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*Blackwood's* and the Cockney School of Prose

**Abstract:**

This article looks at the changing attitude to the *Blackwood's* leading writers John Wilson and John Gibson Lockhart to the so-called Cockney Prose writers, Coleridge, Hazlitt, Hunt, Lamb and Ollier. It shows how a tendency to lump all the Cockneys together in October 1817 slowly developed into a more discriminating attitude in the course of the revamped magazine's first year. It also shows how the principles behind that discrimination lay in Lockhart's reading of Schlegel's lectures, and in the models of scholarship and genial reading that were contained therein.

**Keywords:** Cockney, genial criticism, Lockhart, Wilson, Coleridge, Lamb, Schlegel, Hazlitt

John Wilson's 'Observations on Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*', which opened the revamped *Blackwood's Magazine* in October 1817, has always been a difficult piece to account for. Not only was it strange on a personal level, an anonymous attack by Wilson on one of his most eminent Lake School acquaintances. It was also an odd move for a Tory reviewer to make, targeting a partisan of his own side.<sup>1</sup> Some critics have explained it by suggesting that the aim was primarily commercial. They argue that the main idea was simply to create controversy to attract attention to the re-launched title. The Leopard mauled the High Priest of Highgate in the opening issue in order that he - or someone else - could defend him in a later one. It was not intended to be anyone's final word on the matter. Sure enough, two months later,

*Blackwood's* carried a long anonymous reply to the 'Observations', which declared it to be an 'ungenerous piece of laboured criticism ... a coarse exertion of individual opinion' (*BEM*, 2 (1817), 286).<sup>7</sup> But while there is ample evidence to suggest that Wilson and J. G. Lockhart, *Blackwood's* leading contributors in this period, were far less concerned with maintaining critical consistency than they were with creating a stir, the attack on Coleridge was not purely opportunistic. Trading, as it did, on a stark opposition between London and the rest of the kingdom, it revealed something significant about the literary perspective of the new *Blackwood's*: its anti-metropolitan bias.

[Fig. 6 John Wilson's 'Some Observations on the *Biographia Literaria* of S. T. Coleridge', the lead article in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* for October 1817.]

What is not always remarked upon about the 'Observations' is that, as well as charging Coleridge with 'diseased egotism' and 'grinning and idiot self-complacency', it also held him up as being, in effect, a Cockney, a man who thought himself a very important figure in the world because he was well-known in London (*BEM*, 2 (1817), 5). 'He seems to believe that every tongue is wagging in his praise,' the reviewer wrote, 'that every ear is open to imbibe the oracular breathings of his inspiration, though he has yet done nothing in any one department of human knowledge' (5). Here the target was not Coleridge solely, but something broader and more pernicious, a metropolitan culture that was so self-preoccupied that it mistook local dazzle for lasting achievement. Throughout the article Wilson contrasted the author of the *Ancient Mariner* with figures such as Southey, Wordsworth, Scott, Campbell, Moore, Leslie, Jeffrey and Maturin, all men from the Celtic fringes (Whigs

and Tories) who had contributed lastingly to the national literature. The cumulative inference was clear: compared with these men, Coleridge was a fraud; not only that, he was representative of a larger fraudulence - a culture of self-promotion and vain spectacle that was lurking unwholesomely over the capital:

Yet, insignificant as he assuredly is, he cannot put pen to paper without a feeling that millions of eyes are fixed upon him; and he scatters his Sibylline Leaves around him, with as majestic an air as if a crowd of enthusiastic admirers were rushing forward to grasp the divine promulgations, instead of their being, as in fact they are, coldly received by the accidental passenger, like a lying lottery puff or a quack advertisement. (6)

Wilson focuses on that tendency of Coleridge's work, from 'Kubla Khan' to Chapter XIII of the *Biographia*, to promise much and deliver little, portraying him as the literary equivalent of a Smithfield mountebank. In sum, the reviewer concluded, the sage of Highgate was a most dangerous example for the rising generation to follow, because having alternately embraced, defended and thrown aside all systems of Philosophy and creeds of Religion, he now had nothing to offer in their place but 'the baseless and air-built fabrics of a dreaming imagination' (18).

