LITERARY AUTHORS, PARLIAMENTARY REPORTERS

Samuel Johnson, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Hazlitt and Charles Dickens all worked as parliamentary reporters, but their experiences in the press gallery have not received much scrutiny. Nikki Hessell's study is the first work to consider all four of these canonical writers as gallery reporters, and it provides a detailed picture of this intriguing episode in their careers. Hessell challenges preconceived notions about the role that emergent literary genius played in their success as reporters, arguing instead that they were consummate gallery professionals who adapted themselves to the journalistic standards of their day. That professional background fed in to their creative work in unexpected ways. By drawing on a wealth of evidence in letters, diaries and the press, this study provides fresh insights into the ways in which four great writers learnt the craft of journalism and brought those lessons to bear on their career as literary authors.

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NIKKI HESSELL

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107442535

First published 2012
First paperback edition 2014

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data
Hessell, Nikki.
Literary authors, parliamentary reporters : Johnson, Coleridge, Hazlitt, Dickens / Nikki Hessell.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-1-107-01357-5
1. Journalism and literature–Great Britain–History–18th century.
2. Journalism and literature–Great Britain–History–19th century.
3. Great Britain. Parliament–Reporters and reporting. 4. Johnson, Samuel, 1709–1784–Career in journalism. 5. Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, 1772–1834–Career in journalism. 6. Hazlitt, William, 1778–1830–Career in journalism.
7. Dickens, Charles, 1812–1870–Career in journalism. I. Title.
PN5124.L6H47 2012
820.9–dc23
2011026080

ISBN 978-1-107-01357-5 Hardback
ISBN 978-1-107-44253-5 Paperback

Contents

Acknowledgments

This book would not have been possible without the support of the Royal Society of New Zealand's Marsden Fund Fast-Start Grant that I received in 2006 or the Visiting Fellowship at the University of London's Institute of English Studies that I held in 2007. I am grateful to the staff who assisted me at various libraries around the world, especially those at the Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection at the New York Public Library and Nicholas Mays at the News International Archive. Christopher Reid, John M. L. Drew, Ian Harris and Thomas Kaminski were extremely generous with their time and offered a great deal of advice about possible sources and approaches to this project. For their advice and ongoing professional and personal support I would like to thank H. J. Jackson, Heidi Thomson, Sara Malton, Ingrid Horrocks, Elizabeth Gray and Sarah Ross. Finally, my thanks to my family for their patience and love.

Preface

> What are reporters? They are the humblest craftsmen in the profession of journalism. They are not the creative writers whose names are known to thousands of readers and whose work is printed over their signatures. They are those who write down patiently the exact words of public men and transmit them faithfully to the channels of publicity. They are anonymous, but indispensible.
>
> William Law, *Our Hansard: Or, The True Mirror of Parliament* (1950)

Parliamentary reporting and literature might seem to have very little in common. As William Law articulates in the epigraph, the distinction between a reporter and an author has traditionally been a catalog of opposites: the humble journalist and the exalted writer, the anonymous craftsman and the literary celebrity, the faithful recorder and the creative genius. Yet there is a small group of parliamentary reporters who were also "known to thousands of readers," both in their own time and beyond. Some of the most famous, influential and canonical figures in English literature worked in the press gallery during their careers. Samuel Johnson wrote or edited reports for the *Gentleman's Magazine* for six years, although he apparently only attended the debates once. Samuel Taylor Coleridge reported for the *Morning Post* in 1800; William Hazlitt did the same for the *Morning Chronicle* in 1812 and 1813. Charles Dickens got his start as a shorthand reporter for the *Mirror of Parliament* in 1831; he would go on to work in the gallery for another five years.

