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**"Periodical Performance": The Editor Figure in Early Nineteenth-Century
Literary Magazines**

Chris Lendrum

Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the PhD degree in English Literature

Department of English
Faculty of Arts
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ABSTRACT

Long considered the literary representatives of the public sphere, British periodicals underwent significant changes throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Improved literacy rates and technological advancements in the production and distribution of print meant that the republic of letters, once a venue for discussions between gentlemen, was now more open to a larger and more diverse audience. This increase in potential readers left periodicals uncertain of the identity of their own readership, forcing them to create discourses that helped to define their readers and form them into distinctive audiences. This thesis examines the role that the editor figure played in the formation of readers for specific periodicals. Its focus is on how, both directly and indirectly, early to mid nineteenth-century literary magazines crafted distinctive figures of the editor through which they managed the pressures attendant on them as publications positioned between the popular, commercial market and the literary sphere. In particular, it examines the different ways that the discursive construction of an editor (an "editor figure") offered readers a personal relationship, which evoked aspects of the eighteenth-century public sphere, as an antidote to the expanding print market. Readers were thus socialized, brought into a relationship with a periodical through the editor figure, who acted as an intermediary between the market and the publication, a friendly face in an otherwise confusing world. The nature of a periodical's society, like the figure of its editor, varied, but the point was to lead readers to consider themselves not simply individual readers but part of a distinctive audience, gathered into a community through the guiding hand or personality of an editorial presence.

Divided into four chapters, the thesis focuses on key sites in periodical culture in which an editor figure, constructed through direct commentary and editorial practices and techniques, defined readerly roles and relations in ways that both harnessed and counteracted the impact of the technological powers of print. Beginning with an analysis of the contrasting figures in John Scott's *London Magazine* and *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, the thesis then moves to the realm of cheap publications in a chapter on Charles Knight's *Penny Magazine* and the Chambers brothers' *Chambers' Edinburgh Magazine*. The thesis then concludes with a look at Leigh Hunt, who activated the rhetoric of intimacy he had established over the course of a long career as an editor when he himself ventured into the sphere of cheap publication with his *London Journal*.

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willing to listen to me talk about work when necessary, but they were also able to remind me of the world beyond nineteenth-century periodicals and their editors. John Van Wees and Joe Halee have always been instrumental to my academic career, and the completion of this project is in part due to their interest and encouragement over the years. My parents, John and Sue Lendrum, who have put up with my obsession with books and writing for years, never once complained about having a son who was *still* in school (that I heard), and while I am grateful for that, I am even more appreciative of their love and support. Finally, although she would have everyone believe that her greatest contribution was in helping edit my project, Allie Forsythe (with the help of Pee Wee and Tabitha) patiently endured computer problems, deadline pressures and my general grumpiness over the years. No matter how difficult Christopher North or Charles Knight may have been, she was always quick with a therapeutic curry and a silly story. Every researcher should be so lucky.

INTRODUCTION

It is utterly impossible to persuade an Editor that he is nobody.

– William Hazlitt, "On Editors" (1827)

In 1826, following years of sliding sales and a change in ownership, the venerable *Monthly Magazine* initiated a new direction with the third volume of its "New Series."¹ A conscious shift away from the *Monthly's* previous emphasis on literary and scientific topics in favour of material that was more political or humorous, the purpose of the change was to give the *Monthly* the energy and wit of new periodicals like *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* and the *London Magazine*. As the *Monthly's* editor admits in the preface to the volume, this change was "not commenced without risk" and may well have "given offence to some...who were our constant and esteemed subscribers."² In light of

¹ The editor of the "New Series" remains unknown. Felix Sper has named Dr George Croly as the *Monthly's* editor until January 1826, with Laman Blanchard serving as subeditor through the 1820s. The *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Biography*, however, suggests that Croly was actually a contributor to *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* through the 1820s and possibly even the editor of the *New Monthly Magazine*, making his involvement with the *Monthly Magazine* unlikely. Even if Croly had been able to balance so many demanding positions (and their vastly different political agendas), the third volume of the *Monthly's* New Series would have been published after the period that Sper identifies as that of Croly's editorship. See Sper, *The Periodical Press of London* (Boston: The F.W. Faxon Company, 1937), 29, and John O. Hayden, *The Romantic Reviewers, 1802-1824* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), 58.

² "Preface to the Third Volume," *The Monthly Magazine*, n.s. (1827), 2. The change in format of the *Monthly* was not recognized with a change of series or numbering, but continued under the "New Series" designation that had been introduced in January of the previous year. It is also worth noting that although periodicals were published on a weekly, monthly or even quarterly basis, after a set number of issues (usually 6 months or one year's worth of numbers) they were collected into a single publication. These volumes, which were sold to collectors (often with the purchaser's choice of binding and cover), would generally include a preface from the editor that reflected on the publication's past year. Thus,

this possibility, he appeals to such readers "to look at us again," promising that those who do will find "more, a great deal, in the Magazine than they even used to find before" (4). Should those readers be determined to leave the *Monthly*, however, the editor assures them that they will be sorely missed, not just as paying customers, but as "good friends." Thus when he asks former subscribers to "look at us again," the *Monthly's* editor is not appealing to them as consumers or faceless members of a vast audience but as individuals and close acquaintances who share a relationship with the magazine that is personal rather than commercial.

The *Monthly* editor's rhetoric of personal connection, characteristic of much Romantic-era magazine writing, serves to underline the role of the crucial, but often obscured, figure of the editor in negotiating the tension between satisfying the demands of the market and maintaining a personal connection with readers that was experienced by early nineteenth-century periodicals. Faced with an increasingly crowded market for periodicals, these magazines were forced to establish distinctive brands in order to succeed, and their editors were largely responsible for branding their respective publications, notably through prefaces, prospectuses and other paratextual elements. By explaining decisions or providing commentary on the contents of a particular issue, editors could draw readers into the specific culture of a publication. While such branding gave a periodical a distinctive character in the market, a reading audience, as the *Monthly* preface makes clear, was comprised of individuals. These readers, accustomed to the personal connection of the eighteenth-century public sphere, not only had to be shown how a periodical was distinctive from others on the market, but also had to be attracted to

while the preface in question appeared in 1827, it was attached to material that was first published in 1826.

that same publication as "good friends." By linking these two goals, the *Monthly's* editor was inviting the individual reader into a relationship with the periodical that transcended commercial exchange while still remaining rooted in the magazine's market identity. This formulation encouraged readers to consider themselves as friends and loyal customers, able to enjoy the friendship of the editor and the pleasures of his periodical for the purchase price of each issue. The rhetoric of the editor figure therefore allowed a periodical to maintain both a personal and commercial connection with its readers, addressing them as individuals even while seeking to expand readership.

The motivation for these efforts lay in the frequently discussed explosion of print that took place in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries which, as William St. Clair has observed, led to an "astonishingly rapid growth of periodical publications, journals and newspapers."³ By 1826 and the shift in the *Monthly Magazine's* focus, periodicals occupied an established spot in the British print market, with critical quarterlies such as the *Edinburgh Review* and the *Quarterly Review* enjoying sales of roughly 12,000 or 13,000 at the height of their powers. Meanwhile, moderately successful monthlies like *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* and *The New Monthly Magazine* had monthly circulations that fell between 4,000 to 8,000, and Leigh Hunt's weekly *Examiner* had a circulation of 7,000 at its peak in 1812.⁴ While these numbers are

³ William St. Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 14.

⁴ See R.D. Altick, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public 1800-1900* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 391-96; Greg Kucich and Jeffrey N. Cox, introduction to *Periodical Essays, 1805-14*, eds. Greg Kucich and Jeffrey N. Cox, vol. 1 of *The Selected Writings of Leigh Hunt*, eds. Robert Morrison and Michael Eberle-Sinatra (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2003), xxxvi; and St. Clair, *Reading Nation*, 572-77. My analysis concentrates on what were known as "literary" periodicals, publications that offered discussions of politics, current events or other news alongside reviews and criticism of literary works. It does not deal with either newspapers or more radical periodicals, whose circulation was often much higher. By 1837 (a year following the first

only slightly higher than those of their eighteenth-century counterparts – Addison's *Spectator*, for instance, had a circulation of 3,000, and the *Gentleman's Magazine* had mid-century sales of 10,000 – the number of readers tells only a portion of the tale (St. Clair 572). Fueled by a rapidly growing population and increasing literacy rates, the expanding "reading public" may have clamoured for new publications to read, but not all new readers immediately became purchasers of printed materials. At 6s for the large quarterlies or 2s. 6d for the monthlies, literary periodicals were costly, leaving the majority destined, as Altick put it, "for the drawing-rooms in town and country, and for the subscription reading-rooms."⁵ Nonetheless, the increased ability of the populace to read (if they so desired) coupled with technological advancements such as stereotyping, the Fourdrinier paper-maker and the Stanhope press, meant that the availability of publications, especially periodicals, had never been greater (Altick 392-3). Public reading rooms and coffeehouses ensured that the latest publications could be rented and read in relative comfort for a reasonable price, allowing a single publication to reach an audience much larger than its sales would suggest. Charles Knight, for instance, estimated that while his *Penny Magazine* had sales of 200,000, its readership was closer to a million, all of whom were "anxiously desirous to obtain knowledge in a condensed, and, in most

reduction of the stamp tax), for example, Charles Knight estimated that stamps issued for newspapers in the United Kingdom had surpassed forty-five million; see "Printing in the Fifteenth and in the Nineteenth Centuries," *The Penny Magazine* 6 (December 31, 1837), 507. Similarly, radical publications like William Cobbett's *Political Register*, which sold anywhere from 50,000 to 70,000 copies prior to the Six Acts of 1819, enjoyed much larger sales than their licensed (and therefore more expensive) monthly brethren; see St. Clair, *Reading Nation*, 574.

⁵ Altick, *English Common Reader*, 319. Lee Erickson has suggested that the profitability of a periodical, even a particularly successful one, was far from a sure thing: he estimates that in order to turn a profit, Archibald Constable needed to sell 4,700 copies of the *Edinburgh*, while John Murray, the publisher of the *Quarterly*, did not recover his costs until 1811, over two years after the periodical's initial publication. That said, it is reasonable to assume that the practice of puffing and advertising one's own publications made periodicals beneficial in other ways; see Erickson, *The Economy of Literary Form: English Literature and the Industrialization of Printing, 1800-1850* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 78.

cases, systematic form."⁶ Other, more expensive publications likely saw an even greater ratio of readers to purchasers. As a correspondent in an 1821 article in the *Monthly Magazine* relates, "magazine societies" of ten or twelve members would each contribute their share of a set of monthly publications.⁷ No matter the exact number of readers, however, the result was a vast body of largely unknown readers, eagerly awaiting the latest newspaper, magazine, or review.

The implications of the relationship between the periodical press and its growing audience has become the subject of increasing study over the past twenty years following Jon Klancher's pioneering *The Making of English Reading Audiences, 1790-1832*, which focused attention on the importance of Romantic periodicals as a cultural force. His argument that periodicals "provide perhaps the clearest framework for distinguishing the emerging publics of the nineteenth century" has been central to the investigation of the part that periodicals played in forming, directing and controlling the reading public.⁸ Klancher's contention that individual periodicals constructed "publics" has prompted critical interest in the strategic positioning of publications at all levels of the literary sphere, from the middle-class magazine to more radical publications. Kevin Gilmartin, for example, has examined the implications of the rhetorical strategies of radical periodicals like *The Black Dwarf* and William Cobbett's various publications, which grounded themselves in a trope of opposition.⁹ Shifting to another area of periodical publication, Mark Parker has taken monthly literary publications as his focus in *Literary*

⁶ "Reading for All," *Penny Magazine* 1 (March 31, 1832), 1.

⁷ "Facts Relative to the State of Reading Societies and Literary Institutions in the United Kingdom," *Monthly Magazine* 51 (June 1821), 397-8.

⁸ Jon Klancher, *The Making of English Reading Audiences, 1790-1832* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 4.

⁹ Kevin Gilmartin, *Print Politics: The Press and Radical Opposition in Early Nineteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

Magazines and British Romanticism, arguing for their dialogic nature in order to emphasize a more collaborative model of periodical publication.¹⁰ For both, however, the periodical press is equally a dynamic arena in which, as Mark Schoenfield has recently remarked, public opinion was forged "by marshalling clashing and allied voices across different discourses."¹¹

Periodicals were thus central to the creation of what Paul Magnuson has termed "public discourse," the more fractious and extended realm of the nineteenth century he distinguishes from the more homogenous "public sphere" of the eighteenth century.¹² This recognition has meant a heightened interest in the role of periodicals in shaping literary culture, as evidenced by studies such as David Higgins's book on the relationship between literary magazines and the construction of literary "genius" or Lucy Newlyn's influential account of the anxieties evoked in poets by the expansion of the press and its readers.¹³ My thesis takes its place as part of this ongoing critical inquiry into the questions of reading and audience raised by the periodical press, but it redirects attention away from individual contributors and the periodical as a whole (the subjects of most studies) to the figure of the editor within the periodical. This figure – a discursive construct – remains largely overlooked. It is true that prominent editors like Francis Jeffrey of the *Edinburgh Review* and Leigh Hunt (particularly in his role as editor of the

¹⁰ Mark Parker, *Literary Magazines and British Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

¹¹ Mark Schoenfield, *British Periodicals and Romantic Identity: The "Literary Lower Empire"* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), 1.

¹² Paul Magnuson, *Reading Public Romanticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

¹³ David Higgins, *Romantic Genius and the Literary Magazine: Biography, Celebrity, Politics* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005); and Lucy Newlyn, *Reading, Writing and Romanticism: The Anxiety of Reception* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). Also see Stephen C. Behrendt, ed., *Romanticism, Radicalism, and the Press* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997); David Finkelstein, ed., *Print Culture and the Blackwood Tradition, 1805-1930* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006); and Kim Wheatley, ed., *Romantic Periodicals and Print Culture* (Portland: Frank Cass, 2003).

Examiner) have received attention, but my interest lies less in the actual activities of editors than in how they represented their task to their readers.¹⁴ In emphasizing the figure of the editor, I follow Robert L. Patten and David Finkelstein in their view that editorial "office tasks" of selecting and ordering the contents of a publication were determined by "the way in which editors set out to shape their periodicals for the marketplace."¹⁵ Where they consider the concrete changes editors made to their publications, however, I want to examine the rhetoric employed by editors to establish a relationship between themselves, their publication and their reading audience. This discursive relationship, I will argue, was central to the efforts of periodicals to expand their readership and establish themselves in the market.

While the reading public was rapidly gaining increasing numbers of readers, the process of forming an audience and identity for a magazine was more complex than simply directly addressing those potential readers. Expansion of the reading public, the "Enlightenment dream of improvement" (as Paul Keen puts it), had resulted in conflicting pressures, as efforts to extend the benefits of reading and the public sphere to those who had never previously enjoyed them clashed with the desire to maintain the cohesiveness and prestige of the republic of letters.¹⁶ Periodicals, which had typically been considered

¹⁴ On Jeffrey and the *Edinburgh Review*, see William Christie, *The Edinburgh Review in the Literary Culture of Romantic Britain: Mammoth and Megalonyx* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2009); Biancamaria Fontana, *Rethinking the Politics of Commercial Society: The Edinburgh Review, 1802-1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); and James A. Greig, *Francis Jeffrey of the Edinburgh Review* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1948). On Hunt, see Edmund Blunden, *Leigh Hunt's "Examiner" Examined* (London: Cobden-Sanderson, 1928); Michael Eberle-Sinatra, ed., *Leigh Hunt and the London Literary Scene: A Reception History of his Major Works, 1805-1820* (New York and London: Routledge, 2005); and James Thompson, *Leigh Hunt* (Boston: Twayne, 1977).

¹⁵ Robert L. Patten and David Finkelstein, "Editing *Blackwood's*; or, What do Editors Do?" in *Print Culture and the Blackwood Tradition, 1805-1930*, ed. David Finkelstein (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 146-83.

¹⁶ Paul Keen, *The Crisis in Literature in the 1790s: Print Culture and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 137.

the literary representative of that public sphere (a coffeehouse in print, if you will) continued to offer inclusion in the dialogue that ideally characterized that sphere, even as the actual public was fragmenting beyond all recognition. At the same time, readers (particularly new entrants into the culture of literacy) actively sought the sense of intimacy and inclusion offered by an ideal public sphere.¹⁷ It was commercially in the best interest of periodicals to appeal to those consumers, but many publications and writers expressed concern over what Lucy Newlyn has called their new "dependency on unknown readers, whose numerical power and anonymity were felt to be threatening."¹⁸ Inclined to "devour [every publication] good, bad, and indifferent, which came in their way," these readers represented a thoughtless, unrestrained model of literary consumption that threatened to overwhelm the values of the public sphere.¹⁹ Any magazine that sought to represent the republic of letters had to avoid openly courting popularity and increased sales lest such a stance destroy its brand and undermine the very prestige and intimacy that it sought to offer. Publishing a periodical, as the rhetoric of the preface to the new series of the *Monthly Magazine* suggests, thus meant more than targeting a stable, well-defined group of readers or simply attracting new ones; readers had to be enticed to

¹⁷ The classic account of the public sphere is Jurgen Habermas's influential *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991) and Habermas's clarification of that text, "Further Reflections on the Public Sphere," in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge Mass: MIT Press, 1992), 421-61. Habermas's theories of the public sphere have also been the subject of numerous critiques and commentary, many of which suggest alternate, often overlapping counter-publics that represent the interests of other social groups. See Craig Calhoun, ed., *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992); Terry Eagleton, *The Function of Criticism: From The Spectator to Post-Structuralism* (London: Verso, 1984); Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, *Public Sphere and Experience: Toward an Analysis of the Bourgeois and Proletarian Sphere*, trans. Peter Labanyi, Jamie Owen Daniel, and Assenka Oksiloff (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); and Bruce Robbins, ed., *The Phantom Public Sphere* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

¹⁸ Lucy Newlyn, *Reading, Writing and Romanticism*, 8.

¹⁹ "The Progress of Social Disorganization: No. 1 -- The Schoolmaster," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 35 (February 1834), 229.

purchase a periodical, but they also had to be socialized by it, introduced to the existing values of the magazine and its place in the republic of letters. This tricky discursive task, which required navigating a path between popularity and exclusivity, between appeasing existing audiences and forming new ones, increasingly came to define the thorny responsibility of an editor figure.

(i)

The visibility and importance of the periodical editor in the early nineteenth-century periodical trade were dramatically underscored when, on a foggy February evening in 1821, John Scott, the editor of the *London Magazine*, and James Christie, a London attorney, engaged in a duel on Chalk Farm just outside of London.²⁰ Christie was not Scott's desired opponent. Having written and published a series of scathing criticisms of *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* in his magazine, Scott had been trading letters and public statements with John Gibson Lockhart, whom Scott had accused of being the editor responsible for the "adopted system of calumny" and false representation with which he charged the Scottish magazine.²¹ Lockhart, preserving the mystery surrounding the identity of the editor of *Blackwood's*, denied the charge. Weeks of wrangling over the

²⁰ A number of scholars have dealt with this duel, either in passing or in some depth. The most complete examination is that of Leonidas M. Jones in "The Scott-Christie Duel," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 12.4 (Winter 1971), 605-629, but earlier studies of note include: Andrew Lang, *The Life and Letters of John Gibson Lockhart*, 2 vols (London: JC Nimmo, 1897), and Jacob Zeitlin, "The Editor of the *London Magazine*," *Journal of English and German Philology* 20 (1921), 328-54. More recently, the duel has been re-examined by Mark Parker and Peter Murphy; see Parker, *Literary Magazines*, 20-27, and Peter T. Murphy, "Impersonation and Authorship in Romantic Britain," *ELH* 59 (1992), 625-41.

²¹ "Blackwood's Magazine," *The London Magazine* 2 (November 1820), 513.

finer points of honour and which one of the men was required to "call" upon the other settled nothing. It was only after Christie, an acquaintance of Lockhart, published a pamphlet which Scott found too offensive to ignore that the duel was arranged. What followed was a tragic succession of errors: a first round of shots was exchanged, with Christie firing wide in order to avoid wounding Scott, but because of poor communication between the two seconds, another round of shots followed. Fearing for his safety, Christie aimed for Scott and fatally wounded him. Scott's death was widely lamented: tributes poured in from figures such as Byron, Henry Crabb Robinson and Hazlitt, while a fund established for the maintenance of his wife and children briefly became a minor *cause célèbre* in London.²²

However the duel may be understood – and it has received a variety of interpretations – it reveals the centrality of the figure of the periodical editor in early nineteenth-century magazines. More than mere figureheads or witty personalities, editors were inextricably linked to every facet of their periodical. When (after a relatively friendly early rivalry between the *London* and *Blackwood's*) John Scott published his initial attack on *Blackwood's*, he made it clear that the Edinburgh journal represented "the most foul and livid spot, indicative of an accursed taint in the literature of the day" only because its editors allowed it to do so.²³ An editor, according to Scott, "does not hold himself responsible for the soundness of all the opinions that may appear in the work under his management, if it be of so open and miscellaneous a nature as a magazine," but his publication nonetheless must "be cemented by coincidence of sentiment on all higher public questions, directly affecting personal reputation and principle" (512-3). As a

²² Jones, "The Scott-Christie Duel," 628.

²³ "Blackwood's Magazine," *London Magazine* 2 (November 1820), 510.

miscellaneous form, a magazine allowed for diversity of local views, but the periodical nonetheless was "cemented" by its editor when it came to larger "questions" that represented the publication as a whole.

Editors, however, are not easy to define, not least because actual editors were often obscured behind editorial personae. This was a venerable tradition, going back to the eighteenth century with Isaac Bickerstaff and similar figures. Closer to the Romantic era (and still active throughout it) was Sylvanus Urban, the fictional editor of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, whose name was synonymous with his magazine. He is celebrated, for example, by a rapturous poet in a poem prefacing the periodical's sixth volume for producing a work that will "raise the drooping Muse's aim,/And bid the World revere the *British* name."²⁴ For his part, Urban modestly explained his efforts as the result of perseverance and integrity: "All the Merit we at first pretended to, and all the Share of Applause we now claim, is from a diligent and impartial endeavour to exhibit a well chosen variety of subjects...what we promised, we have performed."²⁵ He had promised a "medium, thro' which men of learning and genius correspond with each other," but this correspondence was possible only because of Sylvanus Urban's mediation.²⁶ He was the focal point of the magazine, most obviously in the letters published in the magazine, which were routinely addressed to "Mr. Urban." Whether this form of address was part of the original letter or added after the fact does not much matter; the salutation creates the illusion that correspondents were addressing themselves first to Urban and then to the rest of the audience. His prominence constantly reminded

²⁴ "To the Candid Readers of this Work, now (Decem. 31, 1736) arriv'd to Six Volumes," *The Gentleman's Magazine* 6 (1736). Original emphasis.

²⁵ "Preface," *Gentleman's Magazine* 11 (1741).

²⁶ "Preface to Vol. XXIII," *Gentleman's Magazine* 23 (1753).

readers that the *Gentleman's*, despite containing a significant body of contributions, was possible only because of Urban's efforts as an editor and mediator.

Behind the persona of Urban was the real editor of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, a role first performed by Edward Cave, but few records exist detailing the duties of Cave or his successors. Indeed, determining what any periodical editor actually did is difficult. As Robert L. Patten and David Finkelstein note, editors performed a wide range of tasks, from overseeing finances to arranging copy.²⁷ Furthermore, not every editor performed all those tasks, or did so in the same manner. John Taylor, for instance, the first full-time editor of the *London Magazine* following John Scott's death, did not write the "Lion's Head" preface that opened each issue; this task was performed by his sub-editor, Thomas Hood. When William Chambers founded the *Chambers' Edinburgh Magazine* (to cite another example), he did so on his own, but he was soon joined by his brother Robert, first as a contributor and then as a co-editor. It is unclear how, or even if, the division of editorial duties changed following Robert's promotion. Situations of conflict between an editor and publisher can often help to reveal what duties a specific editor was expected to perform; however, with the notable exception of the disagreement between William Blackwood and his *Edinburgh Monthly Magazine* editors, James Cleghorn and Thomas Pringle, such disputes seem to have been less common in the Romantic era than they were in the broader, more complex sphere of Victorian periodical publication.²⁸ Finally,

²⁷ Patten and Finkelstein, "Editing *Blackwood's*," 152.

²⁸ A number of critics have provided analyses of the later conflicts between editors and the publishers. See George Boyce, James Curran and Pauline Wingate, eds., *Newspaper History: from the 17th Century to the Present Day* (London: Constable, 1978); F. David Roberts, "Who ran the *London Globe* in the 1830s, 1840s, and 1850s," *Victorian Periodical Newsletter* 13 (June 1971), 6-11; and Joanne Shattock, "Problems of Parentage: the *North British Review* and the Free Church of Scotland," in *The Victorian Periodical Press: Samplings and Soundings*, eds. Joanne Shattock and Michael Wolff (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 145-166.

the tendency of editors to use *eidolons* like Sylvanus Urban or Christopher North muddies the editorial waters. Debate continues, for instance, as to whether the real editor of *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* was, as most scholars suggest, a combination of John Wilson and Lockhart or if they were, in turn, simply used by the publisher, William Blackwood, to obscure his own involvement.²⁹

What we do find in periodicals is editorial self-representation, and it is this that typically forms the basis for what readers come to understand as the work performed by the editor of a particular publication. This editor figure is a discursive construct, a textual set of signs that, like Michel Foucault's "author-function," serves to structure the reading experience, but that process became increasingly complicated as the print market expanded.³⁰ When Sylvanus Urban defined his periodical as a "medium, thro' which men of learning and genius correspond with each other," he implied that he knew his audience was comprised of the sort of readers who would frequent coffee-houses and clubs, and that he himself understood what translating that culture into print would require. Urban, however, is also displaying his implied readership for other readers to see. His representation was as much an expression of who should be reading his publication as of his actual readership, an encouragement to those who wished to associate with "men of learning and genius." Such depictions of a mutual taste across the reading audience suggest an intimate connection between an individual reader, the larger audience and the publication itself, a sense of shared experience that unites all parties into what Benedict

²⁹ See Robert Morrison's "William Blackwood and the Dynamics of Success," in *Print Culture and the Blackwood Tradition, 1805-1930*, ed. David Finkelstein (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 25-27; Parker, *Literary Magazines*, 199; and Alan Lang Strout, *A Bibliography of Articles in Blackwood's Magazine* (Lubbock: Texas Technological College, 1959). I elaborate on this point in Chapter Two.

³⁰ Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?" in *Textual Strategies: Perspective in Post-Structuralist Criticism*, ed. Josué V. Harari (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), 141-160.

Anderson (speaking of nations) calls an "imagined community."³¹ Determining who precisely shared this community, however, became increasingly problematic as the number of potential readers increased. The coherence of readerly communities was more readily assumed in the eighteenth century, when the body of potential readers was smaller and more homogenous. Sylvanus Urban, confident in the identity of his audience, did not have to distinguish his readers from others. With a relatively small body of periodical purchasers from which to draw his audience, he could safely address himself to his select group of gentlemen readers. This is not to say that in doing so, he was not distinguishing his periodical and his audience from others, only that he could do so along the relatively simple lines of political party or class. As a result, his portrayal of the *Gentleman's* audience was untroubled by the spectre of a body of unknown readers.

By the end of the century that had changed. The idea of a united, discriminating public had begun to unravel, and the republic of letters had begun to show signs of disintegration. In 1783, the *London Magazine*, which only twelve years earlier had praised the constancy and taste of the public, now railed against it, announcing that "the taste of the Public...[is] more caprice than...Judgment, and...the reputation of men is seldom of long duration."³² Rather than addressing a united audience, the *London* found itself faced with two groups of readers: one group was comprised of educated "friends of literature," which supported the magazine; another group was perceived as mercurial and easily distracted, a precursor to the larger and potentially untrustworthy audience of the Romantic period. For the editor of the *London*, however, the fault lay with his magazine:

³¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised Edition (London and New York: Verso, 2002).

³² "To the Public," *London Magazine, Enlarged and Improved* (July 1783), 1.

it had somehow managed to divide the public with its weak content, driving readers into separate groups. If the *London* could prove itself "worthy of public attention" once again, the breach could be healed (2). When *The Bee*, an Edinburgh weekly published in the early part of the 1790s, announced its intention to "open a ready intercourse" between its readers, it directed itself at a new audience, one that had grown larger and more varied than Urban's collection of gentlemen. "[The editor] has...observed," the prospectus announces, "that among those who are engaged in the arts, agriculture, manufactures and commerce, there are many individuals of great ingenuity and conspicuous talents....but that these men [are] in a great measure excluded from the circle of literary intelligence."³³ The public embraced by this publication (like the one lost by the *London*) was no longer something to be taken for granted. Its tastes and members were mysterious, ebbing and flowing according to unknown whims and desires, leaving editors to address those readers with much less confidence and security than before.

Jon Klancher has argued that with the increase in potential readers from a variety of classes, late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century periodicals were forced to create "interpretative and ideological frameworks of audiences" through which they could form audiences of their own.³⁴ Readers were encouraged in the discourse of their own periodical to recognize the presence of competing audiences and groups, and in doing so, to become aware both of their own membership in a particular audience and of its cultural and social position in what Klancher calls "the social text." Intimacy had to be created, fostered by indicating the shared values and experiences of a particular body of readers, but only after first revealing how they differed from others. Older cultural forms,

³³ "Prospectus," *The Bee, or Literary Weekly Intelligencer* 1 (1791), vii.

³⁴ Klancher, *English Reading Audiences*, 3.

however, were not immediately discarded. The *Bee*, for example, according to Klancher, offered entry into "the circle of literary intelligence" for new readers who had never enjoyed that privilege before, offering the public sphere as a commodity for purchase even as it fragmented with the addition of new readers (25). Paul Keen has argued that it is the very act of inviting new readers into the reading public that paradoxically hastens its fragmentation and in this sense, James Anderson, the *Bee's* editor, was certainly participating in that process by stretching the definition of "public" beyond that used by earlier eighteenth-century periodicals.³⁵

What Anderson's nostalgic fictions about a unified public also suggest, however, is a shift in the manner in which audiences were defined within the publications that they read. Klancher considers Anderson's misguided promotion of an image of the public sphere as a response to the problem of fragmentation, a nostalgic attempt to return to a time when readers were "waiting to be discovered and acculturated," but there is more to the editorial discourse of the *Bee* than that (38). If audiences had grown so large and varied that they were no longer able to connect on an ideological level as a single reading body, this also meant (as Anderson recognized) that an affective connection was needed, something that united them on a more personal level. It is, after all, difficult to feel close to your fellow reader when you are unsure who he is, let alone what he believes. The *Bee's* editor attempted to create that connection and represent what it meant to be a part of a periodical's audience and community through the trope of the public sphere in order to establish a society that the audience would otherwise lack. Invoking the public sphere promotes the *Bee* as a social setting, a forum for discussion where an individual could,

³⁵ Keen, *Crisis of Literature*, 137.

through the medium of print, "communicate his thoughts to the public."³⁶ A holdover from earlier periodicals, this portrayal of readers as contributors was part of what James Anderson called "periodical performance," the activity of creating a public through the distinctive characteristics of the periodical form. Like its namesake insect, whose activities benefit all members of the hive, the *Bee* argued that it busily promoted the spread of intelligence and experience amongst its own hive: its reading public. Its vision was familiar and domestic: "A man, after the fatigues of the day are over, may thus sit down in his elbow chair, and, together with his wife and family, may be introduced, as it were, into a spacious coffee-house, which is frequented by men of all nations....the dead are even called back to their friends, and mix once more in social converse with those who have regretted their departure."³⁷ The "performance" of the periodical, therefore, was not in its format nor in the roles of its participants but in the publication itself. The *Bee* performed the sociability and shared knowledge that evoked the public sphere, but its intimacy was generated by the editor, whose discourse welcomed readers, situating them within the publication's audience and specific culture. The language it used may be conventional and outdated (although, I would argue, still potent), but the *Bee's* editor is clearly taking an important step towards forming an audience unified not by class or education but by its tie to the periodical.

Kevin Gilmartin has rightly suggested that the image of the bourgeois public sphere retained some power even after its demise, but at the same time, the increasing separation between readers in the early decades of the nineteenth century was becoming

³⁶ "To the Editor of the *Bee*," *Bee* 1 (January 19, 1791), 166.

³⁷ "On the Advantages of Periodical Performances," *Bee* (December 22, 1790), 14.

too pronounced to ignore.³⁸ Periodicals no longer presented themselves as media through which readerly dialogue could occur; instead, they were miscellanies like the *Monthly Magazine*, promising entertainment through skirmishes between witty, predominantly professional writers and their competitors. The readerly desire for intimacy persisted, but now it was addressed in a different way. Rather than engaging in a dialogue mediated by the editor, as in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, readers were encouraged to see themselves as being in dialogue *with* the editor. When the *Monthly's* editor addressed his new readers in the preface to his reformed periodical, he was quick to acknowledge that the body of his readers contained numerous conflicting tastes. What united them, despite those differing desires, was their connection to the periodical and its editor. They were his "good friends" and thus, by extension, friends to every other reader who was also connected to the editor. Outside the text, they were simply readers, anonymous members of the reading public; through the periodical and the strong, personal rhetoric of the editor figure, however, they were socialized, becoming familiar acquaintances and valuable participants in a larger community, one that offered the intimacy and connection between individuals that the print market no longer could. When the editorial persona of an early nineteenth-century periodical invokes his audience, therefore, it is more than an empty rhetorical gesture: his representation of himself, his work and the way in which those duties affect readers all play a role in creating the audience that he describes. The editor, in a sense, enacts his audience.

