THE LITERARY CRITICISM OF WILLIAM HAZLITT

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by

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ABSTRACT

William Hazlitt frankly declared his critical writings to be nothing other than the expression of his feeling for literature. Rejecting the use of some abstract theory to serve as an a priori criterion for literature, Hazlitt posited that truly expressed feeling, if the latter was of sufficient intensity, would supply its own intuitive standard. Hazlitt's expression took the form of description, the main element of which was metaphor.

The question of whether or not there is a non-theoretical way to determine the reliability of Hazlitt's intuitive expression forms the basis for this thesis. By examining the metaphors throughout the body of critical essays it was found that there are structures, metaphoric in nature, which provide examples of the self-unifying and self-validating power that Hazlitt claimed feeling to have.

Of the many metaphoric structures, large and small, found in the criticism two are treated in detail. Chapter II delineates the water metaphor which assumes a cyclic pattern while Chapter III is concerned with the smelting metaphor, a more linear type structure.

Using Hazlitt's call for the expression of feeling as a starting point and illustrating that position's validity, we are able to assert that Hazlitt's criticism is more than a collection of individual essays or books - it is a work of art.

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CHAPTER I

HAZLITT'S METHOD OF FEELING

> In place of a hermeneutics we
> need an erotics of art.
>
> Sontag

"I say what I think: I think what I feel. I cannot help receiving certain impressions from things; and I have sufficient courage to declare (somewhat abruptly) what they are" (V, 175). This statement may be said to summarize the approach of William Hazlitt to literary criticism as a practical, non-theoretical art. It has been called an early "direct defense" of the impressionist method,[1] a view reinforced by such other assertions as: "In art, in taste, in life, in speech, you decide from feeling, and not from reason" (VIII, 31), and "A genuine criticism should, as I take it, reflect the colours, the light and shade, the soul and body of a work" (VIII, 217).

i. Enunciating a Perspective

While it is accurate and pertinent historically to see the Romantic Hazlitt as an anticipator of the impressionist writers (Pater, Wilde, France, et al.) of the second half of the nineteenth century, it is equally important to see him in a broader context as one of those recurring

figures in literary criticism who remind us that art is, by its nature, an experience which loses its very soul to those who attempt to reduce the experience to some sort of clinical or analytical abstract. The importance of seeing Hazlitt thus can be illustrated best by reference not to the impressionists[2] so much as to a like approach (and its opposite) to literary criticism in our own time.

Whitehead states that knowledge can be seen in two very distinct moments: i) "the stage of romance", and ii) "the stage of precision".[3] The human mind is capable of, and performs, post-experiential analysis. And, although the second moment depends on the first, most people would agree that philosophy's main concern is with "the stage of precision". When one turns to literary criticism the primacy of one moment over the other causes some concern and division among literary critics. On the one hand, we have those who emphasize the first moment, "the stage of romance", a position most clearly enunciated by Susan Sontag in her essay "Against Interpretation". On the other hand, a study by E.D. Hirsch, Jr., entitled Validity in Interpretation, may be seen as representative of those critics who argue for "the stage of precision".[4]

In his Preface Hirsch sums up the dichotomy of approach succintly:

> The divinatory moment is unmethodical, intuitive, sympathetic; it is an imaginative guess without which nothing can begin. The second, or critical, moment of interpretation submits the first moment to a "high intellectual standard" by testing it against all the relevant knowledge available. Thus, although the critical moment is dependent and secondary, it has the indispensable function of raising interpretive guesses to the level of knowledge.[5]

He goes on to say that, "since there are no methods for making imaginative guesses", his study advocates "only [the] methods . . . for weighing evidence",[6] that is the second moment of knowledge, "the stage of precision".

If we accept the two moments of knowledge posited by Whitehead, we may say that Sontag argues, unlike Hirsch, for the first, "the stage of romance". But we need to keep the meanings clear. Sontag would agree, it seems, with Whitehead's first moment provided that moment is understood by all to be a part of knowledge. She would disagree with Hirsch's rendition of Whitehead's moments. Hirsch calls "the stage of romance" "an imaginative guess" which is not a part of knowledge without the "second, or critical, moment of interpretation". In presenting his position Hirsch has in fact contradicted himself. The first moment becomes for him some kind of pre-knowledge sensation, a "guess" without a "method" and hence, he implies, without a validity of its own. He takes "practical implications" for granted both as evidence for and "consequences of" what becomes an excursion

into abstract theory.[7] This approach to criticism Sontag would see as an example of the modern stress on content in art. In fact, she says, that method is "a hindrance, a nuisance, a . . . not so subtle philistinism".[8]

She does not deny the validity of philosophy or psychology or any other branch of learning which concerns itself with "the stage of precision": "they give rise . . . to conceptual knowledge . . . which is the distinctive feature of discursive or scientific knowledge".[9] What she does deny is that the first stage, experience, is not knowledge. It is and has its own validity and its own method, that of art itself. "Of course, works of art . . . present information and evaluations. But their distinctive feature [is] . . . transparence: experiencing the luminousness of the thing in itself, of things being what they are."[10] Art (and by implication art criticism) is not "an imaginative guess" as Hirsch says, but the knowledge of experience. Whatever else Hirsch is concerned with it is not literary criticism - the literary aspect has been omitted or, worse, taken for granted. Sontag argues that literature is an experience and any discussion that leaves that experience out has replaced literature with false "duplicates".

Her position is set forth in the essays "Against Interpretation" and "On Style". In the former she points

out that particularly under the influence of the "modern doctrines" ("elaborate systems of hermeneutics") of Marx and Freud, modern literary criticism has been so concerned with "content" that it has ignored "form" and hence the artistic experience itself. The "arrogance of interpretation", which arises from the "excessive stress on content", "takes the sensory experience of the work of art for granted, and proceeds from there".[11] What the literary critic must do is not take that experience for granted.[12] "It is in the light of the condition of our senses, our capacities (rather than those of another age), that the task of the critic must be assessed."[13]

In her essay "On Style" Sontag points out that while all critics are "quick to avow that style and content are indissoluble", "the old antithesis lives on . . . whenever [critics] apply themselves to particular works of literature".[14] In point of fact, the style is the method of artistic creation - "To speak of style is one way of speaking about the totality of a work of art." The type of "knowledge" one gets from art "is an experience of the form or style of knowing something, rather than a knowledge of something (like a fact or a moral judgment) in itself". There is in art an interaction of an experiential moment which is unified in its "energy, vitality, [and] expressiveness" with the willingly "experiencing subject": "Art is seduction, not rape."[15]

Because of the emphasis on content or interpretation, man seems to be "stuck with the task of defending art".[16] The best defense is no defense. Art is like the world: "Both are. Both need no justification; nor could they possibly have any."[17] Hippolyte, the experiencing 'I' in Sontag's novel, The Benefactor, sums up the situation well: "Let nothing be interpreted. No part of the modern sensibility is more tiresome than its eagerness to excuse and to have one thing always mean something else!"[18] The awareness of this leads Hippolyte "to adopt a new attitude . . . [one] without duplicity". In short, modern literary criticism has duped itself: "interpretation is the revenge of the intellect upon art" and "even more. It is the revenge of the intellect upon the world."[19]

With these approaches to modern literary criticism in mind, we may turn to the Romantic considerations of the problem of knowledge (the experiential versus the reflective) and its role in art and criticism. Hazlitt, in his emphasis on feeling, took the side of experience rather than the more abstract side of 'interpretation'. That is not to say that the modern Sontag and the Romantic Hazlitt are equated in all things. Rather they are best seen as a similar kind of response to the problem of 'art knowledge' under the special conditions of their ages. When Hazlitt wrote his criticism and argued for feeling rather than theory he did not have in

mind the ideas and methods propounded by the New Critics, or Marx, or Freud, or Jung any more than Sontag has in mind mechanical empiricism. Where they are on equal terms is their search for the solution of the problem of art knowledge in art itself and not in philosophy or any other branch of learning.

Roy Park points out that "a particular problem" of Romantic critical theory and poetic practice was the resolution of the question "whether poetry is poetry, or whether it is finally explicable only within the framework of a more general metaphysic".[20] He goes on to say that "Hazlitt vindicated the self-authenticating nature of the poetic principle against both a hostile empirical epistemology and what he conceived to be the misguided attempts of contemporary poets and critics to construct a non-scientific and extra-poetic alternative."[21] The common bond, then, between Sontag and Hazlitt is their demand that art be dealt with as it is, art as experience and not as an "arrangement into a mental scheme of categories"[22] or as the "superficial plan and elevation . . . of formal architecture" (VIII, 217).

What makes this bond (beyond its simple recognition) between the two particularly important for us is the way in which it shapes our response to the criticism of Hazlitt. It must be borne in mind that it is about our tendency to

dwell on "the stage of precision" that Sontag is speaking when she says:

> The interpreter, without actually erasing or rewriting the text, is altering it. But he can't admit to doing this. He claims to be only making it intelligible, by disclosing its true meaning.
>
> The old style of interpretation[23] was insistent, but respectful; it erected another meaning on top of the literal one. The modern style of interpretation excavates, and as it excavates, destroys; it digs "behind" the text, to find a sub-text which is the true one.[24]

Nowhere are Sontag's statements more applicable than to modern views of Hazlitt as literary critic. For the vast percentage of written material on Hazlitt has concerned itself with trying to wrest some sort of theory out of his essays by which all that he wrote can be briefly summarized and neatly packaged. The unfortunate result has been that many assessors of Hazlitt seem to be saying: 'Clear away all the excess that Hazlitt wrote and here is what you get', a nice way of stating, 'Don't read Hazlitt, read me'. This attitude may be unintentional but it is one case where Sontag is certainly right in saying that "interpretation excavates, and . . . destroys". Her statements are ironic in effect because Hazlitt himself as a practising literary critic worked from a method diametrically opposed to the interpretative manner. If Sontag sees "the modern style of interpretation" as "aggressive and impious" and so tolerates

"the old style", it is chiefly because she is concerned with the here-and-now of the second half of the twentieth century. But "the old style of interpretation" was Hazlitt's here-and-now and he opposed it just as vehemently as Sontag continues to do with "the modern style".

The modern reader, then, must not only avoid looking for interpretation in Hazlitt but as well avoid interpreting him. To the interpreter Hazlitt will be, for the most part, a disappointment because his criticism has little of the theoretical about it. Instead his concrete practice resolves itself into an art form and as such it is to be primarily experienced rather than analysed. In effect what we have is an intricate and complex movement in the realm of the experiential. The artist expresses his experience in an art form which itself becomes an experience for the critic. And the latter expresses himself in the art form of concrete literary criticism which in turn becomes our experience. That is why it is pleasurable and valuable (if one insists on the latter scale) to read Hazlitt's criticism on writers like Shakespeare, Milton, Pope, Wordsworth, and others; Hazlitt does not replace them, rather he (and through him the reader) experiences their art in a richer way. There is little chance that the responsive reader of Hazlitt will be satisfied with his criticism of a particular author or work, for Hazlitt evokes a response

that demands familiarity with the original. Thus Hazlitt complements rather than supplements the works he criticizes. We may say that Hazlitt achieves in Romantic criticism the aim that Sontag sets for modern criticism:

> The aim of all commentary on art now should be to make works of art - and, by analogy, our own experience - more, rather than less, real to us. The function of criticism should be to show how it is what it is, even that it is what it is, rather than to show what it means.[25]

That Hazlitt's literary criticism is an art form answers those who may ask: If one is to practice literary criticism and yet not be interpretive, how does one go about it? Sontag answers the question by suggesting "more attention to form in art" through "a descriptive, rather than prescriptive, vocabulary" and "equally valuable would be acts of criticism which would supply a really accurate, sharp, loving description of the appearance of a work of art".[26] That Hazlitt strove to fulfill just those types of effects will surely be granted by even the most blatant "interpreter". Hazlitt's answer to the question of how one goes about practicing literary criticism is much like Sontag's but, it seems to me, on a higher level. To the artist the highest form that expression of an experience can take is art itself. It stands to reason, then, that the best response to art is another work of art. For Hazlitt

literary criticism ought to express one's experienced feelings through feeling itself. And since feeling is the true artistic mode, the best criticism becomes itself a work of art.

Our aim ought to be that of Hazlitt, no doubt, but, lamentably deficient in artistic feeling and expression, we must settle for Sontag's: "to show how it is what it is, even that it is what it is". The rest of this chapter will concern itself with the first part of the aim and the other chapters more or less with the second part. With this in mind we must turn then to Hazlitt's 'how', his way of feeling, the method he used in the practice of his literary criticism.

ii. The Method of Feeling

In Hazlitt's view feeling, both experienced in a work of art and expressed in criticism, is an intuitive reaction which is self-validating in proportion to the strength, truthfulness, and sincerity of that feeling. Nor can one determine beforehand, as it were, the quality of one's feeling because that "irreducible datum of human experience" is "infinitely complex and hypothetical".[27] One cannot explain by reason or illustrate by rules what feeling consists of because "there is nothing like feeling but feeling" (XII, 335). Feeling is not some measurable

human, or suprahuman, quality; it simply is.

The critical essays of Hazlitt represent his attempt to put this notion of feeling into practice. Using metaphor as his most substantial element Hazlitt wished to convey his impressions in such a way that the reader could respond with similar feelings. For this the reader values highly each individual essay or lecture by Hazlitt because it represents the particular feeling about the subject in question. And the style of each essay is the means by which author and reader share the experience of feeling through metaphoric richness and density. "The individual essay is the structural unit which displays Hazlitt's imaginative resources at their best," concludes Albrecht[28] and it remains unquestioned at this point.

One of the basic premises of Hazlitt's method is: "There is no rule for expression. It is got at solely by feeling" (VIII, 38). In his two-part essay "On Genius and Common Sense" (VIII, 34-41, 42-50) Hazlitt, concerned with the expression of feeling, draws attention to the difference between, and the relationship of the particular and the general. The particular, he says, may be merely a "circumstance, apparently of no value" but, if it is correctly and sincerely given by the artist, it will show, "by the instinct of analogy", "a strong general principle at work that extends in its ramifications to the smallest things" (VIII, 38). Of

course the artist can fail for some reason[29] in his work so that the particular displays nothing but itself, in effect becomes idiosyncratic and therefore unimportant.

> The minute, the trifling and insipid, is that which is little in itself, in its causes and its consequences: the subtle and refined is that which is slight and evanescent at first sight, but which mounts up to a mighty sum in the end, which is an essential part of an important whole, which has consequences greater than itself, and where more is meant than meets the eye or ear (VIII, 39).

Because they readily lend themselves to the visual these words may seem at first more pertinent to painting than to literature; it is perfectly appropriate for Hazlitt to turn to painting for examples of what he wishes to contrast. He notes that sometimes one feels dissatisfied with a Dutch painting because of its "littleness" "where there are a vast number of distinct parts and objects, each small in itself, and leading to nothing else" (VIII, 39). That is, certain Dutch paintings display the artist's ability to perceive and express particularity in nature while failing to see or at least failing to express the complexity or relationships of the particulars. On the other hand, Claude is not an artist of the trifling or minute. In his painting of a sky, for example,

> one imperceptible gradation is as it were the scale to another, where the broad arch of heaven is piled up of endlessly intermediate gold and azure tints, and where an infinite number of minute, scarce noticed particulars blend and melt into universal harmony (VIII, 39).

If we apply this 'expression of feeling' to Hazlitt's own literary criticism, an interesting parallel develops. His essays are primarily build-ups of metaphoric imagery (that is a variety of particulars) intended to blend and form a whole, a general feeling for the topic on hand. Generally speaking, one can agree with Priestley that Hazlitt's essays are like "an untidily packed but splendidly luscious luncheon basket" giving joy and full nourishment so that "he is in fact . . . the very best" of essayists.[30]

Despite these words of Priestley and similar statements by others, it is not enough to acknowledge that Hazlitt uses or expresses feeling well without some form of critical assessment or proof. And, since Hazlitt himself pointed the way, the proof must be discernible in the expressed feeling itself rather than as the end result of theory which indicates not feeling but something "determined upon . . . beforehand" that gives only "hardness and rigidity" (II, 261).

The question is always present: if Hazlitt proceeds by feeling as he says he does, is there any objective way to

measure or ascertain the reliability of his intuitive expression, his practical concrete criticism? He claimed that the intuitive method was self-validating (given the true feeling and its expression) because its particulars made-up general unities which themselves were particulars. Does his practice, not his 'theory', bear out the claim he makes, or is he, as Watson puts it, "as usual . . . not saying anything [but] . . . simply making a noise to suggest to us that he is, or has been, excited about something"?[31]

We may ask these questions of individual essays and reply to them positively or negatively depending on our own emotional response. If the answer is negative, the failure must lie either with Hazlitt's expression of feeling or our response. Is there a way to indicate where the failure chiefly lies by examining the practical criticism alone?

This approach is not meant to cast doubts on the work of those who have painstakingly constructed what they feel to be Hazlitt's 'aesthetic theory'. That study has been worthwhile and has contributed much to our understanding of Hazlitt's mind itself and its relationship to those other great minds that go to make up what we call the Romantic era. Nevertheless, the 'aesthetic theory' approach is valid only inasmuch as it is clearly understood to be part of the background to the actual criticism.

The aesthetical approach to the questions posed above was and remains an important approach. Its main concern has been to present evidence that Hazlitt's mind was not shallow and shoddy but rather was one vitally concerned with all of human existence, the arts as well as politics, philosophy, etc. Particular emphasis has rightly been placed on his early philosophical writings as well as his youthful exposure to the voices of dissent that he heard at home and at college.[32] Just lately Roy Park has attempted to concentrate on the equally impressive background of painting and how it affects Hazlitt's criticism.

The difficulty with all of these studies is that they arrive at their conclusions, positive though they may be, by stripping away Hazlitt's metaphors. Yet nearly all will say with Wellek that metaphor is the essence of Hazlitt's criticism, his expression of feeling.[33] Larrabee has noted Hazlitt's use of sculpture as a literary metaphor and Park painting, but their main concern has been to present Hazlitt's involvement with and views of these art forms rather than the metaphoric role they play in his literary criticism.[34] For that reason Park's claim that "painting became the most important of Hazlitt's critical metaphors"[35] cannot be accepted without some serious reservations.

If Park means that painting metaphors occur more frequently than any others, he may be right, though I suspect

a recount may be necessary. If he means that the painting metaphors are primary and all other metaphors are secondary, he is surely over-zealous. It seems no more reasonable to argue in favor of painting as "the most important of Hazlitt's critical metaphors" than it does to argue over which color in some painting is more important than the others. (Again one is assuming that quantity alone is not the measure of importance.) From particular angles or in particular lighting one color may appear of more consequence than the others but in reality it is the total mixture of colors that makes a picture. To argue for the prime importance of one may be taken to imply some degree of failure in the others. Probably Park did not intend to defend painting in that way. His well-placed emphasis is on painting's influence on Hazlitt's criticism. Because of this approach Park never quite seems to reach the necessary conclusion about what is most important about the relationship of painting and criticism, namely that the method of painting becomes the method of criticism. Such an approach would reveal that the method used contains many metaphors which are interwoven in the critical essays. One of those metaphors is painting: we have also sculpture, music, water, clothing, smelting, anatomy, and many others. Each of these may appear to be more important from some particular point of view. Considering the criticism as a whole, however, one can only say, 'These are some of the metaphors Hazlitt used.'

If one has reservations about Park's conclusion on painting as a metaphor, it is nonetheless true that he points the right way generally. He affirms Hazlitt's concern with the experiential and shows how it grew out of his involvement with painting as well as with philosophy. The intellectual background is lucidly described and related to Hazlitt's ideas on painting and through painting to criticism. But what is most rewarding about Park is his application of all this background material to Hazlitt's The Spirit of the Age. Park pays particular attention to the "form" of the book. Each essay "frames and isolates each portrait" but "without distorting his analysis in the interest of some more general pattern or theme".[36] Yet there is a sense in which Park is weakest where he is strongest. By concentrating on one book by Hazlitt, he misses the opportunity to show the "form" which holds together not only The Spirit of the Age but all of the literary criticism of Hazlitt. Park expresses surprise ". . . that the critical perception in the last and greatest of his critical writings [The Spirit of the Age] is not only present in a fully developed form but is the subject of his first essay in literary criticism".[37] In the practice of criticism what gives this "critical perception" vitality is chiefly metaphor, not one particular metaphor (e.g. painting) but the whole range of metaphors Hazlitt uses. An

examination of his metaphorical usage will show the constant presence of the artistic process which achieves its own over-all unity.

