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A Comparison of the Literary Criticism of

WALTER BAGEHOT

and

WILLIAM HAZLITT

by

Hugh R. Smith

Presented in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

State University of Montana

1933

Approved:



Chairman of Examining Committee



Chairman of Graduate Committee

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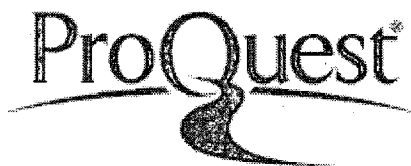


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A Comparison of the Literary Criticism of

Walter Bagehot

and

William Hazlitt

I. Introduction

1. Importance of Bagehot's Criticism

Any history of either nineteenth century English thought or of literature of the Mid-Victorian period must take some account of the work of Walter Bagehot. As contributor to periodicals, editor of the Economist, publisher of books on economics and political theory, and in no small measure as a conversationalist, he exercised a certain influence in several fields of thought between 1850 and 1871. His English Constitution and Economic Studies are still valuable in their fields, and Lombard Street is worth knowing for any student of banking. His essays on The Postulates of Political Economy and on Physics and Politics had their part in shaping political science.

His importance for the student of literature lies in a different field. His literary work falls into two kinds of précis-writing, literary criticism and biographical sketches. The latter, brilliant as they are, have lost much of their

general appeal with the loss of interest in many of the figures discussed; the criticism, because literature is less transitory than men and events, now has more intrinsic interest, perhaps, for the general reader; certainly for the student of literature.

Bagehot's criticism had a historical importance, apart from whatever merits it may have possessed. The late Mr. Saintsbury credits him with having written an essay that was "one of the first frankly to state and recognize Tennyson--the earliest of any importance perhaps to state and recognize Browning--among the leaders of mid-nineteenth century poetry."¹ However, most evaluations of his critical essays now are concerned with their readableness, or with their permanent value as criticism. More often Bagehot is discussed with reference to the former, as in this summary in Hugh Walker's Literature of the Victorian Era:

"Bagehot ranks primarily as an economist and constitutional writer...but in the fifties and sixties he was a power in criticism likewise. Sound judgment, a sense of humor, sympathy, and a gift for epigrammatic expression, make his criticism at once instructive and eminently readable."²

Saintsbury sums up his opinion of Bagehot as follows:

"There are not many better things in criticism than sanity and sense, especially when, as in Bagehot's case, they are combined with humour and good-humour....The study [of the Lit-

1. George Saintsbury, History of English Criticism (London, 1925), p. 496.

2. Hugh Walker, Literature of the Victorian Era (Cambridge, 1913), p. 957.

erary Studies] may result, without protest from me, in a high opinion of his criticism.¹

These pronouncements, one by an accepted authority on the nineteenth century, and the other by the only man who has attempted a historical evaluation of all criticism, would indicate that a study of Bagehot's criticism is warranted by his historical importance. He has also been popular among later writers. Woodrow Wilson devoted two of his not numerous shorter papers to him. The edition of his works by Mrs. Barrington in 1915 and the life in 1916 were reviewed in many of the major reviews in both England and America. The centenary in 1926 of his birth called forth leading articles in the Fortnightly Review and the London Bookman. Quotations from his essays will be found in many publications of the last twenty years that concern the subjects he wrote about: Irving Babbitt, Hugh Walker, J. Scott Clark all quote him frequently, for example. The essay on Bagehot in Herbert Read's The Sense of Glory (1930) is the latest in book form to attach real significance to him. The Everyman Library publishers have thought it worth while to reprint the literary essays.

1. Saintsbury, op. cit., p. 496 and footnote.

2. Reasons for Comparing Bagehot and Hazlitt

"Evaluating" a critic, or any literary man, is hazardous; particularly so when that man after fifty-odd years has as many admirers as Bagehot has today. Comparison does admit of some conclusiveness; and for this reason this study places him beside a better-known and more widely accepted critic whom he resembles in many respects--William Hazlitt--with particular attention to their literary criticism.

It has been convenient to place Bagehot along with Macaulay: most of the short reviews of Bagehot's works mention Macaulay sooner or later. His critical writing took much the same form--unified essays, centering in a personality, easy-flowing in style, with a journalistic tendency to loose classification. "He has all of Macaulay's clearness," writes the preface-writer to the Everyman edition of the essays, "and if he has less than Macaulay's force, he has more than Macaulay's humour, and more than Macaulay's depth."¹ A biographer writes:

"In the seventies² Bagehot succeeded to the mantle of Macaulay, and spoke in private of rendering an acknowledgement to their common master which he did not publicly perform."³

The "common master" was Hazlitt; it is with him this study is concerned.

Hazlitt has been chosen for two reasons: there are defi-

1. George Sampson, Bagehot's Literary Studies (Everyman Library, New York, 1927), v. 1, p. xvii.
2. Sic; rather, the fifties and sixties.
3. P. P. Howe, Life of Hazlitt (New York, 1923), p. 429.

nite, sometimes striking, similarities between the methods and conclusions of Bagehot and Hazlitt--characteristics more fundamental than those Bagehot shares with Macaulay; and there are evidences that Hazlitt's writings had more direct influence upon Bagehot's literary criticism than those of any other single man.

The similarities between the two men extend even to the formative elements in their lives. Both were, for instance, sons of conscientious Unitarians: William Hazlitt Sr. was a Unitarian minister, and Thomas Watson Bagehot was so strict that he sent Walter to London University rather than to Oxford or Cambridge because of the doctrinal tests at the older universities. Both, before taking up journalism, had tasted for metaphysical speculation, and that type of analytic runs through their writings. Both were very much of the world; though Hazlitt was somewhat more the man of letters, Bagehot the man of business. During the best years of their lives both were practicing journalists.

As to their literary work, it is necessary merely to read a page of each of them to see similarity; not so much in mechanics of style as in similar modes of thinking and in their preoccupations. Hazlitt is nearer Bacon and Montaigne in form and topic, nearer Schlegel and Coleridge in literary appreciation; where Bagehot is more toward Macaulay and Arnold in form and appreciation, respectively. But the two are of one dynasty, that of the interpreters of literature in the

language and ideology of the non-literary man. More specifically, as will be apparent in more detailed comparison, their critical judgments, their approach to their subject, the very manner of their critical expression and method of study are all shared.

Where there is so much likeness, influence could not but be suspected. Before Bagehot is placed in literary history, the relative importance of the "echoes" in his writing must be noted. There are many of them. The sentence structures and the form of the essays irresistibly remind one of Macaulay, who was an elder contemporary. Coleridge's literary theory is traceable in the Shakespeare criticism, in discussion of Shelley's imagination, and in some of the purely literary theory in the essay on "Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Browning". This one essay, which contains elements of most of the impressive brilliancy of thought Bagehot showed, Saintsbury rates high, historically; but the doctrinal framework, of which Bagehot was evidently proud--to judge by the space he gave to developing it--is a peculiar mixture of Ruskin's classification of the "true ideal" in Modern Painters, Coleridge's Biographia Literaria, and Arnold's essay on The Study of Poetry. The greater part, however, of the echoes traceable in Bagehot's writings are those reflecting Hazlitt, and they are important elements in his criticism.

The impression of brilliancy in Bagehot's writings, to

tell the truth, is to some extent superficial. There is much of the "happy faculty for voicing platitudes in unforgettable terms". One reviewer has stated bluntly that "there is nothing really distinguished about his essays on Shakespeare and Milton, Shelley, Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Browning. They are not among the best things thought and said about those, and one misses the sure touch of really great critics like Arnold and Renan."¹ Careful study of the essays does leave one feeling some thinness, both in the analytical thought and in the quality of appreciation of a work of art. He has admirers--from his friends Richard Holt Hutton and Viscount Bryce to Woodrow Wilson, Herbert Read, and George Sampson--who believe he deserves better than has been his fate. One reason for his lack of universal popularity these men probably did not sense--the derivative character of his work. Since interest in him is now confined for the most part to students and literary men, those who read him are likely to be familiar with the originals.

Augustine Birrell, in his biography William Hazlitt, notes the influence Hazlitt exerted upon Bagehot, and indicates the two forms in which it appears--restatement of Hazlitt's ideas, and verbal "echoes" from his writings:

"In this preface [Hazlitt's preface to Tucker's Light of

1. A. A. Baumann, "Works and Life of Walter Bagehot", in the Fortnightly Review, v. 104, Sept., 1915, p. 571.

Nature Pursued Tucker is described in terms which have always reminded me of Mr. Bagehot:-- [Quotation follows] This passage not only reminds me of Mr. Bagehot, but of a good many passages in Mr. Bagehot's books.¹

Hazlitt's success in circulating his opinions is largely attributable to the fact that, like his sworn admirer in our own day, Mr. Bagehot, he has always been a favorite author with journalists and ready-writers. His views are infectious, his style attractive, and his words very quotable with or without acknowledgement. Indeed it is very hard always to remember when you are quoting Hazlitt. No more original miscellaneous writer can easily be named than this same Mr. Bagehot, and yet he occasionally gives you half a page of Hazlitt without a word said about it. Compare Bagehot's description of Southey in his essay on 'Shakespeare' (Literary Studies, i, 137)² with Hazlitt's sketch of Southey in his The Spirit of the Age, and what I mean will be plain.³

3. Bibliographic Comment

Bagehot's criticism is almost all to be found in sixteen essays, published between 1852 and 1864, while Bagehot was between 26 and 38 years old. The dates of publication are as follows:

Hartley Coleridge--1852
 Shakespeare--The Man--1853
 Bishop Butler--1854
 William Cowper--1855
 The First Edinburgh Reviewers--1855
 Thomas Babington Macaulay--1856
 Edward Gibbon--1856
 Percy Bysshe Shelley--1856
 Beranger--1857
 The Wavefley Novels--1858

-
1. Augustine Birrell, William Hazlitt (New York, 1901), p. 80.
 2. The reference is to the Silver Library edition of the Literary Studies, published by Longmans, Green and Co., London.
 3. Birrell, op. cit., p. 129.

Charles Dickens--1858
 John Milton--1859
 Mr. Clough's Poems--1862
 Lady Mary Wortley Montagu--1862
 Sterne and Thackeray--1864
 Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Browning; or, Pure,
 Ornate, and Grotesque Art in English Poetry--
 1864

There are occasional references of note in others of his works to literary matters; when worthy of particular notice, they will be taken into consideration.

Hazlitt's criticism is widely scattered. Besides that in the lectures published as criticism, there is a great deal distributed through his miscellaneous essays. A study of Bagehot's quotations shows that he was familiar with certain works, and it is probable that he knew most of Hazlitt that had been published in 1850.

In the sixteen essays just named and two others¹ Hazlitt's name occurs at least seventeen times, usually in connection with a quotation from him. Four quotations are from the Table-Talk²; two from the Lectures on the English

1. "Oxford" and "Lord Brougham".

2. The places of quotation and the sources follow. (All references to the writings of Bagehot and Hazlitt are to two editions: The Works and Life of Walter Bagehot, edited by Mrs. Russell Barrington (10 vols., New York, 1915); and The Collected Works of William Hazlitt (12 vols. and index, London, 1902-6) edited by A. R. Waller and Arnold Glover.) (1) Bagehot, i. p. 220. in "Shakespeare--The Man", from Hazlitt, vi. p. 170-n. "On a Landscape of Nicolas Poussin". (2) Bagehot, ii. p. 219. "Percy Bysshe Shelley", from Hazlitt, vi. p. 148. "On Paradox and Commonplace". (3) Bagehot, i. 163. "Oxford", from Hazlitt, vi. p. 75. "On the Ignorance of the Lear-

Poets¹; three from The Spirit of the Age²; and one from the Lectures on the Age of Elizabeth³. There is one reference that would show familiarity with the Sketches and Essays⁴. Two anonymous references are traceable to the Political Essays (or the Winterslow volume) and the Lectures on the English Poets⁵. Another quotation takes a curiously significant

ned". (4) The derivation of the fourth quotation is fairly certain: "Genius, as Hazlitt would have said, 'puts him out.'" (Bagehot, ii, p. 243, "Percy Bysshe Shelley".) Hazlitt's essay "On the Ignorance of the Learned" contains the sentence, "Nature puts him out." (vi, p. 174. Italics Hazlitt's.) The phrase occurs elsewhere in Hazlitt, but most obtrusively here.

1. Bagehot, iii, p. 52. The Waverley Novels, from Hazlitt, v, 97. "On Thomson and Couper"; Bagehot, ii, p. 37, from Hazlitt, v, p. 92. "On Thomson and Couper".
2. Bagehot, ii, p. 94. "Thomas Babington Macaulay", from Hazlitt, iv, p. 286; Bagehot, ii, 324, "Lord Brougham", from Hazlitt, iv, 324; and Bagehot, ii, p. 307. "Lord Brougham", from Hazlitt, iv, p. 320.
3. Bagehot, ii, "The First Edinburgh Reviewers", p. 52, from Hazlitt, v, p. 319.
4. "Hazlitt wrote an essay to inquire 'Why the heroes of romance are insipid.'"--Bagehot, ii, "Charles Dickens", p. 96. This essay was also printed in the Literary Remains, reprinted 1836; but the Burke reference below points rather to the Sketches and Essays.
5. "As somebody said, he [Pitt] did not grow, he was cast."--Bagehot, i, "Shakespeare--The Man", p. 114; from Hazlitt's essay on "Pitt and Buonoparte", iii, p. 351, published in both the Political Essays and in the Winterslow collection.
 "It has been said, the way to answer all objections to Milton is to take the book down and read him..."--Bagehot, ii, 165. "Edward Gibbon"; also in essay on Milton, iii, p. 219; from Hazlitt, v, "On Shakespeare and Milton", p. 61.

form:

"It was for this reason that Hazlitt asserted that 'no woman ever cared for Burke's writings'. The matter, he said, was 'hard and dry', and no superficial glamor of eloquence could make it agreeable to those who liked what is, in its very nature, fine and delicate."¹

The reference to women and Burke in the first sentence is from Hazlitt's essay "On Taste", published in the Sketches and Essays; and the characterization "hard and dry" is found, not there, but in the essay "On Poetry in General" in the Lectures on the English Poets.

Three other quotations from Hazlitt are to be found: the first probably a "summary quotation", scraped together from all that Hazlitt had ever said in his numerous references to Coleridge², and two others not identified in Hazlitt's writings, that might well have come to Bagehot by oral descent or through writings of Hazlitt's contemporaries.³

These citations show that Bagehot must have been familiar with Table-Talk, Lectures on the English Poets, The Spirit of the Age, Sketches and Essays, and Lectures on the Age of Elizabeth. Inaccuracies in the quotations, and the combining of the criticisms of Burke, would point to such familiarity that Bagehot quoted from memory. Since he wrote memoirs of Pitt, Brougham, and others of that period, and displays in most of his essays a wide acquaintance with persons-

1. Bagehot, ii, "Thomas Babington Macaulay", p. 112.

2. "Great talker [Coleridge], certainly," said Hazlitt, "if you will let him start from no data and come to no conclusions."--Bagehot, i, "Hartley Coleridge", p. 212.

