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2005

Hogging the Limelight: *The Queen's Wake* and the Rise of Celebrity Authorship

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Recommended Citation

Goldsmith, Jason N., "Hogging the Limelight: *The Queen's Wake* and the Rise of Celebrity Authorship" *Studies in Hogg and His World* / (2005): 52-60.

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than was at first contemplated, is now in preparation by Professor Wilson, and will be published [...] within a few Months, in the same style and form as these volumes.' The work, however, never appeared.

41. Martin to Blackie & Son, 13 Feb 1833, in UGD61/8/1/1 Item 10.
42. Blackie Archive, UGD61/1/11/2 (Bundle of Assignments with Authors, unnumbered item). A record of royalties paid to Mrs Hogg for the two original sets, 23 Aug 1841, survives in Stirling University Library, MS 25, Box 2 (3). This shows royalties of £270 from 2,000 copies sold of the *Tales*, £135 from the sale of a further 1,000 of the same, and £42 4s from 500 of the *Poems*. These sums are calculated at the rate of 10% of a reduced price of 27s and 22s 6d for the two sets respectively (i.e. 4s 6d a volume), the result being marginally better than the one-twelfth of retail price mentioned during the Hogg-Blackie negotiations.
43. In an undated Catalogue [marked in pencil 28 Jan 1852], giving trade and retail prices, the *Tales and Sketches* are listed at a reduced price of 21s (trade 15s 9d), and the *Poetical Works* at 17s 6d (trade 13s 2d). In another undated Catalogue, probably for the trade, the volumes are listed as on sale individually ('in fancy cloth, gilt') under separate titles: e.g. 'THE QUEEN'S WAKE, and other Poems,' retail price 3s 6d, and 'MEMOIRS AND CONFESSIONS OF A FANATIC, and other Tales,' at the same price. This tallies with some surviving volumes which have engraved title pages with these volume-particular titles rather than the old generic headings. Both catalogues mentioned above are found in the Blackie Archive, UGD61/4/2/1.
44. Blackie Archive, UGD61/4/2/1. Immediately following this in the same undated catalogue is a full-page advert for *The Imperial Family Bible* ('to be completed in about 36 Parts, at 2s. 6d. each'), the earliest complete edition of which is 1844, with another edition in 1858. Its prominent featuring here under the heading 'New Works and New Editions,' together with the apparent hedging about the parts needed for completion, argues more strongly for the earlier date here and for the catalogue belonging to the early 1840s.
45. Blackie Archive, UGD61/4/1/2 (Stock Edition Book, 1838-1900), pp. 212-13. The completed 1865 *Works* contains 148 numbered gatherings of eight pages each, and it would seem that the individual Parts consisted of five or six such gatherings each. Gillian Hughes has seen a surviving paper-covered part in the family papers of Mr David Parr of Nelson, New Zealand, who is a descendant of James and Margaret Hogg.
46. Blackie Archive, UGD61/4/1/2, pp. 213-14, 273-74; undated catalogues, [1865], [1874], [1884], UGD61/4/2/1.

Jason N. Goldsmith (essay date 2005)

SOURCE: Goldsmith, Jason N. "Hogging the Limelight: *The Queen's Wake* and the Rise of Celebrity Authorship." *Studies in Hogg and his World* 16 (2005): 52-60. Print.

[In the following essay, Goldsmith argues that *The Queen's Wake* is commentary on the literary name branding inaugurated by the periodical culture of Hogg's day. For Goldsmith, the "crisis of reception" staged in the poem—sixteenth-century provincial bards in a first encounter with royal spectacle—is not unlike the uneasy celebrity Hogg experienced as the *Ettrick Shepherd* of Blackwood's *Edinburgh Magazine*.]

On 19 September 1821, John Aitken posted a letter to James Hogg. 'The unceasing cruelty of these damned magazine gentry pursues you everywhere,' he fumed 'and with a degree of savage heartlessness they continue to prey upon the fair fame of a man whose greatest fault is that he ever was connected with them [...]—Bestir yourself in time—Your eternal fame is at stake—and why would you sport with your well earned fame.'¹ Fame, as Leo Braudy has shown, was nothing new.² But the urgency of Aitken's letter suggests that something had changed. In exhorting his friend to action, Aitken seems as determined to define Hogg's fame—it is 'fair,' 'well-earned,' 'eternal'—as he is to defend it.

