

THE PICKERING MASTERS

The Selected Writings of William Hazlitt

Political Essays

Edited by
Duncan Wu



ROUTLEDGE


THE PICKERING MASTERS

THE SELECTED WRITINGS OF WILLIAM HAZLITT

Volume 4
Political Essays

THE PICKERING MASTERS
THE SELECTED WRITINGS OF WILLIAM HAZLITT

Consulting Editors: David Bromwich
Stanley Jones
Roy Park
Tom Paulin

THE SELECTED WRITINGS
OF WILLIAM HAZLITT

Edited by
Duncan Wu

VOLUME 4
Political Essays

 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 1998 by Pickering & Chatto (Publishers) Limited

Published 2016 by Routledge

2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017, USA

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

Copyright ©Taylor & Francis 1998

© General Introduction Tom Paulin 1998

© Editor's Introduction, editorial and introductory notes Duncan Wu 1998

The moral right of the editor has been asserted

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Notice:

Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

BRITISH LIBRARY CATALOGUING IN PUBLICATION DATA

Hazlitt, William, 1778–1830

Selected works of William Hazlitt. – (The Pickering masters)

1. English Essays – 18th century

I. Title II. Wu, Duncan

824.7

ISBN 13: 978-1-13876-323-4 (hbk) (vol-4)

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOGING-IN-PUBLICATION DATA

Hazlitt, William, 1778–1830.

[Selections. 1998]

The selected writings of William Hazlitt / edited by Duncan Wu;

consulting editors David Bromwich, Stanley Jones, Roy Park, Tom Paulin;

introduction by Tom Paulin.

p. cm.

Contents: v. 1. An essay on the principles of human action; Characters of Shakespear's plays — v. 2. The round table; Lectures on the English poets — v. 3. A view of the English stage — v. 4. Political essays — v. 5. A letter to William Gifford, Esq; Lectures on the English Comic writers; Lectures on the dramatic literature of the Age of Elizabeth — v. 6. Table talk — v. 7. Liber Amoris; The spirit of the age — v. 8. The plain speaker — v.9. Uncollected essays.

Includes bibliographical references and indexes.

ISBN 1–85196–369–3 (set : alk. paper). — ISBN 1–85196–361–8 (v. 1 : alk. paper). — ISBN 1–85196–362–6 (v. 2 : alk. paper). — ISBN 1–85196–363–4 (v. 3 : alk. paper). — ISBN 1–85196–364–2 (v. 4 : alk. paper). — ISBN 1–85196–365–0 (v. 5 : alk. paper). — ISBN 1–85196–366–9 (v. 6 : alk. paper). — ISBN 1–85196–367–7 (v. 7 : alk. paper). ISBN 1–85196–368–5 (v. 8 : alk. paper). — ISBN 1–85196–397–9 (v. 9 : alk. paper).

I. Wu, Duncan. II. Title

PR4771.W8 1998

824'.7—dc21

98–10129

CIP

Typeset by Antony Gray London

CONTENTS

Volume 4

List of abbreviations	ix
Introductory note	xiii
Brief biographical directory of selected personages	xxi

POLITICAL ESSAYS 1

Dedication	3
Preface	5
The Marquis Wellesley	21
Mr Southey, Poet Laureat	22
Mr Southey's New-Year's Ode	23
Dottrel-Catching	25
The Bourbons and Bonaparte	27
Vetus	31
On the Courier and Times Newspapers	33
Illustrations of Vetus	37
Illustrations of Vetus (continued)	41
Illustrations of Vetus (continued)	46
Illustrations of Vetus	57
Illustrations of Vetus (concluded)	62
On the Late War	68
Prince Maurice's Parrot; or, French Instructions to a British Plenipotentiary	72
Whether the Friends of Freedom can Entertain any Sanguine Hopes of the Favourable Results of the Ensuing Congress	75
The Lay of the Laureate, Carmen Nuptiale, by Robert Southey	80
The Lay of the Laureate, Carmen Nuptiale, by Robert Southey (concluded)	85
To the Editor of the Examiner	91

CONTENTS

A New View of Society, by Robert Owen	92
The Speeches of Charles C. Western, MP, and Henry Brougham, MP	97
Speeches in Parliament on the Distresses of the Country, by Mr Western and Mr Brougham (concluded)	102
A Lay-Sermon on the Distresses of the Country, addressed to the Middle and Higher Orders. By S. T. Coleridge	107
The Statesman's Manual. By S. T. Coleridge	112
Mr Coleridge's Lay-Sermon. To the Editor of the Examiner	120
Bonaparte and Müller, The Celebrated Historian of Switzerland	122
Illustrations of the Times Newspaper: On Modern Apostates	123
Illustrations of the Times Newspaper: On Modern Lawyers and Poets	129
The Times Newspaper: On the Connexion Between Toad-Eaters and Tyrants	136
Interesting Facts relating to the Fall and Death of Joachim Murat, by Francis Macirone	143
Interesting Facts relating to the Fall of Murat, by F. Macirone (concluded)	149
Wat Tyler; A Dramatic Poem. The Quarterly Review: <i>Article</i> , 'On Parliamentary Reform'	157
The Courier and 'The Wat Tyler'	165
A Letter to William Smith, Esq. MP from Robert Southey, Esq.	174
A Letter to William Smith, Esq. MP from Robert Southey, Esq.	181
A Letter to William Smith, Esq. MP from Robert Southey, Esq. (concluded)	187
On the Spy-System	194
On the Same Subject	196
On the Treatment of the State Prisoners	199
The Opposition and the Courier	201
England in 1798. By S. T. Coleridge	202
On the Effects of War and Taxes	204
Character of Mr Burke	210
On Court-Influence	214
On Court-Influence (concluded)	219
On the Clerical Character	225
On the Clerical Character	229
On the Clerical Character	235
What is the People?	241
What is the People? (concluded)	249
On the Regal Character	260

CONTENTS

The Fudge Family in Paris. Edited by Thomas Brown	266
Character of Lord Chatham, 1807	275
Character of Mr Burke, 1807	279
Character of Mr Fox, 1807	290
Character of Mr Pitt, 1806	298
Pitt and Buonaparte. From the Morning Post	302
An Examination of Mr Malthus's Doctrines	307
On the Originality of Mr Malthus's Essay	311
On the Principle of Population as Affecting the Schemes of Utopian Improvement	317
On the Application of Mr Malthus's Principle to the Poor Laws	323
Queries Relating to the Essay on Population	329
APPENDIX I: Chronological listing of political articles	335
APPENDIX II: Hazlitt's 'The Stripling Bard'	339
Notes	345
Books referred to in the notes to volume 4	436



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Amyot | <i>Speeches in Parliament, of the Rt. Hon. William Windham</i> , ed. Thomas Amyot (3 vols., London, 1812) |
| Bate and Engell | S. T. Coleridge, <i>Biographia Literaria</i> , ed. Walter Jackson Bate and James Engell (2 vols., Princeton, NJ, 1983) |
| Battestin | Henry Fielding, <i>Joseph Andrews</i> , ed. Martin C. Battestin (Oxford, 1967) |
| Battestin, <i>Amelia</i> | Henry Fielding, <i>Amelia</i> , ed. Martin C. Battestin (Oxford, 1983) |
| Battestin and
Bowers | Henry Fielding, <i>The History of Tom Jones A Foundling</i> , introduction and commentary by Martin C. Battestin,, ed. Fredson Bowers (2 vols., Oxford, 1974) |
| Bond | <i>The Tatler</i> , ed. Donald F. Bond (3 vols., Oxford, 1987) |
| <i>Boswell's Life</i> | <i>Boswell's Life of Johnson</i> , ed. George Birkbeck Hill, revised by L. F. Powell (6 vols., Oxford, 1934–50) |
| <i>Canning</i> | <i>The Speeches of the Right Honourable George Canning</i> , ed. R. Thierry (6 vols., London, 1828) |
| Cervantes | Miguel de Cervantes, <i>The History and Adventures of the Renowned Don Quixote</i> , tr. Tobias Smollett (5 vols., London, 1799) (Cooke's edition) |
| Curry | <i>New Letters of Robert Southey</i> , ed. Kenneth Curry (2 vols., New York, 1965) |
| Elofson and Woods | <i>The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke Volume 3: Party, Parliament, and the American War 1774–1780</i> , ed. W. M. Elofson with John A. Woods (Oxford, 1996) |
| <i>Eloquence</i> | William Hazlitt, <i>The Eloquence of the British Senate</i> (2 vols., London, 1807) |
| Erdman | S. T. Coleridge, <i>Essays on his Times</i> , ed. David V. Erdman (3 vols., Princeton, NJ, 1978) |
| Friedman | Oliver Goldsmith, <i>Collected Works of Oliver Goldsmith</i> , ed. Arthur Friedman (5 vols., Oxford, 1966) |
| Griggs | <i>Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge</i> , ed. Earl Leslie Griggs (6 vols., Oxford, 1956–71) |

SELECTED WRITINGS OF WILLIAM HAZLITT: VOLUME 4

- Hill Samuel Johnson, *Lives of the English Poets*, ed. George Birkbeck Hill (3 vols., Oxford, 1895)
- Howe *The Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. P. P. Howe (21 vols., London, 1930–4)
- Keynes Geoffrey Keynes, Kt., *Bibliography of William Hazlitt* (2nd edn., Godalming, 1981)
- Jones Stanley Jones, *Hazlitt: A Life* (Oxford, 1989)
- Jones (1970) Stanley Jones, 'Howe's Edition of Hazlitt's Works: Two Notes', *N&Q*, 17 (1970), pp. 174–5
- Jones (1972) Stanley Jones, 'More Hazlitt Quotations: "The Leman-Lake", Etc.', *N&Q*, 19 (1972), p. 99
- Jones (1983) Stanley Jones, 'Three Notes on Howe's Edition of Hazlitt: Paine, Porson, and Campbell', *N&Q*, 30 (1983), pp. 230–2
- Jones (1993) Stanley Jones, 'Hazlitt, Coleridge, and Edward Young: Unidentified Quotations', *N&Q*, 42 (1993), pp. 470–1.
- Jones (1994) Stanley Jones, 'More Hazlitt Quotations: The Bible, Milton, Dryden, Rochester, Boileau/John Dennis', *N&Q*, 43 (1994), pp. 343–4
- Jones (1995) Stanley Jones, 'More Hazlitt Quotations and Allusions: Shakespeare, the Bible, Milton, Quintilian/Steele, Pope, Burke', *N&Q*, 44 (1995), pp. 186–7
- Jones (1996) Stanley Jones, 'Further Quotations and Reminiscences in Hazlitt: Daniel, The Bible, Milton, Paine, Dorset', *N&Q*, 45 (1996), pp. 37–8
- Langford *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke Volume 2: Party, Parliament, and the American Crisis 1766–1774*, ed. Paul Langford (Oxford, 1981)
- Larpent Dougald MacMillan, *Catalogue of the Larpent Plays in the Huntington Library* (1939)
- Letters* *The Letters of William Hazlitt*, ed. Herschel Moreland Sikes, assisted by Willard Hallam Bonner and Gerald Lahey (New York, 1978)
- Life* P. P. Howe, *The Life of William Hazlitt* (3rd edn., London, 1947)
- Marrs *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. Edwin W. Marrs, Jr (3 vols., Ithaca, NY, 1975–8)
- Marshall *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke Volume 5: India: Madras and Bengal 1774–1785*, ed. P. J. Marshall (Oxford, 1981)
- Martin Sir Thomas Browne, *Religio Medici and Other Works*, ed. L. C. Martin (Oxford, 1964)

