was a long-running action by estranged-wife Helena seeking to obtain financial compensation for their years of separation.²⁰² Long-Wellesley was also sued by his children, whose legacies he continued to plunder. As soon as William junior came of age in 1834 Long-Wellesley helped himself to the funds. Senior members of the Wellesley family, including the Duke of Wellington, then persuaded William to cut off the entail on his estates, terminating his father's 'golden expectations' once and for all.²⁰³ Eventually William instigated proceedings to prevent his father's continuing interference, which Long-Wellesley opposed and obstructed for years preventing final resolution.²⁰⁴ Long-Wellesley's second son James had a sad existence; swapping his army career for the life of a prize-fighter. Boxing gained him some renown, but after sustaining dreadful head injuries he was declared a lunatic in 1847, and died at a Geneva asylum on November 7th 1851, aged 36.²⁰⁵ Whilst James was mentally incapacitated, Long-Wellesley contrived to become a trustee for both younger children's portions. He

²⁰⁰ See Chapter 6 for a full list of his published works.

²⁰¹ October 5th 1845. This hotel is now known as the Ritz.

²⁰² Stead, *Wanstead*, p18; After 1845 Helena was styled Countess of Mornington

²⁰³ *The Age*, April 7th 1834.

²⁰⁴ *The Times*, June 24th 1846 records the opening of *Wellesley v The Earl of Mornington*.

²⁰⁵ Long-Wellesley MS, B3-E26-L14, and *Bailey's Magazine of sports and Pastimes*, Volume 66 (1896), pp.176-7.

managed to swindle away the bulk of their inheritance before Victoria's solicitors intervened.²⁰⁶ William junior died of throat cancer in Paris in 1863, delivering a final insult to the Tylney-Long lineage from his deathbed by altering his will to remove Victoria in favour of their cousin Henry Wellesley.²⁰⁷ In the late 1840s William had unreasonably withheld his consent for Victoria to marry; now he disinherited her.²⁰⁸ When Victoria died in 1897, she was unmarried and childless like her siblings. This meant that the Pole-Tylney-Long-Wellesley dynasty that Long-Wellesley once dreamt of establishing was wiped out in a single generation; perhaps the most potent symbol of the many riches that Long-Wellesley possessed but then squandered during his dissipated life.

At the time of Long-Wellesley's death on 4th July 1857 he was living in lodgings in Marylebone, reliant on a small pension provided by cousin Arthur (2nd Duke of Wellington). *The Morning Chronicle* reported he died suddenly whilst having an egg supper, having spent his last years 'retired from the gay circle of fashionable life'. The public, they said, would be well aware of Long-Wellesley due to his 'peculiar disposition' which had rendered him unworthy of a proper epitaph. Instead they pronounced him

A spendthrift, a profligate... in his youth... a debauchee in his manhood [achieving] the prime disgrace of being... deprived of paternal rights [to] his children, whose early tastes and whose morals he wickedly endeavoured to corrupt, from a malicious desire to add to the agonies of their desolate and broken-hearted mother. Redeemed by no single virtue – adorned by no single

²⁰⁶ Long-Wellesley MS, B3-E11-L36, B2-E11-L12 & B3-E24-L33.

²⁰⁷ Long-Wellesley MS, B2-E12-L2.

²⁰⁸ Ibid, B1-V3-L24.

grace – his life has gone out, even without a flicker of repentance... one who was deservedly avoided of all men.²⁰⁹

CONCLUSION

Long-Wellesley provides a perfect canvas for the study of celebrity and the public sphere during the Regency period; not because he was worthy of renown but because he is a very prominent example of how private character was represented publicly. Self-promotion turned him into a recognisable public figure who was capable of maintaining celebrity over a long period. Print and image media interest helped to commoditise Long-Wellesley, and they gained commercial benefit from reporting his sensational activities; and the public were enticed by the openness of his communication – which invested them into the heart of his private tribulations.

The following chapters take an in-depth look at how Long-Wellesley interacted with the media and public; looking at celebrity and privacy (the closure of Wanstead Park), celebrity and public life (Parliament and privilege), celebrity and the march of morality (duelling in the public sphere), and notorious celebrity and public intimacy (Long-Wellesley's written works). My thesis concludes by drawing together these themes to assess Long-Wellesley's legacy as a Regency period self-publicist whose celebrity impacted upon public opinion. His celebrity was wholly created and sustained within a public sphere that encapsulated popular, social and cultural concerns just as routinely as it handled political issues of that time.

²⁰⁹ 6th July 1857.

CHAPTER THREE

Long-Wellesley at Wanstead: Celebrity Privacy versus Public Enjoyment

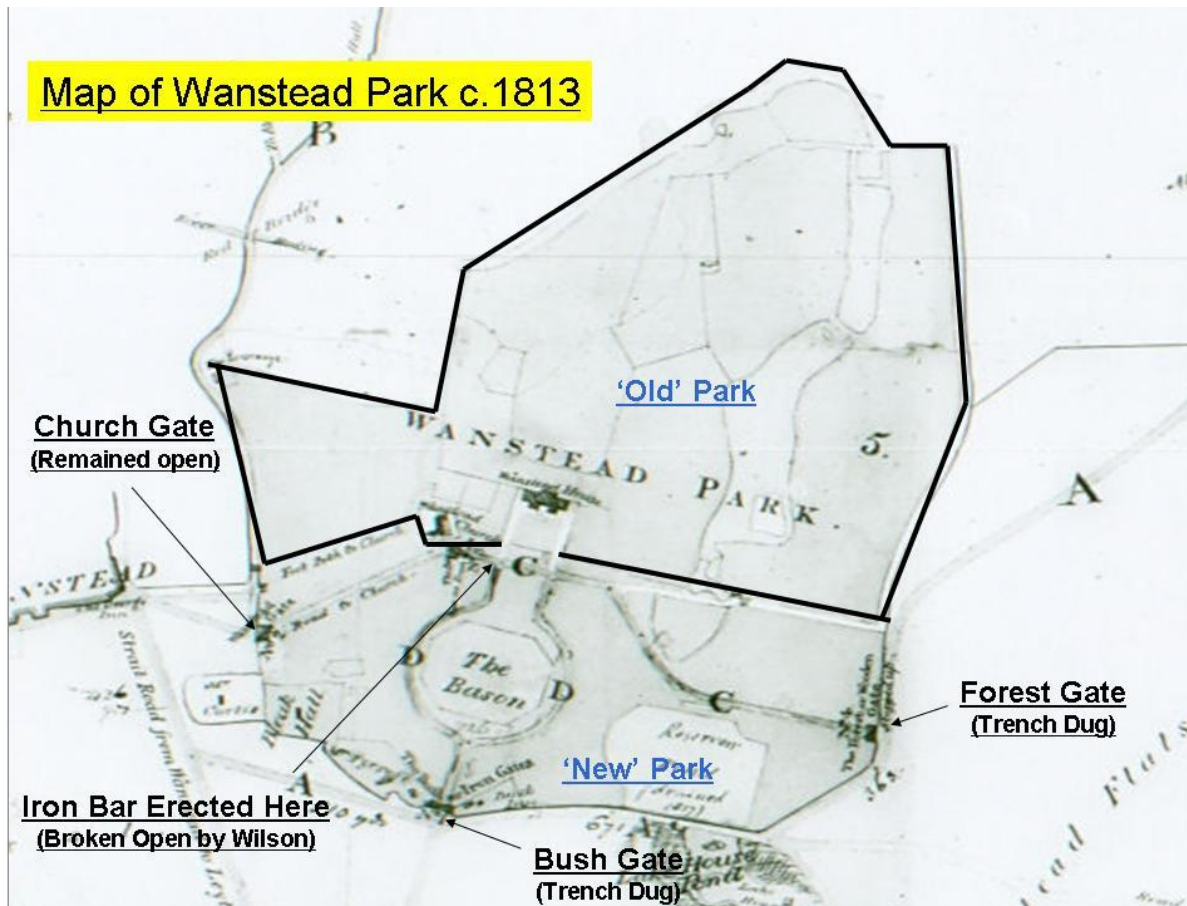


Wanstead House c.1815

*Long a tyrant, his neighbours presumed to annoy,
Their vexation and grief were his comfort and joy,
His greatest delight was to do others wrong
Till the people at length cried, "We won't stand this Long."¹*

On March 12th 1813 a trial was heard at Chelmsford Assizes, pitting a wealthy couple's ambition against the public right to simple pleasures. The case involved land that was sealed off around Wanstead House, a prestigious mansion in Essex about 8 miles from London. But this battle was not against enclosure since the land in question had long since been annexed to Wanstead's estate without protest. Instead this was about rights to use some roadways traversing the Park adjacent to the mansion.

¹ Extract from John Harvey's 'Meditations in Wanstead Park' (*The Satirist*, 12/1813: May) pp.435-440.



William and Catherine Long-Wellesley were the owners of Wanstead House.² On 19th May 1812, a matter of weeks after they took up residence, Long-Wellesley locked three gates providing access to the Park. A letter was sent to selected gentlemen from the neighbourhood enclosing keys for admission but declaring that the Park would remain shut to those described as 'disorderly persons'.³ A standoff quickly developed after the keys were universally returned and Long-Wellesley refused all offers of mediation. So a man from Tower Hill named John Wilson, whose brother lived in East Ham, employed a blacksmith to break the locks in front of a crowd of cheering supporters, and then triumphantly entered the Park. Long-Wellesley reacted swiftly; deep impassable trenches were dug across two of

² The married couple tended to use an abbreviated version of their full surname: Pole-Tylney-Long-Wellesley.

³ *Ipswich Journal* 13th May 1812.

the entrance gates, which were also re-chained. A third gate was kept open but only for access to the parish church, with an iron barrier erected preventing further progress into the Park. Long-Wellesley's hesitation to prosecute Wilson for wilful damage or trespass emboldened his opponents to issue their own writ forcing Long-Wellesley to defend his actions in court. The Park remained closed for nine months whilst each side made preparations for the legal battle to follow.

The fight for Wanstead Park forms an interesting study because it is an early example of one of the principal dilemmas of modern public life; namely, the clash between celebrity and personal privacy. Nowadays it is often asserted that celebrities should not be entitled to privacy when they are constantly (and willingly) in the spotlight.⁴ The absence of a freestanding right to privacy in British common law has confused the boundary between matters of genuine public interest and media over-intrusion.⁵ Existing statutes are now being stretched in an attempt to resolve this issue; leading to a doubling of celebrity injunction and privacy cases in the five years to 2016.⁶ Alex Preston pessimistically contemplates 'the death of privacy' in an age where internet search-engines, relying upon complex information-harvesting algorithms, have created a public sphere where 'anything that is kept from the public gaze is [now] perceived as suspect'.⁷ Adut says the public sphere has always been fraught with danger, so people will try to control their visibility because 'being known can confer great advantages'.⁸

⁴ BBC news 15th July 2011 posed the question: 'Can celebrities expect privacy?'

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-14151678> Accessed May 28th 2019.

⁵ See *Home Office v Wainright* (2001) <https://www.bailii.org/uk/cases/UKHL/2003/53.html> & *Kaye v Robertson* (1991) <https://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWCA/Civ/1990/21.html> - accessed October 16th 2019.

⁶ *Daily Telegraph*, June 12th 2016.

⁷ *The Guardian*, August 3rd 2014.

⁸ Adut, *Reign of Appearances*, pp.37, 60.

Although much lower levels of public surveillance operated during the Regency era, celebrities were still obliged to mediate between their private lives and the version of self the public sphere created for them. Julia Fawcett argues that revelations about private lives stripped celebrities of their self-possession. Despite the anxiety of public exposure, celebrities were reluctant to abandon the powerful and influential 'lifestyle upon which they had come to depend'.⁹ Then, as now, celebrities employed strategies to control how they were recognised and evaluated by their audiences. For example the actress Sarah Siddons 'tirelessly polished her image as a devoted wife and mother' to help her overcome 'prevailing prejudices about the immorality of actresses'.¹⁰

Langford describes privacy in the eighteenth-century as 'the first privilege of the rich', enabling them to travel, dine, socialise, and to reside in seclusion.¹¹ The trend towards compartmentalisation of elite living was particularly evident at home, with the advent of servant stair-cases and back corridors restricting communal household encounters.¹² Habermas considers the drawing together of an intimate sphere of private and domestic experience as a precursor of the new public sphere, because it engendered men with the ability to speak with authority in public situations.¹³ Celebrity possessed similar privileges of social exclusivity, including the ability to engage with and influence audiences, but each step taken towards being publicly owned entailed yielding up, or *being seen to yield*, some degree of personal privacy.

⁹ Julia Fawcett, *Spectacular Disappearances: Celebrity & Privacy, 1696-1801* (University of Michigan, 2016), pp.10-11.

¹⁰ McPherson, *Art & Celebrity in the Age of Reynolds & Siddons*, p.97; Lilti, *Invention of Celebrity*, pp.45-48.

¹¹ Langford, *Polite & Commercial People*, pp.406-407.

¹² Mark Girouard, *Life in the English Country House* (London: Yale, 1978), p.138.

¹³ Habermas, *Structural Transformations*, p.116.

Tillyard reminds us that celebrity was ‘born at the moment private life became a tradeable public commodity’.¹⁴ But what constituted privacy in eighteenth-century Britain is problematic. As Vickery observes, subjects that ‘writers designated as belonging to the private sphere tended to vary according to the particular public they were counterposing’.¹⁵ According to David Vincent ‘the inequality and instability of [an] emerging regime of privacy’ occurred in the Habermasian public sphere. He rejects the notion that public curiosity had a corrosive effect upon the development of public opinion because its spirit of enquiry was ‘the child of a burgeoning consumer culture’.¹⁶

It is useful to refer to Joseph Roach and Felicity Nussbaum when assessing the inter-relationship between celebrity and privacy, each of whom has examined representations of privacy within the acting professions. Roach used ‘public intimacy’ to explain how audiences seeking to learn intimate facts about actors and actresses had to accept mediated versions in the public sphere.¹⁷ Nussbaum describes the commercially-motivated staging of personality behind the façade of an actress’s on-stage character as the ‘interiority effect’. This was a layer dividing the public from the living person; ‘a kind of property subject to market conditions’.¹⁸ These definitions shed light on the processes by which celebrity culture imbibed private sentiment. But they should not be restricted to the acting profession because (as stated in my introduction) the eighteenth-century witnessed a theatricalisation of the public sphere, rendering most appearances subject to some form of

¹⁴ Tillyard, ‘Celebrity in 18th-Century London’, p.25.

¹⁵ Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, p.27.

¹⁶ David Vincent, *Privacy: A Short History* (Cambridge: Polity, 2016) p.50 & *I Hope I Don’t Intrude: Privacy and Its Dilemmas in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford University Press, 2015), pp.155-157.

¹⁷ Joseph Roach, “Public Intimacy: The Prior History of ‘It’” in Mary Luckhurst & Jane Moody (Eds.), *Theatre and Celebrity in Britain, 1660-2000* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2005) pp.15-30.

¹⁸ Felicity Nussbaum, *Rival Queens, Actresses, Performers, and the Eighteenth-Century British Theatre* (Oxford: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), p.21.

manufacture that created a gap (however small) between the genuinely private sphere, and what Lilti dubs the 'critical public sphere' where versions of privacy appeared.¹⁹

The Long-Wellesleys arrived in Wanstead at the height of their celebrity, and their decision to close the Park was partly motivated by their loss of privacy. They were also attempting to control how their public intimacy was revealed by setting a barrier preventing unrestrained access to their private lives. They did not succeed on this occasion not only because they failed to understand Wanstead's heritage, but also because there was a public backlash against their celebrity pretensions.

To develop these findings further it is necessary to begin with a brief history of the Wanstead Estate and its affiliation with Epping Forest. Secondly I will explain how William Pole (Long-Wellesley) and Catherine Tylney-Long became subject to intense media interest, exploring some of the problems their celebrity entailed.²⁰ Catherine's immense fortune, appearances in society, and her courtship were reported in extraordinary detail by print and image media. Pole emerged as one of her suitors, relying on family connections, fashionable appearance, a duel, and his libertine reputation to win the day. As already noted, their wedding announcement 'created more fashionable conversation and conjecture than any marriage project that has been on the tapis for many years'.²¹

Thirdly, I will look at the trial arguments, revealing that this dispute was not about traversing the park *per se* but rather a fight to retain Wanstead Park as an established public

¹⁹ Lilti, *Invention of Celebrity*, p.8.

²⁰ In this chapter I shall use 'Pole' when referring to Long-Wellesley prior to his marriage, and 'Catherine' in regard to Catherine Long-Wellesley, nee Tylney-Long.

²¹ *Lancashire Gazette* January 15th 1812.

amenity. I will also show that events elsewhere taught the Long-Wellesleys that the Park's closure would not allay their privacy concerns.

I will conclude by looking at the effects of this case to show that victory was ephemeral because the powerful landed interest was not yet ready to concede to the will of ordinary folk, but a marker had been laid down to inspire future generations to successfully preserve Wanstead Park as a key component of Britain's first public open space.

The story of Wanstead Park should also be viewed as an important milestone in the history of celebrity privacy, because it sheds light on the predicaments individuals encountered when dealing with commodified versions of self in the public sphere.

Long-Wellesley's closure of the Park was fundamentally a local struggle testing the boundaries between celebrity power and the voice of public opinion. It also fed into a much wider debate about national identity, which had become inexorably linked to freedom and justice. Towards the end of the eighteenth century writers began to wonder if the fences of free-born English liberty had been broken by the 'luxury and depravity of manners' that was corrupting the ruling classes.²² In particular Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* (1791) addressed the masses directly, giving them the impetus to stand up to aristocratic ascendancy. The Long-Wellesley court case was proof of the people's will to safeguard their historic rights as Englishmen. The defence of national freedom also extended to the emancipation of slaves. In 1807, after a long campaign legislation was enacted to abolishing slave trading throughout the British Empire. Thereafter the slavery question featured prominently in British foreign policy. However, exigencies of concurrent wars with France and the United

²² Anon, *Guide to the Knowledge of the Rights and Privileges of Englishmen* (London: Bingley, 1771), p.IV.

States meant it fell into abeyance domestically.²³ This could explain the lack of anti-slavery rhetoric in this case, but it should also be noted that Wanstead House was a product of East India trading not West Indian plantations, and that the wider Wellesley family were prominently opposed to slavery.²⁴ In the latter regard Long-Wellesley's mother was credited with having established a soup-kitchen for distressed black Londoners in the early 1800s from the family home at Hanover Square.²⁵

THE WANSTEAD ESTATE AND EPPING FOREST

It was appropriate that the writ came forward in the name of the *King v Long-Wellesley* since for centuries the Crown employed forest law to exercised jurisdiction over Wanstead Park. First introduced by William the Conqueror, forest law was imposed for the purpose of protecting game for hunting. It applied to any type of land private or common, cultivated or forested within a designated area, which was set by officials who carried out a perambulation to define boundaries. Being designated as 'afforested' meant being liable to forest laws, dictating that deer could roam freely, with enclosure forbidden unless there was prior consent, and a payment to the Crown. Land bought off in this way became 'disafforested', thereby exempt from forest law. Hunting was reserved solely for the King, but commoners were permitted to forage for wood, berries and other edible plants. The peasantry were also entitled to rights of pasture save for the 'fence month' (21 June – 21

²³ Britain concluded trade deals with Portugal (1810) and Sweden (1813) on the basis of curtailing slave trade, and made France agree to abolish it within 5 years a condition of the Treaty of Paris (1814).

²⁴ Long-Wellesley campaigned on an anti-slavery platform at the Essex election (1830). See chapter 4,

²⁵ Kent Archives, F18.

July) when 'agistment' [grazing] was prohibited because it was deemed a threat to newborn fawns.²⁶

The earliest record of the Manor of Wanstead can be found during the reign of Edward the Confessor (1042-1066) when it came into the possession of the Bishop of London. The Domesday Book (c.1083) valued 'Wanested' Hundred at 40 shillings on account of its mill and salt works²⁷. Wanstead came under forest law around 1130, as a part of Epping Forest under the management of a Lord Warden, who enforced the rules on behalf of the Crown and protected peasant's rights. By 1499 'Wanstead Hall' was regularly used as a hunting lodge by Henry VII to grant him privacy from the Court.²⁸ The Park was first enclosed by his son Henry VIII in 1511.²⁹ The enclosed area lay to the east (behind) Wanstead House and later became known as the 'Old Park'.³⁰ Henry VIII began a trend of using Wanstead as a grace-and-favour residence for a succession of privileged courtiers who were designated as 'keepers'. Ownership fluctuated between private and royal hands for the following 150 years, reflecting changing political and religious alliances within English society. In 1544 Wanstead House hosted a historically significant meeting between Queen Mary and Princess Elizabeth in the aftermath of the ill-fated attempt to install Lady Jane Grey to the throne. Mary fled to Norwich during the crisis but was met on her return by Elizabeth, riding out from London with a large retinue of knights, ladies and gentlemen. This

²⁶ Nicholas Hagger, *A View of Epping Forest*, (Alresford, O-Books, 2012), pp.59-61.

²⁷ Oliver Dawson, *The Story of Wanstead Park* (London: Thomas Hood, 1995), p.9. Other significant publications include Jack Elsdon-Tuffs, *Wanstead House* (London: WHS, 1963), Winifred Eastment, *Wanstead Through The Ages* (Essex Countryside, 1969), Dennis Keeling, *Wanstead House: The Owners & Their Books* (London: WHS, 1994), Roberts, *Angel & the Cad*. For its landscape history: Sally Jeffery, *The Gardens of Wanstead House* (London Parks and Garden Trust, 2003).

²⁸ Thomas Penn, *Winter King: Henry VII and the Dawn of Tudor England* (London: Penguin, 2011), p.307.

²⁹ William Addison, *Wanstead Park* (London: Corp of London, c1970), p.5.

³⁰ It is important to clarify that the formal gardens of 'Old Park' were not involved in this dispute.

show of support for her pro-Catholic half-sister probably prevented further civil strife.³¹

Queen Elizabeth's relationship with Wanstead's next owner Robert Dudley, first Earl of Leicester, is well recorded.³² Suffice to say it ended badly for Leicester as he died in debt and out of favour with the first (but sadly not the last) auction held at Wanstead House in 1588 disposing of his goods and chattels to meet the enormous funeral expenses.³³

When Sir Josiah Child purchased Wanstead House (c.1673), it had grown ugly and outdated, unworthy of continued royal interest. Samuel Pepys reckoned it 'a fine seat but an ancient house'.³⁴ Despite these shortcomings Child retained the old building, focussing instead on improving and expanding the Park. Vistas of walnut trees were planted fanning out westwards from the house and augmented by numerous fishponds, lakes and landscaped features. To achieve this, a huge tract of land was appropriated from the forest into the demesne of Wanstead House. King Charles II, who already accepted regular bribes to protect Child's East India Company interests from jealous business rivals and Parliamentary enemies, appointed Child hereditary Lord Warden around 1680. This effectively turned Epping Forest into Child's personal fiefdom.³⁵

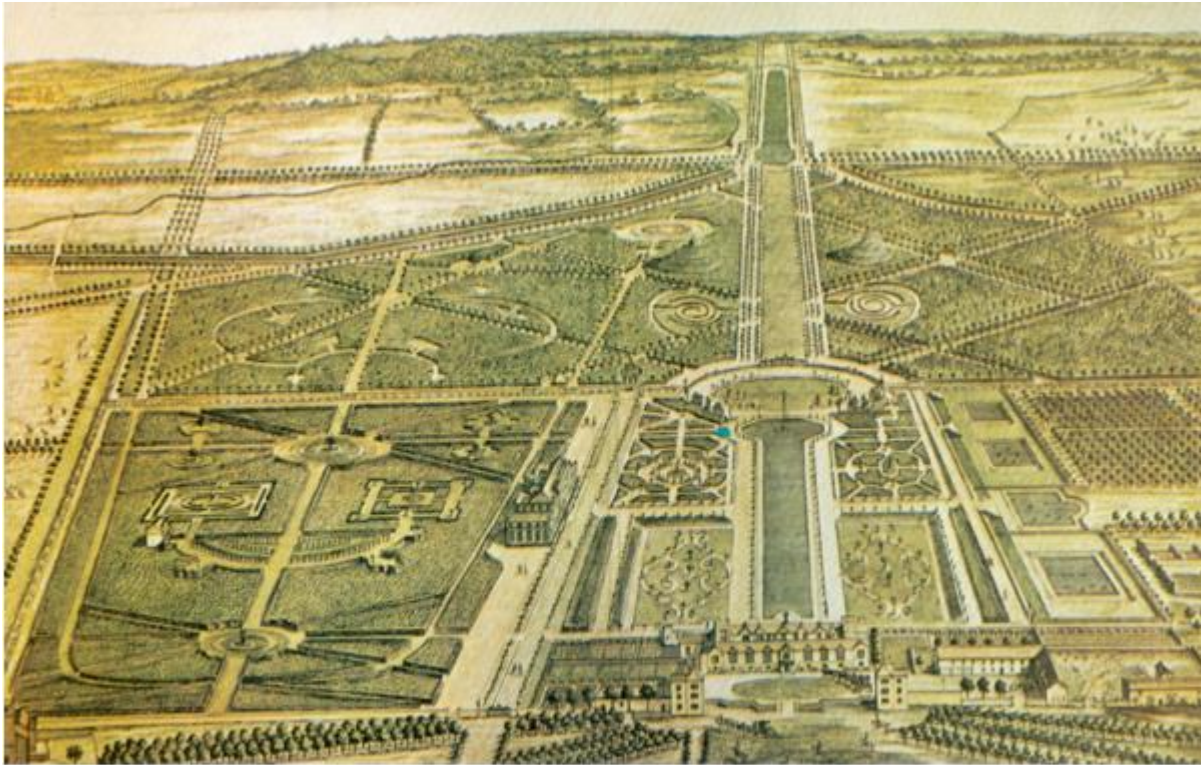
³¹ Dawson, *Wanstead Park*, p.11.

³² For example Sarah Gristwood, *Elizabeth and Leicester* (London: Bantam, 2008); Angela McLeod, *The Story of Robert Dudley* (Leicester: Matador, 2019).

³³ Dawson, *Wanstead Park*, p.13 His funeral costs were £4,000 – a colossal sum for that era.

³⁴ Samuel Pepys, *Diary*, Vol 5 (1665) (University of California, 2008), p.102.

³⁵ Guy de la Bedoyere (Ed.) *The Diary of John Evelyn*, (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1995, p.258 describes Child as 'sordidly avaricious'. ODNB, Sir Josiah Child.



View of Wanstead House and formal gardens by Johannes Kyp (1713)

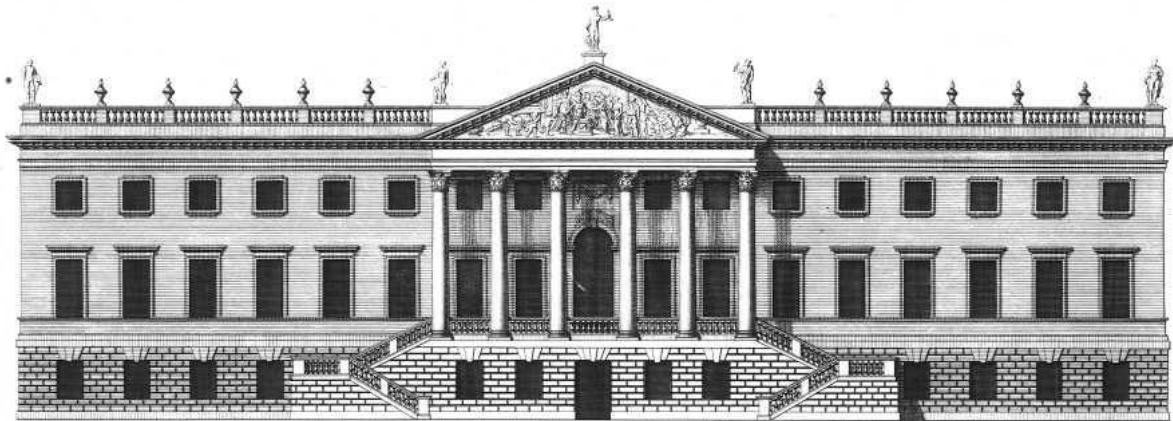
First enclosed in 1511 and known locally as the ‘Old Park’, they were not involved in this dispute.

Johannes Kyp’s view of Wanstead Park c.1713 illustrates the extent of formal garden landscaping undertaken by Child and his son Richard (1st Lord Tylney, 1680-1750), who inherited the estate in 1704.³⁶ The old house pictured at the bottom of Kyp’s panorama was soon afterwards demolished and replaced by a magnificent palace designed by Colen Campbell. Its portico with six Corinthian columns was the earliest recorded on a private residence in England, placing it at the forefront of Palladian-style design which became popular during the Georgian era.³⁷ According to Brewer the 18th century saw the English

³⁶ Richard Child was first raised to the peerage in 1718 as Lord Castlemaine following a royal visit to Wanstead House by George I. He subsequently assumed the title Lord Tylney after his wife inherited the manor of Rotherwick in Hampshire (1731).

³⁷ Colen Campbell’s *Vitruvius Britannicus* (1715) assured him his position at the vanguard of the Revival style – described as ‘a manifesto of English Palladianism’. Wanstead House, as his first and largest commission features prominently. See John Harris, *The Palladian Revival* (London: Yale, 1995), pp.14-15 & p.41.

country house became a single coherent statement about the taste of the owner, and in Tylney's case it was about revealing the riches accumulated through trade and enterprise.³⁸



Extends 200
a Scale of 100 Feet.

The first Design of the best Front of Wanstead as intended by Sir Richard Child Bart.
It is most humbly Dedicated to my Lady Child.

elevation de la Maison de Wanstead, comme elle la Premiere pensèe de L'Architecte.

Ca. Campbell Inv. et Delin.

Wanstead House front elevation from Colen Campbell's *Vitruvius Britannicus* (1715)³⁹

With its beautiful setting and splendid gardens Wanstead House was considered to be amongst the finest seats in the realm, described by many as the English Versailles.⁴⁰ The structure and layout of Wanstead House typified the Grand Style by which noblemen imitated their Roman prototypes, and its purpose from the outset to act as a show place.⁴¹ Child's tree-lined avenues extended far beyond a fenced off inner section dominated by a large octagonal ornamental lake, called the basin, situated in front of the mansion. This

³⁸ Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination*, pp.626-627.

³⁹ This was Campbell's first design, which was subsequently modified for the constructed building.

⁴⁰ Joan Johnson, *Princely Chandos: James Brydges 1674-1744* (New Hampshire: Sutton, 1989), p.168; Armstrong, *Reconstructing Wanstead* provides valuable insight into the history of Wanstead House, its location and the status of its occupants.

⁴¹ Winston Ramsey & Reginald Fowkes, *Epping Forest Then and Now*, (London: Battle of Britain, 1992), p.155.

segregated area contained three gates for access to the grounds or 'New Park' as the locals referred to it.⁴² Signifying its disafforested status the New Park boundaries comprised of palings, which were specially designed ditches with timber barriers preventing deer (and the hunt) from entering the Park.⁴³ Because Wanstead now afforded (at a cost) the convenience of agistment for cattle during the fence month, its enclosure from the forest raised no local objections.

The new mansion house marked a turning point in Wanstead's history. Once coveted as a bolt-hole for royal privacy, it was now reconstructed into a glorious monument to mercantile grandeur; commanding notice and respect.

⁴² Unless otherwise stated, future references to the 'Park' in this chapter will relate specifically to land west of Wanstead House ['New Park'] being the area enclosed by Josiah Child in the late 1600s.

⁴³ Wanstead Estate had its own stock of deer, which were corralled in a separate area during the fence month.



Nollekins' Saloon at Wanstead House (1740), depicts its owners between 1704 and 1794

- (Seated Right) Richard Child, 1st Earl Tylney (1680-1750) - owner 1704-1750
- (Far Right) John Child, 2nd Earl Tylney (1712-1784) - owner 1750-1784
- (Infant on Left) Sir James Tylney Long (1736-1794) -owner 1784-1794

Wanstead House enjoyed a golden period in the mid-decades of the eighteenth century when its new Palladian features influenced the design of neo-classical mansions, such as Wentworth and Holkham. Nollekins' conversation piece *In the Saloon at Wanstead* (1740) depicts it as a thriving family home.⁴⁴ However, when John Child inherited in 1750, domesticity gave way to an era of decadence. The 2nd Earl Tylney entertained lavishly but

⁴⁴ Tylney was the main patron of Flemish painter Joseph Nollekins (1737-1823) and a number of his works appeared in the Wanstead House auction catalogue (June 1822).

lived dangerously, and his homosexual activities at Wanstead became an open secret.⁴⁵ He was a very generous man often organising events open to all who lived in the vicinity.⁴⁶ Eventually in 1768 Tylney fled to Italy after being discovered in bed with two male servants.⁴⁷ He became enamoured with Italian society, settling in Naples alongside other homosexual English émigrés such as Sir Horace Mann. Tylney often talked of returning home, so Wanstead House and Park were kept in a constant state of readiness for his arrival. Requests to buy or rent the house were politely refused, and years elapsed as the master stayed away and the house fell silent.⁴⁸ Ultimately Tylney's need for privacy clashed with Wanstead House's claim for appreciation.

Armstrong says that after the mid eighteenth-century country-house guidebooks became an important component of country-house visiting, but that Wanstead missed out because 'its most blossoming period pre-dated the heyday of such books'.⁴⁹ Whilst it is true that the mansion was effectively mothballed, Wanstead House and Park still attracted numerous tourists thanks to its inclusion in a number of popular travel books.⁵⁰ When Tylney died in 1784 the estate passed to his nephew Sir James Tylney-Long.⁵¹ This new

⁴⁵ G.S Rousseau, *Perilous Enlightenment* (Manchester University Press, 1991), pp.188-189.

⁴⁶ I am grateful for access to unpublished research conducted by Tim Couzens which provides numerous instances of Tylney's open house policy and charitable nature.

⁴⁷ Tylney's behaviour is recounted in Tobias Smollett's *Roderick Random* (1748) through the character of Lord Strutwell, - one of the first examples in English fiction of 'a man notorious for a passion for his own sex'. See also Clinton Elliott, *The Intimate Lives of Gay Men Past and Present*, (Indiana: Authorhouse, 2013), p.292.

⁴⁸ Author's private letters. Tylney turned down Lord Rockingham (1772) and the Russian Ambassador (1774) citing his imminent return as cause for refusal.

⁴⁹ Armstrong, *Reconstructing Wanstead*, p.37.

⁵⁰ Daniel Defoe, *A Tour through the whole island of Great Britain Volume 1* (London: Osborn, 1727) As early as 1724 Daniel Defoe wrote about Wanstead's gardens 'it has become the general diversion of British citizens to go out and see them'. Elsdon-Tuffs, *Wanstead House* has a detailed list of publications such as *The Gentleman's Magazine* (1768) comparing it favourably with Holkham, Houghton, Blenheim and Wilton. Other popular guides include *The Complete English Traveller* (1771) and *The Ambulator* (1790), which describes the Wanstead's interiors and art treasures in some detail.

⁵¹ James Long was the eldest son of Emma Child (daughter of 1st Lord Tylney), becoming Tylney-Long on becoming heir to his uncle's estate.

owner 'felt very little relish for... what is called the high life', preferring the privacy of his ancestral seat at Draycot in Wiltshire, and visiting Wanstead very infrequently.⁵² Tylney-Long produced a son and heir just before he died in 1794. The estate was placed under the jurisdiction of the Court of Chancery pending his coming of age. But that day never dawned because the boy was sickly and passed away in 1805 aged 11. This meant that the vast Tylney and Long estates now devolved upon his oldest sister, Catherine, who was then 16 years old – still 5 years from her majority. Almost immediately the press labelled Catherine the richest heiress in the land, making her a prime topic for conversation throughout all levels of society.⁵³ Whilst she was put through some hastily organised preparatory education for her new situation, Wanstead House was rented for £350 per annum to the Prince du Condé, serving as a base for exiled French royal family members.⁵⁴ It underwent a renaissance as a venue for social gatherings including a visit by several of the British princes in 1808, reported to be the first 'preconcerted interview between the two royal families'.⁵⁵ Catherine finally took possession of Wanstead House after her coming of age, but she did not reside there until after her marriage to Long-Wellesley at St James Piccadilly on March 14th 1812.

As stated, the moment the Long-Wellesleys came to Wanstead they locked horns with their neighbours over the Park. From the outset the newlyweds planned to remould Wanstead House into a status symbol commensurate with their rank and wealth.⁵⁶ Long-

⁵² *Gentleman's Magazine*, November 28th 1794.

⁵³ As early as February 1806 Catherine was identified as 'the richest female commoner in England'. *Caledonian Mercury*, February 15th 1806.

⁵⁴ *Derby Mercury*, March 4th 1802. The future Louis XVIII stayed at Wanstead House in 1807 (Stead). National Archives, C101/3810 receivers account for Wanstead indicates that the French Royal family paid a much-reduced rent that included provision of a housekeeper and bailiff.

⁵⁵ *Morning Chronicle*, August 20th 1808.

⁵⁶ *The Examiner*, January 9th 1814 reported 'Mr. Wellesley Long Pole, they say, is fitting up Wanstead

Wellesley also believed his newly acquired country seat could further his political ambitions, enabling him to join his already-famous Wellesley family relatives, whose power and influence within government and the royal circles was widely acknowledged.⁵⁷ The opening step in an ambitious refurbishment programme involved securing the site, so Long-Wellesley locked the gates.

Reclaiming the Park suited the Long-Wellesleys' vision for Wanstead, but it was also an attempt to deal with problems arising from their heightened celebrity. Not all interest in the Long-Wellesleys' affairs up until this time was positive, and Catherine was especially anxious about personal security long before her marriage. These pressing concerns could explain why the Long-Wellesleys acted so precipitately to seize the roadways instead of adopting a gentler approach, which their opponents claimed might well have been successful.

THE ROAD TO CELEBRITY (1805-1812)

Catherine became an object of fascination the moment she inherited her estates.⁵⁸ This must have come as a shock following her quiet rural upbringing at Draycot, but she seems to have coped and even relished being the most sought-after lady in the realm.⁵⁹ Catherine was expected to find a suitable husband during the London season of 1811. This

House in a style of magnificence exceeding even Carlton House... of which the private hospitalities of England, however celebrated, furnish no precedent, in expense, variety, and extent, since the days of Cardinal Wolsey'.

⁵⁷ In January 1812, Marquess Wellesley (an uncle) resigned as Foreign Secretary in order to challenge Spencer Perceval for the premiership, Wellesley-Pole (his father) was Secretary of State for Ireland, and Lord Wellington (another uncle) led the British forces against Napoleon.

⁵⁸ Stead, p66. This increased still further: An unidentified press cutting (circa 1806) informed readers that the recent death of Charles Long (of Bath) 'added over £200,000 to the funds of Miss Catherine Tilney-Long... who, *before* this unexpected windfall, was the richest heiress to the British Dominions'.

