THE HAZLITT REVIEW

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VOLUME 7, 2014

Hazlitt and Theatre

Bodies that Thought: Hazlitt and Edmund Kean 5
PETER THOMSON

Embodying Shadows: Wilde and Hazlitt as Theatrical Writers 17
JOHN STOKES

'He Spoke to Charles Lamb': Reading and Performance in Hazlitt's *Lectures on the Age of Elizabeth* 31
TOM LOCKWOOD

A Tragedy Called 'The Last Man': Hazlitt's Joke on Francis Place 47
CLAIRE SHERIDAN

Book Reviews

Nikki Hessell, *Literary Authors, Parliamentary Reporters: Johnson, Coleridge, Hazlitt, Dickens* 57
reviewed by Scott McEathron

Gregory Dart, *Metropolitan Art and Literature, 1810–1840: Cockney Adventures* 61
reviewed by James Grande

Gavin Budge, *Romanticism, Medicine and the Natural Supernatural: Transcendent Vision and Bodily Spectres 1789–1852* 65
reviewed by James Whitehead

Report on the 12th Hazlitt Day-school and 2013 Annual Hazlitt Lecture 69
PHILIPP HUNNEKUHL

William Hazlitt Autograph Letters: A Query 73
CHARLES E. ROBINSON

THE HAZLITT REVIEW 7 (2014): 5–16
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BODIES THAT THOUGHT: HAZLITT AND EDMUND KEAN

Hazlitt Society Annual Lecture, 2013

Peter Thomson

If Hazlitt had elected to include an actor among the representatives of 'the spirit of the age', that actor would surely have been Edmund Kean. And he might well have done so: 'The merits of a new play or of a new actor are always among the first topics of polite conversation' (iv, 154),[1] he had written in 1817, and 'Who does not go to see Kean?' (iv, 157). But we are familiar by now with the dangers of sudden success. Kean was a penniless beggar on 25 January 1814 when he first played Shylock at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane: by 27 January he was famous, and by early summer he was rich. He was no better equipped than George Best or Amy Winehouse to assimilate such a change of fortune. Over the next few years, he strutted too much and fretted too little, liable to lord it over aspiring playwrights, as well as fellow actors, at Drury Lane. It may be that he was taking his primitive revenge on a social class that had doubted his talent; it may even be that there was political conviction in his defiance of propriety. But he was paving the road to his own destruction. This was already apparent in 1819, when Kean's blatant contempt for plays by Charles Bucke and Sir Walter Scott's protégée Jane Porter was exposed: in a letter to Robert Southey, Scott called him 'a copper-laced, twopenny tearmouth, rendered mad by conceit and success'.[2] But the critical fall from grace was delayed until January 1825, the month in which Hazlitt's pen portraits of prominent contemporaries were published in book form as *The Spirit of the Age*. And thereby hangs a tale that curiously links Hazlitt's *Liber Amoris* with a bundle of love letters tied up in a ribbon, Sarah Walker with Charlotte Cox.

It is, I suppose, a mere historical coincidence that, for upwards of two years in the early 1820s, Hazlitt and Kean were simultaneously in the grip of lamentable infatuations. It would seem, from the responses of contemporaries, that there was nothing extraordinary about either Sarah Walker or Charlotte Cox, but that is to disregard the impact of bodies on bodies. Kean had been 12 years married when

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

2 *The Letters of Sir Walter Scott*, ed. Herbert Grierson, 12 vols (London: Constable, 1932–7), V, 339.

'Mr. Kean as Shylock' (1827), Folger Shakespeare Library Digital Image Collection: K24.4 no.14. By permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.

he and Charlotte became lovers in the spring of 1820. A few months later, Hazlitt, also 12 years married, saw Sarah for the first time – the way she walked – and found himself freeze-framed in desire, if we allow that desire is 'love' with fewer clothes on. A. C. Grayling has anticipated the course of Hazlitt's first marriage in a pregnant sentence: he 'proposed to her while she was putting a kettle on for tea, a speaking concomitance of events, for Hazlitt loved tea'.[3] The problem was that both Kean and Hazlitt had powerful sex drives, which they had hoped to domesticate in wedlock, only to discover that marriage, rather than focusing sexuality, tended to discourage it. 'I do not think that what is called *Love at first sight* is so great an absurdity as it is supposed to be' (viii, 310), Hazlitt wrote while he was still dreaming of possessing Sarah Walker, and Kean, though less committed than Hazlitt to sincerity, shared the sentiment in a letter to Charlotte: 'from the first moment I saw you I loved, every hour that passion has increased'.[4] He had the advantage over Hazlitt of having already possessed Charlotte – countless times. If Sarah Walker was, in male parlance, a 'prick-teaser', Charlotte Cox was, in the same argot, a 'goer'. And, to begin with at least, it was small disadvantage for Kean that she had a husband, a complaisant, perhaps even a complicit one, 11 years her senior (she was 36 in 1820; Kean was 32). Robert Cox was a London Alderman, who may have recognized the benefit of entrusting the gratification of his wife's sexual appetite and, more so, her extravagance, to a rich lover. If so, it was possibly the decline in his finances through 1824 that brought matters to a head. There is no hard evidence that Charlotte hoped to marry Kean, but she seems to have craved the kudos of being his acknowledged mistress. The insistence on secrecy was all his, and it was probably impatience that impelled her into the bed of her husband's young clerk. *Liber Amoris* bears witness to the incendiary effect of the intervention of a rival lover, and the affair with Kean was effectively burned out by the time Charlotte further mortified her husband by moving in with her newer flame. But it was Kean, the wealthier target, whom Alderman Cox took to court for 'criminal conversation' with his wife. When the case was heard on 17 January 1825, Cox was hoping for damages of £2,000.

The crowded public gallery was treated to a sequence of excerpts from Kean's letters to Charlotte, the ribboned package she had thoughtlessly – or maliciously – left in her bedroom when she moved out. Some of these letters echo the breathy anguish of *Liber Amoris*: 'Oh God! Charlotte, how I love you. If such a feeling is a crime, why are we given it? I did not seek it'.[5] But there was another flavour in this relationship for the public gallery to relish: 'What the devil is the matter with you, you little bitch, if you do not be quiet, I will kick your arse'.[6] Hoots of laughter greeted Kean's references to Charlotte as 'Little Breeches' in raunchy recollection of the occasion when she paraded round his Drury Lane dressing-room in

3 A. C. Grayling, *The Quarrel of the Age* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2000), 117.

4 Raymund FitzSimons, *Edmund Kean: Fire from Heaven* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1976), 141.

5 Ibid, 162.

6 Ibid, 161–2.

nothing but the trunks he wore as Richard III.[7] What sealed his fate, though, was the duplicity of his dealings with Alderman Cox. Once Serjeant Denman had read aloud the letter Kean wrote to Cox – 'I must be the worst of villains if I could take that man by the hand, while meditating towards him an act of injustice' – the jury's verdict was assured.[8] He was fined £800, and *The Times* led the chorus of vilification. 'That obscene little personage', it called him, and more contemptuously still, 'this obscene mimic'.[9] There was, no doubt, a minority who admired Kean's determination to carry on acting, but the great British public is easily stirred to outrage by such shows of bravado. Kean's post-trial performances at Drury Lane were shouted down by the moral majority, and he never fully recovered from the debacle of 1825. After his death in 1833, there was an attempt to collect money for a memorial monument in Richmond. William Charles Macready, already touted as his successor to the throne of tragedy, was asked for £10. £10, he noted angrily in his *Diary*, for a monument to 'the greatest disgrace to the art of all the disgraceful members that ever practised it'.[10]

Hazlitt was there before Kean. Sarah Walker had forced on him a misty recognition of the male urge simultaneously to possess the body of the object of desire and invent the rest of her, and his impulse was to share his painful insight. The publication of *Liber Amoris* in 1823 provided his enemies with powerful ammunition. The book was immediately blistered by the *Literary Register*: 'an exposure of himself in all the nakedness of his conceit, selfishness, slavering sensuality, filthy profligacy, and howling idiotcy', 'indecent trash', 'the ordure of a filthy mind'.[11] And this about a book whose strange guilelessness offers an unparalleled portrait of himself to any male reader who has ever been honey-trapped into the abjectness of infatuation. *The Spirit of the Age* was a bold gesture to the many enemies who believed that the *Liber Amoris* experience might shame Hazlitt into silence. He was travelling on the continent with his second wife during the *Cox* v. *Kean* trial, but when the time came he sprang to the actor's defence with a generosity not unmixed with fellow-feeling. The occasion was his 1828 review of Kean's Shylock. This was the role in which Kean had made his Drury Lane debut in 1814, which Hazlitt's reviews had crucially boosted. In 1828, keyed up to confirm his rehabilitation in London, the actor had left Drury Lane for Covent Garden, but there was no escape there from derision. 'Who', wrote Hazlitt in the *Examiner*:

> Who that had felt Kean's immeasurable superiority in *Othello*, was not glad to see him brought to the ordinary level in a vulgar *crim. con.*? [...] What! You make him drunk and mad with applause and then blame him for not being sober, you lift him to a pinnacle, and then say he is not to be giddy, you

7 Ibid, 187.

8 Ibid, 170, 186.

9 Ibid, 195, 199.

10 *The Diaries of William Charles Macready*, ed. William Toynbee, 2 vols (London: Chapman and Hall, 1912), I, 159.

11 *The Literary Register* (19 July 1823), 41.

> own he is to be a creature of impulse, and yet you would regulate him like a machine, you expect him to be all fire and air, to wing the empyrean, and to take you with him, and yet you would have him a muck-worm crawling the earth. (xviii, 375–6)

To Hazlitt's eyes and ears, Kean was performing as well in 1828 as he had been in 1814. He had the same right to ply his trade of acting as Hazlitt himself did to ply his trade of writing.

There was, after all, much that the two men had in common. Unsurprisingly perhaps, since 'great' lives are promising from the start, and generally precarious. Hazlitt and Kean had both endured years of struggle and obscurity followed by sudden prominence. Both had seen one son die, and neither had found it easy to establish a confident relationship with the surviving son. Neither had found marriage sufficiently satisfying to silence the call of prostitutes, with the attendant peril of venereal disease and the side-effects of mercury treatment. There is, in their regular recourse to market sex, an impulse to which I will return in due course. It is among the matters of immeasurable significance that express what, in the comfort of armchair psychiatry, we like to call 'character'. My shading in of common ground here will be guided by three key words in Hazlitt's critical vocabulary: legitimacy, gusto, and sensibility.

Legitimacy

Hazlitt's assaults on legitimacy are frequent and well-known. His brilliantly destructive account of George Canning coheres around an insistence that 'All Mr. Canning's speeches are but so many different *periphrases* for this one word – *Legitimacy*. [...] With this word rounded closely in his ear, and with fifty evasions for it in his mouth, he advances boldly to "the deliverance of mankind" – into the hands of legitimate kings' (xi, 156). And Hazlitt's model of legitimate kingship is Henry V: 'He was a hero, that is he was ready to sacrifice his own life, for the pleasure of destroying thousands of other lives' (iv, 286). The radicals' name for legitimacy was 'old corruption'. Kean was never going to be as articulate as Hazlitt, but he was an equally conspicuous irritant to the powers that be.

In the theatres of Hanoverian England, 'legitimacy' was hierarchical. The high culture of the spoken drama was confined to the Theatres Royal of Drury Lane and Covent Garden. There was nowhere else for an ambitious actor to make his name in the circles where names were made. There were, to be sure, illegitimate theatres, and these were proliferating in nineteenth-century London. Kean was on the way to one, the Olympic, when the opportunity to perform at Drury Lane presented itself. It was a peculiar circumstance. Drury Lane, favoured by the Whigs, was in deep financial trouble by January 1814, out-manoeuvred by the Tory Covent Garden. With audience numbers on the wane, the committee of gentlemen and aristocrats who had Drury Lane in their charge took a risk on a rumpled actor with a patchy provincial reputation. It seems that Kean, with scarcely a leg to stand on, insisted, against advice, on playing Shylock. It was a shrewd choice. Shylock is

a spectacular blot in the folio of comedy and, significantly, the part was outside the repertoire of the decade's leading tragedian, Covent Garden's John Philip Kemble. Taking Kemble as the model of tragic legitimacy, we can get a clear sense of the unlikeliness of Kean's achievement.

In the first place, Kemble was well connected. His sister, Sarah Siddons, was the acknowledged queen of tragedy, and the Prince Regent was among *his* friends, as well as hers: an imitation of Kemble in stage action was one of the future George IV's party turns. Here was an actor who, unlike Kean, would get drunk *with* his high-society acquaintances rather than *before* them. In the second place, Kemble was tall. Kean, by contrast, was short – certainly not more than 5′6″, probably 5′4″. Hazlitt sometimes measured people's behaviour against their height: 'If Bonaparte had been six inches higher, he never would have gone on that disastrous Russian expedition', and as for Lord Nelson, 'The same sense of personal insignificance which made him great in action made him a fool in love' (iv, 97). It was otherwise with the loftily charismatic preacher, Edward Irving: 'Put the case that Mr. Irving had been five feet high – Would he ever have been heard of?' (xi, 40). In the third place, where Kean's kings and princes betrayed telling touches of the plebeian, Kemble was always patrician. He was the supreme representative of noble Romans – a man and an actor who, as Michael Dobson wittily suggests, found it difficult *not* to play Coriolanus.[12] Fourth, Kemble was well educated – as a Roman Catholic, admittedly, at the English College in Douai – but he had no difficulty in making the necessary compromises with his religion to secure his place in London society. Kean's surviving letters are sprinkled with Latin, and even Greek, tags, but he owed them to his better-educated wife. They are sad attempts to keep up with polite conversation as it hurries past him.

At every level – and I have listed only some of the most prominent – the contrast between Kemble and Kean was extreme, but from the moment Hazlitt's review of Kean's Shylock appeared in the *Morning Chronicle* on 27 January 1814, the contrast became a contest. It was almost as if the legitimate king was under threat from a republican *coup d'état*. Nearly three years later, when Kean was no longer a novelty, Hazlitt wrote a sober retrospect in the *Examiner* (8 December 1816). He was reviewing Kemble's King John with the inside knowledge that the actor's retirement was imminent:

> We wish we had never seen Mr. Kean. He has destroyed the Kemble religion and it is the religion in which we were brought up. Never again shall we behold Mr. Kemble with the same pleasure that we did, nor see Mr. Kean with the same pleasure that we have seen Mr. Kemble formerly. We used to admire Mr. Kemble's figure and manner, and had no idea that there was any want of art or nature. We feel the force and nature of Mr. Kean's acting, but then we feel the want of Mr. Kemble's person. (v, 345)

12 Michael Dobson, 'John Philip Kemble' in *Great Shakespeareans II: Garrick, Kemble, Siddons, Kean*, ed. Peter Holland (London: Continuum, 2010), 99.

Kemble had grandeur: Kean had to manage without it. The phenomenal success of his Drury Lane debut owed something to what we might call the Susan Boyle syndrome. A homely woman from West Lothian looks shockingly out of place on the glamorous stage of 'Britain's Got Talent' until she starts singing, and then the audience goes wild. Edmund Kean, a little, sallow, dark-eyed stranger from the provinces takes *The Merchant of Venice* by the throat, and shakes it. He, too, is 'dreaming the dream'. Overnight, Kean became a star of the legitimate theatre, but he was never a legitimate actor. Jane Moody has called him 'the visible embodiment of an illegitimate stage tradition', arguing that he 'disrupted the perceived identity between the national playwright and the nation's government'.[13] Legitimate actors like Kemble pursued the tragic sublime on the implicit assumption that sublimity was conservative. Kean might touch sublimity for a moment, only to swoop down to the colloquial and fidgety in a fierce transition. Heinrich Heine remembered him as a 'sublime buffoon',[14] perhaps in recognition of something parodic in his approach to performance. Here was a small man, in the headquarters of the legitimate theatre, parodying legitimacy and even, sometimes, himself. Some people found it unnerving. Hazlitt was one of the few to perceive the political under-thrust: 'Mr. Kean's acting [unlike Kemble's] is not of the patrician order; he is one of the people, and what might be termed a *radical* performer' (xviii, 290).

Kean was far too erratic to be politically effective, but there is no doubting his temperamental sympathy with the enemies of privilege. The notoriously disreputable drinking club, which he founded in the summer of 1815, consciously parodied the gentlemen's clubs of St. James's. The Wolves met at the Coal Hole Tavern, off the Strand, and fairly regularly got drunk there, but the egalitarian principles that Kean outlined in his speech at the first meeting are not so far from Hazlitt's: 'It is my hope that every Wolf oppressed with worldly grievance, unmerited contumely, or unjust persecutions, with a heart glowing with defiance may exclaim, "I'll to my brothers; there I shall find ears attentive to my tale of sorrow, hands open to relieve and closed for my defence"'.[15] It may be sentimental, but it is not absurd, to think of Kean and Hazlitt as two hearts glowing with defiance.

Gusto

'Gusto', which Grayling identifies as Hazlitt's 'central concept of aesthetic evaluation',[16] is an elusive word in his writing. We can be sure that he approved of it, but less sure that he always meant the same thing by it. He found gusto in Thomas Chubb's deistic *Tracts* (xii, 223) and in *The Beggar's Opera* (iv, 80). But

13 'Romantic Shakespeare' in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on Stage*, ed. Stanley Wells and Sarah Stanton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 52, 50.

14 Quoted in Peter Thomson, 'Edmund Kean' in *Great Shakespeareans II*, 180.

15 Quoted in F. W. Hawkins, *The Life of Edmund Kean*, 2 vols (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1869), I, 309.

16 Grayling, *The Quarrel of the Age*, 21.

was it the same 'fulness of gusto' (iv, 58) displayed, both as saint and sinner, by the royal psalmist, David, whom Hazlitt perkily calls '[t]he first Methodist on record'? '[T]he character of the poet and the prophet remained unimpaired by the vices of the man […] and the best test of the soundness of his principles and the elevation of his sentiments, is, that they were proof against his practice' (iv, 57). This is Hazlitt speaking in the voice of Edward Gibbon, and I doubt whether we should take him too seriously. His David sins and repents 'in a style of oriental grandeur' (iv, 58), which is here provisionally named 'gusto', but the application will not help us to understand Hazlitt's response to Keats and Milton, or Michelangelo, Rubens, Correggio and, above all, Titian.

Nor are Hazlitt's own attempts at definition as conclusive as we might hope. 'Gusto in art is power or passion defining any object' (iv, 77) is much too imprecise, and 'gusto in painting is where the impression made on one sense excites by affinity those of another' (iv, 78) sounds more conclusive than it is. The essay 'On Gusto' (1816) was written *towards* his own understanding rather than in confirmation of it. I wish I knew what he meant when he wrote of Joshua Reynolds's 'blandness of *gusto*' (viii, 82), and whether he felt that the victorious William Neate boxed with gusto, that John Cavanagh played fives with gusto, and that his own gladiatorial playing of rackets was characterized by gusto, because it would help me to be certain that 'energy' and the will to win are its generative constituents. He certainly associated 'gusto' with 'greatness': 'I have no other notion of greatness', he wrote in 1821, 'than this twofold definition, great results springing from great inherent energy' (viii, 84). But the 'great' Shakespeare is deficient in gusto because of the 'infinite quantity' of his 'dramatic invention'. 'The power he delights to show is not intense, but discursive' (iv, 79). Uttara Natarajan neatly makes the point that gusto, for Hazlitt, 'expresses the creative energy of a powerful authorial or artistic self'. 'Shakespeare's freedom from [...] egotism', she writes, '[...] means that the Shakespearean self is undetectable'.[17] There remains the possibility that Shakespeare could create characters defined by their gusto, or that an actor as ferociously egotistic as Kean could express his gusto through the intensity of his engagement with a Shakespearean character. There must, of course, be 'great results' as well as 'great inherent energy'. The artistic gusto that Hazlitt celebrates involves the harnessing *to a purpose* of creative energy *and* its release *to effect*. Gusto that falls flat in a theatre is bombast.

An actor inhabiting a character is always, at the same time, exhibiting himself. Some do this modestly. Kean was not one of them. Perceived politically, his Shylock was a defiant assertion of the civil rights of legally marginalized Jews, and his Richard III a radical attack on the rights, divine or not, of kings. In these extravagant characters, he could import into the legitimate drama some of the stridency of the illegitimate melodrama which was already flourishing in London's minor theatres. This is a point superbly captured in G. H. Lewes's recollection:

17 Uttara Natarajan, 'William Hazlitt' in *Great Shakespeareans IV: Lamb, Hazlitt, Keats*, ed. Adrian Poole (London: Continuum, 2010), 78.

> He had no gaiety; he could not laugh; he had no playfulness that was not as the playfulness of a panther showing her claws every moment. Of this kind was the gaiety of his Richard III. Who can ever forget the exquisite grace with which he leaned against the side-scene while Anne was railing at him, and the chuckling mirth of his 'Poor fool! What pains she takes to damn herself!' It was thoroughly feline – terrible yet beautiful.[18]

The side-scenes, marking the wings, were out of bounds to the legitimate actor, but Kean followed his gut instincts: 'his body thought', wrote Thomas Barnes in the *Examiner*.[19] A thinking body is a fair indication of gusto in an actor. But the best evidence is his improbable triumph as Othello.

