INFLUENCE OF HAZLITT ON KEATS'S CRITICISM

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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to certify that Miss. Hem Mittal completed her M.Phil. dissertation, entitled "Influence of Hazlitt on Keats's Criticism," under my supervision. To the best of my knowledge the work has been done by the candidate herself.

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PREFACE

That Hazlitt and Keats were close friends is a well known fact to the students of English Literature, but that the latter was heavily indebted to the former not only in regard to his critical ideas but also in poetic compositions is normally overlooked by scholars. The present study is an attempt to show some of the major and specific influences of Hazlitt's critical ideas on Keats. It is needless to say that Keats known primarily as a great romantic poet but students of Keats tend to ignore the fact that Keats was a conscious artist and had something of critical value also to say. His critical statements contained in some of his letters show that Keats's poetic compositions were not a mere spontaneous effusion of feelings but that they were subtly controlled by certain artistic canons. These canons are explained by Keats in his letters. Our purpose is to elaborate these canons as well as to say how they originated from the specific critical statements of Hazlitt. But since Keats explains these canons with a sense of conviction his critical statements do not appear as a mere echo of Hazlitt's points of view but as reinterpretations which have freshness of approach and validity not only for his own poetic composition but for
imaginative compositions in general.

The study has been divided into four sections. The first section — Introduction — briefly summarizes the major critical issues which have engaged the attention of literary theorists from Plato to Keats's own times. The second section contains a discussion of Hazlitt's critical statements which are relevant to showing their influence on Keats's own critical stances. The third section deals with Keats's critical statements which primarily originated from Hazlitt's discussion of various literary issues. Keats's stances have been elaborated and discussed not as a mere echo of Hazlitt's points of view but as critical statements in their own rights also. The final section is in the nature of recapitulation of the discussion of the various literary issues discussed by Keats and Hazlitt. In order to give clarity to my exposition of Hazlitt's and Keats's critical statements I have quoted from these writer's writings rather liberally. Finally a selected bibliography has been appended.

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CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

The term romantic criticism has been used rather vaguely either with reference to certain characteristics of creative literature or with reference to a movement which was opposed to what is loosely termed classical criticism, or to be more precise, neoclassical criticism. In fact, the opposition between the two trends — the romantic and classical in western literature dates back to Plato. Plato was in favour of rigour and restraint in literary composition because he was fully alive to the pitfalls of romantic excesses. For him, though he does not use the term romantic criticism, all creative writings were romantic because they were the product of inspiration and imagination. In simplistic terms Platonic criticism was largely concerned with the following issues of literary criticism which have been debated from the time of recorded history of literature to our own day. These elements are the concepts of inspiration and imagination the creator's personality or impersonality reflected in the poetic product, the subject matter, the purpose of literature in the social context and its effect on the reader, and the choice, use and handling of the poetic medium. All subsequent critics from
the earliest times up to date have discussed some or all of these issues in keeping with their personal predilections and the demands made on literature by the social and temporal contexts of the country of its product. In the discussion of these issues — two distinct critical thoughts had existed right from the beginning of literary theorizing to our own day of critical scholarship. They are the classical trends starting from Plato through the Roman and Renaissance critics and Neoclassicism in France and England to the present time of neo-Arnoldian criticism followed by Eliot and critics who came under his influence. The second trend was that of romanticism, starting from Aristotle through Longinus in Rome and Sidney in England to the first half of the nineteenth century represented by Wordsworth, Coleridge, Hazlitt and Keats. In the following paragraphs we propose to briefly examine the changing and developing concepts of the various components of criticism to have a glimpse of the shaping influences which determined the adoption or rejection of these concepts, so that Hazlitt's and Keats's critical stances can be understood in a comprehensive manner.

The concept of inspiration and imagination has always been central to literary criticism long before formal critical theorizing began with Plato and Aristotle.
Its genesis can be traced even in the scattered writings of poets before Plato, such as Homer and Hesiod. During the Greek phase of literary theorizing two diverse opinions are noticed. Inspiration was considered to be either external, a sort of divine visitation to the poetic mind or it was taken to be an innate faculty which, under special circumstances and in contact with the stimuli of the world of phenomena, is put into operation for a brief duration when the creative process of the mind is on.

The chief exponent of the view that inspiration is external to the mind of the poet and its source is divine is Plato, though as referred to above we find mention of it even in Homer. But it was Plato who stated, debated and elaborated it in his formal critical writings. He stated in the Apology that "not by wisdom do poets write but by a sort of genius and inspiration", and goes on to elaborate this idea further when he said in Ien that "all good poets, epic as well as lyric, compose their beautiful poems not by art, but because they are inspired and possessed". The poets are "possessed" when they compose lines shows that Plato believed in the external existence of inspiration.

Plato was followed and supported by the Renaissance critics, Sir Philip Sidney who in his *Defense of Poiesis* presented his views thus:

Poetry sets forth exalted and divine thoughts and feeds the mind with heavenly ambrosia. This divine fury ... proceeds from the Muses.²

The other view that inspiration and imagination are innate was propounded by Aristotle. He believed that the poet was 'a maker' who created or fashioned poetry on the corpus available from the external world. That is, the poet "created according to a true idea derived from the general concept which the intellect abstracts from the details of sense."³ Longinus reiterated Aristotle as well as made an advance when he stated: "imaginative power is innate beyond the reach of arts and rules."⁴ His statements set the trend of romantic criticism which was to come later. Longinus ignored the classical rules governing art and its composition

and accepted imagination as the creative faculty. Upto the coming of neoclassical critics "the term imagination and fancy were used synonymously to refer to the realms of fairy tale or make-believe."  

"Though sometimes the medieval and Renaissance critics tried to distinguish between them by assigning Fancy the lighter and less responsible kind of imagining, yet in the eighteenth century as imagination moved through the stages of association with the neoclassical critics fancy, fancy assumed the higher role of reference to a more creative mental power, imagination the humbler reference to the mind's more reportorial kinds of drudge work."

Dr. Johnson spoke of imagination as "a licentious and vagrant faculty." The neoclassicists tended to confine the functioning of imagination in poetry to one of combining and associating images. They felt that


imagination was inventive but it must be regulated by judgement. In "Idler", Dr. Johnson remarked of imagination as the faculty which "selects ideas from the treasures of remembrance, and produces novelty only by varied combinations." But coming to the nineteenth century, the concept of imagination acquires a wider connotation and significance. Imagination is the soul of poetic creation. Imagination besides performing the associative or linking function in the mind between ideas and objects of perception also modifies them and creates or rather recreates things which are not even present but are probable. In the following paragraphs we propose to discuss the views of the romantic critics especially those of Wordsworth and Coleridge.

The romantic critics came to regard imagination more than a mere power of visualization, somewhere in between sense and reason, not even the inventive power of the poet which the neoclassicists conceived as "combination of innate sensibility, the power of association and the faculty of conception," but a creative power by which the mind gains insight into reality. Wordsworth emphasized the cognitive and visionary power of imagination. He says that "Imagination shapes and creates ..., a sublime consciousness of the

soul in her own might and almost divine power." For Wordsworth, imagination is the eighteenth century associationalism governing the combination of images. Imagination involves the cooperation or interaction of the human mind with the external world. It is, as Wordsworth spoke of imagination in Prelude BK XIII; "an ennobling interchange or action from within and without." Wordsworth vacillates in deciding about the origins of inspiration or "inward impulse." Sometimes inspiration seems to come from above as "visitings of the imaginative power," at other times, and more characteristically, it seems to emanate from the inner life, and buried past:

A Shy spirit in my heart
That comes and goes will sometimes leap
From hiding places to years old.

At times Wordsworth makes imagination purely subjective, an imposition of the human mind on the real world. At other times he considers it as an illumination beyond the control of the conscious mind and even beyond the individual soul.

But frequently he takes an in-between position which favours the idea of collaboration. Speaking of how imagination functions, he remarked that imagination removes the film of familiarity from the ordinary objects and presents them in an unusual aspect.\textsuperscript{12} Wordsworth attempted to disengage fancy and imagination from their neoclassical explanation and presented Fancy and Imagination as Synonymous. His view in this regard deserves to be quoted in some detail:

To aggregate and to associate, to evoke and combine, belong as well to the Imagination as to the Fancy; but either the materials evoked and combined are different, or they are brought together under a different law, and for a different purpose. Fancy does not require that the materials which she makes use of should be susceptible of change in their constitution, from her touch, and where they admit of modification, it is enough for her purpose if it be slight, limited and evanescent. Directly reverse of these, are the desires and demands of Imagination. She

recoils from everything but plastic, the pliant and the indefinite. 13

Hence Wordsworth has made it clear how Fancy and Imagination are similar and at the same time dissimilar in their requirements and functioning.

The romantic notion that imagination is an innate power was stressed by Coleridge with certainty. Coleridge expressed this idea in his Lectures On Shakespeare: All true poets "write from a principle within, not originating in anything without." 14

In the "Statesman's Manual" Coleridge made the following comments:

that reconciling and mediating power, which incorporates the reasons in images of the sense and organizing (as it were) the flux of the senses by the permanent and self-circulating energies of the reason, gives

birth to a system of symbols, harmonious in themselves and consubstantial with the truths of which they are conductors.\footnote{15}

Coleridge like Wordsworth regards imagination as a mediatory power between the reasoning and the emotional mind. The associative importance of reasoning or judgement in imagination is not ignored. Coleridge equated imagination with reason, and made it the creative, originating function of the mind which deals with wholes; and he equated understanding with fancy, differing from imagination in kind, a non-creative, associative faculty of the mind which deals with parts. Commenting on Wordsworth's statement on fancy and imagination as identical (the power of evoking and combining belongs to both), Coleridge remarked in his treatise Biographia Literaria: "... he (Wordsworth) has mistaken the copresence of fancy with imagination for the operation of the latter singly.\footnote{16} In fact, fancy and imagination are "two distinct and widely different faculties."\footnote{17} Coleridge elaborates this idea further:

\begin{quote}
The \textbf{Imagination} then, I consider either as
\end{quote}

\footnotetext{15}{Quoted from P.S. Shastri, \textit{Coleridge's Theory of Poetry} (Delhi : Chand & Co. 1979), p. 51.}

\footnotetext{16}{J. Shawcross, ed., \textit{Biographia Literaria} (London : OUP. 1907), p. 194.}

\footnotetext{17}{\textit{Ibid.}, p. 60.}
primary or secondary. The primary Imagination I hold to be the living power and prime Agent of all human perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM. The secondary Imagination I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the kind of its agency, and differing only in degree, and in the mode of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates in order to recreate, or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to visualize and to unify. It is essentially vital, even as all objects (as objects) are essentially fixed and dead.\(^{18}\)

Besides classifying imagination as primary and secondary describing their nature and functioning Coleridge speaks of imagination as "a synthetic and magical power."\(^{19}\) Imagination makes the supernatural appear natural convincingly and its driving energy operates in the interaction of life and dream.