Despite the differences between the writers included in this study, the critical reception of their parliamentary reporting manifests some remarkably consistent themes. Scholarly and biographical work on these authors typically presents parliamentary reporting as a rather unpleasant interlude or stepping stone in their careers, one that is left behind with relief as they rise above its petty demands. This is perhaps unsurprising;

there is a sense in which critics – and perhaps readers – want writers to be devoted to literature and to operate beyond the realm of day jobs and wages. We feel for Coleridge, for example, when he writes to a friend that he thinks he might be forced to work in journalism in order to gain those things "yclept BREAD & CHEESE," and perhaps rejoice when he manages to avoid this fate, even if his reprieve is only temporary.[1] At the same time, the parliamentary reports of these four authors are presented in the existing scholarship as exemplars of the genre that manifest the peculiar strengths of the emergent literary genius, the narrative of such accounts being that if literary figures find themselves forced into Grub Street, they will nevertheless certainly shine.

As a genre, parliamentary reporting poses particular challenges for anyone who would like to submit it to a literary analysis, not only because it captures other people's words rather than the author's language but, most significantly, because it is guided by the rules governing Parliament and the newspaper business rather than the author's instincts about quality writing. These difficulties manifest themselves in the scholarship on the reports of literary authors as a tension between accuracy and creativity, a tension which seeks to praise these writers for a unique creative take on the debates, or an accurate rendition of what occurred, or some combination of those two virtues. This is, in fact, an entirely reasonable approach to analyzing parliamentary reports but it emerges from a source different from that which was used at the time when they were composed. As this study will demonstrate, editors, journalists and the reading public of each era wanted to see the debates published in as accurate a form as possible, although it is important to be clear about historical notions of accuracy, as I will discuss later. At the same time, however, the practical and logistical constraints of reporting Parliament hampered the ability to produce accurate reports, while the commercial pressures of the newspaper and magazine business meant that different titles attempted to differentiate their coverage and thus inject some creativity into the content. In other words, the tension between accuracy and creativity was built in to the journalism industry in which each of these authors worked. It did not emerge from, nor is it necessarily indicative of, a transcendent literary talent. Journalists like Johnson, Coleridge, Hazlitt and Dickens certainly did possess the skill to deliver reports that brought together elements of the accurate and the creative. But without an adequate understanding of

[1] Coleridge, *Letters*, 1: 227.

the business of journalism in the eras in which they worked, it is easy to overlook just how *normal* was such a skill. Consequently, it is easy to overlook the degree to which these literary writers operated as highly successful journalists, not frustrated novelists, poets and literary essayists, during their time in the gallery.

Previous scholars have come to a different conclusion, assuming instead that the gallery successes of these authors stem from being outside or beyond the norms of their profession. Thus Johnson, unlike his peers, "dedicates his hack work to the ages," while Hazlitt is portrayed, in a similarly exceptional fashion, as "no slavish stenographer" but rather someone listening to the debates "with the ear of a connoisseur in rhetoric."[2] There are two reasons why earlier scholars have reached a conclusion different from the one that I reach in this book. The first is simply that many of the works in this area are decades old, and critical scholarship on journalism and periodical publishing has moved on since they were published. In 1989, a special issue of *Victorian Periodicals Review* outlined the need to come to terms with such issues as joint or corporate authorship, the heterogeneous reading habits of periodical readers, the relationship of the periodical text to time and the connection between the physical form of the periodical and its contents.[3] However, while these well-established tenets of periodical research have been used to analyze other journalistic works by the authors in this study, such as *Household Words* or *The Rambler*, they have not yet been applied comprehensively to the field of parliamentary reporting even in the most recent literary and biographical works, which still tend to rely on a much older idea of the role of journalism when it comes to considering the press gallery. Perhaps this is because parliamentary reporting does not, by and large, consist of original work, whereas other forms of journalism, such as periodical essays or even editorials, can be more easily incorporated into an interpretation of an author's individual voice or style. Gallery journalism thus remains a stagnant area of research within periodical studies, even as that field provides new and exciting insights in literary criticism more generally.