This is not to say that all editors appealed to their readers as friends and comrades. Editorial discourse was as diverse as the periodicals themselves. Some editors, like the

³⁸ Gilmartin, *Print Politics*, 1-10.

editor of the *Monthly* or Leigh Hunt, offered friendship and intimacy. Others, however, like Christopher North, often treated readers with some suspicion and disdain. Nor is there any doubt that the *bonhomie* displayed by editors like Edward Bulwer-Lytton – who promised "a more liberal intercourse with the public" to ensure that his *New Monthly Magazine* "represents the intelligent Spirits of the time" – was inspired in part by the taste for familiar essays and other personal literary forms during the Romantic period.³⁹ Indeed, it is striking, as David G. Stewart notes, that periodical writers "suggested an increasing intimacy with their readers at precisely the historical moment when they could no longer be certain who those readers were."⁴⁰ But whatever its particular tone or approach, editor discourse acted aggressively to define readership and to situate its readers in relation to both the publication and the rest of the reading public. In general, the editor figure elided the commercial aspects of the print market, foregrounding a rhetoric of friendship as it attempted to locate the reader in an expanding audience of friends, not simply consumers. "Periodical performance," once the product of readers assisting in the production of the very periodical that they read, had become almost exclusively the performance of the editor.

³⁹ "A Word or Two with the Public," *New Monthly Magazine*, n.s. (January 1831), i.

⁴⁰ David G. Stewart, "Charles Lamb's 'Distant Correspondents': Speech, Writing and Readers in Regency Magazine Writing," *Keats-Shelley Journal* 57 (2008), 98.

(ii)

My thesis will pursue this argument by looking at literary magazines published between 1790 and 1850. While they did not have circulations as large as those enjoyed by newspapers, literary magazines offer the opportunity to examine how periodicals altered the representation of the bourgeois public sphere in a period when the relationship between readers and commercial print culture was undergoing dramatic changes. Other types of periodicals, such as radical publications, also promoted public dialogue, but they were interested in establishing themselves as an alternative public. By contrast, literary magazines explicitly maintained a tie, no matter how tenuous, to the familiar eighteenth-century republic of letters. While quarterlies such as the *Edinburgh Review* or the *Quarterly Review* did so as well, their infrequent publication and formality produced a different relationship with their readers. Much of the experience of literary magazines relied on the frequency and regularity of publication, with the connection between reader and periodical being established through regular reading; as Leigh Hunt suggested, the relationship between a reader and an editor was "likely to be more lasting, because it is more gradual and because you see him in a greater variety of subject and opinion."⁴¹ Most importantly, no other periodical form of the early nineteenth century offers the same abundance of editorial contributions and commentary. For reasons I shall discuss, the persona of the editor appears to have been an integral part of what literary magazines offered, a moderating presence between the commercial and the personal that reflects the position between popular and elite culture occupied by the magazines themselves.

⁴¹ "On Periodical Essays," *The Examiner* 1 (January 10 1808), 26.

The first two chapters of this thesis will consider the portrayal of editors and their duties within literary magazines. The discursive authority of those representations, developed through the various prefaces and commentaries of the periodical, was integral to shaping both a reader's experience with a publication and that periodical's identity in the marketplace. While an editor figure may not always have been prominent, it was nonetheless crucial to generating expectations within readers regarding the contents and approach of a particular journal, encouraging them to understand the publication and their relationship to it in a way that transformed them from individual readers into members of an audience that shared a specific reading experience. The first chapter thus examines John Scott's editorship of the *London Magazine* from the periodical's debut in 1820 until Scott's death in March of the following year. Unlike the editorial personae of many of his contemporaries, most notably Christopher North, Scott's editor figure is not highly dramatised or foregrounded. Instead, Scott preferred to guide his readers through his subtle arrangement of the magazine's contents, creating a dialogue between contributions that directed astute readers to an understanding of the magazine and his own editorial techniques. Functioning as what William Hazlitt referred to as a "conductor," this editor figure was developed over the run of the magazine, as regular readers of the *London* gradually became familiar with the organization of the magazine and learned the techniques necessary for its proper reading. So successful was Scott's editorial guidance that it came to be identified with the magazine itself. His death and the subsequent change in editorship were therefore particularly jarring for the *London's* readers. The criticism (both then and since) directed at John Taylor, the editor who followed Scott at

the helm of the *London*, throws into sharp relief the degree to which Scott's "conductor" had given the *London* a distinctive tone and audience.

The second chapter then turns to John Scott's editorial adversary, the fictitious Christopher North of *Blackwood's Edinburgh Review*. The strong, demanding editor figure of North defined an audience and identity for the magazine in a manner very different from that exemplified by Scott. Portrayed as a mysterious "veil'd" figure in the initial number of *Blackwood's*, North gradually emerged over successive issues as an irascible Tory gentleman with an iron control over his magazine and a sharp, even savage, sense of humour. Readers came to understand "Maga," as *Blackwood's* was frequently known, through North's personality, learning its tropes and jokes in his prefaces, commentary and other appearances in the magazine. Where John Scott's editorial guidance was available to anyone who wished to read the *London*, however, North's editorial figure was relentlessly divisive, making clear that while everyone wanted to join Maga's "inner sanctum," only a choice few were allowed entry. The rest were designated members of the brutish "Million," a vast group of ignorant readers bent on possessing and consuming *Blackwood's* and the cultural treasures that it offered. No reader, of course, would willingly identify with the "Million," but by dividing his reading audience into the discriminating and the indiscriminating, North was able to maintain *Blackwood's* exclusivity in the face of the expanding reading audience, while still boasting of its incredible sales and popularity. He crafted a distinct brand for his magazine, situating it within the market but distinguishing it from the market at the same time.

Taking up the question of the expansion of the reading public, the last two chapters consider editorial responses and strategies very different from those of North. Chapter Three focuses on how the editors of *The Penny Magazine* and *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal*, two of the earliest mass periodicals, attempted to craft large audiences for their respective publications. By the 1830s, driven by improvements in printing technology and methods of distribution, the periodical press was able to offer cheaper periodicals to more readers than ever before. While conservative publications such as *Blackwood's* considered this further expansion of the print market to be dangerous, more liberal publishers were optimistic about the inherent potential of the new technologies. In particular, Charles Knight, editor of the *Penny Magazine*, and the Chambers brothers, who produced *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal*, celebrated the advances in printing and transportation that made their respective periodicals possible as promoting the ability of the press to unify readers from across the social spectrum and improve their lives. Readers of the *Penny* and *Chambers' Journal* were represented as united with fellow readers across the nation, joined together by the system of circulation and communication represented by the periodicals. Their participation in a system of exchange made them participants in the progress of industrial society, sharing the experience of print technology and its benefits. Neither magazine was entirely successful at fashioning a true mass audience; while they enjoyed substantial success during their run, the majority of their readers were members of the middle class. Nonetheless, they represent a significant experiment with a different model of popular literature, one that rejected North's portrayal of the savage, dangerous "Million" in order to portray consumption and the expansion of the reading public in a positive light. Rather than

diluting public discourse, the *Penny* and *Chambers' Journal* argued, popularizing literature actually invigorated it, rejuvenating and strengthening the national public it was accused of subverting.

Chapter Four turns to one of the most prolific periodical editors and publishers of the nineteenth century, Leigh Hunt, in order to foreground the question of the "public" in an age of mass readership. Himself a lifelong proponent of popular literature, Hunt promoted literature for a different purpose than that of Knight or the Chambers brothers, but became increasingly dismayed by the loss of contact between readers and the producers of literature in a commercial-industrial economy. Looking back nostalgically at the lively, fruitful debate of the eighteenth-century periodical sphere and its amiable coffee-house society, Hunt emphasized the separation between the writers and readers in a periodical market driven solely by sales. At the same time, however, he not only recognized that that market was here to stay, but considered that it offered hope for the future of public discourse in England. Hunt thus sought to engage his readers in a relationship that offered an alternative model of commercial and interpersonal exchange, one rooted in editorial transparency and an exchange between audience and editor based on intimacy. Welcoming and encouraging as many readers as possible, he posited that the power of the imagination could recreate the connection between the reader and the writer, establishing a sense of coterie based on feelings of pleasure, good-will and shared respect.

Notoriously unsuccessful, Hunt's periodicals never enjoyed the sales that he sought, but his attempts to overcome the separation between the producers of literature and their readers harkens back to the same desire to bring readers into contact with the

publication and each other that motivated editors like John Scott and Christopher North. Every editor figure in this thesis shared that same goal: to introduce their readers into the society of their periodical, socializing them within an audience that (in contrast to the threatening anonymity of the reading public) offered personal contact and intimacy with other readers. The pressures of the market were never far away from the management of a periodical, however, and each of those editor figures was also forced to situate the relationship that they offered their readers in the larger context of sales and circulation. Whether they embraced popularity, as did Knight, Hunt and the Chambers brothers, or rejected it, as did North, they all sought to cast their periodicals as representatives of communication and personal exchange, not just commodities. More than anything, it is this struggle against anonymous consumption that defines early nineteenth-century periodicals. Casting nostalgic eyes back to the eighteenth-century public sphere, they struggled to preserve its values, even while being forced to adjust to changes in the market and reading public that threatened to overwhelm them. This thesis concludes with a brief coda on Anthony Trollope's *An Editor's Tales* (1870), a text in which a middle-aged editor reminisces about his youthful experience as an editor in the 1830s. Pitting an idealized "small magazine" culture against a professionalized sphere of commercial publication, Trollope's fictional editor throws into relief changes in the periodical market in the latter half of the nineteenth century that rendered increasingly obsolete the rhetoric of personal interaction that characterized the editor figure earlier in the century. This editor figure had emerged in response to the need for a new kind of "periodical performance"; in the second half of the nineteenth century, another kind of performance

was demanded, one in which the figure of the editor as an individual with whom readers could enjoy a personal relationship played a significantly reduced role.

CHAPTER ONE

"A Spirit of Candour": John Scott and the Creation of the Editor Figure in *The London Magazine*

In March of 1820, three months after the debut of the *London Magazine* and just under a year before his death in the duel with Jonathan Christie, the editor of the magazine, John Scott, fell ill. The extent and nature of his illness are unclear, but it appears to have been severe enough to prevent him from fulfilling his editorial duties in the April number of the *London*. William Hazlitt, who wrote the editorial notice for that month, warned readers that due to the "illness of the Conductor of the Magazine," they might notice "a deficiency" in several areas, including "Notices of New Books...[the] usual Political Article, and...the News of the month."¹ Hazlitt's word choice is revealing. It is not simply that Scott's political essays and literary criticism – contributions that could comprise as much as a third of the *London* in any given month – were missing, nor is it just that Scott's absence had a predictable impact on the intimate group Charles Lamb called the "little band of scribblers" who constituted the core of contributors to the magazine.² More than this, Hazlitt indicates that without Scott there was a "deficiency," a crucial lack in the magazine's production that could not be filled by anyone else. Hazlitt himself did not even feel capable of providing an adequate response to the magazine's

¹ "Editorial Notice," *London Magazine* 4 (April 1820).

² Lamb to Bernard Barton, 10 February 1825, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Lamb*, vol. 2, ed. E.V. Lucas (New York: AMS, 1968), 460.

numerous correspondents in Scott's absence, explaining that "answers...[will be found] in our next [number]," presumably after John Scott returned. Until then, the *London* was a mere shadow of itself.

Hazlitt is not singular in identifying John Scott with the structure, contents and style of the *London*. No doubt reinforced by Scott's tragic, untimely death and by the *London's* remarkable contributions to the literature of the period, his tenure at the magazine has been typically viewed as an example of strong, capable editorship, so much so that it is impossible to separate the man from the magazine he edited. Charles Lamb's famous lament "Why did poor Scott die?" in his letter to Barton – curious for appearing to mourn the resulting change to the *London* as much as the loss of the man – neatly encapsulates the loss felt not only by the *London's* contributors and readers but, it is implied, by the magazine itself. Central to this identification of Scott with the *London* are the perceived fairness and skill that he brought to his role as editor. According to the former *London* contributor Thomas Noon Talfourd, for example, Scott as an editor had "that which Kent recognized in Lear, which subjects revere in Kings...and contributors should welcome in editors – authority; – not manifested in a worrying, teasing interference in small matters, but in a judicious and steady superintendence of the whole."³ Recent critics agree, highlighting Scott's ability to orchestrate his contributors in a manner that, in the words of Josephine Bauer, kept them in "dialogue with one another."⁴ Scott's authority, Bauer argues, enabled him to keep the dialogue balanced, free of the partisanship that marred rival publications. She likens him to a "good teacher, who,

³ Thomas Noon Talfourd, *Literary Sketches and Letters* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1848), 154.

⁴ Bauer, Josephine, *The London Magazine, 1820-1829* (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1953), 74. For more on the dialogism of the *London Magazine*, see Mark Parker, *Literary Magazines*, 65-66, and Mark Schoenfield, "Voices Together: Lamb, Hazlitt and the *London*," *Studies in Romanticism* 29.2 (Summer 1990), 257-72.

delighting in and encouraging the free lively discussion of a class, is nevertheless unmistakably though unobtrusively there, guiding the thing with a sure hand to keep it from going off into irrelevances or from becoming confused in contradictions" (74). Creativity was never stifled; rather, Scott encouraged a merger of what Joel Faflak has called "the critical and the creative" to strengthen the magazine as a whole.⁵

In the estimation of many of the magazine's more vocal readers and critics, the editors who followed Scott at the helm of the *London* were never able to achieve a similar effect. The comparison has been particularly severe on John Taylor, who assumed the editorship of the *London* following its sale to Taylor and Hessey in the months after Scott's death.⁶ Generally considered to be inferior to his predecessor in nearly every way, Taylor has a reputation for cheapness and boorish behaviour, and this has led to the widespread belief that under his editorship the *London* became disorganized and poorly run. As William Hazlitt concluded in his 1823 essay "The Periodical Press," the *London* after Scott "wants a sufficient unity of direction and purpose....all is in a confused, unconcocted state, like the materials of a rich plum pudding before it has been well-boiled."⁷ While the contrast between Scott and Taylor is not entirely fair – under Taylor's direction the *London* enjoyed consistent sales and published some noteworthy works⁸ – Hazlitt's assessment of Taylor makes the point that, despite having a healthy editor in

⁵ Joel Faflak, "The Two Faces of the *London Magazine*," *The Charles Lamb Bulletin* 44 (October 1983), 69.

⁶ Frank Riga and Claude A. Prance, introduction to the *Index to The London Magazine* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1978), xviii-xxiv.

⁷ William Hazlitt, "The Periodical Press," *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, vol. 16, ed. P.P. Howe (New York: AMS Press, 1967), 232.

⁸ See Riga and Prance, introduction to the *Index to The London Magazine*, xv. Sales of the *London* were estimated to be 1,800 copies at the time of Scott's death, slipping marginally to 1,700 before Taylor assumed control. They remained relatively constant during his editorship, which lasted from July 1821 until the sale of the magazine to Henry Southam in 1825. Taylor suspected that the sales were actually around 1,600 by the time "we entered on the Work," but whatever the actual number under Scott, there appears to have been very little change in circulation numbers during Taylor's editorship (qtd. in Riga and Prance, xv).

Taylor, the *London* now found itself in a state similar to that he described during John Scott's illness three years earlier: it lacked direction, unity and focus. Thus, it was not simply an editor that the *London* missed: it was John Scott.

Despite the consensus regarding Scott's importance to the *London*, it is important when defining the role of an editor figure to distinguish among the various types of authority that the editor of a periodical can wield. The sort of authority praised by Talfourd, writing from the perspective of a contributor, is seldom recognized by readers, who have no access to the duties performed by an editor in the production of a periodical. By all accounts, Scott himself was an excellent editor in this respect. We know, for instance, a great deal about his close relationship with his contributors, particularly Lamb and Hazlitt, and how that interaction affected the production of the *London*. However, this aspect of editorial work is seldom visible within the publication itself. Instead, readers encounter the goals and methods of an editor through prefaces, commentary and other forms of editorial discourse, and it is a reader's recognition of such discursive authority that shapes the experience of a particular periodical. Hence, when William Hazlitt identified the "deficiency" in the *London* during Scott's absence, he was not only informing readers of specific changes they might notice; he was warning them that the magazine and their reading experience would be different than usual. What those readers would register, then, was an absence of editorial authority, which reinforced precisely the centrality of its presence within the *London*.

Where some editors, such as Christopher North of *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, actively promoted their editorial presence, explicitly representing their role in the production of the periodical for the benefit of their readers, John Scott created a more subtle editorial figure in the *London*, one that took full advantage of the serial form of

periodical publication. Establishing himself as the "conductor" of the periodical (to take Hazlitt's term), Scott took responsibility both for organizing the *London's* contributions into a harmonious whole and for leading his readers to an understanding of the publication's themes. As Mark Parker has shown, editorial guidance in the *London* was achieved through Scott's organization of his magazine's contents and his decision to eschew the more direct exposition of other editors in favour of "an indirection that amounts to an almost subliminal persuasion."⁹ This "persuasion" led readers to seek the connections that Scott, in the *London's* prospectus, had promised would uncover "the spirit of things generally."¹⁰ Such a technique demands a more active method of reading from its audience, and this chapter will examine how readers of the *London* under Scott were instructed in techniques for reading the magazine that helped to illuminate the construction of the editor figure. Given Scott's "indirection," the *London's* first readers had to *experience* his presence as "conductor" for themselves, untangling his editorial methods and goals in each successive number of the new magazine. This allowed regular readers of the magazine to become gradually familiar with the efforts of this "conductor" and develop certain reading habits that they could subsequently bring to each number of the magazine. Following Scott's death, however, those carefully acquired reading habits proved of less use, for John Taylor did not assume the same guiding role as Scott. The experience of the *London* with Scott and without him thus points not only to Scott's editorial skill (as is often emphasized) but also to the critical role that the editor figure played in defining the relationship between readers and a particular publication. Regular readers of the *London* came to understand the magazine through their awareness of

⁹ Parker, *Literary Magazines*, 41.

¹⁰ "Preface," *London Magazine* 1 (January 1820), v.

Scott's "conductor," feeling themselves tied to the publications and its other readers through the act of tracing the editorial hand in the theme and organization of the publication. In Scott's absence, that relationship (and the audience it enabled) had to change, disrupting the experience of the *London's* readers and the magazine itself.

"The *Spirit* of Things Generally": Learning to Read the *London*

In a prospectus published before the appearance of the first number of the *London Magazine*, and then again as part of an introduction to the collected first volume, John Scott reflected on how the nature of periodicals had altered since the eighteenth century.

"Looking back to the labours of our predecessors," Scott claims,

we are struck by the alteration in the character of such Works which time has produced, and are made to feel the weight of the new duties that devolve on their conductors. The days are passed when *Vindex* could be suffered to dispute with *Eudocius*, through various successive Numbers, which is most eligible – a married or a single state? When an editor might announce, with self-congratulation, a series of Letters from *Silvanus* on affectation of manner, or expect *Amicus* to recruit his subscription list amongst respectable families, by recommending to Ladies to read Roscommon's Essay on Translated Verse.¹¹

Where an earlier audience may have been entertained by the learned discourse of gentlemen contributing under Greek pen-names or an earlier editor satisfied with providing a publication full of edifying content, the market for periodicals had changed.

¹¹ "Preface," *London Magazine* 1 (January 1820), iv.

The public sought more excitement from publications, demanding that they "start fleeter and subtler game [that was] more complicated and hazardous" than a dispute between two gentlemen (v). Taking its name from an eighteenth-century English miscellany, Scott's magazine attempted to meet this desire by documenting the city of London, "the very 'image, form and pressure' of that '*mighty heart*' whose vast pulsations circulate life, strength, and spirits, through this great Empire."¹² As the "heart" of English commerce and culture, London offered its namesake periodical the opportunity to reveal something vital: the essence of the age, what Scott called "the *spirit* of things generally," which the *London* would attempt to display for the entertainment and edification of its readers (v).

Revealing something like the "spirit of things generally" poses obvious difficulties for a miscellaneous form like the magazine. Scott was aware of the challenge but nonetheless insisted on the ability of his magazine to "catch, condense, and delineate" this "spirit." News and similar accounts represented "merely intelligence," he argued, and failed to provide more than the "facts of contemporaneous history" (vi). What was required was a new method of reading that saw beyond the increasing glut of information. In keeping with the Wordsworthian echo in the reference to the "mighty heart" of London, the implication was that both the editor and reader had to see through external events into "the life of things." What this process entailed, however, was not spelled out: Scott simply directed readers "to our early Numbers for the particulars of our PLAN, which we have here only traced generally in allusions to PRINCIPLES" (viii). The

¹² "Preface," *London Magazine* 1 (January 1820), iv. First appearing in 1732 under the title of *The London Magazine, or, Gentleman's Monthly Intelligencer*, the *London* cited by Scott was published until 1735 by J. Wilford, and contained miscellaneous essays and correspondence drawn from other publications under the caption of "A View of the Weekly Essays and Disputes in this Month." That periodical became *The London Magazine and Monthly Chronologer* in 1736, before reverting to its original title under R. Baldwin from 1747 until 1783.

answer thus lies in the experience of reading the magazine itself.

The first number of the *London* provides a clue to the "particulars" of Scott's "plan." Described by Mark Parker as a "meditation on change and national character," the January 1820 issue situates this "meditation" in a reflection on the most effective means of representing a subject of art.¹³ The key to the number is the initial instalment of the "Living Authors" series, an essay on "The Author of the Scotch Novels," where John Scott praises Walter Scott for his ability to portray characters and events with "an intense feeling for natural truth" that is never impeded by his own biases. The author's ego, Scott argues,

presents no obstacles, in the shape of pre-conceptions or pre-dispositions, to the free and fair development of his story and characters. He speaks just what is set down for him in the book of nature, and we know that its pages are always open before his eyes, and we feel assured that what we read in his, has been faithfully transcribed from them. (12)

Recalling Keatsian "negative capability" or, more immediately for the *London*, Lamb's "sympathy," Walter Scott's imagination is receptive to a wide spectrum of characters and events.¹⁴ He has no discernible style beyond the obvious lack of one, ensuring that reading the Scotch novels provides an unobstructed view of their subject: their author "betrays nothing of himself but the vivid impression which the genuine features of his subject made on his mind" (13). This transparency in turn inspires a sympathetic reaction in Walter Scott's readers, even when they may not be so predisposed; despite how it may

¹³ Parker, *Literary Magazines*, 40.

¹⁴ For the connection between Keats and Lamb, in particular see Robert Frank, *Don't Call Me Gentle Charles: An Essay on Lamb's "Essays of Elia"* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 1976), and Roy Parker, introduction to *Lamb as Critic* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), 10-12.

"[clash] with our own opinions and interests," John Scott claims, "sympathy with others in their misfortunes, and a sense of consolation when we struggle with affliction ourselves, grow up in the mind." Without the impediment of Walter Scott's own personality to distort the narrative, each character can exist almost independently "in the mind" of the reader, generating a sense of concrete reality which is accentuated by the novelist's depictions of everyday life and individual experience. As a result, the characters in the Scotch Novels seem to reflect "every where and every body" (17).

William Hazlitt's contribution on drama, "The Drama, no.1," in this first number continues the emphasis on the concrete and common. The essay, however, acquires added significance when read in relation to John Scott's "Living Authors" article.¹⁵ Hazlitt argues that a genuine student of humanity "likes to see [humanity] brought home from the universality of precepts and general terms, to the reality of persons, of tones and action....he likes to see the face of the man with the veil of time torn from it, and to feel the pulse of nature beating in all times and places alike."¹⁶ The stage is the perfect venue for presenting such a perspective, for it "at once gives a body to our thoughts, and refinement and expansion to our sensible impressions" while purifying the "petty egotism of vulgar life" through aesthetic form. In the immediacy of theatrical performance, where an audience can see and hear the characters, actor and spectator are also more intimately connected, increasing emotional identification and promoting a shared sense of humanity (in much the same way as the intimacy of fictional reading). In short, drama takes abstractions and places them before the audience as a moving pageant with a human cast,

¹⁵ Suggestively, Hazlitt read Walter Scott in similar terms to those of John Scott; see Hazlitt, "Sir Walter Scott," *The Collected Works of William Hazlitt*, vol. 11, ed. P.P. Howe (New York: AMS Press, 1967), 57-69.

¹⁶ "The Drama, no. 1," *London Magazine* 1 (January 1820), 65.

encouraging readers to "rally...round the standard of [their] common humanity" in a manner similar to that promoted by the Scotch novels.

A similar interplay between the abstract and the concrete also surfaces in the editorial "Historical and Critical Summary of Intelligence," which follows Hazlitt's essay on drama. The "Historical and Critical Summary" was to be a recurring feature, and Mark Parker has rightly argued that when articles in a particular number are read in the context of this recurring section, they "often take on a different cast.... [as] what may seem eccentric in either focus or tone becomes relevant to catching 'the spirit of things'" (38). Scott's "Summary" in the first number helps to make his point, revisiting issues discussed earlier and placing them in relation to the overall theme of the magazine. Explaining the purpose of the section, Scott informs his readers that, in future, it will consist of the "notice of diverse topics" rather than of specific events. "To record the facts themselves," he continues, "with any thing like accuracy or fulness, in their shape of news, would be impossible, without trespassing too much on the miscellaneous part of our Magazine."¹⁷ Instead, as the penultimate section of the magazine (it was followed by the monthly register, with its lists of stocks, bankruptcies and other financial news) the "Historical and Critical Summary of Intelligence" would "touch, slightly, but completely, on the whole range of the intelligence of the month...thus to represent its general spirit." The preceding miscellany, therefore, would provide depictions of everyday life, while the "Historical and Critical Summary" would distil those examples into a unifying theme that provided insight into the "general spirit" of the times.

The *London's* first number thus establishes both the magazine's commitment to discerning the "spirit of things generally" and models how it was to be accessed. The

¹⁷ "Historical and Critical Summary of Public Events," *London Magazine* 1 (January 1820), 99.

"spirit" lay beyond the surface of everyday events, but its powers could only be apprehended when particular events were considered in relation to each other as part of a greater whole, caught and condensed for more ready comprehension. The *London*, it was implied, would present the particular and concrete in a manner worthy of the author of the Scotch Novels: free from bias or perceived abstractions. From such particularities would emerge the "general spirit" perceived that month. There would be no editorial explanation of this process, nor would readers receive specific interpretation of the *London's* contents. Instead, they would be left to read the "spirit" for themselves, to seek it among the contributions. If the method underlying the production of materials for that insight remained unclear, the skill needed by the reader did not: as the essays on the Scotch Novels and the drama suggested, sympathy was the key.

In the third number of the *London*, Scott explicitly returns to this point, emphasizing the dangers of overly abstract thought and the importance of individual human experience both directly and through the arrangement of a series of essays and poems. The first contribution, entitled "On Human Perfectibility and the Progress of Society," suggests that if historical studies were pursued with due attention to collecting a more comprehensive record of human existence across all ages, a history that was "both rich and really instructive" could be created.¹⁸ "For certain it is," the author explains, "that general history ought to come after particular histories, as general or philosophical grammar is the result of a careful study of all the various languages," the study of the special and local thus leading to a greater understanding of the whole. In itself, the essay is unremarkable, but in the context of what follows it gains additional meaning. Directly after the article appear two poems, "The Last Song" and an instalment of Barry

¹⁸ "On Human Perfectibility, and the Progress of Society," *London Magazine* 1 (March 1820), 271.

Cornwall's "The Traveller," both of which depict absence and change. In the former, a woman addresses a lover about to leave England forever; in the latter, the speaker views the cliffs of Dover from Calais. Their expression of personal loss and longing contrasts powerfully with the more theoretical essay that preceded them, but the distinct idioms work in tandem, with the poems offering an example of the "particular histories" that unfold daily throughout the Empire. These poems are the stuff of history: small, personal expressions of the age in which their writers lived. Their depiction of the effect of ideology and national character on individuals supplements the abstract discussion of ages and history in the essay that precedes them by offering concrete stories that subtly reflect the spirit of the age.

The third number also presents the second instalment of the "Living Authors" series, this time focusing on William Wordsworth. Arguing that Wordsworth had been the subject of unfair reviews in the *Edinburgh*, John Scott suggests that despite his flaws, Wordsworth does possess the rarest of abilities: insight into the "essential qualities of objects."¹⁹ Unfortunately, however, Wordsworth also lacks Walter Scott's ability to immerse himself in the subject, and this gives him the tendency to turn to abstractions in his depictions, making "his familiar scenes and characters interesting" only then to destroy that effect by "causing them to suggest and illustrate a certain system of thought and feeling which belongs rather to him than to them" (278). Wordsworth's subjects thus frequently reflect too much of the poet himself. This was certainly not the first (nor the only) time that such charges had been made against Wordsworth, but unlike other critics, Scott sees Wordsworth's value as a poet in this "egotistical sublime." He may frame his poetry in abstractions and systems, but beneath those trappings is a portrayal of "his own

¹⁹ "Living Authors II – William Wordsworth," *London Magazine* 1 (March 1820), 277.

heart, and an eloquent justification of his feelings" that reveals a man who experiences things emotionally before distorting them with philosophy (280). The "soul of truth and sincerity" in Wordsworth's poetry, therefore, is not in its representation or abstractions that attempt to reveal meaning but in the poet's experience of events and his response to them (282).

Immediately following Scott's article on Wordsworth is an essay by Thomas Wainright contributed under the name "Janus Weathercock." Part of a series entitled "Sentimentalities on the Fine Arts," the article is a chatty diary that documents the life of Weathercock, a *bon vivant* and general "man-about-town." While Weathercock's essay is amusing for its portrayal of his social life, it is particularly relevant for an account of his encounter with Lancret's "*Repas Italien*," an early eighteenth-century painting depicting a group of young Italian gentlemen and ladies enjoying a pleasant picnic in a wooded area. Describing the print for his readers, Weathercock meticulously documents each section, carefully listing every feature from the "rustic marble table, covered with a clean cloth, French bread...[and] baskets filled with heavy globes of grapes" to the "sturdy thick-leaved elms, and slender acacias" that surround the picnic spot.²⁰ In Wainright's hands, Weathercock is the quintessential aesthete, waxing poetic over small details like a stream "paved with gravel and silver sand...flinging a hundred hues against the dancing sun beams." Because of this appreciation, however, Weathercock has little interest in the technique of the painting's production. He notes that while "it was at first our intention to favour our readers with a few technical criticisms concerning *impasto*, *scumbling*, and *glazing*, &c. &c. for which we are eminently qualified," any discussion of technique would be as unwelcome as "plunging into a bath of drying oil and turpentine" (288).

²⁰ "Sentimentalities on the Fine Arts: Number Two," *London Magazine* 1 (March 1820), 287.

Instead, Weathercock prefers to enter sympathetically into the representation itself and to provide his responses to his readers, describing how he "perused it with half shut eyes, dallying awhile with our delight" (286).

Weathercock's essay provides a fitting conclusion to the run of articles in the number. His interpretation of Lancret's painting stems from so sympathetic an engagement with the object that he considers the represented figures as individuals. He imagines, for example, a young Italian girl rejecting another glass of wine with a tremulous "'Oh no! Not *another* – I am quite afraid. – I am indeed,'" while "a fop" tunes his guitar with arrogant disregard for the world around him (287). Moreover, he presents himself not as an observer but as a participant, placing himself among the revellers, enjoying the "soothing...escape from our gray and watery sky without doors." As with Wordsworth, the value of his response is not in an appreciation of a composition's techniques or a philosophical understanding of its contents, but in the experience it represents. When the painting, which depicts the very everyday occurrences praised earlier in the number, is approached sympathetically, it allows individuals to transcend their own limitations and experience a more intimate relation with the depicted subject.

Sympathetic reading, however, is only half of what is required to uncover the "spirit of things." Janus Weathercock may claim to feel as though he were a part of the Italian party in Lancret's painting, but such identification leaves him no closer to understanding the forces and values that shaped either their lives or his own. As a method of reading, therefore, the sympathetic approach to "particular histories" promoted by the *London* was insufficient. To produce a more general understanding of the age, Scott needed to direct his readers' sympathetic reading of individual accounts into something more compelling and wide-reaching. To achieve this broadening of perspective, Scott had

to carefully construct each number of the *London* to ensure that individual articles were in dialogue with each other. This allowed him to combine individual contributions into a publication that remained a miscellany in format, while still accentuating a single point or theme that could be discovered by readers who approached the magazine as they had been taught to do. In the third number of the *London*, for instance, the articles, beginning with "On Human Perfectibility, and the Progress of Society" and ending with "An Extract from Lord Byron's Journal," are of interest by themselves, but they achieve greater resonance when read as part of a whole. The juxtaposition of theories of history with poetic expressions of loss and homesickness, or the contrast between discussions of Wordsworth's genius and Weathercock's critiques of art, reveal a theme that goes beyond the specific focus of individual articles. An essay on history and several short lyric poems may have little connection beyond the magazine in which they appear, but when read in the context of a critique of Wordsworth's philosophy or Janus Weathercock's experiences with Lancret's painting, they gain a certain coherence. In this way, readers are shown that they must be alert, always searching for the links between contributions. While John Scott's "Historical and Critical Summary of Intelligence" serves as a reference point to the theme of each issue, successfully tracing that theme through the contents of the *London* is left entirely to the reader. Like the "good teacher" Josephine Bauer considers him to be, Scott ensured that while readers were not left entirely to their own devices, meaning was never simply given to them.²¹ Simultaneously initiated into how to read sympathetically and into how the *London* was constructed, Scott's audience was led to a certain understanding of the magazine through carefully placed articles, directed to a certain meaning that they were never forced to reach.

²¹ Bauer, *The London Magazine*, 74.

The ninth number of the *London*, published in September 1820, provides an excellent example of this editorial technique. After several introductory articles, the reader finds a sonnet entitled "Italy: Sonnet Imitated Freely from the Italian of Filicaia" and a set of verses under the heading of "Stanzas." The sonnet, mourning the fallen state of Italy, laments "O, that thou hadst less beauty, or more power/ That men might hate or fear thee more," before proceeding to exhort the seemingly apathetic Italians to "Let thine own right hand thy freedom save!/ Victor or vanquished, else, thou art a slave."²² In contrast, the "Stanzas" that follow are more contemplative, meditating on the transience of life:

The dew-drop is never so clear
As when morning's first ray sees it glisten:
And music is never so dear
As when to its last note we listen.

Though bright may be rapture's first mien –
 And its parting adieu even sweeter:
 The enjoyment existing between –
 Is a vision, – and vanishes fleeter.

We never know how we have lov'd.
'Till what we most lov'd has departed:
For the strength of affection is prov'd
By the joyless, and desolate-hearted.