Both Wordsworth and Coleridge consider imagination as a recreating and shaping power. Imagination, namely the poetic imagination acts on the sensory perceptions stored in the mind. It links ideas and objects into varied combinations. This associative process organizes the sensory perceptions derived from nature into meaningful images. Imaginative process is inventive and is different from imitation. Imagination is not a wilful faculty, as the neoclassicists held but a superior faculty (in comparison to fancy) which helps in transmutation of familiar objects into unfamiliar ones and the vice-versa. It operates in unison with reason and reveals the ultimate reality. The theory of imagination as propounded by Wordsworth and Coleridge influenced the other Romantic critics.

William Hazlitt the other significant critic belonging to the generations of the Romantic critics could not ignore Wordsworth and Coleridge. This does not in any way imply that he has nothing new to say on the concept of imagination. The truth is that he discussed the theory of imagination elaborately and explicitly. His concept of imagination is more modern than that of his predecessors. Hazlitt speaks of imagination "as a wholly aesthetic process",
having "cognitive and visionary nature." Hazlitt perceives imagination as sympathetic, associational, formative, intuitive, futuristic or anticipatory in nature. These characteristics have been elaborated and discussed in the following chapter.

Hazlitt influenced his friend and contemporary, Keats, as far as the latter's literary theories are concerned. We find that Keats's notion of imagination is similar to that of Hazlitt, though at times we are not sure whether he is drawing on Hazlitt's views or is echoing Wordsworth's and Coleridge's tenets, which had a general impact on all the Romantic critics. Keats looks at imagination as a power which creates as well as reveals through creating. Through imagination he sought an absolute reality to which a door was opened by his appreciation of beauty through the senses. In other words, for Keats imagination is an instrument of intuitive insight and is the most authentic guide to ultimate truth and in its highest form is a generative force in its creation of essential reality. Keats also speaks of imagination as a penetrative and sympathetic faculty which identifies itself with the momentary objects of its contemplation.

From the foregoing discussion of the concept of imagination it is clear that the term imagination and its associated connotations have undergone the process of evolution. Not only this, imagination has acquired high esteem with the critics as the active faculty of the mind working in harmony with reason in order to reveal truth which the common man cannot comprehend with his own perception. It is distinct from Fancy and is a superior faculty which is capable of modifying and re-creating.

Like the concept of imagination, the problem of expression of the writer's personality or its non-expression in literary composition is an old issue which has been the subject of debate since the times of Homer up to the present day. Plato's main objection to literature was based on his concept of literature as incapable of representing or conveying reality or truth. His objection to poetry was based on the element of invention in the poetic process of composition. Plato contended that the poet produced something which was not in the world of phenomena. The same idea is upheld by Sidney when he says that the writer recreates from sensory perceptions. This implies that the artist's own experience and vision constituting his inner personality influence and find expression in his work. The presence of the artist's
personality is an important ingredient in the critical stances of Homer, Longinus and Sidney. But the Classical Roman critics led by Horace and the neoclassical critical practitioners of poetry led by Pope were in favour of the artist's detachment. In fact the satirical drama and the ironic mode of writing since the time of Horace and Juvenal through the Jacobins to our own day prefer impersonality because then the artist presents the world of phenomena with detachment.

When we examine the concept of personality and impersonality in the nineteenth century two distinct strands emerge, which have existed side by side. The strain of subjectivity supported by Wordsworth calls for the expression of the artist's self and emotions. According to Wordsworth the artist must create naturally, giving to his feelings and experiences, thereby revealing his personality (the self) in his literary creation. Wordsworth stated in his Essay Supplementary to the Preface:

Poetry treats things not as they are, but as they appear, not as they exist in themselves but as they seem to exist to the senses and to the passions. 21

21, Wordsworth's Literary Criticism, op. cit., p. 169.
Here Wordsworth is defending the expression of poet's emotions and transfiguration of reality into poetry in the colour of his (poet's) own feelings. Unlike Wordsworth, Coleridge described the poet as an objective, impersonal contemplator and creator. The poet shares the general rather than merely personal concerns.

The second strain is that of objectivity, which requires the artist to be impersonal and write with disinterestedness, expressing through correlatives. This view is elucidated by Hazlitt and Keats.

At the outset Hazlitt rejected subjectivity and commenting on Wordsworth remarked "that Wordsworth reduced poetry to a mere effusion of natural sensibility, surrounding the meanest objects with the morbid feelings and devouring egotism of the writers' own minds." He added that the poet's personal feelings and interests should not obtrude in his work otherwise there is the danger of losing "that high and permanent interest beyond ourselves" which is essential for great and universal poetry. From this statement, Hazlitt proceeds to give his views on how the poet looks "abroad into

universal forgetting that there is any such person as myself in the world," and comes to assert that such a forgetfulness is necessary for artistic creation. The poet when creating must detach his feelings and present them objectively through correlatives. How objective correlatives help in segregating personal experiences and feelings of the poet, is explained by Hazlitt thus:

Objective correlative is the perfect coincidence of the image and words with the feeling which the poet has and of which he cannot get rid in any other way.  

In his essay on "Table-Talk" Hazlitt contends:

Unlike Wordsworth, who imposes personal and uncommon associations on objects, the artist must remain detached and abstain from falsifying the significance of an image, only then the artist can make something out of nothing.

Keats followed Hazlitt on the question of the expression or non-expression of the poet's personality. Keats elaborated his ideas on this issue in his well-known theory of negative capability. He considers the poet as unpoetical character, the poet's personality is effaced in his work. The poet in his capacity as creator identifies himself with the object of his imitation, having no fixed self or identity. This negation of individuality and thereby achieving objectivity is possible only in a state of mind when it is neutral and capable of remaining in doubt and fear. This means, when the intellect sustains itself in this state, it comes in a position to reveal the mysteries of life and the universe. To be more precise it then apprehends universal truths. And in order to express universal truths the poet has to dissociate his personal feelings and treat them objectively.

Having discussed the question of personality and impersonality we will now examine the choice of subject matter of poetry. The choice of subject matter of poetry has been always linked with the function of literature in general in any particular age. As Plato believed in the utilitarian and educative function of literature, for him the representation of the ideal and good things in life
constituted the subject matter of poetry. The social responsibility of poetry is the much debated issue since Plato to the present times. Side by side with the didactic function of poetry we find aesthetic function contending for the status of the sole function of poetry. Plato stood for the didactic role while Longinus, Sidney and, the Romantic critics for the aesthetic function. Critics like Horace have tried to find the middle path where entertainment combined with instruction was pleaded to be the function of poetry. Logically, therefore, there had been a vacillation of emphasis on these two concepts up to the end of the eighteenth century. While the eighteenth century critics by and large led by Pope emphasized the choice of urban life as the subject matter, the romantic critics, and even some of the Neo-classical critics went to the other extreme, pleading their case in favour of rural life.

In the nineteenth century Wordsworth in an effort to bring poetry closer to human life selected "incidents and situations from common life," for his poetic compositions published in The Lyrical Ballads. Besides he also, considered the permanent and primary aspects of nature and

the manner in which they influence the permanent and essential qualities of human nature as the proper subject for poetic treatment. Coleridge differed from Wordsworth by adding the supernatural to the province of poetry besides the visible nature. Coleridge chose the supernatural so as to discern the mysterious forces at work in the universe and to realize ultimate reality.

Hazlitt spoke of nature as the soul of act and as being superior to art. Nature is a vast, living and evolving process identical with reality which includes human as well as non-human nature. Poetry incorporates nature in its content. It embodies not only external actions, events and objects but also includes the internal happenings thoughts, emotions and dreams coming to Keats, we find that the subject matter of poetry is well defined. He classified subject matter into three heads things real, semi-real and non-existent. Under things real he includes the sun, the moon and stars; things semi-real are love, the clouds and others which require the poetic imagination to make them exist; and non-existent things that are made great and dignified by an ardent pursuit. 27

We may conclude this discussion on the subject matter of poetry by stressing the fact that during the nineteenth century all the romantic critics accepted nature as the source of poetry. The neoclassical critics had also considered nature as the provider of matter to poetry. The difference between them lies in their approach to nature. For the neoclassicists nature meant primarily human nature but the romantic critics included non-human nature as well under the purview of nature. In short, the romantic critics enlarged the scope of poetry by adding to it content. However, contemporary worldly problems were not considered to be suitable for poetic treatment.