The question, then, might be restated: taking Hazlitt's literary criticism as a whole, can one discern any unity or general structures within the metaphoric framework (as he insisted there must be) to stand as an answer to the negative assertion that Hazlitt's criticism is a jumble of particulars which, like Dutch painting sometimes, "lead . . . to nothing else?" Our answer is, 'Yes, there are metaphoric unities or structures which arise, like the particulars that make them up, intuitively and which therefore demonstrate that Hazlitt's feeling is indeed self-validating as he claimed it would be.' Furthermore, by showing that such intuitive structures clearly do exist, one may say with conviction that the failure of a shared feeling with Hazlitt is not his fault but that of the reader. That is, of course, provided one accepts the method as it is and provided as well that one has read all of Hazlitt's criticism. To do otherwise is to be lacking the critic's "double don" of sympathy and humble honesty[38] as well as to be guilty of assessing from inadequate consideration.

Hazlitt indicated, as we have seen, that structures in that kind of painting which is not trivial arise by the

"expression" of feeling through the delineation of the particular or a mass of particulars. These result in a general picture of some aspect of nature. By 'general' Hazlitt means an "aggregate of well-founded particulars . . . [and not] an abstract theory" (XII, 246). The latter, Park notes, has the "effect of generality" in the sense of "the vague and indefinite".[39] What the artist aims feelingly at is a wholeness, a unity of the mass of particulars in a general form which in itself remains a particular. At the same time this aim of wholeness must not be preconceived in the sense of system or rules, a method which only negates and never adds for it "takes away that tremulous sensibility to every slight and wandering impression which is necessary to complete the fine balance of the mind" (II, 261).

When he looked to literature rather than painting for an example of well expressed feeling, Hazlitt found the answer in Shakespeare. Here was a writer who truly had "that tremulous sensibility" for the particular itself and for the way it contributed to a more general particular as well. "The subtlety in Shakespear, of which there is an immense deal every where scattered up and down, is always the instrument of passion, the vehicle of character" (VIII, 39), both so important to the artist in general and here more pointedly to the dramatist.

> The broad distinctions and governing principles of human nature are presented not in the abstract, but in their immediate and endless application to different persons and things. The local details, the particular accidents have the fidelity of history, without losing any thing of their general effect (V, 204).

And Shakespeare does this by feeling and by the expression of feeling, the intuitive handling of or reaction to nature in the particular. "It is the business of poetry, and indeed of all works of imagination, to exhibit the species through the individual" (V, 204)[40] not by rules which "are applicable to abstractions, but [by] expression [which] is concrete and individual" (VIII, 39-40). Hazlitt points out that preconceived rules and imaginative creation are a contradiction in terms. The only way rules can apply is if they were capable of "foreseeing all those combinations" of the particular, an "impossible" capability; even if it were remotely possible for rules to arise it could only be done through the imagination so that "we should only be where we are, that is, we could only make the rule as we now judge without it, from imagination and the feeling of the moment" (VIII, 40). But feeling is not preconceived, it is intuitive. In short, "reducing expression to a preconcerted system" is an "absurdity" which has no justification in nature (VIII, 40).

General patterns then arise from the aggregation of particulars in the same way that the particulars themselves are related, that is through the expression of feeling. This is the method of feeling, the method of the great artist who possesses "that tremulous sensibility" (II, 261), that "heartfelt language" (XII, 194), that "notation of the heart" as Wilder put it.[41] It is this method of the great artist that Hazlitt himself uses in his literary criticism. Each essay achieves its unity through the accumulation of particular metaphors; the consistency and reliability of feeling is expressed through the repetition and variation of like metaphors which coalesce "from a natural sense of harmony, a secret craving and appetite for beauty" (VIII, 41).

More than this, there is an intuitive unity of certain metaphors which run throughout Hazlitt's criticism. Like Shakespeare, Hazlitt has a "subtlety" of particularity "scattered up and down" his critical work, a subtlety which "is neither insignificant nor equivocal" but "which mounts up to a mighty sum in the end, which is an essential part of an important whole" (VIII, 39). The subtlety works on multiple levels. The individual essay has been noted. The "whole" is a multitude of particular metaphors forming, at the same time, a more general though still particular metaphor. (Spring, stream, river, sea, cloud, rain all come together

in what one may conveniently call a water cycle metaphor, for example.) And a multitude of these more general metaphors interweave to give us the total body of Hazlitt's criticism. An analogy might be made to the skin of an onion which, no matter how much one peels, seemingly continues to present yet one more layer. The danger of such an analogy is that it presents an organized approach which might be mistaken as Hazlitt's rather than our own. Hazlitt does use a similar metaphor but the image of "the whole . . . layer under layer" is always tempered by the writer's need to "do justice to the feeling [he has]" (XII, 279). In practice the layers are so subtly (in the sense of intuitively) mixed that one may not be immediately aware of them but only the end product, the concrete artistic product of criticism.[42]

Hazlitt's aggregative unities cannot be used as rules or points of comparative measurement for other works of art. That kind of usage would mean that his general metaphors would become a "dogmatic or bigoted standard of taste, like a formula of faith" (XX, 386); that is, the general metaphor would "reduce every one to a standard he ought not to be tried by" (IX, 201). Rather, as Hazlitt pointed out, the notion of 'rules arising from feeling' is a contradiction in terms. Feelings are feelings, rules are rules; they cannot be equated because the former are concrete,

the latter abstract.

Hazlitt's metaphoric unities, then, present us with the feeling for literature which he experienced personally. He does not presume to formulate a dogma for all literature of all times and all places. This does not mean that what he expressed is no longer worthwhile or that his method of feeling is not applicable by others. Hazlitt's criticism, because it is art, transcends the pedantic legislative approach and remains as reliable, as valid, and as vital today as it ever was. Because it originates with feeling and can only be responded to properly by feeling, its timelessness is that of the symphony, the painting, or any work of art. Once remove feeling and replace it with system and the art is lost to us. Given the tendency of some men to systematize everything Hazlitt was not surprised by being unappreciated:

> If you do not attach yourself to some one set of people and principles, and stick to them through thick and thin, instead of giving your opinion fairly and fully all round, you must expect to have all the world against you, for no other reason than because you express sincerely . . . not only what they say of others, but what is said of themselves (XVII, 300).

For those who can and do respond with feeling, Hazlitt's criticism is not read but experienced as a vital work of art.

How do these larger metaphoric unities appear then in Hazlitt's criticism? Intuitively. To use Hazlitt's own words, the reader may feel "a natural sense of harmony [in the criticism] . . . though the cause is not understood" (VIII, 41). The chapters which follow will be demonstrations of the causes (metaphoric in nature) of that critical harmony, and this by gathering the particular yet "subtle and refined" metaphors which are "scattered up and down" the criticism. This "infinite number of minute, scarce noticed particulars" will then be arranged so that they may easily and naturally "blend and melt into universal harmony" (VIII, 39) that remains particular by nature. By employing the method of feeling Hazlitt creates a series of metaphoric structures - intuitive, comprehensive equations for the experience of literature - which open up the possibilities of further critical reaction or expression of feeling and avoid any suggestion that he is setting down eternal truth.

At times the chapters may seem to negate feeling in their emphasis on the more or less accumulative effect of particular metaphors. There is a certain degree of truth in this and for several reasons. Firstly, by gathering and arranging the particular metaphors into a unified and particular structure we are negating for the most part the intuitive nature by which Hazlitt expressed himself. Hence

these arranged structures are not to be seen as Hazlitt's nor as desired substitutes for Hazlitt. Secondly, we are taking for granted that Hazlitt's use of intuitive feeling is generally clear from his writings. It is impossible to consider Hazlitt in any sort of intelligent way if one doubts his use of feeling. As well, the chapters are aimed more at suggesting the concrete nature of Hazlitt's expressed feeling than they are at proving the use of feeling itself. The chapters are only an attempt to give a few examples of those metaphoric structures which lie intuitively unified but unarranged throughout the criticism as a whole. And they should only be seen as examples; they invite no more.

To summarize: Hazlitt said that truly expressed feeling resolved itself into intuitive structures or unities; Hazlitt in his criticism worked through feeling; to what extent was his first premise correct as seen in the second? How successful was Hazlitt in truly expressing his feelings through the metaphoric structure? If he was successful the unities must be in the criticism and the chapters that follow provide examples as evidence that such unities are indeed present.

iii. Hazlitt's 'Style' and Metaphor

Some further comments need to be made on the metaphors in Hazlitt's criticism. One is not to expect a

large number of 'original' metaphors in Hazlitt's essays. Indeed, the majority of them were so commonly in use that at first glance they may appear to have lost that very vigor that is the life of metaphor. For example, water metaphors are surely as old as literature itself. Painting as a literary metaphor has a tradition at least as old as Horace's ut pictura poesis and the relationship of painting and writing was considered by many English writers, Dryden ("A Parallel of Poetry and Painting") being a well-known example. The same general usage might be noted of music. Equally common in English literary circles at the time were mechanical (mirror, microscope, telescope, etc.) and non-mechanical (flowers, birds, etc.) metaphors. Today, when it seems natural to demand bold imagery, the paucity of fresh metaphors may strike us as odd and quaint. Fortunately, the way in which a metaphor is used is as important as originality.

Here again we must remember the artist's perspective as well as our own. For Hazlitt language may have been the clothing for ideas but it was an inseparable and natural clothing because language made the poem, essay, novel, etc. the work of art that it was. Dante in his Vita Nuova, XXV, said, "It would be a great disgrace to a man, if he should rime matters under figure and rhetorical colouring, and then, when he was asked, could not strip off that

vesture and show the true sense." Intellectually, no doubt, he was and is right. Artistically, what he says is nonsense because to "strip off [the] vesture" of a work of art is to have no art. Sontag reminds us: "Even if one were to define style as the manner of our appearing, this by no means necessarily entails an opposition between a style that one assumes and one's "true" being. In fact, such a disjunction is extremely rare. In almost every case, our manner of appearing <u>is</u> our manner of being. The mask is the face."[43] "On the Clerical Character" (VII, 242-259), "On Egotism" (XII, 157-168), and "On Fashion" (XVII, 51-56) are three essays by Hazlitt that demonstrate an identical position with Sontag's. Yet, as the latter says, "dangerous metaphors [like clothing, do not] rule out the use of limited and concrete metaphors to describe the impact of a particular style". This is precisely the way Hazlitt discusses style - in terms of impact.

Sontag suggests that in art "which seems to demand the distinction [between style and content] . . . a term such as "stylization" or its equivalent is needed".[44] While Hazlitt does not use the term "stylization", it should be understood that for him "style" sometimes has the meaning that Sontag suggested. We note too that she is only considering the term to conform with what the artist

intended in his art. And here we come to Hazlitt's view of 'style'.

Style is twofold. It can be natural and intuitive or artificial and abstract depending not so much on the critic's perception as on the artist's method and intention. The subtle and refined art which is created intuitively out of feeling has a style inseparable from any content.[45] On the other hand, there are writers who write not from feeling but from abstraction. That is, content and form are separated by the writer and everything that is written and the way in which it is written are executed according to a preconceived and merely intellectual plan or formula. The experience is lost to some sort of dogma. When Hazlitt's feeling tells him of such a case, he considers the work in just that manner, i.e. he considers separately style and content. Invariably those artists and works of art that demand such a separation are not praised for their demand.[46]

With this twofold attitude towards style in mind, we may turn to Hazlitt's 'style'. His use of intuitive expression requires an identity of form and content so that his expressed feelings have a quality of spontaneity. He discusses an author or a work or a 'style' and lets feeling control what he says. A quotation comes to mind; he puts it in. An epigram suggests itself; he puts it in. His

feelings suggest analogy after analogy; he puts them in. Because these aspects arise from feeling their appropriateness is to be measured by feeling also. Expressed feeling is self-vindicating.

This suggests one reason why no great body of 'one-liners' spring to mind when one considers Hazlitt's essays. Nor should there be because the essays are "subtle and refined" not "minute and trifling". The latter would allow lines to be lifted from their surroundings because those lines stick out. Ideally every word, phrase, line, paragraph, and essay should blend together to make the whole work of art. At the same time each structure, for example the paragraph, the essay, etc., should also be a whole.

To avoid idiosyncrasy and appear spontaneous one's choice of language becomes most important. For Hazlitt words themselves must not dictate the feeling in the sense of "deliberately dispos[ing] . . . all . . . thoughts alike" (VIII, 244). With his emphasis on the experience of a work of art, it was imperative that Hazlitt try to evoke a feeling like his own from the reader or listener. To do this, language (word choice) had to be most natural in the sense of common. To use the "eccentric and whimsical modern" or "obsolete expressions" (VIII, 245) would be to call attention to the style or expression for its own sake. In effect, the

content and form would be separated, the experience lost. Hazlitt did not wish to be self-defeating in his choice and use of words or metaphors, or quotations or anything else. We note the word 'choice' because intuitive expression did not mean 'blind expression'. Indeed a writer "may strike out twenty varieties of familiar every-day language, each coming somewhat nearer to the feeling he wants to convey, and at last not hit" the right one. Thus "the first word . . . is [not] always the best". Time and experience may suggest a better word but this "should be suggested naturally . . . and spontaneously, from a fresh and lively conception of the subject" (VIII, 244-5). This is one way of saying that a work of art can be experienced meaningfully more than once and, as well, the artist may rightly be said never to exhaust the feeling he wishes to express nor the expression itself.

The style, then, in Hazlitt's essays is not separable from the content unless we intend to forget or replace the art itself. What we do need is to look at Hazlitt's art in such a way that content does not negate style and style does not negate content. Feeling we have seen explains Hazlitt's criticism in terms of "how it is what it is". We must now turn to the expressed feeling to show "that it is what it is" and this is best illustrated by metaphor.

Obviously, the metaphors one chooses are, as we have suggested, only examples. To list all metaphors would be absurd. The choice is arbitrary and so is the way in which they are handled. The metaphor must be large and comprehensive enough to indicate the breadth and extent as well as consistency of Hazlitt's intuitive expression. It must also be sufficiently large to allow a wide range of reference to various writers and works. And, too, it must make reference to the concepts which are as intuitively expressed as the metaphors with which they are interwoven. If the concepts were separated and treated in isolation (as some critics have done) we would be in danger of suggesting that a summary treatment of those ideas would constitute the criticism of Hazlitt. By concentrating the ideas around the metaphors we avoid this danger and demonstrate instead the interaction of idea and image, both of which are suggested and expressed by Hazlitt's intuitive feelings.

The metaphors, not primary in any way, are carefully chosen examples which most easily and naturally fulfill our need to keep the artistry of Hazlitt in mind. Not Hazlitt's art, these metaphors are glimpses of it and hopefully will indicate to the reader something of the artistic experience that awaits him in Hazlitt's essays.

With this goal in mind we have chosen the two metaphors of water and smelting: water because it can be conveniently arranged in a cycle and smelting because it can be seen in terms of a linear process. One may possibly be inclined to some other arrangement but the cycle and the linear process allow us to see within the one framework a large part of Hazlitt's scope and artistry. Each individual metaphor in each individual essay fits a larger structure which arises intuitively from the whole body of Hazlitt's literary criticism. These metaphors (there are others) are proof that Hazlitt's expressed feeling did resolve itself into a work of art. They remind us that Hazlitt's aim was achieved: to express the experience of art as it was felt, not as an abstract theory nor as superficial description.

CHAPTER II

THE WATER CYCLE

One of the metaphoric unities which we may discern in the literary criticism of Hazlitt is that of water. Indeed, Hazlitt used intuitively so many manifestations of water that our task of ordering the various forms into a structure is most easily achieved by reference to the water cycle found in nature. Spring, stream, river, sea, vapour, cloud, dew, rain - all of these are used as metaphors by Hazlitt. He does not normally use the complete cycle at any one time. Rather, he uses each manifestation as a metaphor when he has the spontaneous and natural feeling that it ought to be used. Thus the many allotropic forms of water are scattered, as he said they would be and as we saw in chapter one, throughout his essays. The structuring, the self-validation of what may appear to be at first sight small, into a larger pattern Hazlitt left to the same feeling and expressed through his pen. Nor could this have been a 'planned' structure. That would be self-defeating. Besides it would have been humanly impossible simply because of the simultaneous use of hundreds of different

metaphors. What structuring there is has arisen intuitively. For us this involves amassing the various manifestations of water used by Hazlitt and ordering them into an artificial, non-intuitive structure or cycle. The latter provides a form of proof that Hazlitt's method of feeling, at least as far as he himself was concerned, was correct. If water can be shown to be in Hazlitt's criticism a comprehensive metaphoric structure, then it follows that the criticism itself (since it is expressed through metaphor) has an inherent unity. (A high degree of consistency, of course, must be evident in the use of the various metaphoric forms of the water cycle.) And that inherent unity is partial proof that Hazlitt's criticism is a self-vindicating art form. It is only partial because the ultimate proof is a shared artistic experience between reader and Hazlitt in relation to the literary works he is writing about.

Since the cycle is now to be artificially structured, that is, lifted metaphor by metaphor from Hazlitt's essays the starting point for our consideration is arbitrary. Yet it seems logical to begin with the water metaphor that Hazlitt used to express his feelings on genius. That metaphor is the spring.[1]

i. Spring

We begin the cycle, then, with the spring, also referred to as the well (-head) or the pool. In keeping with his pluralist outlook,[2] Hazlitt presents in his spring metaphor poetical opposites. A writer's literary potential may be immediately realized or immediately thwarted. If the former, then the spring develops naturally to a stream; if the latter, then the pool has no outlet and remains cut off from actual achievement.

> The springs of Helicon are, in general, supposed to be a living stream, bubbling and sparkling, and making sweet music as it flows; but Mr. Crabbe's fountain of the Muses is a stagnant pool, dull, motionless, choked up with weeds and corruption . . . in its view the current of life runs slow, dull, cold, dispirited, half-underground, muddy, and clogged with creeping things. (XIX, 52-3)

Here Hazlitt presents us with the ideal poetic viewpoint on the one hand, and the supreme frustration of it on the other. It is noteworthy that Hazlitt is not discussing here Crabbe's technical ability so much as his poetic outlook or philosophy. Because Crabbe discerns only the negative side of life, his capacity for poetic expression suffers greatly. Seeing "the current of life" only in its despair and not in its hope, he causes the spring to close

itself off, stop flowing, and become stagnant and polluted. His ability has been frustrated by his outlook. As will be noticed throughout the metaphors, nature herself may be uncorrupted but the poet's evaluation or concept of nature, and hence his poetic practice, may well be corrupted. In the essay "On the Pleasure of Hating", one of his "prose satires" (IX, 30), Hazlitt spoke scoffingly of those who warp their natures so that the truth is often indiscernible:

> Nature seems . . . made up of antipathies: without something to hate, we should lose the very spring of thought and action. Life would turn to a stagnant pool, were it not ruffled by the jarring interests, the unruly passions of men . . . Pure good soon grows insipid . . . Pain is a bitter-sweet, which never surfeits. Love turns . . . to indifference or disgust: hatred alone is immortal (XII, 128).

This warping of nature may be due to belief in abstract principles or to personal prejudice, so that a group of people can hold on to their opinions for so long that the spring-like freedom of nature is replaced by "water in cisterns" and the opinions thus "stagnate and corrupt" (XX, 365). Or one may invert nature through egotism. It was this which prevented Wordsworth from producing the greatest of literary creations, the tragedy:

> That which is the source of dramatic excellence, is like a mountain spring, full of life and impetuosity, sparkling with light, thundering down precipices, winding along narrow defiles . . . The other sort [egotistical and planned productions] is a stagnant, gilded puddle. Mr. Wordsworth has measured it from side to side. ''Tis three feet long and two feet wide' [Wordsworth, "The Thorn" l. 33, (1798)], (XVIII, 308-9).

An allegiance to abstract principles and a tendency to egotism were marks, in Hazlitt's view, of the spirit of his age. This was as true in morality or religion as in anything else. He remarked how the "pure springs of a lofty faith" of the Tudor and Elizabethan times had now "descended by various gradations . . . to . . . the smooth, glittering expanse of modern philosophy, or to settle in the stagnant pool of stale hypocrisy" (XII, 316). If one could only stay young when "the spring of the mind is fresh and unbroken, its aspect clear and unsullied" (VIII, 29), then one would not be swept up in the broad, abstract, impersonal generalities that seemed to dominate mankind.[3]

When the spring is seen as clean and pure, it may be associated with another aspect, namely, the relief of thirst. Hazlitt's interpretation of the whole relationship between the Renaissance and the ancient Greek and Roman writers is seen in terms of giving satisfaction to a deep-rooted desire or urge. He looks back to the Italians and remarks that their poets, who "were the first to unlock

the springs of ancient learning, and who slaked their thirst of knowledge at that pure fountain-head, would naturally imbibe the same feeling from its highest source" (IV, 23).[4] The spring concept, then, becomes united with Hazlitt's view that it is not just the author's power that can become stagnant. It is so with the reader, or better, the responder and his response. Obviously, the literary arts in Europe had come to a sort of stand-still and so the ancients' pool or spring remained untapped until the Italian poets found "that pure fountain-head".

