

THE HAZLITT REVIEW

The Hazlitt Review is an annual peer-reviewed journal, the first internationally to be devoted to Hazlitt studies. The *Review* aims to promote and maintain Hazlitt's standing, both in the academy and to a wider readership, by providing a forum for new writing on Hazlitt, by established scholars as well as more recent entrants in the field.

Editor Uttara Natarajan

Assistant Editors James Whitehead, Philipp Hunnekuhl

Editorial Board

Geoffrey Bindman	Tim Milnes
David Bromwich	James Mulvihill
Jon Cook	Seamus Perry
Gregory Dart	Michael Simpson
A.C. Grayling	Fiona Stafford
Paul Hamilton	John Whale
Ian Mayes	Duncan Wu

We invite essays of 4,000 to 9,000 words in length on any aspect of William Hazlitt's work and life; articles relating Hazlitt to wider Romantic circles, topics, or discourses are also expressly welcome, as are reviews of books pertaining to such matters. Contributions should follow the MHRA style and should be sent by email to James Whitehead (j.r.whitehead@ljmu.ac.uk) or Philipp Hunnekuhl (philipphunnekuhl@gmail.com). Submissions will be considered year-round, but must be received by 1 April to be considered for publication in the same year's *Review*. We regret that we cannot publish material already published or submitted elsewhere. Contributors who require their articles to be open access (under the RCUK policy effective from 1 April 2013) should indicate this, and they will be made freely available on the Hazlitt Society's website on publication.

Subscriptions, including annual membership of the Hazlitt Society, are £10 (individual) or £15 (corporate or institution) per annum. Overseas subscriptions are \$24/£15 (individual) or \$35/£25 (corporate). The *Review* is distributed by the Society, at the annual lecture or by post. Please contact the Society at hazlittsociety@gmail.com in order to set up a new subscription, including in your message a full postal address for the receipt of your copy. Subscription payments for individual members are preferred by annual standing order (account details on request) or by PayPal. Payments are also accepted by cheque or postal order, made payable to the Hazlitt Society, to be sent to James Whitehead, School of Humanities and Social Science, Liverpool John Moores University, John Foster Building, 80–98 Mount Pleasant, Liverpool L3 5UZ

www.ucl.ac.uk/hazlitt-society

ISSN 1757-8299

Published 2019 by The Hazlitt Society

c/o Dept of English & Comparative Literature, Goldsmiths College, New Cross, London SE14 6NW.

© 2019 Individual articles, the contributors; all other material, The Hazlitt Society

Printed and bound in the United Kingdom by Hobbs the Printers Ltd, Totton, Hampshire

Designed and typeset by HWA Text and Data Management, London

THE HAZLITT REVIEW

VOLUME 12, 2019
Hazlitt and His Circle

Hazlitt and Lamb: Spirits of the Age 5
FELICITY JAMES

'Speaking Disagreeable Truths': Leigh Hunt's Unpublished
Memoir of William Hazlitt 17
MICHAEL STEIER

Hazlitt and Byron: Hereditary Prejudices and Liberal
Sympathies 37
DAVID WOODHOUSE

A Lover's Discourse in *Liber Amoris* 61
MARIO AQUILINA

Book Review

Jonathan Mulrooney, *Romanticism and Theatrical
Experience: Kean, Hazlitt, and Keats in the Age of
Theatrical News* 75
reviewed by Diego Saglia

HAZLITT AND LAMB: SPIRITS OF THE AGE

Hazlitt Society Annual Lecture 2018

Felicity James

It is a particular honour to give the Hazlitt Open Lecture. I have been coming to the Hazlitt Day-school for many years, and it brings back before me my early twenties, when I was just starting out as a graduate student, seventeen years ago, setting off to St Catherine's College, to hear Uttara Natarajan and Duncan Wu and Tom Paulin launch into their Hazlittian subjects. But I don't think I fully appreciated, reading the essays the first time around as an undergraduate and in my early twenties, the way in which they are such profound meditations on the strangeness of time and the way we constantly live through our past in our present.

Hazlitt and Lamb, in the work of the 1820s, formulate a very particular familiar style in conversation with one another. As they do so, they are thinking back, continually, to the time of their first acquaintance with poets and with one another, their journeys to Nether Stowey in 1797 and 1798, and their shared responses, over many years, to the poetry of that period, as well as their readings of past literature. So what I want to do today is to consider the familiar relationship of Hazlitt and Lamb, and, through that, to open up their approaches to – and differences in – familiar style. Moreover, at the close of a day thinking about Hazlitt and his circle, I want to remember their friendship, stretching over so many years, sometimes striking out into anger or conflict, but always buoyed by deep affection. This is best summed up in Elia's stalwart defence of Hazlitt in his letter to Southey:

I stood well with him for fifteen years (the proudest of my life) [...] I never in thought swerved from him, I never betrayed him, I never slackened in my admiration of him, I was the same to him (neither better nor worse) though he could not see it, as in the days when he thought fit to trust me. At this instant, he may be preparing for me some compliment, above my deserts, as he has sprinkled many such among his admirable books, for which I rest his debtor; or, for any thing I know, or can guess to the contrary, he may be about to read a lecture on my weaknesses. [...] I think I shall go to my grave without finding, or expecting to find, such another companion.¹

1 Charles Lamb, 'Letter of Elia to Robert Southey, Esquire', *London Magazine* 8 (October 1823), 405.

That formulation in itself is Hazlittian, with those three forceful blows of repetition – never, never, never – and there’s a musicality in it reminiscent of Hazlitt’s prose. I also hear in that ‘neither better nor worse’ comment an echo of the way he talks about himself and Mary as ‘wedded’ to one another, telling Dorothy Wordsworth, ‘I know that she has cleaved to me *for better, for worse*.’² Lamb’s close friendships were lifelong, and that mention of the grave might just remind us, too, that Lamb would go on to be one of Hazlitt’s truest and last friends, close to him in his final illness, organizing his funeral. They would indeed, despite occasional silences, remain companions until the grave; their prose, in its echoes, allusions, homages, enacts this deep familiarity. It is an instance of such literary companionship and homage I want to discuss today. Elia says, ‘At this instant, he may be preparing for me some compliment’ – and I think this is nowhere better shown than in *The Spirit of the Age*, which concludes with an essay on Elia. I want to begin by thinking about Hazlitt’s portrait of Lamb in that volume, and then move to a larger consideration of their approaches to the familiar, their differences, and how Hazlitt manages to reconcile those differences.

The Spirit of the Age is not only a reflection on the present, and the characters of the present, but also a broader meditation on time and its passing. The ‘spirit’ of the title is an ambiguous one. It might mean, variously: a sort of prevailing tendency or tone; a particular character or attitude; a creative, vital, animating principle; a sort of gusto or liveliness which is always of interest to Hazlitt; and also, finally, perhaps something haunting or ghostly. Reading it over the years, I’ve come to think that the volume is not only about the present day but also about what we do with our memories, individual and collective, and how we deal with the hauntings of our own past and our literary predecessors. Take the portrait of Bentham, for instance. There is something very telling about the way Hazlitt pictures ‘the lively old man, his mind still buoyant with thought and with the prospect of futurity’ pausing ‘with lacklustre eye’ to point out Milton’s house, which in another mood he might destroy entirely; a shorthand comment on the way Bentham deals with the past which illuminates the shortcomings of his larger vision, emotional, literary, philosophical (xi, 6).³ Behind this there is also Hazlitt’s wry self-reflection on the time he rented the house in York Street, Westminster, from Bentham in 1813–19, the period of his philosophical lectures, and thus on the different phases of his own life. Indeed, to make the obvious point, the subtitle ‘contemporary portraits’ offers a reflection on his original career: the book is continually striving towards precise portraiture of the sort he describes in ‘The Pleasure of Painting’. To add to this point, we might look at the epigraph to *The Spirit of the Age: or, Contemporary Portraits*. ‘To know another well, were to know one’s self’, reads its initial title page, tidied up in the second edition into a direct quote from *Hamlet*: ‘To know a man well, were to know himself’ (xi, 2). That slight misremembering is distinctly

2 *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975–8), III, 169–70.

3 William Hazlitt, ‘Jeremy Bentham’, in *The Spirit of the Age*. All quotations from Hazlitt are taken from *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. P.P. Howe, 21 vols (London and Toronto: J.M. Dent, 1930–4). References are by volume and page.

Hazlittean: he knows his Shakespeare so well that it has become a part of his own language. The misquotation ‘to know another’ also seems to me to emphasize the importance of relationship, for these are not only contemporary portraits but also portraits of contemporaries who have had particular significance to Hazlitt, from his old landlord to the writers he had deeply identified with in his youth. These are people he has known and thought about for many years, and who reflect part of himself – Godwin, Coleridge, Wordsworth, closing with a meditation on Elia. That final essay also considers Geoffrey Crayon, Washington Irving, and concludes with a brief aside on James Sheridan Knowles, but the bulk of the essay, its heart, really, concerns itself with Lamb, friend and writer.

The essay begins with a comparison of the different essayists, but swiftly moves into a focus on Lamb’s treatment of the past. As he describes Lamb poring ‘over moth-eaten, decayed manuscripts’ (xi, 178) we can hear how closely the Elian style has worked itself into Hazlitt’s own, since that phrase is an echo of Lamb’s description of George Dyer among the ‘moth-scented’ nooks of the libraries in ‘Oxford in the Vacation’, the second of the *London Magazine* essays, ‘with long poring, he is grown almost into a book’ (II, 10).⁴ Then the portrait which follows, Elia who ‘would stand on one side to look over an old book-stall, or stroll down some deserted pathway’ (xi, 178), borrows closely from the first *London Magazine* essay ‘Recollections of the South Sea House’. Indeed, Hazlitt directly references this as the essay develops: ‘how admirably he has sketched the former inmates of the South-Sea House; what “fine fretwork he makes of their double and single entries!”’ (xi, 180). Again, this is a touch born out of Hazlitt’s knowledge of Lamb’s India House identity. He acknowledges him as a portraitist, able to move between double- and single-entry book-keeping and character sketches, an artist like Hazlitt himself in *The Spirit of the Age*: ‘some of his portraits are *fixtures*, and will do to hang up as lasting and lively emblems of human infirmity’ (xi, 181).

Each detail here has its Elian connotations. The use of the word ‘emblems’ looks back to Lamb’s love of sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century authors, and his hunting for emblem books on old book-stalls. It also summons up the Elia essay ‘A Complaint of the Decay of Beggars in the Metropolis’, with its image of beggars as ‘standing morals, emblems, mementos, dial-mottos’ (II, 133), the historical memory of the modern metropolis. He takes a ‘retrospective glance’ at London, filtered through personal and cultural memory and human frailty. How different to the practice of Bentham, who is completely baffled by infirmities and insists on considering ‘man as a logical animal’, overlooking the ‘caprices and irregularities of the human will’ (xi, 8). Similarly, while Bentham looks straight ahead, ‘He regards the people about him no more than the flies of a summer. He meditates the coming age’ (xi, 7), Lamb ‘evades the present, he mocks the future’ (xi, 180). As Elia, he takes comfort in old books, old streets, as Hazlitt puts it, ‘he haunts Watling-street like a gentle spirit’ (xi, 181). As I mentioned, the spirit of the age can

4 Quotations from *The Essays and Last Essays of Elia* are taken from *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. E.V. Lucas, 7 vols (London: Methuen, 1903–5). References are by volume and page.

also be a ghostly one, and here Elia seems to embody the haunting presence of the past, to summon up another, darker interpretation of the familiar. It's there, too, in Hazlitt's description of Lamb prizing the things which have 'gone by':

Death has in this sense the spirit of life in it; and the shadowy has to our author something substantial in it. Ideas savour most of reality in his mind; or rather his imagination loiters on the edge of each, and a page of his writings recalls to our fancy the *stranger* on the grate, fluttering in its dusky tenuity, with its idle superstition and hospitable welcome! (xi, 180)

This description of Lamb's writing as shadowy, hovering between past and present, between dark and light, brings out the stranger aspects of the familiar essay. It also evokes Coleridge's description of the soot on the grate in 'Frost at Midnight', 'that fluttering *stranger*' (line 27), prompting the poet to muse on the nature of sympathy and memory, opening a way for him to remember himself as a child. So as Hazlitt describes the ways in which Lamb lives in the far distant past, he is also remembering their shared acquaintance with poets, and paying homage to the familiar mode of Wordsworth and Coleridge. The *Spirit of the Age* essay is a testament of friendship – it's also a manifesto for the familiar essay as practised by Hazlitt and Lamb, and in the next section I want to expand a little on why I think that fleeting allusion to the poetry of the 1790s is important for the practice of the essay in the 1820s.

* * *

As Uttara Natarajan has shown, the genre of the familiar essay continues and extends the drive towards the 'real language of men' explored in *Lyrical Ballads* and Coleridge's conversation poems, harnessing the rhythms and pauses of spoken speech to describe sensations and subjects deliberately drawn from the ordinary, and using them to open up much larger questions.⁵ Yet, in Natarajan's words, 'the familiar essay is still fully to be recognized as being, at its best, a primary form of a distinctly romantic creativity, embodying and affirming a philosophical position that we are used to identifying elsewhere in romantic literature, and especially in its poetry.'⁶ That insightful article seeks to restore the familiar essay to its rightful place in Romantic conversations, and I'd like to continue this movement. The term 'familiar' is itself central to *Lyrical Ballads*; in the 'Advertisement' of 1798, it forms an important part of Wordsworth's defensiveness. A reader unsympathetic to the volume's conversational 'experiments', imagines the poet, may find that 'many of his expressions are too familiar, and not of sufficient dignity'.⁷ But this is hardly an

5 *Lyrical Ballads, and other Poems, 1797–1800*, ed. James Butler and Karen Green, *The Cornell Wordsworth* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 741.

6 Uttara Natarajan, 'The Veil of Familiarity: Romantic Philosophy and the Familiar Essay', *Studies in Romanticism* 42.1 (2003), 27–44: 27.

7 *Lyrical Ballads*, 739.

apology, of course – rather, it is a challenge, since such ‘familiar’ expressions form the basis for radical experiments with language and form in *Lyrical Ballads*. The ‘Advertisement’ and the ‘Preface’ to *Lyrical Ballads* are a profound – if at times self-contradictory – attempt to refigure literary expression, to invest poetry with the force and vigour of the spoken word.

For the young Hazlitt, meeting Coleridge, hearing the *Lyrical Ballads* read aloud at Nether Stowey, the effect was revolutionary: ‘the sense of a new style and a new spirit in poetry came over me. It had to me something of the effect that arises from the turning up of the fresh soil, or of the first welcome breath of Spring’ (xvii, 117). Those conversations of 1798 would shape his own creative approach, and in particular his attitude towards the essay as a genre. Their influence can be glimpsed in essays such as ‘On Familiar Style’, which attempts to bring content and form together in an exploration of conversational language deliberately echoing the intentions of *Lyrical Ballads*. ‘It is not easy’, Hazlitt’s essay begins, ‘to write a familiar style’: it demands ‘precision’ and ‘purity of expression’, finding words which are ‘common’ and fitting them to an exact purpose (viii, 242). Like Wordsworth’s defence of his ‘too familiar’ language two decades previously, Hazlitt pleads ‘guilty to the determined use of acknowledged idiom and common elliptical expression’ in order to create a particular style free from cliché and pomposity, drawn from ‘common conversation’ (viii, 244). This he puts into practice directly: ‘I hate to see a load of band-boxes go along the street,’ he writes, ‘and I hate to see a parcel of big words without any thing in them’ (viii, 244). What he learnt from *Lyrical Ballads* is clear: the example drawn from everyday life, the conversational fluency, an easy, apparently spontaneous link between content and form which nevertheless reveals the craftsmanship of Hazlitt’s prose, and shows the larger purpose of his use of familiarity: ‘conversation (the everyday, the experiential) becomes the vehicle of philosophy (the abstract, the ideal)’.⁸

In form, style, and philosophical implication, then, the Romantic familiar essay of the 1820s continues the ground-breaking work of poetry in the 1790s. Uttara Natarajan is clearly right in her suggestion that Hazlitt’s muscular, tenacious argument deserves to be placed alongside Wordsworth’s commentaries on *Lyrical Ballads* as a ‘manifesto’ for a new form of writing. I’d add that we need to think of Lamb’s work, too, as participating in this experiment. His work, while it eclipsed Hazlitt’s in popularity in the nineteenth century, is being recovered more gradually, and his role in larger Romantic conversations is still to be fully explored.⁹ Like

8 Natarajan, ‘Veil of Familiarity’, 32.

9 In recent years, however, there have been some very strong critical accounts of Lamb. John Gardner’s, *Poetry and Popular Protest: Peterloo, Cato Street and the Queen Caroline Controversy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), has recovered his political interventions; David Fairer, in a series of articles and chapters culminating in *Organising Poetry: The Coleridge Circle, 1790–1798* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) has showed his part in Romantic creative exchanges; and work from Denise Gigante, *Taste: A Literary History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005), Simon Hull, *Charles Lamb, Elia, and the London Magazine: Metropolitan Muse* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2010), and Gregory Dart, *Metropolitan Art and*

Hazlitt, however, he was deeply involved with Wordsworth and Coleridge, and was engaged in a long process of creative reading and response to the volume which finds its ultimate expression in the essays of Elia.

Yet his development of the familiar essay follows a different path to Hazlitt's. Alongside 'On Familiar Style' we might place 'A Character of the Late Elia', published in the *London Magazine* for January 1823, which would later become the 'Preface' for the *Last Essays of Elia*. While Hazlitt launches straight into self-defence, Lamb offers apology, excuses, evasions. The piece purports to be an obituary of the essayist signed by Phil-Elia, a supposed friend; when it is republished, it is simply as 'a Friend of the late Elia.' 'I am now at liberty to confess,' the 'friend' tells us, 'that much which I have heard objected to my late friend's writings was well-founded. Crude they are, I grant you—a sort of unlicked, incondite things—villainously pranked in an affected array of antique modes and phrases' (II, 151).¹⁰ This is hardly the 'real language of men', but instead an allusive tissue of quotations and archaisms, at odds with Hazlitt's call for plain dealing. 'Words, like clothes, get old-fashioned,' says Hazlitt, 'or mean and ridiculous, when they have been for some time laid aside' (viii, 245). But Elia uses nothing but laid-aside words, antique modes. Similarly, Elia seems deliberately to refute the sort of serious purpose Hazlitt values. Elia 'gave himself too little concern what he uttered,' says the mock obituary, and 'would interrupt the gravest discussion with some light jest' (II, 152). Both the lack of seriousness and the affectedness are compressed into the word 'prank', which brings together the idea of a hoax or trick with an obsolete late sixteenth-century term meaning ostentatiously dressed, or decorated with folds.¹¹ And such layers of borrowed finery, such deliberate prankings and teasings, reinforce the central question of the essay – who is the essayist? His words are his, and yet not his, filched from the works of others. His essays are 'unlicked, incondite things,' like the 'unlick'd bear-whelps' of Shakespeare's *Henry VI*, Part III (Act III, Scene 2, lines 16–12). Even the name Elia is stolen, purloined from a former colleague, and in any case, it is an anagram of its own untrustworthiness: 'a lie'. And the lies keep multiplying – Phil-Elia assures us Elia is dead, but he repeatedly re-appears. Even before we have got to the original obituary in the pages of the *London Magazine*, we have encountered a piece by 'Elia's Ghost', and the editorial has reassured us that Elia's 'ghostship' has promised us very *material* assistance in our future Numbers.¹² He is at once familiar, and unknowable.¹³ Here we might recall Hazlitt in that *Spirit of the Age* essay talking about the 'shadowy' aspects of Lamb's writings, 'Death has in this sense the spirit of life in it', his writing

Literature, 1810–1840: Cockney Adventures (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) have offered new readings of him as urban periodical essayist.

10 This text is from Lucas; see also the slightly different original text, 'A Character of the Late Elia', *London Magazine* 7 (1823), 19.

11 As in Spenser's line, 'Some prancke their ruffles, and others trimly dight / Their gay attyre' from the *Faerie Queene* (I:IV), a work Lamb knew well.

12 *London Magazine* 7 (1823), 3.

13 For more on this double nature of Lamb, see Phillip Lopate, 'Foreword', *Essays of Elia* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2003).

seen as ‘fluttering in its dusky tenuity’. There is something eerie, haunting, ghostly about the way Elia occupies the familiar space.

And this, perhaps, also goes back to his experience of the 1790s. As I said, I think that the origins of Lamb’s familiar mode, as with Hazlitt, lie in earlier conversations. Lamb’s development of the essay as a genre needs to be inflected through an appreciation of the different senses of the term ‘familiar’ which were at play for him in that decade. And here I want to pause for a moment. I want us to think about the date today: 22 September. That day had a particular, tragic significance for the Lambs, remembered poignantly in Charles’s *Blank Verse* poem of 1798:

Where are they gone, the old familiar faces?
I had a mother, but she died, and left me,
Died prematurely in a day of horrors –
All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.

[...]

Ghost-like, I pac’d round the haunts of my childhood.
Earth seemed a desert I was bound to traverse,
Seeking to find the old familiar faces.

Friend of my bosom, thou more than a brother,
Why wert not thou born in my father’s dwelling?
So might we talk of the old familiar faces –

How some they have died, and some they have left me,
And some are taken from me; all are departed;
All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.¹⁴

The claustrophobic pacing of the poem – that ‘Ghost-like, I pac’d’ enacted in the halting rhythm of the verse – reinforces the slow loss of each relationship, from mother to friend to lover to (implicitly) sister: ‘some they have died, and some they have left me, / And some are taken from me’.

This is, in the first instance, a deeply personal cry of loss. Though Lamb was later to remove the startling first verse, the poem as first published makes direct reference to the ‘day of horrors’: 22 September 1796, when Lamb’s sister Mary had, ‘in a fit of insanity’, stabbed and killed their mother.¹⁵ The tragedy seems to have strengthened the intensity of affection between Charles and Mary Lamb, who would live together until Charles’s death in 1834. Their relationship was one of mutual caretaking and support: a profoundly creative ‘double singleness’ (II, 75), to borrow an Elian phrase from the essay ‘Mackery End, in Hertfordshire’, where Mary features as Cousin Bridget. They lived and wrote together, and their joint productions of children’s works include *Mrs. Leicester’s School* and *Tales from*

14 Charles Lloyd and Charles Lamb, *Blank Verse* (London: John and Arthur Arch, 1798), 89–90.

15 Lamb, *Letters*, I, 44.

Shakespeare. At the start of this lecture I quoted from Lamb's letter to Dorothy Wordsworth, 'I know that she has cleaved to me *for better, for worse*'.¹⁶ Such mutual attachment might also be a form of bondage or torment, since the relationship was also defined by Charles's alcoholism and the threat of Mary's sometimes violent mental instability, during which she had to be confined to private asylums. Yet they did, in the face of extreme distress and ill health, maintain a sociable, creative life, the 'lively skirmishes' of their evening parties so beautifully evoked by Hazlitt in his essay 'On the Conversation of Authors':

How often did we cut into the haunch of letters, while we discussed the haunch of mutton on the table! How we skimmed the cream of criticism! How we got into the heart of controversy! How we picked out the marrow of authors! "And, in our flowing cups, many a good name and true was freshly remembered". (xii, 36)

The great guiding spirit of those conversation parties is the literature of the past, the shared reading which binds the friends together. And shared reading, too, is the secret source of consolation in 'The Old Familiar Faces'. I mentioned the faltering, awkward, halting aspect of its metre. But this isn't just about the poet's own grief. The unusual form is directly lifted from Lamb's reading of the Jacobean dramatist Philip Massinger, and his use of feminine rhymes, with their unstressed final syllables, as in these lines from 'A Very Woman', excerpted in Lamb's 1808 anthology of Elizabethan and Jacobean drama: 'In the best language my true tongue could tell me,/ And all the broken sighs my sick heart lend me,/ I sued and serv'd. Long did I love this lady'.¹⁷ In a letter to Coleridge of 1796, Lamb had singled out these lines as part of a larger passage to commend 'the fine effect of his double endings', and they must have been sounding in memory as he wrote his own poem. Moreover, the lines are quoted as an epigraph at the start of Lamb's contribution to Coleridge's *Poems on Various Subjects* (1797) alongside a dedication to his sister Mary. Such shared allusion becomes a way of structuring familiar intimacy – we find Lamb in the late 1790s hunting down rare editions of seventeenth-century texts for Southey and Lloyd as a mark of friendship, and allegorizing his family situation in a blank verse Elizabethan tragedy, *John Woodvil*. Past reading becomes a deep source of consolation, a way of finding, once again, the familiar faces of the past.

* * *

This is what lies behind Hazlitt's appreciation of Lamb as antiquarian in *The Spirit of the Age*, 'his spirit clothes itself in the garb of elder time, homelier, but more durable' (xi, 179), and his natural home is the bye-ways, the old book-stalls, the deserted pathways. I mentioned earlier how closely Hazlitt is alluding there to the

16 Lamb, *Letters*, III, 169-70.

17 Charles Lamb, *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets, who Lived about the Time of Shakespeare* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, 1808), 431.