The next important issue is the question of the poetic medium. What should be the language of poetry—this issue has been debated since early times. The fact that the language of poetry differed from the ordinary or the conversational language was unanimously accepted by ancient critics. Plato, Aristotle, Longinus—all were against the use of showy words and artificial language. In general they disapproved of affectation in poetry. Even the neoclassical critics stood for clarity and simplicity, for "natural thought expressed without violence to language."28

They used refined language or the language of the educated as poetic medium. But in the nineteenth century there was a strong reaction against the artificial or cultivated language of the eighteenth century. The romantic critics advocated the use of natural language as the language of poetry. This view found strong adherence and support in Wordsworth. For Wordsworth in his Preface called for the employment of "the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of life" in poetry. Later this became "a selection of real language of men in a state of vivid sensation." Wordsworth at first spoke of rustic language as the language most suited for poetry on account of its simplicity and its freedom from elaborate expressions. Later he selected spoken language as the apt poetic medium as it is free from vulgarity and meanness of ordinary life. Wordsworth did not distinguish between did not accept the above views. Reacting to them he wrote in his Biographia Literaria:

The best part of human languages properly so called, is derived from reflection on the acts of mind itself. It is formed by a

voluntary appropriation of fixed symbols to internal acts, to processes and results of imagination, the great parts of which have no place in the consciousness of the uneducated man.30

In other words he rejected Wordsworth's notion of the natural spoken language as the language of poetry. He remarked that Wordsworth's view on poetic medium are "applicable only to certain classes of poetry," and hence cannot be accepted without reservations. Instead, Coleridge favoured the use of the language of educated people for poetic expression. Moreover, he felt that the language of poetry must be separate from that of prose. Like the other romantic critics Hazlitt laid stress on the use of simple language and unelaborated expressions in poetry. The language of poetry should evolve naturally out of the poet's feelings for his subject and move the reader. This is not possible if the language is intricate and full of elaborate expressions. Hazlitt did not make any distinction between the language of prose and of poetry. He asserted that metre does not make the whole

difference between prose and poetry. The poet must make use of musical language which is the language of the music of the mind. Metre is responsible for the poetic music. Unlike his predecessors Keats does not mention what should be the language of poetry clearly. But some idea can be formed from his statements here and there in his letters and their practice in his own poems. This much is certain that Keats was for the use of natural language in poetry and appreciated melody in verse.

Having discussed the views of critics on poetic medium we are now going to see what the critics had to say regarding the function of poetry. The chief aim of poetry is to represent general or universal truths. Poetry has formative and moral effect on the readers. This stand was taken by the Greek critics and its continuity is seen even in the critics of the present age. That poetry performs the twin function of instructing as well as pleasing was accepted by the majority of the critics. But initially (Plato) the moral effect of poetry on man's mind and soul was stressed and so the didactic function of poetry was given importance. Later Sidney emphasized that poetry must instruct and please also. The neoclassical critic, Dr. Johnson regarded poetry as a mere vehicle for the communication of moral or psychological truth. During
the nineteenth century, the romantic critics gave weightage to the aesthetic function of poetry but they did not ignore the other function totally. The chief spokesman of romantic criticism, Wordsworth, regarded poetry as the manipulation of human feelings for the purpose of man's mental and moral health and happiness. He wrote:

A great poet ought to rectify men's feelings, to give them new compositions of feeling, to render their feelings more sane, pure and permanent. In short, more consonant to nature that is, to external nature, and the great moving spirit of things. 31

Wordsworth further added that poetry functions to jolt people out of their emotional indifference, making them realize the nature and mystery of the world. Poetry also serves as a stimulant against the "savage torpor" of the age. While Coleridge contends that by making truth rather than pleasure the immediate object of poetry Wordsworth has destroyed "the main fundamental distinction,

not only between poem and prose, but even between philosophy and marks of fiction." Coleridge recognizes the delighting role of poetry and at the same time acknowledges the instructive function also. But the pleasure-giving aim of poetry was emphasized, as is evident from his statement that "Poem is that species of composition ... proposing for its immediate object pleasure, not truth." Neither Wordsworth nor Coleridge was consistent in their idea of the relation of poetry to pleasure. But in Hazlitt there is no contradiction. He insists on pleasure as the proper end of poetry in his essay "On Poetic Versatility." Besides, poetry helps in personal refinement or addition of knowledge which in itself is a pleasure. Hazlitt objected to didactic poetry as it limits the poet's imagination and merely emphasizes truths and maxims which are limited. Like Hazlitt, Keats also preferred that the end of poetry is to amuse the readers. Keats hated poetry that was instructive or had palpable designs.

In the foregoing pages we have briefly summarised the various issues discussed and debated by the Romantic critics during the first half of the nineteenth century,

33. Ibid., p. 10.
which are Imagination and Fancy, Personality and Impersonality, Subject matter, poetic medium and poetic function. We have traced the development of these issues since Plato's times to the nineteenth century.

The above discussion is aimed at giving us a critical background to Hazlitt's own critical stances which eventually were taken up for further elaboration or modification by Keats.
Hazlitt's critical writings are not available in any formally systematized treatise like Aristotle's *Poetics*, Sidney's *Defence of Poesy*, Dryden's *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, or Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*. Hazlitt was a prolific writer who wrote on a variety of subject-matter — literary, critical and that of commonplace interest. But it is not difficult to piece together his critical pronouncements scattered over his writings to get an idea about the various issues of literary criticism. However we do not propose to establish that Hazlitt was entirely original in his theorizing, as perhaps no other critic can be. As we have shown in the preceding chapter there have been certain issues of literary theories which have been discussed and debated over the ages. Hazlitt, too, gives a perfunctory treatment in his stray remarks and sometimes seriously scrutinizes them.

The issue of imagination is a major issue which has been discussed by his contemporaries — Wordsworth, Coleridge and Shelley. Hazlitt also, has his explicatory contribution to make in this regard. His theory of imagination is "more detailed and ... revealing" and of "broader philosophical
reading than that of Wordsworth," is "more consistent, explicit, and less ambiguous than those of Coleridge and Shelley."¹ His description of imagination can be gathered from his different essays. In his lecture "On Poetry in General" he defines imagination as "that faculty which presents objects not as they are in themselves, but as they are moulded by other thoughts and feelings into an infinite variety of shapes and combinations of power."² Here Hazlitt is close to Coleridge's concept of imagination as a re-creative process. In the essay "On Reasoning and Imagination" imagination is considered as "an associating principle."³ In his lecture "On Shakespeare and Milton" he calls imagination "the power of feigning things according to nature,"⁴ and the power of "giving the feeling that is in nature."⁵

Speaking of French drama Hazlitt said that they were devoid of "the faculty of imagination, if by this we mean the power of placing things in the most novel and striking point of view." Hazlitt here, too, seems to be emphasizing what Wordsworth and Coleridge had earlier said of imagination as the faculty which removes the film of familiarity from objects and adds novelty to them.

In his lecture "On Wit and Humour" Hazlitt contrasts imagination with wit: through the former we discover "something similar in things generally alike, and the latter is more or less like a momentary deception, flashy type of visualization of sameness in things that are in actuality totally unlike." In the essay "On Genius and Commonsense" there is a further elaboration of the definition:

Imagination is more properly, the power of carrying on a given feeling into other situations, which must be done best according to the hold which the faculty itself has taken of the mind.

Here there are two points stated by Hazlitt. One is that

the theory of association has given birth to important stylistic factors and the language is evocative, connotative, and suggestive which becomes the staple of New Criticism in the twentieth century. The second point is that poetry expresses the lived experience. It is only in the lived experience that feelings take hold of the mind. Elsewhere he says, "this is the true imagination, to put yourself in the place of others, and to feel and speak for them." 9

"The principle of imagination" he says is another context, "resembles the emblem of the serpent by which the ancients typified wisdom and universe, with undulating folds, forever varying and forever flowing into itself — circular and without beginning or end." 10

These statements on the faculty of imagination, its potential functions are somewhat similar to the qualities ascribed to this faculty in his "Essay on the Principles of Human Action." Hazlitt at first defined imagination as the faculty that "must carry me out of myself in the feeling of others." 11 He goes on to say that imagination is, by no

9. "Art and Dramatic Criticism," Complete Works of William Hazlitt, Vol. XVIII, p. 345. Hazlitt is anticipating Eliot's theory of impersonality. The poet achieves the annihilation of his personal identity by melting into different object, character, and situations through feelings he wants to convey. And this must have given Keats the clue to Negative Capability.

10. Ibid., p. 371.

means, uniformed or undirected fantasy. It is an active agent of the mind which gives momentum to the whole epistemological apparatus within the person's mind. Imagination secures complete sympathetic identification with all the attendant circumstances. Imagination reveals itself through revolutionary relationship between cause and effect and thus foresees "the probable and necessary consequences of things." This sympathetic identification leads to a new illumination, a thrilling and vibrant sense of wholeness, which is the resultant of the happy match between reasoning and imagination.

From the above discussion it is evident that Hazlitt's use of the "word imagination is not contradistinguished from or opposed to reason, or the faculty with which we reflect upon and compare our ideas, but as opposed to sensation or memory." Imagination is totally non-insular and accepts all other cognitive channels. Hazlitt affirms this when he says that imagination is the "faculty of multiplying, varying, extending, combining and comparing" our original passive impressions. It is thus the function of extending and universalizing "ideas beyond the bounds" of

12. Ibid., p. 9.
13. Ibid., p. 19; n. 27.
our "memory and sense." Further, it brings the morality of everything, making it a living experience as the inherent idea of good and evil is exposed and makes it alive in all its emotion-charged particulars. Imagination thus "creates object" that invites voluntary action.14

In this manner, it performs its function as an active and inspiring agent. During the imaginative process imagination begins with the feelings connected with individual images and builds up an elaborate complex of ideas as these images are free to exert full force of association under the impetus and selective control of feeling.15 Thus, we see, imagination to Hazlitt is not a transcendent reality, as Coleridge perceives of it, especially in respect of his Primary Imagination. Hazlitt's postulates on imagination are philosophical. He comes close to Coleridge's understanding of Primary and Secondary Imagination. The following passage on Scott in Hazlitt's The Spirit of the Age echoes Coleridge's concept:

> It must be owned, there is a power in true poetry that lifts the mind from the ground

15. Ibid., pp. 20-27; 24-26n.
of reality to a higher sphere, that penetrates the inert, scattered, incoherent materials presented to it, and by a force and inspiration of its own, melts and moulds them into sublimity and beauty.  