The use of the spring as a relief of imaginative thirst is a good example of Hazlitt's approach to learning. The fact that poets opened the ancients' pool contrasts sharply with another method of learning, that of the universities. Oxford, for example, may have the atmosphere of a "shrine" where generations of scholars came to "slake the sacred thirst of knowledge" as if the university were "the well-head from whence . . . [learning's] stream flowed" (X, 69-70). But in reality Oxford and all of the universities are "cisterns to hold, not conduits to disperse knowledge" (VIII, 268). And this because they have become too concerned with abstract knowledge that has little or no value except to deceive. Concrete knowledge, which is only "drunk plentifully at

those living fountains" of life, has been ignored for the sake of 'standards' and "as a matter of dignity and privilege" (VIII, 268). At best the universities are "cisterns" not springs; their deception begins when one allows the "dream-like" atmosphere to dupe one into thinking that in reality the cisterns are springs.

The spring is used as well to discuss individual authors and their works. As might be expected, Hazlitt sees Homer and Shakespeare as the two supreme artists in literature. Their works "will last as long as nature, because they are a copy of the indestructible forms and everlasting impulses of nature, welling out from the bosom as from a perennial spring . . ." (V, 70).[5] (It would be wrong to think that Hazlitt is combining Platonic forms and emotional impulses here. Platonism was too much of a system to be acceptable to his pluralism, too abstract, although Schneider felt that Hazlitt might have leaned that way unconsciously or in spite of himself.[6] Another aspect which could be mistakenly interpreted as Platonism is Hazlitt's view of Shakespeare and Homer in historical perspective. When he says that a writer like Shakespeare could not have produced the works he did if he had lived in another age or when he says that "Shakspeare, who was so original and saw so deeply into the springs of nature, created nothing: he only

brought forward what existed before" (XX, 295) - when Hazlitt says these things he does not mean that the poet is a medium in the sense that Plato suggested in the Ion, that is that the poet is possessed by an outside influence, or a god. In reality, nature can only speak through the poet if he lets her. Thus genius controls the work, not some god outside the poet.)[7]

The "bosom" is "a perennial spring" because nature is working through it and nature is ever renewable. This is not, as just noted, to deny the genius of the individuals, Homer and Shakespeare. But it is imperative to interpret individual genius in the light of historical circumstance because so much of their success related to their being 'firsts'. Homer, the creator of literature, and Shakespeare, "the Proteus of human intellect" (VIII, 42): time and custom have a way of controlling and directing these first gushes welling out of the spring, but such refinement is not pure nature. The refined achievements of man cannot hope to be as great as the original movements of nature.[8] Other writers have moments of true brilliance - "ordinary" genius (VIII, 42) - but only Homer and Shakespeare can be classified in toto. The "exclusive and self-willed, quaint and peculiar" ordinary genius (VIII, 42) contrasts with Shakespeare's universality of outlook. But this did not mean a constant

equality of achievement by Shakespeare because that would imply an artificial control rather than the constant vitality of a natural spring. In speaking of Shakespeare's "blunders" and his willingness "to take advantage of the ignorance of the age", Hazlitt extends the spring metaphor to include its natural outlet, the stream:

> He had no objection to float down with the stream of common taste and opinion: he rose above it by his own buoyancy, and an impulse which he could not keep under, in spite of himself or others, and 'his delights did shew most dolphin-like' (V, 56).

Such "blunders" could not suppress "a man of genius, raised above the definition of genius" (VIII, 42).

Chaucer was, in Hazlitt's view, nearly on a par with Shakespeare. But their differences lie in the fact that Chaucer was not the Proteus that Shakespeare was and hence did not succeed as often as the latter. There are times when Chaucer's poetry flows, when it "is an ebullition of natural delight 'welling out of the heart,' like water from a crystal spring" (V, 28).[9] In keeping with his view of the diversity of ordinary genius, Hazlitt has high praise for Congreve's Love for Love, a play which naturally lends itself to acting as opposed to reading. In particular, Hazlitt finds that the "short scene

with Trapland, the money-broker, is of the first water" (VI, 71-2; V, 278), a use of the metaphor to indicate the naturalness and purity of the scene.

Hazlitt had a profound respect for Bacon ("one of . . . those men, who . . . are at once poets and philosophers" (XX, 13)) and described his method of perception in terms of a spring or well in the mode of reflection. Thus Bacon "views objects from the greatest height, and his reflections acquire a sublimity in proportion to their profundity, as in deep wells of water we see the sparkling of the highest fixed stars" (VI, 327). In short Bacon proposed the right method - "incorporating the abstract with the concrete, and general reasoning with individual observation, to give . . . solidity and firmness" (XX, 14) -, the method Hazlitt uses himself. But if he describes Bacon's mode of experience with unqualified praise, Hazlitt is not so approving of what he calls the manner of "invention". Bacon at times fell victim to the error of extremes, that is excluding the concrete ("experience") from the abstract ("artificial" theories) or vice versa (II, 125): in the "Novum Organon . . . he sets up a scheme of invention of his own" (XX, 373).[10]

The spring is also used of the real characters of men as reflected in the dramatic characters of various

plays. And again it is Shakespeare who succeeds best because, being a Proteus, he loses himself in the very character he presents. Even in comedy, a lower form than tragedy, Shakespeare succeeds where Ben Jonson fails:

> [Shakespeare's] humour (so to speak) bubbles, sparkles, and finds its way in all directions, like a natural spring. In Ben Jonson it is, as it were, confined in a leaden cistern, where it stagnates and corrupts; or directed only through certain artificial pipes and conduits, to answer a given purpose (VI, 39; Cf. VI, 304).

The real difference between these two giants is that while nature worked through Shakespeare, Jonson worked through nature. Their roles are reversed. In one the heart (experience, concreteness) directs, in the other the head (system, abstractness). In Hazlitt's view, the former method is by far the greater. When Hazlitt writes of Jonson's "specific gravity" (VI, 304), it is Jonson's mode of operation that is being discussed. Jonson decides first what to say and then looks about him to construct the means. This is what "sinks him to the bottom" (VI, 304). Three years earlier, in 1816, Hazlitt had used an almost identical metaphor with reference to John Philip Kemble's acting of Shakespeare's King John. The acting was by "deliberate intention". The movements had "an evident design and determination" about them. In this

Kemble was successful but that was not great acting. There was no 'heart' in the presentation:

> The varying tide of passion did not appear to burst from the source of nature in his breast, but to be drawn from a theatrical leaden cistern, and then directed through certain conduit-pipes and artificial channels, to fill the audience with well regulated and harmless sympathy (V, 345-6).

In contrast to Jonson, Shakespeare's procedure is the proper one - allowing nature to "well . . . out from the bosom" (V, 70), to take the course she wants to take. Still, successful dramatic writing is no guarantee that the dramatic acting will be just as successful. In Kemble's case, the actor failed to perform on a proportionate level to the writer.

Wycherley has a "serious manner and studied insight into the springs of character", while Vanbrugh has "little" of this (VI, 79). Congreve, in the end, falls short too. His Millamant is "an artificial character" for "the springs of nature, passion, or imagination are but feebly touched" (VI, 73).

It was noted earlier that the spring, by nature, has a stream flowing from it, but that at times man controls the flow through the use of conduit pipes or some other mechanical means. "To us it seems, that the free spirit of nature rushes through the soul, like a

stream with a murmuring sound, the echo of which is poetry" (XIX, 80n.). This is so when man willingly forfeits "intervention and controul". Country people, from Hazlitt's condescending viewpoint, were not educated enough to know they had a choice. Hence, they did not hear this "echo . . . poetry" and so their life "grows harsh and crabbed: the mind becomes stagnant, the affections callous, and the eye dull" (XIX, 22). Hazlitt is no primitivist. He nowhere promotes the idea that all one has to do is exist and nature will do the rest, as Rousseau had indicated. Man has to bring himself to nature before she will work through him. In other words, experience and common sense are basic requirements to begin with.

If Hazlitt was condescending to country people for their 'ignorance' of nature, he was sharp and bitter with those who should have been aware of nature in her fullness. These people, particularly poets, bear a heavy responsibility for thwarting nature and Hazlitt often depicts them in terms of the natural converted to the artificial, the mechanical. He once interpreted Thomas Moore's attempt to play down poetic genius as an example of the poet's "see-saw[ing]" between the aristocracy of "letters" and that of "rank", both positions perfectly despicable to Hazlitt. Moore's mind was "like buckets in

a well", now one ascending, now the other descending as expediency dictated (XII, 366). Byron comes in for harsher words. He "turns a water-fall, or a clear spring, into a slop-basin, to prove that nature owes its elegance to art" (XIX, 70-1).

ii. Spring-Stream

The next metaphor in the cycle is that of the stream which may be united with the spring by Hazlitt's comments on literary criticism. Man's interference with the natural spring and stream is obvious. "Many persons see nothing but beauties in a work, others nothing but defects. These cloy you with sweets . . . flowing on in a stream of luscious panegyrics" (VIII, 220). Of course, such criticism will never do. There is an effort to be made to overcome our natural prejudices; unless the critic does so, he must realize that he has fallen short to such an extent that what he does has little or no value.

> It is the effort we make, and impulse we acquire, in overcoming the first obstacles, that projects us forward; it is the necessity for exertion that makes us conscious of our strength; but this necessity and this impulse once removed, the tide of fancy and enthusiasm, which is at first a running stream, soon settles and crusts into the standing pool of dulness, criticism, and <u>virtù</u> (VI, 187).

Again, notice there is no contradiction between effort and

impulse. The country folk lacked the necessary knowledge and hence never received nature's impulse. One should note too that Hazlitt has established a procedural principle for the critic, a principle that time after time he applied in his own work, even when to do so was against his personal inclinations. He set a high standard, and, in general, his practice matched that standard.

While Hazlitt perceived critics and criticism in his own day to be, for the most part, a "standing pool" (XI, 28), he nevertheless saw this as the fault of the practitioners, not of criticism per se. What Hazlitt was so vocal about was the part-time critic who, like the 'coffee-house politician', was content with superficial day-to-day commentaries. As well there were always those who let politics, religion, or philosophy subvert the true role of criticism. The ancients, it was suggested earlier, were seen in terms of an untapped spring until the Italian poets were able to perceive their inherent pure water. So too with criticism. This time the necessity of tapping the spring was perceived and achieved by Coleridge.

Hazlitt has often been criticized for his treatment of Coleridge; yet, the more one reads Hazlitt and Coleridge, the more one feels that Hazlitt knew the poet-critic-philosopher for what he was. In what was probably the

first historical assessment of Coleridge the critic, Hazlitt says that "some twenty years ago, [Coleridge] threw a great stone into the standing pool of criticism, which splashed some persons with the mud, but which gave a motion to the surface and a reverberation to the neighbouring echoes, which has not since subsided" (XI, 28). No, not even today, nor is it likely to subside for some time to come. It is relatively easy, with hindsight, to see just how truly great Coleridge's influence on criticism has been. But surely it is a tribute to Hazlitt that he recognized the profound influence of a genius the moment, almost, that he threw his "great stone". "The mud", the stagnation, was gotten rid of and Coleridge aerated the pool waters to renew their vitality. Hazlitt, in later years, firmly opposed what he felt to be Coleridge's attempts to subject poetry to philosophy but, by the same token, he never ceased to acknowledge Coleridge's original impact on criticism.

iii. Stream

The stream metaphor appears in various forms. There is the stream of time, the stream of mind, the stream of style - all with positive and negative sides. Thus Pope is said to have failed to realize that his work would be "wafted down the stream of time" (V, 74). On the other

hand, there were those mentioned in The Return from Parnassus who had "long since sunk to the bottom of the stream of time" (VI, 280).[12]

Francis Jeffrey held a special place in Hazlitt's life as friend and lawyer in times of emotional and monetary distress. He was important too as the editor of the Edinburgh Review, which served as an outlet for some of Hazlitt's finest work. It has been suggested by some, for example Baker, that Hazlitt's tribute to Jeffrey was not really earned and that Hazlitt was overdoing it for a friend.[13] Hazlitt did speak of Jeffrey in terms of the stream metaphor, first of Jeffrey's mind and secondly of his style.

> There is a constitutional buoyancy and elasticity of mind about [Jeffrey] that cannot subside into repose, much less sink into dulness. There may be more original talkers . . . few, if any, with a more uninterrupted flow of cheerfulness and animal spirits . . . (XI, 132).
>
> [Jeffrey's] style of composition is that of a person accustomed to public speaking. There is no pause, no meagreness, no inanimateness, but a flow, a redundnace and volubility like that of a stream or of a rolling-stone (XI, 131).

This is perhaps extravagant praise even though the phrase "accustomed to public speaking" is as much a criticism of Jeffrey's style as it is praise. In his essay "On Familiar Style" Hazlitt had written, "To write a genuine familiar or truly

English style, is to write as any one would speak in common conversation . . . [without using] pedantic and oratorical flourishes" (VIII, 242). But Jeffrey was a lawyer who, in writing, showed a "too restless display of talent" (XI, 130) in a "language . . . more copious than select" (XI, 131). In effect, his style "gives an air of either too much carelessness or too much labour" (XI, 132). On the resignation of Jeffrey from the editorship in 1829, Hazlitt wrote a tribute to the Edinburgh Review and its former editor; but he noted: "What led more than any other circumstance to the decline or diminished popularity of the Edinburgh Review was its monotony" (XX, 245). In this light, Hazlitt could hardly be said to be overdoing it in Jeffrey's favor, a view reinforced by the blunt concluding couplet to Hazlitt's only known poem:

> And last, to make my measure full,
> Teach me, great J____y, to be dull! (XX, 393).[14]

The stream is prominent in his treatment of the humor of Farquhar. Hazlitt endorses the dramatist's claim of having introduced a new "standard character" to the stage. Such a character "floats on the back of his misfortunes", due no doubt to Farquhar's "unaffected gaiety and spirit of enjoyment . . . [which] overflows and sparkles

in all he does (VI, 85). His style, "animated, unembarrassed, and flowing", reflects this closeness to the natural stream.

Such too is the style of Scott's poetry (V, 154),[15] Bacon's prose (VI, 327-8), and Lyly's dialogue in Midas and Endymion which "glides and sparkles like a clear stream from the Muses' spring" (VI, 199). Spenser possesses the ability to transport us to this ideal world of the spring and the streams set amid their natural landscape. He "takes and lays us in the lap of a lovelier nature, by the sound of softer streams, among greener hills and fairer valleys" (V, 35).[16] This same power of relaxation Hazlitt sees in Goldsmith, "one of the most delightful writers in the language. His verse flows like a limpid stream. His ease is quite unconscious" (IX, 241). Hazlitt tries to capture the quiet peacefulness of the natural stream by concluding that "Goldsmith never rises into sublimity, and seldom sinks into insipidity . . ." (IX, 241).

When we come to Charles Lamb, we are faced with much the same dilemma we saw above with Jeffrey. Lamb and Hazlitt were close friends, so close in fact that one can hardly expect Hazlitt to be objective in his assessment. Yet here again, Hazlitt's expression of the water metaphor contains its own intuitive qualification.

> [Lamb] has none of the turbulence or froth of new-fangled opinions. His style runs pure and clear, though it may often take an underground course, or be conveyed through old-fashioned conduit-pipes (XI, 179).

The qualification is quite important. Lamb is praised for letting nature work through him, for not subjecting nature to opinion. Yet, Hazlitt does not give unqualified praise to the style through which Lamb lets nature speak. The reference to "an underground course" and "conduit-pipes" immediately bring to mind Hazlitt's own comments on Ben Jonson, above, and some unflattering ones on Lord Byron in the next section. "The conduit pipes, which, before with Ben Jonson, were used to illustrate forcing, illustrate here Lamb's predilection for archaisms."[17] Hazlitt, then, thought highly of Lamb when he followed the "effort" and "impulse" of nature;[18] when he did not, Hazlitt felt obliged to say so. Lamb lies between "egotism and disinterested humanity" (XI, 180-1), an enviable position in Hazlitt's estimation but not without its faults.

iv. River

The river, like the spring and stream, is used by Hazlitt in terms of those who measure up to their true natural ability as well as those who fail, either partially or totally. At certain times, too, nature can be

interfered with by outside forces. In his historical view Hazlitt felt that such writers as

> Webster, Deckar, Marston, Marlow, Chapman, Heywood, Middleton, and Rowley . . . were swallowed up in the headlong torrent of puritanic zeal which succeeded, and swept away everything in its unsparing course, throwing up the wrecks of taste and genius at random, and at long fitful intervals (VI, 176).

Hazlitt's awareness of the multiplicity of life lies at the very centre of his appeal to feeling. His metaphors reflect not only extremes but various shades in between so that as the dramatists were floating, in a sense, on their river, so too were the Puritans on theirs. It is when these two rivers meet that the political-religious forces can jeopardize artists and their work. Art, for Hazlitt, is not political, not religious, not anything except art. It is when these outside forces based on prejudice and abstraction try to impose themselves on art or when art allows or seeks such imposition that "wrecks" occur.

Shelley is also seen in the river context. His "bending, flexible form appears to take no strong hold of things, does not grapple with the world about him, but slides from it like a river" (VIII, 148). Like the Quakers, who, in "their aiming systematically at an ideal perfection . . . might as well have a river without banks" (XX, 188), Shelley is a river out of control, ignoring its

relationship with the river banks and the world beyond. Caught up in its own power one can tell neither where it originates nor where it heads. It is simply cut off from reality, true nature and feeling, and has become an abstraction. "Bubbles are to [Shelley] the only realities: - touch them, and they vanish" (VIII, 149).

Hazlitt once wrote of his own style in terms which seem at first glance somewhat like those he used for Shelley. In defense of a digression within an essay he was writing, Hazlitt remarked, "I write this at Winterslow. My style . . . here . . . flows like a river, and over-spreads its banks. I have not to seek for thoughts or hunt for images: they come of themselves" (XII, 121). But the river metaphor here, unlike that of Shelley, does not indicate a flooding out of control; rather it appears more in terms of a gentle natural overflow to aid vegetation. That is, Hazlitt at Winterslow is struck by the profusion of nature, the concrete, and his style, the digression for example, is his natural response to that profusion.

While Shelley looks mistakenly to some idealistic world, wherever that may be, Wordsworth, the greatest of egotists in Hazlitt's view, gives prominence to the outside world but only on his own subjective terms. He "hardly ever avails himself of striking subjects or remarkable combinations of events, but in general rejects them as interfering with the workings of his own mind, as disturbing

the smooth, deep, majestic current of his own feelings . . ." (XIX, 10; IV, 112). Hazlitt concludes by using another aspect of the water metaphor: "Thus . . . every object . . . is clothed with the haze of imagination like a glittering vapour . . ." (XIX, 10; IV, 112).[19] Hazlitt is speaking here of Wordsworth's use of his poetic powers. A great poet has sympathy, i.e. he suppresses his ego to allow nature to come through as she is. Wordsworth does the opposite. He suppresses nature in favor of his ego, "a failure in sympathetic identification".[20]

Sir Walter Scott's poetry "glides like a river, clean, gentle, harmless" (XI, 69-70). Yet it "wanted <u>character</u>[21] . . . It slid out of the mind as soon as read, like a river; and would have been forgotten, but that the public curiosity was fed with ever new supplies from the same teeming liquid source" (XI, 58). Scott's poetry had the outward form but it lacked integrity, internal nature. What a contrast to his prose, which Hazlitt also sets in a water context but where the water is secondary. The primary emphasis comes from Cervantes' <u>Don Quixote</u>, a novel beloved by Hazlitt:

> [Scott's] prose is a beautiful, rustic nymph, that, like Dorothea in Don Quixote [I, iv, 28], when she is surprised with dishevelled tresses bathing her naked feet in the brook, looks round her, abashed at the admiration her charms have excited! (XI, 61).

Such distinction, such concreteness, such feeling was absent in Scott's poetry. Hazlitt felt that Scott should leave poetry to others and devote his full time to prose. Scott's power of prose became "harmless", and not very useful, poetry.