⁵⁹ Long-Wellesley MS, Catherine kept some press reports from this period.

involved attending a whirl of fetes, balls, theatre and other events to mingle with candidates from the highest social circles. Gossip about possible suitors filled the newspapers, periodicals and satirical prints. A developing story such as this was commercially attractive because it enabled the press to update readers, adding spice to keep them transfixed, and fuel demand for new 'episodes'.⁶⁰ At the point when her life-story became public property Catherine crossed the line from mere noteworthiness (merited by statements about her wealth) to celebrity (whereby she was the object of regular and continuous coverage). This accords with Turner's contention that celebrities are born when media interest shifts from 'their public role... to the details of their private lives.'⁶¹

The twists and turns of Catherine's courtship are fully explored in the first section of Roberts *Angel & The Cad* (2015) and need not be elaborated here. Instead I will focus on two satirical prints, providing insight into representations of her celebrity at that time.



⁶⁰ For example the *Morning Post* spent four consecutive days describing her Wanstead House *dejeune* episodically, finishing each report with 'more tomorrow' (12th-15th July 1811).

⁶¹ Turner, *Understanding Celebrity*, p.8.

George Cruickshank's *Princely Piety, Or the Worshippers at Wanstead* is a tour-de-force of celebrity topicality, connecting Catherine's courtship with other prominent public sphere attractions from the autumn of 1811. Catherine is seen at the top of a gilded staircase representing the stages of her life. She balances on the step of 'old maidism' as the devil stands behind pushing her down to 'discretion'. She is surrounded by an array of public characters with whom she is rumoured to have been connected. The tall figure of a jester playing a violin on the left is probably Sir Thomas Champneys, a popular eccentric whose passion for dressing up and role play made him an extremely desirable guest, reckoned to be better value than Kemble.⁶² That summer Champneys, 'whose attendance at a masquerade is always most anxiously looked for by the *beau monde*', formed a platonic friendship with Catherine and was often seen with her.⁶³ His private letters reveal him as a light-hearted matchmaker, suggesting that Catherine run the rule over Mr Bradshaw: 'hair well-dressed, pumps well-fitted, coat well-cut, cravat accurately tied, and snuff box *remarkably large*'.⁶⁴

The pair of characters dancing on the left are Pole and Lord Kilworth, who had fought a duel in August over some lines of poetry sent to the press ridiculing Pole's Waltzing prowess. Renowned for sending their private correspondence to the press, they were thought to be principal rivals for Catherine's hand.⁶⁵ The man with a cockerel on his head is Robert 'Romeo' Coates, an execrably bad actor who caused a sensation at Bath during that

⁶² *Morning Post*, June 14th 1809.

⁶³ *Ibid*, June 27th 1811.

⁶⁴ Long-Wellesley MS, B4-V2-L30.

⁶⁵ This duel is discussed in more depth in Chapter 5.

summer season where he appeared as Romeo and refused to die.⁶⁶ It was common knowledge that Coates plagued Catherine with love letters, and he was about to transfer to the London stage, where he could renew their acquaintance.⁶⁷ Alongside Coates sits Lumley Skeffington, a notable playwright and fop, who attended several of Catherine's entertainments.⁶⁸ Accompanying this satire *The Scourge* invented a fictitious conversation between Skeffington and Catherine, finding him lost for words because 'to flatter perfection is impossible'.⁶⁹ The man on his knees is Baron de Garamb, a controversial character famed for his extremely long false moustache. He was in London appealing for funds to raise an army of mercenaries against France. Cruickshank reflects public distrust in de Garamb, who is shown amassing gold whilst selling secrets to Napoleon. I found no evidence that Catherine knew de Garamb personally, so it is possible that this popularly lampooned personality was added to round off a field of thoroughly unsuitable candidates. The final and central figure in this satire is King William IV, who was then the Duke of Clarence. As a member of the Royal Family he was the best-known of Catherine's many suitors, having met her at Carlton House in May, becoming captivated by her wealth and beauty.⁷⁰ Clarence lived with the actress Dorothy Jordan by whom he had ten children, but he ended their relationship so that he could propose to Catherine. He is depicted here trampling on the Marriage Act whilst beckoning Catherine towards him. Meanwhile Jordan stands on a chest inscribed 'Bushy Money Chest M T' (empty) and pours a chamber pot of children over his head.

⁶⁶ Roberts, *Angel and the Cad*, p.23 - Coates is featured with a rooster because he was often greeted with a cheer of 'Cock-A-Doodle-Do'.

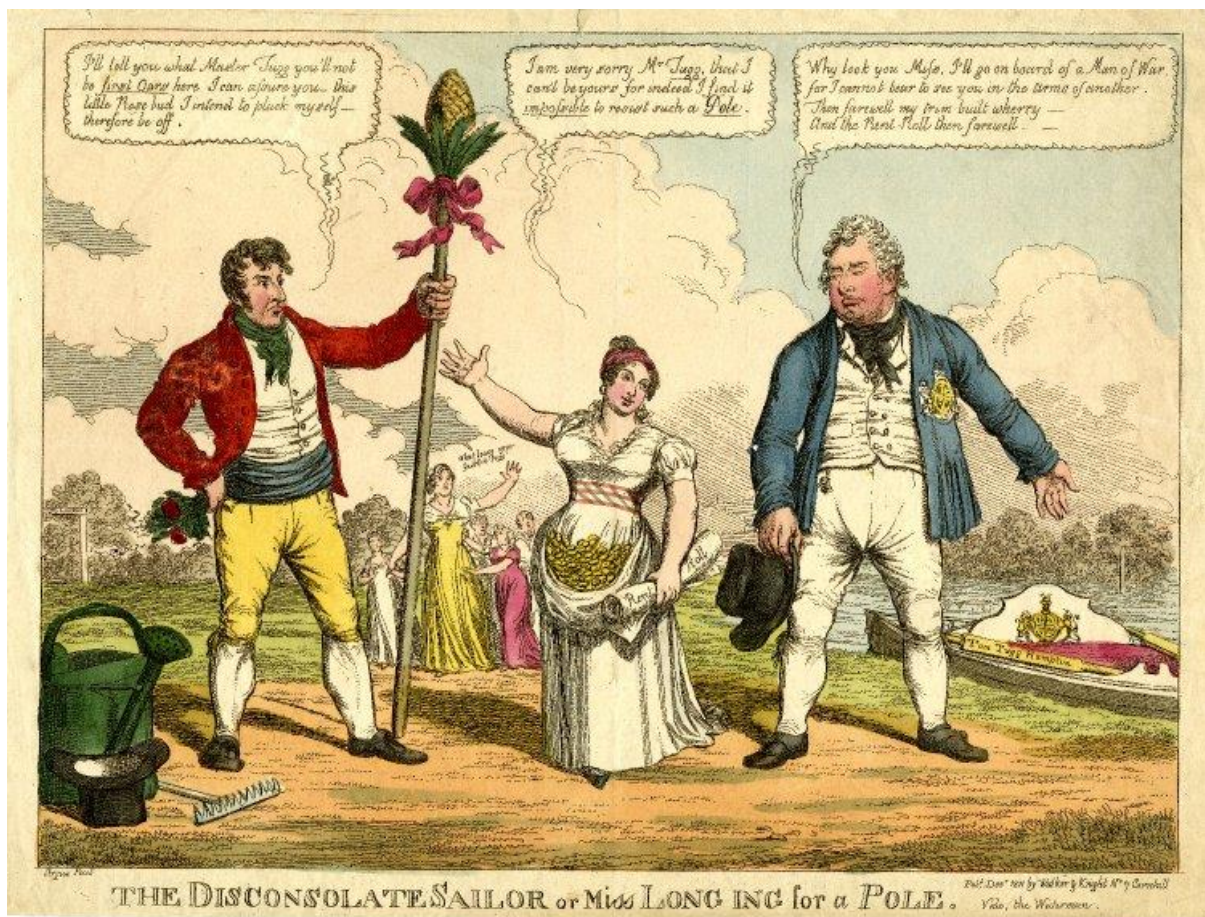
⁶⁷ Ibid, and ODNB, Robert Coates (1772-1848).

⁶⁸ Such as Lady Tylney Long's Ball, *Morning Post*, July 20th 1810.

⁶⁹ *The Scourge*, September 1811.

⁷⁰ Roberts, *Angel and the Cad*, pp.30-37, 45-49.

Cruikshank has created an ensemble of celebrities – in which each character alludes to their reason for recognition to cement their caricatures in the public mind; and he has woven them into the tapestry of a contemporary and still unfolding spectacle. Catherine's private life now belongs to the public sphere, where she is represented as a kind of lottery prize. Her public persona implies that Catherine is fair game for others willing to try their hand, and public opinion is invested accordingly.



This satire by Charles Williams from November 1811 reveals the denouement of Catherine's marriage quest. She wears an apron laden with gold, and carries her rent-roll. She says apologetically to Clarence 'I cannot be yours for indeed I find it impossible to resist

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such a Pole'. Clarence, dressed as a Thames waterman, bids farewell to her rent-roll, and signals his intention to embark, disregarding Mrs Jordan and the children waving in the background. Catherine's arm stretches out towards Pole who is dressed as a gardener and boasts to Clarence 'this little rosebud I intend to pluck myself'. Pole oozes masculinity; he stands erect, a massive pole in one hand and a bunch of previously plucked rosebuds in the other. At his feet lie symbols of his public reputation: a dandy top hat; a rake, and a watering can for sowing his seeds. This satire was factually correct as Catherine had rejected Clarence's advances in favour of Pole; and Clarence was not returning to his mistress. On receiving this news Byron encapsulated public unease about Catherine's choice of husband when he wrote 'Pole is to marry Miss Long & will be a very miserable dog for all that'.⁷¹

Satires of Catherine's courtship go to the very heart of how gender was treated in the public sphere. In these and other examples Catherine appears as a desirable commodity witnessing a battle to obtain her purse. Polite etiquette denied Catherine's character a chance to emerge into the public sphere. As a consequence little attention is paid to her personality excepting the fact she will be deciding her future destiny. By implication Catherine's celebrity revolves around her status as an un-plucked flower, expected to expire when speculation about her marriage has ended and her much-coveted fortune is claimed by the chosen husband. Long-Wellesley, on the other hand, comes across as model of manliness exhibiting pluck and chivalric endeavour to win Catherine's hand. Whilst not entirely flattering, Long-Wellesley's satires portray a fashionable but extravagant man celebrated for his sexual virility, whose arrogant confidence offers audiences the prospect of future spectacle that will further his celebrity.

⁷¹ Leslie Marchand (Ed.), *Byron's Letters & Journals, Volume 2 1810-1812* (London: Murray, 1973), p.142.

From the moment she became public property Catherine was beset by two problems we normally associate with modern concepts of celebrity. Firstly she had to deal with curious and volatile crowds, whose actions she was powerless to control; and secondly she became the target of attention from strangers believing they had a stake in her affairs.⁷² These fame-induced problems convinced Catherine that she needed protection from the public at large.

Catherine's crowd troubles began with her coming of age celebrations at Draycot in October 1810, when a hoard of outsiders 'rushed in and cleared the tables'.⁷³ The event was so well pre-publicised that yeomen employed to keep order were swept aside by a violent gate-crashing mob. To prevent a repetition of such disorder, Catherine deliberately understated entertainments for a party arranged at Wanstead House in July 1811. Her simple invitation card read 'A *dejeune* at 2 o'clock' giving no hint of the incredible display of dancing, music and sumptuous dining to follow.⁷⁴ But the press realised this was an important open-day for potential husbands to assess Catherine first-hand, and they eagerly anticipated the occasion.⁷⁵ *The Morning Post* afterwards enthused: 'to say that the Company were pleased was saying nothing. They were absolutely lost in astonishment and the majesty grandeur and beauty of Tylney House [sic] and its many acquirements'.⁷⁶ This ringing endorsement masked the fact that Catherine's privacy was assailed. On the day a

⁷² Examples for each might be The Beatles' arrival at JFK airport in February 1964 when an albeit good-natured crowd endangered their safety; and the attack upon Monica Seles by a crazed fan in Germany in April 1993.

⁷³ Kilvert F. & W. Plomer, *Kilvert's Diary: 1870-1879* (London: Penguin, 1977), pp.245-246.

⁷⁴ *Morning Post* 11th July 1811.

⁷⁵ It was considered the 'fashionable arrangement' of the week, *Morning Post* 8th July 1811.

⁷⁶ *Morning Post* 14th July 1811.

large number of uninvited guests talked their way inside, doubling the attendees to 1200 and stretching her hospitality to breaking point. Furthermore the Park was crammed with ‘upwards of 10,000 people... standing over every barrier, and up every tree to gratify a more eager curiosity than we ever before witnessed’.⁷⁷ Catherine’s public appearances could be equally intrusive. Charlotte Bury described her being mobbed by packs of gaping ‘truffle-hunters’ from ‘the united schools of Eton and Westminster’.⁷⁸

Lilti contends that the more famous a person becomes – the more easily fans become convinced they share an intimate relationship.⁷⁹ Studies on early celebrities such as Rousseau, Emma Hamilton and Byron have shown that fame intensified public curiosity about their private lives.⁸⁰ Their fame was based on tangible achievement – what Rojek terms ‘achieved celebrity’. Catherine, on the other hand, was an ‘ascribed celebrity’ because she became famous through publicity and wealth not talent, but she still had to grapple with the same issues of public intimacy.⁸¹

Throughout 1811 Catherine received many unsolicited letters. These mainly consisted of fan mail; including several adulatory poems, valentines, offers of advice or constructive criticism. However some missives were more sinister. One particular set of correspondence caused Catherine to make a decision revealing that it was always her intention to close Wanstead’s Park at the earliest opportunity. In February 1811 Catherine ignored her attorney’s advice and terminated leases on three properties immediately adjoining her property. She maintained that their continuing occupation would be

⁷⁷ Ibid.

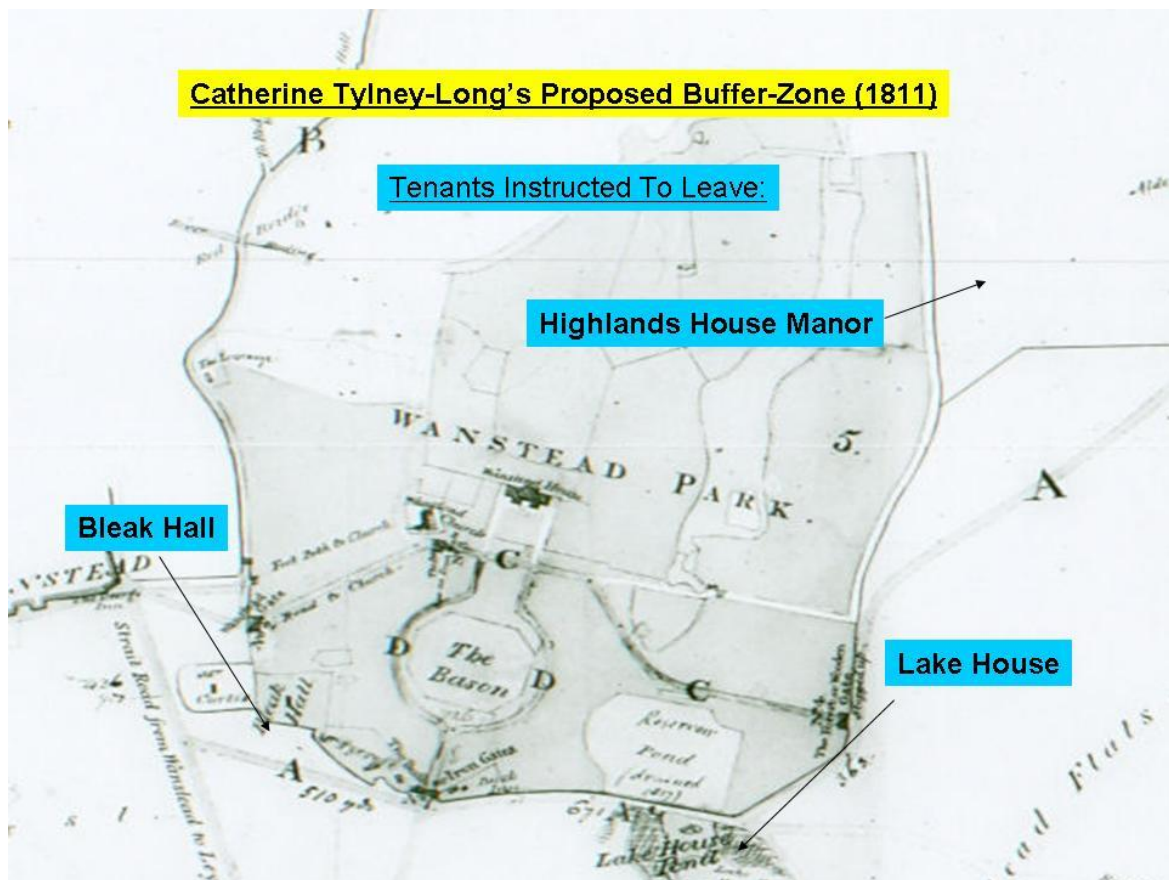
⁷⁸ Charlotte Bury, *Diary of a Lady-in-Waiting*, Vol 1 (London: Bodley Head, 1908), p.71.

⁷⁹ Lilti, *Invention of Celebrity*, p.10.

⁸⁰ Examples include Lilti, ‘Rousseau & Celebrity’; McDayter *Byromania and the birth of Celebrity Culture*; Colville & Williams, *Emma Hamilton*.

⁸¹ Rojek, *Celebrity*, p.17.

‘inconvenient to a resident at Wanstead House’.⁸² Thus Blake Hall, Lake House, and Highlands House were to be stripped of their residents.⁸³



These instructions were issued at a time when Catherine and her family had become virtual ‘prisoners in their own house’, under siege from an obsessed stranger. A man named Scott had penned a long series of ‘ardent, romantic and enthusiastic’ letters claiming ‘it was ordained that they would be matched’.⁸⁴ Initial amusement the Tylney-Longs felt reading these love notes evaporated when Scott accosted Catherine on the road to Chippenham,

⁸² BLM, ADD 82483, f.112, February 12th 1811.

⁸³ Lake House was later rented by Thomas Hood, where he wrote *Tylney Hall* (1834); Bleak Hall perhaps influenced Dickens *Bleak House* (1853), see chapter 6.

⁸⁴ *Morning Chronicle*, January 4th 1812.

refusing to take no for her answer. He subsequently found lodgings near Draycot, rendering it impossible for Catherine to venture out without encountering him.

In these circumstances it is hardly surprising Catherine sought to create a buffer-zone around Wanstead House. Scott's pestering letters continued after Catherine departed for the London season. Then in December, when he heard of her engagement, Scott reappeared at Draycot forcing his way inside to demand a personal hearing. Luckily Pole was present and restrained Scott. The matter was taken seriously because Pole travelled to London and fetch Townsend, an eminent Bow Street Runner, to deal with Scott. However Townsend's only legal recourse was to threaten him with a breach of the peace, which was an inadequate deterrent. In the end Scott only withdrew following a direct appeal from his mother, who was ashamed by the *publicity* surrounding his activities.⁸⁵

⁸⁵ Ibid.



On 7th January 1812 William Heath published this satire, which may be the first ever public representation of a case of celebrity stalking.⁸⁶ Catherine and William appear as star-crossed lovers from Romeo and Juliet, as Townsend drives Scott from the scene. Once again the public got to enjoy, and pass their opinion on, the drama of their private lives.

Catherine was also targeted by a medical student named Lane, whose series of love-letters quickly turned nasty culminating in death threats unless Catherine paid £100. Her draft was directed to a London coffee-house, where Lane was easily apprehended and placed into custody.⁸⁷ These letters and experiences were a direct consequence of Catherine's celebrity, making her wary of interaction with strangers.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Stalking' in this context was first coined by the tabloid press in the United States. As recently as 1996 the question was asked 'Is there a law against stalking?' See *New Law Journal*/6736 pp.418-420.

⁸⁷ *Morning Chronicle*, October 22nd 1812.

⁸⁸ Long-Wellesley MS, contains numerous fan letters.

When she eventually accepted Pole, Catherine chose a partner who was already very well-known thanks to his family connections and rascally reputation. From an early age Pole's chief ambition was 'celebrity' and he was always looking for ways to attain it.⁸⁹ Therefore Catherine's hopes for 'setting off moderately and without ostentation' were quickly subsumed beneath Pole's desire for spectacle.⁹⁰ He saw the potential of combining Tylney-Long wealth with Wellesley power, and the celebrity possibilities it promised.

Closing Wanstead Park laid a marker for the Long-Wellesleys' ambitions, but it also aimed to improve personal security and restore privacy that had been compromised through the process of their exposure to mass public recognition. Recently uncovered bank ledgers, outlining Long-Wellesley's expenditure from the time he arrived in Wanstead, show that considerable and regular payments were made to a Mr Plank, a highly regarded 'police officer' who was responsible for ensuring their safety.⁹¹

THE KING v LONG-WELLESLEY (1813)

A few months prior to the trial Long-Wellesley legally established his rights to the hereditary role of Lord Warden of Epping Forest, stating he was not looking to remove forestry employees from their positions, but merely to confirm his power to appoint or sack them.⁹² Long-Wellesley's wardenship had no bearing on the case because Wanstead Park was long-since disafforested, but it was an attempt to deter opponents such as verderers,

⁸⁹ Ibid, B4-V4-L36 Letter from Mary Bagot, William's sister, September 1808.

⁹⁰ Ibid, B4-V1-L8.

⁹¹ Barclays Group Archives, see also my concluding chapter. A 'police officer' at this time was someone employed (usually on a private basis) to protect individuals or property from intruders, not to be confused with the subsequent state-organised police force that first appeared in 1829. Samuel Plank (or Planche) was most notable for being employed to arrest the Cato Street conspirators in January 1820.

⁹² E.R.O D/Du 503/2.

farmers and huntsmen relying upon the Warden's patronage. This use of privilege to assert status and to defend his public behaviour was a common theme of Long-Wellesley's life. In this instance Long-Wellesley's assertion of Wardenship was to have a profound long-term effect on the future of Epping Forest.

Sarjeant Best opened the case for the prosecution by attacking Long-Wellesley's celebrity status.⁹³ It was 'scarcely necessary' to tell the jury that Long-Wellesley was 'of a very rich family... professing virtues that would have made kings even proud... [possessing] perhaps the largest fortune in this kingdom'. With so much luck he observed 'we should suppose [Long-Wellesley] would be happy to leave the public in possession of the rights they had'. Long-Wellesley was 'inventing troubles' due to the absence of any real worries in his life. It was known he had dismissed the entire administrative staff on his estates the moment he was married, sweeping away 'the wise counsel of a generation of family servants', and by closing the Park he was now claiming new rights rather than relying on old ones. All this occurred during Long-Wellesley's honeymoon, a time when 'we should have thought he would have been otherwise engaged!' Sarjeant Shepherd on behalf of the defence interjected protesting that remarks about Long-Wellesley's family, good fortune or decision to appoint his own staff - 'men of greatest respectability and integrity', - were not only irrelevant to the case but also showed the 'temper with which the prosecution proceeds'. Best apologised for any offence, stating that his clients were anxious to resolve the issue 'in a way most friendly' but he had made his point portraying Long-Wellesley as a heartless outsider riding roughshod over loyal staff and local rights.

⁹³ E.R.O TB/39/1 Much of what follows is taken directly from this trial transcript.

Referring to English law Best advised there were three types of roadway: a footway, a horse (or bridle) way, and a carriageway. ‘Once a road is used by one-horse chaises it becomes a carriageway, then a coach-and-six and broad-wheeled waggons are also entitled to use it’. The defence might prove that loaded carts and heavy waggons had been periodically refused entry to the park, but this made no difference since the road was clearly an established carriageway.

The King v William-Pole-Tynney-Long-Wellesley

PROSECUTION WITNESSES

<u>Witness</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Residence</u>	<u>Profession</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Use of Wanstead Park</u>
1	Biggs, Benjamin	Surrey	Surveyor	-	Since 1783
2	Appleton, John	Wanstead	Chief Steward (Ex-Wanstead House)	-	Since 1786
3	Wilson, Robert	East Ham	Not Stated	-	Since 1773
4	Wilson, John	Tower Hill	Businessman	-	Since 1783
5	Ogle, Jade	Leytonstone	Livestock	71	Since 1768
6	Noble, Joseph	Walthamstow	Brewer	-	Since 1783
7	Bradley, Giles	Whitechapel	Undertaker	-	Since 1787
8	Wilkes,	Wanstead	Not Stated, but related to the Longs	-	Since 1773
9	Raikes, William	Wanstead	Magistrate	-	Since 1768
10	Vincent, Thomas	Ilford	Post Chaise Boy	-	Since 1774
11	Swain, Timothy	Forest Gate	Carter	65	Since 1760
12	Campion, Edward	Wanstead	Driver (Ex-Wanstead House)	72	Since 1760
13	Gribble, Thomas	Wanstead	Retired, profession not stated	82	Since 1750

Table 1

32 prosecution witnesses attended to testify before the special jury, indicating that Long-Wellesley’s intimidatory tactics failed because the people were ‘prepared to accept his privations rather than concede him the Park’. These included county magistrates, justices of the peace and other local dignitaries. A significant number, however, were ordinary folk giving a clear indication that this was a popular cause. To save time only 13 prosecution witnesses were actually called (see Table 1). Merchants contended the roads were utilised for generations without restriction by a variety of transport means. Jade Ogle carried calves and pigs along the roads ‘for the nearest way’ to his customers. Joseph Noble sent dray

horses from his Walthamstow brewery to Wanstead and into Essex via the park. For 28 years Vincent Thomas drove a hired post-chaise from the Red Lion in Ilford through the park, sometimes riding there purely for his clients' pleasure. Self-employed carter Timothy Swain from Forest Gate declared it was his favoured route to Woodford for almost half a century. An undertaker from Whitechapel described funeral processions proceeding through the park for no other reason than to give the dead a final turn around the parish. These cortèges were not even intended for St Marys Church but continued their way out of the park towards Woodford and beyond.

Robert Wilson, whose brother was renowned for breaking Long-Wellesley's locks the previous year, stated that a decade earlier he had found the Forest Gate chained up when going for his regular ride. He approached then Chief-Steward John Appleton demanding that the locks be removed or he would break them. Appleton referred the matter to Mr Bullock who was Receiver of the estate. A letter was then sent reassuring Wilson that the closure was temporary and the gate was re-opened. Had the owners of Wanstead House any rights, the prosecution contended, they ought to have demanded them at that time rather than backing down immediately. The Wilsons said their trips to the Park were purely recreational and that they saw this case as a fight to preserve their entitlement to a 'pleasant ride'. Thomas Gribble aged 82 testified he knew 'men long-since dead' who recalled universal use of the roads as far back as Sir Josiah Child's days. Edward Campion said he 'lived with Lord Tylney before he went abroad,' and regularly drove his master round the park meeting people 'using it in the same way it has been used since', and that Tylney never said anything about it. John Appleton was the Chief-Steward at Wanstead House for 26 years up until March 1812 when Long-Wellesley relieved him of his duties, and had actually rented the Park since 1797. He said that during the decade that Tylney-Long owned Wanstead House

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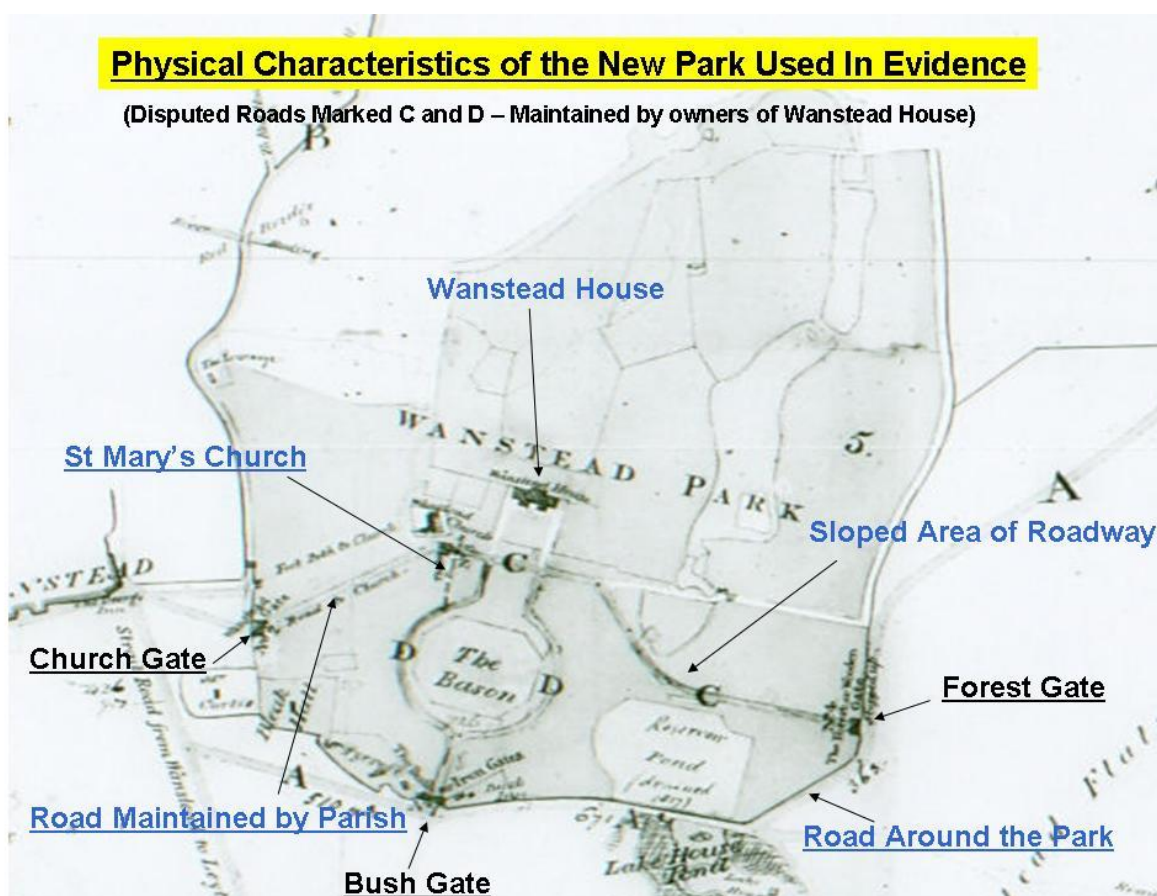
G.P Roberts: *Long-Wellesley & Publicity: The role of Celebrity in the Public Sphere (1788-1832)*

he only resided there twice, during the spring seasons in 1792 and 1793. He admitted that Tylney-Long had tried to lock the gates in 1786, only to find that immediate local objections persuaded him to re-open them because 'he did not want a rumpus'. Best suggested that Tylney-Long wanted the Park closed but *realised* (to his regret) he had no legal right, though Appleton was unwilling to confirm this. Appleton admitted closing the Park on several occasions over the course of two decades, but this was always during the fence month. His reasons were financial: 'people used to fetch the cattle out and put them in so we could not discriminate... so I did not always get paid'. Appleton always stopped loaded carts and waggons though he conceded 'I don't know whether they had rights or not'. In summary the prosecution argued that Long-Wellesley disregarded a wealth of evidence showing that the roads were constantly utilised without interruption, with the knowledge (if not always the acquiescence) of Wanstead House's owners or representatives, therefore his decision to remove these rights had no basis in law.

Sarjeant Shepherd was enticed from London at great expense by Long-Wellesley to defend him in this action. His task was not an easy one considering the strength of the prosecution case, and the fact that neither Bullock nor Long-Wellesley were in attendance. Long-Wellesley was not expected to testify, but his absence from the courtroom was duly noticed. Likewise Bullock, who had represented the Tylney-Longs interests in Essex for several decades, but was kept out of the way because Long-Wellesley had ordered him to attend another courtroom hearing on the same day to evict long-standing tenant Mr Wright from Rochford Hall.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ Wright, who occupied Rochford Hall since the early 1770s when he was considered an excellent tenant by Lord Tylney, was yet another victim of Long-Wellesley's wholesale changes. (From original letters in author's possession).

Shepherd wasted no time agreeing to three token charges of ‘shutting up the roads,’ and declared he would not challenge the veracity of so many witnesses as to how the roads were used. It was more important to show that this situation ‘never originated from a matter of legal right but from neglect or indulgence’ caused by former owners. The public had assumed rights that simply did not exist. Opening the roadways meant unrestricted access to the whole of the Park, which was unquestionably Long-Wellesley’s private property. If Long-Wellesley was to concede now, he might as well ‘submit to all the uses that have been made of the Park and all the amusements that have taken place there’. This action was Long-Wellesley’s stand to retrieve what common sense showed belonged to Wanstead House.



Shepherd used a map to explain the layout of the Park, questioning the logic of Child's investment in such extensive landscaping and disafforestation if he intended to allow unrestricted access. Surely the Lord Tylney would never have sited his Palladian mansion in proximity to such roads? Then there was the curious tradition of the swing gates at each entrance which historically required opening and closing via a latch upon entry or egress to the park. Would this have been necessary or even allowable on a public road? He also pointed out that the road leading to St Mary's via Church Gate was maintained at the expense of the parish in the manner of all public roads, but beyond it and throughout the Park upkeep was the responsibility of Wanstead House. The road from the mansion towards the Forest Gate was not even fully gravelled as any public road should be – it was comprised of turf which was clearly unsuitable for heavy traffic. So the financial arrangements for and physical state of the roads dictated they belonged to Long-Wellesley because 'on consideration no man would say it is a public highway'. With Wanstead House now permanently occupied, now *was* the right time to end years of public indulgence and restore the Park to its rightful owner. He argued that loss of these routes would barely affect commercial interests as the prosecution had already admitted the roadway outside the park boundary (via Blake Hall) was perfectly adequate.

The defence called witnesses to prove that the Park had been closed on many occasions down the years, and that fence month activities alone established the principle that access to the roads *could* be withdrawn by the owners of Wanstead House with the consent of the people. The roads could not be considered public because a right of way was not *always* available. As to occasions when Tylney-Long and Appleton backed down over locking the gates, this bore 'not a feather upon the case'. Neither gentleman relented

because they felt they had broken the law. Goodwill towards neighbours did not amount to any concession of rights.

The King v William-Pole-Tyney-Long-Wellesley

DEFENCE WITNESSES

<u>Witness</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Residence</u>	<u>Profession</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Use of Wanstead Park</u>
1	Barker, Thomas	Wanstead	Parish Clerk	-	Since 1762
2	Pierce, John	Wanstead	Carter (Wanstead House)	-	Since 1785
3	Squibb, George	Wanstead	Gardener (Ex-Wanstead House)	-	Since 1775
4	Adams, Thomas	Wanstead	Carpenter (Wanstead House)	-	Since 1780
5	Bradford, Thomas	Wanstead	Gardener (Wanstead House)	-	Since 1790
6	Rosindale, W	Barking	Builder	-	Since 1790
7	Hawkins, James	Wanstead	Servant (Wanstead House)	-	Since 1790
8	Bridgeman, Charles	Wanstead	Under-Gardener (Wanstead House)	-	Since 1775
9	Tanner, John	Wanstead	Gentleman	-	Since 1781
10	Spurrell, George	Wanstead	Gentleman	-	Since 1790s
11	Cox, William	Wanstead	Carpenter (Wanstead House)	-	Since 1773
12	Pittman, Thomas	Wanstead	Local Farmer	45	Since 1768
13	Saunders, John	Wanstead	Carpenter (Wanstead House)*	-	Since 1773
14	Symonds, Daniel	Wanstead	Carpenter (Wanstead House)	-	Since 1790s

*Denied this under oath

Table 2

Shepherd's line of defence was very similar to a case heard at Thetford in 1805.

Berney v Beavor arose when workmen smashed through a boundary fence erected to block a footpath across the lawn of a Mr Berney. 13 'respectable' witnesses came forward declaring that the established right of way had not been utilised for 25 years, even though Berney's tenants, their servants and workmen were using it regularly without interruption. On the decidedly weak grounds that 'no stranger' was permitted to cross the lawn Berney claimed 'abandonment of rights' enabling the public right of way to be withdrawn. The defence called 26 witnesses (some of whom were very old) unanimously proving the footpath was in continuous use, because it was in fact the main pathway to the next village. However the verdict went in favour of the house-owner on the basis he was entitled to enjoy 'comfort and tranquillity,' the judge giving weight to the fact that the right of way had

been persistently challenged over a long period of time. In this case privacy had won the battle over public rights.

Shepherd called 14 witnesses for the purpose of establishing that the use of the roadways had also been consistently challenged down the years. But the witnesses he relied upon were insufficiently respectable and damagingly partisan (see Table 2). A least 9 of these were current or former Wanstead House staff, mainly lower-grade or uneducated employees who had survived Long-Wellesley's cull of the previous year and may have been coerced to attend. Thomas Bradford and James Hawkins could only state they had been obliged to climb over locked gates a few times when they walked their way to work, which would have been expected early in the morning given that the gates were sometimes closed at night. Parish Clerk Thomas Barker, the only witness of any standing, admitted that he rented 65 acres from Long-Wellesley. After insisting that funeral processions for St Mary's Church had to use the Church Gate only, Barker confessed his failure to enforce this rule. The remaining witnesses described occasions when carts had been turned back or the gates chained, but it was always during the fence month meaning that little new was gleaned.

Best responded that such testimony in Long-Wellesley's name was 'an injustice to a man of rank [and] a lesson to men to take care how they engage in contests'. He scoffed at the prohibition of business traffic: "I will restate the law, that if it be a road for one carriage, it be a road for every carriage." If the Park was wholly private, how was it that St Mary's Church stood within its boundaries for centuries accessible via a road belonging to the parish? When the church was reconstructed in 1790 it remained sited in the Park on land gifted by Tylney-Long, who also generously donated towards the building costs. If Tylney-Long truly believed the Park was exclusively his, he would never have acted so. The plain

truth was that 'upon every occasion this family [attempted] to get rid of the public rights.... when they found the public awake, they abandoned them'.

Revealingly, 7 of the prosecution witnesses emphasised the importance of Wanstead Park as a leisure amenity. Shepherd neglected to challenge these assertions save for labelling them an extended liberty impossible to curtail so long as the Park remained open. The pleasurable activities described were not confined to the roads, involving the grounds of the Park and even extended inside Wanstead House. Its popularity as a tourist attraction was undeniable. Benjamin Biggs found it 'most pleasant to drive for pleasure... I have seen a great number of holiday folks there'. People fished upon the lakes, played sport and picnicked on the grass, and galloped their horses in the Park.

As for the house, Appleton's evidence revealed its role in cultivating Wanstead as a visitor attraction. Pleasure carriages and men on horseback 'were allowed to come on a Saturday & perhaps at other times. It was allowed by the family'. Appleton recalled a great many visitors, proving a lucrative source of income for servants paid to show them around its lavish staterooms to view a wealth of art and ancient artefacts on display. The very lucky were permitted to put their horses up in the stable block. It was clear to all that employees of Wanstead House had a vested interest in welcoming the public and did so as much as possible in the absence of its owners. These circumstances explain why the notion of denying access to the Park for private enjoyment was never seriously considered by those employed at the house. No one denied that travelling through the Park lengthened most journeys, but Wanstead Park's pleasantness made it a worthwhile diversion.



This is a typical 18th century painting of Wanstead House. Figures are usually added to landscape scenes for perspective. However, the emphasis here and in other instances is upon pleasurable use of the park by all levels of society.