The mind depicted here is both active and passive, voluntary and involuntary. The perception of "inert, scattered, incoherent materials" is a process similar to the functions of Coleridge's Primary Imagination. The "force and inspiration" of the mind that melt and mould the sense data "into sublimity and beauty" corresponds to Coleridge's secondary imagination. But nowhere does Hazlitt discuss or comment upon Coleridge's distinction between fancy and imagination. In his review of Biographia Literaria he only makes a passing remark that "reason and imagination are both excellent things; but perhaps their provinces ought to be kept more distinct than they have lately been." However, in an article on "Moore and Byron" Coleridge's distinction is implicit: "The naked Venus to some eyes would seem a dowery to her: Now, this principle of composition leads not only to a defect of dramatic interest, but also of imagination."  

18. Ibid., p. 413.
Hazlitt's main contribution to romantic criticism is his views on the sympathetic function of imagination. Hazlitt sees imagination as capable of identifying itself with whatever comes before it. Functioning sympathetically the faculty of imagination helps the artist to attain both disinterestedness and sympathy. The doctrine of sympathetic imagination existed in embryonic form before Hazlitt but the concept of sympathy was by no means definable. Sympathy, the ability to project oneself completely into any other situation or character, is imagination's greater power. The poet, Hazlitt insists, must have in himself not only "The germs of every faculty and feeling" but must "follow them by anticipation, intuitively, into all their conceivable ramification, through every change of fortune or conflict of passion or turn of thought." In the absence of sympathy "personal interest may in some cases oppress and circumscribe the imaginative faculty." This view is illustrated in his criticism of his well known contemporaries. He writes "that they are at times excessively egotistical, self-assertive, and narcissitic."

Shakespeare is the greatest example of such imaginative sympathy. His writings are a contrast to the

obsessive consciousness of the self that pervades Hazlitt's contemporary. Wordsworth is the greatest example of this sort of lack of sympathetic identification. Sympathetic identification for Hazlitt is primarily a moral identification for both the poet and the reader. The poet shares general rather than merely personal concerns, and his reader, too, achieves a broad sympathy with others. Naturally, this presumes a broadening of the heart and mind. Tragedy "substitutes imaginary sympathy for mere selfishness. It gives us a high and permanent interest beyond ourselves, in humanity as such."20 In his lecture "On Poetry in General" he writes, "One mode in which the dramatic exhibition of passion excites our sympathy without raising our disgust is, that in proportion as it sharpens the edge of calamity and disappointment, it strengthens the desire for good."21 The creative self of the artist must rid itself of insular and obtrusive feeling in order to achieve disinterestedness - a balanced fusion of the inner and the outer.

Imagination is associative in nature according to Hazlitt. Associationism is an important tool in the treatment of art. Rene Wellek points out that "Hazlitt reduces


to associationist vocabulary many notions about the imagination which Wordsworth and Coleridge could have uttered only in their most exalted moods. Hazlitt calls imagination "an associating principles." This is further explained in his remark that "Imagination consists in enriching one idea by another, which has the same feeling or set of associations belonging to it in a higher or more striking degree." The associationist approach appears repeatedly in Hazlitt's treatment of art. He takes associationist aesthetics as the basis of his discussion of literature dealing with non-human subjects, and the reader's response to it. The artist must use familiar image implying familiar associational ideas. Jean Claude Salle has elaborated this aspect in some detail:

The imagination spreads outwards to follow the divergent threads of its object, a tangled network of relations, and yet, like the active principle of the mind, it is ever present to itself. In its outward movement, it feels its way along the inter-connected threads of a complex reality whose tiniest ramifications must

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be known if a 'living' representation is to be produced. At the same time in its centripetal movement in draws everything to particulars of the organizing influence of a single 'self-centred' principle like the spider in the middle of its web, it registers tiny tremors, slight impulses emanating from the periphery, and deduces the meaning of these scattered, though connected impressions ... in this confused mesh of related elements, the associative imagination picks out a definite meaning. 25

Thus the process of imaginative association always transcends the subjective self to achieve objective truth. Feeling as a Romantic centrality functions in Hazlitt's theory of association and establishes his close kinship with Wordsworth, Coleridge, and other poetic theorists of his age. Feeling is central in Hazlitt's theory of association. Hazlitt's essay "On Novelty and Familiarity" reveals how feeling functions: "There is neither truth nor beauty without nature. Habit may repeat the lesson that is thus

learnt, just as a poet may transcribe a fine passage without being affected by it at the time; but he could not have written it in the first instance without feeling the beauty of the object he was describing or without having been deeply impressed with it in some moment of enthusiasm. It was then that his genius was inspired, his style formed and the foundation of his fame laid.\[26\] Hazlitt views feeling as not only as intensifying agent, but also as an evaluating one, the most impartial adjudicator. He says: "Feeling of all original conceptions."\[27\] This touchstone quality of feelings, as described Hazlitt, is a new dimension of the process and indeed establishes Hazlitt's originality.

Imagination possesses the power to create associated feelings. The ideas generated by particular contexts may be termed formative imagination Hazlitt wrote that "everything in this world, the meanest incident or object, may receive a light and an importance from its association with other objects and with heart of men; and the variety thus created is as endless as it is striking and profound."\[28\] Thus Rousseau's periwinkle,\[29\] and Othello's hankerchief,\[30\]

27. Ibid., p. 298.
29. Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 92.
30. Ibid., Vol. VI, p. 61.
though a prewinkle, or a handkerchief as such does not by itself possess any strong or striking associational values, become powerful instruments of passion and imagination because of their particular contexts.

The formative imagination works as the "superintending faculty conscious power" that unites manifold forms of things in nature of "the same common principle of thought." The faculty becomes selective and formative in this process. But such formative activity runs the risk of being entirely subjective with the objective reality getting muddled in the process unless the mind is free from the influence of personal interest. The objective formative perception is possible when the artist is aware that he has to produce some effect; but the effect is the resultant of some sort of form implied. Hazlitt makes his insistence on the importance of form in art further clear in his comments on the "universal harmony" in Claude's paintings. Hazlitt insists on the importance of form in art but does not advocate the neoclassical concepts of form, or generic distinctiveness or stylistic symmetry. Nor is he propagating a rational form got from the application of rules to abstract ideas. Form for Hazlitt is the artistic

equivalent of the perceiving mind's formative selectivity, which includes not only the artist's aesthetic sense but his moral values as well.

Another characteristic of the imagination is its "intuitive perception of the hidden analogies of things." The intuitive imagination is at its best the most educated and developed means of understanding. There is a general, almost instinctive ability in man to synthesize the experimental data. Hazlitt explains: "In learning, any art or exercise, we are obliged to take lessons, to watch others, to proceed step by step, to attend to the details and means employed, but when we are masters of it, we take all things for granted, and do it without labor and without thought, by a kind of habitual instinct." Mind possesses the ability to make the "strong and urgent, but undefined impressions of things upon us" into an "instinct." Hazlitt notes such fusion in Milton: "The fervour of his imagination melts down and renders malleable, as in a furnace, the most contradictory elements." The "weight of his intellectual obligations" never oppressed the poetry.

34. Ibid., p. 327.
for his "learning has the effect of intuition." The amalgamation by imagination of experiences into "intuition is somewhat similar to associational coalescence." This is hinted in Hazlitt's statement that various impressions in a series can recall any other impression in that series without going through the whole in order. So that the mind drops the intermediate links, and passes on rapidly and by stealth to the most striking effects of pleasure or pain which have naturally taken the strongest hold of it... it (i.e., mind) forms a series of unpremeditated conclusions on almost all subjects that can be brought before it. "36 Hazlitt apprehends imagination as objective and truthful because it is also moulded and activised by experience it uses. Truth thus is arrived at by feeling and imagination and not by ratiocination. 37

Hazlitt elaborates the concept further, and says that the imaginative faculty is futuristic or anticipatory and identify itself with a character or situation. "Unlike the memory and sensation which are directed to the past and present, the imagination is future-oriented and free from

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the intimidations of past and present."  

Hazlitt's assessment of Romeo and Juliet is an application of the futuristic thrust of imagination. He says Shakespeare "has founded the passion of the two lovers not on the pleasures they had experienced, but on all the pleasures, they had not experienced. All that was to come of life was theirs." Hazlitt's conviction that Desire and Imagination are inmates of human breast makes the sympathetic quality and futuristic orientation of the imagination as a source of great moral and aesthetic beauty.

Thus, imagination in its creative process, is sympathetic in its identification (within limits) with characters and situations, associational in its effort to give a (new meaning to natural objects, formative in its ability to give and perceive shape and order, intuitive in its perception of the hidden analogies of things, and is futuristic or anticipatory in its powers.

Let us now examine the three key concepts, in Hazlitt's theory of imagination - genius, gusto and nature. Hazlitt attempts to define and clarify the concept of genius.

40. Ibid., p. 250.
in his essay "On Genius and Originality." Hazlitt opposes Reynolds’s basic assumption of connecting genius with accumulation of knowledge. Genius "is a power of original observation and invention.... A Work demonstrates genius exactly as it contains what is to be found nowhere else." He states elsewhere that "the first impulse of genius is to create what never existed before." Hazlitt almost identifies genius with originality. In "On Genius and Common-sense" he writes "Genius or Originality is, for the most part, some strong quality in nature." A thing "acquires and deserves the appellation of genius" only in so far as it is original, "as it has never been done before." Originality, for Hazlitt, "is any conception of things taken immediately from nature, and neither borrowed from, nor common to others. To deserve this appellation, the copy must be both true and new." The essence of originality is truth, "it is the strongest possible feeling of truth, for it is a secret and distinctive yearning after,

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45. Ibid., p. 127.
and approximation towards it, before it is acknowledged by others, and almost before the mind itself knows what it is."

