

# The Charles Lamb Bulletin

The Journal of the Charles Lamb Society

July 1999

New Series No. 107

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## Editorial

IF THE BICENTENARY of Thomas Hood's birth has gone virtually unacknowledged by most academic journals, *The Charles Lamb Bulletin* has more than made up for it. In our last, John Strachan attributed 'The Mermaid' to Hood, and in the present issue Sara Lodge of University College, Oxford, discusses two of his most important poems. It is pleasing also to provide readers with the proceedings of the Charles Lamb birthday luncheon held in February to honour our author. John Beer's toast, and Reggie Watters' response, made for a memorable celebration.

## Sally Brown (1822) and Bridget Jones (1825): Where They Came From and What They Say about Thomas Hood

By SARA LODGE

This lecture was delivered to the Society at the Mary Ward Centre, 7 November 1998.

IN A SKETCH from 1831<sup>1</sup> of the kind which Thomas Hood often doodled in the margins of his writing, and as tailpieces following letters to friends, he depicted an odd wedding. Marianne Reynolds, his sister-in-law, is seen stepping up to the altar with what looks like a tree – Hood's comic literalisation of her new husband, Mr Green.<sup>2</sup> Marianne's face has a viridescent tint, she is becoming Green as the ceremony proceeds. Such intimate verbal-visual play is the overwhelming feature of Hood's private and public writings. The lack of difference between Hood's formal and informal selves – the playfulness and intimacy, the occasional ghoulishness and fierce anger which belong to his personal letters as much as to his published poems, prose and illustration – make him an accessible and endearing subject.

Hood's depiction of himself in this watercolour is, however, even more striking. He paints himself behind the altar, sacrilegiously quaffing wine from the communion cup. His unmarried sister-in-law, Charlotte, meanwhile, occupies a prominent position centre-left, where we see that she has a hook instead of a right hand, for grabbing a potential spouse. Her shadow on the floor is that of a devil with horns and a trident. Such imagery and self-representation hints at another important and insufficiently regarded aspect of Hood's personality – his wit is mischievous, often subversive, quizzical or unorthodox. While his lexical palette and metrical designs are deliberately less grandiose and more familiar than most poets', the very tightness and brightness of rhymes which have laid Hood open to the charge of triviality often underline a critical departure from the sensibilities of those authors and contemporary personalities with whom his work engages.

Several studies, none of them recent, have considered Hood's absorption of Romantic influences into his poetry. Lloyd Jeffrey (1972) considers in detail the possible literary backgrounds to Hood's 'Romantic' poems; Cornelius Cuyler's seminal thesis, 'Thomas Hood: An Illustration of the Transition from the Romantic to the Victorian Era' (1943) also traces his assimilation of Romantic sources, as does Alvin Whitley's specific consideration of 'Keats and Hood' (1956). John Clubbe's *Selected Poems* (1970) includes many of these insights in its annotations. All of these writers explore the field of influence largely from the position that Hood, during the 1820s, is a minor Romantic, who adapts Keatsian, Byronic and Coleridgean models in poems which, while themselves creative and astute, never attain the heights of their prototypes. I do not propose to retrace this ground.

<sup>1</sup> This illustration, reproduced opposite, is taken from Henry C. Shelley, *Literary By-Paths in Old England* (London, 1909), p. 349. Shelley obtained his manuscripts from Marianne Reynolds Green's son, the artist Towneley Green. Marianne Reynolds married Henry Gilson Green on 13 September 1831, at St Botolph's, Aldersgate, and the sketch was probably completed close to this time.

<sup>2</sup> H. G. Green, a friend of Hood's and of the Reynolds family, is depicted as a 'Jack-in-the-Green', a traditional figure of a man dressed in a wicker frame covered in leaves, presented by London chimney-sweeps in their May procession. Hood, like Lamb, was very fond of this colourful and popular festival.

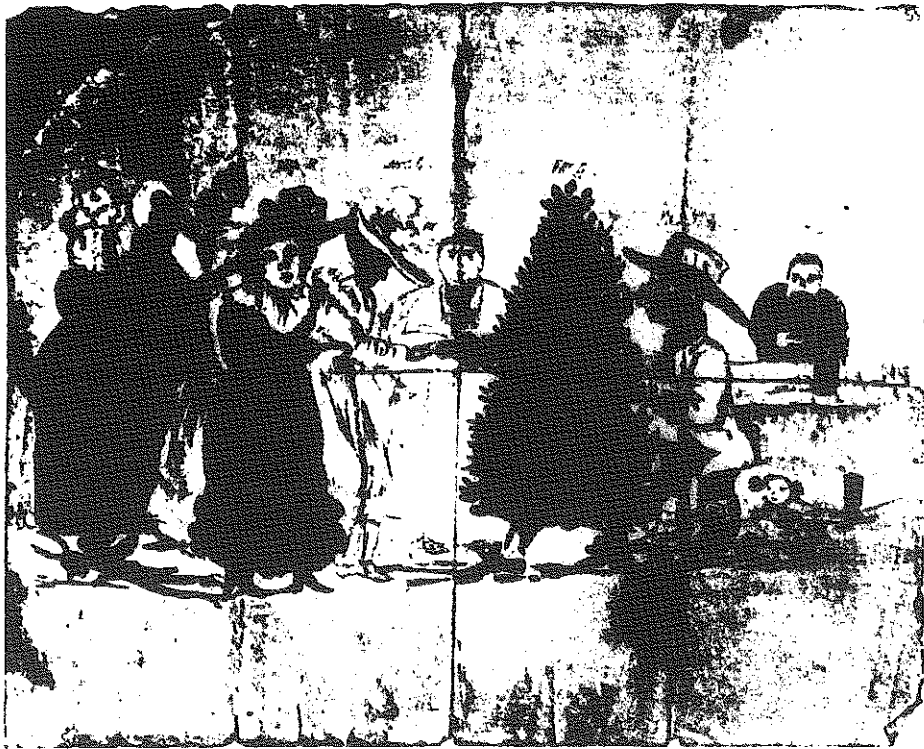


Figure 1: Hood's sketch of Marianne Reynolds marrying Henry Green, 13 September 1831.

Instead, I am interested in the ways in which Hood chooses to differ from other writers. I suggest that it is only possible to reconcile the synchronicities of Hood's Keatsian odes and his comic send-ups (his transmogrification, for example, of Gray's 'Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College' into the wonderful 'Ode on a Distant Prospect of Clapham Academy') if we allow that imitation and parody are points on the same continuum, and realise that Hood's work in the 1820s and 30s is continuously involved in a process of self-definition which establishes not only debts to Romantic and pre-Romantic writing, but also substantive critical difference.

My research has lately thrown up new sources for two of Hood's early poems which emphasize the creative ambivalence of his responsiveness to traditions and genres within the poetry of his period, and it is these new discoveries that I hope to share with you today. Periodization has served Hood ill. Anthologies demarcate his work into three phases. In collections of Romantic verse he appears as a late or minor Romantic, often being represented in terms of his relationship to Keats, with 'Ode: Autumn' or 'Sonnet Written in Endymion'. In collections of Victorian verse, Hood appears as a Victorian forerunner, with abridged poems of social protest such as 'Miss Kilmansegg and her Precious Leg' and 'The Song of the Shirt'. The substantial corpus of Hood's comic verse is comparatively poorly represented, scattered in anthologies of light verse. For this reason, he is always read in terms of a historical narrative to which he cannot but be marginal. Falling fatally between the literary acts of the Romantic and the Victorian, he is condemned to perpetual understudy.

The interest, then, in looking afresh at these two early poems, lies in the integrated view which they offer of Hood's self-fashioning in the early part of his career. They also, I believe, highlight original elements of Hood's literary personality, particularly his lateral and inclusive view of language.

The March 1822 *London Magazine* featured one of Hood's most enduringly popular comic pieces, the punning ballad 'Faithless Sally Brown', presented prominently, and yet anonymously, in the 'Lion's Head', as the submission of 'Common Sense jun. of Leeds'.<sup>3</sup> The allusion to *Common Sense*, a notorious pamphlet of 1776 by Thomas Paine, arguing the American cause in the War of Independence, appears provocative. Hood has 'Common Sense junior' hail from the northern manufacturing town of Leeds, hinting at a radical subtext to this narrative, couched in the popular form of the ballad, which relates the story of Ben the Carpenter, who is press-ganged into the navy and forced to leave his girlfriend, to fight in the Napoleonic wars. On his return, his sweetheart, Sally, has found a new lover and Ben dies heartbroken. The outwardly tragic and agitating nature of this plot is, however, undermined by the parodic nature of Hood's approach to ballad, where puns express a blackly humorous equanimity towards the drama of loss.

Young Ben he was a nice young man,  
A carpenter by trade;  
And he fell in love with Sally Brown  
That was a lady's maid.

But as they fetch'd a walk one day,  
They met a press-gang crew;  
And Sally she did faint away,  
Whilst Ben he was brought-to.

The Boatswain swore with wicked words,  
Enough to shock a saint,  
That though she did seem in a fit,  
'Twas nothing but a feint.<sup>4</sup>

The punning ambiguity between 'fainting' and 'feinting' casts doubt on the authenticity of Sally's ladylike grief, an emotional sensibility made more questionable by her subsequent fickleness. Polite sentiment is challenged by unspecified 'wicked words / enough to shock a saint' (but liable to interest the reader). Hood's own words display a similarly transgressive inconstancy to the relationships in which they are initially presented, shifting from verb to noun and from one meaning to another: the anti-heroically fluid and self-indulgent pleasures of language form a subversive foil to the fixity and endurance of heroic passion which is the ostensible theme of such a ballad romance. Vocabulary such as 'eye-water', which has a triple meaning, referring to the 'high-water' which Sally's tears threaten to cause in the ocean, the 'eye-water' of which tears literally consist, and the Cockney slang for 'gin', emphasizes the demotic world of street-song and tavern ballad to which 'Faithless Sally Brown' claims kinship.

Yet 'Faithless Sally Brown: An Old Ballad' is not a genuinely archaic evolution of a popular lament, but a sophisticated play, authored by Hood, on the expectations evoked by ballad. Conforming to a typical four-line rhymed verse structure, and adopting a typical plot of forced parting and cruel desertion, with characters drawn from lowly stations, it draws unconventional comedy

<sup>3</sup> Hood's prefatory reference to the 'authors' of 'Faithless Sally Brown' when it was reprinted in *Whims and Oddities* (London, 1826), suggests that the poem was the result of collaboration with Hood's friend, and later brother-in-law, John Hamilton Reynolds. The style is, however, so clearly similar to that of Hood's later comic work, that most editors credit Hood as the chief, or sole, author.

<sup>4</sup> 'Faithless Sally Brown: An Old Ballad', quoted from Thomas Hood, *The Complete Poetical Works of Thomas Hood* ed. Walter Jerrold (Oxford, 1906), p. 44, lines 1-12.

from the dispassion which the generic nature of the narrative, and the primacy of word-play, evoke toward to the nominal protagonist – a dispassion which allies the reader with Sally Brown, and with the equipoise of the poem's puns themselves. The Poem's notorious concluding stanza provides a perfect example of Hood's parodically anticlimactic treatment of the drama of mortality:

His death, which happen'd in his berth,  
At forty-odd befell:  
They went and told the sexton, and  
The sexton toll'd the bell.<sup>5</sup>

The deserted military lover expires in his berth. His indeterminate age ('forty-odd') is handled with the same complacency as his death. The pun on 'told / toll'd' summons a similarly functional response from sexton and bell, which both perform their communicative offices without emotion.

The deliberately fraudulent nature of Hood's claim to authenticity and tradition in this piece – 'An Old Ballad' – suggests a humorously critical perspective on poetic archaism and self-conscious revival of folk verse. The ambiguity of presentation – Hood does not claim authorship of the poem (although readers may have guessed that Common Sense junior was a screen for the 'Lion's Head') – creates a critical ambivalence about its origin, status and the level of approval with which it is printed. Hood's introduction to the text, inviting rather than offering assessment, asks 'Will Common Sense, jun. frankly tell us, (in a *frank* if he please,) what we are to think of the following ballad?'<sup>6</sup>

The indeterminacy of the Lion's Head's identity and commitments allows the poem to occupy a uniquely flexible space. It shares column-inches with appraisal of literary submissions. 'Faithless Sally Brown' also appraises genre in a clever and novel fashion, relocating the ballad lament – with its romantic resonances – in a framework of word-play which stimulates parodic laughter, without disowning the popular and polemical affiliations inherent in the form and plot.

A specific source for 'Faithless Sally Brown' has not previously been suggested, but I believe that I have found one, and its nature is extremely revealing about the close relationship between imitation and parody of ballad at this time, and the interplay of popular periodical culture with other literary forms.

In the third volume of Matthew Lewis's gothic novel *The Monk: A Romance* (1796), the beleaguered heroine, Antonia, enters her recently dead mother's room, and, overcome with sad reflections, takes down a book from her mother's library and begins to read the Ballad of 'Alonzo the Brave and Fair Imogine'. This gruesome ballad tells how Imogine swears enduring love for Alonzo as he rides off heroically to Palestine. Within a year, however, she has succumbed to the proposal of a wealthy Baron. On her marriage, the curse which she invoked upon herself should she be false, in her parting speech to Alonzo, is horribly fulfilled. Alonzo's ghost appears at her wedding, taxes her with perjury and bears her away to the Underworld, whence both spectres emerge four times a year at midnight to celebrate a macabre revel, drinking blood from skulls and dancing in a mockery of the wedding feast. Antonia's perusal of this grisly ballad is a prelude to the appearance of her own mother's ghost, who warns Antonia that she, too, will be dead within three days. The ballad serves, as the 'willow' song does in *Othello*, to create a mournful pre-

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 44, lines 65-8.

<sup>6</sup> Hood, 'The Lion's Head', *London Magazine*, March 1822, p. 202.

monition of the murder (and rape) which Antonia is doomed to suffer. It also acts as a link between the supernatural word and the natural, preparing the reader for the introduction of Antonia's mother's ghost. The ballad's fantastical and tragic nature is, thus, in this context, presented without irony.

When Lewis reprinted 'Alonzo and Fair Imogine' in a volume of ballads, *Tales of Wonder* (1801), however, he followed it with 'a Parody upon the foregoing Ballad',<sup>7</sup> the idea for which he admitted to obtaining from a spontaneous parody which had appeared in the newspapers. Lewis's self-parody is entitled 'Giles Jollup the Grave and Brown Sally Green'. Its plot is almost identical to that of 'Alonzo and Fair Imogine', but the class of the characters has been lowered so that the knight, Alonzo, is an apothecary, Giles, and the Baron is a brewer. From a chivalrous fable, this ballad has turned into a tale of trade. Sally wishes that if she is false to Giles he should appear at her wedding and administer rhubarb to her as a physic, which he does, in spectral form. The materiality of the rhubarb and the ghostliness of Giles, form a humorous contrast. The mundanity and Englishness of Giles Jollup the Grave and Brown Sally Green highlights the melodrama and exoticism of their rhyming counterparts Alonzo the Brave and Fair Imogine. The parodic ballad stands alongside the original, providing a satirical commentary on the superstitious and emotional susceptibility which is essential to *The Monk's* atmosphere. 'Giles Jollup the Grave' operates in a commercial world to which Alonzo and Imogine are deliberately extrinsic, but of which the text of *The Monk* which deploys ballad as a gothic device, is clearly part. Lewis, remarkably, can see his ballad both ways in the same place; as a 'Tale of Wonder' which might excite authentic chills, and as a ludicrous piece of sensationalism.<sup>8</sup>

Hood's plot in 'Faithless Sally Brown: An Old ballad' is identical to Lewis's, save for the spectral appearance of the wronged lover (a plot device which Hood uses elsewhere to comic effect, in 'The Ghost: A Very Serious Ballad').<sup>9</sup> The lowly stations of Ben (a carpenter) and Sally (a lady's maid) mirror those of Lewis's Giles and Sally, the description of Sally's initial grief on losing Giles/Ben is similar in both accounts, and Lewis's name 'Brown Sally Green' is strongly suggestive as an antecedent to 'Faithless Sally Brown'. Hood appears, thus, to be building parody upon parody – a habit which is repeated in his 'Address to the Steam Washing Company' and 'A Lay of Real Life', poems whose origins, like those of 'Faithless Sally Brown', have previously resisted identification because of their unrecognised palimpsestic nature.

Hood's mock-ballad is more successful than Lewis's – it takes the materials of ballad parody in a new direction. Where Lewis relies on class-comedy to undermine the romance of loss, Hood focuses on linguistic play. Hood's poem is more political than Lewis's, with its contemporary scenario of press-gangs and long absences at war; his verse-form is also neater and pithier than Lewis's. The authentic 'catchiness' of Hood's ballads literally invited singing, and this ballad, having been swiftly pirated, was officially reprinted with three others by Jonathan Blewitt in *The Ballad Singer* (1829), making, in reverse, the transition between oral and written culture – a fact which delighted Hood, as he acknowledged in his preface to 'Faithless Sally Brown' when it was reprinted in *Whims and Oddities*. Touches such as his use of 'Sally Brown / That was a lady's

<sup>7</sup> Matthew Lewis, *Tales of Wonder* (London, 1801), p. 26.

<sup>8</sup> Interestingly Byron, an early and major stylistic influence on Hood, also produced a parody on one of Lewis's *Tales of Wonder*, 'The Little Grey Man', see *Lord Byron: The Complete Poetical Works* ed. Jerome J. McGann (7 vols., Oxford, 1981-93), i 13-17. Byron's youthful parody, of 1806, features the humdrum adventures of the affectedly prudish Mary Ann, of Southwell, who spends time lying on tombstones in the effort to persuade a young lord to seduce her: she is, like Sally Brown, a parodic counterpart to the vulnerable gothic heroine.

<sup>9</sup> *Comic Annual* (London, 1833).

maid' (line 4) rather than 'Who was a lady's maid', or his allusion to 'fetching a walk' (line 5), give Hood's verses a genuinely colloquial ring. Hood, using Lewis's straight and parodic versions of 'Alonzo and Imogine' as a springboard, produces a poetic narrative which is both humorously self-aware about the conventions of ballad and fits happily into oral circulation.

