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Editorial

TWO IMPORTANT OCCASIONS in this year's season of events fast approach: The Charles Lamb Birthday Luncheon, held, as always, at the Royal College of General Practitioners in February (further details on page 36, below); and a once-only tour of *The Garden of the World*, an exhibition at the Dulwich Picture Gallery (details on pages 36-7, below). Book now as numbers are limited.

The Wordsworth Trust, too, is busy in the coming weeks. On 23-5 January they hold their annual weekend book festival at the Prince of Wales Hotel, Grasmere. Speakers this year include Sally Brown of the British Library (who will speak on the manuscripts of Chatterton); Claire Tomalin on the trials and joys of being a biographer; Luke Herrman on Sir George Beaumont, Wordsworth's patron; Samuel Clapp on Gustave Doré; and Paul F. Betz, from Georgetown University, on his own collection of romantic manuscripts, paintings and relics. In addition, there will be surgeries on the restoration of works of art and books, and Christopher Bacon and Iain Bain will demonstrate printing on woodblocks. The full residential fee is £227. On 8-13 February the Trust conducts its annual Wordsworth Winter School, also at the Prince of Wales, which this year takes as its theme *The Thirteen-Book Prelude*. Speakers include Jonathan Wordsworth (lecturing to the title, 'Ennobling Interchange'); Pamela Woof on *Prelude* Book I; Mary Wedd on the visionary in *The Prelude*; Graeme Stones, always excellent value, discussing camels in Wordsworth; Molly Lefebure (with the inscrutable title, 'Goodbye to All That'; all what? one wonders); Seamus Perry who won't be speaking about *The Prelude* but about the *Ode* and David Chandler on 'Social Implications'. The full residential fee is £398. For further details or booking forms contact Sylvia Wordsworth on 015394 35544 (daytime) or 35651 (evenings and weekends).

Dorothy Wordsworth in 1802

By PAMELA WOOF

1802 IS A FINE YEAR for the Journal. Dorothy Wordsworth is writing at her best; and against the familiar seasonal background there is change – Wordsworth's marriage; this brings urgency, travel, crisis, and return. It brings shape to the Journal. 1802, moreover, is the only year for which the Journal is complete, running from January to December.

But it is for more than chronological completeness that 1802 deeply satisfies: by now Dorothy Wordsworth has had practice in writing under pressure of time and she can achieve effects in few words. Tom Hutchinson, for example, is forever fixed for us in his autumnal activity as Dorothy Wordsworth happened to glimpse him on her and Wordsworth's arrival at Gallow Hill in late September 1802. A marriage that would inevitably change some things for her was soon to take place but the normal life of others kept on, as it always does – and always to one's surprise – its customary course. Three weeks later, writing her retrospective account of their journey to Calais and of her brother's wedding, it is that first sight that she recalls: 'Tom was forking corn standing upon the corn cart'.[1] Apart from these words, Tom Hutchinson is only a name. When she saw him Dorothy was still recovering from the sickness she had had in London and was undoubtedly tense with feeling, 'I was ill both on Saturday & Sunday & continued to be poorly most of the time of our stay'. It is out of her own charged situation that she can capture another person's disinterested involvement in habitual action, 'forking corn standing upon the corn cart'. For us, Tom is permanently forking corn, and this one detail is enough to make us feel we know the whole farm.

We return from that solid world to Dorothy herself on the wedding morning. She describes, from the distance of Grasmere and of three weeks, how she moved, first into stillness, then into action, 'when I saw the two men running up the walk that came to tell us it was over' (altered by Dorothy to the more dramatic 'coming to tell us it was over'). It was those two men running, coming (they are not identified as Jack, George or Tom Hutchinson, just men running), that crystallised her own retreat into the opposite of running, into stillness, 'neither hearing nor seeing anything', and then into the opposite again, an involuntary movement straight forward 'faster than my strength could carry me till I fell'. But Dorothy delays the drama and alters her manuscript, 'till I met my beloved William & fell upon his bosom'. Tom forking corn, the two men running up the walk, or, earlier, Coleridge 'hopping up upon the Side stones' as he and the Wordsworths, parting at the Rock of Names, started on their separate ways home; these intent figures create vignettes of action that enliven all around them.

Some preoccupied glimpsed figures lend their significance without being conscious of Dorothy's story. On the journey back from the Yorkshire wedding to Grasmere, William and Dorothy 'left Mary sitting by the kitchen fire', and walked out among the ruins of Helmsley Castle: '. . . it was warm & very pleasant. . . . There was a man mowing nettles in the open space . . .'. That man mowing nettles near the 'green grassy hillocks', and the moats that had become 'soft green cradles', provides the eternal note of humanity and of time passing. Amid those ancient ruins and grassy cradles, 'children were playing upon the sloping ground', and Dorothy Wordsworth, without being in the least ponderous, selects that one other essential visual detail – a detail that anticipates Hardy: 'There was a man mowing nettles in the open space . . .'

[1] All quotations from the Grasmere Journals are from *Dorothy Wordsworth: The Grasmere Journals* ed. Pamela Woof (Oxford, 1991).

In 1802, aged 30, Dorothy Wordsworth is secure in her use of language, and no longer tries for those more obvious effects she had occasionally attempted in the Alfoxden Journal of 1798. There, in almost Gothic mode, 'the crooked arm of the old oak tree point[ed] upwards to the moon' (24 March),[2] and the upper boughs of trees 'stiff and erect, [were] like black skeletons' (26 January). In 1802, in this Journal, private except for Wordsworth's freedom to use the notebooks for draft poems, Dorothy Wordsworth's words bring readers – and there have been readers of the almost 200 year old Journal now for about a hundred years – 'into communion with the inner spirit of things'. Those last words are Wordsworth's, and he goes on to define excellence in writing, whether in prose or verse: words must be not a clothing for thought, but an incarnation of it. 'Language, if it do not uphold, and feed, and leave in quiet, like the power of gravitation or the air we breathe, is a counter-spirit, unremittingly and noiselessly at work to derange, to subvert . . .'.[3] Written some eight years after Dorothy's Journal, this is concerned with the honesty or otherwise in writing epitaphs, but we recognise its defining aptness for her way with words: to bring us 'into communion with the inner spirit of things', to 'uphold, and feed, and leave in quiet, like the power of gravitation or the air we breathe'.

It is a big claim for language, particularly for the language of a journal that had no public readership in mind, and thus no continuously conscious structuring for effect. The entry for 4 May, already noted for its picture of Coleridge parting from the Wordsworths and cheerfully 'hopping up upon the Side stones' can serve perhaps to illustrate that communion with the inner spirit of things, that upholding, feeding, and leaving in quiet. Wordsworth's refreshing sleep of the night before begins the entry; his composition of several stanzas of 'The Leech Gatherer', and Dorothy's writing them out is then recorded. With the next words the two are on their way past Mr Simpson's on the ascent to Dunmail Raise on a hot morning. 'We rested several times by the way, read & repeated the Leech gatherer'. They see Coleridge, and also Mr Simpson fishing in the beck, eat lunch, and then Wordsworth, Coleridge and Dorothy walk down the side of Wytheburn Water to Raven Crag,

> that lofty purple crag. It stood upright by itself. Its own self & its shadow below, one mass – all else was sunshine. We went on further. A Bird at the top of the crags was flying round & round & looked in thinness & transparency, shape & motion, like a moth.

They climb up, there is no shade; they come down, lie on a moss-covered Rock rising out of the bed of the River, eat dinner, and Wordsworth and Coleridge repeat and read verses till after 4 o'clock. 'I drank a little Brandy & water & was in Heaven'. Dorothy notices the freshness of the Stagshorn clubmoss and the green of the Mountain ashes. They drink tea at a farmhouse, walk to Sara's Crag (the Rock of Names), look at the letters which Coleridge carved in the morning, Dorothy kisses them, Wordsworth deepens the T. 'We sate afterwards on the wall, seeing the sun go down & the reflections in the still water.' It is after that that Coleridge starts 'chearfully' for Keswick, 'hopping up upon the Side stones'.

The Wordsworths, going back to Grasmere down the Raise, meet the woman with two little girls, the elder about 4, wearing slippers down at heel that had belonged to a gentleman's child. The woman was first in a fury, then in tears, pursuing her husband who had 'gone off with another woman'. 'She was a Cockermouth woman', and Dorothy now squeezes in an insertion

[2] Quotations from the Alfoxden Journal are taken from *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth* ed. Ernest de Selincourt (2 vols., London, 1941).

[3] 'Essay upon Epitaphs iii', *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth* ed. W. J. B. Owen and Jane Worthington Smyser (3 vols., Oxford, 1974), ii. 84-5.

that invites comparison of their two feminine fortunes: '30 years of age a child at Cockermouth when I was'. 'I was moved', she continues, '& gave her a shilling'; she quickly recovers from such generosity, 'I believe 6ᵈ more than I ought to have given.' Evening was upon them.

> We had the Crescent moon with the 'auld moon in her arms' – We rested often: – always upon the Bridges. Reached home at about 10 o clock. The Lloyds had been here in our absence. We went soon to bed. I repeated verses to William while he was in bed – he was soothed & I left him. 'This is the Spot' over & over again.

And after this Dorothy probably wrote the day's entry before sleeping herself.

All through the entry the light and texture of the passing day is present: the hot morning, the need to rest, the sunshine in strong contrast to the single mass of darkness created by the crag and its shadow, the looking in vain for a shade elsewhere than at the foot of the great, possibly dangerous crag. Before they climb the hill, Dorothy's eye, and ours, mounts to above the crag where the bird was flying round and round, becoming moth-like to the sight. The central activities of the friends repeating verses, resting by the river, eating, drinking brandy, drinking tea, deepening carved stone letters, all take place in a hot noon and afternoon and in a setting of height that rises into sky where a bird flies transformed into transparency. The friends then sit and watch the sun go down, watch its reflections in still water; Wordsworth and Dorothy walk back under a crescent moon, resting always on bridges, where again there is water and light connecting earth and sky. In so many entries in the Journal – and obviously in Wordsworth's poetry – human activities take on something special, especially natural, something of the spirit even, because they have their being in a setting bigger and more permanent than the indoors and the domestic. Lines of light that reach up and down to sun, moon, stars, cloud and water connect the human with the eternal. One recalls the little Boats that rowed out of Calais harbour in August 1802 with wings of fire, and the sail boats with their fiery track that broke into 'a hundred thousand sparkles balls shootings, & streams of glow-worm light'; they make a brilliant connection in light with the Evening Star seen far off in the west over England, seen also in the reflections in the water. The streams of glow worm light rising from a boat's wash must reach back for Dorothy to the tiny points of light of glow worms on English soil (and in Wordsworth's poetry) and their shootings bring the stars to mind. Wordsworth's young French daughter, Caroline, like the reader, 'was delighted'. The last light, back in the entry now for 4 May, is that of the crescent moon with the 'auld moon in her arms'. This quotation from the ballad, 'Sir Patrick Spens', completes the entry's account of the huge heavenly movement from sun to moon that gives a grandeur of dimension to the local Wytheburn and Grasmere valleys.

The quotation reminds us also of how Dorothy Wordsworth was a witness to and a participant in the imaginative interaction between Wordsworth and Coleridge. The Journal continues, as ever, to be written in the midst of, and as part of, a poetic dialogue: 27 March, Wordsworth's verses of loss which constitute the beginning of the 'Immortality Ode', 'There was a time . . .'; 21 April, Wordsworth and Dorothy hear the Verse Letter to Sara, later 'Dejection', Coleridge's sad poem of particular and personal loss; 4 May, as recorded in this entry, Coleridge probably heard Wordsworth repeat the first version of 'The Leech-Gatherer', itself a kind of reply to Coleridge's Verse Letter to Sara. That Coleridge's poem is in Dorothy's mind, as it undoubtedly was in Wordsworth's, is clear from her reference to the moon on 4 May. She uses – and never before had she been literary about the new moon – a phrase from 'The Ballad of Sir Patrick Spens'. 'We had the Crescent moon with the "auld moon in her arms"'. Coleridge, in the recent Verse Letter to Sara, had said of the new moon, 'I see the Old Moon in her Lap'. Dorothy, half-using, half-correcting this, returns to something very close to Percy: her crescent moon has the

old moon 'in her arms'. The double literary allusion, to Coleridge and to Percy, whose collection of ballads she knew well, is testimony to her alertness to the allusive compositions of Coleridge. And, of course, she responded similarly to Wordsworth's writing. Her moon of the next two days, 5 and 6 May, is first 'a Boat without the Circle', and then 'a perfect Boat a silver Boat', and here clearly is a reference to *Peter Bell*, but not suddenly to the poem of 1798, rather to the allusions to *Peter Bell* in Coleridge's Verse Letter; there, to Coleridge's dulled feelings, the crescent moon, its shape just like the little boat so bright and quick to sail amongst the stars in Wordsworth's poem, is, alas, 'A boat becalmed! dear William's Sky-Canoe'.

The entry ends at home, where it began (its structure not unlike that of the Conversation Poems), with Wordsworth about to sleep, soothed by Dorothy's repeating verses to him, 'This is the Spot', over and over again. These verses that soothed Wordsworth towards sleep on 4 May 1802 were verses, or variants of verses, written in Goslar in 1798-9:

> This is the spot:- how mildly does the Sun
> Shine in between these fading leaves! the air
> In the habitual silence of this wood
> Is more than silent: and this bed of heath
> Where shall we find so sweet a resting-place!
> Come! – let me see thee sink into a dream
> Of quiet thoughts, – protracted till thine eye
> Be calm as water, when the winds are gone
> And no one can tell whither. – My sweet Friend!
> We two have had such happy hours together
> That my heart melts in me to think of it.