²² "Italy," *London Magazine* 2 (September 1820), 276.

Our pleasures are born – but to die;
 They are link'd to our hearts – but to sever:
 And, like stars shooting down a dark sky, –
 Shine loveliest – when fading for ever! – ²³

Where the sonnet exhorts Italy to action and warns against the evils of passivity, the "Stanzas" works up to the standard poetic trope of transience, expressing the fleeting nature of all enjoyment and the inescapability of loss. The depiction of the inherent melancholy of hindsight when "what we most lov'd has departed" in the third stanza suggests a nostalgia at odds with the defiance of the sonnet's closing lines, but both are united by their sense of loss and regret.

Read alone, the pairing is interesting but hardly remarkable. The next article, however, an article on the "German Descriptions of Hogarth," opens with an editorial comment by Scott on the descriptions mentioned in the title (produced by the German scholar Lichtenberg), and these comments complicate the previous verses. Explaining that Lichtenberg's works, "the most elaborate description of Hogarth's works...in existence," are widely celebrated in Germany for having done more for the great artist than anything produced in England, Scott cannot resist correcting such a claim.²⁴ The Germans, Scott notes, "are not aware of Mr. Lamb's exquisite essays, which are altogether of a far purer and deeper sympathy with Hogarth's spirit than Lichtenberg's oddities"; he then commences a glowing description of Lamb's work and abilities before even introducing Lichtenberg's version. Scott's description of how Lamb "interferes with

²³ "Stanzas," *London Magazine* 2 (September 1820), 277.

²⁴ "German Descriptions of Hogarth's Works," *London Magazine* 2 (September 1820), 277.

nothing, alters nothing, strains nothing of the original...takes no exceptions, offers no amendments" in his superlative edition of Hogarth echoes Scott's praise for the work of Walter Scott, but it also establishes an important contrast between the work of an English scholar and that of the "foreigner" when it comes to an English subject. After a description of Lichtenberg's notable accomplishments (of which there are many) and of his mental oddities (equally numerous), Scott explains that the purpose of including the German's descriptions of Hogarth's works was that "we thought that our readers would be happy to see some of these descriptions, by a foreigner, of productions more peculiarly English, than almost any other, either in literature or the arts" (278). Lichtenberg's work is not wrong, but nor is he capable of doing Hogarth the same justice as Lamb, the talented native son. More importantly, however, the article, written in the context of an English monarch's prosecution of his own wife for adultery and the nation's soldiers killing of their countrymen at Peterloo,²⁵ suggests it was decidedly shameful that a foreign nation could plausibly claim to have a greater understanding of an artist so "particularly English" while England itself blindly pursued a destructive path. That Germany could so easily boast of having surpassed the efforts of English scholars, even when an example to the contrary was readily available, indicated how the English neglected their own national accomplishments and history to the detriment of their national reputation. This admonishment is accentuated by the earlier poems, as their motifs of loss and degeneration spill over into the reading of Scott's essay. A lack of pride in national character suggests an apathy that could become, as in Italy, destructive and self-

²⁵ On August 16, 1819, in what would come to be known as "The Peterloo Massacre," English cavalry charged a large crowd that had gathered to protest parliamentary reform at St. Peter's Field in Manchester, resulting in a handful of deaths and more than 600 injured. Long estranged from his wife, Caroline of Brunswick, George IV had sought a divorce from the queen in 1820, creating a political scandal that received great attention and polarized the public.

propagating.

The warning is solidified by Scott's return to the subject of Italy in the article immediately following the account of Lichtenberg's work on Hogarth. Entitled "On Italian Tragedy: Introductory to Remarks on *Il Conto di Carmagnola*, A Tragedy, by Alexander Manzoni," the essay documents the history of tragedy in Italy before examining the claim that the Italian preference for opera had led to the degradation of their theatre. Pursuing the threads of national degeneration raised by the preceding contributions, Scott's essay becomes the crux of the entire number. After considering the history of drama in Italy, Scott rejects the claim that the love of opera has undermined Italian tragedy, arguing that "we believe we may at once trace the poverty of the Italian tragedy to high causes – to the *political and moral circumstances* of the country previous to the French revolution."²⁶ Lacking "universal public spirit [and a] great capital city to give a tone to the public mind," Italy was doomed to suffer from apathy and servitude, bored with everything that did not offer sensual pleasure (287). The institutions and tradition of the country had been entirely forgotten:

The words country, national independence, liberty, human rights, civil virtue, &c. &c. – were become for them void of meaning. Moral sciences were very little cultivated; for they were displeasing to the governors. The human heart was not analyzed; as was that of history, for they had no hopes to nourish, no future events to which to look forward. Public education was entirely in the hands of the monks; whose endeavour it was to degrade the human race, in order to keep it easily under their fingers. All noble passions were stifled in the souls of the

²⁶ "On Italian Tragedy: Introductory to Remarks on *Il Conto di Carmagnola*, A Tragedy, by Alexander Manzoni," *London Magazine* 2 (September 1820), 286. Original emphasis.

miserable Italians, by the effects of such an education. (287)

Without sympathy, imagination or respect for national institutions – indeed, without even the basic will to act in its own defence – Italy fell into moral decay. Carmagnola, when finally mentioned by Scott, is noteworthy for his respect and passion for the very values that his countrymen have rejected. His art, which soars above the tired, sensual productions of the degraded nation, reveals his lofty character and mind, offering hope of national rebirth and rejuvenation. He also, however, represents a stern warning for the citizens of England, lest apathy and ignorance rob them of their powers and their very nation.

Thus, by the time readers reached the concluding poem, "Drab Bonnets," they were prepared for its dismissal of Continental fashion in favour of the tried-and-true traditions of England. "They may cant of costumes, and of brilliant head-dresses," the speaker exclaims, but from Fashion's "fascinations my favourite is free:/ Be Folly's the head-gear that momentarily varies/ But a Bonnet of drab is the sweetest to me."²⁷ This assertion of the value and solid beauty of English tradition completes a section of nearly seventy pages. The theme, while present in each article, is very much cumulative, revealed through successive articles as the "spirit" becomes apparent from the distillation of the individual works. The customary "Historical and Critical Summary of Intelligence" simply summarizes and concludes what has been discussed, but also offers an example with contemporary and immediate edge. Warning of the "foul and slippery path" being followed by the government as it prosecutes the Queen, Scott provides a contemporary issue through which the readers can ponder the issues of national degradation and passive

²⁷ "Drab Bonnets," *London Magazine* 2 (September 1820), 292.

acceptance.²⁸ There is no overt pressure for readers to readjust their readings to reflect Scott's editorial warning at the end of the magazine; unless they read this section first, their interpretations would have been formed well before they ever reached it. Scott's summary merely provides a contemporary example of the issues represented throughout the number, leaving it up to the readers to exercise their critical and imaginative faculties.

"A Free, independent, and honest tone": John Scott's "Conductor"

An issue of the *London* like the one discussed testifies to capable and conscientious direction at the helm of the magazine, but awareness of Scott's editorial presence did not arise immediately. It would have accumulated over the span of several numbers, as regular readers of the *London* came to recognize the editorial role in the production of the magazine they were reading. Following his activity in the first several numbers of the *London*, Scott kept a low editorial profile until the first appearance of "The Lion's Head" in July 1820. Appearing under the Shakespearean epigraph of "Valiant as a lion, and wondrous affable," "The Lion's Head" was intended to be a "string of short affable roars" from the editor on any topic that caught his eye:

Correspondents, and others who may be in expectation of any particular announcement, will do well to look amongst these for what may concern them.

Any one, too, who may have committed a particularly good action, or a particularly bad one, – or said or written any thing very clever, or very stupid, during the month, – ought not, by any means, to neglect interrogating the Lion's

²⁸ "Historical and Critical Summary of Intelligence," *London Magazine* 2 (September 1820), 334.

Head. Surely "one Lion may speak when so many asses do."²⁹

Even as it furthers the dialogic atmosphere of the *London*, Scott's statement makes it clear that if the editor will not be more active, he will at least be more obviously so.

The "Lion's Head" enabled Scott to maintain a more direct contact with his readers, drawing attention to himself as a critic of would-be correspondents and providing what Faflak calls a "persona that could handle both soap box oration and amicable jocularly."³⁰ Responding to a submission on Wordsworth that criticized the poet for being "poor in fancy," for example, Scott explains that "we are tempted to give one extract from the volume now before us, just to put to shame the silly author of Common Sense; for really it is high time that the pop-guns of these mischievous urchins in literature, wherewith they pester their betters, should be wrested out of their hands, and broken over their heads."³¹ He continues by claiming that "if our vocation gives us advantages...for whipping in-doors the troublesome fry that hang on the heels of noble natures in their passage to fame, we may sure feel our *consciences* at ease," making it apparent that he and his editorial "conscience" are the final arbiters of what is acceptable and included within the pages of the *London* (8). Such strong language not only makes the beliefs and ideology of the magazine more transparent, but also foregrounds Scott's own role in the composition and form of the *London* more than terse notes to contributors on the opening page.

At no point was Scott's profile higher than during his feud with *Blackwood's*. Having engaged in a sporadic war of words with the Scottish magazine throughout the *London's* short run, Scott finally committed himself to the conflict in the November 1820

²⁹ "The Lion's Head," *London Magazine* 2 (July 1820), 3.

³⁰ Faflak, "The Two Faces of the *London Magazine*," 73.

³¹ "The Lion's Head," *London Magazine* 2 (July 1820), 7.

number. Following the usual discussion of submissions in "The Lion's Head," Scott concluded by commenting on an article about *Blackwood's* (that he in fact wrote himself) that appears in the same issue of the *London*:

Now the article on the *Reekie Magazine* seems to THE LION to include this rare union: – it reasons (well or ill); it reproaches (justly or unjustly) – and, folded in its tail, lurk both the spirit and the substance of prophecy: for, lo and behold! a new Number of the *smoked* Publication has just come to hand – strong as *kipper* – in time for THE LION, though too late for his keepers, – and there we find already actually *done* – achieved – all that the aforesaid tail anticipated the *Reekie* folk would certainly do! Can anything be more surprising?³²

This passage elevates the competition between the two magazines to new heights, turning what had hitherto been a spirited debate, often couched within the expressions of forced respect and gentlemanly conduct, into a fundamental opposition. Furthermore, Scott implies that *Blackwood's* has become predictable, for the *London* has shown itself "distinguished by the gift" of prophecy by predicting the contents ("strong as kipper") contained in the Edinburgh periodical. This repeated mention of prophecy and prophets recalls the "Chaldee Manuscript," the most infamous of all *Blackwood's* productions, but Scott also uses that infamy to contrast the behaviour of his own magazine with that of *Blackwood's*.³³ The Edinburgh publication, he implies, has become a byword for

³² "The Lion's Head," *London Magazine* 2 (November 1820), 476. Scott's reference to "Reekie" is a reference to the Scottish word for "smoked" and a nickname that was also frequently applied to Edinburgh.

³³ The "Chaldee Manuscript" was published in the first number of *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*. Presented as a prophecy that foretold the overthrow of "the Man who was crafty in council" by forces loyal to "the Man whose name is as ebony," the "Chaldee" was a thinly veiled satire of Archibald Constable, William Blackwood's chief competitor. Famous for its portrayal of the Edinburgh publishing industry, the "Chaldee" became an infamous example of both *Blackwood's* humour and its tendency to transgress libel laws. I discuss the "Chaldee" further in Chapter 2.

improper but entirely predictable behaviour; the *London*, meanwhile, offers insight and morality.

"The Lion's Head" in this number simply set up the opposition between the two magazines, whetting the appetite of the *London's* readers. The remainder of the number revealed the nature of their disagreement. Immediately following the introduction, an article entitled "The Literature of the Nursery," written by Scott himself, opens with a study of the history of children's literature and current offerings on the market, finding recent trends in the genre to be problematic, even harmful. "Innovation has made a fearful progress in the child's library," Scott exclaims after a discussion of works from his own childhood, with the result that the "imagination of [the nursery's] inmates have coarse and poisonous food now collected for them, in comparison with the hoards of other days."³⁴ Books on scandal, fashion and contemporary life have taken the place of classics; rather than promoting virtue and a healthy imagination, these new publications offer children a diet of vice and folly. This conclusion leads Scott back to the subject of the "Lion's Head," for he remarks that if the publishers of these suspect texts "were not too busy for Blackwood's magazine...we should suspect them of being concerned in the manufacture of these things" (481). The *London's* opposition to *Blackwood's* now begins to take shape, as the portrayal of the Scottish publication becomes more sinister, its mischievous behaviour growing darker and more damaging. While "pity, and the interest we take in the sorrows and hazards of others...are the surest foundation on which to rear a noble, kind, intrepid character," neither contemporary children's literature nor *Blackwood's* offers this (483). Instead they promise only cruelty and ridicule, activities that could destroy an entire generation. Thus, the stakes of thoughtless publishing such as

³⁴ "The Literature of the Nursery," *London Magazine* 2 (November 1820), 479.

that pursued by *Blackwood's* are high, ultimately affecting the national character itself.

The article immediately following this piece, Elia's "Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago," accentuates the ethical and cultural oppositions that Scott has been drawing. Lamb's essay on childhood forms a sharp contrast with the "ridicule-loving spirit" of the unsuitable publications just mentioned by Scott, offering Elia's gentle, thoughtful prose as an antidote. Such a move further distinguishes the *London* from *Blackwood's*, confirming its commitment to salutary work rather than mischief and cruelty. This difference vindicates the indignation of the "Lion's Head," casting its expression of outrage at the behaviour of *Blackwood's* as the response of a concerned citizen rather than the antagonism of a competitor. Their opposition, Scott implies, is principled and moral, legitimized by the threat *Blackwood's* represents to the public good.

The heart of the number is Scott's essay on "Blackwood's Magazine," which cements his attempt to position the *London* – and himself – in complete opposition to *Blackwood's*. The epigraph to the article is taken from the third act of *Hamlet*: "They do but jest – POISON IN JEST – no offence i' the world."³⁵ Scott explains in the opening paragraphs of his article that he hopes his readers will understand he is not reacting in response to "a squabble between rival magazines" but because the issue "concerns literature generally, more than any magazine in particular." Nonetheless, as Scott develops his argument against *Blackwood's*, he is careful to emphasize what he calls the "fraudulent" use of characters and false names by the editors of the Scottish magazine, while separating himself and the *London* from that sort of behaviour.³⁶ "An Editor," he

³⁵ "Blackwood's Magazine," *London Magazine* 2 (November 1820), 509.

³⁶ Peter T. Murphy has attributed Scott's attack to his rather traditional adherence to conservative systems of representation that were undermined by *Blackwood's* and its contributors; see "Impersonation and Authorship," 625-649. Gregory Dart, however, has suggested that Scott's refutation of the *Blackwood's*

admits (after documenting how *Blackwood's* writers would often argue against their own contributions under the guise of a different character) "does not hold himself responsible for the soundness of all the opinions that may appear in the work under his management, if it be of so open and miscellaneous a nature as a magazine" (512). All the same, a good editor, like an author, must stand for something; his name must be an indication of his values. Bringing in the example of Walter Scott, who created a fashion for "hoaxing and masquerade," John Scott refuses to allow even the author of the Scotch Novels the alibi that anonymity differs from "writing in a false name":

In this particular instance, the withholding of his name is practising what, in the jargon of the day, may be termed a *mystification* on the public....Persons of grovelling and bad intentions were likely to see the advantage that might be taken of this new source of interest, both as a means of raising popular attention at a cheaper rate than by cleverness alone, and also as furnishing a mode of escaping from that responsibility which attaches to the writer who assumes no feigned character or title. (517)

Walter Scott's behaviour created the potential for serious mischief, an opportunity that *Blackwood's* has been only too willing to exploit. In particular, Scott argues, the editor of *Blackwood's*, who not only allowed false representations to persist but furthered them himself in *Peter's Letters to his Kinfolk*, is as guilty (and perhaps more so) than any of his contributors.³⁷ The role of the editor might not require him to be personally accountable

values was actually an attempt to posit a "literary cockneyism," an urbane style of writing quite unlike the "cockneyism" derided by *Blackwood's* in its attacks on Leigh Hunt, William Hazlitt and other London contributors; see Gregory Dart, "Romantic Cockneyism: Hazlitt and the Periodical Press," *Romanticism* 6.2 (2000), 151.

³⁷ Scott, of course, tragically believed that John Gibson Lockhart was the sole editor of *Blackwood's* and pursued his dispute with the magazine with Lockhart alone, hence his mention of *Peter's Letters*. He did, on occasion, mention John Wilson, who held a chair of philosophy at the Edinburgh University, but

for the contents of each contribution that appeared within a magazine, but neither could it be used to avoid responsibility for the sort of fraudulent representation practiced by *Blackwood's*. An editor, Scott implies, should guide readers to the truth, not away from it, just as he himself does in the very issue of the *London* in which the essay appears.

In the "Lion's Head" of the very next number, Scott explicitly defines the goal of the *London*: "the wish of the Conductors of THE LONDON MAGAZINE (for which the Lion pledges his word of honour) is to give a free, independent, and honest tone to Literary discussion...to introduce into it a spirit of candour." It is this "tone" that Scott would have his readers believe sets his magazine apart from *Blackwood's*. As the Lion's pledge of "his word of honour" suggests, both the contents of the *London* and the conduct of the editor could be trusted. This is a key claim for a magazine that prided itself on displaying the "spirit of things," and in the sequel to his first article on *Blackwood's*, Scott explains his decision to oppose the Edinburgh periodical by representing his editorial work as the natural expression of his morals and conduct as an individual: "As periodical writers," he explains, "commenting chiefly on the temporary features of the time, such infamy [as practised by *Blackwood's*] lies directly within our province...and nothing but cowardice, selfishness, or stupidity would lead any one to inculcate that the matter were better let alone."³⁸ His duties as a respectable citizen and (as his duel suggests) as a gentleman are inextricably linked to his role as an editor, the solidity and honesty of the one infusing the other. They are inseparable, and what can be expected of Scott as an Englishman can also be expected from him as an editor. The same, he implies, could also

Scott considered Lockhart, the infamous "Z," to be the primary instigator of *Blackwood's* behaviour. Lockhart was also Walter Scott's son-in-law, which likely explains John Scott's uncharacteristically harsh allusion to the anonymity of the Author of the Scotch Novels; John Scott had previously publicly appealed to Walter Scott to control his son-in-law or sever all ties with *Blackwood's*.

³⁸ "The Mohock Magazine," *London Magazine* 2 (December 1820), 672.

be said of *Blackwood's* and its editor, but not in a positive way.

This emphasis on Scott's solidity, reliability and honesty underscores just how far his self-representation as an editor had developed prior to his death. More than the purveyor and organizer of his magazine, Scott was now truly its "conductor." Readers were encouraged to consider Scott to be their guide, his editorial methods leading them to examine world events and the print market with an eye to what they might conceal. This role was crucial to the establishment of Scott's reputation as a moral, honest editor, the very same attributes that would lead Josephine Bauer, years later, to praise him for his fairness.³⁹ Scott's editor figure may closely parallel the actual John Scott, but it is nonetheless based upon a select interpretation of his editorial activities, a simplification of his control of the magazine's contributors, production and finances that is rooted in his discursive portrayal of editorship in the *London* itself. This representation proved to be remarkably potent; readers came to expect Scott's critical, engaged efforts, and when his editorial hand was absent, the magazine and their reading experience were diminished. Already represented within the *London*, Scott's importance to the magazine was only confirmed when Hazlitt announced that Scott had been grievously wounded during his duel with Christie. Explaining how "the spirit which animates the Lion's Head being necessarily absent this month, its mouth must be closed," Hazlitt's announcement predicts not only how the format of the magazine would be altered by Scott's absence, but how the entire tone of the publication would be changed and diminished. So it was that, lacking the customary guidance and authority of its editor figure after Scott's death, the *London* had no choice but to change.

³⁹ Bauer, *The London Magazine*, 95.

"Why did poor Scott die?": John Scott and John Taylor

It is likely that, following John Scott's death, the *London's* publisher, Robert Baldwin, assumed the editing duties of the magazine with the assistance of Hazlitt and Wainright.⁴⁰ Several months later, the *London* was sold to Taylor and Hessey. As Mark Parker has shown, while the tone of the magazine in the period between Scott's death and the first issue under Taylor in July 1821 reveals some notable changes, it did not immediately become a radically different magazine.⁴¹ Lamb remained with the *London*, of course, as did Wainright and Hazlitt, and much of the political and social atmosphere originally established by Scott persisted after his death. Other contributions, however, suggest a "slackening of editorial control," according to Parker, and he notes an appeal to a newer, less critical reader, one who is "more interested in consumption than in reception" (76). When the *London* made its debut under the editorship of John Taylor several months later, the stage was set for a clash between the old values of the *London* and those of its new incarnation, a change that ultimately led to Hazlitt's leaving the magazine within the first months of the new ownership.

It is impossible to know what parts of the issues published between John Scott's death and Taylor's editorship were created without any input from Scott. Lacking knowledge of the typical delay between the submission of an article and its publication, or of how far in advance Scott wrote his own contributions, we can never conclusively determine what changes in the *London* can be attributed to his absence. Certainly, Scott is

⁴⁰ Riga and Prance, introduction to the *Index to the London Magazine*, xv.

⁴¹ Parker, *Literary Magazines*, 76-80.

present in the magazine after his death in more than just spirit: articles written by him appear as late as the April number, two months after the duel. Despite this, what matters is not Scott's actual contribution, but the awareness of his absence and the void left by his death. More than simply informing readers of Scott's death, Hazlitt's dramatic announcement that the editor was "no more" interrupted the rhetoric of Scott's editorial control, effectively killing his distinctive editorial discourse.⁴² In light of Hazlitt's statement, it hardly matters that John Taylor was a "man of intelligence and learning" or that he retained most of the *London's* best contributors. From the perspective of the readers, the *London* could not help but be different because John Scott's "conductor" was absent from the publication. The *London's* "conductor," the guide of its readers, was dead.

That absence and the resulting change are immediately apparent in the first number of the *London* that appeared under Taylor's editorship. "The Lion's Head," now written by Taylor's sub-editor Thomas Hood, continued as it did before, but its tone was drastically different. Assuring readers of the magazine's intention to cover the upcoming coronation of George IV, Hood explains:

The Lion's Head is determined on having a paw in the Coronation: It has serious thoughts of putting in its claim to sit on the right side of Britannia (if Britannia intends being present), its old established places, as the earliest pocket-pieces testify.... Lion's Head is not a Dandy-lion, but its mane will be carefully cut and turned for the occasion; and it will go ruffled, like a true British Lion. The readers of the LONDON MAGAZINE, in fine, may rest assured, that the Lion's Head will, on that day, seek its own food, and not trust to the established Jackalls of the

⁴² "Notice," *London Magazine* 3 (April 1821), 359.

diurnal press.⁴³

Hood's wit is undeniable as he cleverly plays with the image of the esteemed and venerable Lion prowling throughout the proceedings, but beyond his word play there is little of substance to be gleaned. Aside from stressing the Lion's traditional link to the English monarchy, this "Lion's Head" is startling apolitical, particularly when read against those written by Scott, and it provides no additional criticism or commentary despite the implications the coronation held for the entire nation. The preface that follows merely concludes with the customary terse statements to contributors, informing them if a contribution is "quite to our taste" or "unavoidably deferred" (4). There is no sense of an engaged editor or introduction to the theme of the number; it is all very clever, but lacking in any guidance for the *London's* readers.

Beneath this change in style there is a more substantial alteration in the *London*. Readers who had grown accustomed to reading the magazine with sympathy and an eye for the link between contributions would be disappointed by the *London's* organization under Taylor. Issues were not themed and essays neither encouraged the imagination nor engaged in a dialogue with each other. The article that immediately follows Hood's first "Lion's Head," for example, begins promisingly enough with an account of a visit to Warwick Castle that is much closer in style to essays found in previous numbers of the *London*. "If anyone would choose to pay Antiquity a visit," the narrator begins, "and see her in her grand tiara of turrets, see her in all her gloomy glory, – not dragging on a graceless existence, in ruined cell, with disordered dress....let such a one go to the wooded solitudes, the silent courts, the pictured walls, and rich embrowned floors of

⁴³ "The Lion's Head," *London Magazine* 4 (July 1821), 3.

Warwick Castle!"⁴⁴ The contrast of a fallen, dishevelled Antiquity with proud English history, still powerfully preserved in Warwick Castle, suggests the sort of opening that Scott would have used to frame an entire number, a juxtaposition of the glorious past with an insecure present that revealed the "spirit" of the age. Despite such promise, however, readers are given only what the opening lines suggest: a minutely detailed account of a visit to the castle. The narrator's encounter with the bridge over the Avon may elicit a rapturous "the Avon! Shakespeare's Avon" from him, but this brush with a proud past is quickly lost in far more mundane reflections on the scene before him:

I leaned against the parapet of the bridge, and gazed in lazy wonder and delight at the castle. It crowned the river, and looked proudly down from its nest of trees and ancient rock, as though watching and brooding over its image in the water, silvery bright beneath it....Every sound and moving object even confirmed the silence; for the long low evening moan of the cattle, in the level meadows by the river side, took a deep far-off echo, as though no other sound was alive to disturb or break it....I shall never forget this scene, – and when in a morning of last spring, I crossed the bridge anew, that evening arose before my eyes in its placid splendour and beauty, and the past revived, with all its warm and slumberous lustre. How poor does the scene appear in this colourless description, and yet it seemed to contain at the time the inspiration of a thousand glowing pages! (6)

The account of his return to the castle may recall the language of "Tintern Abbey," but where Wordsworth's experience leads him to reflections that surpass sensory experience, this narrator laments his inability to capture the actual image itself in a way that a "landscape-painter colours from nature." This regret, more than his actual description,

⁴⁴ "Warwick Castle," *London Magazine* 4 (July 1821), 5.

suggests how changed the new *London* will be. Naturalistic description, in the style of the visual arts, will replace the synthetic efforts of the imagination. The scene does not lead the author to a greater insight into either his own existence or the age itself, nor does it reward readers who approach it sympathetically. It is meant to be read and enjoyed, nothing more. Similarly, the following article, an essay on "On Gray's opinions of Collins, with a Sonnet from Costanzo," instead of engaging with the preceding contribution, provides a lengthy account of Gray's response to the work of Collins. Both articles are static, lacking the multiple layers of meaning and revelation that readers had come to expect of essays included in Scott's *London*.

Although it would be tempting to state that the *London* under Taylor was less complex than it was under Scott and hence inferior, the difference between the two editors does not indicate simply a progression from "better" to "worse." Instead, it suggests a dramatic shift in editorial method and persona. There is little doubt that the content of the *London* changed under Taylor's editorship; contributions about politics or national character were replaced by experimental works such as de Quincey's "Confessions of an English Opium-Eater" or picturesque essays like "Warwick Castle." Hood, for instance, proudly announced in "The Lion's Head" for the August 1820 number that "we are enabled to fulfil our promise (a great grace in a periodical editor), by giving in our present Number a very spirited Etching from Mr. Hilton's picture of Nature Blowing Bubbles for her Children."⁴⁵ This is hardly the sort of potent, timely contribution that a reader would have expected to find under Scott. Similarly, where Scott's rhetorical stance as editor suggested control and great care in the production of the *London*, John Taylor as an editor (and it is important to remember that Hood's "Lion's Head" prefaces

⁴⁵ "The Lion's Head," *London Magazine* 4 (August 1820), 119.

would have been attributed to Taylor) appears far less concerned with such issues. This is not to say that he did not care about the *London*; Taylor's ability to present readers with some truly remarkable contributors suggests he took his duties very seriously, even though the careful construction of meaning was not part of his design. Taylor does, however, lack the critical, active presence displayed by Scott, whose continual discussions of "politics and public manners" encouraged readers to consider the broader world around them more actively. Taylor's *London* shrinks that world to what is entertaining and available for consumption, withdrawing from the issues of the day. It encourages readers to be less active and less involved, unconcerned with the overall meaning of the magazine. Where Scott was a guide, "conducting" his reading audience towards an understanding of a particular topic, Taylor is a shopkeeper, a businessman procuring etchings and other aesthetic pieces for the enjoyment of his customers. There is no need for a "conductor" in the new *London* for the simple reason that there is little to navigate and no "spirit" to discern.

Without Scott's editorial persona, the experience of reading the *London* changed substantially. By choosing not to highlight the dialogue or contrast between the contents of the *London*, Taylor risked leaving habitual readers of the *London* frustrated and unfulfilled as they found that the strategies for reading learned from Scott's "conductor" no longer yielded the same results. Hazlitt's claim that the *London* under Taylor lacked "a sufficient unity of direction and purpose" voices this frustration: his criticism of the "confused, unconcocted state" of the new *London* indicates a reading experience that is unstructured and incoherent.⁴⁶ Nonetheless, Taylor's *London* was little different from most miscellanies of the day. What Hazlitt is suggesting, therefore, is not simply a lack of

⁴⁶ William Hazlitt, "The Periodical Press," 232.

order but the absence of a theme, a "unity" of the contents like that provided by John Scott during his editorship. The expectations of seasoned readers were not met by Taylor's *London*; hence, his editorial efforts assumed the appearance of disorganization and clumsiness. John Taylor could well have been significantly more skilled than John Scott at a number of editorial tasks, but his actual skill (or lack thereof) was immaterial to evaluations of the *London* following Scott's death: the fact that he was different from Scott was enough to unsettle the reading experience following the change of editors.

What readers of the *London* under John Scott learned to read, therefore, was not just the magazine itself nor the threads that linked its various contents: they learned to read John Scott's editing. Accustomed to deciphering the meaning coded into clusters of articles, poems and criticism, Scott's readers looked for a theme or unifying characteristic that tied the contributions together and justified their placement. Time and experience taught regular readers of the *London* to expect the control of the "good teacher" and "strong editor," and they read accordingly. This demonstration of authority and editorial method became the basis for their understanding of the *London's* editor figure and for their expectations for the magazine. Just as importantly, however, those reading techniques became the basis for the creation of the *London's* audience. Individual readers, experiencing the new publication for the first time, would have found themselves invited to participate in the process of reading and discovery promised by Scott's "conductor," to feel that they were sharing the experience with other readers. While anyone could gain access to the insight provided by the *London* and its editor, it was the process of reading that truly forged them into a larger audience, a group of readers united by their shared interest in the "spirit of things" and the techniques used in its pursuit. The *London's* audience was not formed through lengthy prefaces or clever exposition; rather, it was

performed, evoked by readers as they followed the guidance of Scott's "conductor."

In Scott's absence, that audience necessarily changed. John Taylor was not writing for the same audience as Scott; with his emphasis on less challenging contents and a more traditional miscellany format, Taylor had a different readership in mind for his *London*. As a result, it is only to be expected that the new *London*, directed as it was to different readers – a different audience – would seem so alien to critics such as Hazlitt. It was simply no longer intended for them. Doubtless, Taylor felt that by reverting to the tried-and-true format of the miscellany he would be able to increase the *London's* sales, but his failure to achieve this goal indicates only that he was a poor businessman who misjudged the shifting taste of the market, not that he was a poor editor. Ultimately, Taylor was just different from Scott; his editorial figure was an unprepossessing one, bland and inoffensive, befitting a man who, in essence, was a populist and manager, not a conductor.

Ultimately, the quarrel that ended Scott's editorship and his life reflected those same questions of editor-audience relations. Despite all the posturing from the men involved regarding truth, honour and responsible representation, at its heart the duel was about the relationship between an editor and his audience. Describing the "literary system" of *Blackwood's* in an article entitled "The Mohock Magazine" in 1820, Scott compared its writers to a gang of criminals, an equally "anti-social" group given to preying upon their readers instead of aiding them.⁴⁷ Rather than building up relations, *Blackwood's* destroyed them, leaving their readers feeling bullied and betrayed:

⁴⁷ "The Mohock Magazine," *London Magazine* 2 (December 1820), 673. The "Mohocks" of the title were a gang (which took its name from the Mohawk Indians) that terrorized London in the early eighteenth century. Scott also alludes to their appearance in one of Addison's *Spectator* essays, where the Mohocks prey on the innocent and weak; see *The Spectator*, n. 347.

It would seem as if people in general had been all cherishing a bursting sense of the crying necessity of some such exposure [of *Blackwood's*]...This Scotch work had grown to be regarded as a privileged *terrae filius*, – free to commit the rudest assaults and most savage insults without chastisement; – and when our exposition, of what every body knew before, came out we were congratulated and applauded in a way that has excited our astonishment. (673)

The passage points to the core of Scott's disgust with *Blackwood's* and its methods. Rather than encouraging and supporting readers, it offended and subjected them to its vile behaviour. It is not simply that Scott found the material *Blackwood's* published to be shameful or dangerous (although he did), but that he despised it for treating its readers so poorly and with such arrogance. To Scott's mind, those same readers, burdened by *Blackwood's*, would greet Scott's exposure of their oppression with congratulations and applause, finally liberated by a publication that cared for them. It is this image – the oppressive, savage *Blackwood's* of Christopher North opposed by the honest, open *London* of John Scott – that defines the stakes of the duel, expressing the core difference between the two magazines that, with time and each passing letter between Scott and Lockwood, eventually exploded into violence. Scott's outrage at the lies, deceit and dangerous morals of *Blackwood's*, reflective as it is of popular concerns about the press and its productions, is motivated by his conception of a civil periodical sphere, especially when it came to the relationship between an editor and his readers. To his mind a publication like *Blackwood's*, relishing the delivery of "rudest assaults and most savage insults," did not deserve to succeed. *Blackwood's*, however, did succeed, and as the next chapter will show, it did so by forging a strong relationship with its readers through the representation of the formidable Christopher North, an editorial figure at the opposite end

of the spectrum from John Scott's "conductor."