3. "Hazlitt use to say, 'he had seen him [Shelley]; and he did

lities of the first of the century, it is probable that he would have known Hazlitt's Political Essays. There are indications in the text matter that Bagehot knew something of the Characters of Shakespear's Plays, The Round Table, and the Lectures on the English Comic Writers.

Editions of all these works appeared at intervals between 1817 and 1851, when Bagehot began writing. Table-Talk appeared in 1821-2, 1824, 1845-6, and 1857; Lectures on the English Poets in 1818, 1819, and 1841; The Spirit of the Age in 1825, 1835, and 1858; Political Essays in 1819 and 1822; Winterslow in 1839 and 1852; Characters of Shakespear's Plays in 1817, 1818, 1838, and 1848; The Round Table in 1817 and 1841; Lectures on the English Comic Writers in 1819 and 1841; and the Lectures on the Age of Elizabeth in 1821 and 1840.¹ With the exception of the Political Essays, every one of these was published at least once between 1835 and 1850.

There are other items to be noted: Bagehot intended, as Hazlitt's biographer stated, to write an article on the "common master" of his writings and Macaulay's. A note in his wife's diary states that he began it; the biographer's comment

not like his looks." Bagehot, i. "Percy Bysshe Shelley", p. 109.

¹Hazlitt used to say of himself, and used to say truly that, he could not enjoy himself in the society of a drawing-room for thinking of the opinion which the footman formed of his odd appearance as he went upstairs." Bagehot, iv. "Sterne and Thackeray", p. 258.

1. Alexander Ireland, List of the Writings of William Hazlitt and Leigh Hunt (London, 1868).

is brief:

"Sunday, 9th June, 1867....I went to church afternoon, and Walter began his article on Hazlitt for the Fortnightly Review." No record can be found of this article.¹

The date, it will be noticed, is 1867--three years after the publication of Bagehot's last purely literary essay. We also have Bagehot's word in his memoir of Crabb Robinson that he "urged that Hazlitt was a much greater writer than Charles Lamb--a harmless opinion which I still hold."²

1. E. I. Barrington, Life of Walter Bagehot (vol. x of the Works and Life). p. 381.

2. Bagehot, v. p. 61.

II

General Similarities of Bagehot's and Hazlitt's Writings

The tracing of influence is always somewhat tentative. Similarities may be detected that denote only similarities of taste and temperament; of these there are many common to the writings of Bagehot and Hazlitt. They may indicate influence only indirectly: Hazlitt, that is, was a force in literary history throughout the century. Birrell remarked that "gracious rills from the Hazlitt watershed have flowed in all directions, fertilising a dry and thirsty land. You can mark their track as, to quote Cooper's beautiful lines about real rills, they

'lose themselves at length
In matted grass that with a livelier green
Betrays the secret of their silent course.'¹

Any attempt to correlate with finality the writings of Hazlitt and Bagehot would have to take some cognizance of the waters of the matted grass--of the theories, prejudices, ideals, shibboleths that Hazlitt bequeathed to his immediate successors. Such a definitive attempt is beyond almost anyone's power now, since we can never know for sure how men talked in 1850. Resemblances between the two men that smack of the times must be included in comparison, though both may have derived them from nineteenth century England. Obviously mere

1. Birrell, op. cit., p. 129.

current notions should be disregarded; but it is better to list resemblances that may be attributable to influence than not to list those that might not be. Some similarities, on the other hand, are so evidently derivative as to establish Bagehot's use of Hazlitt's writings.

Certain general similarities may be identified before the criticism is compared in detail.

Throughout the writings of both men on their contemporaries runs a tendency to base criticism on personal estimates of character. This is more obvious in Bagehot. His essays always consider the work of a man as expressing his personal character; the key phrases of his introductions and conclusions point to it. "We have only aimed," he says, for example, in the essay on Shelley, "at showing how some of the peculiarities of his works and life may be traced to the peculiarities of his nature."¹ What Bagehot said about Clough and Macaulay is even more personal, since he knew the influences that moulded them. Hazlitt had more faculty of dissociating himself from his criticism, perhaps because he took his office as critic rather seriously; the violent prejudices for which he is noted were more intellectual than personal. He praised Waverley and denounced Scott none the less effectively, and damned the lesser accomplishments of his friends Hunt and Coleridge with vitriolity as well as candor. Nevertheless, Hazlitt's commentary on Wordsworth in The Round Table is

1. Bagehot, ii. p. 263.

comment on Wordsworth's mind and manner, as well as on the Excursion per se. He censures Byron because he thought Byron a "pampered egoist"¹ as well as because he thought Don Juan lacking.

A tendency to generalization in discussing individuals, as well as social phenomena, marks both men. This is a matter of expositional device, and will be considered in discussing their style of writing.

Interest in the contemporary world is evident in both writers. Hazlitt's partisanship and gusto for life are remarked upon by every commentator, as are Bagehot's political and social preoccupations. Both men have been characterized as less literary than worldly, though the designation may be apter for Bagehot.

An important similarity is in their method of attack. Both men, when they criticize a work of art, approach it directly. They often write about that work impressionistically. "The only way to criticize a work of imagination," Bagehot says, "is to describe its effect upon the mind of the reader-- at any rate, of the critic; and this can only be adequately delineated by strong illustrations, apt similes, and perhaps a little exaggeration."² "In a word," says Hazlitt, "I have endeavored to feel what was good, and to 'give a reason for

1. Hazlitt, iv. The Spirit of the Age, p. 261.

2. Bagehot, iii. p. 208.

the faith that was in me' when necessary, and when it is in my power."¹ Both critics use comparison; but for antithesis and vividness of exposition rather than for classification as to merit. There is little of Arnold's touchstone-ing or Pater's meticulous introspection. Hazlitt and Bagehot both held their criterion of excellence half-hidden; the criterion was not literary but personal, less aesthetic than humane. Consistency is subordinate to illumination: when Hazlitt includes Scott, Racine, and Shakespeare in one essay, and when Bagehot similarly includes Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Browning, each figure is described and characterised separately; in both cases, with a ground-work of theory linking the three figures, but with no such direct scaling of values as is to be found in Arnold's essays on Burns and Wordsworth, for example.

Six of the essays are not taken up in detail in this study--those on Butler, Macaulay, Gibbon, Beranger, Lady Montagu, and Clough. Hazlitt said almost nothing about the three he could have known, Butler, Gibbon, and Lady Montagu. The taste for metaphysics common to both Bagehot and Hazlitt shows in "Bishop Butler", though Bagehot's metaphysics are here theological. Gibbon, and the philosophy of history that interested Victorians, Hazlitt was not much interested in. Of Macaulay and Clough, it can only be said that Bagehot's judgments were such as Hazlitt might have rendered had he been

1. Hazlitt, v. Lectures on the Age of Elizabeth, p. 302.

alive; there is the same weighing of virtues against defects, the same careful detachment, and, more specifically, the same emphasis upon the necessity for knowledge other than academic. Such ideas as might be attributed to Hazlitt occur in others of Bagehot's essays and are discussed there. Bagehot wrote of Beranger as representative of the French genius; and while Hazlitt never wrote about French lyric poetry, Bagehot's idea of the French genius is very much that of Hazlitt's often repeated opinion, that the French "appear to unite a number of accomplishments, the literary character and the man of the world, better than we do."¹

Bagehot's essays will be taken up in detail one by one in the following order: first, the essays on those men whose writings both men knew and wrote about--Shakespeare, Milton, Shelley, Cowper, Scott ("The Taverley Novels"), Sterne ("Sterne and Thackeray"), and Wordsworth ("Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Browning, etc."); next, the essays on those Hazlitt wrote little about--the Edinburgh reviewers and Hartley Coleridge; and then the essay on Dickens.

1. Hazlitt, vi. Table-Talk, "Thought and Action", p. 111.

III

Detailed Study of Similarities in Criticism

1. "Shakespeare--The Man"

The central theme of "Shakespeare--The Man" is pointed to in the title. "We would attempt a slight delineation," Bagehot says in the first paragraph, "of the popular idea [of Shakespeare] which has been formed, not from loose tradition or remote research; not from what someone says someone else said that the poet said, but from data, which are at least undoubted, from the sure testimony of his certain works."¹ This is characteristic: it hints at the theme that runs through all Bagehot's critical papers, that writing should be seen against the background of the man who wrote. In the case of Shakespeare he seems to have had to build up the personality, in order that he might discuss it.

Hazlitt certainly had a more intimate sense of the man behind the writing than many of his predecessors in Shakespearean criticism. Pope, Johnson, Dryden--to cite some of the more important critics--shared a neo-classical tendency to look at a play as an isolated entity, to be judged with reference to standards not quite Aristotelian perhaps, but nevertheless only literary. Hazlitt had, in common with most of the nineteenth century Romantic school, the ability to read

1. Bagehot, 1, p. 218.

and judge Shakespeare's plays as he would have read a contemporary's; and his interest in the writings of contemporaries-- Coleridge, Shelley, Byron--was frankly personal, and his criticisms were couched in personal terms. He was even conscious of the relationship between all writing and the experience of the writer, he tells us in The Plain Speaker:

"Let me conjure the gentle reader, who has ever felt an attachment to books, not hastily to divorce them from their authors. Whatever love or reverence may be due to the one, is equally owing to the other....Whatever there is of truth or good or of proud consolation or of cheering hope in the one, all this existed in a greater degree in the imagination and the heart and brain of the other. To cherish the work and damn the author is as if the traveler who slakes his thirst at the running stream, should revile the springhead from which it gushes."¹

In another essay in the same volume he denies that Shakespeare was "a man without passions". "Those persons [Sterne, Scott, Shakespeare] must have experienced the feelings they express, and entered into the situations they described so freely, at some period or other of their lives."² Authors, that is, have the qualities they show in their writings, says Hazlitt. Bagehot follows out the vein: his corollary is that the qualities of the author may be determined by the qualities in the book. It is a step beyond Hazlitt's, but only a step. Bagehot carries the idea still further; the theme recurs for sixteen pages:

"Some extreme skeptics, we know, doubt whether it is possible to deduce anything about an author's character from his books. Yet surely people do not keep a tame steam-engine to write their works; and if those works were really written by a man, he must have been such a man as could write them....A person

1. Hazlitt, vii. "On Jealousy and Spleen of Party", p. 372.

2. Hazlitt, vii. "On Novelty and Familiarity", p. 298.

who knows nothing of an author he has read, will not know much of an author whom he has seen. First of all, it may be said that Shakespeare's works could only be produced by a first-rate imagination working on a first-rate experience. [p. 218] ...It is absurd, by the way, to say that we know nothing about the man who wrote that. [p. 222]....The reason why so few good books are written, is that so few people that can write know anything. p1 228Where are the amusing books from voracious students and habitual writers? [p. 230]....Shakespeare...had that various commerce with, and experience of men, which was common both to Goethe and to Scott. [p. 233]¹

The development of the latter half of this idea, that the best writing is based on much worldly experience, is the theme of "On the Ignorance of the Learned", which Bagehot quoted twice in his writings. A few sentences will show the line of argument and the specific application of it to Shakespeare that Hazlitt made:

"The descriptions of persons who have the fewest ideas of all others are mere authors and readers....A loungee who is ordinarily seen with a book in his hand, is (we may be almost sure) equally without the power or inclination to attend either to what passes around him, or in his own mind. [p. 70]....The learned author differs from the learned student in this, that the one transcribes what the other reads. [p. 72]....A mere scholar, who knows nothing but books, must be ignorant even of them. How should he know anything of a work, who knows nothing of the subject of it? [p. 73]....Uneducated people have most exuberance of invention, and the greatest freedom from prejudice. Shakespeare's was evidently an uneducated mind, both in the freshness of his imagination, and in the variety of his views; as Milton's was scholastic, in the texture of his thoughts and feelings. Shakespeare had not been accustomed to write themes at school in favor of virtue or against vice. To this we owe the unaffected, but healthy tone of his dramatic morality. If we wish to know the force of human genius, we should read Shakespeare. If we wish to see the insignificance of human learning, we may study his commentators."²

The conviction that external reality is primary in creation, and particularly in Shakespeare's creative process, was not to be found in most Shakespeare criticism then. It had been

1. Bagehot, i, pp. 218-233.

2. Hazlitt, vi, pp. 70-77 of Table-Talk.

often noted that Shakespeare drew directly from life itself; but the insistence upon wide worldly experience as more important than anything else was quite foreign to neo-classicism in any form, and among the early nineteenth century critics was peculiar to Hazlitt. Bagehot's agreement with the theme is obvious; some indebtedness to the essay, in the light of his quotations from it and the number of things that appear in this one paper alone that were also in Hazlitt's essay, is certainly probable.

In connection with this argument occurs the "half a page of Hazlitt" Birrell remarked, about Southey, from The Spirit of the Age. The two passages are given herewith:

Hazlitt: "He [Southey] rises early, and writes or reads till breakfast-time. He writes or reads after breakfast till dinner, after dinner till tea, and from tea till bed-time--

'And follows so the ever-running year

With profitable labour to his grave--'

On Derwent's banks, beneath the feet of Skiddaw. Study serves him for business, exercise, recreation. He passes from verse to prose, from history to poetry, from reading to writing, by a stop-watch."¹

Bagehot: "He [Southey] wrote poetry (as if anybody could) before breakfast; he read during breakfast. He wrote history until dinner; he corrected proof-sheets between dinner and tea; he wrote an essay for the Quarterly afterwards; and after supper by way of relaxation composed the 'Doctor'--a lengthy and elaborate jest."²

Bagehot next speaks of Shakespeare's delineation of natural objects. In contrasting his descriptions with Scott's,

1. Hazlitt, iv, p. 269.

2. Bagehot, i, p. 229. This perhaps was a common remark in the fifties and sixties; Hazlitt seems to have been the originator.

he states that Scott "deals with the main outlines and great points of nature.... Young people, especially, who like big things, are taken with Scott, and bored by Wordsworth, who knew too much."¹ Hazlitt never contrasted Shakespeare and Scott in this way; but he did contrast Scott and Wordsworth, noting the same characteristic of Scott's nature: "He conveys the distinct outlines and visible changes in outward objects, rather than 'their moral consequences'."² In this section occurs a favorite quotation of Hazlitt's--"the mighty world of eye and ear"--from Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey". The real form of the original is this:

"...the mighty world
Of eye, and ear;..."

There is a slight misquotation--a matter of cadence--that is possibly significant, especially when it is remembered that the quotation occurs in "On the Ignorance of the Learned".