The second reason that earlier scholars working on the parliamentary reports of these writers have reached conclusions that differ from mine is that they have been involved in a different task. Most analyses of this

[2] Lipking, *Samuel Johnson*, 74, and Birrell, *William Hazlitt*, 96, respectively.
[3] See for example Beetham, "Open and Closed," 96–100; and Latané, "Birth of the Author," 109–17.

phase of the literary subject's life are situated within wider studies – critical and biographical – that aim to show the development of the writer and his or her characteristic strengths and distinctive charms. Since in all four cases parliamentary reporting occupied these authors only briefly and temporarily, and since the point of wider critical and biographical studies is to develop a fuller picture of the their lives and works, such studies consider the reports *only* in terms of what light they can shed on the mature author. My aim in this book is not to criticize these scholarly decisions. The existing studies are typically undertaken by literary critics writing for an audience interested in literary authorship; understandably, such criticism is focused on literary analysis and achievement, and there would be little appetite for a book-length study of any gallery journalist if he or she were not also known for something else. However, while the relative neglect or misapprehension about the authors' gallery careers might be understandable, it does not have to be the final word. There is no compelling reason why scholars and readers should not want to understand this aspect of the authors' writing lives as fully and precisely as they understand other aspects; its potentially minor significance in an illustrious literary career is not an excuse for misrepresenting it. There is thus a need for a study that analyzes the relevant parliamentary reports within their true genre and contemporary environment, seeing them not simply as curious precursors to more important later writings but as pieces of journalism composed within a particular context, if only because any work by a major literary figure should be thoroughly understood if we are to make sense of the entire career.

The divide between literature and journalism might seem like a straw man, a rather dated concept that is no longer accepted in literary criticism circles since periodical studies has emerged and introduced more robust theoretical and scholarly approaches. As I hope to show, however, it is surprising how often even recent critics and biographers slip back into the notion of the redeeming superiority of literary sensibilities when approaching both the reports themselves and the experience of reporting. This study aims to address this problem by shifting the criteria for analyzing the parliamentary reports of these authors in order to show that their achievement is journalistic rather than literary, by which I mean that their reports might succeed as journalism while failing as literature. They might not be aesthetically pleasing, characteristic of the author's usual style, witty, fluent or even particularly interesting, and yet they could still have been extremely fine pieces of parliamentary journalism

by the standards of the day. Using evidence from the newspapers and magazines of the time and from notes, diaries, memoirs and biographies of journalists and politicians, I will demonstrate the ways in which Johnson, Coleridge, Hazlitt and Dickens operated within the normal journalistic practices of their day, blending the accurate and the creative as required to produce successful parliamentary reports. My approach thus attempts to meet Michael Wolff's challenge, issued when revisiting his seminal paper "Charting the Golden Stream: Thoughts on a Directory of Victorian Periodicals": "Why is it so hard to study the press on its own terms and not as though it was an anomaly, and for many a regretful, disturbing, even pathological anomaly within the tidy world of traditional letters?"[4] Rather than comparing these authors' reports with their other, better-known writings, I will compare them with the work of contemporary reporters. This study may do little to enhance their literary reputations, but it will reinstate their important achievements as journalists.

It will also attempt to overcome an ongoing schism between periodical studies and literary studies that makes effective consideration of the journalism of literary figures extremely challenging. Periodical studies is a booming sub-field in the humanities, and Sally Mitchell recently documented the high number of new, large-scale works in the field. But the major figures of the periodical world are not necessarily the major names in literature; Mitchell's survey includes studies of Grant Allen, Rosamund Marriott Watson, Ella Hepworth Dixon, John Chapman, Charles Knight, Douglas Jerrold and Florence Fenwick Miller, important or interesting figures in the history of periodical publication, but hardly household names.[5] Katherine Ledbetter's *Tennyson and Victorian Periodicals: Commodities in Context*, which Mitchell also highlights, has as its subject a major literary author, but is concerned with poetry rather than journalism. It is much rarer to find studies devoted to the journalism of major literary figures – literary studies and periodical studies inform one another, but do not always overlap enough to generate analysis that is concerned with the familiar faces of the literary world but grounded in the theories and practices of journalism research.

In some senses, this book is simply an exercise in the recovery of evidence; I present some source material that has not been scrutinized before, and some that has not been given its due, in the hope that the weight and

[4] Wolff, "Damning the Golden Stream," 128.
[5] Mitchell, "Victorian Journalism in Plenty," 311–21.

nature of this information, presented as a whole, make us more knowledgeable about this aspect of my subjects' work as reporters. But this method is also designed to ask a wider question about the existing scholarship on these authors, and indeed on any author who has worked in a minor genre in his or her career. Why is it that this evidence has not been recovered or adequately assessed already, when one considers how thoroughly these writers have been researched, how often their parliamentary reporting forms a set piece – albeit a small one – in literary and biographical studies, and how comprehensively the notions of literary originality and the hierarchy of genres have been challenged at least since the 1970s in both theoretical and empirical studies? This question is one I will return to in the following chapter and in the conclusion.