Elia essay, 'The South-Sea House', and it's this essay that I would like to come back to in my closing section. Originally published in the *London Magazine* (August 1820) as 'Recollections of the South Sea House', this opens with a portrait of Lamb's first workplace, a direct, intimate appeal:

Reader, in thy passage from the Bank – where thou hast been receiving thy half-yearly dividends (supposing thou art a lean annuitant like myself) – to the Flower Pot, to secure a place for Dalston, or Shacklewell, or some other thy suburban retreat northerly, – didst thou never observe a melancholy looking, handsome, brick and stone edifice, to the left – where Threadneedle-street abuts upon Bishopsgate? I dare say thou hast often admired its magnificent portals ever gaping wide, and disclosing to view a grave court, with cloisters, and pillars, with few or no traces of goers-in or comers-out – a desolation something like Balclutha's. (II, 1)

'Balclutha's' carries a footnote: 'I passed by the walls of Balclutha, and they were desolate. – OSSIAN' (II, 1). The 'South-Sea House', in decline since the 'Bubble' of speculation burst in 1720, is carefully placed in a specific locality, a familiar place – 'where Threadneedle-street abuts upon Bishopsgate' – yet opens onto a larger mythical landscape of desolation, Ossianic and Wordsworthian. We might recall here Uttara Natarajan's comment that we need to read the familiar essay as going between the two states of the experiential and everyday, and the abstract or ideal: the South-Sea House, its magnificent portals gaping wide, is at once a building in the present and a spirit of the past, a kind of living memory.

Yet it's also a comic one. The 'desolation something like Balclutha's' is actually peopled by lively, absurd characters. In a kind of reverse of 'The Old Familiar Faces', where the earth seemed a desert, Elia reveals that this desolation is home to a community of odd clerks, still existing in the bubble of the South-Sea House, and partaking 'of the genius of the place', with their unfashionable 'maccaronie' hair and their attachment to the past (II, 3). This self-sustaining community is again reminiscent of the *Lyrical Ballads*, as in Wordsworth's 'The Brothers' where Leonard evokes the importance of story-telling and shared memories within the community: 'Your dalesmen, then, do in each other's thoughts / Possess a kind of second life'.¹⁸ In a similar way, Elia recreates and lovingly remembers the workers of the 'South-Sea House'. As opposed to Wordsworth's, though, these clerks spend most of their time escaping their work and telling their own stories over again. We meet 'Evans', distinguished by his desire to commemorate 'old and new London – the site of old theatres, churches, streets gone to decay' (II, 4). 'Henry Man, the wit, the polished man of letters, the author, of the South-Sea House' (II, 6), is remembered through his works: Elia purchases his two forgotten volumes 'from a stall in Barbican, not three days ago' and finds him 'terse, fresh, epigrammatic, as alive' (II, 7). We can see how closely this informs Hazlitt's description of Elia himself, and why he chooses to evoke and allude to 'The South-Sea House' in *The*

18 *Lyrical Ballads*, 149.

Spirit of the Age. He is sympathetic to Lamb's use of the antique, the old-fashioned, the words which have been left aside, because he understands the powerful emotional work they perform for Lamb, something akin to the landscapes of the Lakes for Wordsworth, or the vivid evocations of nature in Coleridge's conversation poems. This is what lies behind his defence of Lamb's style in *The Spirit of the Age*, when he acknowledges that 'The style of the Essays of Elia is liable to the charge of a certain *mannerism*' (xi, 182). It is, in many ways, a style which is at odds with that of Hazlitt – but which, in a deeper sense, is actually very close to it, because it is generated by feeling. To continue the quote: 'His sentences are cast in the mould of old authors; his expressions are borrowed from them; but his feelings and observations are genuine and original, taken from actual life or from his own breast' (xi, 182). And it's interesting to note that he closes that section by recommending to the London mayor, alongside the *Essays of Elia*, 'the Rosamund Gray and the John Woodvil of the same author' (xi, 182). Lamb's largely forgotten works of the 1790s channel the language of 'Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher' (xi, 183) so strongly that they even managed to fool Godwin. They do so, however, with a very specific purpose – not imitation, but emotional power.

As Hazlitt comments in 'On Familiar Style', Lamb's sympathy with older authors takes his writing beyond pastiche. He is, says Hazlitt, 'thoroughly imbued' with their spirit, and 'there is an inward unction, a marrowy vein both in the thought and feeling, an intuition, deep and lively, of his subject' (viii, 245). The idea of unction perhaps carries an echo of seventeenth-century devotional prose, drawn from Burton or Baxter, and it also conveys an idea of the peculiarly sensual, 'marrowy', deeply-felt intuition of Lamb's reading and writing practices. It's echoed, too, in the description of his evening parties, where the guests pick out 'the marrow of authors' (xii, 36). This attention to reading and feeling is the essence, I think, of the friendship between Hazlitt and Lamb, and the shared quality of their experiments with the familiar essay form.

This is why, then, Hazlitt chooses to close *The Spirit of the Age* with Lamb. It is, on one level, a testament of friendship across many years: it's also a meditation on the past and the consolations of memory, the power of shared reading. It shows how deeply Lamb's prose has inflected Hazlitt's voice, despite their different views on the nature of familiar style. It should be seen, too, I think, as a companion piece to Hazlitt's physical portrait of Lamb, now in the National Portrait Gallery.¹⁹ This is one of the last portraits he painted, a representation of Lamb dressed as Velazquez's 'Philip IV', painted while Hazlitt was trying to find a publisher for his *Essay on the Principles of Human Action* in 1804. Compare it with his pen portrait in *The Spirit of the Age*: 'There is a primitive simplicity and self-denial about his manners and a Quakerism in his personal appearance, which is, however, relieved by a fine Titian head, full of dumb eloquence!' (xi, 182). Again, Hazlitt is paying homage to their shared appreciation of literature and art of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and remembering the ways in which he had tried, as a young man, to capture this

19 Image available online at <https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portraitZoom/mw03714/Charles-Lamb>

aspect of Lamb in antique garb. Like Lamb modelling his early writing on authors of the distant past, Hazlitt had had in mind Rembrandt, Titian, Velasquez as he started out as a painter – not as imitation, but trying to capture something of their feeling, the intuitive eye. Both the *Essays of Elia* and *The Spirit of the Age* are deeply informed by those earlier selves, poet and painter, and by the conversations between the two men across twenty years.

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

‘SPEAKING DISAGREEABLE TRUTHS’

Leigh Hunt’s Unpublished
Memoir of William Hazlitt

Michael Steier

On Christmas Day, 1814, Leigh Hunt announced that he and a friend known as ‘W.H.’ would embark upon a journalistic collaboration: a new feature in Hunt’s political weekly, *The Examiner*, to be called ‘The GENERAL EXAMINER’. The series, according to Hunt, would consist of articles on ‘subjects of Miscellaneous Interest, Literature, Manners, &c.’ that would be modelled on the celebrated ‘papers’ of Joseph Addison and Richard Steele from the *Tatler* and *Spectator*.¹ When the first number appeared on 1 January 1815, the feature had already changed titles to ‘The Round Table’, but the collaboration held fast. True to their word, Hunt and W.H. would deliver forty-eight ‘Round Table’ numbers over the next two years until new political pressures and other journalistic demands brought the series to an end on 5 January 1817.²

‘The Round Table’ was an important event for Hunt and William Hazlitt, or W.H. as he was known to *Examiner* readers. It was the first of several collaborations between them and it helped secure a personal as well as an intellectual friendship that would last until Hazlitt’s death in 1830. It was in ‘The Round Table’, moreover, as Payson G. Gates writes, that Hunt and Hazlitt developed a ‘habit of playing off each other in their published essays whenever a disagreement with what the other had written inspired a spirited riposte, or when they thought alike, a sympathetic and supportive response.’³ That habit would persist with their private disagreements, in particular, increasing in later years and spilling over sometimes bitterly into their published and unpublished writings – the focus of the present article. Indeed, unlike the spirited ‘Round Table’ exchanges on literary or political

1 See ‘New Prospectus of the Examiner’ in *The Examiner* 365 (25 December 1814), 820.

2 *The Examiner* 471 (5 January 1817) contained the last number: ‘Round Table No. 48’. In the preface to his two-volume collected edition, Hazlitt stated of ‘The Round Table’s demise: ‘Politics called off the attention of the Editor from the Belles Lettres’ – *The Round Table*, 2 vols (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable, 1817), I, vi.

3 Payson G. Gates, *William Hazlitt and Leigh Hunt: The Continuing Dialogue* (Essex, Conn.: Falls River Publications, 2000), 40.



Leigh Hunt (1784–1859), by Benjamin Robert Haydon, c.1811.
© National Portrait Gallery, London

subjects,⁴ the later biographical writings that Hunt and Hazlitt produced about their contemporaries and each other would become, as Hunt saw it, a matter of ‘speaking disagreeable truths.’⁵ Hazlitt had opened himself to criticism after publishing a thinly veiled critique of Hunt and an unapologetic *ad hominem* attack on Percy Bysshe Shelley – Hunt’s ‘friend of friends’⁶ – in the first volume of *Table-Talk* in the spring of 1821.⁷ A few years later in *The Spirit of the Age* (1825), Hazlitt continued to write about friends and contemporaries in a critical, often frustratingly contradictory, vein. In the volume’s brief sketch of Hunt, for instance, Hazlitt celebrated his friend’s ‘natural gaiety and sprightliness of manner’ and the ‘*vinous* quality of his mind’, and in the same space dubbed him a ‘coxcomb’ like Lord Byron, albeit a coxcomb of a more ‘delightful’ cast than the author of *Childe Harold* and *Don Juan*.⁸ The slighting remarks in *The Spirit of the Age* had stung Hunt to the core, but he insisted that it was Hazlitt’s abuse of Shelley in *Table-Talk* and other outlets in the years that followed that had given him the most pain.⁹

Perhaps emboldened by Hazlitt’s own example in *The Spirit of the Age*, Hunt issued *Lord Byron and Some of his Contemporaries* in 1828. The book, a series of loosely connected memoirs, was Hunt’s contribution to a Romantic literary culture increasingly invested in biographies, memoirs, and ‘personalities’, the ‘era’s dark form of life-writing’, according to Kim Wheatley.¹⁰ Hunt’s book was seen in its own time as one of the most egregious examples of the genre because of its vicious attack on Byron, who had died in Greece in 1824. Hunt, it turns out, had also intended to attack Hazlitt in the same volume. Yet, according to a note Hunt must have added to the volume’s preface at a late stage, he decided to withhold the chapter on Hazlitt because ‘readers might have mistaken the object of it.’¹¹ The chapter itself has never come to light until now. A recent discovery among the Hunt papers at Harvard University confirms that Hunt had directed his publisher

4 See, for instance, Hazlitt’s ‘Round Table No. 22’ (*The Examiner* 408 [22 October 1815], 684–5) and Hunt’s ‘Round Table No. 24’ (*The Examiner* 410 [5 November 1815], 713–16).

5 In the preface to *Lord Byron and Some of his Contemporaries*, Hunt used the phrase to describe his unpublished chapter on Hazlitt. See the single-volume quarto edition, *Lord Byron and Some of his Contemporaries* (London: Henry Colburn, 1828), vii.

6 Leigh Hunt, *The Autobiography of Leigh Hunt*, 3 vols (London: Edward Moxon, 1850), I, 154.

7 Hazlitt attacked Shelley in ‘On Paradox and Common-place’ and Hunt in ‘On People with One Idea’; see *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. P.P. Howe, 21 vols (London and Toronto: J.M. Dent, 1930–4), viii, 148–52; 689.

8 Hazlitt, *Works*, xi, 176–7.

9 Hunt wrote to Elizabeth Kent on 2 April 1825: ‘I have seen Mr. Hazlitt’s article on me [in *The Spirit of the Age*]. It contains a number of fine things, & was intended, I think, throughout to please me & do me good. But I do not like his calling me a “coxcomb,” however the word may be sauced with epithets’. See *Leigh Hunt: A Life in Letters*, ed. Eleanor M. Gates (Essex, Conn.: Falls River Publications, 1998), 169.

10 Kim Wheatley, *Romantic Feuds: Transcending the Age of Personality* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 3.

11 Hunt, *Lord Byron*, vii.

Henry Colburn to set up in proof a chapter entitled 'Mr. Hazlitt' for inclusion in *Lord Byron and Some of his Contemporaries*. Presented below is what remains of Hunt's unpublished Hazlitt memoir taken directly from the proof, MS Eng 1668 (2), in the Houghton Library.¹² The memoir, which significantly broadens our understanding of the Hazlitt–Hunt friendship in its last phase, is preceded by a brief discussion of the contexts that led to the chapter's creation and subsequent shelving. Hazlitt's published reaction to the memoir from 'A Farewell to Essay-Writing' follows the transcription and serves as a coda.

MS Eng 1668 (2): Composition history

To understand Hunt's reasons for writing MS Eng 1668 (2), we must begin with Shelley. Fundamental disagreements about the author of *Queen Mab* led Hazlitt and Hunt away from a period of constructive dialogue in 'The Round Table' into a period governed, at times, by suspicious feeling, critical frustration, and bitter sentiment. It may surprise us, then, to recall that Hazlitt's first meeting with Shelley at Hunt's residence in February of 1817 seems to have been an agreeable affair. Both men were passionate about politics, and we learn from Mary Shelley that the party had stayed up until '3 in the morning' weighing the merits of 'monarchy & republicanism', with Shelley and Hazlitt arguing for 'republicanism' and Hunt for 'monarchy'.¹³ Subsequent to this meeting, Hazlitt and Shelley met again at least twice in the ensuing weeks.¹⁴ And yet for reasons not wholly discernible, this period of initial acquaintance did not result in a lasting friendship. Hunt later heard a rumour, which he seems to have believed, that Shelley had once 'cut up' Hazlitt at William Godwin's table and that Hazlitt, catching wind of the cutting, developed a personal grudge against Shelley and vowed revenge.¹⁵

Whatever the case may have been, Hazlitt had by the spring of 1821 come to see Shelley as a paradoxical figure: a visionary poet who believed he could be a useful philosophical reformer. In his *Table-Talk* essay 'On Paradox and Common-place', Hazlitt attacked the poet outright as a 'philosophic fanatic' and an 'overgrown child', adding among other slighting barbs that 'Mr. Shelley [...] is chargeable with extreme levity; but this levity is so great, that I do not believe he is sensible of its consequences'.¹⁶ Hunt, confounded by his friend's remarks, responded with an angry letter on 20 April 1821:

12 MS Eng 1668 (2), Houghton Library, Harvard University. For access to the MS, I thank Leslie A. Morris, Curator of Modern Books and Manuscripts, and the staff at the Houghton Library. I am also grateful to John Hodgson for his help with the bibliographical details.

13 *The Journals of Mary Shelley*, ed. Paula R. Feldman and Diana Scott-Kilvert (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 163.

14 See Duncan Wu, *William Hazlitt: The First Modern Man* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 208–9.

15 *The Correspondence of Leigh Hunt*, ed. Thornton Hunt, 2 vols (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1862), I, 166.

16 Hazlitt, *Works*, viii, 148–9.

I think, Mr. Hazlitt, you might have found a better time, and place too, for assaulting me and my friends in this bitter manner. A criticism on 'Table Talk' was to appear in next Sunday's *Examiner*, but I have thought it best, upon the whole, not to let it appear, for I must have added a quarrelsome note to it; and the sight of acquaintances and brother-reformers cutting and carbonading one another in public is, I conceive, no advancement to the cause of liberal opinion, however you may think they injure it in other respects.¹⁷

Hunt did not hesitate to confront Hazlitt privately with candour, adding, 'In God's name, why could you not tell Mr. Shelley in a pleasant manner of what you dislike in him? [...] I have faith enough in your disinterestedness and suffering to tell you so privately instead of publicly.'¹⁸ He continued, 'If you wished to quarrel with me you should have done so at once, instead of inviting me to your house, coming to mine, and in the meanwhile getting ready the proof-sheets of such a book as [*Table-Talk*].'¹⁹ Hazlitt, a notoriously infrequent letter writer, responded promptly to Hunt's letter the next day, declaring that he had 'no quarrel' with his friend, who was 'one of the pleasantest and cleverest persons I ever knew.'²⁰ Of Shelley, Hazlitt said little, claiming only, 'I do not hold myself responsible to him.'²¹ Still, Hazlitt was unsettled by the exchange and ended his reply with a curious postscript in which he asked Hunt to write 'a character' of him for *The London Magazine*.²² Hunt did not satisfy his friend's request at the time but he retained the idea nonetheless. In his follow-up letter, Hunt instead extended an olive branch but firmly reiterated the charge from his earlier letter: 'your attack on Mr. Shelley, which I must repeat was most outrageous, unnecessary, and even, for its professed purposes, impolitic, must account for my letter.'²³

When Hazlitt toured the continent with his wife and teenage son three years after this heated exchange with Hunt, he did not shy away from visiting his old friend, who had ventured to Italy in 1822 to work on *The Liberal* (1822–3) with Byron and Shelley. We have few details about Hazlitt's initial meeting with Hunt and his family at their farm in Maiano near Florence in February of 1825, but the meeting must have involved feelings of 'unresolved pique,' as Duncan Wu speculates.²⁴ Hazlitt, in the July 1824 issue of the *Edinburgh Review*, had just criticized Shelley's *Posthumous Poems*, published in June through the efforts of Mary Shelley. Of her recently deceased husband's first collected volume, Hazlitt

17 See William Carew Hazlitt's *Memoirs of William Hazlitt*, 2 vols (London: Richard Bentley, 1867), I, 305.

18 *Ibid*, 305–6.

19 *Ibid*, 306–7.

20 *The Letters of William Hazlitt*, ed. Herschel Moreland Sikes, Willard Hallam Bonner, and Gerald Lahey (New York: New York University Press, 1978), 204.

21 *Ibid*, 206.

22 *Ibid*, 206: '[I] wish you would write a character of me for the next number. I want to know why every body has such a dislike to me.'

23 *Memoirs of William Hazlitt*, I, 311.

24 Wu, *William Hazlitt*, 368.

thought little, arguing that his poetry, like his person, had been 'a confused embodying of vague abstractions'. Echoing his earlier criticism of Shelley's failure as a philosophical reformer, Hazlitt further argued that the poet had 'wast[ed] great powers by their application to unattainable objects.'²⁵ John Hunt sent his brother advance notice of Hazlitt's review on 19 June 1824, and Hunt had learned the nature of its contents from Mary Shelley in late October.²⁶ By March of 1825, he had read Hazlitt's review and answered it in his own review of *Posthumous Poems*.²⁷ Although it is not clear when exactly Hunt first read Hazlitt's review, or wrote his own, by the time Hazlitt arrived in Maiano, Hunt was certainly aware of his friend's latest attack on Shelley. With that in mind, he seems to have set himself upon the task of writing the character sketch that Hazlitt had asked him for in April of 1821.²⁸ It was this sketch that William Carew Hazlitt, Hazlitt's grandson, later learned about and described in his *Memoirs of William Hazlitt* (1867). W.C. Hazlitt claims that when his grandfather arrived in Maiano, Hunt presented a 'paper' he had written about Hazlitt, who was advised to read it before dinner out of fear that it might make his stomach turn. In the end, Hunt's apprehensions on this score proved to be unfounded, for Hazlitt finished reading the article only to declare, 'By God, sir, there's a good deal of truth in it.'²⁹ It was at that moment, Wu suggests, that Hazlitt and Hunt 'were reconciled.'³⁰ Hunt's lone reference to the Maiano meeting provides some support for Wu's suggestion, but the reconciliation, as MS Eng 1668 (2) now shows, was only a temporary salve.³¹ Hunt apparently retained a great deal of animus towards his friend and kept close the thought of giving the British reading public a critical portrait of Hazlitt in due time.

That time was 1828. Hunt, having returned to London in the fall of 1825 after three years abroad, found himself with little money and few prospects. *The Examiner* had been under new editorship for several years, and a long-standing

25 Hazlitt, *Works*, xvi, 265.

26 John Hunt's letter to Leigh Hunt is in the British Library (Add MS 38108, ff. 325–6). Mary Shelley wrote to the Hunts on 10 October 1824 of Hazlitt's review, declaring that she 'did not like it at all'; see *The Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley*, ed. Betty T. Bennett, 3 vols (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980–8), I, 452.

27 Hunt's review of *Posthumous Poems* had been 'sent off' on or just before 12 March 1825; see *Leigh Hunt: A Life in Letters*, 166. The review was rejected for publication, but Hunt later published a revised version of the review in the Shelley chapter in *Lord Byron and Some of his Contemporaries*, 174–229. See also Payson G. Gates, 'Leigh Hunt's Review of Shelley's *Posthumous Poems*', *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 42.1 (1948), 1–40.

28 In his 'Indicator' essay, 'My Books', Hunt had written of Hazlitt's 'offences against me and mine', which included misplacing borrowed books and abusing Shelley, 'one of the few men, who thought and felt as deeply as himself'; see *The Literary Examiner* 1 (5 July 1823), 4.

29 *Memoirs of William Hazlitt*, II, 304.

30 Wu, *William Hazlitt*, 369.

31 In a letter to Elizabeth Kent of 12 February 1825, Hunt makes brief mention of Hazlitt's visit, giving the impression that it had been generally agreeable to all parties. See *Leigh Hunt: A Life in Letters*, 163.

estrangement from his publisher brother John did not help reconcile him to the new staff at *The Examiner* office. Hunt was forced to look elsewhere to make ends meet. One of the most promising ventures for a man or woman of letters in England at the time was to publish a book about Byron. Despite the scandal surrounding the publication of *Don Juan* (1819–24) and the poet's collaboration with Hunt on *The Liberal*, Byron's celebrity had only increased in the months and years following his death, and a thriving market for Byroniana developed. Several editions of Thomas Medwin's *Conversations of Lord Byron* (1824) appeared alongside other memoirs, including R.C. Dallas's *Recollections of the Life of Lord Byron* (1824) and Pietro Gamba's sympathetic *Narrative of Lord Byron's Last Journey to Greece* (1825). Hunt, who had been intimate with Byron – indeed a friend – for a significantly longer period of time than any of these biographers, felt that he could offer the public a more truthful account of the noble poet. At the same time, Hunt's friendships, past and present, with other well-known poets and literary figures would allow him to expand the scope and interest of the biography. Here at last was an opportunity to give the public a candid assessment of Hazlitt. And by the end of 1826, Hunt felt he had good reason to do so. In the August issue of *The New Monthly Magazine*, Hazlitt's 'Boswell Redivivus' series appeared, and in the first number Hazlitt published statements about Byron that Hunt had apparently disclosed in private.³² Hunt, already bitter about Hazlitt's public handling of Shelley in recent years, was furious. It was at this point that Hunt must have convinced himself to go forth with his critical sketch of Hazlitt for the Byron volume. The task, however, would not be a pleasant one, and Hunt admits that he ventured upon the memoirs published in *Lord Byron and Some of his Contemporaries* with caution and a great deal of anxiety.³³ With access to MS Eng 1668 (2), we now have a better understanding of one source of this anxiety, for the unpublished chapter, with its many pointed criticisms of Hazlitt, provides some perspective on Hunt's decision to pull the memoir just before it was set to appear in the winter of 1828.

Over a century later, with only W.C. Hazlitt's account of the Hazlitt–Hunt meeting in Maiano available to him, P.P. Howe plausibly suggested that the aborted Hazlitt chapter intended for *Lord Byron and Some of his Contemporaries* may have been that which Hazlitt read in Hunt's presence in 1825.³⁴ Wu offers no new evidence to confirm Howe's suggestion, but Harvard MS Eng 1668 (2) may bring us closer to an answer. In March of 1828, in 'A Farewell to Essay-Writing', Hazlitt issued remarks on a 'character' of himself written by Hunt that he says he came to read by 'accident'.³⁵ The statement would seem to suggest that this 'character' sketch, which Hazlitt also refers to as an 'unpublished Manuscript', was not the article that Hunt had deliberately presented in Maiano in 1825. Although we cannot be certain, the manuscript upon which MS Eng 1668 (2) is based would seem to be a better fit for the 'character' sketch that Hazlitt describes in

32 Hazlitt, *Works*, xi, 353 (see the note to page 188, line 18).

33 Hunt, *Lord Byron*, iii–viii.

34 Hazlitt, *Works*, xvii, 422.

35 *Ibid*, 318.