A more significant parallelism may be noted when Bagehot contrasts Shakespeare and Milton. The specific parallelisms are italicized:

Hazlitt: "Milton, therefore, did not write from casual impulse, but after a severe examination of his own strength, and with a resolution to leave nothing undone which it was in his power to do. He always labours, and almost always succeeds. He strives hard to say the finest things in the world, and he does say them. He adorns and dignifies his subject to the utmost: he surrounds it with every possible association of beauty and grandeur, whether intellectual, or physical. He refines on his descriptions of beauty, loading sweets on sweets, till the sense aches at them, and raises his images of terror to a gigantic elevation, that 'makes Ossa ~~look~~ like a wart'. In Milton, there is always an appearance of effort; in Shakes-

1. Bagehot, i, p. 223.

2. Hazlitt, v. Lectures on the English Poets, p. 155.

pear, scarcely any. Milton has borrowed more than any other writer, and exhausted every source of imitation, sacred or profane."¹

Bagehot: "In his mode of delineating natural objects Shakespeare is curiously opposed to Milton. The latter, who was still by temperament, and a schoolmaster by trade, selects a beautiful object, puts it straight before him and his readers, and accumulates upon it all the learned imagery of a thousand years; Shakespeare glances at it and says something of his own. It is not our intention to say that as a describer of the external world, Milton is inferior to Shakespeare; in set description description we rather think that he was the better. The one is like an artist who dashes off any number of picturesque sketches at any moment; the other like a man who has lived at Rome, has undergone a thorough training, and by deliberate and conscious effort, after a long study of the best masters, can produce a few great pictures. Milton, accordingly, as has often been remarked, is careful in the choice of his subjects; he knows too well the value of his labour to be very ready to squander it; Shakespeare, on the contrary, describes anything that comes to hand."²

The ideas are identical, though the order of presentation and the phrasing is different. Milton prepared carefully for his life work; he delineated elaborately and with effort; he borrowed from every classical source he knew. Shakespeare wrote with ease, without borrowing. This contrast is most significant when it is remembered that these are not general commentaries on the poets, but specific comparison of their delineation of objects.

Bagehot next compares Shakespeare with Scott--material drawn from Lockhart's Life--and Goethe. Since Lockhart's life appeared in 1837, and since Hazlitt was apparently familiar only with Goethe's Werther, Hazlitt could not have anticipated this discussion. The very

1. Hazlitt, v. Lectures on the English Poets. "On Shakespeare and Milton", p. 58.

2. Bagehot, i. pp. 225 and ??.

next topic is again reminiscent:

Bagehot: "He [Shakespeare] was not merely with me, but of men; he was not a "thing apart", with a clear intuition of what was in those around him; he had in his own nature the germs and tendencies of the very elements that he described. He knew what was in man, for he felt it himself."¹

Hazlitt (as was pointed out on page 20 above) said that Shakespeare "must have experienced the feeling" he expresses. In Table-Talk Hazlitt remarked that "his genius consisted in the faculty of transforming himself at will into whatever he chose"²; in the Lectures on the English Poets he came closer to the idea Bagehot expresses, and some of the wording seems to show through Bagehot:

"He was just like any other man, but that he was like all other men. He was the least of an egoist that it was possible to be....He not only had in himself the germs and tendencies of every faculty and feeling. but he could follow them by anticipation, intuitively. into all their conceivable ramifications..."³

The fundamental idea, of course, is by no means uncommon-- Shakespeare's human sympathy have been remarked upon by commentators from Ben Jonson down--Pope, Johnson, Coleridge Bagehot's twisting of the argument to read that Shakespeare must have felt before he wrote is only slightly beyond the Horatian dictum, that one must weep before he can make others weep. Hazlitt knew this, spoke of it with particular reference to Shakespeare, and probably felt it as strongly as Bagehot, though he did not often make it central.

1. Bagehot, i, p. 233.

2. Hazlitt, vi. "On Genius and Common Sense", p. 42.

2. Hazlitt, v, p. 47.

Bagehot takes up several pages discussing Shakespeare's "spirited" quality and humor, illustrating the central point with Falstaff:

"Intense animal spirits are the single sentiment (if they be a sentiment) of the entire character....A morose man might have amassed many jokes, might have observed many details of jovial society, might have conceived a Sir John marked by rotundity, but could hardly have imagined what we call his rotundity of mind....Everything pleases him, everything is food for a joke. Cheerfulness and prosperity give an easy abounding sagacity of mind which nothing else does give...Our English humor...is that of Shakespeare and Falstaff; ours is the enjoyment of a man who laughs when he speaks, of flowing enjoyment, of an experiencing nature."¹

Hazlitt's feeling about Falstaff may be found in his preface to Henry IV:

"Falstaff's wit is an emanation of a fine constitution; an exuberance of good-humor and good-nature; an overflowing of his love of laughter and goodfellowship; a giving vent to his heart's ease, and overcontentment with himself. He would not be in character if he were not as fat as he is; for there is the greatest keep in the boundless luxury of his imagination and the pampered indulgence of his physical appetites. He manures and nourishes his mind with jests, as he does his body with sack and sugar."²

The significant point of resemblance between these passages is in their idea of the essential healthiness of the character, and of this superabundant healthiness as the basis of the character, even to the "rotundity".

Shakespeare knew also the life of fancy, says Bagehot:

"The dreams of childhood, the ravings of despair, were the toys of his fancy. Airy beings waited at his call, and came

1. Bagehot, i. p. 239.

2. Hazlitt, i. p. 278, in the Characters of Shakespeare's Plays

at his bidding. Harmless fairies 'nodded to him, and did him curtesies: and the night-hag bestrode the blast at the command of 'his so potent art'. The world of spirits lay open to him, like the world of real men and women: and there is the same truth in his delineations of the one as of the other.¹

In the introduction to the Characters of Shakespeare's Plays

Hazlitt quotes a long passage from Schlegel, the first paragraph of which deals with Shakespeare's supernatural world in terms very like, if not identical with, those of Bagehot:

"This Prometheus not merely forms men, he opens the gates of the magical world of spirits; calls up the midnight ghost; exhibits before us his witches amidst their unhallowed mysteries; peoples the air with sportive fairies and sylphs:-- and these beings, existing only in imagination, possess such truth and consistency, that even when deformed monsters like Caliban, he extorts the conviction, that if there be such beings, they would so conduct themselves."²

Shakespeare's ability to portray the supernatural, and portray it as convincingly as objective life--characteristic finding of the Romantic critic--is perceived by Schlegel and characterised by the same series of instances. There is further evidence that Bagehot might have made some use of this quotation from Schlegel. An idea which Bagehot developed at some length in this essay is that Shakespeare was really sympathetic with stupid people, and that he recognized the social usefulness of stupidity. The sociological doctrine was Bagehot's own perhaps; but Schlegel in the same passage above quoted notes the literary aspect of the question: "Not only has he delineated many kinds of folly; he has also

1. Bagehot, i. 249.

2. Hazlitt, i. 272.

contrived to exhibit mere stupidity in a most diverting and entertaining manner."¹

Bagehot, stating that we can know Shakespeare's politics, lists his conservatism and his appreciation of the political stupidity of the populace:

"The author of 'Coriolanus' never believed in a mob, and did something towards preventing anyone else from doing so.... The second peculiar tenet which we ascribe to his political creed, is a disbelief in the middle classes.... You will generally find that when a 'citizen' is mentioned, he generally does or says something absurd."²

In Hazlitt's preface to Coriolanus he also noted the reactionary tendencies in Shakespeare himself:

"Shakespeare himself seems to have had a leaning to the arbitrary side of the question, perhaps from some feeling of contempt for his own origin; and to have spared no occasion of baiting the rabble. That he says of them is very true; what he says of their betters is also very true, though he dwells less upon it."³

Bagehot next seeks to prove that Shakespeare knew--was thoroughly and sympathetically acquainted with--women. A certain tolerant misogyny toward feminine intellect appears here, in unmistakable agreement with certain ideas of Hazlitt; the essay "On the Ignorance of the Learned" again contains the fundamental idea, in immediate juxtaposition with what Hazlitt said about Shakespeare⁴ in that essay:

Bagehot: "Such a way or representation [through delineating intellect] may in some sense succeed in the case of men, [but]

1. Hazlitt, i. p. 174.

2. Bagehot, i. pp. 249-251.

3. Hazlitt, i. p. 214, in the Characters of Shakespear's Plays.

4. See above, p. 21.

it would certainly seem sure to fail in the case of women. The mere intellect of women is a mere nothing. It originates nothing, it transmits nothing, it retains nothing; it has little life of its own, and therefore it can hardly be expected to attain any vigor....Shakespeare's being, like a woman's, worked as a whole....He could paint the moving essence of thoughtful feeling--which is the best refinement of the best women."¹

Hazlitt: "Women have often more of what is called good sense than men. They have fewer pretensions; are less implicated in theories; and judge of objects more from their immediate and voluntary impression on the mind, and, therefore, more truly and naturally. They cannot reason wrong; for they do not reason at all."²

Hazlitt's several times repeated statement that Shakespeare's heroines are "pure abstractions of the feelings" makes the final link with Bagehot's statements about Shakespeare's women--"the moving essence of thoughtful feeling".

Concerning Shakespeare's schooling Bagehot says that Shakespeare was not scholastic--as most critics since Ben Jonson's "little Latin and less Greek" phrase have maintained;

"It may be doubted if Shakespeare would have perused his commentators....It is difficult to fancy Shakespeare perusing a volume of such annotations, though we allow that we admire them ourselves. As to the controversy on his school learning, we have only to say, that though the alleged imitations of the Greek tragedians are mere nonsense, yet there is clear evidence that Shakespeare received the ordinary grammar school education of his time, and that he had derived from the pain and suffering of several years, not exactly an acquaintance with Greek or Latin, but like Eton boys a firm conviction that there are such languages."³

These two ideas--that ^{Shakespeare} ~~Bagehot~~ was not "well" educated and that

1. Bagehot, 1. p. 255.

2. Hazlitt, vi. p. 77. in Table-Talk.

3. Bagehot, 1. p. 257.

his commentators were less intelligent--are found together in Hazlitt's "On the Ignorance of the Learned":

"Shakespeare's was evidently an uneducated mind, both in the freshness of his imagination and the variety of his views.... Shakespeare had not been accustomed to write themes at school in favor of virtue and against vice...If we wish to know the force of human genius, we should read Shakespeare. If we wish to know the insignificance of human learning, we may study his commentators."¹

Bagehot's final two pages are taken up with discussion of Shakespeare's religion and his worldliness. As to the former, he becomes eloquent:

"If this world is not all evil, he who has understood and painted it best must probably have some good. If the underlying and almighty essence of this world be good, then it is likely that the writer who most deeply approached to that essence will be himself good. There is a religion of 'cakes and ale' as well as of pews and altar-cloths. This England lay before Shakespeare as it lies before us all, with its green fields, and its long hedge-rows, and its many trees, and its great towns, and its endless hamlets, and its motley society, and its long history, and its bold exploits, and its gathering power, and he saw that they were good. To him, perhaps, more than to any one wise, has it been given to see that they were a great unity, a great religious object; that if you could only descent to the inner life, to the deep things, to the secret principles of its noble vigour, to the essence of character, to what we know of Hamlet and seem to fancy of Ophelia, we might, so far as we are capable of so doing, understand the nature which God has made."²

Hazlitt never became so lyrical on the subject. He called Shakespeare "the most moral of all writers", and said that he was "a moralist in the same sense in which nature is one. He taught what he had learned from her." In another work³ he added, "Though Shakespeare did not intend to be moral, yet

1. Hazlitt, vi. p. 77.

2. Bagehot, i, p. 258.

3. Hazlitt, vi, p. 417. Conversations with James Northcote, Esq., R. A.

he could not be otherwise as long as he adhered to the path of nature."

In this essay of Bagehot's there is not a single major contention which can not be traced in some form to Hazlitt. Many of the ideas--the need of worldly experience for writing, the comparisons of Shakespeare with other poets, the idea of women, of Shakespeare's Toryism and religion--all these can be found fully developed in those of Hazlitt's works we know Bagehot to have read. There are echoes so specific that we know Bagehot borrowed more or less. In truth, this is not "half a page of Hazlitt", but the greater part of an essay.

2. "John Milton"

The organization of this essay is built around two of the divisions into two classes of which Bagehot was so fond. The first divides biographies into "exhaustive" and "selective"--a spur-of-the-moment classification only natural to one confronted with Masson's Life of Milton, which Bagehot was reviewing. Five pages of this are followed by a division of goodness into "sensuous" and "ascetic", a classification not far from that in the essay on Shelley, of men into those of impulse and those of principle:

"The character of the first is that which is almost personified in the prophet-king of Israel....The principle of this character is its sensibility to outward stimulus....In extreme opposition to this is the ascetic species of goodness.... Some men have a repulsion from the world....The consequences of this tendency, when it is thus in excess, upon the character are very great and singular. It secludes a man in a sort of natural monastery; he lives in a kind of moral solitude; and the effects of his isolation for good and evil on his disposition are very many....Those who see life under only one aspect, can see religion under only one likewise....The character of the ascetic, or austere species of goodness, is almost exactly embodied in Milton. The whole being of Milton may, in some sort, be summed up in the great commandment of the austere character, 'Reverence thyself'.¹"

Hazlitt contrasts Shakespeare and Milton, in his Lectures on the English Poets, with special attention to this lonely asceticism:

"Shakespeare discovers in his writings little religious enthusiasm, and an indifference to personal reputation; he had none of the bigotry of his age, and his political prejudices were

1. Bagehot, iii, "John Milton", p. 182 and ff.

not very strong. In these respects, as well as in every other, he formed a direct contrast to Milton. Milton's works are a perpetual invocation to the muses; a hymn to fame. He had his thoughts constantly fixed on the contemplation of the Hebrew theocracy, and of a perfect commonwealth; and he seized the pen with a hand just warm from the touch of the ark of faith. His religious zeal infused its character into his imagination; so that he devoted himself with the same sense of duty to the cultivation of his genius, as he did to the exercise of virtue, or the good of his country. The spirit of the poet, the patriot, and the prophet, vied with each other in his breast....He had a high standard, with which he was always comparing himself, nothing short of which could satisfy his jealous ambition. He thought of nobler forms and nobler things than those he found about him. He lived apart, in the solitude of his own thoughts, carefully excluding from his mind whatever might distract its purposes or alloy its purity, or damp his zeal....He had girded himself up, and as it were, sanctified his genius to this service from his youth.¹

Besides the recognition of Milton as an ascetic type in general, these specific similarities are to be noted: Milton's ascetic withdrawal from the world; his narrow intense faith; and his conscientious self-reverence.

Both these passages are followed by lengthy prose quotations, Hazlitt's from the "Reason of Church Government", and Bagehot's from the "Apology for Smectymnus", to illustrate Milton's seriousness of mind and purpose.

Bagehot, since he was reviewing Masson's and Keightley's lives, enters into a discussion of the ascetic character as it appears in Milton's political actions and prose works, neither of which Hazlitt much concerned himself with. When, on the twenty-eighth page of the essay, Bagehot turns to Milton's poetry, the echoes from Hazlitt reappear. Discussion of the classical nature of the characters in Paradise Lost

1. Hazlitt, v. p. 56.

takes a certain specific bend toward classical nude sculpture, for instance, in the italicized passages:

Bagehot: "The distinction between ancient and modern art is sometimes said, and perhaps truly, to consist in the simple bareness of the imaginative conceptions which we find in ancient art and the comparatively complex clothing in which all modern creations are embodied...The two greatest of Milton's creations, the character of Satan and the character of Eve, are two of the simplest--the latter probably the very simplest in the whole field of classical literature. On this side Milton's art is classical....In real truth, however, it is only ancient art in modern disguise. The dress is a mere dress and can be stripped off when we will. We all of us do perhaps in memory strip it off ourselves. Notwithstanding the lavish adornments with which her image is presented, the character of Eve is still the simplest sort of feminine essence--the pure embodiment of that inner nature, which we believe and hope that women have. The character of Satan, though it is, not so easily described, has nearly as few elements in it."¹

Hazlitt: "Where the associations of the imagination are not the principal thing, the individual object is given by Milton with equal force and beauty. The strongest and best proof of this, as a characteristic power of his mind, is, that the persons of Adam and Eve, of Satan, etc., are always accompanied in our imagination with the grandeur of the naked figure; they convey to us the ideas of sculpture...The figures introduced...have all the elegance and precision of a Greek statue."²

The next statement also harks back--perhaps to the traditional criticism of Milton, certainly to Hazlitt's, as well as to Bagehot's himself in the Shakespeare essay: Milton's originality is insisted upon in the face of his literary borrowing.

