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Editorial

ON THE BASIS of this month's Bulletin it would be easy to suggest that Romantic studies are flourishing – which they are. Major new volumes on Keats, Wordsworth and Hazlitt are reviewed here, together with a new selection of Wordsworth's poems priced at only £2. In addition to which we carry important new articles on Lamb, Wordsworth and Byron.

Jane Stabler's 'Women and Children First: Charles Lamb, Lord Byron and the Nineteenth-Century Readership' began life as a lecture delivered to the Charles Lamb Society on 6 December 1997. She has adopted the original tactic of tracing some interesting parallels between the two writers, which I think will intrigue and entertain many readers.

Sally Bushell is completing her doctorate at Queens' College, Cambridge, part of which we are pleased to present here. *The Excursion* has received a good deal of attention in these pages in recent years, and admirers of that work will no doubt be gratified by her able defence of it.

Joseph Riehl and D. E. Wickham offer two important pieces of scholarly research on Lamb. Professor Riehl has turned up a newly-attributed Lamb essay, 'The Mermaid', reprinted as part of his article. This is a major discovery for Elians everywhere. Our erstwhile Chairman publishes a number of items from his collection of Eliana, some of which will no doubt interest Professor Riehl for the concluding volumes in the edition of Lamb's letters which he is editing with Professor Marrs, due for publication over the next several years. I hope readers will agree with me that it is always heartening to see Lamb's handwriting reproduced in the journal that bears his name.

Women and Children First: Charles Lamb, Lord Byron and the Nineteenth-Century Readership

By JANE STABLER

I WOULD LIKE to record the great delight and sense of honour I felt when Mrs Huxstep invited me to give a lecture to the Charles Lamb Society. The first Elian I ever met was the late and greatly missed Bill Ruddick. It was Bill who introduced me both to Charles Lamb's playful sense of humour and to the mordant wit which could emerge, especially when it was felt that some of Charles Lamb's contemporaries were receiving uncritical adulation for rhetorical bravura and ill-gotten glamour.

In the middle of a very long panel discussion in 1992 which fully acknowledged Percy Shelley as poet, legislator – and, effectively, an angel, Bill leaned across to me and whispered 'Too much Bysshe'. Unfortunately for me as a Byronist, Charles Lamb usually linked Shelley and Lord Byron together: 'Shelley the great Atheist has gone down by water to eternal fire!' he wrote to Barron Field in 1822, before noting that Leigh Hunt and his family were to be adopted by 'the remaining duumvir', Byron: 'What a cargo of Jonases, if they had foundered too!'[1] The image of a foundering ship is perhaps not the most auspicious beginning to any talk and I should feel even more nervous about presuming to bring Charles Lamb and Lord Byron together for you today were it not for the fact that Bill's scholarly work on Byron – perhaps less well-known than his scholarship on Charles Lamb – convinced me that it is possible to hold both writers in high esteem without falling into an Elian heresy.

What I would like to do today is to use Lamb's shipwreck scene as a focus for a comparison of the critical and imaginative powers of Lamb and Byron. I think that despite important differences between them in public and domestic circumstances, Charles Lamb and Lord Byron keep turning up in the same critical boat – especially as regards the nineteenth-century readership.

Firstly, we ought to deal with their disagreements, which are in the open from an early stage in Byron's career. In the first poem of Byron's to be well received by the critics, *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (published in 1809 when Byron was 21), Byron condemned Lamb for a deplorable want of taste in hallowing Wordsworth. He notes that Wordsworth's verse:

> of all but childish prattle void,
> Seems blessed harmony to LAMB and LLOYD . . . (ll.905-6)

A footnote to these lines listed Messrs Lloyd and Lamb as the last and 'the most ignoble followers of Southey and co.'[2] But I don't think this satire offended Lamb for too long, for in 1819 there is evidence that Lamb helped to collect engravings for a reissue of *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*.[3] In 1811, Byron's criticism of Lamb extended to damnation when, after attending one

[1] *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. E. V. Lucas (7 vols., London, 1903-5) (hereafter Lucas), vii. 573.

[2] *Lord Byron: The Complete Poetical Works* ed. Jerome J. McGann (7 vols., Oxford, 1980-93) (hereafter *CWP*), i. 416. All quotations from Byron's poetry are from this edition unless otherwise stated.

[3] In a letter to Joseph Cottle 5 November, 1819: 'The request I have to make is, that you would very much oblige me, if you have any small portrait of yourself, by allowing me to have it copied, to accompany a selection of "Likenesses of Living Bards" which a most particular friend of mine is making' (Lucas vi. 531-2). Lucas's note reads, 'The present letter refers to an extra illustrated copy of Byron's *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, which

of Coleridge's lectures on Shakespeare, he penned an epigram describing Southey, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Lloyd and Lamb as 'Scribblers five . . . All damned though yet Alive'.

Lamb's more mature estimation of Byron's verse was equally low. Whereas Byron denounced Lamb as a 'scribbler', Lamb's view of Byron's work was that its popularity was a sign of its ephemerality. In 1814, Lamb wrote to Coleridge, soothing him about the reception of *Remorse*:

> Methinks it makes for the benefit of sound literature, that the best books do not always go off best. Inquire in seven years' time for the 'Rokebys' and the 'Laras,' and where shall they be found? – fluttering fragmentally in some thread-bare paper – whereas thy 'Wallenstein' and thy 'Remorse' are safe on Longman's or Pople's shelves, as in some Bodleian; there they shall remain; no need of a chain to hold them fast – perhaps for ages.[4]

There is a charming inversion here which makes Byron a failure because he is successful: the word 'fragmentally' turns a modish Romantic form into a literally crumbling ruin, whereas Coleridge's commercial failure is a guarantee of his immortality. The threadbare fluttering captures exactly what Lamb objected to in Byron's reputation, and that sense of something brittle, rubbishy and tawdry, takes us to Lamb's most damning criticism of Byron. In May 1820, Lamb wrote to Joseph Cottle:

> It was quite a mistake that I could dislike anything you should write against Lord Byron, for I have a thorough aversion to his character and a very moderate admiration of his genius – he is great in so little a way. To be a poet is to be the man – not a petty portion of occasional low passion worked up into a permanent form of humanity. Shakespear has thrust such rubbishy feelings into a corner – the dark, dusty heart of Don John, in the *Much Ado about Nothing*.[5]

This criticism is fascinating because it suggests that Lamb regarded Byron as the posturing stage villain of the Oriental Tales. Lamb does not mention *Much Ado* as frequently as other Shakespearean comedies in his letters or essays, but his selection of Don John as the type of Byron seems to be in accord with Mary Lamb's picture of this character in the *Tales from Shakespeare* where she describes Don John as a 'melancholy, discontented man', and again at the end of the Tale as a 'gloomy, discontented man'. In other words, the figure most antipathetic to all that Elia would come to stand for.

If we look, for a moment, at Byron's responses to *Much Ado About Nothing*, we find that, far from identifying with Don John, Byron writes himself into the role of Benedick, or perhaps even more appealingly, throughout his life, he appears as Dogberry: 'This "is flat burglary"' is his response to Caroline Lamb's theft of his picture; 'write me down an Ass', he tells Murray, '*If* errors *are* in the MSS'; and in the Autumn before his death Byron writes from Greece to tell a friend, 'I believed myself on a fool's errand from the outset – and must therefore like Dogberry "spare no wisdom"'.[6]

Byron and Lamb obviously share a relish for Shakespeare's verbal games and Lamb does appreciate Byron as a satirist.[7] In 1833 he quotes from two verses of *Beppo* just for the pleasure

was being made by William Evans, of *The Pamphleteer*, and which is now in the British Museum. Owing to . . . Byron's scorn of Cottle, Lamb could hardly explain the nature of the book more fully' (Lucas vi. 532). Lucas adds that 'G. J. Joseph, ARA, made a coloured drawing of Lamb for the same work' (Lucas vi. 533).

[4] Lucas vi. 440-1.

[5] Lucas vi. 540-1.

[6] *The Letters and Journals of Lord Byron* ed. Leslie A. Marchand (12 vols., London, 1973-82) (hereafter *BLJ*), iii. 11, viii. 244, xi. 20.

[7] Assessing Byron after his death in 1824 Lamb wrote, 'He was at best a Satyrist' (Lucas vii. 643).

of Byron's *ottava rima* wit. This is a letter to Miss Norris at Widford in which Lamb replies to an invitation but notes that 'We can't reckon avec any certainty for une heure . . . as follows'. Lamb doesn't extract a tiny quotation from *Beppo* about the uncertainty of English weather, but gives his correspondent the full benefit of Byronic expatiation:

> I like the Taxes when they're not too many,
> I like a sea-coal fire when not too dear;
> I like the beefsteak as well as any,
> I have no objection to a pot of beer;
> I like the *weather when it's not too rainy.*
> That is, I like two months of every year.[8]

This is followed by another stanza of *Beppo*, and the generous expansiveness of the quotation suggests that Lamb's attitude to Byron has mellowed a little (perhaps after the publication of Moore's *Life* which we know he was keen to read). Certainly, Byron's attitude to Lamb underwent a revolution in later years. He moved from seeing Lamb as an 'ignoble follower of Southey & Co.' to an appreciation of Lamb's own literary skills. In 1822 when Leigh Hunt was hoping that Lamb would write for the *Examiner* or the *Liberal*, we find him explaining to his brother John that Lord Byron 'both likes and admires Lamb',[9] and in the Preface to Byron's play *Werner*, Byron seems to referring to Lamb when he claims: 'Amongst those whose opinions agreed with mine upon this story, I could mention some very high names.'[10] Jerome McGann suggests that Byron is thinking of Lamb's *Specimens of the Dramatic Poets* as one of the 'very high names'. We can't be sure, but it is worth mentioning that Lamb's *Works* in two volumes (1818) appears in the 1827 Sale Catalogue of Byron's library and was, therefore, in Byron's possession at his death. It is through the medium of the theatre, I think, that Lamb and Byron perceived each other and arguably came to appreciate each other. It is the medium of the theatre which allows us to see how, in the course of their careers, they both ran aground – in different ways but for the same reason – on the shoal of public opinion. What I want to do is to keep the images of a shipwreck, the theatre, and the theatre audience in play to bring out a few of their shared concerns.[11]

In his essays and letters, Lamb provides an infectious sense of the excitement of the theatre; this rapture at another world is, however, juxtaposed with acute, critical discrimination. We think of the intoxicated memory of 'My First Play': 'All feeling was absorbed in vision. . . . It was all enchantment and a dream'.[12] Compare this with Byron's response to Kean as Iago in 1814: 'Was not Iago perfection? particularly the last look. I was *close* to him (in the orchestra), and never saw an English countenance half so expressive. I am acquainted with no *im*material sensuality so delightful as good acting'.[13] Lamb of course contrasts his childish wonder with a later 'rationalist' return to the theatre and he describes the difference between seeing the green curtain firstly as a veil 'drawn between two worlds', but afterwards as 'a certain quantity of green baize, which was to separate the audience . . . from certain of their fellow-men who were to come forward and

[8] *The Letters of Charles Lamb, to which are added those of his sister Mary Lamb* ed. E. V. Lucas (3 vols., London, 1935), iii. 377.

[9] Luther A. Brewer, *My Leigh Hunt Library: The Holograph Letters* (Iowa, 1938), p. 155.

[10] *CPW* vi. 384.

[11] I am indebted to three earlier studies of Lamb's theatre criticism: Wayne McKenna, *Charles Lamb and the Theatre* (Gerrards Cross, 1978); George L. Barnett, *Charles Lamb* (Boston, 1976); Janet Ruth Heller, *Coleridge, Lamb, Hazlitt, and the Reader of Drama* (Columbia and London, 1990).

[12] Charles Lamb, *Elia and The Last Essays of Elia* ed. Jonathan Bate (Oxford, 1987) (hereafter Bate), p. 113.

[13] Letter to Moore, *BLJ* iv. 115.

pretend'.[14] It seems to me that Lamb's awareness of himself as part of, but also detached from, the rest of the audience leads to some of his most penetrating insights into the effects of good drama. In this, he is uncannily like Byron. Both Lamb and Byron watch the audience as well as the stage action on their visits to the theatre and take a delight in responding in a contrary fashion to the rest of the audience. We think perhaps of Lamb laughing uproariously through a production of *Mary of Buttermere* (which is an adult version of the perversity he exhibited when he sat at his third play, *The Way of the World*, 'as grave as a judge').[15] As a similarly perverse spectator, Byron gives an hilarious account of Mrs Wilmot's tragedy being 'damned' by the pit:

> I went [he told Moore] to a private and quiet nook of my private box, and witnessed the whole process. The first three acts, with transient gushes of applause, oozed patiently but heavily on . . . the fourth act became as muddy and turbid as need be; but . . . the fifth act stuck fast at the King's prayer . . . he was no sooner upon his knees, than the audience got upon their legs – the damnable pit – and roared, and groaned, and hissed, and whistled . . . it was all over. The curtain fell upon unheard actors . . . the Epilogue was quite inaudible to half the house . . . I clapped till my hands were skinless.[16]

Instead of Wordsworth's dry and aloof assessment of *Castle Spectre*: he claimed that it fitted the taste of the audience like a glove – we imagine Byron and Lamb mingling with the crowd and relishing the press of the pit. Lamb's account of the noise of the 'theatrical fruiteresses' shows how alert he was to the physical presence of other spectators. His essays capture the mingled voices and attractions of the theatre: 'Chase some oranges, chase some numparels, chase a bill of the play.' Entanglements with actresses we had better leave aside for today. It is not just the emotional or sensual aspects of theatre which appealed to Lamb and Byron, but, I would like to argue, their sense of the mental geography of the stage and a sense of the critical threshold marked by the green baize curtain. Unlike many of their contemporaries, Byron and Lamb had a peculiar awareness of the moral and physical space between stage and audience and of the varying kinds of relationship which could be formed across that space. What I'd like to suggest is that Lamb's theatre criticism runs in parallel with and offers a model for Byron's critique of a public he has decided to treat like a theatre audience in *Don Juan*.

The link between the public reception of *Don Juan* and debate about changing tastes in the contemporary theatre becomes explicit in an exchange of letters between Byron and his publisher in 1820. This is where the title of my talk suddenly seems more relevant as Murray (publisher to the Admiralty) and Byron continuously invoked nautical metaphors when they were discussing the launch of new works. Murray was attempting to make Byron trim rather than sail into the wind with *Don Juan* and wrote respectfully (though rather desperately),

> Manners . . . have changed – a man might as well appear without cloaths and quote our Saxon Ancestors – The comedies of Charles Seconds day are not tolerated now – and even in my own time I have gradually seen my favourite Love for Love absolutely pushed from the stage – It is not affectation of moralities but the real progress and result of refinement

[14] Bate 114.

[15] In a letter to Dorothy Wordsworth of 9 July 1803 Mary Lamb described a visit to Sadler's Wells as 'the lowest and most London-like of all our London amusements – the entertainments were Goody Two Shoes, Jack the Giant Killer, and *Mary of Buttermere*!' Charles 'laughed the whole time' (quoted by Wayne McKenna in *Charles Lamb and the Theatre* (Gerrards Cross, 1978), p. 9).

[16] *BLJ* iv. 290.

> – and our minds can no more undergo the moral & religious grossness of our predecessors than our bodies can sustain the heavy armour which they wore.[17]

Byron's answer to this on 29 March 1820 turned into a tirade against the taste of the day and 'refinement' on the English stage:

> You have given me a screed of Metaphor and what not about *Pulci* – & manners, 'and going *without clothes*' . . . I differ from you about the 'refinement' which has banished the comedies of Congreve – are not the comedies of *Sheridan* acted to the thinnest houses? I *know* (*as ex-Committed*) that the 'School for Scandal' was the *worst Stock Piece* upon record. I also know that Congreve gave up writing because Mrs Centlivre's balderdash drove his comedies off – so it is not *decency* but Stupidity that does all this – for Sheridan is as *decent* a writer as needs be – and Congreve no worse than Mrs Centlivre . . . You talk of *refinement*, are you all *more* moral? are you *so* moral? – No such thing, *I* know what the World is in England by my own proper experience.[18]

'Are not the comedies of *Sheridan* acted to the thinnest houses': another point of contact between Byron and Lamb is their high regard for Sheridan from experience of his drama and his company rather than through reading his works.[19] In 1823, Lamb writes to thank John Howard Payne for sending an edition of Sheridan: 'I never read the "School for Scandal"', he admitted, '*Seen* it I have, and in its happier days'. In 'My First Play', Lamb tells us that his godfather's 'familiarity – or supposed familiarity' with Sheridan could command 'an order for the then Drury-lane theatre at pleasure – and, indeed, a pretty liberal issue of those cheap billets, in Brinsley's easy autograph'.[20] Byron, of course, was a friend of the older Brinsley Sheridan. We may all enjoy his description of a drinking party with Sheridan in October 1815 which was 'first silent, then talky, then argumentative, then disputatious, then unintelligible, then altogethery, then inarticulate, and then drunk'.[21] And – to digress for a moment – this reminds us of another enthusiasm which Byron and Lamb shared – alcohol. Byron's scene with Sheridan presents us with a comic double for Lamb's (1813) 'Confessions of a Drunkard', in which the drunkard's companions are described as 'men of boisterous spirits, sitters up a-nights, disputants, drunken' who 'yet seemed to have something noble about them'.[22] The Elian essays recollect Sheridan in more fortunate circumstances than those later ones encountered by Byron. For both Lamb and Byron, however, it would be true to say that Sheridan epitomised the glamour, the sentimentality and the self-destructiveness of drunkenness. It may not be a coincidence that Lamb uses a theatrical image to convey the misery of drinking as a performance – 'to waste whole seas of time upon those who pay it back in little inconsiderable drops of grudging applause'[23] – and, if it is a coincidence, it is a happy one for me that Byron uses the image of a ship lost at sea to characterise Sheridan:

[17] MS location John Murray Archive. I gratefully acknowledge the permission of John Murray to quote from this source.
[18] *BLJ* vii. 61.
[19] In 'My First Play', Lamb recalls the 'familiarity – or supposed familiarity' that existed between his godfather and 'the young Brinsley' who brought his first wife on their elopement to his godfather's house in Holborn: 'My parents were present (over a quadrille table) when he arrived in evening with his harmonious charge' (Bate 111).
[20] Bate 111.
[21] *BLJ* iv. 326-7.
[22] Lucas i. 134.
[23] Lucas i. 135.

> What a wreck is that man! and all from bad pilotage; for no one had ever better gales, though now and then a little too squally.[24]

Lamb's and Byron's appalled admiration for Sheridan's nightly performances outside the theatre was matched, as we have seen in Byron's case, by a strong defence of Sheridan's sort of comedy which was then going out of fashion. In 1814, after seeing a performance of Sheridan's *Trip to Scarborough*, Byron noted in his journal: '*What plays!* what wit! – helas! Congreve and Vanbrugh are your only comedy. Our society is too insipid now for the like copy'.[25]

Byron's resentment of the insipid 'refinement' which was driving the comedy of Congreve and Sheridan off the stage became something of a personal crusade when it seemed that the same prudishness was responsible for damning *Don Juan*. Byron's exasperation, however, is voiced mainly in letters to his publisher and friends in England.[26] Lamb manages to publish exactly the same questions in his *Dramatic Specimens* of 1808 about 'insipid levelling morality' and 'delicacy . . . [which] forbids the dramatizing of Distress at all'. [27] Lamb bravely restated what must have been a controversial view in a series of essays in the *London Magazine* in 1822-5. I'm referring, of course, to the subtle and complex criticism of 'On Some of the Old Actors', 'On the Artificial Comedy of the Last Century', 'On the Acting of Munden' and 'Imperfect Dramatic Illusion'.