'A Farewell to Essay-Writing'. Many of the details that Hazlitt draws out of Hunt's 'Manuscript' are, in fact, found in MS Eng 1668 (2). And while the manuscript itself is not forthcoming, internal evidence in MS Eng 1668 (2) hints at a period of composition. We learn, for example, that Hunt had written at least part of the chapter sometime after the summer of 1826, for at one point he describes Hazlitt's departure for Paris in July of that year as having occurred 'last summer'.³⁶ He also alludes to an essay by Charles Lamb published in September of 1826 and to Hazlitt's 'Boswell Redivivus' series, which began to appear just after Hazlitt departed London for Paris.³⁷ What remains less clear is exactly how much Hunt retained of the contents of the original article he had shown to Hazlitt in Maiano. It seems probable, though, that the unpublished chapter was at the very least a revised version of the original sketch since Hunt claims that he had attempted to publish an earlier version (perhaps the Maiano piece) only to have it rejected for being too 'panegyrical'.³⁸

MS Eng 1668 (2): Bibliographical description

The near complete proof set of Hunt's unpublished Hazlitt chapter is stored in 'Folder 2' of Harvard MS Eng 1668. The set consists of six loose quarto-sized leaves (twelve pages) originally printed on sheets made from unwatermarked wove paper. At some point, the pages suffered moisture damage, which has left the inner margins slightly discoloured; the text itself remains unaffected. The pages are numbered in the upper right consecutively from page 297 to page 308; the running chapter title, 'Mr. Hazlitt', appears centred at the top of each page. The following pages bear signature marks: 297 (2Q), 299 (2Q2), 305 (2R), 307 (2R2). The last two leaves of each signature have no signature marks per the standard printing convention used in the first edition of *Lord Byron and Some of his Contemporaries*. The one exception in the first published edition is page 295, which has the signature mark 2P4 at the foot of the page, perhaps indicating a cancellation. Leaf 2P4 thus seems to confirm that the Hazlitt chapter would have started on page 296, making MS Eng 1668 (2) page 297 the second page of the chapter. In the first edition of *Lord Byron and Some of his Contemporaries*, the chapter on 'Mr. Fuseli.—Mr. Bonnycastle.—Mr. Kinnaird' occupies pages 290 to 295 (recto 2P4) and would have immediately preceded the Hazlitt chapter. The chapter on Charles Lamb, occupying pages 296 (verso 2P4) to 299, would have immediately followed. Because the Hazlitt chapter would have started on the verso of the last leaf of the preceding chapter, it is perhaps not surprising that the first page of MS Eng 1668 (2) separated from the rest of the proof set at some point. Proof page 308, the last page in the set, terminates mid-sentence, so we know there was at least one additional page with text that has been lost. The contents of the last paragraph on page 308, which begins 'Notwithstanding all his distrust and disdain

36 MS Eng 1668 (2), 298.

37 Ibid, 299.

38 Ibid, 297.

[...], however, may suggest that Hunt was moving towards a summation of his friend's character, following the lengthy section on Hazlitt's 'infirmities'. At twelve pages, moreover, MS Eng 1668 (2) resembles the other chapters published in *Lord Byron and Some of his Contemporaries*, with the exception of the major chapters on Byron, Shelley, and Keats. Therefore, what remains of MS Eng 1668 (2) is probably the Hazlitt chapter in a near complete state.

The proof pages contain corrections in ink that were presumably made by Colburn, the book's publisher, who has twice signed the pages 'Mr. Colburn' – once in the upper right of page 297 and again in the upper right of page 305. A note in the same ink and in a similar hand appears in the upper left of page 297: 'Omit all about Mr. Hazlitt'. The proofreader's marks found throughout the chapter are also in a similar ink, and bear close resemblance to the two signatures and the note on page 297. The marks are infrequent, strictly treating typographical or formatting errors. There are no substantive changes indicated or made to the contents of the proof pages by the proofreader. Where a typographical or similar error has been corrected by the proofreader I have placed the correction in brackets. A few incidental formatting errors in the proof have been silently corrected. I have otherwise retained Hunt's original spelling and punctuation (e.g., it's for its) as it appears in the proof set. Page numbers and page breaks, which follow the proof pages, have been added in brackets. Hunt's lone footnote on Sir Philip Sidney, designated by an asterisk on proof page 299, is printed as it appears in MS Eng 1668 (2). The other footnotes, written for this essay, provide context for relevant details that inform the memoir.

MS Eng 1668 (2): Transcription

[297] great zeal, has undergone great and honourable cares, and he has mixed all these up with such a wonderful heap of petty humours, suspicions, and resentment, that try as much as you can to honour the one, and spare the others, and it seems as if he was resolved not to let you. He is a man of no personal address; and it would sometimes appear, that for this single defect he was determined to have every other that was vexatious and spiteful, and to run a muck out of a desperation of self-love.

I, for one, have honoured his talents, and borne his humours, as much as any man; and if chance had not thrown me upon sketching these Portraits,³⁹ in which I am bound to omit nothing characteristic, I still feel respect enough for his political virtues, and kindness enough for the flattering things he has mixed up with his attacks, to have thrown the touches that could have least pleased him into the shade. I wrote a character of him but a little while since,⁴⁰ which was rejected in a periodical

39 Hunt refers variously to the individual chapters in *Lord Byron and Some of his Contemporaries* as 'sketch[es]' (iii), 'picture[s]' (vi), 'reminiscences' (vii), 'article[s]' (vii), 'portrait[s]' (viii), and 'Contemporary Memoirs' (165).

40 This was probably the 'paper' Hunt had presented to Hazlitt in Maiano in 1825.

work⁴¹ as being too panegyric: yet I thought I had been pretty plain-spoken. But I have often observed, that it is not those who are conscious of being least aggrieved, that are inclined to think the most truth of a man. I believe also, I was supposed to be afraid of saying all I thought of him! "O ye gods and little golden fishes!" I have indeed been afraid, in numberless instances, of saying the whole truth of many persons, not out of fear for myself, but for them. My self-love has been too much cut up in my time, to dread any thing new on that score; and as to the rest, I am strong enough to afford to spare. But it has been my lot, (and most people will find it to have been theirs, who are capable of reflection) to have some of my weakest things taken for strong ones, and some of my very strongest for weak. I should probably have omitted a good deal of what I have [297/298] had to say of Mr. Hazlitt, both then and now, if he had not endeavoured to sow discord among my friends and acquaintances.⁴² When he proceeded so far as that, I thought it time, not indeed to forget his good qualities, but to show the havoc he made both with himself and others by his ill ones.

Mr. Hazlitt departed this metropolis in the course of last summer,⁴³ and would willingly, perhaps, consider himself dead to all friends and blows together, but such as he can give them. This is a "mortal bad" humour, which he must not be suffered to indulge. He bequeathed, before he went, certain lively articles to a magazine,⁴⁴ the claws of which articles were pared as soon as their mischief was found out.⁴⁵ It seems, he announced his intention, privately, of "cutting up his friends all round;" a pretty legal circuit! If this were sheer morbidity and sick humour, I would say nothing of it; but a great deal of affectation is mixed with it, not without a very ill opinion, it should seem, of the feelings and understandings of those who may choose to bear it; for with all his knowledge, Mr. Hazlitt, like his friend Bonaparte,⁴⁶ is apt to split upon too ill an opinion of human nature. He is also more ignorant of the world at large than would be supposed possible for so admirable an observer in the particular; and he would in vain thrust his rusticity in this respect down our throats, purely because he resents the not having got rid of it. Mr. Hazlitt is thought by more than one person to be bitten with a desire of imitating Rousseau.⁴⁷ It is a pity, because he has enough in him to dispense with imitating anybody; and what is worse, mocking is catching. If he is foolish

41 Perhaps Colburn's *New Monthly Magazine* to which Hunt had been contributing.

42 Hunt has in mind Hazlitt's attacks on Shelley.

43 In July 1826, Hazlitt, William Jr., and Isabella Bridgwater left London for Paris.

44 Hazlitt's 'Boswell Redivivus' series in *The New Monthly Magazine*.

45 Hunt wrote to Thomas Campbell, the editor of *The New Monthly Magazine*, soon after the first number of 'Boswell Redivivus' appeared, and Campbell quickly apologized for his editorial 'oversight' and 'Hazlitt's calumny'; see *The Correspondence of Leigh Hunt*, I, 252.

46 Hazlitt was a staunch Bonapartist. His sympathetic four-volume biography appeared in stages between 1828 and 1830.

47 Hazlitt's *Liber Amoris; Or the New Pygmalion* (1823), in which reviews in *The Globe* and *The Examiner* found echoes of Rousseau; see Stanley Jones, *Hazlitt: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 338.

enough to imitate the morbidities of Rousseau, the disease may become real. If he can be saved from cutting his fingers any farther with his own edge-tools, it is a humanity; and one's fireside and companionship must be saved at all events. [298/299] Furthermore, if he uses for a tool one of his own friends, making a sort of idol and crab-stick saint of him, wherewith to knock other people on the head, it may be humane to save the tool; especially as Mr. Hazlitt would make no more scruple, than the Catholics of old, to abuse and crack his idol's skull, when he had done with him, whatever worship he may pay him at present.

Mr. Hazlitt reminds one of an admirable and truly original article, written by our common friend Elia, in the "New Monthly Magazine," on the "Pleasures of Sulkiness."⁴⁸ It is difficult to believe that he did not sit for the portrait in it. If you do not notice him on eve[n] the most trifling occasion, it is "furies, death, and rage." He might, indeed, have noticed you, and you may not have seen him, but that is another matter. To be absent from you half a year, is on his side no offence; or rather, (in order to gratify every part of his self-love,) you are to feel it a great deal, and to try and win him out of it, but by no means to resent it as an injustice. This would be paying yourself too great a compliment. But stay away from him for as long a period, no matter what the cause of your absence, and nothing under a massacre of yourself and friends will suffice him. You must have an eye for him wherever he is, or lose it; you must drink tea with him, under pain of an article in the magazines.

Now this sort of cat-scratch love is a little tiresome; and Mr. Hazlitt, after having cut up and plastered his friends all round, and been spared by them over and over again, might as well be told in public, since he has been told of it in vain privately,⁴⁹ that he is not aware, perhaps, how much folly he is exhibiting, and mischief he is doing, by this sort of indulgence in his humours. It is all very well, as long as his cuts end with a little smarting to one's feelings, and relieve him with a notion of [299/300] righting himself. His friends do not reckon him malignant in proportion to the pains he takes to appear so. They can even (so good-natured are they!) fancy that he includes in his morbid endeavours at self-relief, something of a wish to do their own infirmities a service. But there is an end of these excuses, when it is found that nothing can appease him, and that he would throw discord and enmity among societies in which he has always been made welcome. At all events, if he thinks public advice and exhibition salutary to others, let him see for once what good it will do himself.

Mr. Hazlitt says, that the whole ground, principle, essence, and aim of his nature, is the love of truth. As a proof of it, he one day informed me, that he had long had an old score to wipe off with a political time-server;⁵⁰ but that the latter

48 Charles Lamb's (Elia's) 'That a Sulky Temper is a Misfortune' was the last article in his 'Popular Fallacies' series; see *The New Monthly Magazine* 17 (September 1826), 245–7.

49 In Hunt's letters to Hazlitt of 20 and 23 April 1821.

50 Perhaps a reference to Sir James Mackintosh. Hazlitt's portrait of Mackintosh in *The Spirit of the Age* is a mixture of criticism and praise. 'A man of impeccable liberal credentials', according to Wu, and the author of the 'pro-Revolutionary' *Vindiciae Gallicae* (1791), Mackintosh nevertheless transformed himself into one of Hazlitt's detested political turncoats (Wu, *William Hazlitt*, 74). Mackintosh later procured a

having met with an Essay of his, which required a strong metaphysical faculty to understand, and behaving himself impartially enough to speak well of it, he felt himself bound in his zeal for the interests of philosophy to qualify his criticism so far, and do justice to a greater love of truth than he thought to have found in him: in other words, to convert his intended curse into a blessing. A personal offence is not so easily forgiven. Great or small, a piece of mimicry, a word of disparagement, a fancied neglect, it must be hoarded up for a day of retribution. What is very edifying, he feels particularly inclined to resent it when the offender has been praising him. "Oh, ho!" says this cunning thinker; "he panegyrics me, does he? Then have at him." He thinks the other feels his weight, and that now is the time for pressing it upon him. In this respect, it is better to be Mr. Hazlitt's enemy than his friend; for there is a grace in giving unlooked-for praise to the one; whereas it is pure weakness, he thinks, to be taken in by such problematical things as friendship. The public, who are not in the secret of the offence, are inclined to [300/301] wonder at the impartiality of the portraits; and so the praise given to his enemy reverts doubly to himself, while every hit tells with equal force against the luckless acquaintance. A panegyric, indeed, from his hand startles one; for he talks much of "the malice of a friend;["] and for fear of not being thought to possess the acuteness and self-knowledge of the cleverest rogue that may chance to hear him, takes a delight in venting old grudges, pulling down with one hand what he builds with the other, and giving his hearers to understand that he thinks no more of his good word than becomes him.

Whenever I have met with this "ingenious" person, (for be the humour he is in what it may, I like to give him a handsome epithet, and such as I know he approves.) I always beheld in him a man who had suffered much anxiety in behalf of mankind at large. Sometimes I thought of other disappointments he had met with. At all times, I saw in him one who would make amends for his spleen by interesting you with his talents; whom I believed to be a despiser of money; and knew to be above the servilit[i]es and common-places that keep the world hopeless. It must be owned, indeed, that he knows nothing of "the low" and "the common people." A pauper is to him not of necessity a rascal. A poor creature on the town may not, he thinks, deserve to be a bit worse off than her seducer. The human heart beats as audibly in his ear behind drugget as embroidery. Nor does he dislike it fluttering with the new ball-dress, or even the birth-day one. He does not make a loathsome or frightful thing of it; does not call it, with Dr. Young,

That hideous sight, a naked human heart;

[f]irst displacing it with the indifference of a surgeon, and then putting on his airs at the spectacle, like a fine lady. He leaves it as he finds it, [301/302] invested with

copy of Hazlitt's *Essay on the Principles of Human Action* (1805) and praised it in an entry on Joseph Butler in the seventh edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Hazlitt mentions the anecdote in *The Spirit of the Age* with obvious pride, and it was doubtless a factor in his decision to turn a 'curse' against Mackintosh into a 'blessing', as Hunt says.

the proper flesh and blood; and would only temper the elements outside to it, not the genuine and vital mixture of passions within. Add to this, that Mr. Ha[z]litt is a critic of the past, equally sound and enthusiastic (with the exception of a grudge against Sir Philip Sidney*);⁵¹ that he has a fine scent for a metaphysical discovery; a taste, yielding to none of his talents, in pictures; and a style of writing, in which the sentences tell, one after the other, like his vollies at rackets; and I am intimate with but two men alive, whose intellect it is more interesting to come in contact with.⁵²

Such being my feelings when I encountered the sight of my friend Will, my first impulse, notwithstanding occasional heats between us, was always to stretch forth my hand to him, in order to meet his. But

- * He has called Sir Philip Sidney “an intellectual coxcomb.”⁵³ Coxcomb is a favourite word with him, and luckily includes “worshipful society.” He characterizes the Arcadia as a heap of impertinences and spoilt beauties, in which the author is always thrusting himself forward to play “the Cicerone of Nature,” and explain her *to* us. To me, his delight appears mainly to consist in enjoying her with us; which makes all the difference between coxcombry and good company. But the display expected of Sir Philip on all occasions, and the particular circumstance under which the Arcadia was written, may undoubtedly have led him into a greater show of talk, than in justice to his real feelings (eminently social and enjoying) was desirable. He undertook the work to please his sister, the Countess of Pembroke, to whom it was given in portions, as he composed it. He walked through Nature, as it were, with his arm round her waist, and may have felt himself called upon to “teach his lovely scholar all he knew.” I, for one, am willing to hear him; and so have been thousands. The style is faulty; the book formidably long; the popular taste for it superseded: and yet I never met with a person, Mr. Hazlitt excepted, who did not express the greatest pleasure at being made acquainted with it. The difficulty of the first strangeness over, all goes well, even the author’s “impertinence.”

But Sir Philip was a gallant person, a good dresser, and a favourite with the ladies; things, somehow or other, which Mr. Hazlitt cannot tolerate, unless the possessor chooses to deprecate his wrath by taking out a sort of license under his protection.

[302/303] here begin his infirmities. Mr. Hazlitt, as I said before, cannot shake hands. It is doing him a mischief to propose it. His hand is a *noli me tangere*. He stands hanging it like a disabled limb; the operator finds that he has brought upon himself a burden of salutation; the hand is desperately taken, and with hurrying

51 Shelley’s grandfather could claim a connection to the famed Sidney family through a second marriage, and Shelley ‘had a respect for that distinction’ (Hunt, *Lord Byron*, 178). It is, therefore, not surprising that Hunt makes much of Hazlitt’s apparent slight against Sir Philip Sidney. Hunt had already criticized Hazlitt for ‘losing’ a borrowed copy of the poet’s works; see *The Literary Examiner* 1 (5 July 1823), 4.

52 Charles Lamb was probably one of the two other living friends of great ‘intellect’. The other may have been Coleridge. See Hunt, *Lord Byron*, 303: ‘if the world is to remain always as it is, give me to all eternity new talk of Coleridge, and new essays of Charles Lamb. They will reconcile it beyond all others; and that is much’.

53 In *Lectures on the Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth* (1821); see Hazlitt, *Works*, vi, 320.

tenderness restored. The self-congratulation at escape is mutual. He says, that if he cannot shake hands, he can stand by a friend or a cause as stoutly as any one.⁵⁴ He can cut his friend's enemies, that is certain, and his friend along with them. By [one] cause he has stood admirably, through evil report and good report, to his immortal honour.⁵⁵ I should never be afraid of him on that score, unless he found himself destitute of all power, or invested with too much; neither of which circumstances are likely to happen. He is too able for the one; too destitute of address and physical courage for the other. I speak only of times that bring leading intellects into action. There is scarcely any height of authority as a critic, into which it is not possible to conceive him forcing himself, in spite of his humours, and in the teeth of what is established. But his distrust is, and ever will be, the ruin of him in one sense, unless he finds somebody to *love* him out of it; which, whatever difficulties he may put in the way of his own desire for it, is more easy for another to try, than for himself to encourage. He has four besetting faults, all connected with one another: a total want of address; a distrust of mankind, in the gross and the particular; a disposition to revenge, which he thinks it wise to indulge and to avow; and a minute philosophy, an over subtle exercise of his metaphysics on all occasions, which incites him to be critical and peevish with the most innocent actions of those he converses with. He sees human nature best at a distance, and is as ready to help and defend it then, as he is to feel it press on his self-love in the particular. Certainly, [303/304] of all men, he is the last that should bring a charge of vanity, of an over-weening consciousness of his importance. It is not emptiness. He is full enough. But a consciousness of himself pervades and colours all that he contains. He wishes every body to recognize his fullness, but in such a manner as to hold him guiltless of the desire. He demands the utmost self-knowledge in others, united with the highest opinion of himself as a consequence; and yet it is a curious trait in his character, and an apparent inconsistency, that he has a tendency to speak least of those who show him consideration[,] and highest of those who are in the habit of treating him cavalierly. Perhaps he thinks they partake of his taste, and secretly do him justice: and it is to be observed, that these objects of his eulogy do not happen to be above the want of it. With all his love of truth and hatred of tyrants, he has an admiration of power in every shape but one that renders his own exercise of it suspicious. He speaks, I am aware, of an i[n]verted kind of vanity, of a man's being too conscious of his want of address, &c.:⁵⁶ in other words, of a vanity which is none, or only proceeds upon grounds which others are to deny and protest against. But this is a more real vanity than the other, if it shows itself more captious and unforgiving. It's melancholy does not exonerate it. It "walks in a vain shadow," burthened with it's demands. It is only vanity hungry, instead of vanity fed; and is but the less likely to forget itself. Hence its implacability

54 See 'On the Knowledge of Character' in *Table-Talk* – Hazlitt, *Works*, viii, 306.

55 Hunt may be thinking of Hazlitt's commitment to reform and more generally of his 'love of truth and hatred of tyrants'; see MS Eng 1668 (2), 304.

56 See Hazlitt's essay 'On Egotism' in *The Plain Speaker* – Hazlitt, *Works*, xii, 157–68. Hunt issued strong remarks on Hazlitt's essay in his review of *The Plain Speaker* in *The Companion* (12 March 1828), 125–8.

to offence. Hence its jealousy of the self-satisfaction of others, and its tendency to construe every species of satisfaction into that most desired one. Hence even the most erroneous conclusions as to the whole colour of other people's lives. If Mr. Hazlitt sees you gay and volatile with your friends for an evening, he concludes that you are so on all other evenings, and that nothing makes you happy all your life but the acknow-[304/305]ledgment of your merits. To be successful, is with him the same thing as to be in love with the success. To be full of animal spirits, and what the French call *abandon*, is to be wrapped up in your pretensions. It never enters his head, that self-satisfaction may take its turn with the reverse; that one's animal spirits may be restored by the sight of one's friends, for love's sake as well as for vanity's; and that the man, who can become giddy with sociality on the Wednesday, has perhaps been melancholy all the rest of the week; nay, may have lain awake the night before, thinking of Spain, or of Poland, or the inhabitants of the polar star. A man must take care how he betrays his sympathies on those remote points before him. He has not imagination for some, nor belief in any modesty of expectation on others. He knows no medium between triumph and despair, between every pretension and none. He will gravely accuse you of supposing, tha[t] an article (being your own) in a newspaper, shall play the devil with the Emperor of Russia. Seeing you accustomed, in your graver moments, to express yourself with an air of decision, perhaps a superfluous one, amounting to the "mild dogmatism" that somebody speaks of, and that may charitably be attributed to the habit of having settled opinions and fighting for them, he does not give it the benefit of that gentler interpretation; but supposes it owing to the most overweening confidence, and a disproportionate measure of your pretensions with your powers. Concluding you a coxcomb, because you give full play to your social spirits, he assumes, as a necessary consequence, that you must be a favourite with women: or thinking you a favourite with women, he reads the same conclusion the other way, and fancies you must be a coxcomb. He gives into this idle commonplace, because he holds himself to be no favourite; and yet the first time he paid his attentions to a woman that deserved them, he [305/306] was accepted.⁵⁷ Before this, he used to abuse them all, wholesale and retail, attributing the coarsest or most frivolous motives to every thing they did, and not mending the matter by proclaiming a romantic passion for an object whom he denounced unworthy of it. Mr. Hazlitt made a striking business of that affair, à la Rousseau;⁵⁸ but it was difficult not to perceive that much of his feeling was affected and forced. At all events, when he gave out that he had revenged himself on the girl for not behaving herself better, and loving a mal-content of forty as she ought to have done, the predominance of the irritable and egotistical over the real feeling was undeniable. Her position was her excuse. The difference of years, the astounding worship she received, and the formidable moods exhibited at intervals, were farther excuses.

57 Probably a reference to Sarah Stoddart, Hazlitt's first wife. Hazlitt met Stoddart through the Lambs in 1811; they married in 1812 and divorced in 1822. Hunt first met Hazlitt's second wife, Isabella Bridgwater, in Maiano; see *Leigh Hunt: A Life in Letters*, 163.

58 Hazlitt's 'affair' with Sarah Walker, the daughter of his landlady, was the subject of *Liber Amoris*.

Had he loved her truly, he never would have revenged himself. The sweetness of that recollection embalms the least precious object, let the rake or the scorned fury say what they will. Mr. Hazlitt says he desires to be loved for himself only, all claim or merit being studiously put out of the question. His very demerit must be to him, what merit is to others. That is to say, he must be loved for a nonentity or a contradiction. Yet he went to the opposite extreme, when he undertook to make love to another. His rhetoric overdid it, but the instinct was right. Love is full of attributed merits, even in the bloom of the senses, and the ready kindling of youth. When our riches enable us to dispense with the ideal, we delight to bestow it—when it is necessary to us, we seek it as a supply and a vindication. A romantic passion, the least founded, may settle into an attachment for the most respectable. Plain goodness and habit will secure it; and renders merit, so far, of little importance. But no attachment, romantic or homely, if it be really loving, commences without the impli-[306/307]cation of merit and superiority. To dispense with intellectual and moral qualities, is to suppose an infinite perfection of person. To dispense with beauty and personal merit, is to suppose moral or intellectual. In short, this question would not be worth a thought, if we did not see how the acutest men can deceive themselves; what inconsistencies can be overlooked and impossibilities be demanded, by the blindness and childishness of self-love.

Mr. Hazlitt has two spirits in him, often contradicting one another in public, and always subjecting him to the strangest hesitations and alternations of manner in private. Morally bold, intellectually powerful, he is at the same time physically pusillanimous. If he had ground to stand upon, he could move the heart of a nation; and yet he is afraid to come in contact with an individual. With a face not unworthy of his mind, though crossed with fretfulness and disdain, he either sinks into a lax expression of hopelessness, or knitting his brows, and rolling about his eyes, encourages himself to do justice to the real strength of his mind by an affected grimness of demeanour. On ordinary or brief occasions, and where he has no fear of contradiction, he pronounces a judgment in a manner from which there is to be no appeal. At other times, his conversation, till he gets heated, is as timid, fluttering, and wanting in words, as his style of writing is the reverse. He explains a question by shadowy hints and gesticulations; brings down his arm to bear upon it, instead of a sentence, as if going to paint instead of write; and helps himself to a little representative vigour with “d—mes” and “by G—ds.” In the midst of this energy, let any body contradict him with a bold air, or rise up and plant a well-dressed leg on the carpet, like a beau umpire in a play, and he falls to shatters before this higher power. (He denies this, I know; but I have witnessed it.) [307/308] Yet see him next day in a five’s⁵⁹ court, where he puts on the beggarliest-looking habiliments, and stands in the most helpless attitude, and all of the sudden you shall behold this imbecile phenomenon start up with his racket like a Sampson, and make the walls ring again with the cannonading of his balls. Drunk with this success, and

59 According to Wu, ‘Hazlitt was said to be a “furious” player of the game’ (*William Hazlitt*, 258).

unable to forego it for [a]n instant, your next astonishment is to see him rage and become frantic at a miss; literally so, and all but rolling on the ground. There is great affectation in this; of a will purposely indulged and overwrought. If he cannot make the sensation with the hit, he will make it by dint of execrating the miss. His pre-eminence must not be lost, if he can help it, at any price; and here the address is of muscle, and not of manners. Now Sir John Suckling was fond of “a lucky hit at bowls;”⁶⁰ but who would maintain that there was more coxcombry and self-importance in his taking a miss with good-humour, than in this unyielding exaction of success? A man must pay infinite court to himself, must stand himself in stead of a whole circle of flatterers, to behave thus like a spoiled king, and not be able to dispense with a single compliment of fortune. To be sufficient to oneself is a less self-importance, than to measure ourselves with accident and possibility, and demand that they should act up to that height of pretension.