Bagehot: "There seems to be such a thing as second-hand poetry....It is a creation, though, so to say, a suggested creation....In general, such inferior species of creation is not so likely to be found in minds of singular originality as in those of less....Milton's case is an exception to this rule. His mind has marked originality, probably as much of it as

1. Bagehot, iii, pp. 205-6.

2. Hazlitt, i, The Round Table, "On Milton's Versification", p. 38.

any mind in literature; but it has as much of moulded recollection as any mind too."¹

Hazlitt: "Milton has borrowed more than any other writer; yet he is perfectly distinct from every other writer.... The quantity of art shews the strength of his genius; so much art would have overloaded any other writer."²

Bagehot next criticizes the fable of Paradise Lost.

Hazlitt said he believed such criticism inessential; certainly he never attempted it. The discussion following, on the character of Eve, is worth comparing with what Hazlitt said in his essay "On the Characteristics of Milton's Eve" in The Round Table:

Bagehot: "Eve's character, indeed, is one of the most wonderful efforts of the human imagination. She is a kind of abstract woman; essentially a typical being; and official 'mother of all living'. Yet she is a real interesting woman, not only full of delicacy and sweetness, but with all the undefinable fascination, the charm of personality, which such typical characters hardly ever have. By what consummate art or miracle of wit this charm of individuality is preserved, without impairing the general idea which is ever present to us, we cannot explain, for we do not know."³

Hazlitt: "Milton describes Eve not only as full of love and tenderness for Adam, but as the constant object of admiration in herself. She is the idol of the poet's imagination, and he paints her whole person with a studied profusion of charms.... He has...described her in all the loveliness of nature, tempting to sight as the fruit of the Hesperides guarded by that Dragon old, herself the fairest among the flowers of paradise!.. Eve is not only represented as beautiful, but with conscious beauty....Eve has a great idea of herself, and there is some difficulty in prevailing on her to quit her own image, the

1. Bagehot, iii. p. 207.

2. Hazlitt, i. p. 37. "On Milton's Versification".

3. Bagehot, iii. p. 217

first time she discovers its reflection in the water."¹ Eve, for both writers, is an ideal woman. A peculiarity that does not appear in what is given of these passages is their use of a quotation Hazlitt introduces in the last sentence above, which precedes Bagehot's paragraph. Since it describes Eve's disappointment in Adam and her return to admiring her own image, the quotation gives an identical semi-humorous and playful tone to both passages.

The remainder of Bagehot's essay is further condemnation and analysis of the theological plot of Paradise Lost. Both critics agree, as most have, that Satan is the central figure; Bagehot regards it as a defect in conception. Both praise the first two books: Hazlitt says they are "like two massy pillars of solid gold"²; Bagehot says "the interest of Satan's character is at its height in the first two books."³ Otherwise Hazlitt did not discuss the plot.

1. Hazlitt, i. p. 106.

2. Hazlitt, v. Lectures on the English Poets, p. 63.

3. Bagehot, iii. p. 213.

3. "Percy Bysshe Shelley"

Bagehot evidently liked Shelley's poetry; in his essay on "the Pure, the Ornate; and the Grotesque", he quotes a few lines as a specimen of the pure style. However, his liking, as it is revealed in this essay, is very much qualified, more so than we might expect from his regard for others of the Romantics--Wordsworth, Hartley Coleridge, and his friend Clough. These qualifications are essentially those which Hazlitt had felt; except that there is much more tolerance in Bagehot's essay than in most of Hazlitt's (rather few) references to Shelley.

First there is mention of the idea of "self-delineative" poetry, which Bagehot elaborated for the first time in his first literary essay, that on Hartley Coleridge, and which will be traced in discussing that essay. Then comes a division of all men into two classes--men of impulse and men of principle:

"Shelley is probably the most remarkable instance of the pure impulsive character.--to comprehend which requires a little detail. Some men are born under the law; their whole life is a continued struggle between the lower principles and the higher. These are what are called men of principle; each of their actions is a distinct choice between conflicting motives.... In extreme contrast to this is the nature which has no struggle. It is possible to conceive a character in which but one impulse is ever felt--in which the whole being, as with a single breeze, is carried along in a single direction.... Completely realized on earth this idea will never be; but approximations may be found, and one of the closest of those approximations is Shelley."¹

1. Bagehot, ii. "Percy Bysshe Shelley", p. 216 and ff.

A paragraph later Bagehot quotes a page-long passage from Hazlitt's "On Paradox and the Commonplace" in Table-Talk. This passage is the only one of any length in Hazlitt about Shelley that Bagehot would probably have known. The distinction between "Paradox" and "commonplace" is one of the few divisions into two that Hazlitt carries through consistently:

"The greatest number of minds seem utterly incapable of fixing on any conclusion, except from the pressure of custom and authority: opposed to these, there is another class less numerous but pretty formidable, who in all their opinions are equally under the influence of novelty and restless vanity."¹

These two generalizations, Bagehot's and Hazlitt's, are not identical; yet, as we watch their development, there is a pronounced similarity:

Bagehot: "We fancy his [Shelley's] mind placed in the light of thought, with pure subtle fancies playing too and fro. On a sudden an impulse arises; it is alone, and has nothing to contend with; it cramps the intellect, pushes aside the fancies, constrains the nature; it bolts forward into action.... The predominant impulse in Shelley from a very early age was 'a passion for reforming mankind'.... No society, however organized, would have been too strong for him to attack. He would not have paused. The impulse was upon him.... Such truths are independent of time and place and circumstance; some time or other, something, or somebody (his faith was a little vague), would most certainly intervene to establish them. It was this placid undoubting confidence which irritated the positive and sceptical mind of Hazlitt. [Quotation from Hazlitt follows.]"²

Hazlitt: "With one sort [of nature], example, authority, fashion, ease, interest, rule all: with the other, singularity, the love of distinction, mere whim, the throwing off all restraint and showing an heroic disregard of consequences, an impatient and unsettled turn of mind, the want of sudden and

1. Hazlitt, vi, p. 146.

2. Bagehot, ii, p. 218 and ff.

strong excitement, of some new plaything for the imagination, are equally 'lords of the ascendant', and are at every step getting the start of reason, truth, nature, common sense and feeling. With one party, whatever is, is right: with their antagonists, whatever is, is wrong. These swallow every antiquated absurdity: those catch at every new, unfledged project--and are alike enchanted at the velocipedes or the French Revolution....The opinion of today supersedes that of yesterday: that of tomorrow supersedes by anticipation that of today. The wisdom of the ancients, the doctrines of the learned, the laws of nations, the common sentiments of mortality, are to them alike a bundle of old almanacs. The author of Prometheus Unbound (to take an individual instance of the last character) has a fire in his eye, etc...."

The last sentence in the Hazlitt passage marks the beginning of two pages on Shelley, the first half-page of which is that quoted by Eagehot following the passage above. The characterization, it is evident, exemplifies the same type. Eagehot omitted the paranthetical "to take an individual instance of the last character", because he had built up a terminology of his own, emotional rather than intellectual. But comparison of the descriptions of the two characters will show how similar they are: both unsettled and variable in the extreme, thoughtless of consequences, without respect for past or present institutions and modes.

Eagehot's paper then takes up the biographical data-- he was reviewing a life of Shelley and a collection of letters as well as an edition of the poetry--and points out further personal characteristics as manifested in Shelley's works. He agrees with Hazlitt, apparently, that Shelley was "chiefly distinguished by a fervour of philosophic speculation"²; he devotes twelve pages to the philosophic backgrounds of the poetry and the philosophy in the poetry itself.

1. Hazlitt, vi. p. 148.

2. Hazlitt, v. "A Critical List of Authors" in Select British Poets, p. 378.

Hazlitt is often said to have wronged Shelley; Bagehot seems to have thought so, referring to him in this essay as "the dark, threatening, unbelieving critic" of the age. Yet the validity of much of Hazlitt's criticism is indicated in Bagehot's use of the ideas for a more sympathetic study. Hazlitt's criticism of Shelley's Posthumous Poems contains these lines:

"Mr. Shelley was a remarkable man....With all his faults, Mr. Shelley was an honest man....There was neither selfishness nor malice at the bottom of his illusions. He was sincere in all his professions; and he practiced what he preached--to his own sufficient cost. He thought and acted logically, and was what he professed to be, a sincere lover of truth, of nature, and of human kind."¹

Bagehot probably did not read this, since the essay was not published in book form until 1904. But to one who knew Hazlitt's writings, the tone of even the passage in "On Paradox and the Commonplace" must have been less formidable than it seems.

Both Hazlitt and Bagehot state that Shelley's best work is in the shorter lyric; though, again, the judgments, certainly not unusual, may have been made independently.² Bagehot's statement that Shelley was most successful in the "abstract lyric" has as its corollary an assumption of some failure in the opposed form--what he calls the "human" lyric; and Hazlitt, while not unappreciative of the former, criticized the failure rather than the success.

1. Hazlitt, x, p. 257 and ff.

2. Hazlitt, x, p. 270; and Bagehot, ii, p. 249.

4. "William Couper"

This essay is at least four-fifths biographical: the fifth devoted to Couper's poetry is that part where one looks to find traces of resemblances between Bagehot and Hazlitt. Hazlitt's criticism is all contained in a few pages of the Lectures on the British Poets, a sentence of which is quoted by Bagehot in this essay,¹ and barely mentions his life.

The similarity is difficult to show by quotation. There is an interweaving of the same theme in both men's criticism, a contrast between urban sophisticated poetry and rural poetry, that can be sensed more easily than demonstrated. Two groups of similarities are worth quoting, however, one comparing Pope and Couper and one concerning Couper's delineation of nature.

A characterization of Pope in the essay introduces the first comparison:

"He [Pope] was, some one we think has said,¹ the sort of person we cannot even conceive existing in a barbarous age. His subject was not life at large, but fashionable life. He described the society in which he was thrown--the people among whom he lived. His mind was a hoard of small maxims, a quintessence of petty observations. When he described character, he described it, not dramatically, nor as it is in itself; but observantly and from without.... Society in Pope is scarcely a society of people, but of pretty little atoms, coloured and painted with hoops or in coats--a miniature of metaphysics, a puppet-show of sylphs.... The poetry, if such it is, of Pope

1. This phrase sounds like Hazlitt, and sounds as if Bagehot probably remembered Hazlitt; it does not occur exactly, however, in this form anywhere.

would be just as true if all the trees were yellow and all the grass flesh-color. He did not care for 'snowy scalps' or 'rolling streams' or 'icy balls' or 'precipice's gloom'.... At the same time, the fashionable life described by Pope has no reference whatever to the beauties of the material universe, never regards them, could go on just as well in the soft, sloppy, gelatinous existence which Dr. Whewell, (who knows) says is alone possible in Jupiter and Saturn."¹

Hazlitt: "He [Pope] saw nature only dressed by art; he judged of beauty by fashion; he sought for truth in the opinions of the world; he judged of the feelings of others by his own.... Pope's Muse never wandered with safety, but from his library to his grotto, or from his grotto into his library back again.He would be more delighted with a patent lamp, than with 'the pale reflex of Cynthia's brow', that fills the skies with its soft silent lustre, that trembles through the cottage window, and cheers the watchful mariner on the lonely wave. In short, he was the poet of personality and of polished life. That which was nearest to him, was the greatest.... He preferred the artificial to the natural in external objects.He preferred the artificial to the natural in passion.... It cannot be denied, that his chief excellence lay more in diminishing, than in aggrandizing objects...in describing a row of pins and needles, rather than the embattled spears of Greeks and Trojans....In his smooth and polished verse we meet with no prodigies of nature, but with miracles of wit; the thunders of his pen are whispered flatteries; its forked lightnings pointed sarcasms...for the gnarled oak he gives us the soft myrtle: for rocks, and seas, and mountains, artificial grass-plats, gravel-walks, and tinkling rills; for earthquakes and tempests, the breaking of a flower-pot, or the fall of a china jar; for the tug and war of the elements, or the deadly strife of the passions, we have
'calm contemplation and poetic ease.'²

There is nothing reminiscent in phrase in these passages--if we except the contrast with nature's harsher aspects--only a similarity of taste and judgment perhaps; but it is obvious that both men saw in Pope the same thing. Elsewhere both dismiss the question whether Pope is a poet as irrelevant to their purpose, saying that, poet or not, he was an intel-

1. Bagehot, ii, pp. 33-37.

2. Hazlitt, v. Lectures on the English Poets, pp. 70-71.

ligent and artistic workman.¹

Bagehot says that Cowper is of the school of Pope:

"What Pope is to our fashionable and town life, Cowper is to our domestic and rural life?²...Some people may be surprised, notwithstanding our lengthy explanation, at hearing Cowper treated as of the school of Pope. It has been customary, at least with some critics, to speak of him as one of those who recoiled from the artificiality of that great writer, and at least commenced a return to a simple delineation of outward nature. And of course there is considerable truth in this idea."³

There is an implication of Cowper's limitations as a reactionary against Pope's artificiality in the word "considerable" in the last sentence that Bagehot does not fully develop.

Bagehot does not develop it further, except in showing the domestic complacency of Cowper's pastorals, and in quoting--loosely--a statement of Hazlitt's that Cowper, "if he makes a bolder experiment now and then, it is with an air of precaution, as if he were afraid of being caught in a shower of rain".⁴ Hazlitt noted these limitations:

"He has some of the sickly sensibility and pampered refinements of Pope; but then Pope prided himself in them; whereas, Cowper affects to be all simplicity and plainness."⁵

The implications of Bagehot's "considerable truth" are that

1. Bagehot, ii. p. 31; Hazlitt, v. p. 69.

2. Bagehot, ii. p. 35.

3. Bagehot, ii. p. 37.

4. Bagehot, ii. p. 37, from Hazlitt, v. p. 92.

5. Hazlitt, ii. p. 92.

Cowper still had some of the defects of the school of Pope that Hazlitt mentions.