'Faithless Sally Brown: An Old Ballad' is precocious enough as an outing for a young poet-cum-sub-editor, but it is made more remarkable by the fact that the March 1822 *London* which carried 'Faithless Sally Brown' in the fruitfully ambiguous space of the 'Lion's Head' also carried, in the main body of the magazine, his anonymous lyric 'The Sea of Death: A Fragment'. This is a completely different kind of poem. Its atmospheric tableau describes a preternaturally still, quasi-metaphorical landscape of consumption and extinction, where the 'ocean-past' perpetually draws in to cover the traces left by personified Life, and where Death, like a 'gorged seabird' sleeps on 'crowded carcasses'. The poem's abrupt opening, 'Methought I saw . . .', underlines the 'fragmentary' nature of the text, alluded to in the title. The personal, yet disconnected, nature of the vision gives a suggestive impression of a dream, or semi-conscious state, in which the poem's portentous allegory of existence is viewed. Peter J. Morgan has pointed out the similarity of this poem to Coleridge's as yet unpublished 'Limbo', and there is a definite echo, in the last lines, of 'Love and the Sundial', a poem by Thomas Moore. Moore's poem opens: 'Young love found a Dial once in a dark shade, / Where man ne'er had wandered nor sunbeam play'd'; Hood's 'Sea of Death' closes 'Time / Slept, as he sleeps upon the silent face / Of a dark dial in a sunless place'. This echo is interesting, given the opportunities which Hood takes at other times in the *London* to parody Moore's *œuvre*. In 'Please to Ring the Belle', for example, a humorous domestic piece about a housemaid waiting for her lover to call, printed in the January 1822 *London*, Hood opens chirpily, 'I'll tell you a story that's not in Tom Moore', emphasizing the deliberate homeliness of his romance. In 'The Stag-Eyed Lady: A Moorish Tale', Hood specifically parodies the exotic world of Moore's *Lalla Rookh*, as well as the broadly fashionable orientalism of Byron's *Giaour*, Southey's *Thalaba*, and Landor's *Gebir*. Hood's employment, in 'The Sea of Death', of Moore's picture of a dial which cannot measure light, and hence time, because it belongs to an unpeopled, infinite space provides a good example of the interplay between imitation and parody in Hood's assimilation of Romantic authors.

Several motifs appear in 'The Sea of Death: A Fragment' which recur among those poems generally regarded as 'Romantic' by Hood's editors, but which may also be glimpsed in the background of his comic poems. There is a connection between water, death and the engulfing nature of the past which re-occurs most memorably in his 'Ode: Autumn' as 'a dim picture of the drown'd past / In the hush'd mind's mysterious far away'. There is an interest in the innocence of childhood compared with the sorrows of adulthood (the beauty of dead children is contrasted with the faces of those who have experience 'bitterness and scorn'). The narrative technique is, however, distinguished by a dreamy sense of distance between the viewer and the mythic space which he envisages. This 'mythologising distance' is something which Hood borrows from the dream-poems of Coleridge and Keats, and from the wider depictions of desert space in Byron, Moore and other writers. In Hood this distance seems also to express a relationship to the poetic world whose paradigm of mystery and regret he temporarily inhabits. His 'Ode: Autumn' and 'Ode to Melancholy' are homages to Keats which, in their imitative engagement with loss, incorporate the literary bereavement which Keats's death represents. Similarly, the 'fragmentary' topos of the 'Sea of Death' images a deliberately unsustained essay into the territory of the engulfing past, which incorporates Hood's relationship to the poetry he echoes.

Hood deals with the inheritance of Romantic writing in different ways. In 'Faithless Sally Brown: An Old Ballad', he humorously fakes (and, one might argue, creates) an author-indep-

endent text of historic date and collective transmission. In 'The Sea of Death: A Fragment' he again exploits the notion of the detached text, posing as an incomplete part of a work ambiguously lost or abandoned. Both poems create fictions around the concept of authenticity in a highly romantic fashion; but one does so comically and the other without irony. This dialogue is repeated later in the year. The August 1822 *London Magazine* published Hood's 'Lycus the Centaur', with its exotic, mythological dreamscape of desire and brutality, claiming to be an old text, 'from an unrolled manuscript of Apollonius Curius'. The November 1822 'Lion's Head', however, printed a self-consciously fraudulent Chattertonesque piece 'from an old manuscript', typeset in gothic lettering and entitled 'The Fall of the Deer', which incorporated as many puns as possible into an account of a hunt.

Clearly, Hood did differentiate between these different poetic modes, publishing his parodic material from the *London* in *Whims and Oddities* (1826), while poems such as 'The Sea of Death: A Fragment' were reserved for a separate volume, *The Plea of the Midsummer Fairies* (1827). Yet Hood's various submissions to the *London* also share certain characteristics. There are common elements of a language of grotesque, which relates closely to Hood's puns. For example, Ben, the wronged lover in 'Faithless Sally Brown', has his 'head turned' by grief, the literal consequence of which is that he chews his pigtail until he dies. Poems such as 'The Sea of Death' and 'Lycus the Centaur' are also concerned with the consumability of the body, with displacement, distortion and transformation, which in Hood's 'comic' poems are most often achieved through wordplay, but in these 'serious' works borrow from the transformational world of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. All Hood's contributions to the *London* are also extremely self-aware about their status as texts: fragmentary; transmitted by a spurious agent; part of an older document; emerging from commentary upon other writing.

It is productive to recognise that the 'serious' works which have caused Hood to be dubbed a late or minor Romantic poet were appearing at the same time and in the same place as writings which represent a playful critique of Romantic tropes – the ballad, the 'rediscovered' archaic fragment, the oriental, the nature lyric of heightened sensibility. Hood's poetry is, from the start, highly aware of its literary environment, highly responsive – in ways which can incorporate both the 'respectful' consciousness associated with imitation, and the 'critical' consciousness associated with parody. Understanding this is vital to an appreciation of Hood's power and originality as a poet, and to an appreciation of the inseparability of his literary identity as a lyricist, and a humorist who exploits the gap between lyrical and lofty poetic sentiment and the bustling urban world of 'low' language, commerce and popular culture.

Hood's conscious self-identification with demotic forms and oral modes of transmission often constitutes a critique of the poetic rhetoric employed by other contemporary authors. This is particularly evident in notes which Hood appended to 'Faithless Sally Brown' when it was reprinted in the 1826 volume of *Whims and Oddities*. Hood remarks that he never was vainer of any verses than 'The Ballad of Sally Brown and Ben The Carpenter', which, unlike Campbell's *Ballads and Moral Songs* is not celebrated by 'so select a class', but, disseminated and set to music by watermen, and pirated by cheap printers, has passed, like the work of Tasso and Homer, out of the hands, copyright and profit of the author, becoming a genuine part of popular culture:

Dr Watts, among evangelical muses, has an enviable renown – and Campbell's Ballads enjoy a snug genteel popularity. 'Sally Brown' has been favoured perhaps, with as wide a patronage as the Moral Songs, though its circle may not have been of so select a class as the friends of 'Hohenlinden'. But I do not desire to see it amongst what are called Elegant Extracts. The lamented Emery, drest as Tom Tug, sang it at his last mortal benefit at Covent



Garden; – and ever since, it has been a great favourite with the watermen of Thames, who time their oars to it, as the wherry-men of Venice time theirs to the lines of Tasso. With the watermen, it went naturally to Vauxhall: – and, overland, to Sadler's Wells. . . . Cheap printers of Shoe Lane, and Cow-cross, (all pirates!) disputed about the Copyright, and published their own editions, – and, in the meantime, the Authors, to have made bread of their song, (it was poor old Homer's hard ancient case!) must have sung it about the streets.<sup>10</sup>

Hood's comments here show more than his antipathy towards Campbell. They declare an ambitious allegiance with a different class of writing and of reader, which exposes Campbell's *Ballads* as unconnected with the genuine popular oral culture from which ballad stems – an oral culture which has necessary links with the theatres, shops and sideshows of London, with Covent Garden, Vauxhall, Shoe Lane and Cow-cross. (The fond familiarity of Hood with the multiple commercial districts of London, like that of Lamb, betrays his awareness of the indissoluble connections between the colourful worlds of commerce, theatre and literature). Hood's audacious pairing of 'smug' and 'genteel', and his rejection of the concept of 'Elegant Extract' and 'Moral Songs' speak volumes about his self-fashioning in opposition to a middle-class culture of complacent piety and social aspiration. He triumphs in a working-class audience of ferrymen and insists on the proud lineage of oral culture – Homer and Tasso – implying his own relevance as a voice accessible and enjoyable to the commonalty.

This kind of interest in the urban and demotic voice is also at work in the 'Address to the Steam Washing Company' (1825), the second poem that I would like to talk about. In this excursion from *Odes and Addresses to Great People*, Bridget Jones, a washerwoman, pens a remonstrance to the Steam Washing Company which threatens to usurp her livelihood through mechanisation. The poem is divided into two parts. The introductory passage is written in four-foot couplets which, although comic, have a certain metrical and formal decorum. The members of Steam Washing Companies are invited by Hood (or an imaginary educated narrator) to 'lend their ears' to the plight of the laundress who is humorously compared to a classical deity:

When chanticleer singeth his earliest matins,  
 She slips her amphibious feet in her pattens,  
 And beginneth her toil while the morn is still grey,  
 As if she was washing the night into day –  
 Not with sleeker or rosier fingers Aurora  
 Beginneth to scatter the dewdrops before her;  
 Not Venus that rose from the billow so early,  
 Look'd down on the foam with a forehead more pearly –  
 Her head is involv'd in an aerial mist,  
 And a bright-beaded bracelet encircles her wrist;  
 Her visage glows warm with the ardour of duty;  
 She's Industry's moral – she's all moral beauty!  
 Growing brighter and brighter at every rub –  
 Would any man ruin her? – No, Mr Scrub!<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Thomas Hood, *Whims and Oddities*, 1 (London, 1826), pp. 33-4.

<sup>11</sup> Hood, 'Address to the Steam Washing Company', *Poetical Works*, pp. 19-21, lines 21-38.

This admonitory preface is followed by an energetically irregular and frequently misspelt invective, which, if it were spoken (and its vigorous exclamations and questions invite oral interpretation), would be a dramatic monologue in the voice of Bridget Jones. It is also in couplets, but couplets which deliberately thumb their nose at metrical regularity, conveying, instead a sense of the stops and starts, the grammatically and lexically informal and irregular succession of ideas in direct speech. Hood is clearly influenced, in his comic use of the 'uneducated' character to explore the riotous web of meanings suggested by uneven spelling, by eighteenth century novelists and playwrights such as Smollett and Sheridan. He is original, however, in exploring the comic potential of vernacular 'dramatic monologue' in poetry. Although this is a piece which draws humour from the unlikelihood of a washerwoman as poet, its liberating occasional use of dialect ('yourn') and 'low' formulae ('their ant nun at all') foreshadows the direct, challenging, non-periphrastic forcefulness of dialect use by poets such as John Clare, William Barnes and, later, Tennyson, and also the playfulness of characterisation and structure in these writers. Hood is one of the first poets to exploit the pleasures of the enjambed long flow of direct speech which drops off the end of what ought to be the metrical line, giving a rushing sense of the freedom of verbal assault, while still managing to hit a rhyme on each circuit.

Poor Wommen as was born to Washing in their youth!  
 And now must go and Larn other Buisnesses Four Sooth!  
 But if so be They leave their Lines what are they to go at –  
 They won't do for Angell's – nor any Trade like That,  
 Nor we cant Sow Babby Work – for that's all Bespoke, –  
 For the Queakers in Bridle! And a vast of the confind Folk  
 Do their own of Themselves – even the bettermost of em – aye, and evn  
 them of middling degrees –  
 Why God help you Babby Linen ant Bread and Cheese!  
 Nor we can't go a hammering the roads into Dust,  
 But we must all go and be Bankers, – and that's what we must!  
 God nose you oght to have more Concern for our Sects,  
 When you nose you have suck'd us and hanged round our Mutherly necks,  
 And remembers what you Owes to Wommen Besides washing –  
 You ant, curse you, like Men to go a slushing and sloshing  
 In mob caps, and pattins, adoing of Females Labers  
 And prettily jear'd at you great Horse God Meril things, ant you now by  
 you next door neighbours<sup>12</sup>

Hood frees himself, through the voice of Bridget Jones, from linguistic and poetic constraints. His exploration of vernacular, here and in later verse and prose, is not only a comic trope, but an outlet into a free phonetic approach to language which is alive with puns (Lines, Sects), oaths (God help you, curse you), onomatopoeia (slushing, sloshing) and broken words which verge on nonsense (Four Sooth, Horse God Meril).<sup>13</sup> Uneven capitalisation and the idiosyncrasies of spelling and expression allow Hood to direct the emphasis of the sentences, so that the reader can imaginatively voice the lines. Hood's poetry, at its best, is strengthened by this imaginatively lateral view of language and bold guttural rhythms and rhymes which maintain close links with

<sup>12</sup> Hood, 'Letter of Remonstrance from Bridget Jones to the Noblemen and Gentlemen forming the Washing Committee', *ibid.*, pp. 21-4, lines 49-64.

<sup>13</sup> Perhaps 'horsegodmother', defined by *OED* as 'a coarse-looking old woman'.

vernacular speech and subjects. The bold disregard of Bridget's tirade for the niceties of formal English is mirrored in the bold political topicality of her complaint – that industrialisation is squeezing the jobs of traditional hand-labourers – and her humorous visualisation of gender role-swapping, where men become laundresses and women become bankers, is equally audacious. As he did in the 'Lion's Head', Hood employs a comic framing device, which, by interpolating the character of Bridget, distances him from the matter of the poem while allowing him the full scope offered by its verbal freedoms.

The 'Address to the Steam Washing Company' is a highly idiosyncratic and innovative poem which foreshadows Hood's later engagements with dialect and malapropism (in 'A Sonnet on Steam', 'The Carnaby Correspondence' or 'Up the Rhine') and his interest in the changing world of work. It also, however, derives from a parodic stimulus, in a connection which, I believe, has not previously been recognised. In February 1823, Caroline Anne Bowles<sup>14</sup> anonymously printed 'A Letter from a Washerwoman' in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*. This garrulous and misspelled letter of complaint, purportedly from Patience Lilywhite, attempts to capture the characteristics of the Cockney manner and pronunciation. Its comic target, however, is the Cockney School of poetry – specifically William Hazlitt, Leigh Hunt and Percy Bysshe Shelley.

Patience's tale of woe relates to her lodger and his friend, who have ruined her. She describes how an artistic gentleman, with various curious artefacts, comes to occupy her furnished room in Islington. It is not long before he is turning the house upside down, grubbing up the cabbages and onions in the garden in order to establish a 'classical grove' and demanding constant supplies of 'Nectar and Ambrosia' in the shape of 'wishy-washy tea and bread and butter'. The dramatic climax to Patience's wrongs comes when the artful lodger and friend arrange a procession of the nine 'Moses', which involves her daughter, Nance, being dressed up in a tablecloth to represent 'Hairy-Toe' (the muse of erotic poetry) while her son impersonates Cupid with a flambeau. The flambeau sets light to the table linen and causes a general conflagration. The lodgers clope with Nance, leaving poor Patience with unpaid bills and a heap of burnt laundry. The parodic connection with Hazlitt, Hunt and Shelley is made quite clear by the 'fragments' – poems which the lodger leaves in lieu of his rent. These pieces, appended to the washerwoman's letter, parody the paganism, sexual liberalism and egocentricity of the Cockney School, while, like the prose narrative, emphasizing the financial and class realities within which they maintain their classical ideals.

Caroline Bowles's parody is clever in many ways. Patience's complaint is comic, not only because of the malapropisms, misspellings and oral formulae employed in the letter situation through which the reader has to decode the narrative, but because her story makes the conflict in vocabulary between the Cockney poet and the Cockney washerwoman, with whom he lives and upon whom he depends, blindingly clear.

One of the 'fragments' expresses the sentiment, 'my paraplue, a name than *umbrella* / Far more expressive . . .'<sup>15</sup> The 'Letter from a Washerwoman' associates such evasion of humdrum

<sup>14</sup> Caroline Anne Bowles (1786-1854) began publishing poetry with *Ellen Fitzarthur: a Metrical Tale* in 1820. She anticipated Elizabeth Barrett's protests against ill-treatment of workmen in 'Tales of the Factories', published in 1823, the same year as her 'Letter from a Washerwoman'. The synchronicity suggests a parallel between her humorous engagement with the voice of labour and a more serious political commitment – a pattern of interest also in Hood's writing. Caroline Bowles's connection with *Blackwood's Magazine* was reinforced through the successful tales, 'Chapters on Churchyards' which appeared during the years to 1829. In 1839, Bowles became the second wife of the Poet Laureate, Robert Southey, with whom she had corresponded since the start of her literary career.

<sup>15</sup> Caroline Bowles, 'Letter from a Washerwoman and Poetical Fragments', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* (1823), p. 237.

English nouns with a moral evasion of responsibilities associated with property and persons. The poetical lodger grubs up 'cabbages' and 'onions' and replaces them with 'groves' and 'fountains' both in literature and in life, with destructive and alienating consequences.

It seems evident that Hood, coming to write 'An Address to the Steam Washing Company' from the periodical context of the *London Magazine*, which compared itself closely with *Blackwood's*, was thinking of the 'Letter from a Washerwoman', which, in turn, may have been inspired by Leigh Hunt's essay 'On Washerwomen' in the *Examiner* of 15 September 1816. Hood loses the direct allusions to Hazlitt, Shelley and Hunt – his washerwoman has a distinct complaint narrative associated with mechanisation. Rather than connecting a piece of prose Cockney vernacular with poetic fragments of 'Cockneyism' of another kind, Hood chooses to turn the washerwoman's complaint into a poetical monologue, melding the two parodic prongs of *Blackwood's* attack. Hood's poem is not directly parodic (though its connection with Caroline Bowles's piece might have been noticed more readily by readers in 1825). The playfully oppositional notes, however, which it takes from the 'Letter from a Washerwoman' – the implicit contrast between the vocabularies of Cockney vernacular and hellenistic contemporary poetry – make Hood's poem also dialogic in nature. The specific comparison between the washerwoman, Aurora and Venus 'that rose from the billow so early' may have been inspired by the impersonation of classical deities by Patience Lilywhite's family in Bowles's 'Letter'.

