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Contents

Editorial

TWO URGENT NOTES concerning the lecture programme: firstly, I regret that I will not be lecturing on the theme of 'Annotating Lamb' on 4 October 1997 as advertised; instead, the Hon. Secretary will be speaking about Claire Clairmont. Secondly, the meeting of 1 November will feature a talk by Richard Causebrook of the New River Action Group. Further details are provided by the Hon. Secretary on p. 141, below.

The present issue of the *Bulletin* features an important new article by Graeme Stones on Coleridge's Higginbottom sonnets, and a note from the President of the Society, Professor J. Beer of Peterhouse, Cambridge.

As this number goes to press I am pleased to record a highly successful Kilve Court Weekend, organized by Reggie and Shirley Watters. The theme this year was women writers of the period, and highlights included Jane Stabler on Anna Laetitia Barbauld, Shirley Watters on Sara Coleridge, Seamus Perry on STC 'and the women', Kathleen Jones on the women in the Wordsworth and Coleridge circles, and Mary Wedd on Mary Lamb. Some of these lectures will appear in the excellent *Coleridge Bulletin*, though I'm pleased to say that Mary Wedd's will be published in these pages in the very near future. A fuller report on events at Kilve will appear in the next *Bulletin.*

The Ragged-Trousered Philanthropist: Coleridge and Self-Exposure in the Higginbottom Sonnets

By GRAEME STONES

'THERE SEEMS TO BE A DANGER', writes Beth Ropper of sonnet scholarship, and that of the Romantic sonnet in particular, 'of lapsing into criticism by biography'.[1] When the sonnet is confessional self-portraiture, this is not something one need fear too much. When such a poem is also parodic—an equivocal, dubious, ironic piece of autobiography—it is a danger worth flirting with. Writing of prose portraits, Hazlitt called the self 'this fine illusion of the brain and forgery of language'.[2] Fiction is assumed as a given. What matters in art, he wrote elsewhere, is giving 'truth of character from the truth of feeling'.[3] Biography adds little to fine illusions, but can be useful when exploring truth of feeling

There cannot be two writers further apart, in their handling of portraiture, than Hazlitt and Coleridge. Given Coleridge's idealist convictions about the self, and the galleries of self-representation available in his work, one might expect a solid picture to build up in a reader's mind, particularly with Coleridge's ever-present solicitations to 'the reader' for understanding. But Coleridge's portraits are *sfumato* self-imagings, fogs where created selves retreat and multiply.

It is this simultaneous flaunting and evasion which makes Coleridge so gifted in the use of parody, an art he both despised and could not resist, in much the same way that he could not abide plagiarism and could scarcely write without plagiarizing. Parodic images are palimpsistic in a way Coleridge is drawn to, offering one version overlaid with another—which invites another. The art is discontented with conclusion. To use parody is to appropriate one representation and enclose it within a new aesthetic unity, but also to prove how ephemeral are all unities including its own. If desynonomy is a key to Coleridge's thought,[4] then parody might be seen as a lively form of it—a replication which unravels, an art which sunders while reaching for completion.

This is all rather convoluted, and perhaps a better way to explore is to actually watch Coleridge at work with this strange, captivating, layered technique, but to see it first in miniature, in the opening chapter of *Biographia Literaria*, his 'Biographical Sketches of My Life and Opinions', of 1817.

'The following anecdote will not be wholly out of place here', he writes, meaning that this coming digression will help in the book's wider purpose of assisting the reader to understand the much-misunderstood Coleridge, and his writings—for in this context the two are inseparable. The anecdote bears on the difficulties of reading the 'Ancient Mariner', and fits the tenor, all through *Biographia,* of Coleridge's poetry as both flawed and unfairly criticized, and, by implication, his readers as at once justifiably confused, and obtuse.

Coleridge hears, through a friend, of someone who wishes to meet him, an amateur poet admiring of Coleridge's genius but embarrassed by having once written a satirical verse about his poem. Coleridge generously waves this aside, and even invites the *soi-disant* versifier to read

[1] *The English Romantic Sonnet, with particular reference to Wordsworth and Keats* (D.Phil. thesis, Oxford 1993) (hereafter Ropper), p. 10.
[2] 'Letter to William Gifford', *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt* ed. P. P.Howe (21 vols., London, 1930-34) (hereafter Howe), ix. 52.
[3] 'On *Gusto*', Howe iv. 77.
[4] As held, for example, by Paul Hamilton in *Coleridge's Poetics* (Oxford 1983).

out his epigram. Now, 'to my no less surprise than amusement', says Coleridge, 'it proved to be one, which I had myself some time before written and inserted in the Morning Post':

> To the author of the Ancient Mariner.
> Your poem must eternal be,
> Dear Sir! it cannot fail,
> For 'tis incomprehensible
> And without head or tail.[5]

So we have a charming tale in which the presumptuous scribbler turns out to be also a plagiarist, and Coleridge is, incidentally, as it were, revealed as openly amused at the failings of his own poetry. Better still, he even appears to have previously and publicly confessed to these failings, by burlesquing his own obscurity—failings he has then in some poorly-defined sense transcended.

The anecdote gains interest without losing charm if readers discover what Coleridge does not make available to them: that although Coleridge did indeed publish this epigram in the *Morning Post*, it was not to mock his own poetry, but to poke fun at the Poet Laureate, Henry James Pye, for a poem called *Carmen Seculare*, a title Coleridge translates in the *Morning Post* as meaning 'A Poem *an age long*'. The icing of this fairy-cake arrives with the information that, on top of everything else, Coleridge pinched the substance of the epigram from Lessing, an early hint of the wholesale borrowings from Germany which are to follow in later chapters of the book.[6]

The anecdote is printed at the end of the first chapter, immediately after Coleridge has reprinted, in full, three sonnets he published twenty years earlier, offered here because they too reveal a Coleridge confessing to his own poetic failings. This is how Coleridge introduces them:

> The reader will excuse me for noticing, that I myself was the first to expose *risu honesto* the three sins of poetry, one or the other of which is the most likely to beset a young writer. So long ago as the publication of the second number of the monthly magazine, under the name of NEHEMIAH HIGGINBOTTOM I contributed three sonnets, the first of which had for its object to excite a good-natured laugh at the spirit of *doleful egotism*, and at the recurrence of favorite phrases, with the double defect of being at once trite, and licentious. The second, on low, creeping language and thoughts, under the pretence of *simplicity*. And the third, the phrases of which were borrowed entirely from my own poems, on the indiscriminate use of elaborate and swelling language and imagery.[7]

Anyone who comes to the sonnets from Hazlitt, accustomed to Hazlitt's 'damn the consequences, here's what I think and you can make up your own mind' may be wary of these Coleridgean overtures to 'the reader'. The Higginbottom Sonnets provide an early and absorbing portrait of Coleridge, and the longer one considers them, the less staightforward they seem, and the less 'honest' Coleridge's laughter sounds, using 'honesty' in the way Hazlitt himself would use it in these circumstances to gauge an art's fidelity to feeling.

Here in *Biographia*, Coleridge reprints these poems not, he says, for their 'poetic merits', but for 'biographical purposes'.[8] However, biographical information is exactly what has been

[5] *Biographia Literaria* ed. James Engell and Walter Jackson Bate (2 vols., Princeton, NJ, 1983) (hereafter *Biographia*), Coleridge's note, i. 28.
[6] Ibid., i. 28.
[7] Ibid., i. 26-7.
[8] Ibid., i. 28.

excluded in this reprinting, and, with such overtly confessional writing, literary considerations first need support from context. Coleridge represents the Higginbottom Sonnets as a kind of *jeu d'esprit*, a young poet's chuckle at the follies of young poets, especially his own. Three sonnets, reflecting three sins: melancholia, triviality, and bombast. This is not quite how they were read when first published in the *Monthly Magazine* of November 1797, where they appeared under the rubric 'Sonnets Attempted in the Manner of Contemporary Writers'. 'The reader' will be better informed by returning to Coleridge's account in a letter to his publisher, Joseph Cottle, at the time:

> I sent three mock Sonnets in ridicule of my own, & Charles Lloyd's, & Lamb's, &c &c—in ridicule of that affectation of unaffectedness, of jumping & misplaced accent on common-place epithets, flat lines forced into poetry by Italics (signifying how well and *mouthis*[*h*]*ly* the Author would read them) puny pathos &c &c—[9]

Again, the tone is offhand, and lighthearted, skipping hurriedly over the names dropped between first comma and hyphen; but Coleridge's friends were neither to be fooled, nor fobbed off with '&c &c'. Lamb and Lloyd—and also Robert Southey—discovered themselves, in the most unfavourable light, in these sonnets, and found Coleridge's laughter less than kind. Lloyd, an unstable and unhappy young man whose melancholia had not been improved by living with Coleridge for much of the preceding two years, is widely regarded as the target of the first sonnet. Lamb is the most likely candidate for parody of simplicity, in the second, though for complicated reasons Southey was convinced he was the victim. Coleridge's claim to be parodying himself in the last is usually accepted, although, on close examination, a self-portrait once again turns out to be duplicitous.

The results of publication were unfortunate. Southey (not known for his sense of humour) was incensed, and consequently upset Lamb's poise by recruiting him in support. For Lloyd the publication of these parodies seems to have amounted to a conclusive betrayal in an already faltering friendship. A delicate skein of affections was severed in several places, and afterwards Coleridge could only partially repair things. When Hazlitt made fools of his friends in public, they had at least one consolation. They knew exactly what he thought and why.[10] They also knew that Hazlitt would never confuse or conflate their weaknesses with his own, which turns out to be one complication of the Higginbottom Sonnets.

Was this affair then just a lapse of taste and judgement on Coleridge's part, a lesson that indiscretion is also one of the follies of youth, or did Coleridge print these sonnets for less straightforward reasons than he gave either at the time or in *Biographia*? The sonnets have received little close attention, but two persuasive commentators take the second view: Lucy Newlyn, from an article she published in these pages in 1986; and David Erdman, who came up with a startling theory about the final sonnet in 1958.

The story is caught up with Coleridge's early enthusiasm for the sonnet—which in the closing years of the eighteenth century was in the middle of an interesting revival, after a period of Augustan neglect, and was to become a favourite form of composition in the Romantic period. It has sometimes been noticed that this is rather peculiar. We think of the sonnet as imposing very much the kind of classical formalism, and conventional content, that Romantic poets broke away

[9] Letter to Cottle, c. 20 November 1797, *The Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* ed. Earl Leslie Griggs (6 vols., Oxford 1956-71) (hereafter Griggs), i. 357.

