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Contest for Cultural Authority:
Hazlitt, Coleridge, and the "Distresses of the Country," 1816-17

by

Robert Keith Lapp

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

at

Dalhousie University
Halifax, Nova Scotia
October, 1996

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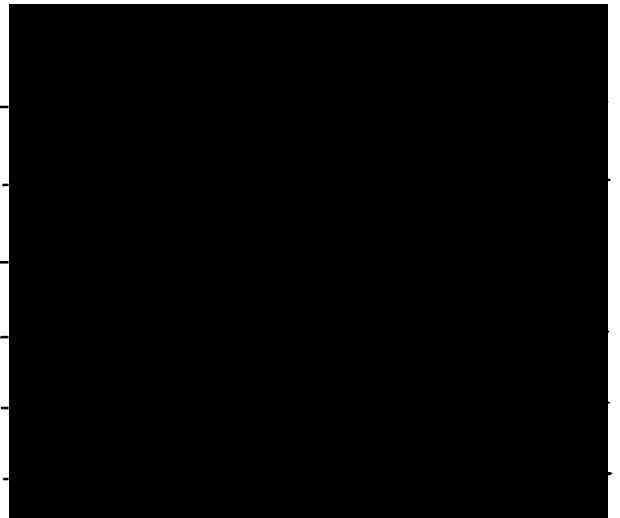
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by Robert Keith Lapp

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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This dissertation
is dedicated to my life-partner
Melody Petlock
without whom it would not have been possible.

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Abstract

Between June 1816 and August 1817, William Hazlitt wrote seven anonymous and harshly oppositional reviews of Coleridge's writings during this period. These reviews have been traditionally rejected as personally motivated and even "malignant" in intent, but this thesis finds them instead to be fundamentally public and political in motivation and emphasis, and in fact to offer an indispensable critique of Coleridge's response to the socio-political crisis known as the "Distresses of the Country" (1816-1817). Indeed, by recovering Hazlitt's side of a pivotal literary-political debate, these writings are found to epitomize a larger contest for cultural authority between two formations within bourgeois ideology: between Hazlitt's post-enlightenment romanticism of libertarian protest, rooted in the democratic force of "common sense" and "public opinion," and Coleridge's withdrawal into visionary idealism, rooted in the autonomous subjectivity of "Poetic Genius."

Hazlitt's reviews of Coleridge are taken up in chronological order, from his Examiner review of the Christabel volume, through his four separate reviews of The Statesman's Manual in the Examiner and the Edinburgh Review, to his Examiner review of Coleridge's Courier essays on Wat Tyler, and finally his review-essay of the Biographia Literaria in the Edinburgh Review. A separate chapter is devoted to a reappraisal of Coleridge's little-read Statesman's Manual. In each case, the text in question is situated as a product of three overlapping discursive contexts: the arena of political debate, the volatile marketplace for literature and literary criticism, and the shifting hierarchy of genres and modes by which discursive authority was performed within the public sphere. In this way, the public struggle between British Romanticism's two foremost critics comes to epitomize a distinct moment in British cultural history. Once resituated within the contexts of political, commercial, and generic struggle, Hazlitt's reviews of Coleridge bring to light some of the most important discursive and ideological conflicts unfolding within middle-class culture at a critical moment in what Raymond Williams has called "the long revolution."

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Introduction

Vigilant "AUDITOR":

Hazlitt's Reviews of Coleridge, 1816-17

On August 14, 1819, just two days before the "Peterloo" massacre, a collection of boldly dissident Political Essays appeared from the house of the radical polemicist, William Hone. These were not Hone's writings, however; nor were they published anonymously, as one might have expected in the thickening atmosphere of repression that marked the summer of 1819. Instead, they appeared under the name of William Hazlitt, widely respected arbiter of literary taste among the British reading public. Hazlitt was ranked at this time alongside Francis Jeffrey of The Edinburgh Review as "one of the two most eminent speculators on literary topics"¹; indeed, as a public lecturer and as author of such books as Characters of Shakespeare's Plays and Lectures on the English Poets, he had earned a reputation as "one of the ablest and most eloquent critics of [the] nation."² But now, as the political crisis that had divided the nation since Waterloo rose again to the forefront of public debate, and as the movement for radical reform once again raised fears of either revolution or heightened repression, Hazlitt was putting at serious risk the cultural authority that had accrued to his name. For in this new

¹"Hazlitt and Jeffrey," Blackwood's Magazine (June 1818). Hazlitt's very eminence induced a campaign of satire against him in the same magazine, beginning in August 1818.

²Morning Chronicle, quoted in Cook, Introduction xlvi.

volume he had gathered together all his most outspoken (yet anonymous) journal articles from the previous six years and was republishing them under his own name from the house of the dissident Hone, thus proving himself, indeed, to be one of the most "eloquent critics of [his] nation." "I am no politician," his preface begins,

... and still less can I be said to be a party-man: but I have a hatred of tyranny, and a contempt for its tools; and this feeling I have expressed as often and as strongly as I could. I cannot sit quietly down under the claims of barefaced power, and I have tried to expose the little arts of sophistry by which they are defended. (Works 7: 7)³

Two days later, of course, the brutal massacre at Manchester, and the repressive aftermath of the "Six Acts,"⁴ brought to an end the brief period of British history that E. P. Thompson has called "the heroic age of popular Radicalism" (603). No doubt for this reason, the "second edition" of Hazlitt's Political Essays, brought out in 1822, consisted of no more than the unsold copies of the first (7: 2). Even today, Hazlitt's Political Essays remain among the least-read of his voluminous writings. Because he is regarded primarily as a literary (rather than political) essayist, these articles, so clearly entangled in the violently divisive struggles of the post-revolutionary period, have seemed well beyond—or beneath—the purview of strictly literary studies.

³Unless otherwise indicated, all further reference to Hazlitt's works will be by volume and page number in the Howe edition.

⁴The most important of the "Six Acts" for the radical press were the final two, which authorized seizure of any newspaper or pamphlet deemed seditious or blasphemous, and subjected all pamphlets commenting on news to newspaper duty if they cost less than sixpence (Woodward 65, Johnson 441).

This is true despite the fact that the book's sub-title, "With Sketches of Public Characters," announces many of the essays to be generically akin to Hazlitt's most securely canonized work, The Spirit of the Age: Or, Contemporary Portraits (1825). It is a book marginalized, moreover, despite the fact that it contains a number of articles originally published as "Literary Notices" in Leigh and John Hunt's innovative journal of opinion, The Examiner. These review-essays, written during the "Distresses of the Country" crisis in 1816-17,⁵ combine experiments in style with trenchant cultural criticism to take sharp aim at "the little arts of sophistry" by which "barefaced power" was defended at this time by literary as well as political figures. And amidst these in turn lies a cluster of articles focussed intently on the writings of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Here we find three different essays devoted to a critique of Coleridge's first lay sermon on the "Distresses of the Country," The Statesman's Manual (1816), while yet another challenges Coleridge's anonymous writings in the Courier during the sensational "Wat Tyler affair" of 1817.

These reviews of Coleridge at the heart of Hazlitt's Political Essays present one of the most striking—and instructive—anomalies in the literary history of British

⁵The years 1815-1819 comprise a period of more or less continuous crisis, but the years 1816-17 were particularly acute, as the euphoria of victory gave way to an unprecedented collapse of the coal, iron, and textile industries. In addition, widespread agricultural foreclosures in early 1816 lead to what Parliament then named "the Distresses of the Country," even as the unusually wet summer of 1816 ruined crops all over Europe, creating what Post has called "the Last Great Subsistence Crisis in the Western World." See below pages 24-5, 78-83, 109-110, and 188; White, Waterloo to Peterloo passim; Thompson 603-40; Evans 7-27; Woodward 62-5, and Post *passim*.

romanticism. On the one hand, they are recognized to be the work of an author celebrated for his achievements as a prose stylist, and as the co-founder, along with Coleridge himself, of the tradition of British romantic criticism. In Walter Jackson Bate's words, Hazlitt is "easily the most representative critic in English romanticism" (Criticism 282). Yet on the other hand, and in marked contrast to the canonical status of his literary criticism in general, Hazlitt's criticism of Coleridge in particular has been marginalized. In a process made especially apparent by the ascendancy of Coleridge within the canon, these "political essays" have been relegated, on both generic and moral grounds, to a virtually invisible niche in the apocrypha of romantic prose. Though readily available in P. P. Howe's handsome, standard edition, these writings—along with Hazlitt's other essays on Coleridge at this time in both The Examiner and The Edinburgh Review⁶—are routinely dismissed (again in Bate's words) as "strangely cruel and indiscriminate attacks," ranked among the most notorious examples of the moral and discursive degeneracy of anonymous review criticism in the Regency (Introduction lxiv).⁷ Thus when they are read at all, it is

⁶I.e., his Examiner review of the Christabel volume (1816) (19: 32-4); and his reviews of The Statesman's Manual (1816) and the Biographia Literaria (1817) in The Edinburgh Review (16: 99-114; 115-138).

⁷The influence of Coleridge's most prominent editors and biographers cannot be underestimated in this process. Griggs, for example, writing in 1959, reduces these reviews to a "veritable campaign of hate" (668); Jackson in 1970 presents a subtler view, but nevertheless remarks that "the treatment of Coleridge's writing during this period [the years 1816 and 1817] is one of the sorriest performances in the history of reviewing ... [and] William Hazlitt played a disproportionately large part in the hostilities" (9, 11).

rarely for their critical insight into Coleridge's writings, but only for their value in the construction of romantic biography. Placed alongside Hazlitt's later, more comfortably celebratory essays about his erstwhile mentor, these so-called "slashing" reviews⁸ are thought to provide evidence of the psychological depths such a relationship seemed destined to plumb—and thus to document the uncanny power of what one recent critical anthology has dubbed "The Coleridge Connection" (Gravil).

This standard approach to Hazlitt's Regency reviews of Coleridge clearly demands reconsideration, especially when we recognize its obvious source in Coleridge's own, scarcely impartial view of the matter. Marked as it is by an unquestioned repudiation of anonymous review criticism in general, and by a strong emphasis on the personal and psychological dimensions of Hazlitt's reviews in particular, this reading is readily traceable to two sources in Coleridge's own oeuvre: to the outpouring of "bitterness and sorrow" in his voluminous (and meticulously edited) correspondence on the subject,⁹ and, more importantly, to the final chapter of his massively influential Biographia Literaria. Here, in the only chapter of this book written after the appearance of Hazlitt's reviews, Coleridge reflects with winning pathos on the impact such criticism has had on his person and on his career. "Three years ago," he declares, referring to

⁸Rooke lxxx; see also Griggs 668 ("vicious"), Campbell 225n ("cruel"), Marrs 226n ("poisonous"), White, Editor's Introduction xxxn ("malicious"), Holmes 179n ("with a personal vindictiveness").

⁹Letters, 4: 668; see also Letters 4: 669-70, 685-86, 692-93, 699-701, 716.

the point at which he began writing the Biographia, "I did not know or believe that I had an enemy in the world: and now ... I reproach myself for being too often disposed to ask,—Have I one friend?" (Coburn 7.2: 238).¹⁰ Coleridge then justifies this query with his famous account of the reception of Christabel, in which he is aware of Hazlitt's role as an early reviewer of the poem in The Examiner, and of the influence this review exerted on Moore's later "quizzing" of the poem in The Edinburgh.¹¹

Repeating therefore his "warning to authors" in the opening chapters of the Biographia regarding "personal enmity behind the mask of anonymous criticism," and "the necessity of a certain portion of abuse and ridicule in a Review, in order to make it saleable," Coleridge continues with an account of Hazlitt's reviews of The Statesman's Manual:

I had the additional misfortune of having been gossiped about, as devoted to metaphysics ... [and] as therefore my character as a writer could not easily be more injured by an overt act than it was already in consequence of the report, I published a work, a large portion of which was professedly metaphysical. A long delay occurred between its first annunciation and its appearance; it was reviewed therefore by anticipation with a malignity, so avowedly and exclusively personal, as is, I believe, unprecedented even in the present contempt of all common humanity that disgraces and endangers the liberty of the press. After its appearance, the author of this lampoon was chosen to review it in the Edinburgh Review: and under the single condition, that he should have

¹⁰Unless otherwise indicated, all further references to Coleridge's writings will be by volume and page number only of the Coburn edition of the Collected Works.

¹¹See Schneider *passim*, and Coburn, "Who Killed Christabel?" for convincing evidence that Thomas Moore (and not Hazlitt) wrote the Edinburgh's notorious satire of Christabel.

written what he himself really thought, and have criticized the work as he would have done if the author had been indifferent to him, I should have chosen that man myself both from the vigour and the originality of his mind, and from his particular acuteness in speculative reasoning. (7.2: 239-42)

This is an emotionally persuasive account, in which Coleridge's generous testimony to Hazlitt's critical powers serves to make all the more appalling his apparent breach of "all common humanity." As a result, however, this passage has become the ethical standard by which each of Hazlitt's reviews of Coleridge during the Regency has been judged by literary history. A striking example of the pervasiveness of this influence is found in the work of one of Hazlitt's own most respected biographers, Herschel Baker, for whom the reviews of The Statesman's Manual are not simply "a deplorable performance," but an instance of "motiveless malignity" (355-6). With this phrase, of course, Baker echoes Coleridge's use of the word "malignity" both in this passage and in the more famous description of Shakespeare's Iago, thus reinforcing Coleridge's characterization of Hazlitt as an evil intelligence bent only on the inexplicable betrayal of intimate friendship. In this and similar ways, the eminently public dimensions and contexts of Hazlitt's "political essays" are reduced to those of "exclusively personal" significance, while the complex range of culturally-specific practices and circumstances involved in anonymous review criticism are collapsed into the timeless "closet drama" of Coleridge's agonistic authorship—with Hazlitt cast as the romantically inscrutable villain.

The result is a very clear instance of the way "the

scholarship ... of Romanticism," in Jerome McGann's words, has been "... dominated by an uncritical absorption in Romanticism's own self-representations" (1). One of these "self-representations," of course, is the familiar trope of afflicted genius; another is the related notion that romantic discourse can—or should—ideally transcend not only the circumstances of its production and reception, but ideology itself, grounded as it is in the self-evident truths of "Nature" and the "Imagination" (McGann 70 and *passim*). In this instance, faced with the awkwardness of a confrontation between two of its foremost critics, a romanticized literary history has turned to passages like the one quoted above to justify the relegation of Hazlitt's "political essays" to obscurity, in order at the same time to facilitate the detachment of Coleridge's own writings from their actual roots in political, commercial, and, more broadly, cultural contestation.

This thesis, therefore, undertakes a re-examination of Hazlitt's reviews of Coleridge during the years 1816 and 1817, based on the initial premiss that in them can be found the best possible contemporary analysis of precisely these roots of Coleridge's work in cultural struggle. These essays, after all, are written by "the most representative critic in English romanticism," essays which Hazlitt himself considered important enough to republish under his own name at the very climax of the post-war crisis (Bate Criticism 282). They promise, therefore, at once to be skilfully written and to offer crucial insight into

some of the key texts of "the Romantic Ideology." Yet for this very reason, the recovery of these reviews must proceed well beyond the mere amendment of a romanticized literary history. This thesis aims instead to contribute to the more comprehensive project of a cultural history of the post-revolutionary period.¹² Under this broader rubric, the conflict between Hazlitt and Coleridge can no longer be dismissed as a "motiveless" or "exclusively personal" skirmish on the margins of literary production. Once relocated within the context of public debate over the "Distresses of the Country," this encounter emerges by contrast as an instructive epitome of those larger patterns of struggle that E.P. Thompson recognized as pivotal in The Making of the English Working Class, and Jon Klancher has more recently shown to have been crucial in The Making of English Reading Audiences. It is a confrontation that takes the form of a contest for cultural authority between the representatives of two fundamentally opposed, but equally influential formations within bourgeois ideology. On the one hand, Hazlitt aligns a politicized romanticism of radical protest with the skilful articulation of the collective voice of "public opinion" and "common sense," a projection into nineteenth-century print culture of the universalizing and democratizing ideals of the coffee-house culture of the eighteenth-century "public sphere."¹³ Coleridge,

¹²For a succinct definition of the "Theory and Practice" of "cultural history" in the sense in which I use the term in this study, see Belsey *passim*; for a seminal application of this methodology to the period in question, see Klancher.

¹³See Habermas *passim* and Eagleton 8-9 and *passim* on the eighteenth-century "public sphere."

on the other hand, articulates a romanticism of withdrawal into visionary idealism that locates cultural authority in the trope of the poet-prophet. This trope is in turn a product of the more generalized ideology of individual "sensibility," drawing in this instance on the emergent tradition of bardolatry with its celebration of the power of autonomous "Poetic Genius."¹⁴

This contest for cultural authority is played out across a remarkable variety of texts and counter-texts written by Hazlitt and Coleridge in the brief two years of the "Distresses" crisis, 1816-17. On Coleridge's part, these include his prefaces to "Christabel" and "Kubla Khan" (Poetical Works 213-15, 295-7), his premature newspaper advertisement of "A Layman's Sermon ... on the present Distresses of the Country" (Courier 12 Aug 1816), and later his two Lay Sermons themselves (Coburn vol. 6); his series of anonymous political essays in The Courier in defense of the Poet Laureate during the "Wat Tyler affair" (3.2: 449-78); and the final polemical chapter of the Biographia Literaria (7.2: 234-48).

Hazlitt's responses to these texts themselves comprise a wide spectrum of textual strategies and discursive contexts. The following study is organized chronologically around each of these responses in turn, beginning (in chapter one) with the inaugural number in The Examiner's "Literary Notice" series in review of Christabel (19: 32-4), and then turning (in chapter two) to the similarly sensational review "by anticipation" of "Mr Coleridge's Lay Sermon," later republished in Political Essays (7: 114-18).

¹⁴See Barker-Benfield *passim* on the eighteenth-century "culture of sensibility"; see Coleridge 7.1: 38; 7.2: 15, 19-28 on "POETIC GENIUS" (7.2: 132).

After a re-examination in chapter three of The Statesman's Manual itself, chapters four and five turn to a comparison of Hazlitt's two more conventional (though quite distinct) reviews of this book in The Examiner and The Edinburgh Review respectively (7: 119-28; 16: 99-114). At the very height of the crisis, the paradigmatic "Wat Tyler affair" erupted at the forefront of public debate, to which Coleridge and Hazlitt both made significant—but now little-known—contributions. Chapter six therefore takes a new look at this closely-followed journalistic duel in the columns of The Courier and The Examiner (7: 176-86), while chapter seven reconsiders Hazlitt's influential extension of this debate into the Edinburgh Review in the form of his full-length review-essay of the Biographia Literaria (16: 115-38). An epilogue looks briefly at Hazlitt's more familiar writings about Coleridge in the years after the crisis of 1816-17: his remarks at the conclusion of Lectures on the English Poets (1818), "My First Acquaintance With Poets" in The Liberal (1823), and his article on "Mr. Coleridge" in The Spirit of the Age (1825) (5: 165-8; 17: 106-22; 11: 28-38).

In order to resituate Hazlitt's reviews of Coleridge within the particular historical moment of the "Distresses" crisis, they will be considered each in turn as the products of three, broadly overlapping and culturally-specific discursive contexts: viz. the arena of public political debate, the volatile and competitive marketplace for literature, and the shifting hierarchy of genres and modes by which authority was constructed within public

discourse. The first two such contexts, of course, correspond to the double classification of many of these reviews as "political essays" and "literary notices." As we shall see, political and literary practice became virtually indistinguishable at the height of the "Distresses" crisis, yet we can nevertheless discern in the context of political debate an engagement with the wider issues of ideological agency, while the context of literary production involves a focussing of these issues in an economic struggle for the media of that agency. These literary "media" were in turn marked by a tendency toward generic fusion, the defining feature of the third context, in which the discursive performance of authority ranged across such opposed genres and modes as satire and lyric, irony and "sincerity," invective and encomium, political oratory and lay-sermon, journalistic "banter" and learned monologue, "[Auto-] Biographical Sketches" and "Sketches of Public Characters," each vying for ascendancy between—and within—the texts of both Hazlitt and Coleridge.

To illustrate this methodology—and to demonstrate at the outset the anomalous position of Hazlitt's review-criticism within traditional literary history—we may begin by turning to the briefest and perhaps most rhetorically efficient of Hazlitt's Political Essays, a letter entitled "To the Editor of the Examiner" (7: 128-9). This epistolary review first appeared in The Examiner on January 12, 1817 under the pseudonym "SEMPER EGO AUDITOR," just as the post-war "distresses" reached their point of greatest intensity prior to Peterloo.¹⁵ To its first readers,

¹⁵Severe food shortages through the winter had quickly turned

this letter would have stood out for a number of reasons: for its apparently bitter objection to The Examiner's recent review of The Statesman's Manual, for the ironic contrast it develops between the correspondent's self-characterization as "a man of a plain, dull, dry understanding, without flights or fancies," and his exuberant experiment in style, at once eclectic and rhetorically pointed. Indeed, in the sharp juxtaposition of such opposing modes as lyrical reminiscence and journalistic satire, "AUDITOR" dramatizes a moment of painful disillusionment which he suggests will be shared by many of The Examiner's readers.

First, however, the attention of such readers would have been seized by the letter's long opening sequence—a rhetorical "flight" that, in a slightly altered version, has since gone on to become one of the most famous passages in the canon of British romantic prose:

SIR,

Your last Sunday's 'Literary Notice' has given me some uneasiness on two points.

It was in January, 1798, just 19 years ago, that I got up one morning before day-light to walk 10 miles in the mud, and went to hear a poet and a philosopher preach. It was the author of the 'Lay-Sermon.' Never, Sir, the longest day I have to live, shall I have such another walk as this cold, raw, comfortless one in the winter of the year 1798. Mr Examiner, *Il y a des impressions que ni les tems ni les circonstances peuvent effacer. Dusse-je vivre des siècles entiers, le doux tems de ma jeunesse ni peut renaître pour*

an economic crisis into a political one. The huge "Spa Fields" meetings in November and December (one of which erupted in violent rioting and arrests), and the arrival in London of reformist delegates from all over England to the "Crown & Anchor Convention" (scheduled to coincide with the re-opening of Parliament) served to create an atmosphere of intensified confrontation and crisis. See 109-110, 188 below.

moi, ni s'effacer jamais dans ma mémoire. When I got there, Sir, the organ was playing the 100th psalm, and when it was done, Mr. C. rose and gave out his text, 'And he went up into the mountain to pray, HIMSELF, ALONE[']. As he gave out this text, his voice 'rose like a steam of rich distill'd perfumes,' and when he came to the last two words, which he pronounced loud, deep, and distinct, it seemed to me, Sir, who was then young, as if the sounds had echoed from the bottom of the human heart, and as if that prayer might have floated in solemn silence through the universe. The idea of St. John came into my mind, 'of one crying in the wilderness, who had his loins girt about, and whose food was locusts and wild honey.' The preacher then launched into his subject, like an eagle dallying with the wind. *That sermon, like this sermon, was upon peace and war; upon church and state—not their alliance, but their separation—on the spirit of the world and the spirit of Christianity, not as the same, but as opposed to one another.* He talked of those who had 'inscribed the cross of Christ on banners dripping with human gore.' He made a poetical and pastoral excursion,—and to shew the fatal effects of war, drew a striking contrast between the simple shepherd boy, driving his team afield, or sitting under the hawthorn, piping to his flock, as though he should never be old, and the same poor country-lad, crimped, kidnapped, brought into town, made drunk at an alehouse, turned into a wretched drummer-boy, with his hair sticking on end with powder and pomatum, a long cue at this back, and tricked out in the loathsome finery of the profession of blood.

'Such were the notes our once-lov'd poet sung,'
 And for myself, Sir, I could not have been more delighted if I had heard the music of the spheres. Poetry and Philosophy had met together, Truth and Genius had embraced, under the eye and with the sanction of Religion. This was even beyond my hopes. I returned home well satisfied. The sun that was still labouring pale and wan through the sky, obscured by thick mists, seemed an emblem of the *good cause*: and the cold dank drops of dew that hung half melted on the beard of the thistle, had something genial and refreshing in them; for

there was a spirit of hope and youth in all nature, that turned everything into good. The face of nature had not then the brand of JUS DIVINUM on it;

'Like to that sanguine flower inscrib'd with woe.'

(7: 128-9)

This memorable portrait of Coleridge in the *annus mirabilis* of British romanticism will, of course, be recognized as part of the widely-anthologized essay "My First Acquaintance With Poets" that first appeared in Byron and Hunt's The Liberal in 1823 (17: 106-122). Modern readers, however, are unlikely ever to have focussed on the political dimensions of this passage, left muted and implicit in the 1823 essay by the removal of explicit references to Coleridge's most recent lay sermon. Yet in both versions, the passage itself is clearly "inscrib'd with woe," not merely from the aestheticized pain of romantic nostalgia, but from the distinctly political imprint of "JUS DIVINUM," a phrase taken directly from Coleridge's Statesman's Manual and used by The Examiner as a sarcastic euphemism for the reactionary doctrine of "the divine right of kings"—a doctrine used in turn by government writers to sanctify the Regent's policy of repressing the movement for democratic reform.

Few readers will therefore be aware that, in its original context, this moving tribute to Coleridge's discursive authority in 1798, in which "Poetry and Philosophy ... Truth and Genius ... Religion ... and the *good cause*" converge with millennial transformative power, was in fact an image thus conjured by Hazlitt to make all the more forceful its exposure as an illusion:

Now, Sir, what I have to complain of is this, that from reading your account of the 'Lay-Sermon,' I begin to suspect

that my notions formerly must have been little better than a deception: that my faith in Mr. Coleridge's great powers must have been a vision of my youth, that, like other such visions, must pass away from me; and that all his genius and eloquence is *vox et preterea nihil*: for otherwise how is it so lost to all common sense upon paper?

Again, Sir, I ask Mr. Coleridge, why, having preached such a sermon as I have described, he has published such a sermon as you have described? What right, Sir, has he or any man to make a fool of me or any man? I am naturally, Sir, a man of a plain, dull, dry understanding, without flights or fancies, and can just contrive to plod on, if left to myself: what right, then, has Mr. C., who is going to ascend in a balloon, to offer me a seat in the parachute, only to throw me from the height of his career upon the ground, and dash me to pieces? Or again, what right has he to invite me to a feast of poets and philosophers, fruits and flowers intermixed,—immortal fruits and amaranthine flowers,—and then to tell me it is all vapour, and, like *Timon*, to throw his empty dishes in my face? No, Sir, I must and will say it is hard. I hope, between ourselves, there is no breach of confidence in all this; nor do I well understand how men's opinions on moral, political, and religious subjects can be kept a secret, except by putting them in *The Correspondent*.

SEMPER EGO AUDITOR. (7: 129)

For this "AUDITOR," then, the "vision" of "Mr. Coleridge's great powers" was contingent upon the poet-preacher's espousal of "the good cause," and Coleridge's evident abandonment of that cause for a politics of pious conformism serves to nullify his authority in this area as mere "*vox et preterea nihil*." Moreover, into the vacuum of authority suddenly created by "AUDITOR"'s recognition of this loss flows the authority of The Examiner itself, on which its correspondent frankly admits he depends for his entire knowledge of Coleridge's text.

Yet there are practical reasons for this transfer of authority: Coleridge's tract, after all, was addressed exclusively to "THE HIGHER CLASSES OF SOCIETY," and in the straightened economic circumstances of a severe, nation-wide depression, such readers as "AUDITOR" were forced increasingly to rely on review criticism for their knowledge of books as deliberately exclusionary in their prices as in their sub-titles. "AUDITOR," of course, represents for Hazlitt the ideal consumer of his own essays within a rapidly evolving marketplace for literature. At once a vigilant and attentive "auditor" of the minute movements of public debate, he is a man of "common sense" and "a plain, dull, dry understanding," who, at the very nadir of the depression, "can just contrive to plod on, if left to [him]self." Added to his vivid memory of Coleridge's Unitarian sermon, these characteristics make him typical of that sector of the reading public shaped by what Gary Kelly calls the "Nonconformist Enlightenment" and made up of a large and diverse group of "artisans and petty bourgeois reformers" (159-60). Moreover, these characteristics situate "AUDITOR" at the very intersection-point of three of the "reading audiences" designated by Jon Klancher as "middle-class," "mass," and "radical," that Klancher demonstrates to have "crystallized" into mutual counter-definition at precisely this moment under pressure of the "Distresses" crisis (16).

This unique positioning of Hazlitt's critical persona is evident in turn in the very stylistic eclecticism that marks his

correspondent's prose. The pseudonym assumes importance in this context, alluding as it does to the opening line of Juvenal's Satires, "Semper ego auditor tantum?"—"Must I always be a listener only?"¹⁶ This letter clearly indicates otherwise. Though "AUDITOR" declares himself to be "without flights or fancies," his letter nevertheless opens with a breath-taking "flight" of lyricized memoir, comparable in rhetorical effect to a Wordsworthian "spot of time," (or, via the allusion to La Nouvelle Heloise, to Rousseau's Confessions), and is thus designed to appeal to the introspective tastes of the newly self-isolating "middle class" reading audience (Klancher 47-57). Yet, as we have seen, this prose experiment in the epiphanic sublime is then subordinated to the iconoclastic satire of the letter's concluding "fancies." Such images as Coleridge's newfangled "balloon" and his misanthropic "empty dishes" reach out to the growing market for the graphic and the sensational in the emergent "mass public" (Klancher 76-97), while they function at the same time as vivid allegories of the political grievances of William Cobbett's "radical" readership, at once newly enfranchised by literacy and left "empty" by the brusque rejection of political reform (Klancher 99-133).

By republishing this letter among his Political Essays on the brink of the "Peterloo" massacre, Hazlitt clearly foregrounds his appeal to this latter, "radical" readership, as well as the discursive context of political debate that helped to define his critical practice. Yet this letter makes equally clear the

¹⁶Duff 1; Rudd 3.

interpenetration of this context with the struggle over the "reading audiences" in the literary marketplace, and the conflicted use of genre as a vehicle for cultural authority. Thus while "AUDITOR"'s letter enacts a moment of poignant disillusionment in Coleridge's political authority, the immediacy of this representation is underscored by the personification of a reader willing to move beyond mere passive consumption to join the dialectical process by which "public opinion" is formed. As the pseudonym suggests, this "AUDITOR" is not content to remain "a listener only." From being provoked by a piece of journalism ("Your last Sunday's 'Literary Notice' has given me some uneasiness on two points"), he moves to take issue with his editor on the subject ("Now, Sir, what I have to complain of is this"), experiences a raising of consciousness ("I begin to suspect that my notions formerly must have been little better than a deception"), and turns finally to a direct public challenge to the literary producer: "Again, Sir, I ask Mr. Coleridge, why, after having preached such a sermon as I have described, he has published such a sermon as you have described?" And this awakening to activism is at the same time underscored by the subversion of lyric by satire, of encomium by invective, of "sincerity" by irony.

Needless to say, for this very reason the literary history of romanticism has taken a rather different approach to this letter. When it is recalled from the apocrypha of romantic prose, it is customarily assigned two roles, both in negative relation to the

securely-canonized 1823 essay "My First Acquaintance With Poets." First, it is presented as the flawed, "primitive" draft of a subsequent masterpiece of romantic prose, and therefore as a telling demonstration of the innate ascendancy of lyric over satiric modes (Jones, "First Flight" 35, 36). Second, this "embryonic" text (Jones 40) represents for biographical criticism a hopeful turning-point in the writing career of William Hazlitt, an early sign of his progressive liberation from what is held to be his brutalizing apprenticeship in political journalism, and his emergence to become one of the major prose stylists of British romanticism.

These remarks may be substantiated by reference to a recent and representative treatment by Bill Ruddick in his article "Recollecting Coleridge: the Internalization of Radical Energies in Hazlitt's Political Prose." Here Ruddick notes the "harsh, impetuous, paradoxical manner of [Hazlitt's] political essays," which, in the case of the 1817 letter causes it to devolve into "a series of bitter reproaches" (251, 253). This is contrasted with Hazlitt's "most mature manner of treating revolutionary and radical themes," that in the 1823 essay manifests itself as "a joy-suffused rediscovery of the past, rapturous from beginning to end" (248, 251). Nevertheless, Ruddick regards Hazlitt's writings on Coleridge during the "Distresses" debate as containing "the germ" of this more "mature manner," and his 1817 letter is singled out as "the most significant" of these writings (249). It is recognized as a pivotal text, however, not in terms of the momentous events taking place in the cultural environment which

gave rise to it, but rather in terms of the personal, developmental process by which Hazlitt had to "internalize" his "radical energies." Thus,

[t]he moment of breakthrough seems to have come when Hazlitt returned to his January 1817 account of Coleridge in the pulpit, detached it from its original context as part of an attack on a particular text, and used it as the key passage which energizes the entire recreation and dramatization of the most important period in his own early life in "My First Acquaintance With Poets." Removed from a 'then and now' relationship with Coleridge's later political thought ... Hazlitt's reminiscence proves to possess a dynamism which is far more potent than he can have realized when he published it in its original context. (250-51)

Here again, we find a particularly clear instance of the way the study of romanticism in general, and of the texts of the "Distresses" crisis in particular, have been "dominated ... by Romanticism's own self-representations" (McGann 1). First, we note the emphasis on evaluation, both critical and moral, founded on norms which posit lyric as the highest standard for literary discourse. Thus the "harsh" and "bitter" discourse of the political essay is contrasted unfavourably with the "joy-suffused," "rapturous," and more "mature" lyrical mode, which "proves to possess a dynamism which is far more potent" than either satire or invective. Second, as Clifford Siskin has shown in The Historicity of Romantic Discourse, such discourse is preoccupied with narratives of development and "progress"—generic as well as biographical—principally articulated in paradigmatic moments of "revision" (39 and *passim*). In Ruddick's analysis, the "moment of breakthrough" for both text and author is also a moment

of "recreation" which in turn serves a process of "internalization"—a development away from the public and politically engaged satiric "attack" toward the formation of a "mature" and complex interiority assisted by lyric "reminiscence." Thus the canonical value of the 1823 essay is clearly reinforced by its disengagement from the atmosphere of discursive and ideological struggle that constituted "its original context as an attack on a particular text," and, perhaps most tellingly, to its removal from a "relationship with Coleridge's later political thought" (Ruddick 251).

As noted at the outset, this thesis locates the value of Hazlitt's Regency reviews precisely in their contestatory relationship with Coleridge's later political thought. As such, they offer an indispensable vehicle by which to re-examine the ideological implications of this thought for the subsequent "scholarship and criticism of Romanticism" (McGann 1). More than this, however, once resituated within culturally-specific contexts of political, commercial, and generic struggle, these reviews, in their very engagement with Coleridge's works, come to epitomize a distinct moment in British cultural history. In them can be read some of the most important discursive and ideological conflicts unfolding within middle-class culture at a critical moment in what Raymond Williams has called "the long revolution" (x).

Chapter One

"Common Sense" and "Humanity":

Hazlitt's Review of the Christabel Volume

Hazlitt's review of the Christabel volume appeared in The Examiner on June 2, 1816, the first of five such articles on Coleridge and his works to appear in the Hunt brothers' weekly political journal over the next nine months.¹ Unlike his other Examiner reviews of Coleridge, however, Hazlitt's "Literary Notice" of Christabel; Kubla Khan, A Vision; [and] The Pains of Sleep was not republished among his Political Essays in August 1819. Perhaps for this very reason, it has retained a higher profile within traditional literary history than any of Hazlitt's other writings on Coleridge during the "Distresses" period. Classified by Howe as an "Uncollected Literary Essay," and focussed as it is on a volume of seemingly apolitical romantic fragments, it has certainly never been stigmatized as an "attack" (in Ruddick's words) on Coleridge's "later political thought" (251). At the same time, however, it has attracted attention to itself as one of the most harshly oppositional reviews by a known author of a text that contains two of the most warmly canonized poems in the English language. Out of this sharp discrepancy of interpretation, Hazlitt's review of the Christabel volume has come to epitomize the scandalous misrecognition of Coleridge's poetic genius at the bar of anonymous review criticism.

¹"Literary Notices. No. 1," Examiner 2 June 1816: 348-9; Howe Works 19: 32-34; Reiman A: 530-32.

Yet this article, though never specifically reclassified by Hazlitt as a "political essay," was nevertheless written within the context of events in May and June 1816 that clearly prefigure the "Peterloo" massacre of August 1819, and it bears the imprint of these events as discernibly as any of Hazlitt's more explicitly politicized reviews. A week before its appearance, for example, The Examiner of May 26, 1816 featured an article entitled "The Riots," in which it gathered accounts of the violent uprisings that had broken out "in various parts of the country" throughout the previous month.² The article reports that under such banners as "BREAD OR BLOOD," houses and barns had been set aflame in a number of "disturbed districts" until in almost every case the rioters had been suppressed by detachments of the standing army. "Want of work and want of bread," The Examiner writes, "are indeed dreadful stimulants to outrage; and it must be confessed these are fearful signs of national suffering" (328). Though "want of bread" was familiar enough, the "want of work" in May 1816 was a virtually unprecedented phenomenon. The end of the war had brought home hundreds of thousands of discharged soldiers, most of whom returned to Britain only to swell the ranks of those already thrown out of work by the collapse of the armament and textile industries—a mass unemployment that was indeed a "fearful sign" of the vicissitudes of a newly industrialized economy (Woodward 63, Evans 15). And like the Manchester yeomanry three years later, the response of the Regent's Tory Ministry to the

²"The Riots," Examiner 26 May 1816: 328-9.

resulting dissidence was to employ force, a strategy duly applauded by such "Ministerial" journals as The Courier and The Times. Thus The Courier of May 25:

The most prompt and decisive measures have been adopted by Government to suppress the riotous proceedings which have lately taken place, and which unfortunately continue in Norfolk, Suffolk, and Cambridgeshire.... —It is now becoming evident that the military force, which some persons have pronounced inconsistent with the liberties of the country, is not more than sufficient for its internal security.³

Five days later, The Times adds this report:

The decisive measures taken at Littleport had universally spread intimidation among the rioters. The coroner's jury had sat on the two persons killed at Littleport, and brought in a verdict of *Justifiable Homicide*: besides which, three troops of dragoons, with some infantry, and two pieces of light artillery, had arrived, and been distributed so as to act, if necessary, at a moment's notice.⁴

Little more than a year after Waterloo, then, and in anticipation of events three years later at "Peterloo," the British army was engaged in a new form of "*Justifiable Homicide*." And while there were "some persons" (most notably in the non-governmental press) willing to pronounce this tactic "inconsistent with the liberties of the country," it is likely that the majority of citizens within the tiny enclave of the ruling classes felt that universal "intimidation" was in this instance an appropriate response to "national suffering."

Simultaneously with these events, and in apparent isolation from them, Coleridge's collection of romantic fragments Christabel; Kubla Khan, A Vision; [and] The Pains of Sleep was

³Quoted by Examiner in "The Riots," 26 May 1816, 329.

⁴[untitled editorial], Times 30 May 1816.

published on May 10, 1816,⁵ and quickly became "the standing enigma that puzzles the curiosity of literary circles" (Reiman A: 268). One measure of its success within such "circles" was the appearance of a rare review in the conservative Times on May 20, hailing Coleridge's book as a "singular monument of genius," and predicting that "its publication in its present imperfect state may not improbably give an additional zest to public curiosity" (Reiman A: 890-1). This prediction proved correct, for one week later the liberal Champion records the ensuing stir of voices and of questions "alternately heard and put" in the clubs, theatres, and drawing rooms of the bourgeois public sphere: "What is it all about? What is the idea? Is *Lady Geraldine* a sorceress? or a vampire? or a man? or what is she, or he, or it?" (Reiman A: 268). As The Times had suggested in its article, the "irresistible" appeal of the leading poem in Coleridge's collection lay not only in the "thought-suspending awe" inspired by *Geraldine*, but also in its story, that is "like a dream of lovely forms, mixed with strange and indescribable terrors. The scene, the personages, are those of old, romantic superstition; but we feel intimate with them, as if they were of our own day, and of our own neighbourhood" (Reiman A: 890).

Thus when Hazlitt came to write his review of Christabel for The Examiner in early June, it was in the context of this uncanny

⁵Though Griggs (4: 634) gives May 25 as the publication date for the book, Jones records May 10 (Hazlitt 222-3), and the volume is indeed advertised as "published this day" in the Morning Chronicle on that date. Moreover, The Champion review (see below p. 42-44), which appeared May 26, suggests a public discussion of the book that had lasted longer than a mere twenty-four hours.

juxtaposition in the daily and weekly newspapers of a "zest" for "strange and indescribable terrors" on the one hand, and alarm over "fearful signs of national suffering" on the other. On the one hand was the phenomenon of a reading public engrossed by Coleridge's fragments of "old, romantic superstition," in which Gothic "terrors" are made to feel "intimate"—"as if they were of our own day, and of our own neighbourhood"—and, on the other, of alarming descriptions of events actually unfolding in the "neighbourhood" of London, in which the performance of both political resistance and political authority involved recourse to actual violence and bloodshed.

Given these circumstances, Hazlitt's review is in turn unique among the many contemporary articles on Christabel for its intuition of a link between these otherwise unrelated phenomena, and for its attempt to work out this connection in a politically inflected reading of the title poem. From its opening paragraph, in which The Examiner's readership is reminded that the author of Christabel doubles as a political writer for the reactionary Courier ("his mind hangs suspended between poetry and prose, truth and falsehood"), through to its final, approving quotation of lines that represent the "one genuine outburst of humanity, worthy of the author," Hazlitt's review attempts to hold Christabel accountable to a norm of "common sense," against which its various strategies of mystification appear ideologically pointed (19: 32, 34, 33). In the following passage, for example, Hazlitt answers the enthusiasm of The Times by acknowledging the aesthetic appeal

of Coleridge's experiment in the Gothic sublime, in order all the more emphatically to refute it:

In parts of *Christabel* there is a great deal of beauty, both of thought, imagery, and versification; but the effect of the general story is dim, obscure, and visionary. It is more like a dream than a reality. The mind, in reading it, is spell-bound. The sorceress seems to act without power—*Christabel* to yield without resistance. The faculties are thrown into a state of metaphysical suspense and theoretical imbecility. The poet, like the witch in *Spenser*, is evidently

'Busied about some wicked gin.'—

But we do not foresee what he will make of it. There is something disgusting at the bottom of his subject, which is but ill glossed over by a veil of Della Cruscan sentiment and fine writing—like moon-beams playing on a charnel house, or flowers strewed on a dead body. Mr. Coleridge's style is essentially superficial, pretty, ornamental, and he has forced it into the service of a story which is petrific.

(19: 33)

It is the "effect" of such a story that Hazlitt is most concerned with here, particularly when this "dream" is measured against the "reality" of other concurrent events in June of 1816. Thus it is the very "beauty" and discursive power of the poem that dictate its rejection, for these work to nullify and transfix the enlightenment norms of clarity and distinctness with a story that is "dim, obscure, and visionary." In calling the poem "more like a dream than a reality," Hazlitt clearly picks up the defining term of the Times review, but deploys the word "dream" to precisely opposite rhetorical ends. In the Times, Coleridge's "dream of lovely forms" is praised for its capacity to make us "feel intimate" with the forms of "old, romantic superstition." Yet these are "forms" that in adjacent columns of the same

newspaper—and in spite of a century of debate seeking to undermine or discard them—continue to function as agents of "universal intimidation" within society at large. The poem itself, we recall, speaks of Sir Leoline's "world of death," represented in Hazlitt's review by the deliberately polemical images of a "charnel-house" and a "dead body." It is the poetic impulse to aestheticize such a world that Hazlitt declares to be "disgusting," a disgust extended by implication to the eager market for such Gothic refinements among writers of the conservative press at precisely the moment that "*Justifiable Homicide*," in defense of an effete social order, was being revived within the borders of Britain itself.

As we shall see, these political overtones in the review's central passage are reinforced by other elements of the review, but first it is important to note how differently this particular passage has been interpreted by previous commentators on it. From the response of Coleridge himself, through to Karen Swann's feminist re-reading of the Christabel controversy, the phrase "something disgusting at the bottom of his subject" has been seized upon as a sign of Hazlitt's attempt to insinuate a salacious misreading of Coleridge's title poem. The authority of this approach is once again a function of the innate priority assigned by tradition to both the poet and the poem, resulting on the one hand in the virtually unquestioned influence of Coleridge's own tendentious account of the reception of his poem, and on the other, in the attractiveness of a companion narrative

by which Christabel requires chivalrous rescue by scholarly posterity from the ruffian grip of anonymous critics like William Hazlitt. The combined result, moreover, is that Hazlitt's review has never been read in the context of the historical events of May 1816, nor in terms of its dialogical engagement with other, equally polemical reviews of the same text.

Coleridge's account of the reception of Christabel, of course, reinforces this tendency, and three elements of it in particular may be isolated for their long-term influence on literary scholarship. First, Coleridge claims in the Biographia that Christabel was "assailed with a malignity and a spirit of personal hatred" by "a man," later identified in his private correspondence as Hazlitt (2: 239; Letters 4: 918). By invoking the shibboleth "personal," Coleridge attempts to preclude the possibility of any other—especially political—motivation for this review. Second, "with very few exceptions," Coleridge claims to have "heard nothing but abuse" of Christabel from the periodical press (2: 237), and for him Hazlitt epitomizes this "abuse" because he was the author of both the Examiner review and also (it seemed to him) of the later, more sensationally hostile "quizz" of Christabel in the Edinburgh (Letters 4: 692). Third, based on this latter (and mistaken) attribution, Coleridge holds Hazlitt responsible for the "rumour" that Geraldine was actually a man in disguise.⁶ The Edinburgh's satire of Christabel famously

⁶Letters 4: 917–18. As we have seen, however (page 26 above), the early Champion review makes clear that public discussion of the poem included from the very outset the possibility that Geraldine was a man: "Is *Lady Geraldine* a sorceress? or a vampire? or a man? or what is she, or he, or it?"

contains a number of variously explicit sexual innuendos, and these for Coleridge not only provide an interpretative key to the earlier Examiner review, but are further explained in his letters with a series of sensational counter-rumours about Hazlitt's alleged propensity to "vices too disgusting to be named" (4: 693).⁷

Each of these claims, of course, has been challenged from within even the most traditional forms of literary research. John Beer, for example, in his article "Coleridge, Hazlitt, and 'Christabel,'" uses biographical evidence to interrogate the "conviction of a strong malevolence on Hazlitt's part," reminding us that "one searches the records of Hazlitt's life in vain for evidence which warrants [such a conviction]" (42). David Erdman's discovery in 1958 of The Times review—and of its reprint two weeks later in The Courier—demonstrated that Coleridge's book was greeted with enthusiasm as well as "abuse" (54). Indeed, as Erdman makes clear, when the total circulation of this Times/Courier review is taken into account and then added to other similarly appreciative articles in The Critical Review and The European Magazine, the Christabel volume is found to have attracted as many influentially "positive" reviews as "negative" ones. Coleridge's protestations to the contrary,⁸ Christabel (Reiman A: 268).

⁷See also 4: 670, 735, and see Beer *passim* for a useful summary of Coleridge's "highly-coloured" counter-rumours, including an unpublished annotation in a copy of Christabel given to his son, Derwent.

⁸See Letters 5: 162, for example, where Coleridge asserts that the Christabel volume "fell almost dead-born from the press."

was in fact a market success, selling out three editions by the end of 1816 alone (Jackson 199n). Meanwhile, in the late 1950s, Elisabeth Schneider proved convincingly that the Edinburgh's late review was written by Thomas Moore, not by Hazlitt,⁹ thus effectively dissociating Hazlitt from both this article's legendary hostility and its salacious innuendos regarding Geraldine's identity and intentions. Taken together, such studies open up the possibility that Hazlitt's approach to Christabel was shaped by quite other concerns than those Coleridge imagined.

Yet the overall impression created by Coleridge's account of this event has lingered long after its individual details have been refuted. We may take as typical Geoffrey Yarlott's brief summary of the reception of Christabel in Coleridge and the Abyssinian Maid (1967):

The critics (Hazlitt particularly) pilloried these poems, especially *Christabel*, whose sexual features induced one pamphleteer to describe it as 'the most obscene Poem in the English Language.' *The Examiner*, of 2 June 1816, objected:

There is something disgusting at the bottom of his subject, which is but ill glossed over by a veil of Della Cruscan sentiment and fine writing—like moon-beams playing on a charnel house, or flowers strewed on a dead body.

Hazlitt, the author, probably, of this review, even spread the rumour apparently that Geraldine was actually a man in disguise. In reacting against the poem's 'obscenity,' these reviewers proved remarkably blind to its other merits....

(181)

Like other similarly traditional narratives of the event, Yarlott

⁹Schneider's original article ("The Unknown Reviewer of Christabel," PMLA 70.3 [June 1955]) proved controversial, but was followed by "Tom Moore and the Edinburgh Review of Christabel" (PMLA 77.2 [March 1962]), and was further corroborated by Coburn in "Who Killed Christabel?" (TLS [20 May 1965]).

locates Hazlitt's review at the very centre of a uniformly hostile response to Coleridge's book, with Hazlitt himself personally orchestrating a wilful and salacious distortion of the title poem.

Even in more recent, "post-romantic" criticism, Coleridge's influence ironically persists. Here we may take Karen Swann's otherwise radical re-reading of the "The Debate on the Character of *Christabel*" as typical: while Swann offers crucial insights into the discursive context of the literary marketplace into which both Coleridge and Hazlitt made competing and controversial interventions, her article is nevertheless premised on the surprisingly unexamined notion that the reviews of Christabel were "universally scathing" (404). Moreover, while Swann works to relativize the authority of Coleridge's own critical discourse on the poem, and in so doing to recover a broad range of "problematically invested literary relations, including those between writers and other writers, and among authors, readers, and books," she nevertheless reduces the intensity of these relations to masculinist "hysteria" in the face of the "fantastic [female] exchanges of Geraldine and Christabel" (398). Once again, Hazlitt's review is held up as the epitome of this "hysteria," and his reference to "something disgusting at the bottom of [Coleridge's] subject" is thus routinely interpreted as an attempt to "reduc[e]" the poem's power "to its sexual content." Swann goes so far as to impute a prurient pun: "Hazlitt contains this power in the 'bottom' and invites us to declare it female" (407).

Like all previous commentators on this text, Swann is

concerned to locate the source of its evident polemical intensity, and in this case she falls back on a traditional (Coleridgean) impression of Hazlitt's character (with its "vices too disgusting to be named") in order to find in his review an especially virulent example of patriarchal chauvinism. Thus she too overlooks the fact that the rhetorical strategies of these "literary gentlemen" were also—and more decisively—shaped by complex political, commercial, and stylistic rivalries, patterns of contestation further intensified by the advent of "national suffering." One crucial feature of Hazlitt's review, for example, that clearly invites us to locate it within these broader discursive contexts, but which has so far gone completely unnoticed in previous commentary, is its original title in The Examiner for June 2, 1816. Where Howe assigns the provisional title "Mr. Coleridge's Christabel" for the standard edition, Hazlitt's review actually appeared under the title "Literary Notices. No. 1" (19: 338). Such a title introduces far more than an isolated critique of Christabel motivated by personal feelings; it announces instead an article fully integrated into the larger journalistic agenda of The Examiner, launching in this case a new and sustained venture into literary criticism on the part of one of the most outspoken, free-thinking journals of political opinion in the British public sphere.¹⁰ The announcement of a "Literary Notices" series in The Examiner takes on even greater significance when we recall that literary criticism was at this time still

¹⁰See Blunden *passim*, Wallins 150-1. On the liberal politics implied by The Examiner's status as a Sunday newspaper, see Morison 227-35 and Aspinall, Politics 13-16.

considered the sole province of the established monthly and quarterly reviews, rarely appearing in the columns of daily and weekly political journals (Reiman A: 890; Hayden xviii). Yet, as we have seen, the Christabel volume was controversial enough to have already broken down this protocol, quickly attracting two reviews in the newspaper press: the first, the unexpected foray of the daily Times into literary criticism; and the second, a sharp retort in the liberal weekly Champion in its trend-setting "Literature" column. "Literary Notices. No. 1" was thus the third review of Christabel to appear, an article clearly designed in competitive response to these two previous reviews, and appearing in a Sunday newspaper with a strong reputation for both dissident politics and journalistic innovation. Far from an autonomous expression of "personal hatred," then, "Literary Notices. No. 1" announces a review primarily motivated by The Examiner's engagement in the broader contexts of public debate: the arena of political struggle, the competitive marketplace for literature and literary criticism, and the shifting hierarchy of genres and modes by which discursive authority was most effectively performed within the public sphere.

Hazlitt's review of the Christabel volume therefore deserves reconsideration within each of these contexts in turn, in order both to clarify its role within the Christabel controversy as a whole, and to recover its perspective on Coleridge's own evolving bid for cultural authority within each of these areas. We may begin by returning to the environment of political debate, where

the polemical tone and approach of this review reflect an underlying structure of political rivalry established over years of intense journalistic "duelling" within the London newspaper press.¹¹ Perhaps the clearest evidence for this lies in the immediate response of The Courier to The Examiner's review. In its very next issue (of June 4, 1816), The Courier closed ranks with its political ally The Times by reprinting substantial portions of the enthusiastic Times review (Erdman 53). With this gesture, The Courier answered the criticism of its foremost political adversary, The Examiner, while defending the work of its own long-term contributor of political essays, Samuel Taylor Coleridge. In so doing, of course, it ironically confirmed the validity of Hazlitt's attempt to suggest thematic links between Coleridge's Gothic poetry and his political prose, while at the same time it reinforced the implicit alignment of positive and negative responses to the book along the deepening ideological divisions of the British public sphere. The appearance of this reprint in The Courier, moreover, brought to an unprecedented total of four the number of reviews in the London newspaper press attracted by the Christabel volume, all within three weeks of its publication, and thus before any of the established monthly or quarterly reviews had had a chance to join the debate. In this way, Coleridge's collection of romantic fragments became the catalyst of a marked convergence of literary and political practice, a trend in turn epitomized by The Examiner's review,

¹¹See Jones, Hazlitt 106-12 for an excellent account of this practice, and of Hazlitt's early apprenticeship in it.

which uses the occasion of the Christabel volume to announce a permanent series of such politicized "Notices." This was a trend clearly accelerated by the thickening atmosphere of political crisis: within just two months, The Examiner would be using its "Literary Notices" column to review "Speeches in Parliament on the Distresses of the Country," and by March 1817, at the height of the crisis, the "Wat Tyler affair" would bring literary and political opinion into inseparable conjunction in Parliament and in the Court of Chancery, as well as in the periodical press.

Back in the spring of 1816, however, the convergence of literary and political discourse was apparent only in less overt forms and contexts. The Christabel volume, for example, shared many of the same features that would eventually make Southey's play Wat Tyler the catalyst of political controversy: both were literary works held over from the 1790s, written by former republicans now active in the reactionary press. But the underlying issue in the case of Coleridge's book was the telling absence, rather than the glaring presence, of an explicit politics in the work itself. Like Gothic fiction in general, the leading poem was thus susceptible to multiple and even contradictory political appropriations. Lord Byron's patronage of the poem, for example, was one reminder that Gothic fiction could be assimilated to free-thinking liberalism, as the writings of Beckford and Lewis had been in the 1790s (Sage 14). In Byron's pre-publication "puff" of Christabel in The Siege of Corinth, he calls it "that wild, and singularly original and beautiful poem" (901). In an

ultimately telling coincidence, this phrase was taken up as the advertising slogan for Coleridge's book¹² at the very moment that Byron became embroiled in the sensational public scandal that transformed him from Britain's most universally admired poet into a Gothic villain seeking haughty self-exile in the sultry land of Radcliffe's Montoni. In these circumstances, then, Byron's epithet "wild" became more than a merely decorous foretaste of sublimity in the poem, but rather an index of scandalous transgression—at once literary, moral, and by association with Byron's liberalism, political.

Yet Byron's intervention also meant that the Christabel volume emerged from the highly respected house of John Murray, better known as the publisher of The Quarterly Review, bastion of Tory moral and political opinion. Hence the swift endorsement of the Quarterly's political ally, The Times, producing a reminder that a taste for Gothic romance was just as easily assimilated to a reactionary as to a libertarian politics (Sage 13, 16). Such an appropriation, however, required a careful erasure of the political by emphasizing the sublime transcendence of social reality on the part of both Gothic poet and reader. Something of this kind may well have motivated Coleridge's own composition of the poem in the late 1790s, as Andrea Henderson has pointed out in a recent article entitled "Revolution, Response, and 'Christabel.'" Amid what Coleridge himself called "the hubbub of revolutions" in the 1790s, and alongside such contemporaneous poems as "Fire, Famine, and Slaughter" and "France: an Ode,"

¹²Morning Chronicle 10 May 1816.