Lamb's essays offer models for what so many critics attempt today; that is, the recovery of work which seems to be neglected by current fashion. Sadly, very few contemporary critics possess Lamb's ability to suggest that the readership is in error with such a mixture of elegant authority and generous self-deprecation. I would like to look a little more closely at Lamb's theatrical writing, drawing out some points of comparison between Lamb and Byron in their discussion of the nineteenth-century readership. One of the first things that struck me as a Byronist was that, like Byron, Lamb had a very keen sense of audience hostility:[28]

> The artificial Comedy, or Comedy of manners, is quite extinct on our stage. Congreve and Farquhar show their heads once in seven years only, to be exploded and put down instantly. The times cannot bear them.[29]

The reason for this aggressive intolerance, according to Lamb, is a form self-centredness whereby audiences respond to drama as a palpable threat to their personal well-being:

> We have been spoiled [as audiences, Lamb suggests] with – not sentimental comedy – but a tyrant far more pernicious to our pleasures which has succeeded to it, the exclusive and all-devouring drama of common life; where the moral point is everything; where, instead of fictitious half-believed personages of the stage . . . we recognise ourselves, our brothers, aunts, kinsfolk, allies, patrons, enemies, – the same as in life, – with an interest in what is going on so hearty and substantial, that we cannot afford our moral judgment . . . to compromise or slumber for a moment.[30]

[24] *BLJ* iii. 207.
[25] *BLJ* iii. 249.
[26] Byron invokes Congreve and Vanbrugh in one of the essays connected with the Pope/Bowles Controversy, but 'Observations Upon Observations' was not published until 1832.
[27] A note to Middleton's and Rowley's *A Fair Quarrel* and note on *A New Wonder* (Lucas iv. 114, 126).
[28] See also Lamb's essay 'On the Custom of Hissing at the Theatres, with Some Account of a Club of Damned Authors'.
[29] Bate 161.
[30] Bate 161-2.

Old comedy, Lamb regrets, has been killed by the stringent 'moral test' which is applied to stage action. Lamb describes the 'severe eyes' of the audience 'which inspect real vices' and which try the dramatic character 'in . . . courts, from which there is no appeal to the *dramatis personae*, his peers'.[31] Lamb's essay gives us a sense of the fearful watchfulness of the times as political tyranny is internalised and invades what had been neutral territory. The theatre, Lamb writes,

> that happy breathing-place from the burthen of perpetual moral questioning – the sanctuary and quiet Alsatia of hunted casuistry – is broken up and disfranchised. . . . The privileges of the place are taken away by law.[32]

There is an extraordinary evocation of thought-police here and I wonder how much Lamb is remembering the dark days of the later 1790s when the forces of law and 'interests of society' were engaged in breaking-up and disenfranchising other forms of sanctuary. Certainly, there are echoes of Burke-inspired panic at the French Revolution in Lamb's depiction of the wary audience:

> We dare not dally with images, or names, of wrong. We bark like foolish dogs at shadows. We dread infection from the scenic representation of disorder.[33]

I am intrigued by Lamb's idea of the theatre as a 'happy breathing-place' because it is so different from the crowded closeness which we recognise as Lamb's physical description of the pit. In a reversal of art and life polarities, Lamb associates natural moments of fresh air and sunshine with the extremely artificial, inside world of the stage. Artificial comedy, he suggests, ought to offer natural pleasures to the audience in contrast to the strained mental 'standard of *police*' which modern audiences insist on assuming:

> In our anxiety that our morality should not take cold, we wrap it up in a great blanket surtout of precaution against the breeze and sunshine.[34]

Lamb's satirical caricature of morality catching cold is mingled in his essay with the image of a cold moral reign.[35] The new misplaced moral sense is realised as a form of frigidity and hypochondria. Although Lamb does not always refer to virtue with a feminine pronoun, we might see his picture of morality in the theatre as the type which would absorb many nineteenth-century women: the delicate invalid, the strict moral guardian. This unhealthy form of insularity may be contrasted with Lamb's memory of his first play where he 'reposed . . . upon the maternal lap' and where there was clearly a more relaxed atmosphere for women and children.[36] Lamb's scathing indictment of the nineteenth-century audience 'taking precautions' against old comedy anticipates Byron's penetrating critique of the readers (or ex-readers) of *Don Juan*: 'it is a sore subject with the moral reader', Byron wrote in October, 1819, 'and has been the cause of a great row'.[37] He was alternately amused and irritated by the 'outcry' the poem caused; particularly by the way in which the poem was outlawed for women by '"a cry of women"'.[38]

[31] Bate 161.
[32] Bate 162.
[33] Bate 162.
[34] Bate 162.
[35] Bate 165.
[36] Bate 112-13.
[37] *BLJ* vi. 234.
[38] *BLJ* vi. 256.

> There has been an eleventh commandment to the women not to read it – and what is still more extraordinary they seem not to have broken it. – But that can be of little import to them poor things – for the reading or non-reading a book – will never keep down a single petticoat.[39]

We might be tempted to think that Byron was exaggerating the response to his poem, but the language of the contemporary reviews suggests that he was not. The *Literary Chronicle* is representative when it expressed the fear that *Don Juan* was 'abjured by married men and read in secret by their wives'.[40] Thelwall criticised the 'Cuckoo strain' of adultery in Byron's poetry and lamented the way that the poet's 'indifference' threatened 'all that the social heart should hold in reverence'.[41] Intelligent critics were sure that the poem presented a real threat to public morality. Only a minority of nineteenth-century critics argued that art could not harm life. Lamb is one of these rare critics. His defence of Wycherley's dramas anticipates Byron's opinion about the influence of literature upon life:

> No peace of families is violated, – for no family ties exist. . . . No purity of the marriage bed is stained, – for none is supposed to have a being. No deep affections are disquieted, – no holy wedlock bands are snapped asunder, – for affection's depth and wedded faith are not of the growth of that soil. . . . Of what consequence is it to virtue, or how is she at all concerned about it, whether Sir Simon, or Dapperwit, steal away Miss Martha; or who is the father of Lord Froth's, or Sir Paul Pliant's children.[42]

Both Lamb and Byron believe that art cannot exert a harmful moral influence on life, but they argue this in different ways. Lamb presents the dramatic world as 'a speculative scene of things, which has no reference whatever to the world that is.'[43] By contrast, Byron suggests that 'The truth' about *Don Juan* 'is that *it is too true* – and the women hate every thing which strips off the tinsel of *Sentiment*'.[44] These relative claims about the relationship of truth to life are, perhaps, not so far apart as we might at first think.

Roy Park has pointed out that 'throughout his criticism [Lamb] is insisting on the closest connection between literature and life. But the relationship is not direct; it is not a one-for-one equation'.[45] When we examine Lamb's concern with the connection between art and truth, we can detect a kinship between the artistic aims of Lamb and Byron. We have looked at the delicate pressure exerted by the nineteenth-century woman reader (or what she was supposed to read), and I wish to turn to another section of the readership which shared the same status as endangered species, the child reader.

In 1808 in *Specimens of the English Dramatic Poets* Lamb attacked the 'puritanical obtuseness of sentiment' and a 'stupid infantile goodness' which he felt to be 'creeping among us, instead of the vigorous passions' and virtues clad in flesh and blood'.[46] His impatience with the 'infantile' enables us to see how he approached his writing for children where, eager to keep the reader 'in the company of flesh and blood', Lamb was sure that children's reading should not be senti-

[39] *BLJ* vi. 237.

[40] *The Romantics Reviewed: Byron* ed. Donald Reiman (5 vols., New York and London, 1978) (hereafter *RR*), iii. 1297.

[41] *RR* v. 536; i. 540.

[42] Bate 164.

[43] Bate 163.

[44] *BLJ* vii. 202.

[45] *Lamb as Critic* ed. Roy Park (London, 1980), p. 14.

[46] Lucas iv. 114.

mentalised.[47] Joseph Riehl has shown how in the case of Lamb's *Adventures of Ulysses*, there was a little too much 'flesh and blood' for William Godwin. Riehl quotes a letter from Godwin to Lamb making exactly the sort of request for revision which John Murray would make to Byron:

> We live in squeamish days [says Godwin] Amidst the beauties of your manuscript, of which no man can think more highly than I do, what will the squeamish say to such expressions as these? 'devoured their limbs, yet warm and trembling, lapping the blood' . . . or to the giant's vomit . . . or to the minute and shocking description of the extinguishing the giant's eye. . . .You I dare say have no formed plan of excluding the female sex from among your readers, & I, as a bookseller, must consider that, if you have, you exclude one half of the human species.[48]

Lamb responded,

> Who is to read them I don't know – who is it reads Tales of Terror & Mysteries of Udolpho? Such things *sell*. – I only say that I will not consent to alter such passages which I know to be some of the best in the Book.[49]

Lamb intended *The Adventures of Ulysses* to be a faithful reproduction of Chapman's Homer, but Godwin found even the Preface to be 'too naked', and asked Lamb to write something that could be 'put into the hands of children'. Lamb 'totally disagreed', believing that children and young ladies ought to want the unabridged Plays of Shakespeare to be 'put into [their hands]'. Courageously, Lamb defends the 'many surprising events and turns of fortune' in the *Tales from Shakespeare* and the 'lively images of *shocking* things' in *The Adventures of Ulysses*. His embattled defence of detail in 1808 anticipates by a decade the satire which Byron launched in *Don Juan* at the 'expurgated editions' given to young children: Donna Inez (or Lady Byron or Sarah Trimmer), you will remember, 'dreaded the mythology':

> Juan was taught from out the best edition,
> Expurgated by learned men, who place,
> Judiciously, from out the schoolboy's vision,
> The grosser parts; but fearful to deface
> Too much their modest bard by this omission,
> And pitying sore his mutilated case,
> They only add them all in an appendix,
> Which saves, in fact, the trouble of an index;
>
> For there we have them all at one fell swoop,
> Instead of being scatter'd through the pages;
> They stand forth marshall'd in a handsome troop,
> To meet the ingenuous youth of future ages,
> Till some less rigid editor shall stoop
> To call them back into their separate cages. (i. 44, 45)

[47] Lamb is less enthusiastic about 'flesh and blood' when it impinges on his enjoyment of Shakespearean tragedy. See Bate, *The Romantics on Shakespeare* (Harmondsworth, 1992), pp. 113, 123.
[48] Joseph E. Riehl, *Charles Lamb's Children's Literature* (Salzburg, 1980) (hereafter Riehl), p. 91.
[49] Riehl 93.

Lamb's terse exchange of letters with Godwin is remarkably similar to the discussions between Byron and his publisher over the shipwreck scene in *Don Juan*.

The manuscript letters of John Murray allow us to hear how Byron's struggle with the nineteenth-century readership followed in Lamb's wake, albeit unknowingly – and I am extremely glad to be able to acknowledge the help of John and Virginia Murray, who kindly granted permission for me to consult the Murray archive. The shipwreck scene in Canto II of *Don Juan* was one of the episodes which Murray persistently asked Byron to revise before publication. In this part of the poem, Byron describes how a ship goes down, and what happens when a small group of survivors runs out of food and turns to cannibalism. On 28 May 1819, Murray asked Byron to 'obliterate' the verse about the Shipwreck and some other lines which 'ladies may not read': as Murray put it, 'the Shipwreck is a little too particular'.[50] He was referring to the stanza which hinted that the ladies of Cadiz had passed on an illness to one of the crew members which made the others reluctant to eat him. Byron insisted that the verse remain. On 23 July, still hoping that the poem could be revised after its anonymous publication earlier that month, Murray wrote to ask Byron to heed Gifford's advice about the shipwreck scene:

> recall Gifford's fatherly Letter to you – & oblige his feelings – Stanza 129 – what opposite discoveries – in the last two lines & the continuation of the allusion in 130 [&] 131 – in the Shipwreck – the contribution of the Ladies – the parody of the Ten Commandments – fill up these with something better & let us put forth the New Edition with your Lordship's name – and proceed I entreat you we never can have enough of such delicious Stuff as this – it . . . resembles Child Harold as Comedy does Tragedy.[51]

Murray's remarks about *Don Juan* as an inspired but risqué comedy which could no longer be tolerated because of the manners and morality of the times echo Godwin's admonishment of Lamb. In both cases, the female readership is invoked by a bookseller as a reason for 'obliterating' particularities. Both Lamb and Byron gave way to some of these editorial requests but they remained true to the principle of fidelity to sources. It was the 'roughness' and vigour of Chapman which Lamb wished to preserve, whilst, in the case of *Don Juan*, Byron was exceptionally proud of his use of the documentary evidence of real shipwrecks: 'You may rely on my using no nautical word not founded on authority & no circumstance not grounded on reality', he wrote on the proof in response to a query from Hobhouse.[52]

This precise attention to detail by Byron and Lamb ran the risk of shocking, by being 'too true'. In March 1807, the reviewer in *The Anti-Jacobin* claimed that Lamb's *Tales from Shakespear* are not 'very proper studies for female children':

> we certainly object to the language of the preface, where girls are told, that there are parts in Shakespeare *improper* for them to read at one age, though they may be allowed to read them at another. This only serves as a stimulus to juvenile curiosity, which requires a *bridle* rather than a *spur*.[53]

Five months later, the *Anti-Jacobin* reviewed a rival to Lamb's *Tales*, *The Family Shakespeare* in four volumes, published by Hatchard. This time, the reviewer approved wholeheartedly of the sentiments of the editor:

[50] On 16 July 1819, Murray wrote to Byron and commended various parts of the first two Cantos, including the shipwreck, 'though of an unproportioned length'.

[51] MS location John Murray Archive.

[52] *CPW* v. 689.

[53] *The Anti-Jacobin* 26 (1807) 298.

> An edition of this kind was certainly very much wanting; for the plays of Shakespeare, in their original state, concern so many indelicate and obscene passages, that they cannot, with propriety, be put in the hands of young persons.[54]

What Hatchard's edition set out to do was to smooth the texture of Shakespeare's drama in 'compliance with the taste of the age':

> It is hoped that the present publication will be approved by those who wish to make the young reader acquainted with the various beauties of this writer, unmixed with anything that can raise a blush on the cheek of modesty.[55]

A crucial word here is 'unmixed': this editor of Shakespeare, unlike Lamb and Byron, did not value the aesthetic of mixture or sudden change. Lamb and Byron both fell foul of reviewers for particularity and for mixing moods and materials. Lamb's *Adventures of Ulysses* was criticised for the sudden and extravagant changes of fortune:

> [The *Adventures*] are full of incidents, unnatural and impossible; and although 'the fictions contained in it will,' in the author's opinion, 'be found to comprehend some of the most admired *inventions* of Grecian mythology,' we are not aware of the advantage to be derived by children from such fictions. As to a moral lesson, if the book contain any such, it has certainly escaped our observation.[56]

'Such a production', the reviewer concluded, was 'almost too low for criticism'.

Tory reviews of *Don Juan* also described the poem as beneath consideration because Byron had set a satirical voice against a sentimental one with the intention of undermining the reader's belief in the existence of virtue. The *Investigator*, for example, described the 'mischievous levity' with which 'every finer and kindlier emotion of the heart is tacitly and insidiously neutralised and destroyed by its constant and systematic association with the ridiculous and the absurd.' Physical detail was also problematic, and, like Godwin and the giant's vomit, the reviewer was particularly offended by Juan's sea-sickness, which is intermingled with Juan's appeals to his first love, Julia, whom he has left behind in Spain:

> 'Beloved Julia, hear me still beseeching!'
> (Here he grew inarticulate with reaching.) (ii. 20)

'The whole circle of poetry', according to the reviewer, 'does not contain a more striking contrast of beauty and deformity . . . but that it is succeeded by a description of a shipwreck, wherein this forced and revolting union is carried to a height'.[57] Other complaints made by the critics about *Don Juan* were that the narrator seemed to be as coldly detached from his work as an actor on stage could be divorced from the passion of the play. This is a complaint which had been raised about Byron's earlier works which were likened to the antics of Garrick, who, it was reported, 'had his mind sufficiently at leisure' in the most pathetic part of *King Lear*, 'to observe the aspect of his audience, and to whisper, with a low oath, to a fellow actor, "Tom, this will do"'.[58]

[54] *The Anti-Jacobin* 27 (1807) 435.

[55] *The Anti-Jacobin* 27 (1807) 435.

[56] *The Anti-Jacobin* 32 (1809) 80-1. The language of 'observation', and complaints that Lamb has not 'strictly observed' certain rules, may have contributed to Lamb's preoccupation with moral watchfulness in his later essays on the theatre. Riehl quotes sections of these reviews.

[57] *RR* iii. 1182.

[58] Josiah Conder's review of *Poems* (1816) in the *Eclectic* (*RR* ii. 737).

There are lots of parallels between the narrative techniques of *Don Juan* and those of the Elian essays: we could think of both narrators as players (in all senses), mingling materials, punning, digressing, talking about food. The shared relish of mischievous performance is, for me, less significant than the way in which they regard the audience.[59] I think that both Lamb and Byron wrote to free the nineteenth-century readership from the 'great blanket surtout of morality' which seemed to be settling over their readers and their publishers. They both maintain the artistic necessity of shockingly violent detail not just for its own sake but because a particular kind of confrontation with such effects was needed to keep the reader aware of the boundaries between art and life, or art and art.

Neither Lamb, nor Byron went in for gratuitous or prolonged scenes of violence or suffering, but both writers were exceptionally interested in the ways in which contrasting scenes could enhance the reader's sense of the haphazard texture of human existence and the arbitrary boundaries of art. As I move towards the end of this paper, it is the sense of boundaries between different states which I would like to emphasise. Before it was published, *Don Juan* was criticised by one of Murray's advisers for crossing aesthetic limits or 'scorching' and 'drenching' the reader at the same time. Byron argued that mixed sensations are very much a part of life or at least life as performance:

> I will answer your friend . . . who objects to the quick succession of fun and gravity. . . . Ask him these questions about 'scorching and drenching'. Did he never play at Cricket or walk a mile in hot weather? – did he never spill a dish of tea over his testicles in handing the cup to his charmer to the great shame of his nankeen breeches? – did he never swim in the sea at Noonday with the Sun in his eyes and on his head – which all the foam of ocean could not cool ? . . . did he never tumble into a river or lake fishing – and sit in his wet cloathes in the boat - or on the bank afterwards 'scorched and drenched' like a true sportsman? ----- 'Oh for a breath to utter'.[60]

Here again, we may see how the terms of debate about the publication of *Don Juan* were anticipated by Lamb's criticism. In the 1808 essay on Hogarth, Lamb analysed the mixed genre of Hogarth's painting and compared it with the texture of Shakespearean drama:

> It is the force of these kindly admixtures, which assimilates the scenes of Hogarth and of Shakespeare to the drama of real life, where no such thing as pure tragedy is to be found; but merriment and infelicity, ponderous crime and feather-light vanity, like twi-formed births, disagreeing complexions of one intertexture, perpetually unite to shew forth motley spectacles to the world.[61]

'Motley' is, of course, the dress of the fool – a role which both Byron and Lamb had thrust upon them. Lamb's astute criticism ought to have pre-empted the objections to Byron's poetry raised by many of the Tory and Evangelical reviewers, but the vast majority of readers and reviewers preferred things in black and white: 'It is true,' wrote William Roberts in the *British Critic*,

> that this existence is a medley of joy and sorrow, close upon each other's confines; and that moral and pathetic representations of life . . . in correspondence with the reality, admit of being chequered by grave and gay, pensive and playful moods; but they must not be

[59] George L. Barnett's chapter on Elia lists characteristics which invite comparison with the narrator of *Don Juan* in matters of narrative performance, informality, love of food; see *Charles Lamb* (Boston, 1976).
[60] *BLJ* vi. 207.
[61] Lucas i. 77.