In Hood's poem, the washerwoman's lament has been transposed from an accusation of personal damages to one of socio-economic obsolescence, but the point made by exploring the language of the laundry is the same. A comic-realist gap is highlighted between the established realm of poetry and that of common life; and the verbal energy and inventiveness of vernacular speech is brought into creative tension with the metrical and lexical expectations of verse.

Linda Hutcheon notes in a foreword to *Romantic Parodies, 1797-1831* ed. Kent and Ewen (1992), which reprints Bowles Southey's 'Letter', that parody undermines

one of the founding tenets of the ideology of romanticism: the notion of literature as unique inscription. Parody's intertextual doubleness itself, therefore, works structurally to undermine the idea not only of the unique text but also of the Romantic 'ego' – the individual, unique genius – and frequently also of the attendant habit of self-obsession, self-promotion, and solipsism that is the target of much . . . specific satire . . .<sup>16</sup>

Both Bowles's and Hood's 'displaced' tirades serve to puncture the concept of the Romantic 'ego'. Patience Lilywhite exposes the fraudulence and arrogance of the self-appointed career poet; Bridget Jones takes up the poetic cudgels herself to protest against threatened redundancy. Kent and Ewen's book serves as a reminder that the period whose dominant ideology is generally regarded as 'Romantic' is studded with parodic and oppositional texts, which, particularly in the periodical context, stimulate one another. Authors such as Bowles who, through gender and genre bias, might be presumed to lie on the wrong side of parody, find ample space for critical play.

Hood's *Odes and Addresses* are fundamentally responsive in character. Poems such as the 'Ode to H. Bodkin, Secretary to the Society for the Suppression of Mendicity' and 'A Friendly Address to Mrs Fry in Newgate', engage critically with contemporary methods for dealing with poverty and crime (Bodkin is condemned for his intolerance, Mrs Fry upbraided for attempting to educate prisoners when it is already too late for moral instruction). Poems such as the 'Address to the Steam Washing Company' also have a critical agenda. Hood subverts the romantic ego through impersonation and translocation, perpetuating the parodic joke of substituting a Cockney washerwoman for a Cockney poet as radical orator. His adoption of a technique from Caroline

<sup>16</sup> Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody: the Teachings of Twentieth Century Art Forms* (London, 1985), p. 9.

Bowles's parodic attack is of particular interest given his contemporaneous poetical sympathy with Keats, a member of the school broadly implicated in the joke. It illustrates the flexibility of his response to Romantic writing.

Sally Brown and Bridget Jones remind us that Hood's poetic creativity often has its roots in a highly aware and humorously subversive response to his literary surroundings. Like Lamb, Hood develops a unique authorial personality partly through non-conformity, developing an intimacy with the reader which is born of the frank exploration of emotional and linguistic tensions. Like Lamb, Hood balances a certain shyness, self-deprecation and domesticity with mischievous wit, whimsy, and trenchant social observation.

The lack of editorial apparatus to 'Faithless Sally Brown' and 'An Address to the Steam Washing Company', which might earlier have thrown up the sources I suggest, is itself indicative of the lack of critical seriousness with which Hood has been treated. To label aspects of his writing, and the writing of the 1820s and 1830s, as late Romantic or pre-Victorian, is to do an injustice to their independent creativity and vitality. Sally Brown and Bridget Jones say that although we may assume familiarity with Hood's mental furniture we haven't pulled out the drawers or looked under the bed. As his bicentenary approaches, let's read him again.

*University College, Oxford*

## Lamb and Southey: Painterly Allusion in the 1798 Review of *Lyrical Ballads*

By CHRISTOPHER J. P. SMITH

I will rather trust a Fleming with my butter, Parson Hugh the Welshman with my cheese, an Irishman with my aqua vitae bottle, or a thief to walk my ambling gelding . . .<sup>1</sup>

ON MONDAY 29 October 1798, Charles Lamb wrote a letter to Southey which was centrally a discussion of poetic practice and poetic form, ballads and eclogues being the subject of the moment. As is well known, Lamb at once put his critical finger upon the absence of real empathy in Southey's 'The Ruined Cottage' and he also introduced a very striking description of his own rate of production, speaking here of the emergence of *John Woodvil*:

But I thank you heartily for the poem. Not having anything of my own to send you in return, tho' to tell the truth I am at work upon something, which if I were to cut away & garble, perhaps I might send you an extract or two that might not displease you – but I will not do that, and whether it will come to anything I know not, for I am as slow as a Fleming painter, when I compose anything new . . .<sup>2</sup>

Though something has already been made of cross-fertilisation between the discourses of Romantic writings and the vocabulary of other disciplines, Lamb, Southey and others at times leave strong evidence that art and music were centrally important to their world, and often became the subject of poetry.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the play of discourse here underlines that importance.

Focussing on 'The Idiot Boy', I want to try to open out the range of allusion in Southey's remarks on *Lyrical Ballads* published in *The Critical Review* of that October, using Lamb's phrase used to describe his *modus operandi* as the starting point. As it seems certain that Lamb did not preserve Southey's letters, I would not wish to comment upon who influenced whom concerning the word 'Fleming' or Flemish art. Lamb's letter is late in October 1798 and perhaps Southey had already set out his famous review, or perhaps he found Lamb's phrase apposite to his needs at the time. Whatever the chronology, Lamb and Southey share a discourse informed by their knowledge of art and are using it to draw analogies between ways of representation in pictures and in words. In the same letter, Lamb aligns Southey's 'old description of Cruelty in Hell'<sup>4</sup> with the style of Hogarth, no doubt referring to Hogarth's *Four Stages of Cruelty* of 1751, and obviously their joint contemporary interest in Quarles also has an artistic connection, as Quarles' emblem books united art and poetry. Art could, and did, hint at things that other critical statements could not, and with more succinct immediacy.

Firstly, to Lamb's remark: 'For I am as slow as a Fleming painter, when I compose anything new'. Lamb here is making allusion to the long tradition of Flemish painting, or the painting of the southern Netherlands, and his remark has a specific weight which has some bearing upon the poetic practices of the late eighteenth century because it invariably concerns the use of detail and

<sup>1</sup> *The Merry Wives of Windsor* II. ii. 316.

<sup>2</sup> *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb* ed. Edwin W. Marris, Jr (3 vols., Ithaca, NY, 1975-8) (hereafter Marris), i. 137.

<sup>3</sup> See Lamb's short poems upon paintings by Leonardo and Titian. See also Christopher J. P. Smith, *A Quest For Home: Reading Robert Southey* (Liverpool, 1997), chapter 5, and pp. 269ff.

<sup>4</sup> Marris i. 139.

its influence upon subject-matter – what to include in a poem and what to exclude – and also it moves towards the strictures of the systems of manners and methods in poetry which in the end provoked remarks like those of Southey's. Of course Lamb is talking about his own speed of composition here being as slow as that of an old Flemish master. He doesn't say why he is slow, just that he is.

But the more details there are in a work of painting, the more time it takes. One only has to study the work of such as Jan van Eyck to recognise the necessarily slow pace of composition – for example, the Arnolfini marriage of 1434, or another fifteenth-century piece, the Madonna of Chancellor Rolin, which both suggest excessive time taken for composition because of the detail, the use of colour and the size of the pictures. It is this central attention to detail that characterises one main branch of the figures of the Flemish school, and it is the use of detail, among other things, which I want to bear in mind in discussing Southey's review.

Southey's well-known comments upon the labour, the time that Wordsworth spent on 'The Idiot Boy' seems to echo Lamb's description of his own way of working, but Southey has further critical remarks to make about the poem, complicating the issue in an interesting way:

No tale less deserved the labour that appears to have been bestowed upon this. It resembles a Flemish picture in the worthlessness of its design and the excellence of its execution. From Flemish artists we are satisfied with such pieces: who would not have lamented, if Correggio or Raffaele had wasted their talents in painting Dutch boors or the humours of a Flemish wake?<sup>5</sup>

Southey now picks up upon another strand of the work of Flemish painters, that tradition stemming largely from Pieter Breughel (c.1525-69) who fathered the depiction of bucolic genre scenes and was eventually known as 'peasant Breughel'. This tradition extended into the seventeenth century when the Flemish painters liked to have their landscapes well-populated with figures (as the Dutch sometimes did not) and simple peasant scenes were very much in vogue. Detail is foregrounded, and everyday life is the subject (leaving aside mythology, religious ecstasy, or *epic* themes in favour of the commonplace honestly represented): normal, day-to-day life, free from war and occupation, depicted in minute, precise detail. Southey suggests that, for him, these scenes exhibit a 'worthlessness' of design excellently painted – and this is how he regards what Wordsworth has done, a poem displaying uninteresting subject-matter and a lack of seriousness.

But is 'The Idiot Boy' an English version of Flemish genre painting in verse? In one sense it feels very un-Flemish, in that it contains scenes which hover on the edge of the Gothic without ever allowing the Gothic to function as such, amounting to a critique of the Gothic, where a *distorting* and theatrical literary mode would supplant this rather straight-painted tale. Southey was right: 'The Idiot Boy' contains some very beautiful and vivid strokes of nocturnal action. But he stands back from the genuine fun of the poem and its essential humanity, where love encounters disability and finds a place for it. Considering the brutality of some eighteenth-century medical methods the poem stands out as all the more remarkable, recalling the way that painters such as Breughel included disabled figures in their work.

Southey's other remarks in the above paragraph underline another more acerbic aspect of the review. If poems like 'The Idiot Boy' can be likened to ordinary Flemish genre scenes, then they must also be gross, a waste of talent lost depicting metaphorical 'Dutch boors or the humours of a Flemish wake'. He might have been thinking there of the picture by Adriaen Brouwer (1605-38) called *Boors carousing* or any number of such scenes of ordinary life recorded in a very

<sup>5</sup> *Critical Review* 24 (1798) 200.

un-literary way.<sup>6</sup> Perhaps he is making a backhanded compliment, as Southey thinks the author could do better. For Southey, the prominence of the literary, especially literary fashion, either in allusion, content, form or voice was essential, for it gave a voice to individuals that might otherwise remain figures of fun or disgust. In his review he snobbishly recoiled from the grossness of such represented in part by the 'Fleming' type,<sup>7</sup> boors unreconstructed by literature, who neither served politics nor populated 'authentic' ballad tales, thus being sanctified only by their place within a literary text, however obscure.

Southey compares the mode of 'The Idiot Boy', and much of the work in *Lyrical Ballads*, with Flemish art. He hints that the 'author' could have done better if he had not left the path sanctified by the work of Antonio Allegri da Correggio (c.1489-1534) and Raphael (Raffaello Sanzio, 1483-1520) as it might be applied to poetry. This remark, rather than simply being condescension may in fact tell us more about Southey's own beliefs in the representation of human life in poetry and further underline the differences between his poetic method and that of Wordsworth.

Correggio's work was highly valued in the eighteenth century, and in 1798 one of his Madonnas fetched 1,220 guineas, and his Duke of Valentino 500 guineas.<sup>8</sup> Like Raphael, his subject-matter is focused on the human. Correggio's manner is always elegant, never loutish, and the striving after beauty is at times painful. Hazlitt has much to say about Correggio, and defines the essential marks of his work:

his pictures . . . appeared to be comparatively mean, feeble, and affected. There is the master-hand, no doubt, but tremulous with artificial airs – beauty and grace carried to a pitch of quaintness and conceit – the expression of joy or woe, but lost in a doting contemplation of its own ecstasy or agony, and after being raised to the height of truth and nature, hurried over the brink of refinement into effeminacy, by a craving after impossibilities, and a wanton dalliance with the ideal. Correggio has painted the wreathed smile of sweetness, but he does not stop until he has contorted it into affectation; he has expressed the utmost distress and despondency of soul, but it is the weakness of suffering without strength. His pictures are so perfect and delicate, 'the sense aches at them;' and in his efforts after refinement, he has worked himself up into a state of languid, nervous irritability, which is reflected back upon the spectator . . . and in the attempt to reconcile the mechanical and the ideal, failed from an excess of feeling!<sup>9</sup>

How very different from discussions of Flemish art. For Hazlitt, Correggio's manners strive after the ideal, his emotions run into a nervous irritability whereby what they pursue causes them to founder upon an excess of feeling. Exaggeration and affectation are present: 'Raphael's women are saints; Titian's are courtesans; Correggio's an affected mixture of both.'<sup>10</sup> That Southey has bracketed Correggio and Raphael together does not imply strong similarity in their work, but the distinction, in Hazlitt's writing, seems to rest upon the extent to which each artist became involved in his subject:

. . . though I could not help allowing, that what he did, he appeared to me to do with more feeling than anyone else; that I could conceive Raphael or even Titian to have represented

<sup>6</sup> Celebrated by Larkin in his poem, 'The Card Players', in *High Windows*.

<sup>7</sup> Set out by Shakespeare, for example, in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* in the shape of the metropolitan boor Falstaff, styled as a 'Flemish drunkard' by Mrs Page at II. i. 23, who redeemed himself only as a figure of fun set within a good story?

<sup>8</sup> E. F. Carrit, *A Calendar of British Taste* (London, 1948), p. 439.

<sup>9</sup> *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt* ed. P. P. Howe (21 vols., London, 1930-4) (hereafter Howe), x. 203-4.

<sup>10</sup> Howe x. 237.



objects from mere natural capacity (as we see them in a looking glass) without being absolutely wound up in them, but that I could fancy Correggio's pencil to thrill with sensibility: he brooded over the idea of grace or beauty in his mind till the sense grew faint with it; and like a lover or a devotee, he carried his enthusiasm to the brink of extravagance and affectation, so enamoured was he of his art!<sup>11</sup>

Hazlitt's version of 'Correggio' consists of an acute assessment of his work interwoven with an idea of the artist as obsessed Romantic pursuing an elusive ideal quality within the human form. This obsessive looking-on was of course what Wordsworth did and what Southey did not do. What then did Southey see as the 'talents' of Correggio and Raphael? Was it their ability in the 'design' of their paintings alone, or was it that they represented *interesting* subjects, epic religious subjects – or was it that Southey responded immediately to their representations of the *ideal*? Did Wordsworth's 'design' merely lack the frame of a good story and scorn the 'artificial airs' of literary fashion? Did Wordsworth's particular observations of class irritate Southey?

The comparison of Wordsworth's 'The Idiot Boy' and Southey's 'The Idiot' (published in the *Morning Post*, 30 June 1798) demonstrates how Southey resolves and corrects a simple episode of love and joy by converting it into a fashionable horror story in which death and God solve all problems, especially those problems associated with idiot boys. Southey dutifully replaces Wordsworth's irregular near-ballad stanzas with regular four-line ballad stanzas where 'The Idiot' digs up his mother's corpse, behaving grossly in the mock-Gothic mode – it has a comic, near-hysterical edge, rather than a haunting sublime quality, very different from his avowed attempts at a truth to nature in the manifesto which preceded the 'English Eclogues' in *Poems* (1799). Could grossness be condoned by fashion, because then it was not vulgar? Southey simply doubts his eyes in favour of his vast knowledge of literature, writing, history, art and artifice. If Southey, in Hazlitt's terms, admired the Correggio-esque stamina that Wordsworth could employ through a steady regard for his subject-matter, then he (as is well-known) equally feared the excessive nervous strains that such processes demanded of him.

Southey was using his lower classes, his English boors, to enact political scenarios, to engage tearful sensibilities, or to provide humorous action in fashionable poetry. None of these categories is needful of the detailed studied representation of local peasant or working people, and neither does any of these categories demand empathic responses. They are essentially literary creations designed for indoor entertainment. Wordsworth's method was very different to his own, though at times Southey successfully recorded ordinary life exactly in his *Commonplace Books* and letters. Conversely, Southey's attempts at approaching the ideal can be found in other places than these – in his many heroes and heroines in the epics for example, where (following the Italians, we might say), postures, emotions, are 'contorted into affectation' and demonstrate an 'excess of feeling'. But if they do not approach Raphael's angelic idealism, they are never vulgar. Southey preserves the appropriate high tone in his epic poetry, a tone that he so admired in Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey*.

*The Open University, Swansea*

<sup>11</sup> Howe xi. 253.

Wordsworth's Blind Beggar  
and Thelwall's *Poems, Chiefly Written in Retirement*

By DAMIAN WALFORD DAVIES

IN ONE OF THE MOST FAMOUS passages of *The Prelude*, Book VII, written in November 1804, Wordsworth describes an arresting sight on the streets of London:

And once, far travelled in such mood, beyond  
The reach of common indications, lost  
Amid the moving pageant, 'twas my chance  
Abruptly to be smitten with the view  
Of a blind beggar, who, with upright face,  
Stood *propped* against a wall, upon his chest  
Wearing a written paper, to explain  
The story of the man, and who he was.  
My mind did at this spectacle turn round  
As with the might of waters, and it seemed  
To me that in this label was *a type*  
*Or emblem* of the utmost that we know  
Both of ourselves and of the universe,  
And on the shape of this unmoving man,  
His fixèd face and sightless eyes, I looked,  
As if admonished from another world.<sup>1</sup>

I wish to suggest that one of the works in *Poems, Chiefly Written in Retirement* (Hereford, 1801), by the radical orator, political theorist, and poet John Thelwall, lies behind this passage. It is entitled 'Lines presented by the Author, to his Mother, together with a crutch stick. / (Re-printed from the Imperial Magazine.):'

DEAR source of that life, which your kindness and care  
Not only preserv'd, but persists to endear,  
Who so oft o'er my infancy fondly would bend,  
Protection to yield, and assistance to lend;  
Ere yet my young limbs a firm fortitude knew,  
Or could hope for a *prop*, but from love, and from you,  
Whose solicitude prov'd (how incessantly tried!)  
The strength of my weakness, my help, and my guide . . .  
And since that great Pow'r has now doom'd me to see  
Your age want the aid you imparted to me,  
O! let me (since mine it by nature appears)  
Be the stay of your steps, and the strength of your years.  
Meantime, at my hand, this small present accept;  
*Both as emblem (or type) and a pledge of respect . . .*

<sup>1</sup> *The Thirteen-Book Prelude* vii 608-23; my italics.