In a way, originality is a natural and necessary concomitant of genius, "for when that which, in the first instance, conferred the character, is afterwards done by rule and routine, it ceases to be genius." Here Hazlitt is reacting to French neoclassicism. Every work of genius is unique and true, and its truth is immediately recognized and enjoyed. Hazlitt does not agree with the contemporary view of untutored, "natural" genius. Self-projection or release of individual feeling is easy, but "wherever there is true genius, there will be true labour, that is, the exertion of that genius in the field most proper for it."

Genius is not a progressive phenomenon. In his fragment "Why the Arts are not Progressive?" Hazlitt disagrees with the theory that in poetry and painting "relative perfection is only the result of repeated efforts, and that what has been once well done constantly leads to something better."

But "what is mechanical, reducible to rule or capable of demonstration, is progressive and admits of gradual improvement. What is not mechanical or definite but depends on

Genius works unconsciously. Hazlitt writes in "Whether Genius is Conscious of its Power?," "that it acts unconsciously, and those who have produced immortal works, have done so without knowing how or why." The place of genius is "in the definite and unknown." Hazlitt is emphatic that the source of genius is imagination - the "intuitive perception of hidden things" - and it "works unconsciously like nature."

Genius is dependent upon feeling. Because of this dependence upon feeling, genius, the capacity for imaginative envisioning and recreation, is related to gusto. Gusto is the result of imagination, of excitement. Hazlitt uses this term "with more intimate sense of its value ... than those literary men who borrowed it from the schools of painting." Hazlitt writes that "Gusto in art is

power or passion defining any object."56 In other words, it is the maximal and most exhilarating awakening and activation of the feeling. Gusto is integral to the creative act and the emotional reflection arising therefrom. Gusto is the cognitive power of recognizing truth. It is "in giving truth of character from the truth of feeling, whether in the highest or the lowest degree, but always in the highest degree of which the subject is capable, that gusto consists."57 Gusto may therefore, be applied to the enthusiastic state of the artist's mind in which the faculty of imagination through sympathetic excitement, sees and gives expression to "the internal character of any object." It is a strong emotional response generated by an object in nature, involving a flash of intensity in both the artist's conception and effect, thereby enabling him to grasp and express the living object in its full variety. Hazlitt's notion of gusto has ontological and psychological significance in its being related to his theory of poetry as symbol and to his account of the creative functioning of the imagination.58 Hazlitt made gusto the test of art; and it


57. Ibid., p. 77.

was his measure of perfection.

It may be surprising but it has been observed that to no other Romantic, not even to Wordsworth, was nature as important as it was to Hazlitt. That nature to Hazlitt was important to Hazlitt is clear from his insistence on "fidelity to nature." Nature, in the sense Hazlitt uses the term, is identical with reality. "By nature we mean existing nature, or some one object to be found in rerum natura, not an idea of nature existing solely in the mind, got from an infinite number of different objects, but which was never yet embodied in an individual instance." The fact that Hazlitt considers nature superior to art is explicit in the essay "On the Elgin Marbles": "No I cannot toss and tumble about huge heaps of earth as the ocean in its fury can. A volcano is more potent to rend rocks asunder than the most splashing pencil. The conclusions of nature can make a precipice more frightfully, or heave the backs of mountains more proudly, or throw their sides into growing lines more gracefully than all beau ideal of art. For there is in nature not only greater power and scope, but (so to speak) greater knowledge and unity of purpose. Art

59. Elizabeth Schneider, op. cit., p. 143.

is comparatively weak and incongruous, being at once a miniature and caricature of nature." This passage shares the general Wordsworthian vision of nature as a vast, living and evolving process with a "unity of purpose."

Further, it shows Hazlitt's conviction about the superiority of nature over art. "In nature real objects exist, real causes act, which are only supposed to act in art, and it is in the subordination of the uncertain and superficial combinations of fancy to the more stable and powerful law of reality that the perception of art consists." Nature is the soul of art. There is a strength in the imagination that reposes entirely on nature, which nothing else can supply. Hence, as Hazlitt infers, the imitation of nature is the great object of art. Nature for Hazlitt includes everything that exists, both human and non-human. He ordinarily uses the word to designate natural objects without, or in spite of the interference of human power and contrivance. He considers beauty, truth and Nature as identical. To the genuine artist, he contends, "truth, nature, beauty are almost different names for the same

61. Ibid., p. 154.
64. Ibid., p. 70.
thing." Again, "Truth doubles the effect of beauty ... and even reconciles us to deformity" and "there is neither truth nor beauty without nature."

Hazlitt's approach to nature is pluralistic. On the relation of nature and genius he says, nature "has a thousand aspects, and one man can draw only one of them. Whoever does this, is a man of genius. One displays her force, another her refinement, one her power of harmony, another her suddenness of contrast, one her beauty of form, another her splendour of colour. Each does that for which he is best fitted by his particular genius."

Hazlitt's pantheistic view of nature is expressed in a rhapsodic passage: "Great as thou art, unconscious of thy greatness, unwieldly, enormous, preposterous twin birth of matter, rest in thy dark, unfathomed cave of mystery, rocking human pride and weakness. Still it is given to the mind of man to wonder at thee, to confess its ignorance, and to stand in awe of thy stupendous might and majesty, and of its own being, that can question thine."

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68. Ibid., p. 298.
realistic and religious to nature are consciously accepted by Hazlitt in his "Outlines of Taste" stressing that there can certainly be two views of nature.\(^7\)

The theories of imitation and of the ideal are fundamental to Hazlitt's aesthetics. Hazlitt sets imitation above mere mechanical copying and accredits it with a creative role: "Imitation renders an object, displeasing in itself, a source of pleasure, not by repetition of the same idea, but suggesting new ideas, by detecting new properties and endless shades of difference."\(^7\) Basically this idea is drawn from the Renaissance theorists, like Philip Sidney. "Imitation", says Hazlitt, "by exciting curiosity and inviting a comparison between the object and the representation opens a new field of inquiry, and leads the attention to a variety of details and distinctions not perceived before."\(^7\) Imitation is not limited to the notions of imitating external actions, events, objects, etc. The notion is extended to internal happenings, thoughts, emotions, and dreams. For poetry "is an imitation of nature, but the imagination and the passions are a part of

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73. Ibid., p. 73.
man's nature." hazlitt's concept of imitation, includes nature and genius and is an essentially imaginative activity.

just as hazlitt's concept of genius is opposed to reynold's concept of genius his notion of the ideal, too, is in contrast. hazlitt's concept of ideal consists in "extreme expression." the ideal is only the selecting of a particular form which expresses most completely the idea of a given character or quality, of beauty, strength, activity, voluptuousness and which preserves that character with the greatest consistency throughout. the ideal is "filling up the outline of truth or beauty existing in the mind, so as to leave nothing wanting or to desire further." in short, the ideal is a certain predominant quality or character "diffused all over the parts of an object, and carried to the utmost pitch that our acquaintance with visible models, and our conception of imaginary object, will warrant. it is expressing our impressions further, raising them higher than usual, from the actual to the possible." a true ideal can be achieve "by singling out some one thing

74. complete works of william hazlitt, op. cit., vol. v, p. 3.
76. hazlitt discusses the 'ideal' in three essays: (1) "on the ideal" (xviii, 77-84); (2) "the ideal" (xx, 302-6); (3) "on the picturesque and ideal" (viii, 317-21) and frequently elsewhere.
77. complete works of william hazlitt, op. cit., vol. xx, p. 302.
78. complete works of william hazlitt, op. cit., vol. xvi, p. 357.
or leading quality of an object and making it the pervading and regulating principle of all the rest, so as to produce the greatest strength and harmony of effect." Further, the ideal is not merely conceptual but an immediate and entire apprehension of what is finer in nature. Hazlitt aims at a synthesis in the relationship between the real and the ideal. Hazlitt is romantic in his insistence on the individual and the particular as against a fixed and formalized pattern, as also on finding the ideal in extremes.

We are now in a position to consider Hazlitt's theory of poetry in general against the background of his aesthetics discussed in the foregoing passages. His views of poetry are wide and varied enough to accommodate diverse conceptions. Hazlitt contends that he uses the term "poetry" to mean three distinct things: "the composition produced, the state of mind or faculty producing it, and in certain cases, the subject matter proper to call forth that the state of mind." He uses the term "poetry" in idealistic Platonic connotations. Poetry is not something to be found only in books, "but wherever there is a sense of beauty, or power, or harmony, as in the motion of a wave of


the sea, in the growth of a flower... there is poetry in its birth." Even fear, hope, love, hatred, contempt, jealousy, remorse, admiration, wonder, pity, despair or madness are all potentially poetry. Every motion of man is poetry, and hence "we are all poets in as much as we are under the influence of passions and imagination, that is, as we have certain common feelings, and undergo the same process of mind in a particular manner what he and all feel alike." Poetry thus transcends genre and becomes an aesthetic energy. In 1817 Hazlitt wrote in "Coleridge's Literary Life" that "poetry is the music of the mind." Hazlitt not only views the importance of sound in poetry but observes the link connecting the psychological process through "sympathy" with the music of verse. Poetry is "the natural impression of any object or event, by its vividness exciting an involuntary movement of imagination and passion, and producing, by sympathy, a certain modification of the voice or sound expressing it." Hazlitt traces a "near connection between music and deeprooted passion. Mad people sing as often as articulation passes naturally into intonation, there poetry begins." Poetry

86. Ibid., Vol. V, p. 12.
is the imaginative wish-fulfilment. Hazlitt recognizes "a simple and familiar language common to almost all ranks, and intelligible through many ages which is best suited for the direct expression of strong sense and deep passion, and which consequently, is the language of the best poetry as well as of the best prose." But he also admits a little ambiguously of another language peculiar to poetry called "poetic diction" — "those flowers of speech, a glittering tissue of quaint concerts and sparkling metaphors, crusting over the rough stalk of homely thoughts." Such ornamental and coloured style is most proper to descriptive or fanciful poetry. "The pleasure derived from poetic diction is the same as derived from classical diction." Poetic diction varnishes over "the trite and commonplace," and lends "a gorgeous robe to the forms of fancy." It is better to lay aside poetic diction when feelings, or pleasures are dealt with "in their naked beauty or deformity," because poetic diction is only "a glittering veil spread over the forms of things and feelings of the heart."