> suffered to run into one another and disturb each other's impressions. Sorrow is engrossing – nor can the heart at the same time lend itself to two opposite emotions.[62]

Lamb and Byron were isolated voices calling for artistic 'intertexture', to use Lamb's word. They both believed that the 'superartificial' (to use Byron's word) realm of art provided a necessary break with life which enabled detached, but humane contemplation on life.

The 'kindly admixture' identified in Lamb's appreciation of Hogarth was associated by him with the voice of the humane artist. In the same essay, he identified the digressive and discontinuous narratives of Smollett and Fielding as a breath of fresh air:

> One cordial honest laugh of a Tom Jones absolutely clears the atmosphere that was reeking with the black putrifying breathings of a hypocrite Blifil. . . . One 'Lord bless us!' of Parson Adams . . . purges off the mass of iniquity which the world-knowledge of even a Fielding . . . could . . . rake together.[63]

That image of Parson Adams clearing the air reminds us of the breath of fresh air Lamb looked forward to in the theatre, the space away from the pressing demands of everyday life. Lamb suggests that 'the livelier pictures and incidents' of Hogarth and Fielding 'give us skill to detect those gradations of sense and virtue . . . and prevent that disgust at common life . . . which an unrestricted passion for ideal forms and beauties is in danger of producing'.[64] Lamb's wariness about the rapidly encroaching era of sentimentality is instructive. Byron, too, uses the example of Fielding and Smollett to point out to the delicate readers of *Don Juan* that they had not always been so:

> Here I might enter on a chaste description,
> Having withstood temptation in my youth,
> But hear that several people take exception
> At the first two books having too much truth;
> Therefore I'll make Don Juan leave the ship soon,
> Because the publisher declares, in sooth,
> Through needles' eyes it easier for the camel is
> To pass, than these two cantos into families.
>
> 'Tis all the same to me; I'm fond of yielding,
> And therefore leave them to the purer page
> Of Smollet, Prior, Ariosto, Fielding,
> Who say strange things for so correct an age. (iv. 97, 98)

Fielding was, of course, a dramatist himself, and Lamb and Byron value his novels for recreating the novelist as a stage-manager who steps forward to address and consult with his audience.

Both Lamb and Byron sustain a playful and ironic dialogue with their readers, questioning the 'correct' taste of the time. I have been suggesting that their unique awareness of audience sensibility comes from a shared appreciation for the knowing, tolerant humour of older comedies. Lamb's 'On Some of the Old Actors' captures exactly this rare understanding, telling us how '*lies* [are] marked out in a sort of italics to the audience' and how there is a 'secret correspon-

[62] December 1821, *RR* i. 490.
[63] Lucas i. 83.
[64] Lucas i. 86.

dence with the company before the curtain'.[65] In 'Stage Illusion', Lamb suggests that such maturity ought to be shared by 'the ladies and gentlemen – on both sides of the curtain'.[66] It is important that he includes the ladies. This acute sense of the relationship between player and audience allows Lamb and Byron to challenge the moral boundaries which had been erected in the name of the family by 'so correct an age'.

To conclude, I would like to suggest that we may see the work of Lamb and Byron as the launch of a campaign to reform the English stage and English culture more widely. In this, they had more in common with each other than is usually acknowledged, and at the heart of their reforming beliefs was the knowledge that if literary taste in England was to be changed, it would have to begin with comedy in its broadest sense, and with attitudes to women and children first.

University of Dundee

[65] Bate 160.

[66] Bate 188.

Exempla in *The Excursion*: The Purpose of the Pastor's Epitaphic Tales

By SALLY BUSHELL

THE EXCURSION is frequently treated as an 'epitaph' marking the death of Wordsworth's great poetic years and correspondingly placed as the final chapter of critical texts. The foundations of twentieth-century neglect of *The Excursion* (and of the later Wordsworth) are to be found in the critical shift against the poem in the late Victorian period led by Matthew Arnold[1] and continued in this century by numerous critics, most notably H. W. Garrod who considers the second half of Wordsworth's career as 'the most dismal anti-climax of which the history of literature holds record'.[2] Willard Sperry adopts a similar position, using Garrod's own words in the title of his book, *Wordsworth's Anti-Climax*,[3] whilst Geoffrey Hartman, for his part, subtitles his chapter on the poem 'The One Great Defect'.[4] In this paper I take issue with Hartman's approach in particular not only because his work is very highly considered, and thus influential in relation to the reputation of *The Excursion*, but also because much of what he has to say is of value even though he intends it negatively.

In works such as those mentioned above, the poem is repeatedly read from a viewpoint which assumes that its aim is didactic and concerned with the conversion of the Solitary, in the light of which Books V-VII can only be treated as the orthodox religious attempt at this (a dull re-run of the philosophical passages). This view certainly informs Hartman's response when he states that: 'It may still be doubted whether the latter part of *The Excursion* adds anything essential to what the first books so sufficiently convey.'[5] I would suggest that the poem's intention, particularly in the epitaph section, is wider than this kind of approach will allow. Of the Pastor's role in Books V to VII Hartman states:

> Standing in the churchyard, he resurrects in a series of 'living epitaphs' the memory of the sufferings and triumphs of his dead parishioners. It is heaping up of exempla in the medieval manner.[6]

The criticism here is two-fold: on the one hand he suggests unease with the nature of the tales as 'exempla', on the other with the overall organisation of narrative in this section of the work. This remark, which Hartman makes dismissively, provides the starting point for a fuller assessment of that which he deprecates. I hope to show that both the moral purpose and the structural

[1] In the Preface to his edition of Wordsworth's poetry Arnold states that 'within one single decade of those years, between 1798 and 1808, almost all his really first-rate work was produced. A mass of inferior work remains, work done before and after this golden prime . . .' (*The Poems of Wordsworth* ed. Matthew Arnold (London, 1879), p. xii).

[2] H. W. Garrod, *Wordsworth: Lectures and Essays* (2nd ed., Oxford, 1927), p. 138.

[3] Willard L. Sperry, *Wordsworth's Anti-Climax* (Cambridge, Mass., 1935). More recent work suggests that *The Excursion* is beginning to be appreciated because of its difficulties rather than in spite of them. See particularly William Galperin, *Revision and Authority in Wordsworth: The Interpretation of a Career* (Philadelphia, 1989) and Alison Hickey, *Impure Conceits: Rhetoric and Ideology in Wordsworth's 'Excursion'* (Stanford, 1997). Frances Ferguson's book *Wordsworth: Language as Counter Spirit* (New Haven, 1977) probably offers the best detailed work on the epitaphic books and on the importance of the epitaph for Wordsworth's later poetics.

[4] Geoffrey H. Hartman, *Wordsworth's Poetry 1787-1814* (New Haven, 1964) (hereafter Hartman), p. 292.

[5] Hartman 321.

[6] Hartman 319.

organisation of the Pastor's stories are more complex, and more central to the poem as a whole, than he suggests.

The exemplum can only be loosely defined. The *Dictionary of the Middle Ages* broadly states that: 'Any story could become an exemplum as long as it contained a moral.'[7] A more exact definition is given by Jacques Le Goff who states that 'The exemplum of the thirteenth century, the golden age of the genre, can be defined as "a brief narrative presented as truthful (that is, historical) and used in discourse (usually a sermon) to convince listeners by offering them a salutary lesson"'.[8]

It was with the foundation of the Dominican and Franciscan orders in the thirteenth century, and the increasing number of preachers, that the medieval exemplum became a widely used form. Thomas Crane's (1890) edition of the *Exempla of Jacques de Vitry*, illustrates a range of stories from the thirteenth century, folktales and fables in which the religious intention of the form is nec-essarily made subordinate to its social orientation. Although such stories started off as individual local collections they began to be gathered together in the thirteenth century and, with the advent of printing, a number of clear 'favourites' such as the *Gesta Romanorum* – emerged and were widely used by preachers all over Europe. The definition of the exemplum thus widened to include illustrations appreciated for their narrative value rather than for didactic content alone.

In some collections this kind of exemplum for preaching purposes had no specific moral attached to it but was designed to be inserted into a sermon with the speaker drawing his own conclusions as appropriate. A preacher might use from between one and five narratives in the latter part of his sermon – a medieval example of the 'heaping up' which Hartman objects to in Wordsworth. By the fourteenth century the form was openly abused, through the telling of improper stories purely for their entertainment value, a tendency which Chaucer depicts in *The Pardoner's Tale* and Dante attacks in Canto XXIX of 'Paradiso'.[9]

A second form of the exemplum, which resists such abuse, is the 'moralised story' such as those in the *Gesta Romanorum* where the narrative is accompanied by a specific explanation of its meaning. As Thomas Crane points out:

> The result of this method was to render the *exemplum* more independent by appending to it an allegorical or symbolical explanation, and thus investing the story with a certain interest of its own.[10]

For the purposes of comparison with *The Excursion* we should, I think, bear in mind the distinction between these two basic kinds of exemplum narrative: the first which is left open to interpretation and the second which offers a far more contained 'closed' form. In the case of the first, the extent to which the Preacher chooses to draw out the moral can be left open, thus allowing him to vary the degree to which he permits audience interpretation. In the case of a more 'closed' form the story is given in two parts: an allegorical narrative and the ensuing explanation of that narrative. There is no need for audience interpretation since the narrative contains its own explanation.

[7] *The Dictionary of the Middle Ages* ed. Joseph R. Strayer (12 vols., New York, 1984), iv. 551.
[8] Jacques Le Goff, *The Medieval Imagination* tr. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago, 1988), p. 78.
[9] See *The Vision; or, Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise, of Dante Alighieri* tr. H. F. Cary (London, 1891), 'Paradise', xxix. 100-2:

> e'en they, whose office is
> To preach the Gospel, let the gospel sleep,
> And pass their own inventions off instead.

[10] *The Exempla or Illustrative Stories from the Sermones Vulgares of Jacques De Vitry* (London, 1890), p. lxxx.

There is no explicit evidence that Wordsworth intended his stories to be considered as exempla, but the presentation of the Pastor's utterances as a series of tales placed in the mouth of a religious figure who is given a clear moral purpose for telling them, allows for comparison between his narratives and the medieval form. It is also worth remembering that from 1800 onwards Wordsworth was an avid reader of Chaucer, and modernised a number of his tales.[11] Comparing the Pastor's teachings in Books V to VII of *The Excursion* with the exemplum form provides us with a means of exploring a number of central concerns about how these narratives work. We find ourselves questioning the Pastor's choice of narratives, the nature of his moral purpose in telling them, and the function of these tales in the poem.

The churchyard narratives are not part of an 'extempore' sermon but are given in response to a specific invitation by the Wanderer, their purpose emerging out of the preceding debate between the characters.[12] The Solitary in Book V argues that the gap between human ideals and the life as it is lived is so wide as to be unbridgeable and man deludes himself if he thinks otherwise:

> If this mute earth
> Of what it holds could speak . . .
> We should recoil, stricken with sorrow and shame,
> To see disclosed, by such dread proof, how ill
> That which is done accords with what is known
> To reason, and by conscience is enjoined . . . (212)[13]

The Solitary considers church ritual to offer a false optimism to man, encouraging him to see himself as better than he is. The graves prompt him only to ask of Philosophy and Religion:

> Where are your triumphs? Your dominion where?
> And in what age admitted and confirmed? (216)

His words question not only the value of belief systems for the living but also all hopes of immortality, since, from his perspective, it is 'Religion' not 'Death' that 'has no dominion'.[14]

In response to the Solitary's questioning of established forms of belief the Pastor does not attempt to reason with him but simply points out the subjective nature of each man's viewpoint:

> The good and evil are our own; and we
> Are that which we would contemplate from far. (223)

[11] For Wordsworth's reading and modernisations of Chaucer see Mary Moorman *William Wordsworth: A Biography: The Early Years 1770-1803* (Oxford, 1957), pp. 101, 515; Duncan Wu, *Wordsworth's Reading 1770-1799* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 27-8 and *Wordsworth's Reading 1800-1815* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 47-9; and Leonard Michael Koff, 'Wordsworth and the Manciple's Tale', *The Chaucer Review* 19 (1985) 338-51.

[12] George Myerson gives an excellent reading of these debates in his consideration of the poem as an 'arguable world'; see *The Argumentative Imagination: Wordsworth, Dryden, Religious Dialogues* (Manchester and New York, 1992), p. 26.

[13] All quotations are from the 1814 text. I have given the page references since there are no line numbers in this edition.

[14] The representation of the Solitary as a disillusioned Godwinian supposedly echoes the experiences of Joseph Fawcett whom Wordsworth describes as one source for the character: 'his Xtianity was probably never very deeply rooted, &, like many others in those times of like shewy talents, he had not strength of character to withstand the effects of the French revolution & of the wild and lax opinions which had done so much towards producing it . . .' (William Wordsworth, *The Fenwick Notes* ed. Jared Curtis (Bristol, 1993) (hereafter Curtis), p. 80). For the fairness or otherwise of this portrait of Fawcett see M. Ray Adams, 'Joseph Fawcett and Wordsworth's Solitary', *PMLA* 48.1 (1933) 508-28.

Only the angels are able to perceive 'The object as it is' (223), the human viewpoint of life is inevitably partial. The Solitary's argument is thus not denied but reduced to the status of a warped perspective. However, if this is true of the Solitary it must also be true of the argu-ments ranged against him. The Wanderer concludes with the Pastor that 'We see then as we feel' (226), and this seems to be a new position for him, a conclusion reluctantly reached. It forces him to recognise that argument has failed; the central question of how to make someone see differently remains unanswered:

> But how acquire
> The inward principle, that gives effect
> To outward argument . . . (227)

The Wanderer's proposed solution lies in the 'exempla'. The stories are to offer a positive illustration of the relationship between an individual's inner and outer life, and the representation of this as a code for living worth adhering to, however difficult it may be. For the Wanderer the moral intention proceeds directly from the preceding debate.

At the same time, however, the nature of that debate, and the Pastor's own arguments, high-light the difficulty of such a task. His earlier point has made us aware of the impossibility of objective representation of man by man. As 'exempla' supporting the philosophical debate the stories must surely be doomed to failure, since they will simply offer an alternative subjective viewpoint which the Solitary is as able to reject as the Pastor was able to reject *his* position. The Pastor for his part seems to be well aware of this. He is clearly uneasy about the Wanderer's intention that 'by your records, may our doubts be solved' (231). Not only does he revert to the Wanderer's original request for a story from the living, but he is also unsure about his ability to make the narratives meet the required ends, stating 'much, I feel, is wanting' (231). Even before he starts telling the stories it seems likely that, if his intention is the same as the Wanderer's, his means of achieving it may be different. In other words, the Wanderer and the Pastors' subjective positions – and narrative intentions – are not identical. The difference between their two intentions creates problems at times for the Wanderer, the listeners and the reader.

The Pastor's first story immediately illustrates the difficulties involved. The narrative of the Childless Couple is the clearest 'exemplum in the medieval manner' which the poem offers us. There is no actual event or focus to the tale which the Pastor strips down, offering a simple example of the nature of honest, contented living. He describes the place the couple inhabit and the acceptant nature of their lives before concluding that:

> In powers of mind,
> In scale of culture, few among my Flock
> Hold lower rank than this sequestered Pair.
> But humbleness of heart descends from heaven;
> And that best gift of heaven hath fallen on them;
> Abundant recompence for every want. (233-4)

This story offers an unexplained portrait of lives, which opposes the Solitary only in as much as it presents a positive model of isolated lives making the best of existence rather than railing against it. In his conclusion it is not clear who the Pastor addresses or quite what his point is:

> – Stoop from your height, ye proud, and copy these!
> Who, in their noiseless dwelling-place, can hear
> The voice of wisdom whispering scripture texts

For the mind's government . . . (234)

His pulpit-like denunciation slightly loses sight of the audience before him, (and the intentions of the tale), in his eagerness to rebuke. Although he responds to the Solitary's rejection of 'outward ritual and established forms' (215) by showing the value of scripture as a guide through life, the Pastor also tries to widen the significance of the tale to address his own particular concern with the value of humble lives as opposed to those of the 'proud'.

The tale is immediately taken up by the Wanderer who makes of it a far more personal narrative in describing his own experience of the couples' kindness. The narrative shifts from third into first person, the Dame's speech is retold, and the Wanderer ends by sharing with us the expression of thanks which he gives, like a blessing, to the woman:

While tens of thousands falter in their path,
And sink, through utter want of cheering light,
For you the hours of labour do not flag;
For you each Evening hath its shining Star,
And every Sabbath-day its golden Sun.

The Wanderer's additional telling of his own encounter is necessary (in his view) in order to make the tale applicable to the preceding discussion. His narrative encourages us to read the Pastor's account as representative of the couples' inner spiritual goodness, whilst his own shows how that goodness is borne out in their every day life and treatment of others. The two accounts *together* thus serve to counteract the Solitary's position, offering a positive illustration of the balance between the individual's inner and outer life, (and its rewards) , from two perspectives. The Wanderer makes a narrative of the Pastor's portrait and closes off the meaning, giving it a significance in relation to the preceding debate which the Pastor had left unclear. In other words, where the Pastor inclines towards the 'open' exemplum with the audience reaching its own conclusions, the Wanderer prefers to make the meaning absolute.[15]

The narratives of Book VI show this distinction particularly clearly. In the first tale, that of the Unrequited Lover, we see the Wanderer anxiously leading the Pastor back on course when he seems to disregard the obvious conclusions:

'Impute it not to impatience, if,' exclaimed
The Wanderer, 'I infer that he was healed
By perseverance in the course prescribed.' (258)

This emerges still more strongly in the next tale of the Persevering Miner. The Pastor tells of an old man who, having searched for gold for twenty years, is broken by the achievement of his wishes:

Not with more transport did Columbus greet
A world, his rich discovery! But our Swain,
A very Hero till his point was gained,
Proved all unable to support the weight
Of prosperous fortune. On the fields he looked

[15] Alternative readings of narrative ambiguity in Books V-VII are also given by Susan Edwards Meisenhelder, *Wordsworth's Informed Reader: Structures of Experience in His Poetry* (Nashville, Tennessee, 1988), who comments on the Wanderer's reinterpretation of the Pastor's tales (pp. 223-8); and Alison Hickey, *Impure Conceits: Rhetoric and Ideology in Wordsworth's 'Excursion'* (Stanford, California, 1997), who reads them as 'plots of deviation' (p. 74), and considers the tale of the Persevering Miner to be an example of this (pp. 89-96).

