

Record: 1

Title: Coleridge as Victorian Heirloom: Nostalgic Rhetoric in the Early Victorian Reviews of Poetical Works.

Authors: Hogsette, David S.

Source: Studies in Romanticism; Spring98, Vol. 37 Issue 1, p63-76, 13p

Document Type: Literary Criticism

Subject Terms: *ENGLISH literature -- 19th century
*CRITICISM

Reviews & Products: POETICAL Works (Book)

People: COLERIDGE, Samuel Taylor, 1772-1834

Abstract: Discusses the rhetoric used in the early Victorian reviews of the novel 'Poetical Works,' by Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Cultural position of Coleridge with the publication of his 'Christabel' volumes; Role of the periodical press in the transformation of the Victorian culture; Literary biography of Coleridge; Meaning of historical processes.

ISSN: 00393762

Accession Number: 1311157

Persistent link to this record (Permalink): <http://arktos.nyit.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/arktos.nyit.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=1311157&site=ehost-live&scope=site>

Cut and Paste: Coleridge as Victorian Heirloom: Nostalgic Rhetoric in the Early Victorian Reviews of Poetical Works.

Database: Academic Search Complete

Full Text Database:

Coleridge as Victorian Heirloom: Nostalgic Rhetoric in the Early Victorian Reviews of Poetical Works

AUTHOR:DAVID S. HOGSETTE

TITLE:Coleridge as Victorian Heirloom: Nostalgic Rhetoric in the Early Victorian Reviews of Poetical Works

SOURCE:Studies in Romanticism 37 no1 63-75 Spr '98

The magazine publisher is the copyright holder of this article and it is reproduced with permission. Further reproduction of this article in violation of the copyright is prohibited.

COLERIDGE OCCUPIED A PRECARIOUS CULTURAL POSITION FOLLOWING THE 1816 publication of his Christabel volume. Most reviewers treated him as a weaver of dangerous imaginative

poems who threatened to reduce England to a state of horrific barbarity marked by Germanic metaphysics and Oriental mysticism. Curiously, though, just twelve years after the publication of the enigmatic *Christabel* volume, the critics who reappraised his serialized, retrospective poetic editions published in 1828, 1829, and 1834 transformed him into a highly esteemed cultural hero. Largely because of his growing political and religious conservatism and his desire to achieve systematized socio-political cultivation, Coleridge was an ideal public figure to be thus resurrected. Victorian critics represented him as a poetic and intellectual saint around whom a stable cultural history could be established, transforming "Coleridge" by a literary canonizing deployed in the service of a larger social project. This project was designed to combat a pervasive feeling of working- and middle-class political alienation brought on by post-war depression, later industrialism, and broader practices of imperialism that would both make and destabilize Victorian culture.

The chief agent of this transformation was the periodical press, a pervasive component of nineteenth-century life that helped the middle classes culturally legitimate their growing economic and political power and aided them in creating a unified national identity. The Reform Act of 1832 was largely responsible for this increased sense of a middle-class political and national identity. Addressing middle-class concerns over Parliamentary representation, it extended the vote to wealthy members of the middle classes and redistributed members of Parliament to correspond with political interests of growing industrial centers. More indirectly but with equal importance, by initiating a great deal of public discourse and political debate, the Reform Act increased the need for disseminating and exchanging information.(FN1) The periodical press responded, and the literary marketplace in general created imagined communities(FN2) or discursive nodes of connectedness among people who were struggling with various social anxieties. "The mass media, however carefully some Victorians tried to insulate themselves," argue Joanne Shattock and Michael Wolff, "is the inescapable ideological and subliminal environment of the modern world. The press, in all its manifestations, became during the Victorian period the context within which people lived and worked and thought, and from which they derived their sense of the outside world."(FN3) The press provided the middle classes with an ideological base that linked its members into communities of thought, centered on views of history, morality, and national identity or character.

