

From

The Coleridge Bulletin

The Journal of the Friends of Coleridge
New Series 23 (NS) Spring 2004

© 2004 Contributor all rights reserved

<http://www.friendsofcoleridge.com/Coleridge-Bulletin.htm>

The Road to Nether Stowey

Duncan Wu

‘My First Acquaintance with Poets’ is our principal witness for events during Hazlitt’s visit to Nether Stowey and Alfoxden in late May 1798. Its popularity derives not just from what it reveals of Wordsworth and Coleridge at a vitally important moment in their creative lives, but from its ingeniously constructed myth of initiation into their work. For those reasons, we should be wary of accepting it as the final word on the events it describes. Take, for instance, the time-scale of Hazlitt’s stay: in the essay it seems to span only a few days, when in fact he was there for three weeks. And it is inconceivable that he failed to make the acquaintance of Berkeley Coleridge, born ten days prior to his arrival. Berkeley was described as possessing a ‘noble and lovely style of beauty, his large, soft eyes, of a “London-smoke” colour, exquisite complexion, regular features and goodly size’. His father was reported to have been ‘very proud of him’, showing him off to admirers,¹ one of whom must have included Hazlitt. Nor can Hazlitt have failed to make friends with Hartley Coleridge, four months from his second birthday; in 1803 he would paint his portrait.² By all accounts, he got on with both of them, such that Coleridge could tell Thomas Wedgwood that Hazlitt ‘is very fond of, attentive to, & patient with, children’.³

But ‘My First Acquaintance’ makes no mention of Coleridge’s family, nor does it mention Joseph Cottle, the intended publisher of *Lyrical Ballads*, who in the midst of Hazlitt’s stay returned to Bristol with manuscripts of ‘The Ancient Mariner’ and many of Wordsworth’s poems for the new volume.⁴ This is not to criticise ‘My First Acquaintance’ which is a masterpiece of its kind, but to question the tendency among some biographers and critics to accept its account as exhaustive. In this essay I wish to recover—and speculate on—some lost conversations of that important moment. Looming behind them is a book that did not yet exist—Hazlitt’s *Essay on the Principles of Human Action*, published in 1805.⁵ Its central argument, which Hazlitt referred to as his theory of disinterestedness, had been formulated as long before as 1794 or 1795. In October 1796 he reported to his father that he had composed half a dozen pages of the *Essay* in shorthand, summarising his system as one that ‘founds the propriety of virtue on it’s coincidence with the pursuit of private interest, and of the imperfections inseparable from it’s scheme’.⁶

The manuscript had grown further by the time he met Coleridge in

¹ Sara Coleridge, *Memoir and Letters of Sara Coleridge* (2 vols., London, 1873), i 2-3.

² See *CC Table Talk* ii 483.

³ Griggs ii 990.

⁴ Hazlitt mentions Cottle nowhere throughout his works. For his part, Cottle does not refer to Hazlitt in his *Reminiscences of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Robert Southey* (1847).

⁵ Throughout what follows I am much indebted to Uttara Natarajan’s lucid exposition of Hazlitt’s philosophy in *Hazlitt and the Reach of Sense* (Oxford, 1998).

⁶ *Letters* 70.

January 1798, but rather than show it to him Hazlitt attempted to explain his theory, with the unfortunate result that 'I did not succeed in making myself understood'. It was not that his theory was too complicated, but that its advocate was a diffident, shy young man. Such early friends as Henry Crabb Robinson testify to his 'bashfulness, want of words, slovenliness of dress, etc.' which 'made him the object of ridicule'.⁷ Even Coleridge would in 1803 describe him as 'brow-hanging, shoe-contemplative, *strange*', attributing to him 'habitual Shyness & the Outside & bearskin at least of misanthropy'.⁸ All the same, the impression he made on Coleridge at their first encounter was not as bad as he thought, because a month after the Wem encounter he asked John Wicksteed to convey to him the 'respect due to his talents'.⁹ This can only have been a reference to Hazlitt's intellectual abilities.

According to 'My First Acquaintance', the failure to acquit himself to his satisfaction left Hazlitt desperate to commit his theory to paper. When Coleridge was gone, Hazlitt returned home and, as he recalled,

I sat down to the task shortly afterwards for the twentieth time, got new pens and paper, determined to make clear work of it, wrote a few meagre sentences in the skeleton-style of a mathematical demonstration, stopped half-way down the second page; and, after trying in vain to pump up any words, images, notions, apprehensions, facts, or observations, from that gulph of abstraction in which I had plunged myself for four or five years preceding, gave up the attempt as labour in vain, and shed tears of helpless despondency on the blank unfinished paper.¹⁰

Having twice failed to articulate his philosophical 'discovery', Hazlitt would have been strongly motivated to make a further attempt when he met Coleridge again. Indeed, his desire to visit Stowey could be attributable as much to that as to the wish to reacquaint himself with Coleridge. One difficulty with this is that 'My First Acquaintance' does not admit to that motive, nor to any occasion on which Hazlitt provided Wordsworth and Coleridge with a demonstration of his theory.

That he did so may be established from other sources. Years later, in the unpublished 'A Reply to "Z"', he recalled: 'when I once explained the argument of that Essay to Mr Wordsworth (and it is a hard matter to explain any thing to him) I remember he said he thought there was something in it, but it was what every shoemaker must have thought of'.¹¹ The most likely moment for this is May-June 1798, when Hazlitt visited Alfoxden.¹² There are

⁷ Morley i 6.

⁸ Griggs ii 990-1.

⁹ Griggs i 394.

¹⁰ Wu ix 101.

¹¹ Howe ix 4.