Kean is the only major actor, with the arguable exception of Paul Robeson, to have established Othello as his signature role. Many have found it a death-trap. Bear in mind the experience of an American actor called Creston Clarke, who ventured beyond his range with King Lear. 'All through the five acts of that Shakespearean tragedy', Eugene Field observed, 'he played the King as though under the momentary apprehension that someone else was about to play the ace'.[20] Any Othello must watch out for his Iago. At Stratford, I have seen a grandly costumed Anthony Quayle made to look vapid by Edward Woodward's dowdily dressed Iago, and Donald Sinden to seem like an actor from a bygone age by a sturdily plebeian Bob Peck. The problem is that, whilst Othello always stands aloof from the audience, Iago is in cahoots with us. As Richard III, Kean had revelled in such intimate contact. The natural progression from there, particularly for a man of Kean's oppositional temperament, was surely to Iago, whom Hazlitt considered 'a sort of prototype of modern Jacobinism' (iv, 14), and it was as Iago that he first appeared in the play at Drury Lane. Anyone could have warned him that he was ill-suited to Othello. Othello, in stage tradition, is big and booming. The diminutive Kean's voice, except at moments of high passion, was not heroic, and, although he had, until dissipation ruined him, the spring of an athlete, he was never overtly muscular. An actor like Montagu Love would have played Othello as a he-man, by 'extend[ing] his chest three inches and then follow[ing] it slowly across the stage'.[21]

Unable to establish the Moor's power through external signs, Kean internalized it. Throughout his career, he best displayed his own allegiance, perhaps his paranoia, when impersonating defeated outsiders. As Othello, he could also signal his support for Wilberforce and the abolitionists. But there was more to it than that. Othello became Kean's weapon in the frantic fight to maintain his supremacy. His own particular 'fulness of gusto' was a prize-fighter's, not a poet's. When Junius Brutus Booth was put up as his rival at Covent Garden in 1817, Kean contrived to bring Booth to Drury Lane as his Iago. Bryan Waller Procter, Hazlitt's friend

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18 G. H. Lewes, *On Actors and the Art of Acting* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1875), 10.

19 Quoted in FitzSimons, *Fire from Heaven*, 57.

20 See Peter Thomson and Gamini Salgado (eds), *The Everyman Companion to the Theatre* (London: J. M. Dent, 1985), 375.

21 Ibid, 382.

and Kean's first biographer, describes the occasion vividly. Harnessing his energy through the first two acts, Kean released it in the emotional tumult of Act Three. It was as if his small body expanded: 'He glared down upon the now diminutive Iago; he seized him and tossed him aside, with frightful and irresistible vehemence'. The improvised choreography of this cruel dance was Kean's. 'There is no doubt', wrote Procter, 'that Kean was excited on this occasion, in a most extraordinary degree, as much as though he had been maddened by wine. The impression which he made upon the audience has, perhaps, never been equalled in theatrical annals'.[22] If this is not gusto, it is at least a near relation.

Sensibility

Coleridge used to say of me, wrote Hazlitt in 1818, 'that "if ever I got language for my ideas, the world would hear of it, for that I had guts in my brains"' (ix, 4). An essayist with guts in his brains was well positioned to appreciate an actor whose body thought. It may be that Catherine MacDonald MacLean overstates the case when she proposes that Hazlitt 'wrote as if the nerve of sensibility in him were strung up almost to the point of pain',[23] but he was well aware of his peculiar responsiveness. 'The only faculty I do possess', he wrote in 1826, 'is that of a certain morbid interest in things' (xii, 347). What MacLean calls Hazlitt's 'extreme sensibility' – self-diagnosed as morbidity – was pathological. It is the signature tune of many of his finest essays. Kean's equivalent was paranoia. Only by acting leading roles could he escape from his unruly self and the mockery of his real and imagined persecutors, and, increasingly, he was as frightened of his fellow actors as he was of his detractors in the auditorium. Once dissipation had reduced his stamina, his only reliable refuge was Othello. That is clear from a letter he wrote in 1822 to the manager of Drury Lane, Charles Lamb's 'great lessee',[24] Robert William Elliston. Kean was, of course, no longer a novelty, and Elliston hoped to fill the house by inducing Charles Mayne Young, now the leading tragedian of the Kemble school, to pair up with him. 'Mr. Young has many advantages that I have not', Kean admitted, 'a commanding figure, sonorous voice – & above all lordly connexions'.[25] Backstage, he called Young a 'bloody thundering bugger',[26] but it was over the choice of parts that he was writing, abject in private, to Elliston. Young's preference was to begin the collaboration with *Venice Preserved*, himself as Pierre opposite Kean's Jaffeir. Not on Kean's life!

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22 Barry Cornwall, *The Life of Edmund Kean*, 2 vols (London: Edward Moxon, 1835), II, 180.

23 Catherine MacDonald MacLean, Introduction to *The Essays of William Hazlitt* (London: Macdonald, 1949), xi.

24 Thomson, 'Edmund Kean', 166.

25 FitzSimons, *Fire from Heaven*, 166.

26 Thomson, 'Edmund Kean', 166.

> If Mr. Young is ambitious to act with me, he must commence with *Iago*. […] I have doubtless my choice of weapons. He must play *Iago*! Before I act Jaffeir. I am told he is extraordinarily great in Pierre – if so – I am beaten – this must not be – I cannot bear it. I would rather go in chains to Botany Bay – I am not ashamed to say – I am afraid of the contest.[27]

The point has been fairly made that, whereas tragedy plays on the emotions of audiences, melodrama plays on their nerves. Hazlitt's position is ambiguous. Tragedy appeals to us, he suggests, almost in the same way as public executions, 'because there is a natural tendency in the mind to strong excitement, a desire to have its faculties roused and stimulated to the utmost' (iv, 15–16). Is this 'the nerve of sensibility […] strung up almost to the point of pain' to which MacLean alludes? Hazlitt reacted extremely to Kean's performance in plays that have no claim to be tragedies: as Overreach in *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* and Sir Edward Mortimer in *The Iron Chest*, for example. That tells us something about Kean's nerve-jangling style. But it surely tells us something about Hazlitt, too. In how many of us does the contemplation of the flesh in a painting by Titian produce 'that sort of tingling sensation to the eye, which the body feels within itself' (iv, 77)? There are those who think people like that should be arrested. Poor Sarah Walker, they might say, reminding the jury of that nasty incident in the Lake District years ago.

The word for this kind of abnormal excitability, especially in matters of sex, is 'erethism', and a case could certainly be made that Hazlitt shared it with some of the most original artists and poets of the nineteenth century: Richard Dadd, Thomas Lovell Beddoes, William Etty, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Algernon Charles Swinburne. It may be a weakness in my own understanding, but I find it hard to account otherwise for such a clever man's dependence on prostitutes. It seems that, when he was lodging at 9 Southampton Buildings, they were sometimes sent up to his room by the landlord's daughter. And who was she? None other than the unattainable object of his desire, Sarah Walker. Was this chutzpah or imbecility? Hazlitt would not have been the first person to seek comfort in the delusion that we are not truly *us* when making fools of ourselves, and all of this is, at least, disconcerting. He knew the risks he was taking, and may well have suffered the consequences. Kean certainly did. His eventual condition, rife among hat-makers, may be medically definable as 'erethism mercurialis'. Workers in felt were exposed to mercury vapours, and over time subject to outbursts of irrational irritability; hence the idiomatic 'mad as a hatter'. Kean is likely to have inhaled mercury fumes as treatment for syphilis, and his increasingly erratic behaviour in the last years of his life may well have been symptomatic.

Perhaps I am making too much of not enough. In conclusion, I return to textual evidence. Hazlitt's advice to actors was to confine their public appearances to the stage. Although I have searched in vain for hard evidence that he and Kean ever met, it would be odd if they did not, and likely, if they did, that Hazlitt was disappointed. The onstage colossus would have been a nonentity among the

27 FitzSimons, *Fire from Heaven*, 166–7.

whirring words of the essayist's conversational circle. Beware of tarnishing the image was his advice in the essay 'Whether Actors Ought to Sit in the Boxes': 'The motto of a great actor should be *aut Caesar aut nihil*' (viii, 274). Intriguingly, Kean uses the same Latin phrase, with a different inflection, in the letter to Elliston from which I have already quoted: 'Aut Caesar, aut Nullus, is my text. If I become secondary in any point of view, I shrink into insignificance'.[28] This was Kean's perennial nightmare, as Hazlitt was intuitive enough to know. His sensibility is the permanent bond between these two extraordinary men. There is a malicious entry in Macready's *Diary* for 1 January 1834, just over six months after Kean's untidy death in Richmond: 'Forster related to me an anecdote of much interest – that Hazlitt in his emergency had applied to Kean for the loan of £50, which K—, on the pretence of inability, refused!'[29] Hazlitt was all too often in emergency, but John Forster was a gossip, and my choice is to believe he was making it up.

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28 Ibid, 166.

29 *The Diaries of William Charles Macready*, I, 90.

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EMBODYING SHADOWS

Wilde and Hazlitt as Theatrical Writers

John Stokes

Sometimes writers are so representative of their period and yet so personal, so authoritative and yet so wrapped in their own experience, that a certain amount of time has to pass before the ground they opened up is fully explored. Hazlitt's writing on theatre is a good example of this process, and Oscar Wilde was a particularly self-aware beneficiary – as he acknowledged when he claimed on one occasion to have heard that 'one of our budding Hazlitts is preparing a volume to be entitled "Great Guildensterns and Remarkable Rosencrantzes"' (VI, 48–9).[1] Collecting tributes to past performances, Hazlitt's sometime custom, could well be, as Wilde ironically implied, a risky business, a reminder of minor achievements and correspondingly brief moments in the critical limelight.

They were, of course, far from contemporaries, Wilde (1854–1900) being born nearly a quarter of a century after Hazlitt's death in 1830. Between them lie massive changes in theatrical practice: the 1843 Theatre Regulation Act, the construction and reconstruction of countless theatre buildings, the emergence of great international stars, a proliferation of genres, extraordinary technological advance. There was, inevitably, a reaction to all of this in the calls for 'reform', for a more campaigning, more obviously 'literary' drama, that were already underway when Wilde was writing as a theatre critic. But Wilde and Hazlitt were linked in terms of profession, as what we would now call 'freelance' writers, who wrote about many things, theatre being just one of them. In fact, Wilde only wrote theatrical criticism for a short period in the 1880s but it's clear that he read and thought about Hazlitt professionally and at times Hazlitt almost seems to have seen Wilde coming, if with a fair amount of apprehension. There's an extremely antagonistic essay by Hazlitt on 'The Dandy School', taking in Disraeli's *Vivian Grey*, which might even be seen to anticipate later hostility to Wilde's *Dorian Gray* (xx, 143–9).[2] Some of Hazlitt's most disliked critical epithets, words such as 'charming' which he

1 Quotations from Wilde's journalism are taken from Oscar Wilde, *Journalism* in *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*, vols. VI and VII, ed. John Stokes and Mark W. Turner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). References are by volume and page.

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

thought of as affected and 'effeminate' (*Notes of Journey Through France and Italy*; x, 116), are among Wilde's stand-bys.

On the other hand, Tom Paulin has spotted the louche figure of Sir Charles Bunbury sauntering through Hazlitt's essay 'The Look of a Gentleman', which has made him wonder if Sir Charles's 'studied negligence [...] inspired Wilde to reinvent the Bunburying pleasure principle for the 1890s'.[3] And there's an aside in Hazlitt's 'On the Knowledge of Character' from *Table-Talk* that seems to sum up the idea behind *Dorian Gray* in a very few words: 'A man's whole life may be a lie to himself and others: and yet a picture painted of him by a great artist would probably stamp his true character on the canvas, and betray the secret to posterity' (viii, 303). Wilde actually quoted those few words in an editorial to the *Woman's World* of March 1889 when he was brooding on his novel (VII, 184).

The important link, obviously, is what we still call 'the Romantic tradition', and Wilde's sporadic acknowledgment of Hazlitt can be put alongside other late nineteenth-century attempts to establish a Romantic heritage: Buxton Forman's editions of Keats (1883) and Wordsworth (1882–9), new editions of Lord Houghton's *Life and Letters of John Keats*, the publication of Sidney Colvin's brief life of the poet in 1887, a life of Coleridge by Hall Caine in the same year, the foundation of the Wordsworth Society in 1881 and of the Shelley Society in 1886, the continuing Byron cult. Hazlitt's reputation, in particular, was reinvigorated by Alexander Ireland's bibliography of 1868 followed by his *Selections* of 1889, while Archer and Lowe's edition of Hazlitt's *Dramatic Essays* appeared in 1895. George Saintsbury, in an essay in *Macmillan's Magazine* of 1887, claimed that Hazlitt 'for all his accesses of hopelessly uncritical prejudice [...] was the greatest critic that England has yet produced' (and found his influence at work in the styles of Macaulay, Thackeray, Dickens and Carlyle).[4] In the case of Wilde, direct references to the earlier writer are usually respectful on the surface, though sometimes questioning underneath, always concerned with critical issues rather than biographical or bibliographical detail.

I'll begin then with a misunderstanding, which may have been wilful, before moving on to what I'll call mirroring, ending with what I'd like to think of as mutuality. Here, first of all, is Wilde in the course of his review of Henry Irving's Hamlet in May 1885:

> A great critic at the beginning of this century said that Hamlet is the most difficult part to personate on the stage, that it is like the attempt to 'embody a shadow'. I cannot say that I agree with this idea. Hamlet seems to me essentially a good acting part. (VI, 48)

3 Tom Paulin, *The Day-Star of Liberty: William Hazlitt's Radical Style* (London: Faber & Faber, 1998), 292.

4 George Saintsbury, 'William Hazlitt', *Macmillan's Magazine* 55 (1 November 1886): 429–41, 433.

The 'great critic' is, of course, Hazlitt, writing on Kean in the *Morning Chronicle* of 14 March 1814, a piece reprinted in *A View of the English Stage*: 'The character is probably of all others the most difficult to personate on the stage. It is like the attempt to embody a shadow'. Hazlitt follows this with four lines from Pope on 'the Cynthia of a minute' and then continues:

> Such nearly is the task which the actor imposes on himself in the part of Hamlet. It is quite remote from hardness and dry precision. The character is spun to the finest thread, yet never loses its continuity. It has the yielding flexibility of 'a wave of the sea'. It is made up of undulating lines, without a single sharp angle. There is no set purpose, no straining at a point. The observations are suggested by the passing scene – the gusts of passion come and go, like the sounds of music borne on the wind. The interest depends not on the action, but on the thoughts [...]. ('Mr. Kean's Hamlet'; v, 186–7)

Why did Wilde find Hazlitt's memorable and, in the end, very positive comments on Kean inappropriate or irrelevant to Irving's current performance? Why did he think, contra Hazlitt, that Hamlet was such 'a good acting part'? For one reason, because it offered opportunities that Irving was now sufficiently mature to seize. These were partly technical, to do with Irving's improved declamation: 'The somewhat harsh angularity of movement and faulty pronunciation have been replaced by exquisite grace of gesture and by clear precision of word, where such precision is necessary' (VI, 48). But that wasn't all. Strong, clear delivery had to be matched by appropriateness to situation:

> For delightful as good elocution is, few things are so depressing as to hear a passionate passage recited instead of being acted. The quality of a fine performance is its life more than its learning, and every word in a play has a musical as well as an intellectual value, and must be made expressive of a certain emotion. [...] Mr. Irving, I think, manages his voice with singular art; it was impossible to discern a false note or wrong intonation in his dialogue or his soliloquies, and his strong dramatic power, his realistic power as an actor, is as effective as ever. (VI, 48)

It seems very likely that Wilde had a specific resonance in mind when he picked out Hazlitt's phrase 'embody a shadow'. In *The Portrait of Mr. W.H.*, Wilde's fiction about a boy-actor who supposedly inspired the Sonnets, the narrator points out that the word 'shadow' carried an additional meaning in Elizabethan times, citing Sonnet 53:

> What is your substance, whereof you are made,
> That millions of strange shadows on you tend?
> Since everyone hath, every one, one shade,
> And you, but one, can every shadow lend –

These lines, says the narrator, 'would be unintelligible were they not addressed to an actor, because the word "shadow" had in Shakespeare's day a technical reference connected with the stage'. The examples he gives are Theseus in *Midsummer Night's Dream* ('The best in this kind are but shadows') and Macbeth ('Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player [...]').[5] The narrator's point is confirmed by the *OED* which says that the word 'shadow', though the usage is long obsolescent, could once be 'applied rhetorically to a portrait as contrasted with the original; also to an actor or a play in contrast with the reality represented'. And the *OED* adds two more examples from Shakespeare.

Wilde appreciated the ambiguity of that word 'shadow' which could refer to a dramatic representation as well as to something vague, ghostly, an insubstantial outline only half there. He enjoyed the Platonic paradox that whenever we see the shadow of a body the presence of a real, an actual, body must be implied. It's the same paradox that underlies *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (where, incidentally, the actress Sybil Vane vows to renounce the 'shadows' of the stage).[6] Actors, like portraits, demonstrate the kind of phenomenological inevitability through which reality is proved by absence. The difference between a painting and an actor being – and this is crucial, especially for Wilde – that the actor is already a mobile body, already 'real'. So what Wilde meant by querying Hazlitt was that it is Hamlet's very theatricality, the fact that he tries on so many roles, that makes the part irresistible to the actor. But the demands it makes upon technical proficiency have to be coupled with an innately physical sense of the present. 'Poetic grace with absolute reality': this was to become Wilde's recurrent formula.

But it is not enough to set up a convenient opposition between Wilde, the sophisticated connoisseur of meta-theatrical role-play, and Hazlitt, the narrow-minded literalist. Hazlitt goes on to say that:

> in spite of these difficulties, Mr. Kean's representation of the character had the most brilliant success. It did not indeed come home to our feelings, as Hamlet (that very Hamlet whom we read of in our youth, and seem almost to remember in our after-years), but it was a most striking and animated rehearsal of the part. (v, 187)

For Hazlitt, Kean's Hamlet can be a success but remain a 'rehearsal', since the ideal, the perfect performance, always lies ahead. In this instance Wilde, not worried about flattery, is the more fulsome and more trusting of immediacy. Never one to miss a chance for alliteration, he sums up Irving's achievement as having 'the two qualities which we in this century so much desire': 'the qualities of personality and of perfection' (VI, 47). It's a combination that he borrows from Swinburne who

5 Oscar Wilde, 'The Portrait of Mr. W.H.' in *Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*, ed. Merlin Holland (London: HarperCollins, 1994), 314.

6 Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*, vol. III, ed. Joseph Bristow (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 62 and 242.

had used it in an essay on Matthew Arnold.[7] Transposed to the theatre we might think of 'personality' as 'individual presence' and 'perfection' as 'technique'.

In many ways Wilde and Hazlitt hold very similar views about Hamlet, but they're starting out from different assumptions. Although it was certainly not the be-all and end-all, technique mattered for Wilde because it contributed to the aesthetic effect of the overall performance. For Hazlitt it was the approximation of the performance to a prior idea of the role, founded on an established reading of the play, that gave it value, at least as a kind of reflection that was seemingly but heroically doomed to inadequacy. These distinctions provide a basis for a comparison between the two critics although, like all such oppositions, they need to be tested, qualified, and perhaps finally discarded.

It's worth noting Wilde's stress on elocution because, although the early-nineteenth-century critics, not least Hazlitt, had been extremely sensitive to dramatic speech, 'correct' delivery had become more of an issue in the following decades. By the 1880s, when Wilde was writing, the theatrical world was increasingly interested in regularizing its skills. A movement was already underway for a 'school' of dramatic art, perhaps to be based on the Paris Conservatoire, which had always been especially concerned with matters of delivery.[8] Actors would sometimes moonlight by providing lessons in the arts of public speaking. Herman Vezin, an actor friend of Wilde's, actually gave him some coaching before he set off on his lecture tour of America.[9] At the same time, acting, primarily Shakespearean acting, was consolidating its own critical history. In this respect the earlier dramatic critics – not only Hazlitt but also Lamb, Coleridge, and Crabb Robinson, who tended to assume that Shakespeare was above all to be read and who saw theatrical performance as a threat to the more meditative and inward aspects of the verse – had effectively undermined their own first principles by leaving records of individual performances that were sufficiently powerful and evocative for the appreciation of acting to develop separately from a simple idea of textual validation.

Hazlitt's estimation of Hamlet as a theatrical role is, of course, very celebrated. Like so many of his portraits of actors and acting it makes use of a concept of shape, sometimes moving, sometimes static. This must have had much to do with the 'points'-based acting of the period, but it's also strongly idiosyncratic. According to Hazlitt, Kemble's Hamlet

> […] unavoidably failed from a want of flexibility, of that quick sensibility which yields to every motive, and is borne away with every breath of fancy, which is

7 A. C. Swinburne, 'Mr. Matthew Arnold's New Poems' in *Essays and Studies* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1875), 123 and 156.

8 See Lucie Sutherland, 'The Actress and the Profession' in *The Cambridge Companion to the Actress*, ed. Maggie B. Gale and John Stokes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), especially 99 and 112–13; George Taylor, *Players and Performances in the Victorian Theatre* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), 127–8; Michael Baker, *The Rise of the Victorian Actor* (London: Croom Helm, 1978), 151–3.