This critique of metropolitan dilettantism was an important feature of Wilson's attack on Coleridge, but to Lockhart's infamous attack on Leigh Hunt, 'On the Cockney School of Poetry No. 1', which appeared later in the same issue, it was absolutely central. Not only that, in its first version, 'Z' made an explicit link between the two:

[Hunt] has gone into a strange delusion about himself, and is just as absurd in supposing that he resembles the Italian Poets, as a greater Quack still (Mr Coleridge) is, in imagining that he is a Philosopher after the manner of Kant or Mendelshon [sic]—and that ‘the eye of Lessing bears a remarkable likeness to MINE’, i.e. the eye of Mr. Samuel Coleridge. (*BEM*, 2 (1817), 40)

Famously, one of Lockhart’s main objections to Hunt’s poetry and personality was aesthetic. In the first ‘Cockney School’ article he lost no time in portraying the ‘King of the Cockneys’ as a figure of ‘exquisitely bad taste, and extremely vulgar modes of thinking and manners in all respects’ (38). Less often noticed, however, is the fact that when ‘Z’ actually drew up a formal balance sheet of Hunt’s crimes in January 1818, vulgarity was only second on the list. The King of the Cockney’s primary and most important offence, it seems, was not lack of taste, but ‘the want and pretence of scholarship’ (*BEM*, 2 (1818), 415). Of course, from one perspective it might be seen as the most predictable and therefore unmeaning move of all, in a literary conflict such as this, to cast aspersions on the other fellow’s education. But I think there was more to it than that. For what Lockhart was doing, in effect, was building further on the argument that Wilson had already broached in relation to Coleridge. The quality that really unites these London authors, it is suggested, is a lack of true learning. They are not scholars but showmen; that is why their metropolitan bubble must be burst.

What connections like this show, I think, is that during the first months after the *Blackwood’s* re-launch, Cockney Prose was at least as much in Lockhart and Wilson’s sights as Cockney Poetry, and it was being critiqued in the same terms. But then the question immediately presents itself: why, given the vehemence of this early critique,

did the Blackwoodsmen's treatment of the Cockney prose writers become so unexpectedly discriminating thereafter? Was it for purely personal reasons - that is, for reasons specific to the individuals involved - that the Blackwoodsmen quickly began to soften their approach towards Coleridge and his friend Lamb, but not towards Hunt and Hazlitt? Or was it more narrowly political? When *Blackwood's* changed its tack in relation to Coleridge, and started to praise instead of blame, was it simply because, when all was said and done, he was a Tory like themselves? Or was there a broader literary critical logic behind their reappraisal? One thing is certain: by 1819 the whirligig of time had brought in some redresses. In *Peter's Letters to his Kinsfolk*, which presented a survey of Scottish literary society through the persona of a visiting Welshman 'Peter Morris', Lockhart was to offer a surprisingly even-handed assessment of *Blackwood's* first two years, praising it fulsomely for weakening the *Edinburgh Review's* authority, while also acknowledging its excesses:

I saw an article in that work the other day, in which it seemed to be made matter of congratulatory reflection, that 'if Mr Coleridge should make his appearance suddenly among any company of well-educated people on this side the Tweed, he would meet with some little difficulty in making them comprehend who he was.'—What a fine idea for a Scottish critic to hug himself upon!<sup>2</sup>

Back in the early months of 1818, however, a critical perspective capable of distinguishing between 'good' and 'bad' London writers had not yet come into being. During the spring and summer months *Blackwood's* followed up on January's 'Letter to Mr. Leigh Hunt' with several more bouts of Cockney-bashing. In May there was another letter from 'Z' to 'Leigh Hunt, King of the Cockneys' and in July a third

instalment of the 'Cockney School of Poetry'. Not that everything which came out of the Hunt circle was savaged. In February the magazine had commenced a series of rather appreciative notices of Hazlitt's *Lectures on English Poetry* penned by the London-based (and essentially Cockney-friendly) P. G. Patmore. But in the following month a firm stop was put to any incipient cosiness when a satirical Notice made reference to 'pimpled Hazlitt's coxcomb lectures' (*BEM*, 2 (1818), 611).