¹² The alternative is 1803, when Hazlitt visited the Lakes. Clearly he did have some important conversations with Wordsworth and Coleridge on that occasion, which may have returned to subjects covered in 1798.

hints elsewhere of such a conversation having taken place. In 1840 Wordsworth remarked to Barron Field that he had ‘little or no knowledge of H[azlitt]’s writings except his first metaphysical Work—I had reasons for this which need not be named’.¹³ When Wordsworth said that, he was in his seventieth year, and reading ‘My First Acquaintance with Poets’ for the first time. That the one work of Hazlitt’s he had ‘knowledge of’ was ‘his first metaphysical Work’ is not that surprising in view of the fact that a copy of the *Essay on the Principles of Human Actions* (1805) was sent to Grasmere by Lamb in February 1806, which when Wordsworth made this comment was in his library at Rydal Mount.¹⁴ Though intended for Coleridge it seems never to have entered his possession. When sent north by Lamb (apparently a gift of Hazlitt), Coleridge was in Italy, not to reach England for another six months. It would not be surprising had Wordsworth forgotten to pass it on to him. All the same, had Wordsworth read it? Not necessarily; he told Barron Field that he had ‘knowledge of’ it, not that he had read it—again providing grounds for thinking that its contents were explained to him by its author. It is also possible that, in order to help acquit himself better than in January, Hazlitt took a manuscript to Nether Stowey and showed it to Wordsworth and Coleridge. That might have been what Wordsworth meant by reasons ‘which need not be named’. Coleridge may have seen the manuscript by December 1800, when in a notebook entry he apparently described it as a ‘jumble’.¹⁵

Hazlitt would have explained his theory to Wordsworth and Coleridge at Alfoxden or Stowey not just for the reasons already mentioned, but because he would have known that they had conceived a philosophy to be argued in Wordsworth’s epic poem, ‘The Recluse’. Like much else, it is not mentioned in ‘My First Acquaintance with Poets’, where Wordsworth is hailed as the author of *Lyrical Ballads* and *Peter Bell*. But there are good reasons for regarding its omission as another act of editorial license on Hazlitt’s part. ‘The Recluse’ was begun in January or February 1798 at Alfoxden, and by the time Hazlitt arrived at Stowey comprised 1,300 lines of poetry. It had been decided in early March that Coleridge and the Wordsworths would leave Somerset and go to Germany later in the year where, as Wordsworth told his friend James Losh, ‘we purpose to pass the two ensuing years in order to acquire the German language, and to furnish ourselves with a tolerable stock of information in natural science.’¹⁶ The principal motive for these tasks was ‘The Recluse’, which as Wordsworth told another correspondent, James Webbe Tobin, would ‘contrive to convey most of the knowledge of which I am possessed... Indeed I know not any thing which will not come within the scope of my plan’.¹⁷ In 1815 Coleridge would recall his hope that it would be ‘the *first* and *only* true

¹³ Barron Field’s *Memoirs of Wordsworth* ed. Geoffrey Little (Sydney, 1975), p. 66.

¹⁴ See Duncan Wu, *Wordsworth’s reading 1800-1815* (1995), p. 104.

¹⁵ *Notebooks* i 868. The identification of the manuscript as Hazlitt’s is conjectural.

¹⁶ EY 213.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 212.

Phil. Poem in existence'.¹⁸

Despite saying nothing of it in 'My First Acquaintance', Hazlitt must have known about 'The Recluse' in 1798. Neither Coleridge nor Wordsworth would have wished to conceal it; indeed they would have wanted to discuss it with him, Coleridge especially. It was, after all, the descendant of 'Religious Musings' and his proposed but never to be written poem, 'The Brook'.¹⁹ A passage from 'The Recluse' had been sent to his brother George in early March, when Coleridge reported that 'The Recluse' was 'as likely to benefit mankind much more than any thing, Wordsworth has yet written'.²⁰ These ambitions for 'The Giant Wordsworth—God love him!²¹ would have been made clear to the twenty-year-old who on 20 May 1798 arrived at Coleridge's cottage, footsore, having taken a circuitous route from Wem to Cambridge and then to Stowey—where, as he would recall 25 years later, 'I... was well received'.²²

Why didn't Hazlitt mention 'The Recluse' in 'My First Acquaintance'? The obvious explanation is that by 1823 it was identified with the pompous, self-preening image of Wordsworth, due as much to the Preface to *The Excursion* as to such reviewers as Hazlitt's friend, Francis Jeffrey. Mention of it in 'My First Acquaintance' might have raised expectations that he was attempting to reinforce that line of attack, which was not his primary intention. He had no wish to defend Wordsworth either—and that would have been the other reason for mentioning it.²³

Given the probability that he knew of it in 1798, Hazlitt may have hoped that Wordsworth and Coleridge might appreciate the superiority of his theories over those of 'The Recluse' and perhaps be moved to reconsider their own—not as overweening a wish as it sounds. He had been educated at home by his father, whose tutor at Glasgow University had been Adam Smith, and had attended the Unitarian New College in Hackney, where metaphysics was taught by some of the finest intellectuals of the day. Even at the tender age of twenty he was fully qualified to advise on 'The Recluse'. That would have made Wordsworth's opinion of his theory of disinterestedness—that it was 'what every shoemaker must have thought of—all the more wounding. Perhaps Wordsworth suspected Hazlitt's ideas to be superior to those formulated for 'The Recluse', but wanted to persuade himself otherwise.

Hazlitt indicates another reason for anxiety on Coleridge and Wordsworth's part when, in his *Letter to William Gifford*, having summarised his philosophical theory, he remarks:

Some persons, who formerly took the pains to read this work,

¹⁸ Griggs iv 574.

¹⁹ Discussed in *Biographia Literaria* i 196.

²⁰ Griggs i 391.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Wu ix 103.

²³ On the few occasions when he does mention 'The Recluse', Hazlitt is invariably critical; see Howe xvi 142; xvii 25, 59.

imagined (do not be alarmed, Sir!) that I wanted to argue them out of their own existence, merely because I endeavoured to define the nature and meaning of this word, self; to take in pieces, by metaphysical aid, this fine illusion of the brain and forgery of language, and to shew what there is real, and what false in it.²⁴

Hazlitt does not identify the ‘persons’ who ‘formerly took the pains to read’ his *Essay*, nor is it explained when or where these objections were set forth. But there is cause to propose Wordsworth and Coleridge as candidates, and Alfoxden or Nether Stowey as the place where they took issue with him. In essence, the objection Hazlitt cites is the threat his ideas posed to the ‘nature and meaning of this word, self’, the specific charge being that he had tried ‘to take in pieces, by metaphysical aid, this fine illusion of the brain and forgery of language’. This echoes the accusation in ‘The Tables Turned’:

Sweet is the lore which nature brings;
Our meddling intellect
Misshapes the beauteous forms of things;
—We murder to dissect. (ll. 25-8)

That last line has become a shorthand way of referring to Wordsworth’s supposed reluctance to intellectualise. It is elaborated in a question posed in *The Two-Part Prelude* in Germany six months later:

But who shall parcel out
His intellect by geometric rules,
Split like a province into round and square;
Who knows the individual hour in which
His habits were first sown, even as a seed;
Who that shall point as with a wand and say,
This portion of the river of my mind
Came from yon fountain? (ii 242-9)

If these lines are an amplification of ‘The Tables Turned’, they show that its target is not the intellectualising impulse. On the contrary, under Coleridge’s guidance Wordsworth had become sufficiently conversant with philosophical theories to manipulate them in such ‘Recluse’ fragments as ‘Not Useless do I deem’, and understood that the larger enterprise of ‘The Recluse’ was to bring a redemptive system to the attention of the reading public. To that end, they had planned the German tour in order to establish their mastery of the discipline then emerging from Jena and Weimar. Wordsworth is critical not of philosophy as such, but of its misuse: the desire to use metaphysics to ‘take in pieces’ the inner self, to expose the brain as a ‘fine illusion’, to be argued out of one’s existence. ‘The Tables Turned’ and to a greater extent *The Two-Part*

²⁴ Wu v 377.