Cecil Thelwall, Thelwall's second wife, in 1838, Wordsworth stated: 'I possess a small printed volume of his, containing specimens of an Epic Poem and several miscellaneous Pieces, in some of which he laments the death of a Daughter in strains that shew how grievously he suffered by that event, — Mr Coleridge and I were of opinion that the modulations of his blank verse were superior to those of most writers in that metre'.<sup>7</sup>

It is interesting to note that the 1850 version of the above lines from *The Prelude* do away with the most specific of the echoes of Thelwall's lines:

. . . an apt type  
This label seemed of the utmost we can know,  
Both of ourselves and of the universe.<sup>8</sup>

It might not be fanciful to suggest that the removal of Thelwall's phrase might have been prompted by an observation on Wordsworth's *Excursion* (1814) by Henry Crabb Robinson (who, in October 1799, had also visited Thelwall at Llyswen). In his diary for 12 February 1815, Crabb Robinson records that Thelwall 'talked of "The Excursion" as containing finer verses than there are in Milton, and as being in versification most admirable; but then Wordsworth borrows without acknowledgement from Thelwall himself!'<sup>9</sup> The poem which Crabb Robinson saw as having been plagiarised by Wordsworth is Thelwall's *Peripatetic* (1793), which has also been identified as informing the scheme of Wordsworth's planned philosophical poem, *The Recluse*.<sup>10</sup> Wordsworth might have felt obliged to dispense with the (actually quintessentially Wordsworthian) phrase, 'a type / Or emblem', since it was resting on a prop of Thelwall's.

*University of Wales, Aberystwyth*

<sup>7</sup> *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Later Years III, 1835-9* ed. Ernest De Selincourt, 1835-9, rev. Alan G. Hill (Oxford, 1982), p. 641.

<sup>8</sup> *The Fourteen-Book Prelude* vii 644-6.

<sup>9</sup> *Diary, Reminiscences and Correspondence of Henry Crabb Robinson* ed. Thomas Sadler (3 vols; 1869), i, 473. Responding to Coleridge's statement in *Biographia Literaria* that 'in imaginative power, [Wordsworth] stands nearest of all modern writers to Shakespeare and Milton; and yet in a kind perfectly unborrowed and his own', Thelwall wrote: 'In main matter or substance — in subject & in manner Wordsworth is original but in detached parts & individual passages, he is frequently a borrower — a paraphrast rather than an imitator'; see Burton R. Pollin and Redmond Burke, 'John Thelwall's Marginalia in a Copy of Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*', *Bulletin of the New York Public Library*, 74 (1970) 90.

<sup>10</sup> For *The Peripatetic* and *The Recluse*, see Kenneth R. Johnston, *Wordsworth and 'The Recluse'* (New Haven and London, 1984), pp. 11-14.

## The 1999 Birthday Toast

By JOHN BEER

This is the text of John Beer's Elian toast on the occasion of the Society's birthday luncheon, held at the Royal College of General Practitioners, Saturday 20 February 1999.

EVEN AS I RISE to propose this toast my eye is caught by the menu and I seem somewhere to hear the voice of Lamb protesting ruefully. 'There was never anything Grecian about *my loins*.'<sup>1</sup> He was never one to resist the chance of a pun, and in this he was in tune with some of his contemporaries, including of course Thomas Hood. The word itself was not known before the seventeenth century, though the practice was familiar before. In Elizabethan times the usual word was 'a quibble' and Shakespeare was among the foremost of those who indulged. But then there were no great rules laid down for language – it was a sphere where you were more free to play. Dr Johnson, who was our great schoolmaster in calling us back in order and discipline, found this aspect of Shakespeare rather hard to take, but he took an appropriate revenge by playing with one of Shakespeare's own plays instead: 'A quibble was to him the fatal *Cleopatra* for which he lost the world, and was content to lose it.'<sup>2</sup> He was content to purchase it, according to Johnson, by 'the sacrifice of reason, propriety and truth'.

As for the actual word 'pun', no-one quite knows where it came from. The *Oxford English Dictionary* thinks it is like some other clipped words such as 'cit' for citizen, or 'mob' or 'nob' or 'snob', which became fashionable slang at the time of the Restoration. That is plausible, but the editors may also have been missing a trick, since they also record the word 'pun' as an early version of 'pound', meaning to use a pestle or similar instrument to compress materials – and that after all is what a pun does: it *pushes* together two possible meanings so as to produce an unexpected reaction in the mind.

Puns are of various kinds, of course. There is the self-reinforcing pun, as with Lewis Carroll's Snark, who, he tells us, 'always looks grave at a pun'. Or there is the treble pun, like that of the cattle-farmer in the West who called his family ranch the Focus, because, he said, 'That is the correct name for the place where the sons raise meat' – but the last is a pun that many might regard as over-refined: the verbal logic is just a little too impeccable. In much the same way we may admire a clever man, but as soon as we hear someone describe him as a 'pundit' he will suffer through the association in our subconscious; and if we are not careful our previous gasps of admiration will now be cut down to sighs.

There was always a touch of the subversive in wordplay, and once Johnson had set his seal on the rules for language it tended to be explored more shamelessly. Hazlitt once said he thought that Lamb's fondness for puns was a mark of his humility;<sup>3</sup> I think it was rather a sign of that subversiveness, enabling him to take a levelling view of language – and indeed of other people, while assuming in Wordsworth's terms that we have all of us one human heart. Consider his defence of the bad pun quoted by Swift. 'An Oxford scholar, meeting a porter who was carrying a hare through the street, accosts him with this extraordinary question: "Prithee, friend, is that thy own hare, or a wig?"' As Lamb points out, part of the pungency of the situation is that in its

<sup>1</sup> The main item on the menu in 1999 was 'Loin of Lamb à la grecque'.

<sup>2</sup> *Johnson on Shakespeare* ed. Walter Raleigh (Oxford, 1908), p. 24.

<sup>3</sup> E. V. Lucas, *The Life of Charles Lamb* (London, 1905), p. 309.

usual sense, this is not a question one would normally ask in polite society; so that by putting it the scholar is assuming a social equality with the porter – yet immediately capping any effect of patronage by inviting him to be complicit with his nonsense.

Or think of the situation as a party of well-conducted people leaves the Gillmans' house one evening after spending an hour or two listening to Coleridge's conversation and make their way to take up all the places in the coach that is to transport them from Highgate back to the centre of London. After a time a stranger puts his head inside the door and asks, 'Are you full up inside?' whereupon from a corner comes the voice of Lamb: 'Well, I can't speak for the others, but that last bit of the Gillmans' pudding did the job for me.' This combination of a readily assumed intimacy to a stranger with such an outrageous (and slightly childlike) pun is the very essence of his particular style and gives us yet another reason to drink to THE IMMORTAL MEMORY OF CHARLES LAMB.

‘My dear Lamb . . . ’:  
An After-Lunch Birthday Speech  
for the Charles Lamb Society

By REGGIE WATTERS

This lecture was delivered as a response to Professor Beer’s Elian toast at the Society’s birthday luncheon (see preceding pages), Saturday 20 February 1999.

WE ALL LIVE IN HOPES of finding a bargain. Immortal longings swarm upon us as we idly trawl the flotsam and jetsam of mortality: a church fête table strewn with jumble; a street-seller’s barrow fraught with ill-matched china and half-morocco odd volumes. Though Reason may commend the sight of a new broom sweeping clean, Sentiment must regret all that detritus of warm human living carried remorselessly to the bin. Few might be happy with the dusty calling of Mr Boffin, whose luxuriant yet modest Bower grew, as you will recall, from a professional picking over of London’s waste heaps. But most of us have felt faint leanings towards his trade. One might say the road to Gehenna is paved with Great Expectations. . . . And of all those ill-considered trifles which attract the eternal Autolycus in us perhaps none have greater power than the unsold lots of an auction. Which accounts for my pleasure when an odd job-lot came my way a little while since . . . containing a small snatch of manuscript on old paper, no more than eight inches by six. This was headed ‘Trinity College, Cambridge’ and dated ‘September 20’, although no year followed. The communication it carried was brief and to the point:

My dear Lamb –

The correct quotation is indubitably that which your fellow collegian made use of – viz. –

Here follows some Greek, which for our general convenience I shall render in the Penguin translation of Sir Desmond Lee:

Because a free man ought to learn nothing under duress. Compulsory physical exercise does no harm to the body, but compulsory learning never sticks in the mind.

Better classicists than I am tell me the passage is from *The Republic*, where Plato has been discussing the moral and intellectual education required by Philosopher-Statesmen. He goes on to suggest that the time for all serious learning is when we are young but that we must not exercise compulsion in our teaching. Then, in answer to his listener’s question ‘Why?’, he produces the words quoted in my manuscript letter, which then ends with a confident flourish:

*You* are right in the Author – Socrates – but your companion is also right in his quotation.

With friendship thine

S.T.C.

There is a kind of man who would prefer not to become Malvolio. To such a one an unexpected letter in the hand may suggest bird-lime in the bush. ‘This’, says I, ‘cannot possibly be a letter from Samuel Taylor Coleridge to Charles Lamb!’ So I began to go about. The paper seemed right; late eighteenth century or early nineteenth but with no watermark. The writing was less certain. *Not* quite the hand of the later Coleridge, to judge from other examples, but showing

similarities and clearly the hand of someone not yet relaxed with his style. A man would need grounds more relative than this. So I wrote, presumptuously, to John Beer.

His reply was kind and cautious. He thanked me for the 'intriguing scrap' and continued: 'I have puzzled over it several times, but with no success. . . . If genuinely CL and STC the main questions, as you'll have recognized over and over again, are why Coleridge should have been writing in September and from Trinity. He did go to Trinity later, of course, for the British Association meeting of 1833, but in June. Writing to Lamb at most times in his life it would have been "Dear Charles", surely.'

The reputations of those twentieth-century torturers who called themselves Ximenes or Torquemada were founded upon the universal fascination of what's difficult, and John Beer's letter was as good as a thinking-cap. Like the naughty boy in Scotland I stood in my shoes and I wondered . . . If there was a difficulty over S. T. Coleridge at Trinity might there be another Trinity 'S.T.C.' to whom the letter could be attributed? In that case 'My dear Lamb' might perhaps be William Lamb, later Lord Melbourne, the young Victoria's favourite? But the archivist at Trinity could find no eighteenth-century member of the college with the initials STC, and only Stephen Thomas Clissold from the nineteenth, and he was admitted in 1843, which was certainly too late for either of the dear Lambs I had been pursuing, and too late, surely, for the paper on which the cryptic message was written. . . . One of the delights of being a Super-annuated Man, of course, is the illusion that he 'has Time for Everything'. It is a period of life when there are special charms in having an excuse to sit once more at a desk, so long, naturally, as you are not doing 'task work'. I remembered that at least one close friend of Lamb and Coleridge *had* been at Trinity in the 1790s and had even threatened to become their literary rival until he thought better of it and married a well-to-do widow in Penzance. I looked out my notes on Charles Valentine Le Grice.

For most of us an acquaintance with the elder Le Grice begins in the pages of 'Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago', and the wit combats between Coleridge and C.V. which Charles Lamb described through a smoky haze of allusion to Thomas Fuller on Shakespeare and Ben Jonson:

which two I behold like a Spanish great galleon, and an English man of war; Master Coleridge, like the former, was built far higher in learning, solid, but slow in his performances. C.V.L.[e Grice], with the English man of war, lesser in bulk, but lighter in sailing, could turn with all tides, tack about, and take advantage of all winds, by the quickness of his wit and invention.

The edge of Lamb's wit here deserves observing. First, he is playing the Virgilian trick: 'Si parva licet componere magnis' – 'If it is permitted to compare small things with great'. The Shakespeare and Ben Jonson of his great 'wit-combats' are no more than a pair of precocious schoolboys! But there is also a physical appropriateness. If STC was already the portly Spanish galleon, Valentine Le Grice was small of stature, with the quick bird-like movements of an Edmunds Blunden. Hardly surprisingly, that later Blue published a Hong Kong University pamphlet, *Coleridge's Fellow-grecian*, in 1956, which is still worth hunting out. And, as well as the quick neatness of a man-of war, Val Le Grice possessed a certain pit-bull terrier belligerence, as you shall hear.

His name appears in the Christ's Hospital Minute Books as being entered for Trinity College in the summer of 1792. Even in this he was unusual, petitioning to take up his school exhibition at Trinity rather than Pembroke Hall as was more usual. He was the next Grecian after Coleridge



himself to go to Cambridge. Yet by January 1793 the same Minute Book records a complaint by the Steward Mr Hathaway against Charles Valentine Le Grice, that he had 'in the Hospital insolently presumed to interfere in the Steward's Government of the Boys and insulted him publicly by language the most abusive and outrageous'. What seems to have happened was this. Val's younger brother Sam was still a Grecian in the School and at New Year 1793 had been thrashed by the Steward for staying out all night. As the Minute Book of this period also records concern at the conduct of Senior Boys, who 'have for some time past been guilty of repeated disobedience to the Steward, and of divers gross Immoralities, as profane language, drunkenness, and publicly conversing with Women of suspicious Character', Sam Le Grice's escapade may have been the last in a series of misdemeanours. Yet, although the last straw, it still stung the young camel's back! Meeting his elder brother down on vacation from Cambridge Sam told him of the indignity. Whereupon Val Le Grice went straight round to the Steward's house demanding vengeance. A lively New Year's pantomime followed, watched attentively by several Bluecoat boys, and this closed with the pugnacious little figure of the elder Le Grice being ejected from the Hospital by force.

The case before the School Governors duly followed. Provocatively, Le Grice decided not to appear in person but simply sent an entenuating plea that he was drunk at the time. This the Governors saw as 'an aggravation of the Offence'. They decreed that £20 should be deducted from his Exhibition and he should not be 'permitted to associate with the Youth of this House'. With the passing of time and a suitable apology these punishments were rescinded, and an entry for January 1796 orders that 'Charles Valentine Le Grice, Scholar at Trinity College, Cambridge, be allowed Twelve Pounds towards taking his Degree of Bachelor of Arts'. So, between 1792 and 1796 Lamb and Coleridge had at least one lively young Christ's Hospital friend in residence at Trinity.

That there were exchanges between them is indisputable. Writing in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for December 1834, a few months after Coleridge's death, Valentine Le Grice famously recalled STC's undergraduate habits:

He was very studious, but his reading was desultory and capricious. He took little exercise merely for the sake of exercise; but he was ready at any time to unbend his mind in conversation, and, for the sake of this, his room (the ground-floor room on the right hand of the staircase facing the great gate) was a constant rendezvous of conversation-loving friends, — I will not call them loungers, for they did not call to kill time, but to enjoy it. What evenings have I spent in those rooms! What little suppers, or *sizings*, as they were called, have I enjoyed; when Aeschylus, and Plato, and Thucydides were pushed aside, with a pile of lexicons, etc. to discuss the pamphlets of the day. Ever and anon, a pamphlet issued from the pen of Burke. There was no need of having the book before us. Coleridge had read it in the morning, and in the evening he would repeat whole pages verbatim . . .

So there is Cambridge Coleridge in full spate for you. In *this* company it seems even more appropriate to recall also Valentine Le Grice's tribute to the full flow of Charles Lamb. Writing for the *Gentleman's Magazine* of May 1838, Le Grice reviewed Talfourd's recent edition of the *Letters*. By then Le Grice was the last of the triumvirate left alive. We can feel how, sitting alone in his Cornish study at Tereife, this country clergyman and thwarted writer, wracks himself up ratchet by ratchet, as he recalls his dead friend, until the flow of his own eloquence of allusion almost matches that of his subject. I make no apologies for reciting a fine passage at some length:

This was Lamb's wit – it kept apart by itself. It did not sharpen the arrows of satire, it did not grin with a provoking malice, it did not thirst for reward, it did not cater to vanity, it did not live on adulation. It was his own quiet possession and delight. It had no fellowship with the Footes, the Sheridans, the Colmans of the day. It rose higher, as it sprang from a greater depth than theirs; but it held acquaintance with, – it paid a becoming deference to the wits and wise men of old. It shook Master [Slender] by the hand: it pulled off its cap in the presence of Sir Thomas Browne; helped old Fuller to his great arm-chair; eat a pippin and carraways with Mr Justice Shallow in his garden; walked arm-in-arm between Bunyan and Bishop Patrick; loved the old playwrights dearly, and the name of Bankside; would converse with Jewell and Fox and the primitive Quakers; read Homer in Chapman and not in Pope; would be seen bending gracefully a knee to the Duchess of Newcastle, like a page in one of Vandyck's pictures; and everywhere it smacked rarely of antiquity; and had an equal command over our tears and smiles. Being thus, it will endure.

These Old Blues certainly had a taste for English seventeenth-century literature. And, to judge from Jem White's 1796 *Letters of Falstaff*, it was a taste they acquired young. We all know how, according to STC, they had acquired it, in part at least, from James Bowyer:

At the same time that we were studying the Greek Tragic Poets, he made us read Shakespeare and Milton as lessons: and they were the lessons too, which required most time and trouble to *bring up*, to escape his censure.

Such reminiscences have sometimes been questioned as Coleridgean myth-constructions, so it is worth mentioning that against one memory recorded a few pages later in the *Biographia* the Le Grice family copy of the first edition bears a hand-written note:

I remember this well. C V Le G. I might multiply this mark through all the previous pages.

We have strayed some distance from Trinity College. But I hope I have at least suggested the possibility of three young men meeting there in the 1790s and remembering Bowyer. Now for something more specific and more tantalising.