The lines are about quiet thoughts and calmness, and a happy relationship. If Dorothy Wordsworth, as Coleridge suggested, had some connection with the group of Lucy poems written also in that German winter, then she was probably the companion addressed in these lines, for the original version of 'This is the Spot' is part of a draft expansion of 'Nutting'. 'Nutting', Wordsworth's lines on his own boyhood violence in ravaging a grove of hazel trees for their nuts, was sent, along with two of the Lucy poems, and the early *Prelude* passages on skating and boat-stealing, to Coleridge (then in Ratzeburg) in December 1798. In the draft expansion (or possibly discarded introduction) of 'Nutting', also written in 1798, the maiden, exhorted at the end of 'Nutting' to be gentle towards the hazels ('with gentle hand / Touch, – for there is a Spirit in the woods') is seen at the draft beginning of the poem violent herself, crashing down hazel branches with flushed cheek and a 'Keen look / Half cruel in its eagerness'. It is she, in danger of repeating Wordsworth's own boyhood violence and consequent remorse, who needs, in the poet's view, to be made tranquil:

> Come rest on this light bed of purple heath,
> And let me see thee sink into a dream
> Of gentle thoughts, protracted till thine eye
> Be calm as water when the winds are gone . . .

That first 'Keen look / Half cruel in its eagerness' could, in a different mood, be 'the shooting lights' of Dorothy Wordsworth's 'wild eyes' of 'Tintern Abbey', fit Coleridge's sense of her alert

eyes, 'watchful in minutest observation of nature', or confirm De Quincey's description of her eyes as 'wild and startling, and hurried in their motion'.[4]

The interesting thing is that Dorothy repeats to Wordsworth 'over & over again' on 4 May verses that had been written with her in mind.

My sweet Friend!
We two have had such happy hours together
That my heart melts in me to think of it.

The acknowledgement of affection is for her, and that straightforward language of feeling is one that Dorothy herself uses. In their shared happiness, for example, that at last, in the June of that same year, and in time for Wordsworth's marriage, the money owed the Wordsworths by their long dead father's now dead employer, Sir James Lowther, was to be paid, they, wrote Dorothy, 'talked sweetly together' and 'lay upon the sloping Turf. Earth & sky were so lovely that they melted our very hearts'. For Dorothy to repeat 'This is the Spot' over and over again to Wordsworth on the night of 4 May 1802 when he was troubled by Coleridge's devastating 'Verses to Sara' and by his own answering composition of 'The Leech Gatherer' was effective in soothing him, and, incidentally, it must have soothed her. The verses are about a loving relationship. They even echo in rhythm a line from one of the great love poems of the late sixteenth century:

Where can we find a better hemisphere
Without sharp north, without declining west . . .

'Where shall we find so sweet a resting-place', demands Wordsworth, but then breaks away from Donne's lyrical tone into the conversational

Come! – let me see thee sink into a dream.

Right through 1802, until it took place in October, Wordsworth's imminent marriage was a factor, and Dorothy, addressing Mary in a letter of 16 April as 'My dearest Mary', 'Mary, my dear Sister . . .', nevertheless, while truly loving Mary, needed reassurance that she was loved too. Having verses by heart and repeating over and over again lines declaring affection and delight in her would help her to peace as well as Wordsworth.

Three weeks earlier she had derived a similar delight and, no doubt, comfort from repeating Wordsworth's poetry. On 16 April, when Dorothy wrote to Mary as her 'dear Sister', she told Mary about the two days' walk along Ullswater and over Kirkstone from Eusemere to Grasmere, and she ended: 'Dear Mary, we are glad to be at home. No fireside is like this. Be chearful in the thought of coming to it.' But in the letter, though she spoke about the 'furious wind' that 'sometimes almost took our breath away', she made no mention of the daffodils and the exhilaration of their wild tossing and reeling in the wind, nor did she include the fact, recorded in the Journal, that walking alone for a short time by Brothers Water, she 'repeated the Glowworm as I walked along – I hung over the gate & thought I could have stayed for ever'. She had learnt the poem immediately, Wordsworth having composed it on horseback on his journey back to Eusemere from visiting Mary only four days previously. Dorothy heard it perhaps two days before happily repeating it on the walk. It is based on a delicate and loving gesture that took place between the brother and sister at Racedown, years before in 1795. The poet finds a single glowworm and carries it some distance and carefully in storm to the orchard of his love's house, and in one ver-

[4] 'Literary Reminiscences: William Wordsworth', *Collected Writings of De Quincey* ed. David Masson (14 vols., Edinburgh, 1889), ii. 238.

sion she is a maiden called Lucy who 'had noted well the stars'. He had the joy of bringing Lucy for the first time to see a glowworm 'that shone beneath the Tree'. Written for Dorothy while he was returning in 1802 from visiting Mary, it was clearly reassuring to his sister, and Dorothy twice records repeating it. In the face of these poems, a massive insistence that love for her would not diminish, she can declare, three weeks later, that she will be able to surmount some loss of physical attractiveness: 'My Tooth broke today. They will soon be gone. Let that pass I shall be beloved – I want no more' (31 May).

Further, in recording that Wordsworth was soothed by having verses repeated to him over and over again, Dorothy illustrates a characteristic of her own writing that leads us to say of her language that, in Wordsworth's words, it can 'uphold, and feed, and leave in quiet, like the power of gravitation or the air we breathe.' That characteristic is repetition. Like life, and offering us something as natural as the power of gravitation, the Journal is full of repeated actions – bakings of pies and bread, walks, readings, visits, repeated weathers and seasons and images. But they are repetitions with variation, not inert samenesses. The bird of 4 May, for instance, that 'was flying round & round & looked in thinness & transparency, shape & motion, like a moth' is, as an image, related to the ravens of three days before (1 May), which

> flew high high in the sky & the sun shone upon their bellys & their wings long after there was none of his light to be seen but a little space on the top of Loughrigg Fell.

In its transparency and its likeness to a moth that bird is related also to the crows of two weeks before, the crows of 16 April seen during that walk over Kirkstone:

> We watched the Crows at a little distance from us become white as silver as they flew in the sunshine, & when they went still further they looked like shapes of water passing over the green fields.

These movements from weighty black physical birds to light, to moths, to shapes of water, we come to recognise as an aspect of Dorothy's way of seeing. When she speaks later of a literal shape of water in rainy July there is almost a comic reversal of the soaring lightness of her treatment of birds:

> The Rain met us at the top of the White Moss & it came on very heavily afterwards. It drove past Nab Scar in a substantial shape, as if going Grasmere-wards as fast as it could go. (6 July)

The rain here, in its substantial shape, puts on a bustling busy human purposiveness. The birds, on the other hand, have a metamorphosis into light, even into the mobile fluidity of such a concept as shapes of water moving in air. It is characteristic, and it pleases us in quietness without surprising, for each encounter with the birds reminds us of the others and strengthens that bringing us, in Wordsworth's words, 'into communion with the inner spirit of things'. As the black birds in flight retain and hold on to light and take on a transparency that is not to be seen when the birds are on the earth something different about them is suggested, their 'inner spirit' perhaps; certainly we receive a fresh perception. Yet it is a perception at once fresh and recognised – as is the way of all true images and writing – and Dorothy Wordsworth herself had come across it before: a kind of repetition. She was a writer, we cannot forget, who was in particularly close accord with Coleridge and Wordsworth. She may have first come to see birds in that transformed way when Coleridge arrived 'very hot' in Grasmere with the second volume of *The Annual Anthology* at the end of July 1800. The Wordsworths and Coleridge took out a boat and read

poems on the water. In that *Anthology* was 'This Lime-Tree Bower my Prison', with its final revised ending:

> when the last rook
> Beat its straight path along the dusky air
> Homewards, I blest it! deeming its black wing
> (Now a dim speck, now vanishing in light)
> Had crossed the mighty Orb's dilated glory . . .

The dusky air, the black wing, the dim speck, and the immediate vanishing into light across the sun's dilated glory is powerful as it is based upon opposition and contrast. There is much of this in the Journal; we become familiar with the balance of light and darkness:

> O the unutterable darkness of the sky & the Earth below the Moon! & the glorious brightness of the moon itself! There was a vivid sparkling streak of light at this end of Rydale water but the rest was very dark & Loughrigg fell & Silver How were white & bright as if they were covered with hoar frost. . . . no moonlight to be seen but upon the Island house & the promontory of the Island where it stands . . . this lowly Building in the waters among the dark & lofty hills, with that bright soft light upon it – it made me more than half a poet. (18 March 1802)

On this occasion Dorothy Wordsworth 'tried to write verses but alas!' Not surprisingly, at that time, 1802, when she was writing so freely and fully in prose, her verse (not extant but for three lines, see 17 March 1802) did not please her. Her natural prose rhythms fit her observations precisely; here, for example, the ending springs into a rhythm that dances compared to the slow, grave beginning, and there is the same sense of contrast, again connected to earth, sky and water.

> All was dark behind. The town of Calais seemed deserted of the light of heaven, but there was always light, & life, & joy upon the Sea.

Contrasts of darkness and light, sound and silence, movement and stillness, death and life even, abound. We remember the funeral at How Top (3 September 1800), with the dark house and the shining sun, the churchyard and the green fields. Of course Dorothy does not spell it out, but as the oppositions accumulate they amount to a way of seeing the world, a way of living: to be intensely happy,

> we sate in deep silence at the window – I on a chair & William with his hand on my shoulder. We were deep in Silence & Love, a blessed hour. (2 June 1802)

Or, in an opposite mood, to have a heart 'so full that I could hardly speak' and a flood of tears that had to come before 'my heart was easier' at Wordsworth's and John's setting off for Yorkshire and the Hutchinsons in May 1800. At the same time, alongside extremes, there is a persistent, agreeable, middling kind of ordinariness: after the intense sitting and the deep silence at the window Wordsworth and Dorothy 'drew to the fire . . . & ate some Broth for our suppers.'

A life lived for the most part in the same place with the same people about must involve repetition. Wordsworth was soothed by Dorothy's repeating to him 'over & over again', like an incantation, 'This is the Spot'. He himself hoped that his readers would be quietened into meditation by the incantatory sequences of phrases, words and images repeated with variations in his verse. The Journal has a not dissimilar effect. We are not surprised to meet the birch tree of 6 May 1802:

> The Birch Tree is all over green in *small* leaf. More light & elegant than when it is full out. It bent to the breezes as if for the love of its own delightful motions.

We are not surprised because we know the tree, and can identify it from its first mention the previous November:

> We stood a long time to look at the corner Birch tree, the wind was among the light thin twigs & they yielded to it this way & that. (17 November 1801)

By its second appearance it is 'our favorite Birch tree':

> it was yielding to the gusty wind with all its tender twigs, the sun shone upon it & it glanced in the wind like a flying sunshiny shower – it was a tree in shape with stem & branches but it was like a Spirit of water – The sun went in & it resumed its purplish appearance the twigs still yielding to the wind but not so visibly to us. (24 November 1801)

The wind's life, visible in the waving branches, and the metamorphosis across substances from wood to water, from stationary tree to flying sunshiny shower, from nature to spirit, to transcendence and the timeless – this is recognisable and characteristic; and we like the tree no less when it loses to Dorothy's sight its spiritual glory and 'resumes its purplish appearance'. We are simply glad to meet it again in May, bending 'to the breezes as if for the love of its own delightful motion.'

These are among the many repetitions that promote a feeling of stability and quietness. Even though Wordsworth and Dorothy go to France and London, Wordsworth is married, and they travel back from Yorkshire, stay in Keswick and at Eusemere for periods, still there is always the return to the same place. After the snow, mist, darkness and danger of the walk back from Eusemere by Grisedale Tarn in January 1802,

> O how comfortable & happy we felt ourselves sitting by our own fire. . . . We talked about the Lake of Como, read in the Descriptive Sketches, looked about us & felt that we were happy. We indulged all dear thoughts about home – poor Mary! we were sad to think of the contrast for her.

Dorothy Wordsworth went straight for the most basic of ancient images: home for her meant, in summer, their garden and its plants, every one of them familiar, and in winter, their own fireside. She describes the latter on 23 March, a day that Wordsworth, long before the cuckoo was heard in Grasmere, had been working on the Cuckoo poem, evoking the twofold wandering voice of the invisible bird of his boyhood:

> he came in rather tired with attempting to write – he is now reading Ben Jonson. I am going to read German it is about 10 o clock, a quiet night. The fire flutters & the watch ticks I hear nothing else save the Breathings of my Beloved & he now & then pushes his book forward & turns over a leaf.

The pattern of small sounds – the fire fluttering, the ticking watch, breathings, and a page being turned, even the reminiscence of 'Frost at Midnight' – establish the peace of people contented in silence by their different mental engagements at that fire-side. By the end of the year Mary is Wordsworth's wife, '½ past 10 o'clock' on Christmas Eve, the night before Dorothy Wordsworth's thirty-first birthday, they sit by the same fire, Dorothy 'running the heel of a stocking', repeating Wordsworth's sonnets and reading Milton. 'It is a quiet keen frost'. Mary, attending to the baking of cakes, 'is well & I am well'. The domestic rhythms have been re-established, and

the regular routines of walks and bakings resumed. The extreme urgencies behind Dorothy's short dramatic sentences of July when she and Wordsworth left Grasmere for the long wedding journey via France have gone. Then it was,

> O beautiful place! – Dear Mary William – The horse is come Friday morning, so I must give over. William is eating his Broth – I must prepare to go – The Swallows I must leave them the well the garden the Roses all – Dear creatures!! they sang last night after I was in bed – seemed to be singing to one another, just before they settled to rest for the night. Well I must go – Farewell. – (8 July)

On the return in October their first action was to go by candlelight into the garden and register the growth. After the next day's unpacking and baking, Dorothy and Mary 'walked, first upon the Hill side & then in John's Grove, then in view of Rydale, the first walk that I had taken with my Sister.' These are favourite paths. Dorothy and Mary walked them again some days later (for Dorothy had been upstairs for a week with toothache); they walked 'to the top of the hill & looked at Rydale. I was much affected when I stood upon the 2nd bar of Sara's Gate . . .' (31 October). She was affected because they were repeating something: she and Mary had stood at Sara's Gate a long time the year before when Mary was visiting (18 November 1801), and Dorothy had noted then the peace and the sweet sound of water falling into the quiet lake. A year later, Mary was Wordsworth's wife, and Dorothy for the first time was alone with her in the house, Wordsworth having gone for a few days to Keswick. The two women walked, and stood at the same gate, and Dorothy again noted aspects of the landscape that were beautiful: how the 'distant Birch trees looked like large golden Flowers'; she noted the still lake, how the sun shone, and how the colours seemed to be melted into one another and yet 'when one tried to find it out' there was 'endless variety'. Mary, there with her for the second time, was part, now, of that pattern of repetitions and recognitions that is the staple both of Dorothy's life and of the Journal. That same evening she and Mary 'sate nicely together after Tea looking over old Letters'.