Henderson notes that Coleridge's "decision not to treat the political explicitly [in Christabel] was itself politically meaningful" (881). She then proceeds to demonstrate how the differences between the first and second parts of the poem reflect "Coleridge's mounting resistance to sensibility" between 1797 and 1800, a resistance which in turn "can best be understood in the context of his own desire to become less immediately responsive to Revolutionary enthusiasm" (887). Henderson does not, however, go on to trace the effect of finally publishing such a poem amid the "hubbub" of rioting in 1816, though certainly in Coleridge's preface to Christabel, written at the time of publication, can be found a corroborating elision of the political. In an effort to reconstruct "the impression of its originality," for example, and thus to "preclud[e] charges of plagiarism," Coleridge is forced to draw elaborate attention to the years in which the poem was composed (Poetical Works 213-24). To do so, of course, was to risk reviving the link between literary "originality" and radical sensibility that pertained in the revolutionary decade—a link that governed Coleridge's other, more explicitly political poetry of that period, and would no doubt therefore have ensured the brisk rejection of Christabel by the governmental press had it been published at that time. Thus Coleridge in 1816 shrouds these dates in ornate formality, spelling out "the year one thousand seven hundred and ninety seven" and "the year one thousand eight hundred" as if to suggest the poem's provenance in an even more remote and exotic era than the simple numbers might otherwise

indicate, reinforcing this impression with the striking Gothicism of his "poetic powers" being held since that time in a mysterious "state of suspended animation" (Poetical Works 213n). Similarly, the preface to "Kubla Khan" presents the poet of sensibility as a passive visionary rather than as a political activist. This fragmentary "vision"—in spite of its ominous "ancestral voices prophesying war," and in modest defiance of Byron's recommendation—is here passed off as a harmless "psychological curiosity" (295).

The Times in turn follows Coleridge's lead by celebrating the Christabel volume as a "singular monument of genius" that by its very nature transcends the political (Reiman A: 890). As we have seen, the very appearance of the Times review itself was a political gesture. Yet in the opening lines of the review this is made into an occasion for the dramatic suspension of the newspaper's "customary track"—in deference to a timeless epiphany of poetic power:

It is not often that we venture to notice the poetical compositions of the day; they have their appropriate sphere of criticism, which, indeed, is for the most part very debatable: but when a work appears of indisputable originality, forming almost a class by itself—attractive no less by its beauty than by its singularity, we may be pardoned for deviating a little from our customary track.
(A: 890)

By this account, then, The Times is inspired to introduce poetical criticism into the (admittedly inappropriate) sphere of political journalism, not, apparently, out of partisan loyalty to a Courier writer and to the publishing house of The Quarterly Review, but

out of startled respect for the "originality," "beauty," and "singularity" of Coleridge's new work. We note, however, that the article pauses just long enough to lay down a broad challenge to the "debatable" sphere of conventional criticism dominated by the monthlies and quarterlies of the Opposition press. We note, too, that the terms of praise here are all adapted directly from Byron's "puff," as quoted in Murray's advertisements for the poem—with the important exception of the key word "wild." When this politically-sensitive word does in fact surface later in the review, it is with telling ambiguity: "...what we have principally to remark, with respect to the tale, is, that wild, and romantic, and visionary as it is, it has a truth of its own that seizes on and masters the imagination from the beginning to the end" (A: 891). Now whether the tale bears this powerful "truth" in spite of, or because of, the fact that it is "wild, and romantic, and visionary," The Times carefully leaves up to its readers to decide. Either way—whether these terms are being appropriated or set aside for the purpose—the review makes quite clear that this "truth" is a function of the poem's fundamental detachment from political and social realities. Christabel is in "a class by itself," and it is the "originality" and "singularity" of both poem and poet that in this case guarantee their cultural authority over the imagination of the reading public.

Among the many responses within the Opposition press to the challenge laid down by this Times review, "Literary Notices, No. 1" stands out for a number of reasons. One of these is its

attempt to hold "wild and romantic" genius accountable to the political and social realities of 1816. Another is its willingness to complicate a politicized response to the Christabel volume by alluding to Coleridge's former political authority within enlightenment nonconformism at the time the Christabel poems were written. Thus by comparison, for example, with the anti-aristocratic rhetoric of the liberal Champion, or with the one-dimensional hostility of the Whig Edinburgh Review, The Examiner turns to such devices as wit, irony, and even allegory to register some of the manifest complexities and contradictions engendered by Coleridge's experiment in the Gothic sublime.

The Champion's review presents an important and initial point of reference in this regard because it preceded "Literary Notices. No. 1" by one week, and appeared in the only other Sunday weekly political journal of anti-Ministerial opinion (Courtney 98-9). It had therefore already taken up the position of pure negation, an approach to Christabel governed at once by The Champion's partisan antipathy to the Times, and by a middle-class liberalism so strongly grounded in anti-aristocratic politics that it translated (somewhat ironically) into virulent anti-Byronism (Courtney 99-100). Indeed, The Champion had recently played a decisive role in escalating the Byron scandal, and thus the word "wild" in Murray's advertisement conjured for it only a corrupt libertinism coming to the aid of a manifest product of anachronistic Toryism. It is therefore with regret that The Champion records in its opening sequence that "Mr. Coleridge's Poem is at present the standing enigma that puzzles the curiosity of literary circles" (Reiman A:

268). In addition to the many questions "alternately heard and put," the article goes on to record the views of its "friend[s]," one of which suggests that Christabel is a "mere hoax," while another declares "that the poem has just the same effect upon his temper as if a man were to salute him on the street with a box on the ear, and walk away" (A: 268). The wildness of the poem thus becomes a form of cynical, dandy-esque violence; far from romantic or visionary, it is said to produce only a "maze of impenetrable mystery" that is "nothing more nor less than the evasive and unsatisfactory resource of conceited negligence and perverseness" (A: 268).

It is the phrase "conceited negligence and perverseness" that draws The Champion's political and literary agendas together, linking Coleridge's poetry with Byron's, and both by implication to the corrupt practices of an effete ruling class. More important even than Byron's promotion of the poem, it is Coleridge's use of the fragment form to produce mystery that implicates it in this sort of cultural corruption, a literary genre most recently popularized by such best-selling fragments as Byron's The Giaour. "The principle of producing effect by means of obscurity, is very admissible ... in the subordinate and incidental points and circumstance in the progress of a story," The Champion concedes,

—but here the line must be drawn, and the licence must never be applied to the main thread of the narrative. It must not be made the excuse for the utter lack of perspicuity and connexion in the main fable, or of definiteness in the characters, the passions, and the situations. The abuse of

talents and the abuse of poetical principles, appear to us to have been, if not Mr. Coleridge's chief object, certainly his chief effect in this Poem. [...] In diction, in numbers, in short in everything appertaining to the Poem, Mr. Coleridge's licentiousness out-Herods Herod. (A: 269)

With this remarkable assertion, The Champion brings to a head the political undertones of its review, as poetic "licence" becomes a metaphor for the worst form of despotic tyranny. What The Times had called "a singular monument of genius" with "a truth all its own," The Champion exposes as a "mere hoax," a wilful "enigma" designed to "puzzle[] the curiosity" of the reading public by deliberately mystifying an "abuse of principles"—whether these be "poetical," moral, or, by strong metaphorical extension, political.

Appearing the Sunday following The Champion's review, "Literary Notices. No. 1" was clearly conceived as much in competitive response to this article as it was in partisan retort to The Times and in critical review of Christabel. The Examiner's politics were more a product of eighteenth-century intellectual radicalism than of the emergent bourgeois moralism of The Champion, and thus, for example, it was predisposed to respect the opinion of the liberal Byron about Christabel (in spite of his class and lifestyle) while yet remaining suspicious of anything that emerged alongside the Quarterly Review from the house of John Murray (Courtney 98-9; Sullivan viii). Hazlitt's review, therefore, attempts to register as accurately as possible the uncanny ambivalence of the Christabel volume in political terms, while at the same time holding both Coleridge and his first two

reviewers strictly accountable to such enlightenment norms as "common sense" and "humanity." In its opening paragraph, this translates into a witty paradox that at once appropriates and supersedes the opposing views of both The Times and The Champion:

THE fault of Mr. Coleridge is, that he comes to no conclusion. He is a man of that universality of genius, that his mind hangs suspended between poetry and prose, truth and falsehood, and an infinity of other things, and from an excess of capacity, he does little or nothing. Here are two unfinished poems, and a fragment. *Christabel*, which has been much read and admired in manuscript, is now for the first time confided to the public. *The Vision of Kubla Khan* still remains a profound secret; for only a few lines of it were ever written. (19: 32)

Taking up Coleridge's own metaphor of "suspended animation," Hazlitt produces the figure of a "genius" so capacious as to be incapacitated, tragically "suspended" from meaningful agency by his own urge to "universality." With this figure he is able to upbraid The Champion for its overly simplistic denial of "genius" in Coleridge's work, while at the same time challenging The Times' premature ascription of truth-value to Coleridge's "unfinished poems." In the most direct reference of any of these early reviews to the environment of political debate, Hazlitt finds Coleridge suspended in particular between the binaries of "poetry and prose, truth and falsehood." The syntactical alignment of "poetry" with "truth," and of "prose" with "falsehood," produces an allusion to the provenance of these poems in the period of Coleridge's radicalism, and to his subsequent (and apparently incapacitating) turn to writing reactionary "prose" for The

Courier. At the same time, however, the ambivalence of the Christabel volume is reflected in the fact that the four categories of "poetry and prose, truth and falsehood" are in fact left strategically unfixed in their referents. The equation of "truth" and "poetry" in Christabel, for example, is clearly undermined by the fact that it "comes to no conclusion," by contrast with Coleridge's more explicitly political poetry—and prose—of the 1790s. As we have seen, moreover, this review goes on to measure the "dim" and fictive "dream" of Christabel against empirical "reality," using a metaphor of military impressment to suggest that Coleridge's poetry—again like his prose—has now been "forced ... into the service of a story which is petrific"—a story, in other words, that is the precise opposite of the empowering narratives of enlightenment.

Meanwhile, of course, the critical "prose" of the review itself assumes its own manifest alignment with "truth," evident in the brisk enumeration of empirical fact ("Here are two unfinished poems, and a fragment"), and in an opening line that asserts with witty emphasis the superior capacity of review criticism to reach conclusions—and to publish them quickly. Further, as the review proceeds it becomes clear that The Examiner's aim in selecting the Christabel volume to launch its new series of politicized reviews was more than simply to expose Coleridge's "suspen[sion] between truth and falsehood," but to reprimand his recent and apparent leaning toward the latter. When the norm of "common sense" is introduced, for example, it is in the context of examining a key revision made to Christabel at the time of its Regency

publication. Here The Examiner intends to supersede the findings of The Champion, which based its negative verdict on the mere fact of "impenetrable mystery" in Christabel, symbolized by the "enigma" of Geraldine's identity: "Is *Lady Geraldine* a sorceress? or a vampire? or a man? or what is she, or he, or it?," The Champion asks (Reiman A: 268). The Examiner, by contrast, is able to prove progressive intentionality in Coleridge's use of mystery by producing knowledge of a line in the original manuscript—now missing from the poem—that fixed Geraldine's identity as "a witch" (19: 33, 338n). This line, in The Examiner's view, is "absolutely necessary to the understanding of the story" (19: 32), and therefore its deletion at the point of publication takes on heightened ideological significance:

The manuscript runs thus, or nearly thus:—

'Behold her bosom and half her side—
Hideous, deformed, and pale of hue.'

This line is necessary to make common sense of the first and second part [of the poem.] 'It is the keystone that makes up the arch.' For that reason Mr. Coleridge left it out. Now this is a greater psychological curiosity than even the fragment of *Kubla Khan*. (19: 33)

Thus The Examiner demonstrates what The Champion could only assert: that Coleridge's sole revision of the poem in 1816 is a deliberate act of mystification, a turning away from "common sense" toward the "dim" and "obscure," a suspension of "truth" even more telling than the opacity of "*Kubla Khan*," precisely because it is active rather than passive. In naming this phenomenon a "psychological curiosity," Hazlitt once again borrows Coleridge's own terms to arch, ironic effect, in this case to

suggest that the construction of an absence at the centre of the poem by removing its "keystone" is continuous with those strategies of mystification by which Coleridge constructs authority in the (new) prefaces to the volume, a form of authority in turn sustained within society at large by such voices as The Times.

As noted earlier, however, it is not Hazlitt's aim in this review simply to negate Coleridge's present authority, but rather to hold the Christabel volume accountable to a former authority grounded in both "common sense" and "humanity" (19: 34). This approach becomes most evident toward the end of the review, where a severe critique of the political implications of the Gothic mode is balanced by a quoted passage held up as a vestige of Coleridge's former discursive authority, and as one of those parts of Christabel said to contain "a great deal of beauty, both of thought, imagery and versification." What Hazlitt finds to approve, however, is certainly not what the liberal Byron promoted as "wild, and singularly original." Hazlitt's commitment to enlightenment ideology means that whatever subversive potential may be thought to inhere in the wildness of the Gothic mode is offset, in his view, by its "spell-bound" fascination for the institutions of Medieval repression. By taking up the "petrific" story of Christabel, therefore, Coleridge drives an unwelcome wedge between the "visionary" and the politically progressive, and once his romanticization of Sir Leoline's "world of death" is found to align itself readily with contemporary forms of

repression, the story is rejected outright as "disgusting."

What Hazlitt finds to approve, by contrast, is a passage that stands out for its "humanity"—a passage, that is, on the margins of the main plot that focuses more on human "reality" than supernatural "dream," and in this case on a brief moment of affection that springs up in defiance of the relentlessly tragic landscape of human relations depicted in the poem. Within the political context invoked by the review, moreover, it is clear that this passage also offers itself as an efficient allegory of the history of division and alienation among men of the British public sphere, a history conjured up by the sudden appearance of these poems of the 1790s amid the post-war "distresses" of the Regency:

In the midst of moon-light, and fluttering ringlets, and flitting clouds, and enchanted echoes, and airy abstractions of all sorts, there is one genuine outburst of humanity, worthy of the author, when no dream oppresses him, no spell binds him. We give the passage entire:—

But when he heard the lady's tale,
And when she told her father's name,
Why waxed Sir Leoline so pale,
Murmuring o'er the name again,
Lord Roland de Vaux of Tryermaine?

Alas! they had been friends in youth;
But whispering tongues can poison truth;
And constancy lives in realms above;
And life is thorny; and youth is vain;
And to be wroth with one we love
Doth work like madness in the brain.
And thus it chanced, as I divine,
With Roland and Sir Leoline.

Each spake words of high disdain
 And insult to his heart's best brother:
 They parted—ne'er to meet again!
 But never either found another
 To free the hollow heart from paining—
 They stood aloof, the scars remaining,
 Like cliffs which had been rent asunder;
 A dreary sea now flows between.
 But neither heat, nor frost, nor thunder,
 Shall wholly do away, I ween,
 The marks of that which once hath been.

Sir Leoline, a moment's space,
 Stood gazing in the damsel's face:
 And the youthful Lord of Tryermaine
 Came back upon his heart again.'

Why does does not Mr. Coleridge always write in this manner, that we might always read him? The description of the Dream of Bracy the bard is also very beautiful and full of power. (19:34)

No doubt Hazlitt's appropriation of this tale of personal estrangement and recollected love functions in part as an allegory of his own relationship with the author of these lines—"Alas! they had been friends in youth." Yet strangely enough, this reading has been almost completely overlooked in previous commentary on the review,¹³ perhaps because the message conveyed is one of abiding (if nevertheless frustrated) love and respect, thus refuting the notion of Hazlitt's pure "malignity" on this occasion. Yet the poignant rhetorical question that sustains such a reading—"Why does not Mr. Coleridge always write in this manner that we might always read him?"—is nevertheless framed in the

¹³Howe notes the personal allegory, but only in his notes to Hazlitt's Lectures on the English Poets (5: 399).

first-person plural, a reminder that within the context of corporate journalism, a biographical reading is always superseded by the conventions of anonymity, which in this case posit the reviewer first and foremost as a metonymy for the editorial staff of The Examiner, and, by extension, for its entire readership. Thus the primary allegorical function of the "friends in youth" passage is to articulate a desire on the part of such readers to recall, if not to recover, the political authority Coleridge once held as an eloquent voice of enlightenment nonconformism. At the same time, the passage works efficiently to conjure the collective, even national experience of painful ideological rupture, an experience particularly acute among middle-class intellectuals, whose shared nostalgia for an original and underlying commonality is now permanently threatened by the emergent paradox of being at once an oppressed, and an oppressing class.

The extent of this rupture would become increasingly apparent as the "Distresses of the Country" crisis deepened, and as the convergence of literary and political opinion become more explicit. As a final point of reference within this context of political debate, we may look ahead to the Edinburgh's late review of Christabel, the only other article after The Examiner to refer directly to Coleridge's "prose." But in Moore's review (which appeared in November 1816),¹⁴ the subtle structure of implication and allusion produced by Hazlitt through such devices as irony and allegory is thrown aside in favour of the blunt invective of

¹⁴Schneider, "Tom Moore" 72.

partisan infighting. In addition to the rough "quizzing" of Christabel for which this article has become notorious—in which the poem is declared to be "utterly destitute of value," with "not a ray of genius"—the final lines of the review offer this telling summary of the political dynamics that underlie the entire

Christabel controversy:

Must we then be doomed to hear such a mixture of raving and driv'ling, extolled as the work of a '*wild and original*' genius, simply because Mr Coleridge has now and then written fine verses, and a brother poet chooses, in his milder mood, to laud him from courtesy or interest? And are such panegyrics to be echoed by the mean tools of a political faction, because they relate to one whose daily prose is understood to be dedicated to the support of all that courtiers think should be supported? If it be true that the author has thus earned the patronage of those liberal dispensers of bounty, we can have no objection that they should give him proper proofs of their gratitude; but we cannot help wishing, for his sake, as well as our own, that they would pay in solid pudding instead of empty praise; and adhere, at least in this instance, to the good old system of rewarding their champions with places and pensions, instead of puffing their bad poetry, and endeavouring to cram their nonsense down the throats of all the loyal and well affected. (Reiman A: 473; Jackson 235-6)

Thus the Edinburgh lays bare the politics of its literary criticism. As the leading organ of the anti-court party, it attacks a writer for The Courier, whose "daily prose" is therefore "understood to be dedicated to the support of all that courtiers think should be supported," and whose poetry, because it is published by John Murray and praised by The Times and The Courier, is implicated in the system of patronage by which the Tory

Ministry sustains its authority within the public sphere. By contrast with Hazlitt's review, however, the fact that "Mr Coleridge has now and then written fine verses," and that the present verses have been praised by Moore's own "brother poet" Byron, are all but lost as complicating factors in this analysis. In the discursive violence of such images as "cram[ming] ... nonsense down the throats of all the loyal and well-affected," and in the gratuitous excess of the phrase "raving and driv'ling," is conveyed instead a one-dimensional enmity that Terry Eagleton has described as a "refraction" within the bourgeois public sphere of the violence of rising class struggle in society at large (37).

The slogan "BREAD OR BLOOD" is a reminder that such class struggle was (and is) as much a matter of economics as politics, and indeed such events as the riots of May 1816 were focussed more on the immediate economic causes of "distress" than on the long-term political effects of violent insurgency. Within the public sphere, the corresponding "refraction" of these bloody confrontations over "want of work and want of bread" took the form of increasingly aggressive marketplace competition. The very appearance of "Literary Notices. No 1" in The Examiner is ample evidence of this, presenting as it does a bold challenge on three fronts: to the market share of rival journals, to the established parameters of review criticism, and to the authority—and therefore profitability—of the latest best-seller. And though this review also shows that political and commercial rivalry were virtually indistinguishable, it is nevertheless significant that at this early point in the "Distresses" crisis, the sort of

discursive violence seen above in the Edinburgh is found in The Examiner's review not so much in its finely-tuned structure of political implications, but rather in those passages that reflect the harsh economics of a volatile marketplace. Resituated within this second discursive context, "Literary Notices. No. 1" proves once again to be a remarkably efficient index of change.

The literary marketplace in June of 1816 was in the process of radical transformation, not only under the immediate impact of a severe, post-war depression, but also via such long-term trends as the commercialization of authorship and the emergence of a mass "Reading Public." Exponential population growth and the success of literacy programmes were thus creating a rapidly expanding consumer base just as consumer spending was being sharply curtailed (Altick 82-3, 100). To survive, writers and publishers were forced to adapt and to innovate in the face of considerable uncertainty, with sometimes unexpected results. As the Edinburgh publisher Archibald Constable notes in August 1816:

Trade in the South is generally speaking very dull and of course the book trade is affected by the stagnation. Books of first-rate merit however sell better now than at any former period; those of a middle walk of literature do not sell at all, and almost all periodical works of talent increase in circulation. ([1])

Constable identifies two growth markets in the midst of economic "stagnation": "Books of first-rate merit" and "periodical works of talent." The appearance of the Christabel volume from the house of John Murray (64 pages octavo, at four shillings, sixpence) was clearly designed for the first of these; the appearance of

"Literary Notices. No. 1" in The Examiner, adding new value (at tenpence an issue) to one of London's most closely-monitored "periodical works of talent," was an unmistakable sign of the latter. Yet where the Christabel volume aimed to intercept the purchasing power of those either profiting by the depression, or insulated from its effects by inherited wealth, The Examiner could gather readers hurt by the depression, especially those in the "middle walks" who wished to keep pace with literary fashion, but who could afford only the time and money for entertaining reviews of exclusively priced books.

Hazlitt's review of the Christabel volume shows itself acutely conscious of these changes. In the opening paragraphs of the review, for example, following the paradox of Coleridge's "suspended" genius, it moves quickly to locate the publication of Christabel within the dynamics of marketplace competition. Hazlitt begins with an analysis comparable to Constable's, though rather more graphic:

The poem of *Christabel* sets out in the following manner:

' 'Tis the middle of the night by the castle clock,
 And the owls have awaken'd the crowing cock;
 Tu—whit! Tu—whoo!
 And hark again! the crowing cock,
 How drowsily it crew.
 Sir Leoline, the Baron rich,
 Hath a toothless mastiff bitch;
 From her kennel beneath the rock
 She makes answer to the clock,
 Four for the quarters and twelve for the hour;
 Ever and aye, moonshine or shower,
 Sixteen short howls, not over loud;
 Some say, she sees my lady's shroud.'

We wonder that Mr. Murray, who has an eye for things, should suffer this 'mastiff bitch' to come into his shop. Is she a sort of Cerberus to fright away the critics? But—gentlemen, she is toothless. (19: 32)

With this jest, we are given a kind of Cruikshank cartoon of the literary marketplace in 1816. On the one side we are given the first-rate "shop" of "Mr. Murray," defended by the howling mastiff of Christabel, and on the other we have "the critics," a growing cluster of "gentlemen" from the various periodicals, addressed on this occasion by the newest talent among them. One striking feature of this scene is that it is the publisher, not the poet, who is the immediate target of witty attack, a foregrounding of literary commerce that is in part traceable to the convergence of politics and literature: the mastiff is "a sort of Cerberus," after all, because she guards the entrance to a corresponding Hades of Tory ideology, well stocked with issues of The Quarterly Review. Yet in this way Hazlitt correctly identifies Murray's profits—in manuscripts already purchased outright from the poet¹⁵—as the commodity that requires unusual measures of protection in a marketplace subject to the increasingly violent (and telling) attacks of "the critics." Murray is caricatured as the savvy capitalist "who has an eye for things," whose shop already contains the lucrative works of Byron and the well-funded Quarterly, but who in the case of Christabel may well have seriously misjudged. For on Byron's recommendation, he has allowed this "wild, and singularly original" infraction of the norms of poetic diction to enter his shop, and to attract the

¹⁵Bate, "Editor's Introduction" lxi.

scorn of "the critics" with its howling rather than "to fright [them] away."

These critics, meanwhile, are interpellated as fellow "gentlemen," a significant gendering of the institution of review criticism (as Swann has noted, *passim*), but an equally important designation of the intended readership of the review itself. By addressing the punchline of his jest to a familiar coterie of "gentlemen," Hazlitt implicitly aligns his readers with the practice of criticism, thus invoking the ideal interchangeability of critic and reader carried over from the coffee-house culture of the eighteenth-century public sphere. This context is crucial to the construction of authority in the review, as the speaker himself is an entrepreneurial voice among "the critics," standing forth boldly in the unfettered discursive space opened up by the enlightenment to offer what seems the only plausible—if pointedly satiric—explanation for the anomaly of the "mastiff bitch" in Murray's shop. At the same time, the term "gentlemen" associates the practice of review criticism with the cultural authority once accorded gentility, now appropriated as a measure of bourgeois respectability, and in defiance of the low social status still accorded those known to be "mere" journalists.¹⁶ "Mr. Murray," in marked contrast, though well-known as one of the great captains of the industry, is reduced to the merest shopkeeper.

Hazlitt pursues his analysis of the marketplace into the next

¹⁶Aspinall, in "The Social Status of Journalists at the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century" describes the prevailing "assumption that no one connected with the newspaper Press was fit for the society of gentlemen" (217 and *passim*).

paragraph, where the poet re-enters the picture. Like Murray, Coleridge is found to have made a grave error in allowing the image of the "mastiff bitch" to enter and to dominate the opening lines of his poem. No longer a defensive measure, however, these lines are now interpreted as deliberately offensive, as a sign of the poet's "contempt" for the new protocols of literary commerce:

There is dishonesty as well as affectation in all this. The secret of this pretended contempt for the opinion of the public, is that it is a sorry subterfuge for our self-love. The poet, uncertain of the approbation of his readers, thinks he shews his superiority to it by shocking their feelings at the outset, as a clown, who is at a loss how to behave himself, begins by affronting the company. This is what is called *throwing a crust to the critics*. If the beauties of *Christabel* should not be sufficiently admired, Mr. Coleridge may lay it all to two lines which he had too much manliness to omit in complaisance to the bad taste of his contemporaries. (19: 32)

Now it is "*the critics*" who are figured as dogs—at least in the eyes of the supercilious poet, as he throws them the opening lines of the poem like a "*crust*" over which to bark and snarl, leaving the rest of his poem unmolested. Hazlitt's use of italics here underscores the latent violence in the tone, diction, as well as imagery of this passage, a discursive intensity that in turn reflects the cultural and historic significance of the confrontation described. On the one hand we have the poet, cast out of the patronage system onto the open market and thus "at a loss how to behave himself," forced to court "the approbation of his readers" even as he rejects "the bad taste of his contemporaries." On the other hand, his new patron, "the opinion

of the public," is now frankly identified with "the critics," whose ascendent authority is based on their long experience in the art of embodying—even as they create—the opinions of an anonymous readership. On this occasion especially, as the critic himself debuts as the voice of public opinion, the authority of review criticism must be asserted with particular intensity. Thus in addition to the obvious flourish of penetrating the "secret" of the poet's "sorry subterfuge," the critic demonstrates his superior familiarity with the shifting protocols of public entertainment by appropriating to witty effect the very lines he criticizes as an affront. In this way he ironically earns "the approbation of his readers" precisely by "shocking their feelings at the outset."

More than a merely gratuitous flaunting of authority, however, lies behind the intensity of Hazlitt's focus on these opening lines of Christabel. Several other factors are at play here as well: Coleridge's own attack on the critics in his preface to Christabel; the impact of Byron and the recent Byron scandal on public attitudes toward "poetic genius"; and The Examiner's own struggle for market share with its closest commercial rivals, principally The Champion. If the image of Sir Leoline's "toothless mastiff bitch" is a "crust" thrown to Coleridge's tasteless contemporaries, then the preface to Christabel might be figured as a full gauntlet, thrown down in rather more explicit challenge to the opinions of Coleridge's critics-as-readers. Here, in the context of anxiously "precluding charges of plagiarism," Coleridge lashes out at his projected accusers:

For there is amongst us a set of critics, who seem to hold, that every possible thought and image is traditional; who have no notion that there are fountains in the world, small as well as great; and who would therefore charitably derive every rill they behold flowing, from a perforation made in some other man's tank. (Poetical Works 214-5)

Coleridge's obtrusive concern with his property rights in Christabel, fostered in part by the unusual circumstances of its manuscript transmission, is nevertheless another sign of the new uncertainties of commercialized authorship on an open market. From his perspective, "the set of critics" pose a double threat to creative genius. Misguided by a false notion of the collective and anonymous, they undermine the moral integrity of genius by reducing the poet's claims to originality to mere thefts from tradition. In so doing, they also elide the very sources of his power, a power figured here in the strikingly "traditional" image of the providential "fountain." Whether Christabel is intended in these terms to be a mere "rill" proceeding from one of the "small" fountains is a question better answered later in the volume, when this image reappears as the "mighty fountain" that erupts in the midst of the "Vision" of "Kubla Khan" (Poetical Works 297).

One effect of this prefatory challenge, of course, is to focus critical attention on the very opening "image" of Christabel. Given the prevailing norms of poetic decorum, the image of the "toothless mastiff bitch" becomes in these terms an arresting attempt to exceed the boundaries of the "traditional" and to demonstrate the presence of a new and mysteriously fresh "fountain" of creative originality. Hence Hazlitt's use of the

term "affectation": Coleridge's evident willingness to edit the poem (as proven later in the review) lends this image an additional aura of deliberation, and within the contestatory atmosphere of 1816, it is thus magnified into a bizarre weapon with which the poet asserts the singularity of his creative genius in defiance of the levelling criticism of "common sense."

This increasing polarisation of poets and critics was the result in part of Byron's recent struggle with "the opinion of the [British] public." We have already seen how this scandal over the private life of Britain's most high-profile creative genius dictated the terms of The Champion's review. Echoes of this event are also heard in this passage of Hazlitt's review in such phrases as the poet's "pretended contempt for the opinion of the public," by which he "thinks he shews his superiority" to his readers by retaining "two lines which he had too much manliness to omit in complaisance to the bad taste of his contemporaries." The heavy irony of the word "manliness," depicting the false authority of patrician "contempt," imaginary "superiority," and withheld "complaisance," all sketch a portrait of Coleridge in Byron's clothing, awkwardly mimicking the Gothic hauteur of his now disgraced and self-exiled benefactor. Of course, one source of discursive intensity in these lines is the very strength of such a bid for cultural authority: Byron's popularity had indeed succeeded in forging a strong link between the notions of sublime autonomy and poetic genius, a link only partially undone by his spectacular fall from public grace. Thus we see both Coleridge

and Hazlitt pressing their advantage in these circumstances: Coleridge in presenting himself in possession of "poetic powers" that make him one of the world's mysterious "fountains" of "originality," and Hazlitt in decrying such rhetoric for its "dishonesty," insofar as it mingles the gestures of class privilege with the emergent cult of genius.

On this point, The Examiner fully concurs with the anti-aristocratic politics of London's other Sunday weekly, The Champion. Yet for this very reason, The Examiner's analysis of the opening lines of Christabel is further animated by the dynamics of direct marketplace competition. On closer examination, we find that The Champion also quotes the opening lines of the poem, but it does so merely in passing, as one example of the poem's "most objectionable parts" (the words "*mastiff bitch*" are underscored with italics), and as the sort of passage in which the poets' "coterie of ardent admirers ... may discover,—(though God knows, we cannot),—a great deal of undefinable sublimity..." (Reiman A: 269). In following up this lead, The Examiner is nevertheless challenged to distinguish its new contribution to review criticism by outmatching its closest commercial rival in both the wit and incisiveness of its treatment of these lines. Thus what The Champion merely indicates with italics to be "objectionable," The Examiner seizes on and holds up as a trenchant symbol of emergent patterns of conflict and authority within an otherwise chaotic marketplace, an explanatory device that clarifies, among other things, the new role to be

played by the politicized criticism of Sunday weekly newspapers. One feature of such a role is to go well beyond simply charging a poem with "undefinable sublimity" as The Champion had done; instead, The Examiner makes a point of penetrating the poet's rhetorical "secret," in this case uncovering Coleridge's "sorry subterfuge" for the authority of review criticism. As we have seen, this competitive strategy recurs on a larger scale when The Examiner goes on to solve what The Champion was content to dismiss as "a maze of impenetrable mystery," producing knowledge of the missing line "necessary to make common sense" of Christabel as a whole (19: 33). By thus substantiating the bombastic assertions of The Champion with empirical proofs, The Examiner gives point and force to its own use of invective. Discursive intensity becomes a sharp tool with which to demonstrate and denounce strategies of mystification and "subterfuge" rather than merely the blunt instrument of factional enmity.

Such a discursive tool, of course, was considerably sharpened by wit. After all, subtlety of analysis alone would not be enough to draw a sufficient audience for this new series of reviews from a reading public as anxious to be inexpensively entertained as intellectually edified. "Literary Notices. No. 1" thus introduces a form of criticism designed to stand out for its style as well as its content, supplementing the analytical and referential modalities of the traditional review with performative gestures that seek "literary notice" in their own right. The Examiner had already proven itself innovative in this regard with its eclectic and loquacious series of "Round Table" essays. Building on this

precedent, it now promises to distinguish itself in the field of literary criticism by forging in effect a new genre of review, characterized by an intense fusion of such elements as paradox, irony, invective, and caricature, laced with literary allusion, and gathered under the bantering, colloquial idiom of Regency "table-talk." In so doing, it impinges upon a third discursive context: the hierarchy of genres by which cultural authority was most effectively invoked—or contested—within the British public sphere of 1816. And here too, pressured by the evolving dynamics of both political debate and marketplace competition, "Literary Notices. No. 1" emerges as a paradigmatic innovation in genre. One measure of its impact within the institution of review criticism, for example, may be found in the format adopted by the mighty Edinburgh Review for its late intervention in the Christabel controversy. In a rare abandonment of its customary full-length review-essay, the Edinburgh condescends on this occasion to imitate the brief, bantering style of the The Examiner's "Literary Notices" series for its famous "quizzing" of the poem. As we have already seen in another context, however, the differences between the Edinburgh and the Examiner reviews of Christabel are as important as their similarities. Here we may simply note that when Peacock came to satirize this genre of "Fashionable Literature" two years later, he took as his example the Edinburgh's less felicitous experiment in it, while making an important—and rarely noted—exception in favour of "one or two weekly publications" (100). Unlike the general run of

periodicals, such weeklies as The Examiner, in Peacock's view, lie outside the "legatur of corruption," and therefore "have the courage to push enquiry to its limits" (100).

The Examiner was nevertheless determined to seek a viable audience for such courageous "enquiry." To the extent therefore that it strove to incorporate what Peacock calls "the faculty of amusing" into its new genre of review, its "Literary Notices" series clearly falls well within Peacock's pejorative category of "Fashionable Literature" (94). Yet by the same token, one of the most attractive features of the opening number in the series was the fact that the inaugural book selected for review was equally "fashionable" in precisely these terms. In Peacock's view, "the newspaper of the day, the favourite magazine of the month, the review of the quarter, the tour, the novel, and the poem which are most recent in date and most fashionable in name furnish forth the morning table of the literary diletante" (94, emphasis added). And in the spring of 1816, there can be no doubt that Christabel was "the poem ... most recent in date and most fashionable in name." As even The Champion ruefully admitted, the Christabel volume was at this time "the standing enigma that puzzles the curiosity of literary circles," rising on what Peacock calls "the spring tide of metropolitan favour," and passing quickly through three editions (Reiman A: 268; Peacock 94).

Even more significant in this context was the fact that the success of this volume—and the controversy it raised—can be attributed to Coleridge's own turn to generic innovation as a

vehicle for cultural authority. In this instance, he supplements the otherwise declining appeal of the Gothic ballad by capitalizing on a rising interest in the poetic "fragment." The phenomenal popularity of Byron's The Giaour two years earlier had created what Francis Jeffrey had at that time named "The Taste for Fragments."¹⁷ Byron's influence is in turn clearly visible in the publication of Christabel as an incomplete poem, for which "the whole" is nevertheless said to be "present" to the mind of the poet (according to the preface) "with the wholeness, no less than the liveliness of a vision"—a vision that (analogous to the successive editions of The Giaour) he promises "to embody in verse ... in the course of the present year" (Poetical Works 213n). At the same time, the status of this poem as a self-contained fragment is reinforced by its inclusion in a volume with two other poems distinctly classified, in the preface to "Kubla Khan," as "fragments" (295, 297). Anne Janowitz, in her article entitled "Coleridge's 1816 Volume: Fragment as Rubric," demonstrates convincingly how Coleridge's strategy on this occasion makes him at once "a reader of the fashion, and a shaper of the genre" (28). This becomes most apparent in his odd designation of the third, and highly finished poem, "The Pains of Sleep," as a "fragment." Where the prefaces to both Christabel and "Kubla Khan" thematize the incommensurability of language to the "vision" of the poet, Janowitz notes how "The Pains of Sleep" is a poem marked both thematically and structurally by patterns of "highly reinforced

¹⁷Edinburgh Review 21 (July 1813), 299; quoted in Janowitz, 21.

closure" (37). Thus, she reasons, by including this poem "... in his volume of three fragments, the generic stability of the first two poems becomes a site for the third to attach itself to the genre," with the result that the "rubric" of the fragment is made into an ever-widening category by which the poet invites readers "to read every poem, however definite its construction, as only a hint of its potentiality" (37-8). This strategy in turn serves to mystify the authority of the poet, whose "mind" is held up as both source and site of the imagined "whole." And despite Coleridge's complaints to the contrary, there was a growing sector of the reading public as fully responsive to such authority as academic posterity has since proven itself to be. The Critical Review, for example, correctly identifies the genre of the Christabel poems as that of the "romantic fragment," "triumph[ing]" in this "fresh display of talent and genius" wherein "the absurd trammels of physical possibility are ... thrown aside, like the absurd swaddling clothes of infants, which formerly obstructed the growth of the fair symmetry of nature" (Reiman A: 505). Meanwhile, as we have seen, the Times/Courier review celebrates the "fragmental beauty" and "thought-suspending awe" of a form of poetry "that interests ... more by what it leaves untold, than even by what it tells," generating in this way "a truth of its own, that seizes on and masters the imagination from beginning to end" (Reiman A: 891).

In both the Christabel volume, then, and in "Literary Notices. No. 1," generic innovation is used as a vehicle by which to generate and to sustain cultural authority. On the one hand,

Coleridge's collection of romantic fragments caters to an emergent "Taste for Fragments," a trend that is in turn indicative of a growing (and ultimately hegemonic) willingness to locate authority in the mind of "genius" as the exemplar of free subjectivity. On the other hand, Hazlitt's review-satire uses wit to attract and to shape "the opinion of the public," where authority is figured as a decentred function of anonymous urban numbers under the compelling—if ultimately elusive—norm of "common sense." As competing forms of "Fashionable Literature" in the spring of 1816, then, the romantic fragment and the review-satire may be said to be evenly matched within the hierarchy of genres comprising authoritative public discourse. Yet one clear advantage held by the review-satire lay in the fact that it was designed not only to claim but to contest authority. We have already seen numerous ways in which "Literary Notices. No. 1" is used to this purpose: in the eminently quotable *bon mot* of the opening line ("The fault of Mr. Coleridge is, that he comes to no conclusion"); in the comic caricature of the poet as a "witch" or as a "clown"; in the dogged "quizzing" of the "mastiff bitch"; or in the arch understatement of the line "Now this is a greater psychological curiosity than even the fragment of *Kubla Khan*" (19: 32-33). We may conclude this discussion, however, by focussing on the closing lines of the review, where Hazlitt turns from Christabel to address the question of genre in "Kubla Khan" itself. Here the performatory wit of the journalistic review serves once again to reinforce the contestatory thrust of the review as a whole. At

the same time, however, the impulse to generic innovation—in conjunction with Hazlitt's own characteristic willingness to "push enquiry to its limits"—produces an unexpected, and distinctly romantic, resistance to closure.

It is important to note that the final lines of the review follow immediately on the lengthy, approving quotation of the "friends in youth" passage in *Christabel*, with its subsequent acknowledgement that "the Dream of Bracy the bard is also very beautiful and full of power" (19: 34). As if, therefore, to return to a dominant key of critical censure, the review ends with a brief coda of satiric judgement:

The conclusion of the second part of *Christabel*, about 'the little limber elf,' is to us absolutely incomprehensible. *Kubla Khan*, we think, only shows that Mr. Coleridge can write better nonsense verses than any man in England. It is not a poem, but a musical composition.

'A damsel with a dulcimer
In a vision once I saw:
It was an Abyssinian maid,
And on her dulcimer she play'd,
Singing of Mount Abora.'

We could repeat these lines to ourselves not the less often for not knowing the meaning of them. (19: 34)

And thus the review concludes. What has traditionally stood out in these lines, of course, is Hazlitt's apparently unimaginative retailing of the third in Peacock's incisive list of "excellent jokes," the fashionably philistine charge of "incomprehensib[ility]" (Peacock 104). And indeed the brisk, *ad libitum* haste of the journalistic review, with its reliance on stock phrase and current idiom, is clearly evident in such a

remark as Hazlitt strives for some degree of critical closure. Yet in the quip that follows about "Kubla Khan" as "*nonsense*," the blank counter of the common joke is tempered by paradox, recalling the high satiric polish of the opening lines of the review. It was from Coleridge's "universality of genius," after all, and from his "excess of capacity," that he is said to have done "little or nothing" in this volume (19: 32). So here, too: though "Kubla Khan" is summarily dispatched to the category of "*nonsense verses*," the fact that Coleridge is said to produce these "better ... than any man in England" crosses the critical thrust of the remark with a vestige of monumental respect that infuses and complicates the entire review.

It is perhaps with this in mind, then, that the satirist proceeds to refine his classification of "Kubla Khan": "It is not a poem," he declares, "but a musical composition." Now two possibilities emerge: either that all "musical composition[s]" are mere "*nonsense*," or, more likely, that the purely aesthetic appeal of "Kubla Khan" can be compared only to the non-representational art of music, an artform with growing resonance at this time as a metaphor for acute "sensibility" to the supra-rational forces of nature. On the one hand, then, the asperity of judgement unleashed in such phrases as "absolutely incomprehensible" and "*nonsense*" hovers over the recital of several lines of this "musical composition," inviting readers to measure these lines against the rough, exoteric norm of "common sense," while noting Coleridge's uncanny facility in creating such "*nonsense*." On the other hand, the drive for critical closure is suddenly undermined

by the tone of bemused reflection that concludes the review. Like Christabel, it seems, "Kubla Khan" has rendered its critic "spell-bound," throwing his faculties "into a state of metaphysical suspense and theoretical imbecility." Yet here, significantly enough, we are asked not to recoil in (ideological) disgust, but rather to embrace an unexpected resistance to closure. For in the end the search for "meaning" itself is allowed to "come[] to no conclusion," short-circuited by Coleridge's Abyssinian song into a pattern of potentially endless, mesmeric repetition: "We could repeat these line to ourselves not the less often for not knowing the meaning of them."

In this way, the very brevity and *ex tempore* informality of the journalistic "Notice" proves itself flexible enough to assimilate features of the "fragment" itself—along with the attendant authority that accrues to a "suspended" judgement of both poet and poem lodged in the mind of the (anonymous) critic. Yet this judgement was not to remain suspended for long. Within two months, Coleridge's announcement of his intention to publish "a Layman's Sermon addressed to the Higher and Middle Classes of Society on the Present Distresses of the Country" would invite the rebuke of "a politics turned—but not to account," along with the reawakened injunction, "let him not write, or pretend to write, nonsense" (7: 118). Meanwhile, the exploratory observation "It is not a poem, but a musical composition" would emerge little more than a year later in the pages of the Edinburgh Review, reformulated by Hazlitt into the phrase "Poetry is the music of

language, expressing the music of the mind"—the centrepiece of a counter-romantic criticism designed to contest the authority of Coleridge's most seminal work in prose, the Biographia Literaria (16: 136).

Chapter Two

Pretending to Write "Nonsense":

Hazlitt's Preview of The Statesman's Manual

If Hazlitt's first article on Coleridge has been traditionally read as a scandal, then his second has been rejected out-of-hand as an outrage. For where the review of Christabel is presented as a wilful misreading of a now canonical text, Hazlitt's satiric preview of The Statesman's Manual is thought to represent no reading at all, based as it is on the mere advertisement for a work that had not even been written at the time of this "review," let alone published.¹ Thus critics and biographers have focussed their attention almost completely on Hazlitt's psychological motives for writing such a article, rather than on the article itself. And here, as before, their explanations have fallen back with little qualification on Coleridge's own claims in the Biographia: that this pre-emptive satire of an unpublished book could only be the product of "a malignity" that is "avowedly and exclusively personal" (7.2: 241). It is this review, for example, that Hazlitt's own biographer, Herschel Baker, singles out as an especially "deplorable performance" marked by "motiveless malignity" (355-6), while others have similarly characterized it as a "vicious attack"

¹Coleridge's advertisement appeared in mid-August 1816 (see page 77 below); by late September (two weeks after Hazlitt's review), Coleridge records in a letter that the announced work was still only in draft form: "I attempted to dictate a something that is coming out" (Letters 4: 673).

(Griggs 668), as "malicious" (White xxxn), "poisonous" (Marrs 226n), and "cruel" (Campbell 225n).

Yet the very tone of moral outrage infusing such epithets suggests at least some degree of critical distortion. Coleridge himself can hardly be expected to have held an impartial view of the matter. Moreover, Hazlitt's first readers did not all respond with similar opprobrium. Even Henry Crabb Robinson, who was himself fond of the term "malignity," thought this article "admirable" enough to read it aloud at a dinner party—along with another of Hazlitt's "Literary Notices"—whereupon one knowledgeable commentator, the veteran essayist William Taylor of the Monthly Review, declared both articles to be "masterpieces of banter" (Howe 190).²

Taylor's response reminds us that what is missing from the received modern reading of Hazlitt's preview of The Statesman's Manual is any thorough-going account of its public, rather than merely "personal," contexts. Here, for example, Taylor locates the authority of this article in the skill with which Hazlitt has adapted review criticism to a specific—and ascendent—genre of public discourse, a genre with roots in the satiric persiflage of the eighteenth-century "public sphere" and now shaped to the arch repartee of Regency drawing-rooms. Meanwhile, other available classifications of this review provide evidence of its engagement

²Howe quotes Crabb Robinson's diary:
 14 October:—I read to the party Hazlitt's article against Coleridge and an equally admirable notice of Owen of Lanark's View of Society.... William Taylor had never before heard any of Hazlitt's compositions. He declared these to be masterpieces of banter. (190)

in similarly public discursive contexts. Hazlitt himself, for example, saw fit to republish it as one of his Political Essays in 1819 (7: 114-18), a clear indication that this "masterpiece[] of banter" was also designed as a substantial intervention in a moment of public crisis, with lasting enough relevancy to be applicable to a similar moment of crisis on the eve of "Peterloo." Furthermore, like the review of Christabel, this article originally appeared under The Examiner's own rubric of "Literary Notice," where, as before, it takes on the broad, corporate agenda of the newspaper as a whole, as well as the specific mandate to "notice" and to "examine" forms of discursive authority in a marketplace alive with momentous transformation. Taken together, then, these three classifications of this article present us once again with a text firmly situated within at least three overlapping contexts of public discourse and debate: the arena of political struggle, the volatile marketplace for literature, and the conflicted hierarchy of genres and modes by which authority was performed—and recognized—at a moment of crisis and uncertainty.

Before proceeding, however, to resituate Hazlitt's preview of The Statesman's Manual within each of these contexts in turn, a re-reading of this article must recover the actual text which provoked its composition. In this instance—and by contrast with the Christabel volume—the utter obscurity of Coleridge's early advertisement for his first lay sermon has in the past served to reinforce the notion of wilful and nonsensical invention on Hazlitt's part in producing a "mock review" of an unpublished text

(Beer 47). It is nevertheless surprising that the advertisement itself has remained in obscurity: even the most recent editor of the Lay Sermons did not see fit to locate or to cite what Coleridge himself refers to as his "first annunciation" of The Statesman's Manual (7.2: 241).³ It has been enough, apparently, to know that Coleridge mistakenly "suffered" this work to be advertised before it was written (Letters 4: 672), and that, as a consequence, "a long delay occurred" between its "annunciation" and its actual appearance in December 1816 (7.2: 241). Yet this tiny advertisement reached far more readers in 1816 than the controversial Christabel volume,⁴ and, quite apart from its obvious relevance to Hazlitt's review, it contains a previously unrecorded title for Coleridge's first lay sermon, as well as the unknown fact that Coleridge (and his new publisher Gale and Fenner) experimented with the idea of a charitable benefit to attract readers to the lay sermon project. Most important for our purposes, and again in contrast with the Christabel volume, this advertisement serves as a remarkably efficient index to the environment of socio-political tension in which all texts at this time were written.

³R. J. White, editor of the Lay Sermons for the definitive Coburn edition of Coleridge's Works (vol. 6) elides the entire issue of Coleridge's premature advertisement of The Statesman's Manual, quoting only Coleridge's reference to it in a letter (Letters 4: 672), while dismissing Hazlitt's "crass malevolence" in writing a purely "anticipatory review" (Editor's Introduction xxxviii-xxxix and n).

⁴The three editions of the Christabel in 1816 volume would have totalled approximately 2,250 copies, while the combined circulation of the Times and the Courier was approximately 12,000 (Erdman 54).

Thus, in the "Books Published this Day" column of the Courier for August 12th and 14th, 1816, and of the Times for August 14th and 15th, we find the following announcement:

In a few days will be published, price 1s 6d,
 THE DAY OF ADVERSITY, a Layman's Sermon addressed to the
 Higher and Middle Classes of Society on the present
 Distresses of the Country
 By S.T. COLERIDGE.

The Profits of this Pamphlet will be given to the Association for the Relief of the Manufacturing and Labouring Poor. Several features of this notice immediately command our attention. First, Coleridge's title "THE DAY OF ADVERSITY" suggests a quite different sermon from the one finally written as The Statesman's Manual, and one that more readily reflects the atmosphere of crisis that by mid-August 1816 affected all levels of society, from the "Higher and Middle Classes" through to "the Manufacturing and Labouring Poor." Yet Coleridge's very specification of these different "Classes" suggests, in the second place, that any potentially levelling effects of economic "ADVERSITY" were in fact outweighed by a politically-charged sharpening of class divisions. This is especially apparent in his careful distinction here between the recipients of his charity on the one hand, and of his political homily on the other. Third, Coleridge's act of charity is itself notable, both as a worthy personal gesture and, as we shall see, as an astute marketing device, for it serves in this instance to align his intervention in the crisis with a scheme of charitable subscriptions recently endorsed by the Prince Regent himself. In this context, finally, Coleridge's choice of genre—"a Layman's Sermon"—is newly foregrounded, for in conjunction

with his act of charity this genre was no doubt intended to convey to his proposed readers a renewed moral and spiritual authority in contrast with the hotly-disputed Gothic "fragments" that were still, three months after they were published, at the forefront of literary controversy.⁵

Together, these various features of Coleridge's advertisement present a useful index to the severity of the evolving crisis, and of the prevailing responses to it on the part of the "Higher and Middle Classes of Society." The title "DAY OF ADVERSITY," for example, was clearly dictated in part by the stark images of destitution and despair among the "Manufacturing and Labouring Poor" that began to fill the daily press throughout the summer. One such image proved emblematic, and may be cited here as the most likely catalyst for Coleridge's impulse to charity. In early July, a group of starving colliers from Bilston-moor in Staffordshire achieved national notice by yoking themselves like beasts of burden to several huge wagons laden with coal and petitions for parliamentary reform, which they then began to haul along the main highways to London as symbolic gifts to the Prince Regent himself. As The Times reports:

About fifty men are yoked to each waggon to drag them to town. One of the waggons proceeds by the route of Worcester;

⁵Three new reviews of the Christabel volume were in circulation in early August: the British Review for July invokes "the moral muse" to deplore Coleridge's adherence to "Lord Byron's tainted muse" and advises him to undertake "the frequent, and perpetual perusal of the word of God" (Reiman A: 240-1); The Scourge for July sees the volume as part of a conspiracy "to undermine the foundations of taste and common sense" (Reiman A: 865); while the Antijacobin Review claims the volume excites nothing but "astonishment and disgust" (Reiman A: 23).

another by Coventry and Birmingham: the route of the third we have not heard. The men proceed at the rate of about twelve miles a day, and receive voluntary gifts of money, &c. on the road as they pass along, declining of themselves to ask alms; their motto, as placarded on the carts, being—"Rather work than beg." Two of these extraordinary teams passed through Birmingham on Thursday last, and excited on their approach considerable alarm; but it proved without cause, as the men demeaned themselves with the utmost propriety ("London" 2 July 1816)

Though the Bilston colliers were intercepted by Police Magistrates and turned back before reaching London, their act of symbolic self-abasement nevertheless "went home to the public imagination and pricked the conscience of the country," in Stanley Jones's words, because it implied "a destitution so extreme and inhuman that an animal yoke was its only appropriate symbol" (Hazlitt 230).

Indeed, even the Regent was moved. Though he never received—or even considered—the colliers' petitions for reform, he decided to perform his own act of symbolic condescension toward the end of July, sending his brother, the Duke of York, to the City of London Tavern, where he was to preside over a meeting of the Association for the Relief of the Manufacturing and Labouring Poor—the very Association named in Coleridge's advertisement.⁶ With Parliament adjourned till January in spite of the mounting crisis, this meeting at the London Tavern was clearly designed as a substitute for governmental policy, attended as it was by the Chancellor of the Exchequer and by other prominent members of

⁶"Distresses of the Poor," Examiner, 4 Aug 1816: 482-485. This article is a verbatim report of the Meeting, analogous to the parliamentary reports printed during active parliamentary sessions.

Parliament, not to mention a glittering roll-call of aristocratic and ecclesiastical dignitaries. These joined the royal family in publicly acknowledging a "stagnation of employment, and a revulsion of trade, deeply affecting the situation of many parts of the community, and producing many instances of great local distress." In response, then, "a subscription [was to be] immediately opened, and contributions generally solicited, for carrying into effect the objects of the Association, &c. &c" (Examiner 4 Aug 1816: 485-6). The Regent's name was put down for £500, the Queen's for £300, the Dukes of York and Cambridge contributed £300, and thereafter a detailed list of such donations became a prominent feature of the daily newspapers, beginning in each case with the Regent and proceeding down through all those who wished to associate themselves publicly with this extraordinary exercise of *noblesse oblige*.

Coleridge's donation to this Association is therefore to be interpreted as more than a merely personal gesture. In both the Times and Courier, it appears in a column directly adjacent to this growing list of noble donors,⁷ and so takes on enhanced cultural authority through its deliberate alignment with the royally-sanctioned response to the "Distresses." This is a response, moreover, that appears on the one hand to reach across the boundaries of class in a gesture of levelling solidarity amidst "ADVERSITY," but which on the other hand serves to

⁷In the Times of August 15, for example, some 70 names are listed, beginning with those contributing over £100; "the Amount of Subscriptions already advertised" totalling over £30,000.

reinforce these boundaries by recreating the sentimental roles of patrician donor and plebeian recipient. These roles in turn helped to reinforce the view that "the Present Distresses of the Country" were a merely temporary, and purely economic, phenomenon requiring no fundamental adjustment to the political structure of society. Even the Whig Edinburgh Review, for example, confirmed this approach in a magisterial essay on the "Distresses" that appeared just days before Coleridge's advertisement, in review of two prominent speeches from the last session of Parliament:

AT no former period of the history of this country, was so great and so general a distress known to prevail, as that which has lately visited us.... During the last twelve or eighteen months, ... the country has been suffering severely in every direction; in its agriculture and its manufactures; its home trade and foreign commerce. The return of peace, after unexampled victories, has brought no relief, but has rather confirmed our apparent ruin; and all classes of men more or less feel the effects of some hidden rottenness in our system, the causes of which no one seems able to discover, much less to remove.⁸

The essay then goes on to probe in considerable detail the economic "effects" of this "hidden rottenness," while delicately eliding any possibility that it might have political "causes."

No doubt this Edinburgh article precipitated Coleridge's own intervention in the crisis,⁹ if only because his advertisement also reflects the pressure of other, more direct—and politically divisive—approaches to this "hidden rottenness." By addressing

⁸"Distresses of the Country," Edinburgh Review 27 (June 1816), 255-6. This edition first appeared on August 9 ("Published this Day," Morning Chronicle 9 Aug 1816).

⁹Coleridge's advertisement first appeared three days after the Edinburgh was published, on August 12.

his sermon only to "the Higher and Middle Classes of Society," for example, Coleridge's title suggests to the mainly Tory readership of the Courier and the Times that it is they who face an almost apocalyptic "DAY OF ADVERSITY," in contrast to—or perhaps at the hands of—the burgeoning numbers of those genuinely distressed by the unprecedented effects of the new industrial economy (Aspinall 200, 206). Indeed, violent insurgency had continued unabated since May, despite the well-publicized hanging of thirty-two of the May rioters.¹⁰ In the industrial midlands especially, a resurgent Luddism created a new "DAY OF ADVERSITY" among middle-class factory owners:

A gang of ... miscreants ... entered the premises of Mr HEATHCOTE of Loughborough, on Saturday last, for the avowed purposes of breaking to pieces the whole of his lace-machinery, on account of having learnt that this gentleman intended to reduce the price of labour. [] The guard, being faithful to his trust ... was shot dead immediately ... and in the course of one hour from that time these ruffians destroyed, in machinery and goods, property to the amount of 15,000l., which will prove the total ruin of the proprietor. (Times, 2 July 1816)

What made such attacks all the more alarming for "the Higher and Middle Classes of Society" was that, unlike the riots in May, they proceeded from well-defined political motives, rather than merely economic or even personal ones. As the Times goes on to note, these particular "ruffians" had come under the influence of "democratic and disorganizing principles among their neighbours of somewhat superior rank and education."

