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## Contents

# Hazlitt, Francis Place, and the Bentham Circle: New Findings

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> Mr Bentham is very much among philosophers what La Fontaine was among poets: – in general habits and in all but his professional pursuits, he is a mere child. He has lived for the last forty years in a house in Westminster, overlooking the Park, like an anchoret in his cell, reducing law to a system, and the mind of man to a machine. He scarcely ever goes out, and sees very little company. The favoured few, who have the privilege of the *entrée*, are always admitted one by one. He does not like to have witnesses to his conversation. (Hazlitt, 'Jeremy Bentham', *The Spirit of the Age*)[1]

In 1971 Roy Park gave sustained attention for the first time to Hazlitt's opposition to Utilitarianism which, he remarked, 'has never been appreciated either at the level of general philosophical history or, more surprisingly, by his own critics'.[2] Since then, the subject has been pursued by various Hazlittians, most recently Uttara Natarajan in *Hazlitt and the Reach of Sense*, who notes Hazlitt's opposition to Bentham's 'role in the progressive mechanization of men'.[3] Though we are often reminded that Hazlitt was one of Bentham's numerous tenants, the full story behind their involvement has yet to be told. It is an intriguing one, and goes some way to explain essential differences between the two men.

Hazlitt's defensive letter to Leigh Hunt of 1821 provides a good starting-point. In that letter, he recalled his eviction from Bentham's property in York Street in the following terms:

> Coulson had been backwards and forwards between my house and Bentham's for between 3 and four years, and when the latter philosophically put an execution in my house, the plea was he had never heard of my name, and when I theorised on this the other day as bad policy, and *felo de se* on the part of the radicals, your nephew and that set said 'Oh it was an understood thing – the execution, you know!' By God, it is enough to drive one mad.[4]

Can it really be that Bentham had never heard of Hazlitt and had no idea that he occupied one of his own properties? The most resourceful of Hazlitt's biographers, Stanley Jones, puzzled over this, concluding: 'it is odd that there was no contact with his next-door neighbour and landlord of six years; unless it was owing to his dislike of putting himself forward'.[5] Perhaps, in saying that Bentham lived 'in a house in Westminster, overlooking the Park, like an anchoret in his cell', Hazlitt too was attempting to find an explanation. That Bentham claimed to be unaware of the

[1] *The Selected Writings of William Hazlitt* ed. Duncan Wu (9 vols., London, 1998) (hereafter Wu) vii 77-8. Throughout this essay, I have preferred the texts here to those in P. P. Howe's *Collected Works* on grounds of accuracy.
[2] Roy Park, *Hazlitt and the Spirit of the Age* (Oxford, 1971), p.49.
[3] Uttara Natarajan, *Hazlitt and the Reach of Sense* (Oxford, 1998), p.168.
[4] *The Letters of William Hazlitt* ed. Herschel Moreland Sikes, assisted by Willard Hallam Bonner and Gerald Lahey (New York, 1978), p. 205.
[5] Stanley Jones, *Hazlitt: A Life* (Oxford, 1989) (hereafter Jones), p. 242.

identity of someone resident in one of his properties is all the more incredible given the length of Hazlitt's tenancy: over six years, Hazlitt moving into York Street shortly after 3 May 1813 and leaving on 25 December 1819. The date of eviction may be one reason why he said Bentham 'philosophically put an execution in my house': from a utilitarian perspective, Christmas Day was the same as any other. It is now possible, with the help of archival materials, to cast further light on this and other questions.

In the letter to Hunt, Hazlitt recalled how Walter Coulson had shuttled between the house at 19 York Street (now called Petty France) and Bentham's much grander residence in Queen Square Place round the corner. Coulson had been tutored by Bentham since the age of fifteen or sixteen, and was launched on his journalistic career in 1813, the year in which Hazlitt moved into York Street, when Bentham found him the job of parliamentary reporter on the *Morning Chronicle* at a salary of four guineas a week. Hazlitt having been appointed to the same job on the same paper, for the same salary, in early October 1812, he and Coulson became close colleagues, lending circumstantial support to W. C. Hazlitt's suggestion that it was Coulson who first brought the York Street house to Hazlitt's attention.[6]

The house backed onto a walled-in yard which adjoined Bentham's much larger garden, over 200 feet in length. Stanley Jones has described Bentham's 'mid-day "circumgyrations" of the garden under Hazlitt's window'.[7] It is possible that Hazlitt did see Bentham at large – though not for long. For much of Hazlitt's tenancy Bentham was himself a tenant at Forde Abbey, Somerset, 1814 to 1818, while his house in Queen Square Place was occupied by his pupil John Herbert Koe, whom he charged with the unenviable job of collecting Hazlitt's rent. We will return to him shortly.