Old letters shared with Mary in late autumn 1802. 'My old Journal' taken out on Christmas Eve 1801 (Dorothy's birthday was Christmas Day) and 'Thoughts of last year' shared then, as she, Wordsworth and again Mary – on that winter visit – 'sate comfortably round the fire in the Evening'. This becomes ritual on repetition in 1802. The road on the drive back to Grasmere from Yorkshire in October was interesting, 'every foot of it', to Dorothy and Wordsworth because they had walked along it in July, 'when we went to fetch our dear Mary'. They stayed at the same inn in Helmsley and Dorothy's heart danced at the sight of it; they saw 'again the little path which we had walked upon, the gate I had climbed over'; at Wensley Dorothy recognised 'the Bridge, the little water-spout the steep hill, the Church', her 'dear recollections' and 'among the most vivid of my own inner visions'; 'my heart was melted away'. At Aysgarth they

> saw the pathway which Wm & I took at the close of Evening, the path leading to the Rabbit Warren where we lost ourselves. The farm with its holly hedges was lost among the green hills & hedgerows in general, but we found it out & were glad to look at it again.

The feeling here and the details – the holly hedges lost among the hedgerows in general – call to mind Wordsworth's revisited landscape on the banks of the Wye above Tintern where the plots of cottage-ground, the orchard tufts 'Among the woods and copses lose themselves', and where the hedgerows are 'hardly hedge-rows'. In Yorkshire the delight in revisiting – and only after three months – is shared with Wordsworth: they were 'glad to look at it again'.

Dorothy Wordsworth's gladness to look at things again permeates the Journal. It was pleasant to her, when they reached harbour in Dover, 'to breathe the fresh air, & to look up and see the

stars among the Ropes of the vessel.' She was back on the English coast that she had seen from France 'far off in the west', 'like a cloud crested with Dover Castle which was but like the summit of the cloud – the Evening star & glory of the sky'. The stars were familiar; they poised themselves 'on the points of the high hills' round Grasmere; they came out 'by ones & twos' as she and Wordsworth walked on the path behind John's Grove, and they were there among the ropes of the vessel in Dover. The same waters and hills are described under different lights which are yet the same light as the seasons come round. The same roads are walked, the same people visited, very often the same books read: Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton. We almost expect to meet the Cockermouth woman raging along the road with her two little girls in pursuit of her husband, for when Dorothy and Wordsworth walked it was their habit to stop and hear the (usually unfortunate) tales of travellers. This Cockermouth woman is one with the woman who was once an officer's wife, with the beggar woman with the gay butterfly-chasing boys, the widow with good clothes, the wife 'fagging up the hill' carrying a Bairn behind the Carman. Once she is literally the same woman, the woman with the pretty little boy whom Dorothy and Wordsworth had first met in June 1800 near Skelwith Bridge when the little boy had been 'walking lazily in the deep narrow lane overshadowed with the hedge-rows'. The mother had often, Dorothy wrote nearly two years later, been a-begging at the Wordsworths' cottage at Town End, and in February 1802 she looked 'broken', her home had been unroofed in a recent storm, her husband injured, and the little boy 'whom I have loved for the sake of Basil', wrote Dorothy, was scarcely grown from the summer meeting of 1800 and, tellingly Dorothy observed, and remembered, was still wearing the same drab coat. The ragman, the old sailor, the discharged soldier with one leg, the sailor who had been pressed, the old man who had been a servant of the Marquis of Granby, all of these outsiders, tramps and poor travellers of the road, different and yet the same, reappear in the Journal. As Dorothy herself says of the mother of the pretty little boy become in 1802 a 'poor little fellow', 'This woman's was but a *common* case'. Repeatedly the hard lives of others cannot be ignored. There was hardly need to be on the road, or to ask questions; Dorothy could see poverty through the window. One winter evening she caught sight of a travelling family. She did not speak to them; they did not tell their story; yet perhaps because they are not particularised by words and histories, they become, in Dorothy's picture of them, all the more impressive as a type or emblem of impoverished and struggling humanity:

> The snow still lies upon the ground. Just at the closing in of the Day I heard a cart pass the door, & at the same time the dismal sound of a crying Infant. I went to the window & had light enough to see that a man was driving a cart which seemed not to be very full, & that a woman with an infant in her arms was following close behind & a dog close to her. It was a wild and melancholy sight. – (12 February 1802)

That night, as though rebuked, Dorothy and Wordsworth worked hard. 'I almost finished writing The Pedlar but poor William wore himself & me out with Labour.'

The Journal of 1802 tells us about that labour; it tells us about the imagination and the composition of poetry. Many stories were set down by Dorothy, many poor people perhaps talked to and recorded because Wordsworth had declared his interest in tracing the primary laws of our nature, our essential nature, more plainly visible, in his view, among persons of 'low and rustic life' whose 'passions . . . are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature'. She sets down the story of Barbara Wilkinson's Turtle Dove at Wordsworth's request; writes down the story told to Wordsworth and retold to her of the child Alice Fell and her torn cloak, the story that Aggy Fisher told Wordsworth about the woman who buried four grown children in one year but who could 'trip lightly' by their graves with a light step because those dead children never

reached that stage when 'their duty to their parents "*wears out & weakens*"'. These encounters were not Wordsworth's or Dorothy's own. There is more detail when one or both of them had met the storyteller and Wordsworth in all likelihood had expressed an interest in preserving some flavour of the meeting. Dorothy's careful account of the leech gatherer is such a case. She had not written her description of the old man immediately on returning to Journal-keeping after some days' neglect in October 1800. She wrote it only after walking with Wordsworth when 'he talked much about the object of his Essay for the 2nd volume of LB' (3 October 1800). They had both met the leech gatherer the week before and the details, and even some of the phrases in Dorothy's account, could have come out of a shared memory and conversation. Whether Wordsworth refreshed his memory by looking at the Journal eighteen months later on 3 May 1802, when writing 'The Leech-Gatherer', the poem that became 'Resolution and Independence', we do not know. If he did, some of the phrases that he perhaps took over into the poem were excised from the revised version. We recall that reading from her Journal was not necessarily helpful to Wordsworth. Having 'half cast' the poem 'Beggars' as he and Dorothy walked from Rydal in March 1802, he was not helped by hearing Dorothy read aloud her own 1800 account (and this, too, incidentally, had been written, not when Dorothy had first met the woman and her boys, but two weeks later when Wordsworth returned from Yorkshire and they talked).

> After tea I read to William that account of the little Boys belonging to the tall woman & an unlucky thing it was for he could not escape from those very words, & so he could not write the poem, he left it unfinished & went tired to Bed. In our walk from Rydale he had got warmed with the subject & had half cast the Poem. (13 March 1802)

Wordsworth's imagination seems to kindle into creative life – and 'kindle' is a word of Dorothy's – more from conversation with Dorothy and less from the written words (though he must have remembered overnight one written detail: the hat of the elder of the two boys is 'wreathed round with yellow flowers' in both Journal and poem (10 June 1800)). The kindling out of conversation happens almost as we read the Journal for 14 March 1802, the day after Wordsworth's inability to finish 'Beggars':

> . . . before he rose he had finished the Beggar Boys – & while we were at Breakfast that is (for I had Breakfasted) he, with his Basin of Broth before him untouched & a little plate of Bread & butter he wrote the Poem to a Butterfly! – He ate not a morsel, nor put on his stockings but sate with his shirt neck unbuttoned, & his waistcoat open while he did it. The thought first came upon him as we were talking about the pleasure we both always feel at the sight of a Butterfly. I told him that I used to chase them a little but that I was afraid of brushing the dust off their wings, & did not catch them – He told me how they used to kill all the white ones when he went to school because they were frenchmen.

The poem takes off from this conversation (which itself probably sprang from talking about the butterfly-chasing boys of 'Beggars', finished that very morning). Wordsworth's butterfly is more than a source of present pleasure; it is a key into the past. Dorothy's detail becomes the climax of the poem and evokes the boy's primal aggression and the girl's tenderness. The boy was a 'very hunter' of the butterfly:

> But she, God love her! feared to brush
> The dust from off its wings.

That detail gives point to the whole poem. Wordsworth knew, as we all do, the value of the particular in defining the universal. The particular is Dorothy Wordsworth's strength.

Besides noting stories for possible poems, Dorothy recorded some of Wordsworth's isolated observations; Wordsworth, after all, did not keep a notebook, as Coleridge did. Her account of the stars one summer evening leads to her remembering an observation of Wordsworth's. She and Wordsworth walked out on 13 June 1802: '. . . we walked a good while – It was a silent night. The stars were out by ones & twos but no cuckow, no little Birds . . .'. Clearly here she recalls Wordsworth's lines of the previous Tuesday:

> The Sun has long been set:
> The Stars are out by twos and threes;
> The little Birds are piping yet
> Among the bushes and trees;
> There's a Cuckoo, and one or two thrushes . . .

The stars and Dorothy's echo of Wordsworth's rhythms and phrases, her 'The stars were out by ones & twos', lead her to recall a comment of his about the moon: 'William observed that the full moon above a dark firgrove is a fine image of the descent of a superior being' (13 June 1802). Indeed it is, and in a kind of way Wordsworth had used the image before, in one of the Goslar-written Lucy poems, 'Strange fits of passion'; there, the moon appeared suddenly to drop behind Lucy's cottage-roof as the poet approached, and he immediately feared, irrationally, yet understandably, her death – in a way, the descent of a superior being, in Lucy's case, into darkness. On another occasion, 23 April 1802, 'William observed that the umbrella Yew tree that breasts the wind had lost its character as a tree & had become something like to solid wood.' Again, a perceptive observation, and one, almost a repetition, that Wordsworth has approached before to describe a tree that breasts the wind, the enduring thorn of 1798 that has become less tree than stone,

> like a stone
> With lichens it is overgrown.
>
> Like rock or stone, it is o'ergrown
> With lichens to the very top.

'The clouds moved as William observed', writes Dorothy on 24 April 1802, 'in one regular body, like a multitude in motion, a sky all clouds over, not one cloud'. The cloud that 'moveth altogether if it move at all' of next week's 'Leech-Gatherer' is a related observation. On Monday, 8 March, Dorothy re-described the moon that she had seen on Friday, 5 March, when she had noted only, 'Beautiful new moon over Silver How'. That moon is expanded on Monday, and this must be because she and Wordsworth had by then talked about it. On Monday Dorothy wrote:

> On friday Evening the Moon hung over the Northern side of the highest point of Silver How, like a gold ring snapped in two & shaven off at the Ends it was so narrow. Within this Ring lay the Circle of the Round moon, as *distinctly* to be seen as ever the enlightened moon is – William had observed the same appearance at Keswick perhaps at the very same moment hanging over the Newlands fells.

As they inhabit each other's concerns and conversation and are creative in repetition, so is Wordsworth's poetry continuously present to their thoughts. Walking 'very wet' along 'the clashy cold roads' of 8 February 1802 towards Rydal for letters, Wordsworth and Dorothy met the letter-carrier, 'our patient bow-bent Friend with his little wooden box at his Back', and so, thankfully, they could turn and take their letters home. Dorothy thinks of the hard lot of the letter-

carrier: 'he goes at that slow pace every morning . . . returns at night, however weary he may be, takes it all quietly.'

> Thus, from day to day
> Bowbent, his eyes for ever on the ground,
> He plies his weary journey.

These last lines are from 'The Old Cumberland Beggar' of 1798 but they must inform Dorothy's characterisation in 1802 of their 'patient, bow-bent Friend', so patient in his weariness that to Dorothy he seemed 'mechanized to labour'. And somewhere behind Wordsworth's bowbent old man is, conceivably, Milton's 'Sybil old, bow-bent with crooked age',[5] and not far ahead is undoubtedly that body more than bowbent, the body 'bent double, feet and head / Coming together in life's pilgrimage', the body of that greatest exemplar of patience and perseverance, the leech gatherer.

The Journal sometimes tells us directly about composition, as when we learn of the order and original dates of composition of, say, among other poems, 'To the Cuckoo', 'Repentance', 'The Rainbow' and that 'part of an ode' of 27 March, those first stanzas, fortunately composed before Mr Olliff sent the Dung and 'Wm went to work in the garden' (Mr Olliff had offered Dorothy the manure ten days earlier); or directly again, as when on 21 May Dorothy read Milton's sonnets to Wordsworth and he straightaway wrote, she says, two sonnets on Buonaparte. We can also learn of composition more obliquely. After tea on 2 February Wordsworth and Dorothy wept when 'I read aloud the 11th Book of Paradise Lost we were much impressed & also melted into tears'. This allows us to understand something of the composition of Wordsworth's 'The Redbreast and the Butterfly' on 18 April. The day before, 17 April, Dorothy had noticed 'a Robin chacing a scarlet Butterfly' and this leads Wordsworth to comment in his poem on such aggression:

> Could Father Adam open his eyes
> And see this sight beneath the skies,
> He'd wish to close them again.

Father Adam in Book XI of *Paradise Lost*, at which the Wordsworths had wept in February, had been 'not unmoved' when he saw, for the first time, as a result of his and Eve's fall, the new mute signs in nature that announced violence: the eagle that 'stooped from his aery tow'r' and 'Two birds of gayest plume before him drove', the lion pursuing 'a gentle brace / Goodliest of all the forest, hart and hind' (*Paradise Lost* xi 185-9). Dorothy had merely seen a robin chasing a butterfly: the robin is neither eagle nor lion, but garden nature at its most domestic. Nevertheless, Wordsworth's reference to Father Adam, and Dorothy's comment on their reaction to *Paradise Lost* Book XI helps us to understand the emotion behind 'The Redbreast and the Butterfly' and the genesis of its composition.