¹⁰Ongoing reports of the trial in The Examiner, for example, included a verbatim report of the judge's address on June 30 and culminated in a detailed account of the mass execution on July 7.

In London, meanwhile, these same principles inspired a corresponding discursive insurgency among newly prominent radical leaders and orators. The Duke of York's meeting at the London Tavern, for example, was interrupted by the radical Lord Cochrane, who called for the abolishment of sinecures and a reduction of taxes as a more effective, and politically appropriate, response to the distresses than mere charity (Examiner, 4 Aug 1816: 481, 483). Similarly, just one week after Coleridge's advertisement appeared, the Lord Mayor of London held a "Common Hall" attended by such speakers as Henry ("Orator") Hunt, who drew up an aggressive petition for reform to be delivered by the Mayor himself to the Regent. In a series of resolutions, this petition describes "the Distress" as "the natural result of a corrupt system of Administration," declares a "Reform of Parliament" to be "indispensably necessary to the safety and honour of the Crown," and, in similarly threatening terms, names the "free, full, and frequent Representation of the People in the Commons House of Parliament" as "the only tranquil, sure, and effectual mode of obtaining *indemnity for the past and security for the future*" (Examiner, 25 Aug 1816: 543; italics in original).

This was the atmosphere, then, of both economic and political "ADVERSITY" that had accumulated within the tiny enclave of the ruling classes by the late summer of 1816. In the midst of this, Coleridge's advertisement emerges as an instructive metonymy of prevailing responses to the crisis: on the one hand, it presents the nominal charity proffered by "the Higher Classes ... of Society," and on the other, it typifies the response of urgent,

discursive intervention adopted by middle-class writers of every political persuasion. Here, as seen before, the vertical pressure of rising class struggle in society at large is "refracted" into the series of bitter, horizontal conflicts that characterized the discourse of the bourgeois public sphere at this time (Eagleton 37). The absence of an active Parliamentary session reinforced this process, creating a vacuum of discursive authority into which poured a veritable cascade of conflicted articles, essays, editorials, pamphlets, "Remed[ies],"¹¹ and "WARNING[S]"¹² from the bourgeois press, all disputing the causes and outcomes of national distress. Dominating the debate was the Edinburgh article quoted above, as well as a similar article in its rival the Quarterly entitled "Reports on the Poor."¹³ Within the more confined arena of London newspaper journalism, the political rivalries witnessed above in the controversy over Christabel were correspondingly intensified, exacerbating the practice of journalistic "duelling" that paired off newspapers, editors, and "anonymous" writers in an almost quotidian series of journalistic conflicts. In this context, then, Coleridge's proposed intervention in the debate was inevitably read for its markers of

¹¹"In a few days will be published, price 2s, THE REMEDY; or, Thoughts on the Present Distresses, in a Letter to a Public Editor. [...] 'The above pamphlet, as its title imports, proposes a Remedy the most effective, suitable to the present unparalleled deplorable state of the times'" (Times, 20 Aug 1816).

¹²"This day is published, price 1d or 9d. per dozen, for distribution, A WARNING TO ENGLAND, on its present alarming situation..." (Times, 29 Aug 1816).

¹³Written by the Poet Laureate, Robert Southey, who at this time emerged as a leading political essayist for the Quarterly Review (5: 29 [April 1816]). This edition, like the June edition of the Edinburgh, appeared belatedly in August (Shine 55).

partisan affiliation, including, in this case, his choice of genre. In conjunction with the appearance of the advertisement itself in the "Ministerial" newspapers, and with its scrupulous participation in the Regent's subscription scheme, the genre of "Layman's Sermon" would serve to underscore its alignment with Tory ideology by claiming for this "Pamphlet" a pious adherence to the doctrinal authority of the Established Church.

In the midst of this, of course, The Examiner had not remained silent. On the contrary, it had taken up a leading role as a voice for reform within the Opposition press, making up in frequency of contributions what it lacked in the total circulation of its rival periodicals.¹⁴ Several days before the Edinburgh's influential essay appeared, for example, The Examiner had set the pace of the debate with the first in a five-part, front-page editorial series entitled "RELIEF OF THE NATIONAL DISTRESSES," begun in direct response to the Regent's initiative at the London Tavern. In the opening number of this series, "The Political Examiner" applauds Lord Cochrane's radical politicization of the meeting, goes on to deplore "the gross attempts of the ministerial papers to attribute all the danger of the present crisis to the mere mention of it, and not at all to the abuses of power," and concludes by offering the warning that "bear as people may, ... a day comes now and then, when they do not bear" (4 Aug 1816: 481-

¹⁴The circulation of The Examiner at this time was between the 7,000 of 1812 and 3,000 of 1821, perhaps around 3,500 copies per week, by comparison with approximately 6,000 daily for both the Times and the Courier and approximately 13,000 quarterly for the Edinburgh and the Quarterly (Wallins 151, Erdman 54n, and Jones, Hazlitt 146n).

2). This outspoken reformism was in turn reinforced in the "Literary Notices" column of The Examiner, which had since June become progressively more explicit in its political content.¹⁵ Now, alongside the editorial series of "The Political Examiner," it began to review rival interventions in the "Distresses" controversy, beginning on August 4th with Robert Owen's utopian manifesto "A New View of Society" ("Literary Notices. No. 6"; 7: 97-103), and then turning on August 11th to answer the Edinburgh Review itself with the first of a three-part series on "Speeches in Parliament on the Distresses of the Country" ("Literary Notices. No. 7," "8," and "9"; 7: 103-13; 19: 151-57).

The result was a publishing coincidence crucial to an understanding of Hazlitt's subsequent preview of The Statesman's Manual. The very day after Hazlitt's first article on "Speeches

¹⁵"Literary Notices. No. 2" (16 June 1816) and "3" (10 June) comprise a two-part review of the "Report of the Select Committee of the House of Commons on the Elgin Marbles" in which the political issues surrounding the appropriation of the Elgin Marbles are directly addressed (18: 100-03; 145-166; 438). "Literary Notices. No. 4" (7 July) and "5" (14 July) take aim at the Poet Laureate, Robert Southey, and his strenuous epithalamion "The Lay of the Laureate" composed for the marriage of Princess Charlotte. This double article was the first of the "Literary Notices" later to be republished as Political Essays (7: 85-97), as it focuses intensely on Southey's political apostasy: "It is the first time that ever a Reformist was made a Poet-Laureate," notes Hazlitt, and the result, significantly enough, is "a Methodist sermon turned into doggerel verse" (7: 86-7). The second article vigorously assaults the poem's celebration of "Legitimacy," (or "the doctrine of 'divine right'"), which Hazlitt describes as "that detestable doctrine, which in England first tottered and fell headless to the ground with the martyred Charles; which we kicked out with his son James, and kicked twice back with two Pretenders"; and which would, "with all the sanctions of religion and morality, sacrifice the blood of millions to the least of its prejudices," and which nevertheless still "rears its bloated hideous form to brave the will of a whole people" (7: 93).

in Parliament on the Distresses of the Country," Coleridge's own proposed contribution to the debate was first advertised in The Times and The Courier, thus creating the basic structure of a journalistic contest for political authority. Not only were Hazlitt's review and Coleridge's announcement competing responses to the Edinburgh's influential review-essay, but the timing of Coleridge's notice made it also construable as a hastily improvised response to The Examiner itself. Indeed, Hazlitt had openly challenged Coleridge to such a response in his essay of the previous day. "Literary Notices. No. 6" begins with the point-blank assertion that "[a]lmost all that has been said or written upon [the Distresses] is a palpable delusion—an attempt to speak out and say nothing." Whether it be "Speeches in Parliament," the Edinburgh's reviews of them, or the "resolutions" of the Regent's designated charity Association, "[t]he great problem of our great problem-finders seems to be, to take nothing from the rich, and give it to the poor" (7: 103-4). Hazlitt then locates one obvious cause of the distresses in the expense of £900,000,000 on a war designed to restore "the Pope, the Inquisition, the Bourbons, and the doctrine of Divine Right," a war which he presents as an object-lesson in the difference between an economy based on "unproductive labour" and one based on "what the industry of man, left to itself, produces in time of peace for the benefit of man" (7: 106, 105). "This whole question," he goes on to observe with heavy irony, "which from its complexity puzzles many people, ... has given rise to a great deal of partly wilful and partly shallow

sophistry"—one example of which is "an article on this subject in Mr. Coleridge's *Friend*" (7: 106 and n).

With this challenge laid down, no doubt Hazlitt read Coleridge's advertisement the next day with considerable interest, and immediately conceived the idea of reviewing this new "Layman's Sermon on the Present Distresses of the Country" as soon as it was published "in a few days." But as the weeks passed and no sermon appeared, its announcement must have seemed with increasing irony to confirm, rather than belie, the claim that such interventions were "an attempt to speak out and say nothing," and "to take *nothing from the rich and give it to the poor.*" In each of his succeeding "Notices," then, Hazlitt attempts to provoke Coleridge into fulfilling his promise to speak out on the crisis. In "Literary Notices. No. 8," for example, he personifies "the other side" of the debate as "Mr. Burke, Mr. Coleridge, Mr. Vansittart, [and] *The Courier*" (7: 111). The following week, in his final article on "Speeches in Parliament" ("Literary Notices. No. 9"), he throws down an even more emphatic journalistic gauntlet, opening with a double epigraph from King Lear which he offers to Coleridge as an appropriate "text" for his competing intervention in the crisis:

——'Take physic, pomp;
Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,
That thou may'st shake the superflux to them,
And shew the Heavens more just.—*Lear.*

'Ha! here's three of us are sophisticated. Off, off, you lendings.'—*The same.*

We see Mr. Coleridge has advertised a Lay-Sermon on the

present situation in this country, *addressed to the higher and middle classes*. If he is at a loss for a text to his *Lay-Sermon*, with the proper mixture of divinity and humanity in it, he cannot do better than take the above two mottos from Shakespear. They are much at his service. (19: 151)¹⁶

Finally, at the conclusion of "Literary Notices. No. 10" (an extension of his earlier notice of Owen's "New View of Society"), Hazlitt announces his intention to review "*Mr. Coleridge's Lay-Sermon in our next*" (Examiner, 1 Sept 1816: 556). With this, Hazlitt may be said to challenge Coleridge one last time to publish his "Pamphlet" within the week. In so doing, however, he alerts his readers to the non-existence of the proposed review-text, and prepares them for a new venture in the already sensational art of the journalistic review.

The resulting "masterpiece[] of banter," first published as "Literary Notices. No. 11" on September 8, 1816, was first and foremost a "political essay," according to Hazlitt's own later re-classification of it. As such, and in tandem with the ongoing editorial analysis of the "National Distresses" in "The Political

¹⁶The epigraphs, of course, are equally appropriate to Hazlitt's own essay, epitomizing his "remedy" for the "Distresses," which is divided into four points, "as if we were writing a Lay-Sermon":

- I. To Take off One-fifth from all Incomes paid by the Public Amounting to above a Hundred a Year, or to Tax all such incomes One-fifth. [...]
 - II. To Strike off at once all Sinecures Great and Small, all Useless Places, and all Pensions whatever, not paid for Professional Services. [...]
 - III. To take off Ten Millions of Indirect and Ordinary Taxes on Consumption, Labour, Manufactures, &c, by Laying a Tax of 10 per cent. on all Real, that is, Permanent Property, above a Hundred-a-Year. [...]
 - IV. To give up as a bonus to the landed proprietor five millions of poor-rates ... by a direct government tax to that amount on sporting dogs, pleasure and coach-horses....
- (19: 151-56)

Examiner,"¹⁷ it was designed at once to expose the general inadequacy of ruling-class responses to the crisis, and to criticize in particular Coleridge's proposed intervention. On the one hand, then, by his overt association with the "Ministerial" politics of the Courier, Coleridge is presented in this essay as part of an overall threat to the agenda of progressive reform. On the other hand, and drawing on Hazlitt's own unusually detailed familiarity with Coleridge's previous political writings (catalogued here as "*the Friend*, the Preliminary Articles in the *Courier*, the *Watchman*, the *Conciones ad Populam*, [and] any of the other courtly or popular publications of the same author"), Coleridge's unique position within the debate is defined as "a politics turned—but not to account" (7: 115, 118).

Though the tactic of reviewing an unpublished work was clearly unprecedented, the rhetorical tone and strategy of the essay's political agenda were largely products of convention. From both sides of the debate, a typically heightened pitch of declamatory intensity was combined with a focus upon details of personal character and opinion designed to undermine the political, moral, and intellectual authority of the opponent (Gilmartin 92-93). Equally typical was the way the intensity of this focus often worked to transform individual particulars into ideological abstractions. In the following passage, for example, Hazlitt draws on Coleridge's most recent political writings (principally "*the Friend*, [and] the Preliminary Articles in the

¹⁷"National Distresses—Princely Donation of Lord Viscount Dudley and Ward," "The Political Examiner. No. 442" (Examiner 8 Sept 1816).

Courier) to paint a vivid picture of his Toryism:

[Mr. Coleridge] takes his notions of religion from the 'sublime piety' of Jordano Bruno, and considers a belief in a God as a very subordinate question to the worship of the Three Persons of the Trinity. The thirty-nine articles and St. Athanasius's creed are, upon the same principle, much more fundamental parts of the Christian religion than the miracles or gospel of Christ.... He highly approves of *ex-officio* informations and special juries, as the great bulwarks of the liberty of the press; taxes he holds to be a providential relief to the distresses of the people, and war to be a state of greater security than peace. He defines Jacobinism to be an abstract attachment to liberty, truth, and justice; and finding that this principle has been abused or carried to excess, he argues that Anti-jacobinism, or the abstract principles of despotism, superstition, and oppression, are the safe, sure, and undeniable remedy for the former, and the only means of restoring liberty, truth and justice in the world. (7: 115-6)

From foregrounding a suitably startling example of Coleridge's obscurantism in the reference to Bruno, Hazlitt moves in this passage with the certainty of any radical orator to the rhythmic and emphatic rehearsal of the by-words "liberty, truth, and justice." Similarly, the sheer repetition of the finger-pointing pronoun "he" (it recurs twenty-three times in the full paragraph) turns it too into something of an "abstract principle[]," its referent sliding imperceptibly from individualized political agent to one of the faceless enemies of reform who propagate "despotism, superstition, and oppression."

Yet against this typical polarizing movement lies the implication that in the sophisticated juggling of such "abstract principles" as "Jacobinism" and "Anti-jacobinism," Coleridge has

sacrificed meaningful political agency for the feeble evasions of the self-conscious apostate. Like the Laureate Southey, Coleridge has turned away from the republicanism of the 1790s to embrace the reactionary politics of the Regency court. Yet unlike Southey, whose Laureate odes and Quarterly essays guarantee him a measure of cultural authority, Coleridge's "powers," on his own admission, remain paradoxically "suspended":

He would have done better if he had known less. His imagination thus becomes metaphysical, his metaphysics fantastical, his wit heavy, his arguments light, his poetry prose, his prose poetry, his politics turned—but not to account. (7: 117-18)

Inevitably, then, a certain tension develops in Hazlitt's essay between the apparent need to pre-empt the political influence of Coleridge's pamphlet and the claim that Coleridge has effectively taken care of this himself: the apparent absurdity of his political ideas, based as they are on a "transposition of reason and common sense," has resulted in the "everlasting inconsequentiality [of] all that he attempts" (7: 116, 117). The non-appearance of the announced sermon thus becomes an apt metaphor for the spectacle of co-opted genius, of a "politics turned—but not to account."

At the rhetorical climax of this essay, then, we find once again that it is not so much an epiphany of Coleridge's present authority that is to be resisted as it is the loss of a former authority that is to be regretted, especially in face of a far more insidious threat to "liberty, truth, and justice":

We lose our patience when we think of the powers that [Mr. Coleridge] has wasted, and compare them and their success

with those, for instance, of such a fellow as the _____, all whose ideas, notions, apprehensions, comprehensions, feelings, virtues, genius, skill, are comprised in the two words which *Peachum* describes as necessary qualifications in his gang, 'To stand himself and bid others stand!' (7: 118)

Consistent with The Examiner's reputation for outspokenness, the article's most resounding verbal barrage is here discharged not against Coleridge, but against an unnameable source of coercive tyranny, presumably the unperturbed Regent himself. For in the midst of the country's economic destitution, and despite his nominal donation to the "Labouring Poor," it was the spendthrift Regent who, with all the unanswerable efficiency of *Peachum's* drunken highwayman (Gay 1.3), seemed to hold "taxes ... to be a providential relief to the distresses of the people."¹⁸ Thus in a brilliant because unexpected manoeuvre, this passage comes as close as possible to seditious libel by using Coleridge's suspended intellectual "powers" as a foil for the complete and utter negation of intellect to be found at the centre of applied political power. More than just angry regret, this loss of "patience" becomes a kind of strategic chafing under political restraints symbolized by the lacuna at the climax of the text. While this lacuna ironically parallels Coleridge's own apparent reluctance to commit himself to print—and is in fact a sign that the exercise of discursive resistance produces only the certainty of its containment—it nevertheless functions rhetorically to

¹⁸Howe annotates the lacuna as: "The poet-laureate?" (7: 380). Surely Gay's "*Tom. Tipple*," however, is a poor match for the upright Southey, and Hazlitt never shrunk from making his references to the Laureate quite explicit (7: 24-7; 168-209 *passim*).

foreground this containment by licensing an outburst that in its very excess flaunts the "powers" of the reformist press.

One of these powers, it seems, is that of allusiveness: the comic irruption of Peachum and his gang as the capstone to this phillipic is one sign of the convergence of "political" and "literary" discourse under pressure of the distresses, and a reminder in turn that this "political essay" appeared in The Examiner under the rubric of "Literary Notice." Though these two contexts were by now virtually inseparable, we may nevertheless discern in the second of these a focussing of the wider issues of ideological agency in a contest for the media of that agency. As a piece of review criticism rich in literary allusions, Hazlitt's article simultaneously challenges Coleridge's bid for discursive authority in a highly competitive marketplace, and promotes the ascendancy of review criticism itself as a medium of choice within the emergent "Reading Public." This is particularly evident in the article's pivotal opening sequence, where the literary tastes of The Examiner's projected readership are reconstructed in a rapid series of metaphorical allusions, beginning once again with a double epigraph:

—'Function

Is smother'd in surmise, and nothing is
But what is not.'

'Or in Franciscan think to pass disguis'd.'

THIS LAY-SERMON puts us in mind of Mahomet's coffin, which was suspended between heaven and earth, or of the flying island at Laputa, which hovered over the head of Gulliver. Or it is like the descent of the Cloven Tongues. (7: 114,

380)

From tragic drama to Oriental romance, from Christian epic to prose satire, these allusions project a commonality of reference and association among the literate middle-classes apparently limitless in its resources (suggested by the repeated "or") and yet safely centred in the key pronoun "us." With the epigraphs taken from Macbeth and Paradise Lost left unattributed, the literary accomplishments of those readers able to recognize them are subtly flattered at the same time that the sheer popularity of these works, and the corresponding cultural ascendancy of Shakespeare and Milton as national poets, lend an aura of indisputable authority to the article that follows. The entire passage addresses a reader sufficiently *au courant* with current opinion about Coleridge to decode the wit with which his new project is to be scrutinized; certainly readers of "Literary Notices, No. 1" would have no difficulty seeing in the epigraphs how the dawning of Macbeth's deranged ambition and the futile schemes of those lost to the Limbo of Vanity are here conjured up to reflect with withering irony on Coleridge's desire to exchange the mantle of the Gothic poet for the robes of the lay-divine. Meanwhile, the comic insubstantiality of the lay-sermon itself is suggested with a cluster of allusions to the iconography of popular prose in which the attractiveness of the products of the imagination is balanced by the stout refusal to be mystified by the forms of superstition or by parodies of self-evident truth. The governing norms of "reason and common sense" are skilfully evoked in the allusion to Swift, whose authority here helps to

align the witty judgments of review criticism with the iconoclastic tradition of English satire.¹⁹

The continuity of this satiric tradition within the practice of anonymous review criticism was strong enough to sustain and incorporate the startling moment of self-parody that occurs when this "Literary Notice" acknowledges it is about to review "a work, not a line of which is written, or ever likely to be written" (7: 114). Suddenly it is the "Function" of the review itself that is briefly "smother'd in surmise," and the otherwise tacit displacements of what Peacock was to call "Fashionable Literature" thrown into bold relief. Yet like the lacuna at the crux of its political argument, this absence of a review-text paradoxically affords the review an opportunity to exhibit the force of its hold over the public by co-opting its own subversion in a stunning excess of wit. The unavailability of Coleridge's new lay-sermon is thus transformed into a symbol of the general obscurantism of the conservative hegemony, while presenting itself for facetious analysis as part of Coleridge's individual strategy to create authority through the mystification of his genius: "he considers it the safest way to keep up the importance of his oracular communications, by letting them remain a profound secret both to himself and the world" (7: 114). .The enlightenment norms of

¹⁹McFarland finds Hazlitt's poetic allusions "remarkable for their frequency, for their inaccuracy, and for their irrelevance," part of an attempt on Hazlitt's part to compensate for a "lack of [university] education" (66-8). As my analysis here attempts to demonstrate, Hazlitt's allusions were, in this instance at least (and I would venture to maintain in much of his writing) not only relevant, but essential to his rhetorical strategy.

clarity and intelligibility can then be invoked to underwrite a review that becomes in effect a series of nimble variations on a single satiric conceit: "We see no sort of difference between [Mr. Coleridge's] published and his unpublished compositions. It is just as impossible to get at the meaning of the one as the other" (7: 114). The difficulty of having no text to review is thus fully elided by making the material unavailability of Coleridge's "unpublished compositions" a metaphor for the cognitive inaccessibility of his "published" ones. These writings are then pressed into service as legitimate referents for critical review.

Meanwhile, of course, the manifest availability of the "Literary Notice" in hand is the best proof of its normative superiority. It shows itself charged with a new and progressive form of authority that is a function of its relatively wide and rapid circulation,²⁰ its demotic appeal to the intellectual tastes and pretensions of a newly enfranchised readership, and (in this case) its uncanny adroitness in eclipsing the ideas—and even the writing—of the text under review. It is suggested, for example, that Coleridge has shrouded himself and his text in inaccessibility to ensure that "he may escape in a whole skin without being handled by the mob or uncased by the critics" (7: 114). The role of criticism in the literary marketplace is thus clearly identified with the sheer power—and violence—of

²⁰The Examiner cost 10d an issue, and to its circulation of approximately 3,500 copies could be added the extended readership of circulating libraries and shared subscriptions. Coleridge's Pamphlet, by contrast, was advertised at 1s 6d; the actual sales of The Statesman's Manual, when finally published, are unfortunately not available, though it did not reach a second edition.

anonymous urban numbers, a political force organised by the vigilance of its commercially elected spokespersons in "uncas[ing]" the nervous evasions of its politicians and the obfuscating "paradoxes of the learned" (7: 116). Moreover, any question of the ethics of review criticism is set aside in the following forthright proposition, which combines the trope of the honest wager with the impeccable procedures of scientific method:

Let the experiment be tried, and if, on committing the manuscript to the press, the author is caught in the fact of a single intelligible passage, we will be answerable for Mr. Coleridge's loss of character. (7: 115)

In one bold stroke, the judicial powers of review criticism are vaunted at the same time that their proper "answerab[ility]" is assured. For concealed in the hyperbolic flourish of this challenge is the ameliorative appeal of satire: Coleridge's "loss of character" on these terms could only involve the potential recovery of his authority with the public by rendering his "powers" accessible once more to its urgent needs.

In the meantime, of course, this statement functions as a disclaimer, authorizing an unfettered depiction of the public "character" Coleridge is thus challenged to lay aside. As might be expected, it is in this facet of the review that it moves well beyond the analytical and referential modalities of "political essay" and "Literary Notice" toward the performative gestures of a "masterpiece of banter" seeking literary notice in its own right. Here then we enter on a third discursive context, reflected in a textual practice which Hazlitt himself later described as combining the "two styles [of] the *literary* and the

conversational" (8: 333). Hazlitt's contestation of Coleridge's authority in this area, however, is much subtler than a mere "quizz" of eccentricity. As we shall see, in a remarkable coda he draws explicit attention to Coleridge's own extraordinary powers of "conversation," paying fulsome tribute to them as a kind of latter-day epiphany of the discursive sublime (7: 118). In so doing, however, he draws an implicit contrast between the ultimate "inconsequentiality" of this individual's "talk" and the potent cultural agency of "*conversational*" journalism: a newly textualized medium constructed from—and in turn constitutive of—the quotidian discourse of the bourgeois public sphere.²¹

As a discursive genre, Regency "banter" may be located on a diachronic scale between the early "wanton" and the later "good-humoured" forms of ridicule (OED), and synchronically between the aggressive raillery of the dandies and the semi-private, intellectual licence of "table-talk." At its most self-consciously "literary" it takes on the cosmological scope and energy of mock-epic:

Doubt succeeds to doubt, cloud rolls over cloud, one paradox is driven out by another still greater, in endless succession.... All [Mr. Coleridge's] notions are floating and unfixed, like what is feigned of the first forms of things flying about in search of bodies to attach themselves to; but *his* ideas seek to avoid all contact with solid substances. Innumerable evanescent thoughts dance before him, and dazzle his sight, like insects in the evening sun. (7: 116, 117)

²¹See Spacks for a provocative study of the important cultural function of "gossip," of which "banter" is one historically specific manifestation.

In an ironic reversal of satirist and "dunce," the newly empowered descendent of the Grub-street hack here draws on the influential precedent of The Dunciad, reinforcing his allusion stylistically by studding his prose with patterns of repetition and alliteration.

Elsewhere, mock-epic simile gives way to metaphors of identity as Coleridge is associated with various stock characters from Restoration Comedy: "He is the 'Secret Tattle' of the Press," "...an intellectual Mar-Plot" (7: 115). Such references suggest a bridge between the "literary" and the "conversational" elements of textualized "banter:" both these characters had appeared recently on stage as part of the continuing popularity of the comedy of manners among Regency theatre-goers (5: 270, 278). Clearly the staging of Restoration dialogue had a direct influence on the mordant exchanges of the Regency "refined," reflected here in the clustering of jests in seemingly inexhaustible appositional chains:²²

Through the whole of [his *Friend*], Mr. Coleridge appears in the character of the Unborn Doctor; the very Barmecide of knowledge; the Prince of preparatory authors! ... His mind is in a constant state of flux and reflux: he is like the Seahorse in the Ocean; he is the Man in the Moon, the Wandering Jew. (7: 115, 117)

The most sensational gestures of the review, however, are traceable to two non-literary precedents, both of which are particularly clear "refractions" of the physical violence in

²²See Jones 256-7 for an alternative account of Hazlitt's stylistic allusion in this passage. Noting his reading in Henry IV at this time, he describes this "stringing of satirical beads" as "verbally inventive vilification in the style of Falstaff."

society at large. On the one hand, such a line as "He is only saved from the extremities of absurdity by combining them all in his own person" is typical of the aggressive verbal posturing of the dandies, who were currently making fashionable the exchange of affronts as the quintessence of civility (7: 116; George 164).²³ On the other hand, the popularity of graphic caricature is reflected in such depictions as "His genius has angel's wings, but neither hands nor feet" (7: 117). Analogous to a Gillray or Cruikshank cartoon, the licence for distortion is here limited only by the need to convey a recognizable likeness. And finally, in perhaps the most fashionably transgressive stroke of this kind, Hazlitt reached into the settled iconography of so-called "vulgar" literature to remark: "Mr Shandy would have settled the question at once:— "You have little or no nose, Sir" (7: 117, 381).²⁴

²³George quotes a contemporary witness: The highest triumph of the English dandy is to appear with the most wooden manners ... and to contrive even his civilities so that they are as near as may be to affronts, ... to have the courage to offend against every restraint of decorum, ... [and] to treat his best friends if they cease to have the stamp of fashion, as if he did not know them, "to cut them" as the technical phrase goes (164).

²⁴In the only other remaining response to Hazlitt's preview, Charles Lamb refers to this line in a letter to William Wordsworth with a display of shock appropriate to the moral sensibility of his correspondent: "O horrible license beyond the old Comedy—" (224). With this, Lamb offers a very different and quite suggestive line of enquiry for the cultural and generic precedents of the public invective of the Regency. Certainly Hazlitt might have been flattered to think he was outdoing Aristophanes, if indeed he and Lamb had not already discussed this possibility. For in this same letter, after calling such writings as the present one Hazlitt's "violent strainings" he goes on to declare "I get no conversation in London that is absolutely worth attending to but his" (225). Meanwhile, with reference to Coleridge's proposed sermon, Lamb offers this telling commentary: [Coleridge has] left for publication as I hear a prodigious mass of composition for a Sermon to the middling ranks of people to persuade them they are not so distressed as is

The calculated excesses of this "quizzing" of Coleridge's public image are in turn justified within the moral and rhetorical norms of the satire by reference to his political apostasy, figured at the climax of the essay as an irredeemable fall from grace. Graphic distortions of "character" are thus warranted as reflections of an even more shocking spiritual ruination:

If [Mr. Coleridge] had had but common moral principle, that is, sincerity, he would have been a great man; nor hardly, as it is, appears to us—

'Less than arch-angel ruin'd, and the excess
Of glory obscur'd.' (7: 118)

By a seemingly inexorable process of exaggeration, the satiric subject becomes identified in these lines with nothing less than the character of Satan himself. Yet this resonant allusion to Paradise Lost leads directly into the fulminating loss of patience over the "wast[ing]" of Coleridge's "powers," and their subsequent comparison with those of the execrable "fellow." The combined effect is to leave Coleridge's "character"—in spite of its "glory obscur'd"—charged with something of the gothic grandeur of the first and greatest apostate, in sharp contrast to the bathetic importunity of Peachum's drunken functionary (Gay 1.3).

Though these images help to bring the political agenda of the essay to an emphatic conclusion, they nevertheless threaten the satiric aims of its "literary" and "conversational" elements with the remystification of autonomous genius. The final paragraph of the review therefore pursues an entirely different rhetorical and

commonly supposed. Methinks he should recite it to a congregation of Bilston Colliers,—the fate of Cinna the Poet would instantly be his. (224)

tonal strategy by turning to the figures of "Unitarian Romance" and to the ingenuous garrulity of "table-talk" (4: 52). This new tonal register answers to the task of conjuring Coleridge's own redoubtable capacity for "conversation," and this phenomenon in turn serves at once as generous evidence for his remaining "powers"—distant echoes of his unobscured "glory"—and as a final surrogate "text" for review at the tribunal of public opinion:

When his six friends, the six Irish gentlemen ... after an absence of several years, discovered their old acquaintance John Bunclé, sitting in a mixed company at Harrowgate Wells, they exclaimed with one accord—'There he is—making love to the finest woman in the universe!' So we may say at a venture of Mr. Coleridge—'There he is, at this instant (no matter where) talking away among his gossips, as if he were at the Court of Semiramis, with the Sophi or Prestor John.' The place can never reach the height of his argument. He should live in a world of enchantment, that things might answer to his descriptions. His talk would suit the miracle of the Conversion of Constantine, or Raphael's Assembly of the Just. It is not short of that. His face would cut no figure there, but his tongue would wag to some purpose. He is fit to take up the deep pauses of conversation between Cardinals and Angels—his cue would not be wanting in presence of the beatific vision. Let him talk on for ever in this world and the next; and both worlds will be better for it. But let him not write, or pretend to write, nonsense. Nobody is the better for it. (7: 118)

As another of his "unpublished compositions," Coleridge's "conversation" is here afforded favourable review precisely because it safely resists materialization as text. Moreover, the hyperbolic praise accorded these remaining "powers," along with the generous edict to exercise them freely, make all the more forceful the sudden, censorious injunction: "But let him not

write, or pretend to write, nonsense."

The authority of these gestures, however, is grounded in several important assumptions. One of these is that mere "talk" has no effective cultural agency; another is that the attempt to press the wagging "tongue" of conversation into print risks the production of nothing but "nonsense." At this point there arises another sharp moment of irony in this review, for this "masterpiece of banter" has itself just supplemented the gratuitous jests of a dandyesque "quizz" with the loquacious excess of "table-talk." As before, however, this glimpse of its own potential meaninglessness becomes an occasion for a redoubled display of its discursive power. As when the unbridled invective of the "political essay" was made possible only by eliding the name of its intended object, or when the quintessence of wit in a "literary notice" was reached only by exposing its own function to be essentially "floating and unfixed," so here the full imperative force of "public opinion" is felt only by effectively obscuring the possibility that its dictates are grounded not in universal standards of "taste" but in the mutable and often arbitrary ordinances of the "gossips." In the end, then, the persuasiveness of this passage depends on two further assumptions: first, that great cultural authority is available to the writer who can in fact reproduce the beguiling fluency of conversation in the relatively fixed medium of print; but second, that this translation is possible only by striving to produce "common sense" rather than "nonsense"—by striving, that is, to adjust the

accents of discourse to match the current consensus of "the town" rather than by calling down from the sublime "height[s]" of exploratory insight in the glossolalia of autonomous genius.

The Examiner, of course, had a writer on staff who could produce just such a translation. What is more, he did so swiftly enough to outpace Coleridge's ponderous homily by several crucial months, with the result that the dissenting reformer, the anonymous critic, and the journalistic "banterer" emerged at this point the unequivocal victor in this particular contest for cultural authority. For in each of the discursive contexts we have examined—political, literary, conversational—alacrity of response had become essential to the success of any intervention. In the political environment, for example, as rising class struggle pressured the formation of bourgeois ideology, the continued unavailability of Coleridge's pamphlet served only to confirm the apparent abstraction and even incapacity of the Tory intelligensia. Hazlitt's article, meanwhile, could take its place among a growing number of "political essays" from the pen of intellectual dissent declaiming the less and less subtle arts of "despotism, superstition, and oppression." Similarly, in the literary marketplace, as accelerated competition for readerships transformed the media of ideology, the absence of Coleridge's lay-sermon from the booksellers' shops could only have confirmed the effectiveness of the new legislative power of anonymous criticism, however much its use of the plural and the imperative was in ironic parody of the repressive dictates of Georgian "legitimacy." And as Coleridge continued to expend his energies in ineffable

drawing-room monologues, the newest mode of "conversational" journalism could survive its immediate consumption in the periodical press to become the focus of repeat performances—in this instance, to be read aloud at a dinner party one full month after its publication and there recognized as a "masterpiece of banter." As we shall see, even after the publication of The Statesman's Manual—an event which should have nullified the authority of this satiric preview—Hazlitt had no difficulty recuperating its value as a fitting preamble to his analytical sequel: "We have already given some account of this Sermon," begins "Literary Notices, No. 21" with brisk dispatch. "We have only to proceed to specimens in illustration of what we have said" (7: 119).

A more instructive epilogue to this particular episode, however, is to be found in the final version of this article as one of Hazlitt's Political Essays in 1819. As seen at the outset, the positive reception of "Literary Notices, No. 11" by the "Reading Public" was very much a function of a precise moment in British cultural history. Thus while its republication in book form represented an important renewal of its cultural agency, its participation in the various contexts of public discourse was significantly altered. The most important change on this occasion was the abandonment of the trope of anonymity. By 1819, Hazlitt had become "one of the ablest and most eloquent critics of [the] nation,"²⁵ and this new cultural authority encouraged him to

²⁵Quoted by Cook from The Morning Chronicle ("Introduction" xlvi).

refocus the politics of dissent, the prestige of criticism, and the appeal of communally constructed discourse in an alternative version of individualized—as opposed to collective—authorial agency. As a "political essay" then, freshly situated among his other ideologically engaged writings, and published by the outspoken radical William Hone just two days before the climactic massacre at "Peterloo," its intervention in the protracted crisis is now characterized by an ethos of personal courage rather than by a self-effacing enactment of the "intellect of the people" (7: 269). Hazlitt's new visibility in the literary marketplace, meanwhile, put him in the unaccustomed position of promoting the metaphysics of his own talent while sustaining the attacks of anonymous satire. Thus we find the following added footnote:

It may be proper to notice, that this article was written before the Discourse which it professes to criticize had appeared in print, or probably existed anywhere, but in repeated newspaper advertisements. (7: 114n)

In the phrase "professes to criticize," Hazlitt uncloaks the dissembling strategies of review criticism, while at the same time laying claim to the ingenuity with which he had once deployed them. Finally, in becoming similarly "answerable" for the more abrasive gestures of "banter," the ventriloquism of public opinion is now recast as the idiosyncrasy of a "personal" style. In his only revisions to the article, Hazlitt trims the most jagged edges of its wit, silently omitting the references to the "Cloven Tongues" and the Shandean "nose." The result is a subtle adjustment to the essay's overall tonality, one that suggests such

titles as Table Talk (1821) and The Plain Speaker (1826) in its counterpoise of the known and the anonymous, the voluble and the forthright.

Chapter Three

Preaching to the "Learned":

Coleridge's Statesman's Manual

By the time Coleridge's Statesman's Manual finally appeared in mid-December 1816, two events had dramatically transformed the socio-political landscape of Great Britain, and launched the "Distresses" crisis into an acute phase. First, William Cobbett's introduction in November of a cheap, two-penny version of his Political Register had succeeded in galvanizing virtually overnight a vast new reading audience among the labouring classes. As the radical Samuel Bamford records,

... the writings of William Cobbett suddenly became of great authority; they were read on nearly every cottage hearth in the manufacturing districts [of England and Scotland]. Their influence was speedily visible; he directed his readers to the true cause of their sufferings—misgovernment; and to its proper corrective—parliamentary reform. Riots soon became scarce.... (quoted in Evans 111)

Riots may have soon become scarce, but not before a second event, the "Spafields riot" of December 2, served to consolidate reactionary opinion, and to justify government repression of the movement for parliamentary reform. On this occasion, some 10,000 people had gathered at London's Spafields to hear the radical "Orator" Hunt report on a petition he had delivered to the Regent. In spite of his pleas for non-violence, however, governmental *agents provocateurs* incited a portion of the crowd to attack the

city, to loot gunshops, and to make a ramshackle attempt to storm "the Bank and the Tower."¹ This faint echo of 1789 was enough to re-open the question of political authority among middle-class intellectuals, and to prepare the way for one unequivocal answer to such a question—a bill to suspend Habeas Corpus as soon as Parliament resumed in January (Thompson 636).

The impact of these events is in turn registered in the revisions made by Coleridge and his publisher to the lay sermon project as it was re-announced on December 10, 1816:

This day is published, price 4s, sewed,
 THE STATESMAN'S MANUAL, or the Bible the best Guide to
 Political Skill and Foresight; a lay sermon addressed to the
 higher classes of society,

By. S. T. COLERIDGE, Esq.

In the press, by the same author, a second and third Lay sermon addressed to the middle and labouring classes, on the present distresses of the country. The three Tracts together will be so published as to make an uniform volume.

Printed for Gale and Fenner, Paternoster-row [etc.].
 ("Books Published This Day," Morning Chronicle 10 Dec 1816)²

In response to an escalating crisis, then, the mere "Pamphlet" advertised in August has now grown to become the first in a series of three full lay sermons, each one addressed to a different

¹"Riots in the Metropolis," Times 3 Dec 1816. For the most detailed historical account, see Thompson 633-36. The Spafields meetings of Nov 15 and Dec 2 were infiltrated by Castle, the government spy and agent provocateur, as was the committee to organize the Spitalfields weavers, who thus attended the meeting with plans in place to attack the Bank and the Tower (634). According to James Watson, who was arrested after the riot for looting gunshops, Hunt had attempted to pacify the meeting (635n).

²The same advertisement appeared again on December 25 and 27 in the Morning Chronicle and in the Times on December 27.

class-defined reading audience. In place of "THE DAY OF ADVERSITY" is a new title that clarifies Coleridge's approach to the question of political authority: his first sermon is now addressed only to the *de facto* rulers of society—"the higher classes"—and locates the ground of their authority in the "Political Skill and Foresight" pre-eminently available in the Bible, or "Statesman's Manual." Meanwhile, the impact of Cobbett's two-penny Register on the literary marketplace is observable here in the new distinction between a "middle class" and a "labouring class" reading audience, and in the replacement of charity with discourse—the original concept of donating "the Profits of this Pamphlet" to the "Manufacturing and Labouring Poor" has here given way to a third lay sermon. Moreover, where the price and quality of the text in hand has risen from 1s, 6d to "4s, sewed," a further advertisement on the back wrapper of The Statesman's Manual announces that the third sermon in the series will be "Printed in a cheap Form for Distribution" with the motto "The Poor have the Gospel preached unto them" (White, Editor's Introduction xxxi). Thus, both commercially and generically, this final lay sermon offers a challenge to both Cobbett and Hunt, projecting at once a religious tract to compete with the vast "Distribution" of Cobbett's two-penny Register, and something of an open-air Methodist sermon to match the rising authority of "Orator" Hunt among the labouring classes.

Coleridge was not alone in this new pattern of response to

the multiple uncertainties of the discursive environment. Hazlitt too, in contesting The Statesman's Manual after its publication, addresses a single message to divergent readerships in diverse discursive modes. We saw at the outset, for example, the epistolary review signed "SEMPER EGO AUDITOR," in which Hazlitt challenges this first lay sermon in the persona of a "man of a plain, dull, dry understanding" who, like Cobbett's radical readers, experiences an awakening to activism as he contemplates the apparent apostasy of a former Bristol republican and Unitarian preacher (7: 128-9). Meanwhile, just two weeks after the appearance of the advertisement above, Hazlitt published a detailed analysis of The Statesman's Manual in the "Literary Notices" column of The Examiner, quoting generously from both Coleridge's sermon and the Bible itself to produce a kind of dissenting counter-sermon in the pages of a Sunday weekly political journal (7: 119-28). In so doing, Hazlitt ironically redirects portions of a text addressed exclusively to "the higher classes of society" to the middle- and lower-middle-class readers of The Examiner. Finally, for the Edinburgh Review he composed a full-length review-essay in which he actually confronts The Statesman's Manual among its intended readership, making use of his position within Francis Jeffrey's stable of anonymous critics to address a reading audience that lay in significant part among "the higher classes of society" (16: 99-114). As we shall see, in searching out an appropriate discursive mode for this essay, he

strives on the one hand to match Jeffrey's own series of magisterial strictures against "the Lake School," while on the other hand creating a worthy successor to Moore's ribald "quizz" of the Christabel volume that had appeared in the immediately previous edition of the Edinburgh. Ironically, of course, the very decision to review The Statesman's Manual in the pages of the Edinburgh contains an implicit acknowledgement of its significance as a contribution to public debate, and however harshly its authority is refused by both Hazlitt and Jeffrey, Coleridge's first lay sermon is thus brought to the attention of the largest single readership among the ruling classes—including many among the "higher classes" who might otherwise have passed it by.

Indeed the The Statesman's Manual represents one of Coleridge's most determined bids for cultural authority, a forceful restatement of many of the ideas introduced in his little-read Friend (1808-10), and one that at the same time looks forward to another major work inspired by the issue of parliamentary reform, On the Constitution of Church and State (1830). Yet this text has always remained on the outer margins of the Coleridgean canon, and is rarely read in its entirety. Quietly understood to be "polemical, extreme, and frequently absurd,"³ it has been decorously abstracted by literary

³Butler 90. See also McVeigh: "Of all Coleridge's prose works, perhaps The Statesman's Manual ... has been treated the most lightly. [...] Today, to those aware of its existence at all, [it] has often seemed faintly absurd, its very title suggesting a quaint self-parody of Coleridge's prosy middle-age..." (87).

historians from the highly politicized circumstances in which it was composed, and delivered to posterity via the distorting metonymy of selective quotation, a text valued primarily for the passage in which Coleridge makes his famous distinction between "symbol" and "allegory."⁴ More recently, however, cultural historians have begun to reconsider this lay sermon in its original form and context, and to hold it up as crucial to an understanding of the changes taking place at this time in political ideology, in the formation of British reading audiences, and in the role played by genre and style in these processes. Jerome McGann, for one, begins his "critical investigation" of The Romantic Ideology with several lengthy (and previously unfamiliar) quotations from The Statesman's Manual, noting that Coleridge's ideas on "the concept of ideology, [and] its relevance to the works of Romanticism" are "trenchant and, in certain respects normative to this day in certain lines of critical thought" (3-4). This first lay sermon, he notes, is founded on an understanding of "the necessary interdependence of knowledge and belief" (4). Knowledge must be grounded in "ultimate principles," Coleridge insists, "while every principle is actualized by an idea, and every idea is living, productive ... and ... containeth an endless power of semination" (6: 23-4, McGann 4). Thus, for McGann,

Coleridge's position is a defense of what we would now call "ideology," that is, a coherent or loosely organized set of

⁴A good recent example is Hodgson's subtle deconstructive analysis of this passage alone in a chapter entitled "Coleridge's Rhetoric of Allegory and Symbol" (4-10).

ideas which is the expression of the special interests of some class or social group. [...] From a Marxist perspective, Coleridge's views are praiseworthy in so far as they argue that knowledge is a social rather than an abstract pursuit. But because his position is a conceptualist-idealist defense of Church, State, and the class interests which those institutions support and defend, Coleridge's ideas are, in a Marxist view, clearly deplorable. (McGann 5)

Nevertheless, McGann goes on to note, their relevance to cultural history is indisputable: "From Mill and Arnold to Mannheim, Trilling, and their successors, theories of ideology were reproduced which can be traced back to the models developed by Coleridge (and his German counterpart Hegel)" (7).

Meanwhile, certain key passages of The Statesman's Manual run like a leitmotif throughout Jon Klancher's seminal study The Making of English Reading Audiences, 1790-1832. Klancher identifies "the twelve months between November 1816 and October 1817" as a pivotal moment in the process of British audience-formation, because during this brief period, such texts as Cobbett's two-penny Register, Coleridge's Statesman's Manual, and William Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine helped fundamentally "to crystallize the tension between modes of reading prefigured in the 1790s" (48). This resulted in the formation of what Klancher identifies as "middle-class," "mass," and "radical" reading audiences, and eventually—beginning with Coleridge's critique of the "Reading Public" in The Statesman's Manual—in the projection of an "institutional audience" Coleridge would later name "the

clerisy" in Church and State (Klancher 17). The Statesman's Manual prefigures this idea by addressing itself not only to "the higher classes" on the title-page, but also to "THE LEARNED," or "*ad clerum*," in the body of the sermon (6: 49, 36). Klancher is particularly interested in the way Coleridge must distinguish this readership from others forming at the same time outside the criteria of "*sound book learnedness*" (6: 39), in particular the amorphous "READING PUBLIC" which "diet[s]" (in Coleridge's terms of disgust) at "the two public *ordinaries* of Literature, the circulating libraries and the periodical press" (6: 38). Klancher comments,

In The Statesman's Manual, Coleridge decrie[s] the "luxuriant misgrowth" of a middle-class audience, but his diagnosis was by no means clear to even his most attentive readers. When Hazlitt, writing for the Edinburgh Review, read Coleridge's complaint—"I would that the greater part of our publications could be thus *directed*, each to its appropriate class of readers"—he queried in a footnote: "Do not publications generally find their way there, without a *direction*?" The Edinburgh's reviewer can scarcely imagine the phantasm of a mass, chaotic, alien public Coleridge called the "promiscuous audience." Coleridge directed his own sermons *ad populum* or *ad clerum*, but between the populace and the learned, an amorphous middle class had become readers of the great public journals.... (Klancher 47)

In 1816, then, still many years before he had fully formulated the idea of the "clerisy" in Church and State, Coleridge can only "gaz[e] unhappily at this emerging discursive event" and "revert[]" to the stance of a preacher, sermonizing against the world of reading and writing coming into visible form" (Klancher 48).

Yet, as Marilyn Butler recognizes, it was precisely Coleridge's sermonizing in this case that succeeded in carving out the audience he desired. The lay sermons, she notes, "first provoked the hostility of young liberal intellectuals, and then more slowly helped to lay the foundation for Coleridge's influence on the next generation" (90). For, "[b]y the 1820s, the religious revival for which Coleridge was calling had come, led as he wished by the upper orders," and it was the genre and style of such works as The Statesman's Manual, as much as their specific content, that guaranteed Coleridge's position as one of the central ideologues of the movement (90). In Butler's view,

Coleridge meant to use his writings to find out an élite, and to help remould it in better accordance with his ideal. The style of his writing helped him to his audience, since the strangely specialized tone made a kind of compact with the reader, flatteringly promoting him to membership among the elect. [...] Coleridge is surely the first example, in England at least, of the sage who turns himself into a cult-figure for the next student-generation. (91)

As we shall see, one feature of this style, ultimately crucial to his exposition of the leading ideas in The Statesman's Manual, is what Butler names "the barely controlled, inspirational flight," the lyric turn that links the political homilist and cultural commentator with the poet of romantic fragments (92).

Taken together, then, these studies of McGann, Klancher, and Butler show The Statesman's Manual to be crucially engaged within each of the discursive environments identified in the present study. What remains for our purposes is to examine this text

further in these terms while resituating it as a specific intervention in the "Distresses" controversy. Coleridge himself facilitates this task by developing in his sermon a series of personae corresponding to the three contexts respectively of political debate, of readership formation, and of generic struggle. For the first of these he takes on the role of the latter-day poet-prophet, who, like the "Hebrew legislator, and the other inspired poets, prophets, historians and moralists of the Jewish church," issues a "threatening call to repentance," and a new paradigm for the true "*spirit and credentials of a Law-giver*" (6: 17, 10, 42). In the second, he warrants his specific appeal to a readership of "THE LEARNED" by positioning himself as the "recluse genius" whose role is quietly to shape "the rise and fall of metaphysical systems" (6: 14-15). And for the third, he invokes the presence of "the gladdened preacher," who, in passages of resonant lyrical prose, "speak[s] under the influence of Love," inspired by a "genuine enthusiasm" that his reader/hearers are meant to distinguish, by stylistic and generic signs, from texts inspired only by the opposing "enthusiasm of wickedness" (6: 92, 23).

The extravagance of these gestures may once again be understood as a function of the general intensification of discourse under pressure of the "Distresses" crisis. And from the first, Coleridge's lay sermon project as a whole was intended primarily as a political intervention in this moment of crisis.

In this first context, however, by addressing his opening lay sermon exclusively to "the higher classes of society," Coleridge's rhetorical position may be seen as ironically analogous to the petitions of the labouring poor generated by such events as the Spafields meetings. Like them, The Statesman's Manual is directed upwards toward the ruling élite, and like them too, it mingles the requisite deference of the humble petitioner with the bold assurance that comes from consciousness of possessing a superior, if clearly unofficial, authority. This is most evident in the "motto" of the work, which Coleridge does not take from Lear (as Hazlitt suggested), but rather from the untranslated Latin of Giordano Bruno (as Hazlitt predicted):

[Tr:] "I beg you, pay attention to these things, however they appear at first sight, in order that, though you perhaps may think me mad, you may at least discover the rational principles behind my madness" (6: 3, 4n)

Unlike the Spafields petitioners, however, the apparent "madness" which the higher classes must condescend on this occasion to overlook is not that of manhood suffrage or the immediate abolition of sinecures. By contrast, part of Coleridge's deferential strategy in the sermon that follows is to avoid direct reference to the specific, practical issues of the crisis: "In this time of distress and embarrassment," he notes with a bow, to "touch on the present state of public affairs in this kingdom" would be to "tread on glowing embers" (6: 46, 33). Instead, the apparent "madness" of his appeal is aligned with that of the

archetypal prophet, whose role is to issue a harsh, if timely warning from the margins of society, and whose "rational principles" in this case consist in locating the ground and source of all political authority in "the acts and constitutions of God, whose law executeth itself, and whose Word is the foundation, the power, and the life of the universe" (6: 7).

This, of course, was no more welcome a message among the higher classes than demands for immediate political reform from the working class, despite the gentry's nominal adherence to the tenets of the Established Church. The ascendancy of enlightenment rationalism, and with it the swift inroads of the "higher criticism" of the Bible, had done much to erode the cultural authority of "Holy Writ" in general, let alone its specific value as a "guide to political skill and foresight" among the nation's policy-makers (6: 5, 3).⁵ Thus what Coleridge refers to as "the orthodox philosophy of the last hundred years" he also decries as "that atheistic philosophy, which in France transvenomed the natural thirst of truth into the hydrophobia of a wild and homeless scepticism" (6: 108, 22). Indeed, Coleridge does not hesitate to identify the rationalist orthodoxy as "the Spirit of Anti-christ" (6: 22), arising first in the "disguised and decorous epicureanism" of the empiricist Locke (6: 108) and then epitomized in the "heartless sophist" Hume (6: 22), an orthodoxy which in turn animates the false prophets of the age, "the critical benches

⁵On the "higher" or "historical criticism" of the Bible at this time, see McGann 5-6, and Prickett *passim*.

of infidelity" that Coleridge names as his direct opponents in the press (6: 17). Doubtless he has in mind such political journals as The Examiner, and even such articles as Hazlitt's own on the "Distresses of the Country," when he characterizes these competing authorities as "the dark hints and open revilings of our self-inspired state fortune-tellers, 'the wizards, that peep and mutter,'" who are "alarmists by trade, and malcontents for their bread" (6: 7).

Invoking this archetypal struggle between true and false prophecy, Coleridge has the advantage of aligning himself with the "permanent prophecies" and "eternal truths" of the Bible, in opposition to the "wizards" and "champions ... of Baal" (6: 7, 111). Yet to do so with sufficient vigour in the emergency of the "distresses," he must supplement the provisional interpretative authority allowed by Protestantism to the lay preacher with the more controversial agency of the self-appointed (if not "self-inspired") poet-prophet. Moreover, Coleridge was struggling at this time with a public persona that gave him rather more notoriety than authority as the poet of Christabel and "Kubla Khan." Yet continuity of purpose allows him to situate his present work in a line of cultural authority that extends from the Biblical writers through Milton to the present day:

Recent occurrences have given additional strength and fresh force to our sage poet's eulogy on the Jewish prophets:

As men divinely taught and better teaching
The solid rules of civil government ...
In them is plainest taught and easiest learnt

What makes a nation happy and keeps it so,
 What ruins a kingdom and lays cities flat.

PARADISE REGAINED, iv. 354. (6: 8)

For both Milton and Coleridge, the "Jewish prophets" present an indisputable paradigm for the cultural authority of those writers who, regardless of their social class, believe themselves "divinely taught," and who are therefore in a position to instruct their temporal rulers in "[t]he solid rules of civil government." Such a role also suggests an authority that is in no way diminished by the possibility that the prophet in question may end up being thought "mad"—particularly if his emphasis falls too threateningly on "[w]hat ruins a kingdom and lays cities flat."

In the immediate context of the "Distresses," and of the Spafields riot in particular, Coleridge's prophetic task then is two-fold. First, he must remind the rulers of Britain that "what makes a nation happy and keeps it so" is contained pre-eminently in the Scriptures, for "in the Scriptures alone is the *Jus Divinum*, or direct Relation of the State and its Magistracy to the Supreme Being, taught as an indispensable part of all moral and all political wisdom" (6: 10, 33). Second, he issues the warning that what "ruins a kingdom and lays cities flat" is precisely the neglect of Scriptural wisdom in favour of "that atheistic philosophy" which, in political terms, issues inevitably in Jacobinism. It is here, perhaps, that Coleridge's political homily would have its most cogent appeal among "the higher classes." Jacobinism is described as a

... *monstrum hybridum*, made up in part of despotism, and in part abstract reason misapplied to objects that belong entirely to experience and understanding. [...] In all places, Jacobinism betrays its mixt parentage and nature, by applying to the brute passions and physical force of the multitude (that is, to man as a mere animal,) in order to build up government and the frame of society on natural rights instead of social privileges, on the universals of abstract reason instead of positive institutions, the lights of specific experience, and the modifications of existing circumstances. (6: 63-4)

By implication, then, any current threat to the "positive institutions" of government mounted by the (false) agents of reform must be resisted as forcefully as the war against Napoleonic France. In particular, "the majestic Temple of the British Constitution" is beyond any need for immediate transformation, least of all by "the brute passions and physical force" of such multitudes as those gathering regularly at Spafields, because it has been clearly "perfect[ed] and secure[d]" by the "especial controul of Providence" (6: 109)—a divine favoritism most recently proven by Britain's victory over the "madhouse of jacobinism," and by the correspondingly "fearful chastisement of France" (6: 109, 33).