The previous tenant of 19 York Street had been James Mill, another disciple of the Utilitarian, who on one occasion entertained Simon Bolivar under its roof. But his spell there was made unhappy by the squalor of the house and its surroundings, which drove his wife to desperation. As Bentham later recalled: 'dirty, ragged, ill-looking children were frequently within her view: she was unhappy -- she was continually in tears'.[8] Sarah Hazlitt may have suffered likewise. After all, she had a two-year old son, and would have wanted a salubrious setting in which to bring him up. The stresses generated by this may have played their part in the break-up of the Hazlitts' marriage, for after being evicted they went their separate ways.

In the face of these deterrents, there were two reasons why Hazlitt would have wanted to move in. The first was that the house stood within the Westminster constituency which (uniquely for the time) gave the franchise to all those who paid the poor rate. That made it a safe seat for reformist MPs, Admiral Lord Cochrane and Sir Francis Burdett having been elected in 1807. During his residence there, Hazlitt therefore had the right to vote for the first (and last) time in his life. The second reason was that 19 York Street, despite its condition, had once been the residence of Milton; in fact, it was where *Paradise Lost* was composed. Such pride did he take in this that Hazlitt commemorated it with a stone tablet embedded in the wall facing the garden, reading: 'Inscribed to the Prince of Poets'. He later recalled how Bentham, walking round his garden with 'some expatriated Patriot, or Transatlantic Adventurer', paused 'for want of breath

[6] W. C. Hazlitt, *Four Generations of a Literary Family* (London, 1897), i 105.
[7] Jones 235.
[8] Jeremy Bentham to Francis Place, 16 June 1831; BL Add. 37949, f.252r.

and with lack-lustre eye'[9] to point it out. Their varying attitudes underline differences which in due course made themselves more keenly felt.

In fact, they were a factor in Hazlitt's first clash with the Bentham circle, mentioned in the *Spirit of the Age* portrait of Bentham:

> To shew how little the refinements of taste or fancy enter into our author's system, he proposed at one time to cut down these beautiful trees, to convert the garden where he had breathed the air of Truth and Heaven for near half a century into a paltry *Chreistomathic School*, and to make Milton's house (the cradle of Paradise Lost) a thoroughfare, like a three-stalled stable, for the idle rabble of Westminster to pass backwards and forwards to it with their cloven hoofs.[10]

Hazlitt correctly observes that the plan to build a school in the garden of Bentham's house would have entailed demolition of 19 York Street so as to provide its pupils with a means of access. He refers again to this in 'On People of Sense', when taking a swipe at Bentham and his followers:

> They propose to erect a Chrestomathic school, by cutting down some fine old trees on the classic ground where Milton thought and wrote, to introduce a rabble of children, who for the Greek and Latin languages, poetry, and history, that fine pabulum of useful enthusiasm, that breath of immortality infused into our youthful blood, that balm and cordial of our future years, are to be drugged with chemistry and apothecaries' receipts, are to be taught to do every thing, and to see and feel nothing . . .[11]

None of Hazlitt's editors or biographers has yet elucidated the background to this. The school in Bentham's garden was the brainchild of his associate, the master-tailor and political reformer Francis Place. Place wished to establish a school run on principles laid down by Joseph Lancaster, and elaborated in Bentham's *Chrestomathia* which, though not published until 1818, Place read three years before, when superintending its printing by John McCreery.[12] As Place explained to Sir John Swinburne, 'our object is not only to produce a superior class of young men in this school, but so to change the whole system of education by adopting all the recent improvements that all other seminaries shall be obliged to follow the example & thereby to produce a most important change for the better in any class of the community'.[13] To this end, he envisaged an octagonal construction 90 feet in diameter accommodating 600 children.

Hazlitt's opposition to this needs to be placed in context. The educational theories that underpinned the project were anathema to him, being as rigidly Benthamite in colour as the proposed schoolhouse. As he saw it, the learning delivered through Bentham's system was worthless, because it confined those who received it within their own ego. Worse still, as he indicates here, they are deprived of the Wordsworthian ability to 'see' and 'feel' the world

[9] Wu vii 78.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Wu viii 232.
[12] See Place to James Mill, 8 August 1815; BL Add. MS 35152, 143v. McCreery was a friend of Hazlitt's; see my 'Hazlitt's *History of English Philosophy*: the larger context', *The Library*, forthcoming.
[13] Place to Sir John Swinburne, 30 March 1815, BL Add. MS 35152, 133r.

around them – the natural world in particular, which feeds 'that breath of immortality infused into our youthful blood'. It is a view that resonates throughout Hazlitt's writings.[14]

On 25 July 1814 Francis Place toured Bentham's garden with the architect James Bevans, who was to make a plan of the building. Hazlitt might well have watched the tailor and the architect at work, and may have engaged them in conversation. Some sort of encounter certainly took place at this time, because Place informed Hazlitt that when construction began his tenancy would have to end.