Hazlitt, however, allowed poetry even "a great number of inversions" than occur in prose and more "epithets and ornaments."


But he agrees with Wordsworth that the language of poetry should evolve naturally from the poet's feeling for his subject and that it should have the power to move the reader, which cannot be achieved if the language is convoluted with the excess of rhetoric and trope. Hazlitt recognizes and justifies the importance of metre in poetry, because it contributes to the rhythm and music of the verse as well as lends it shapeliness. Hazlitt regards the harshness of prose as "fatal to the flow of a poetical imagination." The music of poetry is typical; prose may also have its music of poetry. Hazlitt further elaborates this idea thus: "wherever a movement of imagination or passion is impressed upon the mind by which it seeks to prolong and repeat the emotion, to bring all other subjects into accord with it, and to give the same movement to harmony, sustained and continuous or gradually varied according to the occasion," the language spontaneously aligns itself with the proper musical measure. In this sense poetic metre highlights the unity between "the music of the mind" and "the music of language."

90. Ibid., p. 12.
At the end of this survey of Hazlitt's thoughts on poetry it will be in place to discuss briefly his views on the function of poetry. The true aim of poetry is to provide pleasure. Hazlitt wrote in "On Poetical Versatility" that "the object of poetry is to please." Hazlitt adds that one may even refine oneself through the habitual study of poetry and the works of imagination, or may "imbibe sentiment, with knowledge." But this personal refinement or addition of knowledge in itself is a pleasure.

The above account shows that Hazlitt's theory of poetry is quite comprehensive and fairly cogent. His special examination of genius, nature and gusto is complementary to the theory of imagination and is full of profound insights.


Keats like Hazlitt did not write any formal treatise on literary theorizing. His critical pronouncements are scattered over some of his letters. Even in these letters we do not find specific literary issues systematically discussed and concluded. A particular literary problem is stated, sometimes elaborated in a number of letters. The reader's difficulty lies in collecting these small bits from different places and piece them together in such a way that they provide a cogently argued narrative about a particular point of view. This is why in the following pages we have tried to identify the areas of literary theorizing under different conventional nomenclatures, like the theory of imagination, the theory of impersonality, the theory of the function of poetry, etc. So that it becomes convenient to determine the extent of Hazlitt's influence on Keats in regard to specific issues.

Let us first, look at Keats's views on imagination. Keats's theory of imagination is central to life and literature. He conceives of imagination as the creative faculty engaged in ordering and shaping the apparently
chaotic world and giving it meaning. In Keats's own words "imagination and its empyreal reflection is the same as human life and its spiritual repetition." Keats here is echoing what Wordsworth has said earlier. Imagination collects sensory perceptions from observable reality. These perceptions are stored in mind and allowed to incubate. They later undergo a process of transmutation under the impact of the creative faculty. But this process of transmutation is a repetition at a higher level of the act involved in the reception of the sensory perceptions. Keats here is speaking of primary imagination and poetic imagination which is in line with Hazlitt's views of imagination quoted in detail in the last chapter.

Imagination is prefigurative. It externalizes visions of visualizations as a dream does and "brings to light non-existent things." Therefore imagination is no mirror of the empyrean realm but is inventive. It is related to a higher vision of life. This notion echoes Hazlitt's views of imagination as capable of presenting things with originality or freshness and his preference for the ideal.

2. Ibid., p. 184.
As Hazlitt expressed the view that imagination feigns objects according to nature, Keats also accepts the use of the world of phenomena or the world of reality as the material upon which imagination operates. But he does not rule out the possibility of the use of the world of the probable in the Aristotelean sense. For, Keats even the world of fiction or fantasy sustained by its own logic and internal laws would be suitable material for poetry. Thus, for Keats as for Hazlitt the scope of poetic material is open-ended and this view conforms to that of Aristotle and Sidney. What distinguishes poetry from other discourses is the role of imagination in the former.

Keats does not seem to favour imagination as something irrational or an uncontrolled frenzy as Plato had opined but recognizes the role of reasoning and logic in its operation. Hazlitt had held the same views in his Essay On the Principles of Human Action. Speaking of the complex mind Keats stated: one that is imaginative and at the same time careful of its fruits - who would exist partly on sensation and partly on thought.  

3. Ibid., p. 185.
imagination but something which can put sensory perceptions into meaningful wholes. Besides reason, he recognizes the role of knowledge. Knowledge for Keats is a collection of information from various fields. "An extensive knowledge—takes away the heat and fever: and helps by widening speculation, to ease the Burden of Mystery." Knowledge furnishes imagination with information and helps it to intelligently perceive sensations and logically interpret them. Keats further says:

The difference of high sensations with and without knowledge appears to me this — in the latter case we are falling continually ten thousand fathoms deep and being blown up again without wings and with all (the) horror of a bare shoulders are fledged and we go through the same air and space without fear.

Like Hazlitt Keats affirmed that imagination functions in a sympathetic manner. The faculty of imagination, through a kind of sympathy, can identify itself with whatever comes

4. Ibid., p. 277.
5. Ibid., p. 277.
before it. The greatest power of imagination is 'sympathy', the ability to project oneself completely into any other object, character and situation. Keats says:

A poet is the most un-poetical of anything in existence - he is continually in for-and filling some other body. 6

Keats's view of the necessity of knowledge in the context of imagination has an echo of Hazlitt's concept of the associative nature of the creative faculty. It is needless to elaborate the common-place point of view that without stored information in the mind associations cannot be created out of vacuum. That Imagination is associative, is further hinted at in the following statement.

The simple imaginative Mind may have its rewards in the repetition of its own silent working coming continually on the spirit with a fine suddenness. 7

Imagination links image and idea so as to grasp true mean-

6. Ibid., p. 387.
7. Ibid., p. 185.
ing and reveal the real significance behind the web of images and ideas. This view is drawn from Hazlitt which is as follows:

Real poetry or poetry of the highest order, can only be produced by unveiling the real web of associations, which have been wound round any subject by nature and the unavoidable conditions of humanity.  

The "unavoidable conditions of humanity" refer to the element of universality in poetry because imagination does not produce photo-copy of reality but represents the universal underlying the seeming reality of the human world.

This element of universality is further elaborated in Keats's concept of truth-beauty as the product of poetic imagination. The end product of imagination is presentation of beauty which is truth. Keats expresses it thus:

I am certain of nothing but of the holiness of the Heart's affections and the truth of

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imagination — what the imagination revizes as Beauty must be truth ... for I have the same idea of all over passions as of love: they are all in their sublime, creative of essential beauty. 9

For the dictum, "Beauty must be Truth," Keats owes to Hazlitt. Hazlitt did not categorically state this but believed that great works of art reveal truth because they are unimpaired by time and personal prejudices. Keats is not concerned with philosophical truth as Plato was. For him truth is a vision of life with abiding validity which Wordsworth describes as truth that cannot be withered by clime nor can it be rendered stale by time. 10

Having discussed the nature and function of imagination Keats proceeds to discuss the source of imagination which is passions in their sublimity. When passions are intense/imagination expresses in universal terms truth that which is identical with beauty. This expression of truth-beauty is possible only when incongruities are resolved. In Keats's words:


the excellence of every Art is its intensity, capable of making all disagreeables evaporate from their being in close relationship with Beauty and Truth. 11

From the above it is obvious that the poetic imagination operates only when passional intensity is attained. Here it is relevant to recall Wordsworth's statement which lends support to Keats's concept. Wordsworth has described the silent working of the associative creative mind as:

That serene and blessed mood. In which The affections gently leads us on, until, The breath of this corporeal frame. And Even the notion of our own human blood Almost suspended, we are laid asleep. In body, and become a living soul: While With an eye made quiet by the power of Harmony, and the deep power of joy, we See into the life of things .... 12

Keats's concept of intensity of passion owes to Hazlitt's

concept of gusto developed in the "Round Table" essay. A
great poet must possess an abundance of gusto as the inten­sity of the feeling makes up for the disproportion of
objects and is capable of presenting the object with fide­lity.

Besides intensity of passions, fancy and imagina­tion play role in poetic composition. Keats views "Fancy
as sails, and Imagination as Rudder." He differs from
Coleridge in the sense that he considers fancy as closely
linked to imagination. In other words, Fancy which depends
more on judgement and reason acts as a provider of direction
and a controlling agent for the imagination which may other­wise go wild and be identified with the Platonic frenzy. But
Fancy while in operation, of its own, is a static, mechani­cal faculty about which Coleridge has categorically stated
thus: "Fancy has no counters to play with but fixities and
definities." From the above discussion of Keats's theory
of imagination it is evident that his theory is an echo of
the romantic view of imagination in general and to be more
precise it reminds us of the Hazlitt's postulates.

Both Keats and Hazlitt uphold imagination to be a creative faculty, operating on objects in a state of passionnal intensity. Both agree that imagination functions in a disinterested manner in close affinity with the object, character and situation of imitation, thereby revealing ultimate truth which is identifiable with beauty. Truth-Beauty combination is possible only when all disagreeables are dissolved. So the poetic creation is not mere imitation but has novelty in it. To conclude, we may say that Keats dares to "think" as well as "dream" with imagination.