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- Mason *The Poems of Mr Gray*, ed. William Mason (York, 1775)
- McDowell *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke Volume 9: I: The Revolutionary War 1794–1797 II: Ireland*, ed. R. B. McDowell (Oxford, 1991)
- McGann George Gordon, 6th Baron Byron, *The Complete Poetical Works*, ed. Jerome J. McGann and Barry Weller (7 vols., Oxford, 1980–93)
- Memoirs* W. Carew Hazlitt, *Memoirs of William Hazlitt* (2 vols., London, 1867)
- Milton, *Prose Works* *Complete Prose Works of John Milton* (8 vols., New Haven, 1953–82)
- Mitchell *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke Volume 8: The French Revolution 1790–1794*, ed. L. G. Mitchell (Oxford, 1989)
- Morley *Henry Crabb Robinson on Books and Their Writers*, ed. Edith J. Morley (3 vols., London, 1938)
- MY *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Middle Years*, ed. Ernest De Selincourt, *i: 1806–11*, revised by Mary Moorman (Oxford, 1969); *ii: 1812–20*, revised by Mary Moorman and Alan G. Hill (Oxford, 1970)
- N&Q *Notes and Queries*
- Nicholson *Lord Byron: The Complete Miscellaneous Prose*, ed. Andrew Nicholson (Oxford, 1991)
- Pitt *The Speeches of William Pitt*, ed. W. S. Hathaway (4 vols., London, 1806)
- Price *The Dramatic Works of Richard Brinsley Sheridan*, ed. Cecil Price (2 vols., Oxford, 1973)
- Rooke S. T. Coleridge, *The Friend*, ed. Barbara Rooke (2 vols., Princeton, NJ, 1969)
- Ross Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, ed. Ian Campbell Ross (Oxford, 1983)
- Southey, *Life* *The Life and Correspondence of Robert Southey*, ed. Charles Cuthbert Southey (6 vols., London, 1849–50)
- Spectator* *The Spectator*, ed. Donald F. Bond (5 vols., Oxford, 1965)
- Storey Mark Storey, *Robert Southey: A Life* (Oxford, 1997)
- Therry *The Speeches of the Right Honourable George Canning*, ed. R. Therry (6 vols., London, 1828)
- Warter *Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, &c &c &c*, ed. John Wood Warter (4 vols., London, 1856)
- White S. T. Coleridge, *Lay Sermons*, ed. R. J. White (Princeton, NJ, 1972)



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

Political Essays, with Sketches of Public Characters (1819)

It was after writing the last of his political essays in 1818 that Hazlitt proposed to William Hone that he publish them as a single volume. Accordingly, a contract was drawn up and signed; this survives today at SUNY at Buffalo, is in Hazlitt's hand, and reads as follows:

Memorandum of Agreement this 25th of January 1819 Between William Hazlitt Esquire and William Hone Bookseller

M^r Hazlitt agrees to furnish copy within a week from this time & to supply it as wanted for a Collection of his political Essays which he thinks anyway worth preserving, & which have appeared in the Morning Chronicle, Examiner, Champion, &c. *e.g.* Illustrations of Vetus, Paragraphs on Lord Castlereagh, Notices of the Laureate, Wat Tyler, the Times Newspaper, M^r Coleridge, M^r Wordsworth, M^r Owen's Plans, Essays on War & Taxes, on the Regal character – What is the People? On the clerical character, character of M^r Burke, of M^r Pitt, &c. Reply to the arguments of Malthus, with some original articles, & a Preface. M^r Hazlitt undertakes to give M^r Hone the copyright of this work for £100: fifty to be paid immediately, & the remaining fifty on the publication of the work. [signed] W. Hazlitt. W. Hone

Hazlitt seems to have had an exceedingly clear view of the volume before it went to press, and perhaps even before it had been compiled from the acres of newsprint from which its contents were drawn. The only title mentioned in the contract that appears to have no obvious correlative in the finished work is 'M^r Wordsworth'; Wordsworth does, of course, feature in several of the essays, but in none can he be said to take centre stage. Perhaps Hazlitt had been planning to reprint his review of *The Excursion*, but at the last moment decided against this, as it had already appeared in *The Round Table* (1817).¹ It was, in many respects, a summary collection: along with most of Hazlitt's political writings 1813–18, it includes his 'characters' of statesmen first printed in the *Eloquence of the British Senate* (1807) and some extracts from the *Reply to Malthus* (1807). All of the topics that had most preoccupied him as a political commentator were represented here: besides his thoughts on the Napoleonic Wars, the Vienna Congress, Napoleon himself, and political personalities of the day, political apostasy looms large in the shape of repeated attacks on Southey and Coleridge.

The contract also shows that Hazlitt believed that all 439 pages of its contents could be assembled and prepared within the brief period of a week. In addition, he would have had to write the Preface, which accounted for 36 pages of copy. Hazlitt's contemporaries would have had no difficulty in recognising the stable from which the volume came: John Hunt (the dedicatee), John M'Creery (the printer), and William Hone (publisher) were associated with radical causes. Jones notes that Hazlitt and Hone dined at Hunt's on 31 January 1819 – less than a week after the signing of the contract:² could it be that *Political Essays* was by then prepared for the printer, and that they were celebrating its completion? This was not the first time that Hone had published Hazlitt. In 1817 he had been responsible for an edition of Southey's *Wat Tyler; A Dramatic Poem. A New Edition. With a Preface, suitable to Recent Circumstances*. The Preface in fact consisted largely of a reprint of Hazlitt's article, 'The Stripling Bard', which had appeared in the *Morning Chronicle* on 22 March 1817, and which provided the basis for the longer article on *Wat Tyler* in *The Examiner*, 30 March (pp. 165–74); see Appendix II, below.³

At any rate, Hone was in no hurry to publish, and *Political Essays* did not appear until 14 August 1819.⁴ The epigraph to *Political Essays*, 'Come, draw the curtain, shew the picture', is a composite quotation, recalling *Troilus and Cressida*, III. ii. 46–7 ('Come, draw this curtain, and let's see your picture') and *Twelfth Night*, I. v. 233 ('we will draw the curtain, and show you the picture').

Sales were sluggish, and the remainder of the first edition was still on sale at a reduced price as late as 1840. The volume made little stir, and in any case collections of previously published essays had less chance of succeeding than new works. In 1935 Lester F. Lange reported a copy inscribed by Hazlitt: 'Mr Godwin / with the author's best / respects'. This would accord with Godwin's admiration of the *Vetus* essays. Keynes records a second lifetime edition, published by Simpkin and Marshall and John Templeman on 14 July 1822.⁵ It is, as Keynes notes, scarce, but is not in fact a new edition, as it comprises the sheets of the first edition with a new title-page.

Text

Howe follows the 1819 text, with the exception of 'On the Regal Character', which follows the readings in *Table Talk* (Paris, 1825). As is my policy throughout this edition, I have preferred to offer the reader a text consistent with a single edition, and have therefore followed 1819 throughout. The following emendations have been made: 'Opposionist' is emended to 'Oppositionist' (p. 25); 'scimeter' is emended to 'scimitar' (p. 56); 'Quixotte' to 'Quixote' (p. 62); 'eruditorum' to 'eruditulorum' (p. 117), 'went' to 'wet' (p. 120), 'horned' to 'honed' (p. 175), and 'Houyuhyms' to 'Houynhyms' (p. 208). In the first edition text, the essays which appear on pages 194–202 of the present edition (that is, 'On

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

the Spy-System', 'On the Same Subject', 'On the Treatment of the State Prisoners', and 'The Opposition and the Courier') appear without titles, even though titles are provided in the contents list. I have taken the view that this was an error, and have inserted the titles in their appropriate place in the main text. Hazlitt's occasional variant spelling of Bonaparte ('Buonaparte') has been indulged for the purposes of the present text.

Manuscripts

The only surviving manuscript of any of the essays in this volume is 'On Court Influence', seventeen numbered pages of which survive at the Folger Shakespeare Library, on paper watermarked 1805. In that form it is entitled 'On Political Inconsistency', and constitutes a much earlier version of the essay than that published. So distinct is it that it deserves to be edited as a text in its own right, and I have made no effort to present variant readings in the notes, below. The essay was redrafted thoroughly prior to publication in two parts in *Yellow Dwarf*, 3 and 10 January 1818.

Hazlitt's annotated copy of *Yellow Dwarf* at the British Library contains numerous annotations, mostly in pencil, particularly to 'On the Regal Character' and 'What is the People?'

Finally, a curiosity. Victoria College Library, Toronto, possesses a manuscript of 'Queries Relating to the Essay on Population', in the hand of Sara Coleridge, headed 'Eighteen Queries to the disciples of Malthus by Coleridge'. At the top of the first page, she has written: 'I forget what led me to ascribe these to Coleridge or where I found them. I may be quite mistaken and they may perhaps be Hazlitt's'. The answer must be that she found this text in *The Examiner*, 29 October 1815, where it appeared as No. 23 of *The Round Table* series under the signature 'ESTESI'. She would naturally have concluded that it was by her father, even though it was actually by Hazlitt. Her transcript contains a number of minor variants from *The Examiner* text, but none that would contradict the view that it was her source. It is therefore nothing to do with Hazlitt, or with the composition of his essay.

Reception

Hazlitt must have known that this volume would receive rough handling from all but his closest friends – and it did. Characteristically, the first review to appear was favourable, and probably came from an admirer; it was published only a few days after the volume itself, in *The Literary Chronicle and Weekly Review*, 21 August. Despite the reviewer's reservations about Hazlitt's 'egotism, his ultra-political opinions, and his personal invectives', the overall judgement is in favour of the volume; its contents have, it is argued,

a permanent interest, and we do not recollect having met with any collection of political essays presenting so much diversity, or so likely to afford general gratification . . .⁶

The reviewer goes on to say that ‘Mr Hazlitt’s politics are not our politics’, and observes that ‘Mr Hazlitt evidently does not belong to any of the parties into which English politicians have divided, – he is a political Ishmaelite, whose pen is against every one; indeed, we have heard some of his friends designate him as a “stern republican.”’⁷

The Monthly Magazine reviewed the volume with others published in August 1819, and found it written by ‘the strong hand of truth and critical sagacity’.⁸ For this reviewer, Hazlitt ‘severely handled the corruption, tergiversation, and interested motives of public character, wherever they have appeared; and this in an alternate indignant and satiric vein, that, independent of its truth, baffles all the frivolous sophism and mysticism even of a *Quarterly Review*’.⁹ The reviewer concludes by advising ‘those who love their country, and wish well to social and political order, to peruse and study this elegantly written and very animated volume’.¹⁰ Of course, the *Quarterly*’s notice of the volume was yet to come – and it would not be good.