Many writers understood that the periodical press was crucial for establishing a middle-class ideological base and that the growing power of this class had to be carefully shaped. More specifically, as Jon Klancher argues, these writers realized they had to establish a new middle-class discourse to counter the emergent radical discourses, replacing the script of radical revolt with a "more powerful conception of what binds the middle classes to one another--a representation in which the British middle class could become acutely conscious of itself."(FN4) The critical nostalgia and historical revaluation in the reviews of Coleridge's collected works participate in this hermeneutic negotiation, a project that allowed middle-class readers to view themselves as cultural inheritors of a rich literary tradition and that provided them with a unifying vision of themselves as historically and socially legitimate.(FN5)

For many early Victorian reviewers, Coleridge became an ideal cultural figure whose poetry provided a spiritual renewal. In a review of the 1828 *Poetical Works*, the *Literary Gazette* constructs him as a religious saint whose poetry rehumanizes the reading subject. Started in 1817 by Henry Colburn, the *Literary Gazette* targeted a more general and less sophisticated audience whose interests were not being met by such periodicals as the *Edinburgh Review* and the *Quarterly Review*, which did not see a

market in this neglected audience.(FN6) In addition to being a periodical of fashion, the Gazette addressed the multiple social and economic concerns of the growing middle classes. Its review of Poetical Works expresses a specific concern over the effects of materialism and industrialism, and it posits poetry and art as cultural antidotes to the dehumanizing dis-ease of industrial capitalism: "We appeal to these compositions; and if the reader does not rise from them, like their own marriage-guest, 'a wiser and a sadder man,' he is, indeed, what such theories would make him--a machine, whose thoughts go by clock-work, and his actions by steam."(FN7) Like his own Ancient Mariner, Coleridge is a poet-priest who immerses readers into the saving waters of his poetry, baptizing them into a greater understanding of their material relations in society. He reintroduces feeling and sensibility into the middle- and working-class subject reduced by industrialization and mechanistic philosophy to generic cog in the universal machinery. Coleridge's poetry not only re-humanizes the mechanistic subject but also inculcates a poetic sensibility that joins readers in a community of aesthetic taste, a realm previously reserved for those in the upper classes who enjoyed the privileges of a classical education and aristocratic instruction. Though Coleridge does not eradicate the boundaries between the classes (nor would he want to), he blurs class boundaries into a unified (middle-class) humanity.

A literary biography of Coleridge published in Fraser's Magazine in 1834, just one month before his death, relies on a similar sanctifying rhetoric to reinforce the middle-class national mind. Coleridge is a bardic king and emperor of the literary scene who defends English literary honor and who connects the middle-class readers to their cultural heritage: "No Caesar was ever so majestically diademed.... His state is now imperial--his immortality insured. Art thou not happy, O poet? exuldest thou not, O thou king of song?"(FN8) Represented as a key founding father and constructor of English literary culture, Coleridge wears a majestic diadem that not only represents his own regal stature but also binds his readers together into a cohesive literary state or national consciousness. When Coleridge was actively writing and publishing poetry (1796-1803 and 1816), many critics feared to give him and other "Lake Poets" dominion in the literary marketplace, going so far as to claim colonial rights to the raw materials of the poet's imagination and the landscape of the literary marketplace. Now that Coleridge has stopped writing poetry and his work has become domesticated through retrospective consideration, this reviewer appropriates him for the national interest, even enshrines him as an emperor in the literary history of England. In order for the English middle classes to secure their cultural stability and to overcome the anxieties produced by various socio-political, economic, religious and industrial disruptions, they needed a vision of themselves as supremely civilized, cultivated, and unified--hence the careful (re)construction of a literary history complete with poetic Caesars and bardic kings. Coleridge is a double winner: he is the head of an "Empire of the Mind," and as this grand emperor, he in turn is validated.