[10] See, for example, his letter to Leigh Hunt, 21 April 1822, *The Letters of William Hazlitt* ed. Herschel Moreland Sikes, assisted by Willard Hallam Bonner and Gerald Lahey (New York 1978), pp. 204-6.

from. But it remains a fact. Wordsworth, we know (but often forget), wrote more than 500 of them—more, in other words, than Sidney, Spenser, Shakespeare, Donne and Milton put together. 'I have filled up many a moment in writing Sonnets, which . . . might easily have been better employed',[11] he wrote in 1822—and one cannot help agreeing with him.

Wordsworth is a rather extreme example of what has been called the 'formal pressure'[12] of the sonnet, its prosodic incitement to pick up a single idea, consider this from several complicating angles, and push them through towards the volta at the end, the closing couplet which will in some way bind together an idea's potentialities with a nice neat knot. This unifying impetus has obvious appeals for Coleridge. At the same time, it is a smidgen too tidy, and when Coleridge participates in the revival, he sides with those who began to subvert the sonnet's formalism (I am leaning now on work on the Romantic sonnet by Beth Ropper, and also Stuart Curran[13]). In so doing, he and other Romantic and pre-Romantic poets were exploring alternative aspects of the sonnet, equally predicated by the form, but in tension with it.

These possibilities arise partly from the nature of the sonnet as psychological paradigm: its replication of the movement of thought, from an initial concept, and qualifications of that, towards resolution, making it 'an archetype of the common act of problem-solving, or deciding, or even rationalizing'.[14] This potentiality of the form obviously takes it in the direction of the individual, meditative, or questioning mind, and away from the conventions and impersonality of tradition. Allied to this is the sonnet's facility for exploring and expressing an individual feeling, making it a suitable and soon a favourite vehicle of emotion, in the literature of sensibility. It is becoming, to summarize, a useful form of self-revelation.

So it is that Coleridge values the sonnet in his early poetic practice. He is besotted, almost, with William Lisle Bowles, whom he calls 'the bard of my idolatry',[15] and whose sonnets are tender little envelopes of sensibility. He is also enthusiastic about the form as the only suitable way to poeticize the privacies of self—the sonnet as confessional form, in other words. He and Lamb and Lloyd and Southey exchange sonnets by hand and letter, and debate the proper use and place of them. When he publishes his first collection, *Poems on Various Subjects, by S. T. Coleridge*, in 1796, he includes a long plea on the sonnet's suitability for Romantic introspection:

> egotism is to be condemned then only when it offends against time and place, as in an History or an Epic Poem. To censure it in a Monody or Sonnet is almost as absurd as to dislike a circle for being round.

Against any lingering Augustan distaste for bringing the personal into the public domain, Coleridge asserts a characteristically synthesising argument. The Public is but a unity of parts, he argues, just as an individual self is composed of parts. Instead of the impersonal general appeal of the Miltonic sonnet, he imagines a sympathy among individuals dotted among his audience:

[11] Letter to Walter Savage Landor, 20 April 1822, *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Later Years 1821-53* ed. Ernest de Selincourt, rev. Alan G. Hill (4 vols., Oxford, 1978-88), i. 126.
[12] Ropper 9.
[13] Stuart Curran, *Poetic Form and British Romanticism* (New York, 1986), esp. Chap. 3.
[14] Paul Fussell, *Poetic Meter and Poetic Form* (1965, repr. New York 1979), pp. 124-5, quoted Ropper 16.
[15] Griggs i. 259.

> We are for ever attributing a personal unity to imaginary aggregates. What is the PUBLIC but a term for a number of scattered individuals of whom as many will be interested in these sorrows as have experienced the same or similar?[16]

Coleridge imagines a cohesion of feeling generated by the sonnet which will melt together the disparate elements of his reading Public.

In 1797 he reissued these poems, with the addition of sonnets and verse by Lloyd and Lamb. The tone of introduction, however, is rather different. 'The Sonnet has ever been a favourite species of composition with me; but I am conscious that I have not succeeded in it',[17] he writes. Soon afterwards, he prints three parodies of the very form he has been arguing for. Something substantial has changed, and, after this long preamble, it is time, or past time, to look at the Higginbottom Sonnets in detail.

In *Biographia* Coleridge described Sonnet number one as aimed at 'doleful egotism':

> SONNET I
> PENSIVE at eve, on the *hard* world I mused,
> And *my poor* heart was sad; so at the MOON
> I gazed, and sighed, and sighed; for ah how soon
> Eve saddens into night! mine eyes perused
> With tearful vacancy the *dampy* grass
> That wept and glitter'd in the *paly* ray:
> And I *did pause me*, on my lonely way
> And *mused me*, on the *wretched ones* that pass
> O'er the bleak heath of sorrow. But alas!
> Most of *myself* I thought! when it befel,
> That the *soothe* spirit of the *breezy* wood
> Breath'd in mine ear: 'All this is very well,
> But much of ONE thing, is for NO thing good.'
> OH *my poor heart's* INEXPLICABLE SWELL![18]

In the letter to Cottle, Coleridge suggests himself as the main target of the parodies, and there are certainly a number of echoes of his own poetry within this first endearing spoof on melancholy. Coleridge's 'poor heart' has its sadnesses in his sonnets, and the evening's sympathetic dimming of the light echoes his 'Songs of the Pixies'. The concordance to Coleridge's poetry offers a few further, feebler, parallels.

However the real victim is unquestionably Lloyd, whose first poem in Coleridge's 1797 *Poems* was called, without embarrassment, 'The Melancholy Man', and alone is almost evidence enough of Lloyd's affection for feminine rhyme endings, tearful vacancies, and inexplicable swellings of the heart. 'What means this tumult of thy soul', Lloyd begins, addressing what seems to be his own reflection in some fern-fringed, moss-cushioned forest pool far from all society—

> WHAT means this tumult of thy soul,
> Those feelings words could ne'er define;
> Those languid eyes that vacant roll,

[16] *Poems on Various Subjects, by S. T. Coleridge* (London, 1796), pp. v-vii.
[17] *Poems, by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, second edition. To which are now added Poems by Charles Lamb, and Charles Lloyd* (Bristol, 1797) (hereafter *Poems 1797*), p. 74.
[18] *Biographia* i. 27.

Those cherish'd thoughts that inly pine?
Why dost thou wildly love to stray
Where dimly gleams the doubtful day,
And all-unconscious muse with pensive pace?[19]

Lloyd's fifth sonnet in the volume includes prayers for 'the hard world where I once did dwell',[20] picked up immediately by Coleridge's parody with 'on the hard world I mused'. Elsewhere in this edition, Lloyd's poems are littered with the phrases, constructions and emotions of Higginbottom: languid eyes, piteous sighs, a heaving breast, a musing, pensive sensibility. 'Sighing I turn'd me from the haunts of men',[21] he writes, with the inversion so neatly parodied by Coleridge's 'I did pause me, on my lonely way', and consoling himself in solitude with 'me the wildering hour / Sooth'd',[22] very much as Higginbottom is soothed by the 'breezy wood'. So too with adjectives; although both Lloyd and Coleridge take the word 'paly' into their poetry, from Bowles, Lloyd is happiest in this etiolated atmosphere, filling his lines with damps, and 'sweepy mists', and 'sleety wind[s]'and even the occasional 'arrowy flake' of snow.[23]

Reading Coleridge's conversation poems from this same period, readers are offered a meditative, domesticated poet, recovering in rural harmony from his earlier political activism. In fact, Coleridge had had a turbulent year. He was frequently ill, more frequently depressed, harassed by responsibilities both intellectual and familial, and uncertain of his future. He invited Charles Lloyd to stay with him in September 1795, thinking Lloyd, as a disciple, would provide both an income from tutorials and support for his poetic ambitions.

This was a disastrous idea for both parties. Lloyd was highly strung, and susceptible to his surroundings. The sympathy of character which made him so willing and admiring a pupil also made him vulnerable, prone to take up and then exaggerate whatever was in the air around him. The result was a series of mental breakdowns which were relieved only by removing himself from Coleridge's company.

Lloyd was later accused of parodying Coleridge in a novel which recounts many of the experiences of these years. Although this accusation collapses under impartial readings of the novel, there is a sense in which Lloyd is a living parody, of weaknesses the two men shared, and made visible in their poetry. The result is Coleridge rereading his own poems in the light of this man's company and writings. In July 1797 Coleridge wrote to Southey about the 'Song of the Pixies' and the 'Monody on the Death of Chatterton', poems written in moods he shared with Lloyd, and whose diction and content now made Coleridge squirm. Describing his poetic failings in these, Coleridge is effectively drawing a composite portrait of himself and Lloyd:

> A young man by strong feelings is impelled to write on a particular subject—and this is all his feelings do for him. They set him upon the business & then they leave him.—He has such a high idea, of what Poetry ought to be, that he cannot conceive that such things as his natural emotions may be allowed to find a place in it—his learning therefore, his fancy, or rather conceit, and all his powers of buckram are put on the stretch—. It appears to me, that

[19] *Poems 1797* 153.
[20] Ibid., p. 174.
[21] Ibid., p. 174.
[22] Ibid., p. 175.
[23] Ibid., pp. 171, 185.

> strong feeling is not *so* requisite to an Author's being profoundly pathetic, as taste & good sense.—[24]

In the first of the Higginbottom Sonnets, Coleridge overlays this self-image with a parody in which Lloyd's figure moves into the foreground, and almost conceals his own.