What Aitken labours to paint as fame, I want to suggest, is something closer to what we now call celebrity. One of the arguments I make in the larger project from which I draw this article is that celebrity, a distinctly mediated brand of renown in which representations of the individual are widely circulated to a mass reading public, emerges as a new cultural formation in the early decades of the nineteenth century. A reconfiguration of renown encouraged by the tendency of nineteenth-century readers to identify the poet and the poem, the rise of celebrity was made possible by rapid advances in print technology at the turn of the century. As 'The *Ettrick Shepherd*,' James Hogg was a phenomenon of a burgeoning periodical culture, a representation constructed and circulated in reviews and magazines such as Constable's *Edinburgh Magazine*, *Fraser's Magazine*, the *London Magazine*, and, most famously, *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*. As Thomas Powell observed in *Fraser's Magazine* for April 1830, 'Mr. Hogg is, upon the whole, a very fortunate man; for what with his length of life—no small advantage even for fame (and the *Shepherd* is now fifty nine), and what with the aid of a powerful periodical, his name is already more familiar to the English public than a far greater man, namely Burns, was, until seven years after

his death.’³ The ‘damned magazine gentry’ that Aitken sees as threatening Hogg’s ‘eternal fame’ prove, in Powell’s account, the very means by which the poet has achieved such widespread renown. The conflicting observations of Aitken and Powell stage the confrontation between a fame traditionally based in achievement and a new configuration of public acclaim, celebrity, derived from media exposure. It is perhaps discomfiting to those of us who admire Hogg’s aesthetic achievement that while he shot to fame with *The Queen’s Wake* (1813), which ran to six ‘editions’⁴ in his lifetime and established his reputation as one of Scotland’s finest contemporary poets, he was, as Powell’s remark suggests, most widely known as the ‘boozing buffoon’ (in the words of John Gibson Lockhart) of the hugely popular ‘Noctes Ambrosianae’ of *Blackwood’s*. Indeed, the article that had elicited Aitken’s epistolary call to arms—John Wilson’s pernicious review of Hogg’s revised ‘Memoir’ [“Memoir of the Author’s Life”], published as part of the third edition of *The Mountain Bard*—appeared in *Blackwood’s* for August 1821, an example of the ‘personalities,’⁵ the defamations of character, for which the magazine was so denounced in its day.

Although Hogg reached the peak of his celebrity in the ‘Noctes,’ I want to turn instead to the poem that made his name, a poem about poetic fame and the vexed relationship between an author, his name, and his audience. *The Queen’s Wake* recounts the return to Scotland of Queen Mary in 1561 to resume the throne after nineteen years in France. On her arrival the young queen decides to hold a poetic competition, the ‘wake’ of the poem’s title. Over three nights some thirty bards perform, and twelve of their songs are recounted in Hogg’s poem. These songs are linked by a framing narrative that has previously been viewed as an afterthought, a poorly executed device designed to pass off as a coherent poem a mixed collection of ballads and metrical tales including two of Hogg’s most admired works, ‘Kilmeneay’ and ‘The Witch of Fife.’⁶ And while Hogg’s own account of the *Wake*’s [*The Queen’s Wake*] composition lends credence to such a reading, the loose structure of his poem—the uneven quality of its songs, its somewhat awkward frame—might, I want to suggest, be part of the poetic design. Taking my lead from a presentation copy of the fifth edition, wherein Hogg identifies several of the sixteenth-century bards as his contemporaries,⁷ I want to suggest that the historical event, the sixteenth-century competition, functions as a mirror in which we can see refracted the poem’s nineteenth-century anxieties regarding the uncertain terms of contemporary acclaim.

As early as the announcement of the wake, the poem exhibits reservations about the new public it creates:

Little recked they, that countless throng,
Of music’s power or minstrel’s song;
But crowding their young Queen around,

Whose stately courser pawed the ground,
Her beauty more their wonder swayed
Than all the noisy herald said;⁸

These lines set an oral tradition of poetry and song against an emergent culture of high visibility that is symbolised by the beautiful young queen. The force of that first closed couplet binds the minstrel’s song to an idle throng—more moved by the spectacle of the Queen than the herald’s announcement of the poetic event—whose disruptive power is registered metrically in the trochaic inversions that launch the line.