Yet a literary history modeled solely on imperial and monarchical images would be culturally and politically problematic for the rising middle classes struggling to establish their own positions of economic and political power, especially in opposition to the aristocratic and noble classes. Emperor Coleridge was thus tempered by images of religious magnificence and spiritual holiness. Drawing from the image of Christ the Messiah who unifies the social and political positions of prophet, priest, and king, Fraser's reviewer casts Coleridge as a poet-prophet who redeems the middle-class readers, reopens the sealed Gates of Eden, and leads the readers into a reclaimed Kingdom of Heaven through the divine agency of his sublime imagination and majestic genius. Discussing the sublimity of Coleridge's Constitution of Church and State and the prophetic foresight of his essays in the Morning

Star, the reviewer represents Coleridge in a familiar religious iconography: he is a cultural leader ignored and misunderstood in his day, even a martyr who suffered for the sins of others and who was "crucified daily" for his religious, political, and philosophical beliefs (Fraser's 400-401). Furthermore, his poetry expresses thoughts that are "received as the responses from an oracle--they are as voices from the sepulchre of the mighty" (380). As emperor, spiritual prophet, and Delphic oracle, Coleridge embodies and unifies disparate poetic mysteries and creative voices, gathering them into a single comprehensive (and comprehensible) whole (381). He becomes the English consummation of poetic genius, a secular messiah whose creative power redeems the middle classes and provides a cohesive structure to the universal middle-class Mind.

This image of Coleridge as a cultural messiah resurrected to redeem the fragmented middle-class Mind and allay its anxieties about socio-political progressivism was informed by a heightened Victorian obsession with history and the role historicity played in the formation of communal and political spaces. As Peter Dale argues,

That the nineteenth century was dominated as no period before or since has been by the "historical sense," is a truth of intellectual history.... In England one may first begin to see this new preoccupation with history taking vigorous hold on the national mind in the later twenties. By 1830 Carlyle was proclaiming with good reason that history has "perhaps never stood higher than in these times of ours."(FN9)

Throughout the century, writers and critics pondered the larger meaning of historical processes, the causes of history, the teleology of historical patterns and development, and the place of the individual in this web of historical progress. This preoccupation with historical processes operated as a venue through which explanations concerning life and its experiences could be theorized (Dale 3-4).(FN10) And it informed the various revaluations of Coleridge and his work. Invoking nostalgia, foregrounding literary tradition, placing Coleridge within a canonical literary tradition, and reestablishing his cultural ties to English literary excellence and its Latinate origins, the reception of Coleridge established a cultural network that ultimately served to establish a coherent middle-class national identity.

Historicism and nostalgic emotionalism were not new or particular to the Victorians; it pre-dated even the early romantic poets. But Victorian readers were direct inheritors of the equation of poetry with emotional recollection popularly established by Wordsworth's 1802 preface to *Lyrical Ballads*. "Wordsworth's diagram," Robert L. Patton notes, "uses recollection as the means for reconsidering prior personal experience, bringing it back to mind and feeling, and inciting the recollection of compassion."(FN11) This process is the emotional and historical dynamic informing the critical reception of Coleridge's *Poetical Works*. The retrospective collection of Coleridge's poems not only reintroduced the works to new audiences, it also allowed middle-class readers to participate in the romantic ideal outlined by Wordsworth. Ironically, it was the commercial modes of the literary marketplace that reified this Wordsworthian paradigm. The works of the romantic poet--often produced by an individuated emotional and imaginative recollection in tranquility--once re-released in serial form incited a process of recollection in the minds and imaginations of the readers and critics.

The results of this market-driven recollection produced an interpretive narrative marked by nostalgia and recollective revaluation. With the compassion and deep feeling incited by the process of reflection, early Victorian critics at once redeemed Coleridge and reconstituted the bourgeois subject. The middle-class readership was invited to (re)experience the excellence of English literary majesty (as constructed and reconstructed by the reviewers), to view themselves as English subjects and rightful

inheritors of an extraordinary English culture. Such cultural teleology served to ease the anxiety caused by the fragmentation of the middle class into a variety of specialized communities (occupational, social, ideological, political, and religious) both at home and across the Empire.