Notwithstanding all his distrust and disdain, and his great pity for simpletons, Mr. Hazlitt has a corner left for simplicity of his own: at least I used to think so. And I thought [it] did him good. I fancied it helped to keep his enthusiasm alive; and to save his great talents from degenerating into want of principle. To know every thing for bad, which is the knowledge of some, is, at least, not his knowledge. He is beyond that. He might justly rank with the calmer and nobler intellects, who are able to keep middling ones in heart, and to dispense with the common [308].

Coda: Hazlitt's 'A Farewell to Essay-Writing'

Hazlitt claims that he came to read a ‘page’ of Hunt’s unpublished memoir by ‘accident’. However, the scope of Hazlitt’s response suggests that he had probably perused more than just one of the memoir’s pages. In fact, it seems probable that he had read a large portion of the unpublished chapter. How he came to it, either in manuscript or in another format, remains open to conjecture. Certainly, a few possibilities present themselves. By 1828, Hazlitt had an established professional relationship with Hunt’s publisher, Henry Colburn, and it seems reasonable to think that Colburn, who signed the proof pages, may have placed a version of the chapter into Hazlitt’s hands.⁶¹ Another possibility is that Hunt gave Hazlitt the manuscript from which the proof was made; or Hunt may have simply instructed Colburn to present the chapter to Hazlitt on his behalf. From what we know of Hunt’s friendship with Hazlitt before, during, and after the period *Lord Byron and Some of his Contemporaries* was making its way through the press, the two men were ostensibly on good terms, and Hunt probably would not have objected to

60 Suckling was a life-long interest and a personal favourite of Hunt’s. Hunt modelled his early satire ‘The Feast of the Poets’ upon Suckling’s ‘A Session of the Poets’. Hazlitt remarked of Hunt: ‘He is the only poet or literary man we ever knew who puts us in mind of Sir John Suckling or Killigrew or Carew; or who united rare intellectual acquirements with outward grace and natural gentility’ (*Works*, xi, 177).

61 In addition to publishing with Colburn throughout the 1820s, Hazlitt had been a regular contributor to Colburn’s *New Monthly Magazine*.

Hazlitt seeing his remarks before they appeared.⁶² The precedent, of course, had already been established in Maiano in 1825. At any rate, Hazlitt at some point read a substantial portion, if not the whole, of Hunt's unpublished memoir. Hazlitt's reaction to it appeared in *The London Weekly Review* for 29 March 1828 in an article he prematurely titled 'A Farewell to Essay-Writing,' from which the following remarks have been taken.⁶³

I am rather disappointed, both on my own account and his, that Mr. Hunt has missed the opportunity of explaining the character of a friend, as clearly as he might have done. He is puzzled to reconcile the shyness of my pretensions with the inveteracy and sturdiness of my principles. I should have thought they were nearly the same thing. Both from disposition and habit, I can *assume* nothing in word, look, or manner. I cannot steal a march upon public opinion in any way. My standing upright, speaking loud, entering a room gracefully, proves nothing; therefore I neglect these ordinary means of recommending myself to the good graces and admiration of strangers, (and, as it appears, even of philosophers and friends). Why? Because I have other resources, or, at least, am absorbed in other studies and pursuits. Suppose this absorption to be extreme, and even morbid, that I have brooded over an idea till it has become a kind of substance in my brain, that I have reasons for a thing which I have found out with much labour and pains, and to which I can scarcely do justice without the utmost violence of exertion (and that only to a few persons,)—is this a reason for my playing off my out-of-the-way notions in all companies, wearing a prim and self-complacent air, as if I were 'the admired of all observers'? or is it not rather an argument, (together with a want of animal spirits,) why I should retire into myself, and perhaps acquire a nervous and uneasy look, from a consciousness of the disproportion between the interest and conviction I feel on certain subjects, and my ability to communicate what weighs upon my own mind to others? If my ideas, which I do not avouch, but suppose, lie below the surface, why am I to be always attempting to dazzle superficial people with them, or smiling, delighted, at my own want of success?

What I have here stated is only the excess of the common and well-known English and scholastic character. I am neither a buffoon, a fop, nor a Frenchman, which Mr. Hunt would have me to be.⁶⁴ He finds it odd that I am a close reasoner and a loose dresser. I have been (among other follies) a hard liver as well as a hard thinker; and the consequences of that will not allow me to dress as I please. People in real life are not like players on a stage, who put on a certain look or *costume*, merely for effect. I am aware, indeed,

62 See, for instance, Hunt's letter to Hazlitt of 20 June 1826 in *Leigh Hunt: A Life in Letters*, 181–3.

63 Hazlitt, *Works*, xvii, 317–18.

64 This detail is not found in MS Eng 1668 (2), but see Hunt's review of *The Plain Speaker* in *The Companion* (12 March 1828), 127.

that the gay and airy pen of the author does not seriously probe the errors or misfortunes of his friends—he only glances at their seeming peculiarities, so as to make them odd and ridiculous; for which forbearance few of them will thank him. Why does he assert that I was vain of my hair when it was black, and am equally vain of it now it is grey, when this is true in neither case? This transposition of motives makes me almost doubt whether Lord Byron was thinking so much of the rings on his fingers as his biographer was. These sort of criticisms should be left to women. I am made to wear a little hat, stuck on the top of my head the wrong way. Nay, I commonly wear a large slouching hat over my eyebrows; and if ever I had another, I must have twisted it about in any shape to get rid of the annoyance. This probably tickled Mr. Hunt's fancy, and retains possession of it, to the exclusion of the obvious truism, that I naturally wear 'a melancholy hat.'

I am charged with using strange gestures and contortions of features in argument, in order to 'look energetic.' One would rather suppose that the heat of the argument produced the extravagance of the gestures, as I am said to be calm at other times. It is like saying that a man in a passion clenches his teeth, not because he is, but in order to seem, angry. Why should everything be construed into air and affectation? With Hamlet, I may say, 'I know not *seems*.'

Again, my old friend and pleasant 'Companion'⁶⁵ remarks it, as an anomaly in my character, that I crawl about the Fives-Court like a cripple till I get the racket in my hand, when I start up as if I was possessed with a devil. I have then a motive for exertion; I lie by for difficulties and extreme cases. *Aut Cæsar aut nullus*. I have no notion of doing nothing with an air of importance, nor should I ever take a liking to the game of battledoor and shuttlecock. I have only seen by accident a page of the unpublished Manuscript relating to the present subject, which I dare say is, on the whole, friendly and just, and which has been suppressed as being too favourable, considering certain prejudices against me.

Hazlitt's biographers have long been aware of 'A Farewell to Essay-Writing' and the significance it holds as a key document in the story of the Hazlitt–Hunt friendship. However, without access to MS Eng 1668 (2), these biographers have only been able to draw conclusions about the friendship in its final phase from published writings of a more congenial nature.⁶⁶ Hazlitt, to be sure, made many encouraging statements about Hunt publicly and privately in his final years.⁶⁷ And Hunt, likewise, characteristically left agreeable and approving remarks about Hazlitt

65 Hazlitt glances wryly at Hunt's *Companion*.

66 The major critical biographies that discuss the Hazlitt–Hunt friendship see its final phase as one governed by a spirit of reconciliation. See P.P. Howe, *The Life of William Hazlitt* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1947), 384; Herschel Baker, *William Hazlitt* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), 234–6; and Wu, *William Hazlitt*, 408.

67 See, for example, Hazlitt's review of Hunt's *Companion* in *The London Weekly Review* for 22 March 1828 and his *Table-Talk* essay 'On the Prose-Style of Poets' (Hazlitt, *Works*, xii, 16–17).

before and certainly after his death. His review of *Table-Talk* in *The Companion*, for example, eschews the bitter personal attacks found in the unpublished memoir, whilst his tribute to Hazlitt in *The Tatler* reveals the depth of sympathetic feeling Hunt retained for his friend.⁶⁸ Yet Hunt's 'Mr. Hazlitt' chapter and Hazlitt's 'A Farewell to Essay-Writing', together, show that the two friends maintained deep and unresolved disagreements at a very late stage. Some of the accusations made in both texts, in fact, demonstrate just how petty the arguments between the two men had become. Hunt's criticisms of Hazlitt's manner and dress are examples that might be drawn out of MS Eng 1668 (2) as evidence of frivolous judgment. At the same time, Hazlitt's comment in 'A Farewell to Essay-Writing' that some of Hunt's observations are the 'sort of criticisms [that] should be left to women' reveals just how far Hazlitt had descended in his manner of argumentation with his former 'Round Table' collaborator.

There are moments, however, in Hunt's memoir of Hazlitt that clearly suggest an attempt to move beyond personality and the gossipy 'sort of criticisms' to which Hazlitt objects. We recall that Hunt had sent a powerful message to Hazlitt in 1821, arguing that his friend's public attacks on Shelley were 'no advancement to the cause of liberal opinion'. And at the outset of his memoir of Hazlitt, Hunt offers a similar statement of purpose: 'I should probably have omitted a good deal of what I have had to say of Mr. Hazlitt [...] if he had not endeavoured to sow discord among my friends and acquaintances'. As Hunt saw it, Hazlitt's public abuse of 'friends and acquaintances' like Shelley, who was passionately assisting in the struggle for liberal reform, worked directly against the cause for which Hunt had served a two-year prison sentence in Surrey Gaol. Whether or not Hunt's memoir of Hazlitt was intended to convey a deeper political message must remain an open question because of the incomplete state in which the memoir survives. Nevertheless, the material that has survived in MS Eng 1668 (2) is suggestive and may provide a new lens through which to view Hunt as a memoirist, a historian of liberal reform, and, at times, a 'disagreeable' critic of his contemporaries.

KINNELON, NEW JERSEY

68 See *The Tatler* 14 (20 September 1830), 53; and 21 (28 September 1830), 81–2.

HAZLITT AND BYRON

Hereditary Prejudices and Liberal Sympathies

David Woodhouse

It may seem curious to include, in an issue on Hazlitt and his Circle, an article on the relationship with Byron, who is – at best – ‘a kind of corresponding member’ of the so-called Cockney school.¹ Even Michael Foot, the strongest proponent of Hazlitt and Byron as the representative English essayist and English poet of revolution, tends to bring them into alliance by imagining a first acquaintance between two writers who never met, rather than suggesting any dialogue between their works.² While Hazlitt and Byron could never be said to have clubbed together, the final section of this three-part essay will briefly propose ways their writings interleave in the post-war period, literally by 1822 in *The Liberal* and earlier than that through the bindings of Hunt’s *Examiner* and Jeffrey’s *Edinburgh*. The second part seeks to illustrate how, in an ‘AGE OF PERSONALITY’ where private conduct was even more ‘inseparably connected’ than usual with politics and aesthetics, the coupling of Hazlitt and Byron as prime exhibits of sexual Jacobinism led to an intermittent solidarity.³ But first we should address their caricatures of each other, which display a strong antipathy but which are at the same time self-revealing and discriminating.

-
- 1 Jeffrey N. Cox, *Poetry and Politics in the Cockney School: Keats, Shelley, Hunt and their Circle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 47.
 - 2 Michael Foot, *The Politics of Paradise: A Vindication of Byron* (London: Collins, 1988). I am aware of four previous essays dedicated to the relationship between the two writers, the best of which is ‘Hazlitt and Byron’ by Charles Robinson, in *Publishing, Editing and Reception*, ed. M. Edson (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2015), 25–41. See also James A. Houck, ‘Byron and William Hazlitt’ in *Lord Byron and His Contemporaries*, ed. C.E. Robinson (Newark: University of Delaware, 1982), 66–84; Christopher Salvesen, ‘Hazlitt and Byron: Intermittant [sic] Affinities’ in *Romantic Discourses*, ed. H. Höhne (Essen: Die Blaue Eule, 1994), 120–30; Duncan Wu, *Talking Pimples: Hazlitt and Byron in Love* (revised version, Nottingham: University of Nottingham Press, 2007).
 - 3 *Biographia Literaria or Biographical Sketches of My Literary Life and Opinions*, ed. W.J. Bate and J. Engell, Part VII of *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, Bollingen series no. 75, 2 vols (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), I, 41 (chapter 2); Preface to *A Vision of Judgement (Robert Southey: Later Poetical Works)*, general eds. T. Fulford and L. Pratt, 4 vols [London: Pickering & Chatto, 2012], III, 544).

I Hereditary prejudices

Byron the aristo-liberal

'Lord Byron makes man after his own image, woman after his own heart; the one is a capricious tyrant, the other a yielding slave; he gives us the misanthrope and the voluptuary by turns; and with these two characters, burning or melting in their own fires, he makes out everlasting centos of himself' (xi, 71).⁴ As so often in the more unflattering portraits collected in *The Spirit of the Age*, Hazlitt's incisive distortions rely on a precise grasp of essential qualities in the subject. In one sentence, he encapsulates two truisms which dominate Byron criticism to this day. First, most readers have indeed found 'two characters' to Byron's poetry, represented in headline terms by the misanthropic exhibitionism of *Childe Harold* and the voluptuous facetiousness of *Don Juan*.⁵ Second, Byron is perhaps the greatest example in all English literature of the literary character being inseparable from the personal character.⁶ The 'cento', the patchwork of commonplaces, is one of Hazlitt's favourite motifs and it works especially well here because the parahrhyme on 'canto' reinforces the feeling of Byron's long serialized poems being 'everlasting' in the sense that their self-absorption is interminable. Yet the double meaning on 'everlasting' is a small concession to Byron's place in the canon and his practice might be licensed by the example of Milton, 'a writer of centos' (v, 58), and indeed the example of Hazlitt, who is himself making out a cento from contemporary reviews. In 1818 *Blackwood's* complained of Byron's 'everlasting self-representation or self-reference'; by 1822 the *Edinburgh* had withdrawn its long-standing support, complaining that Byron's heroes were 'all one individual' with 'the same varnish of voluptuousness on the surface – the same canker of misanthropy at the core'.⁷

Where Hazlitt differs from one of his two most loyal employers – Jeffrey – and sides with the other – Hunt – is in the feeling that it is less the canker of misanthropy than 'the canker of aristocracy'⁸ which needs to be cut out:

4 All quotations from Hazlitt are taken from *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. P.P. Howe, 21 vols (London and Toronto: J.M. Dent, 1930–4). References are by volume and page.

5 Marilyn Butler is thinking in particular of these poems when she talks of 'the perennial puzzle confronting Byron's readers and critics: the apparent division of his career into two halves' ('One Man in his Time', *Essays in Criticism* 28.1 [1978], 52–60: 53).

6 John Wilson well summarized the 'popular belief' prevailing in Byron's lifetime that 'it is impossible to speak of his poetry without also speaking of himself, morally, as a man' (*Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 3 [May 1818], 217, 216). The intimacy of Byron's celebrity and his oeuvre has since produced much sensitive criticism but also led Anne Barton to complain of 'the grossly disproportionate interest in Byron's life, physical appearance, and personality at the expense of his poetry' (*New York Review of Books* 49.20 [19 December 2002], 8).

7 *Blackwood's* 3 (May 1818), 216; *Edinburgh Review* 36 (February 1822), 420.

8 This was the verdict of Shelley on Byron in a private letter to Hunt, first published in *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries* (London: Henry Colburn, 1828), 245 and then at the very end of Hunt's *Autobiography*, 3 vols (London: Smith & Elder, 1850),

Lord Byron, who in his politics is a *liberal*, in his genius is haughty and aristocratic: [...] We like a writer (whether poet or prose-writer) who takes in (or is willing to take in) the range of half the universe in feeling, character, description, much better than we do one who obstinately and invariably shuts himself up in the Bastille of his own ruling passions. (xi, 70-1)

Invariable in Hazlitt is a sense of the Noble Lord as a 'spoiled child', a symbol of adventitious privilege, looking down from the 'high tower of his rank' upon the multitude of miserable rogues, and even sometimes actively kicking them 'down stairs' (xix, 65). In the essay 'Merry England', Hazlitt cites Byron's comic poetry as a potential illustration of the native temperament. But he pulls himself up short by reminding himself that Byron 'was one of the English Nobility, not one of the English People' (xvii, 159). Hazlitt's more reductive caricatures obstinately deny that a peer of the realm can have the same anti-clerical or republican ideals as a commoner. He is on surer ground, even as he still installs Byron '*ex cathedrâ* and robed' (viii, 210), when he frames his attacks within the prevailing circumstances of literary production. The *Table-Talk* essay 'On the Aristocracy of Letters' contrasts Byron, whose 'blaze of reputation culminates from his rank and place in society' with Keats, who is assailed by the 'mercenary servile crew' of reviewers because he has 'no pedigree to show them' (viii, 210-11). Hazlitt develops this point elsewhere when he says that *Blackwood's* had a 'double incitement' (xii, 208) to strike at Keats's livelihood as well as his reputation whereas they left Shelley alone because they knew they could not break him in this way. Furthermore, for Hazlitt, a professional man of letters disqualified from 'one or other of the English Universities' (xii, 376) and demeaned by the *Quarterly* for allegedly 'knowing nothing of the Greek or Latin' (ix, 16), Shelley and Byron sometimes seem to stand as representative of the 'ready passport' to 'unmeaning, unanalysed reputation' provided by a liberal education (viii, 207).⁹

In the passage from *The Spirit of the Age* quoted above, Hazlitt cements all this with an allusion to a famous moment in *Rights of Man*: 'Titles are like circles drawn by the magician's wand, to contract the sphere of man's felicity. He lives immured within the Bastille of a word, and surveys at a distance the envied life of man.'¹⁰ What Hazlitt actually does with this figure brings us to his second rather more complex caricature of Byron as the doubly illegitimate 'spoiled child of fame as well as fortune' (xi, 75). Whereas the people have been walled off by the hereditary

III, 322. Tim Webb points out to me the reference was removed from the revised *Autobiography*.

9 See Uttara Natarajan, 'Circle of Sympathy: Shelley's Hazlitt' for some more productive aspects of that relationship (in *Metaphysical Hazlitt: Bicentenary Essays*, eds. U. Natarajan, T. Paulin, and D. Wu [London: Routledge, 2005], 112-22). Michael O'Neill's *Shelleyan Reimaginings and Influence: New Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019) includes characteristically tender readings of both Hazlitt (78-92) and Byron (146-57, 158-73) in relation to Shelley.

10 Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man* (Part I, 1791), ed. Mark Philp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 132.

principle from what Paine called the 'sphere of felicity' and what Hazlitt calls the 'universe in feeling,' it is Byron's indulgence of the pleasure principle, or at least his 'ruling passions,' which walls him off from the people. In a series of paradoxes, Byron has a simultaneous love of singularity and of popularity; he has exploited his patrician position to seduce the common reading public; their relationship is mutually gratifying but also mutually demeaning; his rare example panders to their need for present excitement and their sweet voices pamper his need for present recompense.

This is Byron as *homme fatal*, a cultural force later reconfigured in characters like Rochester and Heathcliff but critiqued at the time in caricatures like *Nightmare Abbey's* Mr Cypress. Peacock pastiches the emotional pageantry of *Childe Harold* but the grimmer point beneath the humour is that, just as the dyer's hand is subdued to what it works in, Byron has essentially subdued his love of liberty to a love of fame. For Hazlitt too, Byron's self-regarding pose is an act of bad faith in stark contrast to what he calls the 'candour and comprehensiveness' (xi, 68) of Scott's *Waverley* novels (the antithesis of Scott and Byron in *The Spirit of the Age* is designed to be especially cutting given that Scott's novels are written in the cause of Legitimacy not Reform). And Byron's version of the egotistical sublime – Hazlitt rarely denies his power – is not only devoid of sympathy for other human hearts, as Wordsworth's has become, but also devoid of any sincere imaginative engagement with the truth of human passion: 'The poetry is fine, but not like' (x, 258).

On the jealousy and the spleen of liberals

Byron's aristocracy and celebrity therefore combine to make him an emanation of 'preposterous liberalism' (xi, 77).¹¹ Hazlitt italicizes the comparatively new usages of 'liberalism' and 'liberal' advisedly, because the project of *The Liberal: Verse and Prose from the South* fitted perfectly into his narrative of martyrdom. This narrative had already been rehearsed in works like the unpublished *Reply to Z*, where reformist writers are at risk of being extinguished by a keen Northern blast, the venom emanating especially from the *Blackwood's* wits in Edinburgh and the Lake poets in Cumberland. For Hazlitt's highly partial account of the sabotage of *The Liberal*, we can turn to 'On the Jealousy and the Spleen of Party'. This is, for good reason, the final piece in the *Plain Speaker* collection published in 1826. Any attempt to summarize the essay risks reducing it in every sense – as he said of Burke, the only specimen of Hazlitt is 'all that he wrote' (vii, 301) – but it is a fierce elegy for a losing and divided cause in general and 'a few persons of middling rank, but of extraordinary merit' (xii, 380) in particular.

The immediate stimulus for the article was some tittle-tattle purveyed about Rousseau and Madame de Warens in a volume of poetry dedicated to Byron by

11 For an excellent recent discussion, see Clara Tuite, 'Lord Byron's Preposterous Liberalism: Perversity, or The Fear That Pleases,' *Occasion* 11 (January 2019), 1–17. A part of Hazlitt is rather attracted to the dazzle and clout of celebrity: 'There is a Caffé Byron on the Boulevards' – he writes three years after Byron's death – 'Think of a Caffé Wordsworth on the Boulevards!' (xvii, 209n.).

Thomas Moore (whose abstention from *The Liberal* was arguably as significant a reason for the journal being short-lived as Shelley's death and Byron's distractions). For Hazlitt, Moore's dismissal of the lovers as 'low and bad' is a piece of 'methodistical cant' given Moore's own reputation for 'meretricious rhapsodies' and the private life of his dedicatee: little time is lost in pointing out that Byron had the same kind of 'sentimental' relationship with 'an Italian lady of rank' as the one for which Rousseau is being arraigned (xii, 366-8). With 'frivolous servility', Moore seeks to 'lower by a flourish of his pen the aristocracy of letters nearer to the level of the aristocracy of rank – two ideas that keep up a perpetual *see-saw* in Mr Moore's mind like buckets in a well' (xii, 367, 365-6). Whereas Rousseau is a first-rate genius who was in earnest about overturning a kingdom and changing the whole tone of sentiment, Moore is a second-rate talent with dishonest attitudes to political and sexual relations, always in thrall to the semi-official Whig line emanating from Holland House.¹² As usual in Hazlitt's essays, Rousseau heralds 'the dawn of a new era' where 'might was no longer to lord it over right' (xii, 373). The phrasal verb is a little Hazlittian mannerism, but he is probably alluding here both to the assertive Cockney usage in *Endymion* – 'There are who lord it o'er their fellow men' – and also to Byron, who lurks throughout the essay as the figure whose 'extension of patronage' (xii, 378) was fundamental to *The Liberal's* success.¹³ Rousseau also leads Hazlitt on to one of those magnificent paroxysms of nostalgia for the time when freedom 'stood erect, crowned with orient light' (xii, 374). There are inevitable references to the three Lake poets in their prelapsarian state, when they served the majesty of man rather than men of majesty. However, such is the sweep of the writing, mixing the bitter-sweet dew of spilt revolutionary aspiration with the sourness of persecuted dissent, that it is not entirely clear whether the cause of liberty was 'annulled, overthrown, trampled upon' (xii, 374) by 1798, 1815, 1819, or 1823.

The Liberal still emerges as a kind of last-chance saloon for progressive forces, whose fissiparous tendencies have been mercilessly exploited by the forces of legitimacy in their highly orchestrated campaign to make liberty 'a sort of bye-word' (xii, 374). Hazlitt complains that, in the face of this savage system of bullying and character assassination, every man of 'liberal principles' (xii, 373) has shifted for himself. *The Liberal* provided a rare opportunity to reunite, a project conceived by patrician poets and metropolitan journalists, a project theoretically open to in-house Whigs and out-of-doors reformers, a project as open to talent as to privilege, a project where tradition carried validity but no voucher. All this is symbolized for Hazlitt by 'my dogged prose bound up in the same volume with his Lordship's

12 Lady Holland may have received a snuffbox in Napoleon's will but was always on guard against her coterie becoming a 'foyer of Jacobinism' (*Journal of Elizabeth Lady Holland 1791-1811*, ed. Earl of Ilchester, 2 vols [London: Longmans, 1908], I, 251). For a flavour of the Holland salon, see Diego Saglia, *European Literatures in Britain, 1815-1832: Romantic Translations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 110-47.