Among the Le Grice papers, there is a scrapbook where the old man stored an item from a Cornish newspaper of 1842. In it an anonymous correspondent (surely Le Grice himself) had offered an unpublished anecdote part of which runs as follows:

In the winter of 1794 Charles Lamb was invited by his friend, L.G., of Trinity College, to spend a few days with him. Lamb arrived by the night coach, when his friend L.G. asked him if after his fatigue, he felt himself equal to joining a party at breakfast, to which L.G. was invited. Lamb would have assented to go, but he complained of a chilblain on his heel, which rendered it necessary for him to slip his shoe down, which he remarked would be very uncomfortable in passing through the snow, and would also be very unseemly in appearance: 'But', said Lamb, 'if you could accommodate me with an easy boot, I might manage it.' 'Oh!' said his friend L.G., 'That I will do,' and after a short absence brought in a pair which suited very comfortably, and off they went to breakfast. 'Well' said L.G., on their return to his rooms, 'how did you like the breakfast? What did you think of my College friends? are they not pleasant men?' – 'I like them very much,' said Lamb: 'Pleasant, chatty, clever, good fellows; but there was one of them, gentlemanly in his manners in other respects, and a sensible man, who stared at me in so pointed a way during the whole morning, nay kept his eyes so fixed upon me, that it was quite disagreeable, –

quite vexatious.' – 'You mean,' said L.G., 'a dark gentleman, who sat opposite to you.' – 'Yes!' – 'And he stared at you very much, did he?' – 'Yes!' – 'I should wonder if he had not done so,' said L.G. 'How so?' 'Why, I introduced you as a gentleman who had arrived from London by the night coach, and he was puzzled to think how you had come in *his boots!*'

So Charles Lamb was in Trinity College in 1794, in the Michaelmas Term which was to be STC's last at Cambridge. And he was mingling with the undergraduates as Val Le Grice's guest. But, of course, the anecdote mentions the snows of winter and my letter is dated 'September 20'. Short of a freak spell of Arctic weather, what explanation is there? Rather feebly I find myself clutching at straws. We are all human and memories make mistakes. Sometimes a mind thinking back nearly 50 years enriches its experience with lovingly invented but totally convincing circumstantial details which the teller himself comes to believe. I remember a past headmaster of Christ's Hospital, the historian David Newsome, recalling how for years he told the story of a boyhood treat when he had been taken to see the 1948 Australian cricketers play their first match at Worcester. He described the first ball of the first over again and again to believing friends. (And you must forgive a certain amount of necessary technical jargon!) The fast bowler Lindwall was bowling to Kenyon, and, said David Newsome, he could still see that first ball being bowled and the middle stump cartwheeling halfway to the boundary. It was only years later that he took down his volume of *Wisden* and discovered that Kenyon had been dismissed by Lindwall third ball not first ball, and had not been bowled but given out 'leg before wicket'. So much, claimed David Newsome, for the certainties of first-hand reminiscence!

What seems indubitable is that, like Kenyon facing Australian fast-bowling, young Charles Lamb was, at least once, exposed to the intimidating conversation of clever Cambridge undergraduates. Several of Le Grice's Trinity circle were to win Firsts and go on to further honours. One, Christopher Wordsworth, brother of the poet, later became Master of the College. Another friend, and honorary member of this Trinity club was a Jesus man, Satterthwaite, of whom Le Grice noted in his Tereife scrapbook:

Satterthwaite, who was stoutest and strongest, died very early. He used often to threaten to break my bones. Our usual appellation was 'Old Satt'.

Perhaps 'Old Satt' sometimes brought along STC from his own college? Or perhaps STC needed no invitation?

Let us turn back to Coleridge himself for a moment. His movements in September 1794 can be fairly precisely traced, and his moods can be fairly accurately judged, because of an enthusiastic flood of letters he wrote to Robert Southey. Certainly these were exciting times for him. He returned to Cambridge on Wednesday, September 17, and wrote next morning effusively:

Well, my dear Southey! I am at last arrived at Jesus. My God! how tumultuous are the movements of my heart – Since I quitted this room what and how important Events have been evolved! America! Southey! Miss Fricker!

We know that immediately before returning to Cambridge he had established himself in London, close to Christ's Hospital, looking for recruits to his Pantisocracy scheme and hoping to arrange publication of the play about the death of Robespierre which he and Southey had dashed off from newspaper reports in about 48 hours. He describes sleeping at night in the Angel Inn, Butcher

Hall Lane, Newgate Street, living during the day with the Grecians at Christ's Hospital, and holding a Coleridgean court for present and past Blues in the evenings:

Every night since my arrival I have spent at an Ale-house by courtesy called 'a Coffee House' – The 'Salutation and Cat', in Newgate Street. We have a comfortable Room to ourselves – & drink Porter and Punch round a good Fire. – My motive for all this is that every night I meet a most intelligent young Man who has spent the last 5 years of his Life in America – and is lately come from thence as an Agent to sell Land. He was of our School – I had been kind to him – he remembers it – & comes regularly every Evening to 'benefit by conversation' he says . . .

Current Bluecoats also were becoming interested in the scheme.

The younger Le Grice (a sweet-tempered Fellow – he goes with me to Cambridge) and Favell, who goes to Cambridge next October twelve month – have intreated that they may be allowed to come over after us when they quit college.

'The younger Le Grice . . . goes with me to Cambridge'. Is that a clue to the background of our Trinity College letter? It would be heartening to think so. We have certainly met the younger Le Grice brother already in this story. And he is worth a little more attention. It was unusual for the School to allow two brothers to follow one another to University as Grecians on a school Exhibition, as this might set a dangerous precedent for restricting the benefits of the Hospital. Yet Bowyer had petitioned the governors to make an exception in Sam Le Grice's case because of his 'uncommon merit'. As a result Sam was allowed to join his elder brother at Trinity in 1794. He was obviously an attractive, impetuous fellow, gifted physically and intellectually. Coleridge wrote of him at the time that he possessed:

All the generous ardent Feelings that characterize Genius.

And you may remember how, at the crisis of Charles Lamb's life, in the autumn of 1796, it was young Le Grice who was to offer practical help:

Sam Le Grice who was then in town was with me the 3 or 4 first days, & was as a brother to me, gave up every hour of his time, to the very hurting of his health and spirits, in constant attendance & humoring my poor father. Talk'd with him, read to him, play'd at cribbage with Him (for so *short* is the old man's recollection, that he was playing at cards, as tho' nothing had happened, while the Coroner's Inquest was sitting over the way!) Samuel wept tenderly when he went away, for his Mother wrote him a very severe letter on his loitering so long in town, & he was forced to go.

Of course, all that lay unimaginably far ahead back in 1794, but it catches for us permanently Sam Le Grice's good nature and establishes his closeness to Charles Lamb. Was that closeness partly formed, I found myself momentarily wondering, by their having first gone up to Cambridge together (although in different senses) in September 1794? And did they even travel up in the same coach as Coleridge? What a poignant journey that would have been for Lamb: it would certainly have made him Sam Le Grice's 'fellow-collegian' in a very special way!

I have to report sadly that this journey does not seem to have happened. Sam Le Grice, as leaving Grecian, would have been required to give a public address to the Lord Mayor and Aldermen as part of the Christ's Hospital celebrations of St Matthew's Day, on 21 September 1794, and the School's Discharge Book in the Guildhall Library carries an entry for 10 October

1794 which states that Sam Le Grice was 'this day discharged from this Hospital . . . and sent to Trinity College, Cambridge.' It seems clear that Coleridge's statement that Sam Le Grice 'goes with me to Cambridge' cannot be taken too literally. However, Sam's presence at Trinity later in the Michaelmas Term of 1794 certainly *might* have encouraged Charles Lamb to make a visit. And Coleridge would surely have been there to patronise them both in his inimitable manner. So perhaps it is simply the date of my note ('September 20') that is wrong? I suppose we cannot expect a man who misremembered the date of his own birthday to be as reliable as an almanac.

If my talk this afternoon needs a serious point (and perhaps it doesn't) then this would be that point. That we know so much about the lives of these people, and yet there are so many gaps. In an age of sympathetic and imaginatively reconstructed biographies, like Richard Holmes's beautiful two-volume *Coleridge*, it is as well to remind ourselves of all those things we *don't* know. John Beer's question about Coleridge addressing gentle-hearted Charles as 'My dear Lamb' points to one significant gap. The first extant letter from Lamb to Coleridge dates from as late as May 1796 – almost two years after the period I have been discussing. The first Coleridge letter to Lamb (putting aside my uncertain fragment) dates from September 1796 – a whole two years ahead. Whether or not Lamb and young Le Grice travelled up to Cambridge as 'fellow Collegians' in 1794 may be a trivial question. 'When exactly did the lifelong friendship of Lamb and Coleridge first become close?' is not. There's no certain evidence to suggest it was at school, where a Grecian might well have chosen to keep his privileged distance from a Deputy Grecian. Most of us, of course, remember those who were immediately above us at school far better than we remember those who were below us. When (and if) he wrote my admittedly dubious note in an unformed hand Coleridge was still 'STC' writing to 'My dear Lamb'. At some time or other that changed. I'd suggest the change came when for the first time in his life Coleridge really *needed* Charles Lamb. And that was in those winter weeks of '94/'95, just a few weeks later than the period we have been considering, when he finally burnt his boats, left Cambridge without a degree and returned for temporary shelter to the penumbra of Christ's Hospital and the hospitable Salutation and Cat in Newgate Street. Then the impossibility of commitment to Sara Flicker must have loomed before him like an enormous shadow from the firelight. Then it was that Charles Lamb sat with him through long evenings, drinking egg-nog and smoking oronooko tobacco, and giving exactly the kind of practical support Sam Le Grice was to offer Lamb in turn at his own time of crisis.

But let us close with a modern Flight of Imaginative Biography after such Pseudopompous Scholarly Ramblings. Imagine a scene in Trinity College rooms by candlelight, that transforming element under which Charles Lamb so often came into his own. A boisterous group of Cambridge men have been entertaining themselves and their young London guest to conversation and negus. Among others Sam Coleridge of Jesus has been recounting at some length a harebrained scheme he has concocted with an Oxford man for setting up a Democrat community on the banks of the Susquehanna River. A part of America, he claims, where Indians are never seen and the Mosquitos are more harmless than Highland midges. All property there will be held in common. Twelve men and twelve young ladies will be sufficient for the scheme, though whether the marriage bond shall be dissoluble is unclear. Precise details are somewhat obscured by much free-flowing wit and facetious catcalling. The scheme, one gathers, will bear the grand name of 'Pantisocracy'. A sum of £150 a head will be sufficient to ensure its success. In the course of the evening others, too, have held the floor. The host, Val Le Grice, for example, has delivered a mock-epic oration on 'The Art of Stirring the Fire', and there have been several lively bursts of male-voice singing, very strident and off-key, in which the following chorus about the

University Vice-Chancellor has been thumped out so loud it could be distinctly heard as far away as the Wren Library:

Gadzoons! Gadzoons!  
Lowther Yates in Pantaloons!

But the party has broken up. Their revels now are ended. For a while three (or just possibly four) Old Christ's Hospital boys stay on to see out the fire and talk over past times, swapping tales of Ward Nurses' daughters and Jemmy Bowyer. In the course of which a good-natured dispute breaks out between Val Le Grice and his now more voluble and stuttering guest. Talk of Bowyer has led inevitably to talk of his birch, and Lamb as plucked a half-remembered quotation from the recesses of his memory, suggesting its relevance to the schemes for Pantisocratic education Sam Coleridge had been discussing earlier. But young Lamb stutters over it abominably. Partly because he is a little drunk, partly because he knows he is no more than a Deputy Grecian in the presence of full Grecians! Val Le Grice, being Val Le Grice, of course corrects him, suggesting in passing that the notion 'Compulsory learning never sticks in the brain' has just been disproved by this Deputy Grecian's amazing feat of memory! Once a somewhat addled and argumentative Charles Lamb has been shuffled back to his guest room, the Senior Grecian present takes down a Plato which had been laid aside for the evening and dashes off a quick and lordly note which he then slips under Lamb's door on his way out of college. The candles flicker and go dim. And beyond, here and there, the lamps of Trinity Street glimmer through fogsmoke white as a mist rolls up from the banks of another river than the Susquehanna.

It is all very neat and rather appealing, and very probably wrong. I hope at least my letter may reflect something of the bond of Brotherhood and Friendship felt by a remarkable group of young men reared amid the dim cloisters of an old Franciscan Friary near Cheapside. That would be excuse enough for reading it at the Lamb Society luncheon.

Trinity College, Cambridge September 20

My dear Lamb –

The correct quotation is indubitably that which your fellow collegian made use of – viz. –

‘Οὐδὲν μᾶθημα ἀετὰ βουλείαξ τοῦ ἐλεύθερου χρῆ μαυθάσει. οἷ μὲν γὰρ τοῦ σώματοξ πόσοι βία πουούμεοι, χείρου οὐδὲν τὸ σωμα ἀπεργά ζουται · ψυχῆ δὲ βίαιου οὐδὲν ἔμμεου μαθήμα.’<sup>1</sup>

You are right in the Author – Socrates – but your companion is also right in his quotation.

With friendship thine  
S.T.C.

*Nether Stowey*

<sup>1</sup> ‘Because a free man ought to learn nothing under duress. Compulsory physical exercise does no harm to the body, but compulsory learning never sticks in the mind.’

## Reviews

ROBERT WOOF AND STEPHEN HEBRON, with an introductory essay by PAMELA WOOF, *Towards Tintern Abbey: A Bicentenary Celebration of 'Lyrical Ballads', 1798*. Grasmere: The Wordsworth Trust, 1998. Pp. vii + 188. ISBN 1 870787 55 2. £12 paperback.

THIS BOOK IS THE CATALOGUE to the Wordsworth Museum's 1998 summer exhibition, 'Towards Tintern Abbey', the Wordsworth Trust's contribution to the plethora of *Lyrical Ballads* bicentennial celebrations. It shows the Trust continuing its tradition of producing catalogues which are capable of standing alone when divorced from the context of the exhibitions which they describe. Indeed, quite apart from its immediate taxonomic purpose, the book offers a fine survey of Wordsworth's early career, of the *Lyrical Ballads* and 'Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey' in particular, beginning as it does with two contextualising essays by Pamela and Robert Woof. Robert Woof's substantial essay, 'Towards *Lyrical Ballads*', elegantly written and wearing its scholarship lightly, traces Wordsworth's early career from his schoolboy efforts to the *Lyrical Ballads*; Pamela Woof's 'Towards "Tintern Abbey": The Poem' delivers what its title promises, and delivers it well. These essays, along with the catalogue itself, combine to offer a well-judged survey of Wordsworth's life and work up until and including the *annus mirabilis*, and I can think of few more entertaining and informative introductions to the subject for the general reader than the one offered here.

This volume is beautifully produced, with high quality illustration throughout. For me, the current high production values in evidence at Dove Cottage are well demonstrated by a comparison between *Towards Tintern Abbey* and two catalogues which I obtained during visits to the Wordsworth Summer Conference as a youthful Oxford M.Phil. student, *Thomas De Quincey: An English Opium Eater 1785-1859* (1985) and *Derwentwater: The Vale of Elysium* (1986). Though the copy is good here, these small volumes, with their crowded typography, tiny illustrations and stapled binding, now seem rudimentary in comparison with the present standard – chapbooks compared with an elephant quarto. The catalogue itself is organised into two parts: 'Lyrical Ballads' and 'Artists, Tourists and the Wye Valley'. The first provides a tangible context to the composition and publication history of the *Lyrical Ballads*: portraits of members of the Wordsworth and Coleridge circles, manuscripts, notebooks, letters, reviews and key editions of the *Lyrical Ballads* and other books. This part of the exhibition provided an opportunity for Wordsworthians to gaze wistfully at books which they covet but could never afford (a situation which, on the evidence of a London antiquarian bookseller's recent catalogue in my possession, which marks up the 1800 two-volume Longman edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* – and not the rare 'black tulip' shown at the exhibition – at £8,000, seems unlikely to change). The letterpress to each illustration is both concise and informative.

To my mind, the revelations in the exhibition are to be found in the 'Artist, Tourists and the Wye' section, which reproduces pictures of the environs of the Wye and of Tintern Abbey itself, from Samuel and Nathaniel Buck's 1732 engraving through to James Mudd's magnificent early photograph of c.1850. The usual suspects – Turner the most notable – are included, but the exhibition also features several less well-known efforts by obscure draughtsmen, the likes of William Burgess, Anthony Devis and Cornelius Varley. As the catalogue progresses, we see the later eighteenth-century development away from what Gilpin dismisses as 'exact portrait[ure]' ('if nature gets wrong', as Gilpin declares, 'I cannot help putting her right'). From topographical and architectural exactitude, to picturesquerie, through to the rather more personal responses of

Romantic period artists, as Thelwall writes, 'The enchanting beauties of the River Wye . . . have been rendered a subject of universal conversation'. This section offers a practical demonstration of the importance of the Wye and Tintern Abbey to the development of theories of the picturesque and to Romanticism itself, showing how, to quote Stephen Hebron, 'Wordsworth initiated a new response to the scenery of the Wye valley, and by the 1830s . . . had replaced Gilpin as its representative voice'.

John Strachan

JOSEPH E. RIEHL, *That Dangerous Figure: Charles Lamb and the Critics*. Columbia, South Carolina: Camden House Press, 1998. Pp. xi + 208. ISBN 1 57113 040 3. £45 (\$55) hardback.

THE PRESENT VOLUME is one in the Camden House series on *Literary Criticism in Perspective*, an enterprise in which scholars, themselves authorities on the subjects at hand, describe chronologically the extant criticism on significant literary figures, works or movements, 'illuminating the nature of literary criticism itself, to gauge the influence of social and historic currents on aesthetic judgements'.

In this volume, Professor Joseph Riehl traces the shifting fortunes of Lamb's critical status over the years since the early nineteenth century: they range between Thackeray's and Lucas's elevation of Lamb to the dizzy height of 'Saint Charles' in Victorian days, on one hand; and on the other, Graham Greene's and Denys Thompson's 1930s consignment of his writings to the low station of 'cunning', 'guile', 'deception', and the nugatory level of a 'Times fourth leader'. The truth, of course, lies somewhere in between, as suggested by Professor Riehl's title.

Readers of Lamb will know the enigmatic remark in the Preface to *The Last Essays of Elia*, where CL, pretending to be someone else, and stacking one irony on another, ventures: 'Few understood him; and I am not certain that at all times he quite understood himself. He too much affected that dangerous figure – irony': like calling some of his carefully-wrought prose 'a sort of unlicked, incondite things', or referring to himself, too great a lover of the juniper, as one who 'always kept a little on this side of abstemiousness'. One wonders how even Mario Praz could have been impervious to such a serious tease.

Professor Riehl has certainly done his homework in sorting through almost 200 years of commentary on Lamb, and he has accordingly produced a volume which is comprehensive, lively and well-written. It will be useful and warmly-received by Lamb scholars and others toiling in the Romantic vineyard. His text proceeds chronologically, prefaced with this apt observation: 'In everything he touches, the character Elia raises deep and difficult problems of human life which we have been reluctant to face, and Elia sometimes leaves his reader with only an empty, lovely teacup'. But what a teacup! whereon a young Mandarin hands tea 'to a lady from a salver – two miles off'.

