

Hazards of Hazlitt

by Theodore Dalrymple (July 2015)

In a crowded train a few days ago I was reading Hazlitt preparatory to writing an essay comparing his Shakespeare criticism with that of Dr Johnson (whom he detested). Which of them was the more acute, the more penetrating? And the essay which I happened to read on the train was *On the Ignorance of the Learned*, which ends with the famous words:

If we wish to know the force of human genius we should read Shakespeare. If we wish to know the insignificance of human learning we may study his commentators.

As Hazlitt had by then written his book about Shakespeare's characters, he presumably knew whereof he spoke. [more>>>](#)