While the poem announces these concerns, Scotland’s bards thrill to the summons. When they arrive at Holyrood, where their skills are to be rated by a new and unfamiliar audience, however, their anticipation turns to fear:

Ah! when at home the songs they raised,
When gaping rustics stood and gazed,
Each bard believed, with ready will,
Unmatched his song, unmatched his skill!
But when the royal halls appeared,
Each aspect changed, each bosom feared;

(p. 17)

Having left behind the security, comfort, and acclaim of a provincial circle of intimates, the poets of the wake are nearly undone by a crisis of reception. In the context of the poem’s nineteenth-century frame of reference, the ‘royal halls’—which strike such fear in the poet’s hearts—symbolise the urban centre in which they are situated. It was from cities such as London and Edinburgh that a new order of reviewers and readers were redefining the terms of literary success. In the guise of a cultural event based on and enacted by an oral tradition, *The Queen’s Wake* probes the consequences of this media explosion on writers. A far cry from Shelley’s unacknowledged legislators, these poets exhibit little of that radical autonomy so claimed by their High-Romantic contemporaries:

Unknown to men of sordid heart,
What joys the poet’s hopes impart;
Unknown, how his high soul is torn
By cold neglect, or canting scorn:
That meteor torch of mental light,
A breath can quench, or kindle bright.

(p. 17)

In what I would argue is a deliberately strained image—‘That meteor torch of mental light’—the creative spark of the Romantic imagination, for all its Promethean aspirations, is revealed to be contingent upon contemporary reception. In contrast to what Andrew Bennet has recognised as a Wordsworthian aesthetic of contemporary neglect,⁹ Hogg seems to have come to a realisation similar to that of 1930s starlet Mae West, who notoriously quipped, ‘It’s better to be looked over than to be overlooked.’ Writing to the London publisher John Murray,

Hogg declared, 'I am fully convinced that once the public loses sight of a poet he may almost be said to no longer exist.'¹⁰ The public that Wordsworth so loathed is for Hogg the very condition of the poet as such. But *The Queen's Wake* remains ill at ease with the poet's relationship to that public and the shifting terms of contemporary acclaim:

Woe that the bard, whose thrilling song
Has poured from age to age along,
Should perish from the lists of fame,
And lose his only boon, a name.

(p. 37)

The conventional acoustic conjunction of fame and name belies a tension this taut octosyllabic couplet establishes between these terms. By the time Hogg was writing, the authorial name had become a commercial asset, the poet's 'only boon.' And as these lines suggest, that asset could be lost. Like any other commodity, the name—notwithstanding the efforts of numerous Romantic writers to conjoin the person and the persona—circulates free from its 'producer.' In an age of personality, that distinctive sign of the individual, the name, functioned as a promotional supplement.¹¹ Forced to contend with an alter-ego who shared his name, Hogg had been beat by a century Marlon Brando, who bellyached, 'People don't relate to you but to the myth they think you are, and the myth is always wrong.'¹²

James Hogg is never named directly in *The Queen's Wake*. And yet he remains a somewhat insistent presence in his signature poem. The narrative voice, as he elsewhere observed, is his own.¹³ He also appears in the person of the Tenth Bard, a Shepherd of Ettrick whose song, 'Old David,' ends in a nostalgic gesture that falls short of the resolution achieved in a poem such as Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey*. 'O, Ettrick! shelter of my youth!' cries the Shepherd,

Thou sweetest glen of all the south!
Thy fairy tales, and songs of yore,
Shall never fire my bosom more.
Thy winding glades, and mountains wild,
The scenes that pleased me when a child,
Each verdant vale, and flowery lea,
Still in my midnight dreams I see;
And waking oft, I sigh for thee.
Thy hapless bard, though forced to roam
Afar from thee without a home,
Still there his glowing breast shall turn,
Till thy green bosom fold his urn.
Then, underneath thy mountain stone,
Shall sleep unnoticed and unknown.