It is this evidence of a "providential counterpoise" to the "Spirit of Antichrist" in Britain that underlies Coleridge's principle assertion that the Bible is "the Best Guide to Political Skill and Foresight," and that it should be regarded by the higher classes as "the Statesman's Manual" of first resource. After all, Coleridge points out,

[t]he humblest and least educated of our countrymen must have wilfully neglected the inestimable privileges secured to all alike, if he has not found, if he has not from his own personal experience discovered, the sufficiency of the Scriptures in all knowledge requisite for a right performance of his duty as a man and as a christian. Of the labouring classes, who in all countries form the great majority of inhabitants, more than this is not demanded, more than this is not perhaps generally desireable [*sic*]— 'They are not sought for in public counsel, nor need they be found where politic sentences are spoken. —It is enough if every one is wise in the working of his own craft: so best will they maintain the state of the world.' (6: 7)

The reading of the Bible, then, is among the "privileges secured to all alike" by British Protestantism, and therefore especially incumbent upon the higher classes. Yet we note that for "the labouring classes ... more than this is not perhaps generally desirable." Political authority is here said to reside in the ability to speak "politic sentences," which, by virtue of another, un-named set of differential privileges, is not among the "craft[s]" assigned by Providence to the "least educated of our countrymen."⁶ By contrast, among those whose work is statecraft—among "men moving in the higher classes of society" (6: 7)—the Scriptures operate in an entirely different way to "maintain the state of the world." Coleridge calls upon the gentry to "contemplate the ANCIENT OF DAYS" because "this, most of

⁶On the general issue of literacy, Coleridge does advocate elsewhere in the sermon for a comprehensive system of national education—if only because "the inconveniences that have arisen from a thing's having become too general, are best removed by making it universal" (6: 39–40)

all things, will raise you above the mass of mankind, and therefore will best entitle and qualify you to guide and controul them!" (6: 25).

The Bible thus teaches different things to different classes of society, differences that are at least in part explained as a matter of textual emphasis. In this sermon, for example, Coleridge lays his greatest emphasis on the Old Testament in proving the Bible to be The Statesman's Manual, as opposed to "the gospel" that he proposes to "preach unto [the poor]" in his third lay sermon. While of course the New Testament also remains applicable to the higher classes—offering them the ironically reassuring prospect of "a kingdom that is not of this world, thrones that cannot be shaken, and scepters that cannot be broken or transferred" (6: 8)—it is the Old Testament that at this juncture offers them much more practical "instruction" in

... the paths by which Providence has led the kingdoms of *this* world through the valley of mortal life—Paths, engraved with the foot-marks of captains sent forth from the God of Armies! Nations in whose guidance or chastisement the arm of Omnipotence itself was made bare. (6: 8)

Clearly Britain and France are meant to be numbered among the modern equivalents of such "Nations"—the one with a Constitution secured by "Providence," and the other still smarting from the "fearful chastisement" that inevitably followed its "revolution" (6: 33). By far the most important lesson to be learned from the Old Testament by the statesmen of such nations is that this "Providence" is the sign of the inexorable authority of the law of

God, "the *Jus Divinum*, or direct Relation of the State and its Magistracy to the Supreme Being" (6: 33).

Yet in order to establish the pre-eminence of the Bible as a practical manual for statesmen, Coleridge must carefully balance the doctrinal assertion of its utter uniqueness as revelation—its "especial claims to divine authority"—with the reassurance that this source of authority remains permanently available to those who would aspire to re-enact the "*Jus Divinum*" in early nineteenth-century Britain. And it is this crucial link between revelation and political authority that lies at the heart of what Coleridge defines as "*the credentials of a Law-giver.*" On the one hand, we are reminded that "the Hebrew legislator and the other inspired poets, prophets, historians and moralists of the Jewish church" have an "immense advantage[] in their favor" over modern writers on political philosophy. This "advantage" consists in the fact that

... their particular rules and prescripts flow directly and visibly from universal principles, as from a fountain: they flow from principles and ideas that are not so properly said to be confirmed by reason as to be reason itself! Principles, in act and procession, disjoined from which, and from the emotions that inevitably accompany the actual intuition of their truth, the widest maxims of prudence are like arms without hearts, and muscles without nerves. (6: 17)

The unique authority of the Bible is thus grounded in the fact that, unlike the "maxims" of rational skepticism, its "rules and prescripts flow directly and visibly from universal principles." Yet such principles, on account of their very universality, must

on the other hand remain available at all times to an "actual intuition of their truth." Thus in Coleridge's most far-reaching definition of political authority, the "intuition" of "universal principles" is equated to the possession of *a priori* ideas—in defiance of Lockean empiricism—and presented as one of the foremost qualifications of statesmanship:

The first man, on whom the Light of an IDEA dawned, did in that same moment receive the spirit and credentials of a Law-giver: and as long as man shall exist, so long will the possession of that antecedent knowledge (the maker and master of all profitable Experience) which exists in the power of an Idea, be the one lawful qualification of all Dominion in the world of the senses. (6: 42-3)

In terms of the overt rhetorical aims of The Statesman's Manual, this definition of the "*spirit and credentials of a Law-giver*" represents the culmination of Coleridge's ideal of Biblically-informed statesmanship among the "higher classes of Society," linking political with ideological authority, legislative power with a certain quality or capacity of mind, and "Dominion in the world of the senses" with "the possession of that antecedent knowledge" that comes from contemplation and recognition of those "ideas and principles" revealed in the Scriptures generally, and in Old Testament history in particular.

At the same time, however, in this very convergence of political with ideological authority, and in the noticeable elision here of the categories of social class set up elsewhere in his text, Coleridge produces a definition of the ideal "Law-giver"

that radically exceeds the overt rhetorical premises of The Statesman's Manual. If legislative power is indeed contingent, not upon rank, inheritance, or even election, but rather upon powers of cognition and the consequent possession of "IDEA[S]," then Coleridge proposes a model of cultural authority based not upon class but upon an alternative hierarchy of intellect and erudition. Moreover, in his use of a philosophical vocabulary at once recondite and avant-garde to frame such a definition of authority, the tone of deference appropriate to the lay-petitioner of inferior rank modulates here into the more "imperative and oracular" mode of an author conscious of possessing precisely the sort of authority that is being defined (6: 18). If "the one lawful qualification of all Dominion in the world of the senses" is the possession of "that antecedent knowledge ... which exists only in the power of an *Idea*," then any author able to discern and to declare the truth of such a "qualification"—indeed to legislate it—must already possess this "power" and must therefore share in some sense "*the spirit and credentials of a Law-giver.*"

In such a passage, then, Coleridge's concern to clarify the sources of political authority vested in the *de facto* "Law-givers" of Britain among the higher classes of society shifts toward the equally important task of defining the sort of authority by which he himself intervenes in public debate to address such an audience. To supplement the Biblical role of the prophet, then, Coleridge adopts a second persona of the "recluse

genius" (6: 14), whose "visions" are accessible only to the intellectual—as opposed to socio-political—élite of "THE LEARNED" (6: 49). Like his definition of "*the spirit and credentials of the Law-giver*," Coleridge's definition of this role is polemical, in that it implies a fundamental relocation of the grounds of cultural authority away from the traditional categories of social class toward a new and rapidly evolving social hierarchy based on literacy, education, and intellectual capacity. One of the important advantages of Biblical history, Coleridge notes, is the way it "balances the important influence of individual Minds with the previous state of national morals and manners" (6: 28). In similar fashion, Coleridge boldly traces "the true proximate cause" of "national events," not "to particular persons" among "the great," as his readers among the higher classes might naturally have supposed, nor "to the errors of one man, [and] to the intrigues of the other [among] the cabinets of statesmen," but rather to those minds more fundamentally able to influence "the predominant state of public opinion" and "the scheme or mode of thinking in vogue" (6: 13-4). Such minds are not, of course, to be found among the anonymous "*wizards that peep and mutter*" on behalf of the various organs of public opinion (6: 7). Rather, they are to be found in "the closets and lonely walks of uninterested theorists ... in the visions of recluse genius" (6: 14-15). Precisely because of their lack of recognition, such minds have in the end a prodigious influence on cultural history:

... all the *epoch-forming* Revolutions of the Christian world,

the revolutions of religion and with them the civil, social, and domestic habits of the nations concerned, have coincided with the rise and fall of metaphysical systems. So few are the minds that really govern the machine of society, and so incomparably more numerous and more important are the indirect consequences of things than their foreseen and direct effects. (6: 14-15)

This, then, is the model of cultural authority that lies at the basis of Coleridge's intervention in public debate. It is the men "*on whom the Light of an IDEA [has] dawned*" that are in a position to determine "the rise and fall of metaphysical systems." These are the "uninterested theorists" who, through a combination of intellect and "*sound book learnedness,*" are in a position to exercise ideological authority by legislating those meanings within a culture that ultimately determine or transform "the speculative principles ... or mode of thinking" (6: 14) operative at a given moment in cultural history. And in the fierce opposition Coleridge sets up between what he calls "the mechanical philosophy" of empirical rationalism and his own unique synthesis of Biblical, neo-Platonic, and German romantic transcendentalism, it gradually emerges that one of the fundamental aims of The Statesman's Manual is to initiate nothing less than a counter-revolution in British philosophy.

It is with this goal in mind that, midway through his sermon, Coleridge unexpectedly re-addresses his text to a reading audience more likely to be in a position to decode and to appreciate the authority of his philosophical "visions." This occurs in the

midst of the crucial passage cited frequently by Klancher for its distinction between a text addressed "exclusively *ad clerum*" (or "to men of *clerkly* acquirements") and one addressed indiscriminately to that "promiscuous audience," the "READING PUBLIC" (6: 36). The historically relevant self-consciousness of this distinction is further heightened by a moment of confusion in the passage itself (quoted in full below), where Coleridge notes that his specific appeal to an audience of "*clerkly*" readers appears in the very title-page of the sermon. As Hazlitt was later to remark, "All that we know is, that there is no such title-page to our copy" (7: 124). In a private letter at this time, Coleridge claims he "directed" the title-page to read "to the Learned and Reflecting of all Ranks and Professions, especially among the Higher Class" (Letters 695). Yet he subsequently emended only one of the extant copies of the book to this effect, which suggests that this crucial alteration of his intended readership came too late to be communicated clearly to his publisher.⁷ The effect of the confusion created by all

⁷White, Editor's Introduction xxxi, xxxin; Coburn 6: 4n. Coleridge emends the title-page of Copy L to read "Addressed to the Higher Class of Society, but more particularly to the Learned," and then notes in the margin of this emended copy, "So it was ordered to be printed, and so, I believe it was advertised" (6: 4n). Yet the advertisement in the Times, as we have seen, contained no such late revision, though it appeared a full three weeks after Coleridge was aware of the necessary changes. It is significant that in his "Editor's Introduction," White seems to accept Coleridge's belief "that the work had been advertised, as an address not merely to the higher classes, 'but more particularly to the Learned,'" thus implicitly laying blame on those, like Hazlitt, who had read the advertisement but nevertheless went ahead and "made merry over C's claim" in the

this, however, is simply to draw more attention to the change itself. This passage, then, is worth quoting at length, for it represents Coleridge's most overt, as well as his most controversial, reflections on the literary marketplace and the projected place of his text within it:

When I named this Essay a Sermon, I sought to prepare the inquirers after it for the absence of all the usual softenings suggested by worldly prudence, of all compromise between truth and courtesy. But not even as a Sermon would I have addressed the present Discourse to a promiscuous audience; and for this reason I likewise announced it in the title-page, as exclusively *ad clerum*; i.e. (in the old and wide sense of the word) to men of *clerkly* acquirements, of whatever profession. I would that the greater part of our publications could be thus *directed*, each to its appropriate class of Readers. But this cannot be! For among other odd burs and kecksies, the misgrowth of our luxuriant activity, we have now a READING PUBLIC—as strange a phrase, methinks, as ever forced a splenetic smile on the staid countenance of Meditation; and yet no fiction! For our Readers have, in good truth, multiplied exceedingly, and have waxed proud. It would require the intrepid accuracy of a Colquhoun⁸ to venture at the precise number of that vast company only, whose heads and hearts are dieted at the two public *ordinaries* of Literature, the circulating libraries and the periodical press. But what is the result? Does the inward man thrive on this regime? Alas! if the average health of the consumers may be judged of by the articles of largest consumption; if the secretions may be conjectured from the ingredients of the dishes that are found best suited to their

text (xxxii, n). Here again, however, White has neglected to consult the advertisement itself.

⁸Patrick Colquhoun, as White notes, was well known as both a metropolitan police magistrate and a collector of statistics, having most recently published A Treatise on the Wealth, Power, and Resources, of the British Empire, in Every Quarter of the World (1814) (6: 38n).

palates; from all that I have seen, either of the banquet or the guests, I shall utter my *Profaccia* with a desponding sigh. From a popular philosophy and a philosophic populace, Good Sense deliver us! (6: 36)

Coleridge's recourse to wit in this passage comes in striking contrast to the "staid," portentous tone struck in the earlier parts of the sermon. Yet this forcing of a "splenetic smile" serves to define even more narrowly the audience of "clerkly" readers Coleridge hopes will join with him in his desponding "*Profaccia*." This, clearly, will be an audience that will not only revel in the rolling, parenthetical periods and orotund, latinate diction, but will share his vigorous rejection of the very possibility of a "popular philosophy" with a distaste that mingles Malthusian horror at the prospect of readers "multipli[ying] exceedingly" with patrician contempt at the temerity of such a "misgrowth" to "wax[] proud."

Yet, as Klancher makes clear, it is not just William Cobbett's upstart readers among the labouring classes that Coleridge satirizes here. Klancher distinguishes between Cobbett's "radical" readership and two others he names "mass" and "middle-class" respectively, and it is these latter two that Coleridge conflates in the derisive phrase, "READING PUBLIC."⁹ The nascent "mass" audience was characterized, in Klancher's view, by a fascination with commodities (in which "social relations take

⁹Coleridge adds a bantering footnote to this term (later quoted by Hazlitt; see Chapter 4, page 178-9 below) which depicts the reading public as uniformly witless and uneducated (6: 36-38n).

on 'the fantastic form of relations between things' [49]), while the newly self-aware "middle-class" audience is characterized by a new and widening gap between the literate consumer of periodicals on the one hand, and "a corporate, collective 'author' institutionally set apart from its readers" on the other (48). Coleridge thus correctly identifies in this larger "READING PUBLIC" a common denominator of "consumption," deploying this now-familiar metaphor to witty effect by following it through, with Swiftian zest, to its conjectured "secretions."

We note, however, that it is ultimately not the "guests," but the "banquet" that most concerns Coleridge here, not the "vast company" newly delivered by literacy to the "two public *ordinaries* of Literature," but the "*ordinaries*" themselves—"the dishes that are found best suited to their palates," and, among these, "the articles of largest consumption." For these latter are Coleridge's direct opponents, both ideologically and commercially, in an urgent struggle over the "heads and hearts" of British readers. Such "articles of largest consumption" as the Edinburgh Review, for example, now wielded unprecedented cultural authority in their capacity to shape "public opinion" directly and immediately, thus threatening with total eclipse the subtler, long-term "influence of individual minds" (6: 28). Meanwhile, to revisit Constable's terms, the "stagnation" of the commercial marketplace meant paradoxically that "books of first-rate merit" such as The Statesman's Manual ("4s, sewed") were "sell[ing]

better now than any former period"—a commercial advantage, however, that served only to place them in direct competition with such "periodical works of talent" as The Examiner, which, at less than a shilling per copy, were the only other commodities "increas[ing] in circulation" (Constable [1]).

Eventually, Coleridge's response to the challenge of the periodical press would be to propose a counter-institution to that of anonymous review criticism, a "clerisy" made up of an élite caste of reader-writers whose task would be (in Klancher's words) "to instruct all other audiences, each according to its social space, how to read and how to distinguish between proper readings and those readings that must be ruled out" (151). At the time of the "distresses," however, this idea is confined to the immediate task of distinguishing an appropriate readership for The Statesman's Manual from the "promiscuous" mass of the "READING PUBLIC":

At present, however, I am to imagine for myself a very different audience. I appeal exclusively to men, from whose station and opportunities I may dare anticipate a respectable portion of that "*sound book learnedness*," into which our old public schools still continue to initiate their pupils. I appeal to men in whom I may hope to find, if not philosophy, yet occasional impulses at least to philosophic thought. (6: 39)

To create such an audience, Coleridge not only calls for "a recurrence to a more manly discipline of the intellect on the part of the learned themselves" (6: 42), but commands such discipline immediately by writing in a prose style of consummate difficulty.

As Klancher notes, this style is "more convoluted than any periodical could reasonably withstand," yet for this very reason it may be regarded as "an audience-forming strategy to counter all other strategies being deployed in the early nineteenth century" (152-3). This is particularly evident in the "Appendix" of "Comments and Essays" which fully double the size of the sermon, in which Coleridge undertakes (among other things) to re-define, in the terms of the German transcendentalist philosophy—and in defiance of British empiricism—such key concepts as "Reason," "Understanding," "Religion," "Will," and "Idea."¹⁰ Such redefinitions create the telling need for a concluding "Glossary ... of the principle terms that occur in the *elements* of speculative philosophy, in ... the sense in which I myself have employed them" (6: 113-4). Hence the "strangely specialized tone" that Butler describes, a "tone" and style that aroused consternation among the sermon's first readers, but which eventually succeeded in "finding out an élite," not only among the gentry students of Cambridge and Oxford in the 1820s (for whom this recluse genius became something of a "cult-figure"), but within the modern academy as well, where Coleridge's very notebooks now provide an endless source of puzzlement and enquiry (91).

Beyond its intellectual challenge, however, one element of

¹⁰See especially "Appendix C" on "Reason and Religion" which goes on to define "Will", "Conscience," "Understanding," and even "Imagination" (6: 59-93).

the "specialized tone" of this sermon is what Butler calls its "emotional appeal," a crucial feature of Coleridge's prose that has, in her view, "outlasted the immediate situation, and also outweighed flaws in the argument" (92). This is a feature of the sermon, then, that exceeds both politics and philosophy, a rhetorical strategy that serves at once to loosen the text from its immediate circumstances of "distress," and to supplement the complexities—and the aporias—of its audience-forming metaphysics. Thus, to the "madness" of the inspired prophet, and to the abstruse elaboration of his "rational principles" by the "recluse genius," is added the "barely controlled inspirational flights" of the lyric poet, linking the genre of "lay sermon" with the romantic "fragments" of Christabel and "Kubla Khan." To this end, Coleridge develops a third rhetorical persona, defined toward the end of the volume as that of the "gladdened preacher" who "speaks under the influence of Love, and is heard under the same influence!" (92). In this role, he is able to thematize, on the one hand, the ironic incommensurability of language to the task of communicating Biblical "principles" and "Ideas," and on the other, to enact rhetorically the moment of epiphany in which such "Ideas" dawn upon the mind—and to dramatize "the emotions that inevitably accompany the actual intuition of their truth" (6: 17).

The passage in which this role is defined, for example, occurs as the peroration of a lengthy essay on the "ideas" of Reason and Religion. "In RELIGION," Coleridge finally declares,

"there is no abstraction. To the unity and infinity of the Divine Nature, of which it is the partaker, it adds the fulness, and to the fulness the grace and the creative overflowing" (6: 90). This "creative overflowing" is in turn recognized, in both form and content, by a "budding and blossoming forth in all earnestness of persuasion, and in all words of sound doctrine" (6: 91). This rhetorical burgeoning is then immediately dramatized in a climactic series of rhetorical questions that probe the central paradox of the sermon: that belief must in fact precede a proper apprehension of Biblical truth. Thus Coleridge once again boldly re-imagines his audience, this time exploiting the residual orality of the lay sermon to project a passive auditory of listeners, in which the previously invoked categories of social class and of intellect are now levelled in the timeless attitude of the "grateful and affectionate fellow-christian" seated "at the feet" of the heaven-sent preacher:

From God's Love through his Son, crucified for us from the beginning of the world, Religion begins: and in Love towards God and the creatures of God it hath its end and completion. O how heaven-like it is to sit among brethren at the feet of a minister who speaks under the influence of Love and is heard under the same influence! For all abiding and spiritual knowledge, infused into a grateful and affectionate fellow-christian, is as the child of the mind that infuses it. The delight which he gives he receives; and in that bright and liberal hour the gladdened preacher can scarce gather the ripe produce of today without discovering and looking forward to the green fruits and embryos, the heritage and reversionary wealth of the days to come; till he bursts forth in prayer and thanksgiving—The harvest truly is

plenteous, but the labourers few. O gracious Lord of the harvest, send forth labourers into thy harvest! There is no difference between the Jew and Greek. Thou, Lord over all, art rich to all that call upon thee. But how shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent? And O! how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth forth glad tidings of good things, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto the captive soul, Thy God reigneth! God manifested in the flesh hath redeemed thee! O Lord of the harvest, send forth labourers into thy harvest!!

Join with me, Reader! in the fervent prayer, that we may seek within us, what we can never find elsewhere, that we may find within us what no words can put there, that one only true religion, which elevateth Knowledge into Being, which is at once the Science of Being, the Being and the Life of all genuine Science. (92-3)

This is the emotional appeal of the ecstatic evangelist, in which the crucial aura of spiritual presence is skilfully textualized in the apparent immediacy of the author's inspiration. A mounting series of rhetorical questions gradually identifies the task of the archetypal "preacher" with that of the present writer, an identity which in turn authorizes—"in all words of sound doctrine"—the climactic paean to the preacher himself as "him that bringeth good tidings," him that "publisheth peace [and] salvation." From this position of consummate spiritual authority, in which the preacher seems to re-experience the very moment of divine commission, he then reaches out in a gesture of sudden and

spontaneous intimacy—"Join with me, Reader! in the fervent prayer"—a prayer, ironically, that requires the reader to seek "within ... what no words can put there."

Indeed, the intercessory prayer is the primary rhetorical function served by the lyric flights of the "gladdened preacher." It is required to bridge the acknowledged gap between the discursive mediation of the sermon and the "actual intuition" of Biblical truth on the part of Coleridge's readers (6: 17).¹¹ Thus toward the end of the sermon proper we find a similar prayer to the one quoted above, in which Coleridge suddenly bows his knees "unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he would grant [readers of the sermon] ... to be strengthened by his Spirit ... to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth and height ..." (6: 48). Shortly afterward, the sermon itself concludes with a passage of similarly fervent invocation, in this case to the "Light" necessary to rediscover "the hidden treasures of the Law and the Prophets" (6: 50-1). Here, however, the pious appropriation of Biblical diction gives way to the rococo profusion of Coleridge's own metaphysics in a breathtaking series of variations on his principal longing for "some gracious moment" in which "one solitary text" of the Bible "should but dawn

¹¹This is the central "Problem of Conveying Belief," according to Wayne Anderson, and one that threatens to "undercut[] the entire enterprise of The Statesman's Manual" (30). In his view, Coleridge can only solve this difficulty by recourse to a "metadiscursive analysis" (30), involving overt "allusions to the circumstances and problems of composing the text" (29), the self-conscious "effort to specify and condition the kind of reader he requires" (29), and such rhetorical strategies as ellipsis, displacement, and deferral.

upon us in the pure untroubled brightness of an IDEA, that most glorious birth of the God-like within us" (6: 50).¹²

By far the most engaging use of lyric intercession, however, occurs once again in one of the supplementary essays, where Coleridge suddenly pauses to remark: "If you have accompanied me thus far, thoughtful reader! Let it not weary you if I digress for a few moments to another book, likewise a revelation of God—the great book of his servant Nature" (6: 70). With this, of course, the task of the "gladdened preacher" coincides with Coleridge's more familiar public persona as a "romantic"¹³ poet, an association which he encourages by declaring that "it has been the music of gentle and pious minds in all ages, it is the poetry of all human nature, to read [the book of Nature] ... in a figurative sense, and to find therein correspondencies and symbols of the spiritual world" (6: 70). Upon this premiss, he then embarks on a passage of appropriately lyrical prose, in which the same intimacy and immediacy of the "fervent prayer" quoted above is combined with an effort to describe and to evoke the emotions necessary to an "actual intuition" of this "spiritual world":

I have at this moment before me, in the flowery meadow, on which my eye is now reposing, one of its most soothing chapters, in which there is no lamenting word, no one character of guilt or anguish. For never can I look and meditate upon the vegetable creation without a feeling similar to that with which we gaze at a beautiful infant that

¹²For Hazlitt's full quotation of this passage (and his commentary on it), see Chapter 4, page 181-2 below.

¹³We recall that The Critical Review correctly identified Christabel as a "romantic fragment" (Reiman A: 317).

has fed itself asleep at its mother's bosom, and smiles in its strange dream of obscure yet happy sensations. The same tender and genial pleasure takes possession of me, and this pleasure is checked and drawn inward by the like aching melancholy, by the same whispered remonstrance, and made restless by a similar impulse of aspiration. It seems as if the soul said to herself: from this state hast *thou* fallen! Such shouldst *thou* still become, thy Self all permeable to a holier power! thy Self at once hidden and glorified by its own transparency, as the accidental and dividuous in this quiet and harmonious object is subjected to the life and light of nature which shines on it, even as the transmitted power, love and wisdom, of God over all fills, and shines through, nature! But what the plant *is*, by an act not its own and unconsciously—that must *thou make thyself to become!* must by prayer and by a watchful and unresisting spirit, *join* at least with the preventive and assisting grace to *make thyself*, in that light of conscience which inflameth not, and with that knowledge which puffeth not up. (6: 71)

The tone and imagery of this passage are in striking contrast to the rest of the sermon. Absent here is the denunciatory zeal of the poet-prophet, the sardonic wit of the elitist genius, even the bold enactment of spiritual authority in earlier passages in a similar persona. Instead, the "emotional appeal" of such a passage resides in the tone of earnest but humble introspection on the part of a man of sensibility, whose dialogue between self and soul in the presence of a breast-fed infant and a "flowery meadow" is only with the most decorous subtlety contrived to identify reader and author in the pronoun "thou." Once this identification is made, however—once the reader understands that it is he or she who is asked to "*make thyself to become*" like the plant—then the

rhetorical task of this passage is found to be the same as previous ones: to model a necessary receptiveness to the "Ideas" of the Bible and, by extension, an openness to their ideological proxy, The Statesman's Manual. Like the preacher-poet vis-à-vis the "vegetable creation," so we as readers are enjoined to become "permeable to a holier power," to allow the "genial pleasure" of these images to "take[] possession" of us, and to cultivate a "watchful" but ultimately "unresisting spirit."

This is the "hermeneutics of belief" that has guaranteed the continued authority of Coleridge's prose and poetry well into the present day. Indeed, quoted in isolation from the rest of the sermon, the "flowery meadow" passage could well "outlast[] the immediate situation" of its composition (in Butler's terms), and even "outweigh[] flaws in the argument" of The Statesman's Manual as a whole. Yet this is a passage just as firmly rooted in the context of intense, and historically-specific struggle as the others quoted above. As it continues, for example, into the subsequent pages of the essay, the feeling of "awe" inspired by the contemplation of nature is reinforced by a renewed intensity of rhetorical gesture ("Lo!—with the rising sun it commences its outward life.... Lo!—at the touch of light how it returns an air akin to light.... Lo!—how upholding the ceaseless plastic motion of its parts...." [6: 72]), until Coleridge suddenly exchanges the lyric sublime of the "gladdened preacher" for the bitter jeremiad of the prophet against "Anti-christ":

O!—if as the plant to the orient beam, we would but open out our minds to that holier light, which 'being compared with light is found before it, more beautiful than the sun, and above all the order of stars,' (Wisdom of Solomon, vii. 29.) [then] ungenial, alien, and adverse to our very nature would appear the boastful wisdom which, beginning in France, gradually tampered with the taste and literature of the most civilized nations of christendom, seducing the understanding from its natural allegiances, and therewith from all its own lawful claims, titles and privileges. It was placed as a ward of honour in the courts of faith and reason; but it chose to dwell alone, and became an harlot by the way-side. [...] [U]surping the name of reason [the Human Understanding] openly joined the banners of Antichrist, at once the pander and the prostitute of sensuality, and whether in the cabinet, laboratory, the dissecting room, or the brothel, alike busy in the schemes of vice and irreligion. Well and truly might it, thus personified in our fancy, have been addressed in the words of the evangelical prophet,'Thou hast said, none is my overseer!—thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee!—and thou hast said in thy heart, I am, and there is none beside me!' (Isaiah, xlvii, 10.) (6: 73-75)

Thus the "emotional appeal" of the "gladdened preacher" is once again aligned with the political and ideological agenda of the poet-prophet and "recluse genius." An openness to that "holier light" evidenced in nature is here found to be contingent upon a rejection of that "boastful wisdom" that represents the entire philosophical and scientific achievement of the eighteenth century.

The very extravagance of these claims—the "madness" referred to in Coleridge's motto—is the clearest sign of their historical

specificity, and one index of the scope and urgency of this particular contest for cultural authority. For this "French wisdom," Coleridge continues in warning to the higher classes, is "[p]rurient, bustling, and revolutionary," and must therefore be an object of immediate resistance in face of such events as the Spafields riot. It is, moreover, characterized by

... a heartless frivolity alternating with a sentimentality as heartless—an ignorant contempt of antiquity—a neglect of moral self-discipline—a deadening of the religious sense, even in the less reflecting forms of natural piety—a scornful reprobation of all consolations and secret refreshings from above—and as the caput mortuum of human nature evaporated, a French nature of rapacity, levity, ferocity, and presumption. (6: 73-77)

These we may take to be the signs by which the "Learned and Reflecting" will recognize and revile Coleridge's direct opponents in the periodical press. In a final effort to define his audience against theirs, Coleridge assumes in his readers an anti-Gallic patriotism which he enlists to turn back the "heartless frivolity" of fashionable prose. And against the inevitable assaults of satiric banter, he poses his own unique and eclectic style, blending romantic veneration of "antiquity" with the "moral self-discipline" of ascetic intellect—a stern piety seasoned with sensibility, with lyric "consolations and secret refreshings from above."

Chapter Four

Dissenting Counter-sermon:

Hazlitt's Examiner Review of The Statesman's Manual

Having waited almost four months for Coleridge's new book to appear, Hazlitt wasted no time in responding to it. Within days of its publication, he had purchased The Statesman's Manual, read it attentively, and prepared a detailed review that appeared as "Literary Notices. No. 21" in The Examiner for December 29, 1816 (7: 119-127). Presented as the inevitable sequel to his September preview, it eschews any preamble to move directly into instructive "specimens in illustration of what we have [already] said" (7: 119). Indeed, perhaps with Coleridge's imputations of "heartless frivolity" and "rapacity" in mind (6: 77), Hazlitt's strategy on this occasion is to adhere scrupulously to the norms of critical decorum, structuring his review entirely around generous quotations from the text, even assuring the reader at one point "that the passages we have given above are given in the order in which they are strung together in the Sermon ..." (7: 121).

For Coleridge, of course, this show of critical fair-mindedness would still be marked by "presumption" and even "levity" (6: 77). For by re-printing lengthy passages of The Statesman's Manual in the pages of The Examiner, Hazlitt pointedly ignores its title-page direction "to the Higher Classes of Society," and purposively redirects its contents to the very

"READING PUBLIC" scorned in the book as a "promiscuous" "misgrowth" (6: 36). Among readers of The Examiner in particular, whose reformist politics and so-called "boastful wisdom" are denounced by the lay preacher as the very "spirit of Antichrist," such passages would speak efficiently for themselves (6: 73, 22). And where they do not, Hazlitt guides and points his readers' interpretation by re-writing the book's key terms: "*Jus divinum*" becomes a euphemism for "the doctrine of Divine Right"; the specialized "Glossary" of German transcendentalism is relabeled "cant"; and the lyric flights of the "gladdened preacher" are found to be "rare rhapsod[ies]" indeed (7: 121, 127).

Yet "Literary Notices. No. 21" functions as more than just an effective sequel to the September preview. It also forms part of a more immediate cluster of "political essays" focussed on the issues of royal "Legitimacy" and political "apostasy," issues that had assumed new prominence in the turbulent aftermath of the Spafields riot. The violence of this event had produced a reactionary backlash against the movement for reform, and The Examiner found itself increasingly isolated as one of the few middle-class journals still willing to espouse this now discredited cause.¹ In response to these circumstances,

¹The Examiner's isolation as a liberal journal was made worse by a coincidence of surnames: the name "Hunt" had become a liability, by false association with the "Orator" held responsible for the riots. "We shall repeat nothing further here respecting Mr. HUNT of Bristol, and our having no connexion with him," writes Leigh Hunt defensively in his editorial immediately following the riot. "We are heartily sorry to see the cause of Reform injured

however, The Examiner chose to redouble, rather than reduce its discursive assault on the aristocratic corruption and "Ministerial" oppression that it saw as the root cause of national "distress." It became Hazlitt's task in particular to express "as often and as strongly as he could" what he would later define as his "hatred of tyranny and [his] contempt for its tools" (7: 7).² Indeed, for the two weeks immediately preceding his review of The Statesman's Manual, Hazlitt's "Literary Notices" column actually displaced the "Political Examiner" as the paper's front-page leading article.

In these front-page essays of December 15 and 22, he focuses his attack on the The Examiner's arch-rival, the daily Times, and in particular on its ultra-royalist editor, John Stoddard. Stoddard had once been a fervent democrat and was now among the most virulent advocates of uncompromising repression in the name of Hanoverian "Legitimacy."³ Thus Hazlitt presents a series of "reviews" entitled "Illustrations of the Times Newspaper," in which he holds up Stoddard's writings as paradigmatic of a more by the interference of such men...." (Examiner 8 Dec 1816: 769).

²Jones points out that Hazlitt's work for The Examiner at this time amounted almost to editorial collaboration, his writings regularly filling almost a third of the entire paper. On December 15, 1816, for example, his "Literary Notices. No. 19" appeared on the front page as the leading article, he contributed a brief "political essay" entitled "Buonaparte and Müller" (7: 130), and two theatrical reviews—"Two New Farces" (18: 210-11), and his famous review-essay of "Coriolanus" (4: 214-221) (Jones, "Three Additions" 359-60).

³Stoddard's virulent prose was considered a liability even to the Times itself; perhaps as a result of The Examiner's "Illustrations," he was fired at the end of December (Jones, Hazlitt 260, 263).

pervasive phenomenon he calls "literary prostitution or political apostasy"—the tendency, that is, for middle-class writers to abandon the liberal ideals of reform under the pressure of reaction, and to become instead the "tools" of "tyranny" (7: 131, 7). "[P]atriots in 1793, and royalists in 1816," these are the writers who once were "loud" in their support of "the right of the people to chuse their own government," and who have now

...turned around to flatter and to screen, with the closeness of their fulsome embraces, the abuses of a power which they set out with treating as monstrous, the right of a discarded family to reign over a nation in perpetuity by the grace of God. (7: 132)⁴

Stoddard was only the most obvious example of this phenomenon; another was the Poet Laureate, Robert Southey, whose increasingly clamant essays in the Quarterly Review were in sharp contrast to his republican "pantisocracy" of the 1790s.⁵ And with the sudden appearance of The Statesman's Manual—with its jeremiad against jacobinism in the name of "*Jus divinum*"—Coleridge, too,

⁴Hazlitt's analysis of "political apostasy" is subtler than the lurid imagery of "prostitution" might suggest. The pressures of conformism and ideological isolation are evident in his essay of December 22: "It requires some fortitude to oppose one's opinion, however right, to that of all the world besides," he writes. "Nothing but the strongest and clearest conviction can support a man in a losing minority" (7: 138). The prosaic difficulty of remaining a stubborn dissenter thus becomes the moral norm against which is measured "the degeneracy of modern apostates and reformed Jacobins, who find the applause of their king and country doubly cheering after being so long without it, and who go all lengths in adulation and servility, to make up for their former awkward singularity" (7: 138).

⁵The April 1816 edition of The Quarterly (15: 29), which had appeared in August, contained two lengthy articles by Southey on "La Vendée" and the "State of the Poor" (Shine 51-2).

was to be clearly numbered among "The Modern Apostates."

Thus we find "Literary Notices. No. 21" inserted between the third and fourth installments of this series on the Times,⁶ offering "specimens in illustration" not only of the satiric conjectures made about this book in the September preview, but also of the more immediately threatening phenomenon of apostasy created by a chilling climate of reaction and epitomized by Stoddard and the Times. Yet it is important to note that the effectiveness of The Statesman's Manual as an "Illustration[] of the Times Newspaper" depended in part on the profile of Coleridge as a political writer that had been built up in The Examiner in the weeks immediately preceding this review. Coleridge, of course, was not the editor of a prominent "Ministerial" daily, nor was he the leading essayist for the Tory Quarterly, nor yet did his anonymous contributions to the reactionary Courier amount to the "daily prose" he was accused of by the Edinburgh Review in its recently published review of Christabel.⁷ And as long as the

⁶The series began on December 1 with "Literary Notices. No. 18," entitled "The Times Newspaper," which aggressively challenges Stoddard's views on royal "Legitimacy" as "a nuisance which ought to be abated" (19: 177). The series "Illustrations of the Times Newspaper" immediately followed, comprising three "Notices" (Nos. 19, 20, and 22) published December 15, 22, and January 12, 1817 respectively. Thus "Literary Notices. No. 21" on The Statesman's Manual appears between the second and third numbers of this latter series, and between the third and fourth of Hazlitt's "reviews" of the Times.

⁷Moore's review appeared in November (Schneider, "Tom Moore" 72). Clearly Moore had no real notion of the frequency of Coleridge's contributions to the Courier. Hazlitt, by contrast, knew these contributions were not "daily," but would no doubt have detected Coleridge's hand in his latest of them, the series of anonymous reviews of Maturin's Bertram in the Courier (19 Aug - 11

promised lay sermon remained unavailable to give tangible proof of "a politics turned," The Examiner's strategy had been once again to declare Coleridge's present politics as strategically indeterminate and unreadable—"in total eclipse"⁸—and at the same time, to clarify for its readers what was determinate: namely, Coleridge's *former* politics as evidenced in his publicly available—and vividly anti-Ministerial—writings of the revolutionary period.

In the most striking manoeuvre of this kind, The Examiner reprinted Coleridge's 1798 "War Eclogue," "Fire, Famine, and Slaughter" in its edition of November 24, a gesture that anticipates on a small scale the more sensational publication of Southey's jacobin play Wat Tyler by the booksellers Sherwood, Neely and Jones three months later. "Fire, Famine, and Slaughter" appears as part of an article in ironic rebuttal of the Edinburgh's heavy quizzing of Christabel. The Examiner quotes the final offending passage of Moore's review, in which, we recall, Coleridge's "daily prose" in the Courier is bluntly linked to the praise that Christabel received in both the Times and the Courier.⁹ To this is added the following commentary:

Sept 1816). It is worth noting that for all Coleridge had to say about the vices of anonymous criticism, he attacks Maturin's play invidiously, (see Hayter *passim*), expressing "horror and disgust" that "the shocking spirit of Jacobinism seemed no longer confined to politics" (7. 2: 276). In statements like these, of course, the spirit of anti-jacobinism is "no longer confined to politics," but inhabits the very core of Coleridge's response to the play.

⁸"Mr. Coleridge and the Edinburgh Reviewers," The Examiner 24 Nov 1816: 743.

⁹See Chapter one, page 52 above for a full quotation of

...We cannot but think the Reviewer in the above passage hard upon Mr. Coleridge, who, whatever he may be at present, was not at the time he wrote the poem of *Christabel* in any danger of the praise of the *Courier* for his political opinions. Leaving his poetical merits out of the question, his political demerits are equally balanced against each other. About the time he wrote the poem in question, and before his poetical faculties were thrown into a state of 'suspended animation,' and his political opinions suffered, like the moon, total eclipse, he wrote also the following Eclogue, which may be found in our Poet Laureate's Annual Anthology for 1800 ("Mr Coleridge and the Edinburgh Reviewers" 743-4)

There follows a full reprint of "Fire, Famine, and Slaughter," a poem in which Coleridge boldly allegorizes the policies of the Kings' first minister Pitt ("Letters four do form his name") as agents of "Hell"—and it is to hell that Pitt himself is figuratively consigned at the end of the poem.¹⁰ By reprinting such a poem on the eve of the Spafields riot, The Examiner not only updates and re-politicizes its own review of Christabel, but creates a fixed point of reference against which to measure the writings of all former radicals at the very moment in which the "Distresses" crisis moved into an acute phase. On December 8, for example, in response to the "Disturbances in the Metropolis," "The Political Examiner" expresses his "disdain" for those "Courtiers

this passage.

¹⁰Coleridge, Poetical Works 237-240. Likely as a result of this Examiner article, Coleridge felt constrained to acknowledge this poem as his own in his Sibylline Leaves of 1817, where it is reprinted with an elaborate "Apologetic Preface" (Poetical Works 595-606) that shares many of its formulations with Coleridge's contemporaneous "anonymous" defense of Southey's Wat Tyler in the Courier (see Chapter Six below, and 3.2: 449-60; 466-478).

and Ex-Jacobins" who would use Spafields as a pretext for repression, adducing "the Anti-Pittite War Eclogue written by Mr. Coleridge" as one illustration of "the Jacobinical part of [these] criers out against riot."¹¹ One week later, having noted Coleridge's advertisement in the Morning Chronicle, Hazlitt's front-page essay on the Times ("On Modern Apostates") presents a facetious cartoon of "Mr. Coleridge, the author of the eclogue called FIRE, FAMINE, AND SLAUGHTER," pictured "Just yonder, at the corner of Paternoster-row," nervously avoiding political self-contradiction by going "to his bookseller's to withdraw his 'Lay Sermon,' or Statesman's Manual in praise of Fire, Slaughter, and Famine!" (7: 133).

In this same essay of December 15, moreover, another such work of Coleridge's is invoked to similar rhetorical effect. At the thematic centre of his article, Hazlitt quotes the adage "*Once a Jacobin and always a Jacobin*," in pointed allusion to the title of one of Coleridge's anti-Ministerial essays in the Morning Post of 1802. In this article, Coleridge had challenged the pejorative use of the term "Jacobin" by those he names "the blind and furious bigots, of the late Ministry" (3.1: 368). Though Coleridge includes himself by 1802 among "the honest and less violent Anti-jacobins," he aims nevertheless in this article to offer a detailed and fair-minded exposition of jacobin politics, including a re-definition of the term "Jacobin" to mean "a man, whose

¹¹"Disturbances in the Metropolis," "The Political Examiner. No. 455," Examiner 8 Dec 1816: 769-70.

affections have been warmly and deeply interested in the cause of general freedom, who has hoped all good and honourable things both of, and for, mankind" (3.1: 367-8). Recalling this essay clearly, Hazlitt writes:

... *Once a Jacobin and always a Jacobin* is a maxim, which, notwithstanding Mr. Coleridge's see-saw reasoning to the contrary, we hold to be true, even of him to this day. *Once an Apostate and always an Apostate*, we hold to be equally true; and the reason why the last is true, is that first is so. A person who is what is called Jacobin (and we apply this term in its vulgarest sense to the persons here meant) that is, who has shaken off certain well known prejudices with respect to kings or priests, or nobles, cannot so easily resume them again, whenever his pleasure or his convenience may prompt him to attempt it. And it is because he cannot resume them again in good earnest, that he endeavours to make up for his want of sincerity by violence, either by canting till he makes your soul sicken, like the author of *The Friend*, or by raving like a Bedlamite, as does the Editor of *The Times*. (7: 135)¹²

Hazlitt's advantage in this kind of polemic lies in the detail with which he can re-invoke such texts from the past. Here, for example, his analysis of the psychology of apostasy is indebted to Coleridge's own observation in the same essay "that no man can ever become altogether an apostate to Liberty, who has been at any time sincerely and fervently attached to it" (3.1: 368). Thus Hazlitt is able to use Coleridge's own former reflections on this subject to deconstruct in advance the inevitable turn to anti-jacobin "violence" in *The Statesman's Manual*, a rhetorical

¹²See Christensen for a skilful application of this debate to the "theory wars" of the 1980s.

"violence" that will be the sign of over-compensation for political self-contradiction—for the "want of sincerity" that is the hallmark of apostasy in the reactionary press.

Not surprisingly, then, when Hazlitt came to review The Statesman's Manual two weeks later, his immediate aim was to establish this very point. The opening sequence of "Literary Notices. No. 21" is comprised of two diverse "specimens" of this new work that Hazlitt brings together to illustrate what he takes to be its central contradiction. On the one hand, the residual liberalism of Coleridge's philosophical ideals is rediscovered in the broad, inclusive generalizations of the sermon's opening words. On the other hand, the acquired Toryism of his applied politics is now proven by a passage drawn from deep inside the sermon's "Appendix," in which Coleridge's use of heavy irony becomes the stylistic marker of an exclusionary and ingratiating appeal to the "higher classes"—and of Coleridge's own persistent concern with apostasy:

We have already given some account of this Sermon [Hazlitt begins]. We have only to proceed to specimens in illustration of what we have said.

It sets out with the following sentence:—

'If our [whole] knowledge and information concerning the Bible had been confined to the one fact of its immediate derivation from God, we should still presume that it contained rules and assistances for all conditions of men under all circumstances; and therefore for communities no less than for individuals.'

Now this is well said; 'and 'tis a kind of good deed to say well.' But why did not Mr. Coleridge keep on in the same

strain to the end of the chapter, instead of himself disturbing the harmony and unanimity which he here very properly supposes to exist on this subject, or questioning the motives of its existence by such passages as the following, p. 23 of the Appendix:

'Thank heaven! notwithstanding the attempts of Mr. Thomas Paine and his compeers, it is not so bad with us. *Open infidelity* has ceased to be a means even of gratifying vanity; for the leaders of the gang themselves turned apostates to Satan, as soon as the number of their proselytes became so large, that Atheism ceased to give distinction. Nay, it became a mark of original thinking to defend the Belief and the Ten Commandments; so the *strong minds* veered round, and religion came back again into fashion.'

Now we confess we do not find in this statement much to thank heaven for; if religion has only come into fashion again with the strong minds—(it will hardly be denied that Mr. Coleridge is one of the number)—as a better mode of gratifying their vanity than 'open infidelity.' Be this as it may, Mr. Coleridge has here given a true and masterly delineation of that large class of Proselytes or their teachers, who believe any thing or nothing, just as their vanity prompts them. All that we have ever said of modern apostates is poor and feeble compared to it. (7: 119)

Once again, Hazlitt's device is skilful recontextualization. By resituating Coleridge's second passage here within his own larger project to expose the "modern apostates," the intended ironies of Coleridge's remarks are multiplied almost exponentially. Coleridge's aim in this passage had been to underscore his assumption of a superior fidelity to Christian doctrine among Britons, by contrast with the French ("Thank heaven! ... it is not so bad with us"). To do so, he allows himself the extravagant jest of picturing even the "leaders of the gang" of British

radicals turning "apostates to Satan," thus bringing "religion [once] again into fashion." Yet, as editor R. J. White points out, "precisely whom 'the leaders of the gang' was intended to castigate is uncertain" (6: 84n). Beyond perhaps William Godwin (whom Coleridge apparently converted to theism), there were no radical leaders who matched Coleridge's description of a fashionable abandonment of francophile atheism (6: 84n). Though Hazlitt was aware that Coleridge himself could never have been accused of "open infidelity," he was also aware that Coleridge had once abandoned Anglican orthodoxy for radical Unitarianism in the 1790s, a fact which is carefully elided in The Statesman's Manual,¹³—as is the fact that Coleridge himself had once aspired to be one of the "leaders of the gang" itself. Thus Hazlitt sees Coleridge unconsciously implicating himself in this passage, a vertiginous moment of self-alienation marked by the tone of supercilious hauteur with which Coleridge scorns the "*strong minds*" of the radical movement who have now turned away from the "Satan" of jacobinism to become preachers of "the Belief and the Ten Commandments." By pointing up Coleridge's unctuous apothegm "Thank heaven!" Hazlitt uncovers the anxiety (or the "vanity") that inhabits the attempt to take on the authority of house cleric to the "higher classes"—an authority necessarily based on a system of aggressive exclusions and distinctions that belie the generous inclusivity of the sermon's opening words.

¹³Indeed, it is displaced by a frontal attack on the Unitarianism Coleridge once espoused (6: 56, 57n, 100, 111n-112).

In terms of Hazlitt's larger series on the Times, however, more positive proof of Coleridge's apostasy is to be found only in his direct espousal of the "doctrine of Divine Right." And it is on this point that the incorporation of "Literary Notices. No. 21" into the series on "The Modern Apostates" intersects with the separate agenda of Hazlitt's evolving series of essays and articles on Coleridge alone. We note, for example, that in the passage above Coleridge has already been placed in a somewhat different category from the other "apostates" in the ironic aside concerning the "*strong minds*." As Hazlitt reminds his readers, "it will hardly be denied that Mr. Coleridge is one of [the *strong minds*]," thus not only implicating Coleridge in his own jest, but at the same recalling—through the inverted sign of respect—just what is at stake in contesting the authority of this extraordinary lay preacher. Yet precisely because Coleridge is one of the "*strong minds*," his political apostasy, as revealed in The Statesman's Manual, takes the same characteristic turn toward circumlocution and dissemblance discovered in Hazlitt's two previous "Notices" of Coleridge. By contrast, for example, with the forthright, daily "raving" of Stoddard in the Times on behalf of "Legitimacy," or with the sycophantic "zeal" of Southey in his Laureate "Lays" and Quarterly reviews (7: 138), Coleridge proceeds by a unique pattern of evasions and omissions. Thus, on the one hand, he turns to "cant" to shroud the crucial doctrine of divine right in the latinate euphemism "*Jus divinum*," while he

"purposely" omits, on the other, any direct illustration or proof of this doctrine from the Bible itself (7: 121, 120).

The turn to "cant," of course, was a rhetorical device already foreseen in Hazlitt's essay of two weeks earlier, where it was defined as a form of discursive "violence" compensating for a "lack of sincerity." In The Statesman's Manual, it is found to comprise a smokescreen of fine distinctions and learned jargon designed to reprobate (in Coleridge's terms) the "mechanic philosophy" of "the unenlivened generalizing understanding," while mystifying the "Reason" and "Imagination" necessary to discern in the Scriptures "the Best Guide to Political Skill and Foresight" (7: 120). Hazlitt quotes a lengthy passage containing these terms in which Coleridge aims to establish the efficacy of Biblical history, a passage that contains one of Coleridge's most evidently Kantian definitions of the "Imagination,"¹⁴ and which ends with the strikingly convoluted claim, "*Hence by a derivative, indeed, but not a divided influence, and though in a secondary, yet in more than a metaphorical sense, the Sacred Book is worthily entitled the Word of God,*" p. 36" (7: 120; Hazlitt's emphasis). To this, Hazlitt retorts:

So that, after all, the Bible is not the immediate Word of

¹⁴Coleridge writes,
 In the Scriptures, [history and economy] are the living educts of the Imagination, that reconciling and mediatory power, which incorporating the reason in Images of the Sense, and organizing (as it were) the flux of the Senses by the permanence and self-circling energies of the Reason, gives birth to a system of symbols, harmonious in themselves, and consubstantial with the truths, of which they are the conductors. (6: 28-9; quoted by Hazlitt, 7: 120)

God, except according to the German philosophy, and *in something between a literal and metaphorical sense*. Of all the cants that ever were canted in the canting world, this is the worst! The author goes on to add, that 'it is among the miseries of the present age that it recognizes no medium between *literal* and *metaphorical*,' and laments that 'the mechanical understanding, in the blindness of its self-complacency, confounds SYMBOLS with ALLEGORIES.'—This is certainly a sad mistake, which he labours very learnedly to set right, 'in a diagonal sidelong movement between truth and falsehood.'— (7: 121)

Thus Coleridge's entire apparatus of "learned[ness]," and in particular his recourse to the terms of "German philosophy," is reduced in Hazlitt's analysis to rhetorical sleight-of-hand, all the more dangerous for its bathetic complexity. For this is a form of "cant[]" that takes the curiously distracting shape of a "diagonal sidelong movement between truth and falsehood," a caricature that at once recalls the imagery of Hazlitt's first two reviews of Coleridge and dismisses at a blow the one passage that has since been valued most about The Statesman's Manual.

Yet if Hazlitt's witty rejection of the famous distinction between "SYMBOLS [and] ALLEGORIES" may seem at first merely tendentious, it is worth noting that his view has been corroborated as recently as 1986 in Hodgson's skilful deconstruction of this distinction in a chapter entitled "Coleridge's Rhetoric of Allegory and Symbol" (4-10). The difference, however, is that in Hazlitt's analysis, the distinction between these two terms is identified as an integral part of Coleridge's political agenda, rather than as part of his

attempt to create an ahistorical lexicon of literary-critical terms. For the passage just quoted leads directly into Hazlitt's treatment of the notion of "*Jus divinum*," implying that in such distinctions as that between symbol and allegory Coleridge has used his learning as a tool to reconstruct a conservative, and in the circumstances, distinctly repressive, ideology:

... and so [Mr. Coleridge] goes on for several pages, concluding his career where the Allies have concluded theirs, with the doctrine of Divine Right; which he does not however establish quite so successfully with the pen, as they have done with the sword. 'Herein' (says this profound writer) 'the Bible differs from all the books of Greek philosophy, and in a two-fold manner. It doth not affirm a Divine Nature only, but a God; and not a God only, but the living God. Hence in the Scriptures alone is the JUS DIVINUM or direct Relation of the State and its Magistracy to the Supreme Being, taught as a vital and indispensable part of ALL MORAL AND ALL POLITICAL WISDOM, even as the Jewish alone was a true theocracy!' (7: 121; Hazlitt's emphasis)

This, for Hazlitt, is the crux of Coleridge's political argument in The Statesman's Manual, a statement that confirms Coleridge's place among "The Modern Apostates," and reveals some of the most fundamental contradictions in his present position. Thus he responds:

Now it does appear to us, that[,] as the reason why the *Jus Divinum* was taught in the Jewish state was, that that alone was a true theocracy, this is so far from proving this doctrine to be a part of all moral and all political wisdom, that it proves just the contrary. This may perhaps be owing to our mechanical understanding. Wherever Mr. C. will shew us the theocracy, we will grant him the *Jus Divinum*. Where God really pulls down and sets up kings, the people need not

do it. Under the true Jewish theocracy, the priests and prophets cashiered kings; but our lay preacher will hardly take this office upon himself as a part of the *Jus Divinum*, without having anything better to show for it than his profound moral and political wisdom. Mr. Southey hints at something of this kind in verse, and we are not sure Mr. Coleridge does not hint at it in prose. (7: 121)

Hazlitt's refutation of Coleridge's central thesis thus rests quite openly on what Coleridge would indeed label a "mechanical understanding" of Biblical revelation. In this view, the Bible's authority in "times like these" is strictly limited by its claims for an active role of God only in the "theocracy" of ancient Israel. As for nineteenth-century Britain, "[w]herever Mr. C. will shew us the theocracy, we will grant him the *Jus divinum*." For Hazlitt and his readers, of course, the dissolute Regent, his reactionary Ministry, and an unreformed Parliament hardly constituted evidence that God was still playing a providential role in British history—unless, of course, this were manifest in "the people" themselves, now inspired indeed for these very reasons to "pull down" a "discarded family." Moreover, in a further irony, Hazlitt points out that this "office" of "cashier[ing] kings" was traditionally assigned God's "priests and prophets," a role Southey and Coleridge seemed to have taken on in the 1790s in their radical "verse" and "prose," and which Coleridge self-consciously re-assumes in The Statesman's Manual. Thus Hazlitt aims once again to expose the ironic, underlying identity of Coleridge's present project with the agenda of radical

reform, a self-cancelling identity that leaves only the rhetorical husk of "cant" to distinguish his present text from his former writings.

Coleridge's anxiety on this very point is proven, in Hazlitt's analysis, by his recurrence in The Statesman's Manual to the peculiar device of the "missing" text. In this case, corresponding to the "missing line" that was "necessary to make common sense" of Christabel, or to the missing sermon that would have made sense of the August advertisement, Hazlitt seizes upon the preacher's strange reluctance to refer directly to the Bible itself in support of his central thesis, and in particular his reticence to quote a passage from The First Book of Kings that he alludes to as proof of the decisive concept of "*Jus divinum*." As before, moreover, it becomes Hazlitt's satiric role in these circumstances to supply this missing text, here by printing at length the passage in question from First Kings as the centrepiece of his review, thus turning his "Literary Notice" (in a Sunday journal) into a something of a counter-sermon from the lay-pulpit of radical dissent. To set up this manoeuvre, Hazlitt structures the first half of his review around a mock search for the Biblical passage in Coleridge's text, using extensive quotation to demonstrate his own contrasting willingness to lay bare the contents of his review-text. He begins this process immediately following the opening pair of quotations examined at the outset of the review:

It is a pity that with all the fund of 'rules and assistances' which the Bible contains for our instruction and reproof, and which the author in this work proposes to recommend as the Statesman's Manual, or the best Guide to Political Skill and Foresight, in times like these, he has not brought forward a single illustration of his doctrine, nor referred to a single example in the Jewish history that bears at all, in the circumstances, or the inference, on our own, but one, and that one he has purposely omitted. Is this to be credited? Not without quoting the passage.

'But do you require some one or more particular passage from the Bible that may at once illustrate and exemplify its application to the changes and fortunes of empires? Of the numerous chapters that relate to the Jewish tribes, their enemies and allies, before and after their division into two kingdoms, it would be more difficult to state a single one, from which some guiding light might not be struck.' (Oh, very well [Hazlitt interpolates], we shall have a few of them. The passage goes on.) 'And in nothing is Scriptural history more strongly contrasted with the histories of highest note in the present age, than in its freedom from the hollowness of abstractions.... (7: 119-20)

Still searching for the promised passages from Jewish history, Hazlitt continues to quote another full page from Coleridge's book, and samples from several pages following, culminating in the key statement about the "*Jus Divinum*." It is here that the lack of proof becomes most conspicuous:

... [Regarding the cashiering of kings,] Mr. Southey hints at something of the kind in his verse, and we are not sure that Mr. Coleridge does not hint at it in prose. For after his extraordinary career and interminable circumnavigation through the heaven of heavens, after being wrapt in the wheels of Ezekiel, and sitting with the captives by the river of Chebar, he lights once more on English ground, and you think you have him.