CHAPTER TWO

"We are Othello and the Public is Desdemona":

Christopher North, *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* and the "Million"

In an 1825 instalment of the "Noctes Ambrosianae," Christopher North, the fictional editor of *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, chastises Morgan Odoherty for a particular piece of "blackguardism" that the Irishman had written against several of his fellow contributors but laments that he was unable to reject the offending article. Explaining that "editing is mere humbug now-a-days," North claims that his hands were tied because "I must put in whatever you lads write, else I lose you."¹ The statement is typical of *Blackwood's*: appearing to expose as an illusion a commonly held belief about the periodical press, the magazine is actually substituting a different fiction in its place. North, as any regular reader of *Blackwood's* would know, was portrayed in the magazine as anything but a weak and powerless editor. Bombarded daily with "scores of articles," he often spoke of ruthlessly culling them, a task he appeared to pursue with little hesitation and even less diplomacy.² Even regular contributors to *Maga*, as *Blackwood's* was frequently known, were wary of North's tongue: when (in another "Noctes") Timothy Tickler, still drunk from the night's entertainment, audaciously

¹"Noctes Ambrosianae 18," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 16 (January 1825), 122. The "Noctes" appeared with varying frequency in *Blackwood's* between 1822 and 1835.

²"Notices to Correspondents," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 27 (July 1830), 136.

challenges a statement by North, he earns an astonished rebuke from the Ettrick Shepherd, who exclaims, "Gude safe us, Mr. Tickler, you're no sober yet, or you wad never contradic Mr. North."³ On the surface, therefore, North's remark to Odoherty appears humorous in light of his well-known severity and authority, a little joke about the production of *Blackwood's* that regular readers would understand and enjoy. In reality, of course, the representation of North's editorial efforts is the greater fiction. His editing is indeed "mere humbug" in the strictest sense; his complaints about the difficulty of his own imaginary activities are simply fictionalizing the fictional, adding another layer of complexity to the already convoluted portrayal of the magazine's production. What initially seems like a deconstruction, characteristically pursued by *Blackwood's* in the interest of humour, turns out to be both something more and less: a straightforward joke that also reveals the truth, undermining the established fictions of *Blackwood's* and its editorship for the enjoyment of those few who would have understood the reference.

Despite the fiction of North's strong, indefatigable editorship of *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, the identity of the magazine's actual editors remains something of a mystery. Initially published in April 1817 as the *Edinburgh Monthly Magazine* and edited by James Cleghorn and Thomas Pringle, *Blackwood's* was created when its predecessor was reformed in October of the same year. Largely traditional and uninspired, the *Edinburgh Monthly* had been promoted by its editors as a "repository of whatever may be supposed to be most interesting to general readers," containing pedestrian sections such as the "Antiquarian Repertory" and "Analytical Notices" that were already wearily

³ "Noctes Ambrosianae 19," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 17 (March 1825), 375.

familiar to periodical readers.⁴ Worse yet for William Blackwood, the *Edinburgh Monthly's* staunchly Tory publisher, was the relative liberalism of his editors. A review, for example, of the Whiggish *Edinburgh Review* – a publication irritating to Blackwood for both its politics and its publisher, his bitter rival Archibald Constable – actually praised the publication for its "boldness, originality, and independence of sentiment" rather than criticizing its politics.⁵ Displeased with his editors and disappointed by sales that were distinctly lacklustre, Blackwood fired Cleghorn and Pringle and reformed the publication into *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* after only six numbers. John Gibson Lockhart and John Wilson are generally credited with assuming the editorship of the new publication, a claim that gains credibility in light of Lockhart's feud with the *London's* John Scott and Wilson's frequent use of the North persona, but the full extent of their activities is unknown.⁶

Despite this uncertainty over the actual identity of the editor of *Blackwood's* – a confusion that played a significant role in the events leading to John Scott's death – the importance and influence of the magazine's editorial presence are not diminished in any

⁴ "Editor's Note," *Edinburgh Monthly Magazine* 1 (April 1817), 11. In collections of *Blackwood's* published by William Blackwood, the issues of the *Edinburgh Monthly Magazine* are actually considered to be the first volume of *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* and are numbered accordingly.

⁵ "The Edinburgh Review, no 55," *Edinburgh Monthly Magazine* 1 (June 1817), 300. For more on Blackwood's quarrel with Archibald Constable, see Robert Morrison's "William Blackwood and the Dynamics of Success," in *Print Culture and the Blackwood Tradition, 1805-1930*, ed. David Finkelstein (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 25-27.

⁶ For more on the assumed editorship of Lockhart and Wilson, see Margaret Oliphant, *Annals of a Publishing House: William Blackwood and His Sons*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1897). Oliphant's study has been the basis for most studies of *Blackwood's* since its appearance. Robert Morrison, following the research of Alan Lang Strout, has suggested that there is evidence, particularly amongst the literary correspondence of the magazine, that William Blackwood was actually the editor of his own magazine, with Lockhart and Wilson sharing in some of the responsibilities. Mark Parker, however, claims that *Blackwood's* was edited cooperatively, with Wilson, Lockhart and, at times, the Irishman William Maginn assuming control of different elements of the publication, Blackwood himself acting as a "medium of communication" between contributors and editors. See Morrison, "Blackwood and the Dynamics of Success," 27; Parker, *Literary Magazines*, 199; and Alan Lang Strout, *A Bibliography of Articles in Blackwood's Magazine* (Lubbock: Texas Technological College, 1959).

way. Indeed, although Christopher North is a fictional character, the authority of the *Blackwood's* editor, as his jest with Odoherty suggests, was established and promoted by the magazine as though he were a real man. Nowhere is this process more apparent than in *Blackwood's* notorious "Translation from an Ancient Chaldee Manuscript." A brilliant (and frequently opaque) satire of the politics and business of Archibald Constable, the "Chaldee Manuscript" purported to be a prophecy foretelling the betrayal of an honest businessman (the "man whose name was as ebony") by two perfidious beasts who promise to produce a book for him, only to sabotage that work and seek employment with a new master (the deceitful "man who was crafty in counsel").⁷ Angered by that betrayal, the "man whose name was as ebony" (an allusion to Blackwood) and his forces challenge and defeat the cowardly Constable-figure of the "man who was crafty in counsel" through the production of a new, superior book.⁸ Initially, however, the "man whose name was as ebony" is unsure how to achieve his revenge. Confused by the counsel of too many advisors, who "spake together, and the voice of their speaking was mingled," the Blackwood-figure turns to the guidance of a mysterious figure "clothed in dark garments, having a veil upon his head" (91-2). Promising the Blackwood-figure that he "will deliver thee out of all thy distresses, neither shall any be able to touch a hair of thy head," this unnamed man is given complete control over the battle, as "the man whose name is as

⁷ The beasts were an allusion to Cleghorn and Pringle and Blackwood's unhappiness with their editing of his *Edinburgh Monthly Magazine*. After being fired by Blackwood, Cleghorn and Pringle went to work for Archibald Constable, editing his *Constable's Magazine*. I will discuss this later in the chapter.

⁸ "Translation from an Ancient Chaldee Manuscript," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 2 (October 1817), 89. J.H. Alexander has suggested that the "Chaldee" was an attempt by *Blackwood's* to identify itself against the dominant presence of Constable's *Edinburgh Review*; see J.H. Alexander, "Blackwood's: Magazine as Romantic Form," *Wordsworth Circle* 15 (Spring 1984), 57-68. Maurice Milne has suggested that Blackwood's target was not the *Edinburgh Review*, but the older, more vulnerable *Scot's Magazine*, also published by Constable; see Milne, "The 'Veiled Editor' Unveiled: William Blackwood and his Magazine," *Publishing History* 16 (1984), 87-103.

ebony" eagerly promises "as though sayest even so will I do." Robert Morrison has suggested that this delegation of power provided Blackwood, Lockhart and Gibson a degree of insulation from criticism and critique by offering a fictional editor as a shield to protect them.⁹ More importantly, however, it also localized the magazine's authority within a single individual. There will no longer be a cacophony of "mingled voices"; instead, there is just the veiled figure (who eventually becomes Christopher North), a calm and collected presence who ensures that *Maga* never lacks a champion. The actual identity of the editor matters very little to this type of editorial discourse; by legitimizing the power of this proto-Christopher North as editor, *Blackwood's* located the decision-making process in this single figure, making him a potential source of insight into the motives and methods of the publication.

This chapter will trace the depiction of the *Blackwood's* editor, from his initial emergence as the mysterious figure in "The Chaldee" through his metamorphosis into the formidable Christopher North, in order to examine how his persona encouraged readers to understand their position in relation to *Blackwood's*. Were they valued friends, or merely desired customers? Did they need to be educated, or were they already in agreement with what *Maga* represented? A more prominent editor figure than that of John Scott's "conductor," the *Blackwood's* editor – first as the "veiled editor" and subsequently as Christopher North – provided a rhetorical focus for readers of *Maga*, a signifier of the magazine's contents and values. As North became increasingly linked to the production and ideology of *Blackwood's*, readers were encouraged to understand the magazine through its editor, to see his personality and humour in its pages and to read accordingly.

⁹ Morrison, "William Blackwood and the Dynamics of Success," 26.

This process, along with the magazine's continuing attempts to reveal the "humbug" of the periodical industry as a whole, encouraged readers to feel an intimacy with the publication, a sense of being included in its society. Not all readers, however, were welcomed by *Blackwood's*. Unlike John Scott's "conductor," who made his guidance available to all readers, Christopher North is vocal about his doubt that many of *Blackwood's* readers truly understand what the magazine represents. Those who fail to recognize Maga's virtues are consequently unworthy of joining its society. Indeed, Maga is presented as an object of desire for the vast reading audience, many of whom see the magazine only as a commodity, not the vessel of culture that it is. Much of North's portrayal as editor involves his efforts to defend his precious magazine from the predations of such readers, and his editorial discourse continues that rhetoric, forcing readers to align themselves either with his publication or with those ignorant, undesirable readers, a group North calls the "Million." North's definition of his audience also served a second purpose, allowing him to attempt to reconcile the tension between the magazine's increasing sales and the personal contact that *Blackwood's* promised its readers. Even though they were a threat to everything that Maga represented, the "Million" also represented a validation of those same values, proof that *Blackwood's* offered something that was desirable, yet still exclusive. North is therefore central to how readers came to understand *Blackwood's* and their relation to it, providing his audience with both an identity to which they could ascribe and insight into what the magazine would deliver to its regular readers.

"All Life, Buoyancy and Fire:" The Emergence of Christopher North

It would be reasonable to expect that, upon reforming the *Edinburgh Monthly Magazine* into *Blackwood's*, William Blackwood would want to avoid mention of the *Edinburgh Monthly's* failure in order to allow his new publication to begin its run unburdened by a less-than-illustrious predecessor. From its initial appearance, however, the new *Blackwood's* emphasized its relationship with the *Edinburgh Monthly*. Opening the very first number, a "Notice from the Editor" foregrounded the ties between the two publications by announcing that, like its predecessor, the new periodical would be "a Depository of Miscellaneous Information and Discussion."¹⁰ Despite this claim, there was very little similarity between the two magazines; instead, the connection between them served to distance *Blackwood's* from its predecessor and to help establish its new, distinctive identity. The most obvious example of this process is "The Chaldee Manuscript." The overthrow of the "man who is crafty" and the punishment of the perfidious Pringle and Cleghorn may be at the heart of the "Chaldee's" prophecy, but such a triumph can only occur because the *Edinburgh Monthly* was a failure. Furthermore, its failure is the fault of the two beasts, not the "man whose name is as ebony"; as a result, the Blackwood-figure can destroy his first magazine without shame, inspired by righteous rage at the deception of the beasts, not shame at the poor sales of his publication. It is a fortunate fall, periodical style: the failure of the *Edinburgh Monthly* makes possible the production of a new book and the triumph of the Blackwood-figure over his opponent.

¹⁰ "Notice from the Editor," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 2 (October 1817).

Preceded by Lockhart's infamous attack on the Cockney School and Wilson's somewhat bewildering review of Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*, the sharp, witty satire of the "Chaldee's" prophecy of a conflict to come also suggests that a change has occurred in the magazine, one that breaks with the past in order to pursue a new style. Thus when placed in the context of the first number of the new *Blackwood's*, the satire becomes a statement both of past behaviour and future conduct, a narrative of origin wherein the failure of the *Edinburgh Monthly* is recast as the basis for the radically new and successful *Blackwood's*.

Behind this dramatic change lurks the mysterious figure of the magazine's editor. The prominent firing of Pringle and Cleghorn makes it obvious that the reformed magazine has a new conductor, but apart from the brief and anonymous "Notice from the Editor" and a terse "Notice to Correspondents," the identity of that editor is never revealed. Failing to introduce himself, as would be customary for a new editor, he remains silent throughout the number until the appearance of the figure in "dark clothes" in the "Chaldee Manuscript." No explicit connection is ever made between this anonymous figure and the new editor of *Blackwood's*, but it is clear that he and the Blackwood-figure in the "Chaldee" enter into a business arrangement that gives the mysterious figure complete autonomy in overseeing the interests of the latter, particularly when it comes to frustrating his competitor. It is a surprisingly powerful moment in the "Chaldee": the figure offers, saviour-like, to "deliver" the Blackwood-figure "out of all thy distresses, [and] neither shall any be able to touch a hair of thy head."¹¹ The implication is that not only is this figure the new editor but that he, not Blackwood, will

¹¹ "Chaldee Manuscript," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 2 (October 1817), 96.

be responsible for directing the resources of the confused "man whose name was as ebony."¹² As a result, it is suggested that *Blackwood's* does indeed have a new director, a seemingly capable and intelligent man who is ruthlessly able to pursue those who oppose Blackwood and his publication, discrediting them even as he entertains the reading audience.

While the "Chaldee Manuscript" reveals the role of the magazine's new editor, it is not until the following number that elements of his personality begin to emerge. In a "Notice from the Editor" that opens the November number, the editor discusses a recent letter addressed to the magazine, stating:

We received, some weeks ago, a letter signed P. professing to be "a Vindication of Mr. Leigh Hunt from the Aspersions of Z.," which, though its author seems erroneously to have supposed that the remarks of Z. were meant to apply to the character of Mr. Hunt as unconnected with that of his writings, should have been inserted, but for one circumstance, which did not at first strike our attention. Mr P. appears to allude, in a pointed manner, to a certain Gentleman, politically hostile to the principles of the Examiner Newspaper, whom he most groundlessly imagines to be the writer of Z. Should he choose to expunge that part of his letter, we will give it a place in our Number for December.¹³

This notice is not extraordinary by itself; it could have appeared in any number of periodicals at the time, asserting both the impartiality of the publication and its intention

¹² It is worth noting that those resources include an army of natural and mythic creatures that come at the call of the mysterious figure. These allies participate in the destruction of the "Man who was crafty in counsel" and remain to be directed by the mysterious figure like a group of fantastic contributors. Indeed, a number of animals (such as the Boar or the Scorpion) were associated with regular *Blackwood's* contributors such as James Hogg and Lockhart.

¹³ "Notice from the Editor," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 2 (November 1817). "Z" was the pen name used by Lockhart for his attacks on the Cockney school.

to protect its writers. When read in the context of a "Note" from the editor that appears on the page directly across from it, however, the initial notice takes on a different character. In the "Note," the editor claims that he "has learned with regret, that an Article in the first Edition of last Number, which was intended merely as a *jeu d'esprit*, has been construed so as to give offence...he has on that account withdrawn it in the Second Edition."¹⁴ Beneath the note, in a smaller script, appears a correction that explains, "with the December Number will be given eight pages, to supply the deficiency occasioned by the omission of the Article, 'Translation from an Ancient Chaldee Manuscript'." The editor's lack of sincerity is readily apparent; what was, in fact, a libellous satire becomes a mere "*jeu d'esprit*," a simple game. Furthermore, by including the title of the offensive article under the pretence of being a dutiful, conscientious editor, he is only reinforcing his seeming lack of repentance by returning the name of the offending article to the attention of the reader and reminding his audience of its contents. The notice about the letter from "P" thus becomes something more than the normal, coded notice from an editor to a correspondent; it suggests that while *Blackwood's* and its editor may not be impartial, nor are they simply "politically hostile." They are, in fact, motivated by fun and wit, willing to poke fun at their targets no matter what boundaries of decorum, or the law, they may transgress. The notice also implies that while *Blackwood's* and its editor may be content to play games with articles about the personality and character of others, such liberties are not to be taken with their own characters. Those who do take matters too seriously – or oppose *Blackwood's* and her writers too vocally – are themselves liable to become targets of satire and the editor's pen.

¹⁴ "A Note," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 2 (November 1817).

The editor's personality continues to develop over a number of articles and letters where he appears as a stern, serious figure, a foil for the more interesting and frivolous dialogue of his contributors. In the fourth letter of the series "Letters of Timothy Tickler to Eminent Literary Characters," the fictitious Tickler, responding to a letter from the editor, offers his congratulations for the past number before chastising the editor for asking yet again about the "Chaldee." "I almost wish you had been mum here, for it is a very delicate subject," Tickler claims, before moving to an extended discussion of *Constable's Magazine* and its editors, the familiar Cleghorn and Pringle.¹⁵ While the editor, Tickler reports, found the periodical to be "unworthy of any further notice," Tickler himself provides a lengthy satirical passage that evokes "The Chaldee" by offering a "prophecy" about the editors of *Constable's*, suggesting that they will be "brought down from [their] elevation by some sporting shepherd," (a reference to James Hogg, widely believed to be the author of the "Chaldee") if their performance does not improve. These references to the "Chaldee" continue the "*jeu d'esprit*" of the original piece by revisiting the attack on Constable and his editors, encouraging any readers who were aware of the premise of the original satire to join in the fun. The editor's rejection of *Constable's* as being beneath his notice may be in direct contrast with Tickler's "prophecy," but according to the fiction of editorship in *Blackwood's*, the letter has been included by his decision alone. This undermines the editor's claim that *Constable's* was best ignored, for if he were truly tired of the subject, the letter would presumably be excluded. Instead, by including it while feigning boredom on his part, the editor reveals his own sly enjoyment of the joke and a desire to pursue it further, but in a manner that

¹⁵ "Letter IV. – To the Editor of *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 3 (July 1818), 461.

makes the joke far more subtle than a sharp editorial or caustic review. The result is a dialogue where much of the enjoyment is derived from deciphering the allusions that are seemingly not endorsed by the editor, yet are clearly there by his design. The suggestion is that while important, mere satire is not enough for the man: the style of the fun is as important as the result, and he is not willing to rest while humour remains in a subject.

Still veiled and anonymous, the editor was thus revealed in bits and pieces, and his emergence influenced how the reader was encouraged to understand *Blackwood's*. In nineteenth-century periodicals, Jon Klancher has suggested, style was a sign of authorship in what had become a largely impersonal form, "a marker of the (always inferred) relation of the audience to the writer hidden behind the corporate text."¹⁶ In the instance of *Blackwood's*, that style is in large part derived from its mysterious editor. The magazine's defining characteristics – its irrepressible love of fun, its critical and aesthetic interests, its various political hobbyhorses – all appear to begin with the editor and his own interests. His gradual emergence thus allowed readers to understand him with greater ease; at the same time, it also allowed them to gain insight into *Maga* itself. Mark Parker has noted that popular topics like The Cockney School or Edinburgh Whigs were more than satirical topics in *Blackwood's*: they became tropes, metaphors for a larger critical discussion or clarification of the magazine's stance on a topic.¹⁷ Leigh Hunt's name, for instance, or a reference to "Yellow Pants" (as the *Blackwood's* writers called him), was meant to evoke an entire range of cultural and aesthetic critiques that readers of *Maga*

¹⁶ Klancher, *English Reading Audiences*, 51.

¹⁷ Mark Parker, introduction to "Noctes VI," *Noctes Ambrosianae, 1822-3*, ed. Mark Parker, vol. 3 of *Blackwood's Magazine, 1817-25: Selections from Maga's Infancy*, ed. Nicholas Mason (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2006), 109-10.

would quickly learn to anticipate. The fact that regular *Blackwood's* readers would already be familiar with the jokes does not appear to reduce the humour; if anything, those tropes actually heightened the pleasure taken in the satire, inviting readers to participate in a familiar, still amusing joke. The editor figure contributed to this process: as his personality became more fully developed, experienced readers could potentially begin to anticipate his response on certain topics. We learn from Tickler's letter, for instance, that the editor has neither love for the Whigs of Scotland nor time for the inept work of Cleghorn and Pringle, whose efforts he considers "unworthy of any further notice." That personal opinion, in turn, appears to influence his editing of *Blackwood's*, as jokes at the expense of the hapless Cleghorn and Pringle or Leigh Hunt began to appear with regularity. His own personality becomes part of the humour, and readers are encouraged to anticipate his response and enjoy a laugh with the *Blackwood's* contributors.

Only in September 1819 (eighteen numbers after his shadowy appearance in "The Chaldee Manuscript") is the "veiled editor" finally given a name. A notice under the heading of "Books Preparing for Publication by William Blackwood, Edinburgh and Cadell & Davies, Strand, London" announces "The Autobiography of Christopher North, Esq. Editor of Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, in 3 vols," promising to provide a "copious account of all the extraordinary scenes which occurred in Paris at the commencement of the Revolution, and of the wonderful escape of the Author shortly after the martyrdom of King Louis."¹⁸ While the notice evokes the convoluted publishing history of Lockhart's *Peter's Letters to his Kinfolk*, where a positive review of the novel

¹⁸ "Books Preparing for Publication," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 5 (September 1819).

was printed in *Blackwood's* in order to increase interest in the work before it had even been published, this announcement also introduces the editor of *Blackwood's* as a fully realized individual – a "pseudo-person," to use Peter Murphy's phrase – with a history of his own that pre-dates the appearance of *Blackwood's*.¹⁹ More than any allusions to the editor's personality or political views, this announcement gives the editor a definable identity, a name and the suggestion of a history to match the elements of his character that had already been revealed.

The emergence of North as a "pseudo-person" actually began a month earlier in an article entitled "The True and Authentic Account of the Twelfth of August, 1819." In this article, North first appears as a character rather than simply an "other" in a dialogue. The "True and Authentic Account" recounts a shooting expedition undertaken by North and his closest contributors, and it marks the first depiction of the editor's appearance. Morgan Odoherly, describing the editor to the anonymous narrator of the "True and Authentic Account," explains how North came "strutting into the front shop [from his office at the rear] as boldly as his rheumatism would permit, with a dog-whip looking out of his pocket, and a call hung round his neck like a boatswain's whistle. After a few minutes confabulation with Ebony, he hobbled off with *Daniel's Rural Sports* beneath his arm."²⁰ A gentleman in manners and status, North is revealed to be a man of intense feeling, exhibiting a passion for literature and a suitably masculine devotion to sporting activities. He takes great pleasure in his surroundings while hunting, for example, exclaiming that his "heart leapt" as he "gazed on the sea of mountains, emerging from the

¹⁹ Murphy, "Impersonation and Authorship," 633. It should also be noted that it appears no autobiography was ever published.

²⁰ "The True and Authentic Account of the Twelfth of August, 1819," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 5 (August 1819), 598.

soft mists in which they have been shrouded during the night" (601). His great passion, however, remains his magazine. Waiting at the camp while the others pursue their hunting and camping, he admits that he "remained at the tent, to overhaul the 'Contributor's Box,' and if necessary, to write a leading article." Dry as it may seem, North finds the work enjoyable, admitting that the "Contributor's Box" is "rich in various matter," providing him with amusement for several hours while the others enjoy more physical pursuits (602).

While North's activities and commentary reveal significant intellectual prowess, he is also increasingly tied to the production and contents of the magazine. Previous suggestions and assumptions about the extent of his editorship begin to be replaced with concrete examples of his duties. In a footnote directly beneath the description of his wilderness editing, North laments that his appearance in *Peter's Letters to his Kinfolk* is of "an obscure man, a martyr to rheumatism, and one who only draws plans, which others execute" (601). While this description may suggest the mysterious "man in dark clothes" of the "Chaldee Manuscript" who advises the Blackwood-figure but ultimately leaves action to his minions, it also emphasizes how different the newly-revealed North is from that portrayal. He is a man of action, whose age and rheumatism may prevent him from pursuing strenuous physical activities but not from the careful supervision of *Blackwood's*. Not only does he read all the contributions himself, but he is perfectly willing and able to write any number of pieces for the magazine. "The Tent," for instance, which is the title of the number following the "True and Authentic Account," offers a fictional account of the production of an upcoming number of *Blackwood's* and depicts North briefly returning to Edinburgh from the moors to personally oversee the final

stages of production. Upon his return, North produces a number of articles for the issue, describing how he "dashed at everything, from Don Juan to Slack the Pugilist; and flew in a moment from the Cape-of-Good-Hope to the Pyramids of Egypt."²¹ After all this, North still manages to moderate the subsequent discussions between contributors under the eponymous tent as they gather to discuss, read, and debate potential material for the following issue. These accomplishments lead North to reflect with pride that "we both plan and execute – and flatter ourselves that there is something in our articles that betrays the hands of the Editor."²²

Increasingly, this fiction of North's editorial duties comes to represent his complete control over the magazine. The "True and Authentic Account," according to the writer, was produced upon returning from the moors because "we do not see how we can do better than fill our last sheet with an account of our shooting excursion" (597). In this instance, "we" is meant to include Hogg, Odoherty and the other *Blackwood's* contributors: "Now...being to a man bachelors...we really believe that for literati we are most extraordinary shots – and we hereby challenge all Scotland for a dinner at Young's, and a hundred pounds to the erection of the National Monument." The introduction of the editor and Odoherty's examination of him, however, introduces a remarkable change in the narrative. Beginning by explaining that if contributors visited North's offices, "it was but for a moment....our visits were indeed like those of the angels," the narrator is careful to include himself in the group of the contributors before proceeding to document the appearance of the important hunters prior to their trip (598). Following North's

²¹ "The Tent," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 5 (September 1819), 627.

²² "The True and Authentic Account of the Twelfth of August, 1819," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 5 (August 1819), 598.

appearance, that voice changes and the next paragraph opens with the statement that "notwithstanding our rheumatism, we arrived first at the place of rendezvous, having gone direct to Aberdeen on the top of the mail." The collective "we" of the *Blackwood's* contributors has thus shifted to the royal editorial "we" of North himself who, choosing "not to encumber ourselves with a gun...[being] under the necessity, on the twelfth, of looking over our 'Contributor's Box'," takes easy possession of both the submissions and the narrative. His appearance transforms the remainder of the "Account" into his retelling of the events of the day as his contributors are relegated to secondary characters whose encounters are related, second-hand, by North himself. The next month's number continues this change, as North narrates his return to Edinburgh, the difficulties getting the previous number to press, and his place in the conversations that take place at the tent when he returns to the moors. What had previously been a collective effort now rests entirely with North.

This prolonged narrative invites a change in how readers view both the editor and the contents of *Blackwood's*. North's ideals and political views, only hinted at before, become more prominent in the magazine and more central to its contents. At one point, for instance, North expresses his pleasure that the "vile Jacobinical spirit, unfortunately but too prevalent" among printers was not present in the printing offices of his magazine, implying that something so distasteful to North would never appear in his magazine.²³ Furthermore, North's authority over the magazine begins to be depicted with increasing regularity. While the veiled editor had always been present, his role was left to be inferred from snippets and allusions. Readers felt his control, but it was seldom shown. By

²³ "The Tent," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 5 (September 1819), 627.

contrast, North's role is emphasized. In a sonnet addressed to Christopher North, subtitled "On Receiving the last Number of this Magazine, by the hands of John Dow, Esq. W.S.," James Hogg compares the reception of *Blackwood's* with the arrival of spring:

How sweet when Winter, o'er the yarrow rocks,
 Hangs his pale banner, and the speary wood
 Groans to the blast, as if in mustering mood –
 And on the far bare hills pine the sad flocks –
 When the unseen ice-queen all the torrents locks,
 And with fantastic spray-work plays her pranks
 Along Saint Mary's lake and Eltrive's banks,
 And, with cold glittering buds and leaflets, mocks
 The warm and lovely summer – oh! How sweet –
 (Now one moon more hath waned like a dream,
 And man is half-forgotten) – Come the feet
 Of thy kind messenger! – Thy wizard gleam
 Flashes the world on the lone bard's retreat
 And life is in my ears like a loud stream.²⁴

While it is the magazine itself that inspires the reaction of the "lone bard," it is noteworthy that Hogg addresses his response to North, thanking him for his "kind messenger." Given the supposed personal relationship between North and Hogg, this sonnet could certainly be read as one friend thanking the other for sending him the newest

²⁴ "Sonnet, by the Ettrick Shepherd: Addressed to Christopher North, Esq., on receiving the last Number of this Magazine, by the hands of John Dow, Esq. W.S.," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 6 (January 1820), 464.

issue, particularly given Hogg's well-known rustic surroundings and the intelligence that *Blackwood's* prided itself on carrying. It is also implied, however, that the magazine itself springs from North – both physically, as it is carried from there by his "kind messenger," and creatively, from his "wizard gleam" – and that in reading it, the reader is engaging in a personal relationship with its editor that must elicit a degree of intimacy and, in the case of Hogg, gratitude.

This realignment of *Blackwood's* around Christopher North infuses the publication with the personality of its editor. He is its source, often depicted writing its articles, and even when he is not, he tirelessly directs its composition and production. This allows the magazine to offer more pointed political commentary through North's voice but, just as importantly, it provides the audience with a model reader: North himself. In the postscript to a letter by "An Old Friend with a New Face," a contribution by Wilson that takes a distinctly mean-spirited approach to Hogg's autobiography, North admits that the letter may have caused pain to some people, but "if thou art, as we believe the generality of our readers are, a person endowed with a gentlemanly portion of common sense, and can relish banter and good humour as well as curry and claret, thou wilt at once discover that the object of this 'deevilrie,' to use an expression of the Shepherd's, is to add to the interest which his life has excited....and put a few cool hundreds in his pocket."²⁵ North is implicitly just the sort of man described, one who enjoys banter and masculine humour but who only has the best interests of his friend and readers at heart. A *Blackwood's* reader, it is suggested, will be of the same mind, enjoying both the humour and the goodwill of the magazine. Moreover, a regular *Blackwood's*

²⁵ "Familiar Epistles," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 9 (August 1821), 52.

reader would be familiar with North and thus able to read accordingly, recognizing the editor's intent. North is merely producing what he would, in turn, wish to read: a bit of "curry and claret," something that the ideal *Blackwood's* reader would understand.

This conflation of North as editor and reader is made explicit in an 1821 comparison between the editor of *Blackwood's* and his periodical predecessor, Sylvanus Urban. "Sylvanus Urban and Christopher North," seemingly written by North himself, opens with the editor cogitating on improvements in periodical literature over the ages, a relatively common subject for a magazine that takes pleasure in considering itself to be innovative and original. North then compares himself to Urban, the fictional editor of *The Gentleman's Magazine*, exclaiming "what an alteration has the interval between the two coronations produced!"²⁶ The two editors, North claims, are opposites: "[North] is all life, buoyancy and fire, while [Urban] is the personification of homeliness and heaviness....carried downwards by the supernatural force of gravitation." While North admits that Urban is his professional ancestor, it is a tenuous link, altered by time and the evolution of the periodical. "He was to us what the frugal shopkeeper, the founder of his family, is to the dashing young heir his grandson," North explains, and the two could not be more different in their attitudes and behaviour. Urban, as the metaphorical lineage establishes, is more practical, frugal and Whiggish, "mindful of pounds, shillings and pence...[in] his dirty shop in Threadneedle Street," while North enjoys both a more sumptuous lifestyle and the rewards of a very lucrative industry (104). The *Blackwood's* editor is more gentlemanly and interesting, eschewing the rigid, provincial activities of Urban and turning "wherever the irrepressible and inexhaustible elasticity of his mind

²⁶ "Sylvanus Urban and Christopher North," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 9 (August 1821), 103.

impels him."

This description, ostensibly of North and his tireless search for "banter and good humour," stands equally for *Blackwood's* itself: North's habits, desires and tastes are the hallmark of his magazine. As he makes abundantly clear, "ordinary repasts" such as those published (and represented) by Urban would be distasteful to contemporary readers, particularly those who have enjoyed "the high-flavoured and exciting viands of [*Blackwood's*] table." The main dish of that feast, of course, is North himself. He is the chef and host, his "life, buoyancy and fire" infusing *Blackwood's* with the same appealing elements that he represents. At the same time, however, he is also one of the diners at any *Blackwood's* feast, enjoying the very stuff that his magazine provides. The name of Christopher North, like that of Sylvanus Urban, indicates the contents and values of the publication while simultaneously proposing itself as typical of its readers, most of whom would doubtless be nothing like North themselves. Figures like Urban and North are an image and a style, a key to understanding the publication and its values, and a model offered to readers as something to which they can aspire. Readers can, in short, both read North in *Blackwood's* and read *like* North.

Just as "The Chaldee Manuscript" writes the history and founding of *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, so does the extended narrative of "The True Account" and "The Tent" – along with dedicatory poems such as Hogg's sonnet, or the salutary "Hymn to Christopher North" – mythologize Christopher North, creating a past and identity for him, but in such a way that his character comes to dominate the publication.²⁷ More than simply the editor of *Blackwood's* or a rheumatic old Tory with a passion for literature and

²⁷ "Letter from *****, Inclosing Hymn to Christopher North," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 9 (April 1821), 59-64.

an indefatigable love for his magazine, Christopher North is a signifier for a range of behaviour that no longer needs explaining. His personality and identity become a style unto themselves, representative of *Blackwood's* content and its relation to the audience. He may represent Maga and all of its values, history and wit, but North also presents the readers with a model of how to read the magazine. That editorial persona offers a singular portal through which a reader can potentially understand the magazine. Articles and commentary can be interpreted as being directed or written by him, or they can be approached and read as North himself would be imagined to do. Indeed, readers are encouraged to identify themselves with North, their familiarity with his often prickly personality inspiring a connection that leads to understanding, admiration and, perhaps, affection. Insight into the mind of North, it is implied, is insight into *Blackwood's* itself, an intimacy that the ideal reader of *Blackwood's* can enjoy and deploy in every issue.