This nostalgic emotionalism clearly characterizes the Literary Gazette's review of Poetical Works (1828). Although the Gazette was known for its notorious literary puffing, to dismiss its praise as mere puffing is to ignore the underlying socio-political import of the reviewer's archeological nostalgia. After reading the poetry, this reviewer feels as though he had discovered some of the great collections of a true genius lost to the modern world but now re-emerging and providing guidance and new hope for a world gone astray:

We are rejoiced to see these volumes, the collected fruits of one of the most original minds in our time. Scattered, unappropriated, neglected, and out of print, as many of these poems have been, yet what an influence have they exercised! How many veins of fine gold has Coleridge, with all the profusion of genius, laid open for others to work. In these pages how many lines start up old familiar friends, met with in quotations we know not whence. (535)

What a cultural find for the middle-class reader: a literary artifact introducing them to treasures long since forgotten or misplaced, and making available "veins of fine gold" that can be mined. Furthermore, this retrospective collection of poetic treasures secures a connection to a heretofore unnamed artistic heritage, making the verses or "old familiar friends" specifically known and accounted for in the spiritual and artistic registry.(FN12) In a weekly periodical aimed primarily at the growing middle-class, Coleridge's work emerges not only as a cultural commodity but also as a literary heirloom whose value can now be traced and made to serve the middle-class desire for high-English cultural inclusion.

Coleridge's position as early Victorian heirloom is reinforced by a review of Poetical Works (1834) in the Gentleman's Magazine just before he died. One of the first magazines, founded in 1731 by Edward Cave, Gentleman's was known in the nineteenth century for an antiquarianism that provided both entertainment and ideological value for middle-class (and some aristocratic) readers by fostering a sentiment of quaint nostalgia.(FN13) This sentiment uncannily pervades the review. Its elegiac and antiquarian reverence for Coleridge and his poetic genius establishes him as an English relic and cultural heirloom just at the moment of his death. The opening question sets the tone: "'Why is the harp of Quantock so long silent?' was the affectionate expostulation of one who remembered its early melodies, and who lamented that they were so prematurely suffered to expire."(FN14) The reviewer romanticizes Coleridge's position in English poetic tradition, selectively remembering the beautiful melodies and striking images while seeming to forget the initial negative reception of these now memorable and endearing pieces. The discourse is patently antiquarian. The excellence of Coleridge's poetry

consists in a high imaginative power, in a fancy throwing its brilliant and grotesque lights even over the shaded abodes of sorrow, in a feeling of the picturesque, the romantic, the supernatural, in a playful seriousness, dallying with its griefs; sometimes delighting to dwell among the fables of enchantment--amid the pageants of chivalry, in masque and tournament--sometimes in the wild and savage solitudes of nature--anon in gilded palaces, among the breathing forms of art. (13)

In his "feeling" for the picturesque and the medieval (pageants, masques, tournaments), Coleridge evokes the cultural heritage of England, tracing the (primogenitive) connections between the middle-class subject and this inheritance, and thus securing a unified community.

Although Coleridge was once considered a dangerous poetic figure, a threat to the traditions of

English poetry inherited from the ancients and reinforced by Pope and the Augustan Dryden, his later conservatism and sage-like contrast to the "Satanic" poets allowed him to be repackaged by the early Victorian Review industry as an aesthetic treasure, a cultural heirloom signifying all that was proper in the English literary tradition. Thus, Gentleman's reviewer notes that Coleridge, far from ignoring or diverging from the poetic principles of his ancestors, as earlier critics argued, was himself a studied antiquarian, one who learned from his English poetic forefathers:

Mr. C. has profoundly studied the principles of poetry; he has rightly adhered to those principles in the execution of his art, and he has left to the public the free choice of approbation or neglect. He has not, as other poets have done, supplicated their favor, followed their direction, bowed to their caprices, and pandered to their desires. Mr. Coleridge has studied, till study has led to well-grounded love and highest admiration, the elder poets of his country: he has recognized the justness of their views, the excellence of their execution; and he has been aware upon what deep and extensive basis they erected the imperishable edifice of their art. (11-12)

Just eighteen years earlier, immediately following the war with France, the critics argued that Coleridge failed to revere his poetic elders and that his German mysticism and Orientalism signaled a literary invasion of aesthetic otherness that threatened to erode the glorious English poetic edifice. In a crowning historical irony, the very work that signified poetic revolution and social disruption for many of its original reviewers now serves a unifying nostalgic function in the 1830s, symbolizing tradition, excellence, stability, and true Englishness. Whereas Coleridge was once an icon of artistic and national instability around which competing popular and official nationalisms were being defined, or even a scapegoat for the "new" poetry, by the time of his death, he was an icon of English literary tradition and its cultural character. A further irony in this rehabilitation is the instability of "Coleridge" as a category of poet and a cultural utility. He had become ideological fodder for anxious middle-class audiences, all of whom in one way or another nostalgically refashioned Coleridge's authorial character and appropriated his work as a means of establishing a unifying English character and a stable national Mind.

This critical emphasis on retrospection and nostalgic reappraisal was intricately related to the methods of book production during the early Victorian period. Coleridge's revised status as cultural heirloom or artistic relic was in part signified and further substantiated by the serialized production of all three editions of *Poetical Works*. Serial publication existed before the English Civil War, mainly in the form of the newspaper; toward the end of the seventeenth century, this mode of production expanded into two major forms: books issued in parts (e.g., Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*) and periodical publications (e.g., magazines).(FN15) By the nineteenth century, serialization was used by most publishers to produce novels in periodicals and reprints of novels and collections of poems in three volume sets known as the three-decker novel or book. This mode of production had a profound effect on how nineteenth-century readers responded to the text, as Linda Hughes and Michael Lund note: "publication format became an essential factor in creating meaning [and] this reading process was intertwined with a vision of life no longer shared by the dominant literary culture of the twentieth century."(FN16) Serialization and the cognitive structures represented by serials influenced the ways in which nineteenth-century readers engaged literary texts, including the serial production of Coleridge's poetic collections.

The serialization of fiction cultivated among the middle classes a retrospection, a nostalgic looking backward to a romanticized history out of which a stable view of the present and a confident view of the future could be constructed.(FN17) The socio-political dynamics of this perspective clearly inform

the serialized production of Coleridge's recollected works. Each edition of *Poetical Works*--1828, 1829, and 1834--was released in three volumes, each creating a nostalgic expectation for the next repackaging of the literary past. The serial form at once evoked a longing for English literary tradition and commodified what the middle class most desired: a material piece of English cultural heritage.

The review of *Poetical Works* (1834) in the *Literary Gazette* reflects this dynamic. It begins with praise for the serial mode of production and distribution, emphasizing how this allows for the majesty of the content to reach more people, to engage a broader cultural literacy, and to enact a wider influence: We are a great friend to the periodical appearance of single volumes; they afford opportunities of purchase to many who would not on the moment be able to meet the outlay for the purchase of the whole. They give time--and one book may be carefully studied ere its companion follows. They also add the pleasure of anticipation to that of possession.(FN18)

The last statement is the most direct formulation of the bourgeois ethic served by serialization: it satisfied the capitalist desire for cheap luxury and reinforced the illusion of plenty by instilling desires for more. The political nature of this review lies in its sincere interest in the needs, desires, and pleasures of the middle-class readers, a readership that ultimately sustains not only the three-decker book trade but also the periodical press. The reviewer gives about equal space to the quality of the poetry and to the cultural significance of its mode of production, distribution, and mass consumption. By advocating the serial mode of literary production, this reviewer not only helps canonize Coleridge, but he also legitimates middle-class reading practices, revealing them to be viable paths toward cultural reinheritance.