Variously, the recording of reading illuminates composition. The 'reading the Life & some of the writings of poor Logan' on 3 June, for example, in volume 11 of Anderson's *British Poets*, reminds us that Logan's life of elation and depression and his death in 1788 at the age of 30, possibly from alcohol, makes him fit into that company of unhappy poets whose fate oppressed Wordsworth in his current composition, 'The Leech-Gatherer'. Further, though we might have gathered from Wordsworth's 'To the Cuckoo' that he knew Logan's charming 'Ode to the Cuck-

[5] 'At a Vacation Exercise', 69.

oo', Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal confirms the interest in Logan, and incidentally demonstrates her own strong response to poetry that expresses yearning: the only line of Logan's she quotes on 3 June, and declares to be one of 'many affecting lines and passages' is

> And everlasting longings for the lost.

Yet immediately after reading Logan that afternoon Dorothy read to Wordsworth Milton's more sombre *Il Penseroso*, a bracing poem on solitude and thoughtful feeling, and surely a tonic after Logan's

> What voice [can] console the incessant sigh
> And everlasting longings for the lost

Another aspect of Wordsworth's composition that we learn about in the Journal is the pains of it, particularly the pains of revision. Wordsworth made himself unwell throughout February working at, altering and refitting 'The Pedlar', and Dorothy was at times worn out with the Labour of copying. Conversely, we learn indirectly how the poetry fed into Dorothy's composition: why, on the day that Coleridge 'repeated the verses he wrote to Sara', 21 April 1802, Dorothy described her 'miserable spirits' on hearing the poem in quite the way she does:

> The sunshine – the green fields & the fair sky made me sadder; even the little happy sporting lambs seemed but sorrowful to me.

The sunshine's glorious birth, the single Field, the fair waters on a starry night, the young lambs bounding of the 'Immortality Ode', all these for Wordsworth had lost their glory and freshness, and for Coleridge, the sky, 'excellently fair', was a blank. These become literal in Dorothy's list – actual green fields, fair sky and little happy sporting lambs but they come from the two interconnected poems, and thus a whole complex of loss lies behind her miserable spirits. The poems are clearly still in her mind the next day when she retreats to the single holly behind that single Rock in the field – recalling Wordsworth's 'single Field'. But the miserable spirits of all three do not last, and Dorothy, as always, registers the truth. Coleridge, on the day after reading the verses that became 'Dejection', 'talked of his plan of sowing the Laburnum in the woods', and Wordsworth spent some time 'flinging Stones into the River', and observing, as he must have reported to Dorothy, who noted it down, 'the dying away of the stunning of the Waterfall when he came behind a stone' (22 April 1802).

Altogether, one can say that the Journal of 1802 demonstrates how Dorothy's imagination finds a dwelling-place, is at home within poetry, mainly the poetry of Wordsworth and Coleridge, and how Wordsworth in particular has a freedom for his inspiration within her words, spoken, possibly written. Within entries the movement from weather to work, from people to places to poetry, from walking to washing to baking, from flowers to feelings, from birds to bread, from reading to planting, the movements from trivial to significant are without transition, without preparation, and ultimately we do not want the best extracts from the Journal. We need it all, in its anyhow order: sometimes in brief with a domestic imagery – as when Dorothy describes Thomas Wilkinson's catechising of her when she wanted to finish reading her letter from William and Mary, presumably about their marriage plans: 'every question was like the snapping of a little thread about my heart' – sometimes at length and with a domestic imagery, as when, on 15 April, the wild daffodils are evoked,

> . . . so beautiful they grew among the mossy stones about & about them, some rested their heads upon these stones as on a pillow for weariness & the rest tossed & reeled & danced . . .

Dorothy expands this last image of dancing and creates a social occasion where wind and flowers are in celebratory movement:

> . . . tossed & reeled & danced & seemed as if they verily laughed with the wind that blew upon them over the Lake, they looked so gay ever glancing ever changing. This wind blew directly over the Lake to them. There was here & there a little knot & a few stragglers a few yards higher up but they were so few as not to disturb the simplicity & unity & life of that one busy highway –

The mention of the 'few stragglers' is typical of Dorothy. Her descriptions are honest. It was not in fact a single host, a total laughing company of ten thousand dancing flowers as Wordsworth has it in his own remembered, re-created image in 'I wandered lonely as a cloud' of almost two years later; the daffodils actually grew untidily as wild daffodils will. 'There are forty feeding like one' writes Wordsworth grandly in his joyful singing verses beginning 'The cock is crowing', verses he wrote on the walk back from Ullswater to Grasmere. Dorothy, when she described the walk in her Journal on returning home, preferred accuracy. She remembered 'a flat pasture with 42 cattle feeding'. She had gone to the trouble to count them; Wordsworth rounds her figure down. They had clearly talked. Although Dorothy in her later prose account recalls Wordsworth's rhythms – 'cocks crowing, birds twittering, the snow in patches at the top of the highest hills' – she may also have contributed to them:

> The cock is crowing,
> The stream is flowing,
> The small birds twitter . . .

for she came upon Wordsworth in mid-composition. It is the unrecorded conversations that we cannot retrieve, that talking that must often have gone before the writing down by either, at a first or at a later stage. Dorothy's own of course is her insistent honesty: not only respecting the 42 cattle but the nuance that could have no place in Wordsworth's song of celebration: the two girls, one with two pitchforks and the other with a spade, who had laughed aloud just after the Words-worths passed them, 'perhaps half in wantonness, half boldness'. Dorothy has a concern for what really happened.

She has a concern for the specific. Particular swallows build at Dorothy's bedroom window, making

> a little chearful song hanging against the panes of glass, with their soft white bellies close to the glass, & their forked fish-like tails. They swim round & round & again they come.

Nine days later, on 25 June, 'I looked up at my Swallow's nest & it was gone. It had fallen down', and Dorothy recalls how she had watched the birds

> early in the morning, in the day many & many a time & in the evenings when it was almost dark I had seen them sitting together side by side in their unfinished nest both morning & night.

She remembers how she had first seen them hanging 'against the panes, with their white Bellies & their forked tails looking like fish'. The swallows, however, built again and four days later Dorothy goes to see 'my swallows':

> . . . I will go & see if my swallows are on their nest. Yes! there they are side by side both looking down into the garden. I have been out on purpose to see their faces. I knew by looking at the window that they were there.

Dorothy did not forget them, although there is less personal involvement in her letter to Catherine Clarkson of June 1803, a year later:

> I am writing in my own room. Every now and then I hear the chirping of a little family of swallows that have their abode against the glass of my window. The nest was built last year, and it has been taken possession of again, about six weeks ago, needing no repairs whatever.

Nor do we forget them: we do not forget these particular swallows, their story interspersed amidst the Journal's ironing and rain and writing; and we cannot forget Dorothy's description of them; it is another metamorphosis. She plunges the birds into a different element: they are like fish, and they swim in air. They transcend their element, and their time. The waterfalls she and Wordsworth hear as they lie in April on the earth and simply listen are particular Grasmere waterfalls, with their different sounds, but they are more: they too move towards another element – 'it was a sound of waters in the air – the voice of the air.' 'Water into air.' The voice of Dorothy Wordsworth in the Journal of 1802 is full of differences and particulars, rich in specifics of biography and creativity, and moving often into transcendencies and the timeless. It is as multi-voiced and as elusive as those waterfalls. 'There was no one waterfall above another – it was a sound of waters in the air – the voice of the air.' One might call it a kind of complex music.

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Lamb, Coleridge, and the Electronic Revolution

By JOHN BEER

This article formed the basis of a talk given to the Charles Lamb Society in spring 1997.

SOME WEEKS BACK a journalist recorded how he had learned that British Telecom wished to give its customers help with talking on the telephone and had issued a short guide to conversation. He was intrigued enough to ring them and ask for a copy, whereupon he found himself connected to a talking machine, which invited him to press one of a choice of numbers. Since none was offering the service he wanted he pressed another, whereupon the voice replied, 'Sorry, you *must* press one of the numbers you have been given.' Eventually, after various delays, he found someone who could actually answer his call in person and be told that he wanted their guide on how to carry on a conversation. He also later discovered that British Telecom have a term for such a call when it is *not* answered by a machine. It is called a 'warm-bodied response'.

I begin with that story because it seems to illustrate very neatly a fact about our contemporary civilization. British Telecom is able to employ the most amazing electronic expertise. It can convey information at great speed and connect people with an ease that would have seemed unbelievable a few years ago, but it still has no control over the quality of the communications themselves, which may be declining sharply for all that they can tell. And if warm-bodied responses are increasingly replaced by dead recorded messages, that indeed seems very likely to happen.

Yet at the same time electronic engineers in other places are trying to achieve one aim above all, which is to produce a computer that would be indistinguishable from a human being. While thousands of people are at work on this project, a few others throughout the world are writing poetry; one of the things they are presumably trying to ensure is that it should not look as if it had been written by a computer. And somewhere along the line there are scholars like myself who believe that the engineers' aim will inevitably fail and are glad that it should be so. We believe, in other words, that while there are some operations of the human mind that the computer can not only mimic but do far better, more quickly and more accurately, there are some things that happen in the mind that no electronic wizardry could ever mime, being actions which belong to our biochemistry rather than to the impulses in our nerves. Unless one could additionally incorporate a biochemical system which would reproduce what happens in the human body, the computer must fail at this point and its limitations be established. The point is, I believe recognized by some of the engineers themselves.

This seems to me one of the most crucial facts of modern life, but it is one that we do not always openly acknowledge. It has its social implications in the increasing ascendancy of calculations when determining commercial decisions, so that the computer will show that it is economically more profitable to install machines to undertake industrial operations and make human beings unemployed but cannot be appalled by the human waste involved. It may also affect literary theory, so that judgments may be based on what can be computed rather than on a fully humanized response to a work. Literary criticism offers an unusually good chance to tease out these particular issues, and one of the reasons I have myself given up so much of my time to the writings of Coleridge is that he, above all writers in his time, seems to me to have been alive to them. It may seem perverse to see him as a prophet of the electronic age, yet some of his notebook comments indicate that he was in fact more perceptive about the general questions involved than we might at first think.

It is not my main business here, however, to argue for the prophetic intelligence of Coleridge, rather to suggest something of the effect he had on his contemporaries – and particularly, of

course, Charles Lamb. I am going to suggest that a sense of the various levels at which the mind can work was something that Lamb learnt from contact with his friend, and that it helps to account for some of the extraordinary subtlety of his writing. Consider the very opening paragraph of the *Essays of Elia*, for instance:

> READER, in thy passage from the Bank – where thou hast been receiving thy half-yearly dividends (supposing thou art a lean annuitant like myself) – to the Flower Pot, to secure a place for Dalston, or Shacklewell, or some other thy suburban retreat northerly, – didst thou never observe a melancholy looking, handsome, brick and stone edifice, to the left – where Threadneedle-street abuts upon Bishopsgate?[1]

The first point one observes in that opening paragraph is the way in which it begins immediately not as a set of detached observations, but as a conversation. Coleridge, who of course invented the term 'conversation poem', pioneered the informal method of writing in some poems of the 1790s, though conversation as such was not something he himself ever excelled at: he referred self-deprecatingly to his receptions at Highgate as '*one*versazion' and most of the works which tend to be referred to as his 'conversation poems' would be better described by the term he himself commonly used: 'meditative poems'. It is a notable feature of 'Frost at Midnight', for instance, that the baby addressed is asleep and so has no chance of responding by word or gesture; and we all know Lamb's story of how Coleridge one day met him and seized him by the coat button as he began to talk, and how Lamb being in a hurry took out his penknife and severed the button, returning an hour or two later to find Coleridge still holding forth to the button.

Lamb managed these things better, as his opening paragraph shows, but my point here is with the further mild implication in his address to the reader that the latter's mind is more likely to be on his own personal affairs than on noticing the buildings he passes on his way. There is something more: the difference Lamb establishes between the rather dead state that subsists in the imagined reader's mind as he walks through the city intent on his business calculations and the kind of life that can be created in it once the Southsea house has been turned from a hardly noticed façade into the building that once contained human beings. This is what we might truly call a warm bodied response, and Lamb is better at producing it than British Telecom.

The *Essays of Elia* came comparatively late in Lamb's career and Lamb's development during the years leading up to them is not always given the attention it deserves. It is a large topic, to which one would like to be able to devote more time, but here we may think primarily about the impact of Coleridge – particularly Coleridge in the time he spent in London during the first years of the eighteenth century. This is not a subject that is much considered, since Coleridge at this time is naturally thought of in the Lake District, living with his own family, and with the Wordsworths, and, after a year or two, with the Southeys as well. But in these, the earliest years of the century, there was an alternative setting for him in London. He even went so far as to envisage a line-up of people who might join him in becoming the new intellectual pioneers of the age. In a letter to Godwin he wrote '. . . let me tell you, Godwin! four such men as you, I, Davy, & Wordsworth, do not meet together in one house every day of the year – I mean, four men so distinct with so many sympathies.'[2]

[1] 'The South-Sea House', p. 1. All page references to the *Essays of Elia* are to the World's Classics edition (the best), ed. Jonathan Bate (Oxford 1987). The Flower Pot was a coaching-inn in Bishopsgate.

[2] *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* ed. E. L. Griggs (6 vols., Oxford, 1956-71) (hereafter Griggs), i. 588, letter of 21 May 1800. Cf. his remark to Davy on 1 January 1800: ' You, [& I,] & Godwin, & Shakespere, & Milton, with what an athanasiophagous Grin we shall march together – *we poets*:. . . – By the word athanasiophagous I mean

Coleridge's sense of a London circle centred partly in his long-standing friendship with Lamb, whom they all knew or came to know, and it is interesting to consider their concerns and the issues they were thinking about. The importance of Lamb's relationship with William Godwin, to take one instance, emerges when one considers that both were caught up in the world of drama at this time, both writing plays. To Wordsworth he was equally attracted, enjoying his one visit to the Lakes – even if he was later to be less at ease, increasingly repelled by his self-absorption and devaluation of Coleridge and the degree to which such attitudes were fostered by his immediate family. In 1800, however, this was a mere cloud on the horizon: Lamb could feel that he was caught up in absorbing developments.