'But I refer to the demand. Were it my object to touch on the present state of affairs in this kingdom, or on the prospective measures in agitation respecting our sister island, I would direct your most serious meditations to the latter part of the reign of Solomon, and the revolutions in the reign of Rehoboam his son. *But I tread on glowing embers.* I will turn to a subject on which all men of reflection are at length in agreement—the causes of the Revolution and fearful chastisement of France.' (7: 122; Hazlitt's emphasis)¹⁵

Hazlitt's aim here is to isolate the moment of telling indirection in Coleridge's turn from the business-like "But I refer to the demand" to the enigmatic recoil "*But I [should] tread on glowing embers.*" And though Coleridge does in fact go on to provide Biblical illustration for "the causes of the [French] Revolution," he does so using a text taken from the highly symbolic prophecy of Isaiah, not from the concrete history of the Jewish "theocracy" in First Kings. This substitution of prophecy for history—of symbol for allegory, in effect—clearly met Coleridge's own criteria for appropriate evidence, but certainly not Hazlitt's, whose strategy is precisely to cater to the preference for "allegory" over "symbol" that marks the so-called "mechanical understandings" of his readers. Thus, he continues,

As we are not so squeamish as Mr. Coleridge, and do not agree with him and all other men of reflection on the subject of the French Revolution, we shall turn back to the latter end of the reign of Solomon, and that of his successor Rehoboam, to find out the parallel to the present reign and regency which so particularly strikes and startles Mr. Coleridge.

¹⁵In The Statesman's Manual, this passage reads "... in the reign of Rehoboam, his successor. *But I should tread on glowing embers*" (6: 32; emphasis added).

Here it is for the edification of the curious, from the First Book of Kings:— (7: 122)

And thus Hazlitt inserts a lengthy Bible lesson into his "Literary Notice," a procedure as strange in context as it is perfectly justified, not only by Coleridge's allusion, and by the protestant tenets of his sermon as a whole, but also by the norms of enlightenment enquiry, and even by a sly inversion of the aims of Christian evangelism with its use of Scripture to "edif[y]" the newly literate.

Hazlitt marks his Bible reading with italics, using this technique to underline for his readers all the salient features of the story. Thus, for example, he emphasizes the fact that "*all Israel were come to Shechem to make [Rehoboam] king,*" but, led by Jeroboam, they agree to do so only on the condition that Rehoboam "*wilt be a servant unto this people*" by lightening the "heavy yoke" of his father. Instead, the new king (not unlike the Regent) "*consult[s] with the young men that were grown up with him*" and, taking their advice, "*answer[s] the people roughly ... saying, My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke; my father also chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions*" (7: 122-3).

At this point, the story's striking "parallel to the present reign and regency"—and its differences—become particularly instructive, underscored at a key point by one of Hazlitt's interpolated asides:

Wherefore the king hearkened not unto the people; *for the*

cause was from the Lord, that he might perform his saying which the Lord spake by Ahijah, the Shilonite, unto Jeroboam, the son of Nebat,' [We see pretty plainly how the principle of 'a true theocracy' qualified the doctrine of *Jus Divinum* among the Jews; but let us mark the sequel.] 'So when all Israel saw that the King hearkened not unto them, the people answered the King, saying, What portion have we in David: neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: to your tents, O Israel: now see to thine own house, David. Then king Rehoboam sent Adoram, who was over the tribute; and all Israel stoned him with stones that he died; therefore king Rehoboam made speed to get him up to his chariot to flee to Jerusalem. So Israel rebelled against the house of David unto this day. (I Kings 11: 42-3 and 12: 1-20; 7: 122-3)

With this, of course, Hazlitt is able to drive home all the crucial allegorical lessons of such a text, both for the immediate end of refuting Coleridge's tendentious reading of the Bible, and for the larger goal of reinforcing The Examiner's own political intervention in the "Distresses" crisis. Coleridge's recommendation of the story of Rehoboam to the "serious meditations" of the ruling classes must, Hazlitt suggests, either be the product of a covert radicalism or of a particularly subtle form of apostasy, the "voluntary self-delusion" of the lapsed intellectual:

Here [in this story] is the doctrine and practice of divine right, with a vengeance. We do not wonder Mr. Coleridge was shy of instances from his *Statesman's Manual*, as the rest are like this. He does not say (neither shall we, for we are not salamanders any more than he, *to tread on glowing embers*) whether he approves of the conduct of all Israel in this case, or of the *grand, magnificent, and gracious* answer of the son of Solomon; but this we will say, that his bringing or alluding to a passage like this immediately after his

innuendo (addressed to the higher classes) that the doctrine of divine right is contained *par excellence* in the Scriptures alone, is we should suppose, an instance of a power of voluntary self-delusion, and of a delight in exercising it on the most ticklish topics, greater than ever was or will be possessed by any other individual that ever did or ever will live upon the face of the earth. 'Imposture, organised into a comprehensive and self-consistent whole, forms a world of its own, in which inversion becomes the order of nature.' Compared with such powers of inconceivable mental refinement, hypocrisy is a great baby, a shallow dolt, a gross dunce, a clumsy devil! (7: 123)

As in the climactic passage of the September (p)review, Coleridge's "powers of inconceivable mental refinement" are once again contrasted with the stark despotism of the Regent, who, like "the son of Solomon," demands only the relatively simple "hypocrisy" of such "dunce[s]" and devil[s]" as Stoddard or Southey, tools of tyranny paid to describe his "conduct" as "*grand, magnificent & gracious.*" As before, too, the very hyperbole which marks the description of Coleridge's "powers" (the image of the "arch-angel ruin'd" now amplified into a form of apostasy "greater than ever was or will be possessed by any other individual that ever did or ever will live upon the earth") is an hyperbole that conveys once again the ironic respect for these "powers" that underscores the very urgency with which they are brought to public "Notice[]" and contested. Yet, whereas in the previous absence of the lay sermon Hazlitt was able to present Coleridge's "powers" as "wasted," and therefore "inconsequential[]," in The Statesman's Manual they are

"exercis[ed]" in such a way as to make them even more insidious than "hypocrisy" itself. Once again Hazlitt makes use of Coleridge's own words (from this lay sermon) to describe the ideological tyranny of "Imposture," and at the same time reconfirms the crucial cultural role filled by the vigilant critic able to unmask such "imposture," both in its intellectual "refinement" by such writers as Coleridge, and in its more grotesque and "clumsy" manifestations within the political landscape of the Distresses crisis as a whole.

The hyperbole and redundancy of Hazlitt's final rattling catalogue of epithets comprise yet another index of the discursive heat emanating from the "glowing embers" of partisan debate that Coleridge was so studiously attempting to avoid. With no loss of energy, however, Hazlitt's review turns its attention from the politics of Coleridge's lay sermon to its reflections on the literary marketplace, issues that were now linked—as both writers were keenly aware—by the matter of reading audiences. Thus in the passage just quoted, a parenthetical aside draws attention for the first time in the review to the fact that Coleridge's "innuendo" regarding the "doctrine of divine right" is "addressed to the higher classes." In the context of political debate, this element of Coleridge's text can be made to seem a piece of mere shameless sycophancy on the part of a middle-class author. Refocussed within the context of a "literary notice" examining new books on behalf of a resolutely middle- and lower middle-class

audience, however, it becomes a gesture of supercilious exclusion. All that is necessary to effect this shift in perspective, of course, is for Hazlitt to produce the passage containing Coleridge's overt rejection of such a "promiscuous audience." Here Hazlitt's technique of invading the quoted passages of his review-text with italics and asides turns the strategy of generous quotation into a species of "banter," at once modelled on, and accommodating itself to, oral performances of the text in question. This brings to "fashionable literature" the apparent immediacy and intimacy of "table-talk," with its spontaneous interjections and shared ironies:

Among other passages, unrivalled in style and matter by any other author, take the following:—

'When I named this Essay a Sermon, I sought to prepare the inquirers after it for the absence of all the usual softenings *suggested by worldly prudence*, of all compromise between truth and courtesy. But not even as a Sermon would I have addressed the present Discourse to a promiscuous audience: and for this reason I likewise announced it in the title-page, as exclusively *ad clerum*, i.e. (in the old and wide sense of the word) to men of *clerkly* acquirements, of whatever profession.' [All that we know is, that there is no such title-page to our copy.] 'I would that the greater part of our publications could be thus *directed*, each to its appropriate class of readers. But this cannot be! For among other odd burs and kecksies, the misgrowth of our luxurious activity, we have a *READING PUBLIC*, as strange a *phrase*, methinks, as ever forced a splenetic smile on the staid countenance of meditation; and yet *no fiction!* For our readers have, in good truth, multiplied exceedingly, and have waxed proud. It would require the *intrepid accuracy* of a Colquhoun'—[Intrepid and accurate applied to a Colquhoun!

It seems that whenever an objection in matter of fact occurs to our author's mind, he instinctively applies the flattering unctiousness of words to smooth it over to his conscience, as you apply a salve to a sore]—'to venture at the precise number of that vast company only, whose heads and hearts are dieted at the two public *ordinaries* of literature, the circulating libraries and the periodical press. But what is the result? Does the *inward man* thrive on this regimen? Alas! if the average health of the consumers may be judged of by the articles of largest consumption'—[Is not this a side-blow at the *Times* and *Courier*?]—'if the secretions may be conjectured from the ingredients of the dishes that are found best suited to their palates; from all that I have seen, either of the banquet or the guests, I shall utter my *profaccia*'—[Oh thou particular fellow!']—'with a desponding sigh: From a popular philosophy, and a philosophic populace, good sense deliver us!' (7: 124)

From the final Shakespearean aside in retort to Coleridge's pedantic "*profaccia*," to the assumption of a shared distaste for Patrick Colquhoun, the London Police Magistrate, The Examiner is able to construct and affirm with ease the contours of its reading audience even as it mocks the awkwardness with which Coleridge does the same. The disparity thus emphasized between these two approaches to the same problem is not simply produced by misdirecting Coleridge's text to an inappropriate readership—though this certainly assists the process. These asides also work to isolate distinct moments of indirection or contradiction that might be equally evident to Coleridge's intended audience: the missing "title-page" that openly contradicts the existing one; the strained hyperbole of the epithet "intrepid accuracy" that seems

overtly tailored to the anxieties of an audience with a propertied stake in public security; the assumption in his readers of a thorough distaste for "the articles of largest consumption" in the "periodical press," articles that include not only The Edinburgh Review (which Coleridge no doubt had uppermost in his mind) but also, and ironically, the various mouthpieces of government policy, through one of which (The Courier) Coleridge himself was known to address this same "READING PUBLIC."

Behind all of these moments of contradiction, however, lies Coleridge's more fundamental ambivalence on the issue of universal literacy. As we have seen, he admits the necessity of a national system of education that would make "*clerkly* acquirements" more widely prevalent.¹⁶ Yet in such a passage as the one Hazlitt singles out here, Coleridge betrays a profound distrust of the democratization of readership and learning. And by redirecting this passage to the readership of The Examiner that owed its very existence to this democratization process, Hazlitt is able to undermine any authority Coleridge's new book might have among upwardly-mobile, middle-class readers who might otherwise have

¹⁶See below, Chapter 3, page 124n, and 6: 39-40. As Hazlitt points out elsewhere in the review, Coleridge's advocacy of universal education in The Statesman's Manual is nevertheless conditional on the system being administered by the Established Church (Dr. Bell's "Madras" system) as opposed to the "monitorial" schools of the dissenter Joseph Lancaster (Coburn 6: 40n). As Hazlitt comments bitterly (again with recourse to the imagery of prostitution that may be compared with Coleridge's reprobation of enlightenment "understanding" as a "harlot by the wayside"): "Learning is an old University mistress, that [Mr. Coleridge] is not willing to part with, except for the use of the Church of England; and he is sadly afraid she should be debauched by the 'liberal ideas' of Joseph Lancaster!" (7: 126).

been attracted to the aura of exclusivity conveyed by a book that addresses itself only to a social and intellectual élite. Moreover, as the commentary that follows this passage goes on to suggest, Coleridge's gestures of exclusion may in fact arise from his own contradictory awareness that the "Reading Public" has become the only patron an author can actually rely on, that cultural authority now resides only in the command of larger and more "promiscuous" reading audiences, rather than smaller and more "select" ones. Thus to Coleridge's "desponding sigh" for deliverance from "a popular philosophy, and a philosophic populace," Hazlitt retorts:

Why so, any more than from a popular religion, or a religious populace, on Mr. Coleridge's own principle, p. 12, 'Reason and religion are their own evidence'? We should suspect that our unread author, the 'Secret Tattle' of the Press, is thus fastidious, because he keeps an ordinary himself which is not frequented. He professes to be select: but we all know the secret of 'seminaries for a limited number of pupils.' Mr. Coleridge addresses his Lay-Sermon 'to the higher classes,' in his printed title-page: in that which is not printed he has announced it to be *directed ad clerum*, which might imply the clergy, but no: he issues another EXTENT for the benefit of all persons of clerkly acquirements, that is, who can read and write. What wretched stuff is all this! We well remember a friend of his and ours saying, many years ago, on seeing a little shabby volume of *Thomson's Seasons* lying in the window of a solitary ale-house, at the top of a rock hanging over the British Channel,—'That is true fame!' If he were to write fifty Lay-Sermons, he could not answer the inference from this one sentence, which is, that there are books that make their way wherever there are readers, and

that there ought every where to be readers for such books!
(7: 125)

With this succinct formula, Hazlitt epitomizes the liberal-democratic ideals upon which the success of The Examiner itself was based. Reviewing Coleridge's Statesman's Manual provides an opportunity to defend the expansion and cultural enfranchisement of the very "Reading Public" that in turn ensures a lively market for liberal journalism. Indeed, Hazlitt suggests, the cultural agency of the new "Reading Public" is such that even Coleridge, with his progressive revisions to the address-label of his sermon, shows himself reluctantly (and therefore confusingly) compelled to accommodate. By contrast with this distressed attempt on Coleridge's part to reinforce or reinvent the divisions of the social hierarchy, Hazlitt once again recurs to Coleridge's own words of "many years ago" ¹⁷ regarding the apparently effortless success of Thomson's Seasons. The "shabby volume" lying in the window-seat of a sublimely remote and "solitary ale-house" presents a compellingly lyrical image of free dissemination, of a book that "[made] its way" to all classes of readers in a *laissez-faire* market regulated only by the radically democratic force of public taste and opinion. And though this image discretely elides the role played by anonymous review criticism in shaping this taste and opinion, it does suggest that the cultural authority of "true fame" can no longer reside in the old-fashioned epistolary

¹⁷Coleridge, of course, is "the friend of his and ours," as we know from "My First Acquaintance With Poets" (17: 120).

intimacy sought by Coleridge in the desire to see books "*directed*, each to its appropriate class of readers." It lies instead in the crucially modern element of anonymity involved in reaching the unknown and possibly transient members of the "Reading Public" that frequent the myriad ale-houses of the nation. Moreover, after twenty-three years of war and distress had oriented this "public" to the most inexpensive and current forms of "reading," the same cultural authority achieved by Thomson is available to the journalist who further sacrifices the element of renown in "*true fame*" to see his own articles appear anonymously alongside this "shabby volume" in the equally well-thumbed newspapers, political journals, and periodical reviews—articles that in even the most remote ale-houses and inns are reaching their secondary and tertiary readerships, making their way indeed "wherever there are readers."

As we have seen, the success of such "fashionable literature" lay precisely in its readiness to move beyond the mere provision of intelligence to noticeable performative gestures of its own. In the context of a book review, and in particular one such as "Literary Notices. No. 21," which has set itself the relatively unusual task of presenting only generous "specimens" of a text already satirized *in absentia*, this performative element consists largely in the skill with which quotations from the review-text are selected and pointed for the reader with italics and interpolated asides in order to facilitate ironic re-reading in

company. Further continuity with the "conversational" style of the September (p)review is maintained by allusions to stock characters from the literary repertoire of The Examiner's middle-class readership: Coleridge is once again "the 'Secret Tattle' of the Press," and, perhaps most memorably, he is now "the impertinent barber of Bagdad" (7: 122). This allusion to "The Tailor's Story" in The Arabian Nights occurs in the midst of Hazlitt's search for appropriate Biblical illustration of the "doctrine of Divine Right." Coleridge's ambivalent movement between referring "to the demand" and retreating from "glowing embers" is described a kind of "trifling" that

... can only be compared to the impertinent barber of Bagdad, who being sent for to shave the prince, spent the whole morning in preparing his razors, took the height of the sun with an astrolabe, sung the song of Zimri, and danced the dance of Zamtout, and concluded by declining to perform the operation at all, because the day was unfavourable to its success. (7: 122)

Providing as it does a moment of comic relief from the polemical intensity of the review's political agenda, this brief depiction also furnishes the many readers who would be familiar with The Arabian Nights an extended "allegory" particularly apt for Hazlitt's satiric purposes.¹⁸ The "impertinent barber of Bagdad" in "The Tailor's Story" is a character with a humorously over-inflated notion of his own wisdom and cleverness, an ambitious man with a bewilderingly protean array of identities who

¹⁸See Carnall, "Impertinent Barber of Bagdad" *passim*, for a detailed and sympathetic study of "Coleridge as Comic Figure in Hazlitt's Essays."

combines mock deference with the aggressive imposition of unwanted advice on his social superiors. Most important, though he thinks himself taciturn, he is a ceaseless "chatterer." As the prince in the story exclaims, "notwithstanding all I could say to make him cease his buffoonery, he would not stop" (Dulcken 220).

Something similar, we recall, had been the satiric aim of Hazlitt's September preview, with the difference that Coleridge's ceaseless "talk" is there thought to warrant prevention only when committed to print: "Let him talk on for ever in this world and the next; and both worlds will be the better for it. But let him not write, or pretend to write nonsense. Nobody is the better for it" (7: 118). Like the prince in the story, of course, such strictures proved ineffectual, and Coleridge's first lay sermon eventually appeared. Yet with The Statesman's Manual now before him, Hazlitt is given the opportunity to verify his assertions with actual "specimens" of Coleridge's legendary conversation converted into print. In doing so, Hazlitt draws on the well-established precedent of appropriating the "beauties" of a review-text in order to enhance the entertainment value of his own review. At the same time, however, Coleridge's most self-evidently performative gestures are shown to be unable to survive the translation from oral delivery to public text, and, more crucially, from the semi-private drawing-rooms of the educated élite to the far-flung window-seats of the nation's ale-houses. By means of such radical re-contextualization, Hazlitt attempts to

turn two examples of Coleridge's conversational style into self-parody. The first of these is taken from Coleridge's lengthy footnote to the passage on the "READING PUBLIC," in which he digresses into a moment of gentlemanly satiric "banter." As Hazlitt indicates, however, the "wit and humour" of Coleridge's remarks depends on the shared assumptions and privileges of a narrowly circumscribed readership—in this case, one defined by classical education and a profound distaste for the infelicities of the unlearned:

To the words READING PUBLIC, in the above passage, is the following note, which in wit and humour does not fall short of Mr. Southey's "Tract on the Madras System":—

'Some participle passive in the diminutive form, *eruditulorum natio*¹⁹ for instance, might seem at first sight a fuller and more exact designation: but the superior force and humour of the former become evident whenever the phrase occurs, as a step or stair in the climax of irony.... [...] Likewise, I would point out to the reader's attention the marvellous predominance at present of the words, Idea and Demonstration. Every talker now-a-days has an Idea; aye, and he will demonstrate it too! A few days ago, I heard one of the READING PUBLIC, a thinking and independent smuggler, euphonise the latter word with much significance, in a tirade against the planners of the late African expedition: "As to Algiers, any man that has half an IDEA in his skull must know, that it has been long ago dey-monstered, I should say, dey-monstrified," &c. But the phrase, which occasioned this note, brings to my mind the mistake of a lethargic Dutch traveller, who, returning highly gratified from a showman's caravan, which he had been tempted to enter by the words LEARNED PIG, gilt on the pannels, met another caravan of a

¹⁹In an unintended irony, The Examiner actually misprints Coleridge's elaborate latinate neologism as "eruditorum natio" (7: 125; see 6: 36).

similar shape, with the READING FLY on it, in letters of the same size and splendour. "Why, dis is voonders above voonders," exclaims the Dutchman, takes his seat as first comer, and soon fatigued by waiting, and by the very hush and intensity of his expectation, gives way to his constitutional somnolence, from which he is roused by the supposed showman at Hounslow, with a "*In what name, Sir, was your place taken? are you booked all the way for Reading?*"—Now a Reading Public is (to my mind) more marvellous still, and in the third tier of "Voonders above voonders.'" (7: 126)

Hazlitt abjures detailed commentary: "A public that could read such stuff as this with any patience would indeed be so," he remarks, confident that the "public" will find Coleridge's attempt at wit more self-evidently offensive than humorous. Unlike the "fashionable literature" with which it competes, Coleridge's discourse is shown to be unable to survive the transition from drawing-room "banter" to full public circulation. Though the story of the "lethargic Dutchman" might have residual appeal for the nationalist prejudices of Britons in all classes, the joke fails in a public text because it harnesses such prejudices on behalf of a series of overt and unguarded class slurs directed against the new majority of British readers. From the association of the new literacy with criminality (in the example of the "thinking and independent smuggler"), to the equation of the contra-natural abilities of the "PIG" and the "FLY" with those of the "Reading Public," Coleridge's class-based "wit and humour" is exposed as a product of either sycophancy or bigotry; in either case, his credibility as a lay preacher is seriously undermined,

not only in the present sermon but in those he proposes to address to more "promiscuous audiences."

Even the "Reading Public," however, would not expect a lay sermon to compete with journalism in the quality of its satire. By contrast, The Examiner itself was the first to admit in its September preview that Coleridge's true forte lay in "the world of enchantment" conjured up by the lyric flights of his conversation. The crux of this sequel review, therefore, lies in proving that the "talk" it described as suitable for "the Conversion of Constantine, or Raphael's Assembly of the Just" is indeed reduced to "nonsense" when converted into print. Hazlitt's approach to this challenge is to present as his final "specimen" of Coleridge's text the peroration to the lay sermon proper in which Coleridge summarizes his argument with a lyric paean to the power of "an IDEA," followed by a brief and "melancholy comment" on "what ... is achievable by the human understanding without this light." By thus quoting the final two paragraphs of the sermon as the conclusion to his own review, Hazlitt sustains the impression of critical fairness and decorum, if not at the same time catering to an emergent taste among middle-class readers ("of clerkly acquirements") for such resonant flights of lyrical prose. Yet Hazlitt's principal aim remains that of satiric deflation, and this he accomplishes in large part by strategic juxtaposition. As in the opening sequence of the review, where a pair of quotations drawn from disparate elements of the text uncovers damaging

contradictions, so here the subversive pressure exerted by Coleridge's sardonic remark just quoted that "[e]very talker nowadays has an *Idea*; aye, and he will demonstrate it too!" works to unravel the authority of his own "*Idea*" of "an IDEA," turning his lyric afflatus on the subject into pure performance without meaning. Worse still, the possibility thus opened that there exists no transcendental referent for the "IDEA" conjured up by this performance reduces Coleridge's final "melancholy comment" on "the labour of the foolish" into a jarringly ironic comment on his own text. The double effect of this final passage—of its lyric appeal and its inversion to bathos—requires quotation in full. This will serve to make clear how on the one hand Hazlitt now refrains from interpolation—adding only two italicized emphases—and in this way allows this flight of the "gladdened preacher" to take rhetorical wing. On the other hand, in his terse yet efficient framing remarks, he recalls the terms of his September preview in order to reinforce an over-riding context of criticism and satire:

To conclude this most inconclusive piece of work, we find the distant hopes and doubtful expectations of the writer's mind summed up in the following rare rhapsody. 'Oh what a mine of undiscovered treasures, what a new world of power and truth would the Bible promise to our future meditation, if *in some gracious moment one solitary text of all its inspired contents* should but dawn upon us in the pure untroubled brightness of an IDEA, that most glorious birth of the godlike within us, which even as the light, its material symbol, reflects itself from a thousand surfaces, and flies homeward to its parent mind, enriched with a thousand forms,

itself above form, and still remaining in its own simplicity and identity! O for a flash of that same light, in which the first position of geometric science that ever loosed itself from the generalizations of a groping and insecure experience, did for the first time reveal itself to a human intellect in all its evidence and in all its fruitfulness, Transparency without Vacuum, and Plenitude without Opacity! O! that a single gleam of our own inward experience would make comprehensible to us the rapturous EUREKA, and the grateful hecatomb of the philosopher of Samos: or that vision which, from the contemplation of an arithmetical harmony, rose to the eye of Kepler, presenting the planetary world, and all their orbits in the divine order of their ranks and distances; or which, in the falling of an apple, revealed to the ethereal intuition of our own Newton the constructive principle of the material universe. The promises which I have ventured to hold forth concerning the hidden treasures of the Law and the Prophets will neither be condemned as paradox, or as exaggeration, by the mind that has learnt to understand the possibility that the reduction of the sands of the sea to number should be found a less stupendous problem by Archimedes than the simple conception of the Parmenidean ONE. What, however, is achievable by the human understanding without this light may be comprised in the epithet *κενόσπουδοι*; and a *melancholy comment on that phrase would the history of the human Cabinets and Legislatures for the last thirty years furnish!* The excellent Barrow, the last of the disciples of Plato and Archimedes among our modern mathematicians, shall give the description and state the value; and, in his words, I shall conclude:—

Aliud agere, to be impertinently busy, doing that which conduceth to no good purpose, is, in some respect, worse than to do nothing. Of such industry we may understand that of the Preacher, "The labour of the foolish wearieth every one of them."

A better conclusion could not be found for this Lay-Sermon: for greater nonsense the author could not write, even

though he were expressly inspired for the purpose. (7. 126-7; Hazlitt's emphasis)

Thus Hazlitt appropriates Coleridge's own final words to convenient effect, abstaining from further comment as if "*the labour of the foolish*" has wearied even its own most indefatigable critic. In so doing, of course, Hazlitt once again trusts that the context of political and cultural criticism established by the rest of the review will render this final "specimen" of Coleridge's prose more self-evidently nonsensical than rhetorically compelling. Certainly Coleridge's decision to turn suddenly from a dazzling exercise in the lyric sublime to a "melancholy comment" on the "*labour of the foolish*" serves Hazlitt's purpose well, providing a ready-made structural echo of his own parting comments in the September preview, where the "beatific vision" of Coleridge's "talk" was turned suddenly into the bleak prospect of printed "nonsense." Within the terms of the present review, moreover, the charge of "nonsense" is justified by implication in a number of ways: by Coleridge's appeal to *a priori* ideas in defiance of Lockean empiricism; by his condescending rejection of "what is achievable by the [mere] human understanding without this light" in contrast to his own implicit possession of it; by the political self-contradiction inherent in using "*the history of human Cabinets and Legislatures for the last thirty years*" to illustrate "*the labour of the foolish*," thus suggesting, in effect, that the policies of the Kings' Ministers and the unreformed Tory Parliament are conducive "to no good

purpose"; and finally by recourse to learned "cant" and mystical paradox which, under the eye of those it is intended to exclude, and under the influence of the hermeneutics of suspicion, is easily converted into a parody of itself, vulnerable indeed to Coleridge's own sardonic remarks about "every talker now-a-days [who] has an *Idea*; aye, and [who] will demonstrate it, too!"

Yet in placing Coleridge's peroration at the very conclusion of his own review, Hazlitt takes the risk that it will in fact exceed its brisk reduction to "nonsense," and appeal directly and powerfully to the interests and desires of his own readers. Coleridge, after all, was among the "*strong minds*," and this "specimen" of his prose is indeed a "rare rhapsody." Beyond the intended sarcasm of this last epithet, for example, lurks the exotic "other" of archetypal inspiration, recalling perhaps the dithyrambic singing of the "Abyssinian maid" that arrested the closure of the review of Christabel. Moreover, as Klancher demonstrates in his study, the specifically "middle class" reading audience of the nineteenth century was forming at this very time around precisely the sort of writing exhibited in Coleridge's peroration—energetic "arguments on the powers of the mind" that "drive[] a florid 'poetic diction' into the very texture of argumentative prose" (52-3). Like other writers in this medium, Coleridge works in this passage at the very edges of language and syntax, demonstrating at once his own possession of the "light" so passionately invoked, and inviting his readers to identify in

their own minds a similar experience of "godlike" subjectivity that will become the catalyst of a new sense of intellectual and cultural authority.

As compelling as this invitation may be, however, it must be emphatically rejected, in Hazlitt's view, as an illusion. And if the final passages of his review left any doubt in his readers' minds as to the reasons for this rejection, Hazlitt quickly followed up "Literary Notices. No. 21" with yet another review of The Statesman's Manual, this time the letter from "SEMPER EGO AUDITOR" examined at the very outset of this study. Appearing only two weeks later, this letter, we recall, contains a similar balance of lyric and satiric elements, linked once again to the contrast between Coleridge's "great powers" as a speaker and the loss of these powers "to all common sense upon paper." But this balance is further clarified in "AUDITOR"'s letter by reiterating the difference between Coleridge's past and present discourse, a difference crucially defined by politics, and by the uses to which Coleridge's homiletic skills are put in specific historical contexts. Thus the Shrewsbury sermon of 1798 was also rhapsodic in its power, as impressive to the "plain, dull, dry understanding" of "AUDITOR" as the very "music of the spheres." Yet this verbal music did remain accessible to his "common sense" precisely because it was aligned, rather than misaligned, with the "good cause":

That sermon, like this sermon, was upon peace and war; upon

church and state—not their alliance, but their separation—on the spirit of the world and the spirit of Christianity, not as the same, but as opposed to one another. (7: 128)

"The face of nature," he goes on ruefully to recall, "had not then the brand of JUS DIVINUM on it."

In the end, then, for both romantic visionary and post-enlightenment critic, it is the "light" that confers authority on the "gladdened preacher." Yet from the perspective of Coleridge's vigilant "AUDITOR," such authority is realized only when this light illuminates politics and history as well as individual minds, and only when—like the sun "labouring pale and wan through the sky, obscured by thick mists"—it comes to resemble an "emblem of the good cause" (7: 129). When this happens, the words of the preacher may indeed seem to conjure the very "music of the spheres" (7: 129). But when this light is eclipsed by "the brand of JUS DIVINUM," then all the preacher's "genius and eloquence" become "little better than a deception," and, while his sermons are quite "lost to all common sense upon paper," even his much-vaunted talk becomes merely "*vox et preterea nihil*" (7: 129).

Chapter Five

"The Exercise of Public Opinion":

Hazlitt's Edinburgh Review of The Statesman's Manual

The letter from "AUDITOR" was an integral part of Hazlitt's response to The Statesman's Manual, sharpening the rhetorical point of his Examiner "Notices" in January 1817, while reappearing in August 1819 as the dazzling coda to a three-part review-sequence of this sermon at the very centre of his Political Essays (7: 114-129). Yet this epistolary review was far from Hazlitt's final word on The Statesman's Manual. In the same week of January 1817 that he saw it published in The Examiner, Hazlitt sent off an entirely different "political essay" to Francis Jeffrey of the Edinburgh Review, this time a full-length, fifteen-page review-article designed to match the gentrified tastes and blue-chip politics of the nation's most influential periodical. It is a measure of Hazlitt's ascendancy within the "Opposition" press at this time that Jeffrey accepted this article without delay, and inserted it into the belated December 1816 edition of the Edinburgh, so that it appeared (with relative speed) on February 24, 1817.¹

Needless to say, such a review proved the decisive factor in this particular contest for cultural authority. Not only did it

¹Morning Chronicle 24 Feb 1817; Houghton (456) records the 14th, but the advertisements in both the Chronicle and the Times on this date state "In a few days will be published"

appear in the pages of the mighty Edinburgh Review—and close on the heels of Moore's heavy "quizzing" of Christabel in the previous edition—but it went unchallenged by any correspondingly positive notice in the Quarterly, as if the Tory press silently acquiesced in the Edinburgh's negative verdict.² Moreover, a coincidence of timing and content ensured that this final review of The Statesman's Manual received maximum public exposure and influence. Written amidst the seething political tensions leading up to the re-opening of Parliament on January 28 (tensions that issued in such landmark events as the "Convention of Delegates for Reform" and an attack on the Regent's carriage³), this review was published just as the new Parliament began debate over a slate of reactionary legislation that included the suspension of Habeas Corpus.⁴ Though the Opposition Whigs were vastly outnumbered in the House of Commons (and the Suspension Bill passed quickly into

²Indeed, as White notes, Coleridge sent presentation copies of both The Statesman's Manual and A Lay Sermon to his erstwhile friend Southey at the Quarterly requesting the favour of a review, yet "when Southey's library was sold, the copies of the Lay Sermons were still uncut" (xxx).

³Delegates from Hampden Clubs all over the country met on January 22 with Cobbett, Hunt, and other radical leaders to produce a unified petition for Reform with half a million signatures. This achievement, however, was nullified at a blow by the stone or bullet that smashed the Regent's carriage-window on January 28. Possibly instigated by *agents provocateurs*, this event was the catalyst for the new Parliament's agenda of reaction and repression. (Thompson 619-20, 636-40; White Waterloo 148-59).

⁴In addition to the suspension of Habeas Corpus, a "Seditious Meetings Act" made all "reforming Societies and Clubs" illegal and gave local magistrates the power to prohibit any meeting over 50 (Thompson 639). Most important for Hazlitt, political writers could now be detained under the warrant of a Secretary of State (White Waterloo 157).

law on March 4), the Edinburgh Review still led an Opposition press that dominated the formation of opinion within the public sphere at large. Even the rival Quarterly acknowledged this to be true: in an edition that appeared shortly before the Edinburgh,⁵ Robert Southey unleashed a thunderous, fifty page jeremiad against "Parliamentary Reform," declaring it the product of the "increased power which has been given to public opinion by the ... prodigious activity of the press" (Quarterly 16.31: 272). Though Southey's immediate object was the radical press epitomized by Cobbett's two-penny Register, he includes "Mr. Examiner Hunt" and even "the Caledonian Oracle" itself in the swath of his tireless reprobation (248, 261). "We have laws ... against poisoning the minds of the people," Southey declares. "Why are not these laws rendered effectual and enforced?" (275).

In the context of a debate over the suspension of Habeas Corpus, such threats in the mouthpiece of government opinion loomed large indeed. Hazlitt had thus harnessed the prodigious cultural authority of the Edinburgh Review at the very moment when this authority was sharply foregrounded as both an object of political debate and as a crucial counterweight to the reactionary majority in the House of Commons. What is more, of the three articles addressing issues of the crisis in this pivotal edition of the Edinburgh, Hazlitt's came closest to refuting Southey's clamant demands for censorship and repression. Where the other two articles tackled such issues as "The Commercial Distresses of

⁵On February 11 ("Published This Day," Times 11 Feb 1817).

the Country" and "The Catholic Question,"⁶ Hazlitt had correctly anticipated the Edinburgh's needs by reorganizing his response to The Statesman's Manual around a timely and impassioned defense of the "freedom of the press" (16: 106). By turning back Coleridge's own conservative strictures on the "READING PUBLIC" and its "articles of largest consumption," Hazlitt's essay served as a propitious retort to Southey and the Quarterly as well, boldly arguing for the continued expansion of the public sphere to include "the labouring classes," and for the unfettered "exercise of public opinion" as an indispensable "control and counter-check" on the forces of "corruption, servility, superstition, and tyranny" (16: 106, 113).

Yet this effect was achieved, paradoxically enough, by softening the explicitly political content of his source materials in the Examiner. In sharp contrast with "Literary Notices. No. 21," for example, Hazlitt virtually drops the charge of apostasy in this review, while his pivotal treatment of "*Jus divinum*" is reduced—perhaps by Jeffrey—to a mere passing reference. In these changes can be read the more or less subtle cost of Hazlitt's access to the pages of the Edinburgh Review. For at this level of debate, and by contrast with Southey, Coleridge was a political non-entity: to the Edinburgh he was at best a minor

⁶Edinburgh 27 (December 1816): 373-390 and 310-338; by John Allen and Henry Brougham respectively (Houghton 456). Other articles in this edition included reviews by Leigh Hunt of Nott's Surrey and Wyatt, and by Brougham of Byron's Childe Harold III.

literary phenomenon, a "Lake School" satellite of Wordsworth whose pretensions to "genius" were in irritating conflict with the enlightenment tastes of the nation's leading periodical. This, certainly, had been the import of Moore's late satire of the Christabel volume, in which Coleridge's collection of fragments is dismissed as "one of boldest experiments yet made on the patience or understanding of the public"—beneath even "the other productions of the Lake School" in its recourse to "the unmeaning or infantine," to "extravagance and incongruity," and to "raving" under "the effects of [an] anodyne" (Reiman A: 473, 469, 472).

Thus in revising his Examiner materials to match the agenda of the Edinburgh, Hazlitt foreshortens his emphasis on Coleridge's past political writings, and instead expands and intensifies his rebuttal of Coleridge's present "contempt" for the "reading public" (16: 112). In effect, then, Hazlitt's reformist politics are now skilfully subsumed into a new contrast he develops in this review between two incompatible models of cultural authority: between "the principle of Catholic dictation," on the one hand, implied by Coleridge's system of exclusions based on class and intellect; and the liberal "diffusion of free inquiry" on the other, dating (in Hazlitt's account) to the Protestant Reformation, but now championed by such enlightenment organs of "public opinion" as the Edinburgh Review (16: 105). These central passages of the essay are in turn framed by a satiric performance carefully aligned with Moore's review, in which, for example, the

paean to "light" quoted at the end of "Literary Notices. No. 21" is replaced by the "flowery meadow" passage of the "gladdened preacher," in order to echo Moore's charge of the "unmeaning or infantine" among members of the "Lake School" (16: 114). Yet here again (as we have now perhaps come to expect), Hazlitt's bantering reduction of Coleridge's lyrical art is far more subtle and ambivalent than Moore's blunt disparagement. By retitling this passage "MR. COLERIDGE'S DESCRIPTION OF A GREEN FIELD," for example, Hazlitt develops a new image of Coleridge as the aged Falstaff "babbl[ing] of green fields" (16: 100), an apotheosis of the Shakespearian sublime that invokes a figure Hazlitt was soon to describe with intense approbation as "the most substantial comic character that ever was invented."⁷

This comparison with Falstaff first appears in the opening sequence of the review, where it underscores the comic, rather than ironic, "absurdity" of Coleridge's lay sermon on the "Distresses" (16: 100). That is, in place of "specimens" illustrating Coleridge's unintentional lapses into political self-contradiction (as in the opening of "Literary Notices. No. 21"), Hazlitt draws instead on his September preview to present a lay preacher constitutionally indisposed to write "one word to the purpose or on the subject"—because he is none other than the sleeping poet of "Kubla Khan" and "The Pains of Sleep":

Our Lay-Preacher, in order to qualify himself for the office

⁷In Characters of Shakespeare's Plays, published July 1817 (4: 277). See Jones for evidence that Hazlitt had written the passage on Falstaff (in the essay "Henry IV") as early as September 1816 (256-7).

of a guide to the blind, has not, of course, once thought of looking about for matters of fact, but very wisely draws a metaphysical bandage over his eyes, sits quietly down where he was, takes his nap, and talks in his sleep—but we cannot say very wisely. He winks and mutters all unintelligible, and all impertinent things. Instead of inquiring into the distresses of the manufacturing or agricultural districts, he ascends to the orbits of the fixed stars, or else enters into the statistics of the garden plot under his window, and, like Falstaff, 'babbles of green fields': instead of the balance of the three estates, King, Lords, and Commons, he gives us a theory of the balance of the powers of the human mind, the Will, the Reason, and—the Understanding: instead of referring to the tythes or taxes, he quotes the Talmud; and illustrates the whole question of peace and war, by observing, that 'the ideal republic of Plato was, if he judges rightly, to "the history of the town of Man-Soul" what Plato was to John Bunyan:'—a most safe and politic conclusion! (16: 100-1)

Where the urgency of crisis and an ethos of empiricism has defined the norm of debate to be "matters of fact," then Coleridge's willingness, like Falstaff, to entertain the apparently "impertinent" is readily satirized. In these circumstances Coleridge's lyric transcendence of history is easily rewritten as the culpable evasion of history. Thus his bid for cultural authority—his attempt "to qualify himself for the office of guide to the blind"—is disqualified by his own apparent blindness to the most pressing "matters of fact" in February 1817: "the distresses of the manufacturing and agricultural districts"; the shifting balance of political power between "King, Lords, and Commons"; the "tythes and taxes"; and "the whole question" of the

transition from "war" to "peace." Instead, Hazlitt suggests, Coleridge has turned first to the transcendental slumbers that produced "Kubla Khan," and then to the moot and irrelevant distinctions made by German metaphysics between "the Reason, and—the Understanding." The result is a book that is merely "politic" rather than political.

For this same reason, however, Hazlitt must abandon the claim that Coleridge was ever an effective political writer, or that he is now to be rejected as a "modern apostate." Instead, and in pointed contrast with Southey,

Mr. Coleridge is not one of those whom he calls 'alarmists by trade,' but rather, we imagine, what Spenser calls 'a gentle Husher, Vanity by name.' If he does not excite apprehension, by pointing out danger and difficulties where they do not exist, neither does he inspire confidence, by pointing out the means to prevent them where they do. We never indeed saw a book that could do less good or less harm. (16: 101)

This last assertion comes as something of a surprise after Hazlitt's vehement rebuttal of the book in The Examiner, and raises the question why the Edinburgh itself would devote fifteen pages to refuting a book with neither agency nor authority. The answer, as reformulated for this review, lies in Coleridge's *potential* agency, a position Hazlitt adopts, perhaps, to nullify in advance any forthcoming second lay sermon that might be any more forcefully or cogently argued:

Perhaps it is well that [Mr. Coleridge] is so impracticable as he is; for whenever, by any accident, he comes to practice, he is dangerous in the extreme. Though his opinions are neutralized in the extreme levity of his

understanding, we are sometimes tempted to suspect that they may be subjected to a more ignoble bias; for though he does not ply his oars very strenuously in following the tide of corruption, or set up his sails to catch the tainted breeze of popularity, he suffers his boat to drift along with the stream A man who exercises an unlimited philosophical scepticism on questions of abstract right or wrong, may be of service to the progress of truth; but a writer who exercises this privilege, with a regular leaning to the side of power, is a very questionable sort of person. There is not much of this kind in the present Essay. It has no leaning any way. All the sentiments advanced in it are 'like the swan's down feather—

'That stands upon the swell at full of tide,
And neither way inclines.' (102-3)

This sudden turn from a subtle analysis of the hidden politics of "philosophical scepticism" to the complete acquittal of "the present Essay" from any such tendency marks one of the principal differences between Hazlitt's treatment of The Statesman's Manual in the Edinburgh and The Examiner. Within the logic of the present review, Hazlitt's aim is preventative: he will "inspire confidence" in the authority of the Edinburgh by "pointing out danger and difficulties" where they potentially exist in such writers as Coleridge, while at the same time "pointing out the means to prevent them"—in this case, by rejecting the present sermon (and any such future sermons) as the ineffectual product of a passive and essentially lyrical mind, a "swan's down feather" resting with unbearable lightness on the turmoil of distress.

Consistency with this image alone would dictate that Hazlitt's treatment of "*Jus divinum*" in this essay would be

different from that in The Examiner. Yet there are also indications that what Hazlitt changed in this area, Jeffrey further revised. It was part of Jeffrey's general editorial practice to edit and overwrite all essays admitted to the Review, and he would later refer specifically to the "retrenchments and verbal alterations" he had made to this article in particular.⁸ Though by definition undetectable, these silent "retrenchments" were most likely made in those parts of Hazlitt's essay touching directly on political issues, an area already firmly under the control of Brougham and the other Whig ideologues. The evidence is circumstantial: in The Examiner, as we have seen, the crux of Hazlitt's argument on "*Jus divinum*" lay in his willingness to quote freely from Biblical history, laying bare the allegorical implications of a story that Coleridge would only gesture toward, and in so doing, risking sedition with such remarks as "Where God really pulls down and sets up kings, the people need not do it" (7: 121). There is some indication that Hazlitt meant to repeat this strategy in the Edinburgh, if only to preserve the logic of the inferences regarding "Catholic dictation" he draws from Coleridge's text. Ironically enough, however, the Edinburgh is ultimately as unwilling as Coleridge to make explicit use of The

⁸In a signed footnote to Hazlitt's review of the Biographia Literaria in August 1817, Jeffrey records that "... I was not even aware of the existence of the Lay Sermon itself, when a review of it was offered me by a gentleman in whose judgement and talents I had great confidence I therefore accepted his offer, and printed his review, with some retrenchments and verbal alterations, ... in January last (Reiman A: 494; Jackson 318).

First Book of Kings. Thus what in The Examiner was the capstone of Hazlitt's argument, and a pivotal illustration of Coleridge's insidious "powers of mental refinement," is reduced in the Edinburgh to a minor example of Coleridge's penchant for unmeaning self-contradiction.

We are certainly lead to expect more: the relevant passages from Coleridge's text are introduced in such a way as to suggest the commencement of a significant, if broadly satiric, phase of the review-essay:

So far Mr. Coleridge has indulged himself in 'a preparatory heat,' and said nothing about the Bible. But now he girds himself up for his main purpose, places himself at the helm, and undertakes to conduct the statesman to his desired haven in Scripture prophecy and history. (16: 112)

Then, after generous quotations of the two passages that begin "But do you require some one or more particular passage from the Bible...?" and "But I refer to the demand...", the Edinburgh simply repeats Coleridge's gesture of evasion, falling back on commentary that depends more on hyperbolic assertion than on logical demonstration:

Let the reader turn to the first book of Kings, in which the parallel passage to our own history at the present crisis stands, according to our author, so alarmingly conspicuous; and he will not be surprised that Mr. Coleridge found himself 'treading on glowing embers.' The insidious loyalty or covert Jacobinism of this same parallel, which he declines drawing on account of its extreme applicability, is indeed beyond our comprehension, and not a less 'curious specimen of psychology,' than the one immediately preceding it, in which he proves the doctrine of *divine right* to be revealed in an especial manner in the Hebrew Scriptures.

We should proceed to notice that part of the Sermon, where the orator rails at the public praises of Dr. Bell, [etc.].... (16: 112)

The Edinburgh's readers, of course, were as unlikely as Coleridge's to actually "turn to the first book of Kings." Thus by contrast with the Examiner's politically pointed Bible lesson, the Edinburgh is willing to rest content with the trope of incomprehensibility, and with such unsubstantiated rhetorical gestures as "extreme applicability." It is the brisk turn to a new topic with the modal "We should proceed to notice..." that suggests Jeffrey may well have hastily condensed a much lengthier treatment of this issue, relying on the (misworded) allusion to the "psychological curiosity" of "Kubla Khan" to provide thematic links with the rest of the review.

Whatever the means, one important result of this reduction of the politics of "*Jus Divinum*" to a minor role in the essay is to allow a new focal point to emerge in Hazlitt's vigorous defense of the "Reading Public." Here the "dangers" of Coleridge's potential agency as a political writer are substantiated with reference to the ominous implications of his present work for the "freedom of the press" and the literary marketplace (16: 106). In effect, then, Hazlitt's contestation of The Statesman's Manual in these central passages of the review depends on a new interpenetration of political, literary, and commercial concerns, a reflection in turn of a larger trend in public debate by which these different contexts of struggle had become virtually indistinguishable under

pressure of the "Distresses" crisis. Within days, for example, this trend would be epitomized in the scandal that would erupt around Southey's radical play Wat Tyler, with its embarrassingly brisk sales among the labouring classes.⁹ In the present instance, Hazlitt takes advantage of the opportunity to update his Examiner material by specifically foregrounding the plight of the labouring classes, and locating in their economic and political distress a metaphor for a less obvious but equally reactionary programme of cultural disenfranchisement adumbrated in such texts as The Statesman's Manual.

He begins by probing the contradiction inherent in Coleridge's claim that the Bible, though ideally accessible "to all conditions of men, under all circumstances," should nevertheless be read in different ways by different classes of readers. To unpack this contradiction, Hazlitt seizes on a distinction Coleridge himself makes in the very opening paragraph of the sermon between Protestant and Catholic forms of interpretative authority. The ascendancy of Protestantism in Britain is, for Coleridge, the logical result of a recognition "that the interment of such a treasure [as the Bible] in a dead language must needs be contrary to the intentions of the gracious Donor" (Coburn 6: 5; Howe 16: 103). In Catholicism, by contrast, the "sophistry" of "a jealous priesthood" has made "the very excellence of the Giver ... a reason for withholding the gift,"

⁹See chapter 6 below *passim*.

resulting in "a complete system of delusion" (6: 5). Hazlitt's strategy is to suggest that the struggle between these two forms of authority is far from over, and that in fact the confidence with which Coleridge identifies his own practice with the Protestant model is in itself delusory:

[t]he truth is, as it appears to us, that the whole of this Sermon is written to sanction the principle of Catholic dictation, and to reprobate that diffusion of free inquiry—that difference of private, and ascendancy of public opinion, which has been the necessary consequence, and the great benefit of the Reformation. (16: 105)

The opposition between Catholicism and Protestantism presents for Hazlitt the archetype of an on-going struggle for cultural authority between reactionary and libertarian forces within the British public sphere—between individual authors, on the one hand, who anxiously aim to control and curtail the "diffusion of free inquiry" and, on the other, the "ascendancy" of an anonymous, and ideally democratic, "public opinion."

In this part of the review, however, the mere assertion of polemical "truth" is not enough. To make good his inversion of Coleridge's terms, Hazlitt juxtaposes the opening paragraph of the sermon with Coleridge's key statement several paragraphs later on regarding the "sufficiency" of the Bible among the lower classes:

'The humblest and least educated of our countrymen [Coleridge writes] must have wilfully neglected the inestimable privileges secured to all alike, if he has not himself found, if he has not from his own experience discovered, the sufficiency of the Scriptures in all knowledge requisite for a right performance of his duty as a man and as a Christian.

Of the labouring classes ... more than this is not demanded, more than this is not generally desirable. "They are not sought for in public counsel, nor need they be found where politic sentences are spoken. It is enough if everyone is wise in the working of his own craft: so best will they maintain the state of the world." (16: 103-4)

To this, Hazlitt retorts:

Now, if this is all that is necessary or desirable for the people to know, we can see little difference between the doctrine of the Lay Sermon, and 'that complete system of papal imposture, which inters the Scriptures in a dead language, and commands its vassals to take for granted what it forbids them to ascertain.' If a candidate is to start for infallibility, we, for our parts, shall give our casting vote for the successor of St. Peter, rather than for Mr. Coleridge. The Bible, we believe, when rightly understood, contains no set of rules for making the labouring classes mere 'workers in brass or stone,'—'hewers of wood or drawers of water,' each wise in his own craft. Yet it is by confining their inquiries and their knowledge to such vocations, and excluding them from any share in politics, philosophy, and theology, 'that the state of the world is best upheld.' Such is the exposition of our Lay-Divine. Such is his application of it. (16: 104)

What Hazlitt uncovers in this commentary is what Coleridge elides: that the access to Scripture authorized by Protestantism inevitably entails access to literacy, a literacy that cannot in fact be confined to Scripture alone. Thus Coleridge's attempt to contain literacy—to insist on the "sufficiency of Scripture," to countenance only those readings that reinforce vocational as well as moral "duty," to claim that the self-evident aim of such reading is to maintain "the state of the world"—all of these gestures betray his unexpected affinity with "papal"

authoritarianism. Hazlitt, for his part, lays claim to an alternative authority, one that is heard in the plural and anonymous "we" of institutionalized "public opinion" with its own set of imperatives: "The Bible, we believe, *when rightly understood*, contains no set of rules for making the labouring classes mere 'workers in brass or stone....'" (emphasis added). This is the rhetoric of Enlightenment libertarianism, driven by a unique historical moment to refurbish the slogans of the Puritan Revolution for the purposes of nineteenth-century class struggle. In this view, both the Bible ("when rightly understood") and the literacy required to read it are more likely to be transformative than conservative, fitting the labouring classes for "free inquiry" beyond Scripture, and beyond "mere" labour itself. This is the true British Protestantism, Hazlitt implies, willing to risk offering "the people" their "share in politics, philosophy, and theology," thus enfranchising them to become fellow producers—and consumers—of "public opinion."

The review then proceeds to reinforce this point with mounting vehemence, a multiple iteration that stands out both for its intensity and for its apparent freedom from editorial intervention. This, it would seem, was the task Jeffrey was pleased to have Hazlitt perform: to deliver a resounding defense of the "Reading Public" and of "the ascendancy of public opinion" in a rhetorical crescendo appropriate to the climactic urgency of the "Distresses" debate within society as a whole. Immediately

following the commentary given above, for example, Hazlitt offers two vivid illustrations of the scene of instruction in Coleridge's text. The first of these depicts the drama of "Catholic dictation," in which can be discerned an allegory of the dashed political hopes of "the poor and illiterate" at the hands of the reactionary backlash:

Great as is our contempt for the delusions of the Romish Church, it would have been still greater, if they had opened the sacred volume to the poor and illiterate; had told them that it contained the most useful knowledge for all conditions and all circumstances of life, public and private; and had then instantly shut the book in their faces, saying, it was enough for them to be wise in their own calling and to leave the study and interpretation of the Scriptures to their betters—to Mr. Coleridge and his imaginary audience. (16: 104)

Hazlitt then refigures Coleridge's "imaginary audience" in terms that re-echo the bitter indignation of "SEMPER EGO AUDITOR":

The Catholic Church might have an excuse for what it did in the supposed difficulty of understanding the Scriptures.... But Mr. Coleridge has no excuse; for he says, [the Scriptures] are plain to all capacities, high and low together. "The road of salvation," he says, 'is for us a high road, and the way-farer, though simple, may not err therein.' And he accordingly proceeds to draw up a provisional bill of indictment, and to utter his doubtful denunciations against us as a nation, for the supposed neglect of the inestimable privileges, *secured to all alike*, ... when, all of a sudden, his eye encountering that brilliant auditory which his pen had conjured up, the Preacher finds out, that the only use of the study of Scriptures for the rest of the people, is to learn that they have no occasion to study them at all—'so best shall they maintain the state of the world.' If Mr. Coleridge has no

meaning in what he writes, he had better not write at all: if he has any meaning, he contradicts himself. (16: 104)

In this "brilliant auditory" Hazlitt draws together Coleridge's Unitarian congregation of the 1790s with the vast crowds of 1816 desperate for words of encouragement regarding "privileges secured alike to all." Yet the scene of instruction has shifted, once again, from oral to written discourse, and for Hazlitt it is this shift that bears the loss of Coleridge's authority, transforming a potential for "brilliant" oratorical power into the unwitting self-contradictions of a "genius" who "[lays] himself out in absurdity" (16: 100).

To justify these harsh images, Hazlitt then needs only to produce the passage in which Coleridge himself dismisses this "brilliant auditory" by naming it, with fastidious hauteur, that "promiscuous audience," "THE READING PUBLIC." This passage, we recall, contains some of Coleridge's most explicit statements regarding patterns of consumption in the literary marketplace, including his satiric depiction of the circulating libraries and the periodical press as the two "public ordinaries of Literature." The "READING PUBLIC," according to Coleridge, is a "misgrowth of our luxuriant activity," a "vast company" that has "multiplied exceedingly" and has "waxed proud." Moreover, "if the average health of the consumers may be judged of by the articles of largest consumption; if the secretions may be conjectured from the ingredients of the dishes that are found best suited to their

palates," then he must "utter [his] *Profaccia* with a desponding sigh"—a sigh articulated in the élitist apothegm "From a popular philosophy and a philosophic populace, good sense deliver us!" (Coburn 6: 35-8; Howe 16: 105)

Hazlitt's response to this passage in the Edinburgh draws on the operative distinction between "Catholic dictation" and (radical) Protestantism to help structure one of the clearest definitions, as well as one of the most forceful demonstrations, of the cultural authority claimed by anonymous review criticism during the "Distresses" crisis. "If it were possible to be serious after a passage like this," Hazlitt begins,

we might ask, what is to hinder a convert of 'the church of superstition' from exclaiming in like manner, 'From a popular theology, and a theological populace, Good Lord deliver us!' Mr. Coleridge does not say—will he say—that as many sects and differences of opinion in religion have not risen up, in consequence of the Reformation, as in philosophy or politics, from 'the misgrowth of our luxuriant activity'? Can any one express a greater disgust, (approaching to nausea), at every sect and separation from the Church of England, which he sometimes, by an hyperbole of affectation, affects to call the Catholic Church? There is something, then, worse than 'luxuriant activity,'—the palsy of death; something worse than occasional error,—systematic imposture; something worse than the collision of differing opinions,—the suppression of all freedom of thought and independent love of truth, under the torpid sway of an insolent and selfish domination, which makes use of truth and falsehood equally as tools of its own aggrandizement and the debasement of its vassals, and always must do so, without the exercise of public opinion, and freedom of conscience, as its control and counter-check. For what have we been labouring for the last three hundred years? Would Mr. Coleridge, with impious hand, turn the world 'twice

ten degrees askance,' and carry us back to the dark ages? Would he punish the *reading public* for their bad taste in reading periodical publications which he does not like, by suppressing the freedom of the press altogether, or destroying the art of printing? He does not know what he means himself. Perhaps we can tell him. He, or at least those whom he writes to please, and who look 'with jealous leer malign' at modern advantages and modern pretensions, would give us back all the abuses of former times, without any of their advantages; and impose on us, by force or fraud, a complete system of superstition without faith, of despotism without loyalty, of error without enthusiasm, and all of the evils, without any of the blessings, of ignorance. (16: 105-6)

Here, then, is "the exercise of public opinion," at once defined and displayed at the height of its discursive and admonitory power. Such a performance suggests, among other things, that although Coleridge's text may remain otherwise "unintelligible" to the Edinburgh Review, it has nevertheless warranted this utmost assertion of the Edinburgh's cultural authority at a crucial moment in public debate.