*Blackwood's* continued to snipe at the Cockneys until well into the summer, but it was not until August 1818 that the question of metropolitan literature really came to a head. Indeed, all things considered, it would be no exaggeration to consider this extraordinary number as being, in all but name, a 'Cockney' issue, so continuously concerned was it with the Lamb-Hunt-Hazlitt circle, and their place in the contemporary field. Not only did August 1818 contain Lockhart's notorious attack on Keats (in 'The Cockney School of Poetry No. IV'), and Wilson's unapologetically abusive 'Hazlitt Cross-Questioned' (which immediately prompted a suit for libel). It also carried Wilson's reviews of Charles Lamb's *Works* and a novel *Altham and his Wife* by Hunt and Shelley's new publisher Charles Ollier. Interspersed among these items was a gothic fiction, a discussion of ghost stories, a review of Scott's *Heart of Midlothian*, Lockhart's eulogy of Raphael's Madonna of Dresden, and an article on Shakespeare's sonnets. It was a gloriously rich issue, which ranged over a bewildering variety of Romantic themes. But it did also, perhaps serendipitously, possess a kind of cultural and critical coherence.<sup>3</sup>

It begins with something like a manifesto: Lockhart's review of his own translation of A. W. Schlegel's *Lectures on the History of Literature* (*BEM*, 3 (1818), 497-511).

When summering in Germany in 1817 Lockhart had consolidated his admiration of

Teutonic letters. In particular he came to see Schlegel's two sets of *Lectures* (the *Lectures on Dramatic Literature* had already been translated into English by John Black in 1815), as a crucial statement of counter-revolutionary aesthetics. Together, Lockhart considered, these two works laid out a complete theory of literary nationalism, a theory with which to oppose the demoralising influence of the Enlightenment in general and the Whig *Edinburgh Review* in particular.<sup>4</sup>

[Fig. 7 J. G. Lockhart's 1816 sketch of himself. Reproduced from Mary Gordon, *'Christopher North': A Memoir of John Wilson* (New York, 1863).]

Lockhart's review begins with an attack on the arrogance of the present. 'We are more knowing than our fathers', he writes, 'but the old breed was a noble one, and it may be worth our while to consider with ourselves whether we may not deserve the reproach of the satirist—*Gens pusilla, acuta*' (*BEM*, 3 (1818), 498). Only in Germany, the reviewer argued, was a serious intellectual effort being made to undo the intellectual and moral damage caused by the French Revolution; an effort that was becoming even more valuable as the threat of revolution loomed again. Only in Schlegel and his fellow countymen was there a principled insistence that 'literature should have reference to an established centre, namely, to religious faith, and to national history and character,' and that its main employment should be to 'nurture and strengthen our associations in relation to these objects' and thereby turn us into worthy citizens of our respective communities (500). To view literature in this light, Lockhart argued, was to give it a purpose - the purpose of keeping alive the 'characteristic spirit of our ancestors', so that 'instead of embodying all kinds of human ideas indifferently', it would 'aim at rivetting a particular set of impressions

proper to itself'. This, he argued, would 'have the advantage of gaining force by every reiteration' until it pervaded 'the whole system both of private and public life' (500).