In the past I have occasionally explored various aspects of his relationship with Coleridge;[3] I have also suggested that for many other writers as well an encounter with Coleridge seemed to bring on a spell of creativity – even if they might sometimes have to wait a few years for the chemistry to work. One of the most important reasons for this, I believe, was Coleridge's unusual aptitude in appreciating human psychology. He was not the first to show such an interest, obviously; but partly because of his own exceptionally well-endowed imagination he was always particularly perceptive about states of mind that operated beyond the strictly rational. And this, I would argue, had its effect on his friends, who in their turn became fascinated by such matters.

There is a good example of this in the critique of Scotsmen in the essay 'Imperfect Sympathies', where Lamb pours scorn on the 'perfect order and completeness' that he finds in the Scottish mind:

> You never witness his first apprehension of a thing. His understanding is always at its meridian – you never see the first dawn, the early streaks. – He has no falterings of self-suspicion. Surmises, guesses, misgivings, half-intuitions, self-consciousnesses, partial illuminations, dim instincts, embryo conceptions, have no place in his brain, or vocabulary. The twilight of dubiety never falls upon him. (pp. 68-9)

If one were looking for a literary source for that catalogue one would go first, I suppose, to Wordsworth's Immortality Ode, with its mention of 'blank misgivings' and 'high instincts'. But the figure who really stands behind this passage – and similar ones in Wordsworth – is, I suggest, Coleridge, who of all people in the age interested himself in such mental border countries.

In the *Essays of Elia* there are of course a number of references to Coleridge which bear witness to the way in which he haunted Lamb's mind, but there is one small group of essays in which he is particularly present. These are the ones entitled 'Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago', 'The Two Races of Men', and 'New Year's Eve'. They were produced in quick succession; after that the Coleridgean influence emerges more sporadically – in pieces such as 'Witches, and other Night-Fears', for example, where he describes how his nightmares were obsessed by a print from Stackhouse's *History of the Bible*, depicting Saul's visit to the Witch of Endor, and how his father later locked the book away when he had accidentally spoiled one of the illustrations:

> I was dreadfully alive to nervous terrors. The night-time solitude, and the dark, were my hell. The sufferings I endured in this nature would justify the expression. I never laid my head on my pillow, I suppose, from the fourth to the seventh or eighth year of my life – so

devouring Immortality by anticipation' (Griggs i. 557).

[3] See 'Coleridge and Lamb: the Central Themes', *CLB* NS 14 (April 1976) 109-123; 'Did Lamb understand Coleridge?' *CLB* NS 46 (October 1986) 232-49.

> far as memory serves in things so long ago – without an assurance, which realized its own prophecy, of seeing some frightful spectre. Be old Stackhouse then acquitted in part, if I say, that to his picture of the Witch raising up Samuel – (O that old man covered with a mantle!) I owe – not my midnight terrors, the hell of my infancy – but the shape and manner of their visitation. It was he who dressed up for me a hag that nightly sate upon my pillow – a sure bed-fellow, when my aunt or my maid was far from me. All day long, while the book was permitted me, I dreamed waking over his delineation, and at night (if I may use so bold an expression) awoke into sleep, and found the vision true. I durst not, even in the day-light, once enter the chamber where I slept, without my face turned to the window, aversely from the bed where my witch-ridden pillow was. – Parents do not know what they do when they leave tender babes alone to go to sleep in the dark. The feeling about for a friendly arm – the hoping for a familiar voice – when they wake screaming – and find none to soothe them – what a terrible shaking it is to their poor nerves! The keeping them up till midnight, through candle-light and the unwholesome hours, as they are called, – would, I am satisfied, in a medical point of view, prove the better caution. – That detestable picture, as I have said, gave the fashion to my dreams – if dreams they were – for the scene of them was invariably the room in which I lay. (p. 77)

Interestingly, there is a similar story in Coleridge's account of his own early life:

> And then I found the Arabian Nights' entertainments – one tale of which (the tale of a man who was compelled to seek for a pure virgin) made so deep an impression on me (I had read it in the evening while my mother was mending stockings) that I was haunted by spectres, whenever I was in the dark – and I distinctly remember the anxious & fearful eagerness, with which I used to watch the window, in which the books lay – & whenever the Sun lay upon them, I would seize it, carry it by the wall, & bask, & read – . My Father found out the effect, which these books had produced – and burnt them.[4]

Despite the graphic description of his terrors of the time, it will be noticed, Lamb does not suggest that it would have been better if his parents had censored his reading. He argues, on the contrary, that if he had never come across them his imagination would still have found forms to fit them out with. Coleridge had a not dissimilar explanation of nightmare, arguing that if the body found itself in an unfamiliar state when asleep the imagination would then find an appropriate form, and so produce a nightmare.[5]

So far as I recall, Coleridge did not maintain that fictional horrors might actually have a virtue for children, but Wordsworth did. In *The Prelude* he described how he had once seen a drowned man being pulled from the lake at Esthwaite.

> At length the dead man, 'mid that beauteous scene
> Of trees and hills and water, bolt upright
> Rose with his ghastly face, a spectre shape –
> Of terror even. And yet no vulgar fear,
> Young as I was, a child not nine years old,
> Possessed me, for my inner eye had seen
> Such sights before among the shining streams

[4] Griggs i. 347, letter to Poole, 9 October 1797.

[5] *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* ed. Kathleen Coburn et al. (5 vols., Princeton, NJ, 1957-) (hereafter *Notebooks*), iii. 4046, discussed in my *Coleridge's Poetic Intelligence* (1977) p. 87.

> Of fairyland, the forests of romance –
> Thence came a spirit hallowing what I saw
> With decoration and ideal grace,
> A dignity, a smoothness, like the words
> Of Grecian art and purest poesy.[6]

In much the same way Lamb maintained that a child who was brought up in the modern way might still suffer badly from nightmares:

> Dear little T.H. who of all children has been brought up with the most scrupulous exclusion of every taint of superstition – who was never allowed to hear of goblin or apparition, or scarcely to be told of bad men, or to read or hear of any distressing story – finds all this world of fear, from which he has been so rigidly excluded *ab extra*, in his own 'thick-coming fancies;' and from his little midnight pillow, this nurse-child of optimism will start at shapes, unborrowed of tradition, in sweats to which the reveries of the cell-damned murderer are tranquillity. (pp. 77-8)

Again it is Wordsworth who comes to mind here, with his picture of the child educated in the ideal modern way:

> This model of a child is never known
> To mix in quarrels; that were far beneath
> His dignity; with gifts he bubbles o'er
> As generous as a fountain; selfishness
> May not come near him, nor the little throng
> Of flitting pleasures tempt him from his path;
> The wandering beggars propagate his name,
> Dumb creatures find him tender as a nun,
> And natural or supernatural fear,
> Unless it leap upon him in a dream,
> Touches him not.[7]

One notices the skill with which that parenthetic 'Unless', placed like a depth-charge in the run of the praise, finally establishes its ironic content. The parents can exercise full control over the child's environment, including its reading, but they cannot govern its dreams; the implication is that, as Wordsworth goes on to observe, essential elements of its humanity which are lost through the exercise of their control rise to reassert themselves in its nightmares.

Interestingly, that detail is not there in the 1805 version of *The Prelude*, emerging into print only in 1850, so that even if Lamb had been privileged to read the poem in manuscript he would not have found it – though it is just possible, of course, that Wordsworth's rewriting might have been affected by reading the *Essays of Elia*.

Lamb went on to generalize his point still further:

> Gorgons, and Hydras, and Chimaeras – dire stories of Celaeno and the Harpies – may reproduce themselves in the brain of superstition – but they were there before. They are transcripts, types – the archetypes are in us, and eternal. How else should the recital of that, which we know in a waking sense to be false, come to affect us at all? – or

[6] *The Prelude* (1805) v 470-81 (Norton text).
[7] *The Prelude* (1850) v 299-309.

– Names, whose sense we see not
Fray us with things that be not? (p. 78)

He goes on with this very sophisticated discussion of the nature of fear, and in particular how strongly it is felt in terms of a disembodied spirit. And it is precisely at this point that Coleridge comes in, as Lamb quotes from *The Ancient Mariner* to illustrate his point:

> Like one, that on a lonely road
> Doth walk in fear and dread,
> And having once turn'd round, walks on
> And turns no more his head:
> Because he knows, a frightful fiend
> Doth close behind him tread. (1798 text, ll. 451-6)

Lamb's thinking here brings him very close to a point that both Coleridge and Wordsworth made: that the good service wrought by fairy tales and romances is to replace this fear of the disembodied by offering a form for the fearful. So Coleridge wrote in a letter of 1797,

> Should children be permitted to read Romances, & Relations of Giants & Magicians, & Genii? — I know all that has been said against it; but I have formed my faith in the affirmative. I know no other way of giving the mind a love of 'the Great', & 'the Whole'.[8]

As has sometimes been noticed, the sentiment recorded here is closely paralleled by one in *The Prelude*, following closely on the one just quoted.

> Oh, give us once again the wishing-cap
> Of Fortunatus, and the invisible coat
> Of Jack the Giant-killer, Robin Hood,
> And Sabra in the forest with St George!
> The child whose love is here, at least doth reap
> One precious gain – that he forgets himself.[9]

Wordsworth moralizes directly where Coleridge follows his more idiosyncratic path, making a psychological point that leads on to one with religious implications.

Lamb extended his tolerance into advocacy of largeness as to what children were allowed to read. One remembers his praise of the education by which Mary had profited:

> She was tumbled early, by accident or design, into a spacious closet of good old English reading, without much selection or prohibition, and browsed at will upon that fair and wholesome pasturage. Had I twenty girls, they should be brought up exactly in this fashion. I know not whether their chance in wedlock might not be diminished by it; but I can answer for it, that it makes (if the worst comes to the worst) most incomparable old maids.
> (pp. 87-8)

The questioning of dreaming, touched on in these accounts of childhood, was clearly important for all three writers. At one point Lamb maintains that he is not a particularly good dreamer:

[8] Griggs i. 354, letter of 16 October 1797.
[9] *The Prelude* (1805) v 364-9.

> The poverty of my dreams mortifies me. There is Coleridge, at his will can conjure up icy domes, and pleasure-houses for Kubla Khan, and Abyssinian maids, and songs of Abara, and caverns,
>
> Where Alph, the sacred river, runs,
>
> to solace his night solitudes – when I cannot muster a fiddle. (p. 79)

But despite this disclaimer one should notice the quality of the kinds of dream he does claim to have:

> For the credit of my imagination, I am almost ashamed to say how tame and prosaic my dreams are grown. They are never romantic, seldom even rural. They are of architecture and of buildings – cities abroad, which I have never seen, and hardly have hope to see. I have traversed, for the seeming length of a natural day, Rome, Amsterdam, Paris, Lisbon – their churches, palaces, squares, market-places, shops, suburbs, ruins, with an inexpressible sense of delight – a map-like distinctness of trace – and a day-light vividness of vision, that was all but being awake. – I have formerly travelled among the Westmoreland fells – my highest Alps, – but they are objects too mighty for the grasp of my dreaming recognition; and I have again and again awoke with ineffectual struggles of the inner eye, to make out a shape in any way whatever, of Helvellyn. Methought I was in that country, but the mountains were gone. (p. 79)

When Lamb asserted the poverty of his dreams he was evidently writing according to very high standards. One should also notice the modesty with which he describes the current work of his dreaming imagination:

> Barry Cornwall has his tritons and his nereids gamboling before him in nocturnal visions, and proclaiming sons born to Neptune – when my stretch of imaginative activity can hardly, in the night season, raise up the ghost of a fish-wife. To set my failures in somewhat a mortifying light – it was after reading the noble Dream of this poet, that my fancy ran strong upon these marine spectra; and the poor plastic power, such as it is, within me set to work, to humour my folly in a sort of dream that very night. Methought I was upon the ocean billows at some sea nuptials, riding and mounted high, with the customary train sounding their conchs before me, (I myself, you may be sure, the *leading god*) and jollily we went careering over the main, till just where Ino Leucothea should have greeted me (I think it was Ino) with a white embrace, the billows gradually subsiding, fell from a sea-roughness to a sea-calm, and thence to a river-motion, and that river (as happens in the familiarization of dreams) was no other than the gentle Thames, which landed me, in the wafture of a placid wave or two, alone, safe and inglorious, somewhere at the foot of Lambeth palace. (pp. 79-80)

Most dreamers would be happy to settle for that, one suspects.

Lamb's interest in the curiosities of human psychology extended, as one might expect, to the region of literary criticism. He recorded, perhaps more vividly than anyone has ever done, the powerful operation of dramatic illusion in childhood:

> I had dabbled a little in the Universal History – the ancient part of it – and here was the court of Persia. It was being admitted to a sight of the past. I took no proper interest in the action going on, for I understood not its import – but I heard the word Darius, and I was in the midst of Daniel. All feeling was absorbed in vision. Gorgeous vests, gardens, palaces, princesses, passed before me. I knew not players. I was in Persepolis for the time; and the

> burning idol of their devotion almost converted me into a worshipper. I was awe-struck, and believed those significations to be something more than elemental fires. It was all enchantment and a dream. No such pleasure has since visited me but in dreams . . . (p.113)

He also commented on the loss of that overpowering sense by the time he next visited the theatre at the age of sixteen,

> I expected the same feelings to come again with the same occasion. But we differ from ourselves less at sixty and sixteen, than the latter does from six. In that interval what had I not lost! At the first period I knew nothing, understood nothing, discriminated nothing. I felt all, loved all, wondered all –
>
> Was nourished, I could not tell how –
>
> I had left the temple a devotee, and was returned a rationalist. (p. 114)

Coleridge, of course, had a good deal to say about dramatic illusion. He was in fact more perceptive than Dr Johnson on the subject, since although Johnson defended the idea vigorously, asserting that the members of the audience were always in their senses and so in the full and positive knowledge of the contrary of what was being enacted on the stage, he did not explain *how* this could be so. It was Coleridge who went far towards solving the problem by relating the phenomenon to that of dreams, asserting that we could know, even while a dream was in progress, the fictional nature of what was being presented to us by our own mind, yet remain aware what our mind would certainly affirm to us if we were in a state of full consciousness. It was not surprising, then, if one could also do so in the theatre.