With an unsettled liberty of thought,
Of schemes and wishes; in the day-light walked
Giddy and restless; ever and anon
Quaffed in his gratitude immoderate cups;
And truly might be said to die of joy! (260)

Superficially this has elements of the exemplum form: we are given a local story based on an actual person who is presented almost as a figure in a fairy tale; when he dies we are told 'He vanish'd' as if he disappears into the hill which his path leads into. But the moment we look for a clear moral the narrative raises a number of questions. The old man is presented as a 'model' of Perseverance and yet he is persevering for pure monetary gain, so that he might equally well be taken to represent a negative attribute such as Avarice. When his perseverance for gold is rewarded, it creates an 'unsettled liberty of thought' (260) which kills him and this at first seems to be punishment for his misplaced perseverance. However, in spite of being unhinged by unexpected success, and falling into drunken ways, he does nonetheless, in one sense, 'die of joy' so that any punishment is not deeply felt, by him at least. The final image we are left with – the imprint of the man on the landscape which is his memorial – encourages us to view him as if he were some kind of medieval pilgrim and yet this seems ironic in view of the fact that the man was merely serving his own ends and, in any case, treading upon a path which led nowhere. The Pastor acknowledges a degree of inappropriateness at the start when he introduces the story as:

A victory less worthy of regard,
Though marvellous in its kind. (259)[16]

However, his fondness for the man leads him on. Ambiguities of tone in the passage make the representation at times touching and almost comic as in the comparison of the Miner's discovery with that of Columbus, which is surely intended to be bathetic.

The Wanderer's response to the tale suggests concern over the story's ambiguity, and an uncertainty of response in those who have heard it. The miner does not present a clear image of perseverance and, correspondingly, the listeners do not know how to react to it. As a result, the minute the Pastor ceases, the Wanderer leaps in to make a hurried metaphor of the individual:

to the Virtuous grant
The penetrative eye which can perceive
In this blind world the guiding vein of hope,
That, like this Labourer, such may dig their way . . . (261)

He attempts to reduce the listeners' confusion over what the miner himself represents by making his actions metaphorical. In other words, the Wanderer tries again to 'close' the narrative by treating it as if it were operative at an allegorical level. Where the Pastor commemorates the Miner himself, with all his failings, the Wanderer redirects the focus onto the act he performs; the process of persevering.

As the stories continue the Wanderer's attempts to mediate reception are reduced, but the ambiguity of meaning in individual tales remains. My final example, the 'Unamiable Woman', is particularly noted for this. William Hazlitt, who treats the churchyard section as a series of failed illustrations, selects this story for criticism:

[16] In 1845 Wordsworth is clearly less keen to have the Pastor question his own representations; the line is altered to 'a humbler victory / Though marvellous in its kind' (VI, 213-14). In the Fenwick Notes (1843) Wordsworth also comments of the individual on whom the tale was based that: 'In reviewing his story one cannot but regret that such perseverance was not sustained by a worthier object' (Curtis 86).

> We think it is pushing our love or admiration of natural objects a good deal too far, to make it a set-off against a story like the preceding, which carries that concentration of self-interest and callousness to the feelings of others to its utmost pitch . . .[17]

Hazlitt allows the story no individual value or purpose, assuming that it only has significance as a contrast to that of Ellen which comes after it. The tale is given after a request by the Poet for positive examples from the dead. The Pastor's intention in this narrative is made clear at the start, when he justifies giving one last negative example:

> For strength to persevere and to support,
> And energy to conquer and repel,
> These elements of virtue, that declare
> The native grandeur of the human Soul,
> Are oft-times not unprofitably shewn
> In the perverseness of a selfish course . . . (279-80)

However, whilst the explanation is clear in itself, the way in which a story about a woman corrupted by her own strengths can teach us the 'native grandeur of the human soul' is far less certain. From the outset, the Pastor is giving us a narrative which contains within it tensions about how we are to understand it.

The opening of the woman's story stresses her strength of character in youth, although her physical description as 'dark and saturnine' perhaps anticipates a more sinister side. The Pastor praises her qualities before turning to the faults which gradually take over her personality:

> An unrelenting, avaricious thrift;
> And a strange thraldom of maternal love . . . (282)

Marriage forces the self-controlled and powerful woman into a state of 'dire dependence' (282) (VI, 717) and an obsession with what little control is left to her. The Pastor goes on to describe her deathbed scene in a way which presents her as jealously clinging on to earthly possessions to the end, rather than looking forward to eternal life:

> and must she rule and reign,
> Sole Mistress of this house, when I am gone?
> Sit by my fire – possess what I possessed –
> Tend what I tended – calling it her own! (284)

At this point the Pastor breaks off 'Enough; I fear, too much' (284). Instead of ending here, however, he concludes with a return to her 'nobler feeling' (284).[18] The part of the narrative which makes her life memorable for the Pastor is his description of an interrupted late night walk:

> a voice
> Roused me, her voice; it said, 'That glorious Star
> In its untroubled element will shine
> As now it shines, when we are laid in earth
> And safe from all our sorrows.' (284)

[17] 'On Mr Wordsworth's "Excursion"', *The Examiner* (2 October 1814), 636-8, p. 637.

[18] The 1845 version omits reference to 'nobler feeling' and adds a religious interpretation of her words (VI, 766-74).

The earlier moral which her story seemed to offer ('the perverseness of a selfish course' (280)), and which formed the main section of the narrative, is overridden by one particular experience with the woman. However, the description in itself is nothing, and it is hard for the listeners or the reader to understand why it should be such a significant moment for the Pastor since we cannot hear her voice or re-live the moment as he does. The narrative reveals the difficulties involved in trying to communicate such a subjective response, and positively illustrates the way in which we can never truly know, or judge, a person. The Pastor's objective judgement of the woman's life is made secondary by a single incident which transfigures his understanding of an individual. The way in which he tells the story attempts to make this point clear to the listeners by demanding a retrospective re-consideration of who she is, and how we see her. It points out the limitations of assuming fixed moral positions and of using individual lives for such a purpose.

In attempting to understand the Pastor's purpose it is essential to remember that as well as being a religious figure he is also a local man. His role as 'recorder' of lives, his role in the community, is at least as valuable as his official religious function. He is first described by the Wanderer in Book V both as a descendant of a good family, who lived in the valley as a boy, and as one who has chosen to return because he 'loved the spot' (206) and 'prized/ The ancient rural character' (206). In Book VII we are again reminded that the Pastor's links to the place are not merely vocational, in his description of himself as a boy watching the arrival of the Gypsy Pastor:

> Young was I then, a school-boy of eight years;
> But still, methinks, I see them as they passed . . . (312)

He places himself within the narrative he tells, reminding us that he is more than just the official 'Historian' that the Poet labels him at the start of Book VII. Rather than being a figure remote from the society which he records, he is a part of that society from birth. This double role means that his narratives have a dual significance: the individuals he describes are both his flock *and* the people who have shaped him. He is not imposed upon, but has grown out of, this community.[19] However, as a result of this strong identification of the religious figure with his people, his tales do not always have the single-minded religious intention or moral structures that the Wanderer requires and the reader expects. In the three narratives considered above, the Pastor offers neither illustrations to support the philosophical argument, nor absolute religious exempla. Instead, his purpose in telling is confused by his desire to portray the real person accurately. He illustrates the difficulty which is inherent in the Wanderer's request to 'Epitomize the life' (230) when the speaker is telling of someone whose life is of value to him. Real people, if truly portrayed, do not conform to neat narrative patterns and clear moral judgements.

The priest himself, as Wordsworth represents him, is not simply a religious mouthpiece, nor a useful adjunct to the Wanderer, but is given a distinct individual identity. As a result his tales are strongly subjective and reflect the particular nature and life of the individual who tells them, and his feelings for those he speaks of. Their ambiguity draws attention to the Pastor's conscious awareness of the difficulties involved in telling another's life and, through this, the poem plays out at a dramatic level Wordsworth's own wider uncertainty as to the difficulties of representation at a number of levels within the text.

[19] He thus fits Wordsworth's description of the ideal priest given in *A Guide Through the District of the Lakes*: 'their minister, in clothing or in manner of life, in no respect differing from themselves, except on the Sabbath-day' (*The Prose Works of William Wordsworth* ed. W. J. B. Owen and Jane Worthington Smyser (3 vols., Oxford, 1974), ii. 200-1).

Thus far I have looked at the ways in which a comparison of individual tales with the 'exempla' form show that, for the Pastor, the representation of character is as important as the moral purpose of each individual tale. Now I would like to turn to the second aspect of Hartman's criticism which concerns the interrelations between the tales.

From the time of its publication, responses to the churchyard books of *The Excursion* have focused on the way in which the narratives accumulate. A brief comparison of two 1814 reviews, that of Hazlitt in *The Examiner* and Lamb in the *Quarterly Review* illustrates two ways of responding to the poem which either respect or dismiss these narrative elements.

For Hazlitt the success of the poem as a whole lies in its ability to convey philosophical truths from the mouth of the poet, and reflect the wealth of experience and feelings which the poet's mind encompasses: 'He only sympathises with those simple forms of feeling, which mingle at once with his own identity, or the stream of general humanity.'[20]

As a result dramatic identities are denied:

> the dialogues introduced in the present volume are soliloquies of the same character, taking different views of the subject. The recluse, the pastor, and the pedlar, are three persons in one poet. . . . there is no dramatic distinction of character. (Ibid., 542)

It is not surprising then that Hazlitt views the narrative elements as unnecessary illustrations of the wider philosophy. He praises the 'general sentiments' (ibid., 555) whilst criticising the fact that: 'he has chosen to encumber himself with a load of narrative and description, which, instead of assisting, hinders the progress and effect of the general reasoning' (ibid., 555). For him the narratives of the poem only exist as pointless illustrations of a philosophy which is better presented at the larger scale. He accords them no value in their own right: 'why introduce particular illustrations at all, which add nothing to the force of the general truth' (ibid.).

Hazlitt, like Coleridge, values Wordsworth as a poet speaking in his own voice and responds to the poem in the light of this position, condemning the narratives and dramatic identities rather than considering what purpose they serve.[21]

Lamb's generous review of *The Excursion* in the *Quarterly* (his only published comment on Wordsworth's poetry, written at the poet's request), does what Hazlitt's refused to do by accepting the narrative framework, identities and characterisations that Hazlitt dismisses.[22] The 'poet' is not assumed to be Wordsworth but recognised as a dramatic identity; Lamb speaks of 'the third, or rather fourth interlocutor, (for the poet himself is one)'.[23] He pays close attention to the various narrative forms of the poem and particularly to the narratives of Books VI and VII which Hazlitt found most burdensome. His first response to the poem in a letter to Wordsworth states

[20] 'Character of Mr Wordsworth's New Poem, The Excursion', *The Examiner* (21, 28 August , 2 October 1814), 541-2, 555-8, 636-38, p. 541.

[21] In *Biographia Literaria* Coleridge criticises Wordsworth's 'undue predilection for the dramatic form' (see *Biographia Literaria* ed. James Engell and Walter Jackson Bate (2 vols., Princeton, NJ, 1983), ii. 135). He later makes the point still more plainly in *Table Talk*: 'Wordsworth undertaking a grand philosophical poem ought always to have taught the reader himself as from himself' (*Table Talk* ed. Carl Woodring (2 vols., Princeton, NJ, 1990) i. 307). 'Wordsworth spoilt many of his best poems by abandoning the contemplative position, which is alone fitted for him, and introducing the object in a dramatic way' (ibid., 308).

[22] In his denunciation of the considerable changes made to it by the editor William Gifford, as well as in the article itself, Lamb shows great anxiety to please Wordsworth: 'I know how sore a world altered makes one, but indeed of this Review the whole complexion is gone' (*The Letters of Charles and Mary Lamb* ed. E. V. Lucas (3 vols., London, 1935) (hereafter Lucas), ii. 149).

[23] Charles Lamb, 'The Excursion; a Poem', *Quarterly Review* 12 (October 1814) 100-11 (hereafter *QR*), p. 101.

that: 'the part (or rather main body) which has left the sweetest odour on my memory . . . is the Tales of the Churchyard.'[24]

In his review Lamb make a number of perceptive, though undeveloped, comments on the operation of the narratives in this part of the poem. He describes it as being 'almost a continued cluster of narration' (*QR* 101) and later states:

> We might extract powerful instances of pathos from these tales – the story of Ellen in particular – but their force is in combination . . . (*QR* 108)

Where Hazlitt somewhat contemptuously treats the narratives 'en masse' only in order to dismiss them, Lamb suggests that the intention of the most dense narrative section of the poem is to work in just that way. Thus, the graveyard narratives cease to be an endless series of stories about individuals but challenge the reader's narrative expectations by asking to be appreciated in relation to each other and together.

The Pastor's narratives assert the value of the oral over the written record, the humble poor over the 'proud'. From the first it is clear that the narratives of the unmarked graves, which need the Pastor to utter them, are intended to contrast with the chiselled recordings of the rich. In Book V when the party first arrive at the village church they go inside the building and see that:

> marble Monuments were here displayed
> Upon the walls; and on the floor beneath
> Sepulchral stones appeared, with emblems graven,
> And foot-worn epitaphs . . . (208-9)

The image created is of a space crammed with physical records of the dead and Wordsworth makes us aware of the status of those held there, 'upright Magistrates' 'Grave Doctors', 'uncorrupted Senators' (209). The puns here on the nature of the living men and their tomb-like identities, mock their desire to perpetuate such status beyond the grave, and remind us of the fact that whilst the stone wording may be 'uncorrupted' they themselves are far otherwise. In terms of what they have become they are no different from those outside from whom they seek to distinguish themselves. This introductory passage also draws attention to the nature of response that the written word demands. The Poet describes how:

> – The tribute by these various records claimed,
> Without reluctance did we pay; and read
> The ordinary chronicle of birth,
> Office, alliance, and promotion – all
> Ending in dust . . . (209)

Whilst the epitaphs elicit the appropriate sobering thoughts much admired by such as Dr Johnson they do little more.[25] The tribute is a kind of duty, a repetitive chore of endlessly repeated micro-stories. The process takes little time and, though it stimulates the Poet to wonder about the records, he has no way of unlocking them.

Such a reading of a man's life, as recorded within the church, is placed in direct opposition to the narratives which follow in Books VI and VII. The distinction between the two social worlds of the dead (inside and outside the church) and, implicitly, between the two kinds of narrative each world possesses, is made before the Pastor begins to speak in Book VI:

[24] Lucas ii. 126.
[25] See Johnson's 'An Essay on Epitaphs', *Gentleman's Magazine* 10 (1740) 593-6.

> The Pastor cast his eyes upon the ground,
> Not, as before, like one oppressed with awe,
> But with a mild and social chearfulness . . . (253)

The recording of the unmarked dead is a positive and communicative act, creating new links between the living, not remote and oppressive as the inside of the church was. It exists as a living narrative in the memories of others. Lamb's review notes this, in his admiring description of the Pastor as narrator:

> Nothing can be conceived finer than the manner of introducing these tales. With heaven above his head, and the mouldering turf at his feet – standing betwixt life and death – he seems to maintain that spiritual relation which he bore to his living flock, in its undiminished strength, even with their ashes . . . (*QR* 108)

The position of the graves next to each other, and their setting, reinforce this union of the living and the dead, with the churchyard represented as a microcosm of the landscape to be seen beyond the churchyard walls. Graves are described as 'habitation' (259) or as a miniature landscape of 'Ridge rising gently by the side of ridge' (277). In this way the place in which the village people lived, and in which they now 'live', are brought together, with death seen as nothing more threatening than a change of dwelling place. The narratives of the churchyard thus reflect upon and grow out of the communality of the setting.

Although the narratives are necessarily dominated by the Pastor, who relates them, the requests and comments of the other characters mean that they are not merely passive listeners but take an active part in the creation of the overall text. The sense of a past community which the graves represent is thus recreated in the present by the retelling of those past lives. The listeners are dependent on the Pastor to create links to a landscape which means nothing to them, but they are, for the most part, allowed to initiate those links. The Pastor weaves a kind of narrative net out of the different lives that are chosen, as the 'Arguments' at the front of Books VI and VII emphasise. This sense of one life leading into, and merging with, another for cumulative effect is most powerfully controlled by the manipulation of the space after the story. The use of this space defines for us the kind of narrative which has preceded it, and its variability in terms of length is significant. At times the space is used by one of the listeners to respond individually, thus indicating a particular effect which the tale has had. Thus, for example, the story of Ellen in Book VII, with its long space for reflection afterwards, demands an exceptional response in the context of Books VI and VII where, for the most part, the narratives run on one after another.

The silence and space around Ellen's tale also draws attention to the fact that, from the conclusion of her story to the end of Book VI, the Pastor allows no space for response to the other tales. The interaction between audience and speaker is denied as the Pastor runs on from grave to grave, making the selections himself and not allowing anyone a chance to respond to the narratives. For the listener, it becomes very difficult to adjust to each new story in terms of sympathy and interest and we begin to feel the need for personal space, for the individual response. As narratives cumulate in a largely nameless pile we long for a name, an epitaph, which we could read for ourselves.

Wordsworth's technique at this point serves to illustrate the workings of narrative in a way which supports the Pastor's central purpose and shows how his narratives do attempt to achieve their original aim, although not perhaps in the way that the Wanderer had envisaged, since they are mediated through the Pastor's own identity. We know that at times the Pastor *does* allow the space and response that we would expect in order to memorise an individual narrative. When that

space is not given it therefore suggests that we are not being asked to memorise these lives in the same way, rather he wants the stories to merge into one in the minds of his listeners. The Poet's comment, as he reviews the stories of Book VI, makes this clear. At the start of Book VII, in a comment which the 'Argument' describes as 'Impression of these Narratives upon the Author's mind' (xix) (VII) the Poet declares:

> While thus from theme to theme the Historian passed,
> The words he uttered, and the scene that lay
> Before our eyes, awakened in my mind
> Vivid remembrance of those long-past hours . . . (309)

It is clear that the Poet is no longer assimilating each individual story but allowing them to merge in his mind and his words, when he finally speaks, reinforce this impression:

> 'These grassy heaps lie amicably close,'
> Said I, 'like surges heaving in the wind
> Upon the surface of a mountain pool' . . . (310)

The effect which Hartman dismisses as 'heaping up', and Lamb touches upon as 'clusters of narration', is in fact the creation of a communal structure, a kind of 'narrative conglomerate': the different lives and stories are not to be seen individually but are intended to merge into one narrative.[26] The Pastor articulates the individuals of the churchyard as a multitude of lives which are held together and feed off each other in the mind, like the turf which rolls over them and makes of them one landscape. It is through this 'conglomerate', at times so frustrating to the listener, that the Pastor most clearly asserts the value of the spoken over the written epitaph: the heterogeneous mixture of related lives over the engravings of cold stone. With the monuments there can be no real common place, no bringing together of the multitude. Each brief life stands alone and is read alone. With the spoken epitaphs of the Pastor and his sense of one life leading into and merging with another for cumulative effect, no one figure is ever seen in total isolation. His narrative of narratives enacts both the mental processes by which the stories are memorised and held, or merged, over time in the individual mind, and the way in which the act of telling unites the listeners. Thus, we see that the Pastor's final position, the cumulative force and meaning of the individual tales, compels the Solitary to experience the truth of this sense of community as a listener, in a way that he cannot argue with.