Yet as this passage unfolds, The Statesman's Manual becomes the occasion to strike out at much larger targets: at "those whom [Mr. Coleridge] writes to please"—those, in other words, who are in a position to underwrite the authority of such reactionary texts, and who might, given the mood of the present Ministry, go so far as to "punish the *reading public* for their bad taste in reading periodical publications which [they] do not like, by suppressing the freedom of the press altogether, or destroying the

art of printing." The hyperbole here thus becomes a register of the rhetorical extremes to which public debate had been driven by the exigencies of the "Distresses" crisis. Against the looming threat of the suspension of Habeas Corpus, this impassioned plea for "freedom of thought and the independent love of truth" in the nation's leading periodical may be regarded in fact as a courageous "exercise of public opinion" in the form of a "control and counter-check" to the alarming trend toward reaction and repression symbolized by Coleridge's contempt for the "Reading Public" and its "objects of largest consumption"—and indeed fully realized in Southey's simultaneous threats and expostulations in the Quarterly.

In these circumstances, The Statesman's Manual presents an important case precisely because of its potentially attractive evasions and obfuscations. Against these, the Edinburgh asserts the blunt certainties of "common sense": "[Mr. Coleridge] does not know what he means himself. Perhaps we can tell him." Then, on behalf of the "Reading Public," the Edinburgh proceeds to clarify the high stakes of ideological struggle: the struggle between what is here stigmatized as "the torpid sway of an insolent and selfish domination" on the one hand, and the (anonymous) "exercise of public opinion, and freedom of conscience, as its control and counter-check" on the other. What saves this opposition from the charge of mere partisanship is the frank admission of the risks involved in its positive terms. "Freedom of thought" is indeed a

"luxuriant activity" of enlightenment that may well entail the possibility of "misgrowth," whether it be in the form of "occasional error," or of the uncertainties of an unregulated "collision of differing opinions." The alternative, however, is a mistaken attempt to recover the imaginary certainties and ideal unanimity of the "dark ages": a reversionary quest made romantically attractive in such poems as Christabel, but when lived out by the lower classes in the form of economic distress, political repression, and cultural disenfranchisement, offers only "the palsy of death" and "all the evils, without any of the blessings of ignorance."

At the very nadir of post-war economic distress, then, and just as the accompanying political crisis was reaching a watershed in the suspension of Habeas Corpus, Hazlitt succeeded in mounting this expression of reformist cultural politics at the very highest level of public debate. While offering the Edinburgh a convenient sequel to Moore's brisk satire of Christabel, he nevertheless far exceeds Moore's review in both ideological scope and cogency by clarifying the context of cultural struggle in which both Christabel and The Statesman's Manual wielded potential—even palpable—agency. In this way, too, he helps to justify the Edinburgh's otherwise arbitrary rejection of Coleridge's authority, while mounting a stirring redefinition of the journal's own mandate within British culture.

At the same time, Hazlitt establishes continuity with Moore's

review by framing these central passages with a satiric "quizz" of "the general character of Mr. Coleridge's intellect" (16: 102). Even here, however, he seems intent on out-performing Moore in the range and subtlety of his satire. Drawing heavily on his September preview for the article's opening sequence, Hazlitt embellishes several of Moore's stock conceits, working them into a fresh display of journalistic "banter" designed at once to describe Coleridge's unconventional discourse and, paradoxically, to "fall[] a little into the style of it" (16: 100). This ironic undertow resurfaces in the conclusion of the review, where once again a substantial "specimen" of Coleridge's most impassioned discourse is reprinted with minimal commentary (16: 114). Ironically titled "MR COLERIDGE'S DESCRIPTION OF A GREEN FIELD," this passage is intended ostensibly to speak for itself in illustration of the preacher-poet's "laborious foolery" (16: 114). As we shall see, however, this species of "foolery" is ultimately left as ambiguous in its implications as the character of Falstaff itself to which it alludes.

It was Peacock who first characterized Moore's review of Christabel in the Edinburgh as a tissue of "ready cut and dried wit," a series of "excellent jokes" endlessly repeated as a substitute for true wit (104). These jokes include the bottomless resources of the bathos ("Forth steps Mr. Coleridge, like a giant refreshed from sleep"), the soporific effect of the work ("The lines given here smell strongly ... of the anodyne"), or its unintelligibility ("we are wholly unable to divine the meaning of

any portion of it") (Peacock 104; Reiman A: 469, 472, 471). While Hazlitt, too, draws on the perennial currency of such jests (particularly in his use of the word "nonsense"), his satiric strategy is to move well beyond mere iteration to entertain with fresh displays of invention. This may be illustrated by his adaptation of the fourth "joke" in Peacock's list: "that the author is insane" (104). Moore, we recall, concludes his review by describing the Christabel volume as "a mixture of raving and driv'ling," a vivid exaggeration of his earlier remark that

[m]uch of the art of the wild writers consists in sudden transitions—opening eagerly upon some topic, and then flying from it immediately. This indeed is known to the medical men, who not unfrequently have the care of them, as an unerring symptom. (Reiman A: 473, 470)

In this way, Moore retails the stock conceit, embellishing it only as far as libellous innuendo by alluding here to Coleridge's residency at Highgate with Dr. Gillman. Hazlitt, by contrast, eschews the merely personal to develop instead a series of virtuoso variations on the theme, a string of similes to describe this discursive "symptom" that are at once diverting in themselves, and unexpectedly imitative of Coleridge's own practice:

An attentive perusal of this Discourse is like watching the sails of a windmill: his thoughts and theories rise and disappear in the same manner. Clouds do not shift their places more rapidly, dreams do not drive one another out more unaccountably, than Mr. Coleridge's reasonings try in vain to 'chase his fancy's rolling speed.' His intended conclusions have always the start of his premises,—and they keep it:

while he himself plods anxiously between the two, something like a man travelling a long, tiresome road, between two stage coaches, the one of which is gone out of sight before, and the other never comes up with him; for Mr. Coleridge himself takes care of this; and if he finds himself in danger of being overtaken, and carried to his journey's end in a common vehicle, he immediately steps aside into some friendly covert, with the Metaphysical Muse, to prevent so unwelcome a catastrophe. In his weary quest for truth, he reminds us of the mendicant pilgrims that travellers meet in the Desert, with their faces always turned towards Mecca, but who contrive never to reach the shrine of the Prophet: and he treats his opinions, as his reasons for them, as lawyers do their clients, and will never suffer them to come together lest they should join issue, and so put an end to his business. It is impossible, in short, to describe this strange rhapsody, without falling a little into the style of it (16: 100)

With this last remark, Hazlitt allows his witty description of Coleridge's writing to double as inadvertent parody, as a "falling" into Coleridge's desultory "style" that illustrates even as it satirizes. In this way, he moves well beyond Moore's two-dimensional assertion of "raving and driv'ling," not only in the eclectic range of his allusions, but in his willingness to complicate the strict distinction between critic and author on which Moore's satire depends. On the one hand, Coleridge's "strange rhapsody" is here granted a certain mesmeric power that is "impossible" to resist, while on the other, the critic's own drive for satiric closure is forestalled as he is seemingly forced to mimic Coleridge's comical delays and deferrals. Of course, there is more at play here than just mimicry, as we know from the

September preview, where Hazlitt's similes and appositions also "rise and disappear" and "drive one another out" quite as rapidly and unpredictably—and with the same unstoppable fecundity—as Coleridge's own thoughts and opinions are said to do. Thus we find critic and author converging unexpectedly at the level of style, as both develop a kind of "rhapsody" to fascinate their readers and to enforce their authority over them.

This moment of identity—however subtle—establishes a subtext of ambivalence in Hazlitt's treatment of style in The Statesman's Manual that works against the grain of the Edinburgh's otherwise magisterial strictures against "the Lake school." This becomes especially apparent at the end of the review, where Hazlitt once again appropriates a passage of striking lyrical intensity to serve as the conclusion to his own article. As in "Literary Notices. No. 21," the ostensive aim is satiric inversion: this final "specimen" of the sermon is quoted to illustrate Coleridge's manic deviance from the norms of enlightenment discourse. Shadowing this purpose, however, is the ironic convergence of reviewer and reviewed at the level of style: the very intensity of Coleridge's prose—whether taken on its own terms or as unwitting self-parody—inevitably enhances the readability of Hazlitt's own text, and to this extent fills the standard function of providing one of the "beauties" of the book under review. Indeed, on this occasion Hazlitt replaces his former selection of the peroration of the lay sermon proper with a

new passage selected from what he calls the "notes," prefaced with the concession (however grudging) that these "notes are better, and but a little better than the text" (16: 113).

At face value, of course, Hazlitt's presentation of the "flowery meadow" passage at the end of his review serves to confirm and reinforce the Edinburgh's caricature of Coleridge as the ineffectual Lake poet of the "unmeaning or infantine" (to recall Moore's terms). By quoting it, moreover, Hazlitt ties together the satiric frames of the review, as this passage has already been adduced at the opening of the review as typical of Coleridge's wilful blindness to pressing "matters of fact":

"Instead of inquiring into the distresses of the manufacturing or agricultural districts, he ... enters into the statistics of the garden plot under his window, and, like Falstaff, 'babbles of green fields'" (16: 100). This allusion to Falstaff, too, seems to echo the jest of madness, for it was on his death-bed that Falstaff "babbl'd of green fields" as he "fumble[d] with the sheets, and play[ed] with flowers, and smile[ed] upon his finger's end" (Henry V 2.3. 14-17).

Yet it is precisely this allusion which strikes a subtle, but countervailing note of pathos. For in an essay on Falstaff written just a month previously, Hazlitt describes him as "the most substantial comic character that ever was invented," in whom "'we behold the fulness of the spirit of wit and humour,'" and with whom we are therefore "not offended but delighted" (4: 277-

79). By setting off Coleridge's passage with the ironically portentous title "MR. COLERIDGE'S DESCRIPTION OF A GREEN FIELD," Hazlitt also gives it a certain idiosyncratic presence, as worthy perhaps of our indulgence as Falstaff's own "boundless luxury of ... imagination" (4: 278).

To consider these contrasting rhetorical effects, then, the conclusion of Hazlitt's review is worth quoting in full:

The notes are better, and but a little better, than the text. We might select, as specimens of laborious foolery, the passage in which the writer defends *second sight*, to prove that he has been unjustly accused of visionary paradox, or hints that a disbelief in ghosts and witches is no great sign of the wisdom of the age, or that in which he gives us to understand that Sir Isaac Newton was a great astrologer, or Mr. Locke no conjurer. But we prefer (for our limits are straitened) the author's description of a green field, which he prefaces by observing, that 'the book of Nature has been the music of gentle and pious minds in all ages; and that it is the poetry of all human nature to read it likewise in a figurative sense, and to find therein correspondences and symbols of a spiritual nature.'

MR. COLERIDGE'S DESCRIPTION OF A GREEN FIELD.

'I have at this moment before me, in the flowery meadow on which my eye is now reposing, one of Nature's most soothing chapters, in which there is no lamenting word, no one character of guilt or anguish. For never can I look and meditate on the vegetable creation, without a feeling similar to that with which we gaze at a beautiful infant that has fed itself asleep at its mother's bosom, and smiles at its strange dream of obscure yet happy sensations. The same tender and genial pleasure takes possession of me, and this pleasure is checked and drawn inward by the like aching

melancholy, by the same whispered remonstrance, and made restless by a similar impulse of aspiration. It seems as if the soul said to herself—"From this state" (from that of a flowery meadow) "hast thou fallen! Such shouldst thou still become, thyself all permeable to a holier power! Thyself at once hidden and glorified by its own transparency, as the accidental and dividuous in this quiet and harmonious object is subjected to the life and light of Nature which shines on it, even as the transmitted power, love and wisdom of God over all fills, and shines through, Nature! But what the plant *is*, by an act not its own, and unconsciously—that must thou *make* thyself to *become!* must by prayer, and by a watchful and unresisting spirit, *join* at least with the preventive and assisting grace to *make* thyself, in that light of conscience which inflameth not, and with that knowledge which puffeth not up."

This will do. It is well observed by Hobbes, that "it is by means of words only that a man becomes excellently wise or excellently foolish." (16: 113-14)

No doubt we are meant to infer from this final statement that Coleridge's words have rendered him "excellently foolish." Yet this formulation is surprisingly ambiguous. Falstaff himself might well be described as "excellently foolish," and (like all of Shakespeare's fools) his witty subversion of social norms lends his "foolery" the very imprint of excellent wisdom.

This ambivalence is further reinforced by the nature of the quotation itself. On the one hand, the passage has clearly been selected to provide self-evident continuity with Moore's caricature of the deranged somnambulist of "Kubla Khan" and "The Pains of Sleep." Of all possible excerpts from The Statesman's Manual, this one alone links the self-consciously lyrical ("the

music of gentle and pious minds," "the poetry of all human nature") with the allegedly bathetic preoccupations of the Lake poets, such as the sleeping infant's "strange dream of obscure yet happy sensations," and Coleridge's fervent desire to become like a "plant," "all permeable to a holier power!" Yet, on the other hand, and unlike the peroration to the sermon proper quoted at the end of "Literary Notices. No. 21," this passage does not of itself invite rebuke by any disingenuous turn from the lyric sublime to a lashing out at the "*labour of the foolish*." Quite by contrast, its theme is humility and "that knowledge which puffeth not up," and though it is certainly vulnerable to Hazlitt's charge of a retreat into mystical piety in the face of political exigency, it is nevertheless quite free of German metaphysical "cant," and presents an accessible and potentially appealing emblem of self-conscious openness to the supra-rational and the numinous. As such, then, and similar to the paeon to the "light" quoted in The Examiner, this passage might well find its own way to those middle-class consumers of periodical literature who, as Klaner notes, were forming into a distinct audience at this time around a taste for such highly-wrought expressions of transcendent subjectivity (51, 53).

In this way, Hazlitt's appropriation of Coleridge's exercise in lyrical prose is far more complex than a merely reductive misreading as "laborious foolery." Behind the arch title and the authoritative "This will do" lies the pathos of the dying Falstaff

betrayed by his erstwhile friend, the king. And beyond Hobbes's stark binary of "excellently wise" and "excellently foolish" lies the possibility that within the nation's largest single reading audience there will be many middle-class readers who will make up their own minds about what Coleridge has achieved in this passage "by means of words only." In this way, Hazlitt concludes his review with yet another sample of Coleridge's rhapsodic style that potentially exceeds the aggressive closure of fashionable satire, and in so doing, prepares the way for the opening lines of his next article in the Edinburgh—in review of the Biographia Literaria: "There are some things readable in these volumes; and if the learned author could only have been persuaded to make them a little more conformable to their title, we have no doubt that they would have been the most popular of all his productions" (16: 115).

Chapter Six

Interrogating the "Romantic Ideology"

Hazlitt, Coleridge and the "Wat Tyler Affair"

Hazlitt's masterly critique of the Biographia Literaria would appear just six months later in August 1817. Yet long before this momentous encounter between the Edinburgh Review and Coleridge's most seminal work in prose, another, less well-known episode intervened to shape the terms of this final confrontation. This was the "Wat Tyler affair" of the spring of 1817: the protracted, sensational public scandal over Robert Southey's long-forgotten jacobin play that became the unexpected catalyst of political, economic, and discursive tensions at the very climax of the "Distresses" debate. The appearance of Wat Tyler (in a pirated edition) on the very day after Southey's clamant denunciation of radicalism in the Quarterly Review laid bare the virulence of the Laureate's own former radicalism in the 1790s—just as the Habeas Corpus act was being suspended to "silence" such dissidence.¹ The resulting controversy ran the gamut of public institutions, from the House of Commons through the Court of Chancery to the burgeoning periodical press, where, in the close-printed columns of The Examiner and The Courier respectively, Hazlitt and Coleridge locked horns over "the nature and purposes of poetry

¹Southey had recommended in his Quarterly article that the government take "effectual means for silencing those demagogues who are exciting the people to rebellion" (16.31: 254).

itself."²

That this encounter between Hazlitt and Coleridge over Wat Tyler has remained almost completely unknown is in itself paradigmatic. Like the affair as a whole, the crucial roles played in it by these two prominent writers have been quietly ignored by a literary history dominated (in Jerome McGann's terms) "by ... Romanticism's own self-representations" (1). Such an event, of course, represents the precise inverse of lyric transcendence, suggesting instead the ineradicable entanglement of "Romanticism" in historically-specific struggles carried on in such "ephemeral" media as anonymous newspaper reviews. One measure of the active marginalization of this event by literary scholarship lies in the number of scholarly articles that have been devoted to its issues and events: since 1817, there have been exactly three, of which only one (published as long ago as 1941) makes any effort to go beyond Wat Tyler itself to the texts it generated in the periodical press.³ Even Byron's memorialization of the affair in such canonical texts as Don Juan and A Vision of Judgement has served only to justify Southey's demotion to the status of a minor poet, allowing the more awkward details of the debate to remain conveniently uncanvassed. One such detail is the fact that Coleridge, unlike Byron, rose to

²Coburn 3.2: 470. All further references to Coleridge's essays on Wat Tyler will be by volume and page number only.

³See Hoadley (1941), Manogue (1982), Foot (1988). Raimond treats the play itself as one of Southey's "Early Writings," but only touches briefly on the "affair" it caused in 1817.

Southey's defense, and undertook to prove in the government-sponsored press that both Wat Tyler and the Laureate poems were examples of the disinterestedness of "poetic genius" and the sublime detachment of "the spirit of poetry" from all forms of political or monetary expediency (3.2: 457). Even more thoroughly obscured, of course, has been the fact that Hazlitt quickly seized on Coleridge's contradictions, and in an uncanny anticipation of "post-romantic" criticism, performed his own critical interrogation of the "Romantic Ideology" as it was in the very process of being constructed. Answering Coleridge's Burkean rhetoric with the Paine-ite plain speech of The Examiner, Hazlitt summarily rejects the cult of transcendent genius, insisting instead on the inseparability of literary and political—and hence ideological—practice.

There can be little doubt, of course, that the play Wat Tyler illustrates just such a conjunction of the literary and the political. Written in 1794 when Southey was aflame with the anti-royalist principles of the French Revolution, its use of the fourteenth-century Peasant's Revolt as a bold allegory for jacobin aspirations of the 1790s was so unmistakable that no one at that time would risk publishing it. In the climactic confrontation between Wat Tyler and King Richard II, for example, the king asks Tyler why he chose rebellion instead of such "milder means" as petitions—because, he cozens, "The throne will always listen to petitions." To this the rebel martyr retorts:

... King of England!

*Petitioning for pity is most weak,
 The sovereign people ought to demand justice.
 I killed your officer, for his lewd hand
 Insulted a maid's modesty; your subjects
 I lead to rebel against the Lord's anointed,
 Because his ministers have made him odious:
 His yoke is heavy, and his burden grievous.[...]
 You sit at ease in your gay palaces,
 The costly banquets court your appetite,
 Sweet music soothes your slumbers; we, the while,
 Scarce by hard toil can earn a little food,
 And sleep scarce shelter'd from the cold night wind: [...]
 The Parliament for ever asks more money:
 We toil and sweat for money for your taxes:
 Where is the benefit, what food reap we
 From all the councils of your government? [...]
 What boots to us your victories, your glory?
 We pay, we fight, you profit at your ease....
 Think you we do not feel the wrongs we suffer?
 The hour of retribution is at hand.*

And tyrants tremble,—mark me, King of England. (42-44)

For this speech, Tyler is promptly murdered by the treacherous Walworth. Such scenes rendered the play too "utopian and injudicious" even for Southey's contacts within radical circles (Manogue 110). The printer Ridgway, for example, with whom Southey left the manuscript in 1794 when visiting him in Newgate Prison, finally decided not to publish it, and the manuscript was laid aside and forgotten (Manogue 110).

Its sudden appearance in 1817 in the midst of the Habeas Corpus debate was no less politically motivated. Though the identity of the manuscript's owner in 1817 still remains a mystery,⁴ his intentions (and those of the publishers Sherwood,

Neeley, and Jones) were manifest: to embarrass the Laureate with the stark contrasts between this jacobinical play and his scarcely anonymous jeremiad against "Parliamentary Reform" that had just appeared in the Quarterly Review (Manogue 111, 105). From the very opening lines of this latter article, Southey could be now construed as unwittingly incriminating himself: "If the opinions of profligate and of mistaken men may be thought to reflect disgrace upon the nation," he begins, "... it might verily be said that England was never so disgraced as at this time" (16.31: 225). These disgraceful "men," of course, are the writers of "Ultra-reformist" tracts, plays, and newspapers of identical sentiments with Wat Tyler, whom Southey now regards as the very "apostles of anarchy" because they "impos[e] upon the ignorance of the multitude, flattering their errors and inflaming their passions, [and thus] exciting them to sedition and rebellion" (16.31: 226). Southey goes on to quote with disdain various such publications, including, ironically enough, a recent petition from the labourers of London:

The resolutions from Bishopsgate assert, that the people are 'goaded with an army of remorseless tax-gatherers, urged on by the cravings of a rapacious, oppressive, and imbecile administration:' they remind us that our history exhibits the patriotic sons of England as 'dismissing and chastising those kings and counsellors, whose profligacy and arbitrary attempts had rendered them obnoxious;' they say that 'the

⁴Though William Wintherbotham held the original manuscript in 1817, Sherwood, Neeley, and Jones published from another pirated manuscript, whose owner they refused to disclose (Manogue 111).

most profligate expenditure among the people's servants, from the lowest to the highest rank, and an unfeeling disregard of the people's wants and miseries, are among the lightest subjects of complaint.'... They say, the said resolutioners of Bishopsgate-ward,—'We claim, we demand, and insist that we have a full constitutional voice in the House of the people.... (16.31: 245-6)

The obvious parallels between this passage and Wat Tyler's demands of the king present just one of the many ways the two texts can be collated to embarrassing effect. For several weeks, then, this was the sport of Southey's political enemies, from sly allusions by the Whig Brougham in Parliament, through the Whiggish Morning Chronicle, to the radical William Hone in his Reformist's Register (Hoadley 81). Yet as long as Wat Tyler remained in its handsome first edition of Sherwood, Neeley, and Jones, priced at 3s 6d, it could circulate only within the upper echelons of the book-buying public, inaccessible to such distressed communities as "the said-resolutioners of Bishopsgate-ward."

A turning-point, however, came with Hazlitt's first intervention in the affair. The Examiner, as we saw in the last chapter, was among Southey's objects of attack in his Quarterly article. Calling Leigh Hunt a "flagitious incendiary" (16.31: 273), Southey lumps The Examiner together with Cobbett's Political Register as reformist publications deserving the strict and immediate attention of the law (16.31: 275). Moreover, "Mr. Examiner Hunt does but blow the trumpet to usher in Mr. Orator Hunt in his tandem, with the tri-color flag before him and his

servant in livery behind" (16.31: 248). The Examiner therefore responded by printing large extracts of Wat Tyler in its edition of March 9, which, at 10d an issue, significantly increased the availability of those passages in Southey's play most likely to excite "sedition and rebellion." These scandalous "Morceau[x]" appeared as part of Hazlitt's "Literary Notices. No. 25" in review of both Wat Tyler and The Quarterly Review. Nothing, perhaps, could better illustrate the complete interpenetration of literary and political discourse at the climax of the "Distresses" crisis than the way this "Literary Notice" brought together for review a political essay and a dramatic poem in an article that itself would eventually be republished among Hazlitt's own Political Essays in 1819 (7: 168-76).

Thus the article begins with an epigraph from Wordsworth—"So it was when my life began, / So is it now I am a man: / So shall it be when I grow old and die. / The child's the father of the man"—which is juxtaposed in turn with these opening lines:

According to this theory of personal continuity, the author of the Dramatic Poem, to be here noticed, is the father of Parliamentary Reform in the Quarterly Review. It is said to be a wise child that knows its own father: and we understand Mr. Southey (who is in this case reputed father and son) utterly disclaims the hypostatical union between the Quarterly Reviewer and the Dramatic Poet, and means to enter an injunction against the latter, as a bastard and imposter. (7: 168-9)

Continuing in this vein, the article becomes a pure example of the "parallelism," a genre of review criticism which had sprung up in

an age of "apostasy,"⁵ and through which Hazlitt and The Examiner become the first to spell out in this case all the most obvious, ironic disparities between the radical play and the reactionary review. It culminates with this breathless catalogue:

We know no other person in whom 'fierce extremes' meet with such mutual self-complacency.... The author of *Wat Tyler* was an Ultra-jacobin; the author of 'Parliamentary Reform' is an Ultra-royalist; the one was a frantic demagogue; the other is a servile court-tool ... the one saw nothing but the abuses of power; the other sees nothing but the horrors of resistance to those abuses: the one did not stop short of general anarchy; the other goes the whole length of despotism; the one vilified kings, priests, and nobles; the other vilifies the people: the one was for universal suffrage and perfect equality; the other is for seat-selling, and the increasing influence of the Crown: the one admired the preaching of John Ball; the other recommends the Suspension of Habeas Corpus, and the putting down of the *Examiner* by the sword, the dagger, or the thumb-screw; for the pen, Mr. Southey tells us, is not sufficient. (7: 170)

For Hazlitt, of course, as for other leading writers in the ascendent Opposition press, the metonymic "pen" not only *had* to be "sufficient" (confronted by a Tory majority in Parliament), but in this case actually was.

Yet in the very week this essay appeared, Parliament passed the suspension of Habeas Corpus, which may go some way to explain the intensity, as well as Paine-ite simplicity, of Hazlitt's rhetorical strategy. The device of the "parallelism" was easy to

⁵Hazlitt names this genre, for example, in his first review of Southey in 1814. Having dispatched the "Laureate's poetical politics" in his "Carmen Triumphale," he notes that "Mr. Southey announces a new volume of *Inscriptions*, which must furnish some curious *parallelisms*" (Morning Chronicle 8 Jan 1814; 7: 27).

grasp, while it admitted of potentially infinite variation. The significance of its deployment here lay in two directions: on the one hand, it catered to a "mode of reading" that lay outside the Examiner's middle-class subscribers in the shared newspapers of the working-mens associations, the circulating libraries, and the village inns—a readership that Cobbett was shortly to abandon for America.⁶ On the other hand, it was a strategy readily adapted to the needs of the outnumbered Whigs in the House of Commons. As Frank Hoadley makes clear in his 1941 article on the affair, it was Hazlitt's Examiner review that inspired the next, remarkable turn of events in this controversy (83). Five days after it appeared, on March 14, 1817, in the context of a heated debate over the Seditious Meetings Bill, William Smith, the Whig M.P. for Norwich, rose to speak in the House of Commons with a copy of Wat Tyler in one coat pocket and the latest issue of the Quarterly in the other. With his eye as much on the newspaper writers in the gallery as on the Tory Ministers opposite, Smith inserted a cunning digression into a defense of his constituents in Norwich, duly reported the next day in all the "parliamentary reports" of the daily papers:

The honourable member then adverted to that tergiversation of principle which the career of political individuals so often presented. He was far from supposing that a man who set out in life with the profession of certain sentiments, was bound

⁶Thompson 639; Jones 271-2. Cobbett's defection is one index of the serious implications of the suspension of Habeas Corpus for reformist writers. With Cobbett's departure, William Hone (publisher of Hazlitt's Political Essays in 1819) became the unofficial leader of radical reform in the press (Thompson 640).

to conclude life with them. ... But what he most detested, what most filled him with disgust, was the settled, determined malignity of a renegado. He had read in a publication (the Quarterly Review), certainly entitled to much respect from its general literary excellences, though he differed from it in its principles, a passage alluding to the recent disturbances, which passage read as follows:—'When the man of free opinions commences professor of moral and political philosophy for the benefit of the public, ... his very breath becomes venomous, and every page which he sends abroad carries with it poison to the unsuspecting reader [...].' With the permission of the House, he would read an extract from a poem recently published, to which, he supposed, the above writer alluded (or, at least, to productions of a similar kind), as constituting a part of the virus with which the public mind had been infected:—

"My brethren, these are truths and weighty ones:

Ye are all equal; nature made you so.

Equality is your birth-right;—when I gaze

On the proud palace, and behold one man

In the blood-purpled robes of royalty, ...

I sicken, and, indignant at the sight,

'Blush for the patience of humanity.'" Wat Tyler.

[The honourable member] could not for a moment suppose that the same individual had written those two passages [hear, hear, hear!] but, if they were written by the same person, he should like to know ... why no proceedings had been instituted against the author... Why... had not those who thought it necessary to suspend the Habeas Corpus Act taken notice of this poem? Why had they not discovered the author of that seditious publication, and visited him with the penalties of the law? (Morning Chronicle 15 Mar 1817; C. Southey 367-369)

Thus adapting Hazlitt's device to the high camp of the British Parliament, Smith creates an extraordinary scene that once again epitomizes the convergence of literary and political discourse at

the height of the "Distresses," and at the highest levels of public debate.

An even more extraordinary scene, however, was enacted just four days later in the Court of Chancery. Perhaps unique in literary history, the Poet Laureate was here desperately seeking an injunction against his one of his own works—and one that was rapidly becoming his greatest market success. With this, the commercial dimension of the Wat Tyler affair met and conjoined with matters of politics and literary genre. Chancery was a Court of Equity, and Southey was seeking "an accounting and surrendering of the profits [of the play], ... the restoration of the copyright, and [an] injunction against further printing, publishing, and selling" (Manogue 111). Yet, strangely enough, for this very reason his injunction was denied. To the amazement of Southey's lawyers—and to a reading public now closely following the case in the daily newspapers—the arch-conservative Lord Chancellor Eldon insisted that "Property, not principle, was the object on which this Court decided." And precisely because the play had been deemed "dangerous, mischievous, and seditious," its copyright could not be protected by Chancery: "... in prior cases on the same subject ... the Court had always acted on the principle of not giving protection to the author of a work which was, or must be represented in a legal sense, as immoral or seditious." As Southey's counsel rose to object, the Lord Chancellor interrupted: "I must again repeat,

that I am not a judge of motives or of conduct, but of property; and shall not interfere where I see I have no right. Injunction refused" (Morning Chronicle 19 Mar 1817). Thus it was that by a technicality of British law, the copyright of a text "calculated to excite a spirit of open rebellion against the Sovereign" was removed, and removed just as the "Distresses of the Country" had created the largest and most receptive audience possible for such a text. Within weeks, some 60,000 copies of Wat Tyler had been sold in a proliferation of ever cheaper editions, making it by far the greatest market success—and by far the most genuinely "popular" work—of any written by the first-generation Lake poets.⁷

It was at this point that Coleridge joined the fray. His intervention was crucial, as it forestalled a potentially disastrous public self-defense that Southey was planning following his defeat in court. Southey had approached The Courier with a highly emotional "open letter" to the M.P. William Smith, but the editors of the Courier—seconded by Southey's closest friends—judiciously advised him to withhold it, and to allow Coleridge instead to take up the rhetorical cudgels. Coleridge, of course, had his own reasons for intervening in the affair. In addition to

⁷Hoadley 85n. The wide dissemination of the play continued up to, and well beyond, a standard 1835 edition in the "Lee's Library for Labourers" series, which, as Hoadley points out, "particularly realised Southey's fears that *Wat Tyler* would be used for propaganda." Thus, while a romanticized literary history has suppressed the affair, Wat Tyler in fact went on to become a classic in the counter-canon of nineteenth-century working class literature.

his memories of a former friendship, he was still seeking a favourable review of his Statesman's Manual in the Quarterly, not to mention of his forthcoming second Lay Sermon.⁸ Further, as Hoadley puts it, Coleridge "must have visualized himself in Southey's position, for the two had been Republicans together, Pantisocrats together, authors of *The Fall of Robespierre* together, lecturers together. Now in the eyes of the world they were Tories together" (87). His defense, then, of "Mr. Southey and Wat Tyler" appeared in four anonymous articles in The Courier over a period of two weeks at the end of March 1817. Out of a number of recurring discursive and rhetorical strategies we may distinguish two general approaches that Coleridge takes to the problem: first, a broad satire of the Opposition press; and second, a deflection of the principal charge of apostasy in a defense of Southey's "poetic genius." Such "genius," in Coleridge's view, was by definition incapable of apostasy because "the nature and purposes of poetry itself" entirely transcend either political or ideological practice (3.2: 470).

In Coleridge's satiric counter-attack on the Opposition press, we witness once again the complete interpenetration of generic, commercial, and political strategies. In it, Coleridge presents a clear-sighted, if rueful, analysis of the broad patterns of political and socio-economic change that were transforming the British social formation. He opens his first

⁸See page 188, footnote 2 above.

article, for example, by calling attention to the crisis of authority inherent in William Smith's use of Parliament as a tool of the media. The reporting of Parliamentary debates in the daily press was still technically illegal, and this Coleridge points out by adopting, with heavy sarcasm, the discourse of reform:

The progress of tyranny, the encroachments upon freedom during the present King's reign, have in nothing been more remarkable than in the publicity permitted to the proceedings in Parliament. [...] Since the French Revolution, the Journalists have freely commented, not always in respectful terms, on the sentiments of the speakers. All this has arisen during an age of tyranny and oppression according to the mob orators of the day. A new aera has now arrived. A Revolution has just been attempted in England; and Parliament is selected as the fit place for proving the inconsistency of the public Journalists! A noble task! Since a Quarterly Reviewer has thus been courageously unmasked, we shall soon find the inconsistency of Weekly Reviewers also demonstrated; and in time the daily press may come under the rod. [...] A dignified task! Hitherto Journalists have endeavoured to place Members of Parliament in the wrong, according to their way of thinking; but now Members of Parliament are to turn the tables, and prove the Journalists in error!.... Sunk will be the Parliament, elevated the Journalists! Such is the implied confession of the ascendancy of the press made by that enlightened statesman and loyal patriot, Mr. William Smith. We thank him for this homage to our calling. (3.2: 449-50)

Though with bitter regret, Coleridge correctly identifies the advent of "a new aera" in the distribution of cultural authority within the bourgeois public sphere that has emerged from the post-war political crisis. With or without Parliamentary reform, "the ascendancy of the press" has engineered a new form of political

agency in the shape of "public opinion," which was now having a tangible impact on the conduct of Parliamentary debate.

What Coleridge also perceives here is that the "reading audiences" of the Opposition press now extended well beyond the boundaries of the bourgeois public sphere. In this case, with or without the universal suffrage demanded by popular radicalism, the agency of the press was shaping public opinion among those Coleridge describes as "the deluded multitude out of doors, the dupes of incendiary demagogues" (3.2: 450). And the Wat Tyler affair has brought these changes into horrifyingly sharp focus. "Is it not strange," inquires Coleridge regarding Smith's quotation of Wat Tyler in Parliamentary debate,

... that he should have selected a passage which appeared to him more particularly calculated to have an effect on the lower orders at the present time, when, by so doing, he must have known, that he should be the means of dispersing it in the course of a week, not only where the Wat Tyler would never have come, but in every alehouse and village over the whole United Kingdom? (3.2: 472)

The irony here, of course, is that Coleridge is availing himself of precisely the same influential medium to which William Smith has paid "homage," an irony evident in Coleridge's admission of "compunction" at joining the struggle over Wat Tyler and in so doing assisting William Smith in "advertising and thus exciting public curiosity about a silly, yet poisonous book" (3.2: 453).

The implied difference, of course, is that such newspapers as The Courier, tacitly underwritten by the Tory Ministry, constitute

a legitimate forum for the exercise of journalistic authority, and like Southey's article in the Quarterly (advertised here as "the best exposition of the present state of the country which has yet appeared"), they are of a fundamentally distinct moral as well as discursive character (3.2: 454). This is a point Coleridge endeavours to make in an elaborate parody of the Opposition press in his third essay in the series, which is presented as an article that has been supposedly *rejected* by the fictitious "Westminster or Parliamentary Review" on account of its "style and principles" (3.2: 466). Unfortunately, Coleridge's control of the satiric mode is less than sure, for in an article intended to distinguish itself by its superior "style and principles," he resorts to the very *ad hominem* mud-slinging that he otherwise professes to deplore—passages that even his first editor, his daughter Sara Coleridge, could not bring herself to reprint (3.2: 467n, 468n). William Smith, for example, is characterized as

... grave and solid from his infancy, like that most *useful* of domestic animals, which, even as a *piggie*, never runs but with some foreseen and prudent motive, whether it be to the mast, the grains, or the wash-tub; and at no time a slave to the present moment, never grunts over the acorns before him without a *scheming* squint, and a segment at least of its wise little eye, cast toward those on one side, which his neighbour is enjoying, or may be about to enjoy. (3.2: 469)

In general, however, Coleridge is successful in distinguishing his essays stylistically by overt signs of learnedness and erudition, in the use of recondite puns, etymologies, and mythological allusions, and in the elaborately

subordinated syntax associated with Edmund Burke. The result is a prose that defines its reading audience by offsetting the material accessibility of the newspaper with a style discursively inaccessible to all but the relatively small circle of university educated gentlemen and "men of letters." The best example is found in Coleridge's most direct attack on Hazlitt himself. Alluding to Smith's adoption of the debating strategies of The Examiner, Coleridge notes that "It might be a service to certain persons who let themselves be used as conducting-pipes of slander pumped up from the cellars and poison-vaults of roguery, if we hinted at the *etymological* appropriateness of the term *diabolical* as applied to this transaction" (3.2: 454). After a remarkably convoluted series of puns on these terms, he continues:

It is some small proof of our previous respect for Mr. W. S., that we were actually surprised at his condescending to *sing base* to the Hunts, Hazlitts, and Cobbetts in this asinine *Io Triumpe* of detraction. The exultation is pardonable in *them*. For what can be more natural than for such creatures to fling out and wax wanton proud on the *supposed* discovery, that a man of Southey's genius and high rank in Literature, had once thought like themselves? It was in truth no small honour to *them*, that even the boy Southey, even at his private writing desk, should have but *sported* (and that in a *Dramatis Personae* consisting of Rioters and Mob-Preachers) with provocatives, labelled, perhaps, but never administered to the same low appetites, for which in right *prosing earnest*, and in the full vigour of their incapacity, *they* have been so long the public purveyors? (3.2: 455)

Here the horizontal struggle for authority between middle-class men of letters is recast as a vertical struggle between those, on

the one hand, of a "high rank in Literature"—exemplified by Southey but including the present writer and even William Smith—and, on the other, such non-university educated "creatures" of the "cellars and poison-vaults of roguery" as the "Hunts, Hazlitts and Cobbetts" whose "low appetites" confuse the mere sporting with "provocatives" at one's "private writing desk" with the actual administration of appropriate opiates to the masses.

This caricature of the reformist press is then taken one step further in a brilliant piece of mythopoeia designed to reinforce Southey's "high rank in Literature" by casting it as the sublime transcendence of Apollo himself:

We might fancy, that as a long-eared virtuoso is said to have found in a bed of thistles the flute of Apollo, left behind by him, when he ascended to his own natural place to sit henceforward with all the Muses around him instead of the ragged cattle of Admetus; so one of his descendants of the present day, snuffing at a forgotten Pan-pipe of Southey's "made of green corn," had rendered it vocal. What wonder, if delighted at hearing the blast of his own nostrils modulated, so sweetly he "nosed the element" in triumph, sawing the air in one long-continued bravura without accompaniment, till not an Ass in the whole neighborhood but left mumbling its prickly fare to bray in chorus. (3.2: 455-6)

Here Wat Tyler is no longer political "poison" but rather the forgotten "Pan-pipe" of a once-bucolic Laureate who has since achieved the apotheosis that has lifted him to his "proper place" among the Muses, far from the "prickly fare" of political struggle. It is a sign of Coleridge's own metamorphosis of "rank" that he feels free here to place the same ass's-head on the

radicals of the present day that the Anti-jacobin Review had unceremoniously bestowed on Southey and himself—back in the pantisocratic days when the Laureateship would have hardly been the place where they would have located the "natural place" of Apollo and the Muses.⁹

This allusion also serves as a transition from Coleridge's satire on the Opposition press to his defense of Southey's "poetic genius." In general, Coleridge's procedure is to deflect the charge of apostasy by displacing the discourse of politics, here with mythological allusion, and elsewhere with the discourses of ethics and of religion. "Sinners make the best Saints," for example, is the moral of one lengthy passage (3.2: 451). But more important for our purposes is his central exculpation of Wat Tyler itself.

Had we been ignorant of the author's name, [posits Coleridge] and known only that the Wat Tyler had been written at the first dawn of the French Revolution ... we fully believe that the following would have been our conclusion. The writer, we should say, was a very young man of warm feelings and active fancy, full of glorious visions concerning the possibilities of human nature, because his lofty, imaginative and innocent spirit "had mistaken its own virtues for the average character of mankind." We should have seen that the vivid, yet indistinct images, in which he had painted to himself the evils of war and the hardships of the poor, proved that neither the forms or the feelings were the result of real observation. The product of the Poet's own fancy, they were

⁹Indeed, as Holmes notes (83), Coleridge's first printed allusion to Pantisocracy was in "Address to a Young Jack-Ass" (Morning Chronicle 9 Dec 1794), later satirized by both the Anti-jacobin and Byron in English Bards, where Coleridge is "The bard who soars to elegize an ass" (line 263, Byron 116).

impregnated, therefore, with that pleasurable fervour which is experienced in all energetic exertions of intellectual power.— But as to any serious wish, akin to reality; as to any real persons or events designed or expected; we should think it just as wise, and just as charitable, to believe that Quevedo or Dante would have been glad to realise the horrid phantoms and torments of imaginary oppressors, whom *they* beheld in the Infernal Regions—*i.e.* on the slides of their own magic lanterns. (3.2: 459)

Here Apollo among the cattle of Admetus is exchanged for a "young man ... who had mistaken his own virtues and powers for the average character of mankind." This, then, is the "Poet," whose "lofty, imaginative, and *innocent* spirit" is fundamentally detached from "real persons or events designed or expected" or even "real observation." Employing a remarkably mechanical model for the imagination in the newly-invented "magic lantern,"¹⁰ Coleridge represents Southey's play as the result, not of hopes for a republican revolution, but of an entirely private and ecstatic union of the "products of the ... fancy" with the "pleasurable fervour" of "intellectual power."

If this is the case, then it follows that such a private drama of desire is susceptible to misuse by those who are neither poets nor intellectuals. To assist the less-gifted of his readers in The Courier in this dilemma, Coleridge offers two possible approaches to Wat Tyler: read with an educated appreciation for irony, it is merely an "admirable burlesque of the pompous extravagances of the demagogues of the day," or, better, it is a

¹⁰See Johnson 152-4.

moral tale of chivalry, arising from Southey's attachment to Spenser, and "the indignation, which ... the outrage on Wat Tyler's Daughter had kindled in him" (3.2: 453, 460). At most, it is a piece "designed to be read by imagined oppressors, not by the oppressed" (3.2: 458). But when misdirected beyond the boundaries of its appropriate reading audience to those incapable of deciphering these subtleties, it becomes a "poisonous book" that may be "used to the very worst purposes among the ignorant, distressed of the lower class" (3.2: 453). The charge of apostasy as well as sedition is thus deflected from the disinterestedness of poetic genius onto the politically interested use of this manuscript as an instrument of persuasion at a moment of national crisis:

Not the thoughts or the feelings as generalities (and the Poet's characters, the historic not less than the factitious in name, as well as in reality, are mere personifications of general laws), but the misapplication of them to particular times and persons, for immediate purposes—not the *writing* but the deliberate *publication*, constitutes the criminality. (3.2: 471)

We can discern in this defense something of the dichotomy between symbol and allegory, between the rebel Wat Tyler as a "mere personification of [a] general law," transcending history and ideology, and "the misapplication" of this symbol as an allegory for "particular times and persons, for immediate purposes."

Coleridge's line of argument here depends heavily on overlooking the fact that Southey himself had tried very hard indeed to have Wat Tyler published in 1794. Even this, however,

could be put down to Southey's youth at the time, for in the end, the entire controversy over his supposed apostasy boils down, in Coleridge's view, to a "compleat ignorance of the whole form, growth and character of a Poet's mind, in early youth and during the first *growing pains* of poetic genius, and its essential difference from the minds of those ... in whom money is an innate idea" (3.2: 469). The Whig William Smith is Coleridge's example of such a philistine, and after the rather crude caricature of the politician-capitalist as a "piggie" (quoted above), he continues:

We contend that such fortunate persons are not calculated to be judges of states of being utterly alien from their own; nor can they conceive how entirely a young Poet, in all his poetic moments, lives in an *ideal world*—how remote, both from his own intentions and from the nature and purposes of poetry itself, is any *direct* influence on the actions of men. On the sub-stratum of their general feelings he is to act by general truths, general emotions—the grandeur of liberty, compassion for the oppressed, indignation against the oppressors, are as natural to him, when these are his subject, as fidelity, loyalty, the majesty of law, and devotion, even to the death, for friend, or King, or Country, are, in his next Poem, perhaps. (3.2: 470-1)

This is the core of Coleridge's defense, and a formative moment in what McGann calls the "Romantic Ideology." The forceful conjunction of literary and political practice, symbolised by the introduction of Wat Tyler into Parliament, forces Coleridge into making explicit the "essential difference" between the "Poet" and the politician, as well as between "the nature and purposes of poetry itself" on the one hand, and any activity designed to have

a "direct influence on the actions of men" on the other. The Poet, and his poetry, inhabit an "ideal" world that is grounded in such "general truths, general emotions" that, with perfect indifference, he can move from poetic subject to poetic subject among such ahistorical polarities as "indignation against ... oppressors" and "devotion, even to the death for ... King or Country."

For this reason, then, even the Laureate's pension and annual butt of sack can be construed as a symbol of "honour" rather than "love of gain." After all, as Coleridge quite correctly points out, Southey could make "thousands, where he makes hundreds" if only he had become a "Journalist in London" instead of the reclusive Laureate. Southey's "honour" nevertheless does have certain ideological implications, and far from avoiding these, Coleridge embraces them with Burkean fervour:

Those who hate the Government in Church and State, naturally enough wish to make all public offices disgraceful; and, in particular, they attempt to render those ridiculous which are merely of an elegant nature, and ornamental to the Crown. Mr Southey has the courage to hold one of these, evidently for the sake of honour, not from the love of gain, and it is this which exasperates his opponents. ... for galled they are to the quick, by seeing men of great talents, extensive information, experience in the world, by the world esteemed, proud of the trappings of Royalty. Such occurrences are fatal to their views. They spread a grace around the Throne, they inspire a reverence for it; they contributed to preserve that sacred awe which was the other day in St. James's Park, trodden down by the hoofs of the Swinish multitude. (3.2: 452)

The ragged cattle of Admetus and the Asses of the radical press have been here transmuted into a far more insidious, and numerous "creature." It would seem that, according to this writer for the Courier at least, at a time when the Regent's carriage is vulnerable to the attacks of this "swinish multitude,"¹¹ the "Throne" becomes indeed the "proper place" for the Muses of poetic genius to assist in "preserving that sacred awe" for an institution that since the defeat of the French Revolution has been restored to apparently universal "legitimacy."

Needless to say, Hazlitt had a somewhat different view of the matter. And in what would have been a widely anticipated article entitled "The Courier and 'The Wat Tyler,'" he set out to make this abundantly clear. Appearing in The Examiner of March 30, 1817, immediately following the third of Coleridge's essays, this article was not part of the "Literary Notices" series, though it begins with the same characteristic admixture of literary, political, and satiric strategies:

Doth not the appetite alter? A man loves the meat in his youth, that he cannot endure in his age. Shall quips and sentences, and these paper bullets of the brain awe a man from the career of his humour? —*Much Ado about Nothing*.

Instead of applying for an injunction against *Wat Tyler*, Mr. Southey would do well to apply for an injunction against Mr. Coleridge, who has undertaken his defense in *The Courier*. If he can escape from the ominous patronage of that gentlemen's pen, he has nothing to fear from his own. (7: 176)

¹¹See note 3, page 188 above: the Regent's carriage was attacked on its way to open Parliament in late January.

With this, Hazlitt delivers a well-aimed "paper bullet." The opening "quip" from Shakespeare manages to cut through the intensity of the entire controversy, while nevertheless registering its displaced violence. If indeed "paper bullets" are the official ordinance in this war of words, then success will go to those whose pens are most "sufficient." To this end, Hazlitt's adopts the shorthand of Coleridge's "ominous patronage," conjuring for his Examiner readers the entire matrix of obfuscation and contradiction satirized in previous reviews, as well as the witty image of Southey forced to seek a second injunction just to stanch the flow of what is elsewhere in the article dubbed Coleridge's "maudlin methodistical casuistry" (7: 178).

Yet if there is to be discursive violence in this affair, it is to be traced, in Hazlitt's view, to Southey himself:

The best thing for Mr. Southey (if we might be allowed to advise) would be for his friends to say nothing about him, and for him to say nothing about other people. We have nothing to do with Mr. Southey 'the man,' or even with Mr. Southey the apostate; but we have something to do with Mr. Southey the spy and informer. Is it not a little strange, that while this gentleman is getting an injunction against himself as the author of *Wat Tyler*, he is recommending gagging bills against us, and the making up by force for his deficiency in argument! (7: 177)

Against the authoritarian "force" of censorship and repression, Hazlitt and The Examiner wield the more democratic weapon of superior rhetoric. At the same time, in response to the violent polarization of political debate, a subtle shift has taken place in The Examiner's self-positioning. To reinforce its discursive

authority, it now assumes the moral high ground of moderation:

What are we to think of a man who is 'now a flagitious incendiary,' (to use the epithets which Mr. Southey applies to the Editor of the *Examiner*) 'a palliator of murder, insurrection, and treason,' and anon a pensioned scribbler of court poetry and court politics? [...] Mr Coleridge indeed steps in to the assistance of his friend in this dilemma, and says (unsaying all that he says besides) that the ultra-jacobinical opinions advanced in *Wat Tyler* were 'more an honour to the writer's heart than an imputation on his understanding?' Be it so. The Editor of this Paper will, we dare say, agree to this statement from disinterested motives, (for he is not answerable for any ultra-jacobinical opinions) as we suppose Mr. Southey will accede to it from mere self-love. [...] Why then not extend the same charitable interpretation to those who have held a middle course between his opposite extremes? We are sure that to be thought a *little less wise and virtuous* than that celebrated person thinks himself, would content the ambition of any moderate man. (7: 177)

Thus The Examiner lays claim to a politics of "the middle course between ... opposite extremes." The "Editor of this Paper"—and his literary reviewer—can safely distance themselves from any discomfiting "answerab[ility]" for "ultra-jacobinical opinions," and this in turn guarantees the moral authority with which they can contest the violent intolerance of "court politics." This rhetoric of the "middle" nevertheless bears with it the metaphoric potential to be recast as a rhetoric of class, by which "any moderate man" might distinguish himself in turn from "lower" and "upper."

In the meantime, however, the pivot upon which Southey's

apostasy—and by implication, that of his defender—turns is the familiar binary of past and present. To this end, Hazlitt's principal point of attack in this review is the emphasis Coleridge places on "the boy Southey" as the author of Wat Tyler, a rhetorical exaggeration by which Coleridge imputes a similar immaturity in all those who continue, like the readers of The Examiner, to subscribe to "the cause of liberty." Hazlitt's answer is to adopt the plainest style of public debate, enumerating what he analyses as Coleridge's principle "assumptions," and providing in each case an answer ranging from the witty to the Juvenalian. An instance of the latter is the second assumption in the series:

2. That Mr. Southey was a mere boy when he wrote Wat Tyler, and entertained Jacobin opinions: that being a child, he felt as a child, and thought slavery, superstition, war, famine, bloodshed, taxes, bribery and corruption, rotten boroughs, Places, and pensions, shocking things; but that now he is become a man, he has put away childish things, and thinks there is nothing so delightful as slavery, superstition, war, famine, bloodshed, taxes, bribery and corruption, rotten boroughs, places and pensions, and particularly, his own.
(7: 181)

Coleridge's reliance on a dichotomy between immaturity and wisdom to account for the difference between Wat Tyler and The Quarterly Review is discovered by Hazlitt not only to underwrite a status quo of injustice, but to discredit by implication all the other achievements of revolutionary romanticism:

Answer. Yet Mr. Coleridge tells us that when [Mr. Southey] wrote *Wat Tyler*, he was a man of genius and learning. That

Mr. Southey was a wise man when he wrote this poem, we do not pretend: that he has ever been so, is more than we know. This we do know, and it is worth attending to; that all that Mr. Southey has done best in poetry, he did before he changed his political creed; that all that Mr. Coleridge ever did in poetry, as the *Ancient Mariner*, *Christabel*, the *Three Graves*, his Poems and his Tragedy, he had written, when, according to his own account, he must have been a very ignorant, idle, thoughtless, person; that much the greater part of what Mr. Wordsworth has done best in poetry was done about the same period; and if what these persons have done in poetry, in indulging the 'pleasing fervour of a lively imagination,' gives no weight to their political opinions at the time they did it, what they have done since in science or philosophy to establish their authority, is more than we know. All the authority that they have as poets and men of genius must be thrown into the scale of Revolution and Reform. Their Jacobin principles gave rise to their Jacobin poetry. Since they gave up the first, their poetical powers have flagged, and been comparatively or wholly 'in a state of suspended animation.' Their genius, their style, their versification, every thing down to their spelling, was revolutionary. [...] Poet-laureates are courtiers by profession, but we say that poets are naturally Jacobins. (7: 181-2)

Here, then, is an alternative ideology of romanticism, one that holds poetic practice in general to be an inseparable function of "political opinion," and one that locates romantic discourse in particular within a politics of resistance. "Authority" can consist only in an evident continuity of principle within the various discursive contexts a given author will engage.

The irony for Hazlitt, and what gives this essay (despite its resolute certainties) an undertone of regret, is the fact that in

the very "romanticism" of poetic genius lies what seems to be a fatal defect of character:

All the poets of the present day have been [Jacobins], with a single exception, which it would be invidious to mention. If they have not continued so, this only shews the instability of their characters, and that their natural generosity and romantic enthusiasm, 'their lofty, imaginative, and innocent spirits,' have not been proof against the incessant, unwearied, importunities of vulgar ambition. (7: 182)

The result is the spectacle of co-opted genius, which Hazlitt describes with a striking counter-mythologization of Southey's apotheosis:

Poor Bob Southey! How they laugh at him! What are the abuse and contumely we are in the habit of bestowing on him, compared with the cordial contempt, the flickering sneers, that play round the lips of his new-fangled friends, when they see the 'Man of Humanity' decked out in the trappings of his prostitution, and feel the rankling venom of their hearts soothed by the flattering reflection that virtue and genius are marketable commodities? (7: 179)

Along with this image of silken malice comes the equally disturbing recognition that poetry is no less entangled in the exchange of "commodities" than it is in the politics of distress.

Yet the stark commodification of "virtue and genius," though regrettable enough, is nothing as compared with its rationalization. This Hazlitt locates in Coleridge's unusual depiction of the poetic imagination as a "magic lantern," in which he reads a dangerous disjunction between mental reality and lived history:

5. Mr Coleridge sums up his opinion of the ultimate design and secret origin of 'the *Wat Tyler*' in these remarkable words:—'We should have seen that the vivid, yet indistinct

images in which he had painted the evils of war and the hardships of the poor, proved that neither the forms nor the feelings were the result of real observation. The product of the poet's own fancy, they' —[viz. the evils of war and the hardships of the poor]—'were impregnated, therefore, with *that pleasurable fervour which is experienced in all energetic exertion of intellectual power*. But as to any serious wish, akin to reality,' [that is, to remove these evils] 'as to any real persons or events designed or expected, we should think it just as wise and just as charitable, to believe that Quevedo or Dante would have been glad to realise the horrid phantoms and torments of *imaginary* oppressors, whom they beheld in the infernal regions—*i.e.* on the slides of their own magic lantern.'

Answer. The slides of the guillotine, excited (as we have been told) the same pleasurable fervour in Mr. Southey's mind: and Mr. Coleridge seems to insinuate, that the 5,800,000 lives which have been lost to prove mankind the property of kings, by divine right, have been lost 'on the slides of a magic lantern'; the evils of war, like all other actual evils, being 'the products of a fervid imagination.' So much for the sincerity of poetry.

Audrey. Is not poetry a true thing?

Touchstone. No.