Lamb takes up this notion of a double consciousness in ourselves and extends it to cover the experience of reading generally. In his essay 'On the Sanity of True Genius', Lamb writes:

> In the poet we have names which announce fiction; and we have absolutely no place at all, for the things and persons of the Fairy Queen prate not of their 'whereabout.' But in their inner nature, and the law of their speech and actions, we are at home and upon acquainted ground. The one turns life into a dream; the other to the wildest dreams gives the sobrieties of every day occurrences. By what subtile art of tracing the mental processes it is effected, we are not philosophers enough to explain, but in that wonderful episode of the cave of Mammon, in which the Money God appears first in the lowest form of a miser, is then a worker of metals, and becomes the god of all the treasures in the world; and has a daughter, Ambition, before whom all the world kneels for favours – with the Hesperian fruit, the waters of Tantalus, with Pilate washing his hands vainly, but not impertinently, in the same stream – that we should be at one moment in the cave of an old hoarder of treasures, at the next at the forge of the Cyclops, in a palace and yet in hell, all at once, with the shifting mutations of the most rambling dream, and our judgment yet all the time awake, and neither able nor willing to detect the fallacy, – is a proof of that hidden sanity which still guides the poet in his widest seeming-aberrations. (pp. 214-5)

Once again, Coleridge has a not dissimilar point to make. In *Biographia Literaria,* he has an early chapter on the 'supposed irritability of men of Genius', which contains a footnote devoted to Dryden's line 'Great wits are sure to madness near allied'. Coleridge points out that one of the components of genius is 'profound sensibility', and that that, if single and unbalanced, exposes the individual to a greater chance of mental derangement; but that another equally essential component is 'a more than usual rapidity of association, a more than usual power of passing from thought to thought, and image to image', which he feels balances the power of sensibility and

negates the danger.[10] One may also think of the later chapter in which Coleridge spells out the virtues of the poet, 'described in ideal perfection' – which again involves appreciating a balance of qualities, such as 'judgment ever awake and steady self-possesssion, with enthusiasm and feeling profound or vehement'. Here again the formulations of the two men are remarkably similar in form, without being identical.

Coleridge's reference to the 'more than usual rapidity of association' in a man of genius brings us to another passage in Lamb which seems strangely reminiscent of Coleridge and which I commented on some years ago. In the essay 'New Year's Eve', Lamb enumerates some of the things he most dislikes the thought of losing when he dies:

> Sun, and sky, and breeze, and solitary walks, and summer holidays, and the greenness of fields, and the delicious juices of meats and fishes, and society, and the cheerful glass, and candle-light, and fireside conversations, and innocent vanities, and jests, and *irony itself* – do these things go out with life?
>
> Can a ghost laugh, or shake his gaunt sides, when you are pleasant with him?
>
> And you, my midnight darlings, my Folios! must I part with the intense delight of having you (huge armfuls) in my embraces? Must knowledge come to me, if it come at all, by some awkward experiment of intuition, and no longer by this familiar process of reading?
>
> Shall I enjoy friendships there, wanting the smiling indications which point me to them here, – the recognisable face – the 'sweet assurance of a look' – ? (p. 34)

As I pointed out in my earlier piece, this bears a very interesting resemblance to an entry Coleridge made in one of his notebooks, dated in 1810:

> . . . to shew him that I was neither ignorant, nor idle in observing, the vast extent and multifold activity of the *Associative Force* I entered into a curious and tho fanciful yet strictly true and actual, exemplification. Many of my Instances recalled to my mind my little poem on *Lewti*, the Circassian (and as by this same force joined with the assent of the will most often, tho' often too vainly because weakly opposed by it, I inevitably by some link or other return to you, or (say rather) bring some fuel of thought to the ceaseless Yearning for you at my Inmost, which like a steady fire attracts constantly the air which constantly feeds it) I began strictly and as matter of fact to examine that subtle Vulcanian Spider-web Net of Steel – strong as Steel yet subtle as the Ether, in which my soul flutters inclosed with the Idea of your's – to pass rapidly as in a catalogue thro' the Images only, exclusive of the thousand Thoughts that possess the same force, which never fail instantly to awake into vivider flame the for ever and ever Feeling of you / – The fire / Mary, you, & I at Gallow Hill / – or if flamy, reflected in children's round faces – ah whose children? – a dog – that dog whose restless eyes oft catching the light of the fire used to watch your face, as you leaned with your head on your hand and arm, & your feet on the *fender* / the fender thence / – Fowls at Table – the last dinner at Gallow Hill, when you drest the two fowls in that delicious white Sauce which when very ill is the only idea of food that does not make me *sicker* / all natural Scenery – ten thousand links, and if it please me, the very spasm and drawing-back of a pleasure which is half-pain, you not being there – Cheese – at Middleham, too salt / horses, my ride to Scarborough – asses, to that large living 2 or 3 miles from Middleham / All Books – my Study at Keswick / – the Ceiling or Head of a Bed – the green watered Mazarine! – A Candle in its socket, with its alternate fits & dying flashes of lin-

[10] *Biographia Literaria* ed. Walter Jackson Bate and James Engell (2 vols., Princeton, NJ, 1983), i. 44n.

gering Light - *O God! O God!* - Books of abstruse Knowlege - the Thomas Aquinas & Suarez from the Durham Library / . . .[11]

I suppose there is a more healthy atmosphere in Lamb's paragraph, more of the open air and of general sociable conversation, while Coleridge's has rather more of a sense of enclosure, even of a sick-room feeling. Yet the resemblances are extraordinary, and leave one wondering whether they are just coincidental, or whether Lamb might have been there when Coleridge expounded his chain of association - particularly when one thinks of the wistfully described children against those in Lamb's famous essay. One can imagine how deeply impressive it would have been to listen to. It is impossible for us to know now; we do not even know whether Lamb was ever aware of Coleridge's love for Sara Hutchinson. The one point I made in my previous discussion was that the final quotation in Lamb about the 'sweet assurance of a look' came from a sonnet about Sir Philip Sidney which he believed to have been written by Fulke Greville, and since various pieces of evidence suggest that he compared his admiration for Coleridge with Greville's feeling for his poet-friend this provides yet another possible connection. Just as Coleridge's chain of association had the one great common link provided by his love for Sara Hutchinson, so Lamb's seems to have led back repeatedly to Coleridge himself.

There was also another set of ideas of Coleridge's which I believe affected Lamb. I have elsewhere explored this range, which again involves the sense that human consciousness existed at different levels. Thomas McFarland has made much of the philosophical implications of his distinction between the philosophy of 'It is' and the philosophy of 'I am'. When people say 'it is' they automatically objectify their vision, trying to see the thing as in itself it really is. When a person says 'I am' he or she subjectifies. moving back in on the inner consciousness. But in the biblical record 'I AM' is also the ultimate statement of God, so that it becomes tempting in Coleridgean terms to see each statement of 'I am' as a way of hinting at the creative divinity in each human being, each person's genius.

There is a further step one can take, summed up in Coleridge's favourite statement 'Each thing has a life of it's own and we are all one Life'. This suggests that there is a further difference when we come to say 'we are'. Such a statement links human beings with one another. The resulting sense of unity between individuals is naturally associated with warmth, and it too is associated with the idea of genius - though rather more hazardously. Coleridge was fascinated by the association between warmth and fanaticism, for which he used the image of the bee-hive, where the community needs a certain level of warmth in order to sustain its level of creative activity, yet the activity can also swarm dangerously on a single, local purpose. This idea was, I believe, linked further in Coleridge's mind with the play on the word 'genial', which in popular usage has to do with a sense of warmth between individuals, yet is also the adjective that can be used of genius. So while the objective analyzing mode leads logically to coldness and the state of death, so the synthesizing mode of our inner consciousness can be associated with a warm sense that we all share 'one Life'. It is close to the state that in German is called 'gemütlichkeit'. In such a state it is more natural to accept the idea of immortality, traced by Coleridge in the traditional image of the serpent. Consider the following marginal note by Coleridge, written in a copy of Herder:

[11] *Notebooks* iii. 3708, quoted in my first essay on Lamb and Coleridge (see n3, above).

> Serpent in a wreath of folds basking in the Sun is beautiful to Aspasia, whose attention is confined to the visual impression, but excites an emotion of Sublimity in Plato who contemplates under that Symbol the Idea of Eternity.[12]

With that skein of thought in mind let us turn back to the passage from 'New Year's Eve', where I suggested that Lamb's mind was running on ideas he had gained from Coleridge. The next paragraph runs

> In winter this intolerable disinclination to dying – to give it its mildest name – does more especially haunt and beset me. In a genial August noon, beneath a sweltering sky, death is almost problematic. At those times do such poor snakes as myself enjoy an immortality. Then we expand and burgeon. Then are we as strong again, as valiant again, as wise again, and a great deal taller. The blast that nips and shrinks me, puts me in thoughts of death. All things allied to the insubstantial, wait upon that master feeling; cold, numbness, dreams, perplexity; moonlight itself, with its shadowy and spectral appearances . . . (pp. 34-5)

If one looks at that unusual use of the word 'genial' to describe an 'August noon', at the weird description of himself as a snake and at the whole range of ideas associating warmth with the sense of immortality and cold with death it is hard to resist the idea that at this point a range of Coleridgean ideas has bubbled up briefly from the past, to be given a humanized form.

But of course it is a *humanized* form; we come back to that extraordinary quality in his writing, which is also in an odd way an expansive quality. I began by quoting the opening to *Essays of Elia*, where he takes the restrictive mental state of the reader passing through a London street and enlarges it into a sense of all that the South-sea House means, with all the ironies involved first in the idea of these clerks serving an essentially defunct company, and then the recognition that he has spent his life first working for that company and then for the East-India house, with perhaps a hint that it has often been quite hard to tell the difference, and that he may have felt himself to be in a state of living death. In the essays tricksiness of this kind is extended: he plays hide-and-seek with himself in the first as the clerk whom the reader is not likely to notice on his way from the Bank, and then, in the Christ's Hospital one, as another schoolboy who takes on Coleridge's memories while observing the privileges actually enjoyed by Lamb himself – before Coleridge is given a part in his own person. But after that the most common device is the expansive one, opening out a country church into a sense of all the people who have worshipped there, or, most vividly, recreating the now virtually non-existent Mackery End into the country house it once was until its sensuous life is fully restored – always as a warm life and a genial one:

> Had I seen these brick-and-mortar knaves at their process of destruction, at the plucking of every pannel I should have felt the varlets at my heart. I should have cried out to them to spare a plank at least out of the cheerful store-room, in whose hot window-seat I used to sit and read Cowley, with the grass-plat before, and the hum and flappings of that one solitary wasp that ever haunted it about me – it is in mine ears now, as oft as summer returns; or a pannel of the yellow room. (p. 175)

The nearest to that evocation I can think of in previous writing is Coleridge's similar remembrance in 'Frost at Midnight' when he describes how at school he saw the fluttering film on his grate that was supposed to portend the coming of a stranger:

[12] *Marginalia* ed. George Whalley and Heather Jackson (6 vols., Princeton, NJ, 1983-), ii. 1069.

> With unclosed lids, already had I dreamt
> Of my sweet birth-place, and the old church-tower,
> Whose bells, the poor man's only music, rang
> From morn to evening, all the hot Fair-day,
> So sweetly, that they stirred and haunted me
> With a wild pleasure, falling on mine ear
> Most like articulate sounds of things to come![13]

Between them Coleridge and Lamb had pioneered a new vividness and intensity in the literature of memory, using the genial powers of remembrance to foster a warm-bodied recreation of the past that no electronic model would ever be able to emulate.

Peterhouse, Cambridge

[13] Ll. 27-33. Coleridge, *Poems* ed. John Beer (London, 1993), p. 189.

Reviews

MARK STOREY, *Robert Southey: A Life*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997. Pp. xv + 405. ISBN 0 19 811246 7. £25 hardback.

WHO WAS IT THAT COULD never imagine Southey occupied except in mending or using a pen? This otherwise comprehensive biography does not tell us, but it gives ample evidence of his tireless energy as a writer: epic and lyric poetry, with which he began, gradually gave place to histories, biographies, translations, and review articles. In his thirtieth year he told a correspondent: 'Nothing provokes me like a waste of words. *Me judice* I am a good poet – but a better historian, & the better for having been accustomed to feel & think as a poet' (p. 172). This self-assessing statement is not limited to his literary craft, but extends to his reasons for writing and his moral and intellectual character. Thirteen years later, in 1817, when *Wat Tyler*, the revolutionary poetic drama which he had written in 1794 when he was twenty, was maliciously published in order to represent him as a turncoat, he wrote to one correspondent, 'God be thanked that the worst which malice can say of me is no more than what I was once proud to say of myself, & never shall be ashamed of saying, that I was a Republican in my youth', and, to another, that it was as natural for him to have written *Wat Tyler* at twenty as 'that now, with the same feelings, the same principles, & the same integrity . . . I should think revolution the greatest of all calamities, & believe that the best way of ameliorating the condition of the people is through the established institutions of the country' (p. 253). A characteristic that emerges strongly from this biography is Southey's conviction that his present moral and political views (at whatever time that present may be) are the right ones, and that, this being so, it is his duty to pronounce on such current issues as the manufacturing system, the slave trade, Irish unrest, Catholic emancipation, and parliamentary reform. As his biographer several times points out, the problems were more difficult to solve than Southey usually recognized.

Writer though he indefatigably was, Southey was also a family man. He married at twenty-one, and when he and his wife went to live with the Coleridges at Keswick he soon found himself supporting the absent Coleridge's family. Of his own eight children four died young. His younger brothers needed helping, as far as he was able, to make their way in life. His last years were troubled ones. His wife lost her mind in 1833 and died in 1837. He married Caroline Bowles in the summer of 1839, but before the end of the year his own mind had given way, and when he died in 1843 he had been virtually confined to the upper floor of Greta Hall for three years. One of the illustrations, a finely detailed watercolour of the view from his study window in 1841 by his wife, is a poignant product of that time.