One reason why Hazlitt loved Don Quixote was that he felt that Cervantes' characters like those of Rabelais were alive and vigorous - "their mirth flows as a river" (V, 113). Still with prose writers, Hazlitt says Jeremy Taylor is as "rapid, as flowing, and endless as [Sir Thomas Browne] is stately, abrupt, and concentrated. The eloquence of one is like a river, that of the other is more like an aqueduct" (VI, 341). Again Hazlitt has vividly used his metaphor to contrast those who allow nature to run her own course with those who build in artificial controls.

Campbell lacks the courage to let nature go and so he becomes Campbell the mechanist poet.

> When he launches a sentiment that you think will float him triumphantly for once to the bottom of the stanza, he stops short at the end of the first or second line, and stands shivering on the brink of beauty, afraid to trust himself to the fathomless abyss (V, 149).
>
> [He] excels chiefly in sentiment and imagery. The story ["Gertrude of Wyoming"] moves slow, and is mechanically conducted, and rather resembles a Scotch canal carried over

> lengthened aqueducts and with a number of locks in it, than one of those rivers that sweep in their majestic course, broad and full, over Transatlantic plains and lose themselves in rolling gulfs, or thunder down lofty precipices (XI, 162).

The problem with Campbell is one of mental affectation reflected in his poetry. He has the power and genius but instead of letting himself go, as it were, he hesitates, trying to fit poetry to an abstract structure. The result, so disappointing to Hazlitt, is a distraction to the reader who is affected more by the form than the total experience.[22]

Landor at times has a style so vigorous that it reminds one of a parallel excess seen in the Puritans above; it "glows among the snows, melts among the rocks . . . his rage boils over and scalds himself" (XIX, 108). And while Landor does not have "the crafty qualifications of the Lake School", he still lacks the openness, the honest objectivity, in criticism that Campbell lacked in poetry. Landor allows his style "to float him into a snug place, but not out of it again for the world" (XIX, 108).

Byron seeks no such snug place but his position reflected in the metaphor indicates an even more serious misuse of nature. "["Childe Harold's Pilgrimage"] represents, in some measure, the workings of [Byron's] own spirit, - disturbed, restless, labouring, foaming, sparkling,

and now hid in labyrinths and plunging into the gloom of night" (XIX, 40). Byron, says Hazlitt, does have genius but it is impetuous, with the substitution of egotism for the depth and breath of nature.

Hazlitt contrasts the genius of Shakespeare and Scott. The former's "is like the Nile overflowing and enriching its banks;[23] that of Sir Walter is like a mountain-stream rendered interesting by the picturesqueness of the surrounding scenery" (XII, 344). The word "rendered" is important. What is contrasted here is the good, life-giving waters of the Nile, one of the great rivers of nature, with the painting of a stream where the stream is even secondary to its artificial surroundings.

Shakespeare and other "Old Masters", like Raphael and Rubens, were not lazy and "slovenly" in their work. "The stream of their invention supplies the taste of successive generations like a river: they furnish a hundred Galleries, and preclude competition, not more by the excellence than by the extent of their performances" (XII, 58-9). Shakespeare, then, in the river metaphor is depicted in terms of irrigation, in terms of providing much needed sustenance through "successive generations".

v. Sea

On the eve of crossing the Channel to start a tour of the continent, Hazlitt wrote the following long and important reflection:

> There is something in being near the sea, like the confines of eternity. It is a new element, a pure abstraction. The mind loves to hover on that which is endless, and forever the same . . . I wonder at the sea itself, that vast Leviathan, rolled round the earth, smiling in its sleep, waked into fury, fathomless, boundless, a huge world of water-drops - Whence is it, whither goes it, is it of eternity or of nothing? Strange, ponderous riddle, that we can neither penetrate nor grasp in our comprehension, ebbing and flowing like human life, and swallowing it up in thy remorseless womb, - what are thou? What is there in common between thy life and ours, who gaze at thee? . . . Great . . . unwieldy, enormous, preposterous twin-birth of matter, rest in thy dark, unfathomed cave of mystery, mocking human pride and weakness. Still is it given to the mind of man to wonder at thee, to confess its ignorance, and to stand in awe of thy stupendous might and majesty, and of its own being, that can question thine! But a truce with reflections! (X, 90).

Commenting on this scene, Wardle remarks that Hazlitt "was stirred by the prospect of the sea . . ."[24] Stirred indeed! The sea, the real one, allows Hazlitt to express metaphorically not only different views of reality but as well his concern that abstraction was falsely overwhelming the true pluralist view, by an almost uncontrollable propensity of the human mind.

Man cannot have "a perfectly distinct idea of any one individual thing" because he does not possess "unlimited power of comprehension" (II, 191). The mind's tendency, though, is to try to comprehend all things, an inclination which, if followed wrongly, only results in the warping of reality because an abstraction in fact is artificial. Thus ideas are only abstractions from reality. Man may acknowledge the human mind's tendency towards abstraction but he should not let acknowledgment take the form of assent. That is, he should be aware of the real nature of abstraction - deception.

This awareness and avoidance of the abstract view of reality is particularly applicable to the writer, to the painter, to all artists.

> The artist, for Hazlitt, is characterized by an openness to the whole of experience in all its complexity and variety as a result of his greater sensitivity of feeling. The effect of generality, whether it be manifested in a creed or dogma, party or sect, a system or theory, is to narrow the range of the artist's impressions. Abstraction diminishes the poet's 'imaginative sincerity' (xii. 328).[25]

Reality is not a bounded or limited design even when it most appears that way. "To suppose that we see the whole of any object, merely by looking at it, is a vulgar error" (XX, 388). In truth, the "circle of knowledge [constantly] enlarges with further acquaintance and study" of an experience.

These are the feelings that Hazlitt expresses in his metaphoric reaction to the sea. The latter is so voluminous that the mind feels overwhelmed and hence tends to abdicate its responsibility to deal with the experience and becomes instead satisfied with an abstract concept of the sea. As a natural "consequence of the limitation of the comprehensive faculty" (II, 191), the "mind loves to hover on that which is endless, and forever the same" rather than come to terms with the multiplicity of reality.

Hazlitt, aware of this proclivity of the mind to consider the sea as "a pure abstraction", resists the inclination and considers instead "the sea itself". That is he chooses to consider the individuality of the sea, knowing, at the same time, that the more he comprehends, the more there remains to be comprehended. This multiplicity in the individual does not dissuade Hazlitt from seeing as much of that individual as possible. Though the sea may be a "fathomless, boundless, . . . huge world of water-drops", the proper way to examine it is not by an abstract concept of 'sea' but by a continuous consideration of the concrete 'drops' of reality. The mind which faces and concerns itself with the real may feel its load burdensome at times because it "can neither penetrate nor grasp in [its] comprehension" the infinite multiplicity of the

individual object. Nevertheless, the mind goes on considering, goes on questioning.

If the real sea contains too many particulars for the mind to fully comprehend, what about the mind itself and its many, many particulars, more even than the sea's "huge world of water-drops"! The mind "can question" itself but it cannot expect a definitive reply here any more than it could with the sea. Were such an answer possible life would be reduced to an abstract system. But life, like the sea, is before all else concrete in nature and of unpredictable variety.

Hazlitt declares "a truce with [these] reflections" at the end of the passage because he realizes that he can never accept the false method of abstraction even though it might apparently bring more contentment of mind than the pluralist way. The struggle is also constantly rewarding for "we then perceive that what we perhaps barely distinguished in the gross, or regarded as a dull blank, is full of beauty, meaning, and curious details" (XX, 388).

There is an interesting parallel between Hazlitt's reflection on the sea and a similar one by Wordsworth. In his Prelude the poet dwells on the "opposition between matter and spirit" but (unlike Hazlitt) Wordsworth "never accepted the world of the senses".[26] We have seen Hazlitt's acknowledgment, through the metaphor of the sea, of the

mind's tendency to concern itself with abstraction. In his view an abstract system will simply not hold up in reality though it may seem the answer to the vast and fearsome qualities of life so aptly caught in the image of the awesome sea. Wordsworth also uses the sea, as well as the river, as a metaphor for his own life and thought. Book IX of the Prelude opens:

> As oftentimes a River, it might seem,
> Yielding in part to old remembrances,
> Part sway'd by fear to tread an onward road
> That leads direct to the devouring sea
> Turns, and will measure back his course, far back,
> Towards the very regions which he cross'd
> In his first outset; so have we long time
> Made motions retrograde, in like pursuit
> Detain'd. But now we start afresh . . . (ll. 1-9).[27]

Abrams remarks that this is "a statement of Wordsworth's human reluctance to face the crisis of maturity".[28] In a sense Hazlitt faces a crisis too but not one of maturity. Rather it concerns his continuous need to assert the vitality and complexity of life. Wordsworth, in contrast, submits to abstraction.

> [He] makes a desperate attempt to reestablish, on abstract premises, and by logical analysis and reasoning, what had originally been his spontaneous confidence in life and his hope for man, but the attempt leads only to utter perplexity about "right and wrong, the ground/ Of moral obligation," until he breaks down completely.[29]

In Hazlitt's view Wordsworth's attempt could only foretell failure. The proper method was to ward off abstraction and concern oneself with concrete experience. That is life, this is feeling as it is in reality. Hazlitt is aware of and avoids the mistake of Wordsworth and others who do not use or forsake "their imaginations of feelings . . .: those . . . are all abroad, in a wide sea of speculation without rudder or compass, the instant they leave the shore of matter-of-fact or dry reasoning, and never stop short of the lost absurdity" (XII, 251).[30]

With this constant awareness of the vitality and plurality of life, it should not be surprising that tragedy receives some attention in the sea metaphor. While he commented that "even a country-inn in France is classical" (X, 103) and that French tragedies were "waves" covered with "the oil of decorum" (X, 149), Hazlitt used ships to illustrate his feelings about the direction that tragedy was taking. "Modern tragedy . . . is no longer like a vessel making the voyage of life, and tossed about by the winds and waves of passion, but is converted into a handsomely-constructed steam-boat, that is moved by the sole expansive power of words" (XII, 53). The writer Hazlitt uses as an example is Byron who "has launched several of these ventures lately . . . and may continue in the same strain as long as he pleases" (XII, 53). These

tragedies replaced nature with artificiality, particulars with mass, objectivity with the "grandes pensees" of the poet, heart with head, experience with abstraction. They lack those "movements of passion in Othello" a tragedy which resembles "the heaving of the sea in a storm; there are no sharp, slight, angular transitions, or if there are any, they are subject to this general swell and commotion" (V, 339).[31] But even Othello is only "like a river" when compared with the greatest of English tragedies, Lear. The latter is "like a sea, swelling, chafing, raging, without bound, without hope, without beacon, or anchor. Torn from the hold of his affections and fixed purposes, [Lear] floats a mighty wreck in the wide world of sorrows" (XVIII, 332). In that great drama Shakespeare has truly captured the complexity of life: "The action of the mind . . . staggers . . . but does not yield" (XVIII, 332). This is the same sort of tension Hazlitt saw in and expressed through the sea.

The sea metaphor was applied to more than tragedy. Virgil's Latin was "melodious, strange, lasting" like "the sound of the sea" (X, 320). The night before he sailed to the continent Hazlitt concluded his reflections by noting: "The sea at present puts me in mind of Lord Byron - it is restless, glittering, dangerous, exhaustless, like his style" (X, 320). There appears to be a fear implied here,

a fear that Byron's style, like the sea, will lead one to accept the poem with an unquestioning awe. For Hazlitt sees in Byron's work, for example Don Juan, a certain superficiality or falseness. "After the lightning and the hurricane, we are introduced to the interior of the cabin and the contents of wash-hand basins" (XI, 75). He floats on swelling paradoxes - 'Like proud seas under him' [Two Noble Kinsmen, II, i], (XI, 76). Anyone familiar with Hazlitt knows well his reaction to what he felt was the political self-betrayal of Wordsworth and Coleridge, not to mention Southey. Bryon's self-betrayal was as a poet. Reputation seemed more important to him than his true role of poet. He "seems to cast himself indignantly from 'this bank and shoal of time', or from the frail tottering bark that bears up modern reputation, into the huge sea of ancient renown, and to revel there with untired, outspread plume" (XI, 73-4). This is impertinence of the highest order. Popularity is not the best measure of genius and real worth, seen, for example, in Scott whose poetry was popular enough but which also lacked character and hence was of no lasting value. Indeed, Hazlitt speculates that Byron himself, even while impertinently placing himself with the ancients, possibly recognizes the truth:

> . . . does he already feel, with morbid anticipation, the retiring ebb of that overwhelming tide of popularity, which having been raised too high by adventitious circumstances, is lost in flats and shallows, as soon as their influence is withdrawn? (XIX, 64).

The image of the sea presents a contrast between Chapman and Wordsworth. The former responded to his surroundings while the latter tried to have his surroundings respond to himself. "All accidental varieties and individual contrasts are lost," says Hazlitt of Wordsworth, "in an endless continuity of feeling; like drops of water in the ocean-stream" (XIX, 11; IV, 113). Hazlitt is referring here specifically to Wordsworth's failure to understand and depict "human nature", man and his motives. Chapman was quite the opposite. "The close intrigues of court policy, the subtle workings of the human soul, move before him like a sea dark, deep, and glittering with wrinkles for the smile of beauty" (VI, 230).

Spenser's poetical language has a musical effect on the reader. "The undulations are infinite, like those of the waves of the sea: but the effect is still the same, lulling the senses . . ." (V, 44). One might think the motion would be sickening but that is not so with Spenser. It is so, though, in Coleridge's "A Lay-Sermon on the Distresses of the Country", where the obscurity of the work produces an effect "exceedingly like the qualms produced by

the heaving of a ship becalmed at sea; the motion is so tedious, improgressive, and sickening" (VII, 115n.). Coleridge's problem here, as elsewhere in his thinking, is that he cannot "come to a conclusion" (VII, 115). The same sensation of "being at sea in a calm" is experienced with that prose style which is "sustained and measured" in the sense of being too finely controlled: Johnson's Rambler style is an example (XII, 6). Or one might turn to Landor's "Ninth Dialogue" which is too, too long. "[The] scene is laid on shipboard, and it very much resembles a long sea-voyage, tedious, alarming, and sickening" (XIX, 107-8). One needs Spenser's "lulling" after such prose experiences!

Much the same is needed after some poetry, Crabbe's "Borough" for example. That poem is so clogged by particulars that it stagnates before the reader's eyes; it "seems almost like some sea-monster, crawled out of the neighbouring slime, and harbouring a breed of strange vermin, with a strong local scent of tar and bulge-water" (XIX, 61). Such is the effect of writing extravagant detail that the poet tends to describe the very stagnation he created and is now caught in. Despite Hazlitt's literary use of the method of painting, in the sense of the individual part contributing to a meaningful whole of some experience, he did not equate the two arts literally in the sense of the eighteenth century's echoing Horace's ut

pictura poesis. The medium and its expressive capability differed and poetry's medium was superior.[32] Crabbe, Hazlitt felt, was attempting a verbal imitation which could not succeed because the best pictorial medium was painting. Added to Crabbe's extravagant detail is the aspect of reality he depicts. By concentrating only on the abject side of humanity, reality actually becomes 'non-reality'. True, the "disagreeable matters of fact" have "a powerful effect on the senses" but the poet must clearly see that there are also 'agreeable matters of fact' in the world. Crabbe's fault is not just that his work lacks "character" and displays only the external, but that it creates a very narrow type of reality which is very unpoetic.

vi. Evaporation

Water is carried from the sea to the air as evaporation. Hazlitt first presents a clear sky. In Campbell's "Gertrude of Wyoming" the line "Till now, in Gertrude's eyes, their ninth blue summer shone" [I, xii, 9] stands out dramatically in the description of her childhood. "It appears to us like the ecstatic union of natural beauty and poetic fancy, and in its playful sublimity resembles the azure canopy mirrored in the smiling waters, bright, liquid, serene, heavenly!" (XI, 162).

A contrast quickly develops the metaphor. "If the poetry of [Campbell] is like the arch of the rainbow, spanning and adorning the earth, that of [Crabbe] is like a dull, leaden cloud hanging over it" (XI, 164). It need hardly be reiterated that Hazlitt saw little to admire in Crabbe, especially when one remembers that he felt that Campbell generally did not succeed.

vii. Condensation

The next metaphor is that of condensation, made up of showers, rain, and dew.[33] Recalling the deep feelings he experienced in his early reading, Hazlitt wrote one of his most nostalgic metaphors: "Sweet were the showers in early youth that drenched my body, and sweet the drops of pity that fell upon the books I read" (XVII, 115). This is the same kind of feeling he experienced in Thomson's poetry. So affectively powerful was the poet's description that the reader felt the "first scattered drops of a vernal shower patter on the leaves above our heads" (V, 87). How different from Cowper, "as if he were afraid of being caught in a shower of rain" (V, 92). Cervantes' Sancho was not cautious and he was so much a child of nature that his "jests . . . fell from him like drops of rain when he least thought of it" (XII, 120).

The falseness of popularity is considered in what Hazlitt feels is the reaction of Landor and Byron to it. The former keeps aloof because he sees "how fast modern wits live, - how soon their reputations wear out, like the hasty shower that spangles the grass for a moment and then sinks into the ground for ever" (XIX, 106). Artistic greatness is not measured by one's reputation; indeed, potential greatness is lost because the "modern wits" care more about fame than art. Such an example was seen above in Byron. In a pejorative use of the metaphor Hazlitt's remarks that Byron's lordly characteristics "mount the steps of the Capitol, fulmine over Greece, and are poured in torrents of abuse on the world" (XIX, 35).

This, our study of the shower metaphor may be ended with Hazlitt's reiteration of the error [and deception] of substituting abstraction for theory for experience, and fixed ideas for feeling. Hazlitt begins by feigning agreement: "all great changes which have been brought about in the moral world" are due to "certain opinions and abstract principles of reasoning on life and manner". These abstract principles:

> are the wholesome dew and rain, or the mildew and pestilence that silently destroy. To this principle of generalization all religious creeds, the institutions of wise lawgivers, and the systems of philosophers, owe their influence (VII, 305).

This was the generalization that Hazlitt did not agree with. Its deceptiveness Hazlitt captures in his feelings on Dr. Stoddart, the editor of the New Times, in terms of a lightning storm and its aftermath. "The light of his imagination, sportive, dazzling, beauteous as it seemed, was followed by the stroke of death." Hazlitt was not deceived. "[I] played all my life with his forked shafts unhurt, because I had a metaphysical clue to carry off the noxious particles, and let them sink into the earth, like drops of water" (XIX, 271). Perhaps this is why Hazlitt considered himself first and foremost a metaphysician. That branch of knowledge had shown him the plurality of life, the mixture of concrete and abstract. Hence he could 'play' with abstractions "all [his] life" without submitting to the mind's tendency to conclude that an abstract system (religious, social, philosophical, or artistic) was the totality of existence, a fault that marked the spirit of his age. One recalls the awesomeness of the sea. Regrettably, for Hazlitt, most Englishmen were duped by Stoddart's and others' abstract generalizations. Had the English been "a nation of metaphysicians . . . they would have detected . . . sophistry . . . prejudice . . . authority" (XIX, 271), all evils to be avoided.

Our final consideration is the dew. In painting, Rembrandt's genius with light was undeniable: "Lumps of

light hung upon his pencil and fell upon his canvas like dew-drops" (XII, 120). Much the same effect was felt by Hazlitt when he read the New Eloise ["I, Lettre XIII in which St. Preux describes the Pays de Vaud"] by Rousseau, "the father of sentiment" (XVII, 133): "The style gave me the same sensation as the drops of morning dew before they are scorched by the sun . . . I wished I could have written such a letter" (XII, 304).[34]

The prose style of Jeremy Taylor is "more like fine poetry . . . [like] innumerable dew-drops that glitter on the face of morning, and tremble as they glitter" (VI, 341-2, Cf. XII, 17). Landor has the ability to enter "into the style and character of the ancient poets, bringing out their freshness and beauty, like roses newly washed in the dew" (XIX, 105).