One recurrent problem in the assessment of Lamb's work, especially his criticism, is the tincture of humour that characteristically shows up in much of what he wrote. Lamb's penchant for humour has severely hurt him because of the common assumption that anybody who is having a good time can't possibly have anything important to say. 'What is needed', writes Riehl, 'is a new and convincing analysis of Lamb's humour, or perhaps of humour in general. . . . Criticism cannot approach Lamb without a coherent theory of humour. This is perhaps the major challenge and opportunity which Lamb poses for academic criticism today'. One can only agree.



It is surprising to see in Professor Riehl's survey how much fuss has been made over Lamb's view of Restoration comedy, which shrewdly allowed the patron 'to take an airing beyond the diocese of the strict conscience – not to live always in the precincts of the law-courts'. When Macaulay fulminated against Lamb in 1841, the reverberations echoed down the years 'through G. H. Lewes and William Archer to Irving Babbitt, T. S. Eliot, and Allardyce Nicoll', a run of intellectual brethren you might expect to have the gift of perspective.

What emerges from this excellent study is the long trajectory of Lamb's reputation: from mixed responses in his lifetime, gradually rising in the latter third of the nineteenth century to 'sainthood', then descending to the depths by the 1930s, followed by two decades of comparative silence; and then, beginning in the 1960s with the new (analytic) critics and continuing to the present, an interest in close reading of Lamb's texts (Daniel Mulcahy, Richard Haven), in biography (Winifred Courtney, Jane Aaron), and in subtle psychological speculation (Fred Randel, Gerald Monsman). At each stage of Lamb's critical standing we get clear, accurate and eminently readable summaries of 'who' said 'what'. The book includes an exhaustive bibliography arranged, like the text, chronologically, with an index to help you find things alphabetically.

John I. Ades

JOHN BEER, *Providence and Love: Studies in Wordsworth, Channing, Myers, George Eliot, and Ruskin*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998. ISBN 0 19 818436 0. Pp. xv + 335. £45 hardback.

THIS DIVERSE AND ABSORBING BOOK, like Professor Beer's earlier *Romantic Influences*, doesn't reprint existing essays and lectures so much as work them into a new whole, a method which insinuates enough sense of a common predicament for the volume to possess a satisfying cohesiveness, while at the same time allowing the author all the elbow room he needs when something becomes irresistibly diverting. The predicament in question sounds a familiar one: the impact of the scientific revolution on the nineteenth-century literary mind; but the case studies on display give no sense of covering well-trodden ground. Since *Coleridge the Visionary*, John Beer has had the great gift of writing an entirely sober and lucid prose which yet manages to make the reader feel thrilled, occasionally amazed, sometimes wrong-footed, even momentarily sceptical – rather as Watson must have felt keeping within a few steps of Holmes – and that enviable capacity is on full display here. The scholarship is as wide and deep and original as we would expect: there has obviously been a good deal of expert digging in archives, led by some diviner's sense, and some significant things are presented here for the first time (especially a tranche of unpublished George Eliot letters). So this is – although I'm pleased to say the publishers don't stoop to saying so – an 'important' book; but it is also an immensely diverting one, in a way Beer's most novelistic work to date. I don't mean merely that he writes here about prose fiction more than we might expect (although he has written finely of Forster and Lawrence and others in the past), but also that the style and manner of his own prose has (in the best way) a novelistic quality: a sequence of often startling human dramas and entanglements are compellingly realised, always pegged to an appropriately cautious use of sources, needless to say, but with that absorbing sense of the intricacies of lives that you associate with the great realists. (Appropriately, the volume is dedicated to A. S. Byatt.) Paths cross throughout the book, the subject of one essay reappearing as the recipient of a letter in another, or a member of the circle in a third, so the suggestion of an entire culture or society gradually establishes itself: it is one of the books's most successful, and quite underplayed, effects.

The advances in science that constitute the book's background provoked a tragic and decisive split between the new materialism and the literary mind, which, constitutionally old-fashioned, continued to hanker after the consoling patterns which made out God's goodness in nature (what the title means by 'Providence'). The case studies Beer offers are episodes in the long and unwilling death of that consolation. Channing's enthusiastic Wordsworthianism sought to retain a faith in the benevolent significance of natural beauty; George Eliot's later response to the same largely subliminal catastrophe (described here in the context of her contacts with the brilliant Cambridge world of Sidgwick) was more strenuous and unyielding, wary of embracing spiritual comforts too easily. In other, less self-checking writers, under the auspices (acknowledged or not) of Plato's *Symposium*, the old spiritual needs found themselves displaced onto human love – which, unsurprisingly, tended to find such redemptive expectations a heavy burden; and several of the portraits here are really studies in the disastrous effects such an ennobling sense of relationship could have. The account of Ruskin's long, futile, ultimately self-deceiving obsession with Rose La Touche is immensely sympathetic, but doesn't seek to disguise the terrible price everyone paid who was involved in that wretched situation. Similarly comprehensive in its sympathies is Beer's extraordinary story of the prodigious F. W. H. Myers, a pioneer of researches into psychical phenomena as well as an eminent Wordsworthian, whose intense and unbearably tangled love affair – a story of automatic writing, guilt, passion, madness, and a dreadful suicide – sounds like a plot for Wilkie Collins. Hovering somewhere behind the book's several pieces, and occasionally drawn into view, is Coleridge's relationship with Sara Hutchinson (about which Beer has written so well elsewhere), which serves as a kind of archetype for this courageous but desperate tradition of love; and, while Coleridge himself features only briefly, it is in many ways a thoroughly Coleridgean book. 'Metaphysics, & Poetry, & "Facts of mind" – (i.e. Accounts of all the strange phantasms that ever possessed your philosophy-dreamers from Thoth, the Egyptian to Taylor, the English Pagan,) are my darling studies', Coleridge told Thelwall; and after finishing this book's vivid and entirely unpatronising discussions of spiritualism and seances, you imagine that, of all academics, Coleridge's benign ghost would surely find our author the most engaging company.

A subtler effect of the great shifts in the century's scientific culture, Beer suggests here (something it would be interesting to have spelt out at greater length), is a calling into doubt of factuality, especially literary factuality – the place of facts in literary writing – and his own response to that prompts what will doubtless be the book's two most provocative chapters, about Wordsworth's Lucy. One of the great virtues of Beer's criticism has always been his Empsonian readiness to treat what appears merely 'literary' language with the seriousness that comes from reading it (as it were) literally. Beer thinks it important that we feel that Lucy really existed (or, at least, that we do not find the question irrelevant); and, disposing of the other candidates that have been suggested, he narrows his search to a girl from the Duddon Valley, encountered during Wordsworth's Cambridge vacations. This has the nice effect of making the 1820 *Poems*, in which the River Duddon sonnets were set alongside 'Vaudracour and Julia', in part a double concealed autobiography, a suggestion that Beer follows up with great elegance. An 'appendix' pushes the speculative boat out rather further, and nominates a particular girl for the part; but I shall not spoil the mystery by repeating the (admittedly speculative) solution.

Seamus Perry

RICHARD HOLMES, *Coleridge: Darker Reflections*. ISBN 0 00 255577 8. Pp. 622. London: HarperCollins Publishers, 1998. £19.99 hardback.

THE SECOND VOLUME of this most recent life of Coleridge, by Richard Holmes, begins in 1804, after its subject's poetic achievements are over. The ex-poet is on his way to Sicily. For the sake of his health, he needs to sojourn in a dry climate. He is travelling on a ship called the *Speedwell*, in discomfort, failing to sleep on a bunk only twenty inches wide, and prone to sea sickness and acute constipation. Richard Holmes spares us no detail of the various methods Coleridge adopted to counteract the latter. It required the surgeon's utmost strength to insert a syringe up his patient's anus. The obstruction suddenly disintegrated, anguish took away disgust, and the patient himself picked out the resultant hardened matter.

This constipation was caused by ingesting opium, mostly taken orally, dissolved in brandy. Coleridge was curiously a victim of his age. It had no notion of addiction: continued indulgence was considered to be mere weakness of will. It had no notion, either, of withdrawal symptoms. Repeatedly Coleridge found himself reverting to opium because of racking pains in his joints. Those who have attempted to give up some ingrained habit, such as smoking, can form an impression of what Coleridge had to endure.

Constipation and opium dominate this volume. Yet, when engaged in some activity that occupied his attention, Coleridge seemed able to control his habit. We see him employed as a stand-in secretary to the Governor of Malta for sixteen months during 1804 and 1805. In the autumn of 1813 he sorted out the financial affairs of his benefactor, John Morgan, brought into chaos by the latter's illness.

His academic ventures, too, were impressive. He gave seven courses of lectures between 1808 and 1819. Some of these were presented under the auspices of such bodies as the Royal Institution and the Philosophical Society. With others, he operated as a freelance. All but two of these courses were, after an initial disruption through nervousness, on the whole successful. The lectures at Wilton's Rooms in 1812 were impaired by the political situation after the assassination of Perceval, the Prime Minister, and the lectures at the White Lion, Bristol, were affected adversely by illness.

Richard Holmes quotes an attentive auditor, Crabb Robinson, describing the lectures of 1810-11, sponsored by the newly founded Philosophical Institution, as 'immethodical . . . abounding in brilliant thoughts, fine flashes of rhetoric, ingenious paradoxes'. There is more to be said. Those lectures, especially the ones on Shakespeare, constitute a peak of Romantic criticism. Some might say they constitute the greatest literary criticism we have. F. R. Leavis, no eulogist of those practising his own trade, began his too-little-known essay, 'Dr Richards, Bentham and Coleridge', with these words: 'I admire and revere Coleridge, and I am in favour of thinking about poetry – in favour, more generally, of applying intelligence to literature' (*Scrutiny* III, 1934-5).

If we look at Coleridge's analysis of the first scene in *Hamlet*, we shall see an enactment of this dictum. The analysis in question is apparently drawn from notes made for the 1813 series of lectures in Bristol:

Compare the easy language of common life in which this drama opens, with the wild wayward lyric of the opening of *Macbeth*. The language is familiar: no poetic descriptions of night, no elaborate information conveyed by one speaker to another of what both had before their immediate perceptions . . . yet nothing bordering on the comic on the one hand,

and no striving of the intellect on the other. It is the language of *sensation* among men who feared no charge of effeminacy for feeling what they felt no want of resolution to bear. Yet the armour, the dead silence, the watchfulness that first interrupts it, the welcome relief of guard, the cold, the broken expressions as of a man's compelled attention to bodily feelings allowed no man, – all excellently accord with and prepare for the after gradual rise into tragedy – but above all into a tragedy the interest of which is eminently *ad et apud intra*, as *Macbeth* is *ad extra*.

That not only conveys the atmosphere of this first scene of *Hamlet* but indicates the means by which the atmosphere is achieved. More, it signals beyond the text upon which it is focused, to other texts, and other exemplifications of dramaturgy. Its specificity of detail implies an area of theory. That specificity, welcome as it is, may be surpassed by its power of suggestion.

Literary criticism of this order, and there is a good deal of it, shows to be nonsense the charge brought by John Carey, that little would have been lost if Coleridge had rested quietly in his grave during the whole period covered by this volume (*Sunday Times*, 11 October 1998). What can be said, though, is that, for all his narrative skill as a biographer, Richard Holmes does not adequately recognise the distinction of Coleridge's critical achievement.

A sign of this is his reluctance fairly to confront the charges of plagiarism the reputation of Coleridge has often had to face. It is significant that the name of Norman Fruman occurs neither in the index nor in the bibliography, though it appears in passing in a prolonged footnote (p. 281). In his book *The Damaged Archangel*, Fruman makes an unanswerable case to the effect that Coleridge depended especially on the German critic A. W. von Schlegel in the formulation particularly of his Shakespeare lectures. No doubt there was an affinity between the two men, and a number of the ideas they had in common were already in the air by the early nineteenth century; notably, the concept of 'organic form'.

What is surprising, as Richard Holmes remarks, is the mendacity that Coleridge showed when an accusation of plagiarism was made. Holmes explains this in terms of Coleridge's perennial sense of guilt. However, what is especially valuable in the work of Coleridge is the close attention to text already evidenced. His awareness of language is that of a great Romantic poet, not that of a German scholar, no matter how erudite. If Coleridge will not explain himself, the biographer should perform the task for him. It may seem a pity that so great a critic should have drawn so heavily on his predecessors. It certainly is a pity that he should have attempted to obscure that fact. But none of his predecessors ever expounded the first scene in *Hamlet* with the sense of atmosphere and alertness to theatrical possibility that Coleridge displayed. What has been said of that particular exposition can be said of many others.

Further, the *Miscellaneous Criticism* edited by T. M. Raysor, a volume scandalously difficult to get hold of in recent years, contains scores of *aperçus* and points of analysis, such as the remarks on the verse technique of Spenser and the dramatic utterance of Donne. In other words, an answer to the charges of plagiarism would amount to a defence of Coleridge as a critic.

However, can we reasonably expect this of a biographer? The first volume of his biography of Coleridge, his life of Shelley (*The Pursuit*), his *Doctor Johnson and Mr Savage* – all proclaim the vivacity of Mr Holmes in his chosen genre. We need, though, to recognise that genre's limitations. The spirit of narrative is in drama, and the *modus operandi* of a writer is notoriously undramatic. When apparently inert, he may be in process of crystallising the most profound medi-

tations. These may or may not have to do with the pangs of thwarted love or the agonies of prolonged constipation.

Mr Holmes supplies us with an amusing picture of Coleridge in his latter years:

Coleridge's popularity in Highgate, now the well-known, white-haired, shuffling sage, spread through the neighbourhood. He was followed by squalls of small boys, and greeted by distinguished matrons. He cultivated a certain eccentricity. When he was caught pulling down branches of blossoms from a neighbour's garden (an escapade he had favoured as a schoolboy at Christ's Hospital), he made friends for life with the outraged proprietor, Mrs Chisholm, by sending her an apology in verse, entitled 'The Reproof and Reply'.

The poem in question could have been written by anyone: 'To pluck both flower and floweret at my will'. Suppose this had been an anecdote concerning the senescence of the Reverend Silas Wotherspoon, retired clergyman, or Dr G. F. Mathias, retired schoolmaster – would it have been recorded for posterity? In the end, biography commits an intellectual heresy. It uses the work to illumine the author, whereas a responsible critic will use the author, if at all, to illumine the work.

We read literary critics because we need them. They show us texts we might not otherwise come across, and reveal aspects of texts that we did not envisage. On the other hand, we read biography because we enjoy it, and we probably enjoy it more than criticism. However, biography really is a form of entertainment. Of course, there is always something interesting in the addiction and even the constipation of our heroes. But it is not the constipation that renders them heroic. That is why the life is a diversion from the text. The biographer is liable to end up descanting on his subject's inadequacies rather than his unique, perhaps unascertainable, genius.

Philip Hobsbaum

UTTARA NATARAJAN, *Hazlitt and the Reach of Sense: Criticism, Morals, and the Metaphysics of Power*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998. Pp. xiv + 210. ISBN 0 19 818437 9. £40 hardback.

APPEARING AT A TIME when Hazlitt's figure and writings are enjoying unprecedented interest in Romantic critical circles and beyond, Uttara Natarajan's *Hazlitt and the Reach of Sense* draws even further attention to a writer whose legacy has all too often been misinterpreted. In her work, Dr Natarajan departs from a certain critical standpoint which has too often seen Hazlitt as a passive receptor of Coleridgean philosophy and, conversely, as a second-hand translator of the philosophy of German idealism. Rather, by delving deeply in the roots of Hazlitt's philosophy, this work offers a thorough reading of Hazlitt's original and, in many respects, problematic brand of idealism. Central in Dr Natarajan's project is Hazlitt's idea of power, whose significance and value invest Hazlitt's thought in its interrelated components: moral theory, epistemology and theory of art.

Dr Natarajan's stringent and competent analysis of the often contradictory definitions of Hazlitt's ideas on imaginative genius and morality necessarily starts with the writer's uneasy relationship with British empiricism. Hazlitt resented Locke's idea that man's mind and knowledge were exclusively shaped by senses and its corollary on the 'mysterious' nature of language. By contrast, Hazlitt exalts the strength of language and its effect, what he terms 'impression'. Interestingly, Dr Natarajan perceives the distinct echo of Newton's mechanic science in the cogency of Hazlitt's lexicon and in his belief in the concrete operations of language.

Dr Natarajan's discussion of language is followed by the definition of the 'power principle' and its role in the workings of the imagination as a creative force. Hazlitt's idea of imagination resents of Britain's cultural tradition, and in fact one of the key passages is the analysis of the influence of Unitarianism. Dr Natarajan alerts us on the limitation of a rigid interpretative grid based on Hazlitt's complete indebtedness to Coleridge. Hazlitt shared with Coleridge an idea of imagination derived from the Unitarian vision of a unique and unifying force, but crucially the role of the imagination represents the real watershed between Hazlitt and Coleridge. Dr Natarajan points out that Hazlitt, unlike Coleridge, did not use the imagination as a human force leading to, and aiming to reveal, divine comprehensiveness. Instead, Hazlitt's imagination acts to unify the order of nature, but does not aim to extend its boundaries towards a God-ordained unity.

Dr Natarajan follows this line of thought in Chapter III, 'The Mighty Intellect'. She offers an intriguing definition of Hazlitt's portrait of the artist, his powers, and, at the same time, his drama. The individual is the constant point of reference of the whole of Hazlitt's metaphysics. The powers of the imagination are in fact the powerful expression of the individuality, both in its strength and limitations. For Hazlitt, the artist is truly creative because his powers are unique, as only he is able to define the ideal. In this sense, the highest forms of nature exist only in the vision of the creative artist. Genius is the highest degree of human development and consists in the intensification of the tendency to self-affirmation of the empowered mind. There is therefore an inward nature of the creative principle, the 'innate bias' whereby the ideal is constructed by the individual himself, the artist's mind being 'partial and inclusive rather than comprehensive or inclusive'. However, the artist is constrained by the peculiar constitution of his own mind in his expression of the ideal. In his (necessarily) egotistical struggle to accomplish artistic creation, he is alone and isolated from mankind (Wordsworth and Byron are for Hazlitt the best examples of this attitude).

An important consequence of the emphasis on the individual features of genius is the distinction between Hazlitt and Keats. The definition of poetical genius is often taken as an example of Hazlitt's influence over Keats's idea of the poet's 'passiveness' towards, and absorption into, nature. For Hazlitt, instead, the 'innate bias' brings with it the notion that the mind does not passively embrace the activity of the senses but is rather active and self-determined.