At the end of a long day the judge decided the defence case was so weak that he directed the jury to find Long-Wellesley guilty, 'which they did without hesitation'. A King might be able to give a bit of land from the forest, but one who adds it to his domain 'must take it with all its burthens'. Because the ancient access rights belonged to the roads not the forest, these could only be taken away by an Act of Parliament.

Taking this case to court was an emphatic error on Long-Wellesley's part. He was ignorant of traditions binding Wanstead House to the forest, unable to prove the rights of

way were acquired by stealth, and completely underestimated the celebrity that Wanstead House and Park already enjoyed, rendering them an important source of local pride and affection. Undaunted by his enormous wealth and influence ordinary folk had shown their willingness to fight rather than to forego their continued enjoyment of Wanstead Park.

Long-Wellesley's absence on the day was attributed by his enemies to an estrangement of feeling 'hardly one degree above a brute'.⁹⁵ This was a little unfair since evidence suggests that Long-Wellesley did intend to be present. He had already taken the trouble to be excused from attending a House of Commons vote by pairing up, and was at home the week the hearing was scheduled.⁹⁶ So confident was he of a successful outcome that Humphry Repton was summoned to Wanstead on Monday 8th March (4 days before the trial) to receive instructions for remodelling the Park. Repton considered this commission 'the summit of his career' and he was delighted by Long-Wellesley's 'good taste' in deciding to 'preserve the original style of the place'.⁹⁷ Given Long-Wellesley's misguided belief that victory in this cause was a formality he would have savoured the occasion. But he never made it because the Long-Wellesley's battle for privacy had finally come to a head.

On the eve of the trial an early morning caller disturbed the tranquillity of Wanstead House. Erstwhile stalker Scott was back, having just escaped from a Norwich madhouse where his family incarcerated him following previous misdemeanours. He alighted from a carriage at Snaresbrook, scaling the Park gates on his way to the mansion. Scott appeared visibly deranged and threatened to murder Long-Wellesley for denying him access to see Catherine. Only the strength and bravery of attending servants prevented a tragedy, for

⁹⁵ Harvey, *Meditations on Wanstead*, p.436.

⁹⁶ *Morning Chronicle*, March 9th 1813.

⁹⁷ Humphry Repton covering letter in *Plans for the Improvement of the Grounds at Wanstead House* (1813) Sold at auction to the Getty Museum in 2002 for £58,000 (Information courtesy of Georgina Green.

Scott was carrying a large carving knife. The next day Long-Wellesley had to prove his life was in danger before a Walthamstow magistrate to ensure that Scott was remanded to Barking Bridewell prison.⁹⁸ Long-Wellesley could not risk leaving his pregnant wife unguarded until he was certain that Scott was safely under lock and key, leaving insufficient time to travel 30 miles to Chelmsford. Events at Wanstead were reported in the London newspapers on the very morning when the trial was heard at Chelmsford. Its absence from the trial transcript meant that the news arrived too late to assist Long-Wellesley's cause. By the day of the trial, however, the Long-Wellesleys had already learned the salutary lesson that locked gates were no barrier against determined intruders; and that invasion of privacy was a price to be paid for celebrity status.

The public were naturally elated by the outcome of the trial. John Harvey described 'a crowd of humble happy beings' music-making and celebrating a ceremonial opening of the gates. Long-Wellesley was a hate-figure likened to Bonaparte since he sought 'to wrong all his neighbours'.⁹⁹ However the means of overturning this ruling had been perfectly illuminated by the judge and Long-Wellesley quickly brought forward a private Act of Parliament to attain his goal.¹⁰⁰ Their expensive house refurbishment plans went ahead regardless and at least part of Repton's landscaping proposals were put into effect. On April 11th 1816 the 'freehold of the soil of the said roads' was finally discontinued and they became part of the Park.¹⁰¹ To compensate Long-Wellesley widened, improved and maintained the road around the park (nowadays known as Blake Hall Road) so that it now added just 188 yards to journeys between Wanstead and Forest Gate (See appendix 2). In

⁹⁸ Reported in *The Times* and *Morning Chronicle* on Saturday March 13th 1813.

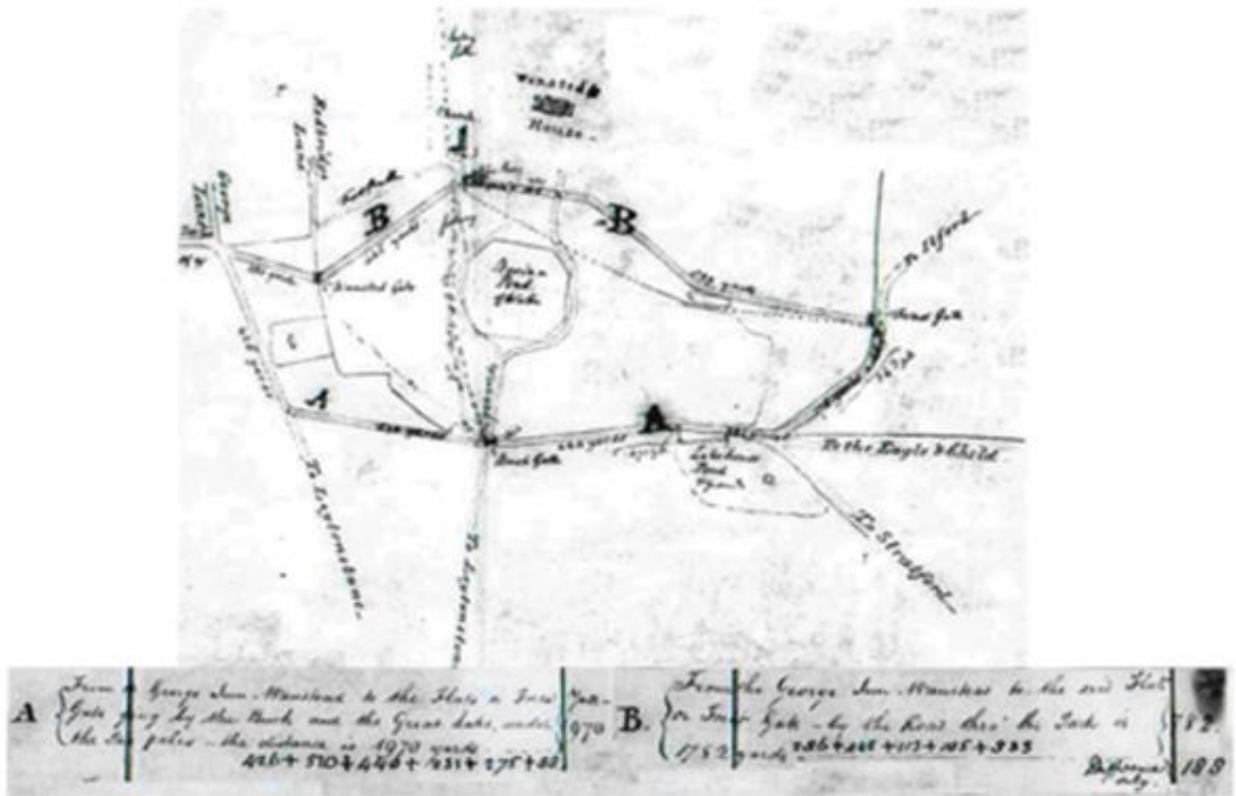
⁹⁹ Harvey, *Meditations in Wanstead*, p.438.

¹⁰⁰ See Chapter 4.

¹⁰¹ E.R.O, TB/39/1 – Act appended.

keeping with his contradictory nature, and perhaps fearing that total seclusion could damage their celebrity standing, Long-Wellesley was conciliatory in victory and permitted public access to the Park on Saturdays.¹⁰²

Wanstead Park – Creation of Blake Hall Road Route c.1816



Following Long-Wellesley's improvements, just 188 yards were added to standard journeys

¹⁰² Stead, p.62.

CONCLUSION

The closure of Wanstead Park, and its resultant lawsuit, provides an early example of celebrity's fight for privacy. Within a few years Long-Wellesley quickly overturned judgement through the privilege of Parliament, and got his way. However, this was not a Pyrrhic victory for the people, because it marked the beginning of an organised opposition which developed into half a century of struggle against Long-Wellesley (and his heirs) in regard to public rights in Epping Forest. Largely through abuse of Long-Wellesley's Wardenship, 3000 acres of forest land were enclosed between 1793 and 1850. This process greatly accelerated after 1850, when another 3000 acres were lost following legislation enacted to meet increased housing needs caused by urban overspill. Thanks to a concerted campaign that drew its inspiration from those who stood up in 1813, Wanstead Park and the remainder of Epping Forest were eventually saved. In 1874 the City of London Corporation was mandated to assume control as Conservators, and forest law and Wardenship authority were thereby abolished. Thus on 6th May 1882, half a million Londoners turned out for the official opening of Epping Forest Park at which Queen Victoria declared 'It gives me the greatest satisfaction to dedicate this beautiful Forest to the use and enjoyment of my people for all time'.¹⁰³

This chapter has uncovered an important dilemma faced by celebrity individuals during the Regency period. The Long-Wellesleys achieved celebrity when the public gained access to their private lives. Unlike the likes of Byron or Rousseau they had no discernible talent, but the sharing of their intimate concerns (whether this was done by design or not) produced a commercialised version of their selves that at times threatened to engulf them.

¹⁰³ Georgina Green, *Epping Forest through the Ages* (London: Kingfisher, 1982), p.49.

They therefore experienced first-hand one of the chief quandaries of modern-day celebrity, and (like the many who have since been there) they were powerless to overcome it.

When the Long-Wellesleys became public property the drama in their 'real lives' served to beguile the public every bit as much as any theatrical performance on the London stage. Publicity created a version of their intimacy that the Long-Wellesleys had to learn to live with, and live up to, if they wanted to maintain their celebrity.

My next chapter examines Long-Wellesley's political career and will focus on his use of publicity and privilege to perpetuate celebrity.

CHAPTER FOUR

LONG-WELLESLEY: PUBLICITY, PARLIAMENT & PRIVILEGE (1812-1832)



Long-Wellesley: ‘Surely the most odious man ever to sit in the House of Commons’¹

¹ David.R.Fisher (Ed.), *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1820-1832* (Cambridge University Press, 2009).

Since the MPs' expenses scandal in 2009, the subject of use, or the misuse of parliamentary privilege has become a hot topic for debate. It may be recalled that the House of Commons tried to suppress the release of Members' expenses, under the Freedom of Information Act, on the grounds it was 'unlawfully intrusive'.² But they were out-maneuvred when uncensored information was leaked to (and subsequently published by) the *Daily Telegraph*.³ Therefore, a matter that the Commons thought they could manage in-house suddenly became a very public scandal. In the end media agitation and public outrage overcame the Commons' unwillingness to put themselves in the dock, compelling them to reform practices.

This enforced recalibration of parliamentary privilege echoes events from 1831, when perhaps for the first time press and public opinion in concert successfully called the Commons to account in regard to self-regulation. The protagonist back then was Long-Wellesley, a self-opinionated publicity seeker who committed a breach of privilege by kidnapping his daughter from her legal guardians and set in train the involvement of newspapers and their readers into the process of redefining rules governing privilege.

In this chapter I will examine how Long-Wellesley's notorious celebrity triggered what Carl Wittke describes as 'a new spirit on the part of the Commons in the matter of privilege', and why it brought about a resolution of centuries-long conflict between *lex parliamenti* (law of the realm) and *lex terrae* (law of the land).⁴ Thanks to his manufacture of public sphere spectacle, the issue of parliamentary privilege was debated in public, allowing the people to have a say in re-drawing codes of conduct in government. Thus public opinion

² *The Guardian*, May 7th 2008.

³ *The Daily Telegraph* began publishing extracts of MPs expenses claims on May 8th 2009.

⁴ Carl Wittke, *The History of English Parliamentary Privilege* (New York: De Capo, 1970), p.138.

entered the political sphere on the back of celebrity appearance, and exercised its power accordingly.

It all began on the hot and balmy Friday evening of July 16th 1831, when the peace and quiet of a sleepy hamlet near Godalming in Surrey was shattered by a six-strong armed gang forcing their way into Unstead Wood, overcoming the servants, and abducting a 13-year-old girl. As Emma and Dora Tylney-Long returned home in their carriage, they were horrified to see their terrified niece Victoria restrained between two men in a curricle driving past them at great speed towards London.⁵ The Tylney-Long sisters recognised the kidnapper as Victoria's own father, whom the girl had not seen for seven years, and wrote immediately to their legal representative. They informed him that Long-Wellesley, famously deprived of custody of his three children by the Court of Chancery after a landmark ruling in 1827, had seized his only daughter (and youngest child), from those legally entrusted with her care. Knowing that Long-Wellesley had already prised his sons away from their legal guardians (his oldest son William was actually an accomplice in this abduction) the Tylney-Long aunts implored the use of 'every possible means... without a moment's delay to save, this last remaining child of our martyr'd sister from utter ruin'.⁶

The following day Long-Wellesley's home in Dover Street was searched to no avail. He was taken to the Court of Chancery and ordered to deliver up his daughter. Long-Wellesley flatly refused, declaring 'I am willing to suffer, but I am determined to have my

⁵ Long-Wellesley MS, B3-E4-L26.

⁶ Ibid. Long-Wellesley removed James from Eton in 1830, and then used his youngest son to entice William back under his influence. In response the Duke of Wellington (as guardian) sent William away to a tutor near Liverpool, but after his return to London in the summer of 1831 Long-Wellesley got him back into his possession. The legal guardians and the Court of Chancery were also unable to compel James to quit his father's house. At the time of this abduction, however, James was no longer with his father, having now joined the army.

child'. He stated his intention to place Victoria 'beyond the jurisdiction of this court', implying she would be taken abroad.⁷ This was an awkward situation for the judge, Henry Brougham, because he had represented Long-Wellesley during his lengthy and complex appeals against Lord Eldon's original custody ruling (1827), and had recently invited Long-Wellesley to a levee celebrating his appointment as Lord Chancellor.⁸ If Long-Wellesley expected goodwill from a friend, he was sorely disappointed because Brougham replied 'although I believe you are acting under the influence of amiable feelings, your conduct has been so openly in defiance of the orders of this Court that it cannot be endured or overlooked... Let William Long-Wellesley stand committed for contempt'.⁹

At this point in the proceedings Long-Wellesley claimed immunity through parliamentary privilege. Because a serving MP had never before been committed for contempt clarification on a point of law was required, so Brougham placed Long-Wellesley under house arrest instead of exposing him to the hardship of Fleet Prison. A large crowd gathered around the court to witness this latest instalment in Long-Wellesley's soap opera, one which was to occupy the public for several weeks.

⁷ *The Satirist*, July 17th 1831.

⁸ *The Times*, March 14th 1831.

⁹ *Ibid*, July 18th 1831. Long-Wellesley's actions were deemed as 'contempt' on the grounds that he was openly defiant of the Court of Chancery's legal jurisdiction over his children.

London, July 18th

Mr Speaker-

I have the honour to inform you, that on Saturday last, I was ordered by the Lord Chancellor into custody, for a contempt of his court. I am not aware that I am so confined for any breach of law, written or unwritten, that can justify my detention. I therefore beg leave to submit this act to your notice, as an infringement of the privileges of Parliament, of my constituents, and of myself. I have the honour further to request, that you will lay this my complaint before the house, in order that it may direct my immediate discharge, that I may attend in my place.

I have the honour to be &c

W. L. WELLESLEY.¹⁰

As soon as Long-Wellesley publicised his letter to the Speaker, Brougham felt compelled to follow suit. The Lord Chancellor believed the press had developed into 'the only organ of public opinion capable of dictating to the Government, since nothing else could speak the sense of the people'.¹¹ Long-Wellesley's desire for validation 'in the public mind' ensured that the question of parliamentary privilege became commodified; a spectacle for public consumption.¹² Mole says that celebrity culture 'eased the sense of industrial alienation between readers and writers' which fostered a 'hermeneutic of intimacy' whereby the reader looked at the text *and* their knowledge of the writer's personality to enter into a kind of personal relationship.¹³ In the same way Long-Wellesley,

¹⁰ *The Times*, July 19th 1831.

¹¹ Aspinall, *Politics and the Press*, p.3.

¹² Long-Wellesley's court appearances are littered with references to his standing in the public mind. See for example *The Times*, March 3rd & November 9th, 1826, January 18th 1827.

¹³ Mole, *Byron's Romantic Celebrity*, p.23.

who considered himself as an author of publicity, expected audiences (presumably already intimately invested in his character) to interpret and relate to his actions.

When Long-Wellesley forced this dispute into the public sphere, newspapers were quick to participate. His propaganda campaign inspired commentary from opponents and allies alike, extending beyond the matter in question to fuel the wider debate about behavioural standards amongst the elite classes. *Bell's Life in London* thought bringing 'the Lord Chancellor into direct collision with the privileges of the House of Commons' was an unprecedented event.¹⁴ The *Poor Man's Guardian* thought this was a case of double standards, contrasting the routine incarceration of poor respectable working-men whose families were left unpitied and destitute, with the lenient home-stay granted to celebrities like Long-Wellesley – who was a man of 'abandoned principles and immoral habits, one of our precious legislators... not only better acquainted with the laws but more bound to respect and obey them'.¹⁵ *The Times* sympathised with Long-Wellesley's dilemma as a father and said they would not be surprised if the Committee of Privilege found in his favour. However they worried that this might lead to 'less conscientious and moral [MPs] than Mr Long-Wellesley... carrying out the most sordid or depraved acts with perfect confidence of impunity' thus making the Lords and Commons appear 'a race of chartered libertines'.¹⁶

Long-Wellesley's abduction of his daughter caused a national sensation, with speculation rife concerning Victoria's whereabouts and her welfare. In the furore of excitement following a momentous election result paving the way towards long-awaited

¹⁴ July 24th 1831.

¹⁵ July 23rd 1831.

¹⁶ July 21st 1831.

extension of the franchise, *The Times* observed that ‘the concealment of this young lady...shares the public attention even with the reform bill’.¹⁷

Long-Wellesley’s demand for immunity from prosecution relied on his being a Member of Parliament. It would therefore be useful to uncover the level of importance Long-Wellesley attached to that office at differing times, and what use he made of its privileges. His behaviour suggests that Long-Wellesley was not a serious politician. Instead he was an accomplished publicist, and for him the theatre of politics was just another stage for the production of his celebrity.

Long-Wellesley’s political career can be divided into three phases:

<u>Years</u>	<u>Target Audience</u>	<u>Privileges Utilised</u>
1812-18	Elite Classes/Royalty	Private Acts of Parliament
1818-20	Enfranchised Classes	Sale of Assets/Protection from Arrest
1828-32	Universal	Immunity from Prosecution

Analysis of the above will provide insight into the issues at stake when Long-Wellesley kidnapped his child, to show that his publicity campaign succeeded in terms of interest generated, but his use of privilege was so anachronistically contrary to the spirit of the age that public sympathy turned to ridicule and disdain.

¹⁷ *The Times*, July 25th 1831. This was the first time since 1715 a party previously in minority swept to power. Their sole mandate to reform the voting system, after which fresh elections would be called.

In the final analysis Long-Wellesley's appeal for parliamentary protection after kidnapping his child was not about the preservation of his liberty, paternal feeling, or the defence of MPs' historic rights; but in fact a calculated attack upon the institution of the Court of Chancery against whom he bore a long-standing grudge.

Long-Wellesley's parliamentary record is detailed on the History of Parliament Trust website.¹⁸ For the period to 1820, R.G Thorne reveals that both his participation and opinions lacked consistency.¹⁹ David R. Fisher's 1820-1832 entry famously describes Long-Wellesley as 'surely the most odious man ever to sit in the House of Commons'.²⁰ This condemnation is surely based upon Long-Wellesley's long and scandalous life rather than his comparatively nondescript service as an MP. But Fisher does make an important connection here which was equally relevant to Long-Wellesley's contemporaries, namely that his constant stream of misdemeanours, and the moral code he openly espoused, were impossible to separate from his standing as an elected representative of the people. Here was a legislator whose extra-parliamentary actions tested the boundaries of propriety. Abuse of position was rife at this time so Long-Wellesley's behaviour was far from unique. What sets him aside is the fact that celebrity made his character so familiar that he became a template for unacceptable behaviour in public life.

My previous chapter describes Long-Wellesley's marriage to heiress Catherine Tylney-Long. Perhaps the most crucial attraction for Long-Wellesley was that Catherine was

¹⁸ See <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/> Accessed June 15th 2019.

¹⁹ Thorne, Commons (V), p.512 Long-Wellesley's inconsistencies are demonstrated by the fact he supported Catholic relief (1813) but voted against it without explanation (1817); was firmly protectionist as a Committee Member for the Corn Laws (1815) only to argue with Castlereagh the following year because he felt agricultural tariffs damaged the economy; and claimed he was a friend to liberty then advocated suspension of *habeas corpus* (1817) because he thought 'public opinion favoured it'.

²⁰ Fisher, *History of Parliament*.

already famous when they first met. Whilst she seems to have enjoyed the frenzy of attention surrounding her, Catherine realised (and accepted) that she would fade from the public eye once the marriage question was settled.²¹ But Long-Wellesley found celebrity intoxicating and he believed his newly acquired fortune provided the means to perpetuate it. Though his estate at Wanstead lay just 10 miles from Westminster, Long-Wellesley knew that London was the essential venue for display. To ensure his presence amongst the hub of fashionable society, he decided to enter parliament at the earliest opportunity. This was a predictable course of action because the members of the landed elite dominated the Commons, and virtually all Lords and MPs owned or rented property in London, anxious for a taste of the *beau monde*.²² Becoming an MP was not just a ticket to the Commons; it provided Long-Wellesley opportunities to demonstrate his standing as a man of rank and fashionable taste.

ST IVES (1812-1818)

Before his marriage Long-Wellesley was employed for two years at the Foreign Office under his uncle Richard, Marquess Wellesley. Duties were of a secretarial nature involving copying and despatching memos, and attending diplomatic functions. Wellesley found the role of Foreign Secretary unsatisfactory because he felt marginalised by Prime Minister Spencer Perceval who he considered lacked vision.²³ Consequently Wellesley joined the Prince Regent's inner circle and stopped attending Cabinet meetings.²⁴ Therefore in the summer of 1811, when the Duke of Clarence was pressing hard for Catherine's hand in

²¹ Long-Wellesley MS, B4-V1-L8, November 14th 1811.

²² Colley, *Britons*, pp.60-61.

²³ Rory Muir, *Britain and the Defeat of Napoleon* (Yale University Press, 1996), p.109.

²⁴ Raglan MS, Sep 22nd 1811 - By September Wellesley-Pole advised Wellington that their brother was 'a great favourite.... [&] the man...to form a new administration'.

marriage, Long-Wellesley was perfectly placed to disrupt proceedings and place himself in contention for the prize.²⁵

Long-Wellesley left the Foreign Office in December 1811, signalling his intention to enter Parliament. But he could not have foreseen the political storm about to be writ upon the Wellesley family. After Perceval's assassination in May 1812, Wellesley and his brother Wellesley-Pole found themselves excluded from office.²⁶ Long-Wellesley's hopes for high office through grace and favour were stifled because his uncle and father were now part of a small pro-Catholic splinter-group including perennial outcast Canning. Nevertheless, Long-Wellesley agreed to join Wellesley's party in return for the procurement of a safe seat. Wellesley introduced him to James Halse - an influential landowner in St Ives, a scot-and-lot borough with just 300 voters and two available seats.²⁷ At the previous election Wellesley had paid Halse £3500 on a no-win-no-fee basis to elect two political allies, but despite bribery and corruption being 'very liberally practiced' the attempt failed.²⁸ Presumably a similar agreement was again brokered because Long-Wellesley appeared at St Ives on the day of nomination to begin his canvass. When the result was declared the *Royal Cornwall Gazette* expressed shock that incumbent MP Samuel Stephens, who headed the poll on the first day, lost out on the second because 'some of his adherents [were] induced by certain mysterious tho' not wholly inexplicable arguments to change their minds, and vote for his

²⁵ Roberts, *Angel and the Cad*, pp.30-32,37,45-49 Letters in the Wiltshire Archives reveal the Duke of Clarence's frustration at being unable to shake off his love rival.

²⁶ Wellesley resigned from the Government in January, intending to challenge Perceval for premiership, but his antipathy towards the Prime Minister meant that after Perceval was assassinated, Wellesley was left out in the cold.

²⁷ All male ratepayers were entitled to vote in scot-and-lot boroughs.

²⁸ Per <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1790-1820/constituencies/st-ives> Accessed June 15th 2019.

opponent'.²⁹ This smash-and-grab victory may have cost Long-Wellesley as much as £5000, showing that even in the smaller boroughs electioneering was a costly business.

By the time he entered the Commons, Long-Wellesley's lifestyle had thrown up two alternative possibilities for enhancing his status, and these took precedence over his nascent political career. After marrying the richest heiress in Britain Long-Wellesley concentrated upon making Wanstead House a venue for spectacular entertainment. He capitalised on royal visits to Wanstead Common for regimental troop inspections to host a series of events attended by the Dukes of York and Cambridge, and the Prince Regent.³⁰ Newspapers noticed this royal patronage and speculated that the Regent intended to honour Long-Wellesley as 'Lord Tylney'.³¹ Fanciful as this seemed, it was not without precedent. Just after the Wanstead House was built in 1718, Richard Child was ennobled following a visit by George I. Elevation to the peerage trumped a seat in the Commons, because it offered the same access to privilege and high office - without the stress and expense of electioneering. Hence there was much to gain from impressing the Regent. From 1813 onwards, the Long-Wellesleys embarked upon a refurbishment program the extent 'of which the private hospitalities of England, however celebrated, furnish no precedent, in expense, variety, and extent, since the days of Cardinal Wolsey'.³²

The second factor distracting Long-Wellesley at this time was the accelerating success of his uncle Arthur, Duke of Wellington. This branch of the Wellesley family was going from strength to strength as the Peninsular War turned in Britain's favour. The importance of the 'Wellesley' family connection to Long-Wellesley cannot be overstated, for

²⁹ *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, October 17th 1812.

³⁰ See *Morning Chronicle*, July 27th and August 3rd, *Caledonian Mercury*, October 1st.

³¹ *Caledonian Mercury*, August 31st 1812.

³² Stead, p.71.

he relied on it constantly throughout his public life. Even when he changed his name by Royal Proclamation at the beginning of 1812, the three names from which his wealth was derived (Pole, Tylney and Long) were subsumed behind 'Wellesley' for his newly created surname.³³ Long-Wellesley enthusiastically promoted his close connection with the nation's new hero, lobbying Wellington for an opportunity to re-join the army for its final push into France. He sent floods of gifts to the Peninsula. But Wellington, recalling how his 'lamentably ignorant and idle' nephew once disrupted his command, resisted the offer.³⁴ His tactfully worded rejection emphasised the importance of Long-Wellesley's parliamentary duties over 'the mere object of colonelling at the head of a militia regiment'.³⁵ Long-Wellesley's celebrity was also greatly enhanced because he had a very striking resemblance to Wellington which was often commented upon. This made him instantly recognisable to the public.

At the start of 1814 *The Examiner* reported that Wanstead House was fitting up 'in a style of magnificence exceeding even Carlton House. The whole of the interior will present *one uniform blaze of burnished gold*'.³⁶ Completion of the works was timed to coincide with Wellington's return from France, and it provided the conquering hero with a suitably grand setting at which to entertain visiting guests from Austria, Russia and Prussia as well as the British Royal Family. It was a spectacular fete 'graced with all the fashion and beauty of the country'.³⁷ Long-Wellesley was rewarded with an invitation to attend the Congress of Vienna but Napoleon's escape from Elba put an early end to this excursion and he soon returned to England. This was a very poor return for such an enormous outlay, and though

³³ See Chapter 2.

³⁴ Raglan MS, August 22nd 1808.

³⁵ Long-Wellesley MS, B4-V4-L22-3.

³⁶ Stead, p.71.

³⁷ *Ipswich Journal*, June 29th 1814.

his entertainments were the envy of elite society, they triggered a more bearish response from press and public alike.³⁸ Perhaps Long-Wellesley's greatest mistake at this time was to eschew mass public appeal in his effort to maintain celebrity. Some of the widely reported occurrences at Wanstead did a great deal of harm to Long-Wellesley's reputation amongst the lower orders. Throwing a handful of gold sovereigns into the crowds attending his revival of the Epping Hunt in 1813 was interpreted as arrogance rather than authentic generosity. A more liberal spread of lower denomination coins may not have been so newsworthy, but would have enhanced his standing with the multitude.

Two issues relating to the refurbishment of Wanstead had a detrimental effect on Long-Wellesley's public image. Firstly, as stated in my previous chapter, Long-Wellesley was taken to court for closing the Park. The judge ruled against Long-Wellesley but handed him a source of enlightenment when he declared 'the ancient access rights belong to the roads' and 'could only be taken away by an act of parliament'.³⁹ Secondly, Long-Wellesley's expenditure was spiralling out of control, causing rumours of financial hardship. Initially, large mortgages were raised upon the Essex estate directly under Long-Wellesley's control.⁴⁰ When these were exhausted he looked to mortgage or sell property on the Tylney-Long estates in Yorkshire and Dorset, but discovered that he could not remove the restrictions of entail without a Private Act of Parliament. These problems awakened Long-Wellesley to the advantages of being an MP.

Between 1816 and 1817 over 50% of all Private and Personal Acts passed involved inclosure. The enactment of Private and Personal Acts clearly enabled the landed interest to

³⁸ Stead, Large, p.71 records Long-Wellesley accompanying Wellington to the Opera (June 1814), where the Duke was rapturously received, but Long-Wellesley was hissed and booed.

³⁹ E.R.O, TB/39/1.

⁴⁰ For a full narrative of Long-Wellesley's fundraising see Smith, '*William Wellesley Pole and the Essex Estates*' (sic).

use Parliament for their own gain.⁴¹ It is surprising that Long-Wellesley passed up the option of seizing common land adjoining his considerable estates to assist in mitigating his debts.⁴² In fact his only 'inclosure' legislation was a modest Act abolishing the roads in Wanstead Park on land he already owned, which was drawn up for the purpose of protecting his privacy.⁴³ Instead Long-Wellesley concentrated on raising cash by using Private Acts to enable asset disposals.⁴⁴

Long-Wellesley barely participated in the Commons during the session to 1818, indicating that his appetite for politics remained lukewarm. Perhaps due to financial embarrassments his entertainments tailed off after 1816. Fashionable interest in Wanstead House seemed to have peaked and his celebrity began to wane. In this time of economic and social distress, even the Regent was becoming mindful of public ostentation. But Long-Wellesley showed a distinct lack of empathy for the plight of the people, setting mantraps on his estates in Hampshire warning locals not to 'deviate from any path' over his land, thus denying them access to woodlands and coppices previously available for forage.⁴⁵ This inflammatory step was widely condemned and the press asked whether any law can justify the 'setting up of engines of destruction' against mankind.⁴⁶ By now Long-Wellesley must have realised that lavish entertainment and general profligacy were not the key to lasting fame. With a general election looming, he therefore decided to freshen up his public image, and commit more fully to politics.

⁴¹ 76 out of 140 Private Acts in this period were for the purpose of inclosure. See www.legislation.gov.uk/changes/chron-tables/private Accessed March 11th 2019.

⁴² In fact Long-Wellesley did not resort to inclosure before 1821, when he paid for a Private Act to divide and allot land around Felsted in Essex – Geo IV – Sess 1831.

⁴³ Session 1816 – 56 Geo III – gained Royal Assent on April 11th 1816.

⁴⁴ Strictly speaking the power to enact private legislation was a benefit rather than a privilege of Parliament

⁴⁵ Stead, p71.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

Long-Wellesley not affected by the revived focus on Old Corruption. *The Extraordinary Red Book* (1817) calculated that the Wellesley were earning £33,000 per annum from the state purse.⁴⁷ Within their number the Duke of Wellington was spared criticism because 'no pecuniary award can sufficiently testify our gratitude to him for his eminent services'.⁴⁸ But the others, especially Wellesley-Pole, were attacked in print and image media.⁴⁹ But Long-Wellesley was excluded from censure because his wealth came through marriage not sinecure, and actually received praise for voting against the Government (in which his father was a Cabinet member) to abolish Income Tax.⁵⁰ Being free from the stigma of corruption may have encouraged Long-Wellesley to abandon his safe seat at St Ives in favour of representing the County of Wiltshire.

WILTSHIRE (1818-1820)

Historians of the unreformed Parliament have often fallen into the trap of labelling the electorate docile, with the majority of English counties falling into a 'prolonged coma' after 1740.⁵¹ Geoffrey Holmes states that 'there were so few county contests, the franchise was largely academic' and Porter thinks this paucity of choice had a 'tranquillising effect' upon what had been hitherto a hyperactive political scene.⁵² Michael Brock contends that by 1760 few people outside the aristocracy were interested in, still less understood, politics.⁵³ Frank O'Gorman has shown these arguments to be flawed firstly because existing

⁴⁷ A Commoner, *Extraordinary Red Book: A List of All Places, Pensions, Sinecures &c* (London: Blacklock, 1817).

⁴⁸ KW, p.301.

⁴⁹ BM Satires 1882,0610.63, *John Bull reading the extraordinary red book* (1816), depicts Wellesley-Pole declaring: "I swallow £10,000 and do very little for it."

⁵⁰ Commoner, *Red Book*, p.32.

⁵¹ Geoffrey Holmes, *The Electorate and the National Will in the First Age of Party* (University of Lancaster, 1976), pp.30-31.

⁵² Ibid, & Porter, *English Society*, p.124.

⁵³ Michael Brock, *The Great Reform Act* (London: Hutchinson, 1973), p.16.

statistical records for contested elections only take into account occasions when a poll *actually took place*. As the expense of funding an election campaign rose significantly in the eighteenth century it became increasingly common for candidates to withdraw, sometimes as late as the day when nominations were finalised, thus distorting the true picture.

Secondly he questions the assumption that uncontested elections meant political allegiances remained static, citing the 1818 election where 56 of the 153 seats that changed hands did so without a contest.⁵⁴ Thirdly an elaborate system of treating and ritualistic behaviour existed involving the entire constituency, not just those entitled to vote.⁵⁵ He concludes that for the majority of voters, elections were far from a 'foregone conclusion'.⁵⁶

There is also a wealth of evidence contradicting the viewpoint that politics belonged to the elite.⁵⁷ From the second half of the eighteenth century onwards increased availability and distribution of print-media enabled politics to permeate society, turning the disenfranchised at all levels into active political players. After 1771 the press were free to publish a record of House of Commons proceedings. Arthur Aspinall credits this with binding Parliament's responsibility to public opinion - making the press an instrument by which the legislature became more reliant on the will of the people.⁵⁸

Descriptive accounts of electioneering frequently found their way into print, proving very popular with readers – and by 1818 advances in technology enabled this offering to expand greatly. From 1814 *The Times* used a steam-driven press enabling production of

⁵⁴ O'Gorman, 'The Unreformed Electorate of Hanoverian England', pp.33-52.

⁵⁵ Ibid, pp.79-115.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ For example Hannah Barker, *Newspapers*, p35 states that due to political awareness 'the growth of parliamentary reporting was one of the most striking developments in newspaper content in the late eighteenth-century'. Elaine Chalus has shown that elite women, though disenfranchised, played an important role in political affairs. See Chalus, *Elite Women*; or Porter, *English Society*, p103 'the lifeblood of popular politics coursed through the propaganda media of newspapers, handbills, ballads, posters and cartoons, through tavern and coffee-house debate, and spilt onto the streets'.

⁵⁸ Aspinall, *Politics and the Press*, pp.35-36.

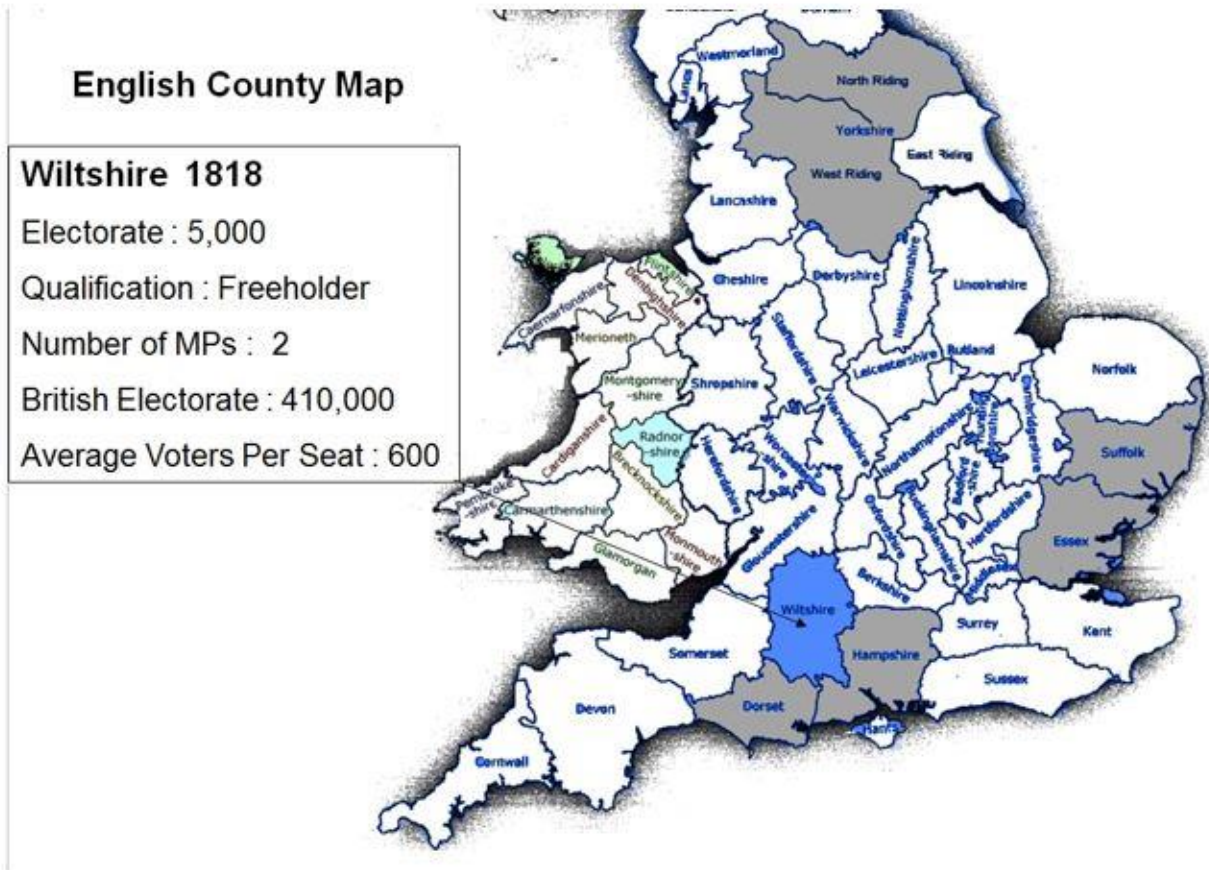
1100 copies per hour, four times the capability of the old hand-operated Stanhope Press.⁵⁹

The steam-driven press had the dual benefit of increased production and the opportunity to extend content without delaying print deadlines, and was soon adopted throughout the industry. For the first time contested elections could now be followed whilst they unfurled, revealing the cut and thrust of the hustings, where fortunes fluctuated daily.