The river metaphor, we saw, provided Hazlitt's comments on the frustration of Campbell's poetic genius by the poet himself. The poet did have potential - "in the centre, the inmost recesses of our poet's heart, the pearly dew of sensibility is distilled" (XI, 162) - but, for one thing, he paid too much attention to the critics and tried to design his poems to please them.[35]

Our delineation of the water cycle ends with the dew and we may summarize with one of Hazlitt's infrequent comprehensive images. He writes of Moore's poetry:

> [It] is like a shower of beauty; a dance of images; a stream of music; or like the spray of the water-fall, tinged by the morning-beam with rosy light. The characteristic distinction of our author's style is this continuous and incessant flow of voluptuous thoughts and shining allusions (XI, 169).

viii. Conclusion

Hazlitt used throughout his literary criticism many metaphors pertaining to various forms of water (spring, stream, river, etc.) which we have arranged to conform loosely to the water cycle of nature. This we have done to indicate that Hazlitt's feeling for literature was self-validating in its metaphoric expression. He had claimed that truly expressed feeling provides its own inherent structure. Our task has been to provide an explicit analysis of that inherent quality.

In doing this we are not suggesting that the cycle is a summation of Hazlitt's criticism. Rather is serves as an explicit form of 'proof' that he was correct in saying that truly expressed feeling justifies itself by creating a coherent whole. This whole is not complete nor ever can be; it allows (as does its expression through metaphor, here water) for an infinite variety of further critical feelings to be voiced by Hazlitt (or, for that matter, by anyone who possesses feeling to the same degree as Hazlitt).

The structure also allows us to see how Hazlitt used metaphor to express those ideas which might be interpreted solely as abstract concepts or theory if expressed otherwise. Nor do we mean by this that Hazlitt's feelings are first 'abstract' and then made 'concrete' by expression: "to propose to embody an abstraction is a contradiction in terms" (XX, 303). Hazlitt's feeling is of the heart; it is a "sentiment", that is, "the habitual workings of some one powerful feeling, where the heart reposes almost entirely upon itself" (XVI, 48). Such feeling is concrete by nature and so is its expression in such metaphors as those of water.

Finally the cyclic metaphors are only artificially ours in the sense that we have added nothing. The inherent quality of the structure has allowed us to see Hazlitt's metaphoric artistry at work without 'interpreting' it. We have not changed Hazlitt but merely extracted one of the metaphoric unities in his work.

CHAPTER III

THE SMELTING PROCESS

Another metaphoric structure that we may elicit from Hazlitt's criticism is that of mining and/or smelting. Like the water cycle, the smelting metaphor incorporates a contrast between the natural and the artificial. As well, it not only concerns the excavation of minerals (in fact there is little of that) but the whole process of removing the waste from the mineral, melting down the ore, shaping the molten metal into the form desired, and marking the finished product. All of these steps are used as symbols for the act of literary or artistic creation. Like the water metaphors, each individual metaphor is marked by a pluralist outlook. Closely related to the smelting process are the metaphors of alchemy and the forge and these may be conveniently dealt with in the same chapter. The whole is based on a series of common processes for which the term 'smelting' will be used.

I. Alchemy

The smelting metaphor may be introduced by the related minor metaphor of alchemy since it involves the

process of changing natural elements into new forms. Hazlitt rightly saw alchemy as a state of mind rather than an actual physical process. The psychology appealed to him, not the practice. In his essay "On Pedantry" Hazlitt points out the necessity of man to be a pedant, that is to have some "force of habit and prejudice . . . at the root of our personal existence" (IV, 84) to act as a kind of security-blanket:

> Life is the art of being well deceived; and in order that the deception may succeed, it must be habitual and uninterrupted. A constant examination of the value of our opinions and enjoyments, compared with those of others, may lessen our prejudices, but will leave nothing for our affections to rest upon. A multiplicity of objects unsettles the mind, and destroys not only all enthusiasm, but all sincerity of attachment, all constancy of pursuit (IV, 84).

Hazlitt notes with distaste that the "ignorant presumption" of pedantry is being replaced by "learned prejudice" and an even worse fault - "the universal diffusion of accomplishment and pretension" (IV, 85), i.e. the trend of artists to be at the same time politicians, entertainers, et al. and vice versa. What is needed is an honest pedantry:

> Pedantry in art, in learning, in every thing, is the setting an extraordinary value on that which we can do, and that which we understand best, and which it is our business to do and understand . . . To possess or even understand all kinds of excellence equally, is impossible; and to pretend to admire that to which we are

> indifferent . . . is not liberality, but affectation (IV, 86).

Poets, then, should not be politicians, for example, because both practices will suffer from interference by the other.[1] If they want to be useful to the arts, the "great, instead of rivalling them, should keep authors, as they formerly kept fools . . ." The truly honest pedant was the alchemist, unfortunately no longer in society; he was as committed to his work as the modern artist should be.

> We see him sitting fortified in his prejudices, with his furnace, his diagrams, and his alembics; smiling at disappointments as proofs of the sublimity of his art, and the earnest of his future success: wondering at his own knowledge and the incredulity of others; fed with hope to the last gasp, and having all the pleasures without the pain of madness (IV, 87).

Plainly, Hazlitt is talking about an attitude of conviction and dedication to one's profession or vocation, whether "in the ornamental . . . [or]the mechanical arts of human life" (IV, 86). The alchemist could continue in his research simply because it never occurred to him to doubt the value of that research. The artist ought to have the same attitude, to strive for "the ELIXIR VITAE and the AURUM POTABILE"! (IV, 87) of language, to be confident despite "the Reviewers". Otherwise, the artist foresakes his pedantry for hypocrisy.

"A favourite Hazlitt quotation," says Howe (IV, 375), is "happy alchemy of mind," - "possibly a reminiscence of Lamb's phrase, 'well-natured alchymy', in his early essay, 'The Londoner'."[2] As above, the phrase clearly refers to a mental state. Applied first in the sense of praise, the phrase is used by Hazlitt of Gay's The Beggar's Opera. While Gay "chose a very unpromising ground to work upon", he nevertheless produced a far from "vulgar play". "The elegance of the composition is in exact proportion to the coarseness of the materials: by 'happy alchemy of mind', the author has extracted an essence of refinement from the dregs of human life, and turns its very dross into gold" (IV, 65; rpt. V, 107). Gay could do this because he was an honest pedant, an artist "intent, not on the means but on the end . . . taken up, not with difficulties, but with the triumph over them"; he was like "the alchemist who, while he is raking into his soot and furnaces, lives in a golden dream - a lesser gives way to a greater object" (VIII, 17).[3] This magical process is applied by a mind so convinced in its motives that it succeeds in producing a work of art from material that of itself is anything but artistic.

In another instance, Hazlitt used the metaphor in a derogatory sense. He is speaking of certain literary critics:

> There is another race of critics who might be designated as the Occult School - _verè adepti_. They discern no beauties but what are concealed from superficial eyes, and overlook all that are obvious to the vulgar part of mankind. Their art is the transmutation of styles. By happy alchemy of mind they convert dross into gold - and gold into tinsel (VIII, 225).

The "Occult School" of critics are hypocrites because their motives are not altruistic but selfish. They judge a book by its difficulty, or rather by its popularity. If a work is generally unpopular, they like it; if "utterly unreadable, they can read . . . for ever" (VIII, 225). Their real failure is their selfishness and one-sidedness. Hazlitt concludes that they do "smack of genius, and would be worth any money, were it only for the rarity of the thing"! (VIII, 226).

The alchemy metaphor, then, relates directly to Hazlitt's view of literature as raw material converted into a finished product. By alchemy the process receives a wave of a magical wand, as it were, a shortcut to pure riches. Thus Gay succeeds in extracting "an essence of refinement" (IV, 65; V, 107). Certain critics, on the other hand, use the alchemical process in the sense of secrecy - "They judge of works of genius as misers do of hid treasure - it is of no value unless they have it all to themselves" (VIII, 225). Whether or not they succeed in their alchemy of mind remains their secret because no one

can understand what they are saying and they apparently wish it to remain that way.

II. i. Vein

The first metaphor of the smelting process is that of the vein. Most frequently Hazlitt uses vein in terms of a core of thought representing the presence or absence of artistic ability. Without veins of ore, there is no smelter; without veins of ability, there is no artist. It is with this in mind that Hazlitt differentiates between one man's potential and another man's creativeness. "He is a man of capacity who possesses considerable intellectual riches: he is a man of genius who finds out a vein of new ore. Originality is the seeing nature differently from others, and yet as it is in itself" (VIII, 46). Again Hazlitt has chosen and used a metaphor (vein) to concretely demonstrate the creative process used in its best way (genius - nature).

Wordsworth provides a good example of what Hazlitt is saying. In the Lyrical Ballads there are many poems of "inconceivable beauty, of perfect originality and pathos. They open a finer and deeper vein of thought and feeling than any poet in modern times has done, or attempted. He has produced a deeper impression, and on a smaller circle, than any other of his contemporaries" (V, 156). Wordsworth was a man of genius, of true originality, at least in his early

Lyrical Ballads. But time was to change that partially, for Wordsworth, said Hazlitt, did not continue to fulfill the latter part of originality - seeing nature, "as it is in itself". Instead Wordsworth began to depicit nature not as she was but as Wordsworth saw her - "His poetry is not external, but internal . . ." (V, 156). Thus his success as a poet of originality was severely limited. "He cannot form a whole. He has not the constructive faculty" (V, 156). Wordsworth, then, was successful in finding a "finer and deeper vein" but, since he would not let nature work through him, he fell short in mining the vein. Yet, Hazlitt does not condemn one because of the other: "I am not, however, one of those who laugh at the attempts or failures of men of genius" (V, 156). Failure (or success) is only meaningful in a man of genius and that Wordsworth was.

Hazlitt makes like comments on Middleton's Women Beware Women. In it "there is a rich . . . vein of internal sentiment, with fine occasional insight into human nature, and cool cutting irony of expression" (VI, 214). Despite this, "the plot and denouement [are] . . . lamentably deficient" because Middleton lacks a unifying ability, "an eye to the whole . . . The author's power is in the subject, not over it [like Shakespeare's power]; or he is in possession of excellent materials, which he husbands very ill" (VI, 215).

Both Wordsworth and Middleton display the vein of nature, as it were, and both fail because their approach is too narrow to allow nature to fully show herself at each step and overall at one and the same time. Both have genius but it is particular or ordinary genius (VIII, 42-3). Hazlitt contrasts Shakespeare with Middleton. The former

> saw to the end of what he was about, and with the same faculty of lending himself to the impulses of Nature and the impression of the moment, never forgot that he himself had a task to perform, nor the place which each figure ought to occupy in his general design (VI, 215).

But, as the water metaphor revealed, Shakespeare was a Proteus, an universal genius. (One may note too in the last quotation a reiteration by Hazlitt of the concept that the poet controls at all times the degree to which nature works through him.)

A different type of genius, the genius of wit and comedy, is witnessed in Vanbrugh. Wit and comedy are artificial forms of creativity and hence cannot measure up to the works of nature. The deliberate use of an "inverted world" and the careful construction of the parts to fit in an overall plan mark the best productions of wit and comedy.[4] Compared with Wycherley's, Vanbrugh's comedies are "not so profoundly laid, nor his characters so well digested". Vanbrugh lacks the element of deliberateness

"so that the whole may hang together". Despite or rather because of this weakness,

> he works out scene after scene, on the spur of the occasion, and from the immediate hold they take of his imagination at the moment, without any previous bias or ultimate purpose, much more powerfully, with more verve, and in a richer vein of original invention (VI, 79).

Here, apparently, is the intuitive imagination at work - the ability "to synthesize what we learn in such a manner that it can be spontaneously used as by instinct".[5] As a result there are scenes in Vanbrugh which show he "has more nature than art: what he does best, he does because he cannot help it" (VI, 79). Yet these scenes are exceptional - they result from Vanbrugh's ability to take "the advantages which certain accidental situations of character present to him on the spot" (VI, 79). Where "the stimulus of sudden emergency" is wanting Vanbrugh's "genius flags and grows dull" (VI, 84). In summary, Hazlitt's analysis of Vanbrugh indicates that the latter is not a master of wit or comedy except in "accidental situations" and in these the poetry of nature exceeds the artificial. His wit is "mother-wit"; that is dramatic failure is avoided only by momentary excellence:

> The train of his associations, to express the same thing in metaphysical language, lies in following the suggestions of his fancy into every possible connexion of cause and effect,

> rather than into every possible combination of likeness or difference (VI, 8).[6]

Another use of the 'vein' metaphor occurs in the criticism of "Charlemagne: Ou L'Eglise Delivrée" by Lucien Buonaparte. Unlike Wordsworth or Middleton, Lucien in his poem "opens no new and rich vein of poetry, though certainly great talents are shewn in the use which is made of existing materials" (XIX, 30). But poetry to be good requires much more than a matter of organizational ability: "Perhaps it may be said that this is all that can be done in a modern poem: if so, that all is hardly worth the doing" (XIX, 30). An example is the poetry of Crabbe who depends almost entirely on "an exact fac-simile" of nature, an ability to organize to a superb degree. That is fine but still remains only "'a thorn in the side of poetry'"; what Crabbe must do is "pierce below the surface to get at his genuine vein" (XIX, 60-2). This he failed to do. Hazlitt compares Crabbe with Milton to show just how much the former misses "his genuine vein" by. Crabbe's observations are of nature. Milton "describes objects, of which he could only have read in books, with the vividness of actual observation. His imagination has the force of nature" (V, 58-9; IV, 37). While "Milton's learning has the effect of intuition", Crabbe's poetry displays nature only in a superficial, mechanical way.

The vein, then, is used by Hazlitt mainly as a metaphor for the creative genius of various writers. While it does not appear to be as developed as some other metaphors, the vein does serve as a precursor for the other smelting metaphors.

ii. Ore

Another metaphor that may be considered here is one closely identified with that of the vein. We may call it the ore metaphor though it concerns as well riches that lie secreted in caves awaiting to be discovered. There are several ways in which Hazlitt views discovery.

In the introductory lecture on the Elizabethan writers, he attempts to account for the main influences on the literature of that age. He notes the Reformation, the discovery of the New World, and, among other causes, "the rich and fascinating stores of the Greek and Roman mythology, and those of the romantic poetry of Spain and Italy" (VI, 186). These "were eagerly explored . . . and thrown open in translations" by those who saw the <u>true</u> value of such riches. To those who were able to absorb and make those rich finds part of themselves went the glory of creative genius. A late example of such power was Milton who, as noted earlier, made such <u>true</u> use of past materials that it

had "the effect of intuition". Hazlitt saw too, however, that discovered riches were of little use to those who went away and were satisfied with mere imitation, with writing the "poetry of common-place". He suggested that in such cases the artistically inclined might be better off never discovering those "rich and fascinating stores". Just as "we dig our fuel out of the bowels of the earth" (X, 176), so too the poet who wishes to write great poetry must put great effort into his work. The common-place poet, the poet of imitation "aims at effect . . . and . . . is contented with common-place ornaments, rather than none. Indeed, this last result must necessarily follow, where there is an ambition to shine, without the effort to dig for jewels in the mine of truth" (XII, 9-10). Great effort in the mind of a genius to come to terms with experience results in an instinctive or intuitional effect.

In the second lecture of the Elizabethan series Hazlitt, as he so often does, uses the same metaphor for another aspect of literature. The Elizabethans were said to discover the riches of the ancients; so Hazlitt and his listeners are described in terms of discovering the riches of the Elizabethans. In an extended metaphor the lecture ("from the Reformation to the middle of Charles I") opens on the prolificacy of "dramatic excellence" -

> In approaching [that period], we seem to be approaching the RICH STROND described in Spenser, where treasures of all kinds lay scattered, or rather crowded together on the shore in inexhaustible but unregarded profusion, 'rich as the oozy bottom of the deep in sunken wrack and sumless treasuries' (VI, 192-3).

Hazlitt compares his listeners and himself to Spenser's Guyon who finds "the massy pillars and huge unwieldy fragments of gold" in the Cave of Mammon. The gold is covered in "dust and cobwebs" but only wants "exploring" to reveal its real value. "In short, the discovery of such an unsuspected and forgotten mine of wealth will be found amply to repay the labour of the search" (VI, 193).

The metaphor here helps in understanding part of Hazlitt's concept of beauty. That attribute, says Hazlitt, is in the object per se, not, as some think, in the subject, in the eye of the beholder. Beauty "is in some way inherent in the object" (IV, 68). Thus the poet must find beauty in nature and then let it shine through his poetry. Likewise, the looker, the listener, the reader, etc. must discover the beauty already in literature, the mine of riches which is sometimes covered with "dust and cobwebs". This explains too why Hazlitt uses such words as "stores", "riches", "jewels", and "treasures" in his metaphor. These have the connotation of finished products and hence contain the highest degree of beauty regardless of what one may attribute

to them. However, this does not mean that the beauty of nature (or of a poem, etc.) is apparent automatically, that the subject's role is purely passive. On the contrary the role of the subject is to approach the treasure with an open-mind. The less the prejudice, the less the abstract commitment, the more revealed is the beauty, the truth within the mine. Hazlitt summed up the position when he said of Wordsworth's "Hart-Leap Well": "Those who do not feel the beauty and force of [this poem], may save themselves the trouble of inquiring farther" (V, 156). Should that be the case, though, "Hart-Leap Well" still retains its "beauty and . . . force" and awaits another discoverer.

We continue the ore metaphor with the mention of specific riches or minerals. The Elizabethan mine is one of gold, though, like nature, it is not all pure:

> I may here observe, once for all, that I would not be understood to say, that the age of Elizabeth was all of gold without any alloy. There was both gold and lead in it, and often in one and the same writer (VI, 197).

And this is one of Hazlitt's basic premises for his own literary criticism - a recognition of the wide variety and diversity in a writer and his works as well as literature in general. It is hard to think of a single instance where Hazlitt makes a value judgement to cover the artist, his

works, aspects of the works, or his method and skill, at one sweep. Shakespeare may be all gold, as it were, but the gold of his comedies is not as pure as that of his tragedies. The former were written in "a more easy and careless vein than [his] tragedies" which were "on a par with, and the same as Nature, in her greatest heights and depths of action and suffering" (VI, 30-1).

Even when it comes to particular characters in Shakespeare one does not always see the purest gold. Hazlitt felt Shakespeare's women were not of the purity of Milton's Eve. Imogen, Miranda, Ophelia, or Desdemona "seem to exist only in their attachment to others" while Eve is "the constant object of admiration in herself" (IV, 105)[7] as well as being a loving and tender mate for Adam. There is a richness to Shakespeare's women but they are not "all of ivory and gold"as is Eve.

Nevertheless, alloy in Shakespeare is of a very low percentage. For example, Richard III bears the mark of purity as well as any other play. It "is as truly Shakespearian - that is, it has as much of the author's mind, of passion, character, and interest, with as little alloy of the peculiarities of the age, or extraneous matter, as almost any other of his productions" (XVIII, 191). Hazlitt felt that Shakespeare was the closest an English artist had come to revealing nature in his works. If there

were impurities, it only went to show that much better how 'natural' a writer he was. (The only time a writer could be perfectly complete was when that writer was following an abstract system, and abstraction on its own was a deception in Hazlitt's view.) Still there were those who thought they could better 'adapt' Shakespeare to the modern stage by 'improving' his plays. Hazlitt disagreed. On Nov. 16, 1813, Hazlitt saw a version of Antony and Cleopatra attributed to Kemble. The playgoer's reaction is not surprising - the play seemed "got up for the occasion". Kemble

> might have separated the gold of Shakespear from the alloy which at times accompanies it, but he ought not to have mixed it up with the heavy tinsel of Dryden (V, 191).

Hazlitt felt that the natural passion in the play had been distorted by the addition of an artificial one. To improve Shakespeare was like trying to improve nature. That could only be done by another Shakespeare, nature herself. "We cannot make an abstraction of the intellectual ore from the material dross, of feelings from objects, of results from causes . . . We must wait nature's time" (XII, 318). The proof lay in such abstraction as Kemble's effort.

The type of ore or quality of ore used most often by Hazlitt is 'sterling', both in the sense of raw material and finished product, though the latter in the sense of

nature's finish and hence its appearance at this part of the smelting process and not at the end.

Collins, though he died young and wrote a small quantity of verse, displayed a talent with great promise. There was some obscurity and affectation but "he has not been able to hide the solid sterling ore of genius" (V, 115-6). His insanity marks a real loss of richness in literature. "He is the only one of the minor poets of whom,if he had lived, it cannot be said that he might not have done the greatest things" (V, 115).

Southey, on the other hand, lived to write a large volume of work. Unlike Collins, however, he did (or held the promise of) "little . . . of true and sterling excellence . . ."; what good there is, "is overloaded by the quantity of indifferent matter which he turns out every year, 'prosing or versing,' with equally mechanical and irresistible facility" (V, 164-5). While Collins' loss of poetic creativity through insanity is lamented by Hazlitt, Southey's imagination was dulled by another type of 'madness', namely self-centredness. Such madness, Hazlitt felt, was particularly evident in his own time and was best witnessed in the Lake School and their poetry of paradox. Southey was a good example.