The editor of *The Champion* (in which several of Hazlitt’s political articles had first appeared) was R. D. Richards, and it may have been he who reviewed the volume there. As one would expect (as several of the articles in *Political Essays* had first appeared there), the review was positive; *Political Essays*, it said, was ‘marked with all the spirit, the energy and the eccentricity of this very extraordinary writer’.¹¹ It argued that since most of the volume’s contents had already been published elsewhere, the only part of the book that could be reviewed ‘with propriety’ was the Preface, which ‘abounds with striking beauties and nervous peculiarities of composition’.¹² After several quotations it noted: ‘The criticisms on the Poet-Laureate and Mr Coleridge are caustics in every line. We forbear to quote from them. Those once-enthusiastic ultra-reformers must have smarted enough beneath them already.’¹³

The *Quarterly* noticed the volume in its issue for July 1819, which was published much later than that, probably in November. Its author was Gifford, who now had a score to settle in the wake of Hazlitt’s *Letter to William Gifford*, published on 1 March, earlier that year. He alludes to the fact that Hazlitt ‘has manifested great wrath against us’, and goes on to note ‘the ludicrous egotism which has driven this forlorn drudge of the Examiner into a belief that it is his prerogative to abuse whom he will, and the privilege of all the world to submit in silence: he lays an autocracy to malediction’.¹⁴ Gifford goes on to ridicule the volume with some highly selective quotation, and concludes with a bilious paragraph:

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

Having got this slanderer of the human race in an attitude, in which it is possible to smile at him, we willingly leave him there. He ought to feel obliged to us. Many will think that we have, on this and other occasions, wasted more time on him than he deserved. We are ourselves of that opinion: but when the Hazlitt first appeared within our province, it struck us that it was of a new species; its activity, disagreeable hum, and glittering blackness – but, above all, the value of the objects, which it seemed to be its nature to defile, excited our attention. We did not know, moreover, but that it might then be only in its *larva*, or grub state; and there was no saying to what extent, if it should change to the perfect *image*, it might increase its numbers. We confess, however, that we wanted skill in entomology. It is plain that it had reached its perfection when we first noticed it; that its powers of mischief hardly extend beyond the making of some dirt and some noise: that it does not belong to our climate, nor can multiply here; but that its presence is owing to the late extraordinary seasons, which have brought us so many new plagues. Its minutes were nearly over, and it would have perished as the heats declined. Yet, perhaps, it may not be entirely without advantage that we have fastened it down upon a sheet of paper amongst our other specimens.¹⁵

At around the same time, *Political Essays* took a sound beating from *The Anti-Jacobin Review*. Its reviewer began by characterising Hazlitt as ‘one of the most impudent of all *book-makers*’,¹⁶ before embarking onto a prolonged attack. Hazlitt is a ‘cockney’,¹⁷ an ‘infidel caviller’¹⁸ who has produced ‘a collection of trash’.¹⁹ Much is made of Hazlitt’s supposed contempt for the clergy, before the reviewer goes on to argue, on the basis of this volume, that

The press, in particular, requires the keen eye of a determined observer; nay, it requires more; it *demand*s the *punishment* awarded by the laws for contempt and sedition. And if this punishment be not speedily awarded, the population of this kingdom will become generally so corrupt, that there will be no dealing with them, except through the medium of force, which ought always to be deprecated.²⁰

The reviewer goes on to demand that ‘the infamous publications’ which stoke up public anger against the government (such as *Political Essays*, one assumes) be censored:

The libels which are now issued against the Christian religion, must shock every serious man; and, if ‘Christianity be part of the law of the land,’ which we are told from high authority is the case, they merit the severest punishment. The attacks on public and private character are equally reprehensible. And, if some steps are not shortly taken to suppress the evil, we shall really think that it is the wish of ministers to let the evil reach to such a height, that the establishment of a censorship will be called for; and the press be placed under the controul of the police. Even this would be better than the present state of things . . .²¹

The reviewer in the *Edinburgh Monthly Review* was no less critical; he began by noting that ‘The eccentric matter, and, above all, the strange, incoherent, Bess-bedlam diction of his lectures, have excited a considerable noise, which Mr Hazlitt

has mistaken for fame.²² He goes on to profess disappointment at finding that *Political Essays* contains 'a very dull attack on the moral character of Mr Southey and his friends. The rest is a mass of abuse about the Duke of Wellington, Lord Castlereagh, Mr Canning, the Regent, and Mr Scott.'²³ Furthermore, the volume 'is yet a base imitation of the vices of Cobbett'.²⁴ Curiously, the reviewer then enters into an attack on Hazlitt's authorial skills. He is accused of 'ignorance of the ancient languages',²⁵ and of using 'antiquated expressions',²⁶ before being compared with Cobbett:

Because Cobbett was plain, Hazlitt must be vulgar, nay, so foul-mouthed, that we should tremble to see the eye of a modest female directed to his polluted pages. Because Cobbett, scarcely knowing, frequently violated the rules of rhetoric, Hazlitt chooses to neglect the most obvious dictates of decency. Cobbett generally addressed himself to the illiterate; it was therefore necessary that he should talk in a manner level to their acquirements. Hazlitt, on the contrary, bespeaks the notice of the high-born and the learned, but forgets that homely figures and disgusting allusions are not the most likely means of securing their attention, far less their approbation.²⁷

But the bulk of the review is concerned with Hazlitt's politics, which it characterises as follows: 'The single object of his politics, is to pull down every establishment in this country; the king, the lords, the commons, the professions, clerical and legal, are all the subject of his splenetic attack. To each of these classes he devotes a separate chapter of abuse.'²⁸ To illustrate this the reviewer quotes passages in which Hazlitt criticises kingship, the clergy, and the legal profession – all of which proves that this is 'by far the most laboured exposition of radical madness, which has yet fallen in our way'.²⁹ So as to leave the reader in no doubt as to his feelings, the reviewer concludes:

We close this volume with feelings of unrelieved disgust. It is to us, as we hope it is to all others, matter of sincere regret, that Mr Hazlitt should be guilty of prostituting his powers to such ignoble ends; and it is grieving to think, that there is but little hope of amendment, at least where party spirit and political prejudice are likely to have any range.³⁰

The reviewer in the *Monthly Review* provided a less acid reading, acknowledging the value of Hazlitt's writings on Shakespeare before attempting to discuss Hazlitt's politics: 'He is certainly "no party-man:" for Whig and Tory, Radical and Reformer, are almost equal objects of his invective'.³¹ But the conclusion this reviewer reaches is that Hazlitt has such a low opinion of humanity that he is virtually a misanthrope. Hazlitt's power as a writer is conceded, but he is asked to stick to *belles-lettres* rather than to write about current affairs:

We participate with him in all his hatred of tyranny and contempt for its tools, whatever station in life they occupy, and with whatever rank or title they are decorated and disgraced: but we have no relish for diffuse, personal, and declamatory

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

invective, and of this we have too much in the volume before us. . . . he is a little *too* cavalier, *too* contemptuous, *too* gross.³²

And with those strictures, contemporary comment on *Political Essays* came to an end.

NOTES

- 1 See vol. 2, pp. 112–25.
- 2 See Jones, pp. 303–4. For a fine account of Hazlitt's general attitude towards politics, see Jones, pp. 239–40. Jones singles out disinterestedness and freedom as the virtues most revered by Hazlitt, and self-interest and oppression as the qualities he most disliked.
- 3 For more on Hone, and Hazlitt's dealings with him, see Jones, pp. 274–6.
- 4 The dating is by Stanley Jones, review of Keynes, *Analytical and Enumerative Bibliography*, 6 (1982), pp. 272–6, p. 276.
- 5 The dating, once again, is Jones's.
- 6 *The Literary Chronicle and Weekly Review*, 14 (21 August 1819), pp. 209–11, p. 209.
- 7 *Ibid.*
- 8 *The Monthly Magazine*, 48 (September 1819), pp. 154–5, p. 154.
- 9 *Ibid.*, pp. 154–5.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 155.
- 11 *The Champion* (7 November 1819), p. 711.
- 12 *Ibid.*
- 13 *Ibid.*
- 14 *Quarterly Review*, 22 (July 1819), pp. 158–63, p. 159.
- 15 *Ibid.*, pp. 162–3.
- 16 *The Anti-Jacobin Review*, 57 (December 1819), pp. 312–24, p. 312.
- 17 *Ibid.*, p. 316.
- 18 *Ibid.*, p. 319.
- 19 *Ibid.*, p. 322.
- 20 *Ibid.*
- 21 *Ibid.*, p. 324.
- 22 *Edinburgh Monthly Review*, 3 (March 1820), pp. 297–309, p. 297.
- 23 *Ibid.*, p. 298.
- 24 *Ibid.*
- 25 *Ibid.*, p. 299.
- 26 *Ibid.*
- 27 *Ibid.*, p. 300.
- 28 *Ibid.*, p. 302.
- 29 *Ibid.*, p. 306.
- 30 *Ibid.*, p. 309.
- 31 *Monthly Review*, 93 (November 1820), pp. 250–8, p. 252.
- 32 *Ibid.*, p. 258.



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL DIRECTORY OF
SELECTED PERSONAGES MENTIONED,
OR REFERRED TO, BY HAZLITT

- HENRY ADDINGTON, 1ST VISCOUNT SIDMOUTH (1757–1844), Prime Minister 1801–4 and Home Secretary 1812–21 knew Pitt from childhood, and was one of his warmest supporters in the Commons from 1784. He was instrumental in helping bring about the Peace of Amiens in 1802. Created Viscount Sidmouth in 1805, he was also one of the masterminds behind the repressive policies of the government during the years 1816 onwards. The suspension of habeas corpus, the committee of secrecy, and the revival of the laws against seditious meetings were his doing. He sustained a mortifying defeat with the acquittal of William Hone, tried for the publication of parodies alleged to be blasphemous and seditious libels. He was later responsible for introducing the repressive Six Acts.
- HENRY GREY BENNET (1777–1836), reformer, was a close associate in the Commons of Brougham and Whitbread. Castlereagh was his *bête noire*, with Henry Addington, Viscount Sidmouth, running a close second. He launched tirades against army estimates, civil list extravagance, and taxes.
- JEREMY BENTHAM (1748–1832), Utilitarian philosopher criticised by Hazlitt for his overweening rationalism. His proposals for penal reform were presented in *The Panopticon, or, Inspection House* (1791), of which Hazlitt was particularly critical; see *The Spirit of the Age* (vol. 7, pp. 77–85).
- HENRY PETER BROUGHAM (1778–1868), afterwards (1830) Baron Brougham and Vaux, had helped set up the *Edinburgh Review* and attained distinction as a lawyer before his association with the Holland House wing of the Whig party. From the start of his parliamentary career he was one of the most effective speakers on their benches in the Commons – on such subjects as slavery, public education and law reform. He entered parliament in 1810 as member for Camelford (the pocket borough of the Duke of Bedford), but lost it in 1812. He re-entered the House in 1816 as member for Winchelsea (pocket borough of the Earl of Darlington). In 1818 he succeeded in revitalising the committee on education which turned up scandalous abuses by the church, the public schools and the universities in their administration of charitable funds donated for educational purposes but diverted for private uses. In later years he became Lord Chancellor, and subsequently retired to Cannes, where he died.