The 1818 General Election occurred at a time of national civil strife. Euphoria over the victory at Waterloo evaporated as Britain tried to adjust from a war economy to peaceful commerce for the first time in almost 25 years. The Corn Laws (1815) set prices at an artificially high level, benefitting wealthy landowners at the expense of the poor.⁶⁰ A bad harvest, the return of thousands of soldiers from Europe, and demonstrations against working conditions combined to increase tension, leading to repressive counter-measures from the Government including the suspension of Habeas Corpus in February 1817. Lord Liverpool's administration, formed in the aftermath of Perceval's assassination in 1812, was set to face its first electoral challenge.

⁵⁹ Ibid, p.7.

⁶⁰ Known as the Importation Act (1815).



Counties in which Long-Wellesley had substantial land interests are highlighted above

The constituency of Wiltshire was a county seat returning 2 members to the House of Commons.⁶¹ It numbered about 5000 voters, placing it in the larger bracket of an overall national enfranchisement of about 410,000. Apart from a by-election in 1772, Wiltshire had seen no contested election since 1715. Whenever a vacancy arose the leading gentry chose one of their number to represent them and he was duly adopted at the county meeting. By 1806 there were some rumblings of discontent among the freeholders after it was discovered that neither of their MPs bothered to attend Parliament to vote against a tax on malt, which seriously affected the livelihoods of barley growers in the county.⁶²

⁶¹ There were a number of additional seats representing towns in the county of Wiltshire.

⁶² Thorne, *Parliament 1790-1820*, entry for Wiltshire.

Wiltshire's election campaign began long before the actual dissolution of Parliament, which occurred on 10th June 1818. On 20th February Richard Long announced his retirement for health reasons, precipitating an almost unprecedented 4-month period for candidates to come forward. Thorne describes Long as 'remarkable only for being a stupid country squire'.⁶³ He had got into Parliament by virtue of being a member of an ancient and respected Wiltshire family and should have been expected to endorse Long-Wellesley through ties of kinship. However the timing of his resignation suggests that Long's support was unenthusiastic, and that he may have gone early to encourage alternative candidates to step forward.

Once fellow MP Paul Methuen declared his intention to continue in office, his re-election was effectively guaranteed. The ruling elite needed to endorse a second candidate who would represent their interests, upon whom the electorate could confer their second votes.

Given that almost half a century had passed since a contested election, Long-Wellesley must have believed his candidature at Wiltshire was less of a risky proposition than seeking re-election at St Ives, particularly as he no longer had the element of surprise which secured success in 1812, and had not set foot in that town since his election.⁶⁴ But the tone of his opening address to the freeholders of Wiltshire induced offence, which caused a third candidate to come forward. Long-Wellesley placed an underwhelming advertisement in all the London newspapers and throughout Wiltshire declaring 'I am governed not so much by any political motives, as by the ambition of restoring upon the house of Draycot an honour which has been so frequently conferred upon that ancient

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ In fact Long-Wellesley failed to turn up to a meeting with Halse in London (October 1817), and then reneged on an agreed payment for £500 to allow him to stand again at St Ives.

Wiltshire family'.⁶⁵ Long-Wellesley condensed the honour of representing Wiltshire to the level of acquiring a bauble for the glory of his family. Not surprisingly his choice of words provoked a barrage of criticism. He was labelled an interloper who had come into the Long family and wreaked havoc in the six years since his marriage. He was a stranger to the county, whose only object to date was to extract large sums of money to lavish upon Wanstead House. Others accused him of extravagance and dissipation in private life; being an inept diplomat, Irish, and a place-man for a rotten borough.⁶⁶ He had no right to call himself an independent candidate, when his father had a seat in the cabinet.⁶⁷ One writer railed 'the first public act he does after carrying off the *golden prize*, is to come and sow the seeds of discord and animosity amongst us'.⁶⁸ The county should not countenance a man known to spend his time 'in the lounge of Bond Street or in the ring of Hyde Park in the morning; and in Fop's Alley, at the Opera House, or in voting away people's money in the House of Commons in the evening'.⁶⁹

Long-Wellesley published a series of replies in reply to these charges, insisting he was English born and bred, proud of his family's services to the state (with particular emphasis on the Duke of Wellington), underlining his intention to reside in the county, refuting any diplomatic wrongdoing, and insisting he was independent.⁷⁰ However he was unable to deny his celebrity lifestyle.

⁶⁵ KW, p.3.

⁶⁶ Ibid, pp.30-45 See Chapter 6 for revelations about Long-Wellesley's diplomacy.

⁶⁷ Wellesley-Pole was restored to the Cabinet as Master of the Mint, June 1814.

⁶⁸ KW, p.46.

⁶⁹ KW, pp.311-312.

⁷⁰ Hobhouse was a particularly active agitator against Long-Wellesley, publishing an addenda to *Travels Round Albania* in 1818 that severely criticised Long-Wellesley's diplomatic service at Constantinople.

WILTSHIRE
ELECTION.

Nomination at Devizes,
On the 18th of JUNE Instant,

THE GLORIOUS ANNIVERSARY
OF
THE BATTLE
OF
WATERLOO!

It is no less extraordinary than gratifying that the Day on which the illustrious
DUKE OF WELLINGTON
obtained his most splendid Titles should be commemorated in this great and
Independent County by the

NOMINATION
OF HIS NEPHEW,
Wm. Long Wellesley, Esq.
To be one of our REPRESENTATIVES in PARLIAMENT.

We cannot err in supporting the Man who has fought with that gallant Hero in
the midst of some of those Battles which have saved our Country from Perdition.
We surely shall do right in Electing this near Relative of the Noble Duke to be
our Representative, who now nobly steps forward to rescue our County from Tyranny.

STICK CLOSE TO THE QUESTION!!
Wellesley & Independence
HEREAFTER FOR
YOUR CHILDREN'S CHILDREN,
OR THE
Disgraceful Slavery of Clubs and Quorum.

Let us then rally around him on the Day of Nomination, when it is earnestly
hoped that the Friends of Mr. LONG WELLESLEY will convince the World of
their Loyalty and Independence by appearing in his Favor.

Brodie and Dowding Printers, Salisbury.

As nomination day fortuitously fell on the anniversary of Waterloo, Long-Wellesley exploited popular patriotic sentiment towards the Duke of Wellington. Drawing upon his uncle's manly virtues of heroism and loyalty, Long-Wellesley claimed immunity from Old Corruption because he was an independent, heroic father-figure who could spare voters the

'slavery of clubs and quorum'. Having initially appealed to represent Wiltshiremen as one of their own kind (albeit through marriage), Long-Wellesley now cultivated the public image of a liberating outsider bent on reforming closed county practices.

Controversy surrounding Long-Wellesley's character encouraged John Benett, of Pythouse to announce his candidature. His friends and supporters proposed him as a native of Wiltshire, of stolid virtues, an active magistrate and yeomanry officer – all of which were traditional stepping-stones to representing the county. However his opponents considered him a nobody; a self-interested landlord with a poor track record amongst his tenantry and the enemy of industrial interests. Benett's campaign against church tithes virtually guaranteed him no support from the clergy.

It was generally believed Benett lacked the means to carry the campaign and that he would back down when faced with a show of hands at the official nomination day. But Long-Wellesley's failure to stem the tide of accusations centred upon his morals and personal habits, convinced Benett that it was worth soldiering on.

When Benett entered the fray, Long-Wellesley privately explored options for procuring an alternative seat.⁷¹ Having already spent lavishly for almost three months before it was usually necessary to begin his canvass, Benett's last-minute candidature guaranteed Long-Wellesley would incur further great expense. Nevertheless when the day of nomination arrived and a contest became inevitable he felt unable to back down because his propensity for largesse took over. This decision he later identified as a primary cause of his financial ruin.⁷²

⁷¹ E.R.O, D/DB F116/1-4, Solicitor Blake to Long-Wellesley, March 3rd 1818.

⁷² See William Long-Wellesley, *Two Letters to Lord Eldon* (London: Ridgeway, 1827).

Once committed to this contest Long-Wellesley embraced Wiltshire's traditional election rituals, which included ceremonial arrival on nomination day, and various parades and festivities expected of him during his canvass. But the un-written rule of respect between opponents fell by the wayside as personal animosity between candidates and their supporters became a notable feature of this election. Long-Wellesley made it clear from the outset that he was going to spend prodigiously, which presented the electorate with an open chequebook: 'Mr Benett will find to his cost; and when too late will acknowledge, that I was his best friend when I told him not to spend his money, nor make me spend mine'.⁷³

Newspapers were filled with reports of lavish election dinners, one of which at Marlborough for upwards of 300 guests started at 2pm, involved no less than 25 toasts and continued until 9am the following morning. The same was repeated throughout all the principal towns. At a time of great hardship, people took full advantage. By the end of May it was common knowledge that Long-Wellesley had borrowed another £32000 at 16%. The average annual interest rate at this time was about 4% so Long-Wellesley was not only heavily in debt but now gambling recklessly upon victory.⁷⁴ Aside from the many elaborate treats, Wellesley employed squib writers, a band, and decked his supporters out in a livery of 'Wellesley Blue'. Additionally he excelled in public speaking and was more than a match for the many hecklers that tried to shout him down.

Long-Wellesley's major innovation was using the press to transmit his campaign to the community. A steady stream of letters appeared in newspapers throughout Wiltshire and neighbouring counties, provoking a swathe of replies and counter-replies to keep the

⁷³ KW, p.350.

⁷⁴ Robert Moody, *Mr Benett of Wiltshire* (Salisbury, Hobknob, 2005), p.90.

contest fully alive in the public imagination. A fraction of these are preserved in *Kaleidoscopiana Wiltoniensia*, a 400 page book published shortly after the election.⁷⁵

Long-Wellesley also embarked on a campaign of brutality, blackmail and intimidation in his pursuit of victory. This was most apparent in the mob he employed to threaten and abuse Benett. The violence became so bad that 600 members of the Wiltshire Yeomanry were placed at Benett's disposal for his own safety. Ninety tenants from William's estates were coerced into signing letters supporting his candidacy, avowing that contrary to reports about man-traps, Long-Wellesley was a kind and generous landlord. Thugs targeted Benett's supporters. One evening all the windows in the Wool Pack Inn were smashed. On another occasion the house of John Tinney, Benett's solicitor, came under attack from a mob wearing Wellesley blue. When Tinney stepped out to confront them, his head was cracked open with a bludgeon. County elections were held at a single polling station in Wilton. Long-Wellesley hired all the horses in Wiltshire, at great expense, to prevent Benett's supporters from travelling to vote. One enterprising gentleman harnessed a team of oxen to pull a cart, carrying voters. Progress was slow, and they had barely left home, when they were surrounded by men on horseback, and forced to turn back. 130 gallons of punch was distributed to the voters at Ramsbury, which was enough to sway all but two of the 130 men who had originally pledged their votes to Benett.

Whilst this aggressive assault continued, Long-Wellesley was taken advantage of by his own supporters. On the fourth day of the poll over one hundred of his friends were so busy enjoying his hospitality they failed to appear at the polling station in time to vote. Consequently Long-Wellesley had to pay for transportation and hospitality again the

⁷⁵ Unless stated otherwise, information in the proceeding paragraphs taken from *KW*.

following day, though he did ensure that the local inn did not serve free food and drink until after his 140 'friends' cast their votes. There was so much skulduggery, that the Sheriff of Wiltshire was forced to intervene, and call order. Eventually on the 8th day Benett conceded defeat, stating it was 'fruitless any longer to continue this contest'.⁷⁶

Long-Wellesley was therefore elected alongside Methuen, but his fellow MP was so appalled by the vicious turn which the election took that he refused to take part in a chairing ceremony. The traditional end-of-contest healing process of the chairing ritual was inoperable, because the populace were so agitated that a riot was feared if Long-Wellesley proceeded in this manner.

This election had very little long-term effect on Wiltshire as Methuen resigned the following year and Benett replaced him after another expensive, violent but ultimately successful election. His reward was the dubious honour of sitting alongside inveterate enemy Long-Wellesley in the Commons. This too proved temporary because the death of George III in January 1820 brought about the dissolution of Parliament.

Long-Wellesley reckoned the 1818 campaign cost him over £40,000 though this is probably underestimated.⁷⁷ Benett spent £18000 in 1818 and a further £35000 in 1819, saddling him with a burden of debt for the rest of his life.⁷⁸ Not surprisingly both men hesitated when faced with the prospect of Wiltshire's third contested election in successive years. Long-Wellesley declared his candidacy on the condition that he 'would not repeat the expenditure of a large sum in a contest, by which he would be compelled to sacrifice the future prospects of his children, and draw resources from his tenantry in their present

⁷⁶ Moody, *Benett*, p.83.

⁷⁷ Long-Wellesley, *Two Letters*, p.38.

⁷⁸ Moody, *Benett*, pp.85, 117.

distressing difficulties'.⁷⁹ Benett was on the verge of withdrawal, when to his surprise Long-Wellesley pulled out citing the 'indefinite expense' of a contested election was now beyond his compass.⁸⁰ This *volte face* was not the mature and considered decision it purported to be, for Long-Wellesley's immunity from prosecution had expired and he had already fled to France to escape a legion of creditors.

In his short stint as MP for Wiltshire Long-Wellesley played a markedly more active role in Parliament, and he even kept a lower public profile, but his dependence on privilege was complete because it was the only thing keeping him from incarceration in the King's Bench.

The Wiltshire election saw Long-Wellesley modify his approach to the press, and see the benefit of engaging directly to get his point across. He learned the value of frequent dialogue as a means of emphasising his personal attributes to a wider audience, rather than trying to perpetuate celebrity via incredible feats of extravagance which served to impress the select few. Whether his more serious approach to politics could have led to high office, and whether the resulting benefits of privilege might have afforded him time to repair his finances, is impossible to tell since the King's death put an end to both prospects.

ESSEX AND ST IVES (1828-1832)

Long-Wellesley's exile lasted almost six years but was notably punctured by an attempt to gain refuge from prosecution in 1822 when his mother procured him a position in the Royal Household as Gentleman Usher and Daily Waiter. After a persistent creditor had Long-Wellesley arrested, he tried to use Royal patronage to obtain release, but the surrounding

⁷⁹ *Oxford Journal*, Feb 26th 1820.

⁸⁰ Moody, *Benett*, p.124 and *The Courier*, Mar 17th 1820.

publicity was deemed embarrassing for the King, so Long-Wellesley resigned the sinecure.⁸¹ Long-Wellesley's future residence in England depended on prudent settlement of his debts. He was advised to stay abroad a few years, during which time trustees made great progress to repair his finances. In the event Long-Wellesley's atrocious behaviour signalled a premature end to the Trust, hastening his return to England.

As stated, whilst in Naples Long-Wellesley committed adultery with Helena Bligh, moving his mistress into the same house occupied by his wife and family. Their affair came to a head in June 1824 when Catherine left the marital home and took the children back to England. Despite remaining abroad, Long-Wellesley drove his wife to distraction through a combination of unreasonable demands and threats against her person. Such was the extent of this torture that Catherine collapsed and died in September 1825, an event that caused shock and outrage throughout Britain where the details were widely reported.

After Catherine's death, Long-Wellesley became a hate-figure and even his own family disowned him.⁸² The terms of Long-Wellesley's 1812 marriage settlement now came into operation and he lost control of all assets apart from the Essex estates in which he retained a life interest only. The rest of the Tylney-Long property passed to his oldest son William, who was placed into the care of the Court of Chancery by Catherine just before she died. Lacking funds to support his lifestyle abroad, Long-Wellesley abandoned the Trust and resumed control of his affairs, returning to London in November 1825.

It was now imperative for Long-Wellesley to regain custody of his children because his eldest son was heir to a small fortune. With this in mind he instigated proceedings. *Wellesley v Beaufort*, which reached judgement in 1827, and was upheld by the House of

⁸¹ *London Gazette*, August 6th 1822.

⁸² Long-Wellesley's mother ignored him for many years and his father never spoke to him again.

Lords on appeal the following year, deprived Long-Wellesley of his children on the grounds of immoral behaviour.⁸³ Long-Wellesley spent an enormous sum on legal expenses during his unsuccessful bid to restore the children. By 1829 newly accumulated debts once again threatened his liberty. This time escape to the Continent was not an option for it was tantamount to admitting defeat in his battle for custody, which would have relinquished all hope of reclaiming the estate. It was therefore vital for Long-Wellesley to return to Parliament and find sanctuary in privilege.

Perhaps the most surprising outcome of Long-Wellesley's loss of custody was that it marked a turning point in public hostility towards him. Whilst the case was heard he was frequently assailed by cries of "Shame," "You murdered your wife," – while others, less charitable, exclaimed, "You ought to be hanged!"⁸⁴ Long-Wellesley openly admitted he 'neglected his wife, and dissipated her wealth with liberal extravagance,' but flatly denied that such conduct 'ought to deprive him of the paternal care of his children'. This struck a chord with newspaper editors and the public alike, as they considered the wider implications of judgement against him.⁸⁵ *John Bull* observed the 'pious indignation' shown by 'sundry small sweepers of chimneys, and pickers of pockets... of the morality and virtue of Long-Wellesley'. If the transported convict was allowed to take his children, this ranked Long-Wellesley below the level of a convicted felon. 'It is clear, that if Mr Long-Wellesley be deprived... no man can be safe near his family, and that nine fathers out of ten... mixed up with every profligacy made, after such a precedent, be robbed of the dearest ties which subsist between individuals on earth'.⁸⁶ The publication of Long-Wellesley's response to

⁸³ Roberts, *Angel and the Cad* gives a detailed account of this case.

⁸⁴ Stead, *Wanstead*, p.14.

⁸⁵ Stead, p.89 (February 1826).

⁸⁶ *John Bull*, January 22nd 1827.

Lord Eldon's judgement very quickly went through three editions receiving broadly positive reviews, adding to the momentum of his rehabilitation in the public eye.⁸⁷

In February 1828, Long-Wellesley sought election to Parliament appearing at St Ives only to find the seat contested.⁸⁸ He also enquired about Sudbury but could not raise the £6000 necessary to procure his selection.⁸⁹ Despite being warned anonymously to 'avoid bills as you would the plague' Long-Wellesley struggled through until 1830.⁹⁰ He reached an agreement at St Ives to coalesce with James Morrison, who had foolishly bankrolled a loan of £57,500 to enable Long-Wellesley to purchase the estate of recently deceased MP Christopher Hawkins.⁹¹ This manoeuvre was sufficient to re-connect Long-Wellesley to the benefits of privilege, but it did not satisfy his celebrity requirements.

Long-Wellesley believed that his support for parliamentary reform could enhance his popularity and decided to put himself forward in Essex where (thanks to his land-holdings) his influence remained strong. When he rather tastelessly solicited nomination in Essex *before* George IV had died, Long-Wellesley said he was not 'violating decency [in] anticipating an event... forbidden to every loyal mind'.⁹² This inappropriate announcement proved he had learnt nothing from 1818, though at least on this occasion he sought universal support: 'I hold the people to be the best judges and the best guardians of their own interests... entitled to the full benefit of that principle of the constitution which provides that they shall legislate for themselves'.⁹³ Once again right up until the 11th hour Long-Wellesley looked certain to succeed unopposed alongside Charles Western, a Whig

⁸⁷ William Long-Wellesley, *Two Letters to Lord Eldon* (London: Ridgeway, 1827) – see chapter 6.

⁸⁸ Long-Wellesley MS, B4-V1-L46.

⁸⁹ BLM 52483, f.131-32.

⁹⁰ Long-Wellesley MS, B4-V4-L44.

⁹¹ Long-Wellesley's fraudulent acquisition of this estate invoked a long-running court case.

⁹² *Essex Election Report* (Chelmsford: Meggy & Chalk, 1830), p.3.

⁹³ *Ibid*, p.9.

and pro-reform candidate. On 24th July, on the basis that Long-Wellesley's tarnished reputation was a step too far, Tory candidate John Tyrell stepped forward. It is hard to understand why Long-Wellesley did not withdraw at this point, for it can only have been another example of self-promotion aimed at prolonging his celebrity.

During this campaign, as Long-Wellesley travelled between St Ives and Essex, he was placed under arrest for a debt in the sum of £3000. However, he appealed for and obtained special bail and was allowed to resume canvassing. By the time judgement was entered and execution against his goods issued, Long-Wellesley was elected for St Ives and successfully claimed immunity from prosecution by virtue of parliamentary privilege, leaving his creditor angry for being induced to delay by promises of payment. *Phillips v Wellesley* (1830) proved a very timely demonstration of the protection Long-Wellesley now enjoyed.⁹⁴ This event did not go unnoticed in the House of Commons. Mr Baring stated his intention to introduce a motion 'preventing members of Parliament from pleading their privilege as a bar to imprisonment for debt'.⁹⁵ In reply Long-Wellesley suggested a repeal of the Law of Arrest because 'he lately found it to be very inconvenient to him!'⁹⁶

Perhaps the most striking thing about Long-Wellesley's 1830 Essex election campaign was the amount of money he spent. On the third day he pointed to a bank in Chelmsford declaring 'Gentlemen, there is £20000 in there and I will spend it this week'.⁹⁷ This was a close contest and Long-Wellesley kept the poll open the maximum 15 days, taking his costs above £23000, at least 5 times more than his opponents'.⁹⁸ This was a

⁹⁴ See Wittke, *Parliamentary Privilege*, pp.137-8 and John Wright, *The Legal Examiner* Volume 2 (London: Wright, 1832), pp.339-340.

⁹⁵ *The Times*, July 18th 1831.

⁹⁶ *The Age*, May 15th 1831.

⁹⁷ N Rowley, *Essex Elections and the Great Reform Bill* (Chelmsford: E.R.O – 68/1976), Notes to illustration 24.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

surprising defeat for Long-Wellesley considering the completely opposing political viewpoints of Tyrell and Western. An unlikely coalition was formed to exclude Long-Wellesley despite his lavish canvass. Over 1500 of the 6000 freeholders voted jointly for Western and Tyrell, and scarcely any second votes went to Long-Wellesley.⁹⁹ Analysis of the campaign material, squibs, and speeches reveals that Long-Wellesley's reputation told against him. Ignoring his manifesto, hecklers questioned Long-Wellesley's morals, and the knowledge he was certain for the seat at St Ives provoked cries of 'hypocrite'. It must have been difficult for Long-Wellesley to argue reform in one constituency whilst relying on corruption in another. Finally, and perhaps most revealingly, Long-Wellesley garnered just 9 out of the 268 clergy-held votes, suggesting moral judgement based on known facts about his character.¹⁰⁰

Once back in Parliament it must be acknowledged that Long-Wellesley played a very active role in the passing of the Reform Bill. By joining the single-vote majority at its crucial second reading on March 22nd 1831 Long-Wellesley perhaps uniquely legislated his own expensively-purchased pocket-borough out of existence.¹⁰¹

Upon the dissolution of Parliament on April 22nd Long-Wellesley received a personal assurance from Lord Grey that Western would coalesce to ensure his safe return for Essex. However, as he was no longer immune from arrest, this campaign proved Long-Wellesley's toughest challenge yet. His agent advised him 'to be of real service you ought to be there in the morning sufficiently early to canvass a large portion of the town [so] you may leave Colchester after dinner in time to proceed to Harwich... when it is desirable that you don't show yourself'. Without making an appearance on the hustings Long-Wellesley was

⁹⁹ Long-Wellesley had 1638 plumpers (i.e double votes), Tyrell 920 and Western just 583.

¹⁰⁰ Rowley, *Essex Elections* - See also Chapter 5 which records Long-Wellesley's duel with a clergyman (1828).

¹⁰¹ *Bristol Mercury*, March 8th 1831 called it an 'unlucky speculation'.

remarkably returned to Parliament. Harriet Arbuthnot mirrored the iniquity of ‘a man no gentleman speaks to & so overhead & ears in debt that he was at Calais till the election was over, & the sheriff who returned him had his hands full of writs against him’.¹⁰² Long-Wellesley’s election for Essex proved his last term in Parliament. Once the constituency boundaries were re-drawn he was allocated Essex South, and when he lost the contest he blamed the Whigs for failing to support him. By this time, after two decades in the limelight, no one (least of all the public) was prepared to listen to his complaints anymore, and his descent into final obscurity began.¹⁰³

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The last great drama of Long-Wellesley’s public life revolved around the kidnap of his daughter Victoria, which inadvertently became the one defining event of his political career. This chapter has established that Long-Wellesley consistently resorted to privilege whilst a serving MP, and that he had an abnormal obsession with conducting his affairs through the medium of the press. What remains is to explain why Long-Wellesley abducted his child at this time, what he was hoping to achieve, and why his actions proved a milestone in the history of privilege.

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In the ceremonial opening of every Parliament since Henry VIII the Speaker invokes Parliamentary rights namely: freedom from arrest, molestation, of speech in debate, and admittance to the royal presence, plus favourable construction in all proceedings. This

¹⁰² Harriett Arbuthnot, *Journal* Vol 2 (London: Macmillan, 1950), p.421.

¹⁰³ Long-Wellesley MS B4-V1-L25, L28, & L29.

reminds us of Parliament's historic role as a Sovereign law-making court with the ability to legislate on new points of law as well as adjudicate on matters deemed too complex for lower courts. Because it was considered that MPs should be free to concentrate on their public service, the Commons insisted that all legal actions from whatever source should be opposed if they prevented members' attendance. Hindering an MP in any way was considered a 'breach of privilege'. This jealously guarded system of protection was historically open to abuse because the Commons regulated its own privileges. For example freedom from molestation or arrest was at one time extended to members' servants and estates meaning that all you had to do was find employment with an MP to escape justice, creating a market in selling 'protections' that was not finally extinguished until 1770.¹⁰⁴

Wittke states that by 1800 most of England's political institutions had completed their development, and the principles of English law were established, but privilege remained a problem 'defying solution'.¹⁰⁵ Though the House of Commons asserted control over inferior civil courts, their power was not absolute. The House of Lords was considered the highest court in the land meaning that any case under appeal was theoretically able to by-pass restrictions laid down by the Commons.¹⁰⁶ Because the Commons' right to enforce privilege ultimately depended on the Lords and King, they increasingly strove to keep questions of privileges out of ordinary courts.¹⁰⁷

It is unlikely that Long-Wellesley set out to test the powers and limits of each house, but from the moment he defied the Court of Chancery, a collision course was set between the Lords and Commons - which could only be resolved by a permanent redefinition of

¹⁰⁴ Joshua Chafetz, *Democracy's Privileged Few* (New Haven: Yale, 2007), pp.126-127.

¹⁰⁵ Wittke, *Privilege*, pp.127-129.

¹⁰⁶ Erskine May, *Parliamentary Practice* 19th Ed. David Lidderdale (London: Butterworths, 1976), pp.92-177.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, p.95.

privilege. When we look into the reasons why Long-Wellesley removed his daughter, it soon becomes clear that the issue of privilege only became a factor once the matter escalated. In order of sequence these can be identified as follows:

1. Long-Wellesley blamed the Tynney-Long sisters for his loss of custodial rights.

Once the case was settled the Court appointed guardians who permitted Victoria to live with her Aunts. Infuriated by their interference Long-Wellesley threatened vengeance.

2. After the House of Lords confirmed the loss of his children, Long-Wellesley consented to the appointment of Sir William Courtenay and the Duchess of Wellington as joint-guardians to his children. After the Duchess died on April 25th 1831, Long-Wellesley believed the guardianship was 'at large' pending a new arrangement from Chancery. He was not alone in this regard, for Courtenay wrote to Wellington on May 31st saying that he doubted the validity of his powers as the remaining guardian.¹⁰⁸

3. Since 1827, Long-Wellesley had pursued a vendetta against the Court of Chancery, not only in print but also by a campaign of disobedience that quite often bordered on contempt. His mission was to demonstrate that Chancery overstepped the mark, interfering with the natural order when by coming between a father and his progeny. *Two Letters* (1827) was followed up by *A View of the Court of Chancery* (1830), a book aiming to destroy the Court's credibility.¹⁰⁹ In addition Chancery (and the public) seemed to tolerate Long-

¹⁰⁸ Wellington MS WP1/1185/11.

¹⁰⁹ See chapter 6.

Wellesley's regular transgression of rules regarding access, for which he was chastised but never properly punished. These included unscheduled visits to Eton, taking his sons on unsupervised outings, and coercing them to swear affidavits against his guardians. Long-Wellesley then began taking them to his home on the pretext that the boys came to him 'of their own free will'.¹¹⁰ By spring 1831 the boys were so frequently found in their father's company that the Tylney-Longs prevented them contacting Victoria. They feared she would be enticed away in the same manner, making Long-Wellesley's victory complete.

4. Though he had nothing to gain financially from Victoria, having made no effort to contact her since 1825, Long-Wellesley saw her abduction as an opportunity to punish the Tylney-Longs, and embarrass the Court of Chancery for mistakenly relinquishing their power by allowing the guardianship to lapse. Having been treated leniently for previous misdemeanours, Long-Wellesley felt certain the new Lord Chancellor – a personal friend – would deal with him in the same manner.
5. It was only when Brougham ordered his incarceration that Long-Wellesley resorted to privilege.

When Long-Wellesley was committed for contempt his plea for immunity was the last and only line of defence open to him to prevent summary justice. The publication of his letter to the Speaker put the spotlight on Brougham, compelling him to respond in kind since the powers of Chancery were seriously under threat. But the Lord Chancellor had to be

¹¹⁰ Wellington MS WP1/1084/1. When James was advised to abscond from Eton he was urged 'you must insist on remaining with your Father, & [refuse] those who will attempt to take you away'. E.R.O D/DB F116/1-4.

careful about Commons' sensibilities from the outset because he stood on both sides of the question. His Court was under assault by a Member of Parliament, but in turn the Lord Chancellor as a member of the Lords held the ultimate sanction to overturn any Commons' ruling against the powers of Chancery. His carefully worded letter to the Speaker emphasised both standpoints; 'The right of this court to commit is unquestionable, and it has been enforced against peers of the Realm, but I have thought fit to make this communication to you... and to testify my perfect respect for the honourable house'.¹¹¹

On July 18th, the Commons debated the matter and opinions were divided. Peel said the notion that MP's 'could not pay the same respect as fellow subjects to the courts of the country was quite absurd'; O'Connell on the other hand thought Chancery power a 'dangerous development'; Wetherall ruled it a 'matter of fact' contempt of court; but Scarlett thought the Lord Chancellor had 'acted in error'. When the Committee of Privileges began their investigation, the true nature of conflict created between Chancellor and Commons was revealed. When asked to release Long-Wellesley to allow him to attend the hearing, Brougham refused stating 'no consideration will induce me to give Mr Long-Wellesley up [because] this is a criminal not a civil proceeding'.¹¹² A few hours later, however, he relented because he realised he was placing himself under the suspicion of violating Commons privileges.¹¹³ When he reported back to the Lords, Brougham said he thought this the most important question about privilege in living memory for the 'dignity of a court of justice had been insulted' and had to be protected if any law or statute was to continue in operation.¹¹⁴ Most newspapers concurred with this analysis: *The Morning Post*

¹¹¹ *The Times*, July 18th 1831 – this letter was published in all the London papers.

¹¹² *Morning Post*, July 18th 1831.

¹¹³ Wittke, *Privilege*, pp.137-138.

¹¹⁴ *The Standard*, July 19th 1831.

considered this common sense¹¹⁵, and *The Standard* pointed out that Long-Wellesley's 'contempt was a purely voluntary act... threatening continuing and repeated violation of the law'.¹¹⁶

Though the proceedings of the Committee of Privileges were to remain private Long-Wellesley busily updated the public from the comfort of his home. On July 18th all the London papers printed his claim that this 'was the voluntary act of a child, who, with her own entire free will and consent, accompanied her brother and me'. He relied on the same argument that won him access to the boys, refuting widespread reports of the use of force. A few days later he published a character assassination of Henry Bicknell upon whose eye-witness evidence the reports of violence were based, declaring him hell-bent on 'impugning my moral life'.¹¹⁷ The same day, on the justification that he could not address the Court directly, Long-Wellesley published a detailed letter to the Lord Chancellor. He began by referring to the friendship and respect he held for Brougham's 'superior intellect' implying this was some kind of friendly disagreement that could be amicably resolved. He explained that in the absence of guardians his paternal right must revert to him. He further contended that Courtenay agreed to hand the guardianship over, meaning his actions were fully consensual.

I must, my dear Lord, think it rather hard upon me, to be sent before the world, and in both houses of Parliament, to be treated as if I had acted no better than a madman, in taking, *vie el armis*, a ward from her legal guardians,

¹¹⁵ *Morning Post*, July 20th 1831.

¹¹⁶ *The Standard*, July 20th 1831.

¹¹⁷ *The Times*, July 22nd 1831.

and then going to beard a judge upon his bench, that judge being the Lord High Chancellor of England.¹¹⁸

The key thing about Long-Wellesley's argument was an absence of comment upon the matter of privilege. He was only interested in showing that the Court of Chancery was at fault for placing him in contempt in the first place. If the Commons were to support this line of argument, this would not only deliver a body-blow to Chancery, but pave the way for him to get his children back for good. He continued to send a stream of communications to the newspapers, so much so that *The Times* announced on July 23rd that they would print no more 'save for advertisements'. Nevertheless fresh attacks on the character of the Tylney-Longs emerged alongside news that Victoria was happy in Paris. Despite resorting to smear and innuendo, Long-Wellesley still enjoyed newspaper support. *The Examiner* questioned how a man so recently declared fit to serve Essex should be deemed unworthy of the care of his own children. This was an 'odious struggle against nature'.¹¹⁹ *The Satirist* asked if it was fair for the entire world 'to condemn him for this specimen of parental solicitude, for natural affection?'¹²⁰

The House of Commons made its report on July 27th. Though they were unable to find any previous case in which the right of the Court of Chancery to commit for contempt had been enforced against persons entitled to parliamentary privilege, Long-Wellesley's actions were considered indictable offence because 'the Lord Chancellor should possess... powers for the protection of the wards of the Crown committed to his charge [being therefore] entitled to exercise the most prompt and effectual means to prevent them being

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ *The Examiner*, July 24th 1831.

¹²⁰ *The Satirist*, July 24th 1831.

withdrawn out of his jurisdiction'. The accidental circumstance of the guardianship being broken was deemed not to affect the question of contempt. On the question of arrest it was agreed that since 1697 Members of Parliament were not liable to be arrested or imprisoned, save in three cases only; namely felony, treason, and breach of the peace (involving trespass). Since Long-Wellesley was in none of these categories it was down to the Commons 'to claim or abandon this as a claim of right'.¹²¹

The Commons accepted the Chancellor's argument that if a commitment 'be in the nature of a process to compel a performance,' rather than punishment for a civil or criminal act, privilege should not apply. Henceforth it was established by the Lord Chancellor that 'privilege never extends to protect from punishment'.

In deciding this question the Commons abandoned the old concept of privilege deriving its authority from the old *lex parliamenti*, a separate and higher code than *lex terrae* under which ordinary courts operated. Wittke says that this decision 'effected a reconciliation between the two bodies of law, merging the *lex parliamenti* in the *lex terrae* – abolishing it as a separate code, and making it part of the law of the land'.¹²² Thanks to Long-Wellesley's actions parliamentary privilege could no longer protect against legitimate punishment under common law.

The report of the Committee of Privileges was published in such depth that the public were enabled to consider the wider issues at stake, and whilst there was a residue of sympathy for Long-Wellesley, the consensus of opinion was that this was a sound judgement.

¹²¹ *The Standard*, July 28th 1831.

¹²² Wittke, *Privilege*, pp.137-138.

With this constitutional issue settled this reverted to being a human interest story and was followed through to its conclusion. After the Commons reached their decision, Brougham granted Long-Wellesley time to prove this was neither a wilful abduction nor an unsanctioned act, but became exasperated by delays, claims of ill-health and the continuing stream of published letters. Thus on July 31st at 4-30pm Long-Wellesley was committed to the Fleet, where he remained until his daughter was retrieved from France. Whilst there his celebrity continued to intrigue the public: 'On his arrival at the prison, there was no room... and he was obliged to accept the offer of a prisoner to share his apartment'.¹²³ Another report stated that 'one of the principal tavern-keepers in the City of London has solicited permission to supply Mr Long-Wellesley's table *gratis* with his choicest wines and viands, during his detention'.¹²⁴ But in the main, public interest in this story focussed on Victoria's safe return to England. Accordingly when she was brought ashore at the Tower of London on August 19th the matter was considered closed.

Long-Wellesley's committal presaged the death of his parliamentary career, signalling the end-game of his celebrity. Of course he was not immediately forgotten, and the press quite frequently referred to him in a derogatory way in the years that followed. The battle for his children, however, was to continue for the rest of his life.

CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that Long-Wellesley forced a change in Commons' approach to its own privilege, and that he did so in a way that allowed mass participation in the process. This was indeed an age of great change, in which public opinion played a huge role. This is

¹²³ Stead, p.123.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

revealingly shown by *The Morning Chronicle* editorial following Long-Wellesley's loss of privilege: 'This is one of the most laudable examples of judicial dignity and decisions afforded by *modern times*' (my italics).¹²⁵

It seems both telling and appropriate that Long-Wellesley should be described as the 'most odious man ever to sit in the House of Commons' because this summation underlines the potency of his notorious celebrity, rather than a judgement of his contribution as a politician. His true impact upon social, moral and political reform during the Regency period came via appearances in the public sphere and was motivated by his need for celebrity validation.

¹²⁵ *Morning Chronicle*, July 29th 1831.

CHAPTER FIVE

Fighting for Celebrity: Long-Wellesley and Duelling in the Public Sphere

Mr Long Wellesley...fought a duel before he was married therefore I suppose he
thinks his reputation is established¹

Elizabeth Fielding, 29th October 1823

This chapter investigates Long-Wellesley's life-long partiality for duelling by looking at disputes in which he participated in 1811, 1828 and 1834. These cases illustrate how Long-Wellesley used publicity to draw audiences into his private life and enhance his celebrity. They will also show that duelling was a prominent source of non-political 'spectacle', providing entertainment, garnering income, and stimulated mass public opinion.

Long-Wellesley's first duelling experience (1811) followed standard rules of engagement until it came into the public sphere. Then, his opponent Lord Kilworth published a version of events at variance to what was agreed by their respective seconds, compelling Long-Wellesley to appeal directly to the public to preserve his public reputation. This duel occurred when Long-Wellesley was battling to secure the hand in marriage of Britain's wealthiest heiress. His act of self-promotion resulted in a further challenge and a second duel; but it also enhanced Long-Wellesley's celebrity. In the summer of 1828, when duelling in Britain was on the wane, Long-Wellesley engaged in a duel he could and should have avoided. The outcome of an appeal to the House of Lords regarding custody of his

¹ BLM, Fox Talbot Collection, 1299.

children was imminent.² But instead of show-casing his paternal attributes to the world at a time when his celebrity profile was high, Long-Wellesley gambled on a public test of honour. He created public sphere theatre by orchestrating a spectacular media event that included the patronage of other well-known celebrities. This foolishly-timed stunt is a measure of the value Long-Wellesley attached to his celebrity persona; his desire for public notice eclipsing the exigencies of discretion. Long-Wellesley's 1834 duels straddle the boundary of my study but their roots originate in his scandalous behaviour from earlier years. Whilst in exile from his creditors at Brussels, Long-Wellesley breached rules of duelling etiquette and brought dishonour to his name. No longer considered to be 'a gentleman' Long-Wellesley became estranged from his peers, and the loss of their protection dealt a fatal blow to his celebrity status.