(p. 73)

The apostrophic invocation of place that launches this passage—'O, Ettrick! shelter of my youth!'—individuates the poem by linking tale and teller to a specific region. But the very act recorded by 'Old David'—David's defeat of

the fairies—has evacuated Ettrick of its inspirational content: 'Thy fairy tales, and songs of yore, | Shall never fire my bosom more.' Hogg compounds the sense of irremediable loss described in these lines through the dense acoustic echo that draws together the final three couplets, their long, low vowels falling precipitously in pitch from the preceding triplet. What resolution the shepherd once derived from his native glen, here recreated in the imaginative act, becomes a eulogy for the poetic project that frames it.

Throughout *The Queen's Wake*, though, such reflection has been the province of the narrator of the framing tale. And its inclusion in the Shepherd's song suggests the rhetorical strategy that Hogg brings to bear on the problems posed by contemporary renown. In crossing the poem's temporal registers, the conclusion of 'Old David' conflates two deliberate representations of James Hogg, the narrator of *The Queen's Wake* and the poem's Tenth Bard, the Shepherd of Ettrick. Rhetorically establishing a continuity of authorial identity across more than two hundred years, *The Queen's Wake* inscribes the poet's immortality in the textual event.

But we should not mistake this for a Wordsworthian act underwritten by the uniqueness of the individual. For it is in the very impossibility of such self-identity over time that *The Queen's Wake* looks to surmount the tension between contemporary acclaim and posthumous renown, or celebrity and fame. Under such pressure the localised, lyric voice necessarily expands into the more communal voice of the popular ballad tradition from which Hogg's poem is made. That tradition, as Anthony Easthope has noted, is characterised by anonymity, variation of the speaking voice, and textual mobility, traits that refuse, 'transparent access to the enounced.'¹⁴ In memorialising the songs and tales of the Scottish countryside, *The Queen's Wake* looks to reproduce rhetorically and to reconcile the doubleness implicit in celebrity by way of the ballad, staking the poet's reputation on an axis that looks back to an anonymous past for its confirmation.

This ballad tradition, which the narrator has inherited from the Bard of Ettrick, is symbolised by a harp that:

[...] will make the elves of eve
Their dwelling in the moon-beam leave,
And ope thine eyes by haunted tree
Their glittering tiny forms to see.

(p. 169)

Whereas 'Old David' had lamented the waning of a supernatural realm as a source of poetic inspiration, this harp—the Ettrick bard's prize for finishing second in the wake—can bring that world back to life. Poetry, it seems, can overcome its effacement. 'But that sweet bard, who sung and played' the poem records,

When forced to leave his harp behind,
Did all her tuneful chords unwind;

And many ages past and came
Ere man so well could tune the same.

(p. 170)

The first to tune the harp successfully is Walter the Abbot (Walter Scott), to whom the narrator expresses a debt:

He told me where the relic lay;
Pointed my way with ready will,
Afar on Ettrick's wildest hill;
Watched my first notes with curious eye,
And wondered at my minstrelsy:

(p. 171)

While acknowledging the importance of Scott's encouragement, the poem also preempts that influence: 'He little weened, a parent's tongue | Such strains had o'er my cradle sung' (p. 171). These lines gesture back to the ballad tradition that Hogg had inherited from his mother and on which *The Queen's Wake* stakes its author's reputation—a reputation that surpasses Scott's. For Scott has abandoned the harp:

But, to the hand that framed her true,
Only by force one strain she threw.
That harp he never more shall see,
Unless 'mong Scotland's hills with me.

(p. 172)

Denouncing Scott's 'forced' strain, the narrator situates himself as the sole inheritor of a distinctly Scottish poetic legacy. In *The Queen's Wake*, then, Hogg stakes his fame on a very particular type of poetry: a poetry situated in the legends and airs of the Scottish Border country. Years later, Hogg would similarly distinguish himself from Scott, 'the king of the school of chivalry,' by crowning himself 'king of the mountain and fairy school' a far more important poetic achievement: 'Dear Sir Walter ye can never suppose that I belong to your school o' chivalry? Ye are the king o' that school but I'm the king o' the mountain an' fairy school which is a far higher ane nor yours.'¹⁵

Notwithstanding his attempts to differentiate himself from his friend and benefactor, Hogg was frequently viewed as an adjunct to Scott, and it is by way of Scott that Hogg ultimately registers his own relationship to fame. In his *Familiar Anecdotes of Sir Walter Scott*, for example, Hogg works through his own poetic legacy. Scott was able to navigate successfully the strong undercurrents of celebrity authorship, Hogg speculates, because: 'There never was any man in the world so jealous of lending his name to any publication' (*Anecdotes*, p. 19), a point he makes on three separate occasions. For all the anxiety *The Queen's Wake* expresses regarding the authorial name, James Hogg, it seems, had *not* been as jealous with his own.