With sentiments like these resounding in our ears, Lockhart's 'Cockney School' article on Keats later in the same number begins to look less like an arbitrary and excessive attack on a defenceless young poet (which was how it was viewed in London), and more like a self-conscious application of Schlegelian principles to the metropolitan literature of the day. One of the things that 'Z' hated most about Hunt and Keats's poetry, we should remember, was its fast-and-loose handling of history, its thoroughly deracinated nature. 'Costume,' he wrote of *Endymion*, 'is violated in every page of this goodly octavo' (*BEM*, 3 (1818), 522). By 'costume' Lockhart primarily meant historical décor, but he was also looking through and beyond that at Keats's flagrant absence of historical spirit. 'His *Endymion*', 'Z' wrote, 'is not a Greek shepherd, loved by a Greek goddess; he is merely a young Cockney rhymester, dreaming a phantastic dream at the full of the moon' (522). To many modern readers this rather off-the-peg, consumerist approach to history is part of Keats's appeal, but to Lockhart it was pure anomaly. In Scott (the *Heart of Midlothian* was also reviewed in August 1818) imaginative literature could be seen as drawing freely and fruitfully on the 'characteristic spirit' of the national past, but in Keats it seemed only to revel in its own status as a fanciful, fashionable commodity.

This emphasis upon Keats as a follower of fashion, albeit an unsuccessful one, is important to Lockhart's article, and allows him to make an implicit distinction between the author of *Endymion* and another low-born poet of the previous generation, Robert Burns (519). It was not simply because Burns was Scottish and



Keats a 'vulgar Cockney' that 'Z' preferred the former, but because the former was in touch with the autochthonous spirit of his country. Untarnished by enlightened Edinburgh, Burns had drawn strength from the 'peculiar veins of national thought',<sup>5</sup> whereas the exact opposite was true, or so Lockhart believed, of Hunt and his disciple Keats. For to him these two Cockneys had no soil - no country. They were mere suburbanites, cultural shape-shifters, who had no natural relation to their environment.

If the article on Schlegel helps explain not only the nature but also the tone of the attack on Keats, wherein Keats becomes a kind of negative exemplification of Lockhart's ideal, then it also helps contextualise the equally vehement attacks on Hazlitt which pepper the same issue. The most combative of the London Cockneys, Hazlitt had provoked Lockhart and Wilson's ire the month before, in two distinct but related ways. Firstly, he had provoked it by the sheer fact of starting to write for the Whig *Edinburgh Magazine*, *Blackwood's* local rival. This was undoubtedly galling. But he had also kindled their wrath further by placing an essay there in July, 'On the Ignorance of the Learned'. Making passing swipes at pedantry, public schools and scholasticism, Hazlitt had offered up Shakespeare as a kind of patron saint of the unlearned. 'Uneducated people have most invention', Hazlitt wrote, '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'.<sup>6</sup> Hazlitt probably had 'Z's recent attacks on Hunt's scholarship in mind when penning this essay; and he must have known that the Blackwoodsmen would take up the gauntlet. But even he must have been shocked at the sheer venom of 'Hazlitt Cross-Questioned'. It is an outrageous personal attack, unjustifiable even in the terms of the period. And yet to read it in the light of the rest of the issue is to discover an underlying logic to it. In it

Wilson had made a point of lambasting Hazlitt as a 'mere quack', just as Lockhart had done with Hunt and Coleridge several months before (*BEM*, 3 (1818), 550). He also baulked violently at the London essayist's apparent dismissal of the value of learning: 'For example, in an essays of yours on the 'Ignorance of the Learned', do not you congratulate yourself, and the rest of your Cockney crew, on never having received any education?' (551). It had been one of the leading ideas of Lockhart's Schlegel review that the Germans had a tradition of proper scholarship that was now largely unknown in Britain. 'The truth is,' Lockhart had written, 'that all the German writers of eminence are also scholars of eminence. They read before they think of writing' (*BEM*, 3 (1818), 498). Because of Coleridge's pathological inability to collect himself in print, Hazlitt had become, as it were by default, the closest thing Regency England had to a German-style universal scholar. But he was a scholar who claimed to see no value in scholarship, and for the Blackwoodsmen that said it all.