The second sonnet, Coleridge averred, pokes fun at 'low creeping language and thoughts, under the pretence of simplicity':

> SONNET II
> OH I do love thee, meek SIMPLICITY!
> For of thy lays the lulling simpleness
> Goes to my heart, and soothes each small distress,
> Distress tho'small, yet haply great to me,
> 'Tis true on Lady Fortune's gentlest pad
> I amble on; and yet I know not why
> *So* sad I am! but should a friend and I
> Frown, pout and part, then I am *very* sad,
> And then with sonnets and with sympathy
> My dreamy bosom's mystic woes I pall;
> Now of my false friend plaining plaintively,
> Now raving at mankind in general;
> But whether sad or fierce, 'tis simple all,
> All very simple, meek SIMPLICITY![25]

As Lucy Newlyn points out, 'The second sonnet . . . is less allusive than the first, and models itself on a certain kind of sensibility rather than borrowing its lines and images directly from other poems'.[26] She, like most commentators, is certain that Lamb is the victim, for slipping occasionally into what she calls 'a sort of bogus humility'. David Erdman disagrees: 'To anyone familiar with the poetry of Lloyd the portrait is easily recognizable even though there are few foci of direct parody'.[27] Erdman is energetic, but, given the flimsy textual evidence, makes little progress against the current. I would admit Lloyd into the poem only at one point, where the plaintive mood is disrupted by those histrionics of 'Now raving at mankind in general'. This is not what one imagines issuing from Lamb, even in caricature. But this phrase does not fit the tone of the poem as a whole.

Newlyn's jibe at 'bogus humility' points usefully to Lamb, but could be put to kinder use. Lamb's own amusement at himself often amounts to parody, to an intentionally bogus humility which is self-mocking. One can easily imagine Lamb in a letter, or as Elia, murmuring, ''Tis true on Lady Fortune's gentlest pad / I amble on', and this wry self-reflexivity is visible all the way through the poem, with the exception of those ravings near the end. Lloyd is certainly simple enough at times, and so too is Southey in these years, but both men lack that ability to laugh at themselves which seems drily at work under the surface of this poem, as though Lamb had written it intentionally to parody himself. Not only is there a change of tone, but also of diction.

[24] Griggs i. 333.
[25] *Biographia* i. 27.
[26] 'Parodic Allusion: Coleridge and the "Nehemiah Higginbottom" Sonnets, 1797', *CLB* NS 56 (1986) 255-9 (hereafter Newlyn), p. 257.
[27] 'Coleridge as Nehemiah Higginbottom', *Modern Language Notes* 73 (1958) 569-80 (hereafter Erdman), p. 576.

Lloyd's adjectival silliness has disappeared, and in its place is a modesty of language Lloyd may have admired in Lamb, but rarely managed himself.

Coleridge was unequivocal in *Biographia* about the final sonnet, 'the phrases of which were borrowed entirely from my own poems', and which, he maintains, expose 'the indiscriminate use of elaborate and swelling language and imagery'.[28] To frame these, he plays with the nursery rhyme of 'This is the House that Jack Built'. Coleridge's third sonnet imagines, or claims to imagine, the ramshackle house of his early poetry:

> SONNET III
> AND this reft house is that, the which he built,
> Lamented Jack! and here his malt he pil'd,
> Cautious in vain! these rats, that squeak so wild,
> Squeak not unconscious of their father's guilt.
> Did he not see her gleaming thro' the glade!
> Belike 'twas she, the maiden all forlorn.
> What tho' she milk no cow with crumpled horn,
> Yet *aye* she haunts the dale where *erst* she stray'd:
> And *aye*, beside her stalks her amorous knight!
> Still on his thighs their wonted brogues are worn,
> And thro' those brogues, still tatter'd and betorn,
> His hindward charms gleam an unearthly white.
> Ah! thus thro' broken clouds at night's high Noon
> Peeps in fair fragments forth the full-orb'd harvest-moon![29]

The first two sonnets were signposted in their opening lines. Number one points with 'this hard world' to Lloyd's stricken-deer pose. Number two, with 'I do love thee, meek Simplicity', to Lamb's self-deprecation. It seems fair then to scan number three's opening for clues. 'And this reft house is that the which he built' yields one immediately, suspiciously direct, which appears to confirm that Coleridge is indeed parodying himself. The phrase 'reft house' comes from Coleridge's 'Lines Written at Shurton Bars', a poem to his wife which certainly does have some swelling moments.

> And hark, my Love! The sea-breeze moans
> Thro' yon reft house! O'er rolling stones
> In bold ambitious sweep
> The onward-surging tides supply
> The silence of the cloudless sky
> With mimic thunders deep.[30]

There is no shortage of allusions to his own poetry as the sonnet develops. Rats appear surprisingly often in Coleridge's poems; so too do 'gleamings',' glade[s]', 'tatter'd' clothes, and liberal sprinklings of 'aye' and 'erst'. The Miltonic double-negative, so beloved by the later Words-

[28] *Biographia* i. 27.
[29] Ibid., i. 27-8.
[30] Published in *Poems* (1796), pp. 113-14, in stanzaic form; see also *The Complete Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* ed. E. H. Coleridge (2 vols., Oxford, 1912), i. 98.

worth, finds its way into an early sonnet of Coleridge's, in the phrase 'not unconscious',[31] parrotted by Higginbottom.

This third sonnet is also Coleridgean in evasiveness of imagery. Rats, who in the nursery version do nothing more complicated than eat Jack's malt, are here grown so sophisticated that David Erdman can read them as 'mimic and symbolic archetypes' of Coleridge's children,[32] and if this seems far to go for an explanation, it is not at all clear just what else they might be.

After the rats, with much the kind of alarming transitional leap one often makes in Coleridge's poems of this period, the reader is abruptly turned out of Jack's reft house, and transported to a forest glade to witness, bemusedly, an unlikely and most unladylike maiden 'all forlorn'. Higginbottom himself admits she has no business there at all, since she belongs back inside, milking a cow with a crumpled horn. An 'amorous knight' materializes out of thin air, clad only in a pair of roguishly tattered trousers. Through these garments Higginbottom (*omen in nominen*) reports, with dubious fastidousness, 'His hindward charms' as all too visible in the light of 'night's high Noon'—thus giving a whole new twist to the traditional sonnet motif of mooning lovers. It is all delightfully done.

However, this is no more faithful a likeness of Coleridge than any of his self-portraits, and Lucy Newlyn, for one, will have none of it. 'To cover his traces,' she writes, 'Coleridge claims in *Biographia* that the phrases were "entirely from his own poems", but', she says firmly, 'it is Lamb who is again the main object of the parody'. She goes immediately to the closing lines of Lamb's first sonnet in the 1797 collection, which 'contain the most absurd rhetorical questions':[33]

> And does the lonely glade
> Still court the footsteps of the fair-hair'd maid?
> Still in her locks the gales of summer sigh?
> While I forlorn do wander, heedless where,
> And 'mid my wanderings meet no Anna there?

Here then is a better source for the sudden forestation of Coleridge's poem. To some readers, Lamb's wood will provoke a testy, 'Well, does this glade contain some loitering woman, or doesn't it?', much the same irritation a literalist might feel puzzling over Higginbottom's milkmaid.

If Lamb ambles unaware into this glade, he is not alone. Erdman discovered an even more startling parallel. Moving from Coleridge's 'Effusion at Evening', which has a similarly dilatory maiden, via Coleridge's knight in Osorio, Erdman arrives at 'Lewti', the 'Circassian's Love-chant' which Coleridge published in the *Morning Post* in 1798. This appeared in his own name, but, notoriously, was lifted wholesale from Wordsworth's notebook where it appeared as 'Beauty and Moonlight, An Ode'. Here again are the now familiar gleamings of moonlight on a forest maiden—what is more, 'paly' gleamings, recalling the first of the Higginbottom sonnets. Here also are illicit charms, meaning the 'bosom soft and white' of Wordsworth's maiden, which will be rather rudely transferred to the knight's posterior by Coleridge. So Erdman finds Coleridge's claim to be parodying himself no more than 'a legal fiction', for he is only 'parodying his own work in the sense that Wordsworth has . . . given it to him'.[34] One could add that it isn't clear whether Wordsworth's gift was voluntary.

[31] Letter to Poole, 1 November 1796, Griggs i. 246.
[32] Erdman 578.
[33] Newlyn 258.
[34] Erdman 578-80.

Suspicions of Wordsworth's presence in the poem are strengthened by Newlyn's attention to the title of the third sonnet, when it first appeared in the *Morning Post*, 'On a Ruined House in a Romantic Country', which sent her off towards Wordsworth's poem 'The Ruined Cottage', on which he was working at the time, when the two poets were already deeply involved with each other. From this poem Newlyn unearthed Wordsworth's use of the phrase 'reft house', which he appears to have borrowed himself from Coleridge's prior use in the 'Lines Written at Shurton Bars'.[35] This is allusion rather than parody, but helps confirm that Wordsworth is in Coleridge's mind while he writes.

Whether Newlyn and Erdman are correct in these suppositions is less important than the fact that they are potential readings. Coleridge's confessional sonnets turn out to be anything but single ideas, pursued to a conclusion. Instead they are layered affairs, in which self-images jostle, cajole, replicate, and retreat, hiding behind those of his less nimble friends.

One clear motive for these evasions does eventually emerge. The major shift in tone of the introduction to Coleridge's 1797 collection lies in its sensitivity to the critical reception of the first edition. The Preface begins with a direct address: 'I RETURN my acknowledgements to the different Reviewers for the assistance, which they have afforded me, in detecting my poetic deficiencies'. He struggles to avoid sarcasm, a struggle protracted through a long paragraph.

He must avoid it, for it would not sit well with the humility he is determined to adopt a little later: 'I expect neither profit nor general fame by my writings; and I consider myself as having been amply repayed without either. Poetry has been to me its own "exceeding great reward"'.[36] Well, Coleridge is not at his most convincing, but the pose was necessary to introduce what can fairly be described as a modest collection of minor poetry in the manner of Bowles.

The reviews were, in fact, on the whole, quite kind, as Coleridge admitted, boasted even, in his letters. But there was criticism from other quarters. Lamb's admonishment is very familiar:

> Cultivate simplicity, Coleridge, or rather, I should say, banish elaborateness; for simplicity springs spontaneous from the heart, and carries into daylight its own modest buds and genuine, sweet, and clear flowers of expression. I allow no hot-beds in the gardens of Parnassus.[37]

The second sonnet allowed Coleridge to have a dig back at Lamb, a dig given more vigour perhaps, as Erdman says, by a review which referred to 'bombast and obscurity', and chided Coleridge for 'shunning that simplicity which should for ever accompany the lyric Muse'.[38] There is also the influence of Wordsworth to consider. Here is a poet who seemed to offer Coleridge co-operative possiblities that neither Southey, Lloyd, nor Lamb could match for range and ambition, a poet who had strong views on the nature and purpose of poetry. Wordsworth's company was bound to stiffen Coleridge's own resolve, and his awareness of weaknesses.