Eight years after the publication of *The Queen's Wake*, in the fifty-third number of the 'Noctes Ambrosianae'

(January 1831), the Shepherd, in conversation with the fictional editor of *Blackwood's*, Christopher North, reflects on his own relationship to the series and the strange force of print culture. 'I dinna remember ae single syllable o' what was said, either by you or me, at the last Noctes' remarks the Shepherd:

—nor, indeed, at ony o' the half hunder Nocteses celebrated in Gabriel's Road and Picardy since the Great Year o' the Chaldee. I never remembers naething—but a' that ever occurs to my mind has the appearance o' bein' imagination. A' thae Fifty-Two Nocteses—what are they noo but dreams about dreams! Sometimes when I read the record o' ane o' them in the Maggazin, I wonder wha's that Shepherd that speaks about the Forest—till a' at ance I begin to jaloose that he's my verra ain sell, an that I really maun hae been carrying on the war bravely that nicht at Ambrose's, though in what year—I'm sure aneuch o' the century—it passed by like a sugh, naething is there in the wild words to tell—nor in the guffaws that a' luk sae silent, sir, in prent yellowed by time, aye melancholy and mournful amaist as the smilin face o' a dear freen in a pictur, when ane luks at it, wi' a sigh, years after the original is dead!¹⁶

Describing the 'Noctes' as dreams about dreams—an infinite regression of fantasies—this remarkable passage exemplifies the link between the romantic imagination and the multiplicity of the celebrity image. This fictional Shepherd claims not to recall having spoken any of the words he finds ascribed to the Shepherd in the 'Noctes' and can only assume that he must have spoken them. When this Shepherd becomes convinced that the Shepherd he sees depicted there is his 'very own self' the structure of celebrity has obtained. Periodicals such as *Blackwood's* are essential to the rise of celebrity precisely because of this capacity for reproduction. Incorporating James Hogg's anxiety about his public representation, his public representation trumps him.

Faced with the phenomenon of his own celebrity, Hogg's extraordinary imaginative faculty failed him. 'I have been trying my hand on a *Noctes* for these two or three days,' he wrote to William Blackwood a year before his death, 'but Wilson has not seen it as yet. I fear it will be all to re-write. I cannot imitate him and what is far more extraordinary I cannot imitate myself.'¹⁷ The image (that 'smilin face of a dear friend in a picture') has outshone the original. Displaced by his own celebrated persona, Hogg, like Tennyson's Ulysses, could lament, 'I am become a name.'

Notes

1. Alan Lang Strout, *The Life and Letters of James Hogg the Ettrick Shepherd: Volume 1 (1770-1825)*, Texas Technical College Research Publication 15 (Lubbock, Texas, 1946), pp. 225-26. Hereafter referred to as Strout.
2. See Leo Braudy, *The Frenzy of Renown: Fame and its History* (Oxford, 1986).