13 *Endymion* III, 1 (*Poems of John Keats*, ed. J. Stillinger [London: Heinemann, 1978], 163).

splendid verse' (xii, 381). But, in Hazlitt's dogged version of events, Moore could not stomach this 'indecent encroachment of plebeian pretensions' (xii, 378) and counselled against Byron's further involvement with a mixture of condescension and timidity. Hazlitt's insinuation is that, just as Moore mocked Rousseau to make the Hollands smile, Moore and Byron welched on *The Liberal* to avoid making the Hollands cross.

Nowhere is Hazlitt more Rousseau's disciple than in his sensibility to the arbitrary degradations of what he might call rank and what we would call class. His antipathy to Byron's 'hereditary prejudices' (xix, 35) may then, to borrow another phrase from *The Spirit of the Age*, be regarded as the effect of his own 'disappointed views and an inverted ambition' (xi, 88). And yet, while Hazlitt tends to project things out of his own head to lay upon his sitters – whether in Southampton Buildings or *The Spirit of the Age* – he understands as well as any contemporary the tension in Byron between caste loyalties and political principles. The other contemporaries to understand this best were the crew of conservative reviewers. They knew what they were doing when they sought to prise Byron out of *The Liberal* by suggesting he had been lost to the polite world of letters through the tradesman's entrance: 'the Aristocratico-democrat is the tame hackney scrivener of the jacobinico-radical'.¹⁴

Many readers have followed Hazlitt in seeing elitist instincts and liberal ideas as a perpetual see-saw in Byron's mind.¹⁵ In his private correspondence, Byron's more lurid outbursts certainly support Hazlitt's contention that he 'resumes his privileges of peerage' (xi, 77) at critical moments. His fantasies about assassinating Henry Hunt – 'I would [...] have passed my sword-stick through his body – like a dog's and then thrown myself on my Peers'¹⁶ – perfectly illustrate Hazlitt's point, in one of his contributions to *The Liberal*, that elements in the House of Lords still believed in their prerogative 'to run their swords through the heart of the nation and pink the liberties of mankind' (xix, 268). In his poetry – even if *Marino Faliero* is not *Coriolanus* – Byron held aristocracy and democracy in creative tension with more panache than he is often allowed. And if Hazlitt's caricature of the timorous Whig disclaiming 'all affinity with such fellows as Hunt, Carlisle [sic], or Cobbett' (xii, 376) is usually borne out by what Byron says in private, it is undermined by what Byron puts his name to in public. The line was always drawn at Henry Hunt

14 *British Critic* 20 (March 1823), 243–4. In this brilliant specimen of conservative journalism, the 'plebification of nobility' is symbolized by the long patrician fingers of a 'macaroni simpereper' (Byron) linking 'with the mutton fist of the sometime tenant of a gaol' (Hunt).

15 Malcolm Kelsall's *Byron's Politics* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1987) remains the magisterial academic account of Byron as a traditional and irrelevant Whig; it is answered with bracing polemic in Foot's *Politics of Paradise*, grudging admiration in Jonathan Gross's *Byron: The Erotic Liberal* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), and subtle pragmatism in 'The Politics of Altruism' by Stephen Minta (*Byron: The Poetry of Politics and the Politics of Poetry*, eds. R. Beaton and C. Kenyon-Jones [London: Routledge, 2017], 239–48).

16 *Byron's Letters and Journals*, ed. Leslie Marchand, 13 vols (London: John Murray, 1973–94), VII, 44.

but, as Jonathan Gross has argued, Leigh Hunt acted as ‘catalyst and conscience’ for the publishing decision in 1814 which Lord Holland thought ‘fixed’ Byron’s politics as Whig.¹⁷ Hunt’s liberal influence is also detectable in later and bolder publishing decisions which fixed them to the left of Holland House: the 1816 *Poems* touched upon in Part II of this essay, the 1821 Appendix prophesying revolution, and the 1823 Preface (published by John Hunt) defending Carlile’s right to free speech.¹⁸

Hazlitt the neither/nor Cockney

It is perhaps as well that Hazlitt did not have access to the bravura snobbery of Byron’s unpublished attacks on members of his circle, imagined blackening their own boots in facsimiles of the very conservative propaganda Byron simultaneously insists is malicious and unjust. Byron’s outburst against the ‘Vulgarity’ of Hunt and other ‘shabby-genteel’ Cockneys is an exercise suggested by *Blackwood’s* notorious initial sketch of Hunt as ‘a vulgar man [...] perpetually labouring to be genteel’; his image of Hazlitt talking ‘pimples’ is derived from the magazine’s doggerel caricature of ‘pimpled Hazlitt’s coxcomb lectures’; he may have borrowed the same attack’s ‘article’/‘particle’ rhyme for later use on Keats and was certainly remembering the *Blackwood’s* conceit of ‘Johnny’ the drivelling young apothecary, ‘sent home with a diuretic’, in his outburst against ‘Johnny Keats’s *p—s a bed poetry*’.¹⁹ As Byron works up these caricatures of self-medicating quack-hacks, he also apes *Blackwood’s* in the pretence that he is ‘speaking of writing, *not* of persons’, in the persistent associations of literary pretension with grubby occupation, and in the exploitation (or invention) of personal ailments to draw the flickering moral inferences that Hazlitt’s complexion was caused by gin-drinking and Keats’s consumption by masturbation.

In other moods Byron would have found this kind of stuff ‘amply refuted by the terms in which it is expressed’.²⁰ The effervescence of the prose bespeaks an anxiety about the social dangers presented, as Cockney incursions are portrayed not as invasions of ability (to borrow Burke’s wonderfully equivocal phrase) but delusions of grandeur. A psychological reading is invited by the way the Cockney

17 See Chapter 1 of *Erotic Liberal* (15–30), which is centred on Byron’s de-anonymization of ‘Lines to a Lady Weeping’.

18 The 1821 and 1823 paratexts are reproduced in *Lord Byron: Complete Poetical Works*, eds. J. McGann and B. Weller, 7 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1980–93) at VI, 222–5 and V, 295–7.

19 Compare *Lord Byron: Complete Miscellaneous Prose*, ed. A. Nicholson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 159 with *Blackwood’s* 2 (October 1817), 39; *Byron’s Letters and Journals*, VIII, 38 with *Blackwood’s* 2 (March 1818), 611 (Byron at least makes some effort, via the contemporary map-making technique of hachuring, to recognize the distinctiveness of Hazlitt’s eruptive style); *Don Juan* XI, 60: 7–8: ‘Tis strange the mind, that very fiery particle, / Should let itself be snuffed out by an Article’ (*Complete Poetical Works*, V, 483) with *Blackwood’s* 2 (March 1818), 611: ‘approve thy article [...] / single particle’; *Byron’s Letters and Journals*, VII, 200 with *Blackwood’s* 3 (August 1818), 519.

20 *Complete Miscellaneous Prose*, 91, responding to a *Blackwood’s* attack on *Don Juan*.

type is dismissed 'as what we called at Harrow – "a Sunday Blood"' by a man born at several removes from his eventual title who would not himself have expected to go to Harrow.²¹ The same can be said for the way Byron and especially *Blackwood's* view the Cockneys as intruders in that double Burkean sense of trespassing upon both patrilineal property and noviciate bed-chambers. Yet they are attuned to the predicament of the Hunt circle, democrats in politics but not in culture, too vulgar and unconnected for citadels like Holland House but too refined and bookish for the tribunes of the two-penny press. Ostensibly a man of the people, Hazlitt believes that 'the look of a gentleman is more easily felt than described' (xii, 209) in the same way Byron believes gentlemanliness is a 'thing to be felt – more than explained.'²² He is capable of an almost Byronic attitude to 'vulgarity aping gentility' (xx, 147; see also viii, 156). Hunt is right to find Hazlitt's 'dog-in-the-manger philosophy, which will have neither one thing nor 't'other' to be partly a matter of temperament but it is mainly a matter of social situation, as *Blackwood's* and Byron perceived.²³

As with Hazlitt on Byron the aristo-liberal, so Byron on the 'neither/nor' Cockneys is an example of a contemporary prejudice that has hardened into a critical commonplace.²⁴ And, just as Byron perceptively self-critiques his own status as 'a ball-room bard',²⁵ Hazlitt can be a pained commentator on his own dilemma. 'On the Jealousy and the Spleen of Party' nears its close with an explanation for the jealousy and the spleen of the essayist:

If the Whigs are fastidious, the Reformers are sour. [...] The one require that you should enjoy the public favour in its newest gloss: with the other set, the smallest elegance of pretension or accomplishment is fatal. The Whigs never stomached the account of the 'Characters of Shakespear's Plays' in the Quarterly: the Reformers never forgave me for writing them at all, or for being suspected of an inclination to the *belles-lettres*. [...] To please the one, you must be a *dandy*: not to incur the censure of the other, you must turn cynic. (xii, 381)

21 *Ibid*, 159.

22 *Ibid*, 160. The flip-side of the two writers' alertness to social and literary pretension is their celebration of men and authors who are 'coarse & yet not vulgar' (*ibid*, 159), a quality both find in Burns and Hazlitt finds in Cobbett (viii, 161).

23 George Barnett, 'Leigh Hunt Revises a Letter', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 20 (1957), 284–91: 286. In readings different from mine, John Bayley has Byron despatching the Cockneys 'with the forceful impartiality characteristic of a man wholly confident of his own social status' (*London Review of Books* 21.12 [10 June 1999], 10) and C.L.R James believes Hazlitt 'is not a divided man, he has no acute consciousness either of class or of divided culture' (*Beyond a Boundary* [London: Stanley Paul, 1963], 158).

24 The 'neither / nor' formulation was made by Marjorie Levinson in her introduction to *Keats's Life of Allegory: The Origins of a Style* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), 5. For a less flash application which encompasses Hunt, see Richard Cronin, *The Politics of Romantic Poetry: In Search of the Pure Commonwealth* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), 181–99.

25 *Don Juan* IV, 109: 2 (*Complete Poetical Works*, V, 238).

Hazlitt ends up caught, in forlorn but defiant solitude, between ‘the painted booths of Whig Aristocracy’ and the ‘sordid styes of Reform’ (xii, 382). For John Whale, taking his cue from the essay’s own juxtaposition of the *Edinburgh* and *Westminster* reviews, the sty reeks of utilitarianism.²⁶ By 1826 this must be right. But, if we are looking for a juxtaposition to sum up the feelings of a whole life and the tensions of an entire career, Greg Dart is also right to put the *Political Register* at the opposite pole to the *Edinburgh Review*.²⁷ Hazlitt is often conscious of being neither Cobbett nor Jeffrey – of being neither *vox populi* nor *vox dei*. E.P. Thompson dealt briskly with the reasons for Hazlitt being more ‘European’ and ‘polite’ than Cobbett: ‘It is a question of rôles.’²⁸ It is also an intricate, interactive matter of personal economic circumstances, political passion, social status, and literary style. More emphasis tends to be placed on the beer-infused breath Hazlitt feels on his neck from Cobbett, the ‘most powerful political writer of the present day’ (viii, 50), than his professional handshake with the tea-drinking Jeffrey. But, however ambivalent about the obvious rewards and subtle penalties of being a contributor to the *Edinburgh*, Hazlitt takes considerable pride in having thereby attained ‘the highest rank in modern literary society’ (xii, 365).²⁹

The irony is that, by very different routes and in very different genres, it is Hazlitt and Byron who begin to play the same role, or at least to strike the same attitudes. Hazlitt begins the Preface to the *Political Essays* of 1819 by proclaiming he is a writer of no party whose only fixed position is ‘a hatred of tyranny’. He ends in the persona of Alexander Pope, drawing the last pen for freedom (vii, 7, 22). These are exactly the positions Byron tends to adopt in the middle cantos of *Don Juan*, where the narrator vows that ‘being of no party, / I shall offend all parties’, rails against ‘Earth’s tyrants’ and adopts the same Popean persona: ‘I may stand alone, / But would not change my free thoughts for a throne.’³⁰ From the perspective of class consciousness, these performances may sail too close to Thompson’s twin bourgeois solipsisms of ‘whimsy’ and ‘rancor.’³¹ From the perspective of literary

26 John Whale, *Imagination Under Pressure, 1789–1832: Aesthetics, Politics, and Utility* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 130–1.

27 Gregory Dart, *Metropolitan Art and Literature, 1810–1840: Cockney Adventures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 66.

28 E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Gollancz, 1963), 747.

29 At the risk of gross generalizations which Hazlitt himself qualifies, he sees Cobbett as the heir of Paine and Jeffrey as the heir of Junius. For the wrestle with Cobbett, see Kevin Gilmartin, *William Hazlitt: Political Essayist* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 50–60, 86–94; the relationship with Jeffrey has been neglected but Duncan Wu makes a start in his essay ‘Rancour and Rabies: Hazlitt, Coleridge and Jeffrey in Dialogue’, in *British Romanticism and the Edinburgh Review: Bicentenary Essays*, eds. M. Demata and D. Wu (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 168–94, especially 168–9.

30 *Don Juan*, IX, 26: 1–2; VIII, 135: 5; XI, 90: 7–8 (*Complete Poetical Works*, V, 416; 406; 492).

31 ‘Disenchantment or Default: A Lay Sermon’ (1969), reprinted in *E.P. Thompson: The Romantics* (New York: The New Press, 1997), 70.

consciousness, they are but one facet of complex self-dramatizations. Yet it can also be the appointed role of the writer (whether poet or prose-writer) to find best purchase in a 'Spirit of contradiction' (xix, 303).³²

Aware of the difficulties of their own situations, Byron and Hazlitt turn on the men of letters whom they believe have found a place – in several senses of that word. What Hazlitt calls 'this absurd trinity' (vii, 183n) is repeatedly made absurd in *Don Juan*: 'Thou shalt believe in Milton, Dryden, Pope; / Thou shalt not set up Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey'.³³ This is part of Byron's patrician literary campaign, for Pope in particular, but at the same time part of his liberal agenda. The parody of the decalogue is a deliberate reprise of one of the devices for which William Hone, the publisher of Hazlitt's *Political Essays*, had been tried for blasphemy in 1817. It is in their deep and bitter fascination with the Lake poets (a fascination the Lakers reciprocated) that we shall find Hazlitt and Byron bound up, sometimes in the same volume.

II Anti-Jacobin couplings

1816: Wordsworth and the music of men's lives

Blackwood's spent most of its considerable energy predicting that the unholy alliance of *The Liberal* would collapse because of social incompatibility. Hazlitt's ironic reference to the journal as 'obnoxious alike to friend and foe' in 'On the Jealousy and the Spleen of Party' (xii, 379) recognizes this line of attack but also the other main allegation that debauched patricians and lodging-house Cockneys had one thing in common: minds capable of producing an 'obscene' and 'dirty' magazine.³⁴ Imbrication of elite and popular licentiousness, a word which itself imbricated free thought and free living, was less blatant but still integral to the post-war Laker 'biblioblitz' campaigning for the regeneration of civil society and literary taste.³⁵ If Jeffrey remained the commander-in-chief of their ungenial critics, the living poet against whom they now marshalled their own ideal of the patriot-bard, simultaneously engaged in sagacious duty and retired in domestic bliss, was the 'bold bad Bard Baron B'.³⁶ Wordsworth's dedication to his wife of *The*

32 Hunt describes Hazlitt as a 'connoisseur in the spirit of contradiction' in a passage implying that Byron was not (*Autobiography*, 74–5) but Byron refers to his own 'Spirit of contradiction' in his final correspondence with Teresa Guiccioli (*Byron's Letters and Journals*, XI, 137).

33 *Don Juan* I, 205: 1–2 (*Complete Poetical Works*, V, 74).

34 *Blackwood's* 13 (March 1823), 266, 365.

35 'Biblioblitz' is the phrase used by Charles Mahoney of Wordsworth in 1815 (*Romantics and Renegades: The Poetics of Political Reaction* [Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003], 83) but it can be applied to all three Lakers, who published twenty books between 1814 and 1817 in a rather more coordinated way than they pretended. For narrative purposes, Part II of this essay will risk homogenizing three very different writers in the way they always complained Jeffrey did.

36 *Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth*, 2nd ed., 8 vols, various editors (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967–93), III, 283.

White Doe of Rylstone, a romance published in quarto in 1815 as if in competition with Byron and Scott, is one of his most beautiful incarnations of spousal love. But in its closing stanza Wordsworth allows himself a swipe at the type of poet whose strain was less 'moral' than his own: 'He serves the Muses erringly and ill, / Whose aim is pleasure light and fugitive'.³⁷ These lines can be glossed by the anonymous attack on Byron co-authored by Wordsworth in the same year, where the 'sensual' and 'sulphurous' tendencies of a 'discontented creature' are crudely demonized.³⁸

If the collaboration on the anti-Byron verses with Southey's friend Mary Barker was bizarre, Wordsworth was also cultivating an alliance with John Scott, the editor of *The Champion*, whom he first met in the week of Waterloo. His celebratory sonnets on the battle were first published in Scott's paper, which proclaimed him 'the greatest poetical genius of the age' at the same time as conducting an anti-Jacobin campaign against Byron as the unofficial leader of an 'Anglo-gallic school'.³⁹ In April 1816 *The Champion* was also the first to publish, on a less authorized basis, Byron's privately circulated verses on his separation, the misty-eyed 'Fare Thee Well' and malevolent 'Sketch from Private Life'.⁴⁰ Scott felt unable to discuss the actual 'facts' of Byron's separation, ostensibly because he was writing in a family newspaper, but also because of the risk of a legal action or a challenge. Yet there are various ways of reading his assertions that Byron had practised 'studied torture on the helplessness of feminine sensibility', leaving his wife 'defenceless' and 'bleeding in her soul's incurable wounds', victim of the 'coarsest violence' and a 'brutal outrage'.⁴¹ The hyperbole may simply be intended to register the gravity of the social offences: by his conduct Byron has lost the right to call himself an Englishman and by writing about it he has lost the right to call himself a gentleman. But the coded editorial is also asking its readers to fill in certain blanks, and to conclude that treason is not the only capital offence of which Byron is guilty.⁴²

37 *The White Doe of Rylstone* (1815), ed. K. Dugas (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 80. In *The Poet's Pilgrimage to Waterloo* (1816), a work which issues a challenge to Byron in its very title, Southey presents another tableau of family life in the Lake District, whose 'quiet bliss' (*Later Poetical Works* III, 242) would certainly contrast with another poet's domestic situation by the time of publication.

38 [Mary Barker and William Wordsworth], *Lines Addressed to a Noble Lord* (London: W. Pople, 1815), 13, 4, 8.

39 *Champion*, 25 June 1815, 206; 3 March 1816, 65. In 1814 Scott had commissioned a series of articles by Thomas Barnes which hailed Wordsworth as 'one of the proudest specimens of the English character' and denigrated Byron as a 'selfish libertine' (28 May 1814, 174–5; 7 May 1814, 150–1). Over the next two years J.H. Reynolds wrote a series of similar pieces for the paper, including an allegory published the week before the leaked poems in which the 'lonely and melancholy' Byron is trumped by the 'calm and majestic' Wordsworth (7 April 1816, 110); for Byron's oblique response, see *Complete Poetical Works*, V, 237–8.

40 *Champion*, 14 April 1816, 117 (reproduced at *Complete Poetical Works* III, 380–6).

41 *Ibid*, 118.

42 *Ibid*, 118. Byron's best man Hobhouse summarized the prevailing rumours: 'cruelty systematic, unremitted neglect, gross repeated infidelities, incest and _____' (diary entry of 7 March 1816 transcribed in petercochran.files.wordpress.com/2009/12/19-separation.pdf [accessed 22 January 2019]). The blank is elucidated by another blank

These effects are so well achieved that Byron's editors consistently mistake the author for a Tory. But Scott would later die on the duelling grounds of Chalk Farm from a *Blackwood's* bullet of lead, not paper. Scott's complex competitive relationship with Hunt is one of several reasons why his rhetoric in 1816 sometimes sounds so like that of the people who would kill him in 1821. The over-riding factor, as Seamus Deane explains, was he now subscribed to the neo-Burkean premise that 'political conviction was inescapably allied to sexual purity' because his Francophobia had outweighed his liberalism.⁴³ Thus he reads Byron's two poems on 'Domestic Circumstances' in parallel with 'On the Star of the Legion of Honour', his lordship's recent contribution to *The Examiner* which was certainly not an ode of thanksgiving:

We notice it here, because we think it would not be doing justice to the merits of such political tenets, if they were not coupled with their corresponding practice in regard to moral and domestic obligations. There is generally a due 'proportion kept' in 'the music of men's lives.' One writer in the *Examiner* sees the death of the world's hopes in the demolition of Buonaparte's power, and he is also the able advocate of drunkenness, the calumniator of women, incredulous of the existence of the noblest aspirations and feelings of the human breast. This is as it should be.⁴⁴

The *Examiner* journalist who is so closely coupled with the Noble Poet is of course Hazlitt, who had previously been a staff-writer for *The Champion*. Scott had used exactly the same quotation from *Richard II* the year before in an article marking Hazlitt's defection, hinting at incidents which had revealed his 'moral deformity' and 'coarseness'.⁴⁵ This time, there seems to be an added allusion to Hazlitt's multi-week bender after Waterloo as well as another potential reference to the so-called Keswick episode of 1803. Hazlitt later suspected Wordsworth of spreading 'tittle-tattle about my private follies' (ix, 4) and the most colourful and most quoted rendition of the Keswick story is Wordsworth's report that when 'some girl' refused to gratify Hazlitt's 'abominable & devilish propensities, he lifted up her petticoats & smote her on *the bottom*'.⁴⁶ The point is taken that the victim of actual harassment

in the annotations Hobhouse made to Moore's *Life of Byron* many years later: 'Lord Holland told me, he tried to _____ her' (reproduced by Peter Cochran in *Byron and Hobby-O* [Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2010], 324). Byron alludes to the charge of sodomy himself in a letter to Hobhouse of 17 May 1819 (*Byron's Letters and Journals* VI, 131).

43 Seamus Deane, *The French Revolution and Enlightenment in England, 1789–1832* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1988), 35–8.

44 *Champion*, 14 April 1816, 118.

45 *Champion*, 19 March 1815, 89.

46 This report is itself reported second-hand and after the fact in Haydon's *Diary* (ed. W.B. Pope, 5 vols [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960–3], II, 470) but Lamb and Crabb Robinson also attest to Wordsworth spreading the story around on his visits to London from 1814 onwards and it is tempting to suggest he egged Scott on here – he was certainly doing so in the case of Byron (*Letters*, III, 304–5).

has been 'objectified' once more by male critics more interested in the implications of the incident's afterlife.⁴⁷ But the symbolism of Keswick for the Lakers, as they dredged it up a decade later in retaliation for Hazlitt's political attacks, cannot be underestimated. What Coleridge called Hazlitt's 'vices too disgusting to be named' were as quintessentially Jacobin as the flagellation of Parisian nuns which Burke found 'too shocking almost to be mentioned' but too good an opportunity to be missed in a celebrated speech of 1791.⁴⁸

Byron's strong solidarity with *The Examiner* in 1816 was the result of his friendship with Hunt but the *esprit de corps* appears to have extended to his leaving Drury Lane theatre tickets (to which he was entitled as a committee member) in Hazlitt's name lest Hunt could not take them up.⁴⁹ Two years later, when Hazlitt interrupted an otherwise scathing review to note that 'all our prejudices are in favour of the Noble Poet, and against his maligners' (xix, 42), he was perhaps remembering the period when they were jointly maligned by John Scott and when their private lives were used, like one of the plays Byron's committee produced, to prove that 'the shocking spirit of Jacobinism seemed no longer confined to politics'.⁵⁰

1817: Coleridge and the cant of morality

This remark was made by Coleridge of Maturin's *Bertram* in one of several articles he wrote for *The Courier* in the summer of 1816. According to Marilyn Butler, these essays 'began' the concerted quasi-Anglican campaign against Byron as the devil almost incarnate.⁵¹ When Coleridge rehashed them in 1817, as he was cobbling together extra material to pad out the *Biographia Literaria*, he followed

47 Sonia Hofkosh, *Sexual Politics and the Romantic Author* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 108.

48 Coleridge: *Collected Letters*, ed. E.L. Griggs, 6 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956–71), IV, 693. When Coleridge claims he and Southey saved Hazlitt from 'transportation' (IV, 670) after being pursued by '200' local yeomen on horse (IV, 735), the anti-Jacobin paranoia is reminiscent of his own case in 1797, soon to be given a humorous treatment in the *Biographia*. For the allusion to the chastisement of the nuns, in an intervention on the Quebec Bill which marked Burke's irrevocable breach with Fox, see *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, general ed. P. Langford, 9 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981–2015), IV, 349.

49 *Byron's Letters and Journals* V, 50.

50 *Biographia Literaria*, II, 229. On the other side of the ledger, Byron was enraged (*Complete Poetical Works*, V, 683n.) that the spirit of 1816 had been forgotten in Hazlitt's *Lectures on the English Poets*. Hazlitt was prepared to burn several bridges to light up his 1818 lecture series; his accusation that Byron was a fair-weather friend of Napoleon (v, 153–4) chose to ignore that, in his little 1816 volume of *Poems*, Byron had put his name not only to the intimate verses pirated by *The Champion* but also the Buonapartist odes anonymously published in *The Examiner* and *Morning Chronicle*.

51 Marilyn Butler, 'Byron and the Empire in the East', in *Byron: Augustan and Romantic*, ed. A. Rutherford (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990), 64. The caricature of the satanic Byron had perhaps already been established during the Separation Crisis (and indeed by 1814 after Byron acknowledged 'Lines to a Lady Weeping').