Although he may not at first sight do what the Wanderer intends, the Pastor achieves his aim far more forcefully, by actively involving his audience in the illustration of his own affirmative life philosophy which the exempla represent. Moreover, his teaching is not simply aimed at the Solitary but embraces all the figures and unites the living with the dead. In the end, the 'heaped up' exempla are not important in terms of whether they communicate their individual meaning or not, because they become illustrative of a wider truth. The narratives are not about a single audience or a single intention, but about the multiple audience they address, the multiple subject matter they speak of, and the multiple responses to them – all of which the churchyard embraces.

Queens' College, Cambridge

[26] This idea is first touched upon by Leonard in 'The Brothers':

> Your years make up one peaceful family;
> And who would grieve and fret, if, welcome come
> And welcome gone, they are so like each other
> They cannot be remembered? (ll. 122-5)

'The Mermaid': A Newly Identified Lamb Essay

By JOSEPH RIEHL

DURING THE SUMMER OF 1822, while in Paris, Charles Lamb met and formed a friendship with the American playwright John Howard Payne, and began to act as informal agent for Payne at Covent Garden Theatre, for whom Payne had recently contracted to write three plays. In October, at the end of a letter full of both business and banter, Lamb writes, 'The weather is charming,[1] and there is a mermaid to be seen in London. You may not have the opportunity of inspecting such a **Poisarde** once again in ten centuries.—'[2] The reference is characteristic of Lamb, trying out his newly acquired French: *Poisarde*, simply put, is 'fishwife', with the connotations of low breeding and foul language which the English term carries.[3]

Attempting to learn more about this mermaid, I canvassed the *Times* and *The Examiner* and failed to turn up any reference to her, though, initially, I was tempted by the notice, in the *London Magazine*, that a hippopotamus had recently been shown in London, the first complete specimen ever seen there.[4] But a little further enquiry revealed two items on the mermaid in the *London* for November and December of 1822. The first is a note from the 'Lion's Head', probably by Thomas Hood:

> We have received a letter (directed 'to be delivered *immediately*,') giving us a description of The Mermaid now exhibiting in St James's Street, from the pen of 'Dr Rees Price, a gentleman distinguished for his scientific literary productions.' Does the proprietor of this suspicious importation think that we never read Sheridan's Puff collateral, or that we will artlessly stand a comma 'tween the anities of him and the Stamp Office! No—no.— Besides, who is this distinguished Dr Rees Price? Has he any interest in this herring-tailed lady? The Mermaid, in fact, comes very suspiciously, per the Americans. Now if Mermaids do really exist, we must say that we are surprised that no fisherman ever netted a specimen since the year One![5]

The *London* did not often continue or carry over its brief notices from one issue to the next, and so it is a little unusual to find that this squib has a lengthier sequel. In its next issue, the saga of the mermaid continues in a new feature, 'The Miscellany', described by its conductor B. W. Proctor as 'a place of refuge for small ingenious productions'. It is known, from Lamb's letter to Taylor of late November 1822 (unpublished, to be Letter 480 in Marrs and Riehl, Volume IV) that he contributed to this section, expressing evident relief that perhaps it might free him from the burden of being expected always to write full-length essays. Four brief items in the December 'Miscellany' entitled 'Scraps of Criticism' are attributed to Lamb.

[1] This, too, was a joke. The *London Magazine* (6.36 (December 1822) 87) describes the weather for the month of October as 'remarkably wet, windy and overcast', nearly the wettest month in seven years. In fact the 27th, the supposed date of this letter, was only the second full sunny day.

[2] Letter to Payne, 27? October 1822, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Lamb* ed. E. V. Lucas (3 vols., London, 1935), ii. 340-1 (there dated as 22 October), to be Letter 474 in *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb* ed. Edwin W. Marrs Jr. and Joseph Riehl, volume 4 (forthcoming) (hereafter Marrs and Riehl).

[3] 'Poisarde . . . woman of vulgar manners, particularly course and insolent in her language' (*Trésor de la Langue Française: Dictionnaire de la Langue du XIX^e^ et du XX^e^ siècle (1789-1960)* (Paris, 1988), xiii. 658; my translation).

[4] See 'Literary and Scientific Intelligence &c.', *London Magazine* 6.34 (October 1822) 381.

[5] *London Magazine* 6.35 (November 1822) 338.

The story of the mermaid, of unknown authorship according to the *Index to the London Magazine*,[6] is told mostly with quotations from the newspapers, and an initial comment:

THE MERMAID.

To use a sporting phrase, the Mermaid has been well *backed.* In the first place, she is detained at the Custom House, and a price of 2000*l.* set upon her ape-like head. Then her picture is sent to Carlton House and her demi-ladyship is let out of the Custom House:—she next takes a first floor at Tom Watson's Turf Coffee House, and sends round her cards for a daily 'at home:' The great surgeons pay a shilling for a peep—and she is weighed in the *scales* and found wanting. Sir A. Carlisle is said to have disputed her womanhood: Sir Everard Home questioned her haddock moiety. One great surgeon thought her to be half a baboon and half a gudgeon: another vowed she was half Johanna Southcote, with a salmon petticoat. Dr Rees Price thought her a Mermaid clean out: and his opinion was disinterestedly forwarded to us by the proprietor. Lastly, she has become a ward in Chancery, and equity barristers tussle for her rights with all their usual manliness and propriety. She has no comb and glass—but how can a lady in her difficulties regard the care of her person. If she washes herself with her own fins, we ought to expect no more. Certainly now she is in Chancery, Sir John Falstaff's taunt of Dame Quickly cannot be applied to her, 'Thou art neither fish nor flesh, and a man knows not where to have thee!' We have been much pleased with the showman's advertisement about this little Billingsgate woman; he treats the question of her 'To be, or not to be,' like a true philosopher, and only wishes you to be satisfied that she has a claim somehow upon your shilling.

[Advertisement.]—The Mermaid in the Sporting World.—So much has been said for and against this wonderful animal, and perhaps with a view to bring the period of dissection earlier than is intended by the proprietor, and we understand it is his determination to satisfy the public opinion on this important question, by some of our first medical men and naturalists, as soon as the bare expences that he had incurred by bringing it to this country are liquidated, which cannot be long now, from the many hundreds of spectators that daily call to view it: among the number many of our noble families; it has also been honoured by visits of royalty. The difference of opinion is now great, whether it will turn out a natural production or a made-up deception, that a great deal of betting has taken place on the event; and as many persons back the strength of their opinion for and against the Mermaid, the sporting men will have a fine opportunity of making a great book, as some are laying 5 and 6 to 4 on the Mermaid being a natural production, while others are laying the same odds, and even 2 to 1 against it. A sporting gentleman, who is supposed to have some concern in this Mermaid, and has taken many bets and some long odds to a large amount, that it really is what it is represented—a Mermaid. It is now exhibiting at Watson's Turf Coffee House, St. James's-street.

We warrant us when this lady comes to be 'what she is represented,' that the Lord Chancellor will look upon her as one of the oldest wards under his care.

The Stirling paper gives us an account of a gentleman every way fit to become Miss Mermaid's suitor. His dabbling propensities—his passion for wet clothes—his great age—all render the match desirable. Ought not a reference to be immediately made to the master to inquire into the settlements?—What an account for the papers!—Marriage in wet life! At Shoreditch, on St. Swithin's day, Mr John Monro, aged 95, to Miss Salmon, the

[6] *Index to the London Magazine* ed. Frank Riga and Claude A. Prance (London and New York, 1978).

Mermaid. The lady was given away by the Lord Chancellor, and, immediately after the ceremony, the happy pair set off for the Goodwin Sands to pass the honeymoon. Two fish-women attended as the bridesmaids.

The account of Mr Monro is as follows:—he seems a fit subject for his namesake, the doctor.[7]

> (From the *Stirling Journal.*)—There is at present living, at a place called Glenarie, six miles from Inverary, a person of the name of John Monro, at the advanced age of 95, who makes a point of walking daily, for the sake of recreation, the six miles betwixt his residence and Inverary, or to the top of Tullich-hill, which is very steep, and distant abut two miles. Should the rain pour in torrents, so much the better, and with the greater pleasure does he perambulate the summit of the hill for hours in the midst of the storm. Whether it is natural to this man, or whether it is the effect of habit, cannot be said: but it is well known he cannot endure to remain any length of time with his body in a dry state. During summer, and when the weather is dry, he regularly pays a daily visit to the river Arca, and plunges himself headlong in with his clothes on; and should they get perfectly dry early in the day, so irksome and disagreeable does his situation become, that, like a fish out of water, he finds it necessary to repeat the luxury. He delights in rainy weather, and when the 'sky lowers, and the clouds threaten,' and other men seek the 'bield or ingle side,' then is the time that this 'man of habits' chooses for enjoying his natural element in the highest perfection. He never bends his way homewards till he is completely drenched; and, on those occasions, that a drop may not be lost, his bonnet is carried in his hand, and his head left bare to the pattering of the wind and rain. He at present enjoys excellent health; and, notwithstanding his habits, he has been wonderfully fortunate in escaping colds, a complaint very common in this moist climate—but when he is attacked, whether in dry weather or wet weather, whether in summer or winter, his mode of cure is not more singular than it is specific. Instead of confining himself and indulging in the ardent sweating potions so highly extolled among the gossips of his country, he repairs to his favourite element, the pure streams of the Arca, and takes one of his usual headlong dips, with his clothes on. He then walks about for a few miles, till they become dry, when the plan pursued never fails to check the progress of his disorder. In other respects, the writer has never heard of any thing singular regarding his manners or habits.
>
> ('The Miscellany', *London Magazine* 36.6 (December 1822) 569-70)[8]

There are several reasons for supposing that the author of this piece is Charles Lamb. The most convincing is his evident interest in the mermaid story, conveyed in his letter to Payne. The first notice of the mermaid undoubtedly was at Taylor and Hessey's offices when Lamb must have seen it, in late October, waiting to be published on the first of November. The second notice would have to have been written before Taylor's regular deadline, 18 November, in order to appear in the December issue. So the timing of the news is just about right. Lamb could have seen the notice by 27 October, when he wrote to Payne, and then written the second article sometime in the next three weeks. Lamb would have seen the notice in time to write his own response, and submit it to Hood by the deadline.

[7] Probably the physician Thomas Monro (1759-1833), son of Dr John Monro and grandson of Dr James Monro, all of whom specialized in insanity. Thomas Monro, author of a pamphlet on conditions in asylums 'Observations' (1816) was a physician at Bridewell and Bethlehem hospitals. He was a patron of arts, particularly of such artists as Turner, Linnell, and John Varley. Alternatively, the writer may be referring to his son, Edward Thomas Monro (1790-1856), who succeeded him in his hospital posts in 1816.

[8] What was this 'mermaid' in truth? The question awaits further research.

The most conclusive internal evidence tying Lamb specifically to the piece is his use of the French word 'poisarde' in the letter to Payne, identifying the mermaid as a fishwife, a term which is echoed in the identification of the mermaid as 'little Billingsgate woman', and of her 'bridesmaids' as 'fish-women'.

Other evidence is more suggestive than conclusive: the (rather bad) Lamb-style puns, particularly on 'backed', 'scales'[9] (both italicized so we won't miss the joke) and on Mr Monro's 'dabbling propensities'; the reference to his friend the surgeon Anthony Carlisle, one of Coleridge's doctors; the apt, risqué quotation (misquoted and adapted as was Lamb's usual practice) from Falstaff in *Henry IV*; the play on the meaning of holidays, in this instance the rainy St Swithin's day, reminding us of Lamb's essays on the holidays. Elsewhere I will argue that Lamb also wrote the article on 'The Drama' for the *London* of July 1823. In it is a verbal echo of this article which says that the mermaid 'sends round her cards for a daily "at home"'. In the later article 'The Drama', Charles MayneYoung is said to have 'summoned his friends together to his "At Home," (for which he sent round his cards freely) . . .'.[10] (The phrase is itself a play on Lamb's new acquaintance Charles Mathews' popular comic entertainment 'At Home'.)

More generally, and even less conclusively, of course, are: the Elia-like tone of the letter, both innocent and skeptical; its racy jabs at barristers; its parody of sensationalist journalism; its connoisseurship of the ridiculous and the grotesque. In fact, its general approach to the mermaid strongly resembles the stance which Lamb took toward the same subject in 'Witches and other Night Fears' (1821), when, at the end of that essay, he reveals how prosaic are his own fantasies of mermaids, how unqualified he feels to have anything to do with them. The tone of that essay, like this one, is reductive, or mock-heroic, stripping the exotic and glamorous of its power and reducing it to the ordinary. In that essay too, as in this one, the mermaids are combing their hair, a stereotypical image of mermaids which the author of this piece parodies.

While the evidence is admittedly not fully conclusive, there seem to be reasons enough for admitting it to the Lamb canon.

University of Southwestern Louisiana

[9] E. V. Lucas records that Lamb himself may once have been weighed in the scales of a local pub, the Coffee Mill, located near Tom Watson's, at No. 3 St. James's Street, where the proprietors weighed their customers, who perhaps bet on the outcome, and kept records, which explains this punning reference. Lucas notes that the neighbourhood is called Pickering Place or Pickering Court, and was noted as a haven for gamblers in the eighteenth century. In 1814, Lamb weighed 9 stone 3 lb., while Byron, living only a few doors down in 1808, weighed 13 stone 12 lb. ('Men of Weight' in *At the Shrine of St Charles, Stray Papers on Lamb brought together for the Centenary of his Death in 1834* (New York, 1934), pp. 82-8).

[10] 'The Drama', *London Magazine* 8.43 (July 1823) 101-2.

Three Unpublished Notes of Charles Lamb and a Reply from Moxon

By D. E. WICKHAM

(I)

I TAKE PLEASURE IN COMMUNICATING to the *Charles Lamb Bulletin* this unpublished note from Charles Lamb, dated 8 February 1825, and now in my collection. (See Figure 1, opposite.) The Islington postmark is of the same date and includes the letters 'Mg', presumably for 'Morning'.

The integral address leaf is inscribed to R. A. Ainsworth, Esq., No. 6 Devereux Court, Temple, the R. A. perhaps inserted by another hand.

This is clearly connected with the occasion mentioned in E. V. Lucas's edition of Letter No. 549 and recorded in Henry Crabb Robinson's *Diary*. A very young and rather brash 'Mr Ainsworth' was among those present: Lucas identified him as William Harrison Ainsworth, the future novelist, and no-one seems ever to have disagreed with this though I am not quite certain why it should be so.

The Librarian and Keeper of the Records of The Honourable Society of the Middle Temple wrote to me in September 1997 that, although there are currently barristers' chambers in Devereux Court, it is technically outside the Temple, albeit immediately adjacent to one of the main gates into the Middle Temple. In territorial terms it does not belong (certainly *in toto*) to the Inn. There is no reference to Devereux Court in the early rental ledgers of Middle Temple and it was not by any means the exclusive domain of barristers. Indeed, only fifty years ago, Kelly's Directories show an array of accountants, surveyors, journalists, artists, wine and spirit merchants, and solicitors in Devereux Court, though without mentioning No. 6 which might, by then, have been subsumed into Devereux Buildings. R. A. Ainsworth does not appear in the Middle Temple *Register of Admissions* nor in the printed membership lists for Gray's Inn and Lincoln's Inn. There is no sign that he was a practising barrister according to the Law Lists of 1820-30.

In October 1997 the Archivist of The Honourable Society of the Inner Temple pointed out that W. H. Ainsworth was a would-be solicitor and so would be excluded from membership of the London Inns of Court. He had been articled to a Manchester solicitor, according to the *Dictionary of National Biography*, and, when he came to London, received further instruction (perhaps by an unusual special arrangement) from Jacob Phillips, barrister and a member of the Inner Temple with chambers at 10 King's Bench Walk during the period in question. There is no sign of an R. A. Ainsworth in the Inner Temple Records so it seems possible that he was merely lodging at Devereux Court, though 1825 is rather early for house occupancy records.

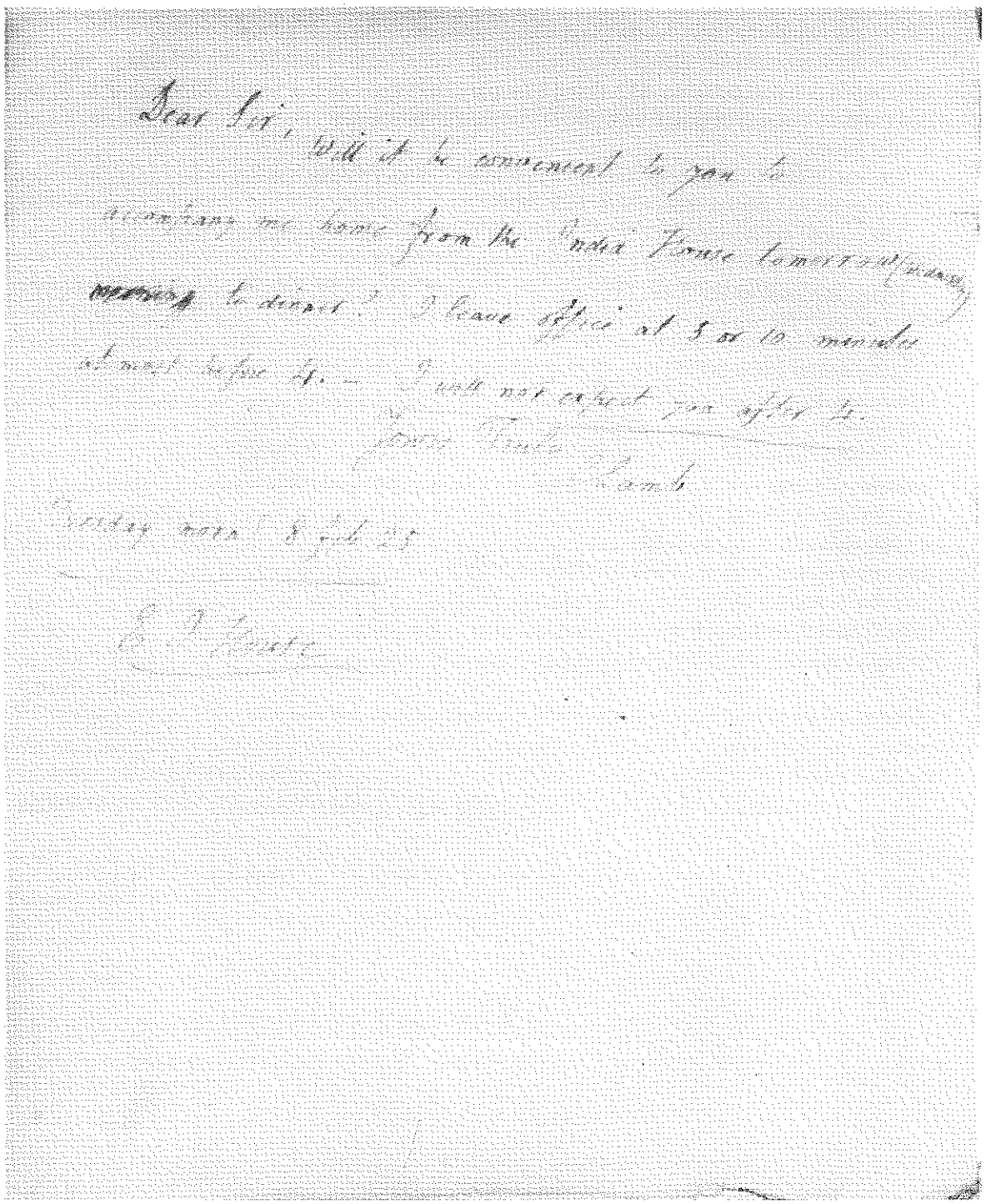

Figure 1: Charles Lamb to R. A. Ainsworth, 8 February 1825

(II)

I take pleasure in communicating to the *Charles Lamb Bulletin* this unpublished note from Charles Lamb, undated, and now in my collection. (See Figure 2, below.) It is addressed, on the other side, simply to 'Mrs Aders', and was presumably delivered by hand.