"Accursed Cant": North and the Business of Personality

Ideal readers, however, are created, not found, and *Blackwood's* required a specific set of skills from its readers. In particular, it demanded an understanding of the quintessential *Blackwood's* characteristic: personality. In *Blackwood's*, personality is a quality, a collection of emotional, physical and mental characteristics that identifies an individual, but it is also a method for understanding what is written and, in the words of Mark Parker, "[connecting] writing to the person behind it, whether in describing and

evaluating discourse."²⁸ This dual role is apparent in the importance of Christopher North to his publication and his influence on how it is read, but the role played by personality in publications like *Blackwood's* also can be found in many of their practices, from their reviews to their interactions with other publications. Personality could inspire attacks like those levied at the Cockneys by Lockhart, or it could be seen as a means of categorizing and critiquing a publication. As a result, personality is neither negative nor positive: it is simply a tool. Asked by Odoherty in the first number of the *Noctes* if he disapproves of personality, North responds: "No, no....In reviewing in particular, what can be done without personality? Nothing, nothing. What are books that don't express the personal characters of their authors; and who can review books, without reviewing those that wrote them?"²⁹ Recognizing and tweaking the individual behind the publication or persona is, to North's mind, simply what literature has always done. As he explains to his contributors, by concentrating on the identity and character of authors, the periodical press is simply following the great satires of history, where "personality, which no literature was ever without, blended...with them."³⁰ Publications like *Blackwood's* are not unduly concerned with personality; rather, they are part of a long and distinguished line of publications who have taken it as their topic.

Despite North's acknowledgement of the role that personality has played in literature, *Blackwood's* repeatedly informs its readers that rival publications are seldom transparent about their use of it. They may write about, and with, personality but they deny doing so, instead attempting to appear objective and unbiased. Discussing an

²⁸ Parker, introduction to *Noctes Ambrosianae*, 1822-1823, xxv.

²⁹ "Noctes Ambrosianae 1," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 10 (March 1822), 362.

³⁰ "Noctes Ambrosianae 3," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 11 (May 1822), 613.

accusation made by Francis Jeffrey in a recent issue of the *Edinburgh Review* that Byron was "the author and institutor of the sin of personality," Pen Owen, a *Blackwood's* regular, angrily retorts, "has [Jeffrey] forgot how, from the beginning of his career, he abused Southey? Has he forgot how he lashed his friend, Tommy Moore?....Was there no personality in calling Thelwall a tailor?" (608). North, however, exercising his editorial authority, explains Jeffrey's actions to his contributors. The *Edinburgh Review*, according to North, was acting out of embarrassment: having begun the conflict with his extremely negative review of Byron's juvenile poems, Jeffrey had found himself the unhappy target of the poet's *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, but with the success of *Childe Harold*, he could not simply attack Byron for fear of seeming petty. Therefore, after being forced to go "down on his knees, and [worship] the rising star. Puff! puff! puff! nothing but puffing," Jeffrey had been able to show his teeth once Byron's popularity had decreased (612). By then, according to North, it was too late. When *Childe Harold* "raved with impunity against Talavera, Wellington, and the Bible," the *Edinburgh's* silence had revealed Jeffrey's true hypocrisy: Tory publications like *Blackwood's* had immediately taken a stand against Byron, but Jeffrey had entered the fray only well after the matter was resolved. What therefore may have been a personal attack was instead motivated by other, less honourable designs, as Jeffrey used a personal attack on Byron to advance his own position and reputation. Furthermore, he did so in such a way that his true intentions were hidden, obscured beneath what North calls the "accursed cant" that denied the existence of personality within his publication. To North, such behaviour was representative of the hypocrisy of *Blackwood's* rivals: despite being involved in the game of personality by virtue of their literary nature, those periodicals instead placed

themselves on a pedestal of objectivity and neutrality that obscured their true intention and misled their readers.

Mark Parker has suggested that the "sophistical rhetoric" of *Blackwood's* attempts "to undermine the seriousness of other periodicals, to show that seriousness is as much a posture as its opposite," but the subversion of competing periodicals surpasses simply revealing the hypocrisy behind their use of personality.³¹ Instead, *Blackwood's* takes pride in attempting to reveal the conventions of the periodical press itself. Having uncharacteristically defended Byron from the attacks of Jeffrey and the *Edinburgh Review* in its third instalment, the "Noctes" introduces the poet himself in its fourth number, portraying an imaginary encounter in Italy between Byron and the magazine's irrepressible Irish contributor, Morgan Odoherty. Sharing a drink with the poet, Odoherty accuses Byron of promoting sin with his poetry, an accusation that Byron strongly rejects, claiming that his work is, in fact, deeply moral: "I defy any man to shew me a speech – a line in *Cain*, which is not defensible on the same principle as the haughty speech of Satan, in the first book of Milton – or the proud defiance of Moloch in the second."³² He further declares that his intention in *Don Juan* to "give a flowing free satire of things as they are" was received so poorly in England and France simply because the "realities of things" in those nations are obscured, distorted by "convention – surface – cant" (103). Byron's echo of North's contempt for Jeffrey's "accursed cant" appears to inspire Odoherty, who suggests that Christopher North views the periodical press in a similar way and strives to help his readers understand the "complete stuff" of magazines. The goal, Odoherty explains, is to show the "*Brutum Pecus* that [the periodical press] 'tis all

³¹ Parker, introduction to "Noctes 4," *Noctes Ambrosianae*, 1822-23, 63.

³² "Noctes Ambrosianae 4," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 11 (July 1822), 105.

quackery and humbug" by mocking the competition and "doing all that ever these folks could do in one Number, and then undoing it in the next, – puffing, deriding, sneering, jeering, prosing, piping, and so forth" (105). *Blackwood's* frequently abrasive humour and savage wit are simply techniques to expose the hypocrisy of other publications. "People have learnt the great lesson," Odoherly concludes, "that Reviews, and indeed all periodicals...are nothing," while *Blackwood's* itself is not a periodical at all, but "a classical work, which happens to be continued from month to month; a real Magazine of mirth, misanthropy, wit, wisdom, folly, fiction, fun, festivity, theology, bruising, and thingumbob" (105-6). The Irishman's use of "Review," drawing attention to the *Edinburgh Review* as it does, asserts the difference between that publication and *Blackwood's* while suggesting that the performance of the former is nothing but illusion, mere "convention – surface – cant." The great institution of periodical literature – its traditions, practices and publicity – is reduced to "nothing," exposed as a business, an artificial entity that astute readers must learn to recognize.

Blackwood's thus casts itself as the purveyor of truth and honesty in an otherwise corrupt business. This stance encouraged readers to consider what they read more carefully, while also offering them an opportunity to feel more connected to the publication and its editor. Meeting with Odoherly in the first instalment of the "Noctes," for instance, North presses his contributor, who has just returned from Fleet Prison, for any and all details of the publishing trade in London. Odoherly is happy to oblige, telling his editor that the "minor periodicals" are doing "worse and worse. Taylor and Hessey are going down like the devil. – Colbourn pays like a hero for what you would fling in the fire. The copyright of the European was disposed of t'other day for about £1600, back

numbers, plates, and all included."³³ His posture is typical of *Blackwood's*, combining a personal attack with a move to clarify the practices of the industry, but it does offer a small window into what, for many readers, would be a previously unexplored world. Some members of the audience would no doubt already understand the workings of the periodical trade, but to most, the names of Taylor, Hessey, or Colbourn would likely be familiar only from their appearance on the title page of publications. Emphasizing the circulation of periodicals – North expresses hope that Sir Richard Philips, the proprietor of the *Monthly Magazine*, is "thriving," and Odoherly provides him with a rough estimate of the magazine's sales – *Blackwood's* emphasizes the materiality of periodicals and their nature as commodities. It is a very different position than what is adopted by competing journals, and it serves to highlight a different aspect of those periodicals, revealing the motivations that lie beneath their rhetoric. Paradoxically, this exposure of the commercial interests of the periodical press actually serves to distance *Maga* from such sordid concerns; by exposing the interests of its competitors, *Blackwood's* is offering its readers a chance to be included in the magazine's society, among the select group that know the "truth" about the periodical press. This connection surpasses the more limited relationship between producer and consumer pursued by other publications, instead promising a deeper, less material relationship between *Blackwood's* and those readers who share the periodical's interest in exposing the "cant" of the modern press.

The key role in the exposure of personality is, unsurprisingly, reserved for Christopher North. He guides the exploration of the press and its practices with what Gary Kelly sums up as "urbanity, wit, learnedness and suavity," explaining what is

³³ "Noctes Ambrosianae 1," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 10 (March 1822), 371.

concealed behind the appearances and business practices of familiar publications.³⁴

Where characters like Pen Owen can only splutter angrily at the behaviour of hypocrites like Jeffrey, North is able eloquently and thoroughly to explain the significance of such actions. Despite this facilitation, personality can obscure as much as it reveals, and North's own personality proves an impediment to completely understanding *Blackwood's* itself. Continually testing the relationship between representation and fact, *Blackwood's* often obscures the line between truth and jest, making differentiating between the two difficult, if not completely impossible. In these instances, Christopher North offers no assistance at all; as Morgan Odoherty tells Byron, the *Blackwood's* editor assumes readers can determine the truth for themselves. North has "two or three principles," Odoherty explains, "I mean religion, loyalty, and the like, [about which] he is always stiff as a poker; and although he now and then puts in puffs of mediocre fellows, everybody sees they're put in merely to fill the pages...his book is just like the best book in the world – it contains a certain portion of *Balaam*."³⁵ Even though Odoherty argues that the contrast between the weaker material and the important contributions is immediately obvious, determining whether something is the product of *Blackwood's* "true men" or not becomes a problem. Superficially, it is unimportant; readers can laugh off Odoherty's statement as a joke, secure either in their belief that *Blackwood's* never provides mediocre entertainment or confident in their ability to determine what matters and what does not. At a deeper level, however, determining the principles that are central to *Blackwood's* requires readers to put the critical skills taught by the magazine to good use. This is not a matter of determining the obvious, such as North's dislike for Whigs; rather, readers must

³⁴ Gary Kelly, *English Fiction of the Romantic Period, 1789-1830* (London: Longman, 1988), 256.

³⁵ "Noctes Ambrosianae 4," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 11 (July 1822), 71.

discern the motivation beneath North's personality and what it means for *Blackwood's*. Readers may feel confident that they know Maga and its distinctive editor but, as Odoherty's joke suggests, their knowledge is far from complete. It is not enough to just read *Blackwood's*; its ideal readers must be able to separate the "balaam" from the substance and recognize the truth beneath the "cant." Only then will they prove themselves to be skilled readers, part of a select few. Encouraging those select individuals, North announces that "talent, wit, learning, never can knock in vain at the door of our Sanctum," but less critical readers are part of a different group, one that thoughtlessly consumes *Blackwood's*, blind to its virtue.³⁶ These are members of "The Million."

Christopher North and "The Million"

In "An Hour's Tête-a-Tête with the Public," a conversational piece from the editor that discusses *Blackwood's* early success, Christopher North announces that "OUR SALE IS PRODIGIOUS – AND WE ARE ABSOLUTELY COINING MONEY."³⁷ His claim is certainly somewhat tongue-in-cheek, playing with the common conception that a publication like his must be immensely profitable, yet there is an element of boastful pride in his claim. "We have actually created a writing public," he crows four months later in "Another Tête-a-Tête with the Public," a group of readers who are supplied by a vast industry of Brobdingnagian proportions solely dedicated to producing *Blackwood's*:

³⁶ "Postscript to the Preface," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 19 (1826), xxxiii.

³⁷ "An Hour's Tête-a-Tête with the Public," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 8 (October 1820), 80.

Pressmen traverse the streets in bands. Printer's devils are at a premium. Paper mills flourish beyond all precedent. Large parties repair daily to the moors; and, from the myriads of wild fowl which are shot, nothing is taken but the quills for pens, – the body is thrown away as refuse. Ink is floated down to us in a canal cut for the purpose.³⁸

True to *Blackwood's* tradition, the excess is fanciful, with entire animals discarded for their feathers and bands of pressmen roaming the streets like gangs. Nonetheless, beneath the customary humour is an attitude of confidence, even arrogance, in the belief that *Blackwood's* distinctive tone has found a willing, enthusiastic audience.

Despite this popularity, however, North makes it clear that not every reader or contributor is worthy of his magazine. No contributor, for instance, no matter how popular, is more important to North than his duty to his beloved Maga. Discussing the failings of many of the *Blackwood's* writers, North tells an aghast Ettrick Shepherd that "man never breathed, nor ever will breathe, for whose contributions to the Magazine I cared one single curse."³⁹ His original plan, he suggests, was to simply write the entire work himself, and it was "nothing but the purest philanthropy [that] induced me...to suffer any contributors to the Magazine," a charity that he bitterly repents. When The Shepherd, predictably hurt, asks his editor if all contributions, including those by a "shepherd, more silly than his sheep," are met with "a cauld glint o'the ee – a curl o'the lip – a humph o'the voice – a shake o'the head," North quickly moderates his tone, but their discussion emphasizes how *Blackwood's* has evolved beyond its contributors (784). "The Magazine, James," North explains, "is the Magazine." While some contributors may be

³⁸ "Another Tête-a-Tête with the Public," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 8 (February 1821), 531.

³⁹ "Noctes Ambrosianae 29," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 20 (November 1826), 783.

closer to the heart of *Blackwood's* than others, all of them are replaceable. Only North can understand and articulate the true nature of the magazine, and he ensures that nothing delays Maga on its inexorable progress to the press. The result is not just a successful publication, but an institution, a magazine beyond the cares, feelings and simple aspirations of mere mortals. *Blackwood's*, as one correspondent tells North, is "impregnable...rejoicing in its own might, laughing at the applause of friends, and the threats of enemies."⁴⁰

Impregnable as Maga may be, it is still beset on all sides by the forces of mediocrity. "There is nothing more to be lamented," the opening lines of an 1821 article entitled "On Vulgar Prejudices Against Literature" exclaim, "and yet nothing more true, than that the 'profanum vulgus,' the common mass of mankind, look on mental superiority with a jealous and jaundiced eye."⁴¹ Outlining a war between the ignorant masses and the refined guardians of culture, the article's author leaves little doubt as to which side of that conflict North and *Blackwood's* support. From Odoherty's scornful derision of the "*Brutum Pecus*" in the "Noctes," to North's contempt for the numerous unskilled and unsuitable submissions to the magazine, Maga always represents the leading edge of taste, wit and urbanity. Opposing the vulgarity of the teeming masses, therefore, is something that *Blackwood's* accomplishes by its very existence. Nonetheless, it is a difficult, thankless task made more difficult by countless foes. Evoking the image of the Battle of Thermopylae, where the Spartan king Leonidas, backed by a small number of "patriots," withstood the invading "million" of the Persian tyrant Xerxes, the article "On Vulgar Prejudices" continues by reminding readers that "the glory of achievement is

⁴⁰ "An Expostulatory Letter to C. North, Esq.," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 10 (October 1821), 292.

⁴¹ "On Vulgar Prejudices Against Literature," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 9 (May 1821), 173.

exactly commensurate to the hazard of the enterprise" (174). The parallels between the ancient battle and a nineteenth-century cultural struggle are apparent: the Spartans defended Greece, home of learning, culture and art from the depredations of an immense horde of barbarians, whose lust for wealth and conquest ignored the great achievements of the society that they sought to destroy. *Blackwood's* seeks to do the same. There is no greater "glory" than such opposition because there is no more important task than the defence of civilization. Where the ancient battle set warrior against warrior, however, *Blackwood's* defence of culture meets the "Million" with the weapon of discursive humour and wit.

A heterogeneous mass, *Blackwood's* foes are drawn from a broad range, including obvious groups such as political opponents and radical workers but also (more surprisingly) the magazine's very own readers and potential contributors. Indeed, North is clear that one of the unifying characteristics of his opponents is their passion for his magazine. In a lengthy passage from his "Notice to Correspondents," North displays a suspicion of contributors and readers that surpasses a simple dislike for their "dull and prosing papers":

There are a prodigious number of clever people at present alive and kicking – and, judging from our own list, we should suppose, that in Great Britain and Ireland, contributors must amount to a million. There is a contributor in about every fourth family. In one domestic circle he is a papa – a stout gentleman about forty, with red cheeks, and a brown wig; in another, grand-papa, a fine military-looking old fellow, six feet high, with hair white as snow....In another family again, the happy mother of ten children is, we are sorry to say it, the unhappy mother of twenty

articles. In this house, a pale delicate girl – an only daughter....in that, three red-armed sisters, well to do in the world – with constitutions strong as horses – and each on the death of her father, the tallow-chandler, entitled to a fortune of fifteen hundred pounds, are all hard at work with their respective articles – one at the pathetic, another at the picturesque, and the eldest, and most formidable at the sublime. Now, not to indulge farther in imaginary pictures, drawn from the contributing population of these realms, we appeal to the candour of that population – nay, we fling ourselves upon it – and ask the Million to reflect for a few moments with themselves, in society or solitude, on the condition of an Editor in this life.⁴²

Once more we see a "Million," now drawn not from Persia but from *Blackwood's* own readers, all of whom seek to invade its pages with their contributions, only to be rebuffed by the Leonidian figure of North. Following a promising portrayal of two stout, presumably Tory gentlemen who sadly waste North's time with dull, self-indulgent letters, the potential contributors become progressively less desirable, their personal flaws marring their work. The neglectful mother, rather than minding her mass of children as she should, proves to be even more prolific and less attentive in her compositions, unhappily producing twenty worthless contributions. A precocious girl, no doubt indulged as an "only daughter," pens an undesirable contribution, and three sisters, seemingly spinsters, struggle with abstract and dull topics that are comically at odds with their humble – and potentially Whiggish – roots. The reading audience of *Blackwood's* is full of such contributors and readers, North suggests, and while all wish to be a part of Maga,

⁴² "Notices to Correspondents," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 27 (July 1830), 138-9.

not one of them is worthy of the honour.

The issue is one of taste and knowledge. While the desire of the "Million" to possess *Maga* suggests that they can recognize value when they see it, their skill as readers is insufficient, ruined by a diet of cheap, easily-consumed periodicals. Mass publications, a *Blackwood's* review of the French publication *L'Autocratie de la Presse* argues, are "lighter productions which attract and are alone read by the multitude...a general democratic, and [of] an increasing licentious character."⁴³ While the review's conclusion that "wealth, virtue, and knowledge, are...fairly overborne by numbers, passion and ignorance" reflects *Blackwood's* conservative politics, it highlights the magazine's characteristic concern with the uncontrolled consumption of the periodical press, a concern not limited to Tory publications. "Look at our literature now," an 1829 article announces, "and it is all periodical...a thousand daily, thrice-a-week, twice-a-week, weekly newspapers, a hundred monthlies, fifty quarterlies, and twenty-five annuals...we are in danger of being crammed; an empty head is as rare as an empty stomach."⁴⁴ As the "Million" demonstrate, full heads are a guarantee neither of comprehension nor of the understanding necessary to use what they read. As the first number of "The Progress of Social Disorganization" (an alarmist feature that made several appearances warning of social disintegration in the 1830s) asks its readers: "Would any one expect that by simply teaching the young to read, and immediately allowing them to devour every thing, good, bad, and indifferent, which came in their way, they would either extend their knowledge, improve their habits, or fortify their minds?"⁴⁵

⁴³ "The Influence of the Press," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 35 (September 1834), 373.

⁴⁴ "Monologue, or Soliloquy on the Annuals," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 26 (December 1829), 950.

⁴⁵ "The Progress of Social Disorganization," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 34 (February 1834), 229.

It is a familiar argument: readers require instruction and guidance, particularly in an era of mass publications and periodicals. Without that education, the "Million" are certainly incapable of truly appreciating what *Blackwood's* has to offer.

The fundamental error made by the "Million" is the belief that by simply purchasing *Blackwood's* they can possess all that it represents. Jon Klancher has suggested that *Blackwood's* inspired "intellectual desire" in its audience, a hunger for thought and intellectual stimulation, but North defined its appeal in far more basic terms.⁴⁶ The drive for emulation and acquisition behind the "Million's" consumption manifested itself as a desire for the physical body of the magazine, a need to hold and a need to read *Blackwood's* that, inspired by Maga's feminine qualities and the charm of her contributors, is portrayed as being sexual in nature. "Were Maga to encourage the advances of elderly gentlemen," North explains in his "Notices to Correspondents,"

by softly treading upon their toes, laying her silken hand of long, white, slender, pink-nailed fingers on their arm, and with her warm, red, balmy mouth, almost touching their ear, asking in a silvery whisper "if it did not thunder" – shrinking to their side all the while, with her frame all on the tremor like a sensitive plant quivering to the touch, then indeed would it be highly culpable in her, the coquette, to say – in reply to the question when popped – "No – no – sir – you must excuse me – no – no – no!" And were she to add to the cruelty of refusal, the shame of exposure, publishing a monthly list of all the wretches who for her sake must wear the willow – then indeed might the rejected articles, unsatisfied with

⁴⁶ Klancher, *English Reading Audiences*, 52.

sympathy, call aloud for punishment.⁴⁷

This depiction of a publication as a flirtatious coquette who first seduces, then rejects and mocks her suitors casts the relationship between a magazine and its readers in terms of desires from which, at the same time, *Blackwood's* wants to distance itself. Yet while Maga may be immune to the appeals of "elderly gentleman" and the clumsy fumbling of lower class vulgarians from the "Million," who pester her with their suggestive "swingeing articles twenty pages long," this does nothing to prevent them from continuing to desire her (139). Their response, North suggests, is understandable even if it reveals their ignorance of *Blackwood's* values; unlike the crude seduction characteristic of her competitors, the virtuous femininity of Maga naturally inspires passion and desire in her readers. She is unattainable and sacrosanct, and the skills of her writers only increase her desirability by providing her with the best, most interesting contributions. The result is irresistible for members of the "Million:" "We are Othello," North writes in the first "Tête-a-Tête," "and the public is Desdemona. She loves us for the dangers we have passed, and we her that she did pity them. What drugs, what charms, what conjuration and what mighty magic, we win the public with – has often been asked of us by the good and unsuspecting herself....[but]we gained her affections by the most upright and straight-forward practices."⁴⁸ The "Million" have little choice but to "fainting follow," attempting to possess what they can neither have nor understand.

The ideal *Blackwood's* reader, one of North's "true men," has no such difficulty. Instructed by North and *Blackwood's* in methods that enable them to see the ideals that a publication represents, *Blackwood's* intended readers understand that the magazine is

⁴⁷ "Notices to Correspondents," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 31 (July 1830), 136.

⁴⁸ "An Hour's Tête-a-Tête," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 8 (October 1820), 80.

more than a commodity. Their ability as readers sets them apart from the lustful rabble, giving them the insight and taste to appreciate what *Maga* (according to North) represents: the very best of civilization. Such qualities cannot be purchased for any amount of money, and certainly not by an upstart with money to spare, such as a Whig businessman looking to exceed both his station and his grasp. Access to the treasures of *Maga* must be earned. By eschewing the hypocrisy and greed of the periodical press in favour of a "classical work" like *Maga*, North's ideal readers are the antithesis of the "Million." Confident in their share of the wealth of civilization, they are ever willing to defend *Maga* and the ideals she represents from the uncouth advances of the "Million."

North's rhetoric leaves no room for a neutral position in this conflict: readers must choose whether they side with him or against him. It is, of course, highly unlikely that any readers – particularly any who read *Blackwood's* – would willingly consider themselves one of the "Million," as a consumer (rather than a reader) deficient in both taste and understanding. What makes the "Million" useful, then, is their ability to clarify what it means to be a reader of *Blackwood's*. The true *Blackwood's* audience is not simply filled with Tories; it is more selective than this. The "Million" certainly includes members of socially undesirable lower classes, uneducated readers or Whigs, but it also includes those who would be generally considered part of the *Blackwood's* audience: patrician Tories and other readers who are educated and privileged. North's rhetoric therefore produces an audience that is not so much formed as defined, winnowed out of a larger body of readers on the basis of values and skills. The image of the "Million" offers the ideal foil, an other against whom *Blackwood's* can efficiently and easily define its own readers.

North's own character, so carefully developed throughout the run of the magazine, only strengthens this process of audience definition. He is a familiar, authoritative voice, inviting readers into a personal relationship with the magazine, one enhanced by the promise to reveal the truth about the periodical press. This intimacy ensures that when the choice between identifying with *Blackwood's* or the "Million" is made, the decision is not as simple as deciding that one does not wish to be grouped with the "Million." Readers will feel they have a vested interest in *Blackwood's*, in the values it represents and in the ways it protects them from groups like the "Million." Truly tied to *Blackwood's*, such readers turn out to be implicated not just as readers in the struggle against the "Million," but as participants.

If the "Million" served North as a tool for defining the *Blackwood's* audience, it also served another purpose, one more closely aligned with the business of the periodical. North's attitude towards the commercial nature of his magazine is a complex, perhaps even contradictory, one. Rejecting a market where publishers were willing to sell their publications to anyone and readers believed that everything was for sale, North was nonetheless proud to number the "Million" among his reading audience. Similarly, he spoke proudly of the "reading public" his magazine had created. This celebration of the popularity of *Blackwood's* is understandable on some levels, even expected, but it sits uneasily with the very principles that served to distinguish the magazine and its readers from the "Million." It smacks of another display of "thingumbob," a jest at the periodical industry even as *Blackwood's* itself participates in the practice that it exposes.

Anything published in *Blackwood's* may be considered a jest of this sort, a deconstruction of the press and its practices, but North is expressing something even

more complex. *Blackwood's* certainly had no interest in rejecting the market; like any publisher, William Blackwood was very concerned with the financial success of his publication. After all, the *Edinburgh Magazine* was reformed in part precisely because it lacked adequate sales. *Blackwood's*, however, relied on the appearance of its unattainable, exclusive nature to establish its identity in the market; it is the basis of its brand. In a publication where the audience was defined not by whom it embraced but by whom it excluded, encouraging an influx of readers was problematic. The values represented by the magazine would certainly be affected, and just as importantly, the identity of its audience as a small, close-knit group of patriotic readers would collapse, destroyed by the awareness that the readership of *Blackwood's* was much larger and far more diverse than the magazine revealed. As a result, *Blackwood's* had to retain the appearance of rejecting the commercial nature of the periodical press, but it could neither abandon the necessities of the market nor *Blackwood's* business. *Maga* had to be free to expand and gain new readers, but not at the cost of its existing ones.

Enter the "Million." Driven by their desire for *Blackwood's*, the "Million" represent unfettered consumption, the sort of popularity that even the most Tory publisher fervently desired. As such, they offered *Blackwood's* the opportunity to enjoy a large circulation without losing any of its exclusivity. Uneducated and basic in their interests, the "Million" could simply desire *Maga* without truly understanding it, purchasing it without actually participating in what it represented. They allowed Blackwood and his editors to safely negate the inherent difficulty of attempting to expand the circulation of a publication while still maintaining the illusion of personal contact between existing readers and the periodical. When expressed by North as an extension of the reading

audience, the "Million" hence become part of *Blackwood's* itself, an unwanted but unavoidable member of the periodical family that threatens the values of the magazine but never its exclusive nature.

Blackwood's success is therefore transmuted from a commercial success into an ideological one. The desire of the "Million," as destructive as it may be, is also proof that what North and his magazine represent have intrinsic value. Statements about the true nature of *Blackwood's* – its exclusivity, its values – simply reassure them of their position in relation to the magazine: secure, represented, and safe. The uncontrollable desire of the "Million" distinguishes the audience and asserts the distinctive Maga brand, but it also balances the rhetoric that preserving those distinctions demands of the publication with the commercial reality of the market for print. According to North, *Blackwood's* is above sordid commercial exchange, but that does not mean that it cannot enjoy financial success. Instead, North suggests a carefully defined model of the market where everyone can participate but merit makes some readers more worthy than others. "The whole periodical press is bought and sold," North announces in an article entitled "Postscript to the Public," "except Blackwod's [sic] Magazine. We know who are our equals, and seat them by our sides; – we know who are our superiors, and we ask to sit on their right hands; – and we know who are immeasurably, eternally our inferiors, and we...show them aside without cruelty."⁴⁹ The relationship between *Blackwood's* and its readers is defined as a meritocracy, a connection that encourages the exchange of ideas, sociability and other qualities more lasting and valuable than money. Differentiating between those who are worthy of joining North and those who are deemed "our inferiors," North's

⁴⁹ "Postscript to the Public," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 11 (July 1822), 55.

description embraces the unavoidable market while still retaining the select nature of the *Blackwood's* brand. The process of assessing the worth of each reader, tellingly performed by the royal "we" of North, allows *Blackwood's* and its readers to enjoy both the validation of popular acceptance and an awareness of their superiority. As a result, Maga can balance the demands of satisfying existing readers and attracting new ones, and North himself can guard the doors to *Blackwood's* sanctum, welcoming his "true men" and rejecting the undesirable "Million."

CHAPTER THREE

"A Large and Increasing Class of Readers": The Creation of a Mass Audience in *The Penny Magazine* and *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal*

By the 1830s, Christopher North's depiction of a million British readers hungrily awaiting the next issue of a periodical was less hyperbolic than it had once seemed. Technological innovation in the printing trade, coupled with the rapid improvement of transportation networks throughout the Empire, had given the periodical press previously unimagined opportunities for the creation and distribution of their publications. No doubt much to William Blackwood's chagrin, however, rather than simply expanding the circulation of established publications such as his own, this potential was being mined by a new type of periodical designed to be affordable and interesting to a wide variety of readers. Unlike radical publications such as Cobbett's *Political Register*, which had maintained low prices by avoiding the Stamp Tax (before being suppressed by the Six Acts of 1819), these new, cheap periodicals were entirely legal and offered to readers for much less than the 2s 6d price charged by *Blackwood's*.¹ John Limberd's *Mirror of Literature*, for instance, a weekly published between 1822 and 1847, sold for a mere 2d and had a circulation of nearly 80,000 a week, roughly eight times what *Blackwood's*

¹ Following a price reduction in 1816, sales of Cobbett's *Register* had jumped to 50,000 per number, or roughly four times that of more expensive publications like *The Edinburgh Review*. For publication figures, see St. Clair, *The Reading Nation*, 574-75, and Altick, *The English Common Reader*, 325-8.

experienced for a particularly successful number. Newspapers and the so-called "Two-Penny Trash," chapbook-sized miscellanies frequently produced on a weekly basis, were even more popular.² Such affordable publications may not have been intended for the same readers as the venerable *Edinburgh Review* and other quarterlies or literary magazines, but their success revealed the existence of a large and eager readership that had yet to be served by the market. These cheap publications represented the antithesis of Christopher North's exclusive, carefully guarded *Maga*; unabashedly for sale to everyone, they happily catered to the desires of consumers, making their circulation a mark of distinction, not shame.

Blackwood's response to this expansion of the print market was predictably severe. While the magazine had once jokingly suggested that it had "created a writing and a printing public" of its own, this process was laudable only when produced by a periodical of *Maga's* quality. In the hands of less committed individuals, publishing on an expanded scale was frightening and potentially dangerous, providing easily-influenced members of the working class with inferior periodicals. As one *Blackwood's* contributor suggested in an 1834 essay on the link between increased literacy and a rise in crime, periodicals were threatening when they found their way into the wrong hands, and cheap publications intended for working class readers were likely to fall into that category. The reason for this danger lay in the contents of cheap periodicals, which were completely unsuitable for working class readers:

What a mass of profligacy, obscenity, infidelity, and calumny, is now issuing
from the lower departments of the Press!...the truth is, that a *periodical* licentious

² St. Clair suggests that by 1833, for instance, there were 18 newspapers published in London with circulations in excess of 100,000; see *The Reading Nation*, 575-7.

literature is established in London, which issues as regularly weekly from the Press as Saturday comes round....They are sold for a few pence each, and thus serve the double purpose of exciting the passions, and increasing the revolutionary sentiments of the labouring classes. The host of works of that description with which the Parisian Press abounds are instantly translated; lithography lends its aid to the powers of description, and colouring completes what imagination had figured. The most popular licentious works of the age of Charles II, from Rochester's Poems downwards are reprinting, and regularly issues in weekly numbers, to a class never reached by the profligacy of the Cavaliers.³

While the "licentious" nature of these publications was a cause for concern, the ease and speed with which the works were produced was even more alarming. Profligate publications may have existed since the seventeenth century, but it was only through advances in printing and distribution that they had become available to "the labouring classes" in an affordable format. Increased circulation promised the spread of "revolutionary sentiments," as the new periodical press quickly produced inexpensive bits of continental fashion, inflaming the minds and passions of its readers with the aid of lithography and other illustrations. Like satanic presses belching forth questionable materials from the "lower departments" of the industry, this cheap press appealed to the desires of readers who did not know better, provoking dangerous ideas and unseemly behaviour, or so the critics feared.

³ "The Progress of Social Disorganization: No. 1 – The Schoolmaster," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 35 (February 1834), 242. "The Schoolmaster" subtitle is likely a reference to a famous statement made by Henry Brougham in 1828, which I discuss later in this chapter.

Charles Knight, a London publisher, writer, and editor known for his advocacy on behalf of the poor and labouring classes, expressed similar concerns about the content of the new, affordable periodicals. Where *Blackwood's* saw nothing but social degeneration resulting from such publications, however, Knight tempered his concerns with hope. Suggesting that labourers, driven by a desire to improve themselves and their meagre education, frequently searched for publications that would provide further instruction, Knight argued that such readers currently found only obsolete or unsuitable material. On the one hand, they were confronted with "the well-meaning but tasteless and almost revolting puerilities of the Tract Societies," on the other with the "coarse stimulants of those writers who knew how to administer to ignorant enthusiasm all the incentives to political discontent."⁴ Knight found neither of these options to be educational for readers or beneficial to society. The issue therefore was not one of quantity, but quality; the increased production and improved availability of published material was only problematic when accompanied by a corresponding lack of instructive and interesting publications. Without what Knight called "cheap and wholesome literature," workers were forced to read obsolete textbooks, tedious lectures or radical pamphlets, none of which offered them the opportunity to improve themselves.

What was needed, Knight urged, was a new kind of literature, one that educated and entertained readers while breaking the dominance that William Cobbett and other "violent and unscrupulous writers" held over the market for cheap publication.⁵ The popular image of a radical gathering, where "gaping rustics...[gathered to] eagerly listen to some youngster" as he read from the latest radical publication, could be neutralized by

⁴ "Education of the People," *London Magazine*, 3rd ser. (April 1828), 2.