9 Richard Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1987), 147–8.

> distracted in the multiplicity of its reflections, and lost in the uncertainty of its resolutions. There is a perpetual undulation of feeling in the character of Hamlet; but in Mr. Kemble's acting, 'there was neither variableness nor shadow of turning'. He played it like a man in armour, with a determined inveteracy of purpose, in one undeviating straight line, which is as remote from the natural grace and indolent susceptibility of the character, as the sharp angles and abrupt starts to produce an effect which Mr. Kean throws into it.

The phrase 'natural grace and indolent susceptibility' suggests the dandyish, erotic appeal to which Hazlitt himself was sometime susceptible – oddly Wildean in its way, as Paulin noticed. It's another side to the more familiar, strenuously masculine Hazlitt and it points forward, perhaps, to a more fluid, more modern understanding of a plastic art.

Invariably Wilde judged the earlier critic in terms of both similarity and difference, of proximity and distance over time. Here he is, citing Hazlitt in a notice of the Oxford University Drama Society's production of *Twelfth Night* in February 1886:

> What a difficult part Malvolio is! Shakespeare undoubtedly meant us to laugh all through at the pompous steward, and to join in the practical joke upon him, and yet how impossible not to feel a good deal of sympathy for him! Perhaps in this century we are too altruistic to be really artistic. Hazlitt says somewhere that poetical justice is done him in the uneasiness which Olivia suffers on account of her mistaken attachment to Cesario, as her insensibility to the violence of the Duke's passion is atoned for by the discovery of Viola's concealed love of him; but it is difficult not to feel Malvolio's treatment is unnecessarily harsh. (VI, 63–4)

And here is the passage from Hazlitt that Wilde has in mind, which he quotes (though characteristically without quotation marks) almost verbatim. It comes at the very end of the short essay on *Twelfth Night* in *Characters of Shakespear's Plays*:

> If poor Malvolio's treatment afterwards is a little hard, poetical justice is done in the uneasiness which Olivia suffers on account of her mistaken attachment to Cesario, as her insensibility to the violence of the Duke's passion is atoned for by the discovery of Viola's concealed love of him.' (iv, 318)

The signal word in Wilde's commentary is 'altruistic' which is another implicit marker of a change between his own time and that of Hazlitt. 'Altruism' is a term that had come to the fore in the course of the nineteenth century on the back of the Positivist philosopher Auguste Comte who had originally coined it. The *OED* gives examples of its use by G. H. Lewes (1853) and Herbert Spencer (1873). By the closing decades of the century it was an established counter in philosophical and ethical debate. Wilde's opposition of 'altruistic', which essentially means self-sacrifice, with 'artistic', the self-fulfilling value that was to become increasingly

dominant in his system, finally to reign supreme, is already full of potential. Could the two values ever be reconciled?

By making that point about 'altruism', Wilde was effectively extending the tripartite development of English comedy outlined by Hazlitt in his note on *Twelfth Night*. There's Shakespearean comedy which 'is full of sweetness and pleasantry [….] has little satire and no spleen'. This is because it 'is of a pastoral and poetical cast'; it's 'natural'. Then there's Restoration comedy, 'the comedy of artificial life, of wit and satire, such as we see it in Congreve, Wycherley, Vanbrugh, etc.'. In this kind of comedy, vanity and self-love are judged very severely. Finally, there's 'modern comedy', the comedy of Hazlitt's own time, belonging to

> a state of society from which the same sort of affectation and pretense are banished by a greater knowledge of the world or by their successful exposure on the stage; and which by neutralizing the materials of comic character, both natural and artificial, leaves no comedy at all – but *the sentimental*. (iv, 313–4)

In his own commentary on Shakespeare's comedy, Wilde prolongs the historical development outlined by Hazlitt all the way to the present. Could natural sympathy ever be made theatrically satisfying (i.e. more than 'sentimental') when, as Hazlitt suggests, all the lessons that comedy can teach us have already been taught?

The answer is: only through the practice of theatre itself. For Wilde the demands of collective performance make comedy both democratic and realistic. '*Twelfth Night*', he writes, is

> a play eminently suitable for performance by a club, as it contains so many good acting parts. Shakespeare's tragedies may be made for a single star, but his comedies are made for a galaxy of constellations. In the first he deals with the pathos of the individual, in the second he gives us a picture of life. (VI, 63)

Although Wilde didn't carry on criticizing plays, at least not professionally, beyond the 1880s, he would persist in composing them: society comedies, a 'galaxy of constellations' and 'a picture of life', by which he means life as a whole. The comments on the OUDS actor who played Malvolio continue with some characteristic phrasing:

> If I ventured on a bit of advice, which I feel most reluctant to do, it would be to the effect that while one should always study the method of a great artist, one should never imitate his manner. The manner of an artist is essentially individual, the method of an artist is absolutely universal. The first is personality, which no one should copy; the second is perfection, which all should aim at. (VI, 64)

That passage is somewhat obscure, although it does rely on the same pairing that is present in the review of Irving's Hamlet: 'personality' and 'perfection'. Wilde's fondness for these condensed alliterative pairings became a kind of stylistic

compulsion, and not always to the advantage of his prose, but the main point here is again to do with technique. Shakespeare's portrayal of Malvolio may be harsh (that's his 'manner'), but his 'method' (the compensating treatment of Olivia, 'poetical justice') must be respected. What Hazlitt had grasped remained pertinent; Shakespeare's sense of balance was something that the modern actor, possessed of both 'personality and perfection', had to learn to deal with, despite changing times.

Whenever critics try to establish Shakespeare's own views of his art, certain passages must obviously come up for consideration: Hamlet's advice to the players ('hold the mirror up to nature') in Act III, Scene II, and Polixenes' disquisition on art and nature from Act IV, Scene IV of *The Winter's Tale*: 'that art/ Which you say adds to nature is an art/ That nature makes'. Hazlitt and Wilde, fascinated by the riddling truths of art and nature, were no different. In their respective treatments of these touchstones they do, though, reveal an inner dialectic.

Confronted by Hamlet's precepts, both writers were drawn to what might sound like good sense, but they were equally determined to make mischief. Wilde, in 'The Decay of Lying', complained about those literally minded critics who

> will call upon Shakespeare – they always do – and will quote that hackneyed passage forgetting that this unfortunate aphorism about Art holding the mirror up to Nature, is deliberately said by Hamlet in order to convince the bystanders of his absolute insanity in all art-matters.[10]

Hazlitt sometimes seems to have cited the advice as an admirable call to 'disinterestedness': 'Indeed, the object and end of playing, "both at the first and now, is to hold the mirror up to nature", to enable us to feel for others as for ourselves, or to embody a distinct interest out of ourselves by the force of imagination and passion' ('On Reason and Imagination', *The Plain Speaker*; xii, 55). Nevertheless, in his Preface to *A View of the English Stage*, he takes a more jaundiced view towards 'the interest we feel in talking about plays and players'. They may be 'the brief chronicles of the time', as Hamlet says, 'the epitome of human life and manners', but while we are talking about them, we are really thinking about ourselves. Plays, says Hazlitt,

> 'hold the mirror up to Nature'; and our thoughts are turned to the Stage as naturally and fondly as a fine lady turns to contemplate her face in the glass. It is a glass too, in which the wise may see themselves, but in which the vain and superficial see their own virtues, and laugh at the follies of others. (v, 173)

That wonderful essay, 'On Actors and Acting', opens with 'Players are "the abstracts and brief chronicles of the times", the motley representatives of human nature. They are the only honest hypocrites. Their life is a voluntary dream, a studied

10 Oscar Wilde, *Criticism: Historical Criticism, Intentions, The Soul of Man* in *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*, vol. IV, ed. Josephine M. Guy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 89.

madness' (iv, 153). Hamlet may or may not be an actor, but all actors are potential Hamlets.

Hazlitt's brief account of *The Winter's Tale* in *Characters of Shakespear's Plays* actually says nothing overtly about Polixenes' speech at all, blandly and conventionally repressing the thought that there might be any difficulty in the idea by maintaining that 'true poetry, like nature, is always young; and we still read the courtship of Florizel and Perdita, as we welcome the return of spring, with the same feelings as ever' (iv, 326). Nature validates the poetry that might otherwise remain locked in individual perceptions. Not that Hazlitt had any wish to deny the inevitable, indeed constructive, role played by the subjective imagination in sympathetic understanding. In a review of *Richard III*, not Kean, he returns in a more positive spirit to the idea that good art exemplifies 'disinterestedness' at work: 'In art, nature cannot exist without the highest art; it is a pure effort of the imagination, which throws the mind out of itself into the supposed situation of others, and enables it to feel and act there as if it were at home' (v, 299).

When Wilde came to review a problematic production of *The Winter's Tale* in 1887, he built on Polixenes to develop his theory of the actor's responsibilities. The problem, simple and familiar enough, was that the American actress Mary Anderson, a personal acquaintance, wasn't up to the challenge she had set herself. She was playing both Hermione and Perdita – but with unequal success. The critical solution was to play one role off against the other. As Hermione:

> Her manner has been too self-conscious, her method too theatrical. In Perdita, however, no trace of these defects could be seen, and, to borrow a phrase from the wonderful speech of Polixenes, one might say that she has at last realised that the Art which adds to Nature is an 'Art that Nature makes'. (VI, 185)

Wilde found it regrettable, though, that 'the wonderful dialogue upon the relations between Art and Nature' had been cut (VI, 185). The complaint was coupled characteristically with a reprimand about verse-speaking:

> It is to be hoped that Miss Anderson will restore it to its place, and that she will be more careful than she has been in her delivery of the text. It is quite right that blank verse should be spoken naturally, but there is no necessity to turn it into bad prose. (VI, 185–6)

By contrast, Wilde's close friend, Forbes Robertson, who played Leontes, did rather better, allowing Wilde surreptitiously to smuggle in an echo of the very lines that Mary Anderson's production has unaccountably dropped. Forbes Robertson made perfect use of 'voice, gesture, and facial expression' together with imagination and, above all, 'feeling':

> And these things are the true essentials of the actor's art. The mere mechanical *technique* of acting can be taught, but the spirit that is to give life to lifeless

> forms must be born in a man. No dramatic college can teach its pupils to think or to feel. (VI, 186)

This is immediately followed by the Polixenes moment: 'It is Nature who makes our artists for us, though it may be Art who teaches them their right mode of expression' (VI, 186). Talk of a 'dramatic college' was indeed in the air, the question of training much discussed. In that respect alone the times had certainly changed. Weighing the talent of Kemble up against the inspired 'genius' of Kean, Hazlitt had once confessed:

> A Kemble school we can understand: a Kean school is, we suspect, a contradiction in terms. Art may be taught, because it is learnt: Nature can neither be taught nor learnt. The secrets of Art may be said to have a common or *pass* key to unlock them; the secrets of Nature have but one master-key – the heart. ('Mr. Booth's Duke of Gloster'; v, 355)

By Wilde's time the word 'school' had taken, or was about to take, a much more precise or literal meaning as it shifted from tradition to training, to the teachable art that nature makes possible.

Whenever context and occasion demands, both men are capable of reducing their divided views to an epigrammatic simplicity. So, for instance, Hazlitt can write in an essay on the Elgin marbles: 'Nature is consistent, unaffected, powerful, subtle: art is forgetful, apish, feeble, coarse' (xviii, 154); or, more tersely, in his study of Byron that 'We are masters of Art, Nature is our master' (xix, 74); or, even, in an essay entitled 'Why the Arts are not Progressive', simply 'Nature is the soul of art' (iv, 162). Wilde was to go one fatal stage further in the 'The Decay of Lying', turning the trope completely on its head: 'the more we study Art, the less we care for Nature. What Art really reveals to us is Nature's lack of design'[11] and, ultimately, 'Art never expresses anything but itself'.[12] By which point we would seem to be very far from Hazlitt indeed. For neither critic was the art/nature relation nearly as stable as they might sometimes want to pretend. There was a puzzling, 'supplementary', interdependency between the two terms, always at work however one tried to spin it. This was the main lesson they took from Polixenes' paradox.

To conclude with mutuality and, fittingly, with mortality: for Hazlitt the physical energy at the heart of performance meant that when an actor retired it felt like a kind of death. Hearing Kemble give a farewell address in 1817 Hazlitt confessed that he found 'these partings with old public favourites exceedingly affecting. They teach us the shortness of human life and the vanity of human pleasures' ('Mr. Kemble's Retirement'; v, 374). And when actors really did die they left nothing tangible behind, only a name: 'Many people have a strong desire to pry into the secrets of futurity; for our own parts, we should be satisfied if we had the power to recall the dead, and live the past over again, as often as we pleased!' ('On Actors

11 Ibid, 73.

12 Ibid, 96.

and Acting'; iv, 158).[13] The only consolation, but it's a very real one, is that the death of old actors obliges a younger generation to discover its own originality.

Wilde, too, was much preoccupied with actors as living, and dying, beings. He sometimes enthused about immortal, though strictly speaking inhuman, puppets, something Hazlitt could never bring himself to do. In 1888, in an extended notice of the memoirs of Adelaide Ristori, the great Italian actress, Wilde set out to rebuff the notion that the art of the actor is merely ephemeral:

> It is often said that actors leave nothing behind them but a barren name and a withered wreath; that they subsist simply upon the applause of the moment; that they are ultimately doomed to the oblivion of old play-bills; and that their art, in a word, dies with them, and shares their own mortality. (VII, 41)

The immediate object of this attack was Augustine Birrell, an essayist and politician whose volume *Obiter Dicta* (1884) contained a piece entitled 'Actors' that Wilde was to return to in 'The Critic as Artist'.[14] He had, surely, Hazlitt's much greater essay 'On Actors and Acting' somewhere in the back of his mind, as no doubt Birrell himself had done. After all, it's in that essay that Hazlitt confronts the question of the immortality of actors head-on and makes his greatest claims for their art:

> The stage is a place where genius is sure to come upon its legs, in a generation or two at farthest. In other arts (as painting and poetry), it has been contended that what has been well done already, by giving rise to endless vapid imitations, is an obstacle to what might be done well hereafter [...]. We have not, neither do we want, two Shakespears, two Miltons, two Raphaels, any more than we require two suns in the same sphere [...]. When a great actor dies, there is a void produced in society, a gap which requires to be filled. (iv, 156)

Birrell's view, by contrast, lacking Hazlitt's urgent sense of loss, reduced the actor to a mere functionary. Wilde found this 'exaggerated' because it rested

> on the assumption that acting is simply a mimetic art, and takes no account of its imaginative and intellectual basis. It is quite true, of course, that the personality of the player passes away, and with it that pleasure-giving power by

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13 Hazlitt's tributes to Kean were to make their own contribution to the myth-making that surrounded the actor's reputation in the nineteenth century. See Jacky Bratton, 'The Celebrity of Edmund Kean: An Institutional Story' in *Theatre and Celebrity*, ed. Mary Luckhurst and Jane Moody (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 90–106; Jeffrey Kahan, *The Cult of Kean* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), and Leigh Woods, 'Actors' Biography and Mythmaking: The Example of Edmund Kean' in *Interpreting the Theatrical Past,* ed. Thomas Postlewait and Bruce A. McConachie (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1989), 230–47.

14 Augustine Birrell, *Obiter Dicta* (London: Elliot Stock, 1884), 124–54.

> virtue of which the arts exist. Yet the artistic method of a great actor survives. It lives on in tradition, and becomes part of the science of a school. (VII, 41)

(We should, of course, again note the presence of the word 'school', here directly coupled with 'science'). And Wilde goes on to question Birrell's attempt to deny to actors all critical insight, by presenting the great actor as an essential and uniquely placed creative intermediary:

> The actor, he tells us, is art's slave, not her child, and lives entirely outside literature, 'with its words for ever on his lips, and none of its truths engraven on his heart'. But this seems to me to be a harsh and reckless generalisation. Indeed, so far from agreeing with it, I would be inclined to say that the mere artistic process of acting, the translation of literature back again into life, and the presentation of thought under the conditions of action, is in itself a critical method of a very high order […]. (VII, 42)

The point, says Wilde, has been proved by the careers of 'our great English actors'.

> Where the literary critic studies the language, the actor looks simply for the life; and yet, how well the great actors have appreciated that marvellous music of words which in Shakespeare at any rate is so vital an element of poetic power, if indeed it be not equally so in the case of all who have any claim to be regarded as true poets. (VII, 42)

Keats's writing on Kean is brought to bear, the poet paying tribute to the sheer sensuality of the actor's delivery. Ever one to identify with a Romantic predecessor, Wilde says that he has had a similar experience listening to Sarah Bernhardt:

> As for Mr. Birrell's statement that actors have the words of literature for ever on their lips, but none of its truths engraved on their hearts, all that one can say is that, if it be true, it is a defect which actors share with the majority of literary critics. (VII, 42)

Whenever critics and actors fail, then, it's invariably because of an absence of feeling. But implicit here is the question, can a critic ever feel as much as an actor can feel? Are the two activities truly parallel? Certainly, there must be some basic similarities. How could anyone respond to a display of physical energy without trying for a suitably dynamic prose equivalent? How could anyone write about the portrayal of young love in a way that denied its lyrical possibilities? Shouldn't a critic always aim to get to the dramatic heart of the matter through the replication of feeling as any serious actor should try to do? And not just the actor. According to the Preface to *Dorian Gray*: 'From the point of view of form, the type of all the

arts is the art of the musician. From the point of view of feeling, the actor's craft is the type.'[15]

One might at this point recall Hazlitt's critical credo: 'My opinions have been sometimes called singular: they are merely sincere. I say what I think: I think what I feel' (Preface to *A View of the English Stage*; v, 175). And that in turn might be put alongside Wilde's insistence that 'No spectator of art needs a more perfect mood of receptivity than the spectator of a play'.[16] The pressure of the deadline, the needs of the occasion, the continual exchange between empathy and evaluation, even the moments when words fail: it's at such times of concentrated feeling that writing about theatre can itself become theatrical. The most remarkable aspect of Hazlitt's criticism, always unexpected yet ever-present, is that he should have written so passionately about being a spectator while frequently denigrating it as an inferior occupation in comparison with being a reader, and without losing touch with his judgmental faculties. Whereas Wilde can often sound smoothly retrospective, over-reflective, governed by aesthetic preference and an obligation to entertain with the polished symmetries of his style, Hazlitt is uncontained, not relaxed (far from it), but open, unfinished, available, 'in a perfect mood of receptivity'. Of course, Hazlitt can also be prescriptive, but only until the moment when he isn't, when discovery intervenes and the writing suddenly sounds extempore. His expectations may be literary in that he believes the whole drama to be already present on the page, but this means that he is thrilled when an actor fulfills his expectations exceptionally well or – even more exciting – brings to a scene more than he was expecting. In his account of Kean's Shylock he speaks of 'perpetually fresh shocks of delight and surprise' (v, 179).

Similarly his description of Kean's treatment of Ophelia, although it starts with some complaints, continues:

> But whatever nice faults might be found in this scene, they were amply redeemed by the manner of his coming back after he has gone to the extremity of the stage, from a pang of parting tenderness to press his lips to Ophelia's hand. It had an electrical effect on the house. It was the finest commentary that was ever made on Shakespeare. It explained the character at once (as he meant it), as one of disappointed hope, of bitter regret, of affection suspended, not obliterated, by the distractions of the scene around him! (v, 188)

There are many instances of that 'electrical effect' in Hazlitt's criticism, something that Jonathan Bate has written about.[17] Kean's Macbeth, for instance:

> […] as a lesson of common humanity, it was heart-rending. The hesitation, the bewildered look, the coming to himself when he sees his hands bloody;

15 Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 167.

16 Wilde, 'The Soul of Man', *Criticism*, 259.

17 See Jonathan Bate, *Shakespearean Constitutions: Politics, Theatre, Criticism 1730–1830* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 139.

> the manner in which his voice clung to his throat, and choaked his utterance; his agony and tears, the force of nature overcome by passion – beggared description. It was a scene, which no one who saw it can ever efface from his recollection. (v, 207)

The moment 'beggars' the very description that Hazlitt is in the course of providing. That's what makes him such an exhilarating and unavoidable critic – his capacity to be overwhelmed. Jazz music was once famously described as 'the sound of surprise'; theatre for Hazlitt we might say is 'the scene of surprise'; in the end the unexpectedly wonderful must occur for the performance to have been worth bothering with in the first place. And when the emotion *does* overwhelm him, Hazlitt records the experience with absolute frankness. These are very special occasions; famously, to have seen Siddons as Lady Macbeth 'was an event in every one's life, not to be forgotten' ('Mrs. Siddons'; v, 312). They stay in the memory outside the normal passage of time.

Yet, even the smoothly imperturbable Wilde must have known such moments too. How else could he have written a wonderfully over-the-top passage like this one, again from *The Portrait of Mr. W.H.*?

> […] to Shakespeare, the actor was a deliberate and self-conscious fellow worker who gave form and substance to a poet's fancy, and brought into Drama the elements of a noble realism. His silence could be as eloquent as words, and his gestures as expressive, and in those terrible moments of Titan agony or of god-like pain, when thought outstrips utterance, when the soul sick with excess of anguish stammers or is dumb, and the very raiment of speech is rent and torn by passion in its storm, then the actor could become, though it were but for a moment, a creative artist, and touch by his mere presence and personality those springs of terror and of pity to which tragedy appeals. This full recognition of the actor's art, and of the actor's power, was one of the things that distinguished the Romantic from the Classical Drama […][18]

For Oscar Wilde, Shakespeare himself was the first Romantic, which meant, among other things, the first die-hard fan of acting. So Hazlitt treads in Shakespeare's footsteps. After misunderstanding and mirroring we conclude, then, with mutuality, with what Wilde, succeeding but not always following Hazlitt, would claim that not just actors but all artists, including critics, have in common: the ability to please, to instruct, but above all to live in the moment.