E. V. Lucas published a single communication from Charles Lamb to the merchant and collector Charles Aders (Lucas No. 452, dated 8 January 1823), a note concerning Mrs Aders' birthday party and an evasion of postal charges. He printed no communications at all from Charles Lamb to Mrs Aders.

She was Eliza or Elizabeth, a daughter of John Raphael Smith, the engraver and painter, and was married to Charles Aders on 6 July 1820.

The couple are noticed by Claude Prance in his *Companion to Charles Lamb*, page 2, and in the Marrs edition of the *Letters*, volume III, pages 109-10.

I used this note as the Elian Reading at the Society's lecture meeting on 3 October 1998 and like to regard the word '(both)' as a new Elianism, to be found and appreciated even in so few words.

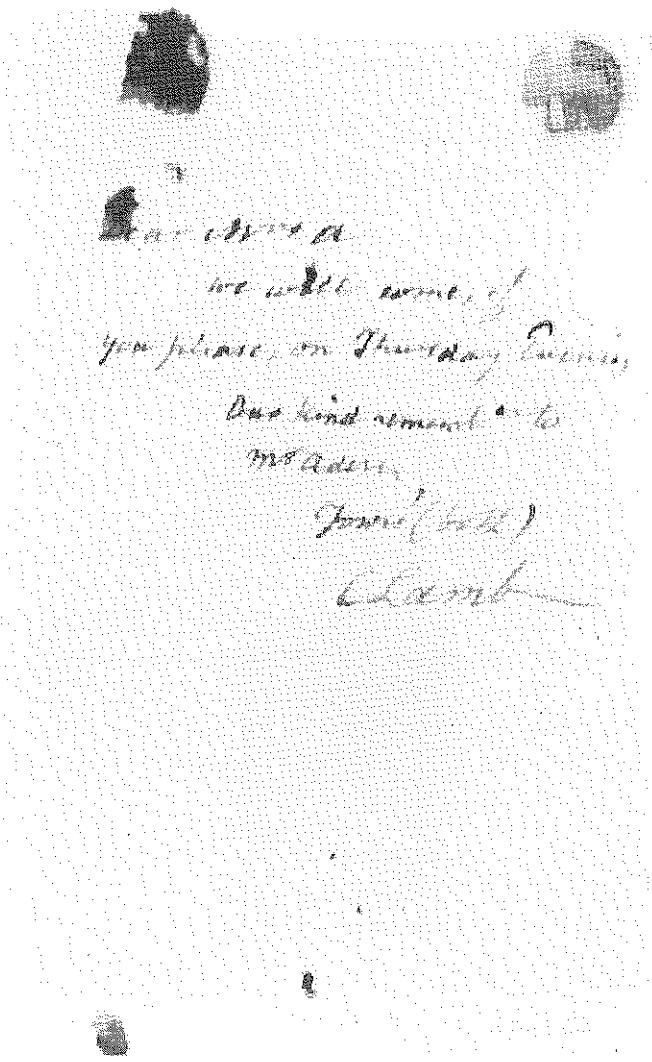

Figure 2: Charles Lamb to Eliza or Elizabeth Aders, undated

(III)

I take pleasure in communicating to the *Charles Lamb Bulletin* this unpublished and undated note from Charles Lamb, now in my collection. (See Figure 3, below.) It is addressed, on the other side and apparently not by Charles Lamb, to F. Field, Esq. There is no address so it was delivered by hand, perhaps within East India House.

Dating the note provides an interesting trail of possibilities which may point to 1825 and particularly to the month of September.

The reference to Islington presumably involves a date between July/September 1823 and August/September 1827, when the Lambs lived at Colebrooke Cottage.

Barron Field returned from Australia in 1824 but soon went to Gibraltar. He had three brothers and, in the circumstances, F. Field, Esq., 'Dear F.', is likely to be Francis John (Frank) Field, who was or had been a clerk alongside Charles Lamb at East India House. Lamb was previously known to have addressed only one brief letter to him, Lucas No. 987 of 6 January 1834, the 'Dandy' letter, now in the Charles Lamb Society's collection at Guildhall Library.

Charles Lamb retired from East India House in March 1825. On 27 May 1825 he attended the funeral of his brother John Lamb's widow. He was the sole executor of her will and seems immediately to have begun to suffer from an inevitable nervous reaction, during which he was attended by Coleridge's doctor James Gillman. This is all in Chapter 43 of Lucas' *Life*.

Apparently he recovered during the summer but suffered a relapse in August/September, undergoing what amounted to a nervous breakdown aggravated by sleeplessness. On 24 September 1825 (Lucas, Letter No. 588) he wrote from Colebrooke Cottage to Thomas Allsop 'Come not near this unfortunate roof yet a while'. He adds that his condition is improving and '[Henry] Field [Junior] is an excellent attendant. But Mary's anxieties have overturned her.' Prance records that Henry Field, Junior, was a surgeon (and, may we hope, a physician?) who, in 1824, 'lived a few doors west of Christ's Church Passage, Newgate Street', i.e. very close to Christ's Hospital.

The eye of faith may interpret the oddly jagged and ill-written script of this note as illustrating the still not fully recovered Charles Lamb, 'in a violent hurry' to be at home with his sister in Islington, dashing into East India House after his recent retirement and leaving Frank Field an agitated note about seeing his doctor brother Henry 'before I get back . . . this morn'.

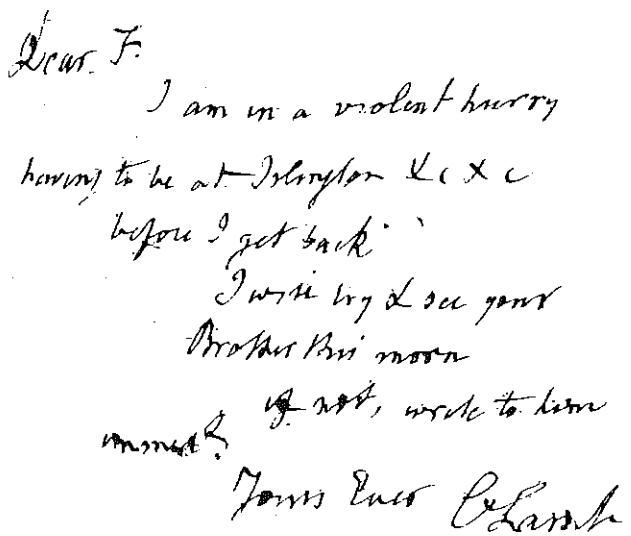

Figure 3: Charles Lamb to Francis Field, undated

(IV)

Dr A. S. W. Rosenbach (1876-1952) of Philadelphia was perhaps the greatest showman-bookdealer of all time. Ever since my first wallow in the 1960 biography by Edwin Wolf 'with John Fleming' I have been haunted by a reference to Harry Widener, the rich young American collector who went down with the *Titanic*:

> As so frequently happens in the amazing world of books, an item that once slipped through the fingers of a collector, by some mystery of providence which seems to watch over bibliomaniacs, came a second time within his reach. It is a foolish man who would tempt Lady Luck twice. [An item sold four years earlier to a private collector was back on the market.] The price had almost doubled . . . but Harry still wanted it, could now afford it, and took it.

Thirty years ago, perhaps more, Charles J. Sawyer, the London antiquarian bookdealer, sent out a catalogue which offered the letter written by Edward Moxon to Charles Lamb in reply to the letter printed as Lucas No. 964, beginning 'For god's sake, give Emma no more watches', timed 'Edmonton, 24th July [1833], 3.20 post mer[idiem] minutes 4 instants by Emma's watch'. Lamb's letter was sprightly, humorous, imaginative. Poor Moxon, knowing that he had to reply in kind, was embarrassed, elephantine, and galumphing. Sawyer's quality was always high but that made him notoriously expensive. I was interested in the letter but no true Elian then. Purchase was an unrealisable dream.

I kept the catalogue, re-read the entry every so often, became an Elian. Twenty or more years later I seem to remember enquiring after the letter in Sawyer's establishment (no shop that) in Grafton Street, but it was long gone. Sawyer went out of business or at least became associated with another dealer. They too apparently disappeared. I consoled myself with the thought that, in the end, *everything* comes on to the market.

In the Spring of 1995 it became clear that a specialist London dealer was about to issue a catalogue of high-grade material which must include some Eliana. There was sure to be something in it for me. I enquired early but was given no advantage, no pointers. On 6 July 1995 the catalogue reached me. Item 672 was the Moxon letter. The price had not doubled in thirty or more years. But I still wanted it, could afford it, and bought it. (See Figure 4, opposite.)

May I add that, thirty or more years older than I was, I now read the letter from a different viewpoint, understand more clearly how diffident that nice young man must have felt when writing it, and think it is really a much better job than I once supposed.

Belvedere, Kent

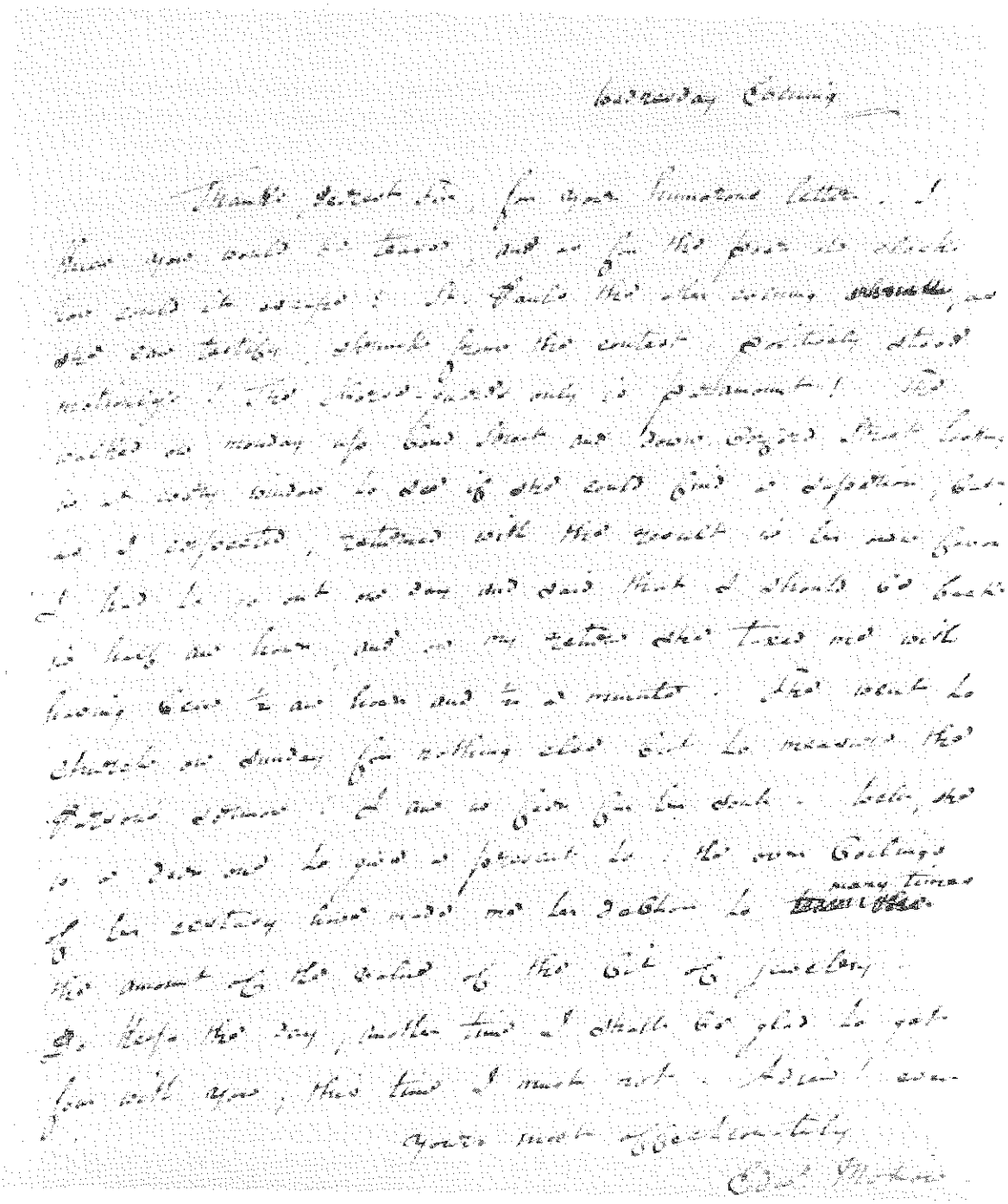

Figure 4: Edward Moxon to Charles Lamb, undated

Reviews

ANDREW MOTION, *Keats*. London: Faber and Faber, 1997. Pp. xxvi + 315. ISBN 0 571 17227 X. £20 hardback.

KEATS'S LIFE MAKES for painful reading. The contrast between his youthful idealism and the suffering of his last year is so clear and so desperately sad that the biographer needs a restrained but compassionate touch. Andrew Motion's new biography is nicely judged in this respect: sympathetic, tactful, and stylish, with a fine sense of the *grandeur* and the *misère* of Keats's short life. It is also admirably well-mannered and even-tempered. Motion is on good terms with his predecessors, and engages in an appreciative dialogue with them, especially with Robert Gittings (who, thirty years ago, paid a similarly graceful tribute to C. L. Finney, W. J. Bate, and Aileen Ward). Biographers of Keats seem to be able to avoid the *odium biographicum*, the scoring of points off their forebears: and one of the joys of this biography is its agreeable air of having been written without prejudice and animosity. Motion even remains cool when dealing with Keats's reviewers, and with his guardian Richard Abbey (described by Keats's sister Fanny as 'that consummate villain'). Almost the only figure who emerges with less credit than usual is Charles Brown, who is seen as possessive, jealous of Fanny Brawne and others, and self-absorbed: even Brown's famous account of the composition of the 'Ode to a Nightingale' is sharply annotated as 'Brown sounds understandably proud here, slipping easily into the role of right-hand man.'

This is unusual. For the most part, Motion allows the story to unfold in its dramatic and painful way, although he occasionally gives a twitch of the curtain, like a stage manager. Keats's walk to Iona, for example, through a rain-soaked Isle of Mull, is seen as a turning-point, undermining his formerly robust health and weakening his resistance to Tom's consumption: 'It was on Mull', writes Motion, 'that his short life started to end, and his slow death began.'

The 'living year' of 1819 was yet to come, but Motion may be excused his moment of flamboyance. His biography is admirable not because of its sharpening of such moments, but for two other reasons. The first is its assimilation of the poetry into the life, with a critical awareness and sensitivity that are rare: Motion is *simpatico* on all the poetry (but especially on *Endymion*) and one of the pleasures of this book is the way in which these critical discourses are deftly linked to the main narrative. The second is the placing of Keats in his time. The principal difference between this biography and its predecessors is the way in which it takes cognizance of the now-fashionable view of Keats as a poet with political and social agenda. So the account of his birth and baptism in 1795 is followed by several pages on the situation of the 1790s; and the influence of Leigh Hunt's *Examiner*, and of Hazlitt's radicalism, are given full weight. It has long been obvious that certain episodes in Keats's poems are powerfully radical, and Nicholas Roe's *John Keats and the Culture of Dissent* has argued the case for contextualising Keats with flair and verve. Motion follows this pattern, arguing that to relate Keats's politics and his radicalism to his verse 'is to uncover a large and neglected part of Keats's inspiration' (p.xxiii). In this reading, the study of Spenser becomes a political one, and the treelessness of the Isle of Wight affected Keats particularly because the trees had been felled to make warships.

But to write a study of Keats, as Roe has done so brilliantly, is one thing; to write a biography is another, and I am not entirely convinced by this foregrounding of political and social events. Keats's remarks on politics in the letter to George in September 1819 contain the disclaimer 'I know very little of these things.' (Motion sets this aside, rather too easily I think.) Obviously a case can be made for this approach, but it becomes a part, and only one part, of a complicated and dynamic Keats. Indeed, one virtue of this biography is not so much its avowed inclusion of

history and politics, but its admission of these things into a complex, passionate, *poetic* life. This includes not only his love for Fanny Brawne, but his hatred of injustice, his love of the natural world, his enchantment with Spenser, his admiration for the Elgin Marbles. It emerges in such things as 'the immortal dinner' in Haydon's painting room, which will be known, with some embarrassment, to all lovers of Charles Lamb and readers of this journal. Motion's graceful, eloquent biography transcends its avowed political and social emphasis, and in doing so provides a moving and compassionate account of Keats's rich and tragic experience.

J. R. Watson

STEPHEN GILL, *Wordsworth and the Victorians*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998. Pp. xiv + 346. ISBN 0 19 811965 8. £25 hardback; KENNETH R. JOHNSTON, *The Hidden Wordsworth: Poet, Lover, Rebel, Spy*. New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company, 1998. Pp. xxiv + 965. ISBN 0 393 04623 0. £30 hardback.

SOME YEARS AGO Stephen Gill wrote a new biography of Wordsworth which was very well received; now he follows it with an equally well-researched study of Wordsworth's influence in the subsequent period. In one of his notes he recalls that when the original biography appeared he was surprised to receive many letters of appreciation from people who wrote to say how much Wordsworth had meant to them, as a poet speaking to the condition of ordinary people. Both the response, and his surprise at it, should provide a salutary tale for university teachers and scholars, reminding them that Wordsworth's readership has never been confined to young students, who may find him boring – and indeed that the scholars' own sophisticated approaches should always make allowance for the existence of readers who appreciate what he has to say very directly.