Both Schlegel and Hazlitt had written extensively on Shakespeare, Schlegel in his *Lectures* and Hazlitt in his *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* (which was first published by Charles Ollier in 1817). So for Wilson Shakespeare was the natural site for staging a showdown with Hazlitt on the question of scholarship. Hence the article on 'Shakespeare's Sonnets', which appears towards the end of the August 1818 issue, an article that quotes extensively from Schlegel's rhapsodic description of Shakespeare's poems, before turning to ridicule Hazlitt for failing to see anything in them (*BEM*, 3 (1818), 585-88). The argumentative line that runs into this article from the previous ones is actually very clear. The Cockney poets and reviewers of the day have been tried and found wanting, but not in relation to their Scottish counterparts as such (indeed in the review of *Heart of Midlothian* Scott himself was accused of

‘writing himself down’) (*BEM*, 3 (1818), 574). They have been found wanting when compared to Schlegel’s literary ideal.

Why then, given that the Blackwoodsmen’s blood was clearly up in August 1818, did they give such a contrasting treatment to Charles Lamb and Charles Ollier? Was it simply to prove that, when they wanted to, they too could be disinterested? That what they said about the Cockneys could be trusted, because they did not savage them all? One might suspect as much given that the Ollier novel that they held up for review (*Altham and his Wife*) was, in truth, a very insubstantial performance, a ‘fashionable’ novel if ever there was one, a sort of Leigh Hunt poem in prose. But that may have been precisely its alibi. What was transgressive about Hunt and Keats, as ‘Z’ never tired of repeating, was their vulgarisation of the ‘high’ genre of lyric poetry. But in Ollier no such transgression had taken place. Ollier’s novel, a novel of middle-class London domestic life, was irredeemably Cockney. But at least it knew its place. This sense is ubiquitous in Wilson’s review without ever being spelt out explicitly. The patronising tone says it all: ‘We observe that our author’, the reviewer concluded, ‘is soon to publish a novel on a larger scale; if he would only give up his Cockney notions in regard to matters of taste and religion, that is, if he would just look a little deeper into things, he possesses fine talents, and is well adapted for such a task’ (*BEM*, 3 (1818), 545).

The climax of the August issue is Wilson’s review of Lamb’s collected *Works*, which is unexpectedly enthusiastic. So enthusiastic, indeed, that we feel a larger point is being made. ‘Mr Lamb is without doubt a man of genius’, the reviewer opens, ‘and of very peculiar genius too’ (*BEM*, 3 (1818), 599). The question of how this statement

correlates with the various other things that *Blackwood's* had said about Lamb's well-known Cockney acquaintances was, of course, immediately on the agenda, not least the very striking judgements that had appeared earlier in this same issue. Wilson's preamble is extremely careful. Significantly, given Hunt and Keats's perceived enthrallment to 'fashion' he argues that Lamb 'never has been, and we are afraid never will be, a very popular writer', and though close to Hazlitt and Hunt, he is (in the end) not one of their school. 'Mr. Lamb's Parnassus is not in the kingdom of Cockaigne' (599).

What is striking to the reader of the August 1818 issue in its entirety is the extent to which the virtues that Wilson finds in Lamb at the end of the number can be seen to mirror *in miniature* those that Lockhart had found in Schlegel at the beginning. Like Schlegel, Lamb is modest; like Schlegel, he is scholarly; and his works are imbued with the ancient national spirit. Turning to *John Woodvil*, Lamb's all but forgotten tragedy of 1802, Wilson argued that though 'deficient in vigour' it was a wonderful imitation of the best old dramatists, and showed Lamb to have been better acquainted with 'the spirit of the tragic genius of England' than any of his contemporaries (602). This is an extraordinary statement, given Lamb's relative obscurity at the time, but it becomes less so if we consider that, not only is Lamb being played off against Hunt, Keats and Hazlitt here, he is also being made to gesture towards a nationalist ideal.