Prelude argue for the essential unknowability of the psyche—something Hazlitt’s theory of disinterestedness appeared to threaten. It is understandable that a poet whose principal subject was the sovereign uniqueness of the mind—in particular his own—might recoil from a theory that anatomised its workings.

That reservation provided an insight to which Hazlitt was frequently to resort in later years—that Wordsworth’s regard for his own mind implied a near-complete disregard for anyone else’s. To Hazlitt’s way of thinking this was precious and egotistical, and he would not hesitate to say so. In his *Examiner* review of *The Excursion* he commented that ‘An intense intellectual egotism swallows up every thing’, and ‘The power of his mind preys upon itself’;²⁵ in the *Lectures on the English Poets* Wordsworth ‘tolerates only what he himself creates... He sees nothing but himself and the universe’;²⁶ reviewing Byron in 1818, Hazlitt dismisses ‘Wordsworth’s arbitrary egotism and pampered self-sufficiency’;²⁷ in ‘A Reply to “Z”’ he admits that ‘I have spoken of his intellectual egotism (and truly and warrantably) as the bane of his talents and of his public principles’;²⁸ while, most memorably of all, Wordsworth is condemned in *The Spirit of the Age* to become ‘the God of his own idolatry’²⁹ Though slanted against their target these remarks contain a kernel of truth and for that reason influenced others, most notably Keats, whose comments on ‘the wordsworthian or egotistical sublime; which is a thing per se and stands alone’ are influenced by Hazlitt.³⁰

If those ‘persons, who formerly took the pains to read this work’ were indeed Wordsworth and Coleridge, the ultimate irony is that their objections were unfounded. Far from being anatomised by Hazlitt’s *Essay*, the concept of the self is revalued by it. It begins by accepting the need for a philosophy of the potential of the individual, and goes on to claim for our innate faculties the power to act and make moral choices. Hazlitt empowers us as autonomous, self-determining creatures in stark opposition to ‘The Recluse’, which predicated the moral perfection of humanity on its wholesale submission to a necessitarian plan. While theoretically amenable to the notion of selfhood, ‘The Recluse’ was to subordinate it to a totalising scheme.

I take this to be the theme of an argument that spanned a long time—possibly days—but which goes unmentioned in ‘My First Acquaintance’. I wish now to examine in detail the intellectual differences between the three protagonists,³¹ comparing the principles formulated for ‘The Recluse’ with

²⁵ Wu ii 327.

²⁶ Wu ii 316.

²⁷ Wu ix 32.

²⁸ Howe ix 5.

²⁹ Wu vii 169.

³⁰ Letter to Woodhouse, 27 October 1818; Rollins i 387. For more on Hazlitt’s influence on Keats’ critical views, see David Bromwich, *Hazlitt: The Mind of a Critic* (Oxford, 1983), Chapter XI, ‘Keats’.

³¹ In doing so there is little choice but to read backwards from Hazlitt’s prose writings to his earlier self of 1798. As far as ‘The Recluse’ is concerned, I have taken ‘Not Useless do I Deem’ and ‘The Pedlar’, composed early 1798, to present the philosophical core of the poem as it was understood at that moment.

Hazlitt's *Essay on the Principle of Human Actions*. But before doing so, an informative remark that does appear in the essay helps pin down the date on which their discussions began. On 23 May Hazlitt walked to Alfoxden with Coleridge to hear Wordsworth recite *Peter Bell*. That evening Wordsworth and Dorothy accompanied them on the road to Nether Stowey in the course of which, according to 'My First Acquaintance',

I got into a metaphysical argument with Wordsworth, while Coleridge was explaining the different notes of the nightingale to his sister, in which neither of us succeeded in making ourselves perfectly clear and intelligible.³²

Wordsworth's explanation in the Advertisement to *Lyrical Ballads* placed the blame squarely on Hazlitt; 'Expostulation and Reply' and 'The Tables Turned', he wrote, 'arose out of conversation with a friend who was somewhat unreasonably attached to modern books of moral philosophy'.³³ Significantly, though, Wordsworth recalled in his Fenwick Notes that the poems were written 'in front of the house of Alfoxden'³⁴—which means that they must have been written subsequent to the argument of 23 May, suggesting in turn that it spanned more than one evening. It also emphasizes the speed with which they were written, for at the end of May Cottle would depart for Bristol, taking the manuscripts with him.³⁵ That means that these poems were probably in fair copy within a week of the 'metaphysical argument' itself (perhaps less), the rapidity of their completion being a clue as to the strength of feeling behind them.

According to 'Expostulation and Reply' the metaphysical argument was sparked off by a careless remark by Hazlitt along the lines of the first three stanzas.

Why, William, on that old grey stone,
Thus for the length of half a day,
Why, William, sit you thus alone,
And dream your time away?

Where are your books? that light bequeath'd
To beings else forlorn and blind!
Up! Up! and drink the spirit breath'd
From dead men to their kind.

You look round on your mother earth

³² Wu ix 106.

³³ *Prose Works* i 117.

³⁴ FN 36.

³⁵ As with so much about the dating of *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), it is hard to be sure. But the Cornell Wordsworth Series editors say that they were written 'probably on May 23 or soon after, almost certainly by June 12' (Cornell *Lyrical Ballads* 107).

As if she for no purpose bore you;
 As if you were her first-born birth,
 And none had lived before you!

