

Institution:	Goldsmiths, University of London
Unit of Assessment:	29: English Language and Literature
Title of case study:	William Hazlitt
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)	

The 19th century essayist William Hazlitt is a great, but neglected, master of English prose. Uttara Natarajan's research into his writings is a major factor in the revival of public interest of his multi-faceted achievement. She has led public discussions of his works and life at the Hazlitt Society and Hazlitt Day School, both of which she co-founded. In 2008, she launched the annual *Hazlitt Review* which reaches a wide general readership and academics. Her study has led to a range of invited public engagements, such as speaking on BBC Radio 4's *In Our Time-William Hazlitt* programme and delivering various public lectures.

2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)
--

Natarajan was appointed to a lectureship at Goldsmiths in September 1999, and is now a Reader here. The works of William Hazlitt have been a focus of her research over this period: having established the philosophical basis of his writing, his originality and profundity as a thinker, she has gone on to show his importance and influence in key areas of contemporary importance.

One revelation emanating from her research concerns Hazlitt's role in shaping attitudes to Shakespeare. He was a key participant in the construction of Shakespeare as an English cultural icon, and her 2010 essay, 'Hazlitt and Shakespeare,'^[1] foregrounded his hitherto nearly forgotten reputation as a theatre critic. The essay illustrated the originality and influence of his critiques of Shakespeare, which he developed in response to contemporary performances, and drew attention to his most influential work, "*Characters of Shakespeare's Plays*", which remains prescribed reading for students of Shakespeare at all levels - from school children through to advanced scholars. Natarajan's analysis also revealed the political influence of Hazlitt's readings of Shakespeare: thus his radicalisation of Shakespeare persists on the modern stage.

The research summarised in the above essay also illuminated Hazlitt's role in performance history. Of particular note, he reviewed and promoted the Shakespearean actor, Edmund Kean, whose new emotive style marked a turning point for the English stage; his positive reviews of Kean rescued the Drury Lane Theatre from financial ruin, and had a decisively positive impact on West End theatre more generally.

Another of her articles, "*Hazlitt, Ruskin, and ideal form*" (2010),^[2] made a strong case for Hazlitt's significance as a leading historian and theorist of art. Thus for example his *Encyclopaedia Britannica* entry, 'On the Fine Arts', was retained intact from 1816 till 1842; and his ground-breaking theory of 'the ideal', which upheld Hogarth over Reynolds, had a formative influence on important later commentators such as John Ruskin. More generally, in this article and in others such as "*Hazlitt's Common Sense*" (2009)^[3] and "*The spirit of his age: Hazlitt and Pater on Lamb*" (2012),^[4] Natarajan articulated Hazlitt's impact on key developments in literary realism in the Victorian era.

Among present-day scholars, Natarajan has been the single most insistent advocate of the originality, power and importance of Hazlitt's thought. She co-edited the 2005 volume "*Metaphysical Hazlitt: Bicentenary Essays*", contributing two chapters which set out the purport and scope of his philosophy.^[5] Her 2003 article, "*The Veil of Familiarity: Romantic philosophy and the familiar essay*"^[6] showed how Hazlitt's philosophy has been translated and popularised – and by the same token, hidden – in the informal, conversational style of his 'familiar' essays, a genre in which his mastery of English prose is most forcefully demonstrated.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

The international calibre of Natarajan's research is evidenced by the publication of her work as articles in highly selective peer-reviewed journals and as chapters by prestigious publishers.

1. Natarajan, U. (2010) Hazlitt and Shakespeare. In Poole A (Ed) *Great Shakespearians, Vol 4: Lamb, Hazlitt, Keats*. London: Continuum; pp 64-108. ISBN 9780826424365.
Submitted output; details available in REF 2b. [chapter in book]
2. Natarajan, U (2002) Hazlitt, Ruskin, and ideal form. *Philological Quarterly* 81(4), 493-503. ISSN 0031 7977. [article]
3. Natarajan, U (2009) Hazlitt's common sense. *Nineteenth-Century Prose* 36(1),13-26. ISSN 1052 0406.
Submitted output; details available in REF 2b. [journal article]
4. Natarajan, U (2012) The spirit of his age: Hazlitt and Pater on Lamb. *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 60(4), 449-64. ISSN 0891 9356; DOI 10.1525/ncl.2012.66.4.449.
Submitted output; details available in REF 2b. [journal article]
5. Natarajan, U. (2005) Hazlitt's Essay on the Principle of Human Action: 1805-2005; and Circle of Sympathy: Shelley's Hazlitt in U Natarajan, T Paulin, and D Wu (Eds) *Metaphysical Hazlitt: Bicentenary Essays*. London: Routledge, 1-14 and 112-22. ISBN 0 415 33566 3.
6. Natarajan, U (2003) The veil of familiarity: Romantic philosophy and the familiar essay. *Studies in Romanticism*, 42(1), 27-44. ISSN 0039 3762. doi 10.2307/25601601 [journal article]