Would these gentlemen persuade us that there is nothing evil in the universe but what exists in their own imagination, but what is the product of their fervid fancy? That the world is full of nothing but their egotism, their vanity, and their hypocrisy? The world is *sick* of their egotism, their vanity, and their hypocrisy. (7: 184)

With this uncompromising gesture, Hazlitt attempts to nullify the authority of the nascent ideology of romanticism, with its attendant cult of poetic genius. The disinterested "imagination" Hazlitt reads as a mask for a solipsistic and even cynical detachment from "any serious wish, akin to reality," an

"hypocrisy" that is the moral opposite of "sincerity." As a result, the poet's claim to represent in the "products of [his] fancy" an intuition of universal truth is deconstructed as the absurd claim to construct reality itself, an ideology that claims to transcend ideology.

Of course, when such an ideology is indeed marketable, and enlisted to "spread a grace" around social injustice, then the results, from Hazlitt's point of view at least, are at once macabre and apocalyptic. Where Coleridge saw the "swinish multitude," Hazlitt sees the grim pageant of superannuated tyranny:

In courtly malice and servility, Mr. Southey has outdone Herodias's daughter. He marches into Chancery 'with his own head in a charger,' as an offering to Royal delicacy. He plucks out the heart of Liberty within him, and mangles his own breast to stifle every natural sentiment left there: and yet Mr. Coleridge would persuade us that this stuffed figure, this wretched phantom, is the living man. The finery of birth-day suits has dazzled his senses, so that he has 'no speculation in those eyes that he does glare with'; yet Mr. Coleridge would persuade us that this is the clear-sighted politician. Famine stares him in the face, and he looks upon her with lack-lustre eye. Despotism hovers over him, and he says, 'Come, let me clutch thee.' He drinks the cup of human misery, and thinks it is a cup of sack ... And they would persuade us that this non-entity is somebody—'the chief dread of Jacobins and Jacobinism, or quacks and quackery.' If so, Jacobins and Jacobinism have not much to fear; and Mr. Coleridge may publish as many Lay-sermons as he pleases.¹²

¹²Coleridge's second Lay Sermon had appeared ten days earlier ("Coleridge's Second Lay Sermon," Times 21 Mar 1817). No doubt the appearance of this work in the very midst of the Wat

(7: 185-6)

With this stark allegory, we are given the central scene of the Wat Tyler affair, the strange spectacle of a prominent author struggling in Chancery to suppress his own most popular work. Coleridge read this act as an appropriate response to the "criminality" of publishing, without authorization, a private manuscript that had been intended to remain only on the "slides of [Southey's] own magic lantern." Hazlitt reads it as the grotesque suicide of revolutionary romanticism as it transforms itself from an ideology of "Liberty" and "natural sentiment" into an ideology of putative transcendence and spurious autonomy, of "imagination" and "genius."

In either case, this scene represents a pivotal moment in the making of what we now refer to as the "Romantic Ideology." Four months later, the seminal Biographia Literaria would finally appear, in which Coleridge selects Wordsworth and Shakespeare as more plausible illustrations of his "philosophical criticism." Almost simultaneously, Hazlitt would publish his Characters of Shakespeare's Plays, in which would reappear his essay on Coriolanus composed at the height of public rioting in December 1816. In it, and by way of epilogue to this affair, Hazlitt reflects on the "nature of purposes of poetry," radically

Tyler affair explains why Hazlitt did not review it, electing instead to contest Coleridge's higher-profile views on the same issues as they were raised by the struggle over Southey's play. A Lay Sermon attracted only two reviews, one of which was written by Coleridge himself (3.2: 461-5), the other by Henry Crabb Robinson (Jackson 278-84).

qualifying his claim that "poets are naturally Jacobins," and suggesting that, for him at least, the Jacobin romantic may well have been what Wordsworth calls "the gleam / The light that never was / on sea or land":

The cause of the people is indeed but little calculated as a subject for poetry: it admits of rhetoric, which goes into argument and explanation, but it presents no immediate or distinct images to the mind, 'no jutting frieze, buttress, or coigne of vantage' for poetry 'to make its pendant bed and procreant cradle in.' The language of poetry naturally falls in with the language of power..... . [Poetry] is everything by excess... It shows its head turretted, crowned, and crested. Its front is gilt and blood-stained.... It has its altars and its victims, sacrifices, human sacrifices. Kings, priests, nobles are its train-bearers, tyrants and slaves its executioners.—'Carnage is its daughter.' Poetry is right-royal. (4: 214)

Chapter Seven

"History and Particular Facts":

Hazlitt's Review of the Biographia Literaria

While the confrontation between Hazlitt and Coleridge in the pages of The Examiner and The Courier brought into sharp focus the political, economic, and discursive issues raised by the Wat Tyler affair, the affair itself continued to command public attention for another two months of 1817. In April, Southey published his Letter to William Smith, rekindling the flames of controversy with the bold claim that Wat Tyler was not in fact seditious (C. Southey 372). Described by Hoadley as "an autobiography written in tears" (89), this pamphlet sold out four editions by the end of the year, and attracted a series of fierce rebuttals from the Opposition press, including Hazlitt's three-part "Literary Notice" in The Examiner in April (7: 186-208), and Jeffrey's mercilessly detailed analysis in The Edinburgh Review in May (28: 151-174).

One of the most important consequences of this protracted controversy—and one that has (once again) gone completely unnoticed by literary history—is that it established the context of discursive and ideological struggle in which Coleridge's Biographia Literaria was first published, and first read. As is now well known, the Biographia was composed and even printed as early as 1815, but due to a series of complications, it had lain idle for almost two years.¹ Now, in the midst of the Wat Tyler

affair, and during the final, and most acrimonious phase of the "Distresses" crisis, Coleridge found himself in a position to see his long-delayed book through to publication. Moreover, to bring his "literary life and opinions" up to date, he composed a new concluding chapter describing the years 1816 and 1817, and though it does not mention the Wat Tyler affair specifically, this chapter clearly bears the imprint of its disputatious tone and style. Like Southey's Letter, it is a bitterly recriminatory account of the reception of Christabel and The Statesman's Manual, bringing to an emphatic head the critique of anonymous review criticism that runs throughout the Biographia. As we saw at the very outset, Hazlitt is all but named here as the epitome of "personal enmity behind the mask of anonymous criticism," while Jeffrey is similarly arraigned with "indignant contempt" as his "employer and suborner" (7.2: 239, 242). By throwing down this gauntlet, Coleridge asks, in effect, that his entire book be read as a deliberate intervention in the volatile public debates of 1817, adding increased polemical vigour to such elements as his "principles in Politics," his pointed encomium of Robert Southey, his factious review of Maturin's Bertram, and his concern to define (and to model) the cultural function of "absolute genius" (7.1: 5, 31). In this way, too, then, Chapter 24 of the Biographia sets up the final, and most culturally resonant contest for cultural authority between Hazlitt and Coleridge during the

¹See Fogel *passim* and Bate "Introduction" li.

"Distresses" crisis. The confrontation between the two anonymous writers for The Examiner and The Courier was now recast as a full-scale struggle between The Edinburgh Review and the author of a book that was to become the most seminal text in English "romantic" criticism.²

The Wat Tyler affair, then, provides an indispensable context in which to rehistoricize the Biographia Literaria. And undoubtedly our best guide to such a re-reading lies in the book's first and most immediately influential critique: Hazlitt's full-length review-essay in The Edinburgh Review. The significance of this review is recognized even by literary historians who have not fully taken into account its determinant contexts in public debate. Walter Jackson Bate, for example, in his introduction to the Bollingen edition of the Biographia, identifies Hazlitt's article as one of the two most important reviews of the book, the other being John Wilson's satire in Blackwood's Magazine—an article Bate regards as notable only for its "indiscriminate ... savagery" (lxv). By contrast, Hazlitt's review, though "headily perverse in places," is distinguished by its "verve and gusto." In Bate's view, moreover, this article,

... by the greatest English critic of the period except for Coleridge himself, not only typifies what many of the

²This struggle was intensified by the fact that Hazlitt's first book of literary criticism—Characters of Shakespeare's Plays—was published in the same month (July 1817) as the Biographia, and Jeffrey's favourable review of Characters appeared directly adjacent to Hazlitt's review of the Biographia in the same edition of the Edinburgh—as if juxtaposed for polemical effect (28: 472-488).

reviewers seemed to have felt and lacked the talent and confidence to say, but it is also a prototype of most of the adverse criticism of the *Biographia* from Coleridge's time to our own. (lxvi)

Bate thus asserts a double significance for this review, a significance further clarified by its rootedness in the controversies of the "Distresses" period. First, because Hazlitt had already largely formulated his critique of Coleridge's romantic idealism in the struggle over Wat Tyler, he is able easily to "typif[y] what many of the reviewers seemed to have felt and lacked the talent and confidence to say." Second, as in all of his reviews of Coleridge's works during this period, Hazlitt invokes an enlightenment ideology of empiricist "common sense," in conjunction with a particular emphasis in this review on the norm of "history and particular facts" (16: 118), to produce a "prototype" of the various materialist and historicist re-readings of this seminal text in our own day. Indeed, what Bate reads as "headily perverse" in this review is in fact Hazlitt's uncompromising insistence on the entanglement of the Biographia in an historically specific context of political and ideological struggle, a context that Coleridge's book—and especially its concluding chapter—so skilfully and attractively elides.³

Hazlitt takes the theme of his review from a highlighted passage in Coleridge's account of his school-days, in which the author affably admits that "*at a very premature age, even before my fifteenth year, I had bewildered myself in metaphysics, and in*

³See above, "Introduction," pages 5-7.

theological controversy. Nothing else pleased me. History, and particular facts, lost all interest in my mind" (16: 117; Hazlitt's emphasis). Such an admission, of course, plays directly into the public image of the "bewildered" metaphysician either comically or culpably abstracted from material reality—an image that Coleridge otherwise claims to resist, and which Hazlitt is now able to recapitulate with practiced compression:

Mr Coleridge has ever since [his fifteenth year], from the combined forces of poetic levity and metaphysic bathos, been trying to fly, not in the air, but under ground—playing at hawk and buzzard between sense and nonsense,—floating or sinking in fine Kantian categories, in a state of suspended animation 'twixt dreaming and awake,—quitting the plain ground of 'history and particular facts' for the first butterfly theory, fancy-bred from the maggots of his brain—going up in an air-balloon filled with fetid gas from the writings of Jacob Behmen and the mystics, and coming down in a parachute made of the soiled and fashionable leaves of the *Morning Post*,—promising us an account of the intellectual System of the Universe, and putting us off with a reference to a promised dissertation on the Logos, introductory to an intended commentary on the entire Gospel of St John. (16: 118)

Though perhaps "headily perverse," this piece of satiric banter serves to orient its readers to the third in the Edinburgh's series of reviews on the Gothic poet of "suspended animation," and the lay preacher of "Kantian categories." Yet Hazlitt's particular interest here in measuring such attributes against the "plain ground of history and particular facts" is clearly a product of the intervening Wat Tyler debate, which was focussed on

the relationship between historical "truth" and the cultural authority of poetic "genius."

Hazlitt thus treats the Biographia as a public reiteration and development of the ideas Coleridge had already expressed anonymously in The Courier. Turning from satire to analysis, he continues:

[Mr. Coleridge] tells us, with a degree of naïveté not usual for him, that, 'even before his fifteenth year, history and particular facts had lost all interest in his mind.' Yet, so little is he himself aware of the influence which this feeling still continues to exert over his mind, and of the way in which it has mixed itself up in his philosophical faith, that he afterwards makes it the test and definition of a sound understanding and true genius, that 'the mind is affected by thoughts, rather than by things; and only then feels the *requisite* interest even for the most important events and accidents, when by means of meditation they have passed into *thoughts*.' p. [7.1: 31]. We do not see, after this, what right Mr C. has to complain of those who say that he is neither the most literal nor logical of mortals.... If it is the proper business of the philosopher to dream over theories, and to neglect or gloss over facts, to fit them to his theories or conscience; we confess we know of few writers, ancient or modern, who have come nearer to the perfection of this character than the author before us. (16: 118)

This final hyperbole is once again the inverted sign of respect: like the "post-romantic" criticism of our own day, Hazlitt and The Edinburgh are willing to register the significance of the Biographia as a clear epitomization of the ideology of transcendence, in which to "dream over theories" becomes a way to "gloss over facts"—in which pure intellect appears to transcend

the claims of a stubbornly historicist empiricism.

Coleridge's "perfection of this character" is measured against the norm of "history and particular facts" in a number of ways in the review that follows. First, Hazlitt takes on "the school of politics of which Mr Burke [is] at the head" in order to present a politicized counter-narrative to Coleridge's "Literary Life" that he calls the "true history of our reformed Antijacobin poets" (16: 133, 138; emphasis added). Taking as his cue Coleridge's tribute to Edmund Burke in Chapter 10 and his defense of Robert Southey in Chapter 3 (7.1: 191-2; 7.1: 55f), Hazlitt rewrites Coleridge's subtle claims to "consistency" as the repressed narrative of "apostasy," a narrative "gloss[ed] over" by members of the Burkean "school" by the art of the "Apology" and by the disconcerting power of their richly metaphorical style. This leads Hazlitt in the end to pursue on behalf of the Edinburgh a significantly new emphasis in his view of the relationship between literary and political practice: in the conclusion of the review, he claims to abandon any belief in a trustworthy conjunction of poetry and politics, declaring himself in ironic agreement with Coleridge that poets "live in an ideal world of their own; and it would be, perhaps, as well if they were confined to it" (16: 137).

Meanwhile, the norm of "history and particular facts" is used to turn back Coleridge's assault on the authority of review criticism within the literary marketplace. In the review's most striking discursive feature, Coleridge's specific charges against

the Edinburgh are answered with the unprecedented gesture of a long, close-printed footnote signed by Francis Jeffrey, in which he responds *in propria persona* to those "averments in points of fact" he deems to be of a "personal and injurious nature" (Reiman A: 492; Jackson 314). Though Jeffrey's self-defense here is ironically akin in genre to both Southey's Letter and the Biographia itself, Jeffrey claims a higher moral ground by adopting the skilfully unemotional style of the attorney-at-law, and by proving himself unexpectedly willing to doff the "mask" of anonymity in order "to answer [Coleridge] distinctly, and in the first person" (Reiman A: 492). While the "public honour" of the Edinburgh is being thus vindicated by its editor, Hazlitt turns to challenge the rival authority of Coleridge's "philosophical criticism," first by dismissing its philosophical underpinnings as the "wilful and monstrous absurdity" of Kantian metaphysics (16: 123), and then by turning to historical precedents within British literature to ground his own counter-definitions of "the essence of poetry," invoking Milton and Shakespeare to refute the hubristic innovations of self-declared "genius" (16: 135-6).

Finally, and in these circumstances, most surprisingly, the norm of "history and particular facts" lies behind the review's clearly positive evaluation of certain aspects of genre and style in the Biographia. Hazlitt, as we have seen, had already introduced a note of undecidability into his treatment of style in The Statesman's Manual, but this had remained at best a subtle

undertone offsetting the Edinburgh's otherwise unmitigated rejection of Christabel. Here, however, the Biographia is treated with unusual restraint, largely because Coleridge's "poetic levity and metaphysic bathos" is balanced in this instance by a welcome turn to biography and "narrative" (16: 125). "There are some things readable in these volumes," the review begins, "—and if the learned author could only have been persuaded to make them a little more conformable to their title, we have no doubt that they would have been the most popular of all his productions" (16: 115). If Coleridge, that is, had delivered only the "Biographical Sketches" announced in his title, he would have achieved an immediate cultural authority that is denied other generic elements of his book such as Burkean politics and German metaphysics. As we shall see, this public privileging of biography reflects an emergent alternative to Coleridge's bid to transcend history in general and the "Distresses" in particular. Where Coleridge stresses the timeless search for "universal principles," the Edinburgh promotes a new aestheticization of history that serves the interests of a reading audience defined, on the one hand, by its actual immunity to the "distresses" of scarcity and oppression, and on the other by its shared memories, at once bitter and lyrical, of revolution and its aftermath.

Yet it was not until the 1820s that such a reading audience would be fully consolidated by the art of nostalgia. As long as the shadow of the "Distresses" lay over public discourse, middle-

class narratives of revolution and post-revolution would be acrimoniously divided along the fault-line separating "consistency" from "apostasy." As Hazlitt goes on to note in his opening remarks, the Biographia, though "readable" in places, is "[u]nfortunately ... not so properly an account of [Mr Coleridge's] Life and Opinions, as an Apology for them" (16: 115). Coleridge's turn from biography to "Apology," whether in describing his own career or that of such symbolic surrogates as Burke and Southey, signifies for Hazlitt the need to deny a narrative of self-contradiction in response to radical change, leading to a loss of "sincerity"—and hence authority. Coleridge's foremost strategy in this regard is to refer beyond history to a discourse of unchanging "principles" that underwrite the necessary evolution of merely provisional "opinions" (7.1: 190). Undoubtedly his boldest illustration of this process lies in his tribute to the political integrity of Edmund Burke in Chapter 10, a figure who, for the Whigs at least, fully epitomized the phenomenon of self-conscious "apostasy." The recent Wat Tyler debates gave this illustration additional prominence because of the link Coleridge makes in it between Burke's putative "consistency" and his widespread discursive influence. As Hazlitt describes it:

[In the tenth chapter of his literary autobiography,] Mr. C. takes occasion to eulogize the writings of Mr Burke, and observes, that 'as our very signboards give evidence that there has been a Titian in the world, so the essays and leading paragraphs of our journals are so many remembrances

of Edmund Burke.' This is modest and natural we suppose for a newspaper editor: But our learned author is desirous of carrying the parallel a little further,—and assures us, that nobody can doubt of Burke's consistency. 'Let the scholar,' says our biographer, "who doubts this assertion, refer only to the speeches and writings of Edmund Burke at the commencement of the American war, and compare them with his speeches and writings at the commencement of the French Revolution. He will find the principles exactly the same, and the deductions the same—but the practical inferences almost opposite in the one case from those drawn in the other, yet in both equally legitimate and confirmed by the results.' (16: 130)

The assertion of Burke's "consistency," precisely because it is subject to "doubt," turns biography into "Apology," producing Coleridge's characteristic distinction between unchanging "principles" and radically opposed "practical inferences." Moreover, this consistency is supplemented in Burke's case by a uniformity of stylistic excellence that makes him the "Titian" of political prose.

As Burke is clearly intended by Coleridge to symbolize his own claims to political consistency (if not of literary influence), and as Burke, rather than Coleridge, was a figure of greater and more lastingly notorious political profile among the Whig readers of the Edinburgh, Hazlitt is given scope to devote five full pages of his review to commentary on this passage. This part of the review, moreover, was later extracted to appear in both The Champion and Hazlitt's Political Essays of 1819 under the title "The Character of Mr. Burke." His approach to this

"character" is two-fold, complicated by the fact that both Hazlitt and his readers actually agreed with Coleridge's assessment of Burke's stylistic achievement. Thus on the one hand, Hazlitt concedes that "Burke's literary talents were, after all, his chief excellence," and proceeds to include in his analysis a detailed appreciation of the sublime "force" of his style, using Pope's words in the end to declare that Burke is "Never so sure our rapture to create, / As when he treads the brink of all we hate" (16: 133-4). On the other hand, and for this very reason, the influence of what Hazlitt calls "the school of politics, of which Burke is at the head" must be vigorously contested with every resource of argument and countervailing force of style. In so doing, what might otherwise appear a disproportionate and even "headily perverse" digression in a review of Coleridge's Biographia is in fact Hazlitt's opportunity to restate many of the ideas originally introduced in his Examiner articles on Coleridge during the Wat Tyler affair, but now in a journalistic context of decisive cultural influence. Most interesting for our purposes is the way the paradigmatic figure of Burke produces an ironic reversal of the positions assumed by Coleridge and Hazlitt on the relationship between literary and political practice. Where Coleridge sees in Burke a desirably potent conjunction of political authority and verbal art, Hazlitt is led by this same perception to conclude that "Reason and imagination are both excellent things; but perhaps these two provinces ought to be kept

more distinct than they have lately been" (16: 137).

This is because, when measured against the norm of "history, and particular facts," Burke (like Coleridge) is discovered to be "a man of fine fancy and subtle reflection; but not of sound and practical judgement—nor of high or rigid principles" (16: 131-2). The story of his career presents the violent self-alienation of apostasy:

It is not without reluctance that we speak of the vices and infirmities of such a mind as Burke's: But the poison of high example has by far the widest range of destruction; and, for the sake of public honour and individual integrity, we think it right to say, that however it may be defended upon other grounds, the political career of that eminent individual has no title to the praise of consistency. Mr Burke, the opponent of the American war—and Mr Burke, the opponent of the French Revolution, are not the same person, but opposite persons—not opposite persons only, but deadly enemies. (16: 130)

Burke's "high example," which Coleridge defends "on other grounds," in fact embodies and disseminates self-contradictions that not only vitiate "individual integrity," but come to symbolize—and even to foster—the internecine divisions of the British public sphere. To expose these contradictions, Hazlitt once again takes up the role of Thomas Paine, deploying "plain facts and principles" in a style that relies on the simple, cumulative power of the "parallelism":

In the American war, [Mr Burke] constantly spoke of the rights of the people as inherent, and inalienable: after the French Revolution, he began by treating them with the chicanery of a sophist, and ended by raving at them with the fury of a maniac. In the former case, he held out the duty

of resistance to oppression, as the palladium, and the only ultimate resource, of natural liberty; in the latter, he scouted, prejudged, vilified and nicknamed, all resistance in the abstract, as a foul and unnatural union of rebellion and sacrilege. In the one case, to answer the purposes of faction, he made it out, that the people are always in the right; in the other, to answer different ends, he made it out that they are always in the wrong—lunatics in the hand of their royal keepers, patients in the sick wards of an hospital, or felons in the condemned cells of a prison. [...] In the one, he insulted kings personally, as among the lowest and worst of mankind; in the other, he held them up to the imagination of his readers as sacred abstractions. In the one case, he was a partisan of the people, to court popularity; in the other, to gain the favour of the Court, he became the apologist of all courtly abuses.... (16: 130-1)

It is passages like this that explain Hazlitt's inclusion of this "character" in his Political Essays of 1819. In this seemingly endless catalogue of reversals (of which only a selection is cited here), Hazlitt is able to encapsulate the history of change during the period narrated by the Biographia, and to insist, in this case, on its reincorporation into Coleridge's narrative.

Yet while this catalogue provides, in Hazlitt's view, "ample proofs of inconsistency" in Burke's political career, what does remain consistent across these oppositions is Burke's skilful appeal to "the imagination of his readers," and in particular his seminal use of metaphor. This is the phenomenon of Burke's "style," in which "he gives loose reins to his imagination, and follows it as far as the language will carry him." In this way, Burke's "whole theory of government" was constructed "not on

rational, but on picturesque and fanciful principles":

Facts or consequences never stood in the way of this speculative politician. He fitted them to his preconceived theories, instead of conforming his theories to them. They were the playthings of his style, the sport of his fancy. They were the straws of which his imagination made a blaze, and were consumed, like straws, in the blaze they had served to kindle. (16: 132-3)

Ultimately, then, it is the sublime power of Burke's "imagination" that is the ultimate source of his authority:

... he always aims at overpowering rather than at pleasing; and consequently sacrifices beauty and grandeur to force and vividness. He invariably has a task to perform, a positive purpose to execute, an effect to produce. His only object therefore is to strike hard, and in the right place. (16: 134)

Needless to say, such "literary talents" become "a dangerous engine in the hands of power, which is always eager to make use of the most plausible pretexts to cover the most fatal designs" (16: 132). Indeed, all that stands in the way of this formidable conjunction of literary and political power is what Hazlitt described in a previous review as "the exercise of public opinion," a form of criticism that, for "the sake of public honour and individual integrity," is willing to remain fully consistent with its roots in enlightenment ideology:

... if we can once get rid of the restraints of common sense and honesty, we may easily prove, by plausible words, that liberty and slavery, peace and war, plenty and famine, are matters of perfect indifference. This is the school of politics of which Mr Burke was at the head; and it is perhaps to his example in this respect, that we owe the prevailing tone of many of those newspaper paragraphs, that Mr Coleridge

thinks so invaluable an accession to our political philosophy. (16: 133)

It is this "indifference" to the lived history of repression and distress that, as we have seen, Hazlitt reads in Coleridge's own most recent "paragraphs" in The Courier defending the practices of the Poet Laureate. Alongside the narrative of apostasy, then, emerges another, less obvious, and therefore more insidious narrative: the continuous, and seemingly inevitable co-optation of "imagination" by the forces of oppression.

Even by the late summer of 1817, there was no more notorious instance of such co-optation than the author of Wat Tyler, the Laureate Odes, and the leading essays of The Quarterly Review. For this reason, Coleridge's defense of Robert Southey's moral integrity in Chapter 3 of the Biographia stands out with the same symbolic prominence as his tribute to Burke—a prominence, however, which has remained invisible to later critics who have disregarded its defining context in public debate. Even Coleridge himself, when he wrote this passage on Southey in 1815, could not have imagined the profile it would assume when delivered into the political arena of 1817, yet it is similar enough to his anonymous essays in The Courier to constitute a public re-statement of those views. Certainly this is the way Hazlitt reads this chapter, treating it like the passage on Burke as a displaced statement of Coleridge's own political loyalties. Once again, Hazlitt seizes on elements of rhetorical excess and strategic indirection in

Coleridge's praise of the Laureate, in this case, his uncomfortably fulsome encomium of Southey's "personal, domestic, and literary habits":

Some people say, that Mr Southey has deserted the cause of liberty: Mr Coleridge tells us, that he has not separated from his wife. They say, that he has changed his opinions: Mr Coleridge says, that he keeps his appointments; and has even invented a new word, *reliability*, to express his exemplariness in this particular. It is also objected, that the worthy Laureate was as extravagant in his early writings, as he is virulent in his present ones: Mr Coleridge answers, that he is an early riser, and not a late sitter up. It is further alleged, that he is arrogant and shallow in political discussion, and clamours for vengeance in a cowardly and intemperate tone: Mr Coleridge assures us, that he eats, drinks, and sleeps moderately. It is said that he must either have been very hasty in taking up his first opinions, or very unjustifiable in abandoning them for their contraries; and Mr Coleridge observes, that Mr Southey exhibits, in his own person and family, all the regularity and praiseworthy punctuality of an eight-day clock. (16: 118, 120-1)

With this witty accumulation of displacements, all quite faithful to Coleridge's text, Hazlitt reiterates the narrative of Southey's apostasy within the public sphere that is avoided by Coleridge's celebration of his consistency within the private sphere. At the same time, Hazlitt's strict concentration on matters of public concern works to ironize Coleridge's own practice, exposing his turn to private "character" as merely the tendentious inversion of the "personal enmity" with which he charges "anonymous criticism" in the Biographia (7.2: 239).

This strategy is reinforced in Hazlitt's treatment of the

long, strangely revealing footnote attached to the encomium of Southey. In this note, Coleridge frankly admits to a "debt of justice" that has "impelled" him to eulogize his friend, and proceeds to offer, as a "specimen" of the unjust allegations of anonymous criticism, a slanderous remark from the Beauties of the Anti-jacobin written in the 1790s, in which Coleridge himself was said to have "*left his poor children fatherless, and his wife destitute. Ex his disce his friends, Lamb and Southey*" (16: 119; italics in original [7.1: 67n]). Other critics, notably Blackwood's Magazine and Coleridge's later biographers, have read in this footnote the submerged pressure of Coleridge's private "debt" to Southey for taking in his abandoned family. Hazlitt, however, decorously confines himself to exposing another narrative of much greater import to the "Reading Public." For in Coleridge's search through all the years for an appropriately damaging "specimen" of anonymous criticism, he chooses one that serves only to highlight the disreputable practices of the government-sponsored press, and in particular the very editors for whom Southey now writes in The Quarterly Review. Aware himself of this difficulty, Coleridge is forced to conclude with the awkward query: "Is it surprising that many good men remained longer than they perhaps otherwise would have done, adverse to a party which encouraged and openly rewarded the authors of such atrocious calumnies?" (7.1: 67n). Hazlitt retorts:

With us, we confess the wonder does not lie there:—all that

surprises us is, that the objects of these atrocious calumnies were ever reconciled to the authors of them;—for the calumniators were the party itself. The Cannings, the Giffords, the Freres, have never made any apology for the abuse which they then heaped upon every nominal friend of freedom; and yet Mr Coleridge thinks it necessary to apologize in the name of all good men, for having remained so long adverse to a party which recruited upon such a bounty; and seems not obscurely to intimate that they had such effectual means of propagating their slanders against those good men who differed with them, that most of the latter found there was no other way of keeping their good name but by giving up their principles, and joining in the same venal cry against all those who did not become apostates or converts, ministerial Editors, and 'laurel-honouring Laureates like themselves! (16: 119)

Thus the art of Coleridge's "Apology" is firmly linked once again to the narrative of apostasy, vitiating all claims to steadfastness of "principle." At the same time, the practice of "personal enmity behind the mask of anonymous criticism" is identified with the policies of a party whose cultural authority is entirely a function of its unprincipled powers of coercion.

Yet Hazlitt's own subtle compromises to the pressure of editorial politics are evident when he turns from Burke and Southey to consider the political career of Coleridge himself. For here, once again, Hazlitt must conform to the Edinburgh's view of Coleridge as politically inconsequential, turning down the ample opportunity offered by the Biographia to press home the charge of apostasy. Instead, he relies on strategies of implication and indirection ironically comparable to Coleridge's

own: Southey, for example, is said to have "chimed in" with Coleridge "both in poetry and politics, in verse and prose, in Jacobinism and Antijacobinism, any time these twenty years" (16: 121); Coleridge is said (in a footnote) to be "out of the Pantisocratic or Lake school" (16: 128n); and he is called a "disappointed demagogue" at the end of the review (16: 138). But when the story of Coleridge's politically nonconformist newspaper The Watchman is quoted at length, and when at the end of this account, Coleridge boldly challenges his dissenting friends from the 1790s to "bear witness for [him], how opposite, even then, [his] principles were to those of Jacobinism, or even Democracy," Hazlitt visibly retreats from a full rebuttal:

We shall not stop at present to dispute with Mr. Coleridge, how far the principles of the *Watchman*, and the *Conciones ad Populam* were or were not akin to those of the Jacobins. His style, in general, admits of a convenient latitude of interpretation. But we think we are quite safe in asserting, that they were still more opposite to those of the Anti-Jacobins, and the party to which he admits he has gone over. (16: 129)

One wonders how such a passage might have been taken up in The Examiner on behalf of such "readers" as "SEMPER EGO AUDITOR." Writing for the Edinburgh, however, Hazlitt allows Coleridge a "convenient latitude of interpretation" in spite of Coleridge's own unique movement from ardent pantisocrat to Tory apologist. As when The Statesman's Manual was said by the Edinburgh to have "no leaning any way," the Biographia is here allowed only a marginally less ambivalent "leaning to the side of power" by comparison with

such high profile representatives of "the party itself" as Burke and Southey.

Even at the very conclusion of the review, where the political entanglements of the Biographia are vigorously reiterated, Coleridge himself is subsumed within a larger category of writers called "our reformed Antijacobin poets," a category more closely modelled on the practices of the Laureate than on the author of Christabel. Moreover, to denounce such poets with appropriate finality, Hazlitt must appear to renounce any residual belief in the "sincerity" of poetry, and thus any belief in the possibility of a positive conjunction of literary and political practice. Where he was able to claim in The Examiner that "poets are naturally jacobins," he now concludes his review of Coleridge on behalf of the Edinburgh with the following observation, "of a very plain and practical nature, ... forced upon us by the whole tenor of the extraordinary history before us":

—Reason and imagination are both excellent things; but perhaps their provinces ought to be kept more distinct than they have lately been. [...] We would not, with Plato, absolutely banish poets from the commonwealth; but we really think they should meddle as little with its practical administration as may be. They live in an ideal world of their own; and it would be, perhaps, as well if they were confined to it. Their flights and fancies are delightful to themselves and to everybody else; but they make strange work with matters of fact; and, if they were allowed to act in public affairs, would soon turn the world upside down. (16: 137)

With self-conscious irony indicated by his use of Coleridge's own

phraseology from The Courier ("they live in an ideal world of their own"), Hazlitt thus arrives at the same conclusion as was there "forced" upon the Laureate's apologist—but for precisely the opposite reasons. Where Coleridge had to argue for the political innocence of Wat Tyler, Hazlitt is arguing here for the ideological complicity of poets who claim to "live in an ideal world of their own," but who follow the "high example" of Burke in allowing their "flights and fancies" to "make strange work with matters of fact."⁴

To enforce this point, Hazlitt recapitulates "the true history of our reformed Antijacobin poets" in a fierce, final burst of invective. "As romantic in their servility as in their independence," he asserts, such poets "require only to be distinguished, and are not scrupulous as to the means of distinction" (16: 137). In generating the necessary intensity of style to refute such "romantic[s]" conclusively, however, Hazlitt is led into a telling relativization of the claims of "the people," shaped at once by the gentrified politics of the Edinburgh and by the all-pervasive influence of Burke himself. Following the rhetorical logic of self-contradictory extremes, the apostate poets are now said to "oscillate ... from one absurdity

⁴Close readers of the Edinburgh would note that this view was corroborated in the adjacent review of Characters of Shakespeare's Plays, where Jeffrey quotes the essay on Coriolanus: "'Shakespeare seems to have had a leaning to the arbitrary side of the question The imagination is an exaggerating and exclusive faculty. The understanding is a dividing and measuring faculty. The one is an artistocratical, the other a republican faculty [Poetry] aims at effect, it exists by contrast. It is everything by excess.'" (Edinburgh 28: 481).

to another": whether as "Jacobins or Antijacobins—outrageous advocates for anarchy and licentiousness, or flaming apostles of persecution—[they] expiate the follies of their youth by the heartless vices of their advancing age" (16: 137). Thus from the putative political neutrality of the Edinburgh, each phase in the career of such writers is now regarded as equally absurd, meaning that the ideals of radicalism are transformed for stylistic effect into "anarchy and licentiousness" and "the follies of ... youth." Moreover, having kindled this blaze of invective, Hazlitt's final caricature of such "follies" ironically bears the imprint of Burke in its recourse to the metaphor of "poisons":

In their days of innovation, indeed, the philosophers crept at their heels like hounds, while they darted on their distant quarry like hawks; stooping always to the lowest game; eagerly snuffing up the most tainted and rankest scents; feeding their vanity with the notion of the strength of their digestion of poisons, and most ostentatiously avowing what ever would most effectually startle the prejudices of others. Preposterously seeking for the stimulus of novelty in truth, and the eclat of theatrical exhibition in pure reason, it is no wonder that these persons at last became disgusted with their own pursuits, and that, in consequence of the violence of the change, the most inveterate prejudices and uncharitable sentiments have rushed in to fill up the vacuum produced by the previous annihilation of common sense, wisdom, and humanity. (16: 137-8)

Like the "middle ground" staked out The Examiner, the "common sense, wisdom, and humanity" that guarantees the political authority of Edinburgh thus comes in the end to identify itself

with a middle position between the "poisons" of radicalism and the "inveterate prejudices" of reaction, a position measurably distinct from Hazlitt's other "political essays" of the period.⁵ In this difference is concealed the subtler "apostasy" of anonymity: in order to achieve the necessary cultural authority decisively to contest Coleridge's political allegiances, Hazlitt must temporarily "stand away" from his own "good name," colluding with the inevitably partisan ideological allegiances of high-level corporate journalism.

And perhaps in no other article of The Edinburgh Review are the issues of anonymity and editorial presence more vividly foregrounded than in this review of the Biographia Literaria. Jeffrey's ceremonial doffing of the "mask of anonymity" in the footnote which dominates the centre of the review is virtually unprecedented in the periodical writing of the time. It demonstrates, among other things, that if the Edinburgh refused Coleridge any authority within the political arena, it took his views on the authority of anonymous criticism within the literary marketplace very seriously indeed. Though Jeffrey's footnote is designed in part to demystify the practice of anonymity, it nevertheless emerges from a point in the text where the plural

⁵See especially the essay "What is the People?," first published in The Champion two months later in October 1817. As Cook notes, this essay was also an intense and allusive "contest" with Burke ("Criticism" 144). Yet far from characterizing radical discourse as "poison," Hazlitt's aim is to co-opt the energy of Burkean rhetoric for the purposes of a radical re-definition of "the people" and a vigorous re-assertion of their "common and equal rights." (7: 262)

"we" covers a complex interchange of critical voices, in the transition from Hazlitt's analysis of Burke (later claimed under his own name among his Political Essays) to the matter of Jeffrey's "former remarks" on Wordsworth:

Mr. C. enters next into a copious discussion of the merits of his friend Mr. Wordsworth's poetry,—which we do not think very remarkable either for clearness or candour; but as a great part of it is occupied with specific inculpations of our former remarks on that ingenious author, it would savour too much of mere controversy or recrimination, if we were to indulge ourselves with any observations on the subject. Where we are parties to any dispute, and consequently to be regarded as incapable of giving an *impartial* account of our adversary's argument, we shall not pretend to give any account of it at all;* and therefore, ... [we] shall pass over all this part of the work before us, by merely remarking ...[etc.]. (16: 134)

Readers of the Edinburgh would already be quite aware by the sign of style that Jeffrey was not the principal reviewer of the Biographia, yet he has clearly taken over the critical voice in this passage, throwing into instructive uncertainty for later scholars the exact point at which Hazlitt's "own" views re-emerge in the discussion of poetic diction that follows. Even the opening gestures of Jeffrey's footnote continue to conflate the identities of editor and essayist in the collective terms "Review" and "Reviewer":

* If Mr. C. had confined himself to matters of argument, or to statements contained in the Review, we should have added no note to this passage, but left him in quiet possession of the last word on the critical question he has thought fit to resume. But as he has been pleased to make several averments

in points of fact, touching the personal conduct and motives of his Reviewer, we must be indulged with a few words to correct the errors into which he has fallen.... (Reiman A: 492; Jackson 314)

In precisely this way, the anonymous "Review" reasserts its integrity, equating its criticism with the public and available, in contrast once again with Coleridge's inappropriate recourse to the "personal." To emphasize this point, Jeffrey begins in the third person, itemizing in the form of an impersonal affidavit each one of the "averments in point of fact" made in the Biographia regarding "the principle conductor of this Review"—including, of course, those made in Chapter 24 about the "employer and suborner" of the critics of Christabel and The Statesman's Manual (A: 492; 315).

It is in response to this most serious affront that Jeffrey drops the mask of anonymity in a unique and unusual interchange of third- and first-person identities:

These are the charges against the principal conductor of this Review; to which, in order to avoid all equivocation, that individual begs leave to answer distinctly, and in the first person, as follows. I do not know that I need say anything in answer to the *first* imputation ... [etc]. (A: 492; 315)

The "answer" that follows, like Southey's Letter and even the Biographia itself, appeals earnestly to the jury of public opinion, yet Jeffrey's legal training equips him to manage this genre of *apologia* in the manner of a defense attorney, skilfully subordinating what is necessarily "painful" in a display of outraged moral sensibilities to the stark evidence of "history and

particular facts." This approach is epitomized in his concluding remarks on The Statesman's Manual:

As to the review of the Lay Sermon, I have only to say, in one word, that I never employed or suborned any body to abuse or extol it or any other publication. I do not so much as know or conjecture what Mr C. alludes to as a malignant lampoon or review by anticipation, which he says had previously appeared somewhere else. I never saw nor heard of such a publication. Nay, I was not even aware of the existence of the Lay Sermon itself, when a review of it was offered me by a gentleman in whose judgment and talents I had great confidence, but whom I certainly never suspected, and do not suspect at this moment, of having any personal or partial feelings of any kind towards its author. I therefore accepted his offer, and printed his review, with some retrenchments and verbal alterations, just as I was setting off, in a great hurry, for London, on professional business, in January last.

It is painful, and perhaps ridiculous, to write so much about one's self; but I would rather submit to this ridicule than to the imputations which Mr C. has permitted himself to make on me—or even the consciousness of having made these rash and injurious imputations. F.J.

(A: 494; 318)

The authority of the role thus constructed by such a defense is precisely the opposite of that sought by the "romantic" poet within the literary marketplace. Jeffrey presents himself as a brisk and efficient man of "professional business" for whom the convention of anonymity, far from being a mask for the "personal and partial," is instead the sign of a decorous subordination of "one's self" to more important public tasks and interests, a turning away from the "painful, and perhaps ridiculous"

concentration on one's own "Life and Opinions" to accommodate the greater demands of *public* opinion.

To meet such demands, of course, Jeffrey must rely on the "judgment and talents" of such writers as Hazlitt, who "at this moment" is conducting, in the main body of the review, the Edinburgh's response to the less "personal and injurious" aspects of Coleridge's "philosophical criticism."⁶ It is Hazlitt's own philosophical training, if not his experience as a writer of "Literary Notices," that makes him particularly well suited to contest Coleridge's authority within the literary marketplace. He is able, for example, to present specific objections to Coleridge's views on the history of rationalist philosophy, before mounting a distinctly Humean riposte to modern German metaphysics. Thus in Hazlitt's view, it is Hobbes, not Descartes, who lies behind what he calls "the modern system of philosophy":

That Hobbes was in fact the original inventor of the doctrine of Association, and of the modern system of philosophy in general, is a matter of fact and history; as to which, we are surprised that Mr C. should profess any doubt, and which we had gratified ourselves by illustrating by a series of citations from his greater works,—which nothing but a sense

⁶ Jeffrey's claim that he had no knowledge of Hazlitt's writings in the "Literary Notices" column of the London Examiner, however closely it may or may not adhere to the high standard of veracity set in his footnote, has the effect of emphasizing the widening divisions between reading audiences of the British public sphere. Jeffrey's adjacent review of Characters of Shakespeare's Plays, moreover, though clearly positive, is nevertheless condescending: Hazlitt has written a "very pleasing book," and one of "very considerable originality and genius," but it is a book written "more to show extraordinary love than extraordinary knowledge" of Shakespeare, and "we think, of course, that our own admiration is, on the whole, more discriminating and judicious" (Edinburgh 28: 472).

of the prevailing indifference to such discussions prevents us from laying before our readers. (16: 123)

The norm of "fact and history" is thus reinvoked to govern philosophical as well as political debate, though we note in this instance it is quickly subordinated to the more powerful norm of public taste and interest. Yet even such "prevailing indifference" to a discussion of British empiricism does not prevent Hazlitt from devoting a full page of the review to a brusque summary of German idealism, which he describes as "absurdities that have not even the merit of being amusing" (16: 124). This critique of Kant is significant, however, both as a register of contemporary British opinion, and as a fair "prototype," to borrow Bate's words, "of most of the adverse criticism of [Kant] from Coleridge's time to our own" (lxvi). Not surprisingly, it is Hume's skepticism that undergirds Hazlitt's analysis:

If [Kant] cannot make good an inference upon acknowledged premises, or known methods of reasoning, he coolly refers the whole to a new class of ideas, and the operation of some unknown faculty, which he has invented for the purpose, and which he assures you *must* exist,—because there is no other proof of it. [...] For example, he sets out with urging the indispensable necessity of answering Hume's argument on the origin of our ideas of cause and effect; and because he can find no answer to this argument, in the experimental philosophy, he affirms, that this idea *must* be 'a self-evident truth, contained in the first forms or categories of the understanding;' that is, the thing must be as he would have it, whether it is so or not. (16: 123-4)

Hazlitt, of course, has his eye in this passage on Coleridge's own

(re-)invention of the "imagination" as a mental faculty fundamentally distinct from the "fancy." Like Kant vis-à-vis Hume on the idea of cause and effect, Coleridge overcomes the strict rationalist limitations of associationism by re-defining the "IMAGINATION" as a faculty that partakes of the "infinite" and the "vital"—as "the living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception"—while reducing the "fancy" to a mere "mode of Memory" with "no other counters to play with but fixities and definites" that "as objects, are essentially fixed and dead" (7.1: 304-5).

Yet, unlike the majority of literary critics since, Hazlitt does not treat Coleridge's distinction between fancy and imagination in any detail—after all, he notes wryly, "Mr C. has suppressed his Disquisition on the Imagination as unintelligible" (16: 138).⁷ Instead, he is concerned with the sort of cultural authority to which Coleridge aspires in making such a distinction, especially evident in his anxiety to establish clear proprietary rights to it. Like Kant's insistence that "the thing must be as

⁷Hazlitt refers, of course, to the letter from a "judicious friend" in Chapter 13, suggesting the omission of the metaphysical "Chapter on the Imagination" (7.1: 300-304). In generic terms, this remarkable letter bears comparison to Hazlitt's letter from "SEMPER EGO AUDITOR" in its skilful balancing of lyric and satirical elements, and its addition of brilliantly ironic discursive complexity to the project at hand. Yet by August 1817 such a letter may well have seemed a telling capitulation to the authority of review criticism. Writing on behalf of "the PUBLIC," Coleridge's "friend" declares that his "readers will have both right and reason to complain" because, among other things, his "speculations on the esemplastic power would be utterly unintelligible" (7.1.302-3). In the context of the criticism established by Hazlitt and others, this last word was more likely to have played into Coleridge's negative public image, than to have challenged it with a subtler irony.

he would have it, whether it is so or not," Coleridge's claim to originality in defining the imagination serves only to foreground the inherent arbitrariness of such a definition. Hazlitt nicknames Kant "the German oracle," and similarly Coleridge is seen to supplement the role of poet-prophet with a desire for definitive intellectual authority. The result is Hazlitt's most memorable depiction of the Biographia:

With chap. IV. begins the formidable ascent of the mountainous and barren ridge of clouds piled on precipices and precipices on clouds, from the top of which the author deludes us with a view of the Promised Land that divides the regions of Fancy from those of the Imagination, and extends through 200 pages with various inequalities and declensions to the end of the volume. The object of this long-winding metaphysical march, which resembles a patriarchal journey, is to point out and settle the true grounds of Mr Wordsworth's claim to originality as a poet; which, if we rightly understand the deduction, turns out to be, that there is nothing peculiar about him; and that his poetry, in so far as it is good for anything at all, is just like any other good poetry. (16: 121-2)

Even the most sympathetic reader of the Biographia will recognize the wit—and even the uncanny accuracy—of this image of Coleridge as the latter-day patriarch of the "Promised Land" of romanticism. In a superb balance of the sublime and the bathetic, of frank admiration for the grandeur of Coleridge's design, and harsh insight into the delusion of its fulfillment, Hazlitt deconstructs the "grounding" of literary criticism in transcendental philosophy as at once illusory and unnecessary.

What Hazlitt—and the Edinburgh—offer instead is designed to be by contrast both practical and historical. Far from the inaccessible and uncertain heights of Coleridge's "philosophical criticism," the Edinburgh grounds the authority of its anonymous criticism in observations on the literary practice of the most widely read British poets, principally Milton and Shakespeare. Here again, Hazlitt was well-equipped as a critic to answer the challenge presented by the Biographia: having just published Characters of Shakespeare's Plays, he was now preparing a public lecture series on the English poets.⁸ Thus it is Milton who is invoked to authorize an epigrammatic counter-definition of "the essence of poetry," and in the variations on the theme that follow we overhear Hazlitt rehearsing the first of his lectures, now widely disseminated under the title "On Poetry in General":

Mr Coleridge bewilders himself sadly in endeavouring to determine in what the essence of poetry consists;—Milton, we think, has told it in a single line—

—'Thoughts that voluntary move
Harmonious numbers.'

Poetry is the music of language, expressing the music of the mind. Whenever any object takes such a hold on the mind as to make us dwell upon it, and brood over it, melting the heart in love, or kindling it to a sentiment of admiration;—whenever a movement of imagination or passion is impressed on the mind, by which it seeks to prolong and repeat the emotion, to bring all other objects into accord with it, and to give the same movement of harmony, sustained and continuous, to the sounds that express it,—this is poetry.

⁸Delivered beginning January 1818 at the Surrey Institution, and—in an another remarkable coincidence—on precisely the same nights as Coleridge's lecture series on drama and poetry at the London Philosophical Society. See Jones, Hazlitt 282, for an excellent account.

The musical in sound is the sustained and continuous; the musical in thought and feeling is the sustained and continuous also. Whenever articulation passes naturally into intonation, this is the beginning of poetry. There is no natural harmony in the ordinary combinations of significant sounds: the language of prose is not the language of music, or of *passion*: and it is to supply this inherent defect in the mechanism of language—to make the sound an echo to the sense, when the sense becomes a sort of echo to itself—to mingle the tide of verse, 'the golden cadences of poesy,' with the tide of feeling, flowing, and murmuring as it flows—or to take the imagination off its feet, and spread its wings where it may indulge its own impulses, without being stopped or perplexed by the ordinary abruptnesses, or discordant flats and sharps of prose—that poetry was invented. (16: 136; see also 5: 11-12)

Where Coleridge asks "What is poetry?" and then recurs to a discourse of abstract "faculties" in the mind of "poetic genius," Hazlitt uses Milton's metaphor of music to devise an answer ultimately rooted in both sensory experience and the materiality of the poetic signifier. Indeed, cutting across the distinction between poetry and prose here is the "music" of Hazlitt's own phrasing, with its rhythmic patterns of repetition and alliteration, and the contrasting onomatopoeic effects of "murmuring" and "dischordant sharps and flats." Yet according to the logic of the review as a whole, it is only poetry and not prose that was invented "to take the imagination off its feet, and spread its wings where it may indulge its own impulses." We saw how Burke "gives loose reigns to his imagination, and follows it as far as the language will carry him," but this leads to

Hazlitt's urgent call for an new distinction between "Reason and imagination." In this definition of poetry, by contrast, "Reason and imagination" may safely part ways in a politically neutral distinction between the representational and nonrepresentational arts, between the rational and the affective.

Yet the lingering political inflection of the Edinburgh's literary criticism is evident in the related discussion of "poetic diction." Here, in response to what Coleridge calls the "long continued controversy concerning the true nature of poetic diction" (7.1: 5), and in spite of Jeffrey's decorous vow to abstain from any notice of the poet whose writings were at the centre of this controversy, the Edinburgh nevertheless indulges in some parting remarks on "Mr Wordsworth's ingenious project of confining the language of poetry to that which is chiefly in use among the lower orders of society" (16: 134-5). With the claim that "the truth and common sense of the thing [is] so obvious, and, we apprehend, so generally acknowledged, that nothing but a pitiful affectation of singularity could have raised a controversy on the subject," the Edinburgh proceeds to sketch a simple triadic hierarchy of poetic "styles" clearly based on the metaphor of class (16: 135).⁹ Thus, at one extreme, is a poetry "made up of *slang phrases*"—"words associated only with mean and vulgar ideas"—that corresponds to Wordsworth's ill-advised championing of the "language" of "the lower orders." At the other extreme

⁹The exact authorship of this passage, as noted above, remains moot.

lies what Wordsworth stigmatized as "*poetic diction*," but which is here described as the "ornamented or coloured style," that is "connected only with the most pleasing and elegant associations," and "made up of words ... warmed by the glow of genius, purified by the breath of time, ... that varnish over the trite and commonplace, and lend a gorgeous robe to the forms of fancy" (16: 135-6; italics added). Most tellingly, however, both of these styles—the "vulgar" and the "elegant"—are in turn said to

... differ essentially from the *middle or natural style*, which is a mere transparent medium of the thoughts, neither degrading nor setting them off by any adventitious qualities of its own, but leaving them to make their own impression, by the force of truth and nature. (16: 135; italics added).

It is the discourse of the "middle," then, that fulfils the enlightenment ideal of clear linguistic transparency, and thus accedes to the cultural authority associated with "the force of truth and nature." While this "middle" style may be compared to the position taken up by the Edinburgh between the "poisons" of radicalism and the "inveterate prejudices" of reaction, it is nevertheless marked by an attractive inclusivity: it is "a simple and familiar language, common to almost all ranks, and intelligible through many ages"; and because it is "best fitted for the direct expression of strong sense and deep passion," it is "consequently ... the language of the best poetry as well as of the best prose" (16: 135). Unlike "poetic diction," then, which is an exclusively poetic style, and which thus "has to lend a borrowed, and, in some sort, meretricious lustre to outward

objects," the "common or natural style is the truly dramatic style, that in which [the writer] can best give the impassioned, unborrowed, unaffected thoughts of others" (16: 135). Not surprisingly, it is Shakespeare who is invoked as the exemplar of this style, whose "dialogues of Othello and Lear furnish the most striking instances of plain, point-blank speaking, or of the real language of nature and of passion" (16: 135).

This "middle, or natural style," in short, is the discourse of such middle-class men of letters as Hazlitt, Jeffrey, Wordsworth and Coleridge, and the example of Shakespeare provides not only a fixed point of reference in British literary history, but also a potential locus of consensus across many lines of political and literary dispute among them. Another such locus of consensus is evident in the Edinburgh's unexpectedly positive evaluation of certain aspects of Coleridge's prose style in the Biographia, an evaluation linked to the ascendancy of (auto)biographical narrative in the literary marketplace. Here we find the norm of "history, and particular facts" provides a point of stylistic and generic convergence for both anonymous critic and garrulous author. The same market demand that makes "some things readable" in Coleridge's Biographia encourages Hazlitt to ensure, through generous quotation, that "there are some things readable" in his own review as well (16: 115). He certainly wastes no time in this regard: the opening paragraph of the review leads directly into one of the two longest quotations of the entire article with

this remark:

[t]here are, in fact, only two or three passages in the work which relate to the details of the author's life, such as the account of his school-education, and of his setting up the *Watchman* newspaper. We shall make sure of the first of these curious documents, before we completely lose ourselves in the multiplicity of his speculative opinions. (16: 115)

To "make sure" is a telling phrase in this context: contrasted with "lose ourselves" it aligns the "curious" appeal of autobiography—the "details of the author's life"—with the discourse of "history and particular facts." Thus by moving quickly into a long passage in the voice of Coleridge's autobiographical persona, Hazlitt can "make sure" of the reader's interest in his own review, appealing at once to the demand for the factual and the aesthetically entertaining. This in turn points to a deeper practicality in Hazlitt's use of such quotations. By remaining anonymous, he himself is not free to indulge in anecdote; his commitment to the plural "we" constrains him to rely on Coleridge to bring personal presence to his text. In a curious chiasmus, Coleridge is enfolded in the communal "we," while his speaking "I" is employed to narrate the story of many: the history of a generation and a class during the revolutionary period.

This is a subtlety, of course, that remains entirely implicit, not unlike Hazlitt's quotation of the "friends in youth" passage in his Examiner review of Christabel. Moreover, this account of Coleridge's school days is invaded, as we have seen, by

the italicization of Coleridge's self-mocking attachment "at a very premature age" to "metaphysicks," laying the ground in the comments that follow for the operative distinction between Coleridge's "philosophical faith" and the sane touchstone of "history and particular facts."¹⁰ Yet running counter-current to this argument, the sheer length of Hazlitt's quotation allows Coleridge the opportunity to seek his own readership by demonstrating his own subscription to proto-positivist discourse. For example, the long tale of the headmaster of Christ's Hospital is told to credit that venerable tyrant with having inculcated principles of literary criticism based on "grounds of plain sense, and universal logic" (Coburn 7.1: 9; Howe 16: 115). Rev. Bowyer taught that "Poetry, even that of the loftiest, and, seemingly, that of the wildest odes, had a logic of its own as strict as that of science" (7.1: 9; 16: 115-6). Further, it is Coleridge himself who mocks his own metaphysics as a "mental disease" and lampoons his interest in it as a bathetic "delving in the unwholesome quicksilver mines of metaphysic depths" (7.1: 17; 16: 117).

Coleridge is thus granted a persona new to the Edinburgh's criticism of him, the table-talker of genial good sense, deploying what he calls elsewhere in the Biographia the trope of "*risu honesto*," or the "honest laughter" of emblematic caricature (1: 26), here invoked with either foolish or decorous good nature at his own expense. This, for example, is the master-trope of the

¹⁰See page 256 above.

account of "setting up the *Watchman* newspaper," the subject of Hazlitt's other lengthy quotation. This passage is offered his readers as a kind of respite after the thankless task of demolishing Kantian metaphysics. Thus, as a gesture of good will, he explains that

Out of regard for Mr C. as well as our readers, we give our longest extract from this narrative part of the work—which is more likely to be popular than any other part—and is, on the whole, more pleasingly written. We cannot say much, indeed, for either the wit or the soundness of judgment it displays. But it is an easy, gossipping, garrulous account of youthful adventures—by a man sufficiently fond of talking of himself, and sufficiently disposed to magnify small matters into ideal importance. (16: 125)

While Coleridge is ritually censured for the (by now) familiar improprieties of unsound judgment, clumsy wit, egotism, and distorted perception, this very context of judgement throws into relief Hazlitt's contrasting approbation of his achievement as an autobiographer. Particularly noteworthy is the description here of the stylistic elements that go into "popular" biographical narrative. This is the "middle, or natural style," governed on the one hand by the norm of "history and particular facts," and on the other by a growing demand, in the aftermath of "distress," for the "pleasing." The result is "an easy, gossipping, garrulous account of youthful adventures," a standard of social discourse in which can be glimpsed a language of possible consensus, a "conversational" style (as Hazlitt was later to describe it) that may transcend the partisan conflicts of the middle class (8: 333).