(‘Expostulation and Reply’ 1-12)

This does not amount to a ‘metaphysical argument’, and it is hard to believe that Hazlitt said anything of the kind. The likelihood that these words are attributed to him as a way of engineering the context for what follows is supported by the relocation of the poem to Esthwaite and Hazlitt’s renaming as ‘Matthew’. All the same, there are elements in Matthew’s remarks that point to the distinctive context of Hazlitt’s visit. He had known him only for two days, but Wordsworth would have realised that Hazlitt was exceptionally well read, having developed his theory out of ideas encountered in books by Hartley and Berkeley—the same books, in fact, that informed ‘The Recluse’. This seems to have made Wordsworth indignant, leading him to compose two poems exposing the redundancy of book-learning when compared with ‘wise passiveness’. It was a fitting rebuff to someone whose best idea was ‘what every shoemaker must have thought of’. ‘The Recluse’ was always to be ‘a philosophical poem, containing views of Man, Nature, and Society’,³⁶ and yet the last two stanzaic poems written for *Lyrical Ballads* argue in favour not of its philosophy but of a Wordsworthian love of nature—the ability to perceive the powers ‘Which of themselves our minds impress,/ That we can feed this mind of ours,/ In a wise passiveness’.³⁷

Wise passiveness was not new in Wordsworth and Coleridge’s poetry. Coleridge’s ‘indolent and passive brain’ in ‘The Eolian Harp’ had been similarly receptive to the ‘one intellectual breeze’ (that is to say, a spiritual force) there described as ‘the Soul of each, and God of All’. Wordsworth and Coleridge understood passivity to be a crucial element of the mystic apprehension of nature which ‘The Recluse’ was to advocate. Perhaps inspired by conversations on the subject, Wordsworth explored it in a blank verse fragment of spring 1798:

a holy indolence
 Compared to which our best activity
 Is oftimes deadly bane
 They rest upon their oars
 Float down the mighty stream of tendency
 In a calm mood of holy indolence
 A most wise passiveness in which the heart
 Lies open and is well content to feel
 As nature feels and to receive her shapes
 As she has made them.³⁸

³⁶ *Prose Works* iii 5.

³⁷ ‘Expostulation and Reply’ 22-4.

³⁸ From DC MS 14, 16r. Facsimile to be found in Butler, 114-15.

This state of pure receptiveness is based on Berkeley's premise that objects in the material world ('things') are ideas in the mind of God. In a Wordsworthian twist those ideas are identified with objects in the natural world, which thereby becomes the force by which the mind is tutored—recast in nature's image. Though both Berkeleyan and Wordsworthian (in the sense that it foregrounds nature rather than God), Coleridge had invented this idea, and was the first to exploit it, when in the first version of 'This Lime-Tree Bower my Prison', sent to Southey in July 1797, he wrote of how in imagination the Quantock hills became 'Less gross than bodily', appending the footnote: 'You remember, I am a *Berkeleyan*'.³⁹

Although Hazlitt would have had reservations about this, philosophical idealism was something to which he was well disposed. Indeed, Berkeley's influence is evident in his theory in its sense of the mind's ability to turn substance to thought, as well as in the suggestion that the mind contained a thinking principle beyond receptivity to sense impressions. And that, of course, was precisely why Hazlitt would have objected to the adaptation of Berkeley's ideas wrought by Wordsworth and Coleridge. Where he argued for the autonomous freedom of the mind, they imprisoned it within a continuous, irresistible process of re-education. As Wordsworth had written in lines for 'Not Useless do I Deem', sent to Coleridge's brother in March, the man 'Once taught to love such objects... *needs must feel* / The Joy of that pure principle of Love' (my italics).⁴⁰ There is no option for the re-educated mind but to 'feel' love communicated through the natural forms that have entered into it. Such compulsion went against the grain with Hazlitt, the project of his philosophy being to restore emphasis to the will and objects of volition.

Had this come up in conversation as 'The Tables Turned' appears to suggest, other aspects of their respective theories would have followed, most obviously the necessitarianism of 'The Recluse'. 'I am a complete Necessitarian', Coleridge proudly announced to Southey in late 1794, 'and understand the subject as well almost as Hartley himself'.⁴¹ This was thanks in large part to his adherence to aspects of Hartleyan theory promoted by Priestley in his *Disquisitions Relating to Matter and Spirit* (1782), which he was reading enthusiastically at the time. Still an important part of his thought in 1798, the belief that associational mechanisms in the mind inevitably transformed self-interest into a disinterested benevolence towards others and converted love of self into love of family and friends was an essential component of 'The Recluse'.⁴²

Wordsworth too could lay down the law of necessity with the most dictatorial of political theorists. It is no accident that one of the most memorable vignettes in *The Spirit of the Age* (probably dating from 1795) is that

³⁹ Griggs i 335.

⁴⁰ Griggs i 397.

⁴¹ Griggs i 137.

⁴² Although Coleridge's belief in necessity would not survive the death of Berkeley Coleridge in 1799.

of him telling a law student to throw aside his books and ‘read Godwin on necessity’.⁴³ Despite having long since disavowed the thought of Godwin, Wordsworth remained attached to its necessarianism at Alfoxden. ‘Not Useless do I Deem’, a fragment of 110 lines composed in early 1798 which contains the philosophical core of ‘The Recluse’, concludes with a wish that,

deeply drinking in the soul of things
We shall be wise perforce, and we shall move
From strict necessity along the path
Of order and of good. (‘Not Useless do I Deem’ 92-5)⁴⁴

There is no room for deviation: we *shall* be wise *perforce*; we *shall* move along the path of order and good—the strictest of taskmasters, necessity, demands it. ‘The Recluse’ left nothing to chance; the free will of the individual was as nothing beside the imperative dictating our political and moral redemption. This was as much Coleridge’s doing as Wordsworth’s, who is reworking ‘Religious Musings’, where a necessitarian system compels humanity to enter ‘a state of pure intellect’.

Another Alfoxden draft towards ‘The Recluse’ written in spring 1798, ‘Description of a Beggar’ (later to become ‘The Old Cumberland Beggar’), outlines these notions with similar emphasis. The social utility of its central character is held to consist in his skill to call forth acts of charity, stimulating feelings of benevolence followed by self-congratulation (Wordsworth’s phrase). From this Wordsworth concludes that he should not be sent to the workhouse—not because he will be happier outside, but because there he would no longer be able to fulfil his task of moral improvement.