Reconfiguring Coleridge as a middle-class literary heirloom thus served the purposes of creating a unified national Mind and politically enfranchising the growing middle classes. By engaging the periodical press, Jon Klancher notes, middle-class readers become "intensely aware of moving between alternative vocabularies of social and intellectual order ... searching for privileged, nodal points at which to anchor a sense of cultural power.... Manipulating or fabricating signs, this public both learns and asserts what it means to be 'middle class' in the nineteenth century" (51). As the reviews of Coleridge's recollected poetical works demonstrate, part of what it means to be middle class in the early Victorian period involves a new bourgeois cultural field that crosses traditional English class boundaries and opens the wealth of its cultural inheritance.

The *Literary Gazette* review of Coleridge's 1828 *Poetical Works* invites middle-class readership to experience what was before exclusive to the aristocracy or the upper classes--the high culture of poetry. The mass readers were mainly readers of novels, a genre that was often scorned by the upper classes and "nobler" readers (yet secretly enjoyed as a decadent thrill). The *Gazette* legitimates the feelings and sensibilities of this growing middle-class audience by demonstrating the connection between their own hearts and that of the genius poet:

How completely do [the verses] bear the impress of the true poet!--thoughts whose truth is written in our own hearts; feelings that make us lay down the book to exclaim, 'How often have I felt this myself!-- touches of description so exquisite, that henceforth we never see a green leaf or sunny spot, like to what they picture, without their springing to our lips; tenderness which both in poet and reader, gushes forth in tears. (535)

Readers are offered a new and elevated cultural character via identification with the bard. They may even participate in the upper class aesthetic valorization of the picturesque: not only can these readers feel and exhibit the poet's sensibility and emotions, they also can share in the poet's artistic mediation

of nature and the scenic. The natural realm becomes aesthetically charged, and through this heightening, middle-class readership can (pretend to) be included in the privileged society. This class migration, of course, could never really occur, but the tenor of the Gazette's reevaluation of Coleridge and reformulation of the middle-class audience allowed for an illusion of class democratization. The medium of this illusory class migration was aesthetic "taste," nurtured by Coleridge.

This idea of a classless association of individuals structured around commonly shared ideas of civility and sensibility was carried over from the eighteenth-century notion of an "egalitarian" public sphere. But, as Terry Eagleton argues, aesthetics and standards of taste were less an attempt to establish such a sphere than a hegemonic internalization of political power: "The aesthetic is in this sense no more than a name for the political unconscious."(FN19) The middle classes appear to be gaining cultural authority by being included within the aristocratic aesthetic circles, learning how to form their own judgments about art and literature according to a common set of aesthetic norms. Thus, it could be argued that the middle classes are not so much politically enfranchised as culturally contained. The "law of the heart" that informs their critical taste ultimately becomes an internalization of external political codes. By embracing aristocratic taste, bourgeois subjects naturalized and legitimated the economic and political power of the aristocratic classes (Eagleton 39-41).

However, this conclusion oversimplifies the ideological, political, and economic factors of class interaction. This illusion of class intermingling was a necessary cushion to class confrontation, as commercial capitalism and practices of empire brought the middle and upper classes in closer proximity. It is misleading to characterize nineteenth-century British society solely in terms of an antagonism between a dwindling landed gentry and a growing professional middle class. "It is better to see reflected in its policies and attitudes," C. A. Bayly notes, "a remarkable consensus in national aims between a revived and prosperous landed class with an emboldened professional and business class. All these elites had the common aim of domestic, and essentially agricultural, 'improvement' and national aggrandisement overseas."(FN20) And John Saville argues that in the "early nineteenth century the expansion of the British Empire was certainly not a single-minded pursuit by British government. There were many crosscurrents of opinion and it was the general growth of manufacturing and the export trade that were the main concerns of the industrial and commercial bourgeoisie."(FN21) Through commercial capitalism and imperialism, the middle classes both competed and became economically, politically, and culturally interconnected with the upper classes. Such a competitive collaboration required an ideological and semiotic network, one that was created in part and maintained by reviewers. The review industry educated the middle-class readers on issues of aesthetic taste and allowed them to engage in literary discussion and reading practices traditionally reserved for aristocratic and learned circles. The incorporation of Coleridge into this process tells us much about his crossing from romantic to Victorian culture.