Butler's "Hudibras" too contained great riches and, if it was not all pure, it still was "the greatest single

production of wit" of its time and possibly the best in the English language. The recognition of Butler's "sterling genius" again shows Hazlitt's wide appreciation of the types of literature, the artificial as well as the natural. He realized and accepted that "Hudibras" "is a satire . . . not . . . dramatic, or narrative [literature]" and hence it is not to be considered in terms of what it is not. The characters of the poem he felt to have little real value in themselves as Butler's satire obviously concerns "not . . . characters but topics" (VI, 65), a view acknowledged and echoed by a well-known modern critic of neo-classic satire.[8] To have centered his satire on characters as Cervantes did in Don Quixote or Hogarth in his comic paintings, Butler would have needed "a considerable degree of sympathy", a quality he does not reveal. Normally a charge of lack of sympathy is a severe censure on an artist by Hazlitt but hereit takes the form of understanding the aims and methods of Butler. He was writing the artificial poetry of wit. Hence he did not need the sympathetic power he would have required were he to write dramatically or narratively. Besides, Butler, in Hazlitt's estimation, did not have a sympathetic imagination to begin with and he was wise to write in a form that he could be successful in rather than attempting a kind in which he surely would have failed (VI, 65).

Hazlitt preferred the Tatler to the Spectator because the former contained "only half the number of volumes" of the Spectator and yet "at least an equal quantity of sterling wit and sense" (IV, 8). The Tatler's effects of evocative transport and metamorphosis is more valuable to Hazlitt than the Spectator's "greater gravity". In short, "systems and opinions change, but nature is always true" (IV, 9).

It is in keeping with his feelings on these two great papers that Hazlitt writes of Washington Irving: his "acquaintance with English literature begins . . . with the Spectator, Tom Brown's works and the wits of Queen Anne" (XI, 183). There seems to be an alignment, though it may be unconscious on Hazlitt's part, between Irving and the Spectator so that one can almost surmise what Hazlitt will say of Irving following his comment above. After the first essay of the Sketch-book Hazlitt finds that Irving's "sterling ore of wit or feeling is gradually spun thinner and thinner, till it fades to the shadow of a shade" (XI, 183-4). The vein, which seemed to hold so much promise, runs out rather quickly. Irving presents the reader with "American copies of our British Essayists and Novelists"; his style and themes are based on British models to such an extent that his "writings are literary anachronisms". Hazlitt does indicate that the "sterling ore" in Irving probably would

be more rewarding if that writer had not fallen for "the natural and pardonable error . . . of European popularity" (XI, 184).

Popularity was one of the things which Hazlitt felt plagued Byron. An egotist, Byron "exists not by sympathy, but by antipathy" (XI, 69). Yet his popular following was quite substantial. It did not include Hazlitt, who wrote with harsh conviction of the poet and his work. In The Spirit of the Age Hazlitt had written of Byron before he learned of the poet's death. Hazlitt's honesty would not allow him to retract what he had said. Instead he let posterity be the judge. "Death cancels every thing but truth; and strips a man of every thing but genius and virtue . . . Death is the great assayer of the sterling ore of talent" (XI, 78). The popular following which attended Byron in life foolishly argued about his proper burial place. Hazlitt rather acidly concluded, "The man is nothing without the pageant." In reality, Byron's "monument is to be found in his works" (XI, 78). To Hazlitt that monument contained little that was sterling.

Even when Hazlitt disagreed with a writer's ideas, he could still admire the manner in which those ideas were portrayed. Thus he felt that "the most perfect prose-style" (XII, 10) belonged to Burke, a writer whose ideas he did not agree with. ("To understand an adversary is some

praise: to admire him is more. I thought I did both: I knew I did one" (XII, 228).) Whereas poetry must be all gold, or at least aim at being so, prose, especially that which deals with the abstract, cannot aim at the same purity. The "prose-writer . . . always mingles clay with his gold, and often separates truth from mere pleasure. He can only arrive at the last through the first" (XII, 11). That is, we admire the extent to which an author's style expresses the abstract through the concrete so that they "coalesce to [a] practical purpose" (XII, 11). That is what Burke does and this is what Hazlitt attempts to practise in his criticism. Hazlitt uses the richest stone of all in speaking of Burke's style. "It has the solidity, and sparkling effect of the diamond: all other fine writing is like French paste or Bristol-stones in the comparison" (XII, 10).

iii. Furnace

The next metaphor in the smelting process is that of smelting itself. Hazlitt uses the metaphor to describe Milton's power of imagination, a power already mentioned in the foregoing pages. "Milton has borrowed more than any other writer, and exhausted every source of imitation, sacred or profane; yet he is perfectly distinct from every other writer" (V, 58). Why? Because the "fervour of his

imagination melts down and renders malleable, as in a furnace, the most contradictory materials" (V, 58). This he does so effectively because his "learning has the effect of intuition". He did not, however, "write from casual impulse, but after a severe examination of his own strength, and with a resolution to leave nothing undone which it was in his power to do. He always labours, and almost always succeeds. He strives hard . . ." but still manages to give that intuitive effect (v, 58-9).[9] Milton's imagination was not limited to melting but continues into the next metaphor of the process, the shaping of the material. This point is important because for the two following writers Hazlitt uses the furnace as the cut-off point, as it were.

Marlowe and Byron are both discussed in terms of the metaphor, with subtle shades of difference between the two. The furnace and its flames are shown in the act of consuming, implying destruction, in contrast to Milton's furnace, which produces a metal capable of malleability, implying construction or production.

Marlowe's "thoughts burn within him like a furnace with bickering flames; or throwing out black smoke and mists, that hide the dawn of genius, or like a poisonous mineral, corrode the heart" (VI, 202). Faustus is Marlowe's "greatest work", but it concerns so totally the evil

gratification of Faustus's desire for all knowledge that Hazlitt feels there is practically no goodness to act as a balance. Indeed, imbalance is so noticeable that "the finest trait of the whole play . . . is the interest taken by the two scholars in the fate of their master, and their unavailing attempts to dissuade him from his relentless career" (VI, 206). Thus the furnace is depicted in terms of smouldering - a slow destructive fire belching black smoke which covers any hopeful sign of relief. The phrase "the dawn of genius" implies Hazlitt's feeling that Marlowe's stature ("a name that stands high") was an undeserved one because the proof of genius is simply never there. At best it is a furnace smelting "a poisonous mineral, corrod-[ing] the heart". Hazlitt seems to sense in Marlowe's writings a lack of sympathy or objectivity on the part of the author. "There is a lust of power in his writings, a hunger and thirst after unrighteousness, a glow of the imagination, unhallowed by any thing but its own energies" (VI, 202). Marlowe's self-centeredness allows him to see only the dark elements in life though, as in Faustus, these can be portrayed with flashes of real artistry.

If Faustus had its saving points, in the address to Helen and in the "interest" of the two scholars, Lusts' Dominion does not fare so well.

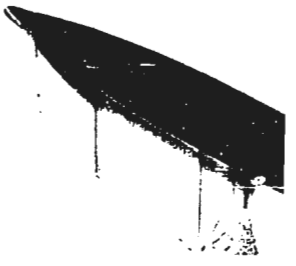
> There is a good deal of the same intense passion, the same recklessness of purpose, the same smouldering fire within: but there is not any of the same relief to the mind in the lofty imaginative nature of the subject; and the continual repetition of plain practical villainy and undigested horrors disgusts the sense, and blunts the interest. The mind is hardened into obduracy, not melted into sympathy, by such bare-faced and barbarous cruelty (VI, 207).

This reaction of disgust is now re-enforced, for it is obvious that what offends Hazlitt is what he feels to be Marlowe's continual obsession with evil. He finds he cannot be "melted" by the play, only "hardened". His comment on Crabbe's poetry applies here - namely, that "disagreeable matters of fact . . . [may have] a powerful effect on the senses, [but] we soon shake them off in fancy" (XIX, 60). What offends too is "the unabated vigour" with which "the business of the plot is carried on in much the same revolting manner" as in Titus Andronicus, which Hazlitt, disagreeing with Schlegel, would attribute, "at least from internal evidence", to Marlowe rather than to Shakespeare (VI, 207-8).[10] ("Hazlitt had no doubt of Marlowe's authorship", says Bakeless and, while that appears to be accurate, it is interesting to compare Hazlitt's and Bakeless's comments on the play. Both agree on the theme - the love of regal power; Hazlitt identifies it with the "general style of writing" of Marlowe while Bakeless points out that "certain passages sound very much like authentic

Marlowe", that the play "was written when Marlowe was still much imitated"; both quote "typical" Marlowe lines; both comment on the "villainy" of Eleazar; and both note the similarity of Eleazar to Aaron in Titus Andronicus. We note too that, while Bakeless does not assign Titus to either Marlowe or Shakespeare, he does say, "Evidence of Marlowe's influence is abundant . . ." The only point on which they differ completely is a consideration of the chronological and bibliographical evidence. The latter is proof that Marlowe did not write Lusts' Dominion, says Bakeless. Hazlitt never considered such evidence - he was concerned with the "general style" or tone of the play. For that reason, the use of the furnace metaphor is both appropriate and valid.)[11]

The Rich Jew of Malta "has not the same fierce glow of passion or expression" (VI, 209). A reliance on horror "to rouse the feelings of the audience" are its chief marks. Hazlitt's feeling about this play is so strong that he speaks of it indirectly: "It is perhaps hardly fair to compare the Jew of Malta with the Merchant of Venice; for it is evident, that Shakespear's genius shews to as much advantage in knowledge of character, in variety and stage-effect, as it does in point of general humanity" (VI, 209-10).

As a kind of summation of Marlowe Hazlitt contrasts him with Heywood. "As Marlowe's imagination glows like a furnace, Heywood's is a gentle, lambent flame that purifies



without consuming" (VI, 211-2). Marlowe's imagination is self-centered and also self-destructive. No longer a furnace in a smelter, it has become the furnace of the garbage dump or the slag heap, producing only great belches of black corrosive smoke. (Were he writing today Hazlitt would probably have used a pollution metaphor with great effect.) Heywood, on the other hand, runs a well-controlled furnace, as it were - well-controlled in the sense of doing a formative task without swirls of smoke and flames of destruction. He has the sympathetic sense Hazlitt finds lacking in Marlowe and the style to go with it. And this because he is more Nature-centered than self-centered. His imagination beholds "the reality of things" rather than "filmy abstractions" (VI, 212-3), even if the reality he depicts concerns "the commonest circumstances of every-day life" (VI, 212). He does write "carelessly" and hence his plots "have little . . . to recommend them"; but he succeeds much more than Marlowe because he "trusts to Nature . . . for gaining the favour of the audience" (VI, 214).

When Hazlitt writes of Byron, the furnace metaphor used is that of Marlowe rather than that of Heywood. Like Marlowe, Byron is self-centered, albeit with a negative self-centeredness, for he "exists not by sympathy, but by antipathy": "He scorns all things, even himself. Nature

must come to him . . . - he does not go to her" (XI, 69). With this view, Hazlitt's use of the furnace is consistent:

> Instead of taking his impressions from without, in entire and almost unimpaired masses, he moulds them according to his own temperament, and heats the materials of his imagination in the furnace of his passions. - Lord Byron's verse glows like a flame, consuming every thing in its way . . . (XI, 69).

The similarity to Marlowe is obvious, though there appears to be a difference. Marlowe's fire was smouldering with black smoke hiding "the dawn of genius". Byron's however, appears as a clear flame and there seems to be an acknowledgement of his imaginative powers. Nevertheless, both Marlowe and Bryon use their materials to suit their own temperament. The role of Nature is replaced by that of their egos.

It was remarked earlier that Hazlitt would not withdraw his remarks on Byron when he learned of the latter's death. But he does admit that the "strain" of his criticism in The Spirit of the Age was "of somewhat peevish invective . . . intended to meet his eye, not in insult his memory" (XI, 77-8). Yet Hazlitt feels that truth and honesty will not allow him "to take up our leaden shafts and try to melt them into 'tears of sensibility'" (XI, 78). The use of the smelter here seems very well suited, as applied by Hazlitt to his own words. The beginning of the essay in

The Spirit saw Byron's furnace consuming everything, while it ends with Hazlitt refusing to melt his criticism for Byron or for posterity. "Death is the great assayer . . ." (XI, 78). For Hazlitt the concern ended with his own words, not Byron's death - "After I have once written on a subject, it goes out of my mind: my feelings about it have been melted down into words, and them I forget" (VIII, 7) - a line Hazlitt used in another context but which applies equally well to his comments on Byron.

There is an instance when Hazlitt uses the furnace metaphor to illustrate a writer's failure to accomplish what he had intended. That writer is Landor who in his "Ninth Conversation" intended to write of "modern wit, low life, and fashionable manners", but failed because the reader is unable to distinguish truth from fiction. The Conversation needs "to be melted down into common parlance, before one can be sure of distinguishing the gold from the brass" (XIX, 107-8). As a contrast one can look to Burke whose purpose was one of "ideas" expressed "in the display of power" "to produce the strongest impression on his reader" (VII, 309). In Hazlitt's estimation Burke succeeded magnificently.

> He did not produce a splendid effect by setting fire to the light vapours that float in the regions of fancy, as the chemists make fine colours with phosphorus, but by the eagerness of his blows struck fire from the flint, and melted the hardest substances in the furnace of his imagination (VII, 310).

Hazlitt saw Burke's style as succeeding where Johnson's failed. The latter smacked too much of the ancients who kept their "ideas" and "form or vehicle" too separated to allow them "to unite cordially . . . or be melted down in the imagination" (VII, 312). Gray's poetry was somewhat alike too in its "borrowed and mechanical" sublimity, whereas Collins had moments of "true inspiration" when his imaginative power "heats and melts objects . . . as in a furnace (IX, 240).

If Johnson and Gray tended to the artificial forms of the ancients, the Lake School proceeded quite differently.

> Their poetry, in the extreme to which it professedly tended, and was in effect carried, levels all distinctions of nature and society . . . it breaks in pieces the golden images of poetry, and defaces its armorial bearings, to melt them down in the mould of common humanity or of its own upstart self-sufficiency (V, 163).

Egotism, not Nature, was the starting point of a Lake poet and hence all things are of a like level: "He tolerates only what he himself creates; he sympathizes only with what can enter into no competition with him." In "the extreme" no ore is mined and then smelted; instead, what had already been formed by nature was taken and melted down again to fit the perverted shapes of egotism. So complete was this reversal of the natural that a "thorough adept in this school of poetry . . . does not even like to share his

reputation with his subject" (V, 163). This egotism, this illicit desire for power, this "upstart self-sufficiency" is what disturbed Hazlitt most of all because it was another form of the abstract. True poetry and true greatness rely on sympathy, a going out of oneself, "negative capability" as Keats was to develop and term Hazlitt's concept.[12] The sympathy of the Lake School is not a real sympathy at all because it is an introverted view of nature.

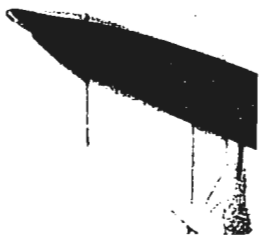
Hazlitt also applies the furnace metaphor to the dramatic character Othello. After his deception by Iago, Othello's spirit is "like fire inclosed in a furnace" (XII, 344). Throughout the play his "splendour is that of genius darting out its forked flame on whatever comes in its way, and kindling and melting it in the furnace of affection, whether it be flax or iron . . . moulding nature to its own purposes" (XII, 343).

Like the sea in the water-cycle, the furnace is, in some ways the most interesting metaphor in the smelting process. Basically, it is used to depict and contrast production and destruction. There are writers who melt the ore of nature to produce works of art, of nature really; there are others who use nature to depict their personal feelings. Milton, Burke, and to a lesser extent Heywood and Collins are examples of those who use their furnaces,

to shape natural materials. Marlowe and Byron are the outstanding examples of consuming furnaces. These examples may concern subject-matter (Milton, Marlowe, Heywood, Byron) and/or style (Burke, Collins, Milton); they may have a full-time (Milton, Marlowe, Byron, Burke) or a part-time (Collins) reference to the furnace. Even the full-time furnaces do not produce a "heat . . . in all cases . . . equally intense" (XII, 355), a characteristic particularly applicable to Othello where the image of "genius darting" (XII, 343) suggests a fluctuating intensity.

Viewed as a major phase in the smelting metaphor, the furnace is not, in general, seen in commendatory terms. For Hazlitt the greatest literature was the closest to nature; but the furnace image implies a breaking down, a changing of the natural ore in some way, whether slight or radical. Even Milton, the poet whose furnace best succeeds, is not conceived in terms of pure nature. He "borrowed" from all sources, he "labours . . . strives hard", he is a poet of "learning" (V, 58-9) - all qualities that Hazlitt does not ordinarily assign to those he considers to be writers of nature.

The use of the metaphor for the character Othello is likewise not to be seen without caution for Hazlitt was speaking of Othello as a tragic figure - in a sense, a



perverter of nature. That is what makes him tragic.[13] The metaphor applied to Othello thus deserves special attention for, in a very real way, it serves as a summation of all the 'furnaces', but particularly those of Marlowe and Byron. Its complexity becomes quickly apparent.

Othello has "splendour" connoting beauty, glory etc.; a "splendour . . . of genius" - an intelligent, creative, talented character. To this point everything appears natural, Othello having the power to be a man of nature - great promise. But now the metaphor changes: "genius darting out its forked flame" with its triple allusion to Jupiter-Zeus (the thunder-bolt flashing out of the heavens), to the fiery dragon of mythology, and, more importantly, to Satan the snake with its connotation of a fall from greatness, from temptation to sin, from innocence to experience in the worst sense. This latter allusion is confirmed by the phrases "flame on whatever gets in its way" (egotism, introversion, not natural) and "kindling and melting it in the furnace of affection" (a hell-image shaping, destroying, perverting through the deception of feigned affection). The "flax or iron" phrase serves as an indication of the determination as well as the strength, the power of the genius at work. And all is reconfirmed in "moulding nature to its own purposes" (XII, 343), a "denunciation" by Hazlitt of those who wrote "about themselves

. . . [who] express personal moods and feelings without finding for them . . . an objective correlative".[14] This is not the metaphor of the Shelley genius-hero wrestling flame from the tyrant in order to be truly and imaginatively free; rather it is the satanic figure seeking personal power, revenge for its fall from the splendour of nature to the hell of perversion. Nevertheless, this is part of reality and, in Romantic terms, implied for Shakespeare the supreme artistry of depicting the 'necessary fall' of Othello from nature to perversion, from joy to disaster in all its strength. It appears to be in this sense that one must also view the furnace as applied to Milton, that is from fall to apocalypse, from separation to a new union. It is appropriate as a summary when one considers the many fire images used by Byron (a kind of tragic artist known particularly for his "intensity" [XI, 72]) as well as the subject-matter and its treatment in Faustus by Marlowe and in Paradise Lost, Paradise Regained, and Samson Agonistes by Milton. And, of course, it is a most powerful condemnation of the poetic practice of Marlowe and Byron, who are not dramatic characters (the created) but writers (the creators).

iv. Foundry

The lines which separate various aspects of a metaphor are often difficult to perceive. This is

particularly true of the foundry metaphor which has the aspects of casting, moulding, and stamping, used separately at times and jointly at other times. As well, each is seen with varying degrees of success in its formative sense. Perhaps Hazlitt's rare application of the metaphor in a political sense can serve as a vivid as well as ironic contrast between formation by nature and formation in some mechanical manner. He speaks of William Pitt's relationship to his father Lord Chatham - the latter's "rank, fame, political connexions, and parental ambition, were [Pitt's] mould: he was cast, rather than grew" (VII, 327).

In the introductory lecture on the Elizabethan age Hazlitt attempted "to give a general sketch of these causes [of dramatic excellence], and of the manner in which they operated to mould and stamp the poetry of the country at [that] period . . ." (VI, 181). Briefly, these causes he saw as the Reformation, the access to the ancients, the discovery of the Americas, the use of old Chronicles and native tradition, the spirit of chivalry, hard labor with few holidays, and a general affinity with nature. Hazlitt concludes that "what gave a unity and common direction to all these causes, was the natural genius of the country, which was strong in these writers in proportion to their strength" (VI, 191). Thus, the variety of causes handled

by a variety in the genius of the writers gave a natural unity to those causes; that is there was a unity, in general, of everything under nature but preserving the diversity within nature. This is, in summary, the reason why the Elizabethan dramatists are so interesting.