⁵ Charles Knight, *Passages of a Working Life*, vol. 1 (London: Bradbury and Evans, 1864), 188.

publications that transformed a threatening assembly of potential radicals into a reading society of workers dedicated to improving themselves. All that was needed was appropriate, engaging reading material. Furthermore, while the labouring classes stood to benefit the most from such quality publications, all classes had need of materials that would increase their knowledge of the world:

Shall we say that the children of the rich and the noble – *par excellence*, the *educated* classes – have nothing to learn? Beyond his inapplicable Prosody, his cricketing, and his boating, can an Eton boy be said to know positively anything?....Why then should we talk of addressing Popular Literature to the *working Classes* only? We *all* want Popular Literature – we all want to get at real and substantial knowledge by the most compendious processes. We are all too ignorant (except those with whom learning is the business of life) of all the wonders of Nature which we see around us – of the discoveries of Science and Philosophy – of our own minds – of the real History of past Ages – of the manners and political condition of the other members of the great human family.⁶

The social, intellectual and moral benefits of such a "popular literature" transcend class: Knight's use of the inclusive "we" suggests a single audience unified by a shared desire for knowledge, not by attendance at privileged schools. Thus, while *Blackwood's* expressed concern over the "thousand daily, thrice-a-week, twice-a-week, weekly newspapers, a hundred monthlies, fifty quarterlies, and twenty-five annuals" churned out by the periodical press and their effect on less-educated readers, Knight's view of the

⁶ "Education of the People," *London Magazine*, 3rd ser. (April 1828), 7.

press was less divisive.⁷ Rather than reinforcing existing distinctions of class and education, he saw the press as a remarkable tool that (despite its misuse in the hands of radicals like Cobbett) offered hope for reaching readers of all classes and showing them what it means to be part of "the great human family."

What Knight was proposing was not actually "popular literature" (in the sense of a literature of working people), but a form of mass literature intended for everyone. As Patricia Anderson has noted, where popular culture is a "non-elitist...culture of the working population," mass culture draws on elements of popular culture to appeal to "an unprecedentedly numerous and socially diverse public" of multiple classes and social groups.⁸ This move towards a mass "public" requires participants to reconsider their place in relation to other audience members. Highlighting how periodicals like Charles Knight's *Penny Magazine* formed a mass audience as a response to the rapid changes that took place in the early nineteenth century, Jon Klancher has suggested that mass publications attempted to transform the crowd, once a representative of the threatening mob, into a familiar entity.⁹ By deciphering the "vast pulsating social machine" concealed within the chaos of the constantly moving crowd, readers were encouraged to recognize their own desires and humanity in the interaction of the masses. This appreciation of shared experience elided distinctions between classes and groups, replacing those boundaries with a sense of inclusion and participation in the crowd. The mass literature championed

⁷ "Monologue, or Soliloquy on the Annals," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 26 (December 1829), 950.

⁸ Patricia Anderson, *The Printed Image and the Transformation of Popular Culture, 1790-1860* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 12. Tim Harris has suggested that definitions of "popular culture" that consider it to be intended for the working classes ignore the regional, fragmented nature of popular culture by treating the lower classes as an "undifferentiated group"; see Harris, "Problematizing Popular Culture," in *Popular Culture in England, c. 1500-1800*, ed. Tim Harris (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 5.

⁹ Klancher, *Making English Reading Audiences*, 76-97.

by Knight promised a similar experience, one where entertainment and education united readers of all classes into a single audience.

Focusing on *The Penny Magazine* and *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal*, arguably the two most influential periodicals intended for an early mass audience, this chapter will examine how the editors of these publications set about providing their readers with the sense of inclusion and belonging that was necessary for the creation of a mass audience. While both magazines, Klancher has suggested, were primarily enjoyed by the lower middle-class, they were nonetheless attached to the idea of an audience that transcended class distinctions (96). To create that audience, however, the editors first had to unify their readers as a public by convincing them that the magazine was intended for them, no matter who they were. A utilitarian notion of education, which Knight and the Chambers brothers both promoted as the proper use for the new printing techniques they used, could not really serve as a unifying theme, for (despite its appeal) it ran the risk of alienating segments of the targeted audience by suggesting a middle-class condescension that replicated familiar social hierarchies. What was required were new representations of the periodicals and their goals that indicated benefits would accrue to all readers. Ultimately, Charles Knight and the Chambers brothers, while continuing to emphasize the knowledge provided by their periodicals, suggested that education was only a by-product of something much larger: the energy of social progress brought about by technological advancement. Unlike *Blackwood's*, which presented the "machine question" as a harbinger of social disintegration and the ascension of the "Million," Chambers and Knight portrayed the scientific and mechanical advances of the period as part of the natural evolution of society, a process that diffused knowledge and wealth widely

throughout the Empire. The *Penny* and *Chambers' Journal* themselves emerge as both representative of and participants in that process, providing their readers with insight into the benefits of technology and assisting in the circulation of information. The editors of the *Penny Magazine* and *Chambers' Journal* define their periodicals as vehicles of communication and equality, countering inequalities between classes and strengthening social ties throughout the kingdom. The result, at least in theory, was to be a new society of readers, where all felt like participants in the process of improvement: a new "Million" formed from different classes across the nation, unified by its experience with print technology in an expanding industrial economy.

"Writing for the People": Education and a Mass Audience

In an 1828 speech following the election of the Duke of Wellington as prime minister, Henry Brougham, MP and chairman of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge (SDUK), announced that "the country sometimes heard that the soldier was abroad. Now there is another person abroad, – a less important person. ... The schoolmaster is abroad! And I trust more to the schoolmaster armed with his primer, than to the soldier in full military array, for upholding and extending the liberties of my country."¹⁰ A prominent Whig who had acted as Queen Caroline's agent during her exile from England, Brougham may have been tweaking the old Tory soldier Wellington, but

¹⁰ Qtd. in George Wingrove Cooke, *The History of Party, From the Rise of the Whig and Tory Factions in the Reign of Charles II to the Passing of the Reform Bill: 1762-1832*, vol. 3, Second Edition (London: John Macrone, 1840), 547.

his statement also reflected the goals and methodology of his society. Assisted by Charles Knight, who served as the SDUK's printer for many of its most prominent publications, the SDUK produced a stable of books and periodicals for all readers during its twenty-two year existence. These publications, which included the *British Almanac*, the *Library of Useful Knowledge*, the *Penny Cyclopaedia* and the *Penny Magazine*, often contained original scholarship, but they were still affordably priced and presented to consumers as educational entertainment.¹¹ The SDUK's goal, Knight explains (quoting the Society's charter in the preface to the Third Series of the *London Magazine*) was to offer "useful information to all classes of the community, particularly to such as are unable to avail themselves of experienced teachers, or may prefer learning by themselves."¹²

Charles Knight's work for the SDUK was not his first foray into the realm of educational literature. A frequent proponent of reforms intended to aid the labouring classes and the poor during his time as editor for the *Windsor and Eton Express*, Knight had promoted the education of workers and the publication of "counter exertions" as a means of opposing the dangerous influence that radical orators and organizers often held over them. Unfortunately, available publications were not suited to either task; only radical publications, with "the quick perception of avarice or ambition," had been able to effectively exploit the "newly-created appetite" for cheap publications and provide readers with reading material.¹³ This inspired Knight to attempt to fill that void himself, and in 1820 he began publishing *The Plain Englishman* with the stated goal of opening

¹¹ In addition to his duties as publisher, Knight also frequently edited and wrote many of the SDUK's publications, even buying the prints for the *Penny Cyclopaedia* and the *Penny Magazine* following the Society's collapse in 1848; see the third chapter of Valerie Gray's, *Charles Knight: Educator, Publisher, Writer* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006).

¹² Qtd. in "Education of the People," *London Magazine*, 3d ser. (April 28, 1828), 5.

¹³ "Cheap Publications, Part One," *Windsor Eton Express* (December 11, 1819).

"the store of 'useful learning' to...the labouring classes" for 1s.¹⁴ While it was never a success, the *Plain Englishman* (which lasted for three lacklustre years) left Knight convinced that in the hands of a competent and dedicated distributor, an affordable publication could affect "the diffusion of sound principles amongst the community."¹⁵ What was required were the necessary resources and an understanding of the audience.

While Knight's next periodical venture – the third series of the failing *London Magazine* – was also a failure, it marked the beginning of his relationship with the SDUK, a partnership that initially filled Knight with optimism for the future of cheap literature. The SDUK, as Knight explained in the "Education of the People" in the *London Magazine*, recognized that "the assumption of mental imbecility of the labouring classes was not true" (6). Instead, the Society pursued what Knight would later call "writing for the people," a style that eschewed the paternalistic language of schools and lectures in order to avoid any suggestion that the reader was a "student of dulness."¹⁶ A truly accessible publication, Knight suggested, should require "only intelligence and ordinary culture" from its readers, relying on the writer to make the contents, no matter how complex, accessible to the audience. The compatibility of the SDUK's goals and Knight's ideals, coupled with the Society's impressive resources, left Knight confident of their ability to finally reach a mass audience. All that was needed was a new periodical,

¹⁴ "Cheap Publications, Part Two," *Windsor Eton Express* (December 19, 1819). The prospectus for *The Plain Englishman* was actually published as part of the second instalment of Knight's essay on "Cheap Publications."

¹⁵ "Education of the People," *London Magazine*, 3rd ser. (April 28, 1829), 3. The *Plain Englishman* had been distributed by the Christian Knowledge Society, an organization that Knight would come to consider representative of everything that was ineffectual and timid in the Church. He also accused them of attempting to subvert and repress the very publication they had agreed to distribute; see "Education of the People," pp. 2-3.

¹⁶ "On Writing for the People," *Knight's Penny Magazine* 1 (1846), 5. *Knight's Penny Magazine* was released following Knight's purchase of the name and plates of the old *Penny Magazine* from the defunct SDUK.

one that could begin afresh, without the baggage of the faltering *London*. Three years later, that new periodical, *The Penny Magazine*, was published.

Appearing on March 31st, 1832, the *Penny* was an immediate success, amassing 200,000 purchasers and, according to Knight, five times that many readers within its first few months. Promising to satisfy readers "who are anxiously desirous to obtain knowledge in a condensed, and, in most cases, systematic form," the *Penny* avoided the heavy-handed didacticism and moralizing that characterized the publications of the Tract Societies, while still attempting to provide its readers with useful, beneficial information.¹⁷ Calling his publication a work of "universal convenience and enjoyment," Knight claimed that the *Penny* was the pinnacle of accessible literature, able to "be taken up and laid down without requiring any considerable effort." It was affordable entertainment appropriate for readers of all classes, the sort of beneficial publication the market lacked and that readers required.

Knight was not the only publisher intent on providing readers with affordable periodical literature. William Chambers, an Edinburgh publisher and bookseller, had made a foray into the same market two months before the *Penny Magazine* with *Chambers' Edinburgh Magazine*. Originally from Peebles, William Chambers and his younger brother Robert had moved to Edinburgh in 1813 following the failure of their father's business. Both eventually opened separate bookshops there, William after an apprenticeship to a bookseller, and Robert after a formal education that stopped short of university.¹⁸ By 1831, the brothers had collaborated on several publications, including the

¹⁷ "Reading for All," *Penny Magazine* 1 (March 31, 1832), 1.

¹⁸ For more on the Chambers brothers, see Robert Chambers, *Man of Letters: The Early Life and Love Letters of Robert Chambers*, ed. C.H. Layman (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990), and

satirical journal *Kaleidoscope; or Edinburgh Literary Entertainment*, a collection of descriptions of characters from the Scotch Novels entitled *Illustrations of the Author of Waverley*, and Robert's very successful *Traditions of Edinburgh*. William, however, had watched the publication of inexpensive works like Constable's *Miscellany* and Limberd's *Mirror* with interest. Following the early success of the SDUK with their *British Almanac*, he decided to produce his own cheap, instructive miscellany. With the assistance of his brother Robert – who agreed initially to act as a contributor, but not as an editor – William Chambers published the first issue of his *Chambers' Journal* on February 4th, 1832.¹⁹ Unlike Knight's *Penny Magazine*, which enjoyed access to the SDUK's resources and network of agents, the new *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal* was initially distributed only in Scotland. As a result, it did not enjoy the immediate success of its competitor, but following the introduction of a second printing in London, its sales increased dramatically, ultimately reaching 70,000.²⁰ While that number remained substantially lower than the circulation of the *Penny* at its peak, sales of the *Penny* quickly diminished while the *Chambers' Journal* was able to maintain its popularity throughout the decade, ultimately in publication until 1956, outliving its competitor by over a century.

William Chambers, *Memoir of William and Robert Chambers*, Twelfth Edition (Edinburgh and London: W. & R. Chambers, 1883).

¹⁹ Robert Chambers joined his brother in editing the *Journal* following the tenth number.

²⁰ The *Chambers' Journal* had an initial circulation of 31,000, a number that steadily increased to 50,000 by the end of its first year (when stereotyping allowed printing to be performed in London as well as Edinburgh). While that number had declined to around 53,000 by the time the *Penny* ceased publication in 1846, it increased to roughly 83,000 following a change in the format of the publication. See "Chambers's Edinburgh Journal," *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal* 2 (February 2, 1833), 1, and St. Clair, *The Reading Nation*, 575. It should be noted that the spelling of "Chambers" varied throughout the periodical. For the sake of consistency, I have used "Chambers" unless the title of an article is specifically spelled otherwise.

Like the more famous *Penny, Chambers' Journal* was created to provide readers of all classes with instruction for a low price. Intended to "take advantage of the appetite for instruction which at present exists," the *Journal* made it clear that it was attempting to appeal to the "poorest labourer" and youngest schoolboy alike, inexpensively providing them with "a meal of healthful, useful, and agreeable mental instruction."²¹ "There is a large class of inquiring minds in the humbler walks of life," the editors explain in an essay on contemporary literature in the *Journal's* twelfth issue,

and another large class composed of the young of all orders, who, in entering upon a course of general modern reading, must be greatly at a loss for a knowledge of many men and books which are familiarly alluded to, and things with which every body is understood to be acquainted, but which, in reality, are only familiar to persons of perfect education, and to those who have been living for a considerable time in intimate converse with the world. It appears to be a proper object for such a work as the present, to supply much information on modern literature as may help....that large class of persons who at the present time are just beginning to read, or are anxious to do so.²²

The article promises access to the topic for all readers, introducing it to those unfamiliar with literature while providing enough substance to interest other, more experienced readers. Coleridge, for instance, is dismissed in the first article as a "pitiable specimen of crazy greatness," while Wordsworth receives grudging praise as "one of the great poetical minds of the country." Such assessments, which are critical without trespassing on the aesthetic judgments of a periodical like the *Edinburgh Review*, are accessible to

²¹ "The Editor's Address to his Readers," *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal* 1 (February 4, 1832), 1.

²² "Popular Information on Literature: First Article," *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal* 1 (April 28, 1832), 99.

everyone; they offer those who are familiar with the works of Coleridge or Wordsworth material for consideration or debate while allowing readers who have never read a line of poetry in their lives to get a sense of canonical names and reputations.

Both the *Penny* and *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal* promote the education that they offer as the basis of a new, better life for their readers. Again, it is the labouring classes who are the primary target of this discourse, and they are repeatedly shown how reading and the acquisition of real knowledge (as opposed to what is offered by radical publications) will bring them happiness. The education the periodicals depict also suggests that the target will be socialized and inculcated with acceptable values that will allow for integration into an industrial economy. *Chambers' Journal*, for instance, explains how the use of reading rooms and reading societies can lead to professional advancement: "Yes," a mill-owner tells the author, "the best educated [workers] are always the best paid," and enjoy an increased "self-respect."²³ The results of improvement are tangible for workers, promising better pay and a feeling of accomplishment, but education also appeals to reformers who seek the improvement of the "self-respect" of that class. Similarly, when the *Penny Magazine* describes the introduction of the printing-press to Turkey where, due to the lack of mechanized printing, the people could afford to read nothing other than the Qur'an, it stresses how the intellectual climate of the entire country was invigorated by the new technology:

Instead of every coffee-house being crowded as it used to be, by idle, silent, stupefied loungers, doing nothing but smoking their pipes, you find them now (in less numbers indeed, which is also a good thing) occupied by men attentively

²³ "Should the Working Class be Educated: Second Article," *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal* 6 (January 28, 1837), 8.

reading the newspaper, or conning over "the last new work" neatly printed, and sold at a very cheap price.²⁴

Unlike the lively middle-class British coffee houses, the Turkish version is more akin to a drinking establishment, filled with "stupefied" men drunk with tobacco and mental inactivity. Invigorated by the press, however, and introduced as participants in a newly vigorous public sphere, those men are transformed into happy, healthy members of society. Again, the practical and moral benefits of reading and cheap literature are merged; men receive education and entertainment at a "very cheap price" while avoiding the temptations of potentially radical activities associated with lower-class taverns. The labouring classes are promised personal improvement and the tangible, often financial, rewards it brings, while the middling classes and reformers are reassured that such readers can be socialized and their dangerous potential neutralized.

As many critics have pointed out, the emphasis the *Penny* and the *Chambers' Journal* place on the education of the labouring classes is problematic. Their representation of the importance of education is infused with an awareness of class and social hierarchies within what is supposed to be a more uniform mass audience, undermining the claims made by Knight and the editors of *Chambers' Journal* that their publications address all readers equally. A number of critics, led by the historian R.K. Webb, have highlighted just this contradiction, suggesting that early mass periodicals, particularly the *Penny Magazine*, were actually vehicles of social control. "The *Penny Magazine*," Webb bluntly asserts, "[was] a middle class Whig view of what the working class *should* read, [and] its sole distinction, woodcuts aside, is to have attained a

²⁴ "The Printing-Press in Turkey," *The Penny Magazine* 1 (April 28, 1832), 40.

remarkably large circulation – for a very short time."²⁵ While Webb is slightly less scathing in his assessment of *Chambers' Journal*, arguing that while "it is not exciting reading...neither is it vapid or silly," his work expresses the suspicions of many critics who have suggested that the editors of these two periodicals (Knight in particular) sought to inculcate working-class readers with middle-class values.²⁶ As Paul Keen has suggested, middle-class attempts at reform were often as much about the reformers as their subjects, and the seemingly admirable inclusion of their "social inferiors as part of their reformist project...[only provided] evidence of their liberality which simultaneously denied the possibility of widening the nets of political agency any further to include their social inferiors."²⁷ It is reasonable to consider the emphasis on social improvement and education within the *Penny* and *Chambers' Journal* in this light, particularly when the rewards highlighted by the periodicals clearly represented middle-class norms. Indeed the goals of the periodicals appear to be nothing less than the translation of the labouring classes into middle-class subjects and their induction into a bourgeois world of coffee-house culture and political moderation.

At the same time, however, to categorize the *Penny Magazine* and *Chambers' Journal* solely as attempts at social control flattens both the innovation and the complications of their intervention in the periodical market. Their actual audience may

²⁵ R.K. Webb, *The British Working Class Reader, 1790-1848* (New York: Augustus M. Kelly, 1971), 80.

²⁶ See Ian Haywood, *The Revolution in Popular Literature: Print, Politics and People, 1790-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Klancher, *English Reading Audiences*, 78-87; and Sarah Wadsworth, "Knight and Head," *Victorian Periodical Review* 31.4 (Winter 1998), 369-86. Several critics have defended Knight's educational efforts and his motives, but they represent the minority: see Scott Bennet, "The Editorial Character and Readership of the *Penny Magazine*: An Analysis," *Victorian Periodicals Review* 17.4 (Winter 1984), 127-41; Valerie Gray, *Charles Knight: Educator, Publisher, Writer* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006); and Rosemary Mitchell, *Picturing the Past: English History in Text and Image, 1830-1870* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 111-139.

²⁷ Keen, *Crisis in Literature*, 91.

have been, as Jon Klancher suggests, primarily comprised of "tradesmen and shopkeepers," but the way in which the editors portrayed their magazines suggests an attempt to engage a much larger, more diverse audience.²⁸ Moreover, their foregrounding of education was less homogenizing than potentially divisive: any attempt to stress the education offered by the periodicals, even when its applicability to all classes was emphasized, ran the risk of provoking suspicion of middle-class condescension or reinscribing an awareness of class within the readership of the magazines. What the *Penny* and the *Chambers' Journal* required was a rubric that more easily unified readers, emphasizing shared experiences and a new, innovative position removed from existing class relations. Only then could they plausibly present themselves as periodicals of the masses.

"Knowledge and Human Improvement": Technology and the Periodical Press

In order to emphasize the innovative, modern nature of the *Penny Magazine* and *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal*, their editors first had to distinguish their publications from other, existing periodicals. To accomplish this, the *Penny* and *Chambers' Journal* accentuated the role of the new technologies in their production and distribution. Printed on steam-powered machines and distributed by train and steamship, neither publication could have existed even a few years earlier and both proudly declared as much from their

²⁸ Klancher, *Making Reading Audiences*, 96.

very first issues. Only in a country with "a high state of civilization," Knight proclaims in a preface to the *Penny's* first volume, could a magazine such as his be printed, presenting its very production as a marvel of progress and engineering:

The paper for 160,000 copies...consisting of 160 double reams...will have been charged with the excise duty of 3*d* in the lb. upon 5,600lbs. – the tax upon that quantity amounting to 70*l*. Up to this point a great deal of technical knowledge and mechanical skill will have been employed. Chemical knowledge and machinery are indispensable in the manufacture of paper; and without the very ingenious invention of Stereotype Founding, in which great practical improvements have been made with a few years, the *Penny Magazine* could not be printed in duplicate, which diminishes the expense, nor could the supply be proportioned to the demand. As we have already explained, the printing *machine* begins its work when every preparation is complete. In ten days one machine produces 160,000 copies from two sets of plates. If the printing machine had not been invented it would have taken a single press, producing a thousand perfect copies a day, one hundred and sixty days, or more than five calendar months, to complete the same number.²⁹

Knight revels in the sheer scale of the *Penny's* production, lovingly describing every detail down to the reams of paper purchased and the money spent on the stamp duty. The cost of printing the *Penny* may have been substantial, but that expense was simply indicative of the scale of the magazine's production, each step of which was remarkable for its efficiency and innovation, a tribute to advancements made in the printing trade.

²⁹ "Preface to Volume One," *Penny Magazine* 1 (1832), iv.

Similarly, the editors of the *Chambers' Journal* accentuated the innovative nature of their periodical, claiming that "the process of stereotyping has rarely been used with so much advantage" as it was in *Chambers' Journal*, which simultaneously printed and distributed numbers in London and Edinburgh.³⁰ A shining example of the "tide of knowledge and human improvement" that was sweeping the nation, these production methods allowed the periodical's editors to meet the demands of their purchasers by keeping prices low and availability high (151). That lower price may have frightened some, but the editors of *Chambers' Journal* considered it to be representative of social progress. "If cheapness, or to use better phraseology, the minimum of price – the perfection of every manufacturing system – [creates] results so likely to elevate the character of the British nations," the editors ask in an 1833 article, "who would not stoop, in such a case, that he might conquer?"³¹ *Chambers' Journal* was thus more than yet another example of two-penny trash; it heralded a new era of efficiency, where the art of printing was honed to "perfection" with scientific precision.

Those achievements in production were complemented by an equally impressive system of distribution. Aided by new forms of transportation, the *Penny* and *Chambers' Journal* were distributed widely and quickly throughout Britain. For the *Penny*, a network of transportation ranging from "the steam-boat upon the seas – the canal – the railway – the quick van...the stage-coach and mail" allowed an issue of the magazine to be available anywhere in the nation no more than two weeks after going to press. Indeed, according to Knight, rather than actual supply and distributions, finding someone who sold the *Penny* was the more problematic issue: "No one who wishes for a copy of this

³⁰ "The Mechanism of Chambers' Journal," *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal* 4 (June 6, 1835), 150.

³¹ "Chambers's Edinburgh Journal," *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal* 2 (February 2, 1833), 2.

magazine, whether in England, Scotland or Ireland, can have any difficulty in getting it...if he can find a bookseller."³² The editors of *Chambers' Journal* were more realistic in their depiction of the periodical's distribution, explaining that difficulties initially had been encountered in "transmitting so bulky an article," but they also proudly described how stereotyped plates had allowed their *Journal* to surpass the "kind of limit to the circulation of a newspaper" experienced by other publications.³³ Unlike their periodical predecessors, neither the *Penny* nor *Chambers' Journal* was unduly affected by what Knight, in his magazine's first volume, would call the boundaries of "space and time"; readers, no matter where they were, could enjoy the periodical in a timely fashion.³⁴

While these methods of printing and distribution represented a specific and significant change in the methods of periodical production, the *Penny* and *Chambers' Journal* situated the improvements within a broader and fundamental shift they claimed was occurring within society itself. The "machine question," as the increasing prevalence of mechanical methods of production was known, may have been a fraught issue that evoked debates about social harmony and national stability, but for the editors of the *Penny* and the *Chambers' Journal*, technological advancement promised to improve the prosperity and happiness of everyone. An active proponent of mechanization in industry, Charles Knight was careful to stress the benefits of machinery. As he argues in *The Results of Machinery*, initially published in 1831,

We think it will be admitted that machinery, in the largest sense of the word, has increased the means of every man to procure a shelter from the elements, and to

³² "Preface to Volume One," *Penny Magazine* 1 (1832), iv.

³³ "The London Press: Mechanical Departments," *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal* 4 (March 7, 1835), 46.

³⁴ "Preface to Volume One," *Penny Magazine* 1 (1832), iv.

give him a multitude of conveniences within that shelter....the nation which has mechanical knowledge has two hundred and fifty times as many houses as the nation without these advantages; and the poorest house of the civilized people is fifty times more commodious as the finest house of the uncivilized people.³⁵

This was a standard argument, one repeatedly advanced by Knight: civilization was built on scientific progress and the "accumulation" of wealth. Machinery, which facilitated the efficiency of labour and allowed for greater accumulation, represented the motor of progress. If civilized nations enjoyed a better quality of life, then machines were the pinnacle of that achievement, promising increased wealth and efficient production that benefitted everyone.

Not only were the *Penny* and *Chambers' Journal* able to reach more purchasers through their use of the latest innovations in publishing and transportation: even more significantly, they were also realizing the potential of printed material and technological advances to bring readers together in a way that no other publication had previously accomplished. William Chambers, for example, introduced the first number of his *Journal* by explaining that he was confident in its success and did "not despair of showing such a specimen of the powers of the printing press as has hitherto been unexampled in the history of Literature."³⁶ Remarkable not simply for its scale or the methods of its production, *Chambers' Journal* was, according to its editors, notable for possessing the ability to reach an audience and influence them: "Nothing within the compass of the British manufacturing industry," they proclaim, "presents so stupendous a

³⁵ Charles Knight, *Capital and Labour* (New York: AMS Press, 1972), 165. *The Results of Machinery* was combined and republished with Knight's 1832 work, *Capital and Labour*, under the title of the latter in 1845; see Knight's advertisement to the new publication in *Capital and Labour*, vii-viii.

³⁶ "The Editor's Address to his Readers," *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal* 1 (February 4, 1832), 1.

spectacle of moral power working through the means of inert mechanism, as that which is exhibited by the action of the steam press."³⁷ The mechanical power of the *Journal* was exceeded only by its "moral power" and ability to inspire readers. Similarly, Charles Knight suggested that his *Penny* had been created to fulfill the original promise of Gutenberg's press. Arguing that "the great mass of the population, even of the most civilized countries, still remains to be brought into actual contact with the enjoyments and blessings of [the press]," Knight claimed that his magazine would be the vehicle of that "contact," connecting readers from across the kingdom to the "blessings" of print.³⁸ The *Penny* and *Chambers' Journal* thus represented a new era of publication, one that had overcome the obstructions of "space and time" that had plagued previous publications in order to diffuse material to all readers. More than just utilizing faster methods of printing and distribution, the periodicals were participating in a fundamental strengthening of the social networks throughout "all ends of the great kingdom."³⁹

"One Family of Twenty Millions of People": Charles Knight and Circulation

Although the editors of both the *Penny* and *Chambers' Journal* agreed in regarding their publications as representative of progressive technological innovation and social change, they represented the role of their periodicals in such change and innovation in very different ways. In the case of Charles Knight, his *Penny Magazine* represented the

³⁷ "Mechanism of Chambers' Journal," *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal* 4 (June 6, 1836), 151.

³⁸ "Printing in the Fifteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," *Penny Magazine* 6 (December 31, 1837), 502.

³⁹ "Preface to Volume One," *Penny Magazine* 1 (1832), iv.

unrestricted circulation of knowledge throughout society, a means of promoting and maintaining the interpersonal exchange made possible by increasing mechanization. In order to understand the importance of the *Penny's* role in this circulation, however, one first must recognize how Knight's concept of exchange influenced his understanding of the press. For Knight, society at its heart was "nothing but a system of Exchanges."⁴⁰ In his view, labour and capital, rather than being in conflict (as Marx would suggest) shared a "community of interests, and an equality of duties, as well as rights" that was rooted in a social notion of economic exchange. Citing the example of Alexander Selkirk, the sailor whose stay on the uninhabited island of Juan Fernandez may have inspired Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, Knight claims that when he was alone, Selkirk "never thought...of providing any store beyond the supply of his own necessities" (21) Once his English rescuers had landed and Selkirk was able to interact with other people, however, he "became social [and] saw that he must be an exchanger" in order to better his life. The presence of others, coupled with Selkirk's contact with them, provided him with the opportunity to obtain things through trade that he could not acquire on his own. With no social ties, Selkirk could never accumulate the wealth that would lift him from his semi-savage existence towards something approaching civilization, but through trade and the system of exchange made possible by his contact with others, he could improve his quality of life.

Knight's link between exchange and sociability is crucial to his portrayal of the *Penny's* role in the print market. For Knight, social ties were integral to personal and economic exchange: Selkirk's opportunity to trade was based on his interaction with

⁴⁰ Charles Knight, *Capital and Labour*, 17.

others, the face-to-face meetings that began all manner of exchange. Communication was therefore crucial to a successful system of exchange, and any nation that had advanced enough to manufacture machines and promote exchange must, Knight argued, possess the most sophisticated, efficient means of interaction possible. Ideally, up-to-date modes of transportation and communication would remove obstructions from the circulation of people, goods and knowledge:

The people who inhabit such a civilized land have not only the readiest communication with each other by the means of roads and canals, but can trade by the agency of ships with all parts of the world. To carry on their intercourse amongst themselves they speak one common language, reduced to certain rules, and not broken into an embarrassing variety of unintelligible dialects. Their written communications are conveyed to the remotest corners of their own country, and even to other kingdoms, with the most unfailing regularity. (40)

Such a network of circulation shapes the entire nation, from its industrial infrastructure to its very language, and every facet of life is marked in some way by the constant need to maintain the system. Those connections, however, also have a tangible effect on the relations between individuals. Inventions like the railway, which Knight credited with "cheapening and equalizing the prices of commodities – for bringing the producer and consumer together in the world's great markets...and making one family of twenty millions of people," continually bring citizens into contact with each other to promote economic exchange.⁴¹ Just as importantly, they also strengthen ties between all parts of the nation in the process; rather than "twenty million" individuals, silently acquiring

⁴¹ Knight, *Working Life*, vol. 2, 78.

goods for their own use, inventions like the railway and the post office form a "family" of the nation's citizens by making exchange easier and more efficient. What appear to be solely economic transactions thus promote social cohesion, bringing individuals closer, physically and socially.

Knight considered the constant exchange of money, goods and people throughout the kingdom to be the most crucial element in social progress, ensuring that wealth was distributed throughout society. The process was not limited only to money or goods. "Riches do not consist only of money and lands, of stores of food or clothing, of machines and tools," Knight tells his readers in *Capital and Labour*; in fact, "the particular knowledge of any art...the facility of communicating ideas by written language...the enjoyment of institutions conceived in spirit of social improvement" are all forms of wealth (41). While, in practice, these "advantages" should belong to all, from "the poorest man in England" to the wealthiest, Knight stresses that such was seldom the case. Accessible only through expensive books, heavily-taxed periodicals and the universities, knowledge was something that had always been out of reach for the labouring classes. Nor was this exclusion accidental; according to Knight, it was the result of a plan conceived by the aristocratic classes to gain a monopoly on knowledge. "The paper duty," Knight recounts in his autobiography, "was an insurmountable barrier to the diffusion of publications that should combine the qualities of literary excellence and extreme cheapness, the basis of aristocratic monopoly on printed materials."⁴² The higher classes, Knight argued, would rather repress workers than educate them, preferring them to be left "without amusement; having no mechanical aptitude....unable to

⁴² Knight, *Working Life*, vol. 2, 330.

read....condemned after [a] day's labour to the silence and solitude of the prison-cell" (189).

Attempts to restrict the access of the lower-classes to more efficient forms of communication and circulation were not new, as Knight noted. He reports, for example, on concerns in the late seventeenth century about the alarming implications of the stagecoach. From the perspective of the nineteenth century, "the evil of the stagecoach is somewhat difficult to perceive," but Knight states a similar kind of thinking motivated the restrictions of the press in more recent times:

Some, however, who acknowledge the fallacy of putting down long and short stages...may fall into the very same mistake with regard to knowledge that was thus applied to communication. They may desire to retain a monopoly of literature for those who can buy expensive books; they may think a five-guinea quarto (like the horse for one or two journies[sic]) a public benefit, and look upon a shilling duodecimo to be used by every one "at pleasure when he had occasion," (like the stagecoach) as a public evil.⁴³

The same desire to maintain control over the movement of people now blocked the circulation of knowledge. Monopolists may have argued that they were intent on maintaining social stability, but their practices actually undermined stability, destroying social cohesion. Not only did restrictions allow radical publishers like Cobbett to prosper, but they served to keep citizens alienated from each other. A freer circulation of the press thus represented more than a way of countering radical influence; it opened possibilities

⁴³ "Reading for All," *Penny Magazine* 1 (March 31, 1832), 1.

for the socialization of readers that promised to overcome the isolation of modern existence.