Whereer the aged Beggar takes his rounds
The mild necessity of use compels
To acts of love and habit does the work
Of Reason, yet prepares that after-joy
Which Reason cherishes. And thus the soul
By that sweet taste of pleasure unpursued
Doth find itself insensibly disposed
To virtue and true goodness.⁴⁵

These lines aim to illustrate, through a practical application, theories stated in abstract in ‘Not Useless do I Deem’. Specifically, they describe a mechanism within the mind that leaves the individual no choice but to perform ‘acts of love and habit’ in preparation for ‘that after-joy / Which Reason cherishes’, the trigger being the old man’s regular appearances. In this case necessity is mild rather than strict, because of the ‘after-joy’ experienced by those responsible,

⁴³ Wu vii 88.

⁴⁴ This quotation is taken from the text in Jonathan Wordsworth, *The Music of Humanity* (London, 1969).

⁴⁵ My transcription from the 1798 manuscript; facsimile pages at Cornell *Lyrical Ballads* 490-1.

however ‘compelled’ their behaviour might have been. As before, free will is the price paid for moral and spiritual reform.

Rehabilitating the Godwinian totem of reason, these lines show that Coleridge and Wordsworth regarded themselves as providing the ultimate response to Godwin in a poem that converts rationality into the vehicle for a coerced ‘after-pleasure’ consequent upon good conduct. Hazlitt would have perceived the clumsiness of this, and perhaps found it symptomatic of the unoriginality of the philosophical regimen of ‘The Recluse’. By contrast, his theory claimed true liberty for the mind by dint of the fact that motives arise not from sensory responses to external impressions but from its innate constitution, which is held to will the outcome by which moral judgements are made. His argument is that as empowered individuals we are free to make our own choices rather than submit to their determination from without. He was the advocate of neither passivity nor necessity, but of the mind’s inherent freedom. In 1809 he would write that the mind ‘is *free*, in as far as it is not the slave of external impressions, physical impulses, or blind senseless motives. It is free, as the body is free, when it is not subject to a power out of itself, though its operations still depend on certain powers and principles within itself.’⁴⁶

From the perspective of Wordsworth and Coleridge that was blasphemy. It dismantled the structure they had put in place to guarantee the silent revolution ‘The Recluse’ was to herald. Wordsworth, more perhaps than Coleridge, would have been indignant at Hazlitt’s apparent sidelining of Nature, and might have referred him to the poem he read aloud at Alfoxden on the afternoon of 23 May—*Peter Bell*—which demonstrated how the individual, however ill-disposed, could not resist the reforming effects of the natural world.

At last he spies the wither’d leaf
And Peter is in sore distress.
‘Where there is not a bush or tree
The very leaves they follow me,
So huge hath been my wickedness.’⁴⁷

Peter Bell demonstrated the efficacy of ‘The Recluse’ principles even when applied to the most unrepentant of criminals. Though receptive to its optimism, Hazlitt would have rejected the thesis that a ‘wither’d leaf’ might be invested with the power to stir Peter Bell’s conscience. His response would have been to admit that while the likes of Peter Bell were susceptible to reform it was due to a motive or cause within the mind; impulses from woods were morally neutral. He did not deny the divine as it was perceived in art or nature, regarding it as attributable to the workings of the imagination—the

⁴⁶ Howe ii 118. I am aware that in using this quotation I am reading backwards, but have no reason to think that Hazlitt would have taken another view in 1798.

⁴⁷ Early version, ll. 871-5; Cornell *Peter Bell* 114.

manifestation of ‘gusto’, ‘nature’, or ‘truth’, rather than of God. Apparently he was sufficiently tactless to say so, or ‘The Tables Turned’ would not contain the instruction to ‘Let Nature be your teacher’.

She has a world of ready wealth,
Our minds and hearts to bless—
Spontaneous wisdom breathed by health,
Truth breathed by cheerfulness.

One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach you more of man;
Of moral evil and of good,
Than all the sages can. (‘The Tables Turned’ 17-24)

Wordsworth invokes a central principle in the philosophy constructed for ‘The Recluse’: passively received, nature would work silently but inexorably on the mind so as to raise it to a state of moral perfection.

Hazlitt was able to take issue with this because unlike Wordsworth he was not in the uneasy position of having substituted a faith in nature for a faith in God. Religion lay at the heart of the philosophical dispute between Hazlitt, Wordsworth and Coleridge. It had raised its head in January when on the road from Wem to Shrewsbury Coleridge had irritated Hazlitt by smashing one of his idols.

He spoke slightly of Hume (whose *Essay on Miracles* he said was stolen from an objection started in one of South’s Sermons—*Credat Judaeus Apellat!*). I was not very much pleased at this account of Hume, for I had just been reading, with infinite relish, that completest of all metaphysical *choke-pears*, his *Treatise on Human Nature*, to which the *Essays*, in point of scholastic subtlety and close reasoning, are mere elegant trifling, light summer-reading. Coleridge even denied the excellence of Hume’s general style, which I think betrayed a want of taste or candour. He however made amends by the manner in which he spoke of Berkeley. He dwelt particularly on his *Essay on Vision* as a masterpiece of analytical reasoning. So it undoubtedly is.⁴⁸

In fairness to Coleridge, it may be that he did not realise that Hazlitt was an atheist. After all, they had met in a Unitarian chapel, after which Coleridge had encountered Hazlitt’s family at the head of which was a Unitarian minister; it would have been reasonable to assume that Hazlitt shared his religious views—though any such misconception would have been dispelled in May.

Hazlitt seems to imply that Coleridge had not read Hume’s *Treatise*, but that may be indicative merely of how soured their relationship had become by

⁴⁸ Wu ix 101. Editors tend to overlook the fact that chapter and verse for Coleridge’s observation is given in *Notebooks* i 327.

1823. It is likely that Coleridge had some idea of its contents, his disapproval of which stemmed in large part from Hume's scepticism. Indeed, in a letter written only weeks after his visit to Wem, Coleridge described Hume's philosophy as 'the pillar, & confessedly, the *sole* pillar, of modern Atheism'.⁴⁹ It was precisely for that reason that Hazlitt was attracted to it. He saw the imagination rather than God as the first cause in the associative process—an observation integral to his model of the empowered mind. While allowing for the possibility of the divine in art as well as nature, he did not see it as having anything to do with a deity, as befitted a secular philosophy with its faith—if such it may be called—in the workings of the mind.