Closely connected with his theory of imagination is his theory of impersonality or negative capability. While discussing Hazlitt's theory of imaginative sympathy we referred to the seeds of the theory of negative capability. Keats's idea of the "Cameleon poet" and his celebrated idea of "negative capability" show that in true poetry the identity of the poet is obliterated by being invested in a suitable object which arouses the sympathetic imagination of the poet. Keats defined the idea of impersonality as follows:

As to the poetical character itself (I mean that sort of which, if I am anything, I am a
Member; that sort distinguished from the Wordsworthian or egotistical sublime; which is a thing per se and stands alone) it is not itself - it has no self ... It has no character ... A Poet ... has no Identity - he is continually in for and filling some other body.15

The poetical character described by Keats brings out the nature of the poet's personality. From the above it is obvious that the poet has no personality to express. In other words the poet has no self or identity to project into his composition. He continually identifies himself with the object of his depiction. This implies the poet's objectivity, which is to say that he must be capable of identifying himself with any object, situation and character with detachment. This principle explains that the proper balance between the objective and subjective is achieved only when the artist is willing or able to forget himself in his composition. Hazlitt had explained similar ideas in the Edinburgh Review:

the poet appears, for the time, to identify himself with the character he wishes to represent and to pass from one to the other, like the same soul successively animating different bodies.  

It is explicit that Keats has been influenced by Hazlitt in being intensely concerned with the problem of the identity of the poet. The strong similarity between Hazlitt's remarks and what Keats writes here can hardly be accidental. They not only use a similar vocabulary in describing the "poetical character," but they also cite gusto as one of its principles and refer to Shakespeare for illustration. In *The Characters*, which Keats heartily admired, Hazlitt uses Cleopatra in place of Jago and Imogen to illustrate how the great poet is "continually ... filling some other body," for Shakespeare "could go out of himself and express the soul of Cleopatra." Similarly, Keats's idea that "the poetical characters... live in gusto" is an almost direct transmission of Hazlitt definition of gusto as "the internal character... the living principle of beauty."

16. Quoted in Rene Wellek, "A History of Modern Criticism : 1750-1950 (New Haven, 1953), Vol. II, p. 163. Coleridge spoke of: "Imagination as the power of objectifying oneself, the Protean self-transforming power of genius. To become all things and yet remain the same, to make the changeful God be felt in the river, the lion, and the flame—that is true imagination."
Keats's concept of negative capability is the most significant principle of his literary creed. As Professor Bate has pointed out, Keats's idea expresses his conviction:

*Man of achievement in literature must possess the ability to negate or lose his identity in something larger than himself, a sympathetic openness to the concrete reality without, an imaginative identification, a relishing and understanding of it.*

Shortly before he wrote this letter (on negative capability) Keats had been reading Hazlitt's "The Round Table." In this work and in "Table Talks" Hazlitt describes a state of mind which Keats echoes when he expresses his views on negative capability:

*I mean by negative capability, that is, when man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, with any irritable reaching after fact and reason.*

According to Keats the poets possessing negative capability

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Men of Genius and great as ethereal chemicals operating on the Mass of neutral intellect but they have not any individuality, any determined character. 19

Keats's description is almost a summary of the state of mind described by Hazlitt, which deserves to be quoted in some detail:

It is such a life as a pure spirit might be supposed to lead, and such an interest as it might take in the affairs of men, calm, contemplative, passive, distant touched with pity for their sorrows, smiling at their affections, but not troubled by their notice, nor once dreamt of by them. He who lives wisely to himself and to his own heart, looks at the busy world through the loopholes of retreat, and does not want to mingle in the fray. 'He hears the tumult and is still.'

19. Ibid., p. 184.
He is not able to mend it, nor writing to mar it. He sees enough in the universe to interest him without putting himself forward to try what he can do to fix the eyes of the universe upon him. Vain the attempt. He reads the clouds, he looks at the stars, he watches the return of the seasons, the falling leaves of autumn, the perfumed breath of spring, starts with delight at the note of a thrush in a copse near him, sits by the fire, listens to moaning of the wind, peruses upon a book or discourses the freezing hours away, or melts down hours to minutes in pleasing thought. All this while he is taken up with other things, forgetting himself.

This passage demonstrates the noteworthy influence that Hazlitt had on Keats and is significant for understanding Keats's concept of negative capability. For Hazlitt not only reveals the values of the state of mind in negative capability but also incorporates a description of a person in this state beginning with the long sentence "he reads

the clouds, he looks at the stars, he watches the return of the seasons." This is precisely the "life of sensations" that Keats wanted to live. The last phrase "forgetting himself" is a premise to sympathy, the concept which coloured the literary theories of Hazlitt and Keats.

We can now consider Keats' s theory of poetry in general. Keats' s basic attitude to poetry is traceable from his letter to Reynolds of 19 February 1818. Poetry is the production of imagination, and makes the beholder aware of its artistic richness and complexity. Keats' says,

I have an idea that a Man might pass a very pleasant life in this manner - let him on any certain day read a certain Page of full Poesy or distilled and let him wander with it, and muse upon it, and reflect from it, and bring home to it, and prophesy upon it, until it becomes stale but when will it do so? Never when Man has arrived at a certain ripeness in intellect anyone grand and spiritual passage serves him as a starting post towards all "the two and thirty Palaces." How happy is such a "voyage of conception," what a delicious diligent Indolence.' A doze
upon a sofa does not hinder it, and a nap
upon clover, engenders ethereal finger-
paintings—the prattle of a child gives it
wings, and the converse of the middle age
a strain of music conducts "to an old
angle of the Isle," and when the leaves
whisper it "puts a girdle around the earth."²¹

In this letter Keats is telling Reynolds not only how the
poet creates an endlessly evocative texture of words through
metaphors, but also how words take on a world of possible
connotations and, depending upon the precision with which
they are ordered in the poem, may precipitate new and
surprising networks of references. Keats clearly favours
a highly evocative poetry of metaphor. This letter further
spells out the character of "distilled" art. In remembering
the poet's complex journey of fancy, the perceptive reader
appreciates the beauty, diversity and richness of art. He
expressed the following views:

Now it appears to me that almost any Man
may like the spider spin from his own inwards,

his own airy citadel - the points of leaves and twigs on which the spider begins her work are few and she fills the Air with a beautiful circuiting: man should be content with a few points to tip with the fire webb of his soul and weave a tapestry empyrean full of symbols for his spiritual eye, of softness for his spiritual touch, of space for his wandering of distinctness for his luxury. But the Minds of Mortals are so different and bent on such diverse journey that it may at first appear impossible for any common taste and fellowship to exist between two or three under three suppositions. It is however quite the contrary - Minds would leave each other in contrary directions, traverse each other in Numberless points, and at least greet each other at the journey's end.22

The "man spoke of" is evidently the poet, and the "tapestry

"empyrean" is the highly crafted fabric of his poem. It is no plain footmat but a globelin arras, wrought by the complex of imagination and reaching, in its intensity, the empyreal realm of Truth-Beauty.

Keats defined poetry in a letter to John Taylor as follows:

In poetry I have a few Axioms... Poetry should surprise by a fine excess and not by singularity - it should strike the Reader as a working of his own highest thoughts, and appear almost a Remembrance. Its touches of Beauty should never be half way thereby making the reader breathless instead of content: the rise, the progress the setting of imagery should like the sun come natural to him - Shine over him and set soberly although in magnificence leaving him in the luxury of twilight... if Poetry comes not as naturally as the leaves to a tree it had not better come at all. 23

The idea that poetry must be memorable is drawn from Hazlitt. Keats is suggesting in the above passage that a poem is autonomous, complex and highly unified which is an echo of Coleridge's concept of poem as a living organism which acted as a source material for the New Critics. Furthermore the poet in making "a beautiful circuiting" is creating his own world. Every poetic act of creation is a taming of the rough Heraclitean beast, flux or chaos. The merit of each poem resides in the number of perceived relationships in its parts, all of which should contribute functionally to the whole. Keats proposes here an organic theory of literature which found its strongest adherent in Cleanth Brooks. Keats's organic theory of literature conforms basically to Coleridge's idea of beauty as "multeity in unity" for the degree of richness in a poem is proportional to the variety of parts which it holds in unity. Keats aimed at unity in poetry. A poem should not only be highly integrated, part to part, and part to whole, but should exfoliate in a natural and orderly way. In a


letter to James Hessey, Keats stated "that which is creative must create itself." Indeed the unfolding of a poem and its progress lend to its overall order. Keats is affirming what Hazlitt had earlier expressed "the poet does not more than describe what all others think and act." A similar view is expressed by Coleridge when he is speaking of the unity in poem. He says:

> the common end of ... all poems is to convert a series into a whole: to make those events, which in real or imagined history move in a straight line assume to our understanding a circular motion.\(^27\)

Poetry while bringing about unity between parts is assumed to move in a "circular motion" because it has nothing to prove.

Poetry was life for Keats, and each poem an "allegory" of the inner life of imagination suggests to George and Georgiana Keats:

\(^{26}\) The Letter of John Keats, op. cit., p. 374.

A Man's life of any worth is a continual allegory - and very few eyes can see the Mystery of his life - a life like the scriptures figurative ... Lord Byron cuts a figure - but he is not figurative - Shakespeare led a life of Allegory; his works are comments on it. 28

Here Keats is expressing his belief that within the poetry we perceive the dominant life which the poet chooses to record, the life of imagination. That is why he said later.