The culmination of Dr Natarajan's work is her assessment of Hazlitt's moral theory and ideal. In this section, the author shows most clearly the originality of Hazlitt's writings and the independence of his own brand of idealism from Kant's. It is a double-edged operation. First of all, imagination is the instrument of moral good, but the origin of imaginative exercise is the principle of power, which for Hazlitt is in itself morally neutral and not necessarily conducive to the good. This idea mainly emerges from Hazlitt's later and darker writings, for instance in the essay 'On the Pleasure of Hating', contained in *The Plain Speaker*. The 'good' is external to the self, and 'natural disinterestedness' is the single moral ideal, the general towards toward which the individual should move. The second aspect is a more operative consequence of the function of the individual 'power' through the imagination. The conflict with Locke on the language is re-enacted here, on a different but analogous level. Dr Natarajan shows the analogies, more coincidental than deliberate, with Kant's idealism and stresses the greater concreteness and particularity of Hazlitt's theory of abstraction. In fact, she stresses that in his definition of 'ideal', Hazlitt refuses to abandon totally the realm of the individual in favour of abstract realities. The 'ideal' is instead union of 'concrete' and 'abstract'. 'Abstract' is not absolutely separated from

the particular. There is no separation between the two spheres, as the abstract properties are the essential property of things. Conversely, knowledge is not determined merely by senses, but has an inward origin and is not exclusively nourished by senses.

With her work, Dr Natarajan gives us an intriguing and critically well-constructed definition of Hazlitt's idealism. By showing the importance of native British philosophical thought, which Hazlitt both absorbed and ultimately refuted, she provides Romantic studies with a much-needed antidote to the tendency to reduce the whole of Romantic thought to an extension of German idealism.

Massimiliano Demata

*Parodies of the Romantic Age: The Poetry of the Anti-Jacobin and other Parodic Writings*. Ed. GRAEME STONES and JOHN STRACHAN. 5 vols. London: Pickering and Chatto, 1999. 1900 pages. ISBN 1 85196 475 6. £395 hardback.

THIS SET IS A MUST-HAVE for all Elians and any serious student of the Romantic period. That Graeme Stones and John Strachan should have compiled such a discriminating collection of parodies of the Romantic period is remarkable enough given the absence of any comprehensive bibliography to the material they have edited; that they have subjected it to thorough-going scholarly scrutiny is a triumph.

The five volumes are divided up as follows: Volume 1, *The Anti-Jacobin* (1797-8), ed. Stones; Volume 2, *Collected Verse Parody*, ed. Strachan; Volume 3, *Collected Prose Parody*, ed. Stones; Volume 4, W. F. Deacon, *Warreniana* (1824), ed. Strachan; Volume 5, P. G. Patmore, *Rejected Articles* (1826), ed. Strachan.

The editors introduce their work with a learned and persuasive disquisition on the critical centrality of parody: 'It has become possible to argue that at its best parody is a uniquely creative form of literary criticism, capable of probing weaknesses in a way which can complement its original and return the reader to the source, enlightened and enlivened.' This argument is borne out most obviously in volumes 2 and 4, where targets such as Wordsworth and Byron come in for particularly sharp comment.

Volume 1 will be highly useful to many of us: *The Anti-Jacobin* has been the focus of scholarly examination since 1852, when it was edited by Charles Edmonds, although many will be acquainted with Rice-Oxley's edition of 1924. Stones' scholarship makes this the edition of choice for any modern reader: he has collated all known sources to produce an attributions table that is as complete, and up-to-date, as possible. His annotations are erudite and, running to over 50 pages, bring *Anti-Jacobin* scholarship to a new pitch of comprehensiveness.

For many, the pleasure of discovery begins with volume 2, which is an anthology of verse parodies collected by John Strachan. The usual suspects have been rounded up – the works of Abel Shufflebottom and Nehemiah Higginbottom, Hogg's parodies of *The Excursion*, and the Smiths' *Rejected Addresses* – alongside lesser-known delicacies such as 'The Nose-Drop', Prowse's 'The Ancient Philosopher', and J. Brunton Stephens' 'The Power of Science' (the last two hitherto unknown to me, and surely ranking among the best Coleridge parodies ever written). It's good, too, to have complete texts of *Peter Bell* and *Benjamin the Waggoner* (neither by Wordsworth) back in print in the same volume. Usefully, Hone's *The Political House that Jack Built* is presented in facsimile, so that the relation between text and illustration is clear. Strachan's notes are excellent, though on one or two occasions I spotted some inconsistency in

the level of explanation provided. For instance, Strachan supplies Smith's notes to the O.P. riots on page 396, without ever saying exactly what they were or when they happened. Stones gives a summary explanation of them in volume 3, p. 362, and Strachan gives a slightly more detailed one in volume 5, p. 237. It might have been a good policy for the editors to have constructed, between themselves, a stock account of such things as the O.P. riots (in other words, informative notes), to be offered to the reader when occasion demanded.

Stones' collection of prose parodies in volume 3 is a provocative and stimulating assortment. Once again, one is pleased to see the old favourites reset and freshly annotated: the Chaldee MS, Austen's *Love and Freindship*, Lewis' *The Castle Spectre*, the Introduction to the *Rejected Addresses*, and so forth. For Elians, this volume contains the pleasure of seeing Lamb included for his letter to Coleridge of May 1798, which sends up Aquinas, as well as his correspondent (though *not* in an up-to-date text; see below.) I must confess to some surprise at finding chapter 13 of Coleridge's *Biographia* presented here alongside Beckford's *Azemia*, Peacock's *Melin-court*, and Hogg's *The Spy*. Does it really count as parody in the same way as they do? I have my doubts; though it may count as an example of a distinguished Romantic making an exhibition of himself.

Volume 4 contains the first scholarly edition of W. F. Deacon's delightful *Warreniana*. Neglected since its publication in 1824, this remarkable collection of puffs for Warren's boot polish in the manner of every leading writer of the day is a genuine discovery. It is prefaced by a learned and informative critical introduction by Strachan, which argues for its importance. This volume is very much easier to use than others in the series for the simple reason that Pickering and Chatto have allowed Strachan to provide footnotes rather than endnotes; one wonders why footnotes could not always have been the default. As a Hazlittian, my only cavil (and it *is* a cavilling point) is that Strachan might have noted more parallels with Lamb and Hazlitt than he does. Deacon mentions Joseph Hume, a friend of Hazlitt and Lamb; he attacks phrenology, a favourite target of Hazlitt's – along with Blackwood, Hook, and the Tory press in general, all of which get a sound drubbing here. The light ridicule of 'Romeo' Coates on page 138 echoes (at least to me) Hazlitt's remarks on the unfortunate thespian in *A View of the English Stage* (1818). And it seems significant to me (although Strachan doesn't mention it) that Deacon was at school with T. G. Wainwright and T. N. Talfourd. But enough of such pedantry. Strachan's editorial work here is a model of its kind; see, for instance, the footnotes to 'The Sable School of Poetry' and 'Annus Mirabilis', or the headnote to 'The Dream' – beautifully written, erudite without being intrusive. Deacon's *Warreniana* is a real discovery, and has been well served by its editor. The set is worth acquiring for this volume alone.

P. G. Patmore (another chum of Hazlitt's, by the way) is alluded to by Deacon, and is the author of volume 5, also edited by Strachan, *Rejected Articles* (1826). Once again, Elians will find much to delight them here. Patmore's imitations of Lamb and Hazlitt are a little dilated, but well-judged and sometimes uncomfortably precise. Mary Lamb was allegedly put out by the description of female attire in the Lamb essay, but I thought it quite persuasive, and enjoyed its scurrility. Strachan's introduction to the volume is clear and informative; his account of Patmore's relations with Hazlitt a model of its kind. His headnotes and footnotes are, once again, accurate, helpful, and unobtrusive.

Although I have reservations about the production standards, I want to make clear that the standard of scholarship in this set is very high. Readers will find Strachan's introductory notes informative and sharp, and Stones' similarly useful, if a shade enigmatic. I hope they will forgive



me for picking one or two bones with them here. Few who read their introductions will miss extensive textual notes, but there were occasions when I wanted to know the provenance of a particular text, and failed to find any indication of it. For instance, Jerome J. McGann prefers the fourth edition text of *Beppo* in his Clarendon edition because it incorporates a number of authorial alterations not present in earlier ones. It is not clear from Strachan's notes to the extract in volume 2 whether he has made the same decision. (It should be said that Stones very scrupulously gives his sources in his annotations.) As editors, Stones and Strachan are conservative. Where Bret Harte refers to 'Ch--l-tte Br-ntë' and the *Anti-Jacobin* mentions 'St. A-dr-w' (to take two random examples) there might be some argument for filling in the blanks. And where the copy-text has 'dis-satisfied' (as happens several times in volume 5), there is a case for eliminating the hyphen. But these are niceties, and have no bearing on the high quality of the editors' work. For ease of reference, line numbers might have been supplied more often; they are offered for 'The New Morality' in volume 1, but not elsewhere.

Such matters are the sort of minutiae that scholars debate interminably, much to the boredom of everyone else, and can be discounted by most readers. But I do have one important scholarly point to raise, and that is the matter of copy-text. On occasion, the editors refer to outdated editions: Stones, for instance, uses Buxton Forman's edition of Keats' *Letters* (long superseded by Rollins). There is no scholarly reason for this and I would assume that it was because Stones didn't have the more up-to-date edition to hand. More seriously, perhaps, Stones prefers as copy-text for the Lamb letter to Coleridge of May 1798 Lucas's 1935 edition of the *Letters* as opposed to Marris or indeed the original MS. Perhaps this decision was taken so as to avoid payment of permissions fees to Cornell University Press (and to Marris) for use of the much better copyright text. If so, it was a false economy. Ideally, Stones should have edited the letter from MS; the next best option was to use Marris as copy-text. Lucas should not have been considered. Why? Because the choice of copy-text is crucial to the reliability of any edition. These volumes will be used as primary source material by academics all over the world; that is their purpose. And on that basis the selection of copy-text is of the highest priority. In this instance, the reader would be best advised to turn elsewhere for purposes of quotation. (Oddly, Marris is a source in Stones' annotations; see, for instance, volume 3, p. 358.) The Lamb letter is not my only reservation in this regard. The 1847 edition of *Biographia Literaria* edited by Sara and Henry Nelson Coleridge is textually superior to either the Bate-Engell text (1983) or the flawed first edition of Coleridge's work (1817), and should have been the source for Stones' text in volume 3.

There are other, minor issues due less to editorial practice than to Pickering and Chatto. Production of these volumes is in general good, but typesetting is sometimes a little wayward. There are some uneven spacings between characters, for instance in the emboldened type in the notes to volume 2. Copy-editing standards are variable. The copy-editor seems to have been in two minds as to whether the default was single or double quotation-marks; sometimes both are used as the default on the same page. (See, for instance, volume 3, page 129.) The copy-editor is also confused as to whether the *Anti-Jacobin* (as it is called in volume 1) is properly termed *The Antijacobin* (volume 4). These are not the only examples of copy-editing failures; it is high time Pickering and Chatto provided a better service to the scholars who work so hard for them. Strachan and Stones deserved better than this.

Leaving these minor points aside, this is an excellent and much-needed edition which no institutional library should be without. Besides the first annotated texts of Patmore's *Rejected Addresses*, Deacon's *Warreniana*, and numerous prose and verse works not easily obtainable

elsewhere, it presents the most recent, and up-to-date scholarly treatment of *The Anti-Jacobin* – and that, I would have thought, makes for a well-conceived and indispensable selection. It is edited to a very high standard indeed.

For information, I give the following corrections (few enough for a project of this size): volume 1, p. xviii ('Shklovsky' for 'Shlovsky', repeated on p. xix), p. vii ('interpenetration' for 'inerpenetration'), p. 147 ('Reue' for 'Rue'), p. 290 ('bicameral' for 'bicamerel', repeated on p. 342), p. 294 ('Vindiciae' for 'Vindicae'), p. 318 ('cf.' for 'c.f'); volume 2, p. 119 ('intercourse' for 'intercousse' – an error in the copy-text), p. 226 ('sheep' for 'sheet'), p. 343 ('the' for 'your' in caption), p. 405 ('Vassall' for 'Vassal'; repeated in volume 5, p. 139), p. 407 ('Purley' for 'Purly'), p. 409 ('Callimachus' for 'Calimachus'); volume 3, p. 12 ('India' for 'India'; presumably a misreading of the scanner), p. 120 ('Lofft' for 'Loft'), p. 146 ('Garnett' for 'Garnet'), p. 320 ('gimcrack' for 'grimcrack'), p. 353 ('Procter' for 'Proctor'; which is, however, correctly spelled in volume 4, p. 78 – another copy-editing oversight?), p. 356 ('Lancelyn' for 'Lancellyn'), p. 358 (Lucas' 1935 edition of Lamb's *Letters* is a 3-volume production, not a 2-volume one), p. 363 ('sparrow' for 'sparro'); volume 4, p. xxx ('Pierce' for 'Piers' – whose name is correctly given by Deacon on p. 96, and by Strachan, indeed, on p. 114), p. 93 ('Hayden' for 'Haydon').

Duncan Wu

*A Response to John Beer from Kenneth R. Johnston*

CLB NS 105 (January 1999) carried a review by John Beer of Kenneth R. Johnston's *The Hidden Wordsworth: Poet, Lover, Rebel, Spy*. Professor Johnston has written to respond to some of the points made by him.

... to have an inquiry, whether into the construction of a legend, or the execution of a crime, is surely to require the telling of stories. And so the asking of questions and the relating of narratives need not, I think, be mutually exclusive forms of historical representation. (Simon Schama, *Dead Certainties (Unwarranted Speculations)*)

In his review of *The Hidden Wordsworth: Poet, Lover, Rebel, Spy*, John Beer assumes that my 'basic assumption' was Wordsworth's secretiveness. Rather, like any scholar, I started with the evidence and worked toward a conclusion. My title conveys that conclusion: I was surprised to notice so many discrepancies between the Received Standard Version of Wordsworth and the facts and likely inferences as I saw them.

For example, I did not set out to write about Wordsworth's sexual experience; rather, I was struck by the manuscript evidence of Wordsworth's extensive proposed additions in 1794 (never published by him) to *Descriptive Sketches* (1793). Beer says these lines sound to him 'more like commonplaces of eighteenth-century poetry of amorous sensibility'. They do to me too (as I mention), but Beer does not acknowledge the manuscript context in which I analyze them, nor the evidence of Wordsworth's later strenuous bowdlerization of even less suggestive passages from his published versions. Still less does he take account of my point that literary conventions can never be *wholly* conventions. Unless the writer is a mere copyist, innovations – or compulsive repetitions – by an emerging original voice (like Wordsworth's) must be regarded seriously and not explained away by tautological reference back to the conventions themselves.

Here, as also in his treatment of my discussion of the emotional relations between William and Dorothy Wordsworth, John Beer writes as if there were a clear demarcation between eighteenth-century styles and habits of Sensibility and more intimate, erotic kinds of behaviour. But the literature of the era, from Richardson to Rousseau to Goethe to Byron, shows everywhere that these emotions existed – as common sense would suggest – along a continuum, not in discrete categories of behaviour and thought. Beer does not acknowledge my clearly stated personal opinion that this brother and sister did not have sexual relations, but he reifies – as many commentators have done – this opinion into an assumption that the idea or temptation never crossed their minds. My point was to show the effort – and, yes, the moral strength – of their resisting the temptation, but primarily to illustrate the force it lent to the creative impulses behind the Lucy poems (among others).

Similarly, my ‘riproaring’ account of life at Cambridge is not intended as titillation, but an attempt to look beyond the ‘evidence’ Book III of *The Prelude* – a poem which Beer apparently accepts as a factually authoritative document – and check Wordsworth’s creation of this literary image of someone *like* himself with other contemporary reports. (That is, the unnamed protagonist of *The Prelude* is not factually identical with William Wordsworth.) The result of this comparison correlated well with my own hypotheses and suspicions, raised by the long sequence of Lake Como texts and the briefer but more intense evidence of the Goslar poems. This is a scholarly, if detective, procedure, not a deliberate setting-out in search of sensation.

So also with the ‘spy’ business. I appreciate John Beer’s speculations and responses here: indeed, I suggest and pursue many of them in the book. I don’t know what Wordsworth might’ve been doing in Germany for the British Secret Service; my own conclusion is virtually identical with Beer’s: ‘travellers in foreign countries often been approached by intelligence services in the hope that they might perform some needed function under the cover of their innocent pursuit.’ And, if my use of the term ‘spy’ in my subtitle ‘appears singularly inappropriate’ to Professor Beer, I am sorry, and can only suggest that he allow me, like Wordsworth, a bit of poetic license, in my subtitle’s easy allusion to John Le Carre’s novel, *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*.

For, the story of Wordsworth’s self-creation, which Stephen Gill excellently sets forth in *Wordsworth and the Victorians* (also reviewed by Beer), tends mightily to work retroactively, as Beer’s review – and his failure to connect it to Gill’s findings – suggests. Of course, I have had occasion to regret that I did not stick with my original working title, *Young Wordsworth: Creation of the Poet*, though by mentioning it in my prologue I hoped to connect the two titles together in readers’ mind – as, roughly, topic (‘young’) and method (‘hidden’). This strategy seems not to have worked with some British academic reviewers, with notable exceptions (Nick Roe and Andrew Noble), though literary journalists like Andrew Motion, Blake Morrison, and Lachlan Mackinnon were highly complimentary. Perhaps over-responding to the publisher’s blurbs, and connecting that response to certain cultural clichés about Americans, they have been provoked by the book’s appearance of sensationalism, without registering its careful research methodologies throughout. Though I am happy to disavow the front jacket blurb that Beer rightly attributes to my publisher, I am, on balance, also content to stand by my final title, if only because its provocation helps to smoke out the deep cultural resistance to seeing the young Wordsworth as in many respects a man like other men – who could thus gain legitimate title to be ‘a man speaking to men.’