Situating the *Penny* in this rhetoric, Knight presents it as being "what the stage-coach has become to the middle classes...to *all* classes": a challenge to the restrictive, anti-social policies of the aristocratic classes. Committed to this goal, the *Penny* was not overtly concerned with increasing its sales; pure consumption, according to Knight, was one-sided, denying participants a reciprocal, productive exchange and ultimately impeding circulation. Instead, the magazine offered a "channel," a conduit that carried information from "the pure and healthy springs of knowledge" to readers everywhere.⁴⁴ Not simply a "channel" of distribution, it also provided a connection between readers of all classes. Likening the *Penny* to the Post Office, Knight emphasized the importance of literally cheap publication: "a cheapness which makes the poorest and the richest equal in their power to connect the distant with their thoughts by written communication" (40). No one would want for reading material or knowledge so long as the *Penny* was in production: nor would they ever lack a connection to other readers. To read the *Penny* was to participate in a modern process of reform that countered social stagnation and to champion a system of exchange that spanned the entire nation. Circulation of the periodical continually promoted new and stronger interactions, forging readers socialized by their exposure to the "family" of the *Penny Magazine* into an audience and a nation.

⁴⁴ "A Postscript to our First Readers," *Penny Magazine* 1 (March 31, 1832), 8.

"The Channel, then, is Open": Socializing the Crowd

Where Knight's representation of the *Penny* foregrounded its role in the construction of the modern nation, the editors of *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal* offered a more personal and affective relationship between their periodical and its readers. Once again, technology was central to this relationship, but rather than following the *Penny's* attempts to inspire awe in its readers through the portrayal of its printing, *Chambers' Journal* sought to make its readers familiar, even comfortable, with the methods of its production. Taking considerable pains to explain every aspect of their periodical's production in an article entitled "The Mechanism of *Chambers' Journal*," the editors provide a lengthy description of "the whole process pursued in the getting up of *Chambers' Journal*, from the writing of the articles to the placing of the paper in the hands of the purchaser."⁴⁵ The emphasis is not on the writing of the periodical; this stage of production only receives a single paragraph of description. Instead, the rest of the article is devoted to the preparation and manufacture of *Chambers' Journal*. The printing machine itself is carefully described for those who are unfamiliar with one; as Chambers explains, "those who have never had an opportunity of seeing a printing-machine would doubtless find considerable difficulty in understanding a minute detail of its appearance and mode of operation." Similarly, the entire process of stereotyping is described, ensuring that readers have an understanding both of what is involved in printing the periodical and of the remarkable nature of the process (150).

⁴⁵ "The Mechanism of Chambers' Journal," *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal* 4 (June 6, 1835), 149.

Familiarity with the machinery involved in the production of *Chambers' Journal* is complemented by frequent descriptions of the printing process. Articles often describe visits to the offices of famous printers or periodicals, revealing the "miracle" of print to readers in an attempt to demystify the process. "Printing is now a manufacture," a contributor explains in an 1841 essay on the operations of a fellow printer, and "the printing-office is a Factory."⁴⁶ An emphasis on the remarkable achievement of print production remains – even those familiar with the process find themselves pausing "a few moments in respectful admiration of the process, and the intellect which brought it into use" – but print production is not beyond the understanding of average readers. In fact, it is an industrial process like any other, occurring in a factory that was likely similar to the one in which many members of the intended audience would have worked. Thus, while it may be an impressive (even awesome) accomplishment, the process that produced the journal they read was accessible to a reader of *Chambers' Journal*, a familiar aspect of the world they inhabited.

This attempt to demystify the production of the *Journal* does not mean that its editors considered machinery and technology to be anything less than a powerful transformative force and a symbol of intellectual progress. As they explain in an article entitled "What is Machinery Doing for Us?" "the very fact of continued mechanical advancement itself bespeaks an intellectual progress," an advancement that made the "diffusion of literature" and information possible.⁴⁷ At the same time, the editors also highlight how technology brings people together on a more personal level. Observing that

⁴⁶ "The Printing Office – a Visit to Clowes's Establishment," *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal* 9 (April 11, 1841), 95.

⁴⁷ "What is Machinery Doing for Us?," *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal*, n.s. 6 (October 10, 1846), 233.

the "order" demanded by new technologies and the organization of industrial production encourages people to adopt a new, more orderly mentality "in consequence of their strictly mechanical nature," the editors emphasize how this order necessitates people to regularly meet within "our factories and public works." This regular contact, in turn, has beneficial effects for society as a whole:

As we all know each other better, we are less liable to offend, and more likely to forgive; and on the development of these Christian doctrines the influence of machinery is much greater than superficial thinkers may imagine. As mechanical adaptations increase and are diffused, so will our social and commercial relations increase and strengthen.

Rather than being alienated and separated by the spread of machinery, people are drawn together, coming to "know each other" better. Social frictions are reduced (as people are less likely to "offend" and more ready to "forgive") and the resulting sense of community transcends the workplace, affecting "social and commercial relations."

The readers of *Chambers' Journal* are drawn into a similar process. Prompted by their familiarity with the periodical's production to feel like privileged members of the society of *Chambers' Journal*, readers were encouraged to believe that reading the publication could lead to a closer relationship with other readers. The editors report, for example, that regular readers of *Chambers' Journal*, keenly interested in the success of the periodical, were only too happy to share their copy of the periodical with others:

Our sheets have hardly ever appeared in the advertising, and never once in the puffing, columns of [newspapers]. By the force of their own native qualities, simply, they have found their way into the hands of more individuals than any

work that previously existed. Their acceptability is also proved by the readiness with which the successive publications are circulated without any aid from the post-office....in every remote ramification of the mechanism of circulation, the same disposition is manifested to take an unrequited trouble in diffusing this myriad shower of Sybylline leaves.⁴⁸

While the editors of *Chambers' Journal* suggest that technology ultimately leads to a better understanding of others, it can never substitute for the connection involved in the informal method of circulation they describe. The post-office favoured by Knight as exemplary of modern circulation is superfluous in the Chambers' account of the exchange between individuals. Indeed, interpersonal exchange has allowed *Chambers' Journal* to reach more readers than it ever could through its own channels of distribution.

Importantly, readerly exchange is based upon the quality of the periodical, not its method of production. Thus, while mechanization may make production and distribution of the periodical more efficient, the community of *Chambers' Journal* begins with the readers themselves as they share the publication with others. Its circulation is thus less a representation of the unstoppable forces of progress and technology (as in Knight's account) than a sign of its ability to inspire loyalty amongst its readers. Denoted by their sharing "hands," readers are united by their enjoyment of *Chambers' Journal* and their recognition of its "native qualities." The emphasis is strictly on the interaction of the readers; technology may facilitate exchange between individuals, but no publication (not even one that has found its way "into the hands of more individuals than previously existed") can generate those relationships on its own.

⁴⁸ "Chambers's Edinburgh Journal," *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal* 2 (February 2, 1833), 2.

Ultimately, the manner in which the *Penny Magazine* and *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal* encouraged readers to feel connected to the journals and their fellow readers defined both periodicals. Whether they were promoting the liberation of knowledge or encouraging sociability, the *Penny* and *Chambers' Journal* sought to foreground their modern, innovative nature and its role in strengthening the relationship between individuals and groups throughout the nation. Gaining an education may have been the most tangible benefit of reading the *Penny* or *Chambers' Journal*, but even this benefit was not so much the result of conventional middle-class attempts at reform as a consequence of the circulation and exchange encouraged by both periodicals. The words with which Knight concluded the first number of the *Penny* resonated for cheap publications as a whole: "the channel, then, is open. Through its course must flow the information conveyed to the minds of a large and increasing class of readers."⁴⁹ Knight's word choice is telling, for it suggests a reading audience that was not stratified, but a "class of readers" unto itself, identified by its choice of reading material, not education, birth or employment. For Knight and the Chambers brothers, this was the true power of mass publications. Improved circulation may have provided information to a much larger section of the reading public, but – even more consequential – it helped to undermine (at least in theory) the distinction between those who had knowledge, those who required it, and those who provided it, including everyone in the circulation of information. As a result, readers of publications like the *Penny* and *Chambers' Journal* encountered each other as participants within the same circuit, not as the representatives of a particular class or level of education. This allowed the editors of the respective periodicals to

⁴⁹ "A Postscript to our First Readers," *The Penny Magazine* 1 (March 31, 1832), 1.

encourage their readers to consider their fellows as members of a single group formed by the same forces that enabled the production of the *Penny* and *Chambers' Journal*.

Describing the first days of the *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal*, William Chambers describes that where others saw a miscellany for the masses as merely "colossal piles of paper and print, and large commercial transactions," he recognized a vehicle that could "address an audience of unexampled numbers."⁵⁰ Invoking the image of a crowd, he speculates about how a new sense of connection – and a new audience – could be created. Asking his readers to stand amid "the passing crowd," he encourages them to see complete strangers as the raw components of what could become a familiar, welcoming group:

Let us stand still but for a moment in the midst of this busy and seemingly careless scene, and consider what they are or may be whom we see around us. In the hurry of the passing show, and of our own sensations, we see but a series of unknown faces; but this is no reason why we should regard them with indifference. Many of these persons, if we knew their histories, would rivet our admiration by their ability, worth, benevolence, or piety, which they have displayed in their various paths through life....if the barrier of mere worldly form were taken out of the way, it is probable that we could interchange sympathies with these persons as freely and cordially as with any of our own classes.⁵¹

What separates the viewer from the crowd is lack of the knowledge that would allow for an "interchange" of sympathies. If the viewer only knew the "histories" of the members of the crowd or had the opportunity to interact with them, they could not remain

⁵⁰ "A Few Words to Our Readers," *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal*, n.s. 3 (January 4, 1845), 2.

⁵¹ "The Passing Crowd," *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal* 1 (March 3, 1832), 33.

"unknown." Without the "barrier" of worldly forms like class or education, individuals would be able to converse freely as members of the same group. By pursuing free, unimpeded circulation, the *Penny* and *Chambers' Journal* attempted to achieve the same result on a national scale and through the virtual world of print, allowing the forces of exchange to transform the crowd from a collection of anonymous individuals into a unified body of cordial feeling and belonging. It was a seductive promise, one held out in particular to readers of the labouring classes whose traditional relationship to mainstream culture was one of opposition rather than inclusion. However, as Klancher noted, readers from the lower classes failed to find compelling what the *Penny* and *Chambers' Journal* offered.⁵² Rather than forming a mass audience out of all classes, these cheap periodicals ended up carving out healthy readerships from members of the broad middle class.

Whether it was that readers, sensitive to class distinctions and given to questioning the motivation of "improving" publications, viewed the *Penny* and *Chambers' Journal* with the same suspicion as do contemporary critics, or whether they simply found the contents dull, both periodicals fell short of achieving a truly "mass" audience. What matters, however, is that Knight's *Penny Magazine* and *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal* represent a key change in the attitudes towards popular literature and its commercial nature. No longer were sales seen as a necessary evil or a shameful fact for publications with literary and intellectual ambitions. The circuit of production and consumption could be made social and personal despite its scale in an expanding industrial economy. The growing reading public, once seen as frightening because of its size and anonymity, was now

⁵² Klancher, *English Reading Audiences*, 96.

understood as an opportunity to widen social connection and personal relation in a national order increasingly dependent on communication networks.

CHAPTER FOUR

"Where shall I place my imaginary coterie?": Leigh Hunt's

Editorial Discourse and Public Performance

In the course of Charles Knight's pursuit of the elusive Mass Audience, his path crossed that of another writer, editor and publisher who also had devoted his life to popularizing literature: Leigh Hunt. Seven years Knight's senior, Hunt had entered the periodical press at a young age, joining his brother John's publication, *The News*, as a theatre critic in 1805. By 1835, when Hunt and Knight became business partners with the merger of *Leigh Hunt's London Journal* and Knight's *Printing Machine*, Hunt had garnered extensive experience (and some notoriety) as an editor and writer for such notable publications as *The Examiner*, *The Reflector*, *The Indicator*, the *Liberal* and (immediately prior to the *London Journal*) *The Tatler*. The *London Journal*, however, represented a change of pace for Hunt, a direct attempt to engage a much larger audience than his previous periodicals through a work "similar in point of size and variety" to *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal* or the *Penny Magazine*, but with a more scholarly focus.¹ When the *London Journal* began to falter, forcing it to join the *Printing Machine* in order to reduce costs, Hunt responded with characteristic optimism and good cheer, calling the

¹ "Address," *Leigh Hunt's London Journal* 1 (April 2, 1834), 1.

merger a "marriage" between "a paper" and a "printing-machine."² "What a happy pair we shall be!" he enthused prior to announcing the specifics of price and content, but Hunt's optimism and obvious care for his periodical unfortunately came to naught: the new, hybrid journal failed within the year.

It was a familiar pattern for Hunt. Despite his endless optimism, his periodical career was dogged by a combination of government interference, poor choices and worse luck; most of his publications enjoyed limited success and very short runs. *The Liberal*, for instance, established in Italy by Hunt, Byron and Shelley, was doomed from the outset by Shelley's untimely death and Byron's diminishing interest in the project, failing after four important, but relatively poorly received, instalments. Similarly, the *Chat of the Week*, started by Hunt in 1830, lasted a mere seven numbers before government pressure forced him to reformat the paper. After six more issues, increased pressure forced Hunt to scrap the project entirely, reforming it as the *Tatler* a week later. Even when a publication enjoyed a relatively long life – Hunt's involvement with the *Examiner* lasted thirteen years (until 1821) and the periodical itself remained in publication until 1886 – Hunt received very little financial reward. Only after they were collected in volumes such as *The Seer* and *The Companion* did Hunt's essays enjoy significant acceptance from the public, but by then, as he ruefully notes in his *Autobiography*, "the reputation, as usual, was too late for the profit."³

Despite this lack of enduring success – or perhaps because of it – Hunt remained a keen observer and sharp critic of the press throughout his life. What he saw there,

² "Union of the 'London Journal' and the 'Printing Machine'," *Leigh Hunt's London Journal* 2 (May 27, 1835), 161.

³ Leigh Hunt, *Autobiography*, vol.2, ed. Roger Ingpen (Westminster: Archibald Constable & Co. Ltd., 1903), 213.

particularly during his time as editor of the *Examiner*, did not impress him. The eighteenth-century coffee-house culture of debate and intellectual discourse, which Hunt considered to be the pinnacle of the periodical press, had largely disappeared, replaced by a "petty and prejudiced manner of journal-writing, which originated in party-spirit and ignorance united."⁴ Where England had once been a "thinking nation," it now followed a path of prejudice and passion. Philosophical concerns had been cast aside, and political debate had given way to blind allegiance to party. "A hundred years ago, when Steele, Addison and Swift wrote in the cause of party," Hunt laments,

political dispute exhibited a much more estimable character than at present. I do not say, that there was no misrepresentation, or abuse, or even rancour...but the periodical politics of these illustrious men exhibited a strain of virtue and a reference to dignified principle scarcely discernible in the present times: the interests of philosophy, of good morals, and of good letters, and the consistencies of public and private character were seldom forgotten.⁵

In his own day, however, that discourse and adherence to principle had been replaced by a new dedication to "expediency" and blindly partisan behaviour.

The cause of the degeneration of public discourse for Hunt lay in its infection by commerce: an emphasis on increased sales had fatally destroyed the public sphere. The problem was not so much the expanding number of readers (as some of Hunt's contemporaries had claimed) as the hyper-consumerism promoted by the press in pursuit of increased profits: "the cause of the deterioration is obvious," he writes, "...it arises entirely from the mercantile spirit" (497). "Mercantile spirit" then fatally combined greed

⁴ "Preface," *The Examiner* 1 (1809).

⁵ "Newspaper Principle, Part 2," *Examiner* 2 (August 6, 1809), 497.

and party spirit, as writers of little talent strove to further the interests of their party and their own career. The resulting fall in the quality of periodical writing was a dramatic one. "The party writers of the former age never experienced a tie like this," Hunt writes in the *Reflector*, "a tie to absolute dullness and dull trickery....they were afraid to write without some shew of talent and reasoning."⁶ A "corresponding worthlessness" spread throughout the public discourse, degrading the entire national mind. As Hunt warns in the same article: "it is with political corruption, as with sickness: its worst effects are not those that are more immediately perceivable, or even more acutely felt, but those which gradually deaden our sensations and at last unsettle our powers of reason" (2).

Behind this distrust and dismay lay a specific concern that the gap between reader and writer, publisher and audience, was growing wider in such a climate. Kevin Gilmartin suggests that "Hunt was less concerned with the broad impact of corruption and commerce than with their tendency to divide writers from their own 'opinions,' and from a public with whom they were once 'personally acquainted'."⁷ Hunt was certainly an outspoken opponent of many of the commercial decisions made by the periodical press, particularly with regard to its relationship with readers. Writing about the custom of "puffing," for instance, he explained that periodical writers present critiques for which they were "directly paid" without revealing that relationship "to the thousands whom they delude."⁸ Such deceit, along with the willingness of certain editors to make their publications the tool of "a set of patrons," ultimately drove a wedge between periodicals and their audience.

⁶ "The English Considered as a Thinking People, in Reference to Late Years," *The Reflector* 1 (October 1810 – March, 1811), 9-10.

⁷ Gilmartin, *Print Politics*, 204.

⁸ "Success of Periodicals," *The Tatler* 2 (April 19, 1831), 777.

Critics have suggested that Hunt's disgust at the tactics of editors and writers led him to attempt to reconnect periodicals and readers through different models of cultural production and consumption.⁹ This is accurate, but it is also worth considering more closely just why Hunt recoiled from the periodical press of his day. It was not simply the idea of commercial exchange that Hunt found disturbing; he was surprisingly pragmatic about the business of periodical publishing. Moreover, as comments in journal after journal demonstrate, he linked sales to the pleasures of his readers: if he provided his readers with enjoyment, they would remain faithful customers. What Hunt really considered contemptible about commercial publication was its encouragement of deceptive veils of anonymity or pseudonymity in which writers and editors obscured themselves and their opinions from the view of their readers. "Where people fancy they are reading the real opinions, and gaining by the experience, of the periodical writers," Hunt complained, "they little imagine that the writers have nothing to do with the matter; that it is the profits only, and not the opinions, which belong to the proprietor and his hirelings."¹⁰ What appeared to be an honest exchange actually occurred under false pretences. Steele, Addison and Johnson may have all published out of necessity but, to Hunt's mind, they did so honestly: "they delivered their own opinions, and in endeavouring to guide the town, endeavoured to procure as much respect as possible for themselves as individual writers."¹¹ The current generation was not so transparent, and if a gap had opened between them and their audience, it was largely the result of duplicity,

⁹ See Jeffrey N. Cox, *Poetry and Politics in the Cockney School* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 62-80; Gilmartin, *Print Politics*, 217-27; and Ina Ferris, "Book-Love and the Remaking of Literary Culture in the Romantic Periodical," *Bookish Histories: Books, Literature, and Commercial Modernity, 1700-1900* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), 111-125.

¹⁰ "The Newspaper Principle, Part 1," *Examiner* 2 (July 30, 1809), 481.

¹¹ "The Newspaper Principle, Part 2," *Examiner* 2 (August 6, 1809), 497-8.

leaving readers and writers actively hidden from each other in ways they had not been in the eighteenth-century periodical sphere.

At the same time, Hunt recognized that any return to such a sphere was not possible. "The age of periodical philosophy is perhaps gone by," he comments with some sadness in 1809; even if the primary culprits (partisan politics and a taste for news) could be reformed, the vastly expanded reading public and multiplication of periodicals themselves meant that the periodical arena was vastly larger than in the days of Addison and Steele and their coffee-house culture.¹² This, however, was both a blessing and a curse. While the sheer size and diversity of the new reading public ensured that both reader and producer remained unknown to each other, the expanded press also promised the diffusion of knowledge and philosophy that Hunt (like most liberals) felt would finally revive English intellectual culture. Even if Hunt wished to undo the "progress" of the press – and he was ambivalent on the topic for much of his career – it was impossible. As a result, he was left to reconcile the tension between two powerful historical narratives of the press: one of loss and slow degradation, the other of inevitability and immense potential.

This chapter will examine Hunt's attempts to negotiate this tension through the creation of a new model of commercial and interpersonal exchange that would allow him to fulfill his desire for an intimate discourse resembling the eighteenth-century public sphere within the unavoidable parameters of modern periodical publishing. The challenge for Hunt was to promote the interaction of periodical readers, writers, editors, and publishers in a manner that recognized the "present commercial state of literature" while

¹² "On Periodical Essays," *Examiner* 1 (January 10, 1808), 26.

encouraging all parties to feel connected to a public discourse that evoked an older, more cohesive public sphere.¹³ By emphasizing personal honesty and editorial transparency, Hunt offered a basis for the exchange between audience and producer based on intimacy, interpersonal interaction, and pleasure. Actual exchange was very limited; while readers could respond to publications through letters and other submissions, these channels of communication seldom appeared in the body of the publication. Instead, as an editorial figure, Hunt foregrounded a more imaginative exchange in which the connection between reader and editor was realized in the act of reading and in the experience of pleasure. Recalling an earlier periodical mode, his journals implied that the present sorry state of periodical publishing was "transitory," a "historical discontinuity," in the words of Kevin Gilmartin, of an otherwise progressive public tradition.¹⁴ Hunt's model of the periodical unified the public and private in a single space, where a writer could once again feel connected to his audience. At the same time, it neatly joined the contradictory narratives of lost eighteenth-century values and the positive potential of the press. Hunt's publications thus become a coffee-house for his readers, a place where they could enjoy reading, discussion and community in a stable, secure setting. Readers from all classes and areas could feel comfortable and part of a larger audience, demonstrating that intimacy and public discourse, past values and future potential, could all meet in a single, glorious (present) place.

¹³ "Success of Periodicals," *Tatler* 2 (April 19, 1831), 777.

¹⁴ Gilmartin, *Print Politics*, 201.

"Party and Profit": Honesty and the Public Sphere

Despite his reform sympathies, Leigh Hunt, like almost every other writer of his era, was disconcerted by the image and potential of the crowd. As we have seen in the previous chapters, the crowd – unruly, anonymous and unpredictable – represented a new, untested power on the social landscape. It was a "new Leviathan," a force that gave monarchies and governments alike reason to pause.¹⁵ This force, Hunt recognized, could inspire change and reform: "The public is too large a body to be bribed or browbeat, its voice, deep and loud, quails the heart of princes."¹⁶ The large "body," however, also indicated the crowd's unwieldy and implacable nature, and Hunt himself chose to take a stance apart from it. As he explains in the 1808 prospectus to the *Examiner*: "a crowd is no place for steady observation. The Examiner has escaped from the throng and the bustle, but he will seat himself by the way-side and contemplate the moving multitude as they wrangle and wrestle along."¹⁷ The "more rational part of the multitude" may listen to the advice he provides, but the body of the crowd remains unaffected. Slow to react and slower to alter, the public inexorably pursued its course with a single-minded intensity that was both the source of its strength and its greatest weakness.

To Leigh Hunt's mind, the periodical press served this public poorly. It had abandoned a properly public culture and the result, as he put it in the prospectus of *The Reflector*, was a "field" that had been "given up to the cultivation of sorry plants, or...cut

¹⁵ "Impossibility of the Continuance of the Present State of Things in Europe," *Examiner* 10 (January 12, 1817), 17.

¹⁶ "Arguing in a Circle," *The Liberal* 4 (1823), 345.

¹⁷ "Prospectus," *Examiner* 1 (January 3, 1808), 6.

up into a petty variety of produce."¹⁸ Incoherent and trivial, periodicals were no longer "a *Chronicle for posterity*" (iv). Instead, they promised a great deal, only to provide little of value. "You are invited to a literary conversation," Hunt had lamented a few years earlier in the prospectus of the *Examiner*, "and you find nothing but scandal and common-place. There is a flourish of trumpets, and enter Tom Thumb. There is an earthquake, and a worm is thrown up."¹⁹ Motivated by the twin evils of "party and profit," the press wallowed in degradation and mediocrity, satisfying nothing but a "curiosity for news."²⁰ At best, it was simply ineffectual, ignored by the people whom it was supposed to represent. At worst, the press willingly destroyed the public spirit that it had been instrumental in shaping, even creating, in the eighteenth century.

Hunt's belief in the decline of the periodical sphere weighed heavily on him. Throughout his career, he remained acutely aware of himself as a descendant of Addison, Steele and Defoe, and respect for this tradition permeates the pages of his own journals. "I shall always endeavour to recollect the consummate ease and gentility with which Addison approached [Wisdom]," Hunt pronounced in the first number of his *Examiner*, and went on to carefully chart a path for his publication in relation to the past:

Johnson paid his devoirs like one who claimed rather than entreated notice, for he knew his desert; it becomes me to be more humble, and I hope it will be my good fortune to see Wisdom in her chearful moments a little oftener than the melancholy Rambler; at the same time I must confess that I have not the slightest hope of viewing her so clearly or of venturing half so far within the sphere of her

¹⁸ "Prospectus," *Reflector* 1 (October 1810-March 1811), iii.

¹⁹ "Prospectus," *Examiner* 1 (January 3, 1808), 6.

²⁰ "Newspaper Principle, Part One," *Examiner* 2 (July 30, 1809), 481.

approach. There was a coldness in the obeisance of Hawkesworth, but there was also a thoughtfulness and a dignity: what he spoke was always acknowledged by the circle, but it seldom reached their feelings. Colman and Thornton did not profess sensibility, they were content with a jauntiness and a pleasantry, that ought to have been their ornament rather than their sole merit. Mackenzie felt the beauty more than the mind of his goddess.²¹

His fondest wish is to "persuade the public to hear me after these celebrated men," and he explicitly takes up their mantle for this purpose, albeit with the recognition that the age of Steele, Addison and even Johnson has passed. "There has now been a sufficient distance of time since the publication of our good old periodical works, and a sufficient change in matters worthy of social observation," he explains in the first instalment of his "Round Table" in 1815, "to warrant the appearance of a similar set of papers."²²

Hunt's reverence for "our good old periodical works" made the fallen state of the early nineteenth -century press particularly galling. What Kevin Gilmartin calls his "hesitation before a monumental past" becomes the basis for Hunt's critique of those writers, editors and politicians who, in the words of the *Examiner's* motto, promote "the madness of the many for the gain of the few."²³ Blindly promoting the agenda of their party, or pursuing profit and power through any available avenue, these "literary" men could never be taken at their word on any topic. Ever the ardent and outspoken critic of the Prince of Wales, Hunt wrote in 1811 that "could the Journals of this country be regarded as faithful a transcript of the public feeling it might be safely concluded that no

²¹ "On Periodical Essays," *Examiner* 1 (January 10, 1808), 26.

²² "The Roundtable No. 1," *Examiner* 1 (January 1, 1815), 11.

²³ Gilmartin, *Print Politics*, 201.

Prince had ever given more satisfaction than his Royal Highness the REGENT."²⁴ To Hunt's mind, rather than speaking for the public, the majority of editors were sycophants and toadies, who refrained from critiquing the Regent as they should under the premise that such truth would "be too hard upon the Prince," or that "it is not a proper time...they are not the proper persons." "Rather let them say," Hunt scoffs, that "it would be contrary to their supposed interests."

The "fall" of the periodical press in the early nineteenth century was represented most powerfully for Hunt in the apostasy of Robert Southey. Already a strong critic of the post of Laureate, which he called "an office in every respect contemptible" for its promotion of men with little-to-no poetic gifts, Hunt's scathing 1813 essay on the "Office of Poet-Laureate" in the *Examiner* juxtaposes the poet's former potential with the fallen state of public discourse and policy.²⁵ Where Southey had once been "all ardent aspiration after principle and public virtue," his acceptance of the Poet Laureateship and its servitude to the government indicates how much literary freedom had become subservient to partisan goals. It is the loss for the public as a whole that pains Hunt the most, as he notes that had Southey been a "common-place man, educated in truckling habits and professing only the vulgar and heartless trade of what is called getting on in the world," Hunt would not have bothered with him.²⁶ As a man who has abandoned his principles for conduct "totally unworthy of him," however, Southey is a true apostate, a man who has turned his back on his values and his gift. Furthermore, such behaviour is indicative of a larger, national problem, for "it is such conduct that gives men of the world their

²⁴ "The Prince Regent and the Journals," *Examiner* 4 (November 24, 1811), 747.

²⁵ "Office of Poet-Laureate," *Examiner* 6 (August 15, 1813), 514.

²⁶ "The New Poet-Laureate," *Examiner* 6 (September 26, 1813), 630.

most grinning triumph over honest intention, conduct, in short, that helps to bring all principle into doubt, that threatens to disturb and confound all one's hopes of men and things" (610). Southey's fall represented a triumph for the forces of hypocrisy and corruption, a sign that the principles of honesty and virtue promoted by Hunt as the basis of a healthy, liberal public discourse were increasingly only a distant memory.

In this climate, the role of public discourse in the facilitation of communication and intellectual exchange had become deeply compromised, and Hunt targeted in particular the practice of using masks and anonymity in periodical publications. Anonymity and fictional personae were a long-established tradition, but as Hunt explains to his readers in the first instalment of the "Round Table" in 1815, these conventions had served an entirely different purpose in the early eighteenth century. "A hundred years back," he argues, "when the mode of living was different from what it is now, and taverns and coffeehouses made the persons of the wits familiar to every body, assumptions of [anonymity] may have been necessary."²⁷ Steele may not have "always been listened to with becoming attention or even gravity" simply because his listeners knew him too well, but once he assumed the "wrinkles and privileges" of Isaac Bickerstaff, readers responded differently. Where Steele's use of a persona was made possible *because* of the connection between the producer of literature and his audience, however, Hunt's contemporaries put on their masks in an expanded, impersonal print world where the figure behind the mask was not "familiar" to anyone. The result was confusion and mistrust that destroyed the tradition of public discourse established by Steele, Addison and the other participants of the eighteenth-century coffeehouses. A writer like Southey, already damned for betraying

²⁷ "The Round Table No. 1," *Examiner* 8 (January 1, 1815), 11.

a proud lineage of poets by accepting the position of Laureate, is therefore doubly guilty for appearing as something he was not, betraying his principles and those (like Hunt) who believed in him. It was that kind of behaviour that inspired Hunt to call for honesty and accountability in the press and to express his belief in the "necessity of uniting private and public virtue."²⁸ The hypocrisy of writers making a "shew of possessing [public virtue]" while, in their own lives, they "do not hesitate to practise an utter contempt for all decencies of a private nature," proves how obscured the link between private individual and the public persona had become: it was now impossible truly to know the individual behind the words.

Hunt's uncertainty about the reading public is a consequence of this sense of how distant the realm of the public literary producer had become from that of the private reader. The crowd was an unknown entity for the simple reason that no contact existed between writers and their readers beyond the most basic commercial exchange. Readers and writers (or editors) no longer encountered each other in public places – or, if they did, they were unknown to each other – and they had lost any connection as individuals. The discursive realm was made up of public performance and private consumption, personae produced for periodicals, and a ritual of reading that (even if it occurred in public places) was entirely detached from the world of the writer. Both parties remained unknown to each other, their tastes, goals and even their identity a total mystery. Public discourse which (in Hunt's ideal vision of the public sphere) would have made individuals known to each other, had collapsed. Where it had once functioned to enable the building of a consensus and the sharing of ideas, the public was now a murky field, populated with

²⁸ "Newspaper Principle Part 2," *Examiner* 2 (August 6, 1809), 482.

half-glimpsed figures and threatening shadows.

In this context of confusion, disjunction and deceit, Hunt positioned himself as a figure of honesty. From his claim that, as a theatrical reviewer he "sacrificed...the opportunity of making some very agreeable and perhaps instructive intimacies, because I would have no excuse for wanting the integrity...of a critic," to the Examiner's separation from the crowd in order to examine its passage more closely, Hunt marked himself as an independent and honest observer.²⁹ Advising the Prince of Wales in an 1808 *Examiner* article to carefully guard his behaviour, Hunt declares that "whatever my illustrious brothers, the Editors, may tell you, posterity will be very apt to call your good nature and affability very worthless ornament." Explaining his frankness, he goes on to separate himself from his contemporaries:

I am endeavouring to gain a difficult reputation, that of an honest Editor of a Journal; and if those real enemies, who call themselves your friends, make a merit of never giving you advice, it becomes every man in my situation to be content with advising you as a friend though he may be regarded as your enemy....Flattery is not the language of your real friends.³⁰

Other editors may offer hypocritical "flattery," but not Hunt; he is honest in both his politics and his opinion. His word may be accepted as truth because Hunt-the-man is exactly as the same as Hunt-the-public-writer.

Writing what you really think, however, as Leigh Hunt soon learned, meant being

²⁹ "The Critic's Farewell to his Readers," *The News* 3 (December 13, 1807), 399. For more on Hunt's move to separate himself from the mainstream press, see Cox, *Poetry and Politics*, 62-81, and Gilmartin, *Print Politics*, 200-217.

³⁰ "A Letter of Strong Advice to His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales on his Character and Connections," *Examiner* 1 (August 21, 1808), 530-1.

accountable for what you wrote. For Hunt, the price was two years in prison for a libel against the Prince of Wales. In the midst of his legal difficulties and the expected hardships, financial and personal, that they caused, Hunt continued to promote his honesty, making his legal guilt a sign of his moral strength. Allowed to continue writing and editing the *Examiner* from his prison cell, he produced several Political Examiners that described the events of the trial and contained transcripts detailing the proceedings. Where Hunt had simply referred to himself as "The Editor" of the *Examiner* in the past, he was careful to sign each contribution about his trial with his full name, suggesting that he was willing to bear the responsibility for his public words in bad times as well as good. Furthermore, it also implies his steadfastness, as he remains himself even in the face of prison and public exposure. Unlike men such as Southey, who succumbed to the lure of profit and fame, Hunt was honest and accountable for his actions, making his discourse trustworthy in a world of deceit.

Hunt's approach to the question of the periodical writer underlines the importance of a writer's name. In a period when the coffee-house was increasingly a thing of the past and the market was filled with an "enormous multitude of new and uniformed readers," a name was really all that a writer and editor had.³¹ For Hunt, a name was also much more than a brand or stylistic marker: it was a critical component in a writer's (or editor's) relationship with his readers. A name indicated character, a private self with which readers could engage as individuals or as members of the larger reading public. An honest individual was one with nothing to hide and, by extension, someone who could be known without the slippery negotiations of determining the personality of the individual behind

³¹ "Success of Periodicals," *Tatler* 2 (April 19, 1831), 777.

the pseudonym. Hunt carefully defended his own name from any attacks or confusion, regularly informing readers that the notorious Henry "Orator" Hunt was "no relation of ours," and he emphasized the connection between his work as editor of the *Examiner* and his private beliefs. His name and reputation, as his statement about attempting to "gain a difficult reputation" attests, were critically important: they had to stand for honesty and transparency, a true signifier of Hunt the writer *and* the man.