John Scott's lead by cobbling together Byron and Hazlitt, if less programmatically. Byron was not mentioned by name in Chapter 23 of the *Biographia*, and a tart *Courier* reference to 'his studies and his amusements on the Continent' was discarded, but the chapter still represents a surreptitious deconstruction of his starring role in 'modern misanthropic heroism'.⁵² This was followed in Chapter 24 by a more explicit caricature of the sadistic 'Rhapsodist' polluting the pages of the *Examiner* and the *Edinburgh*. Although Coleridge claims to be writing more in sorrow than anger (the anger he reserves for Hazlitt's 'suborner' Jeffrey), he still asserts that Hazlitt's proleptic review of his *Statesman's Manual* exhibited 'a malignity, so avowedly and exclusively personal, as is, I believe, unprecedented'.⁵³

When Byron leafed through the *Biographia* in Venice he concluded that Coleridge was a 'shabby fellow', a sentiment shortly to be vented in the Dedication to *Don Juan* where he describes all three Lakers as 'shabby fellows'.⁵⁴ He had a right to feel let down because he had given Coleridge considerable financial and literary support in 1816. Early that year, Byron had used his influence with his Tory publisher Murray to see two important volumes through the press of that 'Mecænas of poetry and orthodoxy' (xix, 66). The first was Hunt's *Story of Rimini*, which came out just at the moment it had become clear Lady Byron had walked out and cemented in the conservative mind the sense of Hunt and Byron as incestuous in more ways than one.⁵⁵ The other was *Christabel &c.* (the &c. including 'Kubla Khan').

Byron was spellbound by 'Christabel', for example using the section on the rift between Sir Leoline and Sir Roland as the epigraph to 'Fare Thee Well'. In his 1818 *Lectures* Hazlitt quoted from the same passage to comment upon the disintegration of his own relationship with Coleridge (v, 166). Coleridge in turn had grounds to complain that the glaring plagiarisms of Byron and provocative misprisions of Hazlitt vulgarized the eroticism of his great ballad of trespass.⁵⁶ But both writers

52 *Essays on his Times*, ed. David V. Erdman, Part III of *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, 3 vols (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), II, 443; *Biographia Literaria*, II, 222.

53 *Biographia Literaria*, II, 241–2. It is possible to see another coupling of Byron and Hazlitt in the *Lay Sermon* (ed. R.J. White, Part VI of *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972], 149), although Coleridge probably has other targets in mind there.

54 *Byron's Letters and Journals*, V, 267; Dedication 6:7 (*Complete Poetical Works*, V, 5); compare *Complete Miscellaneous Prose*, 103.

55 When *Blackwood's* decided to link Hunt's 'sour Jacobinism' with his 'extreme moral depravity', its premise was that the provocations of Rimini (breaching social decorum in its dedication to 'My Dear Byron', literary decorum in its streetwise style, and sexual decorum in its incestuous subject-matter) were calculated by Hunt in prison as a follow-up to the political provocations which had put him there (2 [October 1817], 38–41).

56 John Beer points out that Byron's *Parasina* could make the scenes in 'Christabel' it drew upon 'a good deal more suggestive of obscenity than they would if approached directly' and provides evidence of Coleridge's paranoia about Hazlitt's suggestions, published

continued to nag away at the very problem the *Biographia* was intended to resolve, the contrast between the poetry Coleridge was at last publishing in book form and the prose he was now writing. It was easy for them to lament the evaporation of the youthful 'enthusiasm' (v, 166) demonstrated in the *Sibylline Leaves* collection published in tandem with the literary life.⁵⁷ Having shared the experience of being sexualized by Coleridge, Hazlitt and Byron also pounced on a passage in the *Biographia* to imply that he had sublimated his own sexuality into a millenarian 'fervour'.⁵⁸

Although the *Biographia* is famous for its practical criticism of Wordsworth, its practical model of a professional writer is Southey, exalted in Chapter 3 as a devoted husband and patriot 'unstained by one act of intemperance'.⁵⁹ When Hazlitt came to review the *Biographia* for the *Edinburgh*, he provided a wicked reduction of Coleridge's attempts to prove that private continence and public rectitude were grounded in each other:

Some people say, that Mr. Southey has deserted the cause of liberty: Mr. Coleridge tells us, that he has not separated from his wife. They say, that he has changed his opinions: Mr. Coleridge says, that he keeps his appointments; and has even invented a new word, *reliability*, to express his exemplariness in this particular. It is also objected, that the worthy Laureate was as extravagant in his early writings, as he is virulent in his present ones: Mr. Coleridge answers, that he is an early riser, and not a late sitter up. It is further alleged, that he is arrogant and shallow in political discussion, and clamours for vengeance in a cowardly and intemperate tone: Mr. Coleridge assures us, that he eats, drinks and sleeps moderately. (xvi, 120)

The sharpest personal barb is that, as Hazlitt expected some *Edinburgh* readers to know, Coleridge's estranged wife was living in Southey's house. The hint that the romantic scheme of Pantisocracy in Pennsylvania had turned to burlesque in Keswick served as a neat rejoinder to the rumours he believed Southey and Coleridge had been spreading about his own escape from Cumberland in 1803. The polemical point is that two writers who had once espoused the values of the commune were now espousing family values with equal fanaticism. The irony was not lost on Hazlitt that he considered the *Anti-Jacobin's* allegation back in 1798 that Coleridge had deserted his wife and children to be the most despicable

and alleged, that his poem was 'obscene' ('Coleridge, Hazlitt and "Christabel"', *Review of English Studies* 37.145 [1986], 40–54: 50, 40–3).

57 Compare vii, 217–19, *Complete Miscellaneous Prose*, 106.

58 Hazlitt's reference to 'pleasurable poetic fervour' (xvi, 138), which he finds analogous to the anticipated ecstasies of the regenerated sinner, seems to conflate passages from Chapters 14 and 18 of the *Biographia*; Byron, having probably just read Hazlitt's review, quotes with slightly more accuracy from Chapter 14 – 'almost religious fervour' – before making his customary comparison of the Lakers to religious crackpots (*Byron's Letters and Journals*, V, 267).

59 *Biographia Literaria*, I, 65.

of its smear tactics but his focus in 1817 is on how the writers once victimized as symbols of a subversive 'New Morality' had become reliable purveyors of orthodox propaganda.⁶⁰ And so, especially as the review climaxes with an attack on 'the cant of Morality' (xvi, 138) which references Coleridge's 'nauseous abuse of his contemporaries' in Chapter 23, the case of a recently separated friend of liberty is also recalled.

There is admittedly a gap of a year between Byron receiving this number of the *Edinburgh* and his deployment of 'cant' as his shorthand for the hypocrisy of attacks upon *Don Juan*.⁶¹ But, while 'cant' risked becoming a cant term itself in periodical journalism and was available to both sides, it was a particular watchword of *The Examiner*.⁶² For both Hazlitt and Byron, the shadow of a parahrhyming monosyllable seems increasingly to give it an extra potency in their more polemical outbursts against political and sexual repression. Here is Hazlitt in 1816 on Coleridge's *Statesman's Manual*: 'Of all the cants that ever were canted in this canting world, this is the worst' (vii, 121). Here is Byron in 1821: 'The truth is that in these days the grand "primum mobile" of England is *Cant* – Cant political – Cant poetical – Cant religious – Cant moral – but always *Cant*.'⁶³ Hazlitt paid tribute to this passage, in another example of the recurrent if erratic solidarity of the liberals, when he described it as 'the testimony of a lofty poet to a great moral truth' (xix, 70).

60 See xvi, 119 and compare xvi, 234, ix, 49. Hazlitt and Byron are especially attuned to the way Southey could now be portrayed as in service to Canning, the very person who had demolished him in the late 1790s: 'he was the Butt of the Antijacobin, and he is the prop of the Quarterly Review' (*Complete Miscellaneous Prose*, 101). They both allude frequently to 'New Morality' and the other Anti-Jacobin attacks on the Lakers (the attacks which became, with some political irony, the foundation for Jeffrey's anti-Laker campaign). See, for example, v, 164, vii, 182, 206; *Complete Miscellaneous Prose*, 117; *Complete Poetical Works*, I, 348, 416n.; III, 90–1; VI, 296.

61 Byron acknowledges receipt in a letter to Murray of 12 October 1817 (*Byron's Letters and Journals*, V, 268) and begins to use the term 'cant' in a concerted fashion from November 1818.

62 Although *The Examiner* had a general scepticism of 'newspaper' and 'election' cant (e.g. numbers 51, 69, 150, 637) and was prepared to criticize Napoleon's 'notorious' cant (345, 350, 364), its fire was usually reserved for cant 'loyalist' (158, 469, 610), 'ministerial' (152, 189, 532) or 'Anti-jacobin' (3, 449, 459). It was particularly nauseated by 'court cant' praising the private virtues of the royal family and government ministers (150, 395, 569, 581, 760) – a theme running through its coverage of the 1820 Coronation Crisis (650–1, 655–6, 669–71) – and the 'cant of humanity' used to justify Allied foreign policy (340, 407, 438, 440, 448, 538, 700, 729, 760). The journal's early attacks on the 'perpetual cant' of the Methodists (29, 200, 452) broadened into a campaign against 'Mr. Wilberforce and the rest of the tribe of cant' (723; compare 316, 541, 603–5, 649, 747, 757). For some relevant examples of references to 'cant' in the conservative rhetoric of Walter Scott, Southey, and J.T. Coleridge, see *Quarterly* 16, 191; 16, 246; 18, 329.

63 *Complete Miscellaneous Prose*, 128. The other monosyllable is made explicit in a famous private defence of *Don Juan* (*Byron's Letters and Journals*, VI, 232).

1818: Southey and the sty of Epicurus

The review of *Characters of Shakespear's Plays* which the Whigs supposedly could not stomach appeared in the January 1818 number of the *Quarterly Review*. This was the second time the journal had 'condescended to notice' Hazlitt for his part in the cabal 'carrying on the trade of sedition'; the same number marked its first suggestion that Byron was implicated in such trade.⁶⁴ The occasion was Hunt's *Foliage*, which provoked the *Quarterly* into its most vicious attack on the group of writers it believed was conducting a 'systematic revival of Epicureism'.⁶⁵ The multi-faceted infidelities of Shelley, an arsonist at Eton and an atheist at Oxford, become the reviewer's main target but other cases are covered in the sketch of the representative Epicurean, putting personal liberties before national security and treating sexual pleasure as a natural right not a sacred dispensation:

so the vain and disappointed man, the factious citizen, the adulterer—and he, if such there be, who thinks even adultery vapid unless he can render it more exquisitely poignant by adding incest to it, all these must find a creed unattractive, that enjoins humility, order, purity of heart and practice.⁶⁶

This consolidation of rumours about Shelley, Byron, and Hunt is adroit and particularly audacious in that it works up a sentence in the inaugural attack on the Cockney School which even *Blackwood's* saw fit to tone down because of the potential libel.⁶⁷

All the writers attacked in the review of *Foliage* detected the hand of Southey. This was understandable, if probably mistaken, given that he had doubled down in his role as chief of the *Quarterly's* literary police during the Wat Tyler Controversy of 1817. Hazlitt had seized on Coleridge's portrait of Southey with such relish because, by the time the *Biographia* was published, Southey's long-suppressed play on the Peasants' Revolt had been pirated. Its reminder of the poet's earlier extravagant attitude to English kings 'feasting at ease, and lording over millions' had self-sabotaged the *Quarterly* reviewer's exhortations to the English people to eat, drink, and sleep more moderately.⁶⁸ For anti-ministerial writers, not least Byron himself, the Wat Tyler Controversy was his Separation Crisis turned inside out. Attacked for his delinquency in morals, Byron had taken refuge in the

64 *Quarterly* 18 (January 1818), 466. Hazlitt had first come to the journal's attention as a 'sour Jacobin' in its review of *The Round Table* (17 [April 1817], 157).

65 *Quarterly* 18 (January 1818), 327.

66 *Ibid.*, 328.

67 *Blackwood's* 2 (October 1817), 40: 'For him [Hunt] there is no charm in simple Seduction; and he gloats over it only when accompanied with Adultery and Incest'. This sentence was significantly softened in reprints of the October issue.

68 *Wat Tyler* II, 107 (*Southey Later Poetical Works* III, 485); cf. II, 78 (III, 484). Keats may be making a topical allusion to these passages in the line from *Endymion* referenced in footnote 13.

righteousness of his politics; attacked for his delinquency in politics, Southey took refuge in the righteousness of his morals.

Southey's counter-attack, in a *Quarterly* article and a pamphlet both published under the Murray imprint, concentrated on how the 'seeds of disaffection and insubordination' had been scattered by 'the progress of what are called liberal opinions.'⁶⁹ He had long imparted a continental, pestilential, and indeed venereal quality to subversive literature, aiming much of his fire high (against Jeffrey) and low (against Cobbett). But he now singles out his two *Examiner* enemies and focuses on their sexual Jacobinism, implying that they are 'panders to the lowest vices.'⁷⁰ Southey was responding not only to the way Hunt and Hazlitt had skewered him during the Controversy for the alleged prostitution of his literary talents but also to the way they chose to tease him for his heightened preoccupation with 'physical and moral evil.'⁷¹ Rather against their instincts (respectively domesticated and dissenting) and at possible risk to their reformist credentials, Hunt and Hazlitt played up to Southey's image of them as voluptuous infidels.⁷² The Hunt circle had previously been sympathetic to the character of Malvolio, whom they defended as a victim of aristocratic 'incontinence.'⁷³ But in the Controversy, Hazlitt makes Sir Toby Belch the symbol of the true English patriot's constitutional irrepressibility, whether at table, hustings, or writing desk:

'Dost thou think, because thou art virtuous, there shall be no more cakes and ale,' says *Sir Toby* to the fantastical steward *Malvolio*. Does Mr. Southey think, because he is a pensioner, that he is to make us willing slaves? While he goes on writing in the 'Quarterly,' shall we give over writing in *The Examiner*? (vii, 189)

When Hazlitt suggests the Laureate would be a little less bigoted if his tastes were 'a little more Epicurean' (vii, 202), he is responding to the insistence that even as a youthful revolutionary Southey had never been tainted by a speck of 'Epicurus' sty'

69 *Quarterly* 16 (January 1817), 532. In previous *Quarterly* articles (for example 16 [October 1816], 240), Southey was one of the first to import, with heavy irony, the term 'Liberales' from Spain. It is sometimes suggested that this was the inspiration for the choice of title made in Pisa in 1822: for a recent discussion, see Juan L. Sánchez 'Robert Southey and the "British Liberales"' in *Romanticism, Reaction and Revolution: British Views on Spain, 1814–1823*, eds. B. Beatty and A. Laspra-Rodríguez (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2019), 43–70.

70 *Quarterly* 16 (January 1817), 539. Southey's attacks on Hunt and Hazlitt in 1817 are in many ways a dry run for his better-known diatribe in 1821 against the 'Satanic school' of Moore and Byron, the 'pandar of posterity' (*Later Poetical Works* III, 542).

71 Robert Southey, *A Letter to William Smith, Esq. M.P.* (London: John Murray, 1817), 41.

72 *The Champion* had accused Hunt of 'epicurean perversion' for defending Byron in the Separation Crisis given that he had made his name by attacking the Regent's libertinism (28 April 1816, 134).

73 *Examiner*, 3 March 1811, 166. Compare Hazlitt iv, 315.

(a protestation which had reinforced the impression that Southey was the reviewer of *Foliage*).⁷⁴

Byron's reaction to the *Quarterly*'s 'canting' review of *Foliage* was complicated.⁷⁵ It confirmed his belief that Southey was behind the rumours that he and Shelley had been sleeping with each other's partners in Geneva. But he could also see it marked a very important moment: the lifting of the Murray embargo on meaningful criticism of himself in the journal. He immediately complained to his publisher that the *Quarterly* was seeking to invent a conspiracy between 'men of the most opposite habits, tastes and opinions'. Byron's list of these *Quarterly* targets – 'Moore, Byron, Shelley, Hazlitt, Haydon, Leigh Hunt, Lamb' – feels, apart perhaps from Haydon, like a prospective list of contributors to *The Liberal*.⁷⁶ In fact, Byron is also registering annoyance with Hunt, who had included in *Foliage* verse letters to all the others named, reprinting a matey epistle to him dating from the Separation Crisis which warned, tongue-in-cheek, of Italy's 'lovely girls'.⁷⁷ Byron is not at all sure he wants to be in the club which he thinks Hunt's familiarity and Southey's innuendo have combined to form.

However, a letter to Hobhouse a fortnight earlier had hinted at the manner of his artistic response, as he announces completion of the first canto of *Don Juan* and explains why he has dedicated the poem to Southey:

The Son of a Bitch on his return from Switzerland two years ago – said that Shelley and I 'had formed a League of Incest and practiced our precepts with &c.' – he lied like a rascal – for *they were not Sisters*.⁷⁸

The little tease rests on the pretence that Southey's technical error about the degree of sorority between Mary Godwin and Claire Clairmont, offspring of former marriages of their respective parents, constituted a more grievous slander than his accusation of 'promiscuous intercourse' with both of them.⁷⁹ Such levity may screen Byron's nervousness about another allegation of incest closer to home with

74 Letter to William Smith, 20. The *Foliage* review is now usually ascribed to J.T. Coleridge, S.T.'s nephew.

75 Letter to Murray of 24 November 1818 (*Byron's Letters and Journals*, VI, 82–4), from which the next two quotations are also taken.

76 *Byron's Letters and Journals*, VI, 83.

77 Leigh Hunt, *Foliage; or Poems Original and Translated* (London: C.& J. Ollier, 1818), lxxv. See Jane Stabler, *The Artistry of Exile: Romantic and Victorian Writers in Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 198–9. The other trigger point for Byron, as with Hazlitt's *Lectures* (v, 156), was that Hunt still insisted Wordsworth was 'generally felt among his own profession to be at the head of it' (*Foliage*, 14; compare *Byron's Letters and Journals*, VI, 47).

78 *Byron's Letters and Journals*, VI, 76.

79 It should be pointed out that Peter Cochran and Jane Stabler, two of the readers with the finest ears for Byronic tone, find the not-sisters line of defence genuinely pedantic (*Byron and Bob* [Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010], 76; *Artistry of Exile*, 200) but Byron keeps repeating it like a good joke (*Byron's Letters and Journals*, VI, 82, 126; *Complete Miscellaneous Prose*, 100).

his half-sister Augusta but the spoof pedantry in the face of shocked rectitude is one of the irresistible traits of the narrator of *Don Juan*, a poem whose ‘freedom’ Byron goes on to commend to Hobhouse.⁸⁰ An important aspect of this freedom was stylistic, *ottava rima* at last liberating the voice of Byron’s letters into his poetry. But by ‘freedom’ Byron means sexual frankness. When he asserted in another letter that the ‘soul’ of his poem was ‘it’s licence – at least the *liberty* of that *licence*’, he was turning on its head a line from a Milton sonnet that had become a staple war-whoop of the *Quarterly*, whether used of Cockney prosody or radical lifestyles: ‘Licence they mean when they cry libertie.’⁸¹ Byron could call on many precedents from his vast knowledge of European literature for the licence of *Don Juan* but one early stimulant may have been Hazlitt’s celebration of ‘the pleasurable and the sensual’ as the antidote to Southey’s ‘over-severity’ (vii, 202).

III Liberal sympathies

I have written elsewhere about the brilliance of Hazlitt’s *Examiner* articles on Southey during the Wat Tyler Controversy, the possibility that these essays played a part in the genesis of *Don Juan*, and the circumstantial evidence that Byron’s friend and attorney Douglas Kinnaird may have brought copies of *The Examiner* to him in Venice, or at least news of the London premiere of Mozart’s *Don Giovanni*.⁸² Because this spectacularly successful production had radical credentials, Hazlitt deployed it in the Controversy and was prepared to overlook the Don in *Don Giovanni* (as he overlooked the Sir in *Sir Toby*). For here his emphasis was less on the magician’s wand of privilege than the constricting hand of ‘prudery’ (vii, 202). *Don Giovanni* also allowed him to open an Epicurean front against the Laureate which was Anglo-Italian not ‘Anglo-Gallic’. He invites Southey to the opera because its banquet aria might suggest to him a better reason for risking damnation than selling his soul to despotism and superstition: ‘Women and wine are the sustainers and glory of life’ (vii, 202).

A year later Byron dedicates to the same gentleman a poem with the same hero and the same message: ‘Let us have wine and woman, mirth and laughter, / Sermons and soda-water the day after.’⁸³ There is a small concession to monogamy here and a warning of heartburn if not hell-fire: Byron’s chaste muse is always mischievous but usually more balanced than the reactions it pre-empts, parodies,

80 *Byron’s Letters and Journals*, VI, 77.

81 *Ibid.*, VI, 208. For the original line see *John Milton: Complete Shorter Poems*, ed. S.P. Revard (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2009), 299. The *Quarterly* deployed it against Rimini’s open couplets and – via John Wesley – inflammatory literature in general (14 [January 1816], 474; 16 [January 1817], 551).

82 ‘“Organ of Vanity”: Hazlitt’s Phrenological Caricature of Southey’, *The Hazlitt Review* 10 (2017), 27–43; ‘The Dedication to *Don Juan* Re-Examined: Hazlitt – Wat Tyler – *Don Giovanni*’, *Byron Journal* 45.2 (2017), 141–53; ‘*Don Giovanni* and *Don Juan*: Some Anglo-Italian Perspectives’, in *Un poeta, una città, un poema: Byron, Ravenna e Don Juan*, ed. Gregory Dowling (Ravenna: Angelo Longo Editore, forthcoming).

83 *Don Juan* II, 178: 7–8 (*Complete Poetical Works*, V, 144).

and absorbs. Yet one of the more programmatic motifs of its early cantos is the satire of the Lakers' 'accumulated pretences to virtue',⁸⁴ just as Hazlitt had mocked Southey's 'pretensions to virtue' (vii, 202). And in 1823, when Byron transferred the rights to the poem from John Murray of the *Quarterly* to John Hunt of *The Examiner*, he used what Hazlitt called Sir Toby's 'unanswerable answer' (iv, 314) to Malvolio as the epigraph to all subsequent volumes of *Don Juan*.

Documentary evidence that Byron read *The Examiner* in exile does not exist as it does for Shelley, even if *Don Juan*'s echoes of *Examiner* rhetoric are so frequent that it is hard to believe they are coincidental.⁸⁵ Equally, it will still be hard for some readers to believe that Byron was heavily influenced by a writer he appeared to hold in contempt. Here, for two reasons, Jeffrey is as important a bridging figure as Hunt. First, *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* provides the most significant of several precedents for Byron borrowing strategically and creatively from a critic he was simultaneously deriding. His earliest book-length satire was angrily addressed to a particular Scotch reviewer but reworked Jeffrey's best jokes for use against the English bards. Second, Byron was certainly receiving the *Edinburgh* in Italy and would have heard Hazlitt's voice not only in direct contributions like the *Biographia* review but in some of Jeffrey's own articles.⁸⁶

Jeffrey and Hazlitt both thought *Don Juan* would never do. They did not have access to its suppressed Dedication, where Jeffrey would have recognized a tribute to the 'buff and blue' and where Hazlitt would have recognized many overlaps with his own attacks on the Lakers.⁸⁷ In any case, they would have balked at what Hazlitt, following the *Edinburgh* line, called the poem's 'utter discontinuity of ideas and feelings' (xi, 75). It was also natural for Hazlitt to focus on the more scoffing aspects of Byron's half-serious rhyme – 'he hallows in order to desecrate' (xi, 75) – and to discern in them a species of 'dandyism' divorced from the inspired condition of mankind. Again, it may seem improbable that Hazlitt's own writing was influenced by a style he appeared dead-set against. But three circles of sympathy may be suggested.

84 Ibid, note to Canto V (*Complete Poetical Works*, V, 713n.).

85 As just one example, several critics have suggested Byron's comparison of Coleridge to 'a hawk encumber'd with his hood' (*Complete Poetical Works*, V, 3) is a portmanteau of Hazlitt's dazzling *Edinburgh* passage on the soiled wings of a fallen angel – 'playing at hawk and buzzard between sense and nonsense' (xvi, 118) – and a *Blackwood's* passage on the 'cowl and hood' of Coleridgean abstraction (2 [October 1817], 5). But the crowning allusion in the context of the Dedication may be to Hunt's mockery of Coleridge's esoteric defences of Southey during the Controversy: 'His ally, who has a trick of "encumbering with help"' (*Examiner*, 13 April 1817, 237 – itself alluding to Johnson's *Letter to Chesterfield*).

86 Jeffrey's contribution to the Wat Tyler Controversy was characteristically and wonderfully dry but it borrowed morceaux from Hazlitt verbatim and leant so heavily on his *Examiner* essays in its caricature of the Laureate as an 'oracular weathercock' that it can even be considered a joint production (*Edinburgh* 28 [March 1817], 164; compare Hazlitt vii, 203).