Criticism less gently expressed than any of this was also about to break over the heads of a cluster of young poets, including Coleridge, Lamb, and Lloyd, although Southey took the brunt of the assault. This was the satire of the *Anti-Jacobin*, which began almost precisely when Coleridge published the sonnets. It was the *Anti-Jacobin*'s attack on Southey's attempted simplicities, just one of many failings for which they cudgelled him, which appears to have persuaded Southey that Coleridge intended to mock him in the second sonnet—a suspicion for

[35] Newlyn 259.
[36] *Poems* (1797), pp. xvii-xix.
[37] *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb* ed. Edwin W. Marrs, Jr. (3 vols.; Ithaca, NY, 1975-8), i. 60-1
[38] Erdman 577.

which there is little other evidence, and which seems to have genuinely surprised and dismayed Coleridge. The *Anti-Jacobin*'s critique arrived too late to influence the Higginbottom Sonnets,[39] but perhaps Coleridge, preternaturally sensitive to criticism, sensed what was in the wind.

His only concrete account of his motives for writing the sonnets is from the letter to Cottle in 1797. 'I think they may do good to our young Bards', he wrote, as if he were already the *grand seigneur* of English Letters. Coleridge's sensitivity to criticism is a more persuasive explanation for Higginbottom. Parody offered a supple way to keep ahead of reviewers, rivals and friends.

It is not confined to the sonnets, of course. Coleridge's autobiographical writings are packed with parodic self-portraits which serve the same end, to pre-empt and confuse the critical reception of his poetry, his prose, and his thought. As a confessional strategy self-parody is unequalled, and Coleridge's use of it has never been never bettered. Parodists, it has often been remarked, criticize from a position of safety, pointing out the foibles, fallings-off and follies of a pre-existing work without exposing themselves, operating from what Cyril Connolly nicely called a 'womb with a view'. This is equally true of self-parodists, although here the art requires more dexterity and nerve. Done well, parodic prolepsis keeps the self ahead of its own failings.

The confusions wrought by all this matter little for the reader of Coleridge's early poetry, although they certainly interfere with a balanced assessment of the poetry of his friends. Lloyd, for example, went on to write verse of genuine interest and stature which has been almost entirely neglected.[40] But the Higginbottom sonnets, reprinted as they are in the opening chapter of *Biographia*, are a useful warning to readers who come to that text alerted, perhaps, by Hazlitt, Erdman, or Newlyn. Coleridge's pre-emptive or diversionary self-parody is mesmerisingly effective.

This is as true of his prose as it is of the sonnets. He was particularly fond, for example, of avian metaphors. 'I am a dreaming & therefore an indolent man' he wrote to Godwin, accounting for his inability to complete anything he began, 'a Starling self-incaged, & always in the Moult, and my whole Note is, Tomorrow, & tomorrow, & tomorrow'.[41] No one, it must be admitted, can write as deliciously about the faults of Coleridge as Coleridge himself. 'I have laid too many eggs in the hot sands of this wilderness the world, with ostrich carelessness and ostrich oblivion', he trumpeted early in *Biographia*,[42] before anyone, given what followed, could compare him to a cuckoo instead.

No other writer handles confession so skilfully, or so bewitches his readers. A 'tried experience of twenty years', he writes wearily, in his autobiography, 'has taught me, that the original sin of my character consists in a careless indifference to public opinion, and to the attacks of those who influence it.'[43] Implying a virtue within an admitted sin, in the middle of a narrative actually characterized by a vice the opposite of that to which he has just confessed, all in a tone of rueful sincerity, is a feat of inversion few could imitate. Coleridge grew subtle in these techniques through the conjuring arts of parody.

Oban

[39] Erdman suggests: 'It is technically possible for him to have written and submitted them to the *Monthly Magazine* after reading the attack in the first *Anti-Jacobin*, published November 20' (Erdman 572), but forgets that Coleridge wrote to Cottle, apparently on that same day, saying 'I *sent* three mock Sonnets' (my italics). They were, then, already dispatched.

[40] Two honourable exceptions are Lucy Newlyn, in 'Lamb, Lloyd, London: A perspective on Book Seven of the Prelude', *CLB* NS 47-8 (1984) 169-87; and David Fairer, in 'Baby language and Revolution: the early poetry of Charles Lloyd and Charles Lamb', *CLB* NS 74 (1991) 33-52.

[41] Griggs ii. 782.

[42] *Biographia* i. 45-6.

[43] Ibid., i. 44.

Lamb and Wordsworth's 'Patronage'

By JOHN BEER

IN PROPOSING the toast at this year's Birthday Luncheon I was able to relay an unpublished recollection of Lamb which was new to me and which I think is also worth recording in the *Bulletin*. In the autumn I was working in the Wordsworth Collection at Cornell and took the opportunity to look in the catalogue for anything else that might be of interest. Among one or two other things, I noticed that it held a passage of reminiscence by De Quincey about Charles Lamb which when called up turned out to be a draft towards the essay on him that is published in the standard edition of the *Collected Writings*. It contained slightly more than appears in the published version, however. In the essay De Quincey includes towards the end a comment on Lamb's habit of scattering his wit digressively. It was in fact a tendency Lamb himself mentioned in one of his essays, recalling an occasion when he had attended a wedding. After the reception the bride and bridegroom had departed from her father's house, leaving the rest of the company unsure whether they themselves should be going or staying; indeed, nobody could quite think of anything to say to anyone else:

> In this crisis, betwixt tarrying and departure, I must do justice to a foolish talent of mine. . . . I mean a power, in any emergency, of thinking and giving vent to all manner of strange nonsense. In this awkward dilemma I found it sovereign. I rattled off some of my most excellent absurdities. All were willing to be relieved, at any expense of reason, from the pressure of the intolerable vacuum which had succeeded to the morning bustle. By this means I was fortunate in keeping together the better part of the company to a late hour . . .[1]

In his reminiscence De Quincey writes of this talent of Lamb's in a slightly sharper spirit:

> The mercurialities of Lamb were infinite, and always uttered in a spirit of absolute recklessness for the quality or the prosperity of the sally. It seemed to liberate his spirits from some burthen of blackest melancholy which oppressed it, when he had thrown off a jest: he would not stop one instant to improve it; nor did he care the value of a straw whether it were good enough to be remembered, or so mediocre as to extort high moral indignation from a collector who refused to receive into his collection of jests and puns any that were not felicitously good or revoltingly bad.[2]

In his original manuscript De Quincey inserted an anecdote at this point. I do not believe this part of his draft has ever been published, though I understand it will be appearing in the eagerly expected new edition of De Quincey's works now in preparation by Grevel Lindop and others. De Quincey is recalling a visit he once paid to Lamb:

> On the tea-table lay a copy of Wordsworth in 2 vol.—it was the edition of Longman, printed about the time of Waterloo. Wordsworth was held in little consideration, I believe, by the house of Longman; at any rate, *their* editions of his works were got up in the most slovenly manner. In particular the table of contents was drawn up like a short-hand bill of parcels. By accident the book lay open at a part of this table, where the sonnet beginning—

[1] 'The Wedding', *Essays of Elia and Last Essays* ed. Jonathan Bate (Oxford, 1987), p. 275.
[2] 'Charles Lamb', *Collected Writings of Thomas De Quincey* ed David Masson (14 vols., Edinburgh, 1889), v. 253-4.

> Alas! what boots the long laborious quest
> had been entered with mercantile speed as—
> Alas! what boots—
> 'Yes', said Lamb, reading this entry in a dolorous tone of voice, 'he may well say *that*. I paid Hobby 3 Guineas for a pair that tore like blotting paper, when I was leaping a ditch to escape a farmer, that pursued me with a pitch-fork for trespassing. But why should W. wear boots in Westmorland? Pray, advise him to patronize shoes.'

The reason De Quincey did not use that passage in his draft may have been that he thought it illustrated what he was saying a little too well: the joke seemed to lose any punch it had as it went on. After all, why shouldn't one wear boots in the Lake District? And why should shoes be any better? But if so De Quincey may have been missing the subtlety of Lamb's point, which I think was rather to stick one or two pins in Wordsworth's current grandeur—to suggest that now he was Distributor of Stamps for Westmorland through the patronage of Lord Lonsdale he might do better to wear—or, better, *patronize* shoes, like the civil servant he had become; that nowadays Wordsworth would never be caught, as Lamb had been, in a misdemeanour such as that of trespassing; and, underlying all, to explore the absurdity of imagining Wordsworth in these days of his stateliness addressing a lament to a pair of boots.[3] Coleridge of course could go in for this sort of play: only two years before his death he wrote just such a lament, the verse he entitled 'An Elegiac Plusquam-Sesqui Sonnet to my Tin Shaving-Pot'—a poem that will appear from Princeton, along with many such *jeux d'esprit*, in Professor Mays's forthcoming new edition of the Collected Poems. Compared with Wordsworth's tendency to maintain his dignity it was one of the traits in his friend that Lamb evidently found sympathetic. Like Coleridge in his lighter moods he did not worry too much about matters of poetic decorum—or indeed any kind of decorum—so long as the good cheer of the party could be kept going. Hazlitt, it may be recalled, ascribed Lamb's fondness for making puns to his humility—though the question whether it was a humility before the demands of society or before the authority of language itself is left open for discussion.[4]

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[3] The Lambs seem to have enjoyed the lugubrious ambiguity of this word and the consequent opportunities for bad jokes. There is an anecdote somewhere (perhaps another reader can remember exactly where?) concerning someone who was, if I remember correctly, said to be 'a liar to boot', whereupon Lamb commented, 'What liars are not to boot?' Professor T. W. Craik has pointed out to me that when Charles recited to Mary the question that opens Wordsworth's 'The Force of Prayer', 'What is good for a bootless bene?' she replied, to his delight, 'A shooless pea' (see *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb* ed. Edwin W. Marrs, Jr. (3 vols., Ithaca, NY, 1975-8), iii. 147-8).

[4] See Crabb Robinson's diary entry for 29 March 1811. Commenting, E. V. Lucas took Hazlitt to mean that Lamb 'often had wiser things to say than he would utter, but fearing perhaps that he might go beyond the apprehension of certain of the company and make them uncomfortable, he preferred to maintain a lower and friendlier level by indulging in nonsense' (*Life of Lamb* (1905) p. 309). This would be in character, but Hazlitt may rather have meant that Lamb's punning reflected (paradoxically) his great respect for words themselves, which made it possible for him to enjoy his own transgressions all the more.