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18 Wilde, 'The Portrait of Mr. W.H.', 322.

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'HE SPOKE TO CHARLES LAMB'

Reading and Performance in Hazlitt's *Lectures on the Age of Elizabeth*

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The course of eight lectures that Hazlitt delivered at the Surrey Institution through November and December 1819, which were printed in February 1820 as *Lectures Chiefly on the Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth*, as performance and as text together offer compelling evidence for Hazlitt's relationship to the theatre at the end of this decade.[1] This article traces Hazlitt's preparations for the series, and the book that it became, by reading these *Lectures*, the last series that he was ever to deliver in London, as the product of a network of texts, events, and performances, that together mobilize a set of structuring relationships between text and talk, writing and drama, and page and stage: the reading and performance of my title. Many of those tensions shape a work right at the heart of that network, Charles Lamb's *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets* (1808), which bears on Hazlitt's *Lectures* very directly, and on which in a way his lectures perform an extended reading commentary. That relationship between Lamb's anthology and Hazlitt's lectures invites the larger question of how what we would now call early modern drama was understood and valued in the first decades of the nineteenth century;[2] and it also opens up for newer enquiry some of the longer running debates about Romantic theatre, familiar and still lively over the past two decades of scholarship and research.[3] Thinking through the

1 I am grateful to Gregory Dart, Neil Halliday, Sebastian Mitchell, and *The Hazlitt Review*'s anonymous reader for their detailed comments on drafts of this article, and to the audience who heard the first version of it at the 2013 Hazlitt Day School.

2 On this wider topic see N.W. Bawcutt, 'The Revival of Elizabethan Drama and the Crisis of Romantic Drama' in *Literature of the Romantic Period, 1750–1850*, ed. R.T. Davies and B.G. Beatty (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1976), 96–113; Jonathan Bate, 'The Romantic Stage' in *The Oxford Illustrated History of Shakespeare on Stage*, ed. Jonathan Bate and Russell Jackson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 92–111; Tom Lockwood, *Ben Jonson in the Romantic Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 27–62; and, most recently, Jeremy Lopez, *Constructing the Canon of Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

3 Key recent studies include Gillian Russell, *The Theatres of War: Performance, Politics, and Society, 1793–1815* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995); Jane Moody, *Illegitimate Theatre in London, 1770–1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); David

details of Hazlitt's relationship with Lamb and Lamb's *Specimens*, involves, I argue, thinking through the larger place of their exchanges within a number of key topics in recent accounts of the Romantic period such as sociability, performance, and identity, and some of the key locations in which they have been considered: the lecture hall, and, of course, the theatre.[4]

In bringing these ideas and connections together, the *Lectures Chiefly on the Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth* pick up a longer running discussion that threads through Hazlitt's and Lamb's private and public exchanges. The first substantial public marker of their friendship, Hazlitt's 1804 portrait of Lamb after Velàzquez's 'Philip IV', might be interpreted in this way as part of a deliberate, game-playing exercise in performance, imitation and impersonation.[5] More directly, Lamb's crowded, jostling letter to Hazlitt of 10 November 1805, now in the Houghton Library at Harvard, shows how the questions of reading and performance were central to the bantering back-and-forth of their relationship.[6] The letter has no obvious central topic, being about – if it is *about* anything at all – the gestural talkativeness of four packed pages of text; miscellaneity is meaning here. To follow Lamb through the letter is to see him share conversation about art with Hazlitt:

> O la! your Leonardos of Oxford made my mouth water [...] I had not settled my notions of Beauty. I have now forever! – the small head, the long Eye – that sort of peering curve, the wicked Italian mischief, the stick-at-nothing Herodia's daughter-kind of grace.[7]

Lamb gossips of common acquaintances, and remembers Nelson: 'I have followed him in fancy ever since I saw him walking in Pall Mall (I was prejudiced

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Worrall, *Theatric Revolution: Drama, Censorship, and Romantic Period Subcultures, 1773–1832* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); and *The Cambridge Companion to British Theatre, 1730–1830*, ed. Daniel O'Quinn and Jane Moody (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

4 Gillian Russell and Clara Tuite (eds), *Romantic Sociability: Social Networks and Literary Culture in Britain, 1770–1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); James Chandler and Kevin Gilmartin (eds), *Romantic Metropolis: The Urban Scene of British Culture, 1780–1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); and Jon Mee, *Conversable Worlds: Literature, Contention, and Community, 1762 to 1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); my specific debts to, and engagements with, material from these sources are noted below.

5 National Portrait Gallery, London, NPG 507; see David Crane, Stephen Hebron and Robert Woof, *Romantics & Revolutionaries: Regency Portraits from the National Portrait Gallery, London*, introd. Richard Holmes (London: National Portrait Gallery, 2002), 36–7.

6 The letter is now bMS Lowell Autograph File 197, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

7 Charles Lamb to William Hazlitt, 10 November 1805, in *The Letters of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. Edwin W. Marrs, Jr., 3 vols (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975–8), II, 188.

against him before) looking just as a Hero should look'.[8] Through these and other subjects, the shaping tendency of the letter is towards drama, from the described image to the described scene to the script that Lamb then inserts:

> What other news is there, Mary? – What puns have I made in the last fortnight? You never remember them. You have no relish of the Comic. O! tell Hazlitt not to forget to send the American Farmer. I dare say it isn't so good as he fancies: but a Book's a Book. – '[9]

The reader of this letter today must supply, as Lamb expected Hazlitt to do, the gestural punctuation that paces the embedded script into the rhythm of social exchange: Mary's shrugged, silent reply to prompt Lamb's 'You never remember them', and his mock-serious complaint: 'You have no relish of the Comic' (whereas, of course, his reader – Hazlitt first, and today's reader now – does have, and here experiences, just such a relish in the sketched scene). In Lamb's miniature domestic drama, Mary then does call out: 'O! tell Hazlitt [...]', reminding him to complete his promised loan of Crèvecouer's *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782), about which Lamb would grouse good-naturedly ('thank you for lending it to us') in his new year's letter to Hazlitt of 7 January 1806.[10] That principle of exchange – of letters, texts and readerly pleasure – extends into the last section of the document, too, when Lamb links up art with a kind of literary criticism:

> You send me a Modern quotation poetical. How do you like this in an old play? Vittoria Corombona a spunky Italian Lady, a Leonardo one, nicknamed the White Devil, being on her trial for murder &c. – and questioned about seducing a Duke from his wife & the State, makes answer:
>
> Condemn you me for that the Duke did love me?
> So may you blame some fair & chrystal River
> For that some melancholic distracted man
> Hath drown'd himself in it. –[11]

The exchange of 'Modern' and early modern quotations that this letter extends continues forward into Lamb's *Specimens*. There, three years later in 1808, these lines, spoken during Vittoria's arraignment, are reprinted by Lamb in his generous extracts from *The White Devil* in *Specimens*, part of a long ten-page sample from this scene.[12] The *Specimens* instantiate a particular kind of

8 Lamb, *Letters*, II, 188–9.

9 Ibid, 189.

10 Ibid, 198.

11 Ibid, 189.

12 Charles Lamb, *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets who Lived About the Time of Shakspeare* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees and Orme, 1808); specimens from *The White Devil* occupy 219–34, with this speech at 227 coming from what is Act

relationship between reading and performance, one signal to which is that the word 'theatre' does not appear at all in Lamb's 'Preface' to the volume, despite the detailed attention he gives there to what he calls his 'design'.[13] What matters here is that by relocating this extract from *The White Devil* from his letter to the pages of the *Specimens*, Lamb adds a critical note in which the dramatic language is engaged by his critical judgements and imaginative responses to extend his thoughts in and around reading and performance:

> This White Devil of Italy sets off a bad cause so speciously, and pleads with such an innocence-resembling boldness, that we seem to see that matchless beauty of her face which inspires such gay confidence in her; and are ready to expect, when she has done her pleadings, that her very judges, her accusers, the grave embassadors who sit as spectators, and all the court, will rise and make proffer to defend her in spite of the utmost conviction of her guilt[.][14]

The elements that mix and complicate reading and performance are all in play here: the appeal to the visual ('that matchless beauty of her face'), the affective response among the spectators (who 'will rise and make proffer to defend her'), and all oddly prompted not by witnessing a play on the stage but by imagining it up from the page. This, certainly, is how Hazlitt responds to the self-same scene when he discusses it later in his *Lectures*. She is 'made fair as the leprosy,' he writes, 'dazzling as the lightning. She is dressed like a bride in her wrongs and her revenge'. It is in the arraignment, which Hazlitt calls 'the trial-scene', that her particular ability to produce theatrical affect is seen: 'her sudden indignant answers to the questions that are asked of her, startle the hearers'. And to demonstrate this claim, which parallels Lamb's note very clearly, as Hazlitt's 'hearers' bring together Lamb's judges, accusers, and 'grave embassadors', so too does Hazlitt introduce as evidence the same lines first quoted by Lamb in his letter of 1805: 'Condemn you me, for that the Duke did love me?' (222)[15]

In this context, we might need to rebalance, at least in part, the customary account given by Bryan Waller Procter about how Hazlitt prepared for this lecture series in 1819:

> When he was about to write his 'Lectures on the Age of Elizabeth', he knew little or nothing of the dramatists of that time, with the exception of Shakespeare. He spoke to Charles Lamb, and to myself, who were supposed

III, scene 2 in modern editions (see *The Works of John Webster*, ed. David Gunby, David Carnegie, Antony Hammond and MacDonald P. Jackson, 3 vols [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995–2007], I).

13 Lamb, *Specimens*, vi.

14 Ibid, 229.

15 All quotations from Hazlitt's *Lectures Chiefly on the Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth* (1820) are taken from *The Selected Writings of William Hazlitt*, ed. Duncan Wu, 9 vols (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1998), V. References in parentheses are to page numbers of this volume.

> by many to be well acquainted with those ancient writers. I lent him about a dozen volumes, comprehending the finest of the old plays; and he then went down to Winterslow Hut, in Wiltshire, and after a stay of six weeks came back to London, fully impregnated with the subject, with his thoughts fully made up upon it, and with all his lectures written.[16]

This has often been read, by academics at least, with an eye to, and admiration for, Hazlitt's supremely competent professionalism, his ability to work up and then deliver so quickly a performance on a new special topic, outside his area of specialism. When viewed as the culmination of a sustained process of correspondence and exchange, with Lamb and others, the preparations for the lecture series seem to have started much earlier than Procter suggests, and to remind us of the extent to which their development was an intricate affair which depended on a sense of lively interchange between Hazlitt and his correspondents. At the same time, the example of *The White Devil* reminds us that, to read the *Lectures Chiefly on the Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth* well, we might need properly to unpack that central relationship they have to speaking on the one hand and to books on the other. Among the books that Hazlitt packed with him were certainly Lamb's *Specimens* and, traditionally, Dodsley's 12-volume *Old Plays* (1780); one product of re-reading the *Lectures* is to confirm the presence of other books in that working library.[17]

Before tracking those more detailed habits of book-use that the *Lectures* reveal, however, it is worth dwelling for a moment on the ways in which Hazlitt's speaking to Lamb, as also to Procter, link these lectures with a longer habit of conversation that I have been describing. For that habit of conversation, as I take it, also signals something of the oddity, or doubleness, of this, his last lecture series, both as talk and text. Or rather, as it would seem, text and talk.

Duncan Wu, so much of whose research now underpins any new work on Hazlitt, reminds us that Hazlitt's negotiations for a publication contract predated even those conversations with Lamb and Procter. First sketched out in a letter to Patmore of 3 February 1819, the lecture series and tie-in book took firmer shape in Hazlitt' s mind in the June and July of that year.[18] After Godwin had failed to broker a deal with the publishers Taylor and Hessey, and, in late June, Constable had regretted his inability to 'meet your views', Hazlitt agreed a fee of £150 with Robert Stodart for the as-yet unwritten manuscript; to this period belongs the list of titles and outline topics for each lecture that Wu first printed in his *Selected Writings*.[19]

16 Bryan Waller Procter, *An Autobiographical Fragment and Biographical Notes,* ed. C.K.D. Patmore (London: Bell and Sons, 1877), 173.

17 Wu follows the traditional account of Hazlitt's books: see *Selected Writings*, V, xvii.

18 William Hazlitt to P.G. Patmore (3 February 1819) in *The Letters of William Hazlitt*, ed. Herschel Moreland Sikes, William Hallam Bonner, and Gerald Lahey (London: Macmillan, 1979), 193–4, the letter's date is corrected by Stanley Jones's review for *The Library*, 6th ser. 2 (1980), 356–62: 359.

19 Duncan Wu expands the account of these negotiations given in *Selected Writings* V (xvii–xviii) in his *William Hazlitt: The First Modern Man* (Oxford: Oxford University

This is not so remarkable a kind of dealing, save for the way that it rehearses again that odd temporal and spatial dynamic between writing and performance, on the stage or in the lecture hall, where – at the Surrey Institution on the eight Fridays between 5 November and 24 December 1819 – Hazlitt finally delivered the series, after a postponement of his earlier plans to speak that October.

Hazlitt's opening lecture to the series was in many ways unlike those that followed. It offered, as he said, not a minute discussion of textual and editorial detail in the plays to be treated but the foundations for an exercise in literary and cultural appreciation:

> I shall not attempt, indeed, to adjust the spelling or restore the pointing, but [...] try to bring out their real beauties to the eager sight, "draw the curtain of Time, and shew the picture of Genius," restraining my own admiration within reasonable bounds! (160)[20]

Hazlitt contrasts the kinds of study encouraged at 'our academic institutions' with those implicitly enabled by the newer kind of Institution, of which the Surrey was one: his contrast between 'the learned professors and the reading public' speaks to the ambitions of informed populism that underpin his project (161). This confidence with the description and inhabiting of large cultural formations is marked in the body of Hazlitt's lecture, where he offers a contextual analysis of 'the causes' that 'operated to mould and stamp' the dramatic and other writing to be treated in the succeeding lectures (164). The Reformation and the vernacular translation of the Bible were together 'the chief engine in the great work'; the Renaissance rediscovery of 'the rich and fascinating stores of the Greek and Roman mythology' and 'the discovery of the New World' brought new material into cultural play; and the civic and court culture of the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries, characteristically cast as a Burkean 'age of chivalry' combined to bring together through 'the natural genius of the country' a unique mix of motives and materials (165, 168, 171). Hazlitt's account here, strongly material and committedly contextual, is remarkable all the same for the elements of the early modern that he does not discuss, not least the space and the practices of its theatres, themselves entirely absent from his lecture. What might now be necessary in such an introductory lecture – an account of the relationship between page and stage in early modern drama – is nowhere to be found.[21]

Press, 2008), 273.

20 Curiously in these non-Shakespearean lectures, Hazlitt's quotation adapts *Twelfth Night*, Act I, scene 5.

21 In the modern academy, compare the enduring success of Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage*, 4th edition (1970; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) or the organisation of *Early Modern English Drama: A Critical Companion*, ed. Garrett A. Sullivan, Jr., Patrick Cheney, and Andrew Hadfield (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), which begins with chapters on 'Dramatic Authorship and Print' by Wendy Wall (1–11) and 'Theater Companies and Stages', by Roslyn L. Knutson (12–22), before offering chapters discussing individual plays in detail.

And yet reading the *Lectures* again, it is hard not to be struck by the way in which that dynamic between the page and the different kinds of stage does become itself, vitally and centrally, a subject to which Hazlitt regularly returns. Those moments of return span the whole range of the lecture series. The first and most obvious is the absolute parallel, at least until the fifth lecture, between Hazlitt's *Lectures* and Lamb's *Specimens*. Wu's editorial vocabulary speaks to, and deftly manages, the relationship between the two texts when he writes variously that Hazlitt's account is 'consonant' with, or 'echoes', Lamb's. On other occasions when he does not simply 'refer', as Wu notes, Hazlitt 'extrapolates an argument', or uses material, 'derived from' Lamb, sometimes by following and at others by reversing the order of Lamb's extracts. Elsewhere, as for instance in his account of Ben Jonson's 'serious' drama, Hazlitt supplies the exact counterpart to a now-contrasting argument made by Lamb, here of Jonson's comic writing, already treated by Hazlitt in his *Lectures on the English Comic Writers*.[22]

Wu argues, surely correctly, that Hazlitt's extrapolations often draw out connections left implicit in Lamb, a process that extends even beyond the example of Jonson. Reflecting in his opening lecture on the day-to-day reality of early modern life – hunger, cold, worn-out clothes – Hazlitt is sensitive to the difficulties of living in such a period, and such a material culture: 'The distinctions of dress, the badges of different professions, the very signs of the shops, which we have set aside for written inscriptions over the doors, were, as Mr Lamb observes, a sort of visible language to the imagination, and food for thought' (172). There is imaginative sympathy with Lamb here, of course, but of a kind that revealingly extends his note from *Specimens*, so that it may tell us more about Hazlitt than Lamb: 'The blank uniformity to which all professional distinctions in apparel have been long hastening, is one instance of the Decay of Symbols among us, which whether it has contributed or not to make us a more intellectual, has certainly made us a less imaginative people.'[23] That contrast, so well set-up, between 'written inscriptions' and 'visible language', is scarcely present in Lamb: Hazlitt's separating out in argument Lamb's single 'Symbols' foregrounds the dynamic of texts and sights, words and images, here related by him to two quite different signifying systems, each potentially in tension with the other but vitally creative in the theatre.

That dynamic is hard to avoid, too, in some of the longest of Hazlitt's quotations, where the subject as well as the length matters. Drawing a comparison between Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and Middleton's play, *The Witch*, in his second lecture, Hazlitt gives, 'As a specimen of the similarity of the preternatural machinery [...] one entire scene' (200). From this historical distance, readers might well wonder how. In one bibliographical sense, Hazlitt 'gives' the scene

22 Among other examples, for *consonant* see Wu's annotations at 421, n.7; 423, n.48; 424, n.65; for *echoes* see 422, n.33; for *derived from* see 425, n.77; for *extrapolates* see 429, n.54; and on Ben Jonson and the argument that 'Lamb makes no comparison of the kind made here by Hazlitt, but that very fact may be what sets him along this line of argument', see 432, n.39.

23 Lamb, *Specimens*, 84.

by following a lead in Lamb, whose *Specimens* from *The Witch* include, among other parts, the two scenes quoted by Hazlitt: what are now Act III, scene 3, from its wonderful opening from Hecate – 'The moon's a gallant: see how brisk she rides' – through its ascents, song, and descents; and Act V, scene 2, with its Latin incantations, its 'charm song' with associated stage business, '*The Witches going about the Cauldron*', and its final dance and exit.[24] Hazlitt took only a lead from Lamb, though, for in fact the text given in the printed form of his lectures is not identical with that given by Lamb, whose *Specimens* served their duty as a finding aid: Lamb's text was modernized from George Steevens' edition of *The Witch*, first printed in 1778 from the single surviving manuscript witness, now in the Bodleian. Nor was Hazlitt following here Dodsley's *Old Plays*, which did not contain *The Witch*, but instead the third and final volume of Walter Scott's edition of *The Ancient British Drama*, the form of whose stage directions, vital for such theatrically busy scenes, he follows very closely.[25]

Identification of Hazlitt's textual source, whatever thoughts it might prompt about editors' traditional identification of the dozen or so volumes lent by Procter, does not resolve the larger performative problem that his treatment of *The Witch* foregrounds: how could the one lecturer, with the meagre if not non-existent scenic resources made available to him by the Surrey Institution, 'give' either one of these two theatrically demanding scenes? What would or could it mean for a lecture to 'give' a scene from a play? The space available to Hazlitt was in one sense unlike that available to *The Witch*: a Blackfriars play, *The Witch* was first performed in a Jacobean indoor playhouse, rather than one of the older outdoor amphitheatres. Itself (coincidentally) in Blackfriars, the lecture-room or 'Rotunda' at the Surrey Institution was more similar to an early modern amphitheatre playhouse such as the Globe: both venues shared a performance space shaped by galleried polygonal outer walls; and both featured a stage thrust out into what was the yard of the theatre, or 'the parterre, or ground part' of the Rotunda, which at the Surrey Institution contained nine rows of seats.[26] We do know, in fact, from memories gathered by William Carew Hazlitt, that his grandfather did perform these lectures, singing at least once, thanks to the testimony of an 'eyewitness' who even then had 'ringing in his ear, after forty-seven years, the burden of the song in "Gammer Gurton's Needle", "Jolly good

24 Thomas Middleton, *The Witch*, ed. Marion O' Connor, in *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, ed. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 1151–3, 1160–2.

25 At the time both Lamb and Hazlitt were writing, the single surviving manuscript of Middleton's play was owned by Edmond Malone, with whose collections it passed to the Bodleian, becoming Malone MS 12; Hazlitt followed Walter Scott (ed.), *The Ancient British Drama*, 3 vols (London: William Miller, 1810). The transmission history of the play is well surveyed by O'Connor in her textual essay on *The Witch* in *Thomas Middleton and Early Modern Textual Culture*, ed. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 995-7.