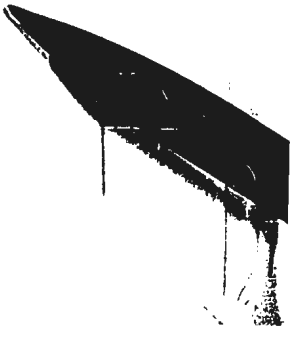
Hazlitt goes on to say that Englishmen are "slow" thinkers, and "therefore impressions do not work . . . till they act in masses"; feelings are not expressed in a "forward" manner so that "they do not come from us till they force their way in the most impetuous eloquence" (VI, 191).

> We pay too little attention to form and method, leave our works in an unfinished state, but still the materials we work in are solid and of nature's mint; we do not deal in counterfeits (VI, 191-2).

In trying to characterize Elizabethan literature Hazlitt says:

> Our literature, in a word, is Gothic and grotesque; unequal and irregular; not cast in a previous mould, nor of one uniform texture, but of great weight in the whole, and of incomparable value in the best parts (VI, 192).

That is, the Elizabethans, in general, were writers who followed nature and whatever faults their writings had, it can claim superiority when compared with the "second-hand imitations of others". The Elizabethans were like the master painters of old who "looked at nature with a feeling of passion, with an eye to expression; and this it was that



. . . moulded them into truth and beauty . . ." (X, 111).

In a union of different metaphors Hazlitt points out: "The springs of pure feeling will rise and fill the moulds of fancy that are fit to receive it" (VIII, 41). The artist must always be willing to let nature 'mould' him if greatness is to be his. There are those however who disagree, "who think that not to copy nature, is the rule for attaining perfection" (VIII, 170). That view was anathema to Hazlitt - "This is not the true ideal". Rather than "fill the moulds of imagination" it "deface[s] and injure[s] them" (VIII, 170). The moulds of the imagination, in order to accommodate nature as they ought, should be marked by the same plurality that one sees in nature itself.

This difference in openness to the plurality of nature is what divides, in Hazlitt's view, the French mind from that of the English. For the French imagination requires that everything be "cast in [an] obvious, common-place mould"; otherwise the material must be "barbarous" (X, 192). This narrowness of mind is reflected in a narrowness of expression, an artificiality of style which is not difficult to learn since "every sentence is to be cast in the same mould" (VII, 311). This is the "absurdity of reducing expression to a preconceived system"; a method unlike nature's which "does not go to work or cast things in a regular mould" (VIII, 40).[15]

To see Molière's comedies acted as they should be is to see the actors and actresses enter "into [their] spirit . . . as if they had been cast in a dramatic mould . . ." (XVIII, 379-80). In English acting Kemble had been the greatest of actors in the classic style. Indeed, he had been so great that when he retired there was "no one to fill his place on the stage. The mould is broken in which he was cast" (XVIII, 225). Kean, on the other hand, was not "cast in the antique mould of the high Roman fashion" - his acting ability was "genius alone" (XVIII, 348). The French influence was felt too in eighteenth-century portrait-painting where, in sharp contrast to the old 'nature' masters, "each face was cast in a regular and preconceived mould" (XII, 6).

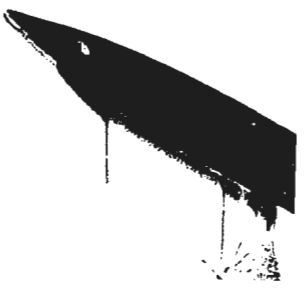
Another deviation from nature, another form of abstraction Hazlitt saw in the Lake School whose "minds are cast in a peculiar mould . . ." (XII, 102), the mould of egotism. In summary, Hazlitt saw in historical perspective a measuring of performance in relation to the Elizabethans, not because art could not be as great again but because it had not been so. Artists, Hazlitt felt, degenerate and dwindle in significance "in proportion as they depart . . . from nature, or the great masters who had copied her, to mould their works on academic rules, and the phantoms of abstract perfection" (XVIII, 120). It was unfortunate but

true that English writing had degenerated since the literature of the Elizabethan era.

One is not surprised that it is Shakespeare of all English writers who is seen in the best sense of the metaphor. He, along with Homer, is the true poet of nature and "nature's mint . . . [does] not deal in counterfeits".

> The poet of nature . . . sympathises with whatever is beautiful, and grand, and impassioned in nature . . . [He] by the truth, and depth, and harmony of his mind, may be said to hold communion with the very soul of nature; to be identified with and to foreknow and to record the feelings of all men at all times and places, as they are liable to the same impressions; and to exert the same power over the minds of his readers, that nature does. He sees things in their eternal beauty, for he sees them as they are; he feels them in their universal interest, for he feels them as they affect the first principles of his and our common nature. Such was Homer, such was Shakespeare, whose works will last as long as nature, because they are a copy of the indestructible forms and everlasting impulses of nature . . . stamped upon the senses by the hand of their maker. The power of the imagination in them, is the representative power of all nature. It has its centre in the human soul, and makes the circuit of the universe (V, 69-70).

There are others who look to nature but none can compare with Shakespeare. The power that the Lake School had displayed was an egotism levelling all; Shakespeare's and Homer's power is the power of nature itself. The ego is negated completely thus allowing the strength of the mind to play its real role, that of alliance with nature's multiplicity.



Even Milton did not have the universality of nature that Shakespeare had. The latter was a Proteus, an exception. Milton had more of the typical genius than any one else. In his essay "On the Qualifications Necessary to Success in Life" Hazlitt remarked that man does things best when the undertaking matches one's faculties. "To do any one thing best, there should be an exclusiveness, a concentration, a bigotry, a blindness of attachment to that one object" rather than a wide and diffuse mind which "will not uniformly produce the most beneficial results" (XII, 197). Thus, for the normal mind, "A part is greater than the whole" simply because "the mind of man . . . cannot embrace the whole, but only a part." A good example, indeed the greatest example, is "Milton's mind" as fully seen in Paradise Lost because there his mind "was just big enough to fill that mighty mould" of the Divine - "the shrine contained the God-head" (XII, 197). If one were to exceed such a powerful performance, it had to be in the sense of production from universality itself - nature. That was the genius of Shakespeare, a genius that was "greater than any thing he has done" because his plays were but parts of the whole. Milton wrote an epic that subjected all existence to an "exclusiveness [that] was the consequence of religious belief rather than of feeling".[16] Shakespeare, because his genius can be equated with the totality and plurality of nature,

did not, indeed could not, without degenerating into a lesser form of genius.

No wonder Hazlitt can say of Shakespeare that he cared nought for "Posthumous Fame" which

> like other passions, requires an exclusive and exaggerated admiration of its object, and attaches more consequence to literary attainments and pursuits than they really possess. Shakspeare had looked too much abroad into the world, and his views of things were of too universal and comprehensive a cast, not to have taught him to estimate the importance of posthumous fame according to its true value and relative proportions (IV, 24).

Throughout all these remarks, Hazlitt is, in a sense, faced with the problem of language. In the normal sense of the words involved, he wishes to contrast the limits of casting and moulding with the unlimited elements of nature. From one point of view nature does no casting, no moulding. But the implications of a chaotic nature did not conform to Hazlitt's view of the plurality in nature. Nature does have a unity but it is one of universal diversity. The comprehension of such a unity is possible only when one has a corresponding genius, the genius of Shakespeare. When one lacks that genius, success is measured according to a partial affinity with nature. It is in this that Milton succeeds because his genius fully considered the greatest aspect or part of the whole - God. Milton's "poetry is not cast in

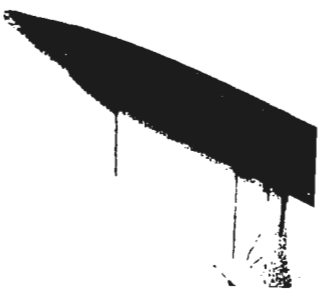
any . . . narrow, common-place mould; it is not so barren of resources" (V, 60).

This affinity with nature is seen in some of the ballads of Burns, like "Mary Morison" and "Jessy". But there is "a still more original cast of thought, a more romantic imagery . . . a closer intimacy with nature, a firmer reliance on it" in the old Scotch ballads (V, 140). The old English ballads too are "adventurous and romantic" but the Scottish seriousness, the tone of the tragic, is replaced by "a gayer and more lively turn" (V, 143).

No where is the difference between the writer who has an affinity with nature and the writer who does not drawn so clearly as between Scott and Byron.

> [Scott] casts his descriptions in the mould of nature, ever-varying, never tiresome, always interesting and always instructive, instead of casting them constantly in the mould of his own individual impressions. He gives us man as he is, or as he was, in almost every variety of situation, action, and feeling. Lord Byron makes man after his own image, woman after his own heart; . . . he gives us the misanthrope and the voluptuary by turns; and with these two characters, burning and melting in their own fires, he makes out everlasting centos of himself (XI, 71).

Thus Hazlitt found that the "characters and situations [of Manfred] were of a romantic and poetical cast, mere creatures of the imagination . . ." (XIX, 44). The poem lacked that negation of self which is always the mark of greatness.



Hazlitt's moral sense is satisfied in Scott ("always instructive") whereas in Byron he found little or nothing to be pleased by.

Nor was he pleased with the metaphysical poets. They had "great talents . . . richness of thought, and depth of feeling; but they chose to hide them . . . under a false shew of learning and unmeaning subtlety". They refused to allow nature to display her spontaneity; instead they man-handled her "till they had fitted [their subject] to the mould of their self-opinion and the previous fabrications of their own fancy . . . Their chief aim is to make you wonder at the writer, not to interest you in the subject . . ." (VI, 50-1). The metaphysical poets write with the wrong mould in mind. "A great mind is one that moulds the minds of others" (V, 155), an accomplishment best done through nature.

In constrasting Dekker and Webster, Hazlitt says the former "is more like Chaucer or Boccaccio; as Webster's mind appears to have been cast more in the mould of Shakespear's, as well naturally as from studious emulation" (VI, 240). This does not mean that Hazlitt saw Webster as a better writer than Chaucer or that Dekker and Chaucer were equals. In fact, Hazlitt is not making equations here, but expressing relative likes and dislikes. Chaucer's poetry, said Hazlitt, "reads like history. Everything has a

downright reality" (V, 20). In relation to Webster, Dekker's writing too gives the "historic picture". Webster's imagination is more active with "the simple, uncompounded elements of nature and passion". Simply put, Webster's imagination was greater than Dekker's, just as Shakespeare's was greater than Chaucer's. Yet Webster did not let his imagination align itself with nature as much as he could have. Instead he imitated Shakespeare, "both in general conception and individual expression". Hazlitt points out that if one is to imitate, Shakespeare is the best model. Yet, imitation, no matter how skillful, can never replace true originality (VI, 240).[17]

Near the end of the Elizabethan age, Hazlitt noted and lamented a growing tendency towards "the artificial diction and tinselled pomp of the next generation of poets . . ." Beaumont and Fletcher "laid the foundation" for "this misplaced and inordinate craving after striking effect and continual excitement" which, pushed to the extreme, left English poetry "the most vapid of all things . . ." Their fault, basically, was a turning from nature to "preconceived . . . standards". By "not leaving the moulds of poetic diction to be filled up by the overflowings of nature and passion", their actions were "inexcusable". There are "resplendent passages" but no resplendent works (VI, 250-1).

There are certain times when an author imitates in style and still manages to let his originality come through. Thus the sentence structures of Lamb's Elia essays "are cast in the mould of old authors . . . but his feelings and observations are genuine and original, taken from actual life, or from his own breast" (XI, 182). Thomson's fault, too, lay in his style "but the original genius of the poet, the pith and marrow of his imagination, the fine natural mould in which his feelings were bedded, were too much" to let an "affectation" of style interfere (V, 87).

The final step in the foundry metaphor is the placing of a mark or stamp on the product, indicating the degree of approval. Thus the Elizabethan writers are seen to bear "the same general stamp" (VI, 175) of originality and spontaneity of nature. Dryden was a writer of artificiality and his Odes bear the "same stamp" as his "Annus Mirabilis", "a tedious performance . . . in the worst style of . . . metaphysical poetry" (V, 81).

Just as a man's face has the years "stamped on his countenance . . . by the hand of nature" (VIII, 304) and "a great artist" captures that stamp "on the canvas" (VIII, 303), so too must a man's mind have genius before beginning to write: "The real ore of talents or learning must be stamped before it will pass current" (VIII, 210). Examples that Hazlitt gives of bearing "the stamp of nature" are

Collins (V, 114-5 - in contrast to Young), Goldsmith (VIII, 47; XVIII, 259), Milton (IV, 37, Kean in acting V, 180), and the Tatler (IV, 8 - in contrast to the Spectator). Davies and Crashaw bear a like stamp but it is one of ambition not nature (VI, 53).

III. Forge

As a subdivision of this chapter, it seems appropriate to mention another closely allied metaphor, namely that of the forge with its implications of fastening down or forced attachment. Along with the glassblower (XVII, 17) and the potter (IV, 137; VI, 191; XVII, 251; XVIII, 307), the blacksmith is also conceived in terms of shaping, as was the smelter.

Hazlitt provides us with a transition between the smelter and the forge with his comments on the difference between Godwin's and Scott's mode of writing.

> At last, we may claim this advantage for [Godwin], that the chains with which he rivets our attention are forged out of his own thoughts, link by link, blow for blow, with glowing enthusiasm: we see the genuine ore melted in the furnace of fervid feeling, and moulded into stately and ideal forms; and this is so far better than peeping into an old iron shop, or pilfering from a dealer in marine stores! (XI, 25).

For Hazlitt originality, even of the subjective kind, was superior to imitation, no matter what the subject. Hence

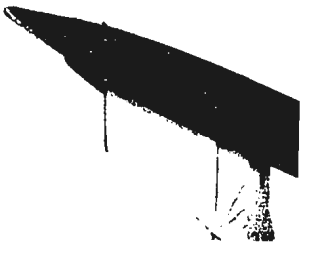
Godwin's 'abstractness' implies more genius, it is more rewarding intellectually to the reader than Scott's 'imitations' of nature. Still, the "monotomy" of extreme originality (Godwin's) is a mark of failure: "He who draws upon his own resources, easily comes to an end of his wealth" (XI, 25).

The first aspect of the forge itself is that of the chains which tie man down. Nature is the forger and the chains are those of existence; or, to put it another way, life is made up of the association of experience. Present feelings receive a richness from the associations which one recalls intuitively from the past: "the mind drops the intermediate links, and passes on rapidly and by stealth to the more striking effects of pleasure or pain which have naturally taken the strongest hold of it" (VIII, 35). Hazlitt speculates that "sounds, smells, and sometimes tastes" rather than 'sights' are "better for links in the chain of association" because they are longer lasting in the memory (VIII, 258). When an artist is stimulated through his imagination by the present, other links, "other strong feelings and ideas" (XVII, 223) are recalled so that "each object is a symbol of the affections and a link in the chain of our endless being" (VIII, 82-3).[18]

Shakespeare is pictured as nature's smith of poetry with his power and control of language. His words "are struck

out at a heat, on the spur of the occasion, and have all the truth and vividness" (V, 54). In words depicting the blacksmith's bellows, Hazlitt tells us that Shakespeare's "epithets and single phrases are like sparkles, thrown off from an imagination, fired by the whirling rapidity of its own motion" (V, 54-5). This is the intuitive imagination at its height. "His language is hieroglyphical. It translates thoughts into visible images". Tragedy uses words which "not only excite feelings, but . . . point to the why and wherefore . . . They are links in the chain of the universe, and the grappling-irons that bind us to it" (XII, 337). This power of feeling through words gets an example in Othello. Iago awaits viciously as Othello enters "crowned with his wrongs and raging for revenge. The whole depends upon the turn of a thought. A word, a look, blows the spark of jealousy into a flame; and the explosion is immediate and terrible as a volcano" (V, 52). Hazlitt points out that nearly all the dialogues of Shakespeare "afford examples of this dramatic fluctuation of passion".

Earlier in this chapter we noted Hazlitt's severity in his criticism of Marlowe. Yet he was clear-minded enough to recognize "the unabated vigour of [that] author's style" (VI, 208). Hazlitt chooses several examples of the style and says that they "seem struck out in the heat of a glowing fancy, and leave a track of golden fire behind them" (VI, 208).



Riveting can mean as well a means of making something or someone prisoner. In the Chaucer's "Tale of the Man of Law" Constance is condemned to death. Hazlitt remarks on Chaucer's selective powers in order to achieve just the right effect. Despite this selectiveness there is an overall unity. "The chain of his story is composed of a number of fine links, closely connected together, and rivetted by a single blow" (V, 21). Chaucer's "severe activity of mind" is thus able to produce the most profound effect on the reader. Speaking of Chaucer's descriptive ability in "The Knight's Tale", Hazlitt remarks:

> What a deal of terrible beauty . . .! The imagination of a poet brings such objects before us, as when we look at wild beasts in a menagerie; their claws are pared, their eyes glitter like harmless lightning; but we gaze at them with a pleasing awe, clothed in beauty, formidable in the sense of abstract power (V, 26).

One would almost think Hazlitt was speaking of Blake rather than Chaucer. In any case, the same feeling is present - the poet has chained and caged the reader just as surely as the beast is chained and caged. On the other hand, one can be made a "captive in the chains of suspense" by the musical language of Spenser, an effect not of power and strength tensed but one of "lulling the senses into a deep oblivion . . ." (V, 44).

Crabbe too "rivets attention" but, unlike the selectivity of Chaucer or the music of Spenser, he does so by his prolixity. Hazlitt remarks that he is so "fascinating" that readers are held like "prisoners in the condemned cell" (XIX, 51-3). And no wonder, for Crabbe "is a kind of Ordinary, not of Newgate, but of nature . . . He sets his own imagination in the stocks, and his Muse, like Malvolio, 'wears cruel garters'." He is like the superintendent "in a panopticon . . ." (V, 97).

What a difference of interest there is in Butler's "Hudibras"! "One thought is inserted into another; the links in the chain of reasoning are so closely rivetted that the attention seldom flags, but is kept alive (without any other assistance) by the mere force of writing" (VI, 67). Or, on a higher level, "the ligament . . . which links [the comic scenes of Henry IV] to humanity, is never broken" (VI, 33) because the reader not only is captured but "sympathise[s]" with the characters involved.

v. Conclusion

Each metaphor - alchemy, the vein, the ore, the furnace, the foundry, the forge - plays its proper role within the individual essays of Hazlitt's criticism. Together they form another one of those large, comprehensive metahpors which incorporate the various aspects of the work

without negating or minimizing those aspects. Yet, like the water cycle, the smelting metaphor does not represent a preconceived abstract system. Rather, it takes shape, one might almost say, accidentally or, as Hazlitt would have preferred, intuitively and naturally. Because it does arise thus the smelting metaphor remains open to an endless variety of further possible expressions of feeling and hence is another example of how Hazlitt's artistry works itself out in his criticism.

CONCLUSION

The number of other examples of metaphoric structures that one could educe from Hazlitt's criticism is quite extensive. Some of these underlying unities are as considerable as those treated in the preceding chapters. Hazlitt's use of clothing as a metaphor is one such example.[1] Other comprehensive metaphors are painting and anatomy while music, sculpture, vegetation, and insects serve as slighter frameworks.

Apart from the recognition of intuitive structures in Hazlitt's essays, the way one chooses to consider them adds naturally some degree of complexity. For example, one might delineate the metaphor of anatomy with its various particulars of head, limbs, muscles, blood, and so on. Or one could place anatomy in a larger structure of humanity where, besides anatomy, one could note birth, death, sex and sexuality (male, female, effeminacy, coquetry, etc.). Or, in an even larger view of earthly existence, one could place man in a position relative to water, soil, air, vegetation, and animality. In other words, the possibilities of various structures we have at our disposal appear to be as wide as nature herself. Hazlitt was quite right when he pointed out that truly felt and truly

expressed feeling was as self-justifying and as complex as nature: "the phenomena are infinite, obscure, and intricately inwoven together, so that it is only by being always alive to their tacit and varying influences, that we can hope to seize on the power that guides and binds them together" (XX, 373). That "power" for Hazlitt is feeling expressed through metaphoric "phenomena" so "inwoven" that their structuring or unification depends on intuition rather than on contrivance. The metaphoric structures we have seen indicate the success of Hazlitt's expression of his intuitive feelings.