Early Readers of Lamb's *Rosamund Gray*

By DUNCAN WU

WHEN DID William Wordsworth read Lamb's *Rosamund Gray* (1798)? The problem is, he did not, to the best of my knowledge, make any comment on the work until 1810 in *Essays upon Epitaphs*.[1] Lamb did send the Wordsworths a manuscript copy of *John Woodvil* in October 1800, and it would be mightily strange if they had not read Lamb's earlier novella by then—but this is mere surmise. A copy of the first edition of *Rosamund Gray* was retained in later years in the library at Rydal Mount, but that could have been acquired at any point between 1798 and 1829, when it was entered in the Rydal Mount library catalogue.[2]

Less uncertainty surrounds its reading by the poet's younger brother, Christopher. In a hitherto unpublished letter of 5 March 1799, now at the Wordsworth Library, Grasmere, Christopher writes from Cambridge to his old College friend Jonas Walton (now at Newcastle): 'Have you seen Lamb's Rosamund Gray? I would have you buy it. It is *a most sweet tale*—and it would be charity'.[3] In his next letter to Walton, 22 April 1799, he returns to the same subject, apparently not having had any response from his friend on this topic: 'Have you read Rosamund Gray? Were you not pleased with it? The stile is designedly assumed—but it is I think very sweet and pleasing.'

Christopher's opinion of *Rosamund Gray* is doubtless of interest in its own right; more importantly, it may be used as support for one or two inferences about William's reading. In the earlier letter, Christopher tells Walton that it would be a charitable act to buy Lamb's volume. This act, were it to have taken place, would be of benefit to two parties: the publisher of the volume, and Lamb himself. Christopher probably did not have the publisher's pocket in mind as he wrote, and was thinking of Lamb. Why, then, should he have wanted Walton to perform an act of charity towards Lamb? The answer must be that he had some inkling of Lamb's personal circumstances; in particular, the family tragedy of 22 September 1796.

How, then, had Christopher Wordsworth, who had not by then met Lamb, acquired this intelligence about the author of *Rosamund Gray*? There are two possible sources of information. Firstly Coleridge, whom Christopher had known as an undergraduate at Cambridge, several years before Coleridge met William.[4] Perhaps Coleridge was the first to tell Christopher about his chum from Christ's Hospital; there is nothing either to confirm or to eliminate the possibility. Be this as it may, William and Dorothy are likely to have told Christopher about Lamb in later years. They had met him soon after arrival in Somersetshire in July 1797, and he was one of the first readers of one of William's most important early works, *The Ruined Cottage*. They, in all likelihood, would have told Christopher, either in person or in correspondence now lost, of the young, intense man, a schoolfriend of Coleridge's, whose sister Mary had killed his mother in a fit of madness, who was now working as a clerk, and doing what writing he could, while nursing Mary at home. It was a situation that would have aroused Christopher's sympathies as much

[1] See *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth* ed. W. J. B. Owen and Jane Worthington Smyser (3 vols., Oxford, 1974), i. 63, 105.

[2] See Chester L. and Alice C. Shaver, *Wordsworth's Library* (New York, 1979), p. 151.

[3] I am grateful to the Chairman and Trustees of the Wordsworth Trust, Grasmere, for permission to quote from the correspondence of Christopher Wordsworth. The italics are his.

[4] Christopher is among that select group of people who knew both Wordsworth and Coleridge before they met each other; others include Francis Wrangham.

as it had those of his brother and sister, and prompted him to urge his friends to buy Lamb's most ambitious publication thus far.

If, for a moment, we accept that conjecture, it becomes unthinkable that William and Dorothy would have hesitated to buy a copy of *Rosamund Gray* soon after publication in 1798. Its purchase would have been an act of charity and encouragement for a friend in need. This is how they would have conceived of it, and how they would no doubt have presented it to those with whom it was discussed. In this light it would not be unacceptable to posit 1798 as the earliest and most likely date at which they read *Rosamund Gray*. Even if none of the foregoing is either plausible or true, it would be difficult to conceive of their avoiding the purchase of a copy for long after 5 March 1799, when their younger brother had urged his old College friend to buy one, as 'it would be charity'. They, after all, would have been subject to the same exhortation, and would hardly be likely to have ignored it.

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Reviews

ELIZABETH SANDFORD, *Thomas Poole and his Friends*. Introduction by Reginald Watters. Over Stowey, Somerset: The Friarn Press, 1996. £12.95 paperback. Pp. 320. Includes index.

MANY YEARS AGO a friend lent me this book, published in 1888. Never did I return a loan more unwillingly. The years between I spent fruitlessly searching for a second-hand copy. Now here is a reprint, with the addition of a fascinating introduction about Elizabeth Sandford herself written, with the help of recently discovered letters, by Reginald Watters, Chairman of the Friends of Coleridge.

This enchanting book brings to life before our eyes 'the remote little rural world' of Nether and Over Stowey before the days of railways or cars. Against this background the sturdy figure of Tom Poole stands out like a beacon. He made no social pretensions. 'I am a plebeian; I am a tanner, you know I am a tanner', he would say. Yet without formal education he learnt Latin and French, getting some tutorial help from friends, and spent many hours as a young man in intense study. In 1795 he writes that he is translating a Latin text into French, 'both for profit and pleasure'. His father seems to have been very hard on him, depriving him of the educational privileges his cousins had, so that he should be apprenticed to the tanning trade at an early age. To an older friend who had 'encouraged him' when a boy 'in his endeavours after self-improvement' he wrote gratefully in 1808, adding 'I have endeavoured to be as useful as I can', which, as Mrs Sandford says, was 'the keynote of his life'. She comments that 'never at any period of his life, does the ambition to *distinguish himself* appear to have found a place in his thoughts'. He saw himself '*as an instrument of service in the cause of humanity*'. In youth he had hoped for 'great reforms, and immense improvements in the condition of the poor', but in the meantime he threw himself 'into every plan of doing good in his own town and neighbourhood', including what was unusual in those days an attempt at help for women through a Female Friendly Society. De Quincey was later to write of him that 'the farmer' turned out to be 'a polished and liberal Englishman, who had travelled extensively, and had so entirely dedicated himself to the service of his humble fellow-countrymen, the hewers of wood and drawers of water in this southern part of Somersetshire—that for many miles round he was the general arbiter of their disputes, the guide and counsellor of their difficulties; besides being appointed executor and guardian to his children by every third man who died, in or about the town of Nether Stowey'.

Unfortunately, in his early days, he came up against that smallmindedness, which is not confined to a 'remote little rural world', of people who cannot conceive that the needs of those who are not well-to-do 'like us' have any claim on them. These views are expressed by his cousin Charlotte Poole of Marshmills. 'Tom Poole drank tea with us. I wish he would cease to torment us with his democratick sentiments . . .' In 1794, before ever Coleridge, Wordsworth and Thelwall erupted into his little world, Poole's friend Robert Anstice warned him 'that I was considered by Government as the most dangerous person in the county of Somerset . . . I laughed —thinking he meant to *hum* me: he assured me he was serious'. It transpired that Poole's letters had been intercepted and opened.

Nevertheless, only a month later he reports that he has met Coleridge and Southey, though but briefly, and proceeds to give what a note calls 'the most detailed account we have of the Pantisocratic Scheme'. Poole comments with his usual shrewdness that he doubts whether human nature is 'yet perfect enough' for 'such a system'. He writes in 1796, 'happy is the genius who has a friend ever near of *good sense*'. Mrs Sandford acknowledges that 'Tom Poole had his faults and peculiarities as well as Coleridge' and instances 'his didactic tone, and too constant tendency

to give advice'. Sadly, it is not enough to be right, as when he bids Coleridge take from his mind 'its two weak parts—its tendency to restlessness and its tendency to torpor . . .' It is also necessary to learn when advice is a waste of effort.

However, as the book goes on to chronicle, Poole gave generously both in material and moral support to his friends, particularly to Coleridge. His only serious failure was concerning the death of the baby Berkeley, when his eagerness for Coleridge's fulfilment of his genius blinded him to the human tragedy. Poole had other distinguished friends, such as the Wedgwoods, Humphry Davy and Thomas Clarkson, whom he supported in his efforts to end the slave-trade, and he spent some months in London assisting John Rickman in making an Abstract of the evidence about the condition of the poor with a view to reforming the Poor Law. May I commend to Elians the sensitive account of Lamb's situation in 1796-7 and the importance not only of Coleridge's friendship but of the fact that 'before the end of the latter year almost all Coleridge's friends were his friends also'.

What then of the author of this book, whose intelligence, good sense and humanity shine out from it, both in her own comments and in the choice she makes of letters to quote? For this we turn to Reginald Watters' excellent Introduction and learn that she was 'the granddaughter of one of Thomas Poole's Marshmill cousins' and married her second cousin, the grandson of Tom's brother Richard. Hence she not only had access to the book into which Tom Poole copied his letters and to Charlotte's journal but also 'had grown up surrounded by members of the family who had known him'. The main interest for us, of course, is his close friendship with Coleridge, which forms an important part of the book, but Poole comes over 'warts and all' as a most interesting character in his own right. So does Elizabeth Sandford who, after she was widowed, made a distinguished career for herself as a teacher and then Headmistress. No wonder she writes with authority as well as sound judgment. We are very much in debt to Reginald Watters for this timely reprint and for his own valuable Introduction.

MARY WEDD

Copies of *Thomas Poole and his Friends* are available from Coleridge Books, 11 Castle Street, Nether Stowey, Somerset TA5 1LN, at a cost of £12.95 plus £2.00 postage and packing.

RAYMONDE AND GODFREY HAINTON, *The Unknown Coleridge: The Life and Times of Derwent Coleridge 1800-1883*. London: Janus Publishing Company, 1997. Pp. 316. £9.95 paperback. ISBN 1 85756 288 7.

THIS WELCOME ADDITION to the many books about the Coleridge family is the first biography of STC's third son. (Hartley's younger brother Berkeley had died in infancy.) Derwent was born seven weeks after the removal from the south-west to Greta Hall near Derwentwater, and so was named after a lake and not a philosopher.