Before delving further into Long-Wellesley's affairs it will be necessary to situate duelling in the public sphere. Firstly, it was as a provider of spectacle for public consumption; and secondly it had the ability to make private affairs public, which is considered by many to be a requisite for celebrity.³ This will be followed by a brief summary of the history of duelling, explaining its transformation from ancient lore into a recognised feature of modern dandy culture by the start of the nineteenth-century.

² *Wellesley v Beaufort*— see Long-Wellesley biography in chapter 2, and case details in chapter 6.

³ Jones & Joule, *Intimacy & Celebrity*, pp.2-5.



Anonymous satire of an English duel c.1820

DUELLING AND CELEBRITY IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE (1750-1800)

To assume that the new public sphere arose in the void created by declining court and religious influence implies there was a schism between previously dominant spheres and the Habermasian model.⁴ But Habermas envisaged this as a more gradual process whereby the 'emergent bourgeoisie replaced a public sphere in which the ruler's power was merely represented before the people with a sphere in which state authority was publicly monitored through informed and critical discourse by the people'.⁵ Over time the public sphere became uniquely diverse and democratically accessible, serving an increasingly literate, selective and commercially-orientated audience. The intensification of competition for attention-ascendency compelled the traditional seats of power, namely Crown, Government and the Church, to modify their output; transitioning away from aloof

⁴ Such as Klein, 'Coffeehouse Civility', p.51.

⁵ Habermas, *Public Sphere*, p.XI.

disinterestedness towards tacit appreciation of the presence and power capabilities of public opinion.

Ongoing social practices faced similar challenges when entering the increasingly commercialised public sphere, where they encountered heightened scrutiny and surveillance. Acts of civility, modes of leisure, and fashionable taste became more sensitive to the foibles of collective public response and were continually shaped by perceptions of what constituted polite and popular culture. The gradual reformation in manners after 1750 saw some barbaric remnants, such as animal cruelty in sport, fall by the wayside. However, other deeply-entrenched customs, such as duelling and rustic folklore, underwent a transformational renaissance once immersed into the public sphere milieu.⁶

Duelling is an ideal subject upon which to assess Adut's contention that 'a reign of appearances' rather than politics alone presaged the rise of public opinion.⁷ At a crucial stage in the development of a consumer-driven public sphere, when 'private life became a tradable public commodity', duelling became an outlet for the manufacture and production of celebrity.⁸ Print and image media portrayed duelling in ways that highlighted public intimacy because protagonists made public their inner thoughts to explain and justify their actions. Felicity Nussbaum's phrase 'interiority effect', originally used to describe how theatre-going audiences imagined the private lives of actors and actresses; is equally applicable to the drama of a duel.⁹ Turner contends that celebrity status is attained at the exact moment when audiences switch focus from people's public role to learning the

⁶ The Romantic Movement is thought to have emerged from the glorification of ancient rural life by eighteenth-century print and image media. Recent texts include Tim Blanning, *The Romantic Revolution* (London: Phoenix, 2010); Casaliggi & Fermanis, *Romanticism: A Literary and Cultural History*.

⁷ Adut, *Reign of Appearances*, p.IX.

⁸ Tillyard, 'Paths of Glory', p.64.

⁹ Nussbaum, *Rival Queens*, passim.

'details of their private lives'.¹⁰ If this is so, then duelling was a driver for celebrity.

Euphemistically described as 'affairs of honour' duels shed light on political, personal and private disagreements. No matter what sphere they originated from, duels aired publicly served to stimulate collective conversation.¹¹

The commercialisation of the public sphere, and its capacity for mass audience engagement, allowed duelling to rebrand from its ancient heritage into a product fit for public consumption. Duelling's code of honour struck a chord with polite culture through its emphasis on the sanctity of personal character; which had to be publicly defended (literally to the hilt when required) to protect social standing.

As a frequent provider of spectacle, duelling must be considered one of the key genres of appearances in the new public sphere. Coffee-houses, theatres, pleasure grounds and the like – the very places where Habermas envisaged the onset of public conversation and debate – were also common venues for the outbreak of arguments. Vociferously pronounced political views often risked drawing a challenge, but the fact remains that any public words or actions deemed detrimental to one's personal or professional honour could provoke the same outcome. Between 1750 and 1765 coffee-house conversations instigated duels over the merits of an actress, ownership of a snuffbox, quality of the butter, and the best place for shooting gamebirds. Ostensibly harmless disagreements, undoubtedly assisted by alcohol, were often escalated to conflict by the new-found obsession with public character.¹² As early as 1751 one newspaper chillingly predicted that rashness was set to

¹⁰ Turner, *Understanding Celebrity*, p8 – albeit Turner claimed this was a 20th century invention.

¹¹ Duels commonly arose from political disputes, but could equally derive from domestic affairs, scandal, sporting disagreements, gambling, public quarrels, or perceived personal insults.

¹² *Lloyds Evening Post* March 4th 1761 (actress), *Whitehall Evening Post* May 22nd 1751, (snuffbox), *Gazetteer*, January 27th 1763 (butter), & January 28th 1765 (game).

supersede reason: 'hardly a week at this time escapes without the news of a duel... [and that] establishing it as fashion, and making it a point of reputation' would lead to a future where 'Men may not be of a Temper to be reconciled upon a Scratch'.¹³

Commercially attractive, morally contentious, popular in print and image media, a common plot device in literature and the stage, participation in duelling invited celebrity. Increasingly detailed reportage gave duels episodic qualities. Each fresh occurrence was dissected and analysed by the press for the entertainment of readers. Simultaneously, this continual airing of essentially private disputes for public titillation breathed fire into wider debates about aristocratic conduct and masculine codes of honour. Duelling's claim for hegemony as an outlet for conflict resolution faced constant moral opposition, but its participants escaped effective legal sanction because of their elite status. At the Old Bailey trial of Bennett Allen on 5th June 1782 the judge found the principles of duelling

directly subversive of every tie of morality and religion... the most dangerous to society [confounding] distinctions between right and wrong; to dress up guilt in the disguise of virtue; and to give to the passions of pride, and of revenge, the captivating names of Spirit, and of Honour¹⁴

Allen received a one shilling fine and six months in Newgate Prison. This was relatively severe punishment for a duellist, but out of step with a society where minor crimes such as pickpocketing (committed by the lower orders) were punishable by death.¹⁵ Print culture consciousness of public fascination with duels hastened their cultural and

¹³ *London Daily Advertiser*, September 30th 1751.

¹⁴ *Old Bailey Proceedings Online*, (t17820605-1).

¹⁵ For example William, 5th Lord Byron, who received just a small fine for killing his cousin in January 1765. See also Frank McLynn, *Crime and Punishment in Eighteenth Century England* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1989), p.XIII.

economic appropriation. Following the death of Major Sweetman in a duel with Captain Watson at Cobham in 1796, a correspondent to the *Morning Post* accused the un-named lady (about whom they quarrelled) of being ‘full of joy’ at her heightened celebrity – which showed that she was capable of ‘making fellows kill one another in homage to her charms’.¹⁶ Watson himself became famous, and simultaneously turned into an object for tourism and celebrity endorsement. Whilst recuperating from gunshot wounds Watson received a stream of well-wishers including the Duke of York. Several illustrious noblemen attended his subsequent trial, bearing testimony to his character ensuring his speedy acquittal.¹⁷ Setting aside the inherent dangers of fighting with sword or pistol, well-managed and publicised duels attracted mass public appeal, enabling participants to celebritise their reputations, and commerce to benefit. By 1753 it was reported that duels were ‘wont to bring in vast revenues to the lower class of pamphleteers’.¹⁸

The growing prominence of duelling in the second-half for the eighteenth-century left many critics confused whether they were witnessing the return of a ‘dreadful custom’ that ought to be extinguished, or the arrival of a consumerised iteration inspired by the ‘prevalence of fashion over sense and reason’.¹⁹ Duelling was a paradoxical ideology – derided by many, but with prominent supporters in Whig and Tory circles.²⁰ One observer declared duelling a rite-of-passage necessary to becoming a ‘perfect fine gentleman’.²¹ Even Samuel Johnson, who was formerly an ardent opponent of duelling, now found it a morally

¹⁶ January 18th 1796.

¹⁷ *Star*, February 3rd and March 22nd 1796 – he was described at trial as ‘a genteel young man’.

¹⁸ *London Daily Advertiser*, February 7th 1753.

¹⁹ *Public Advertiser*, February 2nd and *General Evening Post*, February 5th 1774.

²⁰ McLynn, *Crime and Punishment*, p.144 lists James Boswell and Henry Fielding amongst its vocal advocates.

²¹ *Gazetteer*, November 22nd 1753.

defensible requisite because society had developed a 'superfluity of refinement' rendering gentlemen over-sensitive to offence with no alternative means to defray it.²²

An affront is a serious injury... He who fights a duel does not fight from passion, but from self-defence to avert the stigma of the world, and prevent his being banished from society... a duel is necessary for self-defence. If public war be consistent with morality, private war must equally so.²³

A BRIEF HISTORY OF DUELLING

In 1720 John Cockburn sought to distinguish between 'modern duels' and those of antiquity, concluding 'for two or more persons to fight secretly by their own appointment, merely from a personal pique... was not known among [the] Grecians or Romans'.²⁴ It is generally agreed that an 'early modern' form of duelling arrived in Britain from the Continent, specifically from Italy, around the 1570s.²⁵ The code of honour propogating duelling is believed to have originated in Renaissance theories of courtesy and civility which emphasised that a gentleman must hold dear personal honour and be prepared to die to defend it. Anna Bryson believes that this imported version became fashionable in England because it appealed to vestiges of chivalric values carried forward from medieval times.²⁶

²² Samuel Johnson (1709-1784) poem *London* (1738) attributes duelling to vanity and drunkenness.

²³ Quoted in *The Oracle*, February 9th 1797.

²⁴ John Cockburn, *The History and Examination of Duels* (London, 1720), p.XIV-XV.

²⁵ These include Markku Peltonen, *The Duel in Early Modern England: Civility: Politeness and Honour* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), Stephen Banks, *A Polite Exchange of Bullets: The Duel and The English Gentleman 1750-1850*, (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2010), Richard Hopton, *Pistols at Dawn: A History of Duelling*, (London: Portrait, 2007), Ute Frevert, *Men of Honour: A Social and Cultural History of the Duel*, (Oxford University Press, 1995), and James Kelly, *That Damn'd Thing Called Honour – Duelling in Ireland 1570-1860* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1989).

²⁶ Anna Bryson, *From Courtesy to Civility: Changing Codes of Conduct in Early Modern England*, (Oxford University Press, 1998), pp.272-275.

This may explain why the duel was quickly assimilated into aristocratic culture and its code of honour was able to exercise significant influence in polite society.



A duel with swords, London c.1731

Despite Church, state and literary opposition little progress was made to curtail duelling throughout the eighteenth century. Between 1720 and 1819 no anti-duelling legislation was brought forward, let alone enacted. Markku Peltonen states that even during the most sustained parliamentary campaign against duelling 'the Church remained curiously silent about the whole issue'.²⁷ Stephen Banks concludes the absence of a coherent constituency prepared to make a stand against duelling prior to 1800 meant that it was possible for 'groups of powerful, active men operating under a common ethos who

²⁷Peltonen, *Duel in Early Modern England*, pp.214-215.

were able to propagate in public a vigorous, noisy, and even romantic honour culture, able to ignore moral sanction and turn aside legal retribution'.²⁸ Courts, and especially the monarchy, were susceptible to pardoning duellists found guilty of murder; often swayed by press reports of fair play or proof of mutual consent.²⁹ Occasionally, fatally wounded duellists survived long enough to exonerate their opponents, which proved a powerful mitigating influence on the public mind.

Another reason why duelling proliferated was because there was an intrinsic belief that failure to accept a challenge was dishonourable.³⁰ One writer complained, 'If I kill my antagonist in a duel, the laws are against me; if I do not fight, I lose my honour'.³¹ The social stigma of refusal made all men wary of 'the first rash fellow who may take it into his head to do him injuries which Men of Honour must perish for'.³² There was also undue pressure placed upon those who had been perceptibly wronged to seek 'honourable' redress; for example in cases where cuckolded husbands were forced to challenge the adulterer or face ostracisation as a coward.³³

Between 1750 and 1800 newspaper articles on the subject of duelling multiplied tenfold.³⁴ This was mainly due to the rapid expansion of print media, the regular reprinting of London news reports by provincial papers, and an ever-widening readership base. It also benefitted from greater editorial focus upon scandal and gossip, which made dramatic

²⁸ Banks, *Polite Exchange of Bullets*, p.23.

²⁹ Duellists were more commonly tried on the lesser charge of manslaughter, as it was often argued that all avenues of reconciliation had been exhausted prior to engaging in combat.

³⁰ Banks, *Polite Exchange of Bullets*, pp.78, 224 – on some occasions those who declined duels were 'sent to Coventry' by their peers until they relented and consented to fight; Anon, *The Duellist* (London: Longman, 1822), p.189 says that those refusing to fight rendered their lives 'contemptible'.

³¹ *Craftsman*, November 19th 1774.

³² *Public Ledger*, April 14th 1774.

³³ *St James Chronicle*, December 16th 1762 –In this circumstance adulterers were entitled to decline giving satisfaction on the grounds they had already caused injury.

³⁴ British Library newspaper database records 402 articles (1750s), rising to 4723 (1790s).

events such as duelling attractive for news gatherers. The press in turn profited from developments in the structural etiquette of duelling, opening it up to closer public scrutiny. By the 1770s the role of seconds as intermediaries between parties was established.³⁵ Previously liable to partake in combat, seconds now functioned like umpires, responsible for arrangement and conduct of the duel, safeguarding a fair and honourable fight.³⁶ Their duties extended to ensuring that letters to loved ones were completed prior to combat, wills and bequests were made, weapons chosen, the ground marked, and guns loaded. Whenever necessary they facilitated escape from arrest, but more often they acted as witnesses terminating contests without physical injuries on acceptable terms. This final function included publishing statements satisfactory to the honour of all sides.

Peltonen describes duelling as ritual for which the outcome was secondary: its primary purpose being demonstration of honour in the face of death, without the necessity of inflicting or receiving it.³⁷ Robert Shoemaker concurs that the change from sword to pistols and the redefinition of the role of seconds reduced violence, leading to fewer fatalities. The death of 64 people following an outbreak of disease amongst the vast crowd attending the Old Bailey trial of duellist Captain Clark in May 1750 suggests that public curiosity about the details of duels could in reality be far deadlier than actually taking part³⁸

³⁵ Banks, *A Polite Exchange of Bullets*, p.116.

³⁶ Hopton, *Pistols at Dawn*, p.55.

³⁷ Peltonen, *Duel in Early Modern England*, .pp.2-3.

³⁸ *St James Chronicle*, January 10th 1764 – Between 1750 and 1775 there were 33 recorded fatalities from duelling in Britain.



After 1770 duelling became physically remote, but more publicly accessible via the public sphere

The codification of duelling after 1770 coincided with greater secrecy in the staging of contests, as they switched from urban visibility to more secluded locations. 48 out of 53 British duels reported in 1773 occurred in Westminster. This declined to just 4 of the 32 recorded contests in 1796.³⁹ Affairs of honour were now principally hosted by the public sphere, with readers called upon as absent witnesses; and given possession of the facts necessary to judge character, which enabled them to decide on personal reputations.

The surge in reports about duelling between 1750 and 1800 was not replicated by actual contests held, indicating that newspapers deepened their coverage to satisfy public demand. Some theorists place the apogee of English duelling in the 1790s; usually based

³⁹ British Library Newspapers (BLN), analysis of all duelling reports between 1751 and 1800.

upon reports gleaned from *The Times*.⁴⁰ However, *The Times* only began publication in 1785; which seems uncomfortably close to the point where duelling is presumed to have peaked. Also, data gathered has been subjected to selectivity. Various authors have chosen to exclude differing duels, leaving no consensus as to numbers recorded. Robert Shoemaker assumes that the paucity of reports about duelling in the provinces, and amongst the lower orders, demonstrates their rarity beyond the realms of military and the urban elite. However, this approach overlooks the likelihood that publishers ignored duels of limited public interest and therefore no commercial value.⁴¹ By the same token Donna Andrew says the common practice of wealthy or influential duellists paying ‘omission fees’ to stifle publicity makes it impossible to gauge elite participation.⁴² Although print media cannot pin down reliable duelling statistics, it can be a barometer for gauging public sphere interest and engagement in the spectacle of duelling.

In the search for its public sphere impact, I concentrated on all reports mentioning duelling, regardless of factual accuracy. This included news about challenges prevented or settled prior to combat, editorial commentary, correspondence, advertisements, theatre and literature. On this basis I found 34 instances of British duels amidst 316 separate reports published between 1750 and 1755 (equating to approximately ten reports per duel).⁴³ Banks (using *The Times* only) calculates that there were 67 duels between 1795 and 1800.⁴⁴ As a

⁴⁰ J G Millingen, *History of Duelling* (Volume 2), (Richard Bentley; London, 1841), Anthony Sampson, ‘Dandelions on the field of honour: duelling, the middle classes, and the law in nineteenth-century England’, in *Criminal Justice History* (9), 1988, and Banks, *A Polite Exchange of Bullets*.

⁴¹ Robert Shoemaker, ‘The Taming of the Duel’, *Historical Journal* 45 (3), (Sep 2002), pp.533-35; Antonios Ampoutis & Others (Editors) *Violence and Politics: Ideologies, Identities, Representations* (Newcastle: Cambridge Publishing, 2018), p.286.

⁴² Donna T Andrew book review in *American Historical Review* 102 (5), (Dec, 1997), p.1490.

⁴³ BLN, I looked at duels occurring in England only finding 31 in London (mainly Hyde Park), and single occurrences at Bristol, York, and Oxford. Almost all duels featured one or more military combatants, though their opponents included doctors, servants, tradesmen, and even a comedian.

⁴⁴ Banks, *Polite Exchange of Bullets*, p.72.

very rough guide it could be argued that incidences of duelling appeared in the press twice as frequently in 1800 than they had half a century previously. Banks acknowledges that duelling was rare but, thanks to its high profile, was never 'a marginalised act of peripheral interest'.⁴⁵ He records roughly one fresh duel per month in the last 5 years of the eighteenth century. By contrast duelling was the subject of at least 50 articles per month over the same period.⁴⁶ This indicates that duelling's apogee was more to do with its public sphere visibility than actual occurrences. It had become an established form of spectacle with commercial possibilities, encouraging audience discussion and debate, and inviting celebrity.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century attitudes to violence changed and mob involvement in the ritual of punishment was gradually curtailed. Emsley attributes these changes to the growth of the press: as greater publicity for executions provoked widespread concern about crowd behaviour and management.⁴⁷ Public spaces were evolving into places 'of controlled and orderly retreat [for] a properly behaved public'.⁴⁸ So why did the duelling code of honour endure so ruggedly when attitudes to violence, codes of conduct and conceptions of manliness were perceptibly changing? Peltonen contends that duelling retained its potency because it had become a significant component of the larger debate about civility and manners in early modern England, and that throughout the eighteenth

⁴⁵ Ibid, p.1.

⁴⁶ BLN records 3133 articles about duelling from 1795 to 1800.

⁴⁷ Emsley, *Crime & Society In England*, pp.265-67.

⁴⁸ Don Mitchell, 'The end of public space?' in *Annals of the American Association of American Geographers*, (Vol 85/1, March 1995), pp.115-16.

century arguments raged about whether it conflicted with, or reinforced perceptions of honourable behaviour.⁴⁹

DUELLING AND POLITICS

According to Peltonen duelling received new impetus from ever-growing competition and strife between the Whigs and the Tories.⁵⁰ Although political duels were uncommon they left a deep and lasting impression upon the public mind. When Samuel Martin shot and wounded fellow-MP and radical thinker John Wilkes in 1763 there was widespread suspicion of state connivance in duels 'agreeable to the policies of those in power', especially after Martin's father was subsequently handed 'considerable place in the West Indies'.⁵¹ In 1779 Mr Adam and Charles James Fox duelled after a heated argument in Parliament, inspiring a flood of satirical prints and pamphlets illuminating issues relating to the American War. In 1798 when Prime Minister William Pitt was challenged for criticising George Tierney in the Commons many observers were shocked that the dignity of parliamentary debate could be violated by a call to arms, leaving 'the country threatened by the risk of losing so valuable a life'.⁵² Despite these public misgivings, Pitt was able to use his duel for propaganda purposes underlining his patriotic commitment to the war against France.

When Ministers Lord Castlereagh and George Canning duelled at Putney Heath in September 1809 they caused a seismic rift in Tory politics that was to overshadow the next

⁴⁹ Peltonen, *Duel in Early Modern England*, pp.1-10.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p.216.

⁵¹ *London Evening Post*, August 18th 1764 – This was Wilkes' second duel in a year the resulted from articles he published in the *North Briton*.

⁵² *Evening Chronicle*, May 31st 1798.

two decades. Both men resigned from office, depriving the Government of its two most talented Ministers and presaging what Lord Wellesley later described as the ‘dreadful personal animosities’ that bedevilled subsequent ministries.⁵³ As late as 1829, when the Duke of Wellington became the second serving Prime Minister to take to the field of combat, there was widespread shock in the political sphere. However, the enduring ambivalent sentiment towards duellists afforded him a spike in public popularity.⁵⁴ Irrespective of its moral status, therefore, duelling retained an attractive celebrity aura that persisted right up to the end of the Regency era.

DUELLING AND DANDYISM

As previously discussed Long-Wellesley’s birth and upbringing in St James’ located him in what Greig describes as a fashionable ‘elite within an elite’ – an extremely influential strand of the beau monde to which many aspired but very few were permitted to join.⁵⁵ Their typical daily routine included mornings at Tattersall’s or riding in the Royal Parks, afternoons shopping or just lounging in Bond Street, and attending clubs, theatres or assemblies by night.⁵⁶ An Irish student visiting London saw these idlers as ‘the greatest coxcombs of their day’, desperate to find their names in a paragraph of a fashionable newspaper mixing with the famous and entitled, or hoping to be the subject of a print-shop caricature, granting ‘celebrity amongst those who know them, [affording] intimate

⁵³ Severn, *Architects of Empire*, p.357; Giles Hunt, *The Duel: Castlereagh, Canning, and Deadly Cabinet Rivalry* (London: Tauris, 2008).

⁵⁴ UCL, *Brougham Papers* HB/38138.

⁵⁵ Greig, *Beau Monde*, p.2.

⁵⁶ Anon, *Letters of an Irish Student to his Father in Ireland* (Volume 1), (London: Cradock, 1809), pp.197-201.

satisfaction'.⁵⁷ Obsessed with public notice and aspiring to be role models for wider emulation, this class of mostly young aristocratic men were also the principal exponents of duelling outside of military circles.⁵⁸

By 1800 duelling had become closely bound up with 'dandyism', which was the phrase coined to describe this new mode of elite urban male fashion and behaviour. Jules d'Aurevilly defines dandyism in the Regency period as 'the cult of self' used by men principally to 'show how life can be lived as ironic performance'.⁵⁹ Their acts of self-promotion were theatrically inauthentic, the chief purpose of which was the acquisition of celebrity. Dandyism called for understatement in terms of attire, and condescension in the manner of social interaction. Wilson characterises London dandies as 'nobodies' with a 'craving for celebrity... born of a sense of their inferiority; compared to the soldiers and sailors serving in the world'.⁶⁰

The dandy could be blunt and sarcastic, openly critical of others' appearance and manners, and willing to administer the 'cut' (social exclusion) to those deemed unworthy. Their belittling approach was a recipe for social conflict, heightening instances when honour was called into question, and compelling those offended to seek redress. Through their consumer habits and trend-setting style the dandies exerted considerable influence upon popular culture, meaning they should not be dismissed as nobodies. Despite decrying them as a group, Wilson importantly links dandyism and celebrity ambition, underling the role played by fashion in the manufacture of public image for mass audience recognition.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Stephen Banks, *Duels and Duelling*, (Oxford: Shire, 2012), p.29 – states that during the Napoleonic Wars up to two thirds of duellists held military commissions, attributing their participation to a perceived need to defend not just their own honour, but that of their regiment, ship etc.

⁵⁹ J Barbey d'Aurevilly & Douglas Ainslie (Ed.), *Dandyism* (New York: PAJ, 1988).

⁶⁰ Wilson, *Decency and Disorder*, p.186.

Rhonda Carelick argues that the ethos of singularity in personality espoused by dandyism 'prepare[d] the way for media spectacle and... celebrity' as we recognise it today.⁶¹

Dandyism arose partly as a reaction against the perceived effeminacy of male clothing and behaviour, as personified by the 'man of feeling' who was not afraid to dress garishly or to display public emotion. Dandies abhorred flamboyance in outward appearance, demanding clean cut uniformity, to reflect stripped back masculinity. Although its chief proponents were not necessarily aristocratic, Dandyism was appropriated to underline elite class leadership upon matters of taste in the urban environment. Whereas critical terms like 'fop' or 'macaroni' had served to lambast male appearance as feminine or Francophile, dandyism projected a positive 'ideal of self-fashioning' drawing upon British cultural influences.⁶² Thanks to iconic dandies such as George 'Beau' Brummell (1778-1840) fashion came to the forefront of the public sphere. But the dandy's preference for insult and exclusion as tools for social acceptance also allowed duelling to stay up-to-date and relevant. The precise relationship between duelling and dandyism falls outside the scope of this thesis, save for their celebrity connotations. But the fact that both concepts witnessed their hey-day in Britain around 1800 and had concurrently disappeared by 1850 deserves some notice.

Between 1750 and 1775, 84% of British duels reported by the press occurred within the environs of London.⁶³ Provincial gentry making their annual pilgrimage for the London season would have accepted duelling as a part-and-parcel feature of urban polite society,

⁶¹ Rhonda. K. Carelick, *Rising Star: Dandyism, Gender, and Performance in the Fin de Siecle* (New York: Princeton, 1998), p.19.

⁶² Elizabeth Amann, *Dandyism in the Age of Revolution: The Art of the Cut* (University of Chicago Press, 2015), pp.1-2.

⁶³ Based on analysis of newspaper reports at BLN.

and were not adverse to joining in.⁶⁴ Banks defines proponents as ‘aristocratic rakes... obsessively concerned with the regard of others’ whose upbringing was often marred by violence of the public schools, keen followers of fashion, enjoying rights-of-passage pastimes such as drunken assaults upon their inferiors and casual vandalism.⁶⁵ By implication duelling was a characteristic of lad culture, reserved to the young and foolish. But its endurance within aristocratic, military, and political circles suggests that duelling held a far stronger foothold in the national consciousness, because it was able to determine questions of honour, reputation and celebrity in the public sphere. When the Duke of York exchanged fire at Wimbledon Common in June 1789 a ‘full and true narrative was daily hawked about the streets’, causing moralists to express unease about the levels of social validation that duelling had now acquired; and wonder where it would end.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ ‘North Britons’ and ‘Irish’ are commonly listed as protagonists in London-based quarrels.

⁶⁵ Banks, *Duels and Duelling*, p.32.

⁶⁶ *Woodfall’s Register*, June 2nd 1789.

Analysis of Long-Wellesley's Known Duelling Activities (1811 to 1853)

<u>Date</u>	<u>Challenge</u>	<u>Opponent</u>	<u>Outcome</u>	<u>Note</u>
1 9th August 1811	Received	Lord Kilworth	Wimbleton Duel fought - no injuries	
2 14th August 1811	Received	Lord Kilworth	Hounslow Heath Duel fought - no injuries	
3 November 1819	Received	Mr John Benett	London Settled without combat	
4 December 1823	Received	Captain Bligh	Naples Challenge declined	a
5 July 1824	Received	Dr Bulkeley	Paris Accepted Long-Wellesley's apology	
6 19th June 1828	Received	Rev Heaton de Crespiigny	Calais Duel fought - no injuries	
7 19th June 1828	Received	Mr Herbert de Crespiigny	Calais Contest halted by seconds	
8 15 July 1828	Received	Rev Heaton de Crespiigny	London Stopped by magistrate	b
9 28th Nov 1831	Received	Mr Derbshire	London Challenge declined	c
10 Summer 1834	Received	Sir George Hamilton	Brussels Challenge declined	d
11 September 1834	Received	Colonel Rochfort	Brussels Challenge declined	e
12 February 1843	Received	Count Hummell	Paris Duel fought - no injuries	f
13 13th July 1853	Issued	Lord Shaftesbury	London Referred to Magistrate	g

Notes

- a Long-Wellesley refused to fight as he had 'done nothing wrong' - though could have claimed unequal contest versus military opponent
- b de Crespiigny bound over to keep the peace at Long-Wellesley's instigation
- c Long-Wellesley said his challenger was not a 'gentleman' - but was publicly horsewhipped by his protagonist instead
- d Long-Wellesley fled the country after publishing an explanation that was not accepted by his opponent
- e Rochfort advised to terminate challenge as Long-Wellesley no longer being considered to be a 'gentleman'
- f After Long-Wellesley produced a doctors certificate proving his inability to fight with swords, they then fought with pistols
- g Shaftesbury applied to a Magistrate and had Long-Wellesley bound over to keep the peace

LONG-WELLESLEY AND DUELLING

Thanks to his constant acts of self-promotion, Long-Wellesley's combat experiences offer useful insight into duelling and the public sphere in the opening decades of the nineteenth century. Only his frequent name-changes have prevented Long-Wellesley earning better recognition in the annals of duelling. Historians have failed to deduce that "Mr Pole" (1811), "Long-Wellesley" (1828), "Lord Wellesley" (1843) and the "Earl of Mornington" (1853) are the same person.⁶⁷

Despite his pedigree Long-Wellesley should not be considered a true advocate of duelling, because almost all cases were due to offence caused by him rather than a partiality for initiating combat.⁶⁸ However, given Long-Wellesley's antagonistic attitudes, he may well have been self-aware of his ability to provoke the offer of a duel. The only recorded occasion when Long-Wellesley issued a challenge did not occur until July 1853, aged 65, against Lord Shaftesbury (through the medium of *The Times*) on the grounds of failing to 'act in the manner which regulates the conduct of gentlemen'.⁶⁹

Long-Wellesley understood that duelling was a reputation enhancer capable of affirming his masculinity, and granting public access to his private life. As such, whenever he was asked to fight, Long-Wellesley sought to initiate dialogue. Unlike dedicated aficionados of duelling, Long-Wellesley refused challenges whenever he could do so without loss of

⁶⁷ For example Hopton *Pistols at Dawn*, p.64 & pp.233-234; Long-Wellesley is listed beside himself in the index.

⁶⁸ Long-Wellesley never promoted himself as a duellist.

⁶⁹ See *The Times* 10-15th July 1853. Lord Shaftesbury mentioned *Wellesley v Beaufort* (1827) in a House of Lords debate 'this I had every right to do... It was a law case'. After Shaftesbury referred Long-Wellesley's challenge to a magistrate to prevent a duel, Long-Wellesley published a diatribe against Shaftesbury, which was a thinly-veiled reminder to the public of the details of his private life. Shaftesbury was related to Long-Wellesley's first wife Catherine Tylney-Long, which may also have had a bearing in this matter.

face.⁷⁰ Even on these abortive occasions Long-Wellesley still resorted to the press. Public reaction to Long-Wellesley's duelling changed over time, reflecting the growing distaste for unacceptable conduct in public life. In 1811 duelling enhanced Long-Wellesley's celebrity, but by 1828 it made him look foolish, and those of 1834 placed him beyond the pale of respectability. This did not stop him fighting Count Hummel in 1843 or his final spat with Shaftesbury, which was nothing more than an embarrassing vestige of a bygone era, emphasising why men like Long-Wellesley and the duelling code of honour were no longer considered relevant.

⁷⁰ For example Millingen, *History of Duelling*. There was a complex coda of 'fair play' enabling gentlemen to refuse on the grounds of inequality of status, un-matched ability (such as if faced with a military marksman), or breach of pre-duel etiquette (such as incorrectly worded challenges).



Section of satire by George Cruickshank, published in *The Scourge* (Dec 1811) representing Long-Wellesley (left) and Lord Kilworth about to duel as a clown looks on, and their letters are scattered below.

LONG-WELLESLEY (Mr POLE) V KILWORTH – AUGUST 1811

If there were a campaign extolling the virtues of Regency-era duelling, Long-Wellesley's efforts in the summer of 1811 could fit the bill. Like the pages of a romantic novel he stepped forward to defend a lady's virtue, displayed bravery and honour in the field, and went on to win her heart in marriage. Romantic stuff, and not without elements of

truth, because Long-Wellesley played out this saga through print and image media. As covered in my chapter on privacy, Wanstead House heiress Catherine Tylney-Long was engulfed by a frenzy of media interest throughout 1811. This was her first season in society after coming of age, when she was expected to choose a husband. Not surprisingly Catherine was linked to a great many bachelors of all ages, as print and visual media latched onto her story and speculated upon the outcome.⁷¹

With social engagements a battleground for rival suitors, Long-Wellesley's dancing prowess was distinctly advantageous. His ability to waltz, which he had learnt whilst in diplomatic service at Vienna, earned him considerable kudos. Dancing had long played a key role in polite society, especially in the ritual of courtship.⁷² According to Jane Austen, 'to be fond of dancing is a certain step towards falling in love'.⁷³ In 1776 the *St James' Chronicle* described it as 'an important addition to the academic system of education', warning that inattention to the quality of the dancer in a social setting risked the fashioning of 'hideous misalliances'.⁷⁴ According to Hazel Jones war with France drained the country of almost 200,000 eligible men, creating a desperate shortage of dancing partners at private balls and public assemblies.⁷⁵ By 1810 the leading of a dance was considered a position of honour, influencing the selection of dances and music; with accomplished male dancers becoming highly prized. With the introduction of the waltz, dancing, for a time, overturned the newspaper convention of listing attendees at society events by order of rank. Top position now went to principal dancers engaged to commence proceedings and maintain the

⁷¹ *The Scourge* (December 1811) listed renowned fop Lumley Skeffington (1771-1850), and actor Robert "Romeo" Coates (1772-1848) alongside numerous other celebrities as her supposed suitors.

⁷² Mark Knowles, *The Wicked Waltz and Other Scandalous Dances* (London: McFarland, 2009) pp.32-33.

⁷³ Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (Herts: Wordsworth, 1992), p.6.

⁷⁴ July 13th 1776.

⁷⁵ Hazel Jones, *Jane Austen and Marriage* (London: Continuum, 2009), pp.46-47.

entertainment thereafter.⁷⁶ Long-Wellesley was a celebrated dancer, making him a credible candidate in the race for the 'prize', as Catherine Tylney-Long was now being described.⁷⁷ Her partiality for dancing was common knowledge. In the early part of 1811 Button & Whittakers published *Music Sheet for a Waltz – Miss Tylney Long's Favourite*, and there were reports of all-night dance marathons at her Wanstead mansion.⁷⁸

In May 1811 the *Lancaster Gazette* predicted 'the richest heiress in Europe [was] about to surrender to a subaltern of the enterprising corps of Wellesley'.⁷⁹ However, contemporary onlookers began to think otherwise. Charlotte Bury thought Catherine had 'become quite cruel to [Long-Wellesley]... with the united schools of Eton and Westminster gaping after [her], as if she were fairer than a myriad of Venuses'.⁸⁰ George Jackson noticed Long-Wellesley 'undergo many an uneasy quarter of an hour when she bestows smiles elsewhere'.⁸¹ The situation became more acute after the Duke of Clarence entered the fray, having met Catherine at a fete at Carlton House in June, and he was soon believed to be negotiating marriage terms through her immediate family.⁸² To cap it all, Long-Wellesley's pre-eminence at dancing was faltering, as love rivals including Lord Kilworth began to feature prominently in reports covering Catherine's social engagements.⁸³ When all seemed lost, Long-Wellesley was involved in a duel that put him back in the race.

⁷⁶ *Morning Chronicle*, May 14th 1811; *Morning Post*, May 10th & 8th June 1811.

⁷⁷ Sir George Jackson (Ed. Lady Jackson) *Diaries and Letters Volume 1* (London: Bentley, 1873), p.281.

⁷⁸ Waltz sheet advert is in Stead, *Some Account of Wanstead*; Wanstead House fete reported in *Morning Post*, between July 8th and 20th 1811.

⁷⁹ *Lancaster Gazette*, May 25th 1811.

⁸⁰ Bury, *Diary of Lady in Waiting*, p.71.

⁸¹ Jackson, *Diaries*, pp.244-245.

⁸² See Philip Ziegler, *King William IV*, (London: Cassell, 1989), pp104-6 and Claire Tomalin, *Mrs Jordan's Profession* (London: Viking, 1994), p.239.

⁸³ For example *Morning Post*, June 17th & August 6th 1811. In his youth Lord Kilworth was known as a dandy and a dancer, see http://www.turtlebunbury.com/history/history_family/hist_family_mountcashell.htm Accessed June 18th 2019.

On July 15th the *Morning Chronicle* published an anonymous poem entitled ‘*On Leaving Wanstead House Fete*’ ridiculing Long-Wellesley’s attempts to woo Catherine

With the tumult of Waltzing and wild Irish reels,
As prime dancer I’m sure to get at her;
And by Love’s graceful movements to trip up her heels,
As the Long and the short of the matter⁸⁴

Unwarranted publicity of this kind, linking Catherine to an object of public ridicule, damaged her reputation and prospects of a good marriage. This may explain Catherine’s cooling ardour towards Long-Wellesley at this time. The matter may have rested but for Kilworth’s public recital of this poem at a dinner party on 6th August, which initiated a misunderstanding which ultimately cemented rather than severed her relationship with Long-Wellesley. Kilworth, a 19-year-old undergraduate from Trinity College Cambridge, was trying to fatally undermine Long-Wellesley in Catherine’s presence. But he succeeded in embarrassing Catherine, and in giving Long-Wellesley the impression that *he* was the poem’s author, leading to an altercation that continued long after Kilworth set the record straight. Long-Wellesley accused him of a ‘want of knowledge of etiquette’ by alluding to ‘reports which the public prints made mention of, relative to any Lady & Gentleman in fashionable society’.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ It was sent from the Cocoa Tree Club – whose members included Byron, the only other person known to have described Long-Wellesley a ‘prime dancer’. Byron, who had a club foot, resented Long-Wellesley’s dance-floor popularity – see Marchand (Ed.), *Byron’s Letters & Journals, Volume 3 1813-1814* (London: Murray, 1974), p.41.

⁸⁵ Long-Wellesley MS 20135, f.36 –August 9th 1811.