His dismay at Coleridge's harsh judgement of Hume reminds us that Hazlitt's ideas betokened a metropolitan sophistication symptomatic of the high-powered education enjoyed by graduates of the Unitarian academy at Hackney, of which atheism was an acknowledged by-product. Henry Crabb Robinson recalled that Hazlitt's 'first design was to be a dissenting minister and for that purpose he went to the Unitarian New College, Hackney, and he was one of the first students who left that college an avowed infidel'.⁵⁰ Coleridge too was aware of this, and probably had Hazlitt in mind when he told John Prior Estlin: 'It may be very true, tha[t] at Hackney they learnt, too many of them, Infidelity'.⁵¹ Southey's 1817 essay 'On the Rise and Progress of Popular Disaffection', proposed an explanation:

It is well known that the Socinian academy at Hackney was given up, notwithstanding the high character and learning of some of its conductors, because almost all the students pushed the principles in which they were educated farther than their tutors. The dry-rot was in the foundation and the walls, as well as in the beams and rafters, and the unfortunate pupils came away believers in blind necessity and gross materialism... and in nothing else.⁵²

Hazlitt attended the Academy for two years, leaving it shortly after his seventeenth birthday, declaring his intention not to enter the ministry. The following year it closed.

Southey's allusion to 'blind necessity and gross materialism' points directly to Hartley, to whose influence he had hardly been immune during the 1790s. In 1798 Hartley remained a commanding presence in Coleridge's thought—and therefore in 'The Recluse'—for religious reasons. As Hazlitt would have understood, Coleridge had incorporated into 'The Recluse' the Hartleyan assumption that matter was the determinant of mental process. That's why 'Tintern Abbey', 'The Pedlar', and 'Not Useless do I Deem' are full of

⁴⁹ Griggs i 385-6. That letter is correctly dated 6 February 1798, as John Beer argues; 'A Coleridge Puzzle', *Notes and Queries* 46 (1999) 457-8. See this Bulletin, p. 82 & ff. where, by happy co-incidence, John Beer's article has been reprinted with variations and additions. (Ed.)

⁵⁰ Morley i 6.

⁵¹ Griggs i 577.

⁵² Southey, *Essays, Moral and Political* (2 vols., London, 1832), ii 79.

references to ‘forms’ and ‘shapes’ which are said to ‘impress’ themselves upon the mind. From Coleridge’s point of view, this was vital because it implied the existence of the Unitarian God who as external first cause determined the impressions made on the senses and the manner in which our ideas originate. Hence Wordsworth’s reference in ‘The Pedlar’ to a visionary world perceptible to the Pedlar, ‘And to the God who looked into his mind’.⁵³ From that perspective, Hartley was useful for affirming God’s centrality within the cosmos at a time when deistic or atheistic approaches such as those advocated by Paine and Godwin competed for the attention of radically-minded intellectuals. No wonder Coleridge had hailed Hartley as ‘patriot, and saint, and sage’ in *Religious Musings*.⁵⁴

These comparisons serve also to highlight the belief, fundamental to ‘The Recluse’, that moral choices were dictated by perception. By contrast, Hazlitt established the right of human beings to make their own decisions without compulsion from external agencies. That Coleridge took exception to this is suggested by his jaundiced remark after hearing of Hazlitt’s death, when he lamented his ‘misanthropic strangeness when I first knew him, in his 20 or 21st year, that a something existed in his bodily organism that in the sight of the All-merciful lessened his responsibility—and the moral imputation of his acts & feelings’.⁵⁵ Though filtered through the bitterness of their later falling-out this intriguingly mangled view of Hazlittian thought provides one further suggestion as to where conversations of May-June 1798 may have led. Coleridge would have objected, above all, to Hazlitt’s desire to relieve humanity from its obligations to the natural world, and the message it delivered of God’s will. The amoral world painted by Hazlitt would have been anathema to someone as insistent in his belief in a divinely-ordered cosmos as Coleridge.

This is further complicated by the fact that the poetry Wordsworth composed at Alfoxden indicates that though expected to be the advocate of a philosophy devised by Coleridge, his religious views were distinct from those held by him or Hazlitt. ‘The Recluse’ demanded if not the Unitarian God then at least the ‘living God’ encountered at epiphanic moments by the Pedlar:

The clouds were touched,
And in their silent faces did he read
Unutterable love. Sound needed none,
Nor any voice of joy: his spirit drank
The spectacle. Sensation, soul, and form,
All melted into him; they swallowed up
His animal being. In them did he live,
And by them did he live—they were his life.
In such access of mind, in such high hour
Of visitation from the living God,

⁵³ ‘The Pedlar’ 341.

⁵⁴ Line 371; for Coleridge’s later rejection of Hartley see Griggs ii 706.

⁵⁵ Coleridge, *Notebooks* v 6468.

He did not feel the God, he felt his works.

(“The Pedlar” 99-109)

It is not the deity who communicates directly with the Pedlar, but ‘his works’. That fastidiousness might be a whiff of what Coleridge considered Wordsworth’s semi-atheism, as he called it in a letter to John Thelwall of 1796.⁵⁶ Two years later Wordsworth was more interested in the concept of a transcendent nature than in a deity whose existence was independent of it. It is a reminder that during his residence in London in 1795 he breakfasted with Godwin, some of whose atheism may have rubbed off on him.⁵⁷ Incidentally, Godwin was a friend he had in common with Hazlitt, who had known him since boyhood, as Godwin’s father had immediately preceded the Revd William Hazlitt in his early charge at Wisbech. Were Hazlitt and Wordsworth aware of this? In January Coleridge had declared that he ‘did not rate Godwin very high’,⁵⁸ but Hazlitt does not say whether Wordsworth commented on the metropolitan philosopher.

In religious terms, one senses that in May 1798 Wordsworth was more sympathetic to Hazlitt than to Coleridge, a view supported by a dispute that took place five years later when Hazlitt visited the Lake District to paint their portraits. One afternoon they argued violently, Wordsworth and Hazlitt allying themselves as fellow-sceptics against Coleridge. In a notebook entry Coleridge described it as ‘A most unpleasant Dispute’ in which ‘I spoke, I fear too contemptuously—but they spoke so irreverently so malignantly of the Divine Wisdom, that it upset me.’⁵⁹ Could it be that the seeds of that ‘Dispute’ were sown at Alfoxden, and that at that early moment Wordsworth felt more kinship with Hazlitt for his irreligion than with Coleridge for his Unitarian faith? If so, they were probably not in agreement; in its crudest terms Hazlitt was an atheist and Wordsworth a deist. What matters to the Pedlar is a mediated presence, the ‘living’ power communicated through the natural world. Such mysticism stems from Coleridge, who in ‘This Lime-Tree Bower my Prison’ had developed it to the point where it could be readily adapted for use in ‘The Pedlar’ and ‘Not Useless do I Deem’ six months later. Hazlitt would have recognised that those works (had he seen them) did not aspire to the religious certainty of Coleridge’s poem, where Berkleyan vision enabled its author to see ‘such hues/ As cloathe the Almighty Spirit, when he makes/ Spirits perceive His presence!’⁶⁰ Wordsworth was less concerned to bear out the tenets of Christian theism. That was why his poetry would appeal to a wide spectrum of readers that included such atheists as Percy Bysshe Shelley, who would admire ‘Tintern Abbey’ for its refusal to name God as the ‘presence’ that disturbs the poet ‘with the joy / Of elevated thoughts’.