The biography is divided into six main sections corresponding to the stages of his long career: the Lake District 1800-20, Cambridge 1820-4, Plymouth 1824-6, Helston 1827-40, Chelsea 1841-64, and Hanwell 1864-80. He was educated, with Hartley, at Ambleside. After working as a tutor in a local family he went to Cambridge at twenty. At Cambridge he made cultivated friends like Praed and Macaulay, wrote poetry, lost interest in mathematics, survived typhus, took a pass degree, lost his religious faith, acquired debts, and disappointed his father. Macaulay's cousin, headmaster of a new grammar school at Plymouth, appointed him assistant master there, and at Plymouth he met his future wife, Mary Pridham, the daughter of a banker; under her influence he regained his religious faith and was ordained. He became curate and schoolmaster at Helston

in Cornwall, and with Mary's help built up the parish and the grammar school, to which Charles Kingsley was sent as a boarder in 1833 with his delinquent younger brother. By 1841 it was evident that even a successful school could not continue attracting pupils to a county without railways, and Derwent Coleridge accepted the post of Principal at St Mark's College, Chelsea, the first national Anglican teacher training college. (He would have preferred the headship of Repton, lately held by Macaulay's cousin, but did not get it.) At St Mark's, in accordance with the educational philosophy that he had derived from STC, he produced educated men and not mere elementary instructors, but he had the disappointment of seeing governmental policy frustrate his achievements, and in 1864 left the College to become rector of Hanwell in Middlesex, and remained there till he was eighty, finally retiring to Torquay where he died three years later, survived by Mary.

There are ample primary sources, in the Derwent Coleridge MSS at the Humanities Research Center of The University of Texas at Austin, and in the archives of the College of St Mark and St John (the two institutions merged in 1926 and moved to Plymouth in 1973), and these, along with Derwent Coleridge's published writings, have been skilfully used to create a lucid narrative and portray a speaking likeness of the subject. (The book is also provided with actual likenesses of Derwent and Mary in youth and in age, their Cornish patroness, Helston School, the College staff, and the College buildings.) The balance between public and private life is well maintained: the 1841-61/2 period, for example, receives successive chapters on these two aspects, so that they do not get in one another's way. The tone is throughout admirable, and whenever possible the facts and the letters are allowed to speak for themselves. The disastrous career of Derwent's elder son, at university and in Australia, is an instance. More pleasing to read are the extracts from Derwent's private notebook entitled 'Mary—A Record of Feeling'; walking together near a waterfall, 'she proposed that we should christen each other: and so we did. . . . she said she could not bear to wipe the water off which I had sprinkled on her face.' His letter in reply to her suggestion that he consult a clergyman about his doubts is uncompromising in its honesty: he fears he would out-argue the clergyman, and asks 'Think you I would not rather court a defeat which would give me Paradise here Heaven hereafter? But it is neither from Books or Men that *I* am to seek conviction . . .' As clear-sighted is the letter in which, now a clergyman himself, he admits to dissatisfaction with the sermons he is trying to write: 'I am very fastidious: I want my sermons to be plain, striking, impassioned and scholarlike, not that I value anyone's criticism but my own a single button . . . I want to get at people's consciences, and to do this in a dignified and masterly way, equally remote from genteel slip slop, and vulgar storming.'

Godfrey Hainton, who died in 1976, was Head of the History Department at the College of St Mark and St John, and Raymonde Hainton, who completed the research and wrote it up, is also a historian. Two daughters and a granddaughter also assisted in bringing out the book. It does the whole family credit.

Derwent Coleridge records a single meeting, at dinner with his cousin Edward, a master at Eton, between him and Charles Lamb, 'who rivalled Mr Pridham in the number and badness of his puns'.

T.W. CRAIK

J. R. WATSON, *The English Hymn: A Critical and Historical Study*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997. Pp x + 552. ISBN 0 19 8267622. £65 hardback.

ASSUMING THAT PSALMODY stimulated the development of congregational singing in Christian worship, Professor Watson begins his historical survey with the publication in 1562 of *The Whole Book of Psalmes*; metrical translations by Thomas Sternhold, John Hopkins and others. A century later George Wither's *Hymnes and Songs of the Church* (1623), extended the methods of psalmody to other parts of the Bible, and explored individual spiritual experience. In 1696 *A New Version of the Psalms of David, Fitted to the Tunes used in Churches*, by Nahum Tate and Nicholas Brady, superseded *The Whole Book*, largely because of its insistence on plain speech rather than rhetoric. The work of George Herbert, however, led moderate Puritans to believe that poetry was not spiritually dangerous, and thus encouraged the work of writers such as Baxter and Bunyan. It was the genius of Isaac Watts, however, that united the tradition of religious poetry with that of psalmody, largely, perhaps, by Christianising the psalms (for example Tate and Brady's 'Jehovah reigns . . .' (Psalm 97) becomes 'the Saviour reigns . . .' in Watts' version). Watson devotes a whole chapter to Watts, and calls his next chapter 'After Watts'. Only Charles Wesley is similarly distinguished.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries hymn books proliferated, as did the writers of hymns. Perhaps the consummation of all this was the publication of *Hymns Ancient and Modern* in 1861, and this is virtually the end of Watson's historical survey, though he does conclude the book with a mildly pessimistic chapter: 'Into the Twentieth Century'. Before that he devotes three chapters to an examination of different aspects of English hymnody. A chapter on Victorian women writers indicates the manner in which their compositions reflected their position in society; submissively ministering to men's needs in health and in sickness, and all too often chronically ill themselves—Charlotte Elliot's 'Just as I am' was first published in *The Invalid's Hymn Book* (1841). Though none of these women attained the greatness of men such as Watts, Wesley and Cowper, many are remembered for one great hymn: Sarah Flower Adams ('Nearer my God to thee') for example, and Cecil Frances Alexander ('Once in royal David's city'). In addition several women wrote poetry subsequently used as hymns, notably Christina Rossetti ('In the bleak mid-winter'). Another chapter deals with American hymnody, pointing out how history, environment, and a sense of mission made American hymns distinctively different from the English tradition. In another chapter, 'Different Traditions', Watson deals severely with Sankey and Moody, and much more kindly with slave songs and spirituals, which he greatly admires. The final chapter records the decline of *Hymns Ancient and Modern*, and its overshadowing by *The English Hymnal* and *Songs of Praise*.

Such a historical survey is not Professor Watson's only concern, and perhaps not his principal one. He is determined to rescue the hymn from the inferior status assigned to it by such commentators as David Cecil: 'Hymns are usually a second-rate type of poetry. . . . they do not provide a free vehicle for the expression of the poet's imagination.' Yet acknowledged poets have written hymns, or poems subsequently used as hymns—Donne, Herbert, Milton, and Cowper for example. The topics of devotion might be few, as Dr Johnson averred, but individual responses to them are inexhaustible. The rigidities of metre necessary for congregational singing may stimulate rather than deter the poet; taking a verse from Wesley's 'Come Holy Ghost, all-quickening fire' Watson expertly demonstrates 'the extremely skilful use of image, sound and sense *within* the formal limits of stanza form'.

Watson's best answer to all such criticisms, however, lies in his method throughout the book. He claims, in the Preface, that he is engaged on a work of literary criticism, and explains: ' . . .

if a writer has referred to "this fine hymn" I have tried to see why it should be thought of as fine'. Consequently there is a wealth of illuminating local analysis throughout. At its best, this defamiliarizes things with which we are most familiar; for example the chiasmus in the first two lines of Francis Lyte's 'Abide with me' has a narrative implication that intensifies the plea. And in Watts' most famous hymn, the word 'survey' carries a sense of detached appraisal which is almost shocking in this context. But in the rest of the hymn what the survey reveals is a balance of loss and gain, a profoundly spiritual accountancy.

Watson can be severely adverse in his criticism, and he also has a sharp eye for the ridiculous—these clairvoyant lines, for example, from the Anglicans: 'The good old Church of England . . . . How nobly does she stand!' And these from the Catholics: 'O happy Pyx! O happy Pyx! / Where Jesus doth his dwelling fix'.

The book has faults. Local analysis is greatly to be welcomed, but there can be too much. There are times when Watson's critical examination seems doggedly mechanical, and employed on hymns that hardly merit it. Occasionally he attributes motives rather recklessly, and when he protests that Revivalist hymns contain threats of damnation, he ought at least to acknowledge that the New Testament also has them. But such faults are overwhelmed by the general scholarly and critical excellence of the whole work.

JEFFREY BAKER

Society Notes and News from Members

FROM THE HON. SECRETARY

1997-8 Programme: Saturday 4 October 1997

Duncan Wu's talk, 'Annotating Lamb', scheduled for 4 October, is postponed. Instead the Hon. Secretary will speak on the subject of Claire Clairmont—all are welcome. The meeting begins at 2.30pm.

Saturday 1 November 1997

Richard Causebrook of the New River Action Group will give an illustrated talk on 'The New River', including a pictorial journey along the river from Ware to Islington (recalling George Dyer's immersion in those waters some 174 years ago). The meeting will be at the Mary Ward Centre, 2.30pm. All are welcome. Can any member lend a projector using LEITZ slide magazines, or alternatively a projector using different magazines—enough, in any event, for 150 slides? Please contact me (0181 940 3837) if you can help.