More than anything the quality that Lamb has on his side is that, unlike Jeffrey and Hunt and Hazlitt, he is a critic but not a 'reviewer':

He never utters any of that dull or stupid prosing that weighs down the dying Edinburgh Review,—never any of those utterly foolish paradoxes which Hazlitt insidiously insinuates into periodical publications,—never any of those flagitious philippics against morality and social order that come weekly raving from the irascible Hunt. There is in him a rare union of originality of mind with delicacy of feeling and tenderness of heart. (599)

Original if limited as a poet, and tolerable if tepid as a humorous essayist, Lamb is at his best, Wilson says, in his serious criticism, where he is a genial and sympathetic reader. And what this praise means in practice is that, for Wilson, Lamb's literary reputation comes down to two essays, 'On the Character and Genius of Hogarth' (1811) and 'On the Tragedies of Shakespeare, Considered with Reference to their Fitness for Stage Representation' (also 1811), both of which he discusses at length. But Wilson's treatment is a strange one in that, having made such high general claims for Lamb, and singled out his literary criticism for special mention, he then proceeds to disagree with the main premises of both these essays. But perhaps there is something only apparently paradoxical in this. What Wilson is praising in Lamb, after all, is a genial approach to his critical subjects, and what Wilson himself is bringing to Lamb, in this review-article, is a similarly genial perspective. The article is not only a piece praising a genial author, it is itself a kind of paean to geniality, to the very notion of sympathetic criticism.

Of course, in one sense, it cannot but seem odd, a little schizophrenic even, especially in an issue such as this, for the Blackwoodsmen to be putting themselves forward as champions of 'geniality'. One way of caricaturing the literary culture of the late 1810s

would be to identify Edinburgh, the Edinburgh of Jeffrey's *Edinburgh Review* and *Blackwood's*, with the 'reviewing' culture of the period - political, adversarial and increasingly addicted to 'personalities'<sup>7</sup> - and London, the London of the Lamb circle, with a culture of criticism more amateurish and genial - genial, that is, in the sense of being more amiable, less partisan, but also genial in a deeper sense, meaning 'sympathetic to genius'. Expressions of this aspiration are everywhere in Coleridge's lectures of the period, and in Lamb and Wordsworth's critical essays.<sup>8</sup>

But interspersed with all the 'personalities' in *Blackwood's*' tumultuous first year, there are also frequent, and not wholly facetious invocations to another, more genial model. Often Schlegel is the tutelary spirit behind these gestures. In March 1818 Lockhart posed as a German commentator 'Von Lauerwinkel' who deplored the way in which, as the British periodical press was currently constituted, the author was a 'mere puppet' in the hands of the critic (*BEM*, 3 (1818), 671). And to remedy this, he imagined the emergence of a critic of truly Shakespearean sympathy and flexibility, who would be 'universal—impartial—rational' (672).<sup>9</sup> A few months later, writing in a different guise on Wordsworth's 'White Doe of Rylestone', Lockhart made the same complaint about the 'wrangling and jangling' in present-day periodical criticism, arguing that 'every critic, now-a-days, raises his bristles, as if he were afraid of being thought too tame and good-natured.'

There is a want of genial feeling in professional judges of Poetry [...] For our own parts, we intend at all times to write of great living Poets in the same spirit of love and reverence with which it is natural to regard the dead and the sanctified; and this is the only spirit in which a critic can write of his

contemporaries without frequent dogmatism, presumption, and injustice.

(*BEM*, 3 (1818), 371-72).

Tellingly, in this notion that true criticism, genial criticism, should be close to the spirit of 'love and reverence' with which we are accustomed to view the dead, Lockhart gets very close both to the language and sentiments of Wordsworth's first 'Essay upon Epitaphs', which had first appeared in Coleridge's *Friend* in 1810 and was then later incorporated into the notes to *The Excursion* (1814).

Ironically, one of Lockhart's foremost statements of 'genial' values was in an attack on the Edinburgh Whig establishment in volume II of *Peter's Letters*. Surveying Scottish intellectual life during the early years of the century, 'Peter Morris' complained at length about the pernicious influence that the *Edinburgh* had had on the 'associations of the great majority of Scottish minds', an influence that was 'not', he argued, 'accompanied with any views of philosophy calculated to ennoble human nature, or with any genial or productive spirit of thought likely to draw out the genius and intellect of the country in which their Review was published' (ii. 206-7).