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Natarajan has been instrumental in renewing public interest in Hazlitt since the late 1990s. She is on the Committee of the Hazlitt Society^[1] which grew out of a 2001 initiative instigated by *The Guardian* to restore his long-neglected grave. Its £26,000 restoration cost was funded by private donations and gifts sent by some 700 Guardian readers, many of whom attended the unveiling of the renewed gravestone on 10 April 2003, the 225th anniversary of Hazlitt's birth. The Society was then established as a continuing collaboration between the Guardian and the academy with the aim of raising awareness, understanding and appreciation among the general public of Hazlitt's multiform achievement and of its continuing relevance. Natarajan's research demonstrating Hazlitt's diverse strengths as philosopher, critic, aesthetician, journalist and radical is highly pertinent to the aims of the Society. Her explanations of his ability to communicate complex philosophical, political, and aesthetic principles in an everyday, conversational style means she is uniquely placed to promote his achievements. Her activities on behalf of the Society, underpinned by this research, have been critical to the growth of its membership, which is between 150 and 200 with about two-thirds being lay members.

Since 2007 she has been instrumental in organizing the Society's public annual lecture,^[2] held on the Saturday closest to 18 September (the anniversary of his death). It is given by a leading public intellectual known for his or her ability to engage large general audiences; these have included philosopher A.C. Grayling, the politician Tony Benn, the poet Tom Paulin, the writer Tariq Ali, and the critic Terry Eagleton. There is typically an audience of 150 to 300 people, the overwhelming majority of whom (around 85-90%) are general readers who come from across the country specifically to attend it. Natarajan's expertise feeds into the open discussion at the end of the lectures, as noted in the transcript of the 2011 Benn lecture.^[3]

She is also editor of The Hazlitt Review,^[4] an annual peer-reviewed journal published by the Society to promote and maintain Hazlitt's standing, both in the academy and to a wider audience of about 200 lay readers, by providing a forum for new writing on Hazlitt and his contemporaries. Natarajan

Impact case study (REF3b): GOLDSMITHS – William Hazlitt

edits the annual lecture for publication in the journal, and through this mechanism her scholarship reaches all the members.

In 2000 Natarajan and colleagues Paulin and Wu founded an annual Hazlitt “Day School”, a symposium comprising talks and plenary sessions led by Hazlitt specialists which is open to members of the Society and the wider public. She now runs it with Gregory Dart at University College London. It attracts about 50-60 attendees each year, of whom about three-quarters are non-academic. Natarajan is a regular speaker (for instance, in 2010),^[5] thereby broadening the reach of her findings to an interested literary audience which extends beyond the academy.

She also regularly accepts invitations to talk about Hazlitt for general audiences. For example:

- in 2008 she gave two public lectures with audiences of about 150 each as part of the Oliver Smithies lecture series at Balliol College, Oxford.^[6]
- in 2010 she was the primary speaker on BBC Radio 4’s *In Our Time*, in an edition focusing specifically on Hazlitt.^[7] She talked about the research undertaken during her time at Goldsmiths, focusing particularly on the variety of his achievement, his contribution to theatre history, his view of Shakespeare, and his innovations in the essay form. Although exact audience figures for any single broadcast are unavailable, the estimated figure for programmes in this series is two million, with the permanently-archived podcast making it accessible to a substantially larger cumulative audience. She received a number of responses,^[8] including the following from a listener; for example: “Your contribution on Hazlitt was excellent and I congratulate you for it! It was during my schooldays over half a century ago I read few of his essays!”

Her role in establishing Hazlitt’s importance in English intellectual and cultural heritage is reflected in the citation of her research in the Wikipedia entry on Hazlitt, which receives about 5500 views per month.^[9] Contemporary essayist Arthur Krystal noted in *The New Yorker* (2009) that ‘Hazlitt has been enjoying a serious revival’. He attributed this to the founding of the Hazlitt Society and to new academic research by ‘literature professors’, naming Natarajan among the key participants in both respects.^[10]

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

1. The [Hazlitt Society](#): The Assistant Readers’ Editor at The Guardian can be contacted for confirmation, and for information about membership numbers.
2. [Annual lecture](#) of the Hazlitt Society
3. Annual Hazlitt Society lecture by Tony Benn: *The Hazlitt Review* 4 (2011), 5-10. ISSN: 1757 8299.
4. [Hazlitt Review](#): The Assistant Readers’ Editor at The Guardian can be contacted for confirmation, and for information about audience numbers.
5. [10th Hazlitt Day-School](#), 5 June 2010: *England’s Missing Critic*.
6. The [Oliver Smithies Lectures](#) at Balliol College, Oxford
7. ‘In Our Time’ on William Hazlitt, broadcast on BBC Radio 4, [8th April 2010](#). For estimated audience figures for ‘In Our Time’, see [“Who says Britain is dumbing down?”](#)
8. A compilation of responses from members of the public is available on request from Goldsmiths Research Office.
9. Wikipedia [article on Hazlitt](#). Viewing figures [here](#).
10. [The New Yorker](#), 18 May 2009. This essay was reprinted in Krystal’s 2011 book *Except When I Write*.