SIR FRANCIS BURDETT (1770–1844), English radical who was a zealous advocate of reform. His opinions were largely formed by a visit to Paris during the early days of the Revolution. He became MP for Boroughbridge in 1796 and succeeded his father as 5th Baronet the following year.

GEORGE CANNING (1770–1827), Irish-born British statesman, chiefly remembered for his liberal policy as Foreign Secretary from 1822 to 1827. He started life as a Whig but in 1793 became a dedicated Pittite Tory. With Ellis and Hookham Frere he was principally responsible for *The Anti-Jacobin, or Weekly Examiner* (and composed for it the ‘Needy Knife-Grinder’ and the ‘New Morality’), such a success that it continued after July 1798 as *The Anti-Jacobin Review* till 1821. Hazlitt had a low opinion of him; see his essay in *The Spirit of the Age* (vol. 7, pp. 239–46).

ROBERT STEWART, 2ND MARQUESS OF LONDONDERRY (1769–1822), better known as VISCOUNT CASTLEREAGH, statesman and diplomat responsible for British policy in the peace settlement at the close of the Napoleonic Wars. He was born in Dublin and educated at St John’s College, Cambridge. In 1797 he was appointed Keeper of the Privy Seal (Ireland), then Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, and from March 1798 acting Chief Secretary. His tenure there coincided with the 1798 rebellion, which he took steps to quell, and the union with Great Britain, for which he was largely responsible, and which was achieved only with a messy combination of tact, persistence, and systematic bribery. Castlereagh was out of office between May 1801 and July 1805, when he became Secretary for War. He was Foreign Secretary 1812–22, when he was responsible for the treaty of Paris (1814) and the treaty of Vienna (1815). As leader of the House of Commons he was identified with the repressive policies of the years 1815–19, notably the Peterloo Massacre, the Six Acts, and the cabinet’s unsuccessful introduction in 1820 of a bill to dissolve George IV’s marriage with Queen Caroline. Increasingly paranoid, and suspecting that he was being blackmailed for homosexual acts, he committed suicide on 12 August 1822. Hazlitt wrote admiringly of him in *The Plain Speaker* (vol. 8, page 91).

WILLIAM PITT, 1ST EARL OF CHATHAM (1708–78), one of England’s greatest and most famous statesmen, whose combined vision and practical ability led to a remarkable increase in English possessions and influence. Pitt was related to the Lytteltons, the Temples and the Granvilles, who formed one of the most powerful groups in the landowning oligarchy, which, under the Hanoverian monarchs, virtually governed England. He was appointed, in 1731, a cornet in the King’s Own Regiment of Horse, which later became the 1st Dragoon Guards. This commission brought him an income of £150 a year and an introduction to court and public life. In 1735 he entered the House of Commons as a member for Old Sarum, one of the most notorious of the rotten boroughs. His skills as an orator quickly became apparent.

BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL DIRECTORY

WILLIAM COBBETT (1763–1835), civil rights activist, journalist, farmer and MP.

Hazlitt was well acquainted with his *Grammar of the English Language* (1818) and his newspaper, *The Political Register*, which regularly savaged the government for incompetence and corruption. Hazlitt never doubted the fundamental worth of Cobbett's work, but often took issue with him.

JOHN WILSON CROKER (1780–1857), Irish-born essayist and critic, he became a Tory MP and was Secretary of State for the Navy for twenty years. He was a founder and regular contributor to the *Quarterly Review* and in that capacity was responsible for vituperative attacks (often politically motivated) on various writers of the time, including Keats, Hemans and Hazlitt. He was memorably described by Hazlitt as a 'talking potato'.

JOHN PHILPOT CURRAN (1750–1817), Irish lawyer and statesman, remembered both as a great advocate and champion of Irish liberties. Hazlitt met him at Horne Tooke's house in Wimbledon, and formed a closer acquaintance with him in the year before his death in 1817. See Jones, pp. 251–2.

SIR HUMPHRY DAVY, BART (1778–1829), brilliant chemist and exponent of the scientific method, inventor of the miner's safety lamp and discoverer of sodium and potassium. He and Hazlitt had a number of friends in common, most notably Coleridge. Davy was knighted in 1812.

EDWARD LAW, 1ST BARON ELLENBOROUGH (1750–1818), Lord Chief Justice in England, assisted as one of the counsel for the crown at the trial of Horne Tooke in 1794. Throughout his life he was active for the forces of reaction, opposing Catholic emancipation and the abolition of the pillory among many other liberal causes. As Chief Justice he presided over the trial of the Hunt brothers for libelling the Prince Regent, in the course of which he made a violent attack upon Hunt's counsel, Brougham. He also presided over the second and third trials of William Hone at the Guildhall in December 1817, but, despite his vehement summing up against the defendant, was mortified at the jury's not guilty verdict. He resigned immediately and, his health broken, died the following year.

THOMAS ERSKINE, 1ST BARON ERSKINE (1750–1823), British lawyer, a distinguished advocate whose most important and lasting contributions were in the defence of personal liberties. He successfully defended Thomas Hardy, Horne Tooke and John Thelwall at the Treason Trials of 1794, as well as James Hadfield, who had attempted to assassinate George III in 1800. He was a friend of Fox and Sheridan, and sat in the House of Commons until becoming a peer in 1806.

PETER FINNERTY (?1766–1822), Irish journalist, a colleague of Hazlitt's on the *Morning Chronicle*. By the time Hazlitt knew him he had three times been punished for upholding press freedom (see Jones, pp. 74–5).

CHARLES JAMES FOX (1749–1806), statesman and opposition leader in the House of Commons for most of his political career. Hazlitt heard Fox speak at the Louvre

in 1802, and reports his remarks in *The Eloquence of the British Senate*, published 1806.

SIR WILLIAM GARROW (1760–1840), Baron of the Exchequer, was articled to a solicitor at the age of fifteen, and admitted to Lincoln's Inn in 1778. He was called to the bar in 1783, and quickly procured much business at the Old Bailey. A king's counsel by 1793, he entered parliament in 1805, and the following year became Attorney-General to the Prince of Wales. Lord Liverpool appointed him Solicitor-General in 1812, in which year he was knighted; in 1813 he became Attorney-General. He became Baron of the Exchequer in 1817, and remained a puisne baron in that court for nearly fifteen years, retiring in 1832.

WILLIAM WYNDHAM GRENVILLE, BARON GRENVILLE (1759–1834), English politician, youngest son of the Prime Minister George Grenville. On Pitt's death in 1806 he formed a coalition ministry of Addington's followers, Foxites and his own friends. Its foreign policy failed – not succeeding in making peace with France. Its one indisputable triumph was abolition of the slave trade in 1807.

JOHN CAM HOBHOUSE, BARON BROUGHTON (1786–1869), statesman; he was educated by the Unitarian (and friend of Coleridge) John Prior Estlin at Bristol. He was later taught at Westminster, and then at Trinity, Cambridge. He became Byron's close friend there, and accompanied him on the continental tour of 1809, returning the following year. He was best man at Byron's wedding in January 1815, and visited him at Villa Diodati near Geneva in the autumn of 1816. In 1819 Hobhouse contested the seat at Westminster as an independent radical, and should have won, as the Whigs had agreed not to run against him. However, Francis Place, who appeared to be associated with Hobhouse, launched a vociferous attack on the Whigs, which incited them to nominate Sir George Lamb as their candidate, who duly won the seat. Hazlitt never forgave Place for spoiling Hobhouse's chances (for whom he had voted). He was created Baron Broughton de Gyfford in February 1851.

HENRY RICHARD VASSALL FOX, 3RD BARON HOLLAND, BARON HOLLAND OF HOLLAND IN THE COUNTY OF LINCOLN, AND BARON HOLLAND OF FOXLEY IN THE COUNTY OF WILTS (1773–1840), Whig peer, scholar, and dilettante. He was born at Winterslow House and occasionally stayed at Winterslow Hut, Hazlitt's favourite bolt-hole.

FRANCIS HORNER (1778–1817), politician, entered the Commons in 1806, on the Whig side. By 1815 he was established as one of the foremost parliamentary speakers of the day. In that year he supported Lord Grey in arguing for peace, and the following February denounced the terms of the peace treaties. He would no doubt have been an eminent and accomplished politician had he lived into old age, but he died young. He was an associate of Jeffrey, and helped him found *The Edinburgh Review*.

BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL DIRECTORY

JOHN HUNT (1775–1848), elder brother of Leigh Hunt. He was apprenticed to the printing trade, started his first newspaper, *The News* (on which Leigh Hunt was dramatic critic) in 1805 and founded *The Examiner* with his brother as editor in 1808. They went to prison, not together but simultaneously, for two years (1813–15) for Leigh Hunt's libel of the Prince Regent. John suffered a similar penalty, of one year, for the outspokenness of his own pen (1821–2), during which Leigh Hunt 'withdrew from the proprietorship' of *The Examiner* and went to Italy. Hazlitt's main attachment to *The Examiner* had been because of John Hunt, with whom he had entered into a separate political partnership in the *Yellow Dwarf* in the early part of 1818. John Hunt owned Hazlitt's picture of 'An Old Woman', and had it with him in Coldbath Fields during his second imprisonment. He was the publisher of *The Liberal*, and *Liber Amoris*.

AUGUSTUS, VISCOUNT KEPPEL (1725–86), British admiral. He saw constant service during the Seven Years War, and in 1762 went on the expedition with Sir George Pocock that took Havana, and received £25,000 prize money. He became rear admiral in October 1762 and vice-admiral in October 1770. From 1761 to 1780 he was MP for Windsor, and a strong Whig supporter. The trial mentioned on page 105 (by Burke) arose out of his loss of a battle against the French on 27 July 1778, at which he believed that a subordinate, Sir Hugh Palliser, had disobeyed him. His attacks on Palliser led to a trial and acquittal, first of Keppel and then of Palliser, for neglect of duty.

ROBERT BANKS JENKINSON, 2ND EARL OF LIVERPOOL (1770–1828), Tory Prime Minister of England 1812–27.

WILLIAM PITT (1759–1806), English statesman, Prime Minister 1783–1801, 1804–6, second son of William Pitt, Earl of Chatham, by Lady Hester Grenville.

Francis Place (1771–1854), English radical reformer, best known for his success in securing the repeal in 1824 of the Combination Acts. He started life as a maker of leather breeches, and was drawn into radical activity in 1793 when he attempted to organize a strike among his colleagues. He was a member of the London Corresponding Society, 1794–7; in 1799 he opened a tailoring shop in Charing Cross, and gained commercial success. From 1816 to 1823 he carried on a campaign against the Sinking Fund. Hazlitt did not approve of his close association with the Utilitarians, notably James Mill, who used to call on him on his journeys between Stoke Newington and Bentham's house in Queen's Square Place. He never forgave Place for having 'marred' the Westminster election of 1819 when Hobhouse stood as an independent reformer. Place presented a 'Report to the Westminster Electors' at a public meeting on 9 February 1819, which attacked the Whigs as a 'corrupt and profligate faction'. It led the Whigs to oppose Hobhouse in the election, successfully, by nominating George Lamb to stand against him. This was a particular disappointment for Hazlitt as, for once, he held the franchise and

cast what he afterwards regarded as an ineffectual vote for Hobhouse (see pp. 175, 351).

