January 19, 2012: Nagle on L.E.L.

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Chris Nagle's essay on Letitia Elizabeth Landon (known as ‘L.E.L.’ to her contemporaries) is part of the recently released Encyclopedia of Romantic Literature published by Wiley-Blackwell under the general editorship of Frederick Burwick. The three-volume project is described as “an authoritative resource that covers British artistic, literary, and intellectual movements between 1780 and 1830, within the context of European, transatlantic and colonial historical and cultural interaction.” One of the long essays devoted to major authors, Nagle’s contribution explores the productive tensions manifest in Landon’s life (and mythic death) and in her prolific and influential body of work that spanned all genres during the 1820s and 1830s. He argues that ultimately Landon’s exploitation of multiple (often loosely autobiographical) personae—and a newly commercialized aesthetic that she helped in large measure to create—require reading strategies that attend to the multi-layered and poly-vocal artifice animating her work, especially her poetry.