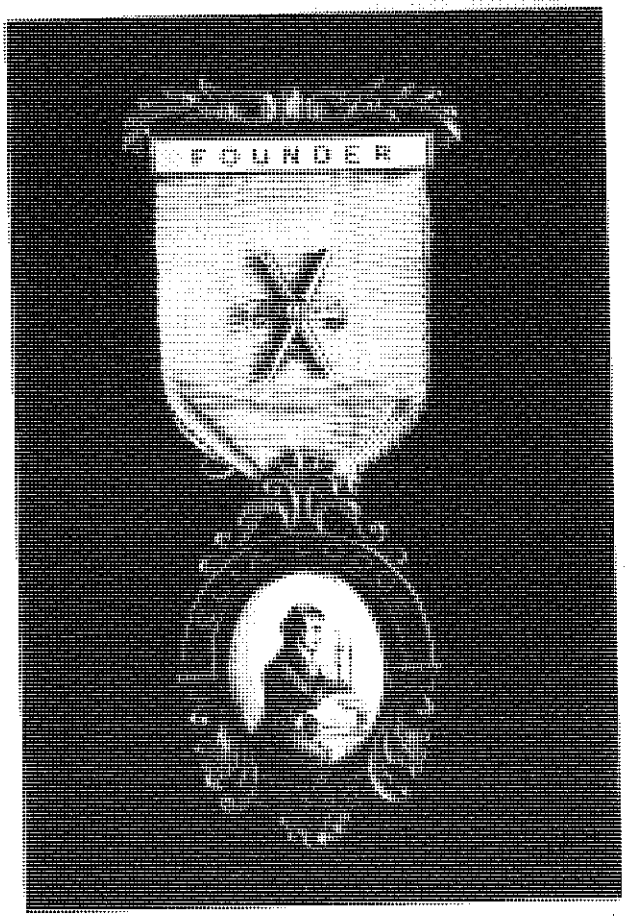
Charles Lamb's Birthday Celebration Luncheon

The next luncheon will be on Saturday 21 February 1998 at the Royal College of General Practitioners, Kensington. We are delighted that Professor Jonathan Wordsworth of St Catherine's College, Oxford, will be our Guest of Honour—especially fitting as 1998 is the bicentenary of the publication of *Lyrical Ballads*. UK members will find enclosed a booking form for the luncheon. Numbers are limited to about fifty, so please book early. Any overseas members who expect to be in London in February will be most welcome. Members unable to partake of the luncheon are welcome to join us for Professor Wordsworth's address at approximately 2.30 pm at the College.

Charles Lamb on Stage—and a Masonic Connection

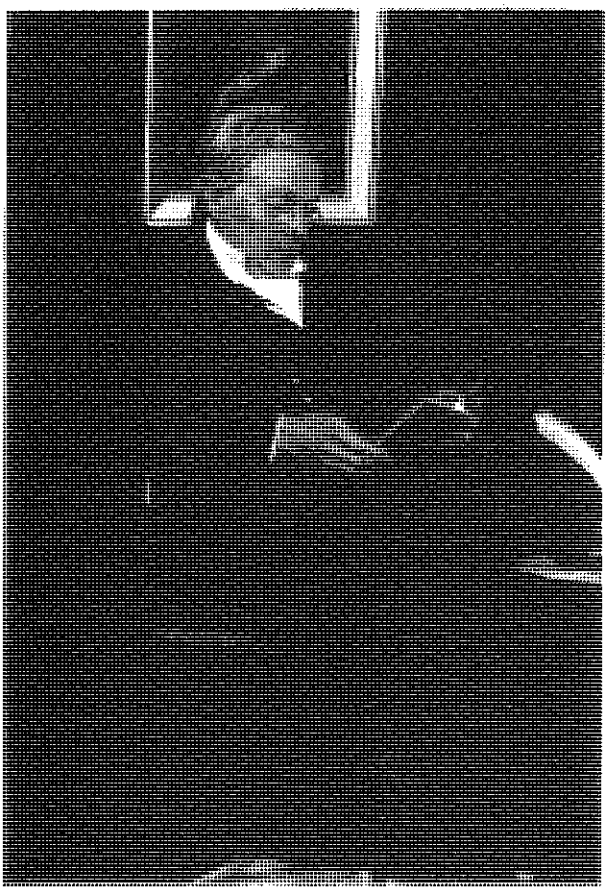
In March 1997 Leslie Ashfield wrote to tell me of the forthcoming production at the Granary Theatre, Wells-next-the-Sea, Norfolk, of his one-man play, 'My Gentle-Hearted Charles', and mentioning that his father was a founding member of the Elia (Masonic) Lodge. The name 'Elia' provoked an immediate reaction, resulting in a rewarding six months' correspondence, culminating in Leslie's joining the CLS.

The Masonic Connection. The Elia Lodge was founded on 19 December 1923. The history of the Lodge relates that 'The Lodge had its origins in Edmonton and its name "Elia" was the inspired suggestion of W. Bro. George Irons (father of Leslie Ashfield). It was the pen name of Charles Lamb the essayist. His heart was full of charity and love to all, in particular to the members of his family whom he sustained during those tragedies which befell them. He displayed true masonic characteristics. He is buried, with his beloved sister Mary, in Edmonton churchyard, so the title is apt, the Founders were a band of friends living in that district'. The Elia Lodge Secretary comments: 'Although Charles Lamb was not a Freemason he showed many masonic tendencies in the way he treated his sister'.



Above: George Irons' Masonic Medal

'My Gentle Hearted Charles'. This celebration of the life of Charles Lamb is set in Bay Cottage (now Lamb's Cottage), Edmonton, in September 1834, where Lamb is talking to Edward Moxon (offstage). The Waldens and Emma are out but expected back later. Mary is unwell upstairs but occasionally knocks on the floor and Charles responds. The author admits that the title is one of which Lamb would not have approved, but the reason is explained in the dialogue and action of the play. It is hoped to produce a video of excerpts from the play and that there may be a later live performance perhaps in London. Leslie Ashfield revealed another intriguing Lamb link. His family were the lessees of Drury Lane theatre at a time when Lamb was an ardent theatregoer.



Above: Leslie Ashfield in the role of Lamb in 'My Gentle Hearted Charles'

Coleridge 200 Years Ago

In January 1798 Samuel Taylor Coleridge came to Shrewsbury to preach a trial sermon in his bid to become a Unitarian minister. A brass plaque by the pulpit and other items in the Unitarian church record this well-received and memorable discourse; in the congregation was William Hazlitt, whose home was a few miles away at Wem. The sermon may have been the first of three, but on receiving news of the Wedgwood annuity, Coleridge abandoned this project.

A 1742 clock overlooking the nave still ticks away as it did during that sermon, and will continue to do so during a special service to be held on Sunday 11 January 1998.

With the help of the Shropshire Tourist Office, it is planned to make this a three-day event, with a talk on the Friday evening by Michael Foot, other talks, a playlet, and a conducted tour

of Shrewsbury on Saturday. There will be throughout the weekend a display of Christ's Hospital items, recalling not only Coleridge but also Lamb and Leigh Hunt. Sadly, this clashes with our meeting on 11 January 1998 when Tom Paulin will be speaking to us on Hazlitt. However, any West Country members who cannot be with us in London on that date should make every effort to join in the celebrations at Shrewsbury.

'Let us cultivate the Elian spirit of friendliness . . .'
So runs the adjuration on the front cover of the *Bulletin*. Some members have evidently taken this to heart! On Saturday 4 October Dr Nicola Trott marries Dr Seamus Perry, swiftly followed by Dr Duncan Wu's marriage to Caroline Cochrane on Saturday 6 December. Our good wishes to them all!

FROM THE EDITOR

Advertising Editor
We extend a warm Elian welcome to Michael Laplace-Sinatra, charged with the task of attracting advertisements to these pages.

The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb: the Marrs Edition
First, the good news: Elians everywhere will be pleased to hear that the progress of Professor Marrs' unfinished edition of the collected letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb, the last volume of which appeared in 1978, is to be expedited by the assistance of Professor Joseph Riehl of the University of Southwestern Louisiana. Professor Riehl tells me that a fourth volume is complete and should be ready for the printer in about a year; a fifth and sixth volume are partially completed.

The bad news is that Cornell University Press, which published the first three volumes, has decided to decline to publish the remainder. Professors Marrs and Riehl therefore wish to inform the Society that there is at present no publisher for the letters, and would appreciate any suggestions that readers may be able to offer. Elians with e-mail can contact Professor Riehl at real@usl.edu. In the meantime, he is to be congratulated on the completion of a study of Lamb criticism, shortly to be published by Camden House. We look forward to reviewing the volume in a future issue.

Lamb on the Net
New websites of interest to Elians continue to appear on the internet. One has been created by Professor Riehl. Since the *Essays of Elia* are (shamefully) out of print, he has done us all a service by placing a complete text of Lucas' 1905 text on the net. There is no charge for downloading it, although Professor Riehl would appreciate anyone who uses it to e-mail him with comments and suggestions. The website address is http://www4.linknet.net/real0/index.html. Elian websurfers may also be interested in the Treasures of the University of Delaware webpage, which has a comprehensive account of their copy of *Elia* (1823) at http://www.lib.udel.edu/ud/spec/exhibits/treasures/english/lamb.html. Information on this *Bulletin* is now to be found on the Romantic Circles website run by Michael Gamer; see http://www.english.upenn.edu/~mgamer/Circles/Periodicals/lamb.html. As from the next issue of the *Bulletin*, this feature will be taken over by our newly-appointed Advertising Editor, Michael Laplace-Sinatra.

FROM D. E. WICKHAM

Charles Lamb's Eyes—For the Record

We know that the colour of Charles Lamb's eyes causes difficulties. Talfourd apparently once described them as 'softly brown'. J. Fuller Russell described them as 'very piercing jet-black'. They are generally claimed to have been of two different colours.

The research lavished on the 1985 Anniversary Quiz revealed, with the agreement of Talfourd (!) and E. V. Lucas, that one eye was hazel and the other was greyish blue or contained specks of grey, etc. The Rich Collection (viii 15) includes a press cutting from the *Daily Mirror* of 10 July 1935, at article entitled 'How Your Eyes Give you Away', by George Godwin. Part of it discusses 'when eyes don't match':

> There remains one type—those people who have eyes of different colours, a more common thing than most people realize, because we seldom note the colour of the eyes of others.
>
> Such people are generally emotional, leading towards mysticism. They are kindly, and often whimsical. But they often lack energy or capacity for active endeavour.
>
> Charles Lamb is a very good illustration of this type: he had one blue and one brown eye, and like many people thus provided for by nature, was a trifle sensitive about it.

The Daily Telegraph of 28 January 1995 printed an article about changing one's eye colour with contact lenses. It was illustrated by a photograph of a face with one blue eye and one brown eye. Such lenses, costing from £20 a pair and lasting around a month, were available in blue, hazel, green and violet. I have since seen an advertisement for stained-glass window contact lenses, but that is another story.

The Annual Programme: Two Methods of Approach

FILLING THE ANNUAL PROGRAMME

Would anyone like to give a talk next year? Please contact the Hon. Secretary.

THE ANNIVERSARY

With the turning of the year, the Council of the Charles Lamb Society will meet in high and solemn conclave. Thereupon our sister Madeline Elia will ask 'Well now, what about next year's programme?'