Love, which 'hopeth all things and believeth all things', is the true inventive principle. It is the true caloric, which calls out every sort of vegetation from the soil, which contains in its bosom the sleeping germs of national genius. Now, the Edinburgh Review cared very little for what might be done, or might be hoped to be done, provided it could exercise a despotic authority in deciding on the merits of what was done. Nobody could ever regard this work

as a great fostering-mother of the infant manifestations of intellectual and imaginative power. (ii. 207)

The most striking thing about this passage, I think, is that, in imagining the ideal literary magazine as a ‘great fostering-mother of the infant manifestations of intellectual and imaginative power’ Lockhart is closely echoing that famous description in the *Biographia* where ‘practical criticism’ had been defined as a sympathetic search in works ‘more or less imperfect’ for ‘promises and specific symptoms of poetic power’.<sup>10</sup> But the connection with Coleridge does not end there. For it was not simply that Lockhart made use of Coleridge’s recipe for genial criticism in *Peter’s Letters*; he also turned Coleridge and Lamb into opportunities to prove his own geniality. Precisely because they had both been ridiculed by the *Edinburgh*, Coleridge very recently, Lamb sixteen years before (when the *John Woodvil* volume had been savaged), they could be offered up as key examples of the kind of ‘exquisite genius’ that needed protection from the Whig establishment. They were emblems, in other words, not of finished achievement, but of infant power. Hence to say that politics played a part in the eventual discrimination that Lockhart and Wilson made between Coleridge and Lamb, on the one hand, and the rest of the ‘Cockney School’ on the other, is undoubtedly true, but in a more complex sense than might initially appear. Of course it mattered that both writers were no longer Jacobins, and that they stood at some distance from Hunt and Hazlitt’s radical *Examiner*. But in truth it was their relative removal from periodical criticism that really helped to rehabilitate them - their status as genial critics, ‘more or less imperfect’, who were outside the reviewing game. For much as Lockhart and Wilson enjoyed the cut and



thrust of magazine controversy they also harboured a powerful and recurrent longing for its opposite. They continued to remain haunted by Schlegel's ideal.

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#### NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> On Wilson's status as leading contributor but not editor of the re-launched *Blackwood's* see Robert Morrison, 'John Wilson and the Editorship of Blackwood's Magazine', *Notes & Queries* (March 1999), 48-50.

<sup>2</sup> *Peter's Letters to his Kinsfolk*, 3 vols (Edinburgh, 1819) ii. 144-5. Hereafter cited as *Peter's Letters*.

<sup>3</sup> On the question of whether there was a coherent cultural agenda lurking behind *Blackwood's*' astonishing surface variety, see chapter one of David Stewart's *Romantic Magazines and Metropolitan Literature Culture* (Basingstoke, 2011), 14-51 [24-5].

<sup>4</sup> The influence of Schlegel upon Lockhart's *Blackwood's* articles and *Peter's Letters* is briefly but trenchantly discussed by Ian Duncan in *Scott's Shadow: The Novel in Romantic Edinburgh* (Princeton, 2007), 47-48, 57-8.

<sup>5</sup> The phrase is used by Lockhart of Burns in *Peter's Letters*, iii. 328.

<sup>6</sup> 'On the Ignorance of the Learned', *Edinburgh Magazine*, 3 (1818), 60.

<sup>7</sup> Tom Mole argues that the Blackwoodsmen developed an increasingly sophisticated defence of 'personalities' or *ad hominem* attacks between October 1817 and August 1818 in 'Blackwood's Personalities' in *Romanticism and Blackwood's Magazine*, ed. Robert Morrison and Daniel S. Roberts (Basingstoke, 2014) 89-97.

<sup>8</sup> See Gregory Dart, 'Practical Criticism' in the *Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age* ed. David Duff (Oxford, 2017).

<sup>9</sup> In "Abuse Wickedness, but Acknowledge Wit": *Blackwood's Magazine* and the Shelley Circle', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 34.2 (2001), 147-64 [149], Robert Morrison compares this figure of Lockhart's to Keats's notion of the 'camelion poet', developed in a letter to Richard Woodhouse of 27 October 1818.

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<sup>10</sup> Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, 2 vols (London, 1817), ii. 13.