It is not judicious, however, to attempt here an extraction and arrangement into units of all the metaphors that Hazlitt used. Only a concordance could have such scope, the justification of which would be open to serious question. Hazlitt's criticism proceeds by feeling and the only place one is likely to experience that feeling is in the criticism itself. The more one becomes concerned with listing concepts or metaphors, or anything else for that matter, the more one is in danger of losing the real Hazlitt. The metaphoric structures we have dealt with, water and smelting, suffice as evidence that Hazlitt's belief that truly expressed feeling was self-sufficient was correct.

This thesis, then, has had a twofold purpose. Firstly, it indicated that, since Hazlitt opposed theoretical systems being applied to art, the reader today must be conscious of the fallacy of evaluating Hazlitt's criticism from a theoretical point of view. His criticism is concrete, practical, applied, because he concerns himself with the experience of literature not with the formulation and application of abstract rules. Hazlitt writes of writers and their works in a language that is as expressive, as solid and definite, as the art he handles. He proceeds from feeling, from the heart.

Secondly, this thesis has demonstrated that in his use of metaphor Hazlitt found a means, self-justifying and self-structuring by nature, of truly expressing his feelings. Since he could not measure or determine a priori his own feeling, he had to have faith that his expression would be equal to the reaction he felt in his heart. By showing some examples of the inherent metaphoric structures which hold the criticism together we have, in a sense, 'proven' that Hazlitt's feelings were indeed deep and comprehensive, and further that his expression of his feelings conformed to his inner impressions.

In short, we have shown that in his literary criticism William Hazlitt achieved the highest form one can achieve in response to an experience with art, namely

art itself. With this in mind our twofold purpose has become one: to make the reader aware that Hazlitt is an artist whose essays provide simultaneously an aesthetical and a critical experience of the highest order.

NOTES

CHAPTER I

HAZLITT'S METHOD OF FEELING

[1]Rene Wellek, A History of Modern Criticism, 1750-1950, Vol. II: The Romantic Age (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), p. 195.

[2]The impressionists were, of course, stressing the experience of art too and in many ways they are the high point at which experience was opposed to intellectual reflection. Nevertheless, though the emphasis may vary according to writer and age, the impressionists were but part of a long historical body of writers who have emphasized experience rather than theory.

[3]Alfred North Whitehead, quoted in E.D. Hirsch, Jr., Validity in Interpretation (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), p. x.

[4]Susan Sontag, Against Interpretation and Other Essays (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1967); Hirsch.

[5]Hirsch, p. x.

[6]Hirsch, p. x.

[7]Hirsch, pp. x-xi.

[8]Sontag, p. 5.

[9]Sontag, p. 21.

[10]Sontag, pp. 21, 13.

[11]Sontag, pp. 12, 13.

[12]Northrop Frye, one of the few modern literary critics that Sontag refers positively to, aptly says: "the identity of content and form is the axiom of all sound criticism". Fearful Symmetry. A Study of William Blake (Princeton University Press, 1947), p. 10.

[13]Sontag, pp. 13-4.

[14]Sontag, p. 15.

[15]Sontag, pp. 17, 22.

[16]Sontag, p. 5.

[17]Sontag, p. 27.

[18]Sontag, The Benefactor (New York: Farrar, Straus and Company, 1963), p. 109.

[19]Sontag, Against Interpretation, p. 7.

[20]Roy Park, Hazlitt and the Spirit of the Age (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 1.

[21]Park, p. 2.

[22]Sontag, p. 10.

[23]"By interpretation, I mean here a conscious act of the mind which illustrates a certain code, certain "rules" of interpretation." Sontag, p. 5. Her definition serves as a perfect summation of all that Hazlitt opposed in the practice of literary criticism.

[24]Sontag, p. 6.

[25]Sontag, p. 14.

[26]Sontag, pp. 12, 13.

[27]Park, pp. 164, 165.

[28]W.P. Albrecht, Hazlitt and the Creative Imagination (Lawrence: The University of Kansas Press, 1965). p. 163.

[29]"In developing his view of the non-abstract nature of poetry Hazlitt laid particular stress on three elements: the poet's openness to the whole of human experience; his 'truth to nature,' or fidelity to the infinite particularity and complexity of that experience; and the poetic sensitivity which alone could make these possible." Park, pp. 161-2. The absence of sensitivity (feeling) means indeed no poetry while the absence of the first two elements severely restricts the expression of the feeling.

[30]J.B. Priestley, William Hazlitt in Writer's and Their Works, No. 122 (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1960), p. 7.

[31]George Watson, The Literary Critics (London: Penguin Books, 1964), p. 137.

[32]Too numerous to list in a footnote most of the important studies on Hazlitt will be found in the bibliography at the end of the thesis.

[33]Wellek, p. 196.

[34]Stephen A. Larrabee, "Hazlitt's Criticism and Greek Sculpture", JHI, II (Jan. 1941), 77-94.

[35]Park, p. 144.

[36]Park, p. 213.

[37]Park, p. 216.

[38]Pierre Danchin, Francis Thompson: La Vie Et L'Œuvre d'un Poete (Paris: A. -G. Nizet, 1959), p. 424.

[39]Park, pp. 109, 112.

[40]Cf. Johnson, Rasselas, Ch. X (1759) and "Preface to Shakespeare" (1765) and Reynolds for the neo-classic view of the ideal which "received no distinguished full-scale refutation until Hazlitt placed the ideal not in abstraction from natural particulars but in the intensification of their natural forms and the revelation of their individuality". Jean H. Hagstrum, The Sister Arts, The Tradition of Literary Pictorialism and English Poetry from Dryden to Gray (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 143.

[41]Thornton Wilder, The Bridge of San Luis Rey (New York: Time Incorporated, 1963), p. 15.

[42]"The phenomena are infinite, obscure, and intricately inwoven together, so that it is only by being always alive to their tacit and varying influences, that we can hope to seize on the power that guides and binds them together" (XX, 373).

[43]Sontag, pp. 17-8.

[44]""Stylization" is what is present in a work of art precisely when an artist does make the by no means inevitable distinction between matter and manner, theme and form." Sontag, p. 19.

[45]Hazlitt's prime example of identity between form and content is Burke. See: VII, 309ff.; XII, 10ff. Indeed, if one separates content from form one finds the former practically worthless. But Burke's "words are the most like things" (VII, 309).

[46]Johnson is an example of those who write in this way. Thus, not surprisingly, Hazlitt finds little to praise in Johnson's 'content' and equally little in his 'style'. Johnson's style was a "mask on the face of nature" (VII, 310).

CHAPTER II

THE WATER CYCLE

[1]"[The] ideal! This is the only true ideal - the heavenly tints of Fancy reflected in the bubbles that float upon the spring-tide of human life" (XII, 223).

[2]For treatment of Hazlitt's pluralism see: Elisabeth Schneider, The Aesthetics of William Hazlitt, 2nd ed. (New York: Octagon Books, 1969), pp. 36-42.

[3]The young mind is more apt to make discoveries whether concrete or abstract (science). This is because it has not yet become too set in its ways by prejudice and dogma. The mind may take any direction "as a drop of water hesitates at first what direction it shall take, but afterwards follows its own course" (XII, 306-7).

[4]G.D. Klingopulos remarks that Hazlitt lacked "a disciplined sense of history, and of the complexity of the relation between literature and society". "Hazlitt as Critic", Essays in Criticism, VI (Oct. 1956), 393. This is certainly true in such metaphoric statements as that on the Italians. Nevertheless, Hazlitt, aided no doubt by his "comparative . . . immun[ity] to the romantic habit of self-projection", does reflect the increasing emphasis on the need for an historical perspective of literature, an emphasis which looked both back to Hurd, the Wartons, and others in the eighteenth century and ahead to continued growth throughout the nineteenth century.

[5]Nature for Hazlitt means everthing that is, the world around man, man himself, and the world of his mind. It "is the inexhaustible unknown, to be understood and experienced as far as man is capable of doing so." Schneider, p. 45.

[6]Schneider, pp. 67-8.

[7]Cf. "On Posthumous Fame . . .", IV, 21-25; "On the Living Poets", V, 143 ff.; "Mr. Wordsworth", XI, 86.

[8]Cf. "Why the Arts are not Progressive?", IV, 160ff., XVIII, 5ff.; "Fine Arts. Whether They are Promoted by Academies and Public Institutions", XVIII, 37ff.

[9]It really does not matter that Hazlitt was speaking mistakenly as if Chaucer were the author of "The Flower and the Leaf". What Hazlitt is doing is giving an example to fit the idea, not vice versa. His choice of, and comments on, various other Chaucer poems clearly indicate this.

[10]Cf. Payson G. Gates, "Bacon, Keats, and Hazlitt", South Atlantic Quarterly, XLVI (1947), 239-51. Gates relates, in a very readable account, his discovery through marginal notes that a copy of Bacon's Advancement of Learning in the Keats House in Hampstead belonged to Hazlitt, not Keats as the latter's friend Charles Dilke indicated. The marginal note that caught Gates' eye furnishes a good example of the distinction Hazlitt wished to make. The note reads: "when he [Bacon] goes from contemplation to what others have done to projecting himself into future science, he becomes quaint & conceipted [sic] instead of original. His solidity was in reflection, not in invention. He was in fact a greater reviewer than Mr. Jeffrey." I don't agree, though, with Gates (p. 335) that there is any real comparison here between Bacon's and Jeffrey's "critical faculties". Rather it seems a case of Hazlitt's seldom used as well as dry humor.

[11]Hazlitt uses a like metaphor of artificial structures in commenting on the narrowness of knowledge and experience of ". . . Coffee-House Politicians". Hazlitt said it was sad to see one of these politicians "waving his arm like a pump-handle in sign of constant change, and spouting out torrents of puddled politics from his mouth; dead to all interests but those of the state" (VIII, 191).

[12]Hazlitt, in an obvious crack at the Antiquary, the Royal, and other such societies, adds "and no Humane Society of Antiquarians and Critics is ever likely to fish them up again" (VI, 280).

[13]Herschel Baker, William Hazlitt (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1962), pp. 215-7. Baker refers to Hazlitt's comment about Jeffrey as "the prince of critics and the king of men" in Liber Amoris (IX, 126). Considering the emotional frame of mind Hazlitt was in at the time, the book itself, and his debt to Jeffrey, one can hardly be surprised at the apparent extravagence.

[14]The poem, "The Damned Author's Address to His Reviewers" (XX, 392-3), was in reaction to Jeffrey's criticism of The Spirit of the Age (1825) in the Edinburgh. Interestingly, Jeffrey's criticism concerned Hazlitt's style and manner of presentation.

[15]Scott's spirit, in contrast to the firey one of Shakespeare, is "like a stream, [it] reflects surrounding objects" (XII, 340).

[16]This reference is a good example of Hazlitt's near poetic prose. The use of alliteration and onomatopoeia here, as elsewhere, can make the reader wary of critical value.

[17]Wellek, p. 197.

[18]Hazlitt's favorite Elia essay was "Mrs. Battle's Opinions on Whist" because it was "the most free from obsolete allusions and turns of expression -
'A well of native English undefiled' [Spenser, "Fairie Queene" IV, ii, 32]" (VIII, 245).

[19]See: "On the Living Poets". Hazlitt compares "The Excursion" to Robinson Crusoe's boat. The latter was a good craft and could have sailed anywhere but it "could not [be gotten] . . . out of the sand where it stuck fast. I did what I could to help launch it at the time but it would not do" (V, 156). See too: "A Reply to 'Z'". Apparently Wordsworth was quite pleased with the review until he realized that Hazlitt had written it. As Hazlitt remarked in the "Reply": "I think this . . . will shew that there is very little love lost between me and my benefactor" (IX, 6, 250n. '6').

[20]Albrecht, p. 133.

[21]"When Hazlitt used the word character he meant exclusively internal nature" in contrast to Joshua Reynolds' "basically external and typical [character]". Eugene Clinton Elliott, "Reynolds and Hazlitt", JAAC, xxi (1962), 75.

[22]Hazlitt speaks of this 'letting go' versus control in acting: "Nothing can withstand the real tide of passion once let loose; and yet it is pretended, that the great art of the tragic actor is in damming it up, or cutting out smooth canals and circular basins for it to flow into, so that it may do no harm in its course" (XVIII, 205). What is applicable to tragic acting is just as applicable to poetry.

[23]Hazlitt used the Nile for Shakespeare on another occasion. Drury Lane had tried to take exclusive rights to produce Shakespeare's King Lear. Hazlitt shot back: "Shakespear's genius must be allowed to take its full scope, and overflow, like the Nile . . . Our poet is national, not private property" (XVIII, 317-8).

[24]Ralph M. Wardle, Hazlitt (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1971), p. 392.

[25]Park, p. 109.

[26]Samuel H. Monk, The Sublime (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1962), p. 231.

[27]Curiously, Hazlitt's reflections occur on the eve of his crossing to France while Wordsworth's lines precede his account of his crossing to take up residence in the same country. Both have been "detain'd", Hazlitt momentarily in the present, Wordsworth much longer in memory, in their thoughts, and both, as it were, "start afresh".

[28]M.H. Abrams, Natural Supernaturalism (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1971), p. 107.

[29]Abrams, p. 108.

[30]Coleridge "is the man of all others to swim on empty bladders in a sea, without shore or soundings" (XVIII, 370).

[31]Hazlitt was discussing Othello here from the actor's point of view. He felt that the actor's "motions of the body should answer to those of the mind", a role that Kean and especially Macready fail in (V, 339). Kean "either does not feel, or seldom expresses, deep sustained, internal sentiment . . ." The exceptional time that he does, as Othello, III, after the scene with Iago, the "tide of feeling then . . . rolls deep, majestic, and awful, like the surging sea after a tempest, now lifted to Heaven, now laying bare the bosom of the deep" (V, 209-10).

[32]"Poetry is more poetical than painting . . . Painting gives the object itself; poetry what it implies. Painting embodies what a thing contains in itself: poetry suggests what exists out of it, in any manner connected with it. But this last is the province of the imagination" (V, 10). These comments are yet another indication of Hazlitt's ability to state what he feels is the truth. Every indication points to his personal preference for painting over poetry but he would not assert merit that the former lacked.

[33]A peculiar use of the metaphor is in Hazlitt's comments on taxes, especially those used to support the aristocracy and the army. "It has been said that the taxes taken from the people return to them again, like the vapours drawn up from the earth in clouds, that descend again in refreshing dews and fertilizing showers. On the contrary, they are like these dews and showers drawn off from the ground by artificial channels into private resevoirs and useless cisterns to stagnate and corrupt" (VII, 223; cf. XIX, 295).

[34]The style, the "expressive" ability of Rousseau is what attracted Hazlitt. The French writer could write of "the past moments of his being like drops of honey-dew to distil a precious liquor from them" (VIII, 24).

[35]As Hazlitt so succintly summed it up: "It is the business of reviewers to watch poets, not of poets to watch reviewers" (V, 150).

CHAPTER III

THE SMELTING PROCESS

1 This honest pedantry also applies to kinds within the same area. Thus "an artist [must not] be required to feel the same admiration for the works of Handel as for those of Raphael" (IV, 86).

[2]Charles and Mary Lamb, The Works of ed. E.V. Lucas, New York: AMS Press, 1968), I, pp. 40, 402.

[3]Hazlitt applies the same phrase to those connected with the stage - managers, prop-men, actors and actresses. They have the 'happy alchemy of mind' to continue no matter what the reception. Their goal is to win the audience's satisfaction and approval. The stage-man has "the true Elixir of Life, which is freedom from care: he quaffs the pure aurum potabile, which is popular applause" (XVIII, 295, 296).

[4]See a further treatment of this aspect of wit in W.P. Albrecht, "Hazlitt on the Poetry of Wit", PMLA, LXXV (June 1960), 245-9.

[5]John M. Bullitt, "Hazlitt and the Romantic Conception of the Imagination", PQ, XXIV (Oct. 1945), 349.

[6]Vanbrugh is another example of the criticism of Hazlitt being as pertinent today as when it was written. Much the same points on Vanbrugh are echoed by a modern critic, though Hazlitt may have hesitated calling Vanbrugh "a dilettante". Collins, "Restoration Comedy", The Pelican Guide to English Literature, ed. Boris Ford (London: Penguin Books, 1968), pp. 165-6.

[7]Cf. IV, 180, 205, 252; V, 346; XVI, 96; XX, 83-9.

[8]Ian Jack, Augustan Satire 1660-1750 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), pp. 17-8.

[9]For the contrasting view of Milton seen by Johnson and Hazlitt see: T.G. Watson, "Johnson and Hazlitt on the Imagination in Milton", The Southern Quarterly, II (1964), 123-33.

[10]Lust's Dominion, of course, is now considered to be part of the aprocrypha of Marlowe as John Bakeless points out in his The Tragicall History of Christopher Marlowe (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1964), 2, XVII, pp. 268-96.

[11]To compare the views of Hazlitt and Bakeless see the former's VI, 207-9 and the latter's 2, XVII, pp. 269-76. See Bakeless on Titus Andronicus in 2, XVI, pp. 258-63.

[12]John Keats, The Poetical Works and Other Writings of John Keats ed. H. Buxton Forman (New York: Phaeton Press, 1970), VI, 103-4. See: Kenneth Muir, "Keats and Hazlitt", Proceedings of Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society, VI (1951), 534-50; Herschel M. Sikes, "The Poetic Theory and Practice of Keats: The Record of a Debt to Hazlitt", PQ, XXXVIII (Oct. 1959), 401-12.

[13]The pleasure we get from tragedy is not just admiration for the writer's genius (it is that partly) but the combination of the concrete action on the stage and "the abstract idea of right and wrong" (XII, 136-7) in our minds. The latter acts as a balance for the former. See: Andre De Villiers, "Hazlitt and 'The Pleasure of Tragedy'", English Studies in Africa IX (1966), 176-83.

[14]M.H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), p. 144.

[15]This artificiality, this preconceived abstractness with its stylistic marks of affectation and silly rules was absent, says Hazlitt from English literature until "the introduction of a rage from French rules and French models" (VI, 192).

[16]Park, p. 182.

[17]Hazlitt says of Webster's Appius and Virginia: "[It is] a good, sensible, solid tragedy, cast in a framework of the most approved models, with little to blame or praise in it . . ." (VI, 234).

[18]For a discussion of this phrase's relationship to associationism see J.-C. Sallé, "Hazlitt the Associationist", RES, New Ser. XV (1964), 38-51. In short Sallé disagrees with Schneider who attributed the phrase to "a kind of pantheism" in Hazlitt. Sallé argues instead that it "belongs to the psychological terminology of associationism".

CONCLUSION

[1]Of particular interest is the prominent role of clothing (actual as well as metaphoric) in relation to dramatic comedy. Clothing is "one of [comedy's] richest ornaments and most expressive symbols" (IV, 12). See: IV, 10-14; 313f.; VI, 5-30 and passim.; XVII, 157ff. For the affinity of clothing to wit and satire see: V, 68ff; 107ff; VI, passim.

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I. Editor's Preface

An Essay on the Principles of Human Action

Free Thoughts on Public Affairs: or, Advice to a Patriot

Preface to an Abridgment of Abraham Tucker's Light of Nature Pursued

Advertisement and Biographical and Critical Notes from the Eloquence of the British Senate

A Reply to Malthus's Essay on Population

II. A New and Improved Grammar of the English Tongue

Prospectus of a History of English Philosophy

Lectures on English Philosophy

III. Memoirs of Thomas Holcroft

IV. The Round Table

Characters of Shakespear's Plays

V. Lectures on the English Poets

A View of the English Stage

VI. Lectures on the English Comic Writers

Lectures on the Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth

VII. Political Essays

VIII. Table-Talk

IX. A Reply to "Z."

A Letter to William Gifford, Esq.

Prefatory Remarks to Oxberry's New English Drama

Liber Amoris; or, The New Pygmalion

Characteristics

Preface and Critical List of Authors from Select British Poets

X. Sketches of the Principal Picture Galleries in England

Notes of a Journey through France and Italy

XI. The Spirit of the Age

Conversations of Northcote

XII. The Plain Speaker

XIII. The Life of Napoleon Buonaparte

XIV. The Life of Napoleon Buonaparte

XV. The Life of Napoleon Buonaparte

XVI. Contributions to the Edinburgh Review

XVII. Uncollected Essays

XVIII. Art Criticism

Dramatic Criticism

XIX. Literary Criticism

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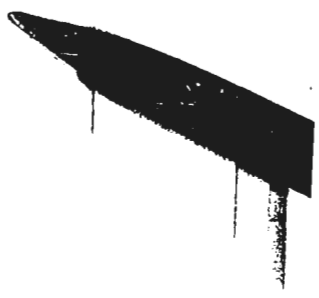

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