⁵⁶ Griggs i 216.

⁵⁷ Reed i 162-3. Nicholas Roe has discussed Wordsworth’s connection with Godwin in *Wordsworth and Coleridge: The Radical Years* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 192-8.

⁵⁸ Wu ix 99.

⁵⁹ *Notebooks* i 1618.

⁶⁰ Griggs i 335.

Perhaps the ‘metaphysical argument’ that took place on the road to Nether Stowey was not, in the end, that much of an argument, at least not in the sense that it centred on philosophy. Hazlitt’s suggestion that he failed to make himself ‘perfectly clear and intelligible’ may be justified, or a rare moment of retrospective gallantry, but it is more likely that Wordsworth and Coleridge understood all too well that they were up against an intellect they could not outmanoeuvre. The essential religious and philosophical differences between them were symptomatic of their different backgrounds and situations. Coleridge had helped Wordsworth concoct a philosophical scheme for a poem that did no violence to his Unitarian God while turning nature into a vehicle for the application of his powers in the human world. That would allow Coleridge to claim the resulting poem as an endorsement of Unitarianism, even though the surviving fragments of 1798 are most persuasive not when discussing the operations of a God in which Wordsworth did not really believe, but when describing the mystic perception of the natural world (in which he did). ‘In all shapes’, Wordsworth wrote of the Pedlar, ‘He found a secret and mysterious soul,/ A fragrance and a spirit of strange meaning’.⁶¹ This would be of little advantage to the philosophical mission of ‘The Recluse’.

For someone as well schooled in metaphysics as Hazlitt, it would have taken some restraint not to point that out, or observe that its mysticism—the component least susceptible to explication—exposed shortcomings in its theoretical underpinnings. My guess is that Hazlitt said something of the kind or he would not have been represented in ‘Expostulation and Reply’ and ‘The Tables Turned’ as receptive only to ‘the spirit breath’d/ From dead men to their kind’. Though great poems, they are more concerned with vindicating Wordsworth’s conviction in his relationship with nature than with responding to Hazlittian metaphysics.

By the time Wordsworth was resident at Goslar in October 1798, he might be expected to have set aside whatever irritation Hazlitt had caused during the early summer. But as he settled down to work on ‘The Recluse’, their exchanges continued to haunt him. The numerous blank verse fragments composed at Goslar include two extended versions of what was to become ‘Nutting’, probably intended for ‘The Recluse’. The first begins by discussing Wordsworth’s childhood love of nature which was so intense he ‘would not strike a flower/ As many a man will strike his horse’; he was returning to the instruction of ‘The Tables Turned’ to cultivate sensitivity to the natural world.

For, seeing little worthy or sublime
 In what we blazon with the pompous names
 Of power and action, I was early taught
 To love those unassuming things that fill
 A silent station in this beauteous world.

(*Nutting*, text in DC MS 15, 39-43)

⁶¹ ‘The Pedlar’ 335-7.

The criticism of power and action as ‘pompous names’ might in theory have any number of referents—except that the pairing of the two suggests a specific context. They were the cornerstones of the philosophy Wordsworth had previously dismissed as ‘what every shoemaker must have thought of’. Power for Hazlitt, as Uttara Natarajan describes it,

is the identifying attribute of the mind and is *innate*; its characteristic is *activity*. Throughout his work, Hazlitt makes free and recurrent use of the term in various contexts, but always with this twofold sense, of innateness and activity, constant in, and inseparable from, his usage.⁶²

As Natarajan observes, power and action lie ‘at the heart of his metaphysics’.⁶³ If as he later recalled he did explain ‘the argument of that Essay to Mr Wordsworth’, the poet can have been left in no doubt of this. He would have understood that (in Hazlitt’s view) instead of arguing that sensory impressions compelled the individual first to love nature and then his fellow man, he should regard human beings as dependent on the will to action—‘power’. By dismissing power and action as ‘pompous names’ blazoned by certain people as ‘worthy or sublime’ Wordsworth rejected Hazlitt’s theories in an extended critique of those preoccupied with ‘power and action’ at the expense of ‘this beautiful world’.

As he continued to work on ‘The Recluse’ during the winter of 1798, Wordsworth continued to fret about Hazlitt in another blank verse passage, ‘There is an active principle’, which espouses the existence of a platonic world-spirit, ‘the soul of all the worlds’. Without warning, Wordsworth branches off into a disquisition on ‘meditated action’.

The food of hope
Is meditated action; robb’d of this,
Her sole support, she languishes and dies.
We perish also,—for we live by hope
And by desire; they are the very blood
By which we move; we see by the sweet light,
And breathe the sweet air of futurity,
And so we live, or else we have no life.
(‘Fragment: There is an active principle alive in all things’, 16-23)

In Hazlitt’s philosophy the object of volition is always imaginary, action being the product of imaginative exercise because it lies in the future rather than the past or present. It is the key to arguing our independence from necessitarian schemes based on the conviction that the mind is shaped by what it perceives. Wordsworth responds by saying that, on the contrary, the ability to ‘breathe

⁶² Natarajan 27.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 28.

the sweet air of futurity' prepares us for a mystic engagement with the natural world characterised by 'hope' and 'desire'. Although he accepts the Hazlittian concept of 'meditated action', it is thus harnessed to the necessarian thinking of 'The Recluse'. For him, hope and desire are attributes of the kind of transcendent experience in which the 'powers of earth'

Impressed upon all forms the characters
Of danger or desire, and thus did make
The surface of the universal earth
With meanings of delight, of hope and fear,
Work like a sea. (*Two-Part Prelude* i 194-8)

This is clearly not Hazlittian 'liberty'; Wordsworth has adapted an aspect of Hazlitt's thinking to his own ends. 'There is an active principle' reveals that natural forces become

Subversive of our noxious qualities:
And by the substitution of delight
And by new influxes of strength suppress
All evil... (ll. 33-6)

On the basis of these allusions in Wordsworth's unpublished fragmentary drafts for 'The Recluse' it would appear that Hazlitt's theory of human disinterestedness had a bigger impact on their author than Hazlitt realised. He left Stowey on 10 June 1798 believing that Wordsworth had dismissed him and his ideas, when in fact they would continue to nag him for months afterwards. Four months later, as Wordsworth began work on 'The Recluse' in a small market town in central Germany, he remained preoccupied with the need to persuade himself of the redundancy of Hazlitt's theory—which suggests that he knew Hazlitt's philosophy to be more credible than his own. Even when, in 'I would not strike a flower', he writes of those who resist nature as 'ye who judging rashly deem that such/ Are idle sympathies, the toys of one/ More curious than need is',⁶⁴ it is likely that the sceptical Hazlitt is in his mind. Of all his acquaintance, Hazlitt is the only one who we can be sure expressed doubt as to whether nature was truly the redemptive force 'The Recluse' was determined to claim.