3. 'Literary Characters by Pierce Pungent—No. 1 James Hogg,' *Fraser's Magazine*, 1 (April 1830), 291-301 (p. 297).
4. Edith Batho listed six separate editions of the work in *The Ettrick Shepherd* (Cambridge, 1927), p. 193. A more detailed account of the history of these and of Hogg's revisions is given in *The Queen's Wake*, ed. by Douglas S. Mack (S/SC, 2004).
5. For Wilson's review of the 1821 version of Hogg's memoir see *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 10 (August 1821), 43-52.
6. One of the few critics to treat the poem more than cursorily, Peter T. Murphy, for example, considers it 'a narrativized anthology,' and musters little enthusiasm for it: 'The narrative framework is not negligible, by any means, but clearly it is a consequence of the need to make a book rather than the book's inspiration'—see *Poetry as an Occupation and an Art in Britain, 1760-1830* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 98.
7. See Alan Grant, 'A Presentation Copy of *The Queen's Wake*,' *Newsletter of the James Hogg Society*, 8 (1989), 21-22, and also the notes to Douglas Mack's edition of the poem. In Hogg's own day such speculations were put forward by 'M. M.' in 'Portraits of Living Scottish Poets. By James Hogg, The Ettrick Shepherd,' *The Literary Magnet*, new series, 3 (January-June 1827), 214-17.
8. *The Queen's Wake*, ed. by Douglas S. Mack (S/SC, 2004), p. 15. Mack prints two versions of Hogg's poem, dating from 1813 and 1819 respectively, and I cite the first of these. Subsequent references are to this edition and are given in the text.
9. See Andrew Bennet, *Romantic Poets and the Culture of Posterity* (Cambridge, 1999).
10. Strout, p. 108.
11. See Andrew Wernick, 'Authorship and the Supplement of Promotion,' in *What is an Author?*, ed. by Maurice Biriotti and Nicola Miller (Manchester, 1993), pp. 85-103.
12. Cited from David Giles, *Illusions of Immortality: A Psychology of Fame and Celebrity* (New York, 2000), p. 86.
13. See his *Anecdotes of Scott*, ed. by Jill Rubenstein (S/SC, 1999), p. 59. Subsequent quotations are from this edition, referred to as *Anecdotes*.
14. Anthony Easthope, *Poetry as Discourse* (London, 1983), p. 83.
15. See *Anecdotes*, p. 61.
16. *Noctes Ambrosianae*, ed. by R. Shelton Mackenzie, 5 vols (New York, 1854), IV, 227.
17. Cited from Caroline McCracken-Flescher, 'You Can't Go Home Again: James Hogg and the Problem of Scottish Post-Colonial Return,' *Studies in Hogg and his World*, 8 (1997), 24-41 (p. 35).

Carolyn A. Weber (essay date 2006)

SOURCE: Weber, Carolyn A. "Delighting in the Indissoluble Mixture: The Motley Romanticism of James Hogg." *Studies in Hogg and his World* 17 (2006): 49-62. Print.

[In the following essay, Weber reassesses Hogg's relationship to British Romanticism. Judging his poetry against that of the English Romantics William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Weber claims for Hogg a "holistic imaginative strategy" unique in its harmonious integration of natural and supernatural worlds. In Hogg's use and appropriation of the Scottish folklore tradition, Weber finds an enlightened approach to Christianity that speaks to Romantic preoccupations beyond those of nationalist identification.]

'The truth is, that man, with all his great capabilities, is a perplexed knot, which it is impossible to untie,' writes James Hogg in his Lay Sermon entitled '**Virtue the Only Source of Happiness.**'¹ Hogg's own varied imagination demonstrates just this entanglement. Ironically, however, this same acceptance of the knot—indeed, an openness to it—that characterises Hogg's work has also possibly contributed to it being so deceptively intellectually dismissible in the past. David Groves explains that 'some of Hogg's supporters in his own time wanted to cast him in this rather silly mould, as being a typical Romantic poet in the most trivial sense of that term.'² The development of critical attitudes toward Hogg reflects ambivalence toward his canon as a whole. Leading Hogg scholar Douglas Mack, for instance, originally posits in his 1970 Preface to Hogg's *Selected Poems*: '[Hogg] wrote far too much verse, and his best poems have long been submerged among his failures,' only to state later that he has since 'become increasingly uneasy about this view of Hogg's achievement.'³ At the onset of our new millenium, Mack asserts that while 'Hogg can indeed be seen as a "disfranchised marginal writer" [...] his extraordinarily powerful and interesting texts nevertheless have a part to play at the heart of our current discussion of British literature of the Romantic era.'⁴ I wish to build upon Mack's assertion by situating Hogg in relation to several new considerations. First, by examining what I mean by the term 'motley Romanticism,' I hope to shed light upon Hogg's stance as a Romantic writer in his own right who owns a complex relationship with the 'imagination,' as demonstrated by his ease with, and interweaving of, the natural and supernatural. Second, while acknowledging the important body of criticism that favours nationalistic and political readings of Hogg as a Scottish writer within an 'English