26 I owe these quotations from W.H. Pyne and W. Combe, *The Microcosm of London* (1808-11) to Frederick Kurzer, 'A History of the Surrey Institution', *Annals of Science*, 57 (2000), 109-41: 118.

ale and old"'. 'And he says,' the account continues, 'that when the lecturer came to the last word he dwelt upon it, till it seemed to vibrate in the air, after it had left his lips, thus – Jolly good ale and OLD.'[27] But even singing is different from singing while ascending, descending, and dancing as was required by the stage directions of *The Witch*.

As I suggested earlier, the length of the two long scenes from *The Witch* casts light on another of the recurrent impressions that reading the *Lectures* leaves: that, coming as they do at the end of such a dazzling run of Hazlitt's previous lecture series, extensively and richly recorded in the letters and diaries of those who attended them, the *Lectures Chiefly on the Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth* are on occasion severely padded out with quotation and (especially later on) self-quotation, thin where earlier series had been richly suggestive. Another of Procter's phrases here catches the ear, and resonates with a repeated habit of Hazlitt's. It is that description of Hazlitt's return to London from Winterslow Hut, 'fully impregnated with the subject, with his thoughts fully made up upon it'. That embodied understanding and the quick decisiveness of mind that Procter remembered are attractive qualities, and central to the kinds of pleasure that Hazlitt elsewhere provides. But the phrasing itself sorts oddly with Hazlitt's own prose. Compare his (dis)praise of *Women Beware Women* and Middleton at large, characteristically framed through half-quotation, here from Donne, and picking up, too, those connections between the static framing of art and the mobile staging of action which we saw in Lamb's letter earlier. Of Middleton:

> He is lamentably deficient in the plot and denouement of the story. It is like the rough draft of a tragedy, with a number of fine things thrown in, and the best made use of first; but it tends to no fixed goal, and the interest decreases, instead of increasing, as we read on, for want of previous arrangement and an eye to the whole. We have fine studies of heads, a piece of richly-coloured drapery, 'a foot, an hand, an eye from Nature drawn, that's worth a history;' but the groups are ill-disposed, nor are the figures proportioned to each other or the size of the canvas. The author's power is *in* the subject, not *over* it; or he is in possession of excellent materials, which he husbands very ill. (196)

The last sentence is key, partly for its closeness to Procter's phrase, but more particularly because it enacts a judgement that Hazlitt passes twice again in the *Lectures*, and once (as I'll return to later) *of* them. Of Beaumont and Fletcher at the start of Lecture IV,

> They thought less of their subject, and more of themselves, than some others. They had a great and unquestioned command over the stores both of

27 W. C. Hazlitt, *Memoirs of William Hazlitt*, 2 vols (London: Bentley, 1867), I, 256–7.

> fancy and passion; but they availed themselves too often of common-place extravagances and theatrical trick. (229)

The same judgement is passed in an impacted footnote to Lecture VII, 'Character of Lord Bacon's Works – Compared as to Style with Sir Thomas Brown and Jeremy Taylor', itself no automatic inclusion even in a series *chiefly* on Elizabethan dramatic literature. Hazlitt had to work hard to include this material. In the section of his lecture devoted to Browne, Hazlitt quotes, as he puts it, an 'account of this extraordinary writer's style, said to be written in a blank leaf of his works by Mr Coleridge' (317). Hazlitt's 'said to be' is odd here, for the long annotation that he quotes comes (as his editors have confirmed) from a letter to 'My dear Sara!', written into the endpapers of an edition of Browne's *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* (1658), late on a Saturday night at James Tobin's, 10 March 1804, as he waited to sail out to Malta.[28] It is explained by Hazlitt's having known the annotation not from this original, but from the tidied and depersonalized text printed in 1819 in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, probably, as George Whalley suggested, sent there by Coleridge in some desperation as settlement of yet another contract that he could by this point not properly fulfil.[29]

Why, rather than how, Hazlitt quotes the annotation is really the question. For Hazlitt's long footnote begins by quibbling with what is probably Coleridge's mis-self-transcription and soon becomes open disagreement. Read Browne, Coleridge enjoins, for precisely 'the exclusive *Sir Thomas Browness*, of all the fancies and modes of illustration [...] his *entireness* in every subject which is before him. He is *totus in illo*, he follows it, he never wanders from it, and he has no occasion to wander; for whatever happens to be his subject, he metamorphoses all nature into it'. Why should one go to bed early, Browne and Coleridge ask: '"THE HUNTSMEN ARE UP IN ARABIA" – what life, what fancy!'[30] This, at least, is how in the lecture Hazlitt quotes Coleridge quoting Browne at the close of his rhapsody on staying up late. Hazlitt's note – putting to one side the question of how he, as a lecturer, might have 'given' a footnote? – is snippy: 'Sir Thomas Brown has it, "The huntsmen are up in America", but Mr Coleridge prefers reading Arabia. I do not think his account of the Urn-Burial very happy. Sir Thomas can be said to be "wholly in his subject" only because he is *wholly out of it*' (318n). Middleton's 'power is *in* the subject, not *over* it'; Beaumont and Fletcher 'thought less of their subject, and more of themselves, than some others'; Browne 'can be said to be "wholly in his subject" only because he is *wholly out of it*'. If it seemed to Procter that Hazlitt returned to London 'fully impregnated with the subject, with his thoughts fully made up upon it', it

28 Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Marginalia*, ed. George Whalley and H.J. Jackson, 6 vols (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980–2001), I, 762.

29 See the discussion in Coleridge, *Marginalia*, I, 795–9 and *Selected Writings*, V, 445, n.29.

30 The text is as quoted by Hazlitt (318).

is often the case that the *Lectures* themselves give potentially more nuanced, and more self-misgiving testimony.

This is to argue that some of the problems and disappointments to which the *Lectures Chiefly on the Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth* give rise in their handling of their subjects can be read differently, and more excitingly, if we take it that the real subject of the lectures is their own, and Hazlitt's, self-consciousness precisely *as* lectures and a lecturer. We have become accustomed to positioning the lecture form and the lecture room, as Gillian Russell has it, 'somewhere between the church and the theatre', this form of 'secular sermonizing' exploiting, at the same time, the 'arts of performance'. Through 'the capacity to attract an audience through manipulation of speech and gesture,' Russell argues, 'the lecturer could harness the power of the actor while importantly remaining in his own character, not subjecting himself or his audiences to the uncertainties of impersonation.'[31]

What we see in these late *Lectures* is, I think, the unravelling of those certainties, the opening up precisely in the lecture hall, as previously had not been the case, of what Russell calls 'the uncertainties of impersonation'. For these were late lectures, and publicly so for Hazlitt, as the last words of his last lecture make a very public closure with his notes of closure, 'glad when our task is done!' (340). More widely, too, this Romantic literary lecture in this period was taking on the characteristics of late style. We might think, here, of Coleridge's anguished, but private, *Notebook* entry of 29 March 1819 – 'O pray Heaven, that it may indeed be the Last' – as he prepared to deliver what would be his last London lecture.[32] So too, as Frederick Kurzer's full and useful history of the Surrey Institution confirms, Hazlitt's *Lectures* were the last series of purely literary lectures delivered there: no further literary topics were discussed in the three seasons that were completed – 1820–21, 1821–22, and 1822–23 – before the Surrey Institution closed finally in March 1823.[33]

That self-consciousness, that late lecturing style – for Hazlitt, and perhaps too in the longer, but still little described, later history of the Romantic public lecture – together make central the delightful moment that Hazlitt found, but Lamb had missed, in Joseph Cook's play, *Green's Tu Quoque*. Here Hazlitt certainly had followed Lamb back into what had been his source, Dodsley's *Old Plays*, for he carries over Dodsley's misattribution of the play, not to Joseph but to 'George' Cook.[34] What Hazlitt had found there was not only the first line to Lamb's specimen on '*Prodigality*', but an exchange not excerpted by Lamb at all.[35] This is 'the first instance,' Hazlitt claimed as he introduced it,

31 Gillian Russell, 'Spouters or Washerwomen: the Sociability of Romantic Lecturing' in *Romantic Sociability*, 123–44: 124.

32 Coleridge's notebook entry is quoted in *Lectures 1808–1819 on Literature*, ed. R.A. Foakes, 2 vols (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), II, 347.

33 Kurzer, 'A History of the Surrey Institution', 137, 141.

34 The evidence for this is set out at *Selected Writings*, V, 269, n.51.

35 Compare Lamb, *Specimens*, 55 with *Selected Writings*, V, 269.

of the theatrical *double entendre* which has been repeated ever since of an actor's ironically abusing himself in his feigned character.

Gervase They say Green's a good clown.
Bubble. (*Played by Green, says*) Green! Green's an ass.
Scattergood. Wherefore do you say so?
Bub. Indeed, I ha' no reason; for they say he's as like me as ever he can look. (269)

This exchange is engaging and valuable precisely because it shows Hazlitt's self-awareness of the ways in which he had become the performer both of himself and of these older plays; it shows him, to rework Russell, harnessing the power of the actor to move outside, and in a way to self-stage, his own character. This self-awareness brings the theatricality of the performer back into the lecture room, but the traffic was only one way.

It is certainly striking to see how few of the plays discussed by Hazlitt in this series had any kind of continuing place in what he called, talking of Dryden's disappearance from the repertory, 'the list of regular acting plays' (333). The lack of connections between plays discussed in the *Lectures* and those he had seen in performance, gathered in *A View of the English Stage* (1818), is pronounced. Hazlitt had at least seen Beaumont and Fletcher's play, *Rule a Wife and Have a Wife*, with Kean in the role of Leon in June 1815, but the play is mentioned only inconsequentially in a list of others in the *Lectures* and not substantially engaged even in the earlier review.[36] The same is true of Massinger's play, *The Duke of Milan*, clearly produced as another vehicle for Kean with the hope that it might follow the success of *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*. 'We do not think the Duke of Milan will become so great a favourite as Sir Giles Overreach, at Drury-Lane Theatre' began his review, and the play is little explored in the *Lectures*.[37] Such examples serve to remind us that Hazlitt's career on the lecture room stage, and his career looking up at the stage as a theatre reviewer, were in contradistinction to one another: his most concentrated period as a lecturer came squarely in that period between early 1818, when he finished reviewing for the *Morning Chronicle*, and the start of 1820, when he took up his more widely spaced duties, contributing monthly articles to the *London Magazine*. Even when contemporary theatre does come to the fore in Hazlitt's *Lectures*, the treatment of it seems cursory, underdeveloped: he says of reading Marston's play, *The Malcontent*, 'one is somehow reminded perpetually of Mr Kean's acting' (210). Hazlitt writes with the false precision of *somehow*, yet does not pursue that *perpetually* into detail; and when he thinks of Kemble acting in Addison's *Cato*, it is to recall a curious because inaudible soliloquy: a 'beautiful and expressive

36 Compare S*elected Writings*, III, 63–4 with V, 241.
37 Compare *Selected Writings*, III, 121, with V, 246.

dumb-show' (332). Given how hard and rewardingly Hazlitt thought about both actors, and particularly about Kean, the loss is felt keenly.[38]

This is to argue that for dramatic lectures, this last series of Hazlitt's is little interested in drama as theatre. The lectures are muffled in their attention and operating at a distance from what he calls 'the noise and glare and bustle of resort' in the lobbies of the two theatres – a phrase that revealingly, he found and framed in his discussion of Lamb's *John Woodvil*, 'a dramatic fragment', Hazlitt says, 'intended for the closet rather than the stage' (323). The thorough-going radicalism, and indeed self-scepticism, with which Hazlitt interrogates his own undertaking in this series has on this basis, I argue, not sufficiently been realized. How else, properly to weight his devastating conclusion to the third lecture?

> In short, the great characteristic of the elder dramatic writers is, that there is nothing theatrical about them. In reading them, you only think how the persons, into whose mouths certain sentiments are put, would have spoken or looked: in reading Dryden and others of that school, you only think, as the authors themselves seem to have done, how they would be ranted on the stage by some buskined hero or tragedy-queen [...] The characters of their heroes have not been cut down to fit into the prompt-book, nor have we ever seen their names flaring in the play-bills in small or large capitals. – I do not mean to speak disrespectfully of the stage; but I think higher still of nature, and next to that, of books. (227)

This section of the series, one of its (few) highlights, is often quoted for what Hazlitt goes on to say about books in youth and age, and in the mind, and of his imagined companionship on Salisbury-plain, where 'there are neither picture-galleries nor theatres-royal': the sociability at breakfast, and in walks out before dinner, of the great dramatists, together with their characters, who, 'seated round, discourse the silent hours away' (228). What has not been noticed is that the earlier section quoted reuses material originally drafted for the first lecture in the series, one of only two survivals from the pre-publication, or possibly pre-delivery stages of the series (the other survival is of draft material for what became Lecture VII, on Bacon, today only partially retrievable from a much-damaged copy of *The Advancement of Learning* now at Keats House). Wu's otherwise nearly immaculate notes do not point up this reuse and repositioning, but it is vital: these thoughts were among the very earliest of Hazlitt's work on the lectures, and were moved to their centre for maximum force and dramatic effect.[39]

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38 See Uttara Natarajan, 'Hazlitt and Kean', *The Hazlitt Review*, 1 (2008), 17–26; Michael Dobson, 'John Philip Kemble' and Peter Thomson, 'Edmund Kean' in *Great Shakespeareans II: Garrick, Kemble, Siddons, Kean*, ed. Peter Holland, (London: Continuum, 2010), 55–104 and 138–81.

39 On Hazlitt's annotations to Bacon see *Selected Writings*, V, xix; on the unnoticed reuse of material between Lectures 1 and 5, compare 418, n.25 with 227.

I have tried to suggest some of the ways in which, from their inception, this last series of Hazlitt's London lectures feel, and are, different from those that precede them; not for nothing, perhaps, is it the case that Keats, as Wu reports, 'having missed the first two, does not appear to have attended any of the others', aptly setting their downbeat tone.[40] There is an end-of-the-decade, played-out quality to the lectures, I have been suggesting: a self-recursiveness or self-consciousness about them, that is hard sharply to grasp, but which catches directly their untheatrical theatricality and their uneasy doubleness between, and about, page and stage. Lamb, to my mind, comes closest and earliest to identifying the ambiguous and enervated qualities of these works, in his contradictory way, first when writing to Mary Wordsworth in February 1818, and second in his *Reflector* essay of 1811, revised and republished in his *Works*, again of 1818:

> S.T.C. is lecturing with success. I have not heard either him or H. but I dined with S.T.C. at Gilman's a Sunday or two since and he was well and in good spirits. I mean to hear some of the course, but lectures are not much to my taste, whatever the lecturer may be. If *read*, they are dismal flat, and you can't think why you are brought together to hear a man read his works which you could read so much better at leisure yourself; if delivered extempore, I am always in pain lest the gift of utterance should suddenly fail the orator in the middle, as it did me at the dinner given in honour of me at the London Tavern.[41]

Hazlitt as lecturer falls between the two possibilities, either of dull but scripted performance from the text, or dangerous and fallible improvisation; so too the actor, by Lamb's account in 'On the Tragedies of Shakspeare, Considered with Reference to their Fitness for Stage Representation', caught between impossibilities:

> So to see Lear acted, – to see an old man tottering about the stage with a walking-stick, turned out of doors by his daughters in a rainy night, has nothing in it but what is painful and disgusting. We want to take him into shelter and relieve him. That is all the feeling which the acting of Lear ever produced in me. But the Lear of Shakspeare cannot be acted.[42]

It is the stage property that catches the eye and creates the problem, tripping the play from the potential power of language into the unyielding world of bodies and objects. Hazlitt is not Lear in these lecture-performances, but that

40 *Selected Writings* V, xviii.

41 Charles Lamb to Mary Wordsworth, 18 February 1818, in *The Complete Letters of Charles & Mary Lamb*, ed. E.V. Lucas, 3 vols (London: Dent and Methuen, 1935), II, 227.

42 *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. E.V. Lucas, 7 vols (London: Methuen, 1903), I, 107; on Lamb's deliberate reshaping of earlier texts in the 1818 *Works*, see Gregory Dart, 'Lamb's Edition of 1818', *The Charles Lamb Bulletin*, n.s. 156 (2012), 106–16.

walking stick is a reminder of the one other thing that William Carew Hazlitt's eyewitness could no more forget, having seen Hazlitt deliver the *Lectures*, than the song that resonated long and loud in his ears:

> He was not so nervous as he had been on the two prior occasions; but a person who was present tells me that he hitched up his knee-breeches continually in a very distressing manner, for they kept slipping over his hips through the want of braces, and disclosing bits of shirt.[43]

This sartorial criticism is not to blame Hazlitt, who was, after all, on the day following the last lecture of this series on 24 December 1819 facing eviction, and had seen over the course of the year his marriage and family break apart.[44] But it is to argue that by becoming himself a kind of actor in and of his series he had exhausted the literary lecture as formerly he had inhabited, and thrived in, the genre. Part of Hazlitt's drive in the series to declare the untheatricality of early drama drives from a developing and disabling self-consciousness about his own theatricality, a dynamic in which he disavows in his historical material what most disturbs him in the present. The effect of that drive, in argument and analysis, is to reduce, if not to collapse, that enabling distance by which previously the lecture-room had held itself apart from the theatre.

That books of plays are odd things, in a way that books of poems and books of novels never are, was for Hazlitt one of the centrally powerful, and deceptively simple, elements of his mind; together reading and performance sparked and enabled his imagination. That oddness was a matter both of ontology and sequence, and of remaining (finally) out of reach:

> I have half trifled with this subject; and I believe I have done so, because I despaired of finding a language for some old rooted feelings I have about it, which a theory could neither give or can it take away. The Robbers was the first play I ever read: and the effect it produced upon me was the greatest. It stunned me like a blow, and I have not recovered enough from it to describe how it was. There are impressions which neither time nor circumstance can efface. (338)

This, as the unacknowledged but favourite quotation from Rousseau implies, takes us right to the building blocks of Hazlitt's mind and style, shot through always with traces of other texts and other modes, and unable to find a language for effects that exist not *in* but *between*. 'I have done: and if I have done no better, the fault has been in me, not in the subject', Hazlitt writes in the last pages of the last lecture (339). That fault 'in me' – as the lecturer becoming his own performer, and as the lectures become their own subject – has been the argument of this article; it reminds us again, I hope, of the ways in which reading

43 W. Carew Hazlitt, *Memoirs*, II, 256.

44 Wu, *William Hazlitt*, 265–80.

and performance were never for Hazlitt a matter of *either* and *or*, but always a complicated and rewarding interchange between *both* and *and*.

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A TRAGEDY CALLED 'THE LAST MAN'

Hazlitt's Joke on Francis Place

Claire Sheridan

What can William Hazlitt's observations on the early-nineteenth-century preoccupation with the figure of the last man tell us about his views on theatre and utility theory, and his attitude to memory and nostalgia? A number of curious things, I would like to suggest. This essay will focus mainly on one passage from Hazlitt's 1826 essay 'The New School of Reform.'[1] In this passage, Hazlitt refers to the 'last man' theme, linking it with the radical tailor, one-time Godwinian, and ultimately highly influential neo-Malthusian, Francis Place. What I want to discuss is the significance Hazlitt attaches to the trope of 'the last man' in the context of his attack on the utilitarian concept of reform. I then want to contrast this with Hazlitt's own sense of left-behindness and nostalgia, which emerges in various places in his writing. Theatre plays a role both in his genuinely reflective thoughts on survival, and his comments on Place and the 'last man'. I want to suggest that for Hazlitt, theatre is the antidote to economy. Of all the arts, it is the one Hazlitt associates most closely with real pleasure, which for him has nothing to do with the cost–deficit calculations advocated by utility theorists. This appears in much of his work, but I think it can be gauged particularly well from the 'last man' passage in 'The New School of Reform'.

'The New School of Reform' first appeared *in The Plain Speaker* in 1826. It is one of several of Hazlitt's essays that take issue with utilitarians and 'Political Economists'.[2] This one takes the form of a dialogue between two characters, a 'Rationalist', who makes the argument for utility, and a 'Sentimentalist', who makes the argument against utility, and who we can safely assume represents Hazlitt's own views. The argument accuses utilitarians and economists of getting reform wrong, and among its most trenchant observations is the contention that an economy-minded approach

1 I am grateful to Stephen Burley for bringing Hazitt's 'last man' reference in 'The New School of Reform' to my attention.

2 Hazlitt's dealings with the utilitarians and with Malthus have been treated from various perspectives. Hazlitt's arguments against Malthus are discussed from a Malthusian point of view in Donald Winch, *Riches and Poverty: An Intellectual History of Political Economy 1750–1834* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); see, for instance, 291–5. Detailed attention to Hazlitt's anti-utilitarian and anti-Malthusian rhetoric can be found in Gregory Dart, *Rousseau, Robespierre and English Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), especially 145–50 and 209–47.

to reform is in fact anti-reform, and that utilitarians, bent on social improvement, are going about it in such a way that they are in fact doing the enemy's work, and helping the established order of things. This is an essay that asks of the utilitarians: 'Are they really in earnest, or are they bribed, partly by their interests, partly by the unfortunate bias of their minds, to play the game into the adversary's hands?' (xii 183).[3]

The terms of the essay can sometimes seem extraordinarily prescient today. For instance, Hazlitt writes of utilitarian reformers:

> They do not grapple with the rich to wrest his superfluities from him (in this they might be foiled) but trample on the poor (a safe and pick-thank office) and wrench his pittance from him with their logical instruments and lying arguments. (xii, 184)

Whatever their stated aims, these new-fangled reformists are working with, not against, the powers that be, and against, not for the people. Hazlitt is recognizing a problem that has become the subject of criticism recently, that there is, and was, a great deal of potential ambiguity in what is meant by 'reform'.[4] When Hazlitt and others identified themselves as reformers, they meant, primarily, that they were in favour of parliamentary reform, but the word bundled in other moral assumptions with it. What Hazlitt shows sensitivity to in 'The New School of Reform' is that any broad, sweeping governmental change can be given a sheen of respectability and the illusion of improvement by being labelled a 'reform', even if, considered from a moral rather than an economic perspective, it's a change for the worse. This argument is given energetic expression in the essay, with the Sentimentalist's assertions that 'they', i.e. utilitarians, amongst whom Hazlitt seems to be counting Malthusians, 'wish to […] relieve distress by withholding charity, to remedy disease by shutting up hospitals' (xii, 182).