JOHN SCOTT, LORD ELDON (1751–1838), Lord Chancellor of England during most of the period from 1804 to 1827, memorable for the soundness and slowness of his judgements, and his opposition to reform. He had been responsible for Pitt's 'gagging acts' and the Treason Trials of 1794, and in later years was known for his repressive policy towards internal dissent and uncompromising opposition to Catholic emancipation. He is the subject of one of the more lethal essays in *The Spirit of the Age*, vol. 7, pp. 206–10.

WILLIAM SMITH (1756–1835), politician, was fervent in the reformers' cause from the time he entered Parliament in 1784. He was particularly active on behalf of the abolitionist movement; Wilberforce was a close friend. His significance in this volume is due largely to his part in the seditious assemblies bill of 1817, when he expressed indignation at the difference between the views of Southey as reviewer for the *Quarterly* and as author of *Wat Tyler*.

J. C. SPURZHEIM, phrenologist (1776–1832). Hazlitt read *The Physiognomical System of Drs Gall and Spurzheim; founded on an Anatomical and Physiological Examination of the Nervous System in general, and of the Brain in particular* (1815) in great detail, and wrote several essays critical of it in *The Plain Speaker*. He also claims to have met Spurzheim, but it is not known when or where the encounter took place. Spurzheim arrived in England in October 1814, visited Ireland the following year, and arrived in Scotland 24 June 1816. Hazlitt dined with Spurzheim's disciple, George Combe, in April 1822, when the main topic was phrenology; see Stanley Jones, 'Hazlitt in Edinburgh: An Evening with Mr Ritchie of *The Scotsman*', *Études Anglaises*, 17 (1964), pp. 9–20, 113–27.

EDWARD STERLING (1773–1847) was educated at Trinity College, Dublin, and called to the Irish bar. He contemplated a military career, but after publishing a pamphlet on military reform he became a regular correspondent of *The Times* newspaper under the signature of 'Vetus'. A selection of Vetus's letters to *The Times* was published in 1812, and went to a second edition in January 1813. He engaged in spirited debate with Hazlitt, at that time writing for the *Morning Chronicle*. He was at Paris during the peace interval of 1814–15, and on his return became a regular and important member of *The Times* staff. As Jones notes, the illustrations of Vetus were the only good things Hazlitt ever wrote, according to Godwin (Jones, p. 121).

SIR JOHN STODDART (1773–1856), journalist, was educated at Oxford and soon after met Wordsworth and Coleridge. In the 1790s he was known to Lamb as a disciple of Godwin, with strong radical views. He was admitted to the College of Advocates in 1801, and from 1803 to 1807 he was the King's and the Admiralty Advocate in Malta. Returning to England, he was from 1812 to 1816 a leader-writer on *The Times*, where he became a staunch critic of

BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL DIRECTORY

Bonaparte. The extremity of his views appears to have contributed to his dismissal, after which he set up a rival paper, *The Day, or New Times*, which ran until 1828. During this period he was satirised by Moore as Dr Slop. He was knighted in 1826.

JOHN HORNE TOOKE (1736–1812) was elected MP for Old Sarum in 1801, after unsuccessfully contesting Westminster in 1790 and 1797. Hazlitt had met him in the late 1790s, and attended *soirées* at Tooke's fine house overlooking Rushmere Pond on Wimbledon Common in subsequent years. See Hazlitt's essay on him in *The Spirit of the Age* (vol. 7, pp. 114–23).

NICHOLAS VANSITTART, 1ST BARON BEXLEY (1766–1851) started life as a Pittite Tory; he was appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer on 20 May 1812. He began his period in office by making new proposals for taxation. Two years later, after the peace, he was compelled to maintain the war taxes, and to raise immense loans for the Sinking Fund. The escape of Napoleon made it necessary in the budget of 14 June 1815 to account for the expenditure of over £79 million, which was again met by renewal of the war taxes and the issue of further loans. In this year taxation of the country reached an unprecedented total. On 12 February 1816 he proposed to reduce rather than abolish the property tax – which was regarded as a breach of good faith, the contention being that it was a war tax. His proposal was rejected by the House on 18 March. As a result he made additions to post dues and excise, and increased soap tax.

JOHN WALTER (1776–1847), chief proprietor of *The Times* newspaper, was educated at Oxford, and joined the staff of *The Times* in 1798, becoming sole manager in 1803. Under Walter the paper was largely independent of the government, frequently opposing Pitt's administration. From 1805 Walter began to establish a network of foreign correspondents, one of whom was Henry Crabb Robinson. At first he was his own editor, but in around 1812 handed over some of the editorial duties to John Stoddart, who was dismissed at the end of 1816, apparently because of his strong Tory prejudices. He introduced the steam-press in his printing house in November 1814.

RICHARD COLLEY, MARQUIS WELLESLEY (1760–1842), Governor-General of India, eldest brother of Arthur Wellesley, Duke of Wellington. He was an MP from 1784; as a liberal, he sympathised with the abolitionists and with Pitt's free-trade principles. However, he drew the line at parliamentary reform, worried by the excesses of the Revolution. Appointed to the Board of Control for Indian Affairs in 1793, he devoted himself to Indian business. He was Governor-General of India 1797–1812. After Percival's assassination on 11 May 1812 he was asked by the Prince Regent to form a government, but failed to do so; instead, Liverpool's government came to power and remained in power until 1827, for which time Wellesley was out of office. In succeeding years his views diverged from those of his illustrious brother: he advocated recognition of

Napoleon as ruler of France, opposed a renewal of war on Napoleon's return from Elba, and opposed the treaty of Fontainebleau, foreseeing that Napoleon would not observe it. He is the subject of considerable ridicule from Hazlitt in the first of the essays in this volume.

CHARLES CALLIS WESTERN (1767–1844), an Essex landowner and member for the county, created Baron Western in 1833. He was returned to Parliament in 1790 as member for Maldon, which he represented until 1812, when he obtained a seat for his county, which he retained for twenty years. He was the mouthpiece for agricultural interests in the Commons, and a leading promoter of the Corn Bill of 1815. On 7 March 1816 he moved that the House should resolve itself into committee to consider the distressed state of agriculture in the United Kingdom.

SAMUEL WHITBREAD (1758–1815), politician, educated at Eton, Oxford and Cambridge before being elected MP for Bedford in 1790 as a close associate of Fox. Throughout the war with France he was one of those most insistent on the need to make peace. From 1809 to the time of his death he spoke more than any other member of the House, attacking abuses of all kinds, supporting the cause of the Princess of Wales, and questioning the grounds of war with America in 1814. He died by his own hand.

WILLIAM WILBERFORCE (1759–1833), MP for Hull, 1780–4; for Yorkshire, 1784–1812; and for Bramber 1812–25. He was a member of the 'Clapham Sect', and led the fight for abolition of the slave trade; it was abolished by the coalition government in 1807, and emancipation was carried in 1833. Apart from his efforts in this cause and on behalf of missionary work in India, he supported the Tory ministries of Pitt (his intimate friend) and the Duke of Portland, Perceval and Lord Liverpool. In particular he approved the coercive measures of 1795 and 1817.

POLITICAL ESSAYS,

WITH

Sketches of Public Characters.

BY

WILLIAM HAZLITT.

"Come, draw the curtain, shew the picture."

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR WILLIAM HONE,

45, LUDGATE HILL.

1819.



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

To JOHN HUNT, Esq.

The tried, steady, zealous, and conscientious advocate of the liberty of his country, and the rights of mankind; –

One of those few persons who are what they would be thought to be; sincere without offence, firm but temperate; uniting private worth to public principle; a friend in need, a patriot without an eye to himself; who never betrayed an individual or a cause he pretended to serve – in short, that rare character, a man of common sense and common honesty,

This volume is respectfully and gratefully
inscribed by

THE AUTHOR /



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

Preface.

I am no politician,¹ and still less can I be said to be a party-man: but I have a hatred of tyranny, and a contempt for its tools; and this feeling I have expressed as often and as strongly as I could. I cannot sit quietly down under the claims of barefaced power, and I have tried to expose the little arts of sophistry by which they are defended. I have no mind to have my person made a property of, nor my understanding made a dupe of. I deny that liberty and slavery are convertible terms, that right and wrong, truth and falsehood, plenty and famine, the comforts or wretchedness of a people, are matters of perfect indifference. That is all I know of the matter; but on these points I am likely to remain incorrigible, in spite of any arguments that I have seen used to the contrary. It needs no sagacity to discover that two and two make four; but to persist in maintaining this obvious position, if all the fashion, authority, hypocrisy, and venality of mankind were arrayed against it, would require a considerable effort of personal courage, and would soon leave a man in a / very formidable minority. Again, I am no believer in the doctrine of *divine right*, either as it regards the Stuarts or the Bourbons; nor can I bring myself to approve of the enormous waste of blood and treasure wilfully incurred by a family that supplanted the one in this country to restore the others in France. It is to my mind a piece of sheer impudence. The question between natural liberty and hereditary slavery, whether men are born free or slaves, whether kings are the servants of the people, or the people the property of kings (whatever we may think of it in the abstract, or debate about it in the schools) – in this country, in Old England, and under the succession of the House of Hanover, is not a question of theory, but has been long since decided by certain facts and feelings, to call which in question would be equally inconsistent with proper respect to the people, or common decency towards the throne. An English subject cannot call this principle in question without renouncing his country; an English prince cannot call it in question without disclaiming his title to the crown, which was placed by our ancestors on the head of his ancestors, on no other ground and for no other possible purpose than to vindicate this sacred principle in their own persons, and to hold it out as an example to posterity and to the world. An Elector of Hanover, called over here to be made king of England, in contempt and to the exclusion of the claims

of the old, hereditary possessors and pretenders to the throne, on any other plea except that of his / being the chosen representative and appointed guardian of the rights and liberties of the people (the consequent pledge and guarantee of the rights and liberties of other nations) would indeed be a solecism more absurd and contemptible than any to be found in history. What! Send for a petty Elector of a petty foreign state to reign over us from respect to *his* right to the throne of these realms,² in defiance of the legitimate heir to the crown, and 'in contempt of the choice of the people!'³ Oh monstrous fiction! Miss Flora Mac Ivor⁴ would not have heard of such a thing: the author of *Waverley* has well answered Mr Burke's 'Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs.'^{*} / Let not our respect for our ancestors, who fought and bled for their own freedom, and to aid (not to stifle) the cause of freedom in other nations, suffer us to believe this poor idiot calumny of them. Let not our shame at having been inveigled into crusades and Holy Alliances against the freedom of mankind, suffer us to be made the dupes of it ourselves, in thought, in word, or deed. The question of genuine liberty or of naked slavery, if put in words, should be answered by Englishmen with scorn: if put in any other shape than words, it must be answered in a different way, unless they would lose the name of Englishmen! An Englishman has no distinguishing virtue but honesty: he has and can have no privilege or advantage over other nations but liberty. If he is not free, he is the worst of slaves, for he is nothing else. If he feels that he has wrongs and dare not say so, he is the meanest of hypocrites; for it is certain that he cannot be contented under them. – This was once a free, a proud, and happy country, when under a constitutional monarchy and a Whig king,⁵ it had just broken the chains of