Such self-representation, however, was not enough to counter the effects of an expanded press and public. The periodical market had changed so drastically since the days of Addison, and the connection between public and private life they enjoyed no longer existed. To recapture that sense of familiarity between an essayist and his audience – a relationship he famously described as a "peculiar intimacy" – Hunt required a way to surmount the gap that had opened between the public life of an author and the private experience of his readers.³² He needed, in short, a way to re-define private and public space, what it meant to inhabit those places, and how the two interacted. Only then could a meaningful, intimate connection be re-established between the producers and consumers of literary magazines. Honesty on the part of public figures was a necessary first step, but for the next stage, Hunt turned away from the present and looked to the past and its lessons.

³² "On Periodical Essays," *Examiner* 1 (January 10, 1808), 26.

"A Very Sensible Pleasure": Hope, Enjoyment and Sociability

"I never pass Covent Gardens (and I pass it very often), without thinking of all the old coffee-houses and the wits," Hunt wrote in an 1826 article for the *New Monthly Magazine*.³³ That thought, however, was a sad one, a constant reminder that "there are no such meetings now-a-days, and no coffee-room that looks as if it would suit." While Hunt had lamented the "wretched state of the Journals" and the passing of the "age of periodical philosophy" as early as 1808, he increasingly began to mourn the loss of social places and gatherings like the Enlightenment coffee-house as his career progressed. Such locations, he argued, had added an important dimension of human interaction to public discourse. As he put it in "Coffee-Houses and Smoking": "people confine themselves too much to their pews and boxes....in former times there was a more humane openness of intercourse." People now closed themselves off from everyone else, even in public, preferring the seclusion of a theatre box to the stimulating conversation of a coffee-house. This is why Hunt finds himself musing on the public smoking rooms of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries that were "open to all comers." Where, he wonders, could he and a group of friends find a similar public place for discussion in early nineteenth-century London, one where the "warmth of...intercourse" could be enjoyed?

Where shall I place my imaginary coterie, and fancy myself listening to the Drydens and Addisons of the day?....where is the room in which we can fancy [Drydens and Addisons]? Where is the coffee-house to match? Where the union of

³³ "Coffee-Houses and Smoking," *New Monthly Magazine* 16 (January 1826), 50.

a certain domestic comfort with publicity, – journals of literature as well as news,
 – a fire visible to all, cups without inebriety, – smoking without vulgarity? (51-2)

The tendency of periodicals like *Blackwood's* to portray themselves as regular patrons of public houses was merely the depiction of "inebriety" and "vulgarity"; what Hunt wanted was the intimacy that only close proximity and "domestic comfort" could provide.³⁴

Sadly, to Hunt's mind, the rituals and spaces that brought people together, providing connection and comfort, had vanished with Dryden, Addison, and Steele, leaving him with no place to locate his own "coterie."

Jeffrey N. Cox has argued that, in an effort to re-establish a "communal sensibility" akin to what would have been found in a coffee-house, Hunt attempted to revive a model of coterie literary production.³⁵ By pursuing a mode of "collective literary practice," Hunt and his circle were able to communicate that sensibility to their readers. Cox explains that Hunt "thought of his periodicals as social and interactive texts," and this attitude carried over into his editing, where he sought "to create something like a coterie connection" between the editorial persona and his readers, a venue that was "open to response from others through letters to the editor" (73). Hunt certainly sought a more intimate connection with his readers, but it is also important to recognize the limits of such a model of collaboration and participation. While Hunt and his circle engaged in activities that mimicked the production of a coterie – and were subsequently depicted doing so in periodicals like the *Examiner*, *Reflector* or *Indicator* – Hunt never explicitly described his magazines as truly interactive, nor did he encourage participation in the

³⁴ On the importance of intimacy to Hunt, see Ferris, "Book-Love," 114-8, and Jane Stabler, "Leigh Hunt's Aesthetics of Intimacy," in *Leigh Hunt: Life, Poetics, Politics*, edited by Nicholas Roe (New York: Routledge, 2003), 95-117.

³⁵ Cox, *Poetry and Politics*, 62.

form of contributions from his readers. Rather, he emphasized the intimacy and connection that his publications established between the editor and his readers as a product of the imagination, a bond realized through *reading*, not writing. In an oft-quoted passage from his 1808 article "On Periodical Essays," Hunt defines the periodical essayist as "a writer who claims a peculiar intimacy with the public."³⁶ This is a relation, however, that is "gradual," tied to the pace of the writer's production and the reader's enjoyment, notably grounded in the material forms and practices of periodical reading:

If you do not like [a periodical essayist] at first you may give up his conversation; but the author of a book is fixed upon you for ever, and if he cannot entertain you beyond the moment, you must even give him sleeping room in your library. But how many pleasant modes are there of getting rid of a periodical essay? It may assist your meditation by lighting your pipe, it may give steadiness to your candle, it may curl the tresses of your daughter or your sister, or lastly, if you are not rich enough to possess an urn or a clothholder, it may save you a world of opodeldoc by wrapping the handle of your tea-kettle.

Hunt – with good humour, but also with a clear sense of the ephemeral nature of his genre – promotes the ease with which the "conversation" can be ended; it is as simple as not reading. At no time, however, is there any actual feedback in this exchange; it is dialogic without actual dialogue. Thus, when Hunt, in the "Prospectus" to the *Examiner*, projects the response of sceptical readers ("The Reader anticipates us here....'Ay,' he cries, 'here is the old Prospectus cant'") his projection is a fiction, an imaginary relation of a reader and

³⁶ "On Periodical Essays," *Examiner* 1 (January 10, 1808), 26.

a publication.³⁷

None of this is to say that Hunt does not consider that connection to be real; it is tangible, but based on a feeling of shared experience and goodwill created in (and through) printed discourse. In one of his most characteristic familiar essays, "A Pinch of Snuff," Hunt asks his reader to "take a pinch of snuff with us."³⁸ What follows is an imagined dialogue, where the reader and the editor appear to derive a great deal of enjoyment from the connection and conversation that are inspired by the taking of snuff:

Editor. [The snuff] is of the sort they call *Invisible* – or as the French have it, *Tabac imaginaire* – Imaginary snuff. No macuba equals it. The tonquin bean has a coarse flavour in comparison. To my thinking it has the hue of Titian's orange-colour, and the very tip of the scent of a sweet brier.

Reader. In fact, one may perceive in it just what one pleases, – or nothing at all.

Editor. Exactly that.

Reader. Those who take no snuff whatever, or even hate it, may take this and be satisfied. Ladies, nay brides, may take it.

Editor. You apprehend the delicacy of it to a nicety. You will allow, nevertheless, by virtue of the same fineness of perception, that even when you discern, or chuse to discern, neither hue, scent, nor substance in it, still there is a very sensible pleasure realized, the moment the pinch is offered.

Reader. True, the *good-will* – that which is passing between us two now.

The precise nature of the snuff – from its colour to its scent – depends entirely on the imagination of the taker who can "discern, or chuse to discern" the features of it as he or

³⁷ "Prospectus," *Examiner* 1 (January 3, 1808), 6.

³⁸ "A Pinch of Snuff," *Leigh Hunt's London Journal* 1 (June 18, 1834), 89.

she wishes; it can be as mild or as strong as one desires, and it can even be suitable for the more delicate members of the audience. Instead of the specifics of the encounter, what matters is the good-will signified by the gesture of its being "offered," because it is at this moment that, as Hunt says, "a very sensible pleasure" is realized. The pleasure of the intimacy and "good-will" on offer is not reduced for its being produced by an imagined exchange; in fact, this sense of community exists independently from any clear channels for an actual dialogue between the editor and his audience. There is only one channel – that of the magazine – and only one experience: that of reading and sharing the little rituals that allow the author and reader to inhabit a space of mutual "good-will" and friendship.

In "Smoking and Coffee-Houses," Hunt eventually finds a venue that not only makes up for the loss of the eighteenth-century coffee-house but also prompts hope. Being directed by an acquaintance to a small establishment that serves coffee, he finds himself in a room that provides all the charm and "domestic comfort" that he desires, with comfortable seating, warming fires and tables that are "profusely covered with the periodical works of the day, newspapers, magazines and publications that come out in numbers" (52). Initially disappointed to find that neither pipes nor wine are permitted within the establishment (he is given coffee and a cigar), Hunt is quick to integrate this change into his understanding of the evolution of the coffee-house. The change, he suggests, may in fact be attributed to the attempts of Addison and Steele to inculcate "a greater taste for literature and domesticity" in the reading public (53). The result is the coffee-house in which Hunt finds himself: "No noisy altercation here," Hunt notes, "no sanded floors or cold feet; no impatient waiting for the newspaper, while the person in

possession keeps it longer because you want it...all is warm, easy quiet, abundant, satisfactory" (54). All of this – the access to reading materials, the cozy surroundings and the social rituals – fill Hunt with pleasure and, when he returns home, he falls asleep "at the words 'Lulling hope'" in a song that he was writing.

Hunt's response to his experience is important. "Pleasure" and "hope" are related terms in Hunt's vocabulary, and both are critical to his understanding of reform. While the present may languish in corruption and mediocrity, the future beckons, bright with unlimited potential, the fulfillment of progress that began far in the past. Optimism, therefore, represents a potent opposition to the discourses of death and despair – narratives of contemporary dissolution – that Hunt saw in the pages of many of his periodical competitors. Opening the first preface to *The Liberal* with an invocation of authors and poets who he feels represent the greatest liberal writers throughout history, Hunt calls upon "all who have thrown light and life upon man, instead of darkness and death; who have made him a thing of hope and freedom, instead of despair and slavery; a being progressive, instead of a creeping retrograde creature."³⁹ By the time Hunt undertook the publication of the *London Journal* in 1834, the liberation of optimism and hope had become something subtly different. Hope, for the older Hunt, suggests not only optimism for the future and a realization of a potential, possibly heavenly, reward, but it informs a desire to alleviate *current* pain. Such relief, which assumes that pain is merely temporary, is realized through the experience of pleasure. Hunt explains in the opening number of his *London Journal* that "pleasure is the business of this Journal....pleasures for all who can receive pleasure; consolation and encouragement for the rest: this is our

³⁹ "Preface," *Liberal* 1 (October 15, 1822), viii.

device."⁴⁰ If we were able to enjoy the world we live in, a great deal of pain and suffering could be alleviated: "There is not a man living perhaps in the present state of society, – certainly not among those who have a surfeit of goods, any more than those who want a sufficiency, – that has not some pain which he would diminish, and some pleasure, or capability of it, that he would increase." The immediate experience of pleasure offers solace for whatever ills may plague an individual, while the "evolutionary meliorism" that Timothy Webb finds in Hunt continues to offer hope that the cause of the pain will abate.⁴¹ Such optimism, however, is secondary to an enjoyment of the present; in fact, hope and optimism themselves become a source of present pleasure. Progress towards an ultimate goal is still posited and the future remains bright, but the emphasis has shifted from what *will* be the present to what it *currently* is.

Hunt's emphasis on enjoying the present has led to the charge that his theories of pleasure represent a moderation, if not an outright abandonment, of his commitment to reform. Many critics have followed the lead of William Cobbett, who famously claimed that Hunt "kissed the rod with the most filial weakness" after his release from prison.⁴² As Ina Ferris has suggested, however, Hunt understood pleasure as crucial to cultural reform, in particular to the expansion of literary culture.⁴³ "Pleasure is in its nature social," Hunt declared in 1828, arguing that encouraging the "many" to take pleasure in the act of

⁴⁰ "Further Remarks," *Leigh Hunt's London Journal* (April 2, 1834), 1.

⁴¹ See Timothy Webb, "Correcting the Irritability of his Temper: The Evolution of Leigh Hunt's Autobiography," in *Romantic Revisions*, eds. Robert Brinkley and Keith Handley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 287.

⁴² *Political Register* 17 (1815), 196. For more on Hunt and his politics following his release from prison, see Gilmartin, *Print Politics*, 207-27; Greg Kucich and Jeffrey N. Cox, introduction to *Periodical Essays, 1805-14*, eds. Greg Kucich and Jeffrey N. Cox, vol. 1 of *The Selected Writings of Leigh Hunt*, eds. Robert Morrison and Michael Eberle-Sinatra (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2003), xxix-lvi; and Carl R. Woodring, introduction to *Leigh Hunt's Political and Occasional Essays*, eds. Lawrence Huston Houtchens and Carolyn Washburn Houtchens (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), 3-71.

⁴³ Ferris, "Book-Love," 118-22.

reflection will expand and strengthen social networks: "The many are not likely to think too deeply of anything; and the more pleasures that are taught them by dint of an agreeable exercise of their reflection, the more they will learn to reflect on all round them, and to endeavour that their reflections may have a right to be agreeable."⁴⁴ From this observation he generalizes that "any increase of the sum of our enjoyments almost invariably produces a wish to communicate them." Periodical publications have a central role in this scenario. "One of the very advantages of a periodical," particularly one that appears on "several sheets," Hunt explains in 1834, "is the power it affords a generous reader of enabling the persons around him to do as he does, and partake at the same moment of the same pleasure."⁴⁵ Not only does a periodical offer the intimacy of a writer addressing his or her readers with the "openness of intercourse, and those impulses of good-will and sociality" that Hunt felt should characterize a publication, but it also allows readers to share that connection and enjoyment with others by physically offering them parts of the periodical to read. The essay, which is actually a response from Hunt to a reader's letter, demonstrates the importance of this practice by depicting a reader who is not so generous in his reading habits. The correspondent, explaining that her husband is meticulous about stitching every periodical he purchases together with no regard for their order before she has a chance to read, complains that she can never enjoy an uninterrupted "tête-a-tête" with Hunt before "'Chambers's Information for the People' presents itself." The title of the essay, "Unsocial Readers of Periodicals," is therefore telling; it suggests that not only is the husband thoughtless, even impolite, for denying his wife the opportunity to read the periodicals as she wants, but that there is something in

⁴⁴ "Bad Weather," *The Companion* 1 (January 16, 1828), 10-11.

⁴⁵ "Unsocial Readers of Periodicals," *Leigh Hunt's London Journal* 1 (June 25, 1834), 101.

his behaviour that is contrary to the "good-will and sociality" that periodicals seek to foster among their readers. The rebuke, where Hunt suggests that "primness and petty exaction have none of the ease and liberality of true order," is a gentle one befitting the mild-mannered Hunt, but it does reveal how periodicals encourage social ability by both providing pleasure and encouraging it to be shared among readers.

Experiencing pleasure, however, requires a certain state of mind, a willingness to take enjoyment in any event or object. Hunt was his own best example of such behaviour, often deriving pleasure from simple, domestic items like a favourite room, book or meal. "A breakfast-table in the morning," he asks his readers in the *Seer*, "clean and white with its table-cloth, coloured with the cups and saucers, and glittering with the tea-pot, – is it not a cheerful object, reader? And are we not always glad to see it?"⁴⁶ While the object is the catalyst for enjoyment, the recipient's mind is the key, giving the experience additional resonance by supplementing it with knowledge and memories:

Be willing to be pleased, and the power will come. Be a reader, getting all the information you can; and every fresh information will paint some common-place article for you with brightness. Such a man as we have described will soon learn not to look upon the commonest table or chair without deriving pleasure from its shape or shape-ability; nor on the cheapest and most ordinary tea-cup, without increasing that gratification with fifty amusing recollections of books and plants and colours, and strange birds, and quaint domesticities of the Chinese.⁴⁷

Through the use of the imagination, the reader is able to enrich his or her enjoyment of an event or object by infusing it with thoughts that can provide mental pleasure and

⁴⁶ "Breakfast Continued – Tea-Drinking," *Leigh Hunt's London Journal* 1 (July 18, 1834), 111.

⁴⁷ "Breakfast in the Summer," *Leigh Hunt's London Journal* 1 (July 2, 1834), 105.

consolation. When Hunt, for example, accepts the contemporary coffee-house for what it is, making himself "willing to be pleased," he adds dimension to the experience through the thought that the current establishment is a direct outcome of the efforts of Addison and Steele. His resulting enjoyment is not simply physical, but mental as well, and this dual nature makes his pleasure importantly social. While in the coffee-house, Hunt feels himself engaged by the establishment and its patrons, completing his "initiation" with a cup of coffee and a newspaper, as he settles in with the other readers. That enjoyment is doubled when he writes about it. Thus, while the connection between Hunt and his fellow patrons occurs in his mind, it is no less intense for that, nor is the pleasure an illusion. The solace that it provides is very real, leading him to believe that the past is not entirely lost, and giving him a "Lulling hope" for a continuity that will link past, present and future.

"Our Most Private-Public Journal": Personal Exchange and Public Discourse

The notion of pleasure becomes central to Hunt's notion of periodicals as emanations of a literary market. Like Charles Knight and William Chambers, he considered the press as crucial to the dissemination and diffusion of knowledge throughout society, and he came to accept that at the root, this process was commercial. As he puts it in an 1831 essay: "the present commercial state of the press...has not been an unnatural, but a natural state; and, as far as it promises a condition of things very different, not an undesirable one; for it simply originates in the diffusion of knowledge,

and the thirst for it excited among all classes."⁴⁸ Kevin Gilmartin argues that such statements represent an "uneasy truce with the market," an abandonment of political principles that ultimately leads Hunt to prefer "a frank discursive fantasy rather than a practical program for social change."⁴⁹ What is at issue, however, is not so much an abandonment of principles as a reconsideration of the relationship between the creators of literature and their audience based upon Hunt's theory of social pleasure (226). In his system, the act of reading promises shared pleasure, an equitable relation, where a producer like Hunt in his position of editor of the *London Journal* promises to provide enjoyment by "extracting pleasurable ideas from the commonest objects," ideas that are then experienced by the reading audience.⁵⁰ This model transforms reading, particularly of periodicals, from mere consumption into something more active and more personal. The reader is linked to the editor and other readers by a pleasure derived from the act of reading and its effects. The connection, of course, is not an actual tie; as we have seen, it is purely imaginative. Nonetheless, a shared understanding is produced, an awareness of a link that infuses a public exchange between a periodical and its readers with the intimacy of a private encounter. As Hunt explains in the *London Journal*, his goal was always to set "an open example of the bringing into public intercourse the same candour and simplicity that are practised between friends in private."⁵¹ As editor, he goes on to explain, he seeks to do "something towards breaking down the barriers of many stiff and mistrustful conventionalities which serve to keep men asunder." In this way, Hunt hopes

⁴⁸ "Success of Periodicals," *Tatler* 2 (April 19, 1831), 777.

⁴⁹ Gilmartin, *Print Politics*, 206.

⁵⁰ "Address," *Leigh Hunt's London Journal* 1 (April 2, 1834), 1.

⁵¹ "Letters to Such of the Lovers of Knowledge as have not had a Classical Education," *Leigh Hunt's London Journal* 1 (April 16, 1834), 17.

to assist in "hastening the coming of that time, when all men shall say candidly and in friendliness, what they think, and nobody shall be thought the *better* or *worse* for speaking in public, any more than he is not for talking in a room, or telling his friends of something which he thinks will please them." Readers, writers and editors, in Hunt's vision, are thus friends, tied to each other by a mutual affinity and by the understanding that a free and open discourse promotes. This shared discourse leads to a fundamental shift in the way that individuals relate to each other; distinctions of "self" and "other," "public" and "private" become attenuated, and the obstructions "which serve to keep men asunder" begin to be overcome. Everyone, no matter the setting, is viewed sympathetically, with an eye to "friendliness" and social ties.

Even the crowd, that frightening symbol of unknown humanity, becomes familiar, "the reduplication of ourselves," as Hunt states in an 1834 essay on "A Human Being and a Crowd." In the crowd we see a duplication "of our own faces, fears, hopes, wants and relations....all the hearts beating in those bosoms are palpitations of our own."⁵² His statement confirms Klancher's suggestion that the periodical press can make the crowd a comforting, familiar place, but Hunt's claim also reveals just how much the private and the public can overlap.⁵³ The members of the crowd become our friends, our intimate associates. The distinction between private and public venues or manners largely dissolves. Thus when Hunt writes that the *Examiner* is a "tavern-room" where he can enjoy "a sort of public meeting with his friends" while the *Indicator* is a retired "study," there is little difference between what occurs in each setting.⁵⁴ Despite the difference in

⁵² "A Human Being and a Crowd," *Leigh Hunt's London Journal* 1 (May 7, 1834), 41.

⁵³ Klancher, *English Reading Audiences*, 76-97.

⁵⁴ "The Indicator and the Examiner," *Indicator* 1 (October 20, 1819), 9.

location, each setting is suited for friendship and the expression of the personal experiences traditionally designated as "private." Indeed, as Hunt's experience with the coffee-house suggests, it is the forms of sociality rather than the specific location that is important, setting the tone for the encounter and heightening pleasure. What matters is the discourse and the personal interaction, which gives "public intercourse the same candour and simplicity that are practised between friends in private."⁵⁵

This elision of the distinction between public and private alters what it means to be a public figure. For Hunt, writers are by their very nature engaged in revealing themselves to the public; the "peculiar intimacy" they enjoy with their readers suggests a measure of private disclosure. A proper union of "private and public virtue" requires that the disclosure be honest. As Hunt explains in 1811, when it comes to "matters of character, it is only those which are plain in the face of day, or which every body has a means of ascertaining, that are directly fit for comment"; everything else is obscured and unknown.⁵⁶ Being public means being visible to all, "plain in the face of day." There is no anonymity, no persona. A public person does not need to perform any particular role; rather, it is simply a matter of an individual going before a large audience, a reading public in the case of writers and editors. Behaviour never changes; private virtue never alters. The public figure is a private man or woman but more visible, exposed to more eyes and minds. Publicity is hence a matter of scale or accessibility; the individual should remain unchanged.

While Hunt, as we have seen, called for this kind of transparency as early as the

⁵⁵ "Letters to Such of the Lovers of Knowledge as have not had a Classical Education," *Leigh Hunt's London Journal* 1 (April 16, 1834), 17.

⁵⁶ "The Prince Regent and the Journals," *Examiner* 4 (November 24, 1811), 748.

first year of the *Examiner*, it was the development of his "discursive fantasy" later in his career that retroactively rewrote his editorial work as something more than the efforts of an honest, independent man. From the "goodwill" experienced between the editor and the reader in "A Pinch of Snuff" to the "impulses of good-will and sociability" he attempts to encourage with the *London Journal*, Hunt and his audience were presented as connected by a bond of friendship and community. Through such a connection, he sought to counter the obstructions "which serve to keep men asunder" that he saw in other periodicals. In contrast to the reciprocity and transparency he offered his own readers, the audiences of other publications were faced with dishonesty and lies. Believing themselves to be reading the honest opinions of an actual person, readers little suspect that periodicals are actually providing fiction: "when people fancy they are reading the real opinions....they little imagine that the writers have nothing to do with the matter."⁵⁷ The relationship between the majority of the press and their readers is thus one of dysfunction and deceit, where all that mattered was profit, and publications were willing to deceive their audience in any way that would improve sales. Readers were only consumers, a vague, nebulous audience whose sole response to the author was through their continued patronage.

As I have noted, Hunt did not shy away from all the commercial implications of the press; on the contrary, he considered the print trade to be crucial to supplying a demand for the diffusion of useful knowledge. Moreover, he was quite candid in wanting sales himself, admitting in the *London Journal* that he would be delighted to acquire "a

⁵⁷ "Newspaper Principle, Part One" *Examiner* 2 (July 30, 1809), 481.

sale of reasonable enormity."⁵⁸ By promoting the social rather than the commercial connections of writing, however, Hunt tried to reform what he saw as dubious, manipulative behaviour on the part of his competitors and to replace it with a model of affective and honest exchange. Rewriting commercial exchange, Hunt made it personal or, more accurately, interpersonal. The result is a periodical that is a hybrid, a mixture of public discourse and private intimacy with no meaningful separation between the two. While addressing a wide audience, the publication nonetheless displays the sort of behaviour "practised between friends in private." Hunt himself, as editor, becomes a similar hybrid of public and private man, existing "immediately before the public" as a writer but, as his imprisonment proves, without any deviance from his private self.⁵⁹ The very title of *Leigh Hunt's London Journal* encapsulates the double dimension: it is a record both of daily transactions and of personal recollections, the public and the private. By attaching his name to the title of his journal, Hunt makes the periodical that much more personal. "It looked like a part of the frankness and open dealing which our paper recommends," Hunt declares in relation to adding his name to the title.⁶⁰ Private and public intermingle, leaving Hunt free to "claim the familiar intimacy of the reader, in this our most private-public journal."⁶¹

Such language is more than a rhetorical device intended to separate the *Journal*

⁵⁸ "Address," *Leigh Hunt's London Journal* 1 (April 2, 1834), 1. Terry Eagleton has argued, not unfairly, that Hunt "uneasily acknowledged the need to write with something less than complete candour." While Eagleton's comments are certainly true of Hunt early in his career, they become less accurate as Hunt aged. He may not have announced his need for sales at every opportunity, but neither did he completely obscure it. This shift, of course, is at the root of many debates about Hunt's devotion to reform as he aged, but for my purposes, it is enough to recognize that a tension between financial necessity and independence did exist; see Eagleton, *Function of Criticism, from the Spectator to Post-Structuralism* (London: Verso, 1984), 39.

⁵⁹ "Preface," *Examiner* 1 (1809).

⁶⁰ "Unsocial Readers of Periodicals," *Leigh Hunt's London Journal* 1 (June 25, 1834), 101.

⁶¹ "Breakfast Concluded – Tea and Coffee, Milk, Bread, etc.," *Leigh Hunt's London Journal* 1 (July 16, 1834), 121.

from other publications of its era. Hunt makes it clear that his "private-public journal" is creating a new, ideal discourse, one that offers readers a chance to participate in what Hunt hopes will become a new model of exchange and public discourse for future generations. Instead of being left to distant optimism, however, that future, in keeping with Hunt's concept of pleasure, is enjoyed now, in the present. It remains in the realm of discourse, restricted to the pages of the *London Journal*, for it can only exist in a place that encourages honesty and community, where the traditional boundaries of public and private have been reduced almost into insignificance. The *London Journal* thus represents a space where that ideal can exist, untroubled by separations of public and private, historical discontinuities or the ominous future. In this sense it recalls Hunt's description of "Gliddon's" coffee-house in the "Smoking and Coffee-houses" essay. As in that coffee-house, the *London Journal* establishes an insular, secluded place outside distinctions of private and public. Just as important, however, is that time is also suspended in this place, as past, present and future blur into one. The climax of Hunt's experience in "Gliddon's" (and the catalyst for his "Lulling hope"), is Hunt's vision of coffee-house wits of the past superimposed on current patrons:

There he sits, over the way, – Steele, I mean, – the man with the short face; for I perceive there is wit at that table. Opposite him is Addison, in black, looking something like a master in chancery. The handsome man, always on the giggle, must be Rowe; and the other one, an officer, is Colonel Brett. But who is this tall formal personage coming up? Look at him, – the very man, Ambrose Phillips.⁶²

Hunt's enjoyment of the coffee-house represents more than a nostalgic retreat; it is an

⁶² "Smoking and Coffee-Houses," *New Monthly Magazine* 16 (January 1826), 54.

affirmation of the present, of the survival of eighteenth-century public discourse (albeit in an evolved form), and a statement of hope that such community will continue to exist in the future.

Remaining constant throughout the development of the press, even during times of corruption, coffee-house culture moves towards an ideal embodiment of community and interpersonal exchange. While it is the quintessential public place, open to "all comers" and encouraging a wide discourse, the coffee-house also offers the domestic comforts and easy intimacy of a private gathering. Self-contained and free from any obstructions to interpersonal exchange, the coffee-house represents Hunt's ideal of public discourse: communal, intimate, unchanging. That is the experience Hunt attempts to replicate in his periodicals, an experience of "wine, wit and natural humanity" available to anyone who can read.⁶³ Through the power of the imagination, the sense of security and community can be realized by an entire audience. Readers are not just told that they are part of a greater community: within the pages of the periodical (at least in theory), such an inclusion is enacted.

Intent on overcoming the disengagement between reader and writer that he felt was promoted by modern publishing practices, Hunt established what amounts to a coffee-house made of print, a community of readers united around his editorial personality and the reading experience that he promoted. He set out to find friends, and made an audience, a living, unified body of readers, sharing the ritual of intimacy and exchange promised by his periodicals. It was an audience unique to Hunt, responding to his preoccupations with the eighteenth-century and public discourse. Those concerns,

⁶³ "Notice to the Public," *Leigh Hunt's London Journal* 1 (December 17, 1834), 297.

bred out of a combination of nostalgia and disgust, optimism and despair, opened a door into a social, communal world for potential readers. Not all readers would have approached Hunt's publication in this way, nor would others have felt comforted and soothed by what a periodical like the *London Journal* represented, but Hunt's editorial work and his struggles with the tension between audience retention and mass printing mark an important effort to give readers, even hypothetical ones, an identity under the conditions of a mass market.

Ultimately, as the repeated failure of Hunt's journals attests, his editorial figure of friendship did not suffice. The reasons for his failure are impossible to determine with any precision. Lack of an understanding of business was certainly a contributing factor, but towards the end of his career, Hunt himself appeared to feel that the print market and the desires of readers had changed. "There are great changes coming in the world," he announced in the first number of his final periodical, *Leigh Hunt's Journal*, "great modifications of the best things in it, and new leave-takings, I hope, of the worst."⁶⁴ While Hunt remained consistent in allying his new journal with progress and "the cultivation of a spirit of cheerfulness, reasonableness, and peace," he also noted that it would mark the first time that he had "men of business at [his] side, who in addition to their power of assisting in the literary portion, will give it those chances of circulation which can only be found in commercial channels." No doubt a practical move, the admission also suggests that the market, always tolerated and accepted by Hunt as a necessity of the periodical trade, was now of greater significance, more integral to the success of the publication and its acceptance. The connection between a reader and a

⁶⁴ "Editor's Address to the Reader," *Leigh Hunt's Journal* 1 (December 7, 1850), 1.

periodical was now relocated, routed through "commercial channels" far from coffee-houses, real or imagined. "My readers will soon see whether I continue to deserve the good wishes of my friends the Many," Hunt claimed with his customary optimism, but it is clear that the relationship between the reader and the editor was changing and, with it, the social networks of the market for periodicals.

CODA

In 1870, Anthony Trollope published a collection of short stories entitled *The Editor's Tales*. Initially appearing between October 1869 and May 1870 in *St. Paul's Magazine*, Trollope's short stories (narrated by the editor himself) relate the professional and personal adventures of an editor in the 1860s as he deals with contributors, fellow editors and the publishing industry in general.¹ Trollope's *Tales* underline the impersonality of a Victorian periodical sphere marked by both professionalization and increased commercialization, as the editor looks back with fond amusement at his first venture in the periodical press, when he participated in the launch of a journal called "The Panjandrum" in the 1830s. "When a new magazine is about to be established in these days," he writes, "the first question raised will probably be one of capital. A very considerable sum of money, running far into four figures, – if not going beyond it, – has to be mentioned, and made familiar to the ambitious promoters of the enterprise. It was not so with us."²

Recalling a simpler world of publication in which an idealistic group could debate the name, contents and purpose of an embryonic magazine with little concern for the business of publishing, he reports that he and his fellow contributors began publishing

¹ The exact nature of the periodical that employs Trollope's editor is unclear, but given that his contributors provide him with short literary works and essays of general interest, it would appear he produces some form of literary magazine.

² Anthony Trollope, "The Panjandrum, Part One," in *The Editor's Tales*, ed. Donald D. Stone (New York: Arno Press, 1981), 30.

with money sufficient only to "procure paper and print for a couple of thousand copies." The kind of advertising now routine was unknown, and the youthful band had little interest in sales and circulation:

We measured the importance of the "Panjandrum" by its significance to ourselves, and by the amount of heart which we intended to throw into it....We were all heart....we were to write and edit our magazine and have it published, not because we were good at writing and editing, but because we had ideas which we wished to promulgate. (151-2)

By contrast, anyone setting up a periodical in the present day cannot afford "ideas" or "heart," requiring instead "very big letters on very big boards, and plenty of them." Publicity is crucial. As for the editorial role itself, he underlines its amateur status in the early venture: "The great WE was not, in truth, ours to use" (147).

The contrast between the youthful activities of an editor who was "all heart," and the detached professional "We" of the middle-aged editor highlights Trollope's sense of a change in periodical culture by the 1860s that made the rhetoric of interaction through which editors like Hunt sought to restore a sense of the personal seem to belong to another era. This is not to say that smaller, experimental or literary publications were not published, but they came to inhabit the fringes of the market, small niches that appealed only to those with specific tastes. The public taste in periodical publications no longer embraced even the vestiges of an idea like the eighteenth-century public sphere, so that whether from lack of interest or the sheer size of the print market, Hunt's dream of giving "public intercourse the same candour and simplicity that are practised between friends in

private" no longer resonated.³ Trollope's figure of the editor is indicative of that change. The personal connection and "ideas" that the young editor sought to provide readers disappeared into the monolithic, impartial "We" of the mature editor, surfacing only in personal moments of vulnerability but absent in his everyday contact with readers and contributors. No matter his motives or his "heart," Trollope's editor represents what Hunt feared: a private man concealed within a very public role who never communicates with his readers in a meaningful, honest fashion. The desire to connect private individuals (readers and writers alike) in a public venue has retreated, leaving only consumers and producers, who meet not in an "inner sanctum" (imaginary coffee-house or similar location), but anonymously in the pages of a commodity, a publication produced and performed for the enjoyment of an audience of consumers and strangers who are content to remain such.

³ "Letters to Such of the Lovers of Knowledge as have not had a Classical Education," *Leigh Hunt's London Journal* 1 (April 16, 1834), 17.

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