Cowper's descriptions of nature, for both, are limited in feeling:

Hazlitt: "There is an effeminacy about him, which shrinks from and repels sympathy. With all his boasted simplicity and love of the country, he seldom launches out into general descriptions of nature: he looks at her over his clipped hedges, and from his well-swept garden-walks; or if he makes a bolder experiment now and then, it is with an air of precaution, as if he were afraid of being caught in a shower of rain, or of not being able, in case of any untoward accident, to make good his retreat home...." "He is delicate to fastidiousness, and glad to get back, after a romantic adventure with crazy Kate, a party of gypsies or a little child on a common, to the drawing room and the ladies again, to the sofa and the tea-kettle."¹

Bagehot: "To Cowper Nature is simply a background, a beautiful background no doubt, but still essentially a locus in quo--a space in which the work and mirth of life pass and are performed. A more professedly formal delineation does not occur than the following:--

'Oh Winter! ruler of the inverted year....
After a very few lines he returns within doors to the occupation of man and woman--to human tasks and human pastimes."²

A comparison of Cowper with Wordsworth, in which Bagehot is involved in this last quotation, leads Bagehot into a characterization of Wordsworth's poetry, linking Wordsworth with Bagehot's theory of "self-delineation" more directly than in any other Wordsworth criticism in the essays. Since the theory--or truism perhaps--is always found in Hazlitt in connection with discussion of Wordsworth's poetry, the parallelism may be noted here as of especial significance:

1. Hazlitt, v. pp. 91-92.

2. Bagehot, ii. p. 38.

Bagehot: "However, it is to be remarked that the description of nature in Cowper differs altogether from the peculiar delineation of the same subject, which has been so influential in more recent times, and which bears, after its greatest master, the name Wordsworthian....To Wordsworth...Nature is a religion. So far from being unwilling to treat her as a special object of study, he hardly thought any other equal or comparable....The delineation of Cowper is a simple delineation. He makes a sketch of the object before him, and there he leaves it. Wordsworth, on the contrary, is not satisfied unless he describes not only the bare outward object which others see, but likewise the reflected high-wrought feelings which that object excites in a brooding, self-conscious mind. Years of deep musing and long introspection had made him familiar with every shade and shadow in the many-colored impression which the universe makes on meditative genius and observant sensibility."¹

Hazlitt: "Reserved, yet haughty, having no unruly or violent passions (or those passions having been early suppressed,) Mr. Wordsworth has passed his life in solitary musing, or in daily converse with the face of nature. He exemplifies in an eminent degree the power of association; for his poetry has no other source or character. He has dwelt among pastoral scenes, till each object has become connected with a thousand feelings, a link in the chain of thought, a fibre of his own heart."²

Hazlitt, in every protracted discussion of Wordsworth, brings in this emphasis upon introversion. This brief statement from The Spirit of the Age contains the elements--the recognition that Wordsworth's greatness is in what he wrote of himself rather than of external nature.³

1. Bagehot, ii, pp. 38-39.

2. Hazlitt, iv, The Spirit of the Age, p. 273.

3. The idea is traced more in detail in the section below on ~~Mr. Coleridge's Poems~~ "Hartley Coleridge".

Speaker Hazlitt draws at considerable length a distinction between the imaginative creation of Shakespeare and the synthetic method of Scott in his novels. The distinction is also made, and more compactly, in the section of Scott's poetry in The Spirit of the Age:

"A poet is essentially a maker; that is, he must atone for what he loses in individuality and local resemblance by the energies and resources of his own mind. The writer of whom we speak is deficient in these last."¹

The recognition of Scott's limitations, which Hazlitt marks as deficiency, Bagehot accepts without specific condemnation. Hazlitt did^{so} accept it, for the most part, in The Spirit of the Age. Neither critic really demanded a "criticism of life" in Scott, though both apparently ranked the "doctrinaire" effort higher.

Both men thoroughly approved of Scott's abandonment of poetry for novel-writing. Bagehot says that "the sense became in his novels more free, vigorous and flowing, because it is less cramped by the vehicle in which it is conveyed."² Hazlitt said, "The definition of his poetry is a pleasing superficiality. Not so of his Novels and Romances. There we turn over a new leaf... The author of Waverley has got rid of the tagging of rhymes, the eking out of syllables, the colours of style, the supplying of epithets, the grouping of his characters, and the regular march of events, and comes

1. Hazlitt, iv, p. 244.

2. Bagehot, iii, p. 45.

to the point at once, and strikes at the heart of his subject, without dismay and without disguise."¹

Both were conscious that Scott's political ideas entered strongly into his novels, though Bagehot briefly mentions Scott's Toryism with a tolerance--perhaps even a sympathy--that Hazlitt, a contemporary, did not attain.²

Bagehot's own summary of the first half of his essay is adequate for comparison of judgments:

"We may therefore sum up the indications of this characteristic excellence of Scott's novels by saying, that more than any novelist he has given us fresh pictures of practical human society, with its cares and troubles, its excitements and its pleasures; that he has delineated more distinctly than any one else the framework by which this society adheres, and by the boundaries of which it is shaped and limited; that he has made more clear the way in which strange and eccentric characters grow out of that ordinary and usual system of life; that he has extended his view over several periods of society, and given an animated description of the external picture of each, and a firm representation of its social institutions; that he has shown very graphically what we may call the worldly laws of government, and that over all these he has spread the glow of sentiment natural to a manly mind, and an atmosphere of generosity congenial to a cheerful one."³

Hazlitt's enthusiasm was hardly so sociological, but the approval is of the same aspects of the novels:

"All is fresh, as from the hand of nature: by going back a century or two and laying the scene in a remote and uncultivated district, all becomes new and startling in the present advanced period.--Highland manners, characters, scenery, superstitions, Northern dialect and costume, the wars, the religion, and politics of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, give a charming and wholesome relief to the facti-

1. Hazlitt, iv. 245.

2. Bagehot, ii. pp. 47-8; Hazlitt, iv. pp. 249-252.

3. Bagehot, iii. 61.

titious refinement and 'over-laboured lassitude' of modern readers....Our author has conjured up the actual people he has to deal with, or as much as he could get of them, in 'their habits as they lived'. He has ransacked old chronicles, and poured the contents upon the page....He has taken his materials from the original, authentic sources, in large, concrete masses."¹

The major interest of both men is in the historical setting.

There are two divergences--Bagehot's approval of Scott's sociology and Hazlitt's disparagement of Scott's originality.

The defects, or limitations, of Scott Bagehot summarizes as follows:

"On the whole, and speaking roughly, these defects in the delineation which Scott has given us of human life are but two. He omits to give us a delineation of the soul. We have mind, manners, animation, but it is the air of this world. We miss the consecrating power; and we miss it not only in its peculiar sphere...but in the place in which a novelist might be most expected to delineate it....His heroes and heroines are well-dressed for this world, but not for another; there is nothing even in their love which is suitable for immortality. As has been noticed, Scott also omits any delineation of the abstract side of unworldly intellect."²

The first limitation, the lack of "delineation of the soul", is the basis for Hazlitt's comparison of Scott and Shakespeare in The Plain Speaker. The section Bagehot summarizes in speaking of this delineation of the soul points out this lack as it appears in characterization:

"Scott's is a healthy and genial world of reflection, but it wants the charm of delicate exactitude. The same limitation of Scott's genius shows itself in a very different manner of art in his delineation of his heroines....The difference is

1. Hazlitt, iv. p. 245 and ff.

2. Bagehot, iii. p. 70.

evident between the characters of women formed by Goethe's imagination or Shakespeare's, and those formed by such an imagination as that of Scott. The latter seem so external. We have traits, features, manners; we know the heroine as she appeared in the street; in some degree we know how she talked, but we never know how she felt--least of all what she was: we always feel there is a world behind, unanalysed, unrepresented, which we cannot attain to.... Such a character as Margaret in 'Faust' is known to us to the very soul; so is Imogen; so is Ophelia. Scott's heroines, therefore, are, not unnaturally, faulty, since from a want of the very peculiar instinctive imagination he could not delineate to us their detailed life with the appreciative accuracy of habitual experience.... The same criticism might be applied to Scott's heroes. Every one feels how commonplace they are--Waverley excepted, whose very vacillation gives him a sort of character. They have little personality. They are all of the same type;--excellent young men--rather strong--able to ride and climb and jump.... But we know nothing of their inner life."¹

Hazlitt did not speak specifically of the delineation of women in general. In the Plain Speaker essay he points out a characteristic deficiency in the portrait of Meg Merrilies--"Her exits and entrances are pantomimic, and her long red cloak, her elf-locks, the rock on which she stands, and the white cloud behind her are, or might be made the property of a theater."² A few sentences later he speaks of character portrayal in general:

"Shakespear is a half-worker with nature. Sir Walter is like a man who has got a romantic spinning-jenny, which he has only to set a going, and it does his work for him much better than he could do it for himself. He lays an embargo on 'all appliances and means to boot', on history, tradition, local scenery, costume and manners, and makes his characters chiefly up of these.... There is none of this [Shakespeare's] overweening impertunity of the imagination in the Author of Waverley, he does his work well, but in another-guess manner. His imagination is a matter-of-fact imagination."³ ⁴

1. Bagehot, ii, pp. 65-6.

2. Hazlitt, vii, p. 343.

3. Compare Bagehot--"Above all minds, his had the Baconian propensity to work upon stuff'." (iii, p. 62)

4. Hazlitt, vii, p. 343.

The objection of both writers is to superficiality; Bagehot phrases it in terms of the soul, Hazlitt in terms of passion.

In Hazlitt's essay on "Why the Heroes of Romance are Insipid", mentioned by Bagehot in the essay on Dickens, Scott's heroes are criticized thus:

"They conform to their designation and follow the general law of their being. They are for the most part very equivocal and undecided personages, who receive their governing impulse from accident, or are puppets in the hands of their mistresses. I do not say that...[they] are absolutely insipid, but they have in themselves no leading or master-traits, and they are worked out of very listless and inert materials into a degree of force and prominence solely by the genius of the author."¹

Bagehot finds them "commonplace" and with "little personality"; Hazlitt calls them "equivocal and undecided personages", with no "leading or master-traits".

The second defect Bagehot found, the lack of delineation "of the abstract side of the unworldly intellect", is similarly stated in both The Spirit of the Age and The Plain Speaker:

"The cells of his [Scott's] memory are vast, various, full even to bursting with life and motion; his speculative understanding is empty, flaccid, poor, and dead. His mind receives and treasures up every thing brought to it by tradition or custom--it does not project itself beyond this into the world unknown, but mechanically shrinks back as from the edge of a precipice. The land of pure reason is to his apprehension like Van Dieman's Land!"²

"All that is gossipped in the neighborhood, all that is handed down in print, all of which a drawing or an etching might be procured, is gathered together and communicated to the public: what the heart whispers to itself in secret, what the imagination tells in thunder, this alone is wanting, and this is the great thing required to make good the comparison in question [between Scott's dramatic situations and Shakespeare's]."³

1. Hazlitt, xii, pp. 65-66.

2. Hazlitt, iv, p. 242.

3. Hazlitt, vii, p. 345.

Neither man draws a clear distinction in these discussions between abstract thought and spiritual thought; so that Bagehot's two defects, as they are developed in the essay, are somewhat interdependent, and the passages in Hazlitt contain elements of both. The latter quotation from Hazlitt may also be compared with the defect in soul Bagehot found-- "We have mind, manners, animation, but it is the stir of this world. We miss the consecrating power."¹

Bagehot ends by briefly discussing plot and style. Concerning the latter, Bagehot is more kind than Hazlitt, who thought "the writer could not possibly read the manuscript after he has once written it, or overlook the press," because of the "bad and slovenly English in them."² Bagehot seems to think the style inadequate--says that the reader is not conscious of the author at all--and then qualifies the praise, probably speaking of the same thing that Hazlitt objected to:

"Still, on great occasions in imaginative fiction, there should be passages in which the words seem to cleave to the matter....He [Scott] used the first sufficient words which came uppermost, and seems hardly to have been sensible, even in the works of others, of that exquisite accuracy and inexplicable appropriateness of which we have been speaking."³

1. Quotation above, p. 47.

2. Hazlitt, iv. The Spirit of the Age, p. 251.

3. Bagehot, iii, p. 72.

6. "Sterne and Thackeray"

Though Hazlitt's writings abound with references to Tristram Shandy and the Sentimental Journey, he only once attempted a discussion of Sterne, in the Lectures on the English Comic Writers, and that is less than half a page long. It may be summarized:

"There is more of mannerism and affectation in him [than in Richardson] and a more immediate reference to preceding authors; but his excellences, where he is excellent, are of the first order. His characters...are made out...by glancing transitions and graceful appositions. His style.... is at times the most rapid, the most happy, the most idiomatic of any that is to be found. It is the pure essence of English conversational style. His works consist only of morceaux--of brilliant passages....There appears to have been in Sterne a vein of dry, sarcastic humor, and of extreme tenderness of feeling; the latter sometimes carried to affectation, as in the tale of Maria, and the apostrophe to the recording angel: but at other times pure, and without blemish. The story of Le Fevre is perhaps the finest in the English Language. My Uncle Toby is one of the finest compliments ever paid to human nature."¹

Sterne is one of the few men whom both Hazlitt and Bagehot knew and talked about and on whom there were some fundamental disagreements; though the agreement between them is still pronounced. The mannerisms of Sterne, usually touched upon, bothered Hazlitt very little; Bagehot, however, objected at page length.² As to the "reference to preceding authors", Bagehot says that when Sterne wrote Tristram Shandy, he "had filled his head and mind, not with the literature of his

1. Hazlitt, viii, p. 120.

2. Bagehot, iv, pp. 240-1.

own age, but with the literature of past ages"¹--which is possibly what Hazlitt meant, though we cannot be sure.

The purity of style Hazlitt mentions Bagehot thought the essence of artificiality.² But Bagehot is not less convinced that the merits of Sterne are in isolated passages. He says that "Sterne's best things are read out of his books--in Enfield's Speaker and other places--and you can say no worse of any one as a continuous artist."³ Bagehot seemed to find no "dry, sarcastic humor"; he did find the "extreme tenderness of feeling", and makes of it the only merit Sterne really had.

"The real essence of Sterne is single and simple....He excels, perhaps, all other writers in mere simple description of common sensitive human nature....It is portrait painting of the heart. It is as pure a reflection of mere natural feeling as literature has ever given, or will ever give....Sterne's feeling in his higher moments so much overpowered his intellect, and so directed his imagination, that no intrusive thought blemishes, no distorting fancy wars, the perfection of the representation."⁴

This passage is nearest to Hazlitt, and the thought in both men is the most fundamental in their criticism. The word "pure"--meaning "quintessential"--is at the center of their feeling about Sterne's sentiment.

Bagehot, as often, builds his essay about the biography of Sterne, with which Hazlitt was not concerned. Two other objections make up the rest of the literary criticism, to

1. Bagehot, iv, p. 239.

2. Bagehot, iv, n. 252.

3. Bagehot, iv, p. 242.

4. Bagehot, iv, pp. 239-40.

Sterne's morality, and to the eccentricity of his characters. Hazlitt in another place defends Sterne's morality, and he wrote an essay to prove that the picturesque--which Bagehot in "Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Browning" termed the typical--is the individual.

In the discussion of Thackeray, whom Hazlitt of course did not know, there is nothing traceable to Hazlitt; though Thackeray's peculiar irritable sensitivity, contrasted with Sterne's sensitiveness, is compared to that of Hazlitt himself. There is very little criticism at all--not one of Thackeray's novels is even mentioned by name.

7. "Wordsworth, Keats, and Browning; or, Pure, Ornate, and Grotesque Art in English Poetry"

This essay is long and digressive; it contains most of Bagehot's critical theory apart from his biographical interpretation, much that was being said during his own time, and so as a whole probably is one of the most interesting to the reader new to Bagehot.