I have no quarrel with John Beer’s references to the arguments of his excellent past and present works on the subject of Wordsworth, love, and the human heart. Indeed, I would doubt that

there is much disagreement between him, me, and Stephen Gill on the overall quality of Wordsworth's works' impact and influence. I agree that students who go to the poetry will be disappointed if they look for French mistresses, passionate sisters, and radical politics, and I also reject Beer's implication that in thirty years of teaching I have ever tried to 'stir up a bored sophomore class with titillating sexual theories' about Wordsworth. (Calming down sophomores' overly titillated reactions to Byron's and Coleridge's private lives is more usual.) But, nonetheless, the mistresses, sisters, and politics *are* there, even in the poetry, and though they are not the content or the message of the poems, they are important to a study of their author's creative development – along with many other 'hidden' elements not captured in my subtitle – and to better understanding of how Wordsworth came to be the profound student of the human heart that he is in Beer's fine peroration. That readers may appreciate Wordsworth's poetry because they, too, 'undergo experiences of suffering and loss, of social betrayal and thwarted political expectations' is precisely my point. Not that Wordsworth hid the evidence of his experience of all these things and is therefore to be held somehow accountable by the muckraking American biographer. But that, having had these experiences, he knew whereof he spoke, and by creative handling of them (ranging from suppression to elision to metaphoric transformation) he created the poetry we love, *and* the image of the Poet that Stephen Gill's Victorians venerated – and, it appears, that John Beer still wants to venerate without the very suggestive, if often tentative, evidence that Wordsworth was not always the 'moralizing observer' that Beer prefers, but a young man who knew these things by the very Romantic truth-test of having felt them on his pulses.

Kenneth R. Johnston

**John Beer replies:**

It's clear that I'm more willing to take Wordsworth's words at their face value than Professor Johnston, and that's probably the only comment that's needed: it's now up to other readers to choose between our versions if they wish to do so.

## Society Notes and News from Members

FROM THE HON. SECRETARY

### *Visit to Kensal Green Cemetery*

On 10 April a select group of members explored this splendid cemetery – a real *rus in urbe* with carpets of primroses, anemones, and bluebells among the innumerable monuments. With the help of a volunteer guide we found Tom Hood's grave (a handsome slab of pink granite but sadly devoid of the plaques which formerly ornamented it), and, with some difficulty (second poplar on the right), Leigh Hunt's memorial, inscribed 'One who loved his fellow men'. Frustratingly, George Dyer eluded us, but Sam Bull, our guide, has now kindly sent me the following information:

Dyer is listed in our Gazetteer of famous names buried in Kensal Green. He is listed thus: DYER, George (1755-1841). Historian whose great work was a history of Cambridge University and its colleges. He was described as a 'man of singular simplicity and kindness' and died totally blind. His widow died in her hundredth year and is deposited with him. He was a friend of Charles Lamb, who described him as a gentle and kindly eccentric. Grave no. 2930/13/PS. There is no trace of a monument, buried in a raised bank.

Dyer's grave is in the Dissenters (Nonconformist) end of the cemetery, and being one of the earliest interments the grave marker has long since disappeared. A few years ago the ground level in that area was raised, and any surviving gravestones were removed and located along the wall, but there is no Dyer marker. It would be possible to pinpoint the gravesite, via the Ground Plans held in the GCC office, but of course there would be nothing to see on the ground.

The Friends of Kensal Green Cemetery run regular tours of the cemetery which start at 2pm every Sunday throughout the year. Members may like to avail themselves of this opportunity to visit this remarkable site.

### *Obituary: Constance Clara Ledwith*

Connie died on 1 March 1999 aged 95 years. She had been a member since 1977. Older members will remember with gratitude her quiet friendliness and her interest in our activities. Our thoughts and sympathy go out to Frank and her family.

### *Helen Stutfield*

On 30 April four CLS members were part of a large congregation of family, friends, and colleagues at the Service of Thanksgiving for Helen's life, held at St Paul's, Covent Garden, the 'Actors' Church'. Those of us who only knew Helen through the CLS were moved by the many tributes to her career as actor, teacher, stage manager, and to her work with her local church in Primrose Hill and for the Actors' Church Union. The address was given by Moray Watson and the music included, appropriately, Vaughan Williams' setting of 'Fear no more the heat of the sun'. The service was a joyful celebration of a wonderful life.

### *The Mary Ward Centre*

The AGM on 8 May was the Society's last meeting at the Centre. Constraints on funding and pressure on space mean that the Centre can no longer accommodate us for our monthly meetings.

We are pleased that Mary Ward is proving so successful but sorry to lost this link after so many years – at least since 1970 (the earliest minute book I have to hand) – originally at Tavistock Place and latterly at Queen Square. We are grateful for all the trouble Olga Janssen has taken to fit us in and for the friendly welcome we always receive. We send our best wishes to Patrick Freestone, the Principal, and to all the staff.

*University Challenge: Brush up your Eng. Lit.!*

At the semi-final on 20 April, both the Open University and Durham University were defeated by the simple question: 'Which writer cared for his sister after she had murdered their mother?' One contestant hazarded 'William Blake' but others looked distressingly blank.

*Farewell!*

This is my last General Secretary's News and Notes. But I hope to contribute to future Bulletins as an ordinary member.

FROM THE EDITOR

*Stanley Jones*

The death of Stanley Jones, who died in March at the age of 83, is a profound loss for Hazlitt studies, as well as for this Society, of which he was a long-standing member. No one knew more about Hazlitt's life and works than Stanley. During the three-year period of my editing of Hazlitt's selected writings, I visited libraries in America, Canada and the United Kingdom, invariably to find that Stanley had been there before me.

As one of the Advisors to my edition, Stanley was always helpful. Despite severe arthritis, he replied quickly to all my requests for help, often providing me with information unknown to anyone else. Such generosity of spirit was typical of him, and all too rare among academics. I shall never forget my last visit with him, just before the launch party for the edition in January this year, when he showed me his collection of photographs of the places in France where Hazlitt had once stayed. He had been particularly fortunate in finding, often with the minimum of evidence, Hazlitt's lodgings around the French countryside, only years, or in one case months, before their demolition.

Stanley was never a Lecturer in any Department of English Literature. During his time at the University of Glasgow he lectured in French, specialising in the works of Proust. Those who knew him were aware that his expertise extended much further. He spoke with authority on Ruskin and Dylan Thomas (whom he had known as a schoolboy at Swansea Grammar School).

His biography of Hazlitt, published in 1989, is a milestone in literary studies. Stanley revealed more about Hazlitt's second wife than had previously been known, as well as a vast amount of new evidence relating to Sarah Walker and her family. Despite illness, he had managed in recent years to uncover much new information on his author, a good deal of which remains in the drawers of index cards on which he recorded his findings. Anyone working on the great journalist in future will have many reasons to be grateful to him.

*Eleanor M. Gates: Leigh Hunt: A Life in Letters: Together with Some Correspondence of William Hazlitt*

Stanley would have appreciated Eleanor M. Gates' new volume, which collects together 422 letters by or to Leigh Hunt, together with an appendix of 14 by Hazlitt. This much-awaited

volume is the fruit of more than ten years' research, and is sure to interest Elians. Lamb is prominent in the volume, as he is the subject of the first of the Hazlitt letters, which records the Lambs' visit to Winterslow in 1809: 'we had many long, & some pleasant walks, to Stonehenge, Salisbury, Wilton, &c.' Falls River Press is willing to offer members of the Charles Lamb Society (and therefore all subscribers to this *Bulletin*) a discount of 25% from the cover price of this important volume (\$44.95), bringing it down to \$33.70. Falls River is the sole distributor of this volume, and anyone interested in acquiring the volume should write to them at P.O. Box 524, Essex, Connecticut, 06426, USA, for further details.

*Patrick O'Leary: Regency Editor*

It was a pleasure to meet Mr O'Leary at the Society's AGM in London this May. He will be known to many readers for his exemplary volume, *Regency Editor: A Life of John Scott* (Aberdeen, 1983), which remains the standard work on Lamb's friend, the editor of the *London Magazine*. Readers in the United Kingdom may obtain a copy of the volume free of charge from its author, provided they send him £1 to cover postage. The address is: Patrick O'Leary, 4 Fairlawns, Brownlow Road, Bounds Green, London N11 2DH.

*Query: Stowe and Lamb*

E. Bruce Kirkham, editor of the letters of Harriet Beecher Stowe, writes to draw readers' attention to Stowe's reference to Lamb's 'wicked toast about children'. Can anyone identify the reference? If so, please contact E. Bruce Kirkham, Professor of English, Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana 47306, USA. He can be e-mailed at [ebkirkham@bsuvc.bsu.edu](mailto:ebkirkham@bsuvc.bsu.edu).

*Back Numbers of the Bulletin*

The editor's set of back numbers is incomplete, because three have gone out of print. The missing numbers are (New Series) 74 (April 1991), 76 (October 1991), and 91 (July 1995). If any members have copies that they would like to donate to the Society, for preservation with the editor's set, I would be grateful if they could send them to me at Department of English Literature, University of Glasgow, Glasgow G12 8QQ, Scotland.

*Lamb on the Syllabus*

He may have long disappeared from the school curriculum, but Lamb lingers on at University level as an essential item on the Romanticism course. The following question turned up on the English Literature examination paper this May at the University of Glasgow: "Poor Charles Lamb! What a tender and joyous heart had he! What playfulness, what purity of style and thought!" (Landor). Either discuss this assessment of Lamb's life and work, or discuss the playfulness of any Romantic prose writer'.

*Decommissioning of the Editor*

In fine Elian tradition, the present editor will be superannuated with the next *Bulletin*, to be succeeded by a far worthier incumbent, Professor Richard S. Tomlinson of Richland Community College, Decatur, Illinois. All editorial correspondence should henceforth be directed to him at: 669 South Monroe Street, Decatur, IL 62522-3225, USA. He can be reached by e-mail at: [kublakhan@poboxes.com](mailto:kublakhan@poboxes.com). His fax number is 001 217 475 0323. All communications concerning

subscriptions to the *Bulletin* and membership of the Charles Lamb Society should be directed to the Membership Secretary, Cecilia Powell, BM – ELIA, London WC1N 3XX, UK.

SOCIETY NOTES AND NEWS FROM MEMBERS

*Bloomfield and Barnes back in print*

Elians will be pleased to learn about Trent Editions, an enterprising publishing venture from the Department of English and Media Studies at Nottingham Trent University, which aims to bring unjustly neglected texts back into print. Among the early titles two are of especially likely interest. John Goodridge and John Lucas have assembled a generous *Selected Poems of Robert Bloomfield*, the 'peasant poet', and author, most famously, of *The Farmer's Boy* (1800). Lamb 'had the felicity' of hearing George Dyer read Bloomfield's book aloud in October 1800 (Marrs i.242); he wasn't (it must be admitted) exceedingly impressed, though he conceded his 'originality'. To modern eyes, Bloomfield is (as John Lucas argues in his wide-ranging and scholarly introduction) a more remarkable figure, and this welcome new selection includes, besides his poems (*The Farmer's Boy* complete), excerpts from the prose, and some intricate little engravings taken from early editions. The other text is a useful selection of poems by William Barnes, Hardy's great influence; it contains verses both in standard English and in dialect. The editor, Valerie Shepherd (Reader in Linguistics at Nottingham Trent), has arranged the book thematically, and provides a detailed critical commentary and a full glossary. Both titles are handsome paperbacks of 150 or so pages, priced at a very reasonable £7.99. Further details from John Goodridge at the Department of English and Media Studies, Nottingham Trent University, Clifton Lane, Nottingham NG11 8NS.

Seamus Perry

FROM D. E. WICKHAM

*Dead! Dead!! Dead!!!*

I had a lovely time one Saturday in July 1997, when our Elian acquaintance Jill Bickerton, a descendant of Charles Lamb's friend Thomas Massa Alsager, invited me to a picnic. So there we were, several of us, drinking drinkables and eating nibblebles from the back of her silver hatchback, in the middle of Kensal Green Cemetery in north-west London. We drank through the rosé wine, then through the white, and were well into the blood-red before we had finished.

The cemetery can be visited on most days of the year but this was a special annual Open Day and, yes, a catacomb was indeed opened. There was a parade of automotive hearses going past and, nearby, a little group of Goths, young people costumed as vampires, Victorian undertakers, the Addams family, etc., dressed to kill and dying to be photographed. One of our number was longing to photograph them, so I encouraged her to go and do just that. They received her into their midst with quiet rapture, there was a good deal of fluffing about and posing and, in the end, she was happy, they were happy, and I was reminded of Tom Lehrer's heart-warming tale of the young necrophiliac who achieved his boyhood ambition by becoming the local coroner. But I digress.

The Friends of Kensal Green Cemetery have recently issued a really excellent guide to the better-known dead and the more important tombs there. It is available at the cemetery for £6 or, presumably and plus postage, from The Secretary of the Friends of Kensal Green Cemetery, c/o General Cemetery Company, Harrow Road, London W10 4RA.

Reading the guide against Claude Prance's *Companion*, I was surprised by the number of Elian references and thought that they deserved a brief record as follows, with one or two additions.



The cemetery is divided into fairly large and well-filled rectangles, which are numbered on the plan but not generally marked on the ground. Thus you really need the book to find things and so I do not plagiarise all the location details given. The numbers are those of the rectangles.

Ainsworth, William Harrison	154
Alsager, Thomas Massa	102
Ayrton, William	131
Barnes, Thomas	29
Braham, John	59 (fragmentary headstone)
Colburn, Henry	47
Coulson, Walter	88
Cruikshank, George	88 (now a cenotaph: remains in St Paul's Cathedral)
Cunningham, Allan	169
Darley, George	36
Darling, George	75
Dilke, Charles Wentworth	54 and 55
Dyer, George	13 (no trace of a monument)
Forster, John	113
Grattan, Thomas Colley	87
Harley, John Pritt	26
Hogg, Thomas Jefferson	88
Hood, Thomas	74
Hume, Joseph	115
Hunt, James Henry Leigh	121
Kemble, Charles Philip	55
Kemble, Frances Anne (Fanny)	55
Leslie, Charles Robert	55
Liston, John	99
Maclise, Daniel	33
Macready, William Charles	Catacomb B, still in use
Mathews, Charles James	27
Mathews, Elizabeth	27
Mulready, William	56
Stephens, Catherine	Catacomb B, still in use
Tuer, Andrew White	123
Vestris, Lucia Elizabeth	27 (headstone now destroyed)
Weekes, Henry	155

Sir Thomas Noon Talfourd is buried West Norwood Cemetery, Square 34. Fanny Kelly is buried in Brompton Cemetery.

## 50 Years Ago: from *CLS Bulletin* no. 89 (May 1949)

*From the Editor's Chair*

... It will be noticed that the Bibliography contains several references to Katharine Anthony's book *The Lambs: A Study of Pre-Victorian England*, and in the main these are adverse criticisms of her psycho-analytical diagnosis of Charles and Mary, resulting in 'paranoid traits intermixed with basically manic-depressive character'. Such traits are best left in the hands of medical experts. [Though the phrase 'Freudian Flapdoodle' is printed a few lines earlier!]

H. M. Tomlinson, writing in another connection in *John O'London's Weekly* (1 April), makes the following comment: 'It is true, as an American observer pointed out recently, that our most notable literary critics show not so much a love of literature as a long-suffering patience with it. There is an air about it, with its analysis and comparison, of a coroner's inquest. The subject lies on a mortuary slab, and is anatomized. It is not a living subject, but one for dissection, in a search for the internal disorder that was the origin of its courage and joy. Treated thus, even Charles Lamb looks no happier than a surgeon's exhibit in a bottle; and we know what psycho-analysis can make of Hamlet.'

## 50 Years Ago: from *CLS Bulletin* no. 90 (July 1949)

*Extract from the Will of E. V. Lucas*, who died 26 June 1938: 'Whereas I have for some years paid for the upkeep of Charles Lamb's grave at Edmonton and on my death I wish the opportunity to be given to two of my friends to take over this matter I DIRECT that such friends be asked in this order, namely,

Hermann Finck, 212 Hornsey Road,  
Charles Walter Berry, 3 St. James[']s Street.

In the event of their predeceasing me or being unwilling to undertake such upkeep I DIRECT that my Executor make the necessary arrangements to keep the said grave in order in perpetuity at a cost of not more than thirty shillings a year and to pay such amount and any death duties thereon out of my estate with liberty if any trustees deem it desirable to pay a capital sum to the Churchyard authorities to give effect to this arrangement.'

*Extract from the Will of Charles Walter Berry*, who died 1941: 'WHEREAS in accordance with the terms of the will of my old friend E. V. Lucas I have been privileged to pay for the upkeep of the grave and monument of Charles Lamb in Edmonton Cemetery and as I desire to provide for such grave in perpetuity I give to the Council of the Almoners of Christ's Hospital for the general purposes of the foundation the sum of £200 free of all death duties upon trust to invest the same in any investments upon trust to apply the annual income thereof for the general purposes of the said Hospital so long as the said Hospital shall provide for keeping in due order and proper repair of the grave and monument of the said Charles Lamb as aforesaid provided that if the said Hospital shall for the twelve months [sic.] fail to effect or carry out the requisite repairs or shall otherwise fail to comply with the foregoing conditions then the said legacy or the investments for the time being representing the same shall be paid or transferred to the trustees of the Royal Berkshire Hospital Reading absolutely.'

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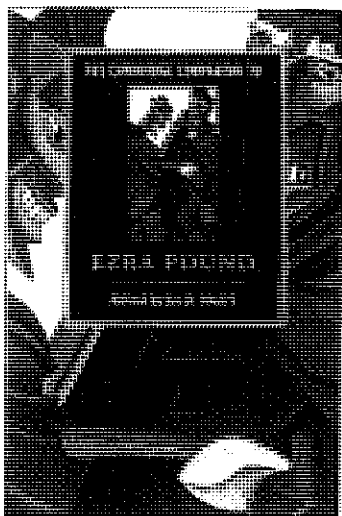
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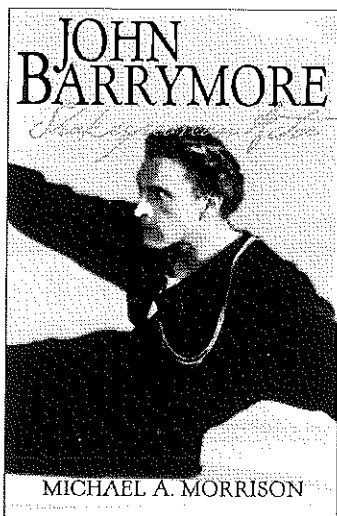
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