Then will follow an internalised wailing and gnashing of teeth, some looking down in a spasm of navel-contemplation, others upwards, throwing their eyes to the ceiling as a necessarily architectural impediment to the flight heavenwards. Gradually, and as happens every year, we shall all come to fix our eyes piercingly and accusingly on our cousin Mary Elia, who will wave her hands and protest 'No, no, I can't think of anyone'. Then sister Madeline will remind us that she has one name left over from last year and *x* might be asked to speak again, and two members of the Society might be prevailed upon, but that gives no lee-way for refusals and is too few anyway. Then we look again to Mary Elia, who says plaintively 'Perhaps Duncan knows somebody', whereupon we all turn to our Caledonian kinsman Duncan McElia and wait for him to pull a couple of academics out of the air. All goes well until the next Council meeting when Madeline Elia says 'Look, I am still trying to fill two lecture dates and it is getting very tight for the printing deadline'.

Meanwhile members of the Society hiss 'Why don't they ask me?' to their friends and their friends reply, with a hint of asperity, 'Would you have a subject to talk about?'

In fact relevant anniversaries are falling over themselves as suitable subjects. The programme for the year 1997-8 is already published. My personal excuse for not marking the 175th anniversary of the visit to Paris (1822/1997), apart from having overlooked it at the correct early

moment, is that it is more suitable as a project for an Elian Booklet and, the longer I leave it, the more original material I shall have and the more feasible coloured illustrations may become!

In 1998 we have the anniversaries of the birth of the Reverend Matthew Feilde (250), the publication of *A Tale of Rosamund Gray* (200), and the deaths of Mrs Cowden Clarke, née Novello (100), Lucy Barton (briefly Mrs Edward Fitzgerald) (100), and Holbrook Jackson, 'the complete bookman' according to Claude Prance's *Companion* (50).

In 1999 there is the anniversary of the birth of Thomas Hood (200), the death of John Lamb, Sr. (200), and the removal of the Wordsworths to Dove Cottage (200). We might mark the deaths of Bryan Waller Procter ('Barry Cornwall') (175) or of Bernard Barton (150). Robin Healey is working on an Elian Booklet about Charles Lamb's Hertfordshire and 1999 is the anniversary of the sale of Button Snap to the Charles Lamb Society (50). It is also the anniversary of the deaths of Reginald L. Hine (50), Samuel Morris Rich (50), and Edmund Blunden (25).

Please will members feel thus encouraged to think about offering talks, however brief or however much shared with others, on some of these subjects or on topics suggested by themselves. It would be helpful to clear the matter first with the Honorary Secretary, just to ensure that you have exclusive rights to the subject, but dates can be fixed later. It is also worth appreciating that, far ahead as October 1998 may appear at present, it is bound to occur, probably and apparently two or three weeks after the *preceding* Christmas.

Christchurch, Newgate Street

Christchurch Insurance was formed in 1992 and, in that year, took up a 125-year lease from the City Corporation on the tower of Christ Church, Newgate Street. This surviving part of the war-ruined church built by Sir Christopher Wren in 1687 would have been well-known to Charles Lamb, since it and its mediaeval predecessors stood beside the entrance to Christ's Hospital before it moved to Horsham.

A spiral staircase was installed in the tower and cabling and computer equipment introduced. Together with the adjoining vestry the tower now forms the Christchurch Insurance City offices with panoramic views and with memorial tablets on the office walls. According to an article in *The Daily Telegraph* of 26 April 1997, the T and M sections of the office filing system are often muddled or found to have sections missing: above the filing cabinets is the tablet of Thomas Misenor, died 1779.

Mr H— and Miss H—

The Archives of The Clothworkers' Company contain a reference to John Hogsflesh, son of Edward Hogsflesh, schoolmaster, of Westham [West Ham?] in Essex. The father was dead by 16 April 1695, the day on which the son was apprenticed for seven years to Thomas King.

The Daily Telegraph for 29 January 1997 printed a death notice for Eileen Hogsflesh, who had died peacefully on 26 January 1997 in her 90th year, probably of a stroke. Her funeral service was to be held at St Clement's Church in Leigh-on-Sea, also in Essex.

'If dirt were trumps'—A Note for the Record

E. V. Lucas' *Life* of Charles Lamb, Chapter 20 for 1803, refers to the following joke as attributed to Ayrton and as his only joke. The chapter and verse for the original reference, however, are W. Carew Hazlitt's *Offspring of Thought in Solitude: Modern Essays*, 1884, page 44:

> The story of Lamb and Martin Burney's dirty hands ['If dirt was trumps . . .'] is too well known to need repetition here. We believe that the *jeu d'esprit* was not Lamb's at all, but

was made by a gentleman who never uttered a second witticism in the whole course of his life, and who thought it a *little* hard to be robbed of this unique achievement! The real person, we have understood, was the father of the late Mr Commissioner Ayrton.

Obituary

I do not claim to have written the following obituary, simply to have communicated it, after noticing it in the *London and Middlesex Archaeological Society Newsletter*, Issue 81, May 1994, where it had already been copied from the *Hendon and District Archaeological Newsletter*, April 1994:

> Final Straw—We are saddened to learn of the death of Someone Else, a most valuable member of our Society. His [her?] passing creates a vacancy that will be hard to fill. Someone Else has been with the Society from the beginning, and did far more than the normal person's share of work. Whenever there was a job to do, a helping hand needed, or just an ear required, these words were on everybody's lips—'Let Someone Else do it'. Whenever there was a need for volunteers, everyone just assumed that Someone Else would volunteer. Someone Else was a wonderful person, sometimes appearing superhuman. But a person can only do so much. Were the truth known, everyone expected too much from Someone Else.

To See Ourselves . . .

The following note is from *The Journal of William Charles Macready 1832-1851*, abridged and edited by J.C. Trewin, 1967. E. V. Lucas; *Life* of Charles Lamb, Chapter 50 for 1834, mentions the supper and the pun but not the remark about Emma Isola.

> **9 January 1834**Went to Talfourd's (from whom I had received a note of invitation to supper in the morning) to meet Charles Lamb; met there Price, Forster, Mr and Mrs [Barron] Field (I fancy a Gibraltar judge), Charles Lamb, Moxon the publisher, and *not* Mrs Moxon [Emma Isola as was] whose absence was noted by those present as a most ungrateful omission of respect and duty, as he (Lamb) had literally brought her up, and wanted her attention and assistance. I noted one odd saying of Lamb's that the last breath he drew in he wished might be through a pipe and exhaled in a pun. Spent a pleasant evening and walked home under a 'pitiless storm' with Price.

Two notes. (1) Claude Prance's *Companion* quotes an opinion that Macready was 'surpassed only by Garrick and equalled only by Kean'. (2) Who is 'Price', mentioned by the great tragedian first and without further identification? Might he be Stephen Price (1783-1840), an outstanding American theatre manager who held the tenancy of Drury Lane from 1826 to 1830? He was noted for his love of spectacular effects, like real horses and tigers on stage.

An Epitome of Charles Lamb's London

The following verse is printed, without source or date, by Roy Porter, in his *London: A Social History*, 1994. References to Edlams, coronations (with new reigns beginning in 1714 and 1727 rather than nothing since 1760?) and rabbits (Mary Toft, the fraudulent rabbit-breeder?) may push it back into the 1730s but it surely helps to sum up Charles Lamb's London. Presumably *instalments* means *installments* or what we today would call *installations*, putting people into ceremonial office, like clergymen or Masters of Livery Companies.

Assemblies, parks, coarse feasts in city-halls,
Lectures and trials, plays, committees, balls,
Wells, Bedlams, executions, Smithfield scenes,
And fortune-tellers' caves and lions' dens,
Taverns, Exchanges, bridewells, drawing-rooms,
Instalments, pillories, coronations, tombs,
Tumblers and funerals, puppet-shows, reviews,
Sales, races, rabbits and (still stranger) pews.

Not One of Ours

The name *Mary Lamb* tripped me up (well, it would, wouldn't it?) in the following entry from Catalogue No. 274, issued by the antiquarian book-dealers, Howes of Hastings, in April 1997: 'FANE (Violet, i.e. Mary Lamb, later Singleton, later Lady Currie, 1843-1915) Collected Verses. First Edition. Small 8vo, pp. vi+101, orig[inal] violet cloth with gilt violet on upper side. Smith, Elder, 1880. Presentation copy with signed inscription from the author on title.'

Oh, all right, £45, if you must know, and, No, I didn't buy it.

50 Years Ago: from *CLS Bulletin* No.79 (September 1947)

Edmonton: A fine summer's afternoon and a goodly company of Elian pilgrims, forty to fifty strong, were 'on the road' like Chaucer's pilgrims, wending their way under the genial guidance of Mr F. H. Postans to the shrine in Church Street, Edmonton, of their own patron saint who for a brief twenty months lived at Bay Cottage with his sister Mary. Viewed from the street, the house, now called Lamb's Cottage, appears a small unpretentious dwelling, the pathway from the gate occupying almost one half of the narrow garden leading to the door, but the cottage is deceptively commodious with its nine rooms, the windows of what was once Mary's bedroom overlooking a long garden. Through the courtesy of the present owner [in 1947], Mr J. J. E. Potter, members were enabled to inspect the rooms, which are little changed apart from decoration and furnishings, from Lamb's time. Mr Potter now utilises the rooms for the display of Oriental art treasures, and one found ornaments of jade and gilded and enamelled gods and goddesses from Chinese and other oriental sources in serried ranks; these would have appealed to the eyes of Thomas Manning.

from *CLS Bulletin* No.80 (November 1947)

[At the October 1947 meeting Mr Reginald L. Hine] presented to the Society a copy of *Sylvia*: or the May Queen, a Lyrical Drama by George Darley, 1827: this copy bears the inscription, 'Miss Kelly with the Author's kind Respects'.

In the *Evening Standard* of June 28th [1947], it was reported that two smartly dressed women were charged at Marlborough Street [Magistrate's Court] with being drunk and disorderly in Bruton Street, Mayfair, which they denied. P. C. Allin deposed that one of them quoted some verse.

The magistrate (Mr J. B. Sandbach, K.C.): Was it polite verse?

P.C. Allin: Yes, it was Lamb.

The magistrate fined the reciter only 2*s*.6*d*. saying that he could not see any disorder in her poetry.

Miss Florence S. Reeves has accepted the appointment of Membership Secretary, and we take this opportunity of wishing her every success in her new position [which she held from 1947 to 1986].