Because parliamentary reporting is by its nature rather dense, I have tried to set workable parameters for this book. I have chosen to focus only on those writers who can be considered truly canonical and have thus been the subject of sustained literary analysis. Some obscure literary authors did work in the gallery from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries, but I have chosen to omit these figures because I am interested in the way that the journalism composed by canonical literary figures is interpreted in the extensive secondary research that surrounds them. I have also restricted my selected sources for the four subjects of this book to a small group of London periodicals, chosen for their prominence or for their direct rivalry with the publications for which my subjects worked. Provincial publications are not discussed because they were not directly in competition with the London papers and most did not have their own reporters at Parliament.

My work draws on that of a number of literary scholars who have made similar attempts to analyze parliamentary journalism *as* journalism. It is a testament to the limited attention that has been given to this approach that I can name only, at most, two or three principal scholars or studies for each of the authors under examination. Benjamin Beard Hoover's 1953 book *Samuel Johnson's Parliamentary Reports: Debates in the Senate of Lilliput* remains the authoritative study of Johnson's career as a parliamentary reporter, although the edition of *Debates in the Senate of Lilliput* in Yale University Press's Works of Samuel Johnson includes valuable new insights. As well as providing an elegant summary of the background to Johnson's reports for the *Gentleman's Magazine* and readings that compare Johnson's versions with those in the *London Magazine*, Hoover produced a measured and clear-sighted evaluation of this body of work. More

recently, Thomas Kaminski devoted a chapter of his *The Early Career of Samuel Johnson* to the question of the reports.[6] (The timing of my book means that I have unfortunately not had the opportunity to consult the forthcoming Yale edition of the *Debates*, but I am extremely grateful to Professor Kaminski, one of the volumes' editors, for allowing me to read his general introduction before the new edition went to press.) The early work on Coleridge's parliamentary reporting, and indeed on Coleridge's journalism generally, was produced by David V. Erdman. Through his introduction to *Essays on His Times in the Morning Post and the Courier* for the Princeton *Collected Coleridge* and in the article "Coleridge in Lilliput: The Quality of Parliamentary Reporting in 1800," Erdman undertook an important analysis of Coleridge's notes from the gallery. Hazlitt's reports have only been considered in any detail (and then largely in an editorial, rather than a critical, context) by Duncan Wu in his edition of *New Writings by William Hazlitt*.[7] Kathryn Chittick discusses Dickens's reporting in her *Dickens and the 1830s*, as does Matthew Bevis in *The Art of Eloquence: Byron, Dickens, Tennyson, Joyce*.[8] John M. L. Drew's *Dickens the Journalist*, the only major modern study of the novelist's journalism and one of the few recent works that brings together the fields of canonical literary studies and periodical scholarship, includes an excellent chapter on the reporting.[9] Much of this research is now many years old, and a fresh approach to the subject, informed by some of the new directions in periodical and print culture studies, is certainly warranted.

My study aims to contribute to this important body of work by adding detail about the practices and norms of parliamentary journalism and providing more readings of the reports themselves than some of these studies, particularly those which are focused on journalism generally, were able to do. It will also be more comparative in nature than the works mentioned above, placing the reports of each author alongside reports by their contemporaries in the gallery as well as considering the links between each of my subjects and their approach to reporting. In order to achieve these goals, I have drawn on a second group of texts: the numerous histories of journalism and memoirs by gallery journalists published from the mid nineteenth century up to Andrew Sparrow's 2003 book

[6] Kaminski, *Early Career of Samuel Johnson*, 123–43.
[7] Wu, ed., *New Writings*, 1: 31–45 and 1: 94–120.
[8] Chittick, *Dickens and the 1830s*, 1–17, and Bevis, *Art of Eloquence*, 86–144.
[9] Drew, *Dickens the Journalist*, 5–20.