After several "warming-up" pages of gossip about the unpopularity of Byron and the decline of poetry-reading, Bagehot develops a doctrine that art portrays the typical. The argument is not far from that supporting Coleridge's theory of the esemplastic imagination, phrased in more popular language with concrete illustration. From this he proceeds^e to show that poetry may be classified, according to the mode of delineating the type, as pure, ornate, and grotesque.¹ There

1. This triple classification rings very much like Ruskin's classification of "true idealism" in the ~~third~~ book of the Modern Painters, which had been published in 1856, eight years before this essay. Ruskin's classification is into purist, naturalist, and grotesque idealism. "Purist idealism", however, is practically Bagehot's "ornate"; "naturalist idealism" is "that central and highest branch of ideal art which concerns itself simply with things as they ARE"; and corresponds directly with Bagehot's "pure". The grotesque, as Bagehot expounds it, is quite different from Ruskin's theory. See Modern Painters, iii, Chap. VI-VIII. The title of Bagehot's essay--"in English Poetry"--hints that Bagehot may have expected some readers to be familiar with what Ruskin had expounded in regard to art.

is a vagueness about the word "pure"¹ which makes it difficult to state exactly what he means, and whether the meaning is to be found in Hazlitt's writings. This is his statement:

The definition of pure literature is, that it describes the type in its simplicity--we mean, with the exact amount of accessory circumstance which is necessary to bring it before the reader in finished perfection, and no more than that amount....The pure art is that which works with the fewest strokes....Pure art does not mutilate its object; it represents it as fully as possible with the slightest effort possible....If you catch yourself admiring its details, it is defective; you ought to think of it as a single whole which you must remember, which you must admire, which somehow subdues you while you admire it, which is a 'possession' to you 'for ever'."²

As instances of pure style are quoted Wordsworth's sonnet "The Trossachs" and that "Composed upon Westminster Bridge", Belial's speech in Paradise Lost, and a stanza of Shelley's "The Isle". It does not seem so likely that the standard of "the pure" as a category came directly from Hazlitt; Hazlitt was not given to categories. It seems nearer in kind to Arnold's idea of "the best". However, it may be shown that the two men agreed in general in what is said about the "pure" in Wordsworth and Milton.

Of Wordsworth's sonnets Hagehot says that "few better

1. "If pure is to mean 'unadorned', Wordsworth is most certainly not at his poetical best when he has most of the quality, but generally at his worst; if it means 'sheer', 'intense', 'quintessential', his best of poetry has certainly no more of it than the best of the other two."
Saintsbury, History of English Criticism, p. 496.

2. Hagehot, iv, pp. 280-1.

instances of purer style" could be found.¹ This purity Hazlitt mentioned more than once, especially in the form the idea may be said to take in the prefaces to the Lyrical Ballads:

"He [Wordsworth] has 'no figures nor no fantasies, which busy passion draws in the brains of men': neither the gorgeous machinery of mythologic lore, nor the splendid colours of poetic diction.... [His] use takes the commonest events and objects, as a test to prove that nature is always interesting from its inherent truth and beauty, without any of the ornaments of dress or pomp of circumstances to set it off.... His popular, inartificial style gets rid (at a blow) of all the trappings of verse, of all the high places of poetry: 'the cloud-capped towers, the solemn temples, the gorgeous palaces' are swept to the ground, and 'like the baseless fabric of a vision, leave not a wreck behind.' [Sic].... The jewels in the crisped hair, the diadem on the polished brow are thought meretricious, theatrical, vulgar; and nothing contents his fastidious taste beyond a simple garland of flowers."²

"He has scarcely any of the pomp and decoration and scenic effect of poetry: no gorgeous palaces nor solemn temples awe the imagination."³

In so far as Eagehot meant that pure poetry is not ornate, which is apparently the central contention⁴, Hazlitt is evidently in agreement as respects Wordsworth's style: in fact, when the echoes of Hazlitt's Wordsworth passages in "The First Edinburgh Reviewers"⁵ and "Hartley Coleridge" are remembered, one must suspect that Eagehot took the idea of this kind of purity from Hazlitt.

1. Eagehot, iv, p. 282.

2. Hazlitt, iv, Spirit of the Age, pp. 270-2.

3. Hazlitt, i, The Round Table. "On Mr. Wordsworth's Excursion", p. 120.

4. A few pages later he states, "The extreme opposite to this pure art is what may be called ornate art." (iv, p. 289)

5. See below, p. 63.

What Hazlitt said on the speeches in Pandemonium in Paradise Lost is but a few sentences in the Lectures on the English Poets:

"The whole of the speeches and debates in Pandemonium are well worthy of the place and the occasion--with Gods for speakers, and angels and archangels for hearers. There is a decided manly tone in the arguments and sentiments, an eloquent dogmatism, as if each person spoke from thorough conviction; an excellence which Milton probably borrowed from his spirit of partisanship, or else his spirit of partisanship from the natural firmness and vigour of his mind. In this respect Milton resembles Dante, (the only modern writer with whom he has any thing in common) and it is remarkable that Dante, as well as Milton, was a political partisan. That approximation to the severity of impassioned prose which has been made an objection to Milton's poetry, and which is chiefly to be met with in these bitter invectives, is one of its great excellences."¹

The ideal of purity is in the italicized words. More or less aside from the discussion of purity, Bagehot has two or three pages discussing the connection between Milton's political activity and the debates:

"Milton, though always a scholar by trade, though solitary in old age, was through life intent on great affairs, lived close to great scenes, watched a revolution, and if not an actor in it, was at least secretary to the actors. He was familiar--by daily experience and habitual sympathy--with the earnest debate of arduous questions on which the life and death of the speakers certainly depended, on which the weal and woe of the country perhaps depended.... This great experience, fashioned by a fine imagination, gives to the debate of the Static Council in Pandemonium its reality and life.².... The debate in Pandemonium is a debate among these typical characters at the greatest conceivable crisis, and with adjuncts of solemnity which no other situation could rival."³

1. Hazlitt, v. pp. 65-66.

2. Bagehot, iv. p. 283.

3. Bagehot, iv. p. 287

The theme takes another turn in both writers:

Hazlitt: "He [Milton] relied on the justice of his cause, and did not scruple to give the devil his due. Some persons may think that he has carried his liberality too far, and injured the cause he professes to espouse by making him the chief person in his poem. Considering the nature of his subject, he would be equally in danger of running into this fault, from his faith in religion, and his love of rebellion; and perhaps each of those motives had its full share in determining the choice of his subject."¹

Degehot: "It [the Satanic council] is a debate in the Long Parliament, and though the theme of 'Paradise Lost' obliged Milton to side with the monarchial element in the universe, his old habits are often too much for him; and his real sympathy--the impetuous and energy of his nature--side with the rebellious element.... Satan may have been wrong; but on Milton's theory he had an arguable case at least.... Milton's sympathy and his imagination slip back to the Puritan rebels whom he loved, and desert the courtly angels whom he could not love, although he praised them."²

That is to say, both men think possibly that Milton's temperamental insurgency is responsible for the fundamental plan and development of Paradise Lost.

The remainder of the essay deals with contemporaries. The striking peculiarities of Tennyson and Browning were not of especial prominence as such in the time of Hazlitt; and except for what he says about the ornate by contrast with Wordsworth's purity, there is nothing of importance in the critical ideas.

1. Hazlitt, v. n. 65.

2. Degehot, iv. pp. 283-4.

8. "The First Edinburgh Reviewers"

This essay covers a good deal of political material. A good share of it is devoted to Francis Horner and Sydney Smith, of neither of whom did Hazlitt write anything in particular. Much is devoted to picturing the times of the Review's origin, and the circumstance, when Bagehot wrote, were matters for history rather than for partisanship as Hazlitt had felt them. Nevertheless, there are evidences in this essay that Bagehot was in Hazlitt's debt, as well as that they were in consonance.

A complete paragraph, almost an aside, out of Hazlitt's Lectures on the Age of Elizabeth, is here given; Bagehot quoted from it and seems to have adapted it to develop himself:

"We have lost the art of reading, or the privilege of writing, voluminously, since the days of Addison. Learning no longer weaves the interminable page with patient drudgery, nor ignorance pores over it with implicit faith, as authors multiply in number, books diminish in size; we cannot now, as formerly, swallow libraries whole in a single folio solid quarto has given place to slender duodecimo, and the dingy letter-press contracts its dimensions, and retreats before the white, unsullied, faultless margin. Modern authorship is become a species of stenography: we contrive even to read by proxy. We skim the cream of prose without any trouble; we get at the quintessence of poetry without loss of time. The staple commodity, the coarse, heavy, dirty, unwieldy bullion of books is driven out of the market of learning, and the intercourse of the literary world is carried on, and the credit of the great capitalists sustained by the flimsy circulating medium of magazines and reviews. Those who are chiefly concerned in catering for the taste of others, and serving up critical opinions in a compendious, elegant, and portable form, are not forgetful of themselves: they are not scrupulously solicitous, idly inquisitive about the real merits, the bona

vide contents of the works they are deputed to appraise and value, any more than the reading public who employ them. They look no farther for the contents of the works than the title page, and pronounce a peremptory decision on its merits or defects by a glance at the name and party of the writer. This state of polite letters seems to admit of improvement in only one respect, which is to go a step further, and write for the amusement and edification of the world, accounts of works that were never either written or read at all, and to cry up or abuse the authors by name, although they have no existence but in the critic's invention. This would save a great deal of labour in vain: anonymous critics might pounce upon the reviews, the defenceless heads of fictitious candidates for fame and bread; reviews, from being novels founded upon facts, would aspire to pure romance; and we should arrive at the beau ideal of a commonwealth of letters, at the euthanasia of thought, and Millennium of criticism!"¹

The theme is that of the first five pages of Laghot's article; not only the theme, but the relative sprightliness of the style:

"Review writing is one of the features of modern literature.... Hazlitt started the question, whether it would not be as well to review works which did not appear, in lieu of those which did--wishing, as a reviewer, to escape the labour of perusing print, and, as a man, to save his fellow-creatures from the slow tortures of tedious extracts.... In truth, review writing but exemplifies the casual character of modern literature. Look at a railway stall; you see books of every color--blue, yellow, crimson, 'ring-streaked, speckled, and spotted', on every subject, in every style, of every opinion, with every conceivable difference, celestial or sublunary, maleficient, beneficent--but all small.... It may be all very well for a pure essence like poetry to be immortal in a perishable world; it has no feeling; but paper cannot endure it, paste cannot bear it, sting has no heart for it.... What a change from the ancient volume!--

'That weight of wood....' [Quotation, seven lines
.... And the change in the appearance of books has been accompanied--has been caused--by a similar change in readers. What a transition from the student of former ages!... In this transition from ancient writing to modern, the review-like essay and the essay-like review fill a large space.... Whatever we may think on this point, however, the transition has been made.^{a2}

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1. Hazlitt, v. p. 319.
 2. Laghot, ii. pp. 51-5.

Bagehot's development is fuller: the framework underlying the discussion is that of Hazlitt's paragraph--the shortening of books, the contrast of types of readers, the place of the review in this development. When we know from his quoting it that Bagehot read the paragraph, and note the hold it would have on anyone's memory, it is difficult not to suspect that the reason why the development is the same is that the idea was adopted and restated.

This introduction of Bagehot's is followed by a characterization of Lord Eldon, too lengthy to summarize in quotation. Briefly, Lord Eldon is stated to be a typical Tory--"he believed in everything it is impossible to believe in" --conservative to the point of desperate fear of change, personally amiable "until he was himself hurt", and with "all the direct influence of the Prime Minister".¹ Hazlitt, characterizing Eldon in The Spirit of the Age, says that Eldon is good-natured; that his good-nature "is often no better than indolent selfishness"; that he is "a thoroughbred Tory", who worries about only what concerns him directly; that he "has been uniformly and without a single exception on the side of prerogative and power, and against every proposal for the advancement of freedom."² There is only one fundamental difference between Bagehot's and Hazlitt's picture--where Hazlitt held rancor, Bagehot could be merely con-

1. Bagehot, ii. pp. 56-61.

2. Hazlitt, iv. pp. 325-330.

temptuous. Bagehot gives certain biographical data Hazlitt did not have, taken from the books he is reviewing; but in view of the fact that he quotes Hazlitt's statement that Eldon was "good-natured", and that he also was thoroughly familiar with The Spirit of the Age, one suspects that the portrait is only superimposed upon Hazlitt's.

Bagehot says of Horner that he is "a striking example of keeping an atmosphere."¹ The remark has been cited as both clever and penetrating, and Bagehot seemed to think so-- the characterization is built over that remark. It is worth noting that Hazlitt's essay "On Manner" in The Round Table has for its first sentence--"It was the opinion of Lord Chesterfield, that manner is of more importance than matter"-- and then develops the idea for some pages. A quotation from Chesterton on Marlborough is given as a "good illustration of the general theory" in much the same way that Bagehot cites Horner.²

There is a similarity of judgment respecting Jeffrey in the estimation of him in The Spirit of the Age and in Bagehot's essay. In both he is characterised as a representative Scotchman: Bagehot contrasts Scotch and English education, metaphysical and dialectical against factual. The "facility and boldness of the habits" produced by Scotch education, he says, were "curiously exemplified in Lord Jeffrey".³ Hazlitt.