Mark Storey, who is Professor of English Literature at the University of Birmingham, has treated Southey's life chronologically and in detail. He gives some critical attention to the poems, but his emphasis is on the whole life and work of this vigorous high-principled man, who could also be engagingly playful. There is a generous amount of quotation from Southey, particularly from the letters, and eight pages of well-reproduced pictures, mainly portraits of Southey, his family, and his friends.

A biography with so much substance should be fully satisfying, but, for me at least, it comes short of what I had hoped for. My two chief reservations spring from a single source, my continual awareness of the biographer. Storey seems to feel obliged to comment on almost everything he records:

> On another walk, when Joseph and Amos Cottle came over, Southey got stuck in a bog (which could be seen retrospectively as something more than literal). (p. 105)

> As ever, Southey was fascinated by the gruesomeness of death, in particular by the mutilation of Shelley's body: 'The fish had devoured half of it.' At the back of his mind lurked no doubt the fate of Bishop Hatto, and the equally graphic display of God's judgement. This was another reason for Southey to cling on to his trim figure: there would be little spare flesh for any avenging creatures to gnaw at, should he meet an untimely end. (p. 297)

These are unusually fantastic flourishes. More typical nudges are 'Presumably Edith was unaware of this' (p. 237); 'So much for the happy, sociable, family man' (p. 241); 'What his daughters thought of all this, back in Keswick, we can only surmise' (p. 281); 'It was all very well having his friends to stay, but there was always relief when they had gone – how much the greater Edith's relief we can only imagine' (p. 296); 'Alas, poor Caroline; and alas, again, poor Edith' (p. 282). Storey also seems so afraid of writing stodgily that he affects a slangy vivaciousness: 'Taylor had harked back to *Joan of Arc* as the real McCoy' (p. 145); 'more than a smidgeon' (p. 148); 'albeit with a few hiccups along the way' (p. 156); 'bring home the bacon' (p. 157); 'tickled pink' (p. 227); 'slightly peeved' (p. 239). Some of his phrases defy rational examination: 'Southey's ebullience was cruelly punctured' (p. 91); 'did not ruffle any scruples' (p. 109); 'he was hoist on the petard of his own hysteria' (p. 243); 'his ability to go against the current grain' (p. 274); 'just to leaven the excitement' (p. 327); 'he had the stoicism to bear such minor kicks and pricks' (p. 336). He has a reckless way with allusions: 'The problem was that it was not just his own family he was having to support: there were the blind mouths of the Coleridge tribe' (p. 227); 'As she took her leave of Greta Hall, Caroline said, as though she had indeed become her husband, "'Is it a dream?' – I sometimes say as I look round – ". But this was no dream; she lay broad waking' (p. 344). Alas, poor Milton; and alas, poor Wyatt.

On the credit side, the factual content seems almost wholly accurate. *Peter Bell* is not 'a poem about a donkey beaten to death by its frustrated rider' (p. 55). The trial of Arthur (not Andrew) Thistlewood and the other Cato Street conspirators in 1820 is confused with a trial in 1817 which resulted in an acquittal: Southey's 'belief that at least the Cato Street conspirators would get their just desserts' (*sic*: p. 280) was not 'mistaken'. Southey translated *Amadis of Gaul* (Bibliography, p. 386), not *Amadis the Gaul* (pp. 155, 170, and Index, p. 403); is Astérix to blame? Caroline Bowles is twice called Charlotte on p. 295. The Index lists fewer than half the references to Charles Lamb.

T.W. CRAIK

ROBERT SOUTHEY, *The Annual Anthology 1799, 1800*. Introduction by Jonathan Wordsworth. Woodstock Books: Poole, 1997. 2 volumes in 1. Pp. 300 + 299. ISBN 1 85477 202 3. £55 hardback.

ONE OF THE MOST INTRIGUING and engaging productions of Southey's Bristol period was actually the brainchild of his correspondent, William Taylor of Norwich; writing to Southey on 26 September 1798, Taylor commented:

> I wonder some one of our poets does not undertake what the French and Germans so long supported in great popularity – an Almanack of the Muses – an annual Anthology of minor poems – too unimportant to subsist apart, and too neat to be sacrificed with the ephemeral

> victims of oblivion. Schiller is the editor of one, and Voss of another such poetical calendar in Germany; their names operate as a pledge that no sheer trash shall be admitted.

As Jonathan Wordsworth remarks in his useful introduction to the Woodstock reprint, this remark struck a chord with Southey, who needed a life-support system for the many poems he had published in the *Morning Post*, to which he had, for almost a year, been a weekly contributor of unsigned poetry. The result was that volume one of the *Anthology* contains 62 poems by Southey, and volume two 28; he was by far the largest contributor to both, and concealed the fact either by publishing his contributions anonymously or by using pseudonyms (Abel Shufflebottom; 'Theoderit' – an anagram of 'The Editor'; 'Erthusyo' – 'R. Southey'; even 'Byondo' – 'Nobody'). It is hard to begrudge Southey his shameless promotion of his own poetry, when so much of it is of interest today. He ranges from ballads to blank verse, from political satire to sententiae. Among them, readers will find *St Juan Gualberto*, which Coleridge described as 'original both in conception and execution', and what may be Southey's best poem, *The Battle of Blenheim*, which has been a standard feature of anthologies ever since. He must have taken some pride over it, even at the time, for it appears under his own name.

Elians will want to own this reprint for two poems of exceptional interest. The first is *Living Without God in the World* (examined in these pages in detail in the July *Bulletin* by David Chandler, NS 99, pp. 86-101), that early blank verse poem which must, in some sense, be part of Lamb's response to the family tragedy of 22 September 1796:

> Mystery of God! thou brave and beauteous world,
> Made fair with light and shade and stars and flowers,
> Made fearful and august with woods and rocks,
> Jagg'd precipice, black mountain, sea in storms,
> Sun, over all, that no co-rival owns,
> But thro' Heaven's pavement rides as in despite
> Or mockery of the littleness of man!

The other work of interest to Elians is the first published text of Coleridge's *This Lime-Tree Bower my Prison*, published here as 'This Lime-Tree Bower my Prison. – A Poem addressed to CHARLES LAMB, of the India-House'. It had been in manuscript since its composition in July 1797, unpublished, waiting for the right opportunity; with Southey's project its moment had come. In those opening lines Coleridge shamelessly envisages his future as a blind poet, like Homer or Milton:

> Well, they are gone, and here must I remain,
> This lime-tree bower my prison! I have lost
> Such beauties and such feelings, as had been
> Most sweet to have remember'd, even when age
> Had dimm'd my eyes to blindness!

Many treats await the reader of this unusual anthology. Other members of the Southey/Coleridge circle to contribute included Amelia Opie, Charles Lloyd, Joseph Hucks, Robert Lovell, Mary Robinson, George Dyer, Joseph Cottle, and Thomas Beddoes (the egregious proprietor of the pneumatic institute and author of the earliest known parody of the *Lyrical Ballads*, which appears in volume one of the *Anthology* as 'Domiciliary Verses'). Like the best anthologies, Southey's is one which is best sampled in small doses, perhaps over an Elian glass of madeira just before retiring to bed, rather than read from cover to cover in the analytical glare of harsh

daylight. In this way you are free to discover at random the delights of, for example, 'Ode to a Pig, while his Nose was being bored', 'To a College Cat', 'To a Wood Pigeon', 'The Filbert', 'A Ballad of a Young Man that would read unlawful Books, and how he was punished', 'To a Spider', 'The Dancing Bear', and Joseph Cottle's 'The Killcrop', which Wordsworth said was his favourite in the collection. Wordsworth abstained from contributing, although he does appear in 'This Lime-Tree Bower', and is represented by proxy, as it were, in Coleridge's 'Lewti' (adapted from Wordsworth's juvenile poem, 'Beauty and Moonlight'). DUNCAN WU

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE, CHARLES LAMB, CHARLES LLOYD, *Poems 1797*. Poole and Washington, D.C.: Woodstock Books, 1997. Pp. 278. ISBN 1 85477 197 3. £42 hardback.

THE YEARS FROM 1996 to 1999 bring a stream of Romantic bicentenaries: most notably the first meeting of Wordsworth and Coleridge, the Annus Mirabilis, *Lyrical Ballads*, the *Two-Part Prelude*. This Woodstock facsimile volume reminds us of the bicentenary of *Poems 1797*, by Coleridge, Lamb and Charles Lloyd. It is a transitional collection, giving hints of greater things to follow. The title page designates it 'the second edition' of 'Poems by S. T. Coleridge', but its content is substantially changed from that of the 1796 edition. Jonathan Wordsworth's fascinating Introduction shows how Coleridge was moving towards greater simplicity of diction, partly on the perceptive advice of Charles Lamb, but partly in response to a movement in critical fashion. He also analyses how the best poems in the volume reach towards, but do not yet quite achieve, the quality of Coleridge's greatest conversation pieces. Here the dates are highly significant. The volume was published on 28 October 1797, but Coleridge had delivered it to Joseph Cottle to be printed almost simultaneously with his own momentous visit to the Wordsworths at Racedown on 5 June 1797. That led to William and Dorothy moving to Somerset to be near Coleridge at Nether Stowey, and to the start of the Annus Mirabilis for both poets. 'This Lime Tree Bower my Prison' was written a few weeks later, 'Frost at Midnight' (and 'The Ancient Mariner') early the following year. None of those great poems appears in this volume. It does, however, have a revised version (now entitled 'Composed at Clevedon') of what would become 'The Eolian Harp', and three other poems in which Coleridge's distinctive voice is heard, if not quite fully developed. The beautiful sonnet to the River Otter, and 'Reflections on having left a Place of Retirement' (which actually changes its title between the Table of Contents and the text of the poem itself) are appreciatively discussed by Jonathan Wordsworth. Perhaps the most moving poem of the three is Coleridge's blank verse dedication to his brother George, in which he describes the unhappiness of his childhood, his sense of removal from his family when he was sent to Christ's Hospital:

> Me from the spot where first I sprang to light,
> Too soon transplanted, ere my soul had fix'd
> Its first domestic loves

and his yearning for family affection – or just for affection. Sadly, but predictably, George did not like the poem, though the *Critical Review*, to their great credit, did.

Charles Lamb and Charles Lloyd are also named on the title page, and there are fifteen poems by Lamb, some reprinted and some new. Authorship, however, is at times a slippery matter. 'Sonnet 8' – 'As when a child on some long winter's night' – is here attributed to Lamb, but had been published in the *Morning Chronicle* by Coleridge. In the 1803 Poems it reverted to Coleridge, but much later reappeared in Lamb's works. It is clearly based on the Beldame's story-

telling in Beattie's *Minstrel.* We are left uncertain whether Lamb or Coleridge was the admirer of Beattie. Both, I hope.

Poems 1797 may have been a transitional volume, marking just one stage in Coleridge's most fruitful period of poetic development, but in another sense it had an important degree of permanency. It remained in effect the current poem collection in Coleridge's own name until *Sibylline Leaves* was published in 1817 – for *Poems 1803* was little more than a reissue of *1797.* It is therefore an important addition to the Woodstock series. ROGER ROBINSON

JONATHAN WORDSWORTH, *The Bright Work Grows.* Poole and Washington D.C.: Woodstock Books, 1997. Pp. xiv + 283. ISBN 1 85477 212 0. £35 hardback.

ANNA SEWARD IS SUPPOSED to have given up the notion of publishing a botanical poem to illustrate the System of Linnaeus, because such a subject would not be proper for a female pen. Some thought Linnaeus risque, too fond of promiscuous analogies, too lingeringly descriptive of stems and stamens, calyxes, receptacles and petioles. And so instead she recommended the idea to a man, to Erasmus Darwin, who was certainly less shy of dubious poetry.

Unlike many women of her time, Anna Seward accepts the corsets of propriety. Nevertheless she earns herself a place in this collection of essays by Jonathan Wordsworth. She was, he says, 'among the best known writers of the day'. Why this was so, how she differs from other female authors, and what those others have to say about propriety are among the questions answered in this volume.

These essays have previously appeared as introductions to discrete works by women, in facsimile reprints in the Woodstock series *Revolution and Romanticism.* The series has recovered texts essential to a balanced understanding of the period: essential, but elusive. Books once couched in subterranean passages below the Bodleian, or otherwise beyond the reach of many students and readers, are thus now made available. Beautifully produced, the Woodstock texts are not cheap.

The essays are refreshingly free from habits of attitude, and results can startle. Discussing Mary Robinson and the Della Cruscans, for example, he writes: 'Nobody can be found to speak well of them', before considering them with a patience which at last makes sense of their extravagancies. Here, as everywhere, Wordsworth's strength is a dispassionate and honourable sense of context. Given the variety of writing considered, the historical and political complexities, and the additional complications of gender, this contextualising discretion is vital. Sometimes these women share little else beyond their sex. Hannah More finds herself in company with her natural enemy, Mary Wollstonecraft, although what emerges in this case are surprising similarities. Mary Lamb is celebrated, her achievements rescued from the sadness of her life. So too is Joanna Southcott, whose sadnesses are darker even than those of Mary. The privileged – Lady Caroline Lamb – may be jostled by the less fortunate: Ann Yearsley, Isabella Lickbarrow. Radicals and quietists, feminism's heroines and feminine villains, the earnest, the witty, the noisy and the gentle all appear.

Jonathan Wordsworth is accomplished, in a demanding form. The information and insight distilled into these brief introductions is remarkable. Here are no polemical asides, no irrelevancies, no parades, no rococo. Each phrase tells, every paragraph is suffused with learning hard-won but lightly-worn. The tone throughout is resolutely textual: this is book-learning, in the deepest sense. It means of course that wider issues are left unexplored. There has been something of a revolution *in* Romanticism recently, a real upheaval in studies of the period, and in the

concept itself. The part that women have played in this has been active and contentious. In *Women in Romanticism* (1989), Meena Alexander spoke of her subjects as forced into a 'back-against-the-wall aesthetic'. The nature of that aesthetic is still undefined. Two new anthologies have just appeared, to underline the liveliness and importance of the subject: Paula Feldman's *British Women Poets of the Romantic Era*, and Duncan Wu's *Romantic Women Poets*. Feldman points out that 'women inspire a rethinking of the term *romantic*'. Wu argues eloquently against 'a kind of separatism based on the idea that literature is qualified by gender'. Anna Seward's dilemma persists; just what exactly is proper material for a female pen continues to be controversial. From these debates *The Bright Work Grows* largely abstains.