ADDED MATERIAL

DAVID S. HOGSETTE is Assistant Professor of English at the New York Institute of Technology. In addition to teaching romantic period literature, he directs the Writing Program and coordinates the Writing Center at the Old Westbury campus. He constructed and maintains Romantics Unbound, a world wide web learning and research site for the study of romanticism. This essay is part of a book he is writing on the cultural construction of Coleridge by late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century critics and reviewers.

FOOTNOTES

1. See Simm Eliot, "Some Trends in British Book Production, 1800-1919," *Literature in the Market Place: Nineteenth-Century British Publishing and Reading Practices*, eds. John O. Jordan and Robert L. Patten (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995) 19-43. Analyzing such material evidence as trends in the number and type of books published and purchased and the price ranges of various categories or types of books sold in the nineteenth century, Eliot concludes that for the rising middle class, book production and trade increased in response to controversy over the Great Reform Bill and other related social changes (28). Moreover, during this time the sales of literary and secular works by middle class readers were gradually surpassing that of religious materials (36-37). The periodical press and the Review began to serve a crucial social utility, namely to establish a clearly identifiable, accountable, and traceable cultural committee and national character.
2. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983; London: Verso, 1991) 5-7.
3. Shattock and Wolff, eds., *The Victorian Periodical Press: Samplings and Soundings* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1982) xiv.
4. John P. Klancher, *The Making of English Reading Audiences, 1790-1832* (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1987) 49. Becoming "conscious of itself" amounted to the construction of a national mind, a process, argues Klancher, that depended on the negotiation of "negative" and "positive" hermeneutics. The periodic press sponsored a positive hermeneutic promoting a middle class "Mind" or unified national consciousness that realizes the importance of universal truth and strives to make it known. The negative hermeneutic realizes the relativity of truth and the slipperiness of linguistic structures, and so destabilizes the national Mind by throwing the reader into an ambiguous sea of social signs (47-75).
5. See Isobel Armstrong, *Victorian Scrutinies: Reviews of Poetry, 1830-1870* (London: Athlone P, 1972) who notes that in "a society so full of anxieties and bewilderments as Victorian society . . . poetry could be the great cohesive force . . . it could bind into one society, through an appeal to their sympathies, the groups of people who were becoming increasingly atomized and fragmented in the changing environment of industrial Britain" (25). It was the task of the critic to implement this function by creating and modeling critical and interpretive practices. "Forging their own interpretive strategies to counter those emerging all around them," argues Klancher, "middle-class writers intimated to their readers an unparalleled power of reading itself. To that end, one might say the middle-class audience would come to see the social relation between people in the fantastic form of a relation between texts" (Klancher 49-50).
6. Robert Duncan, "Literary Gazette," *British Literary Magazines: The Romantic Age, 1789-1836*, ed. Alvin Sullivan (Westport, CT: Greenwood P, 1983) 242.
7. Review of *The Poetical Works* (1828), *Literary Gazette* 23 Aug. 1828: 535.
8. "Reminiscences of Coleridge. Biographical, Philosophical, Poetical, and Critical," *Fraser's Magazine* 10.58 (1834): 380.
9. Peter Allan Dale, *The Victorian Critic and the Idea of History* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1977) 2.
10. See also Richard Altick, *Victorian People and Ideas* (New York: Norton, 1973). Altick notes that these nineteenth-century notions of history and perceptions of time were ambiguous and multifaceted, more so from midcentury on into the twentieth century as new evidence from biology, zoology, palenotology, and astronomy called the biblical account into question (99-101): the earth was much older than the Bible said. These discoveries not only shook confidence in Christian theology, but also forced a rethinking of history and the individual's place in it. The world was becoming much larger and