87 Dedication, 17:4 (*Complete Poetical Works*, V, 8).

The most obvious, and the most obvious continuation of the sexual disputations we examined in Part II, is argued for by Charles Robinson: ‘The liberties Hazlitt took in and with his *Liber Amoris* stemmed, in part, from his reading of *Don Juan*.⁸⁸ One of the two qualities Hazlitt did recognize in Byron’s *ottava rima* was its spirit of contradiction in the face of the infuriate tide of conservative innuendo: ‘The extravagance and licence of the one seems a proper antidote to the bigotry and narrowness of the other’ (xi, 77).⁸⁹ The liberty of Hazlitt’s own licence is less playful and more self-lacerating but the inspirations for his act of reputational self-harm included Byron meeting his Moscow in *Juan* and his Waterloo in *Cain*.⁹⁰

The second feature Hazlitt responded to in *Don Juan* was its reflexivity. He was actually disagreeing with the view that it was ‘a TRISTRAM SHANDY in rhyme’ when he described it as ‘a poem written about itself’ (xi, 75n.). But Byron came to think in this way of his mock-epic’s later English cantos, which Hazlitt preferred to the earlier instalments: ‘I mean it for a poetical T Shandy – or Montaigne’s Essays with a story for a hinge.’⁹¹ Hazlitt did not need anyone to tell him about the qualities of Sterne or indeed of Montaigne, whom he had praised for saying ‘what is uppermost’ (vi, 93) before the narrator of *Don Juan* professed to ‘write what’s uppermost.’⁹² In the Advertisement to the 1825 Paris edition of *Table-Talk* Hazlitt also claims his own social intercourse had persuaded him it was ‘possible to combine the advantages of the two styles, the *literary* and *conversational*’ (viii, 333). In acknowledging that his digressions risk appearing either too ‘metaphysical’ or too ‘desultory’ (viii, 333), he happens to echo two celebrated passages in the contemporary work which had already demonstrated that the literary and the conversational could be combined:

But I am apt to grow too metaphysical:
 ‘The time is out of joint’ – and so am I;
 I quite forget this poem’s merely quizzical [...]
 I don’t know that there may be much ability
 Shown in this sort of desultory rhyme;
 But there’s a conversational facility [...]⁹³

The turn from the ‘we’ of *The Round Table* to the ‘I’ of *Table-Talk* and *The Plain Speaker* most obviously stems from the fact that the first collection was a joint

88 Robinson, ‘Hazlitt and Byron’, 27.

89 A three-part *Examiner* article on ‘Canting Slander’ which defends *Don Juan* at more length from evangelical accusations of licentiousness has, however doubtfully, been ascribed to Hazlitt (*New Writings*, ed. D. Wu, 2 vols [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997], I, 406–34).

90 See *Don Juan* XI, 56: 1–2 (*Complete Poetical Works*, V, 482), lines which Hazlitt quotes in *The Spirit of the Age* (xi, 74n.). Wu proposes Byron’s *Sardanapalus* may also have played a role in Hazlitt’s decision to leap ‘on his own pyre’ (‘Talking Pimples’, 22–4).

91 *Byron’s Letters and Journals*, X, 150.

92 *Don Juan* XIV, 7:5 (*Complete Poetical Works*, V, 561).

93 *Don Juan*, IX, 41:1–3; XV, 20:1–3 (*Complete Poetical Works*, V, 421; 594).

production with Hunt. It can also be read as Hazlitt's retreat from full political engagement back into himself. But the 'personal authorship' of the later essays, if fathered by Montaigne (iv, 7), has some kinship with the poet who made centos out of his wide-ranging experience to 'build up common things with common places'.⁹⁴ The familiarity of the periodical essayist, like the *Blackwood's*-inflected banter of *Don Juan*, can be seen as reinforcing social distinctions as much as it elides them, especially for the schools of late twentieth-century criticism which propose that the inspired author seeking out an enlightened reader is the final fetish of Romantic ideology. Byron's *ottava rima* and Hazlitt's essay collections are still more readable, and were more read, than the lumbering *Excursion* or wavering *Biographia*.

Finally, *The Liberal* brings Hazlitt and Byron together, however temporary and loose the alliance. The two little masterpieces they offer to the journal reflect their very different backgrounds and methods but also distil their shared obsession with the Lake poets. It was perhaps an accident of timing that 'The Vision of Judgment' ended up in the new journal but it was deliberately positioned as the teaser of the first issue in 1822 and had a devastating effect. Just as the *Anti-Jacobin* parodies of 1798 had gagged Southey's protest poetry, forcing him to become the 'living undertaker' of the annotated epic (v, 164), after Byron's parody he fell almost mute as Laureate and concentrated instead on prose and anthology. 'My First Acquaintance with Poets' also goes back to 1798 but, rather than silencing the voices of Coleridge and Wordsworth, seeks to recover their fullest flavours. At the same time, it is a calculated contribution to a liberal periodical where the trajectory taken by its enemies, however parenthetically referenced, is always resonating.⁹⁵

The Liberal is too often viewed through the shipwrecked prism of its surviving contributors' retrospective disappointment. Jane Stabler is one of several critics who have recently challenged the consensus that the journal was 'something that never really came together before it fell apart'.⁹⁶ The project may have had impossible ambitions: the levelling of traditional prejudices based on rank, on nationality, on established religion, and – although Byron and Hazlitt would not be especially attuned to this aspect supervised by Mary Shelley – on gender.⁹⁷ But

94 *Don Juan*, XIV, 7:8 (*Complete Poetical Works*, V, 561). Compare *The Plain Speaker's* citation of Montaigne's *Essays* as an example of 'a stock of common sense and common feeling to furnish subjects for common conversation', even if Hazlitt then ruefully acknowledges that 'taste is a luxury for the privileged few' (xii, 26–7).

95 Hazlitt gives a dutiful little puff to 'The Vision' in 'My First Acquaintance' (xvii, 115) but perhaps the dark parallel to his essay in Byron's oeuvre is the figure of the 'sad trimmer' in *Don Juan* III, a perfectly achieved composite Laureate deeply implicated with Byron himself, who momentarily recovers the vatic voice of his 'warm youth' in the very act of being a paid court poet (*Complete Poetical Works*, V, 187).

96 Jane Stabler, 'Religious Liberty in the "Liberal"' (2015), *BRANCH: Britain, Representation and Nineteenth-Century History*, ed. D.F. Felluga. Extension of *Romanticism and Victorianism on the Net* available online at https://www.branchcollective.org/?ps_articles=jane-stabler-religious-liberty-in-the-liberal [accessed 22 January 2019].

97 Mary Shelley's contributions are as stimulating as they are understated: the little piece on Madame d'Houtetot draws a portrait of a poetess of fragments treated like a piece of

the considerable achievements of its four issues constitute a cosmopolitan defence of poetry, even if Percy Shelley's essay with that title was not published there as intended. Like the Shelleys, Hazlitt and Byron were both well aware of the many complications arising from 'zeal in the cause of freedom' (xi, 78). The same logic applies to *The Liberal's* inevitable caricature of the 'morality of slaves and turncoats,' which over-simplifies the legitimate questions Wordsworth and Coleridge asked about freedom's complications.⁹⁸ But, as we approach the bicentenary of *The Liberal*, it is perhaps a time to be making fewer excuses for its contributors. We should celebrate its epitaph to their genius and their humanity.

THE BYRON SOCIETY, LONDON

property, a figure at the epicentre of the Rousseauvian earthquake but also 'a last relic of the age of Louis XV' (*Liberal* 2 [1823], 69–83).

98 [Leigh Hunt], 'Preface' (*Liberal* 1 [1822]), vi.

A LOVER'S DISCOURSE IN *LIBER AMORIS*

Mario Aquilina

Bringing Roland Barthes into dialogue with William Hazlitt's *Liber Amoris* – into Hazlitt's circle – is not an unprecedented move. Gregory Dart does this briefly in his introduction to *Liber Amoris* when he describes the book as an exploration of “‘that madness we want’” in love.¹ ‘[T]hat madness we want’ is a phrase adapted from Roland Barthes's question in *A Lover's Discourse*, ‘shall I deliberate if I must go mad (is love, then, that madness *I want?*)’, and the subtle change of Barthes's first person singular ‘I’ to Dart's plural ‘we’ is significant.² Dart's suggestion, which is in tune with Barthes's ideas about love, is that the madness of love is not only Hazlitt's. It is, in other words, also ours.

Reading Hazlitt's *Liber Amoris* alongside Barthes, in fact, often takes this direction of emphasizing the generalizability of Hazlitt's sentiments and feelings. Charles Mahoney, for instance, uses Barthes to argue that *Liber Amoris* should be read primarily as a lover's discourse.³ *Liber Amoris*, Mahoney tells us, is similar to Barthes's *A Lover's Discourse* in being a restaging or performance rather than an analysis or an expression of love. It is ‘a structural portrait of love; ‘not merely autobiographical, and [...] certainly not a sentimental novel [...] *not a love story*’.⁴ *Liber Amoris*, Mahoney insists, is ‘not the narrative of an episode but the sentiment of love itself’.⁵ It performs the scene of a lover trying – but ultimately failing – to figure out an unknowable other.⁶ Citing Barthes's fragment on the figure of the ‘unknowable’ (‘*inconnaisable*’), Mahoney describes Sarah as an ‘entirely figural’ persona that constitutes ‘an insoluble riddle’ for Hazlitt, who is in turn cast as a critic torn by ‘interpretative anxiety’.⁷ He thus reads Hazlitt's account of his love for

1 Gregory Dart, ‘Introduction’ to William Hazlitt, *Liber Amoris and Related Writings*, ed. Gregory Dart (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 2008), 1.

2 Roland Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*, trans. Richard Howard (Vintage Books: London, 2002), 190.

3 Charles Mahoney, ‘*Liber Amoris*: Figuring Out the Coquette’, *European Romantic Review* 10:1 (1999), 23–52.

4 *Ibid.*, 27, 41.

5 *Ibid.*, 41.

6 *Ibid.*, 41.

7 Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse*, 134–5; Mahoney, ‘*Liber Amoris*’, 26, 24.

Sarah Walker as part of a wider tradition of discourse on love. In doing so, he builds on the work of other critics of *Liber Amoris* that focus on its aesthetic aspects, such as Robert Ready, who delineates in detail the literary affinities of *Liber Amoris*,⁸ and P.P. Howe, who argues that *Liber Amoris* is 'a perfectly deliberate and a highly characteristic work of art issued to the public in a certain form in the author's own lifetime and in the maturity of his genius'.⁹

For Howe, 'Our view of the *Liber Amoris* as a work of imaginative art has been seriously impeded by the circumstance that it is founded on fact', and he critiques exclusively biographical approaches that 'have elbowed out aesthetic appreciation altogether'.¹⁰ Ready adopts a similar approach to it, and he argues that 'Hazlitt did not discover the literary material inherent in the projective psychology of love' since 'that material is as old as the Pygmalion legend itself, and one could trace Pygmalion motifs through all of love literature'.¹¹ However, as Howe himself admits, 'the field of aesthetic regard' does not exclude that of 'biographical explication', and it is this undecidable relation between its literariness and its being based on occasionally unsavoury fact that I discuss in what follows.¹² More specifically, I read *Liber Amoris* as *subject to* while *performing* what we might call, following Jacques Derrida, the logic of the law or principle of contamination, that is, the idea that the formulation of laws or borders, such as those delineating genre, can only happen simultaneously with the recognition of their always already possible transgression.¹³ *Liber Amoris* may be described as impure, primarily in the sense of being infiltrated by extraneous matter that disrupts identity, both that of the figures in the text but also of the text itself. The impurity is not primarily moral but constitutional, that is to say, *Liber Amoris* is constituted by impurity, and this impurity limits the possibility of interpretative exhaustiveness because it does not allow us to assume an unhesitating critical position in relation to its textual status.

In his experimental autobiography, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, Barthes writes how the writing of one's own life 'must all be considered as if spoken by a character in a novel'.¹⁴ Writing about oneself, Barthes suggests in this book of fragments and images, involves an inevitable incursion into the social dimension

8 Robert Ready, 'The Logic of Passion: Hazlitt's *Liber Amoris*', *Studies in Romanticism* 14:1 (1975), 41–57. Ready shows that *Liber Amoris* is abounding in literary affinities not only to Goethe's *Sorrows of the Young Werther* (1774), Rousseau's *Confessions* (1788) and *New Heloise* (1758), as well as the myth of Pygmalion, but also to works of contemporaries of Hazlitt like Blake, Coleridge, and Keats as well as works that were written after *Liber Amoris* by Hardy, Proust, Yeats, Sartre, Jung, and others.

9 P.P. Howe, 'Hazlitt and "Liber Amoris"', *Fortnightly Review* 99 (February 1916), 300–10: 300.

10 *Ibid.*, 300.

11 Ready, 'The Logic of Passion', 45.

12 Howe, 'Hazlitt and "Liber Amoris"', 300.

13 See Jacques Derrida, 'The Law of Genre', trans. Avital Ronell, in *Parages*, ed. John P. Leavey (Stanford: Stanford University Press), 217–49.

14 Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 2010), epigraph without pagination. Italics in the original.

of the symbolic, and thus one's writing about oneself can never be exclusively delimited to its relevance to the writer's individual life. One is always dispossessed by language that exceeds the narcissistic limits of the individual, even when the writer attempts to convey real life experiences, and there is thus an inevitable slide into a common discourse (such as the literary). From this perspective, therefore, any response to life-writing purely in terms of its relation to 'fact' is reductive.

Liber Amoris is somewhat hybrid in form. It is partly drama, partly epistolary, and partly reflective prose. However, it is not hybridity that makes *Liber Amoris* undecidable and impure in the senses I mean here, but rather, the way in which the text refuses to allow itself to be classified exclusively as either autobiographical or fictional, that is, whether it invites us to read it in terms of its relation to fact or its status as literature. As John Frow argues, 'Genre shapes strategies for occasions; it gets a certain kind of work done', so when genre is undecidable the 'work' to be done in the reading becomes difficult to ascertain.¹⁵

An aspect of *Liber Amoris* that highlights this undecidability is its epistolary nature. The letters for which documentary evidence has been found, for instance, may seem to gesture to a simple correspondence between Hazlitt and H., but even here things are problematic. Hazlitt includes letters in Part III for which there is probably no original; he edits several letters for which there is an original by censoring some of his most explicit phrases and passages; and he reorders the chronology of the letters for narrative and thematic continuity.¹⁶ A significant inclusion is a passage from a cancelled draft of 'The Fight' in Letter VI of Part II in *Liber Amoris*. Noted by Duncan Wu and cited by Dart in an editorial note, it exposes the permeability of the text to its outside with a letter supposedly addressed to Hazlitt's friend Patmore being intermixed with a paragraph originally drafted for an essay in Hazlitt's name as an essayist.¹⁷ Inversely, but also revealingly, Dart notes that the essay 'The Fight' included, in an earlier draft than that published, a passage concerning Sarah Walker which Hazlitt eventually deleted.¹⁸ Drawing the boundaries of *Liber Amoris* as text, and hence as belonging to a specific genre, is highly problematic.

The undecidability of *Liber Amoris* can also be seen in the figure of S. By undecidability, here, I do not mean 'ambiguity' or 'indeterminacy' but the impossibility of fully conforming to one side of a dichotomy or an opposition. In other words, I am not referring to the struggle to interpret what S.'s real intentions are, as depicted in the text, whether she is a coquette, a manipulator, or a victim. I am referring, rather, to the way in which S. is always already involved in a movement of displacement in the very act of being named, thus disrupting the simple correspondence between Sarah Walker and the textual S.

15 John Frow, *Genre* (2006; 2nd edn, London and New York: Routledge, 2015), 15.

16 For details about such changes, see, for instance, Dart's editorial notes in *Liber Amoris*, 223–38.

17 *Ibid.*, 227.

18 *Ibid.*, 239.

Hazlitt writes: 'It is herself that I love' (ix, 121),¹⁹ and he recounts a conversation in which he tells Sarah: 'I care not what thou art, while thou art still thyself' (ix, 103). It is, therefore, 'herself' or as he tells her, 'thyself'; that Hazlitt loves. It is Sarah herself, 'whatever' she is (ix, 103). And yet, the proper name that presumably identifies Sarah Walker, and only her, is not only partially elided by a half-hearted attempt to cover her identity in the published manuscript, but is continuously, almost obsessively, replaced by many other proper names or descriptive phrases. Sarah Walker is S., she is 'Infelice' (ix, 102). She is 'my Eve' (ix, 126), 'the little Greek slave, Myrrha' (ix, 119), 'the false Florimel' (ix, 159). She is 'the new Calypso' (ix, 118), 'the statue' (ix, 117), 'an arrant jilt' (ix, 118), a 'sweet rogue' (ix, 118), a 'saint' (ix, 137), an 'exquisite witch' (ix, 104), 'a little sorceress' (xi, 109), an 'infection' (ix, 121), a 'guardian-angel' (ix, 126), an 'earthly Goddess' (ix, 156), a 'creature' (ix, 112, 119), "a pensive nun, devout and pure" (ix, 102), a 'coquet' (ix, 141), an 'artful vixen' (ix, 127), an 'unfeeling girl' (ix, 128), 'my heart's idol' (ix, 119), a 'little trifler' (ix, 143), a 'whore,' a 'consummate hypocrite,' a 'little monster of lust or avarice or treachery,' and more.²⁰

Liber Amoris ends with the following lines, in which H. envisions a prospective end of his infatuation with Sarah:

I am afraid she will soon grow common to my imagination, as well as worthless in herself. Her image seems fast 'going into the wastes of time,' like a weed that the wave bears farther and farther from me. Alas! Thou poor hapless weed, when I entirely lose sight of thee, and for ever, no flower will ever bloom on earth to glad my heart again! (ix, 162)

These lines reinforce the displacement which makes S. an undecidable figure throughout the text in which common nouns that describe Sarah through metaphors or similes and names of characters from literary tradition substitute for her name. Indeed, it is not only at the end that Sarah grows 'common to [Hazlitt's] imagination,' but she is always already being turned from a singular individual into what Barthes calls 'the speech of the People [...], the non-subjective mass (or of the generalized subject).'²¹ In this extract, however, Hazlitt takes the displacement even further when he writes not of her, but of *her image* in terms of similes. It is not only Sarah 'herself' that becomes something else but her image that is now 'like a weed that the wave bears farther and farther from [him]' (ix, 162). The Shakespearean image of the weed and waves – here used both as a simile and as a metaphor – does not specifically refer to Sarah Walker, but to her 'image,' that is, not Sarah but Hazlitt's literary conception of her in his imagination or language.

19 All quotations from Hazlitt are taken from *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. P.P. Howe, 21 vols (London and Toronto: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1930–4). References are by volume and page.

20 For the last three phrases, see Dart, *Liber Amoris*, 231–3.

21 Barthes, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, 4.

This double displacement of the proper into the common in the depiction of Sarah is also at work in the opening of *Liber Amoris*. There, where the generic borders of the text are supposedly to be established, we find a series of frames that rather than delineate what is to follow, highlight its impurity: firstly, the title, *Liber Amoris; Or, The New Pygmalion*, immediately gestures at the displacement at work in the text. What we are to read, presumably, is another version of the myth. H., S., and the text itself are then immediately posited as being marked by an alterity which anticipates them.

Second, in the Advertisement Hazlitt writes that the text which follows was transcribed very carefully by a 'native of North Britain' who is now 'dead' (ix, 97). We read that the manuscript has been reproduced faithfully – not a word has been altered, though the names and circumstances have been disguised 'as to prevent any consequences resulting from the publication' (ix, 97). We know, of course, that the disguise was too thin to be anything but half-hearted, that Hazlitt is not a native of North Britain and that he is not 'dead' at the time of publication, so what the Advertisement really does is not describe the text but actually dissimulate it, hiding it, further problematizing the generic categorization of what follows as autobiography.

The vignette on the title page of the 1823 edition of *Liber Amoris* is also significant. This image, Dart tells us, is from a portrait 'thought to resemble Sarah Walker', which Hazlitt copied from 'an old master'.²² Thus, a copy of Hazlitt's own copy of a master's portrait depicting someone else is here made to frame the book. The image signifies metaphorically. It stands in for Sarah, or, more precisely, for Hazlitt's perception of Sarah through resemblance to the work of an old master. The image also signifies metonymically, as it becomes clear in the opening of the first section of Part I of the book, entitled 'The Picture'. This opening in *medias res* presents us with an exchange between H. and S., precisely about the portrait reproduced in the title page:

H. Oh! Is it you? I had something to show you – I have got a picture here. Do you know any one it's like?

S. No, Sir.

H. Don't you think it like yourself?

S. No: it's much handsomer than I can pretend to be.

H. That's because you don't see yourself with the same eyes that others do. I don't think it handsomer, and the expression is hardly so fine as yours sometimes is.

S. Now you flatter me. Besides, the complexion is fair, and mine is dark.

H. Thine is pale and beautiful, my love, not dark! But if your colour were a little heightened, and you wore the same dress, and your hair were let down over your shoulders, as it is here, it might be taken for a picture of you. Look here, only see how like it is. The forehead is like, with that little obstinate protrusion in the middle; the eyebrows are like, and the eyes are just like yours, when you look up and say – 'No – never!' (ix, 99)

22 Dart, *Liber Amoris*, 219.

H. sees a resemblance between S. and the picture he shows her, the same image as that on the title page. S. rejects the comparison outright, but this image, H. insists, 'might be taken for a picture of [her]' (ix, 99), especially if S. were to go through a series of transformations ('if your colour were a little heightened, and you wore the same dress, and your hair were let down over your shoulders, as it is here, it might be taken for a picture of you' [ix, 99]). Ironically, H. sees the resemblance specifically when S. looks up to him and says: 'No – Never', that is, when she rejects and resists him (ix, 99).

This picture has a problematic status as it appears 'on either side' of what Derrida calls 'the invisible line that separates title from text'.²³ The title of a book, together with the other paratextual material that accompanies it usually 'allows us to classify it in a library', or at least this is what often happens in nonfictional texts.²⁴ But the paratextual material that includes the title, the vignette, and the advertisement, rather than defining the text which follows, problematizes it and its generic affiliations.

The undecidability in *Liber Amoris*, therefore, is not simply the unknowability of Sarah as an elusive figure. The generic status of the text itself, and hence of our relation to it as readers, starts from the undecidable. Fluid subjects are at stake, and it is difficult to simply establish a one-to-one correspondence between text and world.

The identity of H. and his relation to Hazlitt, which is a crucial consideration in any evaluation of *Liber Amoris*, is also acutely unstable. As Kurt M. Koenigsberger writes, 'the self represented in the text – whether one takes it to be H. – or Hazlitt – is not self-identical, is not an *individual*, but rather participates in its own narrative without fully belonging as its identical subject'.²⁵ This impurity – the being both in and out of textual borders – means that purely literary or purely biographical approaches are reductive. As Koenigsberger argues, criticism of Hazlitt's *Liber Amoris* has tended to reinforce an 'excluded middle'.²⁶ Indeed, the book is often presented either as absolutely other, a text to reject and condemn due to the shameful events it recounts, or as 'an exemplar of virtual sameness', a text to domesticate and canonize as literature, that is, a text that signifies primarily within the context of literary tradition and the conventions of the discourse of love that extend till Barthes and beyond.²⁷

What Barthes does in *A Lover's Discourse* – the book is not simply a discussion of the discourse of love but its performance – is to show how much of what we say about ourselves and about love always already comes from elsewhere and feeds that elsewhere. In writing the self, in writing love, the text, under the thrall of the

23 Jacques Derrida, 'Before the Law' in *Acts of Literature*, ed. Derek Attridge (New York: Routledge, 1992), 189.

24 *Ibid.*, 189.

25 Kurt M. Koenigsberger, 'Liberty, Libel, and *Liber Amoris*: Hazlitt on Sovereignty and Death', *Studies in Romanticism*, 38:2 (1999), 281–309: 283.

26 *Ibid.*, 288.

27 *Ibid.*, 287.

symbolic, dispossesses the individual self, and a similar dispossession happens to readers of such text. Singular discourses about love become a lover's discourse, and Barthes tries to show this with a series of rhetorical figures that any lover speaks.

This article could indeed have outlined the extensive correspondence between Hazlitt's *Liber Amoris* and the rhetorical figures in Barthes's *A Lover's Discourse*. These correspondences between texts about love would be, as Barthes puts it in relation to the multiple sources he cites, a form of 'recalling [...] what has seduced, convinced, or what has momentarily given the delight of understanding (of being understood?)'.²⁸ From this perspective, to quote Barthes, 'it is a lover who speaks' and not a specific one;²⁹ or, following Ready, we can say this is 'a prototype of a lover'.³⁰ So many figures outlined by Barthes throughout his work, such as 'absence', 'anxiety', 'waiting', 'demons', 'drama', 'faults', 'embarrassment', the 'unbearable', 'jealousy', 'letter', the 'monstrous', the 'obscene', 'crying', 'ravishment', 'suicide', 'truth', and the 'will-to-possess' provide obviously relevant parallels.³¹ Textualization, in other words, links all the lovers in the world, and this is not simply a Barthesian motif but also a potential way of accounting for an aspect of Hazlitt's style in *Liber Amoris*, with its continuous allusions to and quotations from literary tradition.³² Milton, Rousseau, Spenser, Keats, Byron, Dekker, Goethe, and classical myth are obviously there. Shakespeare is everywhere in and around *Liber Amoris*, including in a letter about Sarah Walker that Hazlitt sent to P.G. Patmore and that he eventually decided to include in the book:

If you think me right, all engines set at work at once that punish ungrateful woman. Oh! Lovely Renton-Inn, here I wrote a volume of Essays, here I wrote my enamoured follies to her, thinking her human and that 'below was not all the fiend's' here I got two answers from the little witch, and here I was cuckolded and I was damned. I am only a fool, would I were mad!³³

In this letter, in which Hazlitt angrily and unpoetically urges Patmore to 'try' Sarah Walker in order for him to ascertain what kind of character she is, Hazlitt expresses his bitterness by embodying and adapting words and phrases from the king's lines in *King Lear*. Lear's invocation to the winds to 'Crack nature's molds, all germens spill at once / That make ingrateful man!' becomes an invocation to 'all engines [to] punish ungrateful woman'.³⁴ Hazlitt regrets having thought

28 Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse*, 9.