On the evening of 8th August Kilworth's challenge duly arrived

Sir – Not deeming the answer received... sufficiently satisfactory, I must request a further explanation, or a total disavowal of the words you used at Lady Hawarden's.⁸⁶

Consenting to a duel was a risky strategy because Long-Wellesley was gambling Catherine's reputation as well as his life. She would have been aware, as Mary Bennett observes in *Pride and Prejudice*, that 'loss of virtue in a female is irretrievable, that one false step involves her in endless ruin'.⁸⁷

Long-Wellesley already had first-hand knowledge of the repercussions of duelling. Two years previously his uncle Henry Wellesley opted for legal recourse from Henry Paget for eloping with his wife Charlotte, rather than fighting a duel. Wellesley won £20000 damages from Paget, but there was a lingering sense that choosing not to fight tarnished his honour.⁸⁸ Also the famous Castlereagh and Canning encounter (September 1809) wrought division in the Wellesley family. Long-Wellesley's father William successfully dissuaded Henry from acting as Canning's second for 'dread of the family being split into parties'.⁸⁹ But he could not over-ride the fact that 'Richard's sympathies were with Canning; and Arthur owed everything to Castlereagh'.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Ibid, f.37.

⁸⁷ Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, p.277.

⁸⁸ Muir, *Wellington: The Path to Victory*, p.291 - Henry Wellesley thought he had been publicly humiliated and therefore resigned from the Treasury.

⁸⁹ Jenkins, *The Wellesley Papers*, p.267.

⁹⁰ Longford, *Years of the Sword*, p.258.

Initially Long-Wellesley tried to diffuse Kilworth's wrath via an exchange of letters. Once this failed, Long-Wellesley gave his assent, declaring '[if] your Lordship is resolved to quarrel with me, and to throw me the glove, I have only most reluctantly to accept of it'.⁹¹ Four hours later, at dawn on August 9th, Long-Wellesley was on the ground at Wimbledon, having made his arrangements and appointed Colonel Shawe as his second. Kilworth did not appear until 7am, and his apology for tardiness enabled the seconds to settle the affair without exchange of fire. At this stage Long-Wellesley was most anxious to avoid publicity. After returning to his lodgings at Conduit Street he sent Catherine a note, enclosing copies of letters exchanged with Kilworth, begging for personal hearing:

I may fairly look upon myself, as having been treated in a manner most outrageous... You may but justly suppose my dearest Miss Long how wretched and unhappy I must feel, at the idea; that any transaction into which I was led should have caused you the least pain. I feel confident I did all in my power to ward off Lord Kilworth's malicious intentions; & I hope that you and the world in general will feel that my failure rested solely on his obstinacy... I have sent to the newspaper offices... to stop at any price any paragraphs relative to this transaction, which may come to their office for insertion. This I believe is all that is now left for me to do, save that of once more assuring you of the sincerity of my affection for you and my anxious wish not to incur your disapprobation.⁹²

⁹¹ Stead, p.67.

⁹² Long-Wellesley MS 20135 f.36 – August 9th 1811.

The following morning Kilworth published their correspondence, without mentioning Catherine, claiming that the matter was only concluded *after* Long-Wellesley made ‘ample apology’ on the ground.⁹³ Any question of Long-Wellesley remaining silent was now extinguished, for it was now incumbent upon him to set the record straight. Accordingly, and with the agreement of both seconds, Long-Wellesley published a counter-statement declaring that although ‘everything was amicably adjusted in the most honourable manner.... [no] apology was necessary, nor was any made’.⁹⁴ *The Times*, one of many newspapers publishing both versions of events, justified its insertion by acknowledging ‘the attention attracted to the subject to which the [duel] relates... and the station and pretensions of the two parties’. They were alluding to Catherine, though she was not spared by other newspaper reports some of whom eagerly reprinted the impromptu that initiated this dispute. Considering that *The Times* believed ‘disputes between private individuals are of no moment to the public at large’ their decision to publish was an implicit acceptance of the celebrity angle, which conflated this relatively trivial dispute.⁹⁵

Kilworth’s refusal to accept Long-Wellesley’s interpretation of their discussions led to a further challenge being issued on August 14th. Unlike the first occasion Long-Wellesley was open for business, insisting that ‘no earthly power shall induce me to grant you a meeting til after the inclosed statement shall have met *the public eye*’ (my italics).⁹⁶ In effect he was now appealing to the audience, both to discredit Kilworth and bolster his own reputation. On the day after Long-Wellesley’s statement was published, the authorities were placed on high alert to prevent a second encounter: ‘all the police officers and runners

⁹³ Stead, p.67.

⁹⁴ *The Times*, August 16th 1811.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ *Morning Chronicle*, August 19th 1811.

have been collected, and sent out to every place of known resort for duellists around the capital'.⁹⁷ According to the *Morning Chronicle* their meeting took place at Fulham Fields on the evening of the 16th, but only after a lengthy search for privacy

the parties were obliged in consequence of the crowds of curious persons who suspected their intentions to go from place to place, until at last they were relieved from spectators. When they took their ground Lord Kilworth fired and missed. [Long-Wellesley] fired his pistol in the air. The seconds then interfered and they were reconciled.⁹⁸

This second encounter triggered a fresh flurry of press coverage allowing Long-Wellesley to strengthen his character as a gentleman reluctantly dragged to the field, who had honourably refused to return fire on his belligerent opponent. Both the events and Long-Wellesley's use of language proved very popular. One reader found the letters so amusing that he accused the *London Chronicle* of 'confederacy' in the whole affair.⁹⁹ Byron was particularly enamoured with 'throwing the glove'; adopting this phrase (with credit to Long-Wellesley) when facing up to his own critics.¹⁰⁰ After a few days the press tired of the affair, refusing to publish more correspondence 'save for advertisement' – but by this time Long-Wellesley's fortunes were transformed.¹⁰¹ As early as August 15th George Jackson heard gossip 'imported from Bond Street affirm[ing] Miss Long has at last surrendered, and that marshal Pole is forthwith to be put in early possession of the citadel and all its

⁹⁷ *Caledonian Mercury*, August 19th 1811.

⁹⁸ *Morning Chronicle*, August 19th 1811.

⁹⁹ August 20th 1811.

¹⁰⁰ Alice Levine & Robert Keane, *Rereading Byron: Essays Selected from Hofstra University's Byron Bicentennial Conference (1988)*, (New York: Garland, 1993), p.116.

¹⁰¹ Stead, p.100.

stores'.¹⁰² Another newspaper thought that the duel enabled Long-Wellesley to 'absolutely shut her out from all other pretenders'.¹⁰³ Whilst the spat with Kilworth was not initially stage-managed, its dramatic presentation and outcome enhanced Long-Wellesley's reputation, giving him celebrity. No longer just one of the pack of 'truffle-hunters' – Long-Wellesley was now a public figure in his own right, and this transformation was probably crucial to his success in securing Catherine's hand in marriage.¹⁰⁴

LONG-WELLESLEY v DE CRESPIGNY (1828)

Despite changing attitudes to its continuance, Long-Wellesley did not re-evaluate his views on duelling as a means to resolve conflict. Instead he found ways to avoid further contests by using acceptable excuses from the duelling code of conduct. This served Long-Wellesley well until 1828, when he decided to duel with a priest on the sands at Calais.

In 1823, when Elizabeth Fielding observed that Long-Wellesley's 'reputation is established' she reflected a belief that, despite the growing backlash against duelling, it was still considered a masculine badge of honour.¹⁰⁵ The post-Waterloo years were epitomised by civil unrest and hardship, with rising dissent against aristocratic profligacy and excess. Banks records just 13 duels in Britain between 1815 and 1820, suggesting that it was becoming a casualty of this social upheaval.¹⁰⁶

In 1822 Stephen Leach blamed the press for perpetuating duel culture

¹⁰² Jackson, *Diaries*, p.281.

¹⁰³ *Colonial Times*, Volume 11 (Hobart, 1826), p.42.

¹⁰⁴ Phrase coined by Bury, *Lady in Waiting*, p.71.

¹⁰⁵ BLM, Fox Talbot Collection, 1299.

¹⁰⁶ Banks, *Polite Exchange of Bullets*, p.72.

Newspapers are stuffed with expressions of regret that no compromise between the parties is expected to take place, and the reader is often annoyed with the frothy and disgusting letters which pass between the worthies.¹⁰⁷

Leach believed that duelling was a crime caused by ‘false and mischievous honour’ wrongly instilled via defective education into the children of ‘vulgar high life’. By participating a man ‘immediately becomes a fool, a ruffian and a thief’.¹⁰⁸ Banks concurs that by the 1820s duelling was increasingly treated as an act of folly deserving ridicule, diminishing its prestige as a valid code of honour.¹⁰⁹ At the same time elite education was in the throes of reform, rejecting codes of violence, and acting as a deterrent for younger generations.¹¹⁰

After his marriage, Long-Wellesley was involved in a number of disputes that resulted in challenges being issued, but he avoided taking to the field. He refused satisfaction to fellow Wiltshire MP John Benett (1819) because he was not considered to be a gentleman; Thomas Bligh (1823) was declined because accepting his challenge could be construed as an admission of adultery on Long-Wellesley’s part, when he pointed out it had yet to be proven in a court of law. Doctor Thomas Bulkeley accepted an apology from Long-

¹⁰⁷ Stephen Leach, *The Folly and Wickedness of Duelling Exposed* (London: J King, 1822), p.10.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Banks, *Polite Exchange of Bullets*, p.215.

¹¹⁰ Ute Frevert, ‘Honour and Middle Class Culture: the history of the duel in England and Germany’ in J. Kocks & A. Mitchell (Eds.), *Bourgeois Society in Nineteenth Century Europe*, (Oxford: Berg, 1993), p.226 – says that public school reform ‘was probably of decisive importance in bringing about the observed change in behaviour of the English social elite’.

Wellesley (1824) but the advantages of his military background meant that any contest would have breached the bounds of fair play.

Thanks to his exploits in 1811, Long-Wellesley established his reputation for honour and valour as a duellist, rendering it unnecessary to repeat the exercise. Yet, in the summer of 1828, he did return to the arena of combat, facing Reverend Heaton de Crespigny, an adversary he could have refused without dishonour, at a time when his public persona required restraint. Long-Wellesley's appeal against the loss of his parental rights following *Wellesley v Beaufort* (1827) had been at the House of Lords since April – with a decision imminent.¹¹¹ Proceedings at the appeal were widely reported, with many expecting Long-Wellesley to succeed. *The Morning Chronicle* declared it a 'most admirable appeal'.¹¹² Long-Wellesley was represented by Lord Brougham – perhaps the foremost legal advocate of his time. Brougham focussed on the dangerous precedent created by empowering the Court of Chancery with jurisdiction over paternity – and, significantly, he warned that evidence from 'discarded menial[s] might bring [any men] to the bar of public opinion, [making] their most heedless expressions the ground of the vilest calumny'.¹¹³ This was a clear acknowledgement of the growing intrusion of public opinion, and the pressure it bore upon the judicial process. One newspaper declared Eldon's judgement had set 'the most monstrous anomaly to break the tenderest ties of nature... and assign as a reason for such a mighty outrage – the support of MORALITY'.¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ By strange coincidence, former duelling adversary Lord Kilworth (now Earl Mountcashel) was one of the Lords presiding over Long-Wellesley's appeal – *The Times*, April 25th 1828.

¹¹² May 22nd 1828.

¹¹³ *The Times*, May 22nd 1828.

¹¹⁴ Stead, p.100.

Given the strength of Long-Wellesley's case, the soundness of Brougham's arguments, and a groundswell of opinion against an over-reaching court of Chancery, there was no need for Long-Wellesley to seek further publicity. But, as forecast by George Dallas when the appeal was first lodged, Long-Wellesley became 'the victim of his own venom and, like the viper, destroy[ed] himself'.¹¹⁵ He did this by maintaining a persistent low-level dirty tricks campaign against the friends and members of Catherine's family who had lined up against him in the original custody case. In particular he sought to undermine the character of the Miss Tylney-Longs, Catherine's sisters; now legal guardians to his children. He published allegations about their sectarian religious principles, corrupt upbringing, and an affidavit suggesting an 'incestuous' relationship between Emma Tylney-Long and her uncle Sir William Champion de Crespigny. The sisters remained publicly silent, but Dora privately lamented 'his system of misrepresenting everything... [which] is as troublesome as it is unjust'.¹¹⁶ In the early months of 1828 Long-Wellesley was regularly in the news. Rumours swirled about his return to Parliament, as he arranged a series of lavish hunt meetings in Hampshire and Essex.¹¹⁷ One newspaper speculated that he was taking holy orders to escape 'the scurrilous attacks of libellous, prying editorial hacks'.¹¹⁸

Regardless of their support or opposition, Long-Wellesley's ongoing battle with the Court of Chancery kept the public in thrall. In his favour, a fresh Chancery ruling preventing Long-Wellesley from selecting a tutor for his children, was described by some newspapers as a ruling that was 'pregnant with the most mischievous of consequences to society'.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ Long-Wellesley MS E14-L3, April 15th 1828.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*, E26-L4.

¹¹⁷ BLM, ADD 52483 p131-32 – Wellesley was offered a seat for £6000 (8th March 1828); He was extremely active with hunt meets: *Bell's Life in London*, 6th & 27th January, March 2nd & April 6th & 13th 1828.

¹¹⁸ *Liverpool Courier*, February 1st 1828.

¹¹⁹ Stead, p.99.

Counting against Long-Wellesley was the news of his savage destruction of 1200 ornamental trees from Wanstead Park (carried out for the purpose of funding his legal challenge), which was considered as wilfully despoiling his son's estate. The press rejoiced when the Lord Chancellor's special injunction halted tree-felling at Wanstead, causing Long-Wellesley to complain to the *Morning Chronicle* for 'its object to injure me'.¹²⁰ Concurrent with Long-Wellesley's appeal to the Lords, he also instigated a bill of action against the Tylney-Long sisters' attorney Hutchinson and others on the grounds of conspiracy to fabricate evidence against him. This case was thrown out by a jury at Middlesex Court.¹²¹ Given the strength of news-flow, public opinion could not fail to notice Long-Wellesley's appeal, or become invested in its outcome. What this meant, however, was that Long-Wellesley's unpalatable public behaviour became a secondary consideration to the question of defining the boundaries of paternal rights, which affected every father in society.



Reverend Heaton de Crespigny (1796-1858)

¹²⁰ *Morning Chronicle*, February 20th 1828.

¹²¹ *The Times*, April 17th 1828.

On June 16th Long-Wellesley received a challenge from Reverend Heaton de Crespigny, eldest son of Sir William, the uncle whom Long-Wellesley contended had had 'incestuous relations' (sic) with Emma Tylney-Long. These claims originated in an affidavit submitted to the Master in Chancery in the autumn of 1826. Having been struck out for scandal and impertinence this affidavit had not been responded to, or relied upon by Eldon when he made his final judgement. A year later, on the grounds that these allegations remained unanswered, Long-Wellesley summoned Reverend de Crespigny; and successfully persuaded him that his father had intrigued with Emma, who had subsequently bore him a bastard child.¹²² Long-Wellesley's motive was clear; he was resorting to blackmail to compel the Tylney-Long sisters to withdraw their opposition to his appeal. He asked de Crespigny as an interested party to undertake 'a charitable office... bringing [this affair] to such a satisfactory termination as to avoid any further public scandal'.¹²³ When de Crespigny met the Tylney-Long sisters in January 1828 he interpreted their shocked silence as an admission of guilt; but it was not until June when he tackled his father that de Crespigny became aware of the position into which he'd been placed.¹²⁴ Sir William rejected the accusations, and threatened to disinherit his son, forcing de Crespigny to act swiftly for his own sake as well as for the honour of his family. Hence on June 15th a challenge was issued seeking 'requisite proofs' or 'immediate satisfaction'.¹²⁵

With so much riding on the result of his appeal Long-Wellesley's acceptance of de Crespigny's challenge was a bad decision. As it was unheard of for clergymen to issue

¹²² This child, according to Long-Wellesley, was being raised by a tenant on the Draycot Estate (the Tylney-Long's ancestral home). There is no evidence to support Long-Wellesley's allegations..

¹²³ Stead, p.99.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

challenges, especially on a Sunday, Long-Wellesley had ample grounds for refusal.¹²⁶ *The Examiner* lambasted ‘the march of liberality in the Church’ enabling a parson to send a challenge on the Sabbath, when a Costermonger selling an apple would have been committed to the treadmill: ‘selling bread for the poor is less excusable than slaying for vengeance by the rich’.¹²⁷ There was further time for reflection after Long-Wellesley was arrested at the French play and ‘only liberated after giving his word to appear at Bow Street Magistrates’ the following morning, where he has bound over to keep the peace.¹²⁸ Despite having respectable escape routes, Long-Wellesley chose to take their contest to Calais, away from the Court’s jurisdiction – but into the public eye.

Long-Wellesley carefully planned a spectacle, and the rumour mill set to work as word got out about the impending duel. He arranged for the duel to be staged on the beach, turning it into open-air theatre. People breakfasted at Dover before setting off on boats from England for their ring-side seats, with the proximity of the pier offering a grand circle for watching the proceedings. He even lined up a well-known celebrity to act as his second. This duel (and its repercussions) became a prominent source of conversation for the best part of a year, and was labelled by *The Times* as ‘food for gossips’.¹²⁹ At 4pm on June 19th Long-Wellesley walked to the sands, arm-in-arm with his friend and fellow-celebrity George ‘Beau’ Brummell who was resident in Calais, in front of an expectant crowd gathered on the jetty.¹³⁰ De Crespigny’s younger brother Herbert loaded his pistol before both parties fired simultaneously from a distance of ten paces. As none of the parties were injured,

¹²⁶ Hopton, *Pistols at Dawn*, pp.243-244.

¹²⁷ July 6th 1828.

¹²⁸ Stead, p.99.

¹²⁹ September 4th 1828.

¹³⁰ Gareth Glover, *Wellington's Voice: The Candid Letters of Lieutenant Colonel John Fremantle* (London: Frontline, 2012), pp.211-212 & Stead, p.99.

Herbert came forward and issued his own challenge to Long-Wellesley, seeking the same satisfaction. Long-Wellesley said he was willing to repeat the exercise, but de Crespigny's second Captain Brooke pronounced that he [Long-Wellesley] 'had done as much as he was required to do' – and the business should be terminated.¹³¹ Unlike traditional post-duel denouements, the two sides left the ground without reconciling their differences. What now remained was the battle for public ascendancy, which duly commenced following their return to London.

Long-Wellesley made a dramatic appearance at the Covent Garden Opera House on Saturday June 21st. Whether by design or coincidence the Miss Tylney-Longs were present together with their ward Victoria. Long-Wellesley theatrically turned his back on his daughter, whom he had not seen for almost 4 years 'lest in manifesting anything like parental feeling he might be charged with contempt of Chancery'.¹³² Newspapers questioned the audacity of Emma Tylney-Long for being out in society given her interest in the circumstances of the duel. This was a prime example of gender bias in the public sphere. The Tylney-Long sisters, victims of Long-Wellesley's scandal mongering, but prevented from openly defending themselves by conventions of feminine etiquette, were now described as brazen for daring to appear in public. The following day Long-Wellesley published a lengthy statement in the *Sunday Times* leaving little to the imagination regarding the nature of his accusations, or the identities of those targeted. This included an assertion that his dead wife Catherine, hearing of her sister's affair had declared 'I think relatives ceasing to be respectable, ought to cease to be respected'.¹³³ *The Times* justified

¹³¹ *Bell's Life in London*, June 22nd 1828.

¹³² *Morning Chronicle*, June 28th 1828.

¹³³ *Sunday Times* 29th June 1828.

reprinting Long-Wellesley's statement in full by saying that 'we should not give publicity to this account unless we felt the cause of truth is best served by the amplest and rudest discussion'. In their view this 'strange narrative' had a direct bearing on the Lords appeal, and they declared 'our columns are open to any answer'.¹³⁴ Younger brother Herbert duly replied on his family's behalf, drawing attention to the many inaccuracies, insisting that Long-Wellesley led his reverend brother astray, and confirming that legal proceedings were about to be constituted.¹³⁵ On behalf of the Tylney-Long sisters, Hutchinson submitted a letter criticising *The Times* for publishing 'a foul and totally unfounded libel' so close to the decision of the House of Lords; and reminding the public that Emma Tylney Long was a 'spotless and pure-minded lady...due to her own dignity, and her unsullied honour... [would not] enter the lists with her vile traducer, in such an arena as the columns of a newspaper'.¹³⁶ This letter was published, but alongside yet more correspondence and accusations submitted by Long-Wellesley.

By the time the House of Lords made their ruling on July 4th, Long-Wellesley had turned his private life into a cause célèbre. Long-Wellesley lost his appeal, denying him any custodial rights.¹³⁷ The chief effect of his duel with de Crespigny was that his subsequent libellous revelations softened public reaction to the appeal outcome. Long-Wellesley inadvertently switched the public's focus from the implications of legal precedent against fatherhood, towards the scandalous exposé of his private life. The lure of publicity, involving a glamorous overseas jaunt in front of an appreciative seaside crowd, with special guest

¹³⁴ *The Times* 30th June 1828.

¹³⁵ *Ibid*, July 2nd and 4th 1828.

¹³⁶ *Ibid*, July 3rd 1828.

¹³⁷ See chapter 6.

appearances, was irresistible to a celebrity like Long-Wellesley – and, as forecast, his subsequent public behaviour made him the true ‘victim of his own venom’.¹³⁸

A few days after his unsuccessful appeal Long-Wellesley received another challenge from Herbert de Crespigny, but this time he brought his antagonist before a magistrate, declaring that nothing ‘should again induce him to commit a breach of the peace’.¹³⁹ This was a lesson learned too late, and did nothing to arrest his flow of libellous accusations and letters. Like he had done in 1811, Long-Wellesley engaged in duelling to serve a purpose, that of generating publicity, because he saw public opinion as the true tribunal for celebrity recognition.

LONG-WELLESLEY v HAMILTON AND ROCHFORD (1834-35)

After Long-Wellesley’s departure from England to escape his mountainous debts at the beginning of 1833, there was a noticeable and sustained campaign to ridicule him *in absentia*. *The Satirist* thought Long-Wellesley a good locksmith ‘for he was always making a bolt’; and *Figaro in London* proposed his appointment as ‘a judge of the King’s Bench, for he has had vast experience’.¹⁴⁰ As reports of fresh misdemeanours arrived from the Continent, however, the mood towards Long-Wellesley hardened significantly; and jokes turned to vilification. Although the period 1833-1835 falls outside of the scope of my thesis, it provides some important insights into Long-Wellesley’s celebrity durability.

¹³⁸ Long-Wellesley MS, E14-L23.

¹³⁹ *Newcastle Courant*, July 19th 1828.

¹⁴⁰ *Satirist*, March 31st & *Figaro*, June 1st 1833.

In January 1833 Long-Wellesley abandoned his house in Bruton Street, servants homeless and unpaid, and his coachman locked up in Fleet prison ‘for debts contracted through his master’s instrumentality’.¹⁴¹ There was a public outcry surrounding this heartless act, as several of his staff wrote pitiful letters to the press outlining their state of destitution. A subsequent sit-in at Bruton Street resulted in some servants being paid, and the public scandal was thought to have derailed Lord Grey’s intention to elevate Long-Wellesley to the Lords in reward for his contribution to the Great Reform Act.¹⁴² That summer Long-Wellesley’s newly-purchased estate at St Ives in Cornwall was sequestered following a court case determining that he had acted fraudulently during its acquisition.¹⁴³ Autumn and winter brought the stark news that Long-Wellesley had left his wife and children destitute at Calais, having publicly disavowed his marriage and its progeny.¹⁴⁴ When the newspapers learned that Helena managed to secure a pay-off from her estranged husband amounting to £700 per annum they reacted with cynicism because ‘the chief difficulty, as regards this long-named gentleman, has been to secure anything for those who [have] real claims upon him’.¹⁴⁵ In November a fire at Mr Leander’s coach-making premises at Tottenham Court Road delivered a body-blow for Long-Wellesley’s aspirations to return home, for it contained ‘property of the most splendid description, consisting of furniture, paintings, lamps, chandeliers, &c’ held in storage ‘for safety prior to his leaving England’.¹⁴⁶ Alongside the slew of negative reportage there remained a dwindling residue of celebrity

¹⁴¹ *The Times*, January 4th 1833 The situation of Long-Wellesley’s servants was extensively covered – initially because he published letters denying that they had been unpaid – A subsequent sit-in by the servants resulted in them extracting £271 in back-payments. Outdoor servants, however, were not paid and a great many appeared at various magistrates courts throughout January (or wrote to the press) pleading poverty.

¹⁴² *The Age*, once a staunch supporter of Long-Wellesley’s parental rights, now thought his entry to the Lords would be an affront to ‘decency’ and a ‘degradation of the peerage’. Feb 17th 1833.

¹⁴³ *The Times*, May 9th 1833.

¹⁴⁴ *Jackson’s Oxford Journal*, September 28th 1833.

¹⁴⁵ *Satirist*, December 10th 1833.

¹⁴⁶ *John Bull*, November 4th 1833.

attached to Long-Wellesley's name. *The Satirist* marked him out as a 'sporting men' expected to make bathing at Boulogne 'very gay'; and Mr Mellish, a wealthy contractor, was delighted to have taken up residence at Long-Wellesley's old house in Dover Street, as it placed him so near the 'pint of fashion'.¹⁴⁷

The following two years continued in a similar vein as the public watch Long-Wellesley's descent into notoriety. But then reports suddenly stopped. Save for being listed in some ongoing legal hearings, Long-Wellesley does not feature in the British Library Newspaper database for 1836.¹⁴⁸ His celebrity died away through a combination of press fatigue, his enforced banishment from nearby Calais to distant Brussels, and the public turning their back on his dissipated conduct.¹⁴⁹ These factors underscore his loss of relevance in a society where decency had become the norm, and reprehensible behaviour frowned upon. But the final dismantling of Long-Wellesley's celebrity lay in his ostracisation from elite society – which was occasioned by breaches of the duelling code of honour.

Between autumn 1834 and summer 1835 Long-Wellesley quarrelled with two gentlemen of the same rank or above, leading to challenges being issued. In the first case Sir George Hamilton, Secretary to the British Embassy at Brussels, took great offence in comments made by Long-Wellesley 'of a nature most injurious to my character'.¹⁵⁰ When Hamilton demanded an apology Long-Wellesley fled to Germany, and, though Hamilton followed him to Dresden and Frankfurt he was unable to call him to account. Consequently on October 20th Hamilton published a statement declaring that 'Mr Long Wellesley, first by

¹⁴⁷ *Satirist*, July 16th & September 22nd 1833.

¹⁴⁸ The only 'Long-Wellesley' reports concern his grown up children's appearances in London society.

¹⁴⁹ *Dublin Freeman's Journal*, November 5th 1833 reports a French court ruling making Long-Wellesley liable for debts incurred by his estranged wife in Calais. Long-Wellesley escaped liability by moving to Brussels.

¹⁵⁰ Stead, p.103.

his infamous slander of me, and then by his cowardly refusal to give me satisfaction, has forfeited every claim to the character of a gentleman'.¹⁵¹ Long-Wellesley's reply was both feeble and ineffective; he claimed to be convalescing from illness, and appealed to the Foreign Secretary, Lord Palmerston, to investigate Hamilton's conduct. This letter was copied to London newspapers so that: 'the public press furnish sufficient evidence that Mr Long-Wellesley has never hesitated, not only to give explanation, but to make apology, where he has inflicted pain or unintentional insult'.¹⁵² This time Long-Wellesley's appeal to the public fell on deaf ears, and Hamilton created a placard labelling him a coward, which was posted up in the public libraries throughout Brussels. Long-Wellesley's reputation suffered through his inability to prevent this public slur, and his decision to publish the Palmerston letter exacerbated matters because it also contained defamatory comments about a second gentleman: Lieutenant William Rochford, who was a highly respected veteran of the Peninsular War campaign. In the spring of 1834 Long-Wellesley's oldest son William had come of age and gained his financial independence. Long-Wellesley invited young William to Brussels, where it was reported he was milking his son for thousands of pounds each month.¹⁵³ Years of struggle to keep Long-Wellesley away from his children's fortunes, appeared to have been lost. According to Longford, the Duke of Wellington asked Rochford to rescue the boy before he was utterly ruined.¹⁵⁴ Long-Wellesley's letter to Palmerston denounced Rochford as 'a man of infamous repute', implying that homosexual advances had been made towards his son.¹⁵⁵ His intention was probably to embarrass

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² *The Standard*, November 8th 1834.

¹⁵³ *Belfast News Letter*, September 9th 1834.

¹⁵⁴ Longford, *Pillar of State*, p.257 - says Long-Wellesley publicly accused Rochford of seducing his son.

¹⁵⁵ *The Standard*, November 8th 1834, and Frances Wilson, *The Courtesan's Revenge* (London: Faber & Faber, 2003), p.290.

Rochford into retreat, but it led to an immediate challenge. Long-Wellesley replied that Rochford's homosexuality denied him any right to satisfaction. The matter only terminated when Rochford's seconds learnt that Long-Wellesley was posted as 'a coward' by Hamilton, rendering it dishonourable (on their part) for the duel to go ahead.¹⁵⁶ Long-Wellesley published his exchange of correspondence with Rochford in *Galignani's Messenger* (a Parisian English-language newspaper). When it was reprinted in London – one paper reflected the sentiment of all by advising Rochford to use an 'ash-plant or a double-thronged... horse whip' to deal with Long-Wellesley once and for all.¹⁵⁷ Rochford was ultimately successful on rescuing William from his father's clutches, because he (William) was soon back in England taking steps to cut off the entail on his estate and put an end to Long-Wellesley's 'golden expectations'.¹⁵⁸

In these episodes, Long-Wellesley had been called to account by two gentlemen of spotless character. He singularly failed to observe duelling's code of honour, and breached the tenets of polite gentlemanly conduct – forcing Long-Wellesley to shed all claims he held for membership of the social elite. As late as 1829, *The Spectator* still considered duelling as 'that species of reparation which is sought for amongst gentlemen'.¹⁵⁹ Long-Wellesley's fall from grace therefore was not about partaking in combat, but more to do with disrespecting its rules.

By refusing to engage in a contest against his protagonists Long-Wellesley abdicated his status as a gentleman – putting an end to his celebrity pretensions. The *Morning Chronicle* succinctly summed up his exit from public life

¹⁵⁶ In Belgium duellists required two sets of seconds.

¹⁵⁷ *The Times*, January 5th 1835.

¹⁵⁸ *The Age*, April 7th 1834.

¹⁵⁹ Cited in Banks, *Polite Exchange of Bullets*, p.66.

Mr LONG-WELLESLEY has made himself sufficiently conspicuous already to gratify the most reckless indifference to public opinion. As if this, however, were not enough, he has in the present affair[s] contrived to afford an additional reason why public opinion, in deference to public morals, should assign him a station in which he might be without the power of either influencing it for either evil or good.¹⁶⁰

THE DEATH OF DUELLING

The disappearance of British duelling after 1852 has long been the subject of conjecture, especially because continental versions persisted until as late as the 1930s.¹⁶¹ Anthony Simpson says it fell victim to elite snobbery, an aristocratic inspired abandonment caused by its 'embourgeoisement' (middling class participation) which belittled the validity of duelling as a test of personal honour.¹⁶² James Kelly's comprehensive study of duelling in Ireland contends that the declining social status of combatants caused a spike in duelling practices until around 1800; but - once it had become too rife - there was a backlash from the law and respectable society against 'the affair of honour'.¹⁶³ In Britain too, by the 1790s there was concern that duelling was travelling down the social scale. *The Times* called it a 'remnant of Gothic barbarism... a disgrace to our laws, as it not only pervades the higher, but the lower order of the people'.¹⁶⁴ 'Lower order' probably referred to lawyers, doctors

¹⁶⁰ November 3rd 1834.

¹⁶¹ See Banks, *Polite Exchange of Bullets*, pp.167-190 which makes a compelling argument that Continental duelling persisted because, unlike Britain, the middling classes reinvented it 'as a tool of democracy [giving it] attributes of the idealised Republican male' (at p.171).

¹⁶² Cited in Banks, *Polite Exchange of Bullets*, p.66.

¹⁶³ Kelly, *Duelling in Ireland 1570-1860*, reviewed by David Dickson in *Eighteenth Century Ireland Society* (12), 1997, pp.163-164.

¹⁶⁴ *The Times*, January 3rd 1792.

and similar professionals who increasingly embraced duelling, at a time when perceptions of what constituted a gentleman became more fluid.¹⁶⁵ Georgian society has been described by Colley as 'used to fighting [and] ... largely defined itself through fighting'.¹⁶⁶ Amongst the middling and lower ranks disputes were far more likely to involve fists, rather than expensive (and not readily available) pistols.¹⁶⁷ This did not preclude lower classes from choosing to ape their betters. In the mid-1770s several London pawnbrokers offered rental of swords or pistols for as little as 5 shillings.¹⁶⁸ In 1767 two footmen who duelled over the affection of a woman were admonished by their master 'because none had the right to murder one another but people of quality'.¹⁶⁹

On the rare occasion when lower-order duels were considered worthy of report, the emphasis was on ridicule, implying that participants acted above their station. The lower orders were often blamed for trivialising duelling. In 1788 two men fell out over the etiquette of a game of hazard, and in 1789 at Cannon Coffee-house a duel ensued following a disagreement about the causes of another duel.¹⁷⁰ Men duelled for possession of a church seat, and there were endless quarrels begun at the Opera.¹⁷¹ In 1790 it was reported that two Worcester schoolboys fought a duel with pistols, having locked horns over the meaning of a Latin word.¹⁷² Ultimately, duelling outside of elite circles was frowned upon because the reputations lesser men strove to maintain were not deemed sufficiently worthy to defend.

¹⁶⁵ See Banks, *Polite Exchange of Bullets*, pp.82-94 which suggests that (for some professions) duelling represented a claim upon gentility.

¹⁶⁶ Colley, *Britons*, p.8.

¹⁶⁷ Shoemaker, *Taming of the Duel*, p.529.

¹⁶⁸ *Middlesex Journal*, March 15th 1774.

¹⁶⁹ *Gazetteer*, June 15th 1767.

¹⁷⁰ *The Times*, April 2nd 1788; *Morning Chronicle*, February 25th 1789.

¹⁷¹ *London Packet*, March 16th 1797, and (for example) *The Times*, March 13th 1794.

¹⁷² *The Argus*, January 2nd 1790.

Despite evidence of contemporary disdain for duelling in the lower ranks, Sampson's 'embourgeoisement' theory fails to prove that aristocratic society rejected duelling due to its democratic reach. However, Kelly's assertion that lower class involvement sparked greater respectable opposition by the early nineteenth century is more plausible considering that a much broader reassessment of moral standards in British society was already underway. It is probable that duelling fell foul of what Lawrence Stone terms 'the crisis of aristocracy'.¹⁷³ Aristocratic power wilted in the face of a powerful and emergent commercial and middling class, whom, according to Banks, 'imposed their will on their betters'.¹⁷⁴ Andrew's description of a confident and strident British middling class identifying and rejecting duelling as 'a failing of the upper classes', marks it out to be a casualty of the rise of respectable society in the early decades of the nineteenth century.¹⁷⁵ Duelling was marginalised by strengthening moral pressure applied by the rise of public opinion, and following this devaluation, its contribution to celebrity culture diminished.

CONCLUSION

Duelling was a form of public sphere appearance that was capable of stimulating public opinion in political as well as non-political ways. Its modernisation was crystallised by the development of a commercialised public sphere, and it greatly benefitted from the growing importance of public image as a marker for reputation and celebrity. Before duelling became a casualty of middle-class inspired notions of respectability, it helped to

¹⁷³ Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy 1558-1641* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965).

¹⁷⁴ Banks, *Polite Exchange of Bullets*, p.191.

¹⁷⁵ Donna T. Andrew, 'The Code of Honour and its Critics: Opposition to Duelling in England 1700-1850' in *Social History*; 5(1980):no. 3, pp.409-434.

enfranchise mass audiences; providing them with regular opportunities to control and influence news-flow. Public fascination with duelling and its participants reveals the workings of a celebrity industry within the public sphere. Duelling had both cultural and commercial value, allowing the private to become public, welcoming strangers into personal affairs, and encouraging mass conversation and debate.

This chapter has shown how Long-Wellesley engaged in duelling for the purpose of self-promotion, and it was something he was prepared to participate in right up to the final years of his life. But Long-Wellesley's real weapon of choice for attracting attention was the epistle rather than the pistol. For him duelling represented a tool for initiating dialogue, rather than a thirst for bloodshed. My next chapter examines Long-Wellesley in print.

CHAPTER SIX

LONG-WELLESLEY & THE PEN: WRITING FOR CELEBRITY



Long-Wellesley addressing the Lord Chancellor in a scene from *Wellesley v Beaufort*

This chapter will look at the role played by letters produced in evidence in *Wellesley v Beaufort*. This landmark case kept the public enthralled for over three years, debated by the public and the press, and polarising opinions about its underlying social implications. Long-Wellesley's letters were closely scrutinised, particularly those written to and about his children. The fatherly 'advice' Long-Wellesley gave ignited moral debate in the same way that the publication of Lord Chesterfield's letters to his son had done in the previous century; and his unconventional views forced society to question the validity of the parameters governing acceptable behaviour. Long-Wellesley's misogynistic attitudes were

also laid bare during this trial, and his suggestion that women were chattels to be pursued for personal gratification had a deep impact on the public mind.

My preceding chapters on privacy, privilege, and duelling illustrate Long-Wellesley's reliance on the written word to keep him in the public eye. Long-Wellesley's private correspondence was often written in a style assuming wider circulation. This is particularly evident in a collection of letters written to his sons and their tutor over the period 1824-1825, which contained undertones of menace towards his wife Catherine (from whom he was separated) and her family, because he knew they would also read them. In June 1825, as a consequence of these threats, Catherine placed the children into the safety of the Court of Chancery.

The Court of Chancery first came to prominence in England during the 14th Century, dealing with the law of 'equity', which was deemed to encapsulate legal questions that could not be settled by the application of common law. Decisions relied upon the law of reason, or as Carleton Allen puts it, 'a philosophical and theological conception of conscience [was the] one general principle which more than any other influenced equity'.¹ Chancery specialised in matters concerning trusts and property, where there were often multiple interested parties requiring nuanced judgements. This included jurisdiction over property in cases of lunacy, and the management of estates inherited by minors. Chancery's guardianship of children arose from the King's prerogative of *parens patriae* (translated as 'parent of the nation') which effectively gave the state a caretaker role in the welfare of

¹ Carleton Allen, *Law in the Making* (London: Clarendon, 1939), p.389.

wealthy children, pending their coming of age (usually at 21) when they became legally capable of managing their own affairs.²

The Lord Chancellor was the official head of Chancery and, for many centuries, was responsible for making most of Chancery decisions himself. By the 1800s the sheer number of cases and an ever-widening scope of activities meant that Chancery was beset with backlogs and delays. This was not helped by the fact that the Lord Chancellor had additional obligations of attending the House of Lords on most days of the week to discuss and advise on new legislation.³

Fearing that her children's property and education were in danger, Catherine asked the Court of Chancery to appoint 'guardians exclusive of their father [before] their morals would be utterly ruined'.⁴ After Catherine's death in September, Long-Wellesley issued a writ of *Habeas Corpus* demanding the return of his children. But the Lord Chancellor, who was concerned about making a ruling based purely on the facts 'as they appeared in the papers', ruled that 'nothing could be determined without hearing the arguments'.⁵ This was a significant acknowledgement of Long-Wellesley's celebrity status, and the prejudicial effect it was having upon the mechanism of law. But Eldon refused to close the door to outside influence because (and to the delight of a packed courthouse) he reasoned that a test of Chancery jurisdiction such as this ought to be heard publicly 'because it was a guard to the conduct of the judge, [operating] for the true interests of the parties, as well as of

² William Lindsay Carne, "A Sketch of the History of the High Court of Chancery from Its Origin to the Chancellorship of Wolsey", *Virginia Law Review* (391, 1927), p.606.