This is, in any case, a book to be sampled, not read in one sitting. Cumulatively, serial introductions naturally create a sense of absence – of the authors themselves. As a work of reference, however, or one to whet appetites, it is unbeatable. Few entries fail to provoke curiosity about the writers they describe. Mary Anne Radcliffe is the only one who continues to seem lacklustre, despite a vigorous defence.

The book's title comes from Felicia Hemans: 'The bright work grows / Beneath my hand, unfolding, as a rose'. It fits. There is an attentiveness at work in this volume which makes room for the poetry and prose of these writers to unfold naturally. This is so even when Wordsworth's own prose is occasionally peremptory. Of Joanna Baillie, he writes: 'She had it in her to be a poet of real stature'. This periodic brusqueness is less provoking than it sounds in quotation, more a matter of compression than dictation, more Hazlitt than Dr Johnson. Of Baillie, Hazlitt says 'She is a Unitarian in poetry'. Full stop. And then unpacks himself, discussing her singlemindedness with true insight. Jonathan Wordsworth has similar rhythms, systolic assertions followed by expansion.

Only quibbles remain. Editors know full well that readers can have too much of a good thing, but often cannot contain themselves. So for 'laced macaronies' and 'furbelowed dames' we must be given '[dandies]' and '[ladies in flounces]'. The criticism is trivial, and ungrateful. The lasting impression from this volume is the one of attentiveness. Eavan Boland, in a poem about the rooms of other women poets, wonders 'whether the blue abrasions / of daylight, falling as dusk across your page / make you reach for the lamp'. At times, *The Bright Work Grows* carries us into the rooms of these women; we see them reach for the lamp.

GRAEME STONES

Society Notes and News from Members

FROM THE EDITOR

The Charles Lamb Birthday Luncheon 1998: Final Reminder

One final reminder for the next birthday luncheon, which 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*. Numbers are limited to about fifty; at the time of going to press, there are places available. 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. For tickets please contact Madeline Huxstep on 0181 940 3837.

The Keats-Shelley Memorial Association: The Sheila Birkenhead Bursary 1998

Members may be interested the hear about a new bursary for graduate students wishing to attend the Wordsworth Summer Conference 1998. The Bursary, established in memory of Lady Birkenhead (author of *Illustrious Friends*), will cover the full cost of attending the Conference, to be held in Grasmere during the first two weeks of August 1998. It is open to anyone engaged in full-time education at postgraduate level at any institution of higher education in the United Kingdom, who intends to read a paper at the Conference on the subject of any of the second generation romantics. Only one award will be made. Applications should include a CV (including the names of two referees), and a title and abstract of the paper to be read. Further enquiries should be directed to Dr Duncan Wu, St Catherine's College, Oxford OX1 3UJ. The closing date for applications is 4 April 1998. Applications to read papers should be directed to the Conference Director: Professor Jonathan Wordsworth, Wordsworth Summer Conference, c/o Dove Cottage, Grasmere, Cumbria LA22 9SH.

Keats-Shelley Prize 1998

The Association is also inviting applications for their Keats-Shelley Prize 1998, sponsored by the Folio Society. There are two competitions open to all, for an essay or a poem. The essay should be on any aspect of Keats' or Shelley's work or life, and must be of between two and three thousand words, including quotations. The poem should focus on a Romantic theme; either the natural world or the elements, and may be of any length up to 50 lines, not including the title. Judges are Vicki Feaver, Duncan Wu, Andrew Motion and Angus Graham-Campbell. Entries should be sent to The Folio Society, 44 Eagle Street, London WC1 4FS.

NOTES AND NEWS FROM MEMBERS

Italy in the Age of Turner

On Saturday 4 April 1998 the Society will visit Dulwich Picture Gallery, where this exhibition will be on show from 4 March to 24 May. Members of the Society will be shown the exhibition by the Society's membership secretary, Dr Cecilia Powell, who is curator of the exhibition and the author of the accompanying catalogue, *The Garden of the World*, published by Merrell Holberton.

Dulwich Picture Gallery, opened to the public in 1814 (ten years before the National Gallery) was designed by Sir John Soane. As readers of the Bulletin will be aware, it was well known to Lamb's circle, inspiring Hazlitt's fine essay, 'The Dulwich Gallery' in the London Magazine for

January 1823 where Dulwich College (the recipient of the collection through a bequest of 1811) is delightfully described as 'this little nursery of learning, simple and retired . . . just on the verge of the metropolis'. The collection itself, mainly assembled in the 1790s, is rich in the works of northern European painters of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries who were inspired by Italy and its heritage. The exhibition 'Italy in the Age of Turner' explores the continuing fascination of Italy for British painters in the decades surrounding the opening of the Gallery. It includes over fifty paintings, watercolours and drawings by Turner and about twenty of his contemporaries, on loan from collections all over the country.

On 4 April members are asked to assemble at the Gallery just before 2pm. The Gallery is situated in College Road, London SE21, just opposite the main entrance gates to Dulwich Park. There is ample free parking nearby. Railway trains from Victoria to West Dulwich station or from London Bridge to North Dulwich station take about 12 minutes, and the Gallery is then 10 minutes' walk from either station.

Entry to the Gallery costs £3 (concessions £1.50; NACF members free).

In Dulwich village, just a few minutes away, there are several excellent places to have lunch; Pizza Express, Cafe Le Piaf, the Crown and Greyhound (one of London's finest pubs).

Members who plan to take part in this visit are asked to notify Cecilia Powell at 28 Grove Lane, London SE5 8ST.

Lamb on the Net

Alan Liu's *Voice of the Shuttle* (http://humanitas.ucsb.edu/shuttle/eng-rom.html) is a very useful metapage to start any search for websites on Romantic authors. It offers an extensive number of links to electronic texts from the Romantic period, poetry as well as prose. For instance, the *British Poetry Archive, 1780-1910* (http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/britpo.html) or *Representative Poetry Online* (http://library.utoronto.ca/www/utel/rp/intro.html). It also contains a link to the *Romantic Period Chronology* (http://humanitas.ucsb.edu/projects/pack/rom-chrono/chrono.htm), an invaluable chronology that offers a wealth of information on the Romantic period, from a literary point of view as well as from a political one.

Elian websurfers will no doubt appreciate the link Liu includes, under the name of Charles Lamb, to *Sonnet Central* (http://members.aol.com/ericblomqu/lamb.htm), a website offering sonnets by numerous writers of English literature. This page contains the full text of six of Lamb's sonnets, namely 'To My Friend, the Indicator', 'Saint Crispin to Mr Gifford', 'A timid grace sits trembling in her eyes', 'As when a child . . .', and 'On the Sight of Swans in Kensington Garden'

Michael Laplace-Sinatra

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, Williams 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 Leigh121; 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.

S. E. Winbolt's Lamb Medal: An Elian Conundrum

Lamb Medals for the best English essay by a Grecian were awarded annually at Christ's Hospital between 1875 and 1948. They were of silver, bearing the profile of Charles Lamb and the school's coat of arms and motto, with the winner's name and the year of the prize engraved round the edge. Samuel Edward Winbolt (1868-1944) won the prize in 1886, when he was a Grecian and the school was still at Newgate Street. He became a classics and history master at Christ's Hospital and retired in 1929. He has always been understood to have presented his medal to the Charles Lamb Society in 1940. In 1994, when Deborah Hedgecock was listing the Society's collection (published as *A Handlist to the Charles Lamb Society Collection at Guildhall Library*, which was as a Supplement to *The Charles Lamb Bulletin*, No. 89, January 1995), she told me that she had inspected the edge of the only Lamb Medal in the Society's possession. It bears the name of John Whittingham Hackett and the date 1921. I have found no reference to such a gift to a date of presentation.

Several explanations are possible. It is perhaps most likely that there was a misunderstanding and that Winbolt gave the Society a Lamb Medal, but not his own one. Such objects still occasionally appear on the specialist medal market.

The House in Duncan Terrace

One more rather puny twig to add to the pile of evidence about whether or not the present house was the Lamb dwelling or a later house built on the same site. In his *London Mystery and Mythlogy*, 1952, page 35, William Kent lists some of the points against identifying the house as the original. He admits that each of them can be explained, but adds: 'It is, however, surprising that, although a letter of Lamb's was quoted as saying that it [the house!] had six rooms and the front door opened straight into the dining room, it does not seem to have occurred to anybody to observe that this did not apply to the Duncan Terrace house'.

On the other hand, I believe it is known that alterations were made to the front of the house long ago, so why not to the interior as well? Even adding a flight of front steps to make the ground floor more obviously into servants' quarters is not impossible, given mid-Victorian attitudes and, for example, the unexpected accusations of vulgarity levelled against Jane Austen by one of her nieces.

Charles Lamb and Farnham

George Sturt's *A Small Boy in the Sixties*, first published in 1927, tells of his childhood in Farnam in Surrey during the 1860s.

In chapter 20 he remembers a school festival at which a boy sang 'that sentimental ballad "Far far away". "Where are now those happy faces", it said, "That I knew so long ago?" I still remember the delicious yearning sob excited by that song.' Does the rhythm, let alone the theme, sound familiar to Elians?

In chapter 21 he recalls the names of his books. 'Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare* . . . could not be read in the type of the duodecimo edition, which is what I had got.' This may well have been an early edition: the first edition of 1807 was a duodecimo in two volumes and so is my second edition of 1810. The print of 1810 strikes me as wonderfully readable, the equivalent to most modern type-faces in terms of size and well leaded, i.e. there is plenty of space between the lines.

A bibliophilic digression on Elian readability: William Kent (*London for the Literary Pilgrim*, 1949, page 128) mentions Samuel Morris Rich's first meeting with the works of Charles Lamb, Charles Kent's *oculist's edition* of 700 pages of tiny type. Been there, got that! It comprises 704 pages, actually, the type is half the size of what is in the duodecimo, and there is no leading!

For the Record: Shelleyana

Roy Porter is Professor of Medical History at University College London. The 400-plus pages of his *London: A Social history*, 1994, contain many facts and remarkably few errors, but I was rather taken aback by this passage on page 144:

> Light, lofty and theatrically designed, London's shops induced awe. 'Oh, the lamps of a night!' exclaimed Shelley, 'her rich goldsmiths, print-shops, toy-shops, mercers, hardware men, pastry cooks, St Paul's Churchyard, the Strand, Exeter Change, Charing Cross, with a man upon a black horse! These are thy gods, O London.'

Shelley was the one, of course, who said the opposite, that 'Hell is a city much like London - A populous and smoky city'. This looks to me more like a straight quotation from Charles Lamb's letter to Thomas Manning which Professor Marrs dates 27(?) February 1801. In other words, a bit of a bish.

In passing, I hope you all read, e.g. in *The Times* of 13 February 1996, about the latterday Mrs Partington, the office cleaner who went into her building at Canary Wharf on the day after it received an indirect hit from the IRA bomb and complained about the mess on the carpets. She

and three others cleaned the lavatories and refilled the paper holders, then emptied the rubbish bins. The piles of shattered glass and masonry dust meant, she explained, that 'You couldn't do any Hoovering'. The name of this indomitable lady was Mrs Mary Shelley.

That's the way to do it!
The following was printed in the *Royal Society of Arts Journal* a few years ago as the complete introduction by the Chairman of one of their lecture meetings:

> The Royal Society of Arts very wisely provide their Chairman with a small note of how to behave at these meetings. The note is far too courteous to mention the two real hazards. The first is to give the lecture yourself, anticipating almost everything the lecturer is going to say; the other is to provide, to the lecturer's great embarrassment, a premature obituary, giving particulars of all his achievements and honours. Sir Ralph will be relieved to know that I have been long enough a lecturer not to fall for those two mistakes. Item One on my agenda is that the Chairman should introduce the Lecturer, which I now have great pleasure in doing.

50 Years Ago: from *CLS Bulletin* No.81 (January 1947)

Our debt to Mr Rich [as Editor of *The C.L.S. Bulletin*] can never be adequately acknowledged, and on vacating the Editor's chair we [we? Oh, Mr Farrow, grammar! D.E.W.] can only say our hearts are filled with gratitude for his long and splendid services. Solely for reasons of health Mr Rich quits the post which has been for him a labour of love and in which he has won our affection and admiration.

Fortunate it is that in our ranks we have an Elisha to succeed Elijah. Mr H. G. Smith has for many years made numerous contributions to our *Bulletin*, and his acceptance of its editorship will ensure the maintenance of its high qualities. In this task he will have at his service the sage advice and the unique Elian knowledge of Mr Rich. There is thus a change of hands but not a change of heart and we are confident that the future of our *Bulletin* will be worthy of its past.

from *CLS Bulletin* No.82 (March 1947)

The Chairman, Mr Walter Farrow, submitted the Annual Report [for 1947] for approval; there had been some outstanding addresses, notably the Centenary address on Mary Lamb by Mr Edmund Blunden, and Mr Reginald L. Hine's happy transportation of Lamb's spirit into his beloved Hertfordshire countryside; the summer outings to Edmonton, Hampstead and Kensington had revived many Elian memories; whilst the *Bulletin* had maintained a bond of union between the Society in London and the provincial and overseas members, an additional asset being its increased size and periodicity: there were now forty-two overseas members and 213 in the provinces, and the work of the Corresponding Secretaries had helped to augment the interest of those unable to attend the meetings. The branches at Bradford and Glasgow in their turn were steadily gaining ground and adding interest and pleasure to the members in those districts. The Society's Dramatic Group too was a useful adjunct to the members' interests.

New Members

The Society warmly welcomes the following new members: Nick Mulhern and George Leslie Irons.