Gardner ESPRit Conference Abstract for July 2016 paper.

**The Political Moment of Pierce Egan’s *Life in London***

*Life in London* was first published in monthly parts in September 1820 and in boards from July 1821, with thirty-six cuts by George and Robert Cruikshank. It was hugely successful and it is estimated that there were over sixty imitations in the 1820s. The audience *Life in London* gained seems to have ranged from the Duke of York to labouring class children. *Life in London* was also made famous to people who had never read it through the theatre: various stage versions were shown on either side of the Atlantic—some of which survived well into the nineteenth century.

This paper argues that Egan co-opted the kind of format that William Hone and George Cruikshank had used in their radical pamphlets, such as *The Political House that Jack Built,* to gain access to the huge cross-class audience that they had found and made. However Egan does this without the politics or gripes that Hone’s pamphlets contained. Instead Egan is interested in the highs and the lows of London life; the spectacle of London. The title page and frontispiece to *Life in London* herald this intermingling of the ‘high’ and ‘low’ by showing a variety of scenes and fonts. As John Strachan writes: Egan’s work is “notable for its typographic riot: the italics, small caps and exclamation points.” This usage of print technology to affect the mood and response of the reader, along with the pictures and the songs, makes *Life in London* a kind of multi-media experience.