The joke about the last man and Francis Place occurs at a point where the 'Sentimentalist' is accusing utilitarians of a hypocritical attitude towards art. He suggests that they prescribe philistinism but enjoy their aesthetic pursuits in private:

> I have sometimes thought that the great professors of the modern philosophy were hardly sincere in the contempt they express for poetry, painting, music, and the Fine Arts in general – that they were private *amateurs* and prodigious proficients *under the rose,* and, like other lovers, hid their passion as a weakness – that Mr. M— turned a barrel-organ – that Mr. P— warbled delightfully – that Mr. Pl— had a manuscript tragedy by him, called 'The Last Man,' which he withheld from the public, not to compromise the dignity of philosophy by

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

4 See Joanna Innes, '"Reform" in English Public Life: the Fortunes of a Word' in *Rethinking the Age of Reform: Britain 1780–1850*, ed. Arthur Burns and Joanna Innes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 71–97.

> affording any one the smallest actual satisfaction during the term of his natural life. (xii, 186)

The passage is noteworthy for several reasons. It is reminiscent of Hazlitt's portrait of Jeremy Bentham in *The Spirit of the Age*, in which Hazlitt becomes very taken with the fact that Bentham plays the organ. Hazlitt seems tickled by this because it crystallizes, in several ways, the limitations of utility theory. He mentions the organ twice in the Bentham portrait. The first mention of Bentham as musician is there to provide an example of Bentham's comfortable, refined existence, which gives him little understanding of the criminal elements his panopticon aims to do away with: 'What should Mr. Bentham, sitting at ease in his arm-chair, composing his mind before he begins to write by a prelude on the organ, and looking out at a beautiful prospect when he is at a loss for an idea, know of the principles of action of rogues, outlaws, and vagabonds?' (xi, 11) Hazlitt's second reference to Bentham's musicality seems to make the point that there are pleasures that can't be quantified, and that Bentham, despite his insensibility to poetry and to Shakespeare, is not immune to them all: 'Mr Bentham relieves his mind sometimes, after the fatigue of study, by playing on a fine old organ' (xi, 16). A little further on, Hazlitt reflects 'if all the sources of satisfaction are taken away, what is to become of utility itself?' (xi, 16), and there is a sense that he might be addressing, amongst other things, Bentham's fondness for music. This is reinforced in 'The New School of Reform', in which it is acknowledged that Bentham, if not any of his followers, has an appreciation of at least one of the arts.

However the terms of the acknowledgement appear rather ironic. Just after the passage on utilitarians as 'secret proficients', Hazlitt has his 'Rationalist' announce that:

> So far from being proficients, or having wasted their time in these trifling pursuits, I believe not one of the persons you have named has the least taste or capacity for them [the arts], or any idea corresponding to them, except Mr. Bentham, who is fond of music, and says, with his usual *bonhomie* (which seems to increase with his age) that he does not see why others should not find an agreeable recreation in poetry and painting. (xii, 186–7)

Hazlitt's reference to Bentham's '*bonhomie*' is tricky. In the context of the defence of the arts in 'The New School of Reform', and in light of Hazlitt's own dealings with Bentham – who had him evicted from York Street in 1819 – it seems sarcastic.[5] But Hazlitt had remarked on this quality in Bentham in 1825: 'There is a lack-adaisical *bonhommie* [sic] about his whole aspect […] a good humoured, placid intelligence […] he is a beneficent spirit' (xi, 7). And at the end of his *Spirit of the Age* portrait, he had added: 'Mr. Bentham, in private life, is an amiable and exemplary character. He is a little romantic, or so' (xi, 15). It is, however, also hard to gauge how sincere

5 For an account of the eviction, see Duncan Wu, *William Hazlitt: The First Modern Man* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 277–8.

any of these remarks are. But it's a clever ruse, in 'The New School of Reform', to put the praise into the mouth of the 'Rationalist', a Bentham supporter, since those who were part of Bentham's inner circle really were devoted to him, and might well have attested to his 'bonhommie' without any of Hazlitt's reservations.

However, the contradiction that Bentham's playing the organ seems to embody does not seem to be the point that is being made about utility and art in 'The New School of Reform'. While Bentham's love of music is well documented by others besides Hazlitt, I can't find any evidence that James Mill, who is 'Mr M—' in the passage, actually played a barrel organ. This is probably because he did no such thing, and that's the joke: as the 'Rationalist' points out to the 'Sentimentalist', 'you are quite mistaken in this supposition, if you are at all serious in it' (xii, 186). Confusingly, though, this kind of absurd fabrication does not seem to be the way the joke works for 'Mr P—' who, according to Hazlitt, 'warbled delightfully'. 'Mr. P' is generally supposed to be Thomas Love Peacock, the friend of Shelley, notable for satirical novels such as *Headlong Hall* and *Nightmare Abbey*. But although Peacock was associated with utilitarians and utilitarian arguments (notably in his essay 'The Four Ages of Poetry, which provoked Shelley's 'Defence of Poetry'), he did not make his enthusiasm for art, literature, and music a secret. Indeed, Leigh Hunt would write in 1832: 'the Utilitarians themselves are poetical! [...] if you want a proper Bacchanalian uproar in song, you must go to the author of "*Headlong* Hall," who will not advance utility itself, unless it be jovial. It is a moot point which he admires most, Bentham or Rossini.'[6] Hazlitt certainly seemed aware of this quality in Peacock by 1829. Marilyn Butler points out that in his 1829 essay, 'The Utilitarian Controversy', 'Hazlitt was declaring that Peacock's position as a Westminster reviewer could not be reconciled with his passion for opera – or with his wit'.[7] Perhaps Hazlitt simply knew Peacock better by 1829. There is not a great deal of material documenting Hazlitt and Peacock's acquaintance, though they must have known each other at least slightly. There are two entries in the Godwin diary that mention them both, though in such a way that it is not clear whether they were in the same place at the same time, and rather suggests they were not. On 17 July 1824 Godwin noted 'Peacock calls twice: Hazlitt sups', and on 5 August 1824 Godwin wrote: 'Hazlitt calls. Peacock calls.'[8]

6 Leigh Hunt, 'Preface' to *The Poetical Works of Leigh Hunt* (London: Moxon, 1832), liii.

7 Marilyn Butler, *Peacock Displayed: A Satirist in His Context* (London: Routledge, 1979), 173. 'The Utilitarian Controversy' also contains another joke about Francis Place in relation to the theatre, this time about his relationship with the actress Louisa Chatterley, who would become Place's second wife in 1830 (xx, 258). However, this relationship is unlikely to have been part of Hazlitt's joke in 1826, because Place's relationship with Louisa Chatterley seems to date from 1828. (Place's first wife, Elizabeth, died in 1827.) See Howe's notes (xx, 430n.) for details of Mrs. Chatterley, Francis Place, and their 'conspicuous courtship'. For another of Hazlitt's jokes about the utilitarian Place's involvement with an actress, see his 1829 essay 'Sects and Parties' (xx, 265).

8 *The Diary of William Godwin,* ed. by Victoria Myers, David O'Shaughnessy and Mark Philp (Oxford: Oxford Digital Library, 2010), <http://godwindiary.bodleian.ox.ac.

Of course, even in 1826, the reality of Peacock's love of song may be part of Hazlitt's joke, just as the reality of Bentham's musicality is part of the joke on him. But with Peacock this does not seem to be the case. As I have mentioned, the 'Rationalist' assures the 'Sentimentalist' that 'except Mr. Bentham', the rest of the New School have no capacity for the arts. And even if the joke against Peacock is to do with his real love of opera, this is not the way the joke against Francis Place (Mr. Pl—) functions. Just as it seems doubtful that there is any real suggestion that Mill actually plays a barrel organ, there does not seem to be a real basis to assume that Place has truly written a play called 'The Last Man'. It is this joke against Place that I am concerned with now, and the reasons why Hazlitt ascribes to him authorship, not just of any play of no particular genre, but of a 'tragedy' called 'The Last Man'.

In early 1826, when Hazlitt is thought to have written 'The New School of Reform', 'the last man' as a theme was once more a matter for discussion. It had made literary appearances, and been the subject of commentary, on and off since the publication of Byron's poem 'Darkness' in 1816. The year 1826 was particularly fruitful for last men, with the publication of Mary Shelley's novel *The Last Man*, Thomas Hood's poem, 'The Last Man' in his collection *Whims and Oddities*, and the production of a sketch by John Martin called 'The Last Man'. However, in the very early months of 1826 when Hazlitt was probably working on 'The New School', it is most likely that he would have been aware of only one of these. Mary Shelley's novel, *The Last Man*, was published on 23 January 1826 – William Godwin noted the publication in his diary.[9] He also recorded calling on Hazlitt on 3 February, and Duncan Wu thinks that 'The New School of Reform' was one of a number of essays that Hazlitt had finished writing by 11 February.[10] Godwin had finished reading *The Last Man* by 6 February.[11] I don't know whether Hazlitt read Mary Shelley's *The Last Man*, at this time or at any other, but he may well have got the gist of its contents from Godwin, or from Mary Shelley herself. Godwin's diary records that Godwin, Mary Shelley, and Hazlitt dined together on 29 December 1825 (Godwin's abbreviation, 'adv.', indicates that Hazlitt turned up unexpectedly).[12] Godwin recorded both Hazlitt and Mary Shelley at dinner again on 5 January 1826, just three weeks before Mary Shelley's *The Last Man* was published, and around a month before Hazlitt is thought to have finished writing 'The New School of Reform'.[13] It seems highly likely that Mary Shelley's forthcoming book would have been a talking point during these dinners at

uk/diary/1824-07-17.html > [accessed 13 December 2013] and < http://godwindiary.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/diary/1824-08-05.html> [accessed 13 December 2013].

9 *Diary of William Godwin*, <http://godwindiary.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/diary/1826-01-23.html> [accessed 13 December 2013].

10 Duncan Wu (ed.), *The Selected Writings of William Hazlitt*, 9 vols (London: Pickering and Chatto, 1998), VIII, 382.

11 *Diary of William Godwin*, <http://godwindiary.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/diary/1826-02-06.html> [accessed 13 December 2013].

12 *Diary of William Godwin*, <http://godwindiary.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/diary/1825-12-29.html> [accessed 13 December 2013].

13 *Diary of William Godwin,* <http://godwindiary.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/diary/1826-01-05.html> [accessed 19 March 2014].

Godwin's, and that Hazlitt would have had the subject in mind for this reason when he wrote his essay shortly afterwards.

It wouldn't take detailed knowledge of the plot to have found out that Shelley's novel is a fairly grim one, concerned with an apocalyptic plague that destroys the whole of humanity, with the exception of the last man of the title, Shelley's hero, Lionel Verney. Modern critics have been quick to link Mary Shelley's apocalyptic vision with the dire predictions contained in Malthus's *Essay on the Principle of Population*, a work itself first written to take issue with the sanguine optimism of perfectibility theory as expounded by Godwin and others.[14] Although it is sometimes argued that Shelley's *The Last Man* joins in a Malthusian critique of Godwinian optimism, I would argue that Mary Shelley doesn't share Malthus's value judgements about poverty, or make any argument that the alleviation of financial hardship via the state will be responsible for apocalyptic social breakdown that will affect even the ruling classes – and these are certainly among the strands in Malthus's writing that Hazlitt particularly dislikes.[15] For instance, in his essay on Malthus in *The Spirit of the Age*, Hazlitt observes: 'Mr Malthus's "gospel is preached to the poor." He lectures them on economy, on morality […] and on the ungracious topic, that "the laws of nature, which are the laws of God, have doomed them and their families to starve […]". This is illiberal, and it is not philosophical' (xi, 111).

In Shelley's novel, plague is not dependent on human agency for its efficacy; it is, instead, an irresistible force of nature. As Anne McWhir puts it: 'Since Shelley's plague is not "contagious", it cannot be avoided by restricted trade or travel; consequently, its inflictions – air-borne, invisible, inescapable – seem as remote from human agency as any supernatural force'.[16] Within the novel itself, we get: 'The plague was not in London alone, it was every where, it came on us [...] like a thousand packs of wolves, howling through the winter night, gaunt and fierce',[17] and:

> Where was the plague? 'Here – every where!' one voice of horror and dismay exclaimed, when in the pleasant days of a sunny May the Destroyer of man brooded again over the earth [...]. With one mighty sweep of its potent weapon, all caution, all care, all prudence were levelled low: death sat at the tables of the great, stretched itself on the cottager's pallet, seized the dastard who fled,

14 Anne McWhir includes excerpts from Malthus's *An Essay on the Principle of Population* as an appendix to the Broadview edition of Mary Shelley's *The Last Man*. See Mary Shelley, *The Last Man*, ed. Anne McWhir (Ontario: Broadview, 1996), 398–9.

15 For the argument that Mary Shelley joins Malthus in critiquing Godwin, see Lee Sterrenburg, 'The Last Man: Anatomy of Failed Revolutions', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 33 (1978), 324–47: 334: 'Godwin's prophecy of the rational anarchist future is so extreme that it virtually invites rebuttal. His critics, including Mary Shelley, tend to go to opposite extremes. Godwin forecasts a utopia that could come about once human population is brought under control. Thomas Malthus rebutted Godwin by envisioning a nightmare world of overcrowding, depleted resources, and human suffering. Mary Shelley rebutted her father's rationalism by envisioning the annihilation of the entire human race.'

16 McWhir, 'Introduction' to Mary Shelley, *The Last Man,* xxxi.

17 Mary Shelley, *The Last Man*, 209–10.

> quelled the brave man who resisted: despondency entered every heart, sorrow dimmed every eye.[18]

The plague in *The Last Man* affects rich and poor alike, but there is no causal connection between what Hazlitt calls 'the relief afforded to the poor' ('Mr. Malthus'; xi, 111) and plague, as there would be in a properly Malthusian scenario. Indeed, there is an argument to be made that plague is unleashed in *The Last Man* due to an act of aristocratic unilateralism – its provenance is connected to the behaviour of Lord Raymond, the novel's Byronic character. So if anything Mary Shelley's plague is a plague that trickles down, not one that creeps up. It is perhaps worth pointing out here that during the Reform crisis in 1830 Mary Shelley would observe, disparagingly, of what she called 'the Aristocrats': 'Our *sick* feel themselves tottering'.[19]

But Mary Shelley's separate purposes might not have mattered to Hazlitt, a fierce anti-Malthusian, who would have recognized *The Last Man* as a novel that takes a pessimistic, Malthusian theme. He may also have known about Merrival, a character in *The Last Man* who appears to be a satirical portrait of Godwin: he is so preoccupied with his speculations about the future that he only becomes aware of the plague too late. As Mary Shelley puts it, 'He was far too long sighted in his view of humanity to heed the casualties of the day.'[20] This Malthusian scepticism about gradualist perfectibility is enough for 'The Last Man', as a theme, to be brought in as a comment on Francis Place.

From early Godwinism, Place 'converted' to Malthusianism in the 1820s. In fact Place's Malthusianism was quite different from Malthus's. Place was a neo-Malthusian because he promoted contraception, unthinkable to Malthus, who was arguing instead for the necessity of 'misery' as a natural check to population. But for Hazlitt's purpose in 'The New School', the differences between Place and Malthus do not seem to matter any more than the differences between Mary Shelley and Malthus do. Hazlitt signifies Place's shift in allegiance from Godwin to Malthus by imagining the play Place has written to be 'called "The Last Man"'. Malthus's pessimism and the apocalyptic predictions arising from his theory of population are gestured at in the 'Sentimentalist's' idea that Place's play would be 'a tragedy'. Through a series of associations – the last man with Place, Place with 'Political Economists', political economists and utilitarians with a betrayal of reform (playing the game into the 'adversary's hands') – the signification of the last man trope as interpreted by Hazlitt emerges. For him, the last man is symbolic of the false consciousness of 'The New School of Reform'. This is not because 'the last man' symbolizes the egotism of the artist, as some critics have argued in recent years, but because it symbolizes the egotism of the self-interest theorist.[21]

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18 Ibid, 215.

19 Mary Shelley to Frances Wright, 30 December 1830, in *The Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley*, ed. Betty T. Bennett, 3 vols (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), II, 123–4.

20 Mary Shelley, *The Last Man*, 226.

21 For 'the last man' as a symbol of the egotism of the artist, see Sara Lodge, *Thomas Hood and Nineteenth-Century Poetry: Work, Play and Politics* (Manchester: Manchester

But there is ambiguity here, too. The 'Sentimentalist' does suggest, albeit negatively, that, had Place's hypothetical 'last man' play not been a 'manuscript' and 'withheld from the public', it *would* have given someone some small 'actual satisfaction', just by virtue of its being art. In the form of drama, what Hazlitt regards as the mean-spiritedness of Place's Malthusianism would have been tempered by artistic licence and made, on some level, enjoyable. Nevertheless, *The Plain Speaker* keeps returning to the egotism of 'Political Economists' (including in the essay 'On Egotism'), and their inability to credit those who are good at things they do not value: 'A man is a political economist. Good: but this is no reason he should think there is nothing else in the world, or that every thing else is good for nothing' (xii, 159). By titling Place's imagined play 'The Last Man', the 'Sentimentalist' also links Place with the kind of philosophical arrogance that imagines itself to be lonely in superiority. Lastness as ascribed to Place is connected to a point Hazlitt keeps returning to, that '"a few and recent writers"' (he uses the phrase, framed by incredulous inverted commas, seven times in 'The New School of Reform') wish to 'monopolize all true greatness and wisdom [...] to themselves' (xii, 187). The 'Sentimentalist' compares the utilitarian to 'the religious fanatic', noting the 'strong desire of the ELECT to narrow the privilege of salvation to as small a circle as possible, and in "a few and recent writers", to have the whole field of happiness and argument to themselves' (xii, 181). Lastness, as linked to Place, could also be a comment on this 'narrowing', since there is no smaller circle than one, and no better way to monopolize than by claiming sole survival.

Hazlitt's joke linking lastness to utilitarian proselytes, though strictly unnecessary and strangely throwaway, has manifold applications. It suggests that utilitarians are concerned with passing fashions, and hints that they are pessimistic, arrogant, and vain of their own role in bringing 'the greatest happiness to the greatest numbers' (xii, 185), to the point that they exclude all others from participation in this project. Hazlitt throws ridicule onto the idea of lastness insofar as he connects it to the cynicism and reductionism of 'The New School of Reform'. But at the same time that he associates lastness with utilitarian wrong-headedness and philistinism, he also suggests an alternative role for it: that it has the potential to make a *bona fide* work of art, and, in its artistic form, to provide a non-utilitarian, but more important 'actual' form of 'satisfaction'.

Hazlitt does not, then, totally do away with lastness by his satirical associations. Indeed, the essay itself suggests an affinity with the type of lastness that identifies itself with a previous movement of reform-oriented sociability, an 'old school' of reform. It reveals nostalgia for a different era of politics, for 'Sheridan, Fox, and Burke' (xii, 184), and waxes protective over 'the cause of Reform', fearful that utilitarians and political economists want to 'strip' it, 'to disgust the friends of humanity, to cheer its enemies' (xii, 183). In his portrait of Godwin, collected in *The Spirit of the Age* the year before *The Plain Speaker*, Hazlitt himself employed the sole survivor trope in earnest:

University Press, 2007), 64.

> Mr. Godwin has kept the best company of his time, but he has survived most of the celebrated persons with whom he lived in habits of intimacy. He speaks of them with enthusiasm and discrimination; and sometimes dwells with peculiar delight on a day passed at John Kemble's in company with Mr. Sheridan, Mr. Curran, Mrs. Wolstonecraft [sic] and Mrs. Inchbald, when the conversation took a most animated turn, and the subject was of Love. Of all these our author is the only one remaining. Frail tenure, on which human life and genius are lent us for a while to improve or enjoy! (xi, 28)

Hazlitt's writings on Godwin usually contain a mixture of admiration and disparagement – rude remarks on Godwin's conversation in *The Plain Speaker* led to their estrangement after 1826 – but there is no irony or satire in this portrayal of Godwin as a last man figure. Hazlitt uses the trope to confer a special nostalgic status on Godwin because for Hazlitt, Godwin as survivor of this oppositional, dramatic, intellectual social group has an inherent fascination. This particular gathering is mentioned again in *The Plain Speaker*: '[Curran] and Sheridan once dined at John Kemble's with Mrs. Inchbald and Mary Woolstonecroft [sic], when the discourse almost wholly turned on Love [...] What a subject! What speakers, and what hearers! What would I not give to have been there' ('On the Conversation of Authors'; xii, 41). Interestingly, Godwin is left out this time – this is partly necessary for rhetorical reasons, since later on the same page Hazlitt will declare that Godwin does not 'talk well' on any subject. Godwin cannot therefore be celebrated amongst this group of 'speakers' and 'hearers' if the disparaging comment that follows is to be believed. By expressing his own sense of identity with the group, Hazlitt effectively replaces Godwin as last man with himself.