* Mr Burke pretends in this Jesuitical Appeal, that a nation has a right to insist upon and revert to old establishments and prescriptive privileges, but not to lay claim to new ones; in a word, to change its governors, if refractory, but not its form of government, however bad. Thus he says we had a right to cashier James II, because he wished to alter the laws and religion as they were then established. By what right did we emancipate ourselves from popery and arbitrary power a century before? He defends his consistency in advocating the American Revolution, though the rebels, in getting rid of the reigning branch of the Royal Family, did not send for the next of kin to rule over them 'in contempt of their choice,' but prevented all such equivocations by passing at once from a viceroyalty to a republic. He also extols the Polish Revolution as a monument of wisdom and virtue (I suppose because it had not succeeded), though this also was a total and absolute change in the frame and principles of the government, to which the people were in this case bound by no feudal tenure or divine right. But he insists that the French Revolution was stark-naught, because the people here did the same thing, passed from slavery to liberty, from an arbitrary to a constitutional government, to which they had, it seems, no prescriptive right, and therefore, according to the appellant, no right at all. Oh / nice professor of humanity! We had a right to turn off James II because he broke a compact with the people. The French had no right to turn off Louis XVI because he broke no compact with them, for he had none to break; in other words, because he was an arbitrary despot, tied to no laws, and they a herd of slaves, and therefore they were bound, by every law divine and human, always to remain so, in perpetuity and by the grace of God! Oh unanswerable logician!

tyranny that were prepared for it, and successfully set at defiance the menaces / of an hereditary pretender; when the monarch still felt what he owed to himself and the people, and in the opposite claims which were set up to it, saw the real tenure on which he held his crown; when civil and religious liberty were the watch-words by which good men and true subjects were known to one another, not by the cant of legitimacy; when the reigning sovereign stood between you and the polluted touch of a bigot and a despot who stood ready to seize upon you and yours as his lawful prey; when liberty and loyalty went hand in hand, and the Tory principles of passive obedience and non-resistance were more unfashionable at court than in the country; when to uphold the authority of the throne, it was not thought necessary to undermine the privileges or break the spirit of the nation; when an Englishman felt that his name was another name for independence, 'the envy of less happier lands,'⁶ when it was his pride to be born, and his wish that other nations might become free; before a sophist and an apostate had dared to tell him that he had no share, no merit, no free agency, in the glorious Revolution of 1688, and that he was bound to lend a helping hand to crush all others, that implied a right in the people to chuse their own form of government; before he was become sworn brother to the Pope, familiar to the Holy Inquisition, an encourager of the massacres of his Protestant brethren, a patron of the Bourbons, and jailor to the liberties of mankind! Ah, John Bull! John Bull! thou art not what thou wert in the days of thy / friend, Arbuthnot! Thou wert an honest fellow then: now thou art turned bully and coward.⁷

This is the only politics I know; the only patriotism I feel. The question with me is, whether I and all mankind are born slaves or free. That is the one thing necessary to know and to make good: the rest is, *floci, nauci, nihili, pili*.⁸ Secure this point, and all is safe: lose this, and all is lost. There are people who cannot understand a principle; nor perceive how a cause can be connected with an individual, even in spite of himself, nor how the salvation of mankind can be bound up with the success of one man. It is in vain that I address to them what follows. – 'One fate attends the altar and the throne.'⁹ So sings Mr Southey. I say, that one fate attends the people and the assertor of the people's rights against those who say they have no rights, that they are their property, their goods, their chattels, the live-stock on the estate of Legitimacy. This is what kings at present tell us with their swords, and poets with their pens. He who tells me this deprives me not only of the right, but of the very heart and will to be free, takes the breath out of the body of liberty, and leaves it a dead and helpless corse, destroys 'at one fell swoop'¹⁰ the dearest hopes, and blasts the fairest prospects of mankind through all ages and nations, sanctifies slavery, binds it as a spell on the understanding, and makes freedom a mockery, and the name a bye-word. The poor wretch immured in the dungeons of the Inquisition may breathe a sigh to liberty, may / repeat its name, may think of it as a blessing, if not to himself, to others; but the wretch imprisoned in the dungeon

of Legitimacy, the very tomb of freedom, that 'painted sepulchre, white without, but full of ravening and all uncleanness within,'¹¹ must not even think of it, must not so much as dream of it, but as a thing forbid: it is a profanation to his lips, an impiety to his thoughts; his very imagination is enthralled, and he can only look forward to the never-ending flight of future years, and see the same gloomy prospect of abject wretchedness and hopeless desolation spread out for himself and his species. They who bow to thrones and hate mankind may here feast their eyes with blight, mildew, the blue pestilence and glittering poison of slavery, 'bogs, dens, and shades of death – a universe of death.'¹² This is that true moral atheism, the equal blasphemy against God and man, the sin against the Holy Ghost, that lowest deep of debasement and despair to which there is no lower deep. He who saves me from this conclusion, who makes a mock of this doctrine, and sets at nought its power, is to me not less than the God of my idolatry, for he has left one drop of comfort in my soul. The plague-spot has not tainted me quite; I am not leprous all over, the lie of Legitimacy does not fix its mortal sting in my inmost soul, nor, like an ugly spider, entangle me in its slimy folds; but is kept off from me, and broods on its own poison. He who did this for me, and for the rest of the world, and who alone could do it, was Buonaparte. He / withstood the inroads of this new Jaggernaut, this foul Blatant Beast, as it strode forward to its prey over the bodies and minds of a whole people, and put a ring in its nostrils, breathing flame and blood, and led it in triumph, and played with its crowns and sceptres, and wore them in its stead, and tamed its crested pride,¹³ and made it a laughing-stock and a mockery to the nations. He, one man, did this, and as long as he did this, (how, or for what end, is nothing to the magnitude of this mighty question) he saved the human race from the last ignominy, and that foul stain that had so long been intended, and was at last, in an evil hour and by evil hands, inflicted on it. He put his foot upon the neck of kings, who would have put their yoke upon the necks of the people: he scattered before him with fiery execution, millions of hired slaves, who came at the bidding of their masters to deny the right of others to be free. The monument of greatness and of glory he erected, was raised on ground forfeited again and again to humanity – it reared its majestic front on the ruins of the shattered hopes and broken faith of the common enemies of mankind. If he could not secure the freedom, peace, and happiness of his country, he made her a terror to those who by sowing civil dissension and exciting foreign wars, would not let her enjoy those blessings. They who had trampled upon Liberty could not at least triumph in her shame and her despair, but themselves became objects of pity and derision. Their determination to persist in extremity of wrong only / brought on themselves repeated defeat, disaster, and dismay: the accumulated aggressions their infuriated pride and disappointed malice meditated against others, returned in just and aggravated punishment upon themselves: they heaped coals of fire upon their own heads; they drank deep and long, in gall and bitterness, of the poisoned chalice

they had prepared for others: the destruction with which they had threatened a people daring to call itself free, hung suspended over their heads, like a precipice, ready to fall upon and crush them. 'Awhile they stood abashed,'¹⁴ abstracted from their evil purposes, and felt how awful freedom is, its power how dreadful. Shrunk from the boasted pomp of royal state into their littleness as men, defeated of their revenge, balked of their prey, their schemes stripped of their bloated pride, and with nothing left but the deformity of their malice, not daring to utter a syllable or move a finger, the lords of the earth, who had looked upon men as of an inferior species, born for their use, and devoted to be their slaves, turned an imploring eye to the people, and with coward hearts and hollow tongues invoked the name of Liberty, thus to get the people once more within their unhallowed gripe, and to stifle the name of Liberty for ever. I never joined the vile and treacherous cry of spurious humanity in favour of those who have from the beginning of time, and will to the end of it, make a butt of humanity, and its distresses their sport. I knew that shameful was this new alliance between kings and people; fatal this pretended / league: that 'never can true reconciliation grow where wounds of deadly hate have pierced so deep.'¹⁵ I was right in this respect. I knew my friends from my foes. So did Lord Castlereagh: so did not Benjamin Constant.¹⁶ Did any of the Princes of Europe ever regard Buonaparte as any thing more than the child and champion of Jacobinism? Why then should I: for on that point I bow to their judgments as infallible. Passion speaks truer than reason. If Buonaparte was a conqueror, he conquered the grand conspiracy of kings against the abstract right of the human race to be free; and I, as a man, could not be indifferent which side to take. If he was ambitious, his greatness was not founded on the unconditional, avowed surrender of the rights of human nature. But with him, the state of man rose exalted too. If he was arbitrary and a tyrant, first, France as a country was in a state of military blockade, on garrison-duty, and not to be defended by mere paper bullets of the brain;¹⁷ secondly, but chief, he was not, nor he could not become, a tyrant by right divine. Tyranny in him was not sacred: it was not eternal: it was not instinctively bound in league of amity with other tyrannies; it was not sanctioned by all the laws of religion and morality. There was an end of it with the individual: there was an end of it with the temporary causes, which gave it birth, and of which it was only the too necessary reaction. But there are persons of that low and inordinate appetite for servility, that they cannot be satisfied with any thing / short of that sort of tyranny that has lasted for ever, and is likely to last for ever; that is strengthened and made desperate by the superstitions and prejudices of ages; that is enshrined in traditions, in laws, in usages, in the outward symbols of power, in the very idioms of language; that has struck its roots into the human heart, and clung round the human understanding like a nightshade; that overawes the imagination, and disarms the will to resist it, by the very enormity of the evil; that is cemented with gold and blood; guarded by reverence, guarded by power; linked in endless

succession to the principle by which life is transmitted to the generations of tyrants and slaves, and destroying liberty with the first breath of life; that is absolute, unceasing, unerring, fatal, unutterable, abominable, monstrous. These true devotees of superstition and despotism cried out Liberty and Humanity in their desperate phrenzy at Buonaparte's sudden elevation and incredible successes against their favourite idol, 'that Harlot old, the same that is, that was, and is to be,'¹⁸ but we have heard no more of their triumph of Liberty and their *douce humanité*,¹⁹ since they clapped down the hatches upon us again, like wretches in a slave-ship who have had their chains struck off and pardon promised them to fight the common enemy; and the poor Reformers who were taken in to join the cry, because they are as fastidious in their love of liberty as their opponents are inveterate in their devotion to despotism, continue in vain to reproach them with their / temporary professions, woeful grimaces, and vows made in pain, which ease has recanted; but to these reproaches the legitimate professors of Liberty and Humanity do not even deign to return the answer of a smile at their credulity and folly. Those who did not see this result at the time were, I think, weak; those who do not acknowledge it now are, I am sure, hypocrites. – To this pass have we been brought by the joint endeavours of Tories, Whigs, and Reformers; and as they have all had a hand in it, I shall here endeavour to ascribe to each their share of merit in this goodly piece of work. It is, perhaps, a delicate point, but it is of no inconsiderable importance, that the friends of Freedom should know the strength of their enemies, and their own weakness as well; for