A hundred years ago such a caution would have been less necessary, since readers of all classes were then more ready to accept the philosophy of the human heart which he was advocating; whereas in this century it has been deeply undermined by the experience of two world wars. The Victorians of whom Gill writes, certainly, did not question his impact radically, whatever criticisms they might wish to make. His influence has indeed long been among the great commonplaces of literary history, yet no-one has previously spelt out its nature in extended detail, despite the fact that the subject is a fertile one, involving not only those major figures who acknowledged a profound debt to their predecessor, but the wide range of allusion to him in the minor literature as well.

In his biography, Stephen Gill wrote of Wordsworth's *Guide to the Lakes* as a book that had been waiting to be written and for which the time had become ripe. The same can be said of his own new book – indeed, the only reason for being glad that such a study has not been written before is that the growing availability of Victorian material in recent years has given him access to much more information than earlier writers would have had. His own work with the Wordsworth Library, including its wide-ranging manuscript collections, has increased the range of that access, as his references frequently show.

The period also includes the publishing history of Wordsworth's poems during his own lifetime, dominated by the operation of Copyright Laws which were then more closely related to the date of publication of individual works than (as now) to that of the author's death. The result was that as different works came out of copyright and were more widely disseminated they might assume a new prominence, but the position might be complicated further by the role of Wordsworth's intervening revisions, since a reprinting at a particular time could miss an important earlier revision on Wordsworth's part if that had been first published in an edition that still remained in copyright.

All these complexities Gill takes in his stride, as with the further intricacies involved in the nineteenth-century evolution of 'Wordsworth', that official version of him which he himself had helped to construct and in the development of which his family subsequently connived. The respectability bestowed when his brother Christopher became Master of Trinity College, Cambridge during his lifetime was reinforced when two of his nephews were made bishops of the Church of England and other members of the family also became ecclesiastical dignitaries. One of the intriguing results came when one of the bishop-nephews (also a Christopher) was encouraged to write the Life of his uncle, posing a dilemma for those members of the family who knew about the liaison with Annette Vallon as to whether that should be mentioned. Christopher, to give him credit, was in favour of doing so (though admittedly on the grounds that 'truth will out') and hoped to win a sympathetic reading by presenting the matter in the full context of the turbulence surrounding the French Revolution. In the end, however, family caution won and the affair was allowed to lie buried until the next century.

Gill investigates at a number of levels Wordsworth's dominating yet uneasy relationship with his successors. The poet himself began the process of constructing the official 'Wordsworth' by exercising close supervision over the reprinting of his work. By suppressing or rewriting his early radical writing and by constantly reorganizing the order and arrangement of his poems he buttressed his conservative image, while the withholding of *The Prelude* for posthumous publication kept in the foreground as his central achievement *The Excursion*, maintaining his position as the great teacher of duty and affection, the twin virtues which in his view his civilization most needed to cultivate. There is no need to think that the covering up of his earlier career was undertaken simply to preserve an image of respectability for himself as an individual, though that was undoubtedly one effect of his efforts. It was rather the case (as with much of Victorian 'hypocrisy') that his intense anxiety at the state of society in his time brought in its wake an equally desperate urge to play down any thing that might hinder the spread of his message. His success in this endeavour was certainly notable.

Gill gives his general account in terms of particular relationships: of Wordsworth with his descendants and editors, and of later writers with Wordsworth. Some of his best chapters as a result are those in which he discusses those writers whose debt was most profound, particularly George Eliot, whose early novels in particular can be seen as a further extension of the humane content of *Lyrical Ballads*, and Matthew Arnold, whose fulsome yet guarded praise was to become well known. The story that such a method of separate assessments leaves largely untold, however, is that of the broader changing pattern of the Victorian reception – particularly in terms of the scientific controversies of the day. In the first half of the century and just after, his writing offered the basis for a concordat between science and religion, coupled with the cultivation of noble emotions, which some of his intellectual successors accepted gratefully. Adam Sedgwick, for example, canon of Norwich (himself a fellow of Christopher Wordsworth's college) could pursue his geological researches without too much anxiety and even contribute to Wordsworth's own *Guide to the Lakes*. But after the publication of *The Origin of Species* that solution lost much of its cohesive power. The publication of *The Prelude* in 1850, meanwhile, seemed no more than a charming series of sidelights for those who had found their central illumination of 'Wordsworth' in *The Excursion*.

Within such self-imposed limitations Gill's study is masterly, providing a necessary point of departure for all future studies of Wordsworth and the Victorians. Its publication, as it happens, coincides with that of Kenneth Johnston's *The Hidden Wordsworth*, which approaches Wordsworth's life and influence from a very different point of view. Where Gill is scholarly and judicious, Johnston is ranging and unconstrained, delighting to find speculations which he can

push to the limits. The points where Gill leaves off his investigation for want of further evidence are precisely those where Johnston gets going. 'Wordsworthian biography,' he writes in his prologue, 'does not need more facts, though these are always welcome, so much as it needs more speculation.' Up to a point one is bound to sympathize, particularly since the result is a biography which has a verve and dash denied to Gill.

Speculations are certainly present in abundance, the most fertile having to do with three of the roles assigned to Wordsworth in the book's title, those of 'Lover', 'Rebel' and (more unexpectedly) 'Spy'. His most characteristic procedure is to look for those periods when least is known about Wordsworth's life and ask what might have been happening then that he would later have been concerned to mask.

The basic assumption underlying this strategy, that Wordsworth was a secretive man, can readily be admitted. In addition to his successful attempts to hide the existence of the relationship with Annette Vallon and the existence of his illegitimate daughter during his lifetime, he showed extreme reticence concerning the occasion of the 'Lucy' poems, as De Quincey noted. And Cottle recounted with pleased recognition the supposed view of Wordsworth's Somerset neighbours that he was 'surely a desperate Jacobin, for he is so silent and dark that no one ever heard him say one word about politics'.

But what then might Wordsworth have been covering up? It is one of Johnston's basic assumptions that the man who went off to France and fathered a child must already have had significant sexual experiences; if we ask where he acquired them we are invited to choose between the 'frank-hearted maids of Cumberland' consorted with during his vacations from Cambridge (as mentioned in *The Prelude*), and the denizens of Cambridge itself. The latter location becomes the occasion for a riproaring account of the seamier side of university life at that time, as recorded by various contemporaries. Wordsworth, it is suggested, must have been participating fully in all this, since the only bar to belief (apart, of course, from a total lack of solid evidence) lies in accounts of his own, such as his horror when he saw a degraded woman for the first time on the road to Cambridge, his record that returning there he 'sate down' in his 'own unlovely cell' (admittedly 'in lightsome mood'), his habit of walking alone in the college grounds at night, his shame when on one occasion he celebrated the memory of Milton too well and turned up at his college chapel more drunk than he ever was before or after, his sorrow that he did not then know Coleridge, upon whom he might have exerted a staying and calming influence, and his assertion that the deeper passions working round him at the time, including 'those of dissolute pleasure' were by him 'unshared, and only now and then observed' – his only failings at that time being of dreaming and 'submissive idleness'. Johnston clearly sees all this as little more than a smokescreen; he argues that given the atmosphere of sex and violence in Cambridge at the time Wordsworth 'could not have avoided its prostitutes and provocative "snobesses"', particularly when we recall his statement 'my heart was social / And loved idleness and joy'. His presentation of himself as a puritan, Miltonic young man is seen as a sham.

The next period to arouse Johnston's suspicions comes during a few days of wandering by Lake Como in August 1790, when it is not easy from the records to account for all his activities. Lines in the subsequently-written *Descriptive Sketches* describing how a wanderer may see 'dark-eyed maids' tending their harvest, or be drawn by the distant sound of music in the evening to a scene of 'Lip-dewing Song and ringlet-tossing Dance, / Where sparkling eyes and breaking smiles illume / The bosom'd cabin's lyre-enliven'd gloom' are redolent, according to Johnston, of 'a pulsating voyeuristic lust'. (To me they read more like the commonplaces of eighteenth-century poetry of amorous sensibility, but that is by the way.) After reading such lines there is little doubt in Johnston's mind as to what Wordsworth was up to during one or two of the days

in question, so that the blurb to the book can receive as one of the bullet points of his alleged revelations 'the poet's contradictory accounts of the dancing girls he met on the shores of Lake Como in 1790 and his detailed knowledge of prostitution in Cambridge'. The publishers' blurb goes on to claim that with 'French mistresses and passionate sisters' Wordsworth's life is revealed as 'one that Byron might have envied'. Pluralism, it seems, is not a failing confined to the eighteenth-century Church.

'Passionate sisters' refers of course to Dorothy, and the intensity of her feelings for her brother, which led F. W. Bateson to propose an incestuous element in the relationship, in due course to be covered up. Johnston takes this up but from a slightly different view, based on his reading of a manuscript version of 'Nutting' which was addressed (at least later) to 'Lucy', and which began

> Ah! what a crash was that – with gentle hand
> Touch those fair hazels; My beloved Maid;
> Though tis a sight invisible to thee,
> From such rude intercourse the woods all shrink
> As at the blowing of Astolpho's horn.

In dealing with these lines, Johnston makes two leaps of speculation. The first, following another recent critic, is to assume that the use of the word 'intercourse' means that this is not really a poem about nutting at all but sexual violence, about which the 'Maid' is being admonished. The second is that 'Lucy' is really Dorothy. What Johnston suggests, therefore, is that Wordsworth was having difficulty in resisting his sister's passionate erotic advances and recounted this little moral episode of his boyhood escapade in an effort to restrain her.

This interpretation of Dorothy Wordsworth's behaviour is then developed by way of the poem among those on the Naming of Places addressed to her, where the place associated with her is a spot in Easedale at which Wordsworth recalls having turned a corner to see the waterfall, surrounded by the whole life of nature. Dorothy is accordingly identified by Johnston with that waterfall; her brother's subsequent poem 'The Waterfall and the Eglantine' then becomes in his eyes a thinly-veiled portrayal of himself as a hapless mountain flower trying vainly to stand in the way of her roaring tide of passion.

If some readers feel at this point that things are becoming absurd it will be hard to blame them. Turning back to the Naming of Places poem and reading it carefully they will see that Wordsworth is not identifying his sister with the Easedale waterfall specifically but with the whole scene around it, and the sense of natural life which it exudes. De Quincey, it is true, described Dorothy Wordsworth as 'the wildest person I have ever known', but in doing so qualified the word 'wildest' with the words 'in the sense of the most natural'.

To take the argument a stage further back, the first example in the *Oxford English Dictionary* of 'intercourse' in a sexual connection dates from 1798. (Wordsworth's other use of the expression 'rude intercourse', in *The Excursion* viii 67, has no such connotation.) Such a possibility always lurked, no doubt, but only alongside many others. Johnston, by contrast, tends to read *all* Wordsworth's uses of the word (including his account of how in boyhood he held 'unconscious intercourse / With the eternal Beauty'!) as carrying a strong sexual significance.

The final step which must be questioned is the assumption that 'Lucy' always means Dorothy. The only poem in which such an identification is apparent is the 1807 published version of 'Among all lovely things . . .' (recording the glow-worm incident which he privately acknowledged to relate to Dorothy) and this was originally addressed in the manuscript to 'Emma', Wordsworth's normal poetic name for her. The fact that the name 'Lucy' was substituted in the

published version (which was never reprinted in his lifetime) suggests rather that he was attempting to *avoid* his readers making such an identification, in view of its emotional language.

This is not of course to deny the existence of an element of ardent intimacy in their relationship, as witnessed by his tendency to write of her as 'my Love' in poems of 1800-2 and she of him as 'my Beloved' and even 'the Darling!' in one or two of her journal-entries during the same period. Any sexual undertones in their love are, however, in my view, best understood (following the interpretation developed in my *Wordsworth and the Human Heart* (1978), especially chapter 6) in the context of an intensity of feeling accompanied by strong and unquestioning restraint on both sides. Johnston's comment on Dorothy Wordsworth's wearing her future sister-in-law's wedding-ring on her forefinger during the night before the wedding seems to me, by contrast with some of his other speculations, very apt: '(Her) behaviour was not so strange in that era of Sensibility as it seems today.' In the same way one may argue that there *was* a relationship between Dorothy and 'Lucy', as his later re-use of some of the more reflective 'Nutting' passages in poems addressed to her demonstrates, but that it was both complex and subtle – not a matter of simple identification. The lines beginning 'Ah! what a crash was that . . . ' strike me as too patronizing in tone to have been directed to his sister, whom he normally addressed in rather more stately accents. If they *were* addressed to her, however, they should be seen as presenting an early instance of the shift posited in the first chapter of my new book *Providence and Love*, where I suggest that Wordsworth occasionally associated Dorothy with 'Lucy' honorifically, to mark his particular affection for both. (Such a theory presupposes, of course, that 'Lucy' was an actual person, the case I am favouring there.)

Speculations on the lines of Johnston's may find ready acceptance among an audience which cannot even begin to imagine the poise of passion and restraint that an earlier generation, brought up in a more puritan tradition, would have taken for granted. In that context, nevertheless, it can readily be granted that Dorothy Wordsworth was pressing at the limits of her emotional sensibility, with results that were agonizing for her when her brother finally decided to marry, and it is here that some of the entries from her journals are most relevant. One of Stephen Gill's chapters shows how her early editor William Knight, evidently disturbed by their strong emotional content, censored them in his edition – leaving them to be rediscovered by later scholars who would not only pounce on them but draw out and inflate their implications.

The most startling of the publisher's claims is a political one – that the book is 'the first to break through' to unveil 'the radical young poet whose fiery intellect revolutionized English poetry'. This must be news indeed. Much of Stephen Gill's earlier work, after all, along with that of Oxford contemporaries such as Jonathan Wordsworth and Nicholas Roe, was devoted in detail to the poet's early radicalism. In Gill's biography he was able to use his work on poems such as 'Salisbury Plain' and *The Borderers* to show how the young Wordsworth's enthusiasm for the French Revolution led to a strong social concern, yet how the poems expressing these feelings became buried in favour of the revised versions he later published. English poetry was hardly revolutionized as a result; the 'radical young poet' has long been recognized, nevertheless, with Nicholas Roe exploring the matter in considerable detail. News of such work has not apparently penetrated publishers' offices on the other side of the Atlantic, though Johnston, at least, knows about it: it is properly acknowledged in his references.

Of the other speculations in which Johnston indulges, the most interesting ones concern Wordsworth's possible connections with the secret service – an arm of Pitt's government which first came into existence in the 1790s as a result of the growing threat from France. These conjectures are based on several pieces of information brought together for the first time. The first is a sentence in the report which James Walsh, the agent sent to spy on Wordsworth and

Coleridge in Somerset in 1797, passed back to his superior, in which he stated that he had discovered the name of the tenant of Alfoxden. It was '*Wordsworth* a name I think known to Mr Ford'. This has usually been taken as a hint that Wordsworth had previously been recognized by the Home Office as holding dangerously radical views, but since Ford was a member of the newly-formed secret service, Wordsworth might, Johnston argues, already have been enlisted as an agent, so that Walsh's sentence would have acted as a tip to Ford that he had done no more than set one agent to watch another.

The second point is the account of how on their way to Hamburg they got to know a French emigrant with whom, according to Coleridge, Wordsworth formed a 'kind of confidential acquaintance', agreeing that they should lodge together when they reached Hamburg on 20 September. This man, named De Leutre, claimed he was being deported on the orders of the Duke of Portland; they saw a good deal of him during their Hamburg sojourn before leaving the city on 3 October. From the correspondence of James Craufurd, the British chargé d'affaires in Hamburg, it appears that De Leutre *was* in fact an agent of some kind – whether of the French Directory, or the British government, or both is not clear. The 'confidential acquaintance' with him on Wordsworth's part is therefore thought by Johnston to have involved his being, or becoming, an agent himself.

The third, and most significant piece of evidence is a recently-discovered single entry in the Duke of Portland's secret Journal, 'To paid Mr Wordsworth's Draft £92/12/–' p. 616). This item appears in the course of simple routine payments to both Craufurd and Ford, and is accompanied by a pencilled note opposite, 'Expended to 4 June 1799 [for?] payment of 3 Bills drawn by Wordsworth and Craufurd'. On the face of it this looks like further evidence of Wordsworth's involvement.

The final evidence, negative this time, is the absence of any record concerning the Wordsworths' movements in Germany between 28 February and 20 April 1799, after which they returned to Hamburg and set sail for England. Johnston's thesis is that during this period Wordsworth might have been engaged on a secret mission of some kind, perhaps in the south of Germany.

The existence of these pieces of evidence (which Johnston has examined and recorded alongside many other documents of the time) offers an intricate state of affairs for investigation, in which the possibilities multiply. Perhaps, as he recognizes, the 'Mr Wordsworth' whose draft was paid was not William at all. Or the item might conceivably refer to some piece of assistance given to the Wordsworths by Craufurd on their return to Hamburg, enabling them to sort out their financial affairs – which we know to have been complicated – before they set out for England. If, on the other hand, Johnston's hypothesis that the payment was being made to William for services rendered is accepted, various alternatives still present themselves. Was he recruited for the secret service during the 1790s on the strength of his earlier sojourn in Paris, so that even at Alfoxden he was already familiar to the Home Office (perhaps unknown even to Coleridge) as a friendly agent – which would explain why no further traces of Walsh's investigation survive in the records. (An important argument against this is presumably the absence of any recorded payments to him before the 1799 entry.) Or was he simply recruited in Hamburg, through his new acquaintance with De Leutre, to perform some specific service? If he *was* employed at all this would seem the likeliest hypothesis; even to the present day travellers in foreign countries have often been approached by intelligence services in the hope that they might perform some needed function under the cover of their innocent pursuit: in the infancy of the secret service such a device must already have presented obvious attractions. If so, what Wordsworth's particular service was will probably never be known, though Johnston has his theories, and no doubt we

can expect eager researchers to turn over the records for many years to come in the hope of throwing more light on the mystery. What can be said, on the strength of the evidence presented so far, is that the term 'Spy', with its implications of a long-term engagement, appears singularly inappropriate. If Wordsworth was ever involved at all, it seems to have been to assist temporarily with some specific task or tasks.

In this instance at least, Johnston has hit on some pieces of evidence that are worth investigating if only at a biographical level. What then should be said of the book's achievement as a whole? Despite the impression given at its lowest ebb of a college teacher trying to stir up a bored sophomore class with titillating sexual theories, his evident enthusiasm and the vividness of his writing for the most part maintain the reader's interest. He has evidently carried out a great deal of research – which often shows to its best advantage when he is not pursuing a pet theory: in some cases the accounts which have resulted are the fullest now available. What most readers will remember best, however, I suspect, are such things as his racy descriptions of low life in Cambridge and London in Wordsworth's youth or his account of Hamburg as a hotbed of international political intrigue at the turn of the century, but he has not shown that Wordsworth was ever more than a moralizing observer in any of these settings. Students who turn to the poetry in search of 'prostitutes', 'French mistresses' and erotically passionate sisters, along with radical politics and espionage, certainly, will be in for a considerable disappointment. They will find themselves dealing with a very sober poet indeed, whom Byron, even if he had had the privilege of reading Johnston's book, would not have envied in the least. They need not give up hope of profiting from the poetry, however. They may write poetry themselves and come, as many poets have done, to admire his consummate mastery of language – particularly if they also study his relationship with Coleridge, whose speculations constantly stimulated him to complex writing of his own. Or they may in time, in their own lives, undergo experiences of suffering and loss, of social betrayal and thwarted political expectations – or simply of sympathy with the grief of others – which will show them something of what Stephen Gill's appreciative readers of Wordsworth evidently valued: the work of a man who had come to believe that if there was to be a revolution in human affairs it must begin not with bodies of society but with individuals; a poet not of the guillotining head (or for that matter of the amorous genitals) but of the human heart. That is where the hidden Wordsworth is truly to be found. John Beer

TOM PAULIN, *The Day-Star of Liberty: William Hazlitt's Radical Style*. London: Faber and Faber, 1998. Pp. xvii + 382. ISBN 0 571 17421 3. £22.50 hardback.