Gregory Dart has commented on Hazlitt's tendency to depict himself as 'the last of the old-style Jacobins', and something similar, or at least parallel, is happening here.[22] Nevertheless, this reiteration of the 'day passed at John Kemble's' does shed light on the aura of lastness conferred on Godwin the survivor in the *Spirit of the Age* portrait. Godwin the survivor represents what Hazlitt missed on this occasion, the experience of having 'been there'. Godwin as last man is a living memorial to some extraordinary, unrepeatable, gatherings. For Hazlitt, the nostalgia for a select group that this represents is perfectly valid. It is more valid, in fact, than any notion of lastness that the 'New School of Reform' can claim because unlike the utilitarians being attacked, the group at Kemble's being lamented are known for their links to the arts and to sentiment – they are actors, dramatists and writers who both engage in and critique the language of sensibility. This may be another reason Godwin is left out of the reiterated account: though he reintroduced sympathy into his philosophy (and critics such as Victoria Myers have observed that it was never really absent), his name would not (and does not) immediately call to mind the culture of sensibility.[23]

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22 Dart, *Rousseau, Robespierre and English Romanticism*, 229. See also 223: 'Hazlitt was increasingly to depict himself as the last of the Jacobins; a microcosm of the unified general will'.

23 For the presence of sentiment in Godwin's earlier thought, see Victoria Myers, 'William Godwin and the *Ars Rhetorica*', *Studies in Romanticism* 41 (2002), 415–44.

Hazlitt is not worried about the sentimental implications of lastness. Instead, as his joke against Place reveals, he is worried by lastness in its unsentimental aspect. In this instance, Hazlitt is satirical regarding lastness only when it behaves as a token of the cold school of reform.

The contradiction that allows Hazlitt to ridicule lastness as a trope associated with Malthusians and Benthamites, but celebrate it when it is a mark of belonging to a purer, older, *dramatic* reform movement is, perhaps, another manifestation of what Kevin Gilmartin calls Hazlitt's 'split social vision'. Gilmartin comments that 'Unique to Hazlitt's prose was the way an anxiety about merit was channelled from politics into culture, resulting in a split social vision.'[24] Lastness as a mark of distinction is permissible as a signifier that someone has belonged to the hierarchy of genius. But Hazlitt's last man joke indicates that the discourse of lastness has the potential to be usurped by politicians, who will use concepts more at home in the arts to give their 'lying arguments' a dramatic interest. They are, as Hazlitt says of Malthus, 'sophist[s] and party writer[s]' (xi, 112). They are plundering emotive rhetoric to make mechanistic theories convincing, even whilst disclaiming the utility of the disciplines they borrow from: stealing from the arts in order to denigrate art. The absurdity in the statement, 'that Mr. Pl— had a manuscript tragedy by him, called "The Last Man"', comes, not from anything innately laughable about Place, or about lastness, but from the disjunction that Hazlitt finds between them. The idea that an exclusive inhabitant of the 'political republic' should explore a theme only befitting the 'republic of taste' is ludicrous.[25]

So I suppose I'm suggesting several levels to this joke, which has a number of possibilities. In the first instance, Hazlitt imagines Place's play to be 'The Last Man' because it's a Malthusian theme, and Place is a Malthusian. But Hazlitt never says that 'The Last Man' is a bad theme for a work of drama, in fact it might make a good tragedy, and be 'actually satisfying' – and this is why Place's play is 'withheld'. Hazlitt himself seems fairly taken with ideas about solitary survival. But for Hazlitt to regard himself, or, in a good mood, Godwin, as a last man figure, is his prerogative, as someone who understands drama, and by extension, the human condition, more than an economically minded politician ever could. The last man is fine as a theme, but only for the sensitive, not for Place, and here lies the incongruity. But then again, maybe the fun comes from knowing that Francis Place is no more capable of writing a play, even on his favourite theme, than James Mill is able to play a barrel organ.

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24 Kevin Gilmartin, *Print Politics: The Press and Radical Opposition in Early Nineteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 229.

25 For the 'political republic' and the 'republic of taste', see Gilmartin, *Print Politics*, 229, where he cites John Barrell.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Nikki Hessell, *Literary Authors, Parliamentary Reporters: Johnson, Coleridge, Hazlitt, Dickens*

pp. xxi + 195. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012. Cloth, £55.

Nikki Hessell's fascinating study of the parliamentary reporting of four eighteenth- and nineteenth-century authors offers a detailed account of a journalistic practice to which literary scholars have paid relatively little attention. For the writers in question – Johnson, Coleridge, Hazlitt, and Dickens – parliamentary reporting was, at the very least, an important professional activity that bred numerous contacts and helped them live to write another day. But even as Hessell seeks to enrich our understanding of the practice and its many nuances, she also seeks to open up a larger critical discussion about the relationship between literary and journalistic work in the era. In doing so, she resists what she sees as a governing critical bias – an assumption that the reporting is interesting mainly insofar as it illuminates, or reveals, more 'purely' belletristic concerns: 'the parliamentary reports of these four authors are presented in the existing scholarship as exemplars of the genre that manifest the peculiar strengths of the emergent literary genius, the narrative of such accounts being that if literary figures find themselves forced into Grub Street, they will nevertheless certainly shine' (x). Hessell views previous critics as too eager to portray these writers as somehow rising above the constraints of the form. Instead she wants to demonstrate 'the degree to which these literary writers operated as highly successful journalists, not frustrated novelists, poets and literary essayists, during their time in the gallery' (xi).

Accordingly, Hessell's introductory chapter considers the problem of 'reporting and the individual talent' (1), and she offers a brief critique of the prevailing 'critical heritage' (2) surrounding each of her four subjects. She then goes on to argue, in later chapters, that each writer's canonical reputation has been retroactively, and artificially, imposed upon his parliamentary reportage. (That reportage varied considerably in quantity and in form; Johnson and Dickens had multi-year professional engagements while Coleridge, at the other extreme, published only three pieces of journalism, all of which appeared in 1800.) A more useful interpretive approach, Hessell asserts, is to place the parliamentary reports

of Coleridge or Dickens alongside contemporary reports from other working journalists. This method fosters many of the volume's key insights.

Hazlitt's job as a parliamentary reporter for the *Morning Chronicle*, a position he held for at least a year beginning in late 1812, was to transcribe as accurately as possible the ongoing floor debates and speeches, and then quickly to fashion reports from those notes. Reporters worked in one-hour shifts (down from two hours a decade earlier) and conveyed their reports for almost immediate typesetting and publication, so that the morning papers might chronicle the opening stages of a debate that was actually still in progress. Hessell describes the working conditions as cramped and difficult – there was not yet a dedicated press gallery, nor even a desk – but she finds indications that Hazlitt was energized by the demands of the work.

Hazlitt's situation was particularly interesting because five years earlier he had published his two-volume *Eloquence of the British Senate*, a compilation of two centuries' worth of significant oratory. Hessell is at pains to explain Hazlitt's attitude toward his selected material in that earlier work: he 'recognizes how little of what happens in Parliament is timeless and transcendent, but argues for its importance all the same' (100). She goes on to argue that this dual perspective was central to what Hazlitt did as a reporter: 'Being an effective compiler of past speeches and an effective reporter of present ones were two quite different things, but it is clear that Hazlitt knew the difference' (100–1).

In Hessell's view, the dominant critical view surrounding Hazlitt's tenure as a parliamentary reporter has been that he disdained it – disdained both the drudgery of the job and the banality of most of what he heard from the gallery. Even as she argues against this position, she also acknowledges that some recent work, especially that of Duncan Wu, has offered better, more textured understandings of what Hazlitt was doing as a reporter. Crucial to her discussion is a relatively obscure and understudied archival document: the commonplace book of Hazlitt's wife Sarah Stoddard, now held in the Berg Collection of the New York Public Library. Hazlitt used the notebook to record several parliamentary sessions in May and June of 1813, and thus it 'allows us to trace his method from gallery to page' (104). Further, it provides 'one of the rare examples of the survival of the notes of any gallery reporter, let alone one who was well known in later life' (104). Using the notebook as a basis, Hessell offers a detailed reconstruction of Hazlitt's working methods as they were applied to debates surrounding the 'future of the East India Company, questions about the Princess of Wales's conduct, the Peninsular War, and agitation for Catholic rights' (101).

It is precisely the careful exactitude of Hessell's analysis that gives her account its power, and that exactitude is necessarily difficult to recapitulate in brief. She shows clearly that there were times when Hazlitt captured a great deal of the actual language being used, while there were other times when he was working at a frantic pace and generating a report based on only a few scattered words and phrases ('necessary'; 'was against'; 'thought the measure insufficiently strong'). We cannot always be sure when the variations in his note-taking reflected his sense of a given speech's importance, or when his work was being frustrated

by more mundane impediments. Relatedly, Hessell describes the value that the sub-culture of parliamentary reporters placed on the art of memorization – not memorization as a fall-back for failed note-taking, but as a technique that was cultivated as an essential part of the job. So there were times, perhaps, when detailed notes were consciously eschewed. But even given these uncertainties, because Hessell compares Hazlitt's notes both to the *Morning Chronicle*'s printed columns and to the columns of other reporters printed in other papers, she is in a very strong position to comment on the extent to which his accounts were either representative or idiosyncratic, politically charged or neutral. In her reading, 'A new vision of Hazlitt the reporter thus emerges from the evidence of the notebook: someone who was well versed in the routines and norms of newspaper journalism […] and whose contributions were good enough but also, it must be pointed out, sufficiently generic in style to be integrated into both his own paper's coverage and that of the collected debates. There is no obvious Hazlittian voice in these reports, no sense of him as the scourge of parliamentarians' (115).

Hessell spends a considerable amount of time discussing Hazlitt's coverage of the speech of William Plunkett on the rights of Catholics, a speech delivered February 25, 1813. The speech is important because we know (from other sources) that it was one Hazlitt especially admired and later wrote about in the essay 'On the Present State of Parliamentary Eloquence'. There Hazlitt comments on the difficulty of trying to report on Plunkett because of the fluency of his delivery: 'There was no boggling, no straggling, irrelevant matter; – you could not wait for him at the end of a long parenthesis, and go on with your report as if nothing had happened in the interval, as is sometimes the case' (quoted 116). We know Hazlitt found the reporting difficult; we also know his paper nonetheless produced a full report. Hessell is able to compare the *Morning Chronicle*'s coverage with Hazlitt's personal remarks on Plunkett in the 'Eloquence' essay; she also compares it to the coverage in other print accounts; and finally she compares it to Hazlitt's reportage of speeches we know he disliked. Putting all of these elements together, she concludes that despite his admiration for the speech, both his reportorial techniques and his reportorial voice were basically unremarkable – that is, they did not obviously convey his support for Plunkett. This is not to say, however, that Hazlitt never exercised editorial judgement: he was skilled both at reconstruction and at judicious omission, techniques Hessell identifies as widely at play in the community of reporters.

As with many individual examples Hessell cites, the case of the Plunkett speech is complicated by the issue of collaboration. Newspaper write-ups were produced by teams (or pairs) of reporters working under duress, and the collaboration was frequently serial in nature: a reporter would write in a style that could be easily attached to, or amalgamated with, the work of his colleague on the next shift. This of course creates massive difficulties for the scholar interested in questions of attribution, and Hessell focuses specifically on two reports Wu attributes to Hazlitt in his recent *New Writings of William Hazlitt*. Hessell makes a strong case that Wu's attributions, while essentially sound, haven't taken into account the complexity of what were actually hybrid texts, and she argues that this leads him to claim too

much for Hazlitt's originality and independence as a reporter. Given Wu's editorial skills and ongoing engagement with Hazlitt, I imagine he will take up these issues in the future.

For the purposes of this review, I have concentrated on Hessell's work on Hazlitt, but each of her chapters makes a thought-provoking contribution to our understanding of print culture. One might expect that the concerns would largely be the same from chapter to chapter, but though there are recurring themes, Hessell's attentiveness to historical contexts, including the evolving nature of the relationship between the government and the press, makes for readings that are complementary but diverse. Throughout, Hessell's writing is clear – exceptionally so – and direct in its argumentation. Hessell is well aware that her emphasis on the journalistic over and against the literary is likely to challenge the built-in orientation of her book's readers. 'While the symbolism of working as a gallery journalist appeals to biographers, critics and readers, the details do not' (172). But while she acknowledges that 'I too would rather have "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" than Coleridge's report of Pitt' (173), she offers in this volume a cogent, articulate, and thoughtful account of the world from which such reports emerged.

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Gregory Dart, *Metropolitan Art and Literature, 1810–1840: Cockney Adventures.*
pp. xi + 297. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
Cloth, £57.00.

Gregory Dart's rich and finely illuminating new book takes a term of literary controversy and uses it as a way of understanding urban life in the early decades of the nineteenth century. No longer confined to the 'Cockney School' attacks of J.G. Lockhart and John Wilson in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* on the upstart writers of the Leigh Hunt circle, Cockneyism expresses a range of new possibilities and anxieties linked to lower-middle-class life in the modern city.

The word goes back to the time of Chaucer, its etymology debated, but its meaning well-established as a term for the pampered and effeminate town-dweller. The best diagnosis of the Cockney condition is, of course, Hazlitt's 'On Londoners and Country People', which begins by disagreeing with the implied definition of *Blackwood's* that a Cockney is 'a person who has happened at any time to live in London, and who is not a Tory'; by contrast, Hazlitt's Cockney is 'a person who has never lived out of London, and who has got all his ideas from it'. He lives in the moment – 'pert, raw, ignorant, conceited, ridiculous, shallow, contemptible. His senses keep him alive' – and his proximity to great things gives him a kind of vicarious existence: 'surcharged with a sort of second-hand, vapid, tingling, troublesome self-importance […] [a] real Cockney is the poorest creature in the world, the most literal, the most mechanical, and yet he too lives in a world of romance – a fairy-land of his own'. Dart's detailed reading of this essay shows how it prepares the reader for a 'final democratic flourish' in the transition from 'false consciousness to civic virtue' (82): 'In London there is a *public* […]. We comprehend that vast denomination, the *People*'. By shifting from culture to politics, Hazlitt can celebrate the Cockney as a natural democrat. But Dart reminds us that there is no straightforward progress; instead, the essay demands to be read dialectically, revealing Cockney vices and virtues as ultimately inseparable.

Not yet used as way of referring to the working class of London's East End – a usage that only arrived in the late Victorian period – Dart locates the early nineteenth-century Cockney within the realm of the petite bourgeoisie. Stranded in 'that unfortunate no man's land between the polite and the plebeian' (9), Cockneys were often identified by occupation: shopkeepers, seamstresses, lawyers' clerks and apprentices. The frequency with which a few occupations crop up points to an interesting slippage between representation and reality. The urban petite bourgeoisie may still have been deprived of political representation, but, judging by the periodical literature of the day, were the most well-represented demographic in British culture. We can understand this, Dart suggests, as a product of the anxieties provoked by the rapid growth of the aspiring Cockney class and its

challenge to conventional ideas of status and respectability. It was a term largely, but not exclusively, used by and about young men, and Dart acknowledges the sometimes misogynistic tone of Cockney writing. The particular resonance of the term in cultural criticism came from the way it seemed to reflect the experience of the bohemian, liberated, precarious, and commodified nineteenth-century writer and artist. Dart's claim that 'we are all Cockneys' now (53), regardless of whether we were 'born within the sound of Bow Bells', may appear to some readers as a piece of metropolitan parochialism, but is also a neat demonstration of his thesis.

Individual chapters are structured around particular figures and urban spaces. Hazlitt's Cockney is a lover of 'suburban retreat' and Dart offers a guide to Cockney places of confinement and escape. Leigh Hunt's 'Sunday in the Suburbs' (1835) celebrates the Cockney tea-garden, 'where there is no tea going forward, and not much garden' but plenty of 'talk, smoke, beer and bad paint'. The pasteboard bower comes to embody the Cockney imagination, and Dart shows how Hunt recalls Keats's 'Ode to a Nightingale' in his description of tea-garden Cockneys 'but too happy in their tired-heartedness to get to the first bit of holiday ground they can reach' (42). This is a convivial but provisional space, a manufactured, bastardized pastoral for Londoners who never go further than Clerkenwell and Islington. It is also identified, in Keats's poetry, 'with the heavily fetishized, infinitely deferred promise of poetic language itself' (53).

While the tea-garden is the archetypal Cockney space, Dart's Cockney sites all involve questions of perspective, scale, and moral uncertainty. In a superb chapter on *Liber Amoris*, Dart argues that it is the 'sheer littleness' of 'love in a lodging-house' that Tory reviewers found so provoking (92–3), using littleness to analyse the complex relationship between Hazlitt's self-lacerating tale of unrequited love and his political disappointment post-Waterloo. Dart claims Charles Lamb's celebration of London street life as 'the nineteenth century's first formulation of the writer as *flâneur*, the "man of the crowd" that became so important to Baudelaire and Benjamin' (143). John Martin's *Belshazzar's Feast* (1821) is a perplexing attempt, in a decade of rapid urban development, to 'bring the new aesthetic of the urban panorama to bear upon traditional history painting' (166), while Benjamin Robert Haydon's *The Mock Election* (1828) inhabits the 'Cockney microcosm' (204) of that strangest of London spaces, the debtors' prison.

One of the great strengths of the book is the way it builds on pioneering studies of the Hunt circle by Nicholas Roe and Jeffrey Cox, as well as James Chandler and Kevin Gilmartin's influential collection of essays, *Romantic Metropolis* (2005), which challenges Benjamin's description of Paris as 'the Capital of the Nineteenth Century'.[1] Dart's study is an admirably clear, elegantly written, and capacious addition to scholarship on Romanticism and the city, exposing many Romantic shibboleths and taking Cockneyism well beyond its usual bounds. It is particularly astute on how 'Cockneyism was not an issue that always separated cleanly on party lines' (192), showing how Hunt and Hazlitt could criticize Martin or John Soane

1 James Chandler and Kevin Gilmartin (eds), *Romantic Metropolis: The Urban Scene of British Culture, 1780-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 5.

in terms very similar to those used by *Blackwood's*. Conversely, writers such as Charles Lamb and Pierce Egan managed to avoid being labelled as Cockneys, despite their metropolitan themes. Unsurprisingly, given the size of the subject, this is not an exhaustive study, and it would be interesting to expand the thesis to theatre and music, two of the dominant forms of metropolitan culture. The musical culture of the *Examiner* circle has recently been explored by Gillen D'Arcy Wood in his account of 'Cockney Mozart'.[2] Dart's otherwise excellent chapter on the phenomenon of Egan's *Life in London* (1821) only briefly considers the theatrical adaptations of the novel – the most popular of which, W.T. Moncrieff's *Tom and Jerry; or, Life in London; An Operatic Extravaganza*, ran for three hundred nights at the Adelphi. In this case, as in many others, thousands saw the stage version who never read the book. What effect did this have on its meaning for contemporary Londoners?

Dart's focus is on extending Cockneyism from periodical literature to art and architecture, and from that slice of literary history traditionally served up as second-generation Romanticism to the less charted decade of the 1830s. The second part of his title is borrowed from Renton Nicholson's *Cockney Adventures, or Tales of London Life* (1838) and the final chapter includes a revealing comparison of Nicholson's stories with Dickens's more detached portrayal of Cockney types in *Sketches by Boz* and *The Pickwick Papers*. For Dart, Dickens's achievement is to combine the sympathetic and satirical traditions of Cockney writing and provide some resolution to the 'Cockney Moment'. In Sam Weller, Dickens had taken the figure of the Cockney, which had been a signifier for all that was ambiguously threatening about the free-floating city-dweller in the 1820s and 1830s, and miraculously transformed it into a reassurance against such anxieties, a synonym for everything rooted, loyal and content to be low. The Pickwick–Weller relationship becomes 'the most old-fashioned of master–servant relationships' (248).

Dickens's role as the culmination and resolution of a tradition is a useful way of thinking about what falls outside the 'Cockney Moment'. Dart's focus on the petite bourgeoisie largely excludes popular politics and metropolitan radicalism, with episodes such as the Spa Fields riot, the Queen Caroline affair and Reform crisis reduced to 'noises off'. This is perhaps inevitable, and the terrain Dart covers is much less studied. It does have implications, however, for how we view Dickens's relationship to early-nineteenth-century culture. Sally Ledger argues that we should read Dickens as the inheritor not of eighteenth-century picaresque but of 'an altogether less respectable, more truly disruptive, more *popular* radical genealogy' of Regency satire and melodrama, exemplified by William Hone and Thomas Wooler, and taken up by mid-century writers including Dickens, Douglas Jerrold, Ernest Jones and G.W.M. Reynolds.[3] In Ledger's view, these aesthetic

2 Gillen D'Arcy Wood, *Romanticism and Music Culture in Britain, 1770-1840: Virtue and Virtuosity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), chapter 4.

3 Sally Ledger, *Dickens and the Popular Radical Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 2.

modes preserve their disruptive charge and inevitably lead from popular culture to political questions about 'the People'. By contrast, focusing on the character of the Cockney gives us a more bourgeois, less radical Dickens. Dart shows the Cockney to be a restricted mode of class belonging, a squeezed lower-middle, always slipping into false consciousness or becoming an object of bourgeois condescension. The political possibilities glimpsed at the end of 'On Londoners and Country People' prove to be fleeting.