1. Bagehot, ii, p. 69.

2. Hazlitt, i, p. 44.

3. Bagehot, ii, 74.

saying that Jeffrey was better in mixed company than tete-a-tete, speaks of the contentious theoretic Scotch character, and observes that Jeffrey "has been a little infected by the tone of his countrymen".¹ Both men think of Jeffrey as the man of the world: Hazlitt tells as much about his conversation and presence as about his writing; Bagehot regards him as the brilliant "voice" of the "cities of the plain".²

One passage of eloquence in this part of Bagehot's essay has been quoted ever since Richard Holt Hutton wrote his first memoir of Bagehot. It concerns Jeffrey and Wordsworth, and a few sentences out of the two pages will indicate the trend of thought:

"The truth is, that Lord Jeffrey was something of a Whig critic. We have hinted, that among the peculiarities of that character, an excessive partiality for new, arduous, overwhelming, original excellence, was by no means to be remembered.... They are most averse to mysticism. A clear, precise, discriminating intellect shrinks at once from the symbolic, the unbounded, the indefinite. The misfortune is that mysticism is true.... But be this as it may, it is certain that Mr. Wordsworth preached this kind of religion, and that Lord Jeffrey did not believe a word of it.... Yet we do not mean that in this great literary feud, either of the combatants had all the right, or gained all the victory. The world has given judgment. Both Mr. Wordsworth and Lord Jeffrey have received their regard. The one had the laughter of his own generation, the applause of drawing-rooms, the concurrence of the crowd; the other a succeeding age, the fond enthusiasm of secret students, the lonely rapture of lonely minds. And each has received according to his kind.... Nature ingeniously prepared a shrill artificial voice, which spoke in season and out of season, enough and more than enough, what will ever be the idea of the cities of the plain concerning those who live alone among the mountains; of the frivolous concerning the grave; of the... [etc]"³

1. Hazlitt, iv, p. 317.

2. Bagehot, ii, p. 77.

3. Bagehot, ii, 75 and ff.

The antithesis, the reiteration and building of metaphor one might think Macaulay's. It would do no harm to Bagehot's eloquence to give the antithesis to Macaulay and the perception of the fact to Hazlitt--"He [Wordsworth] has produced a deeper impression, and on a smaller circle, than any other of his contemporaries."¹ But a paragraph in The Spirit of the Age must be noted:

"He is in this sense the most original poet now living, and the one whose writings could the least be spared: for they have no substitute elsewhere. The vulgar do not read them, the learned, who see all things through books, do not understand them, the great despise, the fashionable may ridicule them: but the author has created himself an interest in the heart of the retired and lonely student of nature, which can never die. Persons of this class will still continue to feel what he has felt: he has expressed what they might in vain wish to express, except with glittering eye and faltering tongue!"²

It is all there: Bagehot's idea in all completeness, the accent of the eloquence, the very rhythm and climactic emotion; all that is lacking is the redundant elaboration and the antithesis. Whoever has read either passage will remember it, and should he read the other, will suspect he has read it before. How much of it came from Bagehot's pen because he had read The Spirit of the Age can, of course, be only conjecture; enough to remark that it is easier to explain the similarity of the passages, as in so many other cases, by unconscious plagiarism than to explain the coincidence.³

One other point deserves attention. In discussing Sydney Smith's humor, Bagehot quotes the dialogue between Shallow and Silence about the death of Old Double in Henry IV

1. Hazlitt, v. p. 156. The Lectures on the English Poets.

2. Hazlitt, iv. p. 273.

3. See below, p. 69, where similar passage occurs.

as an example of contrasting humor--humor that rests upon a broad human incongruity, rather than mere wit.¹ Hazlitt, in the lecture on Shakespeare and Ben Jonson in the Lectures on the English Comic Writers, quotes the same passage, though at a little more length, and makes the same point by it.²

1. Bagehot, ii. p. 85.

2. Hazlitt, viii. p. 34.

19. Hartley Coleridge

Hazlitt wrote six words about Hartley Coleridge's poetry, and they were in a footnote:

"Mr. Coleridge named his eldest son (the writer of some beautiful sonnets) after Hartley...."¹

Bagehot states in this essay that Hartley's sonnets were his "earliest and best work".² Comparison of the judgments of the two on the central figure must be left at that.

The essay does contain, however, a number of other matters to be noted. Worth mention, on the first page, is Bagehot's quotation of a well-known passage from a letter of Gray's. "Don't you remember when Lord B. and Sir H.C. and Viscount D., who are now great statesmen, were little dirty boys playing at cricket? For my part I do not feel one bit older or wiser now than I did then."³ Hazlitt quoted the same passage twice, in the Lectures on the English Poets and in the Plain Speaker.⁴

Much of the essay is a sketch of personality; in fact, Bagehot says that he is interested "mainly in bringing a remarkable character before the notice" of the reader.⁵ In the biographical sketch only one point is worth noting, that both

1. Hazlitt, v. iv, 216. Spirit of the Age

2. Bagehot, v. i, 209

3. Bagehot, v.i, 187

4. Hazlitt, v.v, 118; v. vii, 205

5. Bagehot, v.i, 202

critics believed poets are not given to brilliant university accomplishment. Hazlitt voiced this in the essay "On the Ignorance of the Learned:"

Bagehot: "There is a peculiar reason why a great poet (besides his being, as a man of genius, rather more likely than another, to find a difficulty in the preliminary technicalities of art) should not obtain an academic prize, to be given for excellent verses to people of about twenty-one. It is a bad season....And particularly in a real poet, where the disturbing influences of passion and fancy are most likely to be in excess, will this unhealthy time be most likely to be excessive and conspicuous. Nothing in the style of 'Andymion' would have a chance of a prize....There are no defined thoughts, or aged illustrations."¹

Hazlitt: "Our men of greatest genius have not been most distinguished for their acquirements at school or at the university.

'Th' enthusiast fancy was a truant ever."
....A mediocrity of talent, with a certain slenderness of moral constitution, is the soil that produces the most brilliant specimens of successful prize-essayists and Greek epigrammatists."²

One of Bagehot's recurring theses is developed in this essay--that regarding "self-definative" poetry. It is most fully set forth here in the first literary essay Bagehot ever published; and it recurs in the essays on Shakespeare, on Shelley, on Coleridge, and again in the essay on Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Browning--in the latter of which Hartley Coleridge's poetry is again quoted in connection with the idea. His development of the idea is as follows:

"Lyrical poetry....as we know, is of various kinds....but... it is designed to express, and when successful does express,

1. Bagehot, v.i, 196

2. Hazlitt, v.vi, 72

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some one mood, some single sentiment, some isolated longing in human nature....In course of time, the advance of ages and the progress of civilization appear to produce a new species of poetry which is distinct from the lyrical, though it grows out of it, and contrasted with the epic, though in a single respect it exactly resembles it. This kind may be called the self-delineative, for in it the poet deals not with a particular desire, sentiment, or inclination in his own mind, not with a special phase of his own character, not with his love of war, his love of ladies, his melancholy, but with his mind viewed as a whole, with the entire essence of his own character...This species of poetry, of course, adjoins on the lyrical, out of which it historically arises.... [Epics] describe character, as the painters say, in mass....Now this quality of epic poetry the self-delineative precisely shares with it. It describes a character--the poet's--alone by itself."¹

This conception Hazlitt worked out in full; it entered into everything he wrote of Wordsworth. On the whole, Hazlitt didn't like it. "The great fault of a modern school of poetry," he says, "is, that it is an experiment to reduce poetry to a mere effusion of natural sensibility; or, what is worse, to divest it both of imaginative splendour and human passion, to surround the meanest objects with the morbid feelings and devouring egotism of the writers' own minds."² The last few pages of the Lectures on the English Poets register his protest at the poet who "sees nothing but himself and the universe."³ However, he made an exception when he discussed Wordsworth himself. A few sentences each from several comments on Wordsworth will show in a manner the self-delineative idea:

1. Bagehot, v.i, 205-7

2. Hazlitt, v.v, 53, Lectures on the English Poets

3. idem, v.v, 163

"His poetry is not external, but internal; it does not depend upon tradition, or story, or old song; he furnishes it from his mind, and is his own subject."¹

"It [The Excursion] is not so much a description of natural objects as of the feelings associated with them; not an account of the manners of rural life, but the result of the poet's reflections on it....He may be said to create his own materials; his thoughts are his real subject....He sees all things in himself."²

"Mr. Wordsworth's poems in general are the history of a refined and contemplative mind, conversant only with itself and nature."³

"Mr. Wordsworth is the last man to 'look abroad into universality,' if that alone constituted genius: he looks at home into himself, and is content with riches finclose'....He sits in the centre of his own being, and there 'enjoys bright day'....He contemplates a whole-length figure of himself, he looks along the unbroken line of his personal identity."⁴

This idea of self-delineation as a peculiar phenomenon of the Romantic poets has receded into the background; it does not seem quite clear-cut today when we read it in Bagehot. The idea, probably, was better suited for Hazlitt's disparagement than for Bagehot's appreciation. Why Bagehot made so much of it becomes understandable when we see how Hazlitt used it: the distinction made was convenient, especially in addressing an audience not well acquainted with the Lake School. Remembering Bagehot's acquaintance with the Lectures on the English Poets and Table-Talk, one naturally suspects that Bagehot took over the notion bag and baggage and expanded it to meet his

1. Hazlitt, v.v, 157, Lectures on the English Poets (Lion)
2. idem, v.i, 112 The Round Table, "On Mr. Wordsworth's Excursion"
3. idem, v.i, 121, "On Mr. Wordsworth's Excursion"--2nd paper
4. idem, v.vi, 44, Table-Talk, "On Genius and Common Sense"

needs.¹

In the two pages devoted to Wordsworth in this essay occurs a short passage similar to that in "The Edinburgh Reviewers," about the narrowness of Wordsworth's appeal and the depth of his influence on the "idle student" and "solitary thinker".² The "Edinburgh Reviewer" passage we traced to Hazlitt, and this one shows the same elements of eloquence and lyricism. Here also is a comparison of Wordsworth to Rembrandt:

"There is a print of Rembrandt said to represent a piece of the Campaign, a mere waste, with a stump and a man, and under is written 'Facet et loquitur'; and thousands will pass the old print-shop where it hangs, and yet have a taste for paintings, and colours, and oils: but some fanciful students, some lonely stragglers, some long-haired enthusiasts, by chance will come, one by one, and look, and look, and be hardly able to take their eyes from the fascination, so massive is the shade, so still the conception, so firm the execution. Thus it is with Wordsworth and his poetry."³

Twice Hazlitt compared Wordsworth and Rembrandt, though not naming a specific picture: once in the essay "On Genius and Common Sense" in Table-Talk, and once in The Round Table:

"....He, too, like Rembrandt, has a faculty of making something out of nothing, that is, out of himself, by the medium through which he sees and with which he clothes the barrenest subject."⁴

"His poems bear a distant resemblance to some of Rembrandt's landscapes, who, more than any other painter, created the medium through which he saw nature, and out of the stump of an

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1. In the essay on Cowper, Bagehot's use of the idea takes the exact form in which Hazlitt conceived it. See above p.43
 2. Bagehot, v.i, 214
 3. idem, 214
 4. Hazlitt, v.vi, 43

old tree, a break in the sky, and a bit of water, could produce an effect almost miraculous."¹

It would seem as if Bagehot and Hazlitt were looking at the same picture, if one had not seen a "mere waste" and a man, and the other a break in the sky and a bit of water; the stump, at least, is common to them.

Of the poems of S. T. Coleridge, Hazlitt said that, with the exception of "The Ancient Mariner", some of "Christabel", and a "fine compliment" to Schiller, they were "dreary trash."² Bagehot differs only in that he does not mention the Schiller sonnet:

"Turn over the early poems of S. T. Coleridge, the minor poems (we exclude 'The Ancient Mariner' and 'Christabel', which are his epics), but the small shreds which Bristol worshipped and Cottle paid for, and you will be disheartened by utter dullness."³

S. T. Coleridge comes into the essay for a good deal of discussion, particularly his conversation: Hazlitt probably wrote more than anyone else about the conversation of Coleridge; and Bagehot takes here quite for granted that what Hazlitt wrote was authoritative, even to the extent of citing his opinion.⁴

Except for a little--surprisingly little--specific praise of certain of Hartley's poems, there is no other literary criticism in the essay.

1. Hazlitt, v.1, 120

2. idem, v.v, 166-7, Lectures on the English Poets

3. Bagehot, v.1, 209

4. idem, v.1, 212

10. Charles Dickens

In this essay on Dickens there are two points in which Bagehot might have been influenced by Hazlitt. The first is not of importance, or even definite enough, taken in itself, to be worth considering. But it may be added to the data.

"Men of genius," Bagehot says, "may be divided into regular and irregular."¹ In Hazlitt's essay "On Genius and Common Sense" is a statement that Salvator "was what they call an irregular genius". There is no further development of the idea in Hazlitt; Bagehot develops it so fully that it is the foundation of his essay; but there is a possibility that Hazlitt's phrase might have stuck. Bagehot, as has been stated in discussing "Hartley Coleridge", probably made use of other parts of this essay.

The second resemblance more significant is in a characterization of Chaucer, whom Bagehot uses to illustrate "Regular genius". The description may be compared with what Hazlitt said about certain aspects of Chaucer in the Lectures on the English Poets.

Bagehot: "Possibly no mind gives such an idea of this sort of symmetry of regular genius as Chaucer's. Everything in it seems in its place. A healthy sagacious man of the world has gone through the world; he loves it, and knows it; he dwells on it with fond appreciation; every object of the old life of 'merry England' seems to fall into its precise niche in his ordered and symmetrical comprehension. The prologue to the Canterbury Tales is in itself a series of memorial tablets to

1. Bagehot, viii, p. 74

medieval society; each class has its tomb, and each its apt inscription. A man without such an apprehensive and broad sagacity must fail in every extensive delineation of various life; he might attempt to describe what he did not penetrate, or if by a rare discretion he avoided that mistake, his works would want the binding element; he would be deficient in that distinct sense of relation and combination which is necessary for the depiction of the whole of life, which gives to it unity at first, and imparts to it a mass in the memory ever afterwards."¹

Hazlitt: "For while Chaucer's intercourse with the busy world, and collision with the actual passions and conflicting interests of others, seemed to brace the sinews of his understanding, and gave to his writings the air of a man who describes persons and things that he had known and been intimately concerned in; the same opportunities, operating on a differently constituted frame, only served to alienate Spenser's mind from the 'close-pent up' scenes of ordinary life.... Chaucer was the most practical of all the great poets, the most a man of business and the world. His poetry reads like history. Every thing has a downright reality; at least in the relator's mind....He speaks of what he wishes to describe with the accuracy, the discrimination of one who relates what has happened to himself, or has had the best information from those who have been eyewitnesses of it. The strokes of his pencil always tell. He dwells only on the essential, on that which would be interesting to the persons really concerned; yet as he never omits any material circumstance he is prolix from the number of points on which he touches, without being diffuse on any one; and is sometimes tedious from the fidelity with which he adheres to his subject, as other writers are from the frequency of their digressions from it. The chain of his story is composed of a number of fine links, closely connected together, and rivetted by a single blow."²

The characterizations of the man are very like--worldly, interested in the world, interested in things. But more important is the stress in both quotations on the architectural side of Chaucer's work, on the adequacy of detail and organization, on the unity of the whole.

1. Bagehot, v. iii, 77

2. Hazlitt, v. v, 20-1

Bagehot has a point to make; he makes it by using the data Hazlitt gives. Whether he took any of the data from Hazlitt is not ascertainable. Bagehot in all his works quotes Chaucer once, says another time that Chaucer was shrewd; otherwise, this is the only mention. Since he quoted much from Shakespeare, Milton, Shelley, and Wordsworth, it might be suspected that he did not know so much about Chaucer and hence might be likely to borrow the data. At least Bagehot and Hazlitt found much the same thing when they looked at Chaucer's mind.

General Dissimilarities Between Bagehot and Hazlitt.

Such dissimilarities as are to be found in estimates of writers whom both Bagehot and Hazlitt wrote about are distinctly secondary. There is, first, a difference in their attitude toward Romantic poetry of the 1800's. Hazlitt saw only Shelley's limitations, and spoke much of Wordsworth's. Bagehot never spoke much of Wordsworth's limitations as such, and granted Shelley merits which Hazlitt did not appreciate. Second, there is a difference in their estimate of Sterne: Hazlitt accepted him most unreservedly, quoted him constantly, and gives every impression of taking unbounded delight in him. Bagehot carped at his morality, his theology, his character, his novels. These are the only divergences of any importance, and in both of these cases the convergences are more fundamental.