Were these speculations, none of which are mentioned in 'My First Acquaintance', to have any bearing on what took place on Hazlitt's visit to Alfoxden and Nether Stowey in May-June 1798, they would explain a good deal about subsequent relations between the protagonists. For one thing, they ratify Wordsworth's comment to Hazlitt's son, shortly after Hazlitt's death, that in 1798 he 'was then remarkable for analytical power, and for acuteness and originality of mind'.⁶⁵ That testimonial was genuine, and looked back to

⁶⁴ 'I would not strike a flower' 14-15.

⁶⁵ LY ii 387.

their discussions in Somerset. But if, as I suspect, it recollects their lengthy debates about the philosophy of ‘The Recluse’ at Alfoxden it was also grudging. Hazlitt was capable of demonstrating the shortcomings of ‘Recluse’ philosophy in a way that would have left serious doubts in Wordsworth’s mind as to its viability, even had he preferred to suppress them. Indeed, those doubts might conceivably have contributed to his inability to make progress with ‘The Recluse’. They were, after all, caused in large part by a mounting loss of confidence in his ability to explicate the philosophy. ‘I am very anxious to have your notes for the Recluse’, he told Coleridge on 4 January 1804⁶⁶—notes that would have explained to him what the poem was supposed to be about. It is worth bearing in mind that the only surviving works in which ‘Recluse’ philosophy is successfully explicated in blank verse—‘The Pedlar’ and ‘Not Useless do I Deem’—date from the period immediately *preceding* Hazlitt’s visit; Wordsworth would not subsequently achieve the same level of confidence, perhaps because Hazlitt’s arguments left him with too many doubts.

Hazlitt’s theory of disinterestedness was probably explicated to Wordsworth and Coleridge at the very moment they were meditating what was to become the central poetic project of the Romantic period. As such, we should acknowledge its importance not just to their development, but as a formative influence on British Romanticism. The clash of ideas had a reciprocal effect on Hazlitt too, of course. Having been one of the few to understand what ‘The Recluse’ was intended to have been at its inception in 1798, he was ideally placed to write some of the most penetrating and well-informed contemporary criticism of Wordsworth. He may have read ‘The Ruined Cottage’ and ‘The Pedlar’ at Alfoxden, and as he reviewed *The Excursion* in 1814 was one of the few readers to understand the extent to which it fell short of its author’s early ambitions, for all its qualities. He would also have recognized the extent to which a handsome quarto volume bearing a dedicatory sonnet to the Tory Peer Lord Lonsdale exemplified its author’s abandonment of radical politics.

In Hazlitt’s eyes, Coleridge was the worse culprit, because his failure to live up to the aspirations of the 1790s was greater. In a cancelled manuscript note to his *Lectures on the English Poets*, Hazlitt described him as ‘the only person I ever knew who answered to my idea of a man of genius’;⁶⁷ but, as he put it in *The Spirit of the Age*, ‘What is become of all this mighty heap of hope, of thought, of learning, and humanity? It has ended in swallowing doses of oblivion and in writing paragraphs in the *Courier*.—Such, and so little is the mind of man.’⁶⁸

These remarks have never been placed within their correct context.

⁶⁶ EY 452.

⁶⁷ Wu ii 379.

⁶⁸ Wu vii 103. I have explored the consequences of that disappointment further in ‘Rancour and Rabies: Hazlitt, Coleridge and Jeffrey in Dialogue’, *British Romanticism and the Edinburgh Review* ed. Massimiliano Demata and Duncan Wu (Palgrave: Basingstoke, 2002), pp. 169-94.

Hazlitt was one of the few who had known Coleridge and Wordsworth at the moment they were jointly proposing ‘The Recluse’, a poem that aimed at similar ends to the French Revolution, through a necessitarian scheme by which nature (rather than God) would have a morally improving effect on humanity. Hazlitt understood this better than anyone else—better than Charles Lamb, Thomas Poole, or any of the various correspondents to whom news of ‘The Recluse’ was given at the time—for the simple reason that he was the only person of their acquaintance qualified to assess its philosophical aims and dispute them, a process that may have taken some considerable time. But time was at their disposal—three weeks of it, much of which is unaccounted for in ‘My First Acquaintance with Poets’. He had argued over the philosophy of ‘The Recluse’ at the moment when Wordsworth and Coleridge were most confident of it, and would assess their subsequent work in its light. More than anyone else, he earned the right to judge its non-completion as a measure of their failure. It was a unique perspective. That was why, as he concluded the *Round Table* text of his review of *The Excursion*, he declared that he (unlike Wordsworth and Coleridge) would not

be prevented from returning on the wings of imagination to that bright dream of our youth; that glad dawn of the day-star of liberty; that spring-time of the world, in which the hopes and expectations of the human race seemed opening in the same gay career with our own; when France called her children to partake her equal blessings beneath her laughing skies; when the stranger was met in all her villages with dance and festive songs, in celebration of a new and golden era; and when, to the retired and contemplative student, the prospects of human happiness and glory were seen ascending like the steps of Jacob’s ladder, in bright and never-ending succession. The dawn of that day was suddenly overcast; that season of hope is past; it is fled with the other dreams of our youth, which we cannot recal, but has left behind it traces, which are not to be effaced by Birth-day and Thanksgiving odes, or the chaunting of *Te Deums* in all the churches of Christendom. To those hopes eternal regrets are due; to those who maliciously and wilfully blasted them, in the fear they might be accomplished, we feel no less what we owe—hatred and scorn as lasting!⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Wu ii 120.