Obscure Scribblers, the first history of British parliamentary journalism to appear in ninety years.

What this book does *not* attempt to do is provide close readings of the later literary works of these authors in light of their experience as parliamentary reporters, although it will make a contribution to our understanding of their careers as a whole. This literary analysis has been undertaken in some detail by the scholars already mentioned (particularly in the cases of Johnson and Dickens). But it is also a form of analysis that runs counter to my central argument in this book: namely, that focusing on the literary aspects of reporting and the reporter's life tends to crowd out comprehensive and sustained analysis of the journalism as journalism and the journalist as journalist. In his biography of Charles Dickens, Grahame Smith makes a crucial point about the difficulties of coming to terms with the "complex" of a literary life, arguing that "there is a tendency to privilege a single strand of this complex in relation to the discourse that currently preoccupies the reader and critic."[10] My study is as guilty of this tendency as any other, in that it ignores other facets of the subjects' lives and writings in favor of microscopic attention to one genre from their bodies of work. It does, however, have two redeeming features that other studies perhaps do not. The first is that its particular area of attention is one that has not received much scrutiny, making the decision to isolate it from other, heavily documented aspects of the authors' works perhaps more justifiable than another analysis of well-worn ground. The second is that it deliberately does not offer a superficial reading of the authors' literary texts in order to justify its claims about their parliamentary reporting, in the manner that much of the existing scholarship uses brief and sometimes unsubstantiated accounts of the reporting to support readings of literary works or interpretations of literary lives. This book does not, therefore, aim to provide a new way to read *David Copperfield*, for example, although I would be delighted if someone used it to undertake such a study. My contribution will instead be to make the case for removing literary genius from the journalistic equation to see what new insights emerge in our quest to understand the full range of each writer's work.

Of particular importance to this study is Dror Wahrman's 1992 article "Virtual Representation: Parliamentary Reporting and the Language of Class in the 1790s." Wahrman argues that the different press reports

[10] G. Smith, *Charles Dickens*, 1.

of speeches from the period he considered ought to be read as "distinct reconstructions" of parliamentary proceedings, influenced by political allegiances, rhetorical strategies and reporting practices.[11] For readers in the 1790s, Wahrman suggests, "there was no single image of parliament available to and shared by everyone. Instead the public was confronted with a plurality of representations."[12] While his evidence is drawn from a single decade, and his focus is on the papers' political allegiances, his summary of the nature of parliamentary reporting as a genre is valuable in analyzing other historical periods and other motivating factors.[13] Wahrman's sensible analysis of the way parliamentary reports were constructed reminds us of the importance of treating each publication's coverage as a hybrid product, forged by professional practices, competition in the marketplace, political allegiances and interferences, journalists' abilities and readers' expectations.

The notion of the report as a "distinct reconstruction" is one that guides this study. The reports that will be examined in later chapters are considered alongside alternative versions of the same coverage in competing publications, authorized speeches published by the orators themselves, the other speeches that made up the debate in which an individual address was delivered, and the rest of the parliamentary coverage that each publication ran. They have also been considered in the context of contemporary attitudes to parliamentary reporting as expressed by politicians, journalists and ordinary readers. The assumption behind this approach is that it is only in combination and comparison with other examples and relevant contexts that the particular "distinct reconstructions" created by the writers who form the subject of this study can be adequately identified and analyzed.

My approach to reading a report is thus to see it as, inevitably, one journalist's response to the range of forces that acted upon reporters at that time. Taking Wahrman's term as indicative of normal journalistic practice throughout history, I interpret the reports as products of a peculiar assembly line, one that renders the same raw materials into related

[11] Wahrman, "Virtual Representation," 85.
[12] Wahrman, "Virtual Representation," 85.
[13] A similarly helpful summary of the usefulness of eighteenth-century parliamentary reporting is provided by Brycchan Carey, who reminds us that, despite the flaws in the way Parliament was reported, the existing records are still important to scholars for the "echo" of the original spoken rhetoric that they preserve. Carey also notes that the very diversity of the accounts of Parliament produced by journalists in the eighteenth century allows researchers the unique opportunity to see a single rhetorical event from different angles; see Carey, *British Abolitionism*, 145 and 159.