One important difference between their methods is their attention to and use of the biographical. In Bagehot's first essay, that on Hartley Coleridge, he states in so many words: "It is necessary to comprehend his character, to appreciate his works."¹ This is probably a youthful statement; it is significant that his last literary essay, on Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Browning, is not at all biographical. Nevertheless, there is much practice of the doctrine in all the

1. Bagehot, i, 204

essays except two. Speaking of the story that Keats peppered his tongue to enjoy claret, he remarks, "When you know it, you seem to read it in his poetry." A commentator says that is not true critical method: "Personality may be used as a comment; but a poem or any other work must stand alone....Walter Bagehot realized this oftener in practice than in theory."¹ Whether true method or not, it was at least partly Bagehot's; and more Bagehot's than Hazlitt's.. If it is susceptible of being abused, Bagehot was more likely to abuse it than Hazlitt.

This biographical interest is partly that of Macaulay. The application of it to literature as Bagehot attempted it was not Macaulay so much as Sainte-Beuve. Saintsbury and Scott-James, two of the few who have attempted an internationally comparative study of critical ideas and methods, credit Sainte-Beuve with the introduction of the "psychological" approach. A comparatively recent definition of Sainte-Beuve's method may be quoted:

"J'ai défini à la critique de genèse la critique psychologique, individuelle. Elle comprend trois efforts principaux: (1) l'établissement de la carte des facultés sensorielles, sentimentales et idéologiques; (2) l'étude des procédés d'élaboration et de la composition; (3) la détermination de la structure mentale, la définition et la hiérarchisation de ses modes d'activité habituelle, l'expression de ses lois. Si tout va bien, on arrive à définir le type d'esprit de l'écrivain, et peut-être le classement en familles dont Sainte-Beuve rêvait se réaliserait-il quelque jour."²

1. Holbrook Jackson, "Walter Bagehot, Writer and Banker", Living Age, April 28, 1925, p.233

2. Gustavo Rudler, Les Techniques de la Critique, et de L'Histoire Littéraires, Oxford, 1923 p.195

Sainte-Beuve's dream of a science of criticism Bagehot probably did not share. But the general method of approach to the author and his personality through his works, the linking of them together in discussion, was not common among critics earlier in the century. What Bagehot had of the method defined above under (3),¹ he did not get from Hazlitt. That he was influenced directly by Sainte-Beuve and the French romantic critics of the thirties and forties is not at all improbable: Sainte-Beuve was a contributor to magazines in 1828, a regular contributor to the Revue des Deux Mondes and the Revue de Paris from 1831 on. His Portraits Contemporains appeared between 1832 and 1848, and his Port-Royal between 1840 and 1848.¹ Bagehot was in Paris for ten months or so in 1851-2, and in 1857 wrote a review article on Beranger which shows acquaintance with contemporary French criticism.²

If Bagehot stands between Hazlitt and Sainte-Beuve in his psychological interest, he stands between Hazlitt and Taine in the sociological. The problems of social adjustment underlie what he says of Shelley, Cowper, Milton, Clough, Gibbon, in such a way as to be basic in the message. These studies are essays and only secondarily criticism; as he knew himself. Hazlitt, we feel, read for enjoyment; he does not

1. Lewis Mumford Kott, Sainte-Beuve, N.Y., 1925
 2. (See ref. in Bagehot, iii, 13, e.g.; and quotation in "Percy Bysshe Shelley", v.ii, 239)

use the word "instructive" so much as Bagehot; he was more directly aesthetic than Bagehot. His terminology belongs to art so much and not to the humanities. Besides Bagehot's interest in sociology is his interest in history itself; in fact, Hugh Walker ranks him with Main and Buckle as one of those who helped work out a 19th century philosophy of history. Hazlitt, possibly because he did not live then, had little such interest.

There is a divergence of tastes of the two men, towards the aesthetic, in Hazlitt, and towards theology in Bagehot. Hazlitt liked the Restoration dramatists; Bagehot never even mentioned them, and one suspects he would have found their morality as objectionable as Macaulay did, or as he himself found Sterne. That Bagehot had, instead, was a profound sympathy for and interest in the religious temperament: it comes out in "Shakespeare--the Man." It comes out by contrast in his discussion of Gibbon, Borlase, and Macaulay.

V. Comparison of Style.

It has been stated that superficial resemblances associate Bagehot and Macaulay in the minds of many readers. For one thing, the journalistic demands upon them were similar: they wrote articles based upon timely happenings, usually publication or reprinting of a book. Long articles were expected--long by our standards at least--with something of the flavor of the "leading article" taken for granted. Summary of subject matter took up much of the discussion, since readers were less sophisticated in a literary way than Hazlitt's, and literary criticism was partially subordinate: the word "instructive" is one of Bagehot's favorites. Biography tended to associate itself with literary work, as has been pointed out. Long articles also demand large divisions of organization; allow full development of theory; and, it must be admitted, they are well adapted for "padding", or at least rambling discussion. Bagehot and Macaulay found them adaptable to their tastes in all these respects. Besides these characteristics of the article itself, there is similarity in sentence style. Bagehot was almost as much given to balanced structure and rhetorical device as Macaulay. If there is an "adamantine hardness" in his style, as one critic asserts,¹ it is the same hardness that has been found in Mac-

1. Sampson, introduction to the Literary Studies, p. xv

aulay's style, and is linked with the same brilliant rhythmic and rhetorical artifice.

This very artificiality contrasts fundamentally with Hazlitt. Virginia Woolf says that Hazlitt's words glow white-hot, and that does not come from merely calculated rhetoric. The echoes of Hazlitt in Bagehot are often from the passages that glow; as the eloquence of the "lonely student" passage on Wordsworth, in The First Edinburgh Reviewers, and the comparison of Shakespeare and Milton in Bagehot's Shakespeare--The Man. There are other passages of eloquence in Bagehot; but the eloquence never fuses form and substance in the unorthodox fashion as such passages in Hazlitt often do. The famous sentence in Hazlitt's essay On the Feeling of Immortality in Youth, beginning, "To see the golden sun and azure sky..."¹ --a sentence half a page long that one does not forget--would be incredible in Macaulay, and hardly less so in Bagehot. When Stevenson said that "we are mighty fine fellows, but we cannot write like William Hazlitt," he certainly would have included Bagehot in his we; definition of the subtleties of literary expression, that Stevenson concerned himself with even more than Bagehot, is inadequate to explain the essential difference between the styles of Hazlitt and

1. Hazlitt, v: xll, 153

Bagehot.

A similarity in the thinking of the two men deserves notice here. Mention has been made of their use of generalization. In Bagehot it amounts to a mannerism: there are no less than twenty divisions into two, or three, classes in these sixteen essays; divisions of men into those of impulse and those of principle, of goodness into natural and ascetic; of lyric poetry into human and abstract; of religion into natural and supernatural; of genius into regular and irregular. Only the essay on Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, which is chiefly biographical, does not contain one of them. In seven of the essays¹, these categorizings are fundamental in the organization and exposition.. Leslie Stephens says, "Such classifications will not always bear reflection; they only give emphasis to a particular aspect..."² When Bagehot says in the essay on Cowper that ballad and blank verse are the two most essentially opposed forms, a second look at the statement leaves doubts as to its validity; and when he divides lyric poetry into that of this world and that not of this world, in the essay on Beranger, a little thought makes the distinction less clear than it appears at first sight. Bagehot was, however, not bound very strongly by his own gen-

1. Those on Hartley Coleridge, Shelley, Shakespeare, Milton, Dickens, The Waverly Novels, Wordsworth, Tennyson and Browning.

2. Stephens, Studies of a Biographer, v. III, N.Y., London 1907, 153.

eralizations--they almost fade before he is through expounding them; the fact speaks better for his taste than for his thoroughness.

Hazlitt, when he "strikes out a theory in the heat of the moment,"¹ is even less bothered about the "foolish consistency". He also is given to broad denunciations and characterizations, in discussing either individuals or social phenomena. His characterization of Pitt, though more specific in detail and more splenetic than anything of Bagehot's, is none the less a wholesome condemnation on the same general basis as Bagehot's condemnation of Guizot.² The characterization of Fox,³ to one familiar with Bagehot's studies, is strikingly similar in the use of generalization.⁴ But more often Hazlitt drops this sort of theory in a sentence or two. Such theories can be found in any number of his miscellaneous essays. When he does work out a division of characters or ideas into categories, they will be found running through all his work; as his ideas on the introspective ("Bagehot's self-delineative") poetry of the Lake school, on paradox and commonplace, on genius and common-sense, Bagehot's theories, when they reappear, have a new name and a slightly different

1. Stephens, *ibid.* Said of Bagehot.

2. Hazlitt's political essays, v. ii., and Bagehot's Shakespeare--The Man, v. i

3. Hazlitt, *idem*

4. See especially the comparison of Fox and Pitt, and the characterization of Fox's mind as purely historical.

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form: impulsive and principled types, in the essay on Sholley, become sensuous and ascetic in the essay on Milton, Puritan and Cavalier in that on Macaulay; the distinction drawn is almost the same, but it is seen from a different angle. Hazlitt was more thorough: his ideas grew and crystallized like Arnold's, where Bagehot's remained amorphous; and the ideas of both Hazlitt and Arnold, being founded on scholarly reflection, stay in the mind of the reader as Bagehot's do not. Bagehot's theoretical concepts, besides being, as has been shown, often derived elsewhere, are liable to a charge of mere inadequacy from slovenly thinking.

The most evident point of difference between the two men is their sense of humor. One need not accuse Hazlitt of lacking humor, but certainly he was seldom clever. A comparison of two passages already quoted is illuminating:

Hazlitt: "He [Southey] rises early, and writes or reads till breakfast-time. He writes or reads after breakfast till dinner, after dinner till tea, and from tea till bedtime--

'And follows so the ever-running year
With profitable labour to his grave--'
on Derwent's banks, beneath the feet of Skidaw.
Study serves him for business, exercise, recreation.
He passes from verse to prose, from history to
poetry, from reading to writing, by a stop-watch."¹

Bagehot: "He [Southey] wrote poetry (as if anybody could) before breakfast; he read during breakfast. He wrote history until dinner; he corrected proof-sheets between dinner and tea; he wrote an essay for the quarterly afterwards; and after supper by way of relaxation composed the 'Doctor'--a lengthy and elaborate jest."²

1. Hazlitt, Spirit of the Age, iv, 269

2. Bagehot, i, 229, Shakespeare, the Man

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The matter of this is about the same. Hazlitt's exaggeration is really slight--mention of the stop-watch is the only element; Southey probably did literally what Hazlitt says. Southey, however, probably did not consistently lay out his day, allotting only time before breakfast to poetry. The specific illustration for humorous effect is Bagehot's.

A sentence from Bagehot's essay on Macaulay illustrates his type of cleverness:

"After dinner, Demosthenes may come unseasonably....Dreadful idea, having Demosthenes for an intimate friend! He had pebbles in his mouth; he was always urging action; he spoke such good Greek; we cannot dwell on it--it is too much."¹

It is verbal humor, in a sense--"such good Greek"--and humorous affectation. Wit like this, which runs through every essay of Bagehot's and often into his political and theoretical writing, wit which is only a shade this side of virtuosity, could not have been Hazlitt's. "The fact is," Bagehot says, "Cowper was not like Agamemnon."² The device may be legitimate journalism; it is merely dramatization of a theoretical concept with a flavor of absurdity. Hazlitt was usually too direct for that. He counted more on the interest of his subject and what he had to say. Bagehot was conscious, as Hazlitt was not, that the average reader of his article must be entertained by things other than theology and poetry;

1. Bagehot, iii, 95

2. idem, iii, 47, William Cowper.

a certain Victorian didacticism he perhaps counted upon, but he did not presume upon it.

Hazlitt's constant use of the first person singular is indicative of a difference. Bagehot, much less often, makes use of the editorial plural. There is more in this than a matter of journalistic custom; the we was common enough in Hazlitt's time. But Hazlitt felt he was writing to a reader; his I is Hazlitt. Bagehot felt, so to speak, as a magazine: he wrote as if the article spoke to a large body of readers. His is much nearer the Scotch mind he described in The First Edinburgh Reviewers, the mind that "would wish to write an article": there is a little less evident the desire to express, a little more the desire to write.

VI--Conclusion

The purpose of this paper has been to establish two main theses: that there are pronounced similarities between the methods and conclusions of Bagehot and Hazlitt, and that there are evidences that Hazlitt's writings had direct influence upon Bagehot's literary criticism. The evidence may be summed up as follows:

Important dissimilarities between the judgments and methods of the two men are traceable to their respective times, and are not important when weighed against their similarities. A slight divergence in their estimates of Shelley and Sterne, a different attitude toward the place of biography in critical writing, a consciousness of theological and sociological problems in Bagehot characteristic of the Victorians, and some slight divergence of tastes--these are all. The styles of writing are also both individual, with not many common elements.

Similarities in the method of criticism include an unusually strong consciousness of the relation between personal character and what is written; a tendency to analyse works of art in terms of human relationships and metaphysical thought rather than in comparison with more formal literary criteria; and an impressionistic, direct approach to a work of art, personal rather than historical or academic.

Similarities of judgment are significant both in showing resemblance and indicating influence. In the evaluations of writers upon whom both wrote, there is no divergence worth

mentioning. Shakespeare and Milton are accepted classics; Wordsworth is the greatest of his age; Cowper, Shelley, Byron are minor but interesting figures; S. T. Coleridge was a stimulating figure in thought, but only stimulating; Southey was a bookworm; Chaucer was an orderly-minded man of the world; Scott was a considerable and entertaining novelist, and Sterne a most sensitive one.

Two ideas to which Bagehot devoted a good deal of space can be traced to Hazlitt's writings: that men must experience before they can write, and that "self-delimitative" poetry is a kind of its own. A number of ideas appear about specific men and their work which can be traced out in Hazlitt in works known to have been familiar to Bagehot: most of what Bagehot said about Shakespeare and Milton both may be found there; the fundamental attitudes toward Chaucer, Sterne, Shelley, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Jeffrey--the groundwork of the ideology applied in discussing all these figures--is to be found in Hazlitt. In connection with the exposition of these ideas about Shakespeare, Southey, Shelley, Wordsworth and Jeffrey, are to be found echoes of phraseology used by Hazlitt.

Other items of indebtedness appear sometimes, particularly in the critical theory of the essay, "Wordsworth, Tennyson and Browning". When they are put together with what was evidently derived from Hazlitt, Bagehot's original contribution to critical vocabulary or thought becomes negligible. The statement that what Bagehot said was "not among

the best things thought and said" about these writers is supported by this much evidence: most of the important things had been said before.

What, then, did Bagehot contribute to letters? First of all, his taste was such that he wrote well and accurately of his contemporaries. In the second place, though he went to school to Hazlitt, he learned his lessons thoroughly. What he said about those of whom Hazlitt had written is ^{most} often merely a sympathetic elaboration of what Hazlitt had said. It was, however, sympathetic, and an elaboration. The essays are readable as few of his contemporaries' efforts are--their wealth of illustration and the vigor of the incidental ideas keep them alive. Finally, and perhaps most important, he held his part in the dynasty of those who would keep the arts human by relating them to the world as most men know it. He is only liable to a diminution of glory based on evidence that, in a literary-critical way, he was demonstrably not original. It is fair to let his defence of another speak for him: "Men awake with their best ideas; it is seldom worth while to investigate very curiously whence they came. Our proper business is to adapt, and mould, and act upon them."

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