³ Anon, *Chancery Commission: Copy of the Report made to His Majesty into the Practice of Chancery* (London: Sweet, 1826), pp.9-12.

⁴ Stead, p.88.

⁵ *The Times*, November 5th & 7th 1825.

public justice'.⁶ Long-Wellesley responded to this rhetoric by charging his legal representatives to act for him 'in the most public manner', requesting that 'all the papers be published [letting] my character stand or fall by the decision'.⁷ In effect, Long-Wellesley's celebrity status, which had created an emotional bond between his private self and the watching audience, made it impossible for either side to deny the public their say in its outcome.⁸

Catherine's physical absence from *Wellesley v Beaufort* makes it difficult to compare her public representation with that of Long-Wellesley. The well-known circumstances Catherine's tragic death placed her on a moral pedestal, symbolising the crushing of female virtue by masculine boorishness that was practically impossible to contradict. Had she lived Catherine would never have compromised her modesty by appearing at the Court, but her arguments may have been easier for Long-Wellesley to discredit. In the event it was largely left to men to dismantle the age-old construct of male hegemony within wedlock, calling time on Long-Wellesley's toxic masculinity. In many respects *Wellesley v Beaufort* encapsulated gender bias in the structure of Old Corruption. As Judith Lewis has argued, Old Corruption embraced the wider realm of privilege including the iniquity of women's rights.⁹ As reprehensible as Long-Wellesley's behaviour and opinions may have seemed from a moral standpoint, his birthrights as a gentleman and father-figure were still reasoned to be sacrosanct. The underlying question to be decided therefore was not Long-Wellesley's culpability for Catherine's demise, but whether existing mechanisms of masculine control

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ William Long-Wellesley, *Two Letters to Lord Eldon* (London: Ridgeway, 1827), pp.112-113.

⁸ Roberts, *Angel and The Cad*, p320-325 describes *Wellesley v Beaufort* as 'the court of public opinion'.

⁹ Judith Lewis, *Sacred to Female Patriotism: Gender, Class, and Politics in Late Georgian Britain* (London: Routledge, 2013), pp.64-65.

upon which he depended ought be dismantled because they no longer aligned with public standards of decency.

Wellesley v Beaufort has been described by Lawrence Stone as a ‘turning point in Chancery’ because it laid down that paternal rights over children were no longer inviolable.¹⁰ From this point onwards personal morality was a relevant consideration, and *Wellesley v Beaufort* became ‘the precedent of choice’ cited in subsequent child custody cases.¹¹ Long-Wellesley’s tactics throughout the trial and its subsequent appeal process involved asking audiences to pore over his affairs in minute detail. When faced with the sordid details, the public decided they did not like what they saw, and their reaction was duly noted. In Eldon’s judgement speech he stated that he could not ‘defy the public’, and that he ‘should deserve to be hunted out of society’ if he were to place the children with Long-Wellesley.¹²

A second section examines Long-Wellesley’s venture into publishing, which began in 1827, when he was at the height of his scandalous celebrity and cashing in on public interest in the twists and turns of his tempestuous life. Although Long-Wellesley enjoyed some success as an author, it was on the basis of personal exposé rather than literary merit. His autobiographical style was another medium by which he tried to engage the public in his celebrity.

¹⁰ Lawrence Stone, *The Road to Divorce: England 1530 to 1987* (Guildford: Biddles, 1990), p.177.

¹¹ Danaya Wright, ‘Policing Sexual Morality: Percy Shelley and the Expansive Scope of the *Parens Patriae* in the Law of Custody of Children’, *Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies* (8/2, summer 2012).

¹² Stead, p.96.

My final section remains in the realm of literature by looking at Long-Wellesley's celebrity as an inspiration for contemporary writers, providing examples where he may be located in their works.

BACKGROUND TO *WELLESLEY v BEAUFORT*

When Long-Wellesley arrived back in London in December 1825 he discovered that his late-wife's personal possessions – including a cache of his private letters – were in the hands of those lined up against him. Over the course of *Wellesley v Beaufort* over 200 letters were submitted into evidence by both sides. A quarter of these were penned by Long-Wellesley regarding the care of his children. Though the majority contained routine instructions, some containing shocking language and opinions were referred to in the first affidavits submitted against him in Chancery.¹³ Long-Wellesley strove hard to stop his opponents from further exploiting these letters, and when that failed he began to forge an alternative interiority effect to counter the detrimental interpretation of his character being peddled in the public sphere. Long-Wellesley recast himself as a caring and dutiful father, who merited support during this 'unnatural contest'.¹⁴ These conflicting versions of Long-Wellesley's public intimacy could be described in Mole's terms as a third hermeneutic, because the audience were presented with competing variants of his authentic self in the public sphere.¹⁵

¹³ *Wellesley v Beaufort*, Thomas Bulkeley.

¹⁴ Stead, *Wanstead*, p.12.

¹⁵ Mole, *Byron's Romantic Celebrity*, pp.3-4, 23.

After the Wanstead House sale in 1822 Long-Wellesley and his family embarked on a Grand Tour, travelling through France, across the Swiss Alps to Naples. When it was suggested he leave his children behind, Long-Wellesley replied, 'I have the most decided objection to it, and never will assent to such folly. I may give up my property to pay my debts, but I will not give up my children'.¹⁶ As to the mode of education, William told Brummell that 'he preferred having a tutor for them at home as he knew boys learnt very bad habits at school'.¹⁷ In September Long-Wellesley engaged John Pitman to tutor William (aged 9) and James (aged 7)

'he shall live in my family, have a separate table for the two boys and himself, and his salary of £250... He shall have the entire management, control, and regulation of the boys... as their tutor to a public school (Eton)... They are young, wild, and quite uneducated... [but] I feel more alive to the good education of my children than I do to any other circumstances of my life'.¹⁸

Long-Wellesley had not benefitted from a 'good education'. His formative years at Hawkedon demonstrated why tutoring was thought by some to have 'little effect on the rebellious and incompetent'.¹⁹ Long-Wellesley refused to be taught, asking 'what use is there in poring over books?'²⁰ By the age of 21 when Long-Wellesley was dismissed from the army, Wellington found him 'lamentably ignorant... never [on] a par with the rest of

¹⁶ Wellesley v Beaufort, supplementary evidence, letter 'circa September 1822'.

¹⁷ Ibid, John Randall.

¹⁸ Ibid, Letter from Long-Wellesley to Shawe, June 27th 1822.

¹⁹ Grafton A. & L Jardine, *From Humanism to the Humanities* (London: Duckworth, 1986), p.156.

²⁰ Long-Wellesley MS, B4-V4-L18.

society till he shall have educated himself'.²¹

From the outset the tutor Pitman had mixed feelings about his role, and his loyalties were torn. He 'experienced much personal civility, attention, and even kindness' from Long-Wellesley. But he was appalled by Long-Wellesley's 'coarse and unfeeling language [towards Catherine] such as the words "what a damned fool you are," if she made any observation in which [Long-Wellesley] did not like'.²² He was also shocked hearing the boys 'use some very disgusting expressions...and vulgar oaths in French. When he reproved them, young William told him that his father...liked it, and had always allowed him to do so'.²³

Pitman observed Long-Wellesley's infidelity at Naples in 1823, realizing that Catherine was duped into offering Helena the protection of her home. After their removal to Florence, he said that Catherine 'opened her eyes' to what was unfolding and asked Helena to leave.²⁴ When Long-Wellesley continued to see Helena clandestinely, Pitman thought he behaved in a 'harsh, morose and unkind manner [towards Catherine], who was of a meek and tender disposition'.²⁵

When Catherine finally left Paris, Long-Wellesley allowed her to take their children back to England, strictly on the condition that 'you will attentively follow my wishes with regard to their treatment and education'.²⁶ Pitman accompanied Catherine 'on the understanding that his power and office were solely related to the education of the children'.²⁷

After their return to Draycot, for a period of about a year, Long-Wellesley sent a

²¹ Raglan MS.

²² *Wellesley v Beaufort*, John Pitman.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *The Age*, February 4th 1827.

²⁵ *Wellesley v Beaufort*, Pitman.

²⁶ Long-Wellesley MS, B2-E10-L14, Long-Wellesley to Catherine, July 13th 1824.

²⁷ *Wellesley v Beaufort*, Pitman.

series of letters to his children and Pitman, the contents of which played a part in the outcome of *Wellesley v Beaufort*.

WELLESLEY v BEAUFORT

Interest was high in *Wellesley v Beaufort* because the public acknowledged its status as a cause célèbre with an all-star cast and a salacious story line. The courtroom was packed to the rafters to hear the story unfold.

The case against Long-Wellesley's guardianship focused on two aspects of his morality. Firstly it was contended that Long-Wellesley had committed adultery with Helena, that he had a child by her, and that their relationship was ongoing. The latter situation not only undermined Long-Wellesley's integrity, but also invoked the shocking possibility that Catherine's children could end up being contaminated by the woman held liable for the destruction of her marriage. Initially Long-Wellesley responded to these accusations by submitting various affidavits demonstrating that the charges against him were false. Counter-affidavits were quickly produced, relying on documents recovered from Seymour Street in July 1825, when Long-Wellesley had tried to ambush Catherine at her house but been chased away by the threat of arrest.²⁸ These exposed beyond doubt the full extent of Long-Wellesley's libertinism. In one letter written to Helena, Long-Wellesley boasted, 'I have only had one dozen of women since I saw you; the thousand and three will be made up before you arrive'.²⁹

A further serious setback to Long-Wellesley's moral character occurred in May 1826, when Thomas Bligh commenced a Criminal Conversation lawsuit against him. Fearing that

²⁸ See chapter 2.

²⁹ *Wellesley v Beaufort*, Meara.

the full facts of his affair with Helena could be highly prejudicial to the public mind, Long-Wellesley resorted to a series of delaying tactics, aimed at ensuring that *Wellesley v Beaufort* could be over and done with prior to the adultery case.³⁰ But after deliberations in Chancery dragged on until October, and Long-Wellesley pleaded with the Chancellor to make his decision, Eldon refused because he thought *Bligh v Wellesley* would give “a singular turn on the subject [towards] determining other allegations, which had been made in this suit”.³¹

The second strand of *Wellesley v Beaufort* concerned Long-Wellesley’s views on the upbringing of his children, as evidenced by his letters. These were said to reveal levels of immorality that would invalidate his claim to their guardianship. In January 1826, Long-Wellesley engaged solicitors to redeem his late wife’s personal possessions, hoping to recover anything that might ‘bear upon the case’.³² But he was already too late; because several unedifying phrases attributed to Long-Wellesley had already been cited in his opponents opening affidavits, which were read aloud in court. The following day newspapers attacked Long-Wellesley for using ‘obscene language’ urging his son ‘to hunt everything from the elephant in the forest, to the flea in the blanket... to play hell and the devil – to chase dogs, cats, and women, both young and old’.³³ They emphasised Long-Wellesley’s curse against those daring to curtail the boys’ pleasures: “Damn their infernal souls to hell”.³⁴ Aware of being condemned by his own words, Long-Wellesley demanded the return of the offending documents. This proved difficult; despite his absolute entitlement to Catherine’s property as her next-of-kin, the Tylney-Long sisters refused to

³⁰ *Morning Post*, May 6th & June 13th 1826.

³¹ Stead, p.88.

³² E.R.O, D/DB F116/1-4.

³³ Stead, p.88.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

yield. All they were prepared to supply were transcripts of those letters relied upon in their affidavits; which placed Long-Wellesley at risk of further incriminating disclosures.³⁵

In Chancery, Long-Wellesley's attorney Mr. Hart tried to mitigate matters by declaring it was not the 'petitioner's past life, but his present condition that must be looked into'. Comments made with 'a sense of levity... had been falsely represented in the sections of the letters quoted'.³⁶ In this regard Hart was correct, for the letter advising his children to 'hunt women' had been truncated to imply advice given on the treatment of all women – whereas in the full text Long-Wellesley was only commenting on the practice of sparing game during the breeding season. Hart thought that the press had been misled into thinking that Long-Wellesley told his 9-year-old son that 'women were nothing, and that a man's duty was to debauch as many of them as he could'.³⁷

Whilst the battle over Catherine's effects raged on, Long-Wellesley tried to win back the public's favour. In August he published a letter purportedly sent to his younger son (two years previously) in which Long-Wellesley counselled him to treat inferiors with civility, avoiding at all costs 'coarse language, to feel proud of reading'; and stressing the importance of 'good company'.³⁸ Long-Wellesley declared this was the true picture of his care. However, his opponents responded with a mass of evidence to the contrary – including a letter to Catherine in which Long-Wellesley drew a comparison between lying and blaspheming: 'You remember, I allowed him to swear, in order to establish in his mind a distinction between a vice and a venial fault'.³⁹

When Long-Wellesley finally obtained full copies of his correspondence on 9th

³⁵ *The Times*, March 3rd 1826.

³⁶ *Ibid*, March 18th 1826.

³⁷ Stead, *Wanstead*, p.14.

³⁸ *Wellesley v Beaufort*, Long-Wellesley – 'letter' dated August 1824.

³⁹ Long-Wellesley MS, B1-E9-L20, July 15th 1824.

December, the fight for ascendancy over public opinion intensified.⁴⁰ Within a day Long-Wellesley submitted a vast tranche of his letters into evidence, many of which were leaked to the press. This move bore the hallmark of Long-Wellesley's celebrity, which was driven by a desire for public endorsement. He believed the letters would help his case, but it transpired that they were used against him. This demonstrates how public opinion could not be led; he tried to manipulate the public but it backfired.

At this stage the first part of the case against Long-Wellesley's character was all-but proven. On November 1st Thomas Bligh was awarded £6000 damages after the packed courthouse heard salacious accounts of Long-Wellesley seducing his friend's wife on the slopes of Mount Vesuvius, and eloping with her afterwards. The Kings Bench jury deliberated for just 15 minutes and 'the verdict was announced to tumultuous applause'.⁴¹ There was an air of triumphalism in the press, with some newspapers overstepping the mark in their enthusiasm to castigate Long-Wellesley. The *Sunday Times* alleged he had been 'living in open harlotry' at the time of his marriage, that he was an inveterate gambler who 'by wild waste and wanton riot reduced a regal fortune to ruin... making his wife pander to his base appetites and driving her broken-hearted to the grave'.⁴² Long-Wellesley successfully sued for libel, on the grounds that their report was 'false in all its material parts'.⁴³ But, when similar allegations appeared in *The Age*, Long-Wellesley set aside his prosecution. This newspaper had a reputation for being 'coarse, low, ungentlemanly, and overly personal' with an emphasis on scurrilous content.⁴⁴ Rather than suing them for

⁴⁰ Wellesley, *Two Letters*, Appendix.

⁴¹ *Caledonian Mercury*, November 6th 1826.

⁴² *Bell's Life in London*, December 3rd 1826.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ David E Letané Junior, 'Charles Molloy Westmacott and the Spirit of the Age', in *Victorian Periodicals Review* (40/1, spring 2007), p.44.

damages, Long-Wellesley may have struck a deal with its commercially-minded editor Charles Westmacott, because *The Age* performed a *volte face* and began to advocate for Long-Wellesley keeping charge of his children.⁴⁵ According to James Sack, by the end of the 1820s *The Age* was ‘the leading Sunday paper in the country, [thought to have] the highest circulation of any newspaper... in the United Kingdom’.⁴⁶ *The Age* functioned in a similar way to modern satirical reviews such as *Private Eye* – David Letané credits its success to a recipe of satire, ‘hyperbolic representation of public “personalities”... and the teasing of theatrical stars, politicians, peers, and others in public view’.⁴⁷ The commercial success of publications like *The Age* indicates there was strong middle-class interest in high society scandal which ran parallel to the debate about standards of respectable behaviour during this period, and may explain why there was such a high degree of public fascination with Long-Wellesley.

After Long-Wellesley’s Criminal Conversation conviction, his legal team reminded the Chancellor that the real question at stake was one of parental rights, and *not* marital infidelity. This line of argument suggests why Long-Wellesley decided to flood the public sphere with so many routine and trivial letters. He must have hoped their sheer volume would help to dilute the effect of the few bad ones that had been cited to portray him adversely.

Releasing these documents *en masse* was a hasty exercise. To begin with Long-Wellesley surrendered control of how his letters would be presented for public inspection. The vision he tried to conjure up as a typical father doing his best in trying circumstances, became distorted after editors sieved through all the papers to construct their own

⁴⁵ Long-Wellesley MS, B4-V4-L58 – Westmacott’s reputation blackmail belies his journalistic talents.

⁴⁶ Cited in Letané, ‘Westmacott’, pp.44-45.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

perspectives. Newspapers quickly realised that Long-Wellesley had neglected to check their content prior to distribution. As a consequence, the press were handed a particularly damning letter dated March 14th 1825, in which Long-Wellesley warned ‘neither God or devil shall interfere between me and my children’.⁴⁸

On December 10th and 11th *The Observer* published (without comment) around 20 of Long-Wellesley’s letters to his boy. These contained pleasing encouragement towards study, praising improved hand-writing, attentiveness and Latin. There was a great deal about field sports, advice on fishing and hare coursing, and a declaration that: ‘A gentleman of England... to be a fine man, ought to be a bold man; and the best way to become a bold man, is to be a fox-hunter’. On the subject of morals Long-Wellesley warned of the effects of ‘cunning’ upon a young man’s ability to discern between ‘that which is very wrong... and that which is pardonable’.⁴⁹ He alluded to Canning’s duel with Castlereagh:

Canning, with all his brilliant talents, sunk himself to the lowest ebb in public estimation, by his cunning... In all acquirements which can fit a man for a station above his rival, Canning possessed the superiority, save that of ... disdaining the petty art of cunning- this did Castlereagh, and he triumphed amidst all his glaring defects.⁵⁰

When *The Times* included letter extracts on December 11th all positive fatherly advice was removed and his hunting treatises were the focus of interest. Another paper saw ‘talent and good sense’ in Long-Wellesley’s letters, but thought his choice of words when

⁴⁸ *Wellesley v Beaufort*, supplementary evidence.

⁴⁹ *The Observer*, December 10th & 11th 1826.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

commiserating with James for falling ‘arse over head’ from his horse, displayed a ‘nonchalance in putting upon paper such indecencies [appearing to] justify... our doubt of Mr Wellesley’s fitness for that responsible and weighty duty – the tuition of his... children’.⁵¹ In his defence one editorial expressed alarm to see children being robbed of ‘their natural protector... and consigned to others [who] have no right to the superintendence of their education.’⁵² *The Age* also rallied to Long-Wellesley’s side

The fashion seems to have been set to run down Mr. Wellesley without either consideration or mercy; and in order to deprive him of the custody of his own children, every kind of indecency and immorality is laid to his charge. We are not going to take up the cudgels for Mr. Long Wellesley; we know nothing of his affairs... If what he has done, were to impose the bringing up children, upon the LORD CHANCELLOR, we apprehend his Lordship would soon keep the most extensive boarding school in the Kingdom.⁵³

Despite their mixed press and audience reaction, releasing these letters helped to invigorate Long-Wellesley’s cause. They provided a timely reminder of what was at stake when a man’s personal indiscretions impinged on his family life. The public were prepared to accept proof of his paternal love – but they found the tenor of Long-Wellesley’s letters an affront to common decency. They found it strange that Long-Wellesley could recommend reading books, but not for pleasure: ‘not a Miss Molly stupid story book of little Johnny... If

⁵¹ Stead, *Wanstead*, p.14.

⁵² Stead, p.83.

⁵³ *The Age*, December 18th 1826.

you find any such, destroy them'.⁵⁴ It was equally odd that he should think that gentlemen should 'mix with the vulgar, and make them keep their places'.⁵⁵ Most strikingly of all, in a passage probably intended to distress Catherine, Long-Wellesley set the parameters for his family relationships via this boorish instruction to Pitman.

I also most IMPERATIVELY COMMAND that you impress upon my children's minds the necessity of their looking up to me as a father, to whose authority they are to BOW AND TO SUBMIT with implicit obedience... desire the boys to be taught respect to their mother, and obedience, but it must be REFLECTED OBEDIENCE, the rays of which first shine upon me.⁵⁶

Throughout January 1827 Long-Wellesley's letters featured prominently in the closing arguments, as each side cherry-picked prose appropriate to their positions. Hart fought to contextualise Long-Wellesley's language, declaring that if such a dreadful penalty 'was to be attached to the use of an unguarded expression, he was afraid that numerous excellent fathers, even in the highest ranks of life, would forfeit their paternal rights'.⁵⁷ Most observers believed the legal ramifications of the case transcended discussion about Long-Wellesley's reprehensible character. There was public unease that punishing Long-Wellesley endangered the security of all fathers, the contemplation of which made the Chancellor's decision too close to call.

Interest had now reached fever-pitch and Chancery's proceedings dominated the press. Newspapers, lined with black borders as a mark of respect for the death of the Duke

⁵⁴ *Wellesley v Beaufort*, Bulkeley – Long-Wellesley letter to his son April 19th 1825.

⁵⁵ Stead, p83 Long-Wellesley to Pitman, September 4th 1824.

⁵⁶ *Wellesley v Beaufort*, Long-Wellesley May 26th 1825.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, January 25th 1827.

of York (January 5th), curtailed reportage of the funeral arrangements in favour of Long-Wellesley's cause. On January 19th *The Times* report exceeded 9000 words, and *The Morning Post* apologised to its readers that other news had to be 'unavoidably postponed for want of space'.⁵⁸ As the decision-date drew near, every nuance of the case was intensely scrutinised, with courtroom exchanges set out like a play script. Each day the court was packed; 'every body's ambition seemed to be to catch a glance of this notorious person'. Women of all classes 'whose eagerness knew no bounds' flocked to Chancery, fascinated by Long-Wellesley's celebrity.⁵⁹

In Chancery, Long-Wellesley made the most of the unfolding drama, constantly interjecting during proceedings, and appealing to the crowd's prejudices. He denounced one affidavit on the grounds that a gentleman's word should be accepted above the testimony of a 'low Irish Catholic'.⁶⁰ These provocative words served the dual purpose of aligning himself with widespread public sentiments against Catholics; and acknowledging Eldon's position as an Ultra in the Tory Government, who was rigorously opposed to Catholic emancipation. When the Chancellor pointed out that verbal outbursts were not permissible, Long-Wellesley banged his fist on the bar shouting "as a man of honour and an English gentleman, I call on you to do me justice".⁶¹ Even when silent Long-Wellesley was animated and emotional, so that when the court rose there was a surge of people 'to obtain a closer look at the hero of the day'. Once order was restored Long-Wellesley theatrically strode down the centre of the Court and the multitude parted to let him pass. An even larger crowd awaited him outside, hissing their disapproval. One day he was followed across

⁵⁸ *Morning Post*, January 29th 1827.

⁵⁹ *The Times*, January 19th 1827.

⁶⁰ Long-Wellesley MS, B3-E27-L11.

⁶¹ Stead, p.92.

the square, and forced to seek refuge in a barrister's chambers. Long-Wellesley faced his audience, showing 'good-natured defiance' like a pantomime villain – and was inundated with catcalls.⁶² *John Bull* denounced the hypocrisy of the mob that were daily assailing Long-Wellesley, because they failed to contextualise 'one instance of conjugal infidelity in the better classes... when there exist 500 in the lower and middling ranks'.⁶³

On the day of judgement, when the doors of the court opened, the rush of people was so great 'every corner of it was almost instantaneously blocked up'. Even the lawyers' benches were packed, obliging many learned counsel to stand and watch. Long-Wellesley did not attend, sending a servant wearing his livery, to hear the final verdict.⁶⁴



Section from Isaac Cruikshank satire (1827) showing Long-Wellesley knocked over, with his letters strewn about, spouting immoral advice, with his children behind under the care of Lord Eldon

⁶² Stead, *Wanstead*, p.14.

⁶³ January 22nd 1827.

⁶⁴ Stead, p.96.

In his closing speech, the Chancellor said the case had given him a great deal of pain and many sleepless nights. Referring to Long-Wellesley's correspondence he thought their general tenor 'would do credit to any moral-minded man' but it was impossible to ignore that Long-Wellesley's conduct towards his children was 'highly immoral'. Together with the supporting affidavits, the Chancellor deduced that it was Long-Wellesley's determination to 'make his sons the most complete blackguards possible'. He recalled two lines from Long-Wellesley that he heard at the very outset of the trial. The first concerned him cursing, 'Damn his infernal soul to hell'; and the second urging his boys to 'play hell and the devil... chase all the cats, dogs, bulls, and women, both young and old'. Whilst he was sure that Long-Wellesley was not asking his 9-year-old boy to 'debauch women' the Chancellor believed such advice could be remembered and repeated. He thought the extensive reportage meant that Long-Wellesley had 'been already, perhaps too much, lowered in *public estimation*; but he must do his duty... to his conscience, to his country, and to his God' – by ruling for the children to remain in Chancery, and away from their father. My italics here emphasise the extent by which public opinion had been permitted to intrude into the realm of social justice. The verdict was greeted with a 'smothered expression of approbation' in the court, followed moments afterwards by loud cheers outside.⁶⁵

The Chancellor expressed dismay that Long-Wellesley was still involved with Helena, with whom he now had a child, but his chief concern was the effect Long-Wellesley's unconventional views could have upon his children's morals. The same reasoning was applied when Long-Wellesley lodged an appeal to the House of Lords, which was presided

⁶⁵ All quotes drawn from Stead, p.96.

over by Lord Redesdale, and reached judgement on 3rd July 1828. After upholding the Court of Chancery's right to exercise 'jurisdiction in separating a parent and his children', thereby rejecting the appeal, Redesdale stated that his decision was influenced by a letter Long-Wellesley had sent to Pitman just a few weeks prior to Catherine's death

There are many things which ought to be let alone- a Court of Chancery have no business to interfere between a father and his children; they have a right to be allowed to go to the Devil in their own way.⁶⁶

This lengthy and highly publicised case shed light on unacceptable standards of behaviour thought to persist in elite society. Thanks to Long-Wellesley's openness in sharing his intimate thoughts and deeds, the House of Lords felt able to confirm the precedent set down by Eldon and this important legal reform remained in place. According to Roberts, *Wellesley v Beaufort* should be considered a milestone in feminist legislation, because it paved the way for the Custody of Infants Act (1839) that first gave mothers rights of access to their children in the event of separation or divorce.⁶⁷ Further afield, its ruling is said to have formed the basis of the United States Juvenile Court system.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ *The Times*, July 7th 1828 *Wellesley v Beaufort* dragged on until 1834 (when Long-Wellesley's oldest son William came of age) because Long-Wellesley persistently questioned every decisions made in the management of his children.

⁶⁷ John Wroath, *Until They are Seven: The Origins of Women's Legal Rights* (Winchester: Waterside, 2006), p.15 and p.115 recognises *Wellesley v Beaufort* as a key stepping-stone towards aligning legislation with Caroline Norton's campaign for mothers to have custody of their children.

⁶⁸ Roberts, *Angel and the Cad*, p.325.



This satire, published by George Humphrey (1827) fully encapsulates the arguments laid down in this thesis, because it exemplifies an end-game for scandalous celebrity after exposure to mass judgement via the public sphere. Long-Wellesley is portrayed as a physical representation of 'Vice and Profligacy'; carrying a tract professing his purity of morals, whilst Eldon looms overhead bringing down judgement upon him. The law is shown to be falling into line with public opinion during this age of moral reformation, reflecting that standards

of common decency will prevail over the hedonistic lifestyle and behaviour propagated for public consumption by Long-Wellesley.

LONG-WELLESLEY IN PRINT

Given his lifelong propensity for writing, it is unsurprising that Long-Wellesley turned his hand to authorship. His creative shortcomings were quickly exposed because he was unable to stray far away from the subject of his personal affairs. Long-Wellesley's most important literary output, between 1827 and 1830, is worthy of consideration because of its influence on popular culture and the boost it gave to his celebrity status.

Post-trial public interest in the details of Long-Wellesley's life remained extremely high. Scarcely a day passed without updates on his health and whereabouts, with the *Literary Magnet* for February 1827 devoting an entire section to his affairs. In July Long-Wellesley published *Two Letters to Lord Eldon*, laying out his misgivings regarding the loss of custodial rights. Naturally the public wanted to read the inside story. In his preface Long-Wellesley declared that he had wanted to place the contents of these letters 'to the public months ago' and had only refrained from doing so in the hope of effecting a family reconciliation.⁶⁹ The reader was instantly being enticed by the promise of juicy revelations, whilst simultaneously being asked to appreciate 'the sufferings I must undergo in bringing this under public consideration'. Long-Wellesley immodestly records his astonishment 'that the domestic concerns of so humble an individual as myself should occupy public attention at all' – but as they were now in the open he would 'carry the history of that private life' yet

⁶⁹ Long-Wellesley, *Two Letters*, preface.

further into the light.⁷⁰ This preface was a perfect piece of self-promotion, providing the hook upon which the contents relied. What followed was a vindication of his character during which all sides of his family were attacked, supported by an assortment of private and personal documents produced to reinforce his arguments.

The eponymous two letters to Eldon were devoid of apology for his treatment of Catherine, save the observation that ‘because a man might not fulfil his duties as a husband’ it did not mean he was ‘totally incompetent to fulfil the duties of a father’.⁷¹ He did concede that expressions in his letters to the children were ‘ill-chosen and in bad taste’ but suggested that had the case been heard by Eldon’s predecessor Lord Thurlow, ‘who was not only more addicted to swearing than any other man almost that ever existed, but who lived in constant adultery’, the outcome would have been different.⁷² Even Eldon’s move with the spirit of the age, in declaring ungentlemanly brutality intolerable in polite society, was seen by Long-Wellesley as an unfair obstacle to justice.

In summary, *Two Letters* would have cut no ice with Eldon even if had been submitted privately. Its mixture of respect and insult, together with the rag-bag of appendices, offered nothing to suggest a genuine miscarriage of justice. Nevertheless *Two Letters* went through four editions within six months of publication.⁷³ Whilst it is not known exactly how many copies were sold, there is little doubt that Long-Wellesley’s book was widely read and discussed.

⁷⁰ Ibid

⁷¹ Ibid, p.50.

⁷² Ibid, pp.53-54.

⁷³ The first edition sold out within a week.

If Long-Wellesley truly expected to elicit a response from Eldon, why did he present his letters to the public sphere in this way; dragging yet more private concerns into the public realm? The answer lies in the concluding lines of his preface, containing a coded warning to his Wellesley relatives that they 'ought to support a member of their own family'. He stated that more serious family secrets would have to be revealed, if his relatives would not support his House of Lords appeal.⁷⁴ Just prior to publication Long-Wellesley sent a letter to the London newspapers objecting to the Duke of Wellington's appointment as guardian to his children. He pointed out that Wellington had failed to 'come forward to support me, in the struggle I am making for the restitution of [my] rights'.⁷⁵ *The Age*, with typical disloyalty, expressed shock that 'this gentleman, already sufficiently notorious, seems bent on making himself more so... [he] is marked out as a man more despised than any other person living in the same sphere of life [compelling] even his own family to denounce him as unworthy of their countenance'.⁷⁶

The Times greeted *Two Letters* wearily: 'the unhappy affairs of Mr Long -Wellesley will never cease from appearing before the public'. They almost grudgingly conceded Long-Wellesley's 'considerable talents; and... the happy tact of expressing himself, with the reserve and delicacy of a highly well-bred gentleman'. The attached correspondence was deemed to be 'exquisite and fit for the stage'.⁷⁷ There was certainly an element of drama within the book, which drove its popularity. *The Standard* could not understand Long-Wellesley's motive, save for giving Eldon 'new ground for exultation', questioning whether Long-Wellesley was trying to set a precedent. 'Can a man henceforward, upon any

⁷⁴ Long-Wellesley, *Two Letters*, preface.

⁷⁵ *Morning Post*, June 27th 1827.

⁷⁶ *The Age*, July 1st 1827.

⁷⁷ *The Times*, July 20th 1827.

despicable pique... publish all the letters he has ever received in the course of his life? [If so] the whole confidence of social life is broken down... and absolute barbarism is preferred before the system of society which may be expected'.⁷⁸ For them, a future where newsfeed was governed by celebrity seemed a very bleak prospect. The *Hampshire Telegraph* said *Two Letters* was 'a bad cause worse vindicated'.⁷⁹ Not all criticism was adverse; one newspaper latched onto the hypocrisy of punishing Long-Wellesley for a mistake 'which, according to the qualified morality of the age... if it be made a reason for so breaking the ties of nature, would separate... nine tenths of mankind from their offspring'.⁸⁰

By far the greatest discussion point in *Two Letters* was the inclusion of correspondence between Long-Wellesley and the Duke of Wellington, extracts from which dominated the press. Wellington came across as patient and mild in his attitude towards Long-Wellesley. If anything his reputation was enhanced by this publication. Long-Wellesley's mission to cow his relatives into submission failed – no member of his family broke ranks to support his appeal – and the cost to him was greater notoriety. Perhaps the biggest effect of *Two Letters* was to instil a degree of public fatigue over the minutiae of Long-Wellesley's existence. For when he finally carried out his threat to reveal family secrets (via *Ramblers Magazine* or *The Frolicsome Companion*, Number 18, published to coincide with Wellington's appointment as Prime Minister) - the exposé of the Wellesley brothers extra-marital affairs went largely unnoticed.⁸¹

A View of the Court of Chancery, published in 1830, represented a serious effort on Long-Wellesley's part to contribute to ongoing plans for updating Chancery practice. In 1826

⁷⁸ *The Standard*, July 20th 1827.

⁷⁹ July 23rd 1827.

⁸⁰ Such as *John Bull*, July 29th 1827.

⁸¹ Longford, *Pillar of State*, p.253 & Muir, *Wellington: Waterloo*, p.272.

a Royal Commission, chaired by Lord Bathurst, had published almost 200 recommendations to relieve the burden of business undertaken by Chancery.⁸² As yet, however, no changes had been implemented. Over several chapters, Long-Wellesley's book examined Chancery history, its place in the English judicial system, and compared it with courts in other European states. Long-Wellesley made four proposals for Chancery reform. Firstly, he said the powers of the Chancellor should be accurately defined; and secondly that a jury system be adopted to assist with decisions. Thirdly that it should be permissible to submit evidence *viva voce* instead of in written form – meaning that Long-Wellesley wanted the court to have a 'public voice'. Lastly, he pointed out that affidavit testimony ought to be more effectively challenged than by the existing requirement to submit counter-affidavits, because this caused interminable delays.⁸³ In his preface, dedicated to then Lord Chancellor Lyndhurst, Long-Wellesley said his object was 'to influence public opinion in my favour' towards the reformation of the 'vicious system' governing the proceedings of Chancery.⁸⁴

By this time Long-Wellesley had already sidestepped the problem of not being able to address the Court directly by deciding to represent himself in the continuing hearings concerning *Wellesley v Beaufort*.⁸⁵ Long-Wellesley added a 75 page appendix to his book, containing full transcripts of proceedings in Chancery on 29th July 1829 when he had participated in discussions about the children's vacation arrangements. Though it already approached half of the book's content, Long-Wellesley stated that he had made last-minute omissions from the appendix to avoid prosecution for a 'highly incriminatory matter'. He

⁸² Anon, *Chancery Commission: Copy of the Report made to His Majesty into the Practice of Chancery* (London: Sweet, 1826).

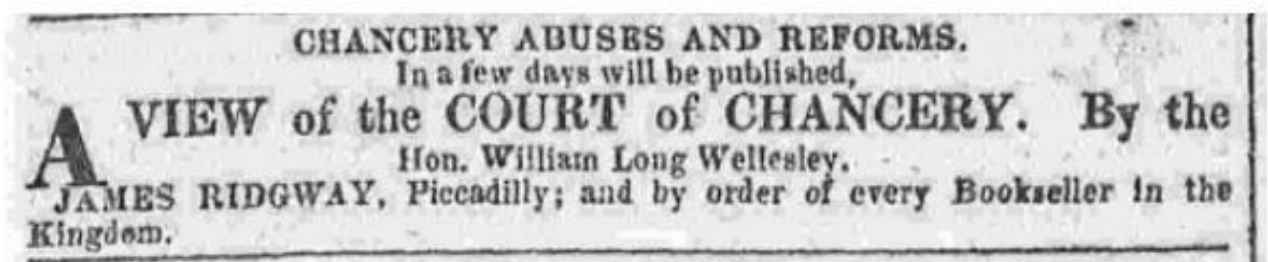
⁸³ Long-Wellesley MS, B2-E15-L26 His proposals met with some support in the press, but most observers echoed George Dallas' opinion that the book as a whole was 'worthy of his perverted and deranged understanding'.

⁸⁴ Long-Wellesley, *A View of the Court of Chancery*, (London: Ridgeway, 1830), preface.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, appendix.

concluded by stating that all 'impartial minds' would now be certain he had been robbed of his paternal rights by false evidence, which was 'the offspring of malice'. In reply to those questioning his lack of discretion, Long-Wellesley defended his right to make private information available to the public on the grounds that a man's honour is 'paramount to all other considerations, and when publicly assailed *demands a public defence*' (my italics).⁸⁶

In October 1829, Long-Wellesley took his place amongst the fashionables wintering in Brighton. *The Derby Mercury* confirmed his enduring celebrity by admiring his equipage comprising of the finest horses, and occupation of 'the best house in the place'.⁸⁷ Long-Wellesley's private correspondence reveals that *View of Chancery*, was orchestrated for publication on the opening day of the new decade. Publisher John Ridgeway sent proofs for approval, and Mr Barstow of Grays Inn was engaged to excise the book of anything libellous.⁸⁸ Long-Wellesley then wrote to the Chancellor to obtain approval of his dedication, penning a 20-line poem for his frontispiece.⁸⁹ Advertisements were placed in the London newspapers from early December.



Long-Wellesley placed this advertisement in all the major London newspapers

⁸⁶ All quotes derived from Wellesley, *Chancery*.

⁸⁷ November 11th 1829.

⁸⁸ Long-Wellesley MS, B4-V4-L43 & L54.

⁸⁹ BLM ADD 3486, f.414 & Long-Wellesley MS, B4-V4-L65.