At this day,
 When a Tartarean darkness overspreads
 The groaning nations; when the impious rule,
 By will or by established ordinance,
 Their own dire agents, and constrain the good
 To acts which they abhor; though I bewail
 This triumph, yet the pity of my heart
 Prevents me not from owning that the law
 By which mankind now suffers, is most just.
 For by superior energies; more strict
 Affiance to each other; faith more firm
 In their unhallowed principles; the bad
 Have fairly earned a victory o'er the weak,
 The vacillating, inconsistent good.²⁰

A Reformer is not a gregarious animal. Speculative opinion leads men different ways, each according / to his particular fancy: – it is prejudice or interest that drives before it the herd of mankind. That *which is*, with all its confirmed abuses and 'tickling commodities,'²¹ is alone solid and certain: that *which may be* or *ought to be*, has a thousand shapes and colours, according to the eye that sees it, is infinitely variable and evanescent in its effects. Talk of mobs as we will, the only true mob

is that incorrigible mass of knaves and fools in every country, who never think at all, and who never feel for any one but themselves. I call any assembly of people a mob (be it the House of Lords or House of Commons) where each person's opinion on any question is governed by what others say of it, and by what he can get by it. The only instance of successful resistance in the House of Commons to Ministers for many years was in the case of the Income-Tax;²² which touched their own pockets nearly. This was 'a feeling disputation,'²³ in which selfishness got the better of servility, while reason and humanity might have pleaded in vain. The exception proved the rule; and this evidence was alone wanting to establish their character for independence and disinterestedness. When some years ago Mr Robson brought forward²⁴ in the House the case of an Exchequer Bill for 3*l.* 16*s.* which had been refused payment at the Bank, the Chancellor of the Exchequer (then Mr Addington, now Lord Sidmouth) rose, and in a tone of indignation, severely reprimanded Mr Robson for having prematurely brought forward a fact which he knew to be / impossible; and the House cheered the Minister, and scouted Mr Robson and his motion for inquiry. The next day, Mr Robson repeated his charge, and Mr Addington rose, and in the same tone of official authority, brow-beat Mr Robson for having brought forward, as something reprehensible and extraordinary, what he said happened every day, though the day before he had undertaken of his own accord to pronounce it impossible; and the House cheered the Minister, and scouted Mr Robson and his motion for inquiry. What was it to them whether Mr Robson was right or wrong? It was their cue (I speak this of the House of Commons of 1803)²⁵ to support the Minister, whether right or wrong! Every corporate body, or casual concourse of people, is nothing more than a collection of prejudices, and the only arguments current with them, a collection of watch-words. You may ring the changes for ever on the terms Bribery and Corruption with the people in Palace-yard, as they do in the Room over the way²⁶ on Religion, Loyalty, Public Credit, and Social Order. There is no difference whatever in this respect between the Great Vulgar and the Small,²⁷ who are managed just in the same way by their different leaders. To procure unanimity, to get men to act in *corps*, we must appeal for the most part to gross and obvious motives, to authority and passion, to their vices, not their virtues: we must discard plain truth and abstract justice as doubtful and inefficient pleas, retaining only the names and the pretext as a / convenient salvo for hypocrisy! He is the best leader of a party who can find out the greatest number of common-places faced with the public good; and he will be the stoutest partisan who can best turn the lining to account. – Tory sticks to Tory: Whig sticks to Whig: the Reformer sticks neither to himself nor to any body else. It is no wonder he comes to the ground with all his schemes and castle-building. A house divided against itself cannot stand. It is a pity, but it cannot be helped. A Reformer is necessarily and naturally a Marplot, for the foregoing and the following reasons. First, he does not very well know what he

would be at. Secondly, if he did, he does not care very much about it. Thirdly, he is governed habitually by a spirit of contradiction, and is always wise beyond what is practicable. He is a bad tool to work with; a part of a machine that never fits its place; he cannot be trained to discipline, for he follows his own idle humours, or drilled into an obedience to orders, for the first principle of his mind is the supremacy of conscience, and the independent right of private judgment. A man to be a Reformer must be more influenced by imagination and reason than by received opinions or sensible impressions. With him ideas bear sway over things; the possible is of more value than the real; that which is not, is better than that which is. He is by the supposition a speculative (and somewhat fantastical) character; but there is no end of possible speculations, of imaginary questions, and nice distinctions; / or if there were, he would not willingly come to it; he would still prefer living in the world of his own ideas, be for raising some new objection, and starting some new chimera, and never be satisfied with any plan that he found he could realise. Bring him to a fixed point, and his occupation would be gone. A Reformer never is – but always to be blest,²⁸ in the accomplishment of his airy hopes and shifting schemes of progressive perfectibility. Let him have the plaything of his fancy, and he will spoil it, like the child that makes a hole in its drum: set some brilliant illusion before his streaming eyes, and he will lay violent hands upon it, like little wanton boys that play with air-bubbles. Give him one thing, and he asks for another; like the dog in the fable, he loses the substance for the shadow: offer him a great good, and he will not stretch out his hand to take it, unless it were the greatest possible good. And then who is to determine what is the greatest possible good? Among a thousand pragmatistical speculators, there will be a thousand opinions on this subject; and the more they differ, the less will they be inclined to give way or compromise the matter. With each of these, his self-opinion is the first thing to be attended to; his understanding must be satisfied in the first place, or he will not budge an inch; he cannot for the world give up a principle to a party. He would rather have slavery than liberty, unless it is a liberty precisely after his own fashion: he would sooner have the Bourbons than Buonaparte; for he truly is for a / Republic, and if he cannot have that, is indifferent about the rest. So (to compare great things with small) Mr Place, of Charing-Cross,²⁹ chose rather that Mr Hobhouse should lose his Election than that it should not be accompanied with his Resolutions; so he published his Resolutions, and lost Mr Hobhouse his Election. That is, a patriot of this stamp is really indifferent about every thing but what he cannot have; instead of making his option between two things, a good or an evil, within his reach, our exquisite Sir³⁰ sets up a third thing as the object of his choice, with some impossible condition annexed to it, – to dream, to talk, to write, to be meddlesome and troublesome about, to serve him for a topic of captious discontent or vague declamation, and which if he saw any hopes of cordial agreement or practical co-operation to carry it into effect, he would instantly contrive to mar,

and split it into a thousand fractions, doubts, and scruples, to make it an impossibility for any thing ever to be done for the good of mankind, which is merely the plaything of his theoretical imbecility and active impertinence! The Goddess of his idolatry is and will always remain a cloud, instead of a Juno.³¹ One of these virtuosos, these Nicolas Gimcracks³² of Reform, full of intolerable and vain conceit, sits smiling in the baby-house of his imagination, 'pleased with a feather, tickled with a straw,'³³ trimming the balance of power in the looking-glass of his own self-complacency, having every thing his own way at a word's speaking, making / the 'giant-mass'³⁴ of things only a reflection of his personal pretensions, approving every thing that is right, condemning every thing that is wrong, in compliment to his own character, considering how what he says will affect not the cause, but himself; keeping himself aloof from party-spirit, and from every thing that can cast a shade on the fancied delicacy of his own breast, and thus letting the cause of Liberty slip through his fingers, and be spilt like water on the ground: – while another, more bold than he, in a spirit of envy and ignorance, quarrels with all those who are labouring at the same oar, lays about him like mad, runs a-muck at every one who has done, or is likely to do, any thing to promote the common object, and with his desperate club dashes out his neighbour's brains, and thinks he has done a good piece of service to the cause, because he has glutted his own ill-humour and self-will, which he mistakes for the love of liberty and a zeal for truth! Others, not able to do mischief enough singly, club their senseless contradictions and unmanageable humours together, turn their attention to cabal and chicane, get into committees, make speeches, move or second resolutions, dictate to their followers, set up for the heads of a party, in opposition to another party; abuse, vilify, expose, betray, counteract and undermine each other in every way, and throw the game into the hands of the common enemy, who laughs in his sleeve, and watches them and their little perverse, pettifogging passions at work for him, from the high / tower of his pride and strength! If an honest and able man arises among them, they grow jealous of him, and would rather, in the petty ostracism of their minds, that their cause should fail, than that another should have the credit of bringing it to a triumphant conclusion. They criticise his conduct, carp at his talents, denounce his friends, suspect his motives, and do not rest, till by completely disgusting him with the name of Reform and Reformers, they have made him what they wish, a traitor and deserter from a cause that no man can serve! This is just what they like – they satisfy their malice, they have to find out a new leader, and the cause is to begin again! So it was, and so it will be, while man remains the little, busy, mischievous animal described in Gulliver's Travels! – A pretty hopeful set to make head against their opponents – a rope of sand against a rock of marble – with no centre of gravity, but a collection of atoms whirled about in empty space by their own levity, or jostling together by numberless points of repulsion, and tossed with all their officious projects and airy predictions, by the first breath of caprice or shock

of power, into that Limbo of Vanity, where embryo statesmen and drivelling legislators dance the hays of Reform,³⁵ ‘perpetual circle, multiform and mix, and hinder all things,’³⁶ proud of the exclusive purity of their own motives, and the unattainable perfection of their own plans! – How different from the self-centred, well-knit, inseparable phalanx of power and authority opposed to their / impotent and abortive designs! A Tory is one who is governed by sense and habit alone. He considers not what is possible, but what is real; he gives might the preference over right. He cries Long Life to the conqueror, and is ever strong upon the stronger side³⁷ – the side of corruption and prerogative. He says what others say; he does as he is prompted by his own advantage. He knows on which side his bread is buttered, and that St Peter is well at Rome.³⁸ He is for going with Sancho to Camacho’s wedding, and not for wandering with Don Quixote in the desert, after the mad lover.³⁹ Strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth to Reform, but broad is the way that leadeth to Corruption, and multitudes there are that walk therein.⁴⁰ The Tory is sure to be in the thickest of them. His principle is to follow the leader; and this is the infallible rule to have numbers and success on your side, to be on the side of success and numbers. Power is the rock of his salvation; priestcraft is the second article of his implicit creed. He does not trouble himself to inquire which is the best form of government – but he knows that the reigning monarch is ‘the best of kings.’⁴¹ He does not, like a fool, contest for modes of faith; but like a wise man, swears by that which is by law established. He has no principles himself, nor does he profess to have any, but will cut your throat for differing with any of his bigotted dogmas, or for objecting to any act of power that he supposes necessary to his interest. He will take his Bible-oath that / black is white, and that whatever is, is right, if it is for his convenience. He is for having a slice in the loan, a share in a borough, a situation in the church or state, or for standing well with those who have. He is not for empty speculations, but for full pockets. He is for having plenty of beef and pudding, a good coat to his back, a good house over his head, and for cutting a respectable figure in the world. He is *Epicuri de grege porcus*⁴² – not a man but a beast. He is steyed in his prejudices – he wallows in the mire of his senses – he cannot get beyond the trough of his sordid appetites, whether it is of gold or wood. Truth and falsehood are, to him, something to buy and sell; principle and conscience, something to eat and drink. He tramples on the plea of Humanity, and lives, like a caterpillar, on the decay of public good. Beast as he is, he knows that the King is the fountain of honour, that there are good things to be had in the Church, treats the cloth with respect, bows to a magistrate, lies to the tax-gatherer, nicknames the Reformers, and ‘blesses the Regent and the Duke of York.’⁴³ He treads the primrose path of preferment,⁴⁴ ‘when a great wheel goes up a hill, holds fast by it, and when it rolls down, lets it go.’⁴⁵ He is not an enthusiast, a Utopian philosopher or a Theophilanthropist,⁴⁶ but a man of business and the world, who minds the main chance, does as other people do, and takes his wife’s