but unique products. These products derive their value simultaneously from their resemblance to the blueprint of the real speeches delivered in Parliament and their difference from one another. The identity and talent of the individual reporter are some of those raw materials, but the status of the report produced shares an important characteristic with every other report. What they have in common, paradoxically, is their claim to uniqueness. By acknowledging the inherent logic of viewing a report as a "distinct reconstruction," I hope to shed light on the forces that create it and thus counter some discredited but still influential assumptions about transcendent literary talent and its effect on parliamentary journalism.

Throughout the book, I refer to "accurate" reporting, and it is perhaps worth explaining how I am using this term. In this study, accuracy is always assumed to be historically mediated; even with modern technology, it is worth remembering that the age of audio- and videotape is also the age of sound bites, Photoshop and video-editing suites. It is difficult to be sure exactly what was said in Parliament today, and it was much harder in the periods under examination in this book. When I talk about accurate reporting, then, I am not appealing to the idea that the exact words of speakers were captured (or, if there is some evidence to suggest that they were, it will be provided). I am, however, appealing to the contemporary understanding of accuracy, within whatever constraints operated at the time. I am also proposing that the evidence suggests that editors, journalists and readers placed a high value on such circumscribed accuracy, making it an important measure of effective reporting.

This book consists of six chapters. The first, "Reporting and the individual talent," examines the critical heritage of each author's career as a parliamentary reporter. It proposes that despite the differences between the authors in terms of their eras and the genres of their later literary work, and despite the advances in periodical studies that propose that there should be no special divide between the literary and the journalistic, there are consistent themes in the way scholars approach their careers in the gallery. In every case, there is a tendency to regard these authors as exemplary parliamentary reporters, so good that they are recognized as masters of the genre and thus too good to remain in the gallery, journalists so excellent that they must stop being journalists. There is likewise a tradition, in every case, of examining the various reports for stylistic clues that point to the emerging talents of the canonical author. I characterize each of these critical heritages using a phrase that describes the manner in which this persona, transcendent of contemporary journalism and yet

consistent with the later literary figure, has been presented: the creative Johnson, who, in his own words, invented speeches for parliamentarians in "a garret in Exeter-street"; the poetic Coleridge, too imaginative to discipline himself to the work of reporting speeches; the critical Hazlitt, sneering at the mediocrity he witnessed; and the accurate Dickens, capturing the voices of MPs in the way he would later capture the voices of his most memorable characters.[14] This chapter thus establishes the critical orthodoxy that can be questioned when the norms of parliamentary journalism in each era are considered.

The next four chapters treat the authors in chronological order. Chapter 2 considers Johnson's gallery journalism alongside arguments about fact and fiction in parliamentary reporting in the late 1730s and early 1740s in order to question the emphasis on the creativity of his reports. It begins by sketching the conditions governing parliamentary reporting in that era, when Johnson contributed the "Debates in the Senate of Lilliput" to the *Gentleman's Magazine*. I explain the way in which my research differs from Benjamin Beard Hoover's invaluable but dated study in its use of the manuscript notes composed by Lord Hardwicke, who was present in the House of Lords during some of the debates that Johnson reported but whose notes do not feature in Hoover's account, nor in any other scholarship on the subject as far as I am aware, and in providing a more complex understanding of the balance between fact and fiction in the magazines' reports than Hoover allows. The chapter outlines the ways in which Johnson's recollections of his days as a parliamentary reporter colored subsequent readings, which tended to stress his creative powers and his ability to dupe readers into thinking they were reading verbatim accounts of the speeches, and shows that contemporary readers, editors and journalists were in fact very sophisticated in their understanding of the relationship between fact and fiction in the reports. The second half of the chapter considers examples from Johnson's career as a reporter, in comparison with the work of his rival, Thomas Gordon of the *London Magazine*, to demonstrate both the high value that he and his editor, Edward Cave, placed on factuality, and the way in which his creative contributions were influenced by the magazine's style. The chapter concludes that Johnson's creativity was tempered and shaped by the norms of parliamentary journalism.