diverse, with the universality of Western thought challenged by an increasing cultural relativity. Though not without anxiety, this broader sense of history opened a larger temporal space in which to live and to make socio-historical identifications: "For all their pride in the present, they had an ineradicable feeling--the word 'nostalgia' does not do it justice--for the past. Although in one mood they valued the innovative, the liberal, and the rational, their affinity with the romantic temper nourished an equal sympathy with the antiquarian, the conservative, the emotional" (101).

11. Robert L. Patten, "Serialized Retrospection in *The Pickwick Papers*," *Literature in the Market Place: Nineteenth-Century British Publishing and Reading Practices* 133.

12. Surveying and documenting English literary treasures became a widespread practice in the periodical Reviews. Allan Cunningham wrote a popular literary history series for the *Athenaeum* during the 1830s titled "Biographical and Critical History of the Literature of the Last Fifty Years" in which he positions himself as a cultural account, a surveyor of the homeland who establishes its excellence and demonstrates the connections between its canonized writers and middle-class readers. The critic thus allows the *Athenaeum* community to feel linked to (as if participating in) the cultural dynamics and formations of the nation. In 1833 Cunningham situates Coleridge in this dynamic. See his "Biographical and Critical History of the Literature of the Last Fifty Years," *Athenaeum* 16 Nov. 1833: 769.

13. Cornelius P. Darcy, "Gentleman's Magazine," *British Literary Magazines: The Augustan Age and the Age of Johnson, 1698-1788*, ed. Alvin Sullivan (Westport, CT: Greenwood P, 1983) 136, 138-39.

14. Review of *The Poetical Works* (1834), *Gentleman's Magazine* July 1834: 11.

15. John Feather, *A History of British Publishing* (New York: Croom Helm, 1988) 106.

16. Linda K. Hughes, and Michael Lund, *The Victorian Serial* (Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1991) 2.

17. See Patten 123-24. Hughes and Lund note further that serialization met the following cultural needs: 1) it harmonized with a growing capitalist ideology, satisfying the desire for cheap luxury and giving readers a part of the item or commodity with the seductive promise of more to come and the illusion of plenty by spreading the bounty over time; 2) by portraying the development of a person's life, serialized fiction invited readers to imagine their own lives as a progressive history or a spiritual quest; 3) it reinforced a new sensation of lived and historical time that coincided with the effects of the new technologies of travel and industrialization, which were speeding up people's perception of time, even as scientific discoveries were making time seem boundless and expansive; and 4) serialized literary production allowed the middle-class subject to view progress and social change in terms of safe gradual change over a long period of time, as opposed to disruptive cataclysmic change or violent revolution. For other discussions of these effects, see Altick, *The Presence of the Present: Topics of the Day in the Victorian Novel* (Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1991) and N. N. Feltes, *Modes of Production of Victorian Novels* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1986). For a detailed history of English serial modes of literary production, see Feather, particularly 153-55.

18. Review of *The Poetical Works* (1834), *Literary Gazette* 17 May 1834: 339.

19. Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990) 37.

20. C. A. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World, 1780-1830* (London: Longman, 1989) 12.

21. John Saville, "Imperialism and the Victorians," In *Search of Victorian Values: Aspects of Nineteenth-Century Thought and Society*, ed. Eric M. Sigsworth (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1988) 165.

Source: Studies in Romanticism, Spring98, Vol. 37 Issue 1, p63, 13p

Item: 1311157