I find that I cannot exist without poetry - without eternal poetry - half the day will not do the whole of it. 29

Poetry should be natural. It should come spontaneously as leaves to a tree. Here Keats is resonating what Hazlitt had said in The Round Table essay "On Posthumous Fame":

It is indeed, one characteristic mark of

29. Ibid., p. 133.
the highest class of excellence to appear naturally the mind of the author, without consciousness or effort. The work seems like inspiration.\textsuperscript{30}

This idea of Hazlitt is comparable to Keats's remarks on Shakespeare's sonnets, "they seem to be full of fine things said unintentionally."\textsuperscript{31}

Poetry is of the empyrean and the air. Keats uses words as spiritual, ethereal and empyreal to denote the nature of poetry. Poetry transcends the material and the mortal realm and pertains to fantasy or the imagination. Keats seems to draw this concept from Hazlitt, for Hazlitt had uttered similar views in his essay "On Poetic Versatility."

Poetry dwells in a perpetual utopia of its own .... It has the range of the universe; it traverses the empyrean .... Its strength is in its wings, its element the air ... sullied, degraded as we have seen it, we shall not insult over it, but leave it to Time to take out the stains it is a thing immortal as itself.\textsuperscript{32}


31. The Letters of John Keats, op. cit., p. 188.

Ethereal things form the subject matter of poetry for Keats. These ethereal things may be divided under three heads which are as follows:

Things real - things semi-real - and no things - Things real such as existences of sun, moon and stars and passages of Shakespeare. Things semi-real such as love, the clouds and which require a greeting of the spirit to make them exist - and Nothings which are made Great and dignified by an ardent pursuit. 33

Here Keats is speaking of the levels of reality which poetry deals with. This idea reminds us of Aristotle's categorising things, as historical, semi-real and fantastic which constitute the subject matter of poetry. Unlike Keats, Hazlitt did not classify the subject matter of poetry distinctly but their ideas of the content of poetry are similar.

"Poetry should be great and unobtrusive" wrote

Keats to Reynolds. He further added:

a thing which enters one's soul, and does not
startle it or amaze it with itself but with
its subject. 34

Keats here implies that the content and thought of poetry
should be sublime so as to touch the soul and thereby
please the readers. The reader's response must correspond
to the visions and emotions which the poet has created in a
particular frame of mind. Keats is emphasizing here the
poet-reader relationship which was to be later discussed by
I.A. Richards in detail.

The poet must deal with lived felt experiences in
his poetry for we are able to comprehend and feel those
feelings better which the poet himself has imaginatively
undergone. Keats expressed this view while speaking on
the truth of passions in Wordsworth's poetry. He stated:

We find what he says true as far as we have
experienced and we can judge no further but by

34. Ibid., p. 224.
large experiences - for axioms in philosophy are not axioms until they proved upon our pulses: We read fine things but never feel them to the full until we have gone the same steps as the Author.  

Keats is sceptical about the entertaining function of poetry. In his words:

I am sometimes so very sceptical as to think Poetry itself a mere Jack a lantern to amuse whoever may chance to be struck with its brilliance.  

But he disapproves of didactic or instructive function of poetry. He said, "we hate poetry that has palpable design upon us." Keats affirmed the fact that poetry has social function to perform besides proving pleasure. He wrote to Fanny Brawne:

If my health would bear it, I could write a Poem which I have in my head, which would be

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35. Ibid., p. 279.
36. Ibid., p. 242.
37. Ibid., p. 224.
a consolation for people in such a situation as mine. I would show someone in Love as I am, with a person living in such liberty as yo do.\textsuperscript{38}

The poet endeavours to:

add a mite to that mass of beauty which is harvested from these grand materials (the space, the magnitude of mountains and waterfalls) by the finest spirits, and put into ethereal existence for the relish of one's fellows.\textsuperscript{39}

The above are the major critical pronouncements of John Keats. In this chapter wherever the opportunities arose we have mentioned Keats's indebtedness to Hazlitt supported by the Comparative study of Keats's and Hazlitt's critical theories. Keats emerges to be specially drawing on Hazlitt for his theory of imagination, views on the impersonality of the poet or the negative capability and the nature and function of poetry. Professor Bate is right in making the following statement: "Keats's values

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., p. 312.
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., p. 301.
appear as a gifted extension and development of Hazlitt. Professor C.D. Thorpe throws light on this affinity between their views by referring to their personal relationship. He says that Keats's relationship with most of his contemporaries was seasonal but Hazlitt's "fiery laconisms" captured his admiration and won his steady allegiance. The relation between them was one of mutual respect and friendship which became the basis of their intellectual affinity. As a result of this cordial relationship Keats was receptive to Hazlitt's ideas and adhered enthusiastically to them. We cannot overlook Professor Thorpe's opinion as Keats himself opined in a letter to Haydon: there are three things to rejoice in this Age - The Excursion, Your Pictures and Hazlitt's depth of Taste. Hazlitt's criticism was a positive, constructive force in Keats's intellectual growth.

42. The Letters of John Keats, op. cit., p. 203.
CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

The foregoing discussion establishes two things: one that both Hazlitt and Keats belong to the critical tradition of romanticism and secondly that, Keats, a great admirer of Hazlitt, took up the major critical issues discussed and elaborated by Hazlitt, for a much subtler exploration than his friend. The uniqueness of Keats lies in the fact that he does not merely echo Hazlitt but approaches literary issues in his own rights as a critic. This is not to refute what Kenneth Muir has asserted: "almost all Keats's critical opinions originated in Hazlitt's essays."

Professor C.D. Thorpe in his study of the personal relationship between Hazlitt and Keats has revealed that there was "mutual respect and friendship," between them, which naturally led Keats to draw upon Hazlitt's writings. But more than the personal relationship, Keats was himself convinced of the importance of the literary issues treated by Hazlitt.

The positive effects of Hazlitt's criticism are directly revealed in the discussions of several literary issues which Keats included in his letters. Hazlitt's
Characters of Shakespeare's Plays and Lectures On The English Poets were decisive influences in the formation of Keats's artistic creed. Keats himself acknowledged Hazlitt's intellectual powers in the famous reference to "his depth of taste" and in linking the book to "Works of genius."

The important critical letters containing Keats's literary ideas are - "Beauty must be Truth" to Bailey, 22 November 1817; "Negative Capability" to George and Thomas Keats, 21 December 1817; and "Endymion" to John Taylor, 27 February 1818.

Keats followed Hazlitt in regard to the nature and function of Imagination. Keats considers imagination to be the creative faculty which superintends, combines and moulds sensory perceptions in order to recreate. How Imagination functions Keats writes: Imagination is of two types primary imagination and secondary or poetic imagination. Primary imagination is possessed by all normal human beings while secondary imagination is the faculty responsible for poetic creations. Primary imagination combines chaotic sensations into meaningful perceptions while poetic imagination works on sensory perceptions and in a state of passional intensity transmutes these perceptions into new perceptions so that
they appear novel, unfamiliar and aesthetically beautiful. By passional intensity Keats implies the state of emotional excitement when the feelings are so intense as to induce imaginative faculty into activity. Keats distinguishes Imagination from Fancy. He says that Fancy is a mechanical faculty working on "fixities and definites" and does not create rather produces the copy of the original object. He held poetic imagination to be the superior faculty of the two. Imagination works in close cooperation with reasoning and knowledge. Hence imagination is not fanciful or wilful but a reasonable and reliable faculty. It is not only associative but intuitive also. Imagination acting on sensory impressions associates them and reveals reality embodied in them. Keats's "intensity of passion," in fact, is an elaboration of Hazlitt's concept of 'gusto.'

Like Hazlitt, Keats was concerned with the problem of the poet's identity or personality the poet was conceived to be an impersonal creator without identity and who is capable of identifying himself with diverse objects, characters, and situations. This idea is the basis of the theory of Negatively Capability which implies the mental state when the poet composes with detachment in the state of negation of the self. This is amply evidenced by Shakespeare
who could create a Cordelia with as perfect an ease as a Goneril or a Desdamona and an Iago in the same composition. This is possible only when the creator constantly makes his own personality malleable so that he could enter into the personalities of diverse nature without being partial to anyone. Hazlitt's sympathetic imagination in the source of Keats's view in this regard.

Keats's concept that Truth and Beauty are identical also owes to Hazlitt. The combination of truth - beauty is achieved when poetic imagination operates on intense feelings. In this state of passional sublimity the mind is capable of getting rid of incongruities from objects. In other words proportional harmony is realised, which is equivalent to truth and beauty. By truth Keats means authentic truth which is universally acceptable and true to observable reality. Beauty implies harmony among the various parts of the object and contributes to balance, proportion and unity of a poetic artefact. This means that an object in order to be true to reality as well as beautiful must represent universality and be free from personal prejudices or concerns and have organic unity. Thus the concept of Beauty is not related only to the content but also to the form and structure of a poetic composition.
Like Hazlitt Keats believed that poetry should be natural and come spontaneously to the poet without restraint or much effort. Spontaneity or naturalness in poetic composition was the hallmark of romantic criticism which was emphasized by Hazlitt and then by Keats. This concept was a reaction against neo-classical restraint, artificiality and control of imagination by judgement.

Keats favoured a wide framework for the subject matter of poetry which can be things real, semi-real and even non-existent. In things real Keats includes Sun, Moon, Stars and passages of Shakespeare; semi-real things are things such as Love and cloud; and non-existent things are those which are fantastical but are made great and dignified by ardent pursuit. Concerning the language of poetry and its function Hazlitt and Keats were certain that the language of poetry should be natural or familiar, devoid of unnecessary elaborate expressions. A regards the function of poetry both the critics favoured entertainment as well as intellectual enlightenment. They held nature superior to art; it was the soul of poetry. The aim of the poet is to faithfully depict nature but not to become a blind imitator. This means they regarded the poet as the Man of Genius and feelings (sensitive) and hence capable of originality
and innovation.

Thus, John Keats's literary creed and values appear as a gifted extension and development of Hazlitt's. "Keats was basically a poet who used Hazlitt's ideas for critical purposes. Hazlitt's ideas generated philosophical reactions in Keats's mind which in turn produced a vital improvement in the original material which made Keats's views more penetrative, sensitive and persuasively expressed."
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