29 Ibid, 9.

30 Ready, 'The Logic of Passion', 52.

31 Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse*, see Contents page.

32 For a discussion of Hazlitt's intertextual style and his use of Shakespearean quotations, see Mario Aquilina, 'Echoing as Self-fashioning in the Essay: Hazlitt's Quoting and Misquoting of Shakespeare', *Polysèmes: Revue d'études intertextuelles et intermédiaires*, 20 (2018), DOI: 10.4000/polysemes.4262.

33 Letter written to Patmore between 10–14 June 1822, as cited in Dart, *Liber Amoris*, 231.

34 *King Lear*, III.2.8–9.

that 'below was not all the fiend's' (echoing Lear's raving claim, in response to his daughters' betrayal, that 'beneath is all the fiends') and he thinks of himself in terms of the foolishness and madness interplay that is central to *King Lear*.³⁵ The tendency to resort to literary allusions – especially from Shakespeare – in expressing intense and personal feelings is a characteristic of Hazlitt's writing. His style, while instantly recognizable and marked by a clear sense of individual voice, continuously incorporates words and phrases that come from elsewhere, especially from literary tradition.

In *Liber Amoris*, the permeability of identity that marks the 'lover's discourse' can be gleaned further, for instance, in the often discussed 'little image' of Napoleon (ix, 112). H. sees a correspondence between him and S. when she admits to still having feelings for someone else even if she has long ceased to hope or can only 'hope against hope' (ix, 110). H., S., and her lover are thus bound in a triangular relation characterized by the improbability or impossibility of love, but also by solipsistic projection. Just as H. sees an unlikely resemblance of S. in a portrait, she sees a resemblance between a small bronze figure of Bonaparte and her old lover. H. asks if 'there was not a likeness between [him] and [her] old lover', but the resemblance she insists on, instead, is in what she calls the 'little image' of Bonaparte (ix, 112). '[A]ll but the nose was just like' her old lover, she says in a way that recalls H.'s own attempt to see and prove a resemblance between S. and the little portrait (ix, 112). Hazlitt tells Sarah: 'Ah! dear girl, these are the ideas I have cherished in my heart, and in my brain; and I never found any thing to realise them on earth till I met with thee, my love!' (ix, 99). S. too projects similarities onto another who, for different reasons, does not reciprocate her love. In this, they are alike, but what makes this parallelism or doubling between them even stronger for H. is 'that the God of [his] idolatry, that is Bonaparte, 'should turn out to be like her Idol' (ix, 112).

In *A Lover's Discourse*, Barthes writes about how, in love, 'the subject painfully identifies himself with some person (or character) who occupies the same position as himself in the amorous structure'.³⁶ This identification, Barthes writes, 'is not a psychological process' but 'a pure structural operation: I am the one who has the same place I have [...] I am to X what Y is to Z [...] I am caught in a mirror which changes position and which reflects me wherever there is a dual structure'.³⁷ The structural analogy that Barthes notes in the love relation, with 'certain points [being] arranged in a certain order around one point',³⁸ also clearly recalls Jacques Lacan's famous seminar on Edgar Allan Poe's detective story, 'The Purloined Letter'. Through a discussion of a series of triangular relations among the characters of Poe's detective story, Lacan here argues that 'it is the symbolic order which is constitutive for the subject'.³⁹ In other words, the subject is constituted by its

35 *King Lear*, IV.6.122.

36 Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse*, 129.

37 *Ibid*, 129.

38 *Ibid*, 130.

39 Jacques Lacan, 'Seminar on "The Purloined Letter"', trans. Jeffrey Mehlman, in *The Purloined Poe: Lacan, Derrida, and Psychoanalytic Reading*, eds. J. P. Muller and W.J.

relation to the signifier, or, more precisely, by a series of intersubjective relations among different subjects that undergo displacement according to their changing relations to the signifier.

When Barthes writes in *A Lover's Discourse* that '[a] long chain of equivalences links all the lovers in the world', he is adapting a Lacanian conception of the subject to the topic of discourse about or of love.⁴⁰ In doing so, he focuses not on the singularity of the lover but on that which makes him equivalent to others. Stylistically, *A Lover's Discourse* performs this equivalence through Barthes's fragmentary style that incorporates 'pieces of various origin [that] have been "put together"' from texts, particularly from Goethe's *Werther*, as well as from conversations with friends.⁴¹ These fragments, Barthes tells us, also come from his 'own life'.⁴²

This mixture of the textual elsewhere and life experiences is of course also central to Hazlitt's *Liber Amoris*. Here too the subject is structured by relations of displacement that link not only H. to S. and to her lover as well as to various little images or signifiers like the portrait and the Bonaparte figure, but also to the reader, who not only identifies with the protagonists in their specific relations in the signifying structure but also recognizes allusions and citations that emphasize the doubling and redoubling of lovers across time. This may be illustrated further by returning once more to Hazlitt's use of quotations from Shakespeare in *Liber Amoris*. As in many of Hazlitt's essays and the letter to Patmore discussed above, Shakespeare figures heavily in *Liber Amoris*, and as elsewhere in his oeuvre, Hazlitt uses a combination of quotations reproduced word for word from Shakespeare and quotations that are adapted, to different degrees, from the original text.

For instance, when Hazlitt recounts speaking to Sarah's father about his relationship with his daughter, he presents himself as an ancient mariner who must tell his story, repeatedly, and who, like Othello with Desdemona, seduced Sarah with his words rather than his looks: 'So I told him the whole story, "what conjurations, and what mighty magic I won his daughter with"' (ix, 147). In a letter to Patmore reproduced in Part II of *Liber Amoris*, Hazlitt inverts a quote from Iago to speak about how he may be misreading Sarah's character. Iago's: 'To lip a wanton in a secure Couch, / And to suppose her chaste' becomes Hazlitt's 'To lip a chaste one and suppose her wanton',⁴³ which conveys H.'s thought that maybe Sarah is not deceiving him after all (ix, 120).

Such modifications of quotations, as well as the use of quotations in specific contexts, as in his comparison of Sarah with Dekker's Infelice, are often laced with irony, and this irony constructs the speaker not only as someone sharing feelings that others have already written about but also as an individual voice with its own individual take on these feelings. In other words, when Hazlitt cites Shakespeare,

Richardson (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 28–54: 29.

40 Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse*, 131.

41 Ibid, 8.

42 Ibid, 8.

43 *Othello*, IV.1.70–2.

for example, he does not simply defer to the old master's vision of the world, but countersigns it, so to speak, by echoing while at the same time veering from it in a singular way, often by modifying or misquoting the original. Take, for instance, the way Hazlitt cites Shakespeare's famous Sonnet 116 in a section entitled 'Unaltered Love':

Love is not love that alteration finds:
Oh no! it is an ever-fixed mark,
That looks on tempests and is never shaken. (ix, 133)

Here, Hazlitt adapts and edits Shakespeare in order to move between the individual and the general and back again. He contextualizes his love for Sarah within the tradition of the sonnet, but he also expresses his own conception of love by modulating Shakespeare's idealistic vision of unchanging love in the sonnets. Hazlitt's sentence, immediately following the quotation from Sonnet 116, is 'Shall I not love her for herself alone, in spite of fickleness and folly?' (ix, 133). The 'Shall I' reminds us of the opening verse of Shakespeare's Sonnet 18, 'Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?' Such affinities and allusions to Shakespeare are continuous in this section. Like the fair youth of the sonnets, the 'gentle thief' of Sonnet 40, S. is conceived as having 'robbed' H. (ix, 133). And like in Sonnet 40, in which Shakespeare implies that the fair youth has slept with his mistress, there is a third person involved; in the case of Hazlitt, the other to whom Sarah has turned. The structure of the passage, with its self-reflexive mode and tendency to move an argument or thought forward through an internal dialectic, is also heavily reminiscent of Shakespeare:

Is my love then in the power of fortune, or of her caprice? No, I will have it lasting as it is pure; and I will make a Goddess of her, and build a temple to her in my heart, and worship her on indestructible altars, and raise statues to her. (ix, 133)

The oppositional 'No', here, recalls Shakespeare's 'Oh no!' in Sonnet 116, which serves to allow Shakespeare to shift from negative definitions of love through what it is not to more assertive definitions of love in terms of what it is. Making a 'Goddess of her [Sarah]' (ix, 133) recalls Juliet's 'god of my Idolatry' as well as the use of such tropes in the sonnets, not only Shakespeare's, of course.⁴⁴

However, Hazlitt also departs from Shakespeare. He 'will pursue [Sarah] with an unrelenting love, and sue to be her slave' (ix, 133). He will 'mourn for her when dead. And thus [his] love will have shown itself superior to her hate' (ix, 134). 'I shall triumph and then die', he writes (ix, 134). The language of triumph, the idea of mourning when she is dead seems to run counter to the trope of self-belittlement that Shakespeare often employs in his sonnets. In Sonnet 71, for instance, the persona tells the Fair Youth:

44 *Romeo and Juliet*, II.2.156.

No longer mourn for me when I am dead

[...]

Nay, if you read this line, remember not

The hand that writ it; for I love you so,

That I in your sweet thoughts would be forgot,

If thinking on me then should make you woe.

Hazlitt echoes Shakespeare, but, as he writes at the end of this section: ‘This is [*his*] idea of the only true and heroic love!’ It is Hazlitt’s, even if presented through allusion to Shakespeare and the tradition of the sonnet more generally. ‘Such is mine for her’, Hazlitt says, reminding us that beyond the generalization that definitions of love may gesture at, there is his individual relation with Sarah (ix, 134).

In the next section, entitled ‘Perfect Love’, Hazlitt continues the abstract defining of love by not using the first person ‘I’ at all and by not referring in any way to either Sarah or himself. ‘Perfect love’, he writes, ‘has this advantage in it, that it leaves the possessor of it nothing farther to desire’ (ix, 134). The opening line, which is aphoristic in the way it conveys a truth in a simple sentence, introduces a short section in which Hazlitt speaks in primarily abstract ways about love. The style is lyrical and reflective: ‘There are no words so fine, no flattery so soft, that there is not a sentiment beyond them, that it is impossible to express, at the bottom of the heart where true love is’ (ix, 134). The romantic but also Shakespearean motif of words being insufficient to express pure love here turns *Liber Amoris* away from the obsession with the self towards a contemplation of a state beyond the self: ‘Perfect love reposes on the object of its choice, like the halcyon on the wave; and the air of heaven is around it’ (ix, 134). In truth, his relationship with Sarah brings anything but the halcyon days of calm; however, here, Hazlitt foreshadows, for instance, Barthes’s description of ‘complement’ or ‘fulfilment’ in *A Lover’s Discourse*, where Barthes speaks of ‘a perfect and virtually eternal success of [a] relation: paradisiac image of the Sovereign Good.’⁴⁵ At this level of abstraction, Hazlitt’s is a lover’s discourse that echoes tradition and that gestures at a significance beyond the biographical realities of his behaviour and that of Sarah Walker.

Referring to his autobiography, Barthes writes that it is ‘*as if*’ all this were ‘*spoken by a character in a novel*’. And yet, the fictionalization of the subject writing its own life, its being turned into literary discourse, is an ‘*as if*’ metamorphosis and not an absolute erasure of the biographical. Even in *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, and in *A Lover’s Discourse*, where the singularly autobiographical is curtailed far more forcibly than it is in Hazlitt’s *Liber Amoris*, the life of an individual and its realities still leave their indelible traces. The language may be spoken ‘*as if*’ it were from a character in a novel, but it is not. And while Hazlitt’s language may share extensive affinities with literary tradition, it is also the language of an individual who signs the writing in his name. Admittedly, Hazlitt disguises himself behind a threadbare veil of anonymity in not giving his name as the author of *Liber Amoris*,

45 Barthes, *A Lover’s Discourse*, 54.

but he signs his own name repeatedly – indirectly but indelibly – in a variety of ways. As noted above, he folds into the text of *Liber Amoris* passages intended for ‘The Fight’, an essay he did sign in his own name. He also reproduced real letters that he had sent and received, thus establishing an obvious link – even if ambiguous – between text and life. However, even if we were to ignore these pieces of evidence that depend on biographic investigation, Hazlitt signs in other ways, through effects of appropriation such as those that Derrida observes in Francis Ponge’s work.⁴⁶ Hazlitt does not publicly declare that *Liber Amoris* are his memoirs – thus trying, unconvincingly, to evade what Derrida calls the first modality of the signature, that is, the act of ‘authenticating (if possible) the fact that it is indeed he who writes.’⁴⁷ However, like Ponge, he weaves other appropriative dynamics into his writing. There is what Derrida describes as the second modality of the signature, which involves ‘style, the inimitable idiom of a writer’ that the signatory may ‘leave by accident or intention in his product.’⁴⁸ The peculiarly Hazlittian engagement with Shakespearean words, ideas, and tropes is one example of the signature of style.

Another is the self-reflexive irony in *Liber Amoris* which creates a kind of double voice that presents us with H. but also with a second voice – an authorial voice if you will – that modulates it and that filters it in various ways. For instance, when we read S. telling H.: ‘you sit and fancy things out of your own head, and then lay them to my charge’ (ix, 108), or when Hazlitt writes about the various pictures and images that are seen as resembling the object of love, we sense that Hazlitt’s vision is simultaneously clouded like H.’s as well as self-aware, at least to an extent. ‘I have mistook my person all the while’, he says, citing *Richard III*, before going on to tell Patmore that another picture he saw at Dalkeith Palace struck him as ‘the very pattern of her’ (ix, 137). Again, this is yet another moment of significance in showing the doubleness of the voice in *Liber Amoris*. For what H. tells us is entitled *Hope Finding Fortune in the Sea* is really called *Truth Finding Fortune in the Sea*. It is not *Hope* but *Truth* that the image portrays.⁴⁹

As Uttara Natarajan writes, there is a complex relation to the self in Hazlitt’s thinking, but ultimately there is also an endorsement of the ‘egotistical sublime’ rather than a simple diffusion of it.⁵⁰ This becomes more and more clear in Hazlitt’s work through his essays which tend increasingly more assiduously towards the autobiographical while still appealing to universal values. And as Natarajan argues, there is in *Liber Amoris* the simultaneous affirmation and critique of selfhood, a

46 Jacques Derrida, *Signéponge/Signsponge*, trans. Richard Rand (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984).

47 Derrida, *Signéponge/Signsponge*, 52.

48 Ibid, 52.

49 And what Hazlitt could not yet know is that the painting, then attributed to Luca Giordano, is now widely thought to have been the work of Pietro Liberi. There is double displacement then of the resemblance that H. sees between Sarah and the painting.

50 Uttara Natarajan, *Hazlitt and the Reach of Sense: Criticism, Morals, and the Metaphysics of Power* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), 102.

simultaneous denunciation of the dangers of solipsism and an affirmation of a solipsistic vision which seeks to transform the world into an image of one's own projection.⁵¹ The book suggests solipsism in its reference to Pygmalion in the title, and it begins with a scene depicting Sarah rejecting Hazlitt's moulding projections, but it ploughs on in the same vein.

As Dorothy Kelly argues, even if we understand autobiography, as Barthes does, as a co-creation of self and text through language that functions as a performance of the self rather than its expression, autobiography 'still *names* the self by saying that the text is the self; thus it still represents the self' even if the self is a performative creation.⁵² In other words, while there are many ways of limiting the effects of representation, naming is irrepressible, and *Liber Amoris* names. It names Hazlitt. And it names Sarah Walker. *Liber Amoris* is impure and undecidable in being both autobiographical and literary. It is marked by unpleasant details of Hazlitt's life and by intertextual allusions to literary tradition. Hazlitt signs in his own name and in the name of his life. He gives us himself, candidly, often embarrassingly so. But he also countersigns others, those who, like Shakespeare and Barthes, produce a discourse about love we can all identify with. It is, at one and the same time, Hazlitt's singular account of a series of events in his own life and 'a lover's discourse'. '[I]t is because of this homology', as Barthes puts it, 'that the love story "works" – sells.'⁵³

UNIVERSITY OF MALTA

51 Ibid, 188.

52 Dorothy Kelly, 'The Cracked Mirror: Roland Barthes's Anti-autobiography: *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes*' in *Roland Barthes, Critical Evaluations in Cultural Theory*, ed. Neil Badmington, 4 vols (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), II, 107–12: 109.

53 Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse*, 130.

Jonathan Mulrooney, *Romanticism and Theatrical Experience: Kean, Hazlitt, and Keats in the Age of Theatrical News*

pp. xii + 275 Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018. Cloth, £75.00.

Whereas some books reveal their game gradually, Jonathan Mulrooney's recent monograph shows its hand from the outset thanks to its striking, and extremely significant, cover image: a detail from John Orlando Parry's 'The Posterman' (1835), a large canvas depicting a London street scene taking place in front of a wall covered with several layers of posters – new and old, sticking and peeling off, and mostly made up of playbills and other advertisements for the entertainment industry. A well-known set-piece, this impressive painting crystallizes and spectacularizes a variety of cultural, social, and aesthetic themes and issues from the transitional years between Romanticism and Victorianism. Mulrooney rehearses these features in the opening pages of the book, but also specifically analyses 'The Posterman' in order to turn it into a window that opens onto a pervasively theatrical age and an age of theatrically-oriented media. The painting functions as a focusing device aimed at the processes at the centre of the book, which Mulrooney also brings to the fore by highlighting what remains implicit in Parry's visual narrative. Indeed, even though the painting depicts 'a public life outside the bounds of any kind of bourgeois public sphere', yet, the theatre it thematizes, with 'its publicity, its performances, and most especially the textual afterlife it occasioned in newsprint and periodicals' promoted 'the continuing reimagination of individual and collective experiences in Romantic-period England' (5).

In several ways, this book reflects the current status of Romantic-period drama and theatre studies. It signals that we are well past the days when literary scholars of the era were uninterested in drama and theatre, largely endorsing and rehearsing contemporary (conservative) judgements about a worthless, because degraded and decadent, stage. It also confirms the positive effects of the work done in recent years to explain to the scholarly community the nature and relevance of that dramatic and theatrical culture – and Mulrooney mentions with gratitude the many pioneering scholars and critics who have contributed to reintroducing theatre to the centre of our debates and who have set the discussion on new terms. But he does something else, too: he examines theatre as a pervasive force, infiltrating and modifying other cultural phenomena, and being changed by them; and, in doing so, points out a future critical and scholarly direction for studies of Romantic-period drama and theatre. To this end, he organizes his book in two sections: the first is entitled 'The Making of British Theater Audiences' and examines Britain's theatrical press between 1800–30; the second, 'Theater and Late Romanticism', explores the intersections of performance, theatrical journalism, and poetry by focusing on the connections linking Edmund Kean, William Hazlitt, and John Keats.

Moreover, though it has its sights set firmly on the stage, Mulrooney's book addresses some central questions in current Romantic-period studies in general,

most visibly, those related to the media and mediation, by its focus on reviewing, reporting, poetic composition, and performance as an act of (re)mediation. On the one hand, therefore, the book is in line with the attention given to, and rethinking of, mediation, promoted nearly a decade ago by Clifford Siskin and William Warner in *This is Enlightenment* (2010). On the other, it pursues its own investigation of a particularly complex, because multi-layered, case of mediation and its effects on cultural production and diffusion, casting light on the emergence and repercussions of a set of networked media, spaces, and institutions, in which the so-called 'OP [Old Price] Riots' played a crucial role (44). In the autumn of 1809, disturbances broke out at the reopened Covent Garden, as theatre-goers from the lower classes protested against the increase in admission prices and the reduced number of cheaper seats owing to the introduction of more, and more profitable, boxes. Lasting over several months, these riots caused an ideologically charged short circuit of performativity and writing that, Mulrooney argues, paved the way for an intersection between parliamentary 'intelligence' and theatre reportage, which became a distinctive cultural feature in post-Waterloo Romanticism (30, 43).

Romanticism and Theatrical Experience offers a wealth of valuable information, thanks to its reconstruction of the origin and flourishing of various types of theatrical journals. Mulrooney analyses the formats of these periodicals, their different ways of reporting on theatre and reviewing drama, and what they reported on or reviewed (in particular, the Hunts' *Examiner* stands out for its innovative ways of mediating drama and theatre). As a result, the pages of the theatrical press appear as a mosaic of multiform, adjacent materials, and are thus intriguingly akin to the contemporary structure of a theatrical evening, when different types of entertainment were mixed together to produce a combination of dissonant viewing experiences reflecting, as Mulrooney notes, the place of theatre in the broader cultural system. Given these premises, his book is not centrally concerned with the opposition between legitimate and illegitimate drama and theatre. Though not ignoring it, it does not insist on their contrapositions but rather investigates their interrelations. Drama and theatre – on stage and on the page – are presented as a pervasive socio-cultural phenomenon familiar also to those who were not theatre-goers. As noted above, one of the book's central concerns is the audience-making function of theatre and 'theatrical news', that is, their joint contribution to forming and informing the public and, more widely, the cultural system of Romantic-period Britain (in a note to the introduction, Mulrooney acknowledges his debt to what he calls Bourdieu's 'relational model of cultural production') (19).

If one were to list the book's keywords, they would include such terms as 'conversation' and 'coalescing' (6); at the same time, however, concepts of difference and contrast are crucial throughout. The idea that a cultural system functions through an alternation of encounters and breaks informs Mulrooney's analyses of interlocking case studies taken from the 'Cockney' environment. This enables him to bring into focus a kind of diffuse urban spectacularity, related to processes of critical, performative, and poetic creation, and characterized by gaps and breaks – indeed, by a fully-fledged 'poetics of interruption' and a 'resistance to narrative' that suspend 'progressive notions of personal and national history' (13). Hazlitt's 'occasionalism'

is a manifestation of this tendency in the field of theatrical news (152); so is Kean's acting, with its innovatively syncopated style; and similar strategies are found in Keats's verse, the litmus test of Mulrooney's argument and the book's lynchpin (his study starts and ends with Keats). This tightly interconnected triad certainly enables the author to make a strong case, and one may wonder whether his argument would be as convincing with a different cast in a different context. Even so, the Cockney triad indicates a valuable model and pattern for further examinations of similarly close-knit examples of theatrical pervasiveness, influence, and overlapping – and once again Parry's 'Posterman' is an apt icon here.

We should be grateful to Jonathan Mulrooney for writing a book that both plunges us into the lively panorama of the 1820s and 1830s, and yet also has much to say about the Romantic era as a whole. *Romanticism and Theatrical Experience* demonstrates that if drama and theatre have their specific features, they also participate in a collective space of cultural formation and re-formation through a constant redesigning of boundaries, processes, and media. Finally, Mulrooney's study invites us to problematize the category and role of experience, drawing our attention not only to drama and theatre as experiential dimensions, but also as phenomena that shaped experience, at once mirroring and informing subjective and collective identities in the rapidly-shifting environment of the later Romantic period.

DIEGO SAGLIA
UNIVERSITY OF PARMA



HAZLITT SOCIETY

FOUNDING PRESIDENT

Michael Foot

PRESIDENT

Sir Jonathan Bate

VICE PRESIDENTS

Ronald Blythe FRSL, DLitt

Michael Estorick

Peter McKay

Lord Myners of Truro CBE

Alan Rusbridger

Juan José Sánchez Arévalo

COMMITTEE

Chairman

Gregory Dart

Secretary

Helen Hodgson

Sir Geoffrey Bindman

A.C. Grayling

Philipp Hunnekuhl

Ian Mayes

Michael McNay

Uttara Natarajan

Duncan Wu

The Correspondent

James Whitehead

School of Humanities
and Social Science,

Liverpool John Moores
University, John Foster

Building, 80–98 Mount

Pleasant, Liverpool L3 5UZ

The Hazlitt Society grew out of the project to restore Hazlitt's long-neglected grave in St Anne's churchyard, Soho. It was restored by public subscription and the renewed gravestone, in black Lakeland slate, was unveiled by Michael Foot on the 225th anniversary of Hazlitt's birth, 10 April 2003. The committee which was formed for the purpose of the restoration established the Society to encourage appreciation of Hazlitt's work and to promote his values.

Each year there is a lecture by an eminent Hazlitt scholar on the Saturday closest to 18 September, the day Hazlitt died. A newsletter, sent out in the spring of each year, alerts members of the Society to this lecture, which is free of charge, and any other events that may be of interest to admirers of Hazlitt.

The Society is closely associated with the annual Hazlitt Day-school that takes place on the same day as the annual lecture in London. Members qualify for concessionary rates.

The Society publishes *The Hazlitt Review*.

hazlittsociety@gmail.com

www.ucl.ac.uk/hazlitt-society