advice to get on in the world, and set up a coach for her to ride in, as fast as possible. This fellow is in the right, and / 'wiser in his generation than the children of the light.'⁴⁷ The 'servile slaves'⁴⁸ of wealth and power have a considerable advantage over the independent and the free. How much easier is it to smell out a job than to hit upon a scheme for the good of mankind! How much safer is it to be the tool of the oppressor than the advocate of the oppressed! How much more fashionable to fall in with the opinion of the world, to bow the knee to Baal, than to seek for obscure and obnoxious truth! How strong are the ties that bind men together for their own advantage, compared with those that bind them to the good of their country or of their kind! For as the Reformer has no guide to his conclusions but speculative reason, which is a source not of unanimity or certainty, but of endless doubt and disagreement, so he has no ground of attachment to them but a speculative interest, which is too often liable to be warped by sinister motives, and is a flimsy barrier against the whole weight of worldly and practical interests opposed to it. He either tires and grows lukewarm after the first gloss of novelty is over, and is thrown into the hands of the adverse party, or to keep alive an interest in it, he makes it the stalking-horse of his ambition, of his personal enmity, of his conceit or love of gossiping; as we have seen. An opinion backed by power and prejudice, rivetted and mortised to the throne, is of more force and validity than all the abstract reason in the world, without power and prejudice. A cause centred in an individual, / which is strengthened by all the ties of passion and self-interest, as in the case of a king against a whole people, is more likely to prevail than that of a scattered multitude, who have only a common and divided interest to hold them together, and 'screw their courage to the sticking-place,'⁴⁹ against an influence, that is never distracted or dissipated; that neither slumbers nor sleeps; that is never lulled into security, nor tamed by adversity; that is intoxicated with the insolence of success, and infuriated with the rage of disappointment; that eyes its one sole object of personal aggrandisement, moves unremittingly to it, and carries after it millions of its slaves and train-bearers. Can you persuade a king to hear reason, to submit his pretensions to the tribunal of the people, to give up the most absurd and mischievous of his prerogatives? No: he is always true to himself, he grasps at power and hugs it close, as it is exorbitant or invidious, or likely to be torn from him; and his followers stick to him, and never boggle at any lengths they are forced to go, because they know what they have to trust to in the good faith of kings to themselves and one another. Power then is fixed and immoveable, for this reason, because it is lodged in an individual who is driven to madness by the undisputed possession, or apprehended loss of it; his self-will is the key-stone that supports the tottering arch of corruption, steadfast as it leans on him: – liberty is vacillating, transient, and hunted through the world, because it is entrusted to the / breasts of many, who care little about it, and quarrel in the execution of their trust. Too many cooks spoil the broth. The principle of tyranny is in fact identified with a man's

pride and the servility of others in the highest degree; the principle of liberty abstracts him from himself, and has to contend in its feeble course with all his own passions, prejudices, interests, and those of the world and of his own party; the cavils of Reformers, the threats of Tories, and the sneers of Whigs.*

A modern Whig is but the fag-end of a Tory. The old Whigs⁵⁰ were in principle what the modern Jacobins are, Anti-Jacobites, that is, opposers of the doctrine of divine right, the one in the soil of England, the other by parity of reasoning in the soil of France. But the Opposition have pressed so long against the Ministry without effect, that being the / softer substance, and made of more yielding materials, they have been moulded into their image and superscription, spelt backwards, or they differ as concave and convex, or they go together like substantive and adjective, or like man and wife, they two have become one flesh. A Tory is the indispensable prop to the doubtful sense of self-importance, and peevish irritability of negative success, which mark the life of a Whig leader or underling. They 'are subdued even to the very quality'⁵¹ of the Lords of the Treasury Bench, and have quarrelled so long that they would be quite at a loss without the ordinary food of political contention. To interfere between them is as dangerous as to interfere in a matrimonial squabble. To overturn the one is to trip up the heels of the other. Their hostility is not directed against things at all, nor to effectual and decisive opposition to men, but to that sort of petty warfare and parliamentary *tracasserie*, of which there is neither end nor use, except making the parties concerned of consequence in their own eyes, and contemptible in those of the nation. They will not allow Ministers to be severely handled by any one but themselves, nor even that: but they say civil things of them in the House of Commons, and whisper scandal against them at Holland House.⁵² This shews gentlemanly refinement and good breeding; while my Lord Erskine⁵³ 'calls us untaught knaves, unmannerly to come betwixt the wind and his nobility.'⁵⁴ But the leaden bullets and steel bayonets, the *ultima ratio regum*,⁵⁵ by which / these questions are practically decided, do their business in another-guess manner; they do not stand on the same ceremony. Soft words and hard blows are a losing game to play at: and this, one would think, the Opposition, if they were sincere, must have

* There is none of this perplexity and jarring of different objects in the tools of power. Their jealousies, heart-burnings, love of precedence, or scruples of conscience, are made subservient to the great cause in which they are embarked; they leave the amicable division of the spoil to the powers that be; all angry disputes are hushed in the presence of the throne, and the corrosive, fretful particles of human nature fly off, and are softened by the influence of a court atmosphere. Courtiers hang together like a swarm of bees about a honey-comb. Not so the Reformers; for they have no honey-comb to attract them. It has been said that Reformers are often indifferent characters. The reason is, that the ties which bind most men to their duties – habit, example, regard to appearances – are relaxed in them; and other and better principles are, as yet, weak and unconfirmed.

found out long ago. But they rather wish to screen the Ministry, as their *locum tenens* in the receipt of the perquisites of office and the abuse of power, of which they themselves expect the reversion.

Strange that such difference should be
'Twixt Tweedledum and Tweedledee.⁵⁶

The distinction between a great Whig and Tory Lord is laughable. For Whigs to Tories 'nearly are allied, and thin partitions do their bounds divide.'⁵⁷ So I cannot find out the different drift (as far as politics are concerned) of the Edinburgh and Quarterly Reviews,⁵⁸ which remind one of Opposition coaches, that raise a great dust or spatter one another with mud, but both travel the same road and arrive at the same destination. When the Editor of a respectable Morning Paper reproached me with having called Mr Gifford a cat's-paw, I did not tell him that he was a glove upon that cat's-paw. I might have done so. There is a difference between a sword and a foil. The Whigs do not at all relish that ugly thing, a knock-down blow; which is so different from their endless see-saw way of going about a question. They are alarmed, 'lest the courtiers offended should be:'⁵⁹ for they are so afraid of their adversaries, / that they dread the reaction even of successful opposition to them, and will neither attempt it themselves, nor stand by any one that does. Any writer who is not agreeable to the Tories, becomes obnoxious to the Whigs; he is disclaimed by them as a dangerous colleague, merely for having 'done the cause some service;'⁶⁰ is considered as having the malicious design to make a breach of the peace, and to interrupt with most admired disorder the harmony and mutual good understanding which subsists between Ministers and the Opposition, and on the adherence to which they are alone suffered to exist, or to have a shadow of importance in the state. They are, in fact, a convenient medium to break the force of popular feeling, and to transmit the rays of popular indignation against the influence and power of the crown, blunted and neutralized by as many qualifications and refractions as possible. A Whig is properly what is called a Trimmer – that is, a coward to both sides of a question, who dare not be a knave nor an honest man, but is a sort of whiffling, shuffling, cunning, silly, contemptible, unmeaning negation of the two. He is a poor purblind creature, who halts between two opinions, and complains that he cannot get any two people to think alike. He is a cloak for corruption, and a mar-plot to freedom. He will neither do any thing himself, nor let any one else do it. He is on bad terms with the Government, and not on good ones with the people. He is an impertinence and a contradiction in the state. If he has a casting / weight, for fear of overdoing the mark, he throws it into the wrong scale. He is a person of equally feeble understanding and passions. He has some notion of what is right, just enough to hinder him from pursuing his own interest: he has selfish and worldly prudence enough, not to let him embark in any bold or decided measure for the advancement of truth and justice. He is afraid of

his own conscience, which will not let him lend his unqualified support to arbitrary measures; he stands in awe of the opinion of the world, which will not let him express his opposition to those measures with warmth and effect. His politics are a strange mixture of cross-purposes. He is wedded to forms and appearances, impeded by every petty obstacle and pretext of difficulty, more tenacious of the means than the end – anxious to secure all suffrages, by which he secures none – hampered not only by the ties of friendship to his actual associates, but to all those that he thinks may become so; and unwilling to offer arguments to convince the reason of his opponents lest he should offend their prejudices, by shewing them how much they are in the wrong; ‘letting I dare not wait upon I would, like the poor cat in the adage;’⁶¹ stickling for the letter of the Constitution, with the affectation of a prude, and abandoning its principles with the effrontery of a prostitute to any shabby Coalition he can patch up with its deadly enemies. This is very pitiful work; and, I believe, the public with me are tolerably sick of the character. At the same time, he / hurls up his cap with a foolish face of wonder and incredulity at the restoration of the Bourbons, and affects to chuckle with secret satisfaction over the last act of the Revolution, which reduced him to perfect insignificance. We need not wonder at the results, when it comes to the push between parties so differently constituted and unequally matched. We have seen what those results are. I cannot do justice to the picture, but I find it done to my hands in those prophetic lines of Pope, where he describes the last Triumph of Corruption: –

But 'tis the fall degrades her to a whore:
 Let greatness own her, and she's mean no more.
 Her birth, her beauty, crowds and courts confess;
 Chaste matrons praise her, and grave bishops bless:
 In golden chains the willing world she draws,
 And hers the Gospel is, and hers the Laws;
 Mounts the tribunal, lifts her scarlet head,
 And sees pale virtue carted in her stead.
 Lo! at the wheels of her triumphal car,
 Old England's genius, rough with many a scar,
 Dragg'd in the dust! his arms hang idly round,
 His flag inverted trails along the ground;
 Our youth, all liveried o'er with foreign gold,
 Before her dance, behind her crawl the old!
 See thronging millions to the Pagod run,
 And offer country, parent, wife, or son!
 Hear her black trumpet thro' the land proclaim,
 That *not to be corrupted is the shame*.
 In soldier, churchman, patriot, man in power,
 'Tis avarice all, ambition is no more!
 See all our nobles begging to be slaves!
 See all our fools aspiring to be knaves! /