On the day of publication Ridgeway distributed copies to ‘editors of all newspapers’, but he found Westmacott at *The Age* reluctant to eulogise over the book lest it offend his uncle Lord Eldon (a fact it will be noticed hadn’t stopped him before).⁹⁰ The costs of a production error may have been dwarfed by the marketing fees

Copies with gilt leaves have been forwarded to the Duke of Wellington, Lord Chancellor &c &c by the mistake of the binder. I find all the copies sent to the bookseller at Brighton were fine page copies – instead of the ordinary paper... Advertisements appear twice a week in each of the daily papers, but on different days in some, so as to appear in two or three every day.⁹¹

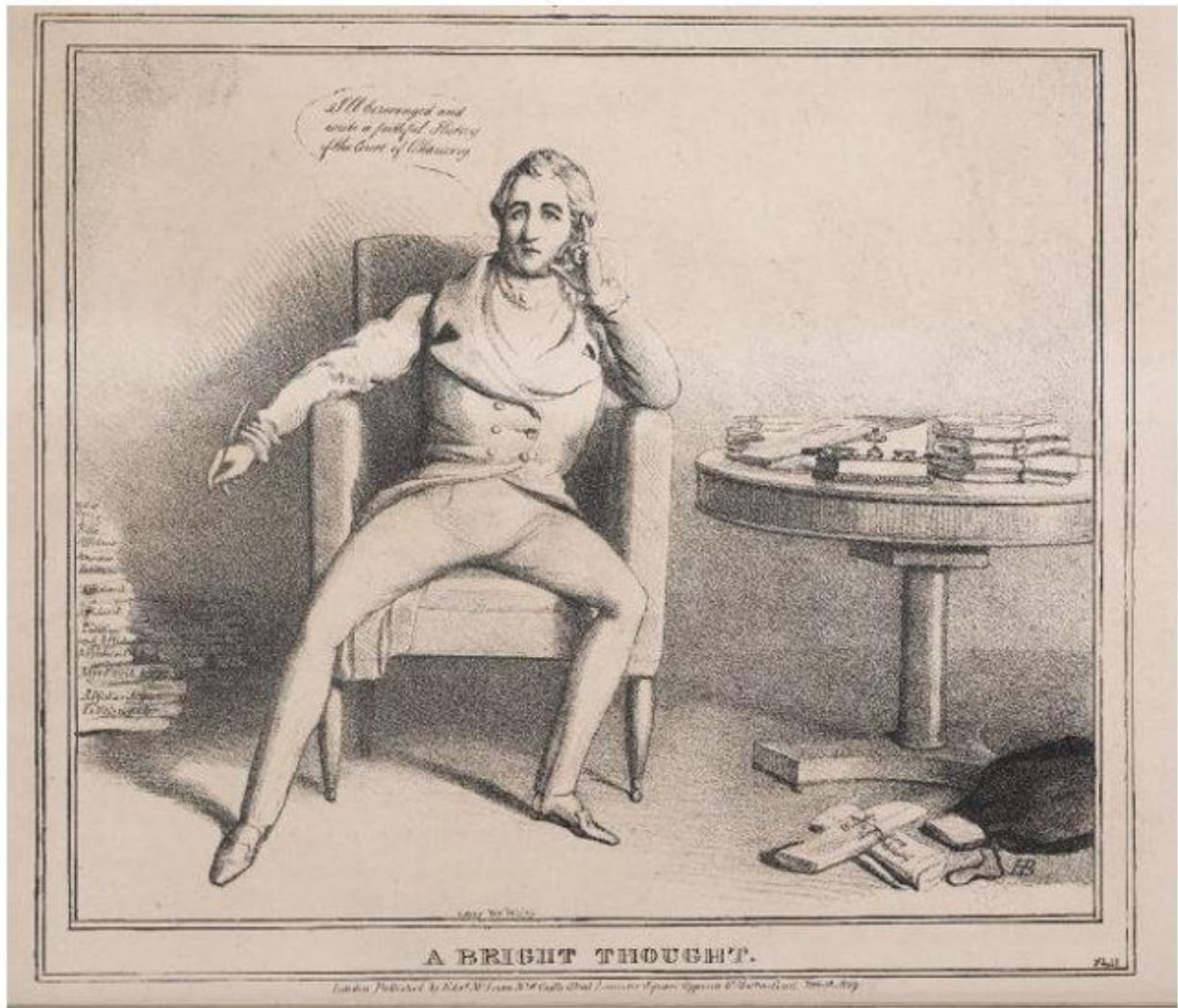
The Imperial Magazine reviewed *View of Chancery* without being ‘censors of morality’, setting aside their dislike of Long-Wellesley to praise his ‘exposure of the corruptions and defects of the chancery system [fully proving] the necessity for revision and reform’.⁹² Most reviews ran along the same lines, although *The Times* thought Long-Wellesley worthy of a prize for use of a title ‘with little or nothing to do with its contents’ and ‘acquitting himself with such lamentable weakness and deficiency in what he has attempted... that he hardly have advanced his own cause, or to escape the censure and ridicule to which he has laid himself open’.⁹³

⁹⁰ Long-Wellesley MS, B4-E8-L25.

⁹¹ *Ibid.* By this time the Duke of Wellington was Prime Minister

⁹² *Imperial Magazine*, Volume 12 (1830).

⁹³ *The Times*, January 10th 1830.



Satire suggesting that Long-Wellesley's *View of Chancery* was written as an act of revenge (Dec 1829)

Within a short space of time, *View of Chancery*, ceased to be noticed. Chancery was to remain largely unchanged until its final dissolution in the late 1850s, when it was still beset by interminable hearings relating to *Wellesley v Beaufort*. Long-Wellesley's motivation for publishing may have been genuine support for Thurlow's concurrent (and unsuccessful) proposals for Chancery reform, using facts about his own case to illustrate its shortcomings. But his inclusion of overly lengthy courtroom extracts renders *View of Chancery* nothing short of a vehicle of self-promotion, created at great expense for the purpose of re-hashing his public life.

In 1827, Hazlitt coined the phrase 'silverfork' to denote fashionable novels filled with 'the folly, caprice, insolence and affectation of a certain class' that provided a voyeuristic observation of upper-class lives and practices.⁹⁴ Smollet's *Roderick Random* (1748) is an early example of the silverfork genre, with its character 'Lord Strutwell' replicating the homosexuality of Lord Tylney, then owner of Wanstead House.⁹⁵ Tuite argues that silverforks constituted 'a critical genre of celebrity culture', by helping to enrol a new urban, middle class, and fashionable readerships into the practice of 'imitation and self-fashioning'. They operated as a form of new mass media publicising the private lives of authors, and led to the establishment of a culture of literary celebrity.⁹⁶ Judith Barbour says that this style of writing blurred lines between fiction and reality, making 'an author's life and social position commodities that could be turned for profit'.⁹⁷ Long-Wellesley's authorship of his private affairs between 1827 and 1830 should be assessed as a singular form of silverfork, disposing of literary disguise in favour of real characters and settings that packaged him up for public consumption. Stripped of novelistic veneer, Long-Wellesley's works were an open invitation to pry into his world, serving to accentuate his celebrity.

Long-Wellesley returned to writing books in his later years. In 1839, he published in French and in English *Un Mot au Belgique (Word to the Belgians)* – a largely tedious volume notable only for being the first written history of that country. *A Fourth Political Word* (1842), dedicated to Sir Robert Peel, assesses the state of British politics, and *A Fifth Political*

⁹⁴ William Hazlitt, *Complete Works* Volume 17 (London: Dent, 1933), p.143 – essay entitled 'The Dandy School'.

⁹⁵ Rictor Norton (Ed.), "Lord Strutwell, 1748", *Homosexuality in Eighteenth-Century England: A Sourcebook* <http://rictornorton.co.uk/eighteen/strutwel.htm>.

⁹⁶ Tuite, 'Tainted Love', p.71-72.

⁹⁷ Judith Barbour, 'Silver Fork Novels' in Ian McCalman (Ed), *Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age: British Culture, 1776-1832* (Oxford University Press, 1999), p.705.

Word (1843) directed to the House of Lords, outlines his solutions to the Irish question.⁹⁸

These works had little influence in the corridors of power. At best they may have contributed to the generous reception Long-Wellesley received when he finally took his seat in the Lords in March 1845, as the 4th Earl of Mornington; which was a brief moment of rehabilitation into the arms of respectable society.⁹⁹

LONG-WELLESLEY'S LITERARY CONNECTIONS

Space dictates a very cursory run through Long-Wellesley's literary whereabouts. Considering the number of years he was active in the public sphere, Long-Wellesley's impact upon contemporary literature seems at first glance fleeting. Late Georgian writers tended to refer obliquely to well-known characters of their day. Many of these celebrity connections and their meanings have become lost to modern readers, who are naturally less familiar with the nuances of Regency popular culture.

Perhaps the best-known allusion to events in Long-Wellesley's life is made by Austen in *Northanger Abbey* (1817). According to Roberts, Austen was dazzled by the courtship and marriage of her distant relative Catherine Tylney-Long, and capitalized on her celebrity by changing the heroine's name from Susan to Catherine, and marrying her off to a 'Henry Tylney'.¹⁰⁰ Jocelyn Harris and Janine Barchas argue that Austen made these late

⁹⁸ William Long-Wellesley, *A Word to the Belgians* (Brussels: Meline, 1839); *A Fourth Political Word* (London: Hatchard, 1842); and *A Fifth Political Word* (London: Mitchell, 1843) The numbering of his works suggests he considered the book on Belgium to be his third 'word' and was continuing the sequence.

⁹⁹ Long-Wellesley MS, B3-E26- L12.

¹⁰⁰ Roberts, *Angel and the Cad*, p.76.

changes to her manuscript (originally written in 1803) to make the story 'more specific and contemporary'.¹⁰¹

Byron liked to include popular figures and events in his works, making him a purveyor of speculation and gossip. But he was a high-profile victim of the same culture of celebrity appropriation, as perhaps the most famous silverfork novel *Glenarvon* (1816) is a thinly-disguised account of Lady Caroline Lamb's affair with the poet. Caroline Franklin attributes the commercial successes of literary celebrity to the bourgeoisie who were 'fascinated to learn details about high society life'.¹⁰²

At the height of his fame it was considered a badge of honour to be noticed in Byron's poetry, no matter how disparaging the context. When Byron expressed his antipathy for dancing in *The Waltz* (1813), Long-Wellesley featured as one of its arch-proponents.¹⁰³

*A modern hero fought for modish manners;
On Hounslow's heath to rival Wellesley's fame,
Cock'd, fired, and miss'd his man—but gain'd his aim.*¹⁰⁴

In the notes published with his poem, Byron contended that Long-Wellesley 'gained a pretty woman, whom he deserved, by fighting for', unlike (his uncle) Wellington who was fighting a real fight in the Peninsula without reward.¹⁰⁵ This not only recognised Long-

¹⁰¹ Jocelyn Harris, *Satire, Celebrity and Politics in Jane Austen* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2017), pp.254-256; Barchas, *Matters of Fact in Jane Austen*, p.117.

¹⁰² Caroline Franklin, *The Female Romantics: Nineteenth-century Women Novelists and Byronism*, (London: Routledge, 2012), p.123 Although *Glenarvon* was published anonymously, Lamb's authorship was an open secret.

¹⁰³ Byron penned this under the name Horace Hornem, but found his views so much at variance with public opinion on Waltzing, that he was forced to disclaim it soon afterwards.

¹⁰⁴ Horace Hornem (Byron), *The Waltz*, February 1813.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

Wellesley's primacy at dancing, but underlined the social respect he garnered by engaging in a duel to win Catherine's hand.¹⁰⁶

In *Don Juan* Canto XI, written in October 1822 Byron looks back at how the world has changed since Waterloo, beginning with the loss of Napoleon, working his way down through the English royalty, to now-dead Whig grandees such as Sheridan, before asking

Where's Brummell? Dish'd.

Where's Long Pole Wellesley? Diddled.¹⁰⁷

Given that Byron famously ranked Brummell alongside Napoleon and himself as 'the three great men of his time', some value must have been attached to Long-Wellesley's celebrity to have merited inclusion alongside them in a passage of poetry lamenting what had been lost.¹⁰⁸ Long-Wellesley was not above laying claim to Byron's celebrity for his own purposes, having aligned himself to Byron's inner circle and owning an original miniature portrait of the poet which he gave away as an election bribe in 1818.¹⁰⁹

Although they were never close, Byron and Long-Wellesley had much in common. Byron was schooled in Dulwich whilst Long-Wellesley lived at Blackheath; they spent time together at Cadiz in 1809; shared the same banker (Douglas Kinnaird), theatre patronage (Drury Lane); mistress (Maria Kinnaird – by whom Long-Wellesley fathered a child); and had a host of mutual friends including Brummell, Alvanley, Scrope Davies and the poet Thomas

¹⁰⁶ See Chapter 5.

¹⁰⁷ Byron, *Don Juan*, Canto XI.

¹⁰⁸ Hubert Cole, *Beau Brummell*, (St Albans: Granada, 1977), p.78.

¹⁰⁹ Desmond Hawkins (Ed.), *The Grove Diaries: The Rise and Fall of an English Family, 1809-1925* (Dorset: Dovecote Press, 1995), p.138.

Moore.¹¹⁰ In character too, the men were similar. A psychiatric assessment by Professor Michael Fitzgerald found that Byron 'had a pervasive pattern of disregard for and violation of the rights of others', adding that 'his impulsivity could be seen in his extreme promiscuity'.¹¹¹ These psychopathic tendencies might easily be applied to Long-Wellesley.¹¹² Of Byron's friends, Hobhouse was the least impressed by Long-Wellesley, but still exploited Long-Wellesley's celebrity to sell his own books.¹¹³

Caroline Lucy Scott's *A Marriage in High Life* (1828) was a thinly veiled account of Long-Wellesley's adulterous activities and treatment of his wife Catherine. Two volumes recounted the tale of a woman who should be 'easily recognised... placed in singular and trying circumstance' for which the reader should feel 'some interest in the events which occasioned her first introduction into the world, and her sudden disappearance from it'.¹¹⁴ This novel was edited by Lady Charlotte Bury, who had once witnessed and recorded Catherine's courtship.¹¹⁵ Its anti-hero 'Lord Fitzhenry' was 'remarkably good-looking, with a stamp of high birth', treating his bride from the outset with a 'cold and distant manner', before eventually breaking her heart.¹¹⁶ *John Bull* congratulated Scott for her choice of subject which 'revealed to the uninitiated a great deal of what is passing in high life'.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁰ Dowden, *Journal of Thomas Moore* entry for October 20th 1820 in Paris records Long-Wellesley's belief that Byron 'has come after him here to his no small disturbance'. Other entries mention Long-Wellesley's miniature portrait of Byron. Scrope Davies MS at the British Library has an invitation card from Long-Wellesley; and Hobhouse's diary entry March 1st 1818 (BL Add MS 472345) records that both Byron and Long-Wellesley had an affair with Maria Kinnaird.

¹¹¹ Cited in *The Telegraph*, April 15th 2001.

¹¹² Long-Wellesley is said to have boasted he had made love with 1003 women – *The Times*, January 17th 1827.

¹¹³ Hobhouse, *Journey Through Albania*.

¹¹⁴ Caroline Scott, *A Marriage in High Life*, (Volume 1), (London: Colborm, 1828), preface.

¹¹⁵ Bury, *Diary of a Lady in Waiting*, p.71.

¹¹⁶ Scott, *Marriage in High Life*, p.13.

¹¹⁷ *John Bull*, December 3rd 1827.

Franklin states that Scott's novel is an early example of 'a stream of stories of unhappy and broken marriages' which became prominent up until the Matrimonial Causes Act (1857) ¹¹⁸

Thomas Moore's poem *Hat versus Wig* appeared in *The Times* just days after Lord Eldon's judgement in *Wellesley v Beaufort*

Who tried the long, Long-Wellesley suit, which tried one's patience in return?

When, loth poor Wellesley to condemn, he with nice discrimination weigh'd,

Whether 'twas only 'Hell and Jemmy,' Or 'Hell and Tommy' that he play'd. ¹¹⁹

Central to Charles Dickens' *Bleak House* (1852) is a long-running court case, *Jarndyce versus Jarndyce*, described as 'this scarecrow of a suit has, over the course of time, become so complicated, that no man alive knows what it means'.¹²⁰ Though it is generally accepted that Dickens' fictional Lord Chancellor lampoons Lord Eldon or 'Lord Endless' as he was nicknamed, no connection has ever been made with Long-Wellesley's cause.¹²¹ However, it should be noted that *Wellesley v Wellesley* (as *Wellesley v Beaufort* became known after 1834) was still ongoing in the 1850s, and that 'Bleak Hall' was a mansion owned by Long-Wellesley, located just beyond the boundaries of Wanstead Park.¹²² Dickens was familiar with Wanstead, and is thought to have bought property there in the 1850s, therefore Long-

¹¹⁸ Franklin, *Female Romantics*, p.123.

¹¹⁹ Published February 15th 1827, 'jemmy' refers to Long-Wellesley's name for youngest son James, and Hood questions whether private notes between father/son should incur the interpretation Eldon chose to assert.

¹²⁰ Charles Dickens, *Bleak House*, (London: Bradbury, 1853), p.3.

¹²¹ Dickens mentions one 20-year old case in his preface, but critics have overlooked Long-Wellesley. See Graham Storey, Kathleen Tillotson and Angus Easson (Eds.), *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, VII. (London: Clarendon, 1993), pp.128-129; and William Dunston. 'The Real Jarndyce and Jarndyce' in *The Dickensian* 93.441 (Spring 1997), p.27.

¹²² Bleak Hall, thought to have been demolished c1860, was at the top of what is now called Blake Hall Road.

Wellesley's Chancery suit, should not be discounted from consideration as inspiring Dickens' work.¹²³

Long-Wellesley's celebrity was occasionally suppressed, such as by Horace Twiss in *The Public and Private Life of Lord Eldon* (1846) which omits *Wellesley v Beaufort*, despite Eldon himself considering it to be one of his most important cases.¹²⁴ Twiss may have been unwilling to tarnish his biography with scandal by including one of Eldon's final cases, the outcome of which was contentious.

Thomas Hood's only novel *Tylney Hall* (1834) was an example of cashing in on Long-Wellesley's fame, rather than recreating his story.¹²⁵ Hood lived on the Wanstead Estate; his landlord was Long-Wellesley, and the two men were on good terms.¹²⁶ *Tylney Hall* is a very faithful representation of the topography of Wanstead and its environs, but its reception was muted as critics and readers alike felt misled by the expectations of an expose of events at Wanstead House, which was not forthcoming. *The Literary Gazette* echoed this widespread disappointment

It was inferred that the private histories of the Wellesley and Long families had furnished matter for the novel.... but, of course, to the signal discomfiture of the speculators the figures were not drawn from living models.¹²⁷

¹²³ Information provided by local studies researchers Maggie Brown (2015) and Theresa Musgrove (2017).

¹²⁴ Horace Twiss, *Life of Lord Eldon*, (London: Murray, 1846); Stead, p.96.

¹²⁵ Thomas Hood, *Tylney Hall*, (London: Bailey, 1834).

¹²⁶ See my blog *Thomas Hood, Tylney Hall & Multicultural Wanstead* on wickedwilliam.com which examines and reviews *Tylney Hall*.

¹²⁷ *The Literary Gazette*, Volume 24, (London: Colborn, 1840), p.512.

Long-Wellesley's most important, yet thus far unacknowledged, literary connection may be found in the works of William Makepeace Thackeray (1811-1863).¹²⁸ Described as the first novelist to hold a mirror up to life [making] the reader feel uncomfortable, Thackeray exposed middle and upper-class hypocrisy by playing on their propensity for snobbery, and turning their notion of morality on its head.¹²⁹ It is generally agreed that Thackeray drew inspiration from Colonel Merrick Shawe, an uncle by marriage, who served in India under Arthur Wellesley. Injured at Assaye, Shawe was pensioned off on half-pay. But he visited Arthur (Wellington) in Spain during the Peninsular War (1809-1814), and was in Brussels during the battle of Waterloo.¹³⁰ Shawe served the Wellesleys in various administrative and secretarial capacities for over half a century, obtaining unique insight into the inner-workings of that family. Shawe was a great source of reference when Thackeray wrote *Vanity Fair* (1848).¹³¹ The source for *Barry Lyndon* (1844), however, has thus far been solely attributed to Andrew Robinson Stoney (1747-1810), a delinquent gambler and womaniser, whose story Thackeray became acquainted with in 1841.¹³²

¹²⁸ ODNB, William Makepeace Thackeray.

¹²⁹ Anne Montserrat, *An Uneasy Victorian – Thackeray the Man* (London: Cassell, 1980), pp.1-3.

¹³⁰ Shawe spent a great deal of time in Thackeray's marital home. See Lewis Melville, *The Life of Thackeray* (London: Routledge, 1996); and Catherine Peters, *Thackeray, A Writer's Life* (Surrey: Sutton Publishing; 1999).

¹³¹ Gordon Ray, *The Buried Life* (Harvard, 1952) gives a detailed analysis of Thackeray's reliance on Shawe as a source for information in *Vanity Fair*.

¹³² Wendy Moore, *Wedlock*, (London: Phoenix, 2009), p.58 & pp.413-414; Ahmed Savkar Altinel, *Thackeray and the problem of realism*, (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1986), pp.91-92.



Merrick Shawe (1772-1843) –worked with Long-Wellesley for 20 years

Shawe was involved in Long-Wellesley's affairs for two decades. Acting as second for the duels with Kilworth (1811), he carried venison from Wanstead to Wellington's army in the Peninsular (1814), sought out and occasionally procured Parliamentary seats for Long-Wellesley, organised the Wanstead House auction, and served as a trustee for the estate

whilst Long-Wellesley was in exile.¹³³ In 1827, their relationship ended, after Long-Wellesley blamed Shawe for failing to effect reconciliation between him and the Wellesley family.¹³⁴

Given the extraordinary circumstances of Long-Wellesley's life it seems self-evident that Shawe recounted tales to Thackeray. Weak-willed Amelia Sedley (*Vanity Fair*), for example might easily relate to Catherine, and Becky Sharp (who both befriends and betrays Amelia) seems uncomfortably close to Helena Bligh. There is more than a trace of Long-Wellesley in *Barry Lyndon*. Lyndon's general boorishness, cynical womanising, and taste for conflict are recognisable. But it is in the description of Lyndon's marriage and appearance as 'an ornament of English society' that Long-Wellesley's character seems to truly emerge. The narrator finds a 'mass of unedifying documents' relating to Lyndon's dissipation and extravagance, stating 'he was clever enough at gaining a fortune but incapable of leaving one'.¹³⁵ Like Long-Wellesley, Lyndon breaks his wife's will before destroying her wealth: 'I hate pride... and I overcame this vice [by] completely subduing her'. A fortune is spent on Lyndon's country estate including magnificent Gobelin tapestries, which were also a notable feature of Wanstead House, even though Lyndon (like Long-Wellesley) only has a life interest in the property. The extent of his entertainments and wealth make Lyndon 'no small sensation at the coffee houses in Pall Mall... described in all the morning prints'. The expression of wealth is thereby considered by Lyndon to be the mark of personal celebrity. Lyndon's financial ruin is precipitated by a foolhardy and expensive election campaign; a project driven by vanity akin to Long-Wellesley at Wiltshire (1818). It is as if Thackeray has

¹³³ Shawe signed and submitted post-duel letters to the press; Long-Wellesley MS, B4-V4- L22/3, February 13th 1814, Shawe obtained St Ives (1812), suggesting a variety of other pocket boroughs for purchase in 1822; he oversaw the Wanstead House auction E.R.O D/DB F116/4 June 22nd 1822; and was one of Long-Wellesley's trustees between August 1822 and November 1825.

¹³⁴ E.R.O. D/DB F116/1-4, April 11th 1827.

¹³⁵ William Makepeace Thackeray, *Barry Lyndon*, (Oxford University Press, 1984), p.234.

transported Long-Wellesley's words, deeds, and attitudes back in time to create Lyndon's persona for that section of his book. Even when Lyndon describes himself as a 'man of letters' - a 'fine gentleman' and patron among the wits, there is an echo of Long-Wellesley's own delusions of grandeur.¹³⁶

It may be too much to assert that Long-Wellesley is Barry Lyndon. But there is strong evidence to suggest that Long-Wellesley's celebrity life, as recounted by Shawe, was an important source relied on for Thackeray's creation.

The last stop on our literary journey relates to research carried out by Thomas Hardy, but seemingly never utilised in his published works. Hardy's *Facts* notebook, compiled around 1883 for research purposes, has a lengthy entry relating to *Bligh v Wellesley* (1826). Eleven pages of trial transcriptions have been collated from the *Dorset County Chronicle*. William Greenslade's recent study says that *Facts* was typical of many of the notebooks Hardy relied upon to aid his writing. News stories within this surviving volume can be directly linked to episodes in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1884).¹³⁷ Hardy's father once lived and worked near Athelhampton, Long-Wellesley's Dorset estate, so his interest may also have piqued by this connection. Though Hardy never used this material, it shows that Long-Wellesley's celebrity still flickered on until the turn of the century, when the first biographical accounts of his life began to appear.

¹³⁶ Ibid – quotes drawn from pp.223-248.

¹³⁷ William Greenslade, *Thomas Hardy's 'Facts' Notebook: A Critical Edition* (London: Routledge, 2017), pp.XXI, 91.

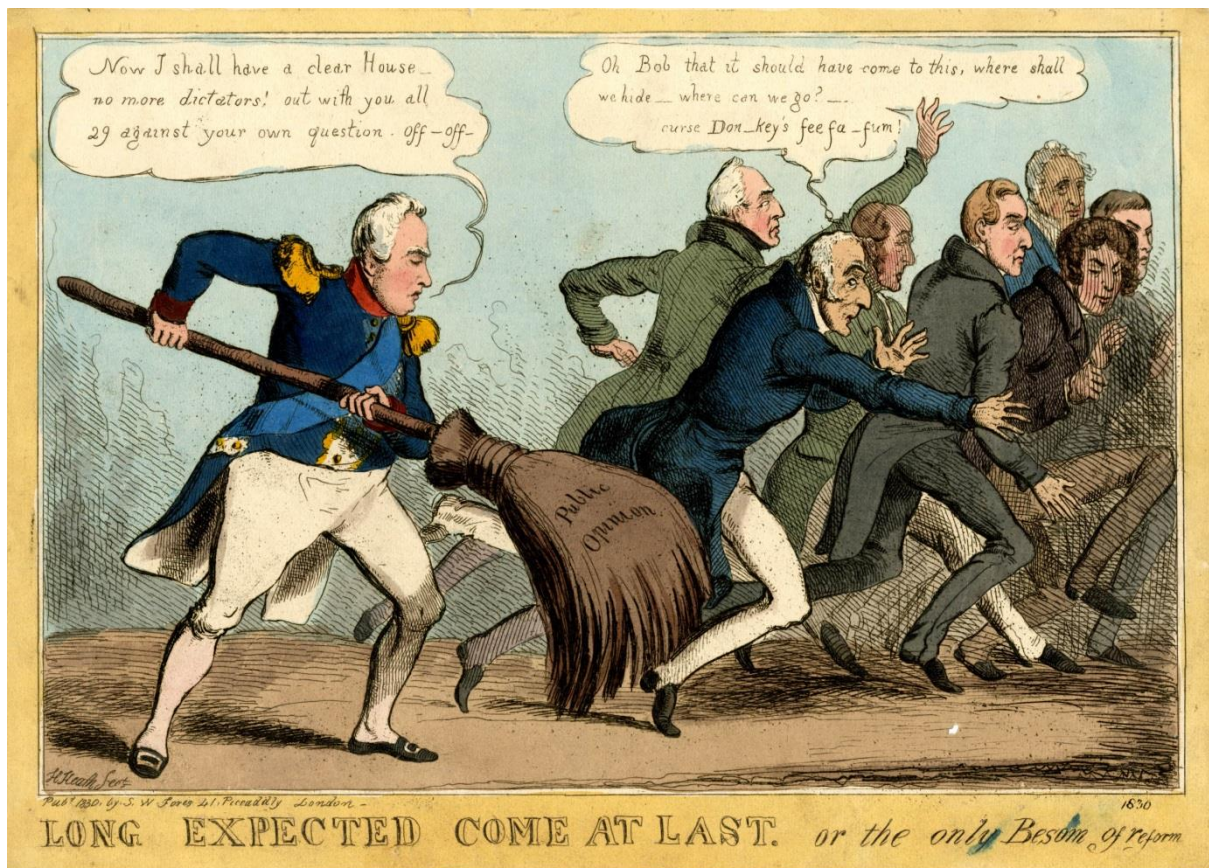
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This chapter has examined Long-Wellesley's written words beginning with an assessment of his epistolary evidence in *Wellesley v Beaufort* and the effect it had upon public opinion, and following on with his two books about the case in Chancery; which were also largely in letter-format. In the latter Long-Wellesley freely admitted his need for public empathy, stating his intention to continue revealing his intimate self. The public outcry that ensued from Long-Wellesley's controversial behaviour foreshadows Lumby's visualisation of today's public sphere which enables the airing of 'socially important issues once deemed trivial'.¹³⁸ By using scandalous prose to insert *himself* into the foreground, Long-Wellesley directly contributed to the development of a form of public opinion whose roots lay in celebrity culture, but (when aroused) was capable of sufficient power as to inspire cultural and social reform. His prosaic language was imbibed into the wider debate about behavioural standards. Scandalous celebrity commodified Long-Wellesley for commercial purposes, for his own sake and the benefit of the print industry that reported on him. Above all Long-Wellesley's appearances reveal that Regency period audiences were, as Adut contends 'the very essence of public life' with a positive creative input to the operation of the public sphere.¹³⁹

¹³⁸ Berry, 'Celebrity and Public Life', p.252.

¹³⁹ Adut, *Reign of Appearances*, p.XXI.

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On June 26th 1830 George IV passed away and his brother the Duke of Clarence ascended to the throne as William IV. The above satire, published in July, served notice upon the political class that times were changing. Prime Minister Wellington and his cabinet are depicted being swept away by the broom of 'public opinion' which is wielded by the new monarch, in what proved to be a timely warning that the old system of aristocratic governance was about to end. Within months Wellington was unseated from office, and the process of electoral reform was fully underway. Public opinion is shown to be the catalyst

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for political reform, but it is heavily implied that this 'broom' was already at work in the public sphere, underpinning a growing movement towards respectability that would supplant the crude bawdiness and moral corruption that once characterised Georgian Britain. By the early 1820s Richard Gaunt contends that the political sphere, under pressure after the trial of Queen Caroline, was preoccupied with 'mollifying public opinion'.¹

In 1828, William Mackinnon defined public opinion to be 'the sentiments of the most intelligent and most moral members of the community; entirely distinct from popular clamour, the result of ignorance and want of thought'. He traced its roots to the middle classes, and listed its requisites as 'moral principle, religious feeling, facility of communication, capital, and extent of information... without which it can have no real or vigorous existence'. He believed that these elements were a direct consequence of 'the spirit of manufacturing and commercial industry', which regulated the size and proportion of that class. Even the most despotic government could not contain the march of intellectual thought generated by these means. Sooner or later, he forecast, public opinion 'must come into collision, and struggle for ascendancy with ancient prejudices and old established notions of arbitrary power'.² This contemporary analysis is very revealing for two reasons. Firstly, morality is placed at the very core of intellectualised thought, suggesting that public opinion operated across multiple spheres. Secondly, public opinion is traced to consumer activities meaning that it originated via a process of audience selection from a choice of spectacle appearing in the public sphere. Mackinnon appears to

¹ Richard Gaunt, *Robert Peel: The Life and Legacy* (London: Tauris, 2010), p.55.

² William Mackinnon, *On the rise, progress and present state of public opinion in Great Britain* (London: Saunders, 1828), passim.

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acknowledge that society at the end of the Regency period knew that the power and influence of public opinion stretched beyond politics.

The primary aim of my thesis has been to redress celebrity culture within the development of the new public sphere in Britain between 1788 and 1832. This has involved interrogating the Habermasian public sphere, to find out how its Adutian 'reign of appearances' generated mass audiences by the start of the Regency period. In the urban venues where intellectual and political conversation is thought to have presaged the new public sphere, there was a rival culture of entertainment and pleasure that included scandal and gossip. Conversation and debate revolved around any topic that aroused public curiosity and interest, not just affairs of state. The public encountered and consumed non-political spectacle within the same public sphere apparatus considered to have initiated the rise of public opinion. Therefore, because audiences sifted through a milieu of events and appearances that were competing for their notice, it is necessary to look beyond politics for the true composition of the public sphere

Lunardi was chosen as an example of mass popular interest in the 1780s, to reveal how individuals were already able to address audiences, by creating commodified versions of their public selves. Lunardi's success in attracting 200,000 spectators to his balloon launch in 1784 demonstrates firstly that print and image media was capable of mass engagement by that time; and secondly that the public sphere was not solely reserved to political affairs. The role played by publicity underlines Adut's contention that the public sphere was a stage where events competed with each other for attention, and that

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audiences played an active role in determining their outcome.³ Lunardi's case also suggests the presence of a celebrity industry, and that commodification of individuals and groups was a natural characteristic of the Habermasian public sphere.

Chapter One investigated what shape and form celebrity took in the public sphere, to show that its presence was not marginal, or fleeting, and that it as an essential ingredient of publicity – which provided regular instances of novelty and spectacle for audience consumption.

Long-Wellesley is just one example of Regency celebrity in the public sphere, but he provides interest because of the many ways in which his celebrity was represented. He became a symbol of immorality in high society during the final years of the Regency period because he consciously publicised his private life for the purpose of celebrity. His decision to create and distribute his own sensational narrative makes him a notable case study because he was the chief purveyor rather than a helpless victim of malicious rumour and gossip. Themed chapters have examined aspects of Long-Wellesley's celebrity: what he thought it meant; how he acquired and coped with it; his attempts to manipulate, and then perpetuate it. His behaviour appealed to what was thought to be the primary function of public opinion at this time; as an organ of moral regulation. To paraphrase Dyer's theory, Long-Wellesley's celebrity may have been bereft of virtue, but it was not without cultural value.⁴

Long-Wellesley's public sphere appearances had commercial and political characteristics, but the true mark of his celebrity can be gauged by the minor titbits of extra

³ Adut, *Reign of Appearances*.

⁴ Dyer, *Stars*, passim.

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information that were regularly disclosed by the press purely for reader's entertainment. Even whilst he stoked up a sense of moral outrage, there was a constant underlying fascination with Long-Wellesley that would not look out of place in today's popular culture. Readers came to expect trivial personal details, strengthening their emotional tie with Long-Wellesley's public self. *Bailey's Magazine* recalled that in his heyday he 'was the neatest of sociable... faultless alike in dress, symmetry and style... at the zenith of fashionable popularity'.⁵ He also enjoyed the status of celebrity spokesman; on one occasion taking centre-stage at the auction of Brummell's goods and chattels in May 1816, to field questions about his friend's possible whereabouts.⁶ In November 1826, when his adultery case was splashed across the news and he was a figure of hate, one paper found it necessary to record 'Mr Long Wellesley's hair [turning] quite white, and yet his whiskers... have retained their original dark colour'.⁷ Whether it was a birthday gift to his wife, his hunt apparel, a public engagement, or even getting lost in London's fog – Long-Wellesley received press attention, and the large crowds who followed him about pay testimony to a level of interest that (in the absence of talent) can only be associated with his celebrity.⁸

This study shows that Regency celebrity should be treated as an apparatus at the heart of the Habermasian public sphere. It functioned as a means of enabling individuals to achieve fame through singularity of character (or deed), was commercially attractive and exploitable, and played an important role in the development of consumer culture. The celebrity industry was far more sophisticated than has hitherto been credited. Popular

⁵ *Baileys Magazine of Sports*, February 1st 1875.

⁶ William Jesse, *The Life of George Brummell, Esq., Commonly Called Beau Brummell*, Volume 1 (London: Navarre Society, 1927), pp.309-330.

⁷ Stead, p.112.

⁸ E.R.O., *Chelmsford Chronicle*, May 14th 1813; Stead, p.71.

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culture in the public sphere during the Regency period deserves to be judged in its own time and context, unsullied by modern perspectives. I hope this thesis will encourage historians to re-think the role of mass media before the advent of photography, to appreciate that celebrity culture was not only present as an aspirational goal for individuals, but could also hold sway over public opinion. Regency period celebrity was not always trivial or transient, because, as demonstrated by Long-Wellesley's scandalous behaviour, it could generate sufficient outcry for permanent political and social change. The march of morality that occurred in the final decades of the Regency era brought Long-Wellesley in its wake, publicising him as an exemplar of all that was wrong with elite society. But as soon as decency and respectability triumphed in the public sphere, he was consigned to obscurity and his celebrity finally extinguished.

Long-Wellesley offers further avenues for research beyond this PhD. It has not been possible to fully explore his legal and courtroom dramas, which played an important role in the theatre of his public self. In recent months the first extant portrait of Long-Wellesley has been uncovered at a house in St Ives.⁹ Investigations are currently underway to discover how it got there, and if it was found with other primary source documents.

It would also be useful to conduct a psychiatric assessment of Long-Wellesley along the lines used by Fitzgerald upon Lord Byron.¹⁰ Butler's conclusion that Richard Wellesley had narcissistic tendencies is also interesting because Long-Wellesley shared his uncle's lifelong tendency for seeking gratification through vanity.¹¹ Although Long-Wellesley displayed many of the character traits of a narcissist – selfishness, sense of entitlement and

⁹ Currently in the possession of Parade Antiques, Plymouth, who are having the painting restored.

¹⁰ Cited in *The Telegraph*, April 15th 2001.

¹¹ Butler, *Eldest Brother*, p.8.

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lack of empathy – his egotism went far beyond this. It would be fair to say that he displayed many of the traits of a psychopath – glib and superficial charm, grandiose sense of self, pathological liar, cunning and manipulative. His violence was most evident through the cruelty directed towards his children, which led to them being made Wards of Chancery. This intensified after the court case with Long-Wellesley displaying shocking degrees of callousness: kidnapping Victoria, terrorising William into handing over large sums of money, and fleecing brain-damaged James before leaving him to rot in a madhouse.

Also, whilst finalising my thesis I was permitted access to Long-Wellesley's bank accounts at Goslings Bank.¹² The most striking revelation gleaned from these documents is the enormous expense incurred by the Long-Wellesleys in protecting their celebrity privacy. This new resource reinforces the findings of chapter 3, and can show the full extent by which the Long-Wellesley couple relied on security to preserve their celebrity status. The bank ledgers will prove an interesting primary source for examining excessive consumerism during Regency times; and also provide insight for Wanstead House historians seeking to establish Long-Wellesley's exact role in the bankruptcy of his family's estate.

This thesis contributes to the history of the public sphere, particularly exploring the role played by celebrity culture. It has been argued that the Habermasian ideal of a politically orientated public sphere is not viable because public opinion relied upon spectacle, and was subject to the vagaries of audience response. Adut's definition of the public sphere as a 'reign of appearances' has offered new opportunities for re-assessing popular and consumer culture; showing that individual commodification was a natural consequence of greater public engagement. Furthermore it reveals audiences played an

¹² Courtesy of Barclays Group Archives.

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active rather than passive role; stimulated by publicity regarding all manner of subjects, including celebrity; but free to decide the level and manner of their responses. Long-Wellesley's scandalous celebrity underscores the importance of negative codes of behaviour within analogous society, because it rallied public opinion together to reject the warped code of honour that he projected into their midst.¹³

Adut's vision of spectacle fuelling the public sphere may encourage historians to concentrate on other sources of spectacle experienced in Regency times; such as sports like boxing and pedestrianism; and popular fads and fashions; which made their own contribution to the development of a genuinely multi-faceted form of public opinion.

¹³ Lilti, *Invention of Celebrity*, p.35.

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Abbreviations used in footnotes are shown in brackets

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