The class inflection of this discourse is more than evident in one of the "youthful adventures" related by Coleridge, and quoted—without comment or interjection—by Hazlitt. This is the story of the "tallow chandler," in which the trope of "*risu honesto*" is produced not only by Coleridge's own self-caricature but by a structure of contrasts between the highly literate and loquacious author and his minimally educated interlocutor. Full of "youthful" idealism, Coleridge canvasses the industrial midlands in search of subscribers to his newspaper, and is introduced to a prospective reader:

I commenced an harangue of half an hour to Phileleutheros the tallow-chandler, varying my notes through the whole gamut of eloquence, from the ratiocinative to the declamatory, and in the latter, from the pathetic to the indignant. I argued, I described, I promised, I prophesied; and, beginning with the captivity of nations, I ended with the near approach of the millennium; finishing the whole with some of my own verses, describing that glorious state, out of the *Religious Musings*.

—'Such delights,

As float to earth, permitted visitants!
 When in some hour of solemn jubilee
 The massive gates of Paradise are thrown
 Wide open: and forth come in fragments wild
 Sweet echoes of unearthly melodies,
 And odours snatch'd from beds of amaranth,
 And they that from the crystal river of life
 Spring up on freshen'd wings, ambrosial gales!'

(7.1: 181; Howe 16: 126-7)

In this, of course, we overhear once again the lyric preacher of "Truth and Genius" described by "SEMPER EGO AUDITOR" in the pulpit at Shrewsbury. Yet where "AUDITOR" aimed to lay bare the bitter

narrative of apostasy for the Examiner, this quotation of Coleridge's own self-mocking reminiscence suggests such a narrative only by the most indirect implication. Presented without commentary in the pages of the Edinburgh, it serves instead as a source of amusement for all men of letters who are willing to stand away momentarily from the repressed knowledge that education has made it possible to produce rhetoric at will—rhetoric whose very Burkean hyperbole is the sign of its possible disjunction from any "rational" referent.

Yet Coleridge's self-caricature is counter-balanced by a grotesque cartoon of the tallow-chandler that evokes the stark otherness of the labouring and artisan classes:

He was a tall, dingy man, in whom length was so predominant over breadth, that he might almost have been borrowed for a foundry poker. O that face! ... I have it before me at this moment. The lank, black, twine-like hair, *pinguin*-nitescent, cut in a straight line along the black stubble of his thin gunpowder eyebrows, that looked like a scorched *after-math* from a last week's shaving.... while the countenance, lank, dark, very *hard*, and with strong perpendicular furrows, gave me a dim notion of some one looking at me through a used gridiron, all soot, grease, and iron! (7.1: 180-81; 16: 126)

This grim product of industrialization is then given a dialect and preoccupations meant to contrast those of the eloquent author:

And what, Sir! (he said, after a short pause) might the cost be? *Only four-pence*, (O! how I felt the anti-climax, the abysmal bathos of that *four-pence!*) *only four-pence, Sir, each Number, to be published on every eighth day*. That comes to a deal of money at the end of a year. And how much did you say there was to be for the money? *Thirty-two pages, Sir! large octavo, closely printed*. Thirty and two pages?

Bless me; why, except what I does in a family way on the Sabbath, that's more that I ever read, Sir! all the year round. I am as great a one as any man in Brummagem, Sir! for liberty, and truth, and all them sort of things; but as to this, (no offence, I hope, Sir!) I must beg to be excused. (7.1: 181-2; 16: 127)

At this all middle-class writers for the reading public close ranks and laugh, for here is a man bluntly impervious to all eloquence but that of "Brummagem" demagogues and the Bible. Here, too, the autobiographer has condescended to approach the very outer borders of the domain of public discourse, a domain which gentlemen of all political stripes, however violently they may contest it, hold nevertheless in common. Perhaps, too, Hazlitt includes this sketch because it is the "true history" of Coleridge at his political best, in eloquent negotiation with the social "other"—in this case a Dissenting "Phileleutheros," (or lover of freedom)—and this, moreover, is the closest that Coleridge's autobiography can come to Hazlitt's own, as well as to that of all those liberal readers of the Edinburgh ever touched by the "youthful adventure" of revolution.

Yet as long as the shadow of the "Distresses" lay over public discourse, the difference between Coleridge's aims in telling this story and the Edinburgh's aims in reprinting it would remain in evidence. Coleridge seeks to distance himself and his readers with laughter from the utter futility of mingling idealism with any attempt to have "direct influence on the actions of men" (3.2: 470). The Edinburgh, by contrast, aims to consolidate a middle-

class readership by catering to a new taste for the art of nostalgia, while at the same time nullifying the authority of Coleridge's opinions in politics, philosophy, and literature, and even naming him in the final paragraph of the review, with reference to this passage, a "disappointed demagogue."

Notwithstanding this aim, however, the moment of middle-class consensus that opens up briefly in the quotation of these passages looks forward to a decade of bourgeois prosperity in which the painful narratives of apology and apostasy are seemingly transcended by an aestheticization of history and memory: of lived "history" and of personal "facts" packaged in an "easy, gossiping, garrulous style."

Conclusion

"The Cause of Civil and Religious Liberty":

Hazlitt's Writings on Coleridge, 1818-1825

Seven articles in sixteen months: Hazlitt's reviews of Coleridge during the "Distresses" period represent an intensity of focus unmatched in the remainder of his long and prolific writing career. Such compression has made these reviews seem aberrant to traditional literary history, a "deplorable" but passing outburst of spleen rooted in personal—even "motiveless"—malignity, and quite dispensable, therefore, to our understanding of their subject-matter (Baker 356). The present study, by contrast, finds in this very concentration of public statements an indispensable core of criticism focussed on one of the key figures in the making of the "Romantic Ideology," essential alike to our understanding of the writings of Coleridge and Hazlitt, and of the brief period in which these reviews appeared in public newspapers and journals. Nor, in the end, are these reviews anomalous: despite the pressures of conformity, Hazlitt's political vision—his commitment to "the cause of civil and religious liberty" (17: 110)—remained consistent throughout his entire oeuvre, up to and including his final, monolithic Life of Napoleon (1828-30).¹ Thus while these reviews of Coleridge were shaped by the immediate and particular circumstances of the "Distresses," they serve

¹See Cook, "Criticism" 137-40.

nevertheless as a crucial interpretative key to Hazlitt's later, better-known writings about Coleridge. It is to these later writings we now turn in conclusion, refiguring them briefly as four occasions on which this contest for cultural authority was renewed in the years following the "Distresses": in 1818, when Hazlitt and Coleridge emerged as rival lecturers on poetry and culture; in 1819, when five of these reviews were republished as Political Essays on the eve of Peterloo; in 1823, when "My First Acquaintance With Poets" appeared in Byron and Hunt's scandal-tossed Liberal; and finally in 1825, in Hazlitt's Spirit of the Age, where Coleridge is held up as the tragicomic epitome of "an age of talkers, and not of doers" (11: 28).

One harbinger of this "age of talkers" was the popularity of public lectures in the late Regency, and the fact that Hazlitt and Coleridge turned simultaneously to lecturing in early 1818—and for several weeks held forth on precisely the same nights—presents a striking extension of their contest for authority into the year "of declining alarm" that followed the "Distresses" (Evans 21). It is significant that Coleridge's lectures on "The Principles of Judgement, Culture, and European Literature" were presented at an institution (the London Philosophical Society) that pointedly refused any topics on "Theology and Politics" (5.2: 25). Similarly, Hazlitt's lectures "on the English Poets" have been traditionally regarded as a welcome retreat from the maelstrom of political conflict to "the serenity of the lecture-

desk" and to talk of pure literature (Baker 252). In fact, however, the political tensions defined by the "Distresses" remained very much in evidence: The Courier, for example, reports with delight how Coleridge digressed from his lecture notes one evening to depict Shakespeare's Caliban as "an original and caricature of Jacobinism" (5.2: 124). Hazlitt, meanwhile, had redoubled his production of "political essays," finding time between lectures to become the "leading spirit" of John Hunt's new political weekly The Yellow Dwarf (Greenburg 437). Here, alongside such classics of political prose as the essay "What is the People?," he contributed a retort to the Courier article entitled "Mr. Coleridge's Lectures," in which he reports a heckler's response: "'But you once praised that Revolution, Mr. Coleridge!'" (19: 208).

This exchange in turn set the tone for Hazlitt's closing remarks on Coleridge at the very end of his own lecture-series several weeks later. Unlike his rival at the London Philosophical Society, Hazlitt was under no constraint at the Surrey Institution to avoid political topics,² and especially in this final lecture "On the Living Poets," he aims for a "becoming frankness" when taking up "the Lake school of poetry," making no attempt "to screen either its revolutionary or renegado extravagances" (5:

²Subscribers to the Surrey Institution were mostly Dissenters, Quakers, and evangelicals (Baker 253; Coburn 5.1: 487). In his sixth lecture, for example, Hazlitt forgives Swift "for being a Tory," because his legacy as a moralist is superior to that of "some others" who have left behind only "the shining example of an apostate from liberty" (5: 111).

161). This is certainly true when he turns in the end to Coleridge:

It remains that I should say a few words of Mr. Coleridge; and there is no one who has a better right to say what he thinks of him than I have. 'Is there here any dear friend of Caesar? To him I say, that Brutus's love to Caesar was no less than his.' (5: 166).

With this striking analogy from Shakespeare, Hazlitt sums up his relationship with Coleridge, and the motivation behind his series of incisive reviews in the years 1816-17. While the image of "Brutus's love" might seem at first to ratify the theme of treacherous, "personal" betrayal that has since dominated our understanding of these reviews, we note that Hazlitt has chosen Brutus, not Iago, to depict his role as Coleridge's critic, thus figuring his challenge to the cultural authority of his erstwhile mentor not as one of "motiveless malignity" (Baker 356), but rather as one of public, political, and historical necessity, an action undertaken in reluctant response to his antagonist's own, prior betrayal of republican ideals. In the commentary that follows, therefore, Hazlitt draws on his writings in The Examiner to reinforce this political analogy, quoting once again the "friends in youth" passage from Christabel as an implicit allegory of political alienation and division, and adducing such poems as "Fire, Famine and Slaughter" from the period of Coleridge's republicanism as examples of "high poetical enthusiasm and strong political feeling" (5: 166).

Yet the Wat Tyler affair had taught that such a conjunction

of "high poetical enthusiasm" with "the good cause" of emancipatory politics was at best unstable, and at worst a complete illusion. Hazlitt, moreover, had been challenged by Coleridge's writings—and his tergiversation—to construct his own positive definition of poetry that would account at once for its social value and its tendency to "fall[] in with the language of power" (4: 214). One element of this counter-definition we have already come across in the review of the Biographia: Hazlitt's emphasis on the materiality of the poetic signifier (as we would now put it). Contrasted with prose, poetry "make[s] the sound an echo to the sense"; it "suppl[ies] the inherent defect of harmony in the customary mechanism of language," and thus "Poetry is the music of language, answering to the music of the mind" (16: 136; 5: 12). Hazlitt expands on this "music of the mind" in his opening lecture ("On Poetry in General") where he begins by addressing the "subject-matter" of poetry. Here the romantic metaphor of music is grafted onto such enlightenment universals as "the mind of man" to thoroughly democratize the poetic impulse. "Man is a poetical animal," Hazlitt declares, and thus "there is no thought or feeling that can have entered into the mind of man, which he would be eager to communicate to others, or which they would listen to with delight, that is not a fit subject for poetry" (5: 2). In this, Hazlitt directly contests the elitist tendencies of Coleridge's definition in the Biographia, where the question "What is poetry?" is immediately referred to the question

"what is a poet?," which in turn is figured as "a distinction resulting from the poetic genius itself" (7.2: 15). Hazlitt, by contrast, with no similar need to mystify his own authority as a "poetic genius," recurs instead to the inclusive first-person plural of anonymous criticism: "the flame of the passions, communicated to the imagination, reveals to us, as with a flash of lightning, the inmost recesses of thought, and penetrates our whole being" (5: 3).

Most interesting for our purposes is the way Hazlitt's concept of poetry is further qualified in his commentary on Coleridge's Ancient Mariner. No doubt with the recently published Sibylline Leaves in mind (where the Ancient Mariner appeared enhanced for the first time by its prose gloss), Hazlitt begins with an assessment well corroborated by posterity: this poem, he claims, is Coleridge's "most remarkable performance, and the only one that [he] could point out to any one as giving an adequate idea of [Coleridge's] natural powers" (5: 166). Yet, as in the review of Christabel, this judgement is immediately qualified by Hazlitt's implicit recurrence to the norm of "history and particular facts," against which he measures Coleridge's willingness to construct a world of pure—and ultimately enigmatic—vision, into which the "glittering eye" and importunate grip of the mariner-poet is our only guide (Poetical Works 187). "[His Ancient Mariner], Hazlitt continues, "is high German, however, and in it he seems to 'conceive of poetry but as a

drunken dream, reckless, careless, and heedless, of past, present, and to come'" (5: 166). For Hazlitt, then, while the "subject-matter" of poetry may well range across the entire spectrum of "thought and feeling" in "the mind of man," the poet, to earn the approbation of the public, must nevertheless remain heedful of "past, present, and to come"—must retain, that is, some vestige of responsibility to historical cause and effect, and (by implication) to the on-going process of human enlightenment. Thus Hazlitt continues to contest a romanticism of visionary withdrawal which produces only the idiosyncratic "dream" of genius—a lyric discourse that, in Coleridge's own words, is not at all designed to have "any *direct* influence on the actions of men" (3.2: 471).

To conclude his 1818 lecture, therefore, Hazlitt draws on such writings as his preview of The Statesman's Manual and the "AUDITOR" letter to construct a coda for his Regency criticism of Coleridge that at the same time anticipates his writings on him in the 1820s. While acknowledging to the crowded auditorium³ that Coleridge is "the only person I ever knew who answered to the idea of a man of genius," Hazlitt nevertheless roots his own species of romantic bardolatry within a strongly politicized dichotomy of past and present:

[Mr. Coleridge] was the first poet I ever knew. His genius at that time had angelic wings, and fed on manna. [...] In his descriptions, you then saw the progress of human happiness and liberty in bright and never-ending succession, like the steps of Jacob's ladder, with airy shapes ascending

³Jones 283.

and descending, and with the voice of God at the top of the ladder. And shall I, who heard him then, listen to him now? Not I! That spell is broke; that time is gone for ever; that voice is heard no more: but still the recollection comes rushing by with thoughts of long-past years, and rings in my ears with never-dying sound. (5: 167)

The key word here is "liberty," and it would remain the operative theme in Hazlitt's two most "familiar" reworkings of this passage: "My First Acquaintance With Poets" (1823), and the essay "Mr. Coleridge" from The Spirit of the Age (1825).

In the meantime, however, the immediate outcome of this contest for cultural authority may be measured on the rough ledgers of the literary marketplace in 1818. Hazlitt's skill as a periodical reviewer had laid the groundwork for his sudden success as a public lecturer, and when his first series filled the "ample hall" of the Surrey Institution "to the very ceiling,"⁴ he was encouraged to repeat it a few weeks later at the very epicentre of reformist politics, the Crown and Anchor Tavern, before publishing it as Lectures on the English Poets. Meanwhile, Coleridge's lectures, though equally well-attended, were neither repeated nor published, perhaps because, in Henry Crabb Robinson's view, they contained "much obscurity ... and not a little cant and commonplace."⁵ Thus on the strength of Hazlitt's success, his Characters of Shakespeare's Plays passed easily into a second edition, while the Biographia Literaria did not, nor did either of Coleridge's two lay sermons, or his Sibylline Leaves (1817), or

⁴Examiner 8 Mar 1818: 154; quoted in Jones Hazlitt 283.

⁵Quoted by Jones, Hazlitt 283.

the new three-volume Friend (1818). By June 1818, Hazlitt was ensconced as one of the nation's "two most eminent speculators on literary topics."⁶ The other such eminent speculator was not thought to be Coleridge, however, but rather the editor of the Edinburgh Review.

Perhaps our best indication that the "Notices" and reviews which produced this effect were written out of public rather than merely "personal" concerns lies in the fact that Hazlitt republished the majority of them in August 1819, at the very height of a second and even more severe national crisis. In this way, the intensity of focus on Coleridge and his works in 1816-17 corresponds once again to a moment of equally intense socio-political upheaval. Indeed it is no coincidence that the publication of Hazlitt's Political Essays by the radical William Hone preceded the "Peterloo" massacre by just two days. In Evans' words, "the political temperature in the summer of 1819 was higher than ever," and thus "fears of a breakdown of public order, which some construed as preparation for rebellion," were already "rife" when "Orator" Hunt accepted the invitation to address the fateful meeting in St. Peter's Fields at Manchester (23). This watershed event of the post-war era, however, did not bring the "heroic age of popular Radicalism" immediately to an end (Thompson 603). On the contrary, Hazlitt's Essays had four more months to circulate in a context of extreme public turmoil, as the martyrdom of

⁶"Hazlitt and Jeffrey," Blackwood's 3 (June 1818): 303.

peaceable reformists at Manchester galvanized the Opposition press and the Whigs in Parliament, briefly transforming what Hazlitt calls the "good cause" into a truly "national cause" (7: 129; Evans 23). Inevitably, however, this cause was silenced in December 1819 by the "Six Acts," or rather, it was sent so far underground by these "Gagging Acts" (as they were then popularly known) that it would not re-emerge for another full decade.

Of the seven reviews during the "Distresses" we have just examined, Hazlitt selected five for republication in his Political Essays: his three Examiner articles on The Statesman's Manual, his article on Coleridge's Wat Tyler essays in The Courier, and the passage on Burke from his Edinburgh review of the Biographia. As noted at the end of Chapter two above, his republication of these reviews, under his own name and in August 1819, significantly altered their orientation within the discursive environments identified in this study. Appearing now under the unifying rubric of Political Essays, they are given thematic coherence by the prefatory essay explaining Hazlitt's "hatred of tyranny and ... its tools" and his view that tyranny is propagated as much by "poets with their pens" as by "kings" with their "swords" (7: 7, 10). Published, moreover, from the house of William Hone, these essays are now directed well beyond the boundaries of the middle-class readerships of The Examiner and the Edinburgh toward the "radical" audience first gathered by Cobbett, and then taken over by Hone and his Reformist's Register when Cobbett fled to America

in 1817 (Thompson 639-40). This volume represents Hazlitt's equivalent, in effect, to Coleridge's unwritten third lay sermon. In this context, the letter from "SEMPER EGO AUDITOR" at the centre of the volume takes on greater prominence for its personification of an activist "of clerkly acquirements"—of a reader, that is, whose latinate pseudonym is the sign of his refusal of the position of merely passive "auditor" ("Must I be always a listener only?"),⁷ and who in his letter dramatizes the process of becoming one who actively audits—or calls to account—both poets and kings, thus joining the dialectical process by which public opinion is formed.

At the same time, of course, the writerly skill with which this process is dramatized is reclaimed by Hazlitt himself on this occasion as he drops the mask of pseudonymity. This change is instructively ambivalent in its implications. On the one hand, if there is anything "personal" about these Essays, it is Hazlitt's willingness now to sign his own name to them, to mortgage his new-found cultural authority as a literary critic for unequivocal solidarity with the movement for reform at this crucial juncture in its evolution. It is now as a bold "asserter of the people's rights" (7: 10) that Hazlitt positions himself as "one of the ablest and most eloquent critics of the nation,"⁸ exchanging the trope of anonymity for the ethos of individual courage in the very

⁷Rudd 3; see Introduction, page 18 above.

⁸Morning Chronicle (1819); quoted in Cook "Introduction"
xlvi

teeth of reactionary alarm. On the other hand, however, by invoking the cultural authority that has accrued to his name, Hazlitt abandons the rhetorical advantage implicit in anonymity as a self-effacing enactment of "the intellect of the people" (7: 269), and in so doing sets up in its place an equally implicit hierarchy of (active) author and (passive) auditor. As we saw, for example, in the footnote added to the preview of The Statesman's Manual, we find Hazlitt now advertising the skill with which he once marshalled the dissembling strategies of anonymous criticism, "profess[ing] to criticize" a book that (at the time) had not yet appeared in print (7: 114n).

For a political satirist, moreover, to drop the mask of anonymity was to invite the counter-attack of political satire. Hazlitt's new prominence as a literary critic in 1818 had already made him the target of the "Ministerial" press, and these Political Essays merely confirmed the need for governmental writers to abate his influence. In a series of articles throughout 1818 and 1819, beginning with a libelous attack in Blackwood's (based on Lake School gossip about Hazlitt's private character)⁹ and continuing with three reviews in the Quarterly of the Round Table, Characters of Shakespeare's Plays, and Lectures on the English Poets,¹⁰ Hazlitt was stigmatized as a

⁹"Hazlitt Cross-Questioned," Blackwood's (Aug 1818): 549-553. For two excellent accounts of the impact of Lake School gossip, see Jones Hazlitt 154-60, 297-300, and Foot "Hazlitt's Revenge" *passim* (where "Revenge" is ironic: Hazlitt's only "revenge" on such gossip, in Foot's view, is judicious praise of their poetry in public journals).

¹⁰Rev. of Round Table, Quarterly 17 (April 1817): 154-59;

lascivious, unlettered "cockney" (Blackwood's) adept only in "the trade of sedition" (Quarterly 18: 466). Now, in response to the Political Essays, he is reviled by the Quarterly as a mere "insect of the moral world" (22: 158) whose "powers of mischief hardly extend beyond the making of some dirt and some noise"—yet an "insect," we note, which the Quarterly must nevertheless spend considerable effort "to fasten ... down upon a sheet of paper with [its] other specimens" (22: 163). Shortly after this review, Parliament took similar measures against the art of dissident satire as a whole, and with the repressive "Six Acts" it ushered in the quietist 1820s—a new era "of talkers, and not of doers" (11: 28).

It would be five years before Hazlitt would define "the spirit of the age" in these terms, and name Coleridge (with some irony) "the most impressive talker of his age" (11: 30). In the meantime, of course, Hazlitt himself published two volumes of Table Talk in which satire and invective are exchanged for a combination of the "two styles [of] the *literary* and the *conversational*" (8: 333). Yet, as Cook has shown, despite this shift in generic vehicle, Hazlitt's political vision remained consistent to the very end of his career ("Criticism" 137-40). Though the "Gagging Acts" of 1819 necessarily muted the intensity with which this vision is expressed, the central drama of

rev. of Characters, Quarterly 18 (Jan 1818): 458-466; rev. of Lectures, Quarterly 19 (June 1818): 424-34. See also rev. of Political Essays, Quarterly 22 (July 1819): 158-163 (discussed below).

"liberty" oppressed by "tyranny" continues to animate his writings throughout the 1820s, not least in his two most famous essays on Coleridge. As we saw at the outset, the adjustment of rhetorical register in these essays has been traditionally interpreted as a process of growth to maturity: Hazlitt's "most mature manner of treating revolutionary and radical themes," says Ruddick (248), consists of a successful—and (implicitly) desirable—"internalization of radical energies" (243). What was "harsh, impetuous, [and] paradoxical" in such articles as the "AUDITOR" letter (253) is displaced by a "joy-suffused rediscovery of the past, rapturous from beginning to end" in such essays as "My First Acquaintance With Poets" (251). Yet, as we have seen from the Wat Tyler affair, this model of political maturation is one that is clearly endorsed by Coleridge, but emphatically rejected by Hazlitt, who traces it to the tendentious rationalization of apostasy rather than to its frank exposure. Indeed, Cook has described this model as an "influential myth of maturity" by which "a growth to maturity is a growth to conservatism" (Introduction xiii), and as such, we can recognize it as one of "Romanticism's" own most powerful "self-representations" (McGann 1). When applied to a reading of Hazlitt's 1823 essay, for example, it involves overlooking the fact that the unsold copies of Political Essays were reissued in 1822 as a "second edition" just months before the publication of "My First Acquaintance With Poets" (7: 2), a fact that indicates (among other things) that Hazlitt expected his

"AUDITOR" letter to be read as a parallel version, rather than as a "primitive draft" of his memories of Coleridge in the 1790s (Jones "First Flight" 36).

The difference between these two texts, then, must be accounted for in other terms. Politically, of course, the difference is defined by "Peterloo": in 1817, Hazlitt wrote as an activist with hope that the interventions of an ascendent Opposition press would enforce change through the democratic pressure of popular opinion; in 1823, he writes without hope, "repining but resigned" (as he describes his father in the essay [17: 110])—resigned to the ascendancy of a reactionary press anxious to preserve a status quo that has delivered accelerating prosperity to a reading public dominated by an equally ascendent middle class. With political change therefore outlawed, the literary tastes of what Klancher defines as the "middle class" reading audience are now fully oriented toward those genres of discourse best designed to consolidate its identity and authority over its emergent counterpart in "mass" (rather than "radical") culture (Klancher 47-53). We have already encountered two such genres of the "middle" style: first, those "arguments on the powers of the mind" that "drive[] a florid 'poetic diction' into the very texture of argumentative prose" (Klancher 51, 53); and second, what Hazlitt identified as the "easy, gossiping, garrulous account of youthful adventures" that draws bourgeois readers together in shared memories of a romantic age of activism and its

aftermath—an age now regarded as either safely or tragically distanced by time and change (16: 125). The differences between Hazlitt's essays of 1817 and 1823, then, may also be defined in commercial terms as an adept reflection of this shift in public taste from satiric "banter" to gregarious "table talk" on the part of a writer still making his living on the very pulse of periodical fashion. Hazlitt's generic solution is to graft a Wordsworthian or Rousseauist lyric nostalgia onto an ironic (because often implicit) narrative of political betrayal and defeat, and the result is an epiphany of plenitude rooted in historical time, rather than in timeless "vision." Yet Hazlitt's generic compromise also involves an overlooked element of continuity with his Political Essays of the Regency. These, we recall, were subtitled "With Sketches of Public Characters," and in both "My First Acquaintance With Poets" and later in "Mr. Coleridge" from The Spirit of the Age: Or, Contemporary Portraits, something of the witty cartoonist persists. Indeed, like the much-maligned preview of The Statesman's Manual, there are now (once again) no review texts to hand, and thus Coleridge's talking (and not his doing) must substitute as source of both admiration and despair.

An accurate reading of "My First Acquaintance With Poets," moreover, must take into account the embattled circumstances of its publication in The Liberal, a rhetorical context easily overlooked—or downplayed¹¹—by latter-day readers of the

anthologized text. Hazlitt himself, it is to be noted, never anthologized "My First Acquaintance With Poets," as he might easily have done by republishing it in the later, Paris edition of Table Talk (1825) or in The Plain Speaker (1826). In other words, he never disengaged this essay from its original discursive context, and this context, on closer inspection, we find to be one of dramatically renewed political, commercial, and generic struggle. The title of The Liberal alone indicates as much: under the hegemony of political reaction, such a rubric was deliberately provocative, and doubly so coming from an editorial collective (Byron, Shelley, and Leigh Hunt) that had been stigmatized as "the Satanic School" by the Laureate Southey in his preface to "The Vision of Judgment" (1821). In Elledge's account, the short-lived Liberal "set the London literary scene boiling and seething[,] first in expectation of it, then over its contents, and briefly in its wake" (221). The first number contained an unexpurgated version of Byron's satire of "The Vision of Judgment," which earned the publisher, John Hunt, a swift indictment for seditious libel. Its second number accompanied a revised edition of Byron's "Vision of Judgment" that now included his combative "Preface" to the satire, clarifying his object of attack as the Poet Laureate, not the king, and in the process re-opening all the issues of the Wat Tyler affair. In its third number appeared "My First

¹¹Jones, for example, notes that "the apostasies of Coleridge and Wordsworth" are not named in the essay, but may have obtruded themselves "even more readily with the subscribers to *The Liberal* ... in 1823" than they would now. ("First Flight" 37).

Acquaintance With Poets," alongside an "Advertisement" by Leigh Hunt designed to bait, rather than to mollify the reactionary press on the widening "Vision of Judgement" scandal (Liberal 2: v-viii). To its first readers, then, Hazlitt's reference to this scandal in the essay itself would serve to ground it clearly in the same rhetorical contrast of past and present that animated the letter of 1817. On this occasion, it is Coleridge's description (back in the 1790s) of "the third heaven, of which he had had a dream" that is now said to be "very different from Mr. Southey's Vision of Judgment, and also from that other Vision of Judgment, which Mr. Murray, the Secretary of the Bridge-street Junto, has taken into his especial keeping!" (17: 115). Here, then, in place of the contrast between Coleridge's two sermons of 1798 and 1816 we are given the difference between Coleridge's "dream" of the 1790s and Southey's "Vision" of 1821—and between this "dream" and Byron's daring satire in The Liberal—and this contrast would serve in turn as a thematic catalyst for such references elsewhere in the essay as to Coleridge as a "wayward enthusiast," whose very habit of "shifting from one side of the path to the other" was an undetected sign in the 1790s of a future "instability of purpose or involuntary change of principle" (17: 112-3).

Heightening the contrast between past and present in the 1823 essay, then, is the larger context of political reaction, dating to "Peterloo" but epitomized in the swift indictment of John Hunt, as well as in the well-publicized discord fomented among the

journal's editors by John Murray (Elledge 224), not to mention in the imminent and inevitable collapse of The Liberal itself. Against this backdrop of the present-day betrayal and persecution of "liberty," Hazlitt paints the bright portrait of Coleridge's liberalism in the 1790s, the very intensity of which may be read as a rhetorical exaggeration designed to throw into correspondingly poignant and ironic contrast the loss of this "genius" to the failing cause of liberty in the 1820s. Within the essay itself, moreover, this contrast is supplemented by Hazlitt's introduction of his own father as a character foil for the young Coleridge:

It was curious to observe the contrast between him and my father, who was a veteran in the cause [My father] had been relegated to an obscure village ... far from the talk he loved, the talk about disputed texts of Scripture and the cause of civil and religious liberty. Here he passed his days, repining but resigned

No two individuals were ever more unlike than were the host and his guest. A poet was to my father a sort of non-descript: yet whatever added grace to the Unitarian cause was to him welcome. He could hardly have been more surprised or pleased, if our visitor had worn wings. Indeed, his thoughts had wings; and as the silken sounds rustled around our little wainscoted parlour, my father threw back his spectacles over his forehead ... and a smile of delight beamed across his rugged cordial face, to think that Truth had found a new ally in Fancy! (17: 110-11)

Like his son in later years, the elder Hazlitt's pleasure in this new alliance was short-lived. The very next morning, "Fancy" was to break ranks with "Truth" when Coleridge accepted the Wedgwood

annuity, and "instead of ... being the pastor of a Dissenting congregation at Shrewsbury, he was henceforth to inhabit the Hill of Parnassus, to be a shepherd on the Delectable Mountains!" (17: 112). While literary history has exulted over this turn in Coleridge's career, and has read in Hazlitt's depiction of it a similarly approving dichotomy of prosaic "pastor" and poetic "shepherd," we nevertheless overhear the politically-inflected irony of this contrast, equivalent to the opposition of "reality" and "dream" in the review of Christabel, and aligned in this essay with the opposition between the career of the elder Hazlitt and the "wayward" poet. As Stanley Jones puts it,

Whereas in 1817 Coleridge's volte-face was shown by the contradiction between what he himself once said and what he was now saying, in 1823 the same point ... is implicitly but far more effectively clinched in the profounder contrast, exemplary on a human and existential and not merely abstract level, between one man who has shifted his ground with the passing of years and another who had remained all his life an immovable as a rock. The Rev. William Hazlitt is here portrayed as a humbly heroic figure who sustained in the moral history of his time, together with his equally obscure fellow-pastors Rowe of Shrewsbury and Jenkins of Whitchurch, that 'line of communication by which the flame of civil and religious liberty was kept alive, and nourished its smouldering fires unquenchable' ([17: 107]; Jones "First Flight" 37)

Jones quotes here the second of the two points in this essay where Hazlitt clarifies what he intended by the "good cause" in his account of the Shrewsbury sermon. It is "the cause of civil and religious liberty," and in both texts, we recall, this cause is

pitted against "the brand of JUS DIVINUM" (17: 109)—an agent of tyranny later described in The Spirit of the Age as "the murderous practices of the hag, Legitimacy" (11: 34).

In this way, then, Hazlitt's most frequently anthologized essay on Coleridge presents a parallel, rather than a "more mature" version of his politics during the "Distresses" crisis. This is true of the generic features of the essay as well. While Hazlitt has acceded to changes in literary fashion by combining the lyric epiphany of the Shrewsbury sermon passage with "an easy, gossiping, garrulous account of [his] youthful adventures" in Wem and Nether Stowey, he has also incorporated into this generic fusion the (satiric) "sketch of a public character" that forms one of the key ingredients of his Political Essays—and later of The Spirit of the Age. In perhaps the most famous description of Coleridge in the canon, Hazlitt presents a witty phrenological portrait that directly recalls his bantering preview of The Statesman's Manual in its graphic rendering of Coleridge's "nose":

His forehead was broad and high, light as if built of ivory, with large projecting eyebrows, and his eyes rolling beneath them like a sea with darkened lustre. 'A certain tender bloom his face o'erspread,' a purple tinge as we see it in the pale thoughtful complexions of the Spanish portrait-painters, Murillo and Velasquez. His mouth was gross, voluptuous, open, eloquent; his chin good-humoured and round; but his nose, the rudder of the face, the index of the will, was small, feeble, nothing—like what he has done. It might seem that the genius of this face as from a height surveyed and projected him (with sufficient capacity and huge aspiration) into the world unknown of thought and imagination, with nothing to support or guide his veering

purpose, as if Columbus had launched his adventurous course for the New World in a scallop, without oars or compass. So at least I comment on it after the event. (17: 109)

From the sublime forehead to the bathetic nose, from Columbus to the tossing "scallop, without oars or compass," we are given the same set of satiric contrasts as those between the "eagle dallying with the wind" and Coleridge's treacherous "balloon" in the 1817 letter, or between Coleridge's "talk" and his "attempt[s]" to write in the 1816 preview. Once again, too, Hazlitt grounds the essay efficiently in the present, balancing the entire, loquacious account of Coleridge's remarkable powers against the terse referent "what he has done," which in 1823 still remains, in his view, "small, feeble, nothing."

Further complicating the matter of style and genre in this essay is Hazlitt's direct thematization of it, and in particular his identification of the origins of his own discursive facility in what Jones calls "the thaumaturgic splendour" of Coleridge's conversation ("First Flight" 37). Where in Hazlitt's Regency reviews of Coleridge, the convergence of satirist and subject at the level of style was tentative and ironic ("It is impossible, in short, to describe this strange rhapsody without falling a little into the style of it" [16: 100]), in the age of table-talk this identity is now overt and acknowledged, and its source celebrated in quasi-mythological terms:

As we passed along between W—m and Shreswbury, ... a sound was in my ears as of a Siren's song; I was stunned, startled with it, as from a deep sleep; but I had no notion then that

I should ever be able to express my admiration to others in motley imagery and quaint allusion, till the light of his genius shone into my soul, like the sun's rays glittering in the puddles of the road. I was at that time dumb, inarticulate, helpless, like a worm by the wayside, crushed, bleeding, lifeless; but now, bursting from the deadly bands that 'bound them

'With Styx nine times round them,'

my ideas floated on winged words, and as they expand their plumes, catch the golden light of other years. My soul has indeed remained in its original bondage, dark, obscure, with longings infinite and unsatisfied; ... but that my understanding also did not remain dumb and brutish, or at length found a language to express itself, I owe to Coleridge. (17: 107)

From what has gone before, we can read in the contrast now developed between the "bondage" of Hazlitt's soul and the eloquence of his "understanding" the contrast between political defeat and commercial viability in an age of "talkers, and not of doers." We note that the language of "motley imagery" and "quaint allusion" that Coleridge is said to have inspired in him is of value now only to "catch the golden light of other years," to celebrate, in other words, the brief—and possibly illusory—convergence of "Truth" and "Fancy" in "the year 1798." While literary history has welcomed this turn to reminiscence in Hazlitt's writing, and incorporated it into a narrative of generic development—of the ascendancy of romantic biography and "joy-suffused" lyricism over "harsh, impetuous, paradoxical" satire—it has done so only at the cost of overlooking the (political) tragedy that underlies it. Moreover, this narrative of

development, with its affinities to the "influential myth of maturity," is once again soundly rejected by Hazlitt himself in another reflection on the question of style. "I can write fast enough now," he remarks, after describing his frustrations composing his first work, his Essay on the Principles of Human Action. But then he asks, "Am I better than I was then? Oh no! One truth discovered, one pang of regret at not being able to express it, is better than all the fluency and flippancy in the world. Would that I could go back to what I then was!" (17: 114). With this, Hazlitt reduces the essay-style for which he is most valued—his "most mature" mode of the 1820s—to mere "fluency and flippancy," thus subordinating both what he has acquired from Coleridge, and what he has since required to contest his mentor's authority, to the radical inarticulateness that attends the direct apprehension of "truth." This movement, of course, is not unlike that of Wordsworth in the "Intimations Ode," or even of Coleridge himself in "Dejection: an Ode," yet with the difference that the "truth" once apprehended by Hazlitt in this case is not one that authorizes individual "genius" and "the growth of a poet's mind," but rather one that serves the "cause of civil and religious liberty" by proving "*the Natural Disinterestedness of the Human Mind*" (17: 114).

Yet it was "fluency and flippancy" that sold periodicals and books in an "age of talkers," and while Coleridge continued to hold forth at Highgate, becoming something of a pre-Victorian sage

for his legendary powers of "conversation," Hazlitt continued to make a living by combining "the *literary* and the *conversational*" in the medium of print (8: 333). Thus it is that Hazlitt's most securely canonized work, The Spirit of the Age, has as its centrepiece a "Contemporary Portrait" of Coleridge as "the most impressive talker of his age" (11: 1, 30), and contains as its most striking stylistic innovation an 840-word sentence designed at once to celebrate and to parody this unstoppable phenomenon (11: 32-34). In this balance of sincerity and irony, Hazlitt summarizes his entire collection of writings on Coleridge, from the unwieldy "capacity" of this genius found in the review of Christabel (19: 32), through the narrative of apostasy in the "Distresses" reviews, to the politicized summary of Coleridge's poetical achievement in the 1818 lecture, to the use of a character foil—this time "Mr. Godwin"—to illustrate Coleridge's unique dissipation of his "capacity."

Indeed, the recurrent theme of Hazlitt's final essay on Coleridge is taken from the very opening lines of his first review: the paradox that "from an excess of capacity, [Mr. Coleridge] does little or nothing" (19: 32). The only difference between the review of Christabel and The Spirit of the Age is that by 1825, Coleridge's very uniqueness in this regard suggests—again paradoxically—a general cultural trend. For if "the present is an age of talkers, and not of doers," Hazlitt explains, it is because

We are so far advanced in the Arts and Sciences, that we live in retrospect and doat on past achievements. The accumulation of knowledge has been so great, that we are lost in wonder at the height it has reached, instead of attempting to climb or add to it; while the variety of objects distracts and dazzles the looker-on. (11: 29)

Epitomizing this latter-day phenomenon, Coleridge has "'a mind reflecting ages past,'" in which there is "hardly a speculation ... left on record from the earliest time, but it is loosely folded up in [his] memory, like a rich, but somewhat tattered piece of tapestry" (11: 29). Like the "age" as a whole, then,

Mr. Coleridge is too rich in intellectual wealth, to need to task himself to any drudgery: he has only to draw the sliders of his imagination, and a thousand subjects expand before him, startling him with their brilliancy, or losing themselves in endless obscurity (11: 30)

This image of Coleridge playing with the "sliders of his imagination" offers one clue to the complex tone that infuses this portrait of plenitude. Having encountered this image in the context of the Wat Tyler affair, we can register more precisely the irony with which Coleridge's own simile of the "magic lantern" is once again taken up to reduce visionary romanticism to mere solipsistic bemusement with the gadget of the "imagination." Yet at the same time, when Hazlitt follows up this image with the comment that such a mind "thinks as it were aloud, and babbles in its dreams!," what might otherwise appear a blunt indictment is tempered by our recollection of another image from the "Distresses" period: of Coleridge as the dying Falstaff

"babbl[ing] of green fields" (16: 100). As before, then, the bitterest irony is crossed by sympathetic pathos as well as Hazlitt's own characteristic insight. For if indeed "[p]ersons of greatest capacity are often those, who for this very reason do the least" (as Hazlitt now re-states the wry paradox), then it is because such persons "prefer the contemplation of all that is, or has been, or can be, to the making a coil about doing what, when done, is no better than vanity" (11: 30).

One effect of Hazlitt's generalization of the character-type is to modify the extent to which Coleridge can be held responsible for his failure to perform up to "capacity" on behalf of the "good cause." This effect is borne out in turn by Hazlitt's lengthening perspective on the narrative of apostasy. The narrative itself, to be sure, is rehearsed every bit as vividly and emphatically as it ever was in the Political Essays. By 1825, however, it had become apparent that Coleridge, unlike Southey or Wordsworth, was not about to accept any of the "places or pensions" proffered by "the hag, Legitimacy" (11: 37, 34). Like them, still, his achievement as an author is limited to the era of his political resistance: "All that he has done of moment, he had done twenty years ago," when "he hailed the rising orb of liberty ... and had kindled his affections at the blaze of the French Revolution ..." (11: 30, 34). Certainly, too, Coleridge's very "capacity" must still be regarded as a political liability:

'Frailty, thy name is *Genius!*'—What is become of this mighty heap of hope, of thought, of learning, and humanity? It has

ended in swallowing doses of oblivion and in writing paragraphs in the *Courier*.—Such, and so little, is the mind of man! (11: 34)

With such "paragraphs in the *Courier*" in mind, moreover, Coleridge is once again arraigned for having "turned on the pivot of a subtle casuistry to the *unclean side*" (11: 34). Yet, by contrast with his fellow Lake poets, he is at least one whose

... discursive reason would not let him trammel himself into a poet-laureate or stamp-distributor, and he stopped, ere he quite passed that well-known 'bourne from whence no traveller returns'—and so has sunk into torpid, uneasy repose, tantalized by useless resources, haunted by vain imaginings, his lips idly moving, but his heart for ever still, or, as the shattered chords vibrate of themselves, making melancholy music to the ear of memory: Such is the fate of genius in an age, when in the unequal contest with sovereign wrong, every man is ground to powder who is not either a born slave, or who does not willingly and at once offer up the yearnings of humanity and the dictates of reason as a welcome sacrifice to besotted prejudice and loathsome power. (11: 34)

We note that the fundamental struggle between liberty and tyranny remains unaltered here; it is only Coleridge's role in this struggle that has been subtly refigured, with greater emphasis now on the dying Falstaff, perhaps, than on the sovereign Caesar—on Coleridge as the hapless victim, rather than the fully co-opted agent of tyranny. The poignancy of this portrait is redoubled by the fact that Hazlitt is now describing his own "fate" as well as that of Coleridge in an era of "sovereign wrong." Like Coleridge, he too has been "ground to powder" for refusing to "offer up the yearnings of humanity and the dictates of reason" to the cultural

imperatives of "loathsome power." In commercial terms, for example, the continued assault on Hazlitt's reputation by the Tory press had forced him to publish the first edition of Spirit of the Age anonymously, until its success allowed a second edition later in the year under his own name (11: 2). This convergence of critic and subject under a regime of "besotted prejudice" is once again reflected in a final identity at the level of style: both writers, in this view, are reduced to making "melancholy music to the ear of memory."

Yet when Hazlitt turns to treat "Mr. Coleridge's productions" in more detail, the imprint of their struggle for authority clearly remains. Drawing heavily on his 1818 lecture, Hazlitt once again praises Coleridge's poetry from the era of his republicanism, quoting "his affecting Sonnet to the author of the Robbers," and again isolating the Ancient Mariner as Coleridge's most pre-eminent work. Here, we note, he revises his assessment to align it better with the theme of Coleridge's "capacity":

Let whatever other objections be made to it, [this poem] is unquestionably a work of genius—of wild, irregular, overwhelming imagination, and has that rich, varied movement in the verse, which gives a distant idea of the lofty or changeful tones of Mr. Coleridge's voice. (11: 35)

No longer a "drunken dream," the Ancient Mariner is nevertheless "wild, irregular, [and] overwhelming," the first of these epithets being the key word in the controversy over Christabel, just as "overwhelming" recalls the way the earlier poem was said to throw the critic's faculties "into a state of metaphysical suspense and

theoretical imbecility" (19: 33). The phrase "changeeful tones" is also more than just a compliment on Coleridge's elocution, but doubles as a further index of his instability of character. Certainly it is this negative side-effect of his "capacity" that lies behind the final, stinging rebuke of Coleridge's prose:

If our author's poetry is inferior to his conversation, his prose is utterly abortive. Hardly a gleam is to be found in it of the brilliancy and richness of those stores of thought and language that he pours out incessantly, when they are lost like drops of water in the ground. The principal work, in which he has attempted to embody his general view of things, is the FRIEND, of which, though it contains some noble passages and fine trains of thought, prolixity and obscurity are the most frequent characteristics. (11: 35)

It is Coleridge's prose, after all, that bears his turn "on the pivot of a subtle casuistry to the *unclean side*" (11: 34), and in these astringent comments we revisit the terms in which The Statesman's Manual, the Courier essays, and the Biographia were contested during the "Distresses." The word "casuistry," for example, recalls the "maudlin Methodistical casuistry" with which Coleridge was said to defend Southey during the Wat Tyler affair (7: 178), and this word is in turn a variation on the key term "cant" used to depict the German metaphysics through which Coleridge affected his retreat from politics into pure vision (7: 135). By such strategies of prose, in Hazlitt's view, Coleridge's "excess of capacity" has been aborted—or, worse, transformed into its grim parody, "prolixity and obscurity."

To summarize the multiple elements of this portrait, then,

Hazlitt makes use of another character-foil, this time William Godwin, author of the anarchist manifesto Political Justice and the jacobin allegory Caleb Williams:

No two persons can be conceived more opposite in character or genius than the subject of the present and of the preceding sketch. Mr. Godwin, with less natural capacity, and with fewer acquired advantages, by concentrating his mind on some given object, and doing what he had to do with all his might, has accomplished much, and will leave more than one monument of a powerful intellect behind him; Mr. Coleridge, by dissipating his, and dallying with every subject by turns, has done little or nothing to justify to the world or to posterity, the high opinion which all who have ever heard him converse, or known him intimately, with one accord entertain of him. (11: 35-6)

Like the opposition of "Truth" and "Fancy" in the 1823 essay, Godwin presents an example of the successful concentration of "capacity," however modest, in contrast to Coleridge's dissipation of his "excess." Though left unstated, the politics of this contrast would also have been readily evident to Hazlitt's first readers, if nowhere else than in Hazlitt's view that Godwin "has accomplished much." Like the elder Hazlitt's tenacious upholding of "the flame of civil and religious liberty" (17: 107), Godwin symbolized an unwavering commitment to "abstract reason" and the radical implications of "universal benevolence" (11: 18-9), easily contrasted with Coleridge's desultory "dallying" with both the "good" and the "unclean side." Yet in each case, these former champions of the "good cause" have suffered a tragic fall amounting almost to premature death. Godwin (not unlike Hazlitt's

father) has been cast into utter obscurity by the age's "dastard submission to prejudice and to the fashion of the day," leaving him "to all intents and purposes dead and buried" (11: 16-7). Coleridge, meanwhile, by attempting to follow these same turns of fashion and prejudice, has become "the greatest talker" in "an age of talkers," and for this very reason has been induced to "lay[] down his pen ... for the stare of an idler," and to become a grotesque parody of his potential with "lips idly moving, but his heart for ever still" (11: 30, 34).

Hazlitt's original version of this essay ends with his comparison of Godwin and Coleridge, leaving its political applications largely implicit. These, however, he clearly wished to clarify and reinforce, for in another edition of Spirit of the Age published shortly after in Paris, he added a new, final paragraph to the essay that was retained in the second (signed) English edition of 1825, as well as in all subsequent ones. This final paragraph constitutes, in effect, Hazlitt's last addition to the The Spirit of the Age as a whole, and as such reflects both the importance he attached to the portrait of Coleridge in particular, and his on-going concern to situate that portrait within the larger narrative of revolution and reaction defined by his Political Essays. Here, then, is Hazlitt's own, resounding coda to the body of criticism taken up in this study:

It was a misfortune to any man of talent to be born in the latter end of the last century. Genius stopped the way of Legitimacy, and therefore it was to be abated, crushed, or set aside as a nuisance. The spirit of the monarchy was at

variance with the spirit of the age. The flame of liberty, the light of intellect was to be extinguished with the sword—or with slander, whose edge is sharper than the sword. The war between power and reason was carried on by the first of these abroad—by the last at home. No quarter was given (then or now) by the Government-critics, the authorised censors of the press, to those who followed the dictates of independence, who listened to the voice of the tempter, Fancy. Instead of gathering fruits and flowers, immortal fruits and amaranthine flowers, they soon found themselves beset not only by a host of prejudices, but assailed with all the engines of power, by nicknames, by lies, by all the arts of malice, interest, and hypocrisy, without the possibility of their defending themselves 'from the pelting of the pitiless storm,' that poured down upon them from the strongholds of corruption and authority. The philosophers, the dry abstract reasoners, submitted to this reverse pretty well, and armed themselves with patience 'as with triple steel' to bear discomfiture, persecution, and disgrace. But the poets, the creatures of sympathy, could not stand the frowns of both kings and people. They did not like to be shut out when places and pensions, when the critic's praises, and the laurel-wreath were about to be distributed. They did not stomach being sent to *Coventry*, and Mr. Coleridge sounded a retreat for them by the help of casuistry, and a musical voice.—'His words were hollow, but they pleased the ear' of his friends of the Lake School, who turned back disgusted and panic-stricken from the dry desert of unpopularity, like Hassan the camel driver,

'And curs'd the hour, and curs'd the luckless day,
When first from Shiraz' walls they bent their way.'

They are safely inclosed there, but Mr. Coleridge did not enter with them; pitching his tent upon the barren waste without, and having no abiding place nor city of refuge.

(11: 37-8)

With this, Hazlitt updates the narrative of revolution and

"retreat" to the year 1825, and Coleridge's pivotal role within it. Here we are taken back to "AUDITOR"'s aborted quest for "immortal fruits and amaranthine flowers," and forward to a new and final image of Coleridge shut out from the walls of "Shiraz," at once unwilling to "trammel himself in to a poet-laureate or stamp-distributor" (11: 34) and constitutionally incapable of focussing his prodigious "capacity"—even on the project of rationalizing tyranny.

For Hazlitt, as always, the tragedy here lies in the "barren waste," a reflection of Coleridge's refusal of meaningful political agency disguised now as a kind of romantic other-worldliness. In a previous age, however, "Genius stopped the way of Legitimacy," creating the illusion that an alliance between "the light of intellect" and "the tempter, Fancy" would bring millennial force to bear in the archetypal "war between power and reason." Not surprisingly, only the "dry abstract reasoners" like Godwin (and the veterans of Dissent like the elder Hazlitt) could withstand the inevitable "pitiless storm" of reaction. As for the poets, the very conditions that made their poetry possible—their "sympathy" with *all* "the thoughts and feelings of man"—also made it possible for them to romanticize "corruption and authority." Here especially, Coleridge played the crucial role of supplementing the "musical voice" of poetry with the "casuistry" of Transcendental Idealism, and thus "sounded a retreat" for the poets of the age, and leaving behind in his prose the legacy of a

ideology that seeks to transcend ideology.

Hazlitt himself, meanwhile, in such passages as this, continues to uphold "the flame of liberty" into the very midst of the reactionary 1820s, unwilling to accept the equally "barren" obscurity of a Godwin or a provincial dissenter. Here, once again, he sounds the note of an alternative romanticism of resistance, carrying into the very drawing-rooms of the "age of talkers" this on-going "war between power and reason." By adding this paragraph to his second edition of The Spirit of the Age, his latest masterpiece of "fluency and flippancy" is identified in tone and theme—as well as in name—with his Political Essays, reworking its "Sketches of Public Characters" into "Contemporary Portraits," declaring once again in no uncertain terms the author's "hatred of tyranny, and [his] contempt for its tools," and thus ensuring that the narrative of apostasy is registered as an indispensable feature of "the spirit of the age."

With the hindsight of cultural history, of course, we can now see Coleridge safely ensconced within "Shiraz' walls" of academic posterity. Even Hazlitt, insofar as he is thought to be "the most representative critic in English romanticism," has been given limited asylum within this "city of refuge" (Bate Criticism 282). In so doing, however, his Political Essays have been "set aside as a nuisance" despite their obvious affinities with his more securely canonized works, and despite the fact that Hazlitt himself would rank these among his most important contributions to

"the spirit of the age." Certainly in the critique of Coleridge at their very centre, he takes on a far more important role than that of mere supplement and acolyte to Coleridge's "genius" in the *annus mirabilis* of British Romanticism. Instead, he is the vigilant chronicler of the "retreat" of that Romanticism—under Coleridge's banner—from the "cause of civil and religious liberty" to a myth of "maturity," from the "mind of man" to "the visions of recluse genius," from the plural and the public to a solitary lyric "dream."

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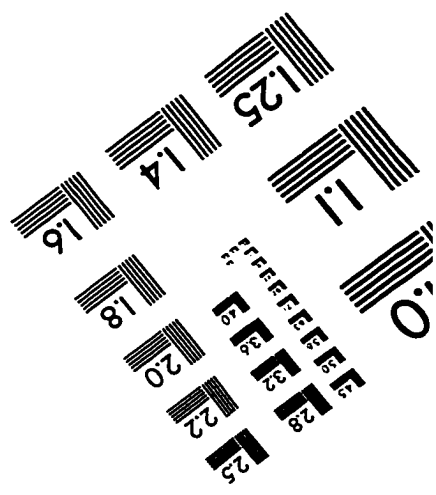
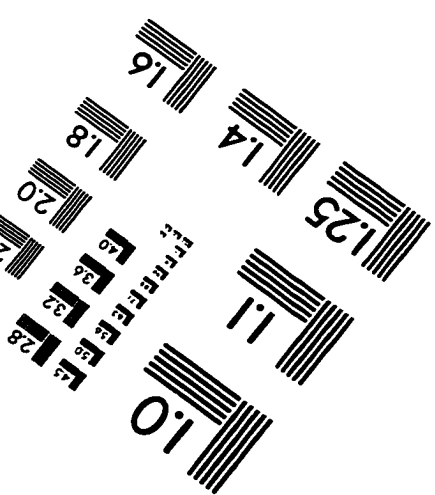
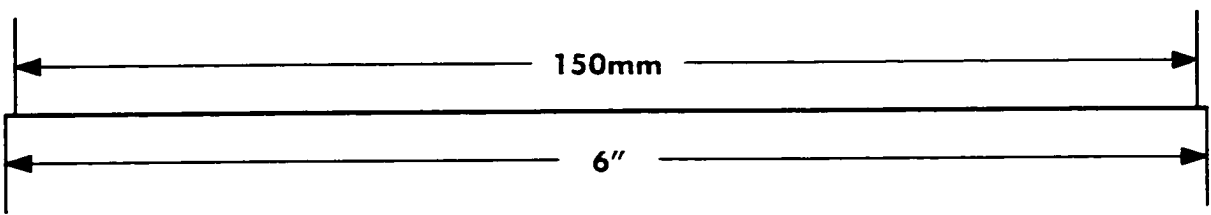
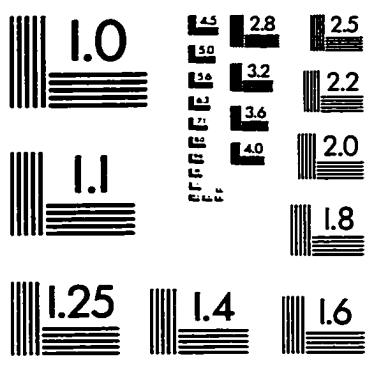
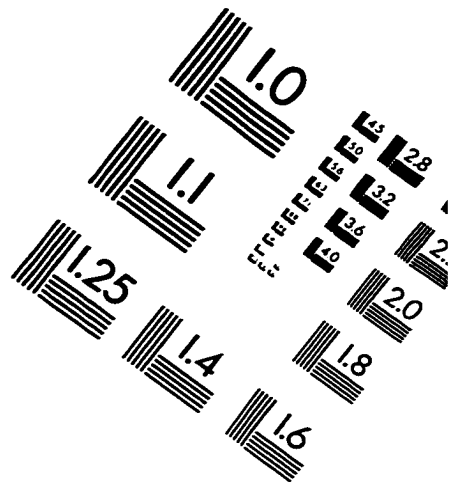
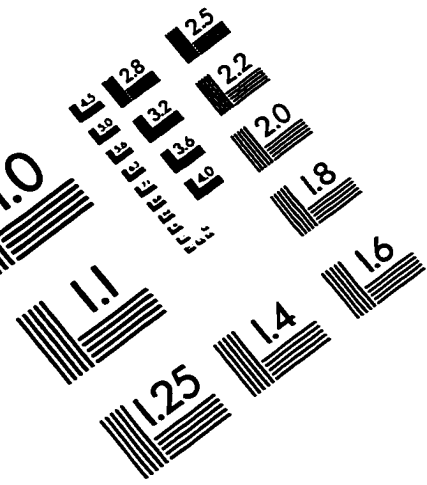
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