These questions are perhaps most acutely posed by the final Cockney in this book: one who falls outside the 'Cockney Moment' but who is among the funniest and most perfectly pitched in the entire tradition. In *Great Expectations*, John Wemmick combines his work as Jaggers's clerk with his suburban home life in Walworth, living in a glorified cottage with the Aged P. His life is a Cockney fantasy but also, for Dart, a disquieting echo of the main Pip–Magwitch narrative, without hope of transcendence or progress: Wemmick is 'a monster of privatized imagination and privatized feeling' (252). One of the many achievements of Dart's insightful and continually revealing study is to show how the pleasures and limits of Cockney life are always interlinked.

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Gavin Budge, *Romanticism, Medicine and the Natural Supernatural: Transcendent Vision and Bodily Spectres 1789–1852.*
pp. viii + 295. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. £55.00.

Scholarly work on Romantic-period medicine and literature has come some way since early investigators began to wonder about the possible connections between Keats's unfinished medical training at Guy's and his poetics, or the physiological theories that lay beneath frequent Romantic references (Hazlitt's included) to nerves, fibres, pulses, irritation, and circulation, or the rather fraught relationship between European Romanticism and the rhetoric of health and pathology captured in Goethe's remark to J. P. Eckermann: 'I take it that the Classical is health and the Romantic is illness'. Recent work by Martin Wallen, Alan Richardson, Sharon Ruston, and others has brought to the fore in particular the important connections between radical politics and philosophy and medical materialism, 'the most powerful, yet profoundly ambiguous, toehold for a mode of materialism within traditional European thought' being 'the discourse of medicine – a discourse as vast as it was diverse', in the words of George Rousseau, paraphrasing Dora Weiner.[1] However, it is also easy to overstate the medical materialism of the period, especially in order to claim a version of Romanticism that is recognizably modern in its assumptions about the neurological or otherwise embodied basis of mental life, or polemically set against religious authority on body and soul. Among the strengths of Gavin Budge's wide-ranging and interesting contribution to this debate are his refusal to take on only one side of 'the Romantic opposition between the transcendent vision of the natural supernatural and the bodily specters of overstimulation' (20) and his attempt to maintain the period's 'dual epistemological perspective, in which visionary intuitions are not reducible to the body but neither can the embodied character of perception be ignored' (8). His success in this endeavour is varied.

Budge argues over the course of his book that themes which have traditionally been understood as central to Romantic writing, such as vision, inspiration, imagination, and transcendence, are beset by the 'spectre' of the body and the recurrent suspicion that all of these phenomena are tied to its grosser functions, the result only of dyspepsia, fatigue, insomnia, or narcotic stimulation, as in Byron's famous comment in a letter to John Murray that Keats's poetry was a 'vision produced by raw pork and opium' (it is curious that Budge does not quote this line, even though he refers in another context to the letter in which it occurs). Despite the 'dual perspective', embodiment generally beats out its

1 G.S. Rousseau (ed.), *The Languages of Psyche: Mind and Body in Enlightenment Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 33.

opposite, disembodiment, which doesn't seem to appear as an operative term in the book at all. I noticed 'disembodied' only once, in a disclaimer: 'The claim to a position of disembodied vision was never a wholly unproblematic one' (187). The best section of the book, however, is probably the acute account of William Wordsworth's poetics in relation to the medical thinking of Erasmus Darwin and others (chapter two). Budge argues, against earlier accounts, that Wordsworth recast Darwin's materialist psychology, based on the association of nervous sensations, as a sort of disembodied materialism, 'a vital assimilation of the world whereby the materiality of Nature becomes progressively spiritualized through the physical workings of association itself', an 'effort to develop an ideal economy of the self, in which sensation would become an organ of the immaterial soul rather than tending to reduce the mind to the materiality of bodily responses' (55). The following chapter, on Samuel Taylor Coleridge and his debt to Thomas Beddoes and Tom Wedgwood, makes an equally strong case for medical influence on literary philosophy, although its arguments are sometimes harder to follow. This is often the case with the difficult topic of mind–body dualism, however, as every major thinker since Descartes has found, or as Coleridge put it in a notebook entry which Budge cites (116), 'Body & Soul, an utterly absolute Mawwallop'. (A 'maw-wallop' is a rather obscure slang term for something stomach-churning.) But the secondary references in this section are also partial, missing important articles on the topic by Francis Doherty and Neil Vickers, and referring (in main text, bibliography, and index) to the Coleridge scholar Seamus Perry as Sean Perry.

As with Coleridge, Budge observes, Hazlitt's sense of psychosomatic entanglement was informed by his poor digestion. The book's discussion of Hazlitt in the following chapter (in a slightly random conjugation with Harriet Martineau) consists of an account of his 'analysis of the peculiarities of English cultural and political life as products of the nervously irritable national temperament' (20), connecting his political and social thought, as well his views on the 'conditioned nervous response' (23) to poetry, with an underlying medical model of 'nervous irritability', irritability meaning in this context sensitivity to stimuli rather than irascibility. There are useful insights here for readers of Hazlitt. Budge shows how Hazlitt's urbanism and hostility to rural ignorance or stagnation (for example in his 'Merry England' essay of 1819) drew on a contemporary physiology which stressed the consequences of inadequate external stimulation and the excessive drawing on resources of the self, which also casts fresh light on Hazlitt's mixed feelings about Wordsworth and the Lakers. Physiology can also be seen to underpin Hazlitt's ambivalent feelings about the force of poetry, and how dangerously easily the 'irritable English itch for powerful feeling' (134) fell in with the feeling for power.

Other parts of Budge's book address fiction and the visual arts in addition to Romantic poetry, poets, or critics, moving between 'neurological self-control' in the early Gothic novels of Ann Radcliffe, the account of slavery and the vision of American society in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), and the aesthetics of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Here the book is rather less

successful, largely as a coherent rationale or overall argument connecting these disparate authors and texts – and others – never really emerges, although a wide and always interesting range of textual material is adduced; the art-historical chapter is unfortunately impaired by having no visual reproductions. Both the spectral and the medical tend to come and go as connecting or co-ordinating themes, and despite passing reference to a 'fairly extensive popular medical literature dealing with ghosts and apparitions published in the period' (79), there is in fact not very much analysis of such literature. The Gothic tradition rather disappears from the book after Ann Radcliffe, which is surprising as it offers one very obvious way of connecting the Romantic to the Victorian in terms both of spectres and medical science in literary culture, and thinking in a more extended way about the perennial appeal of images of disembodied human action. *Romanticism, Medicine and the Natural Supernatural* relies instead on a more diffuse idea of the influence of both Romanticism and medical thought through the nineteenth century, which does not always hold up.

The account of the history of medicine in the book places great weight on the significance of John Brown (1735–1788) and the Brunonian system, which accounted for almost all disorder, and indeed almost all human functioning, as produced by the shifting balance of over- or under-stimulation (*sthenia* and *asthenia*). Budge notes that this 'simplicity and [the] conceptual elegance of Brunonian medicine played an important part in its intellectual appeal' (56) over a relatively long period, and attempts to extend a sense 'of Brown's continuing influence in the nineteenth century' (12). However, the simplicity of the system also allows it to be seen everywhere by the historian, and Budge routes almost all reference to stimulation, exhaustion, sensory excitation or inhibition, or the nervous system and its metaphorical deployment in literature and culture, back to 'Brunonian ideas' or 'Brunonian discourse', even past the end of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, where there is scant evidence of influence, or (more to the point) where very differently derived models of stimulation, exhaustion, excitation, and inhibition came into play. Here the book is itself simplistic: it collapses whole worlds of medical debate or influence into one figure. Budge's claim that scholarship on the legacy of Brunonian thought has been limited (12–13) also ignores Germany, where Brown's influence was always greatest, and work in German. There is a deal to be said for a history of what Rousseau has called 'the long shadow of the nerves', and the many ways that the idea of an economy of nervous energy persisted from before Brown (from Albrecht von Haller onwards) to long after him. But it requires a much greater range of reference in the history of medicine and psychology than is shown here. The book also shows signs of having been sutured together from articles in the way that it repeats its explanation of the medical context in each chapter; *i.e.* the Brunonian system is outlined in the introduction, and then again on pages 55–7, 80–1, and 126–7.

The book concludes with an attempt to link the nineteenth-century rhetoric of cultural health with the early twentieth-century institution of academic English criticism, via figures such as I. A. Richards, but this has been done better

by Nicholas Dames in *The Physiology of the Novel: Reading, Neural Science, and the Form of Victorian Fiction* (Oxford University Press, 2007), which Budge cites at several points but does not really extend. Nevertheless Budge's book is consistently good on a sense of how Scottish empiricism connected metaphysics and medical thinking, and was 'a native British philosophical context' (79) previously neglected as a key influence on British Romanticism, compared to German idealism and other continental thought, and the sections on Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Hazlitt are likely to influence future work on these authors' thinking about natural science, medicine, and the human body and sensorium.

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REPORT ON THE 12TH HAZLITT DAY-SCHOOL AND 2013 ANNUAL HAZLITT LECTURE

'HAZLITT AND THEATRE'

University College London, 14 September 2013

Philipp Hunnekuhl

Shortly before the day's grand finale it was alleged that the most Hazlittian of all material circumstances – an acute lack of funds – had occasioned the move of the annual Hazlitt Lecture from Conway Hall in Red Lion Square to University College London. Whether there was any truth in this rumour could never be firmly established, not even (or perhaps least of all) over those few Hazlittian drinks between speakers, audience, and organizers that concluded this stimulating, late-summer Saturday at a Bloomsbury pub. What *could* there and then be established, however, was that the experiment of combining the annual Lecture with the 12th Hazlitt Day-school through the shared theme of 'Hazlitt and the Theatre' had been a thoroughgoing success: new perspectives of young researchers had blended with the practical knowledge of theatre professionals and the long-standing expertise of senior academics in an environment refreshingly informal and conducive to the frank exchange of ideas and opinions.

Somewhere between UCL and the pub, the Day-school's speakers offered to turn their papers into submissions to the *Hazlitt Review*. Hence, if the agreement of these names with those of the contributors to the present issue of the *Review* has struck the attentive reader, then the reason behind this is that our speakers have kept their word, and that our anonymous reviewers were as delighted with their written contributions as the Hazlitt Day audience was with their spoken ones. The result is that in this issue we have on the page what, on 14 September 2013, we had on the UCL stage (or lecture hall), to borrow Lockwood's dichotomy. So as not to bore the attentive reader with less eloquent synopses of what she or he already knows, then, and also to do justice to the theme of the day, I shall concentrate in this report on the interaction between our speakers and their audiences as well as providing a few anecdotes from the day.

Tom Lockwood (University of Birmingham) opened the day in UCL's Old Refectory with his paper entitled '"He spoke to Charles Lamb": Reading and Performance in Hazlitt's *Lectures on the Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth*'.

The paper disentangled the overt influences and oblique undercurrents of the manner in which Hazlitt's third (and last) series of London lectures in November and December 1819 found its way onto the pages of his 1820 *Lectures Chiefly on the Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth*, placing stress not only on Lamb's 1808 *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets* but also on the sociability of Hazlitt's environment. Lockwood just about managed to channel into his line of argument the attention that his claims (Hazlitt the lecturer becoming the performer of his own analyses as well as their theatrical subject matter) placed on Lockwood himself behind the lectern. His argument on the whole, however, was novel and gripping, doing away with too narrow perspectives of direct, linear influence between texts, and opening critical discourse up to the multidirectional and multilayered currents of influence and performance on the 'stage' of sociability. Thus, in a very Hazlittian manner, he situated the origin of text not in the singular engagement of an author with text, but in the multifariousness of historical detail, each in its own right.

Claire Sheridan (Queen Mary University of London) then set out to do what is commonly discouraged: she ventured to explain a joke. Instead of sacrificing humour to scholarship, however, Sheridan managed to elicit further laughs from her audience alongside her analysis. Her paper, entitled 'A tragedy called "The Last Man"': Hazlitt's joke on Francis Place', highlighted the ambivalence in Hazlitt's use of the 'last man' trope with respect to Godwin and Place. The significance of sociability implied in Lockwood's critical approach from here on underwent a more overt politicization in Sheridan's paper, which ever so sharply worked out the inclemency of Malthusianism by never losing sight of the joking character of Hazlitt's remarks on Place. The theatrical link here is a purely hypothetical one – Francis Place's alleged play – yet Sheridan carefully and convincingly constructed the debate about the hypocrisies of Utilitarianism around it. This debate's contemporary relevance became increasingly obvious during the discussion that followed: at a time when again austerity is not just preached but imposed by a very similar kind of 'self-interest theorist[s]' (to use Sheridan's terms), the laws of the marketplace are yet again fetishized. Hazlitt's joke then, I would conclude, mocks Place, the 'last man' of a proto-Govian 'New School of Reform', who proclaims universal benefit whilst clandestinely corroding social coherence by applying an unyielding market rationale.

During the tea and coffee break that followed, speakers and visitors had a first opportunity to mingle in the wide corridors of the South Cloisters, where a photographic exhibition impressively brought home the more recent history of these walls. While an understandable nostalgia for the Oxford origins of the Hazlitt Day-school may still prevail in some of our most faithful attendees, the roots of UCL as a secular alternative to Oxbridge during Hazlitt's lifetime, and the intellectual profile that it has since acquired, render our new venue a great deal more than a lacklustre surrogate.

Back in the Old Refectory – these days apparently less of a place for the indulgence in food and drink than the South Cloisters – James Whitehead introduced his colleague John Stokes, Professor Emeritus at King's College London, whose very participation in the Day-school had drawn explicit interest

from several new visitors in the build-up to the event. And Stokes's paper, the morning's plenary lecture entitled 'Embodying Shadows: Wilde and Hazlitt as Theatrical Critics', lived up to their high expectations. Drawing on a now obsolete notion of 'shadow' in theatrical jargon, Stokes emphasized how Wilde invoked Hazlitt in order to explain an actor's assertion of reality through reality's overt absence in a play. Stokes highlighted this invocation's whole range of nuances, from the disagreement about *Hamlet* as a drama to be acted or read, via natural sympathy in Hazlitt's and Wilde's stress on collective performance, to Hazlitt's somewhat atypical, Dandyish, or erotic concessions echoed more prominently in Wilde. Emphasizing this latter, all too easily overlooked facet of Hazlitt's dramatic criticism alleviated the contrast between the two Irish descendants and added a compelling element of critical flexibility to Hazlitt that lends further support to his modernity. If the audience fell quiet from time to time in the following round of questions and answers, then this was due to the conclusiveness and lucidity of Stokes's talk. There simply was not much (if indeed anything) to be added, and we are delighted to publish the written version of his paper in this issue.

After lunch Marcus Risdell, librarian and curator at the Garrick Club, spoke about 'Charles Mathews's Gallery of Theatrical Portraits'. However discerning the preceding papers may have been, Risdell added an element to the day that had till then been somewhat neglected: visuals. His presentation gave form and face to much of what had previously, in a more abstract manner, been addressed. Subjects of Hazlitt's critiques emerged in stunning vigour, and the Day-school visitors gained rare insights into the collections of the Garrick, started by Hazlitt's almost exact contemporary Charles Mathews (1776–1835). Details of Mathews's eventful life – of initial provincial successes, popularity spreading to the US, and varying financial fortunes – rounded off a remarkable talk on the provenance, in Hazlitt's day, of many a surviving work of art, and highlighted a theatrical tradition which is still very much alive today.

Another tea break followed, during which the organizers faced the biggest logistical challenge of the day: moving an expanding audience from the Old Refectory's ground-floor location to the Gustave Tuck Lecture Theatre, UCL's grand attic. A few (keen but lost) stragglers had to be collected on the fringes of the campus and guided towards the, well, Theatre, before it was my pleasure to announce the lecturer, Professor Peter Thomson (University of Exeter). In the Gustave Tuck Lecture Theatre, the wood panels of the suitably ancient blackboard are superscripted in golden Hebrew letters from the Song of Moses, 'REMEMBER THE DAYS OF OLD, CONSIDER THE YEARS OF EACH GENERATION' (my less than negligible translation skills here being decisively assisted by the English translation provided right beneath). This appeal to a dialectic of tradition and reform set the tone for Thomson's lecture on Hazlitt and the recurring object of Hazlitt's theatrical critiques, the actor Edmund Kean.

Hazlitt's critique of Kean's Shylock, which made the struggling actor famous almost overnight, is one such instance of reform celebrated against tradition. Of course Hazlitt, in his 1825 *Spirit of the Age* essay 'On Coleridge', stressed that 'history and particular facts' matter profoundly. But when Kean, in late January 1814,

wrought 'legitimacy' out of the hands of theatrical conservatism and subverted it with a vivacity that matched Shylock's poignant appeal to humanity, this freed tradition from patrician appropriation and handed it over to a new generation. Kean emancipated the audience from Kemble's legitimate Covent Garden 'religion' – and Hazlitt was delighted. Thus began to emerge a parallel between the actor and the critic that Thompson accentuated in several more facets, and the lecturer did not tire of highlighting present-day references to his own audience.

With a view to establishing Kean's performing, 'thinking body' as the subversive stage reification of 'gusto', Thomson drew attention to Hazlitt's concept of aesthetic appreciation as calling for both the release and effect of dramatic vivacity. Kean's acting the part of Othello through a subtle, psychological build-up of liveliness – as opposed to the traditional thunderous presence of the character – that released itself in an improvised 'dance' with Iago at the height of dramatic tension, took the thinking physicality of Kean's performances yet further. Hazlitt's physical responsiveness to Kean's acting – the 'guts in [his] brains' – then brought together the strands of Thomson's argument. Our lecturer drew the striking parallel between Hazlitt's excitability and Kean's exaggerated, at times irrational, fear of ambitious competitors and ill-tempered audiences: what united these men beyond their rejection of legitimacy, and what set their intellectual achievements apart, was a pathological propensity to challenge the emotional convenience of convention. Or, in the words of Kurt Cobain, 'Just because you're paranoid, don't mean they're not after you': morbidity may very well be true and justifiable against the backdrop of conventional superficiality and hypocrisy. Both Hazlitt and Kean, Thompson did not fail to point out, were victims of public vilifications as a result of their more (in Hazlitt's case) or less (in Kean's) publicly exposed affairs and underlying irrationalities of desire. For Hazlitt this meant that his imagination supplied, in an increasingly less controllable manner, what his body longed for but could never possess in Sarah Walker – that he created a complete image in which thought and body are one, propelled by infatuation yet irreconcilable in its opposition between desire and sheer physical need. This hint at Lacan and thereafter, in popular culture, the Rolling Stones – that only need can be fulfilled but not desire – is yet another indicator of the modernity of Hazlitt's psychological insights in *Liber Amoris*.

But these last digressions on Thomson's lecture are mine, I admit, although I cannot quite recall how many of them I managed to contribute to the discussion that followed the lecture; Thompson was in high demand after all. Be that as it may, it was an immense honour to have worked not only with this most eminent Shakespeare and Brecht scholar (even if only for the day), but also to have welcomed every single one of our speakers and audience members. I would like to thank them all once more on behalf of the Day-school's organizing committee.

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WILLIAM HAZLITT AUTOGRAPH LETTERS: A QUERY

For the purposes of a new edition of the letters of William Hazlitt (1778–1830) that will replace the seriously flawed Sikes edition, I seek information on autograph letters in private hands and uncatalogued or unpublished autograph letters in university libraries and other public archives. I also seek information on Hazlitt letters that were published in overlooked nineteenth-century reminiscences and biographies – as well as Hazlitt's letters to editors in the newspapers and journals to which Hazlitt made contributions.

Sikes printed 168 letters in 1978, and I have since then published 33 additional letters from manuscript (including six from letters owned by private collectors).[1] I anticipate that my edition will contain 250 letters. As is well known, Hazlitt did not write that many letters, and each new letter provides a new window into the many unknown parts of his life and works.

I have made inquiries to 250 libraries and am in the process of checking with another 250 libraries and archives, and I have already transcribed letters from approximately 40 archives (the major ones including the British Library, the Bodleian Library, Cambridge University Library, Dr. Williams's Library, National Library of Scotland, and The Wordsworth Trust in the UK; and the Buffalo, Folger, Harvard, Pforzheimer, Princeton, and Yale libraries in the USA). I have pursued all the letters published in Sikes and also those listed in works by Duncan Wu and Stanley Jones (including Jones's articles correcting and adding to Sikes) – and in Barbara Rosenbaum's invaluable *Index to Hazlitt's Manuscripts*.

My new edition will have an apparatus that records addresses and postmarks and notations, if present, on each letter, and will use watermarks and ink and type of paper to help date undated letters.

I welcome any information on autograph and other letters and will certainly credit all those who supply me with new letters or leads.

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1 Charles E. Robinson (ed.), *William Hazlitt to His Publishers, Friends, and Creditors: Twenty-seven New Holograph Letters* (Heslington, York: The Keats–Shelley Memorial Association, 1987). Also printed, without index, in *Keats–Shelley Review* 2 (1987), 1–47. See also 'Two New William Hazlitt Letters to His Editors', *Nineteenth-Century Prose* 36 (2009), 167–76; and 'Four New William Hazlitt Letters', *Keats–Shelley Review* 24 (2010), 66–75.

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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.*

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