[14] Murphy, *An Essay*, 44–45.

Chapter 3 reconfigures the notion of the poetic Coleridge, familiar to us through his biography and major poems, to suggest instead the ways in which his shrewd journalistic vision manifested itself in the pages of the *Morning Post*'s parliamentary coverage in 1800. The chapter begins by outlining the changes in the status and practices of parliamentary reporters between Johnson's era and Coleridge's. Using memoirs by his contemporaries in the gallery, this chapter demonstrates that Coleridge occupied an unusual role in the world of parliamentary journalism in 1800: part reporter, part subeditor and part commentator. This finding is then used to build on David Erdman's work on Coleridge's parliamentary reports, which concluded that he was an outstanding exponent, to argue that some of the characteristics of his reports can be explained by his unconventional role.

Chapter 4 argues that Hazlitt was more fully integrated into normal gallery practices than critics have allowed in their focus on his critiques of Parliament and his typically skeptical manner. The chapter explains the important events of 1803, when parliamentary reporting received a degree of official recognition from the Speaker of the House, and the developments in gallery journalism between Coleridge's tenure in 1800, and 1812, the year Hazlitt joined the parliamentary corps for the *Morning Chronicle*. It considers Hazlitt's preparation for the task of reporting in light of his 1807 work *The Eloquence of the British Senate*, as well as the intense scrutiny that parliamentary speechmaking and reporting were under in the period. The chapter then turns to the substance of Hazlitt's parliamentary reports. I examine the so-called "Christabel notebook," which belonged to Hazlitt's wife Sarah and which he used during his time in the gallery, to demonstrate that he reported six debates in May and June 1813. Although the existence of these notes has been documented in earlier scholarship, this is the first time that they have been correctly dated and that the subsequent six reports in the *Morning Chronicle* have been attributed to Hazlitt. Using these six reports, I analyze his reportorial technique, demonstrating that it was a combination of attention to some of the exact words and phrases used by the speakers in the House, abbreviation where necessary of speeches that were unlikely to stir public interest and, in some cases, reliance on memory when his notes were inadequate. This evidence about the norms of parliamentary reporting in the period, and the characteristics of Hazlitt's style, is then applied to Duncan Wu's attribution of two reports in *New Writings of William Hazlitt* (2007) in order to demonstrate that these attributions need further refinement. The

chapter concludes with an analysis of a famous speech Hazlitt reported – Plunket's address on Catholic Emancipation in February 1813 – to show how his technique played out when confronted with a speech he particularly admired. In addition to making new attributions to Hazlitt, and refining those already made, this chapter proves that there were several occasions on which Hazlitt's report became part of the official record.

Chapter 5 takes issue with the longstanding assumption that Dickens's parliamentary reports cannot be traced because his highly accurate shorthand texts have blended in with the rest of the newspapers' reporting. The chapter outlines the evidence that shorthand was in fact a rare skill in the gallery when Dickens joined in the early 1830s, and that accuracy was a contested notion in the world of parliamentary reporting. As well as analyzing the coverage of the one speech that can be confidently attributed to Dickens – Stanley's February 1833 speech on Ireland – this chapter tentatively proposes two further reports from his time at the *Morning Chronicle* that might be attributed to him, using a combination of evidence about the system of turns that governed gallery reporters, his movements on particular dates and the presence of shorthand sections in the *Chronicle*'s coverage. The evidence for these attributions is inconclusive, and they are offered not as definitive findings but as the basis for further research and questioning. The chapter concludes that Dickens's accuracy might actually have made him a slightly anomalous – and thus slightly more visible – figure in the 1830s press gallery than has previously been assumed.

The concluding chapter summarizes the ways in which the critical heritage outlined in the first chapter might now be rewritten, with a greater emphasis on recent developments in periodical studies, to reflect the subtle engagement between each author and his era. This chapter contributes to the ongoing aim of print culture studies to ensure that future studies of the journalism of literary figures take greater account of the norms of the profession at the time, and are more alert to the ways in which an author engages with those norms.