THIS IS A MOST INTERESTING and original book, a kind of biography of a prose-style. It does not set out to provide a 'Life' as P. P. Howe and, more recently, Stanley Jones have excellently done. What it does is to demonstrate how the influences on Hazlitt's thinking are also influences on his style. As the title suggests, the pursuit of liberty affects not only what he wrote but how he wrote it.

As one might expect, Paulin emphasizes the family's Irish background with its Republican fervour, which helps to explain Hazlitt's lasting hatred for 'legitimacy', namely the hereditary principle, particularly of monarchy. His obsession with this seems to have blinded him to the fact that Despotism need not be hereditary and allowed him to see Napoleon as 'the child and champion of the Revolution'. Though 'He did many things wrong and foolish', yet 'He kept off that last indignity and wrong offered to a whole people . . . of being handed over, like a herd of cattle, to a particular family'. The history of the time makes this perfectly understandable. But Wordsworth, whom Hazlitt charged with apostasy, was forced to recognize that supreme power

can be just as tyrannical when 'usurped' or even sometimes when 'given by election'. Nevertheless, it is refreshing in this age of selfish cynicism to be reminded of the 'doctrine of benevolence common among Unitarians at this period' which 'rejected the principle of self-interest' and wished for liberty for all. Paulin points out that this disinterested altruism was combined with 'sensuous joy in the natural world', not a Puritanical shrinking from it. This was a legacy from Hazlitt's father, from whose sermons Paulin quotes.

Sermons indeed had a formative influence both on Hazlitt and Wordsworth. Paulin reminds us that Joseph Fawcett's 'term "living soul" in a sermon . . . is central to the inspiration of "Tintern Abbey"' and the lines it inspired are frequently quoted by Hazlitt. Alongside the message, however, Hazlitt's medium also gains from the immediacy and life of the spoken word. Roy Park speaks of his 'kinetic vocabulary' and Paulin shows how he values vehemence and motion rather than the static and ornate character of classical style. Paulin gives as one example how in Hazlitt's 'epic, wittily affectionate sketch of Coleridge's intellectual development in *The Spirit of the Age*, he is like Satan falling from noon to dewy eve' and quotes the line 'and so dwelt for a while in the spirit with John Huss', scanning it to demonstrate its 'fluid anapaestic movement' and commenting, 'All is process, movement, gush'. It is a pleasure to see Paulin taking the rhythm and cadences of prose as seriously as they deserve.

He shows how from every quarter come contributions not only to Hazlitt's thought but to his style: from Priestley the scientific imagery which runs through his work; from Hobbes a 'subtly varied prose rhythm' and a 'type of tactile image'; from Locke, though he rejected his idea of the mind as a *tabula rasa* and condemned 'the prolixity and ambiguity' of his prose style, did he not perhaps inherit those occasional apparently unending sentences? I am reminded that, as a teenager taking my entrance exam. for Oxford, I was faced with a question which required a grammatical analysis of a sentence from *Human Understanding* which took up a whole page. How times have changed! Today even pundits speaking on the BBC routinely use 'may' for 'might', for example, and give objects to intransitive verbs. Does the general ignorance now of the skeletal structure of the language partly account for the present neglect of prose style? The examiners might perhaps have gone to Hazlitt for their sentence. After all, there is his comment which captured the interest of David Bromwich, 'Why should one not make a sentence of a page long, out of the feelings of one's whole life?' Paulin quotes several such.

Hazlitt demonstrates what he means by 'disinterested' when he says, 'It has always been with me a test of the sense and candour of any one belonging to the opposite party, whether he allowed Burke to be a great man'. While disapproving strongly of Burke's politics, particularly in 'his prose-aria on Marie Antoinette', Hazlitt yet praises in the highest terms his 'most perfect prose style' and was undoubtedly affected by it deeply and permanently. Paulin writes very well on this ambivalent relationship.

His general method is well illustrated by his examination of the essay on Poussin's picture of 'blind Orion' which is on the front cover of the book. He says that it is 'an elegy' for Keats and Napoleon, who had just died, 'and for the values he shared with them'. Hazlitt's response to the painting 'in June 1821 needs a careful, even painstaking analysis'. This he proceeds to give it. Earlier he had said that 'For Hazlitt, the imagination in general is "an associating principle"', and here he says, 'If we examine his essay closely, we can see that it's constructed through a characteristic deployment of quotation . . .' These quotations 'are force fields and associative symbols which are hallowed in the way place-names sometimes are for other writers'. As with quotations, so also with imagery and visual references or word-pictures in the essays, all are related by association to the main theme. It is impossible in a small space to do justice to this book but its greatest strength is in the way Paulin most subtly and carefully traces interweaving

strands of thought and style. His analysis of passages of Hazlitt's prose delicately disentangle the web of allusion to show how this shapes the reader's understanding and reaction to the message without destroying that immediacy, almost physicality, of the medium which was so important to Hazlitt.

In his Introduction Paulin says, 'Almost all the books and essays the young painter went on to write are now out of print. One of the very greatest writers of English prose, Hazlitt is almost never read or cited or studied'. This sent me to my bookshelves to count how many popular editions of his work published over the years I had collected there. The answer was seven, including the one I had at school, a selection specially made by Howe for that purpose. Most members of the Lamb Society would, I think, date their love of the essayists back to schooldays. What has happened? The destructive influence of certain opinionated literary critics and some curious educational theories about the capacities of youngsters have meant that much precious and rewarding literature has been lost to them and their lives have been greatly impoverished. Let us hope that this book, Duncan Wu's edition of Hazlitt for Pickering and Chatto, and Tom Paulin's Penguin Selection, among others, will help to put the essayists back on the map. A new edition of De Quincey is in preparation. Professor Joseph E. Riehl, a long-time friend of our Society, is to co-edit the remaining volumes of the Marrs edition of the Lamb *Letters*. Perhaps *Essays of Elia* will be next. It is a sad sign of the times that Jonathan Bate's World's Classics edition was allowed to go out of print. We could do now with something like the old *Portable Charles Lamb*, which contained a selection of both letters and essays. In the meantime, do read Tom Paulin's outstanding and rewarding book.

Mary Wedd

William Wordsworth. Ed. STEPHEN LOGAN. Everyman Poetry: London. ISBN 0 460 87946 4. £2 paperback.

THIS SERIES, like its predecessors in the reprinting of classics in very inexpensive form, is presumably intended to tempt the non-specialist reader to embark on the pleasures of literature. To this end, Everyman has provided the added attraction of tables of Chronology, an introduction and brief notes, which greatly assist in understanding the background and quality of the work of art. In this Wordsworth volume they are in general excellently done.

The Chronology is in two parts on facing pages, on the left 'of Wordsworth's Life' and on the right 'of his times', a most useful juxtaposition, placing the work in the context of literature and politics of the period. Obviously in a book of this size and price one cannot expect an extended treatment but there are some odd omissions. For example, we are told of the death of Wordsworth's parents but no mention is made here of Dorothy's departure to Halifax or of William's going to Hawkshead Grammar School, though the latter is referred to in the prefatory note on his life. After 'nursery school in Penrith' the next we hear of his education is 'Enters St John's College, Cambridge'. For the year 1797, on the right-hand page Coleridge's composition of *Kubla Khan* and *The Ancient Mariner* are recorded but on the left-hand page there is a blank. Racedown has not been mentioned and the whole of the Alfoxden year might never have been, nor the second visit to Tintern Abbey which was the occasion of the poem. One almost wonders here whether a passage was accidentally left out in the printing. However, one would not wish to carp unduly at what is in the main very helpful.

Stephen Logan's *Introduction* is wholly admirable, lucid, balanced and persuasive. The reader is fortunate to have available to him such a beautifully clear and discriminating picture of Wordsworth, in his period and in ours. 'It is pretty certain,' Logan says, 'that Wordsworth would have had little patience with the majority of modern academic studies of his work, which too

rarely ask the question why his poetry really matters and whose writers seem so little prepared to learn anything from him'. By contrast, Logan takes the trouble to see Wordsworth against the changing background of his long life, starting from the Augustanism which was 'the prevailing outlook among the adults he grew up with'. What a joy to find succinct definitions of such labels as Augustanism and 'what is conventionally, and somewhat unaptly, known as the Enlightenment', instead of having them thrown about as missiles of mystification to demonstrate the speaker's superiority, without any certainty that anybody knows what they mean! It is long since 'Define your terms' was regarded as the starting point for intelligent discourse.

What Wordsworth wished to express in his poetry was 'the way that people were actually thinking, feeling and speaking', while following his predecessors in being 'a learned and scrupulous craftsman'. Why, then, is Wordsworth now under-appreciated?

'The reason is, I believe, that the complex system of cultural changes which he helped instigate, has estranged us from many of the basic presuppositions which inform his poetry . . .' In stating what these are, sometimes the need for brevity gives an impression of over-simplification, for example 'Wordsworth was throughout his career a Christian poet'. Well, Coleridge did not always think so. I suppose 'it depends what you mean by . . .' and obviously there is not room to go into all that, but Logan does clarify when describing the differences between Wordsworth and ourselves. As he neatly puts it, 'There is a world of difference between leaning towards agnosticism from a standpoint of Christian faith, and peering towards agnosticism through a fog of unbelief'. In this and other respects, 'Victorian critics, writing before the onset of Modernism and the dissolution of cultural traditions which formerly stretched unbroken across post-medieval literature, could count on a degree of cultural affinity with Wordsworth which no longer exists'. Nevertheless, what Arnold called his 'healing power' has 'continuing relevance to ourselves' and 'perhaps we need this power the more acutely because the temptations to moral despair are greater than ever before'. For 'Wordsworth considered himself primarily a teacher' and 'his slightest lyrics are no less "philosophical" (in his sense of being concerned with wisdom) than his loftiest blank verse'.

In his choice and arrangement of the poems, the editor has wished to redress the balance between poems which Wordsworth 'did not publish' and 'those he did' and also between *The Prelude* and the lyrics which 'have in recent years suffered neglect'. So he has divided his selection between those poems 'published during and after Wordsworth's lifetime' and has included only three passages from *The Prelude*. For the former he has used the first published text, for the latter the 1805 version. The dates of composition and publication are given at the foot of each poem. It is a very good selection given the limits on space. We all have our favourites and will notice some missing and I doubt if any two of us could agree on a choice of only three passages from *The Prelude*. I do not envy the Editor the need. He has chosen 'The Stolen Boat', 'The Infant Babe' and 'Waiting for the Horses'. There is one late, unfamiliar poem, 'Yes thou art fair', whose middle stanza provides a lesson for those writers of 'academic studies', indeed for us all.

> Imagination needs must stir;
> Dear Maid, this truth believe,
> Minds that have nothing to confer
> Find little to perceive.

An excellent anthology, guided by expertise and good sense. Was ever £2 better spent?

Mary Wedd

Society Notes and News from Members

FROM THE HON SECRETARY

1999 Programme

Saturday 9 January: Luisa Calé, of Wolfson College, Oxford, will speak on 'Lamb and Visuality'.

Lamb's birthday luncheon

This annual fixture will take place on Saturday 10 February 1999. Do bear in mind that this year Dr D. G. Wilson, 9 Banham's Close, Cambridge CB4 1HX, is kindly undertaking the organization of the luncheon. Applications for tickets should be sent to him using the booking form enclosed with the October 1998 *Bulletin*.

Kensal Green Cemetery

'Nothing could be more enlivening than a walk through Kensal Green cemetery', writes Lucinda Lambton in the *Time Out Book of London Walks*. In April we plan a visit to this remarkable cemetery, the final resting-place of Leigh Hunt, George Dyer, and Tom Hood, as well as a host of other famous names. If you would like to join this tour please let me know by 6 March (tel.: 0181 940 3837) and I will send details.

AGM

Scheduled for Saturday 8 May 1999. This is an important meeting as we shall be electing both a Chairman in succession to Mary Wedd and a General Secretary in succession to myself, to say nothing of a new Editor of the *Bulletin*. If the Society is to flourish into the next millennium we need volunteers to carry on our work.

A Slide Show

As one of my last efforts as Hon Secretary, I am hoping to compile a set of slides which can be used in talks to other organizations. I plan in the next few months to visit the various Lamb sites with my camera. If anyone has slides – especially portraits of Lamb's friends and contemporaries – I should be happy to include them in the series.

FROM THE EDITOR

From Joseph Riehl

Joseph Riehl, who is editing Lamb's letters, writes in with a query. In a February 1823 letter to J. A. Hessey, Lamb includes a quotation: 'No offense, in the world, none, Hall / There is no such Cheesemonger etc.' Can any reader identify it? Any answers should be sent to Professor Riehl at Department of English, University of Southwestern Louisiana, Lafayette, LA 70504, USA, or by e-mail to him: real@usl.edu.

From Michael Moore

Does any reader know the date (and quotable source) of Lamb's letter to Bernard Barton, in which the following appears: 'Literature is a bad crutch but a very good walking-stick'? Please reply to Michael Moore, Department of Psychology, University of Southampton, Southampton, SO17 1BJ, or by e-mail: mm14@psy.soton.ac.uk.

NOTES AND NEWS FROM MEMBERS

'The Three Bears', Again

Professor Carolyn Misenheimer of the Indiana State University testifies in the January 1997 issue of *The Charles Lamb Bulletin* that she felt 'shock bordering on outrage' when she discovered that Robert Southey's tale 'The Three Bears' was not properly attributed to him in a book she delighted in as a child. That work, a volume of the Childcraft series published by W. F. Quarrie and Co. of Chicago in 1923, classified the story only as a folk or fairy tale, but without an author. She said that the only way she could justify such an 'unabashed display of ignorance' and 'ineptitude' is by supposing that by that date 'The Three Bears' had become so popular as to be classified as an anonymous work.

The matter, as usual, is not that simple. I have in my possession a copy of a book called *Children's Literature: A Textbook of Sources for Teachers and Teacher-Training Classes*, also published in Chicago (by Rand McNally), but two years before Professor Misenheimer's volume. My mother bought it when she attended the University of Chicago in 1921. In it, 'The Three Bears' is prominently assigned to Southey (from *The Doctor*) and is prefaced by a note saying that if he got it from an earlier source, the editors have not been able to find it. The story is reprinted as Southey wrote it.

Professor Misenheimer may be happy that she did not grow up with Southey's original story in her memory. For instead of Goldilocks, the visitor to the bears' house in Southey's tale is a 'little old Woman', and not a nice little old woman either. She is 'impudent', 'bad' and 'naughty'. She utters naughty words when things do not go her way. When, asleep in the little bears' bed, she is awakened, she jumps out of the window. In the *Goldilocks* stories I know, the girl simply runs away, and that is the end of it. Southey, however, speculates that the old woman may have broken her neck in the fall from the bears' window. Or she may have been captured 'by the constable and sent to the House of Correction for a vagrant'.

In the Elian spirit, I suggest that much could be made of the old woman's metamorphosis into Goldilocks. A cautionary tale (don't rummage through neighbours' houses even if they are unlocked) becomes an almost Gothic adventure in which children thrill to an exotic experience. A new chapter in the rise of Romanticism?

If, as I suspect, Professor Misenheimer's story had Goldilocks in it, perhaps the people at W. F. Quarrie left off Southey's name because they knew it was no longer his story. In short, I think she may be right about why they left his name off. I wouldn't call it ineptitude.

I wonder a bit at her not knowing about my book, for the editors Charles Madison Curry and Erle Elsworth Clippinger were both professors of Literature at the Indiana State Normal School, an earlier name for Indiana State University. More importantly, the Quarrie people must surely have known about the Curry and Clippinger book, which was published in the same city within a two-year time span. At the very least, they should have acknowledged it. But, as everyone knows, Chicago in that era was rife with gangsters like Al Capone and other criminals.

George Soule

FROM D. E. WICKHAM

Lamb in the Lords: For the Record

Peers block women from hereditary title claim was a headline in the *Times* for 8 March 1994. 'The Lords last night rejected an attempt to change the law of succession, which gives eldest sons precedence over eldest daughters,' the report began. Well down in the second column Lord Dacre of Glanton, not the mediaeval baron he sounds but the 80-year-old Life Peer still better known as the former Oxford historian of the British Civil War and the seventeenth century, Hugh

Trevor-Roper, criticised the Bill as 'radical, reactionary and romantic' [cf. the Cavaliers who were 'Wrong but Wromantic' according to *1066 and All That*] and defended the 'irrationality' of the present system. 'Lord Diamond wishes, with one half page of print, to sweep away all the rights and Patents that have been issued in the last seven centuries by thirty kings,' he said [and, my goodness, as one who attended his lectures thirty years ago and heard him give an informal talk on Edward Gibbon as recently as January 1994, I can hear him saying it]. 'I am afraid it smells to me a little of political correctitude. This Bill is rather like burning down the house in order to have roast pig.'

Obituary

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

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

50 Years Ago: *CLS Bulletin* no. 87 (January 1949)

A Modern Aspostolic Succession by 'Old Mortality' [In the summer of 1932 the pseudonymous writer visited Feltham, having been misinformed by Walter Jerrold's *Middlesex* in Macmillan's *Highways and Byways* series, that Fanny Kelly was buried there. During his visit he met a Mr Daines and mentioned his interest in 'that erstwhile popular and great actress'. Mr Daines invited him in.] He told me that nobody had mentioned Fanny Kelly's name to him for years. In the early 70s of the last century his parents lived next door to Miss Kelly. At that time he was a scholar in the Merchant Taylors' Company School, then recently removed from the City to the Charterhouse. Three or four evenings a week, after he had completed his home lessons, he would call at Fanny Kelly's house and she would regale him with stories of the stage of her day so vividly that he fancied he could see the glare of the stage footlights. Leaving school he was articled to a stockbroker, but still kept up his calls. One evening he found her rather excited – a novelty for her. She then told him that at long last she had been *discovered* and that Irving and Toole had paid her a visit and had promised to use their influence to secure a pension for her from the Literary Fund. Soon after she died [in 1882], just before the first payment was due.

Seeing that I was keenly interested he brought down from an upper room a collection of portraits and press cuttings all concerning Miss Kelly. . . . On leaving . . . he gave me a hearty shake of the hand and hoped to see me again. Retracing my way to the station I passed the cottage where Fanny Kelly had lived and musing upon my talk with Mr Daines the thought came to me that Charles Lamb had shaken hands with Fanny Kelly, she had shaken hands with Mr Daines, and he had with me. A modern apostolic succession.

[Unhappily illness on both sides prevented a further meeting before Mr Daines's death and the modern Kelly correspondence was destroyed in 1940.]

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