This unwelcome news must have made Sarah Hazlitt more restive than ever, which can only have strained the marriage further. Those tensions would worsen, for although construction never took place, the plan to build the school loomed over them throughout the Hazlitts' time there. It was a constant threat. That is the context within which Hazlitt's intermittent attacks on Bentham and his acolytes should be understood.

Those attacks began with a review of a friend and associate of Bentham: Hazlitt noticed Robert Owen's *A New View of Society* (1816) in *The Examiner* of 4 August and 1 September 1816. The mainstay of his criticism was that Owen's brand of radicalism was acceptable to the political establishment thanks to its hopeless impracticability:

> His schemes thus far are tolerated, because they are remote, visionary, inapplicable. Neither the great world nor the world in general care any thing about New Lanark, nor trouble themselves whether the workmen there go to bed drunk or sober, or whether the wenches are got with child before or after the marriage-ceremony. Lanark is distant, Lanark is insignificant.[15]

Such ribaldry went down badly in the Bentham circle because several of them (including Bentham) had invested in Owen's New Lanark scheme. On 15 September, two weeks after the second part of the review appeared, Place informed James Mill, then resident with Bentham at Forde Abbey: 'You have seen the two articles in the Examiner against Robert Owen, they are as you will conclude by Hazlitt'.[16] This is symptomatic of Place's resourcefulness in gathering intelligence and feeding it back to Forde Abbey. His talent in that regard was renowned, having led Sir Francis Burdett, a former friend, to denounce him publicly for being a government spy. In all likelihood, Place obtained news of Hazlitt's authorship from Coulson (who as we have seen was a regular visitor to the Hazlitts). Mill replied to Place, saying that

> I felt considerable indignation at the treatment of Owen in the Examiner. A man may differ from him – & a man may say, he ascribes too much importance to his own opinions. But there is nothing about Owen [that] provokes hostility – I cannot think well of any man that shews it to him. My best respects to him and let me know what he comes about.[17]

[14] Hazlitt outlines his views most succinctly and clearly in 'On Classical Education' in *The Round Table*.
[15] Wu iv 494.
[16] Place to James Mill, 15 September 1816; BL Add. MS 35152, 214r.
[17] James Mill to Place, 8 October 1816; BL Add. MS 35152, 220r.

In the meantime Hazlitt had gone on to notice George Ensor's *On the State of Europe in 1816* (1816), which was sent to him by Place as long ago as July, in the hope that it would receive kindly treatment. Place had gone to some trouble to obtain for Hazlitt an 'uncastrated' copy of the work which contained all Ensor's criticisms of the Holy Alliance, sent only to those who (it was hoped) were receptive to his radical zeal, including the Hunt brothers and Francis Jeffrey.[18] Hazlitt was not as dismissive of Ensor as he had been of Owen, and in fact quoted extensively from the book, often with approval: 'This little work has real stuff in it; and the right sort of stuff. It is full of undeniable facts, and undeniable inferences from them. It is written by an "Independent Man:" we can say no more for it.'[19] He could not, however, resist the observation that Ensor's 'style is an amusing mixture of *naivete* and eccentricity'.[20]

This was not, perhaps, the review for which Place had hoped, but it gave the book's contents a wider airing than they would otherwise have received. All the same, it could not ameliorate the harm done by the attack on Owen, about which the Bentham circle remained agitated. On 13 October, Place told Ensor that 'It is Wm Hazlitt who writes the critiques for the examiner it was he who abused Owen so unmercifully – he is the author of Malthus's Essay on Population'.[21] Place, it seems, was continuing to gather information about Owen's tormentor: Hazlitt's name had not appeared on the fourth of his book-length works, *A Reply to the Essay on Population* (1807), but that had not stopped Place from discovering his authorship.

Hazlitt must have known that the review of Owen had harmed relations with Place, and realised that there was nothing to be gained by placating either him or his landlord. Accordingly, in his *Round Table* essay 'On Common-Place Critics', published in *The Examiner* on 24 November, he took a further swipe at them. This deft essay paints the portrait of someone who 'has something to say upon every occasion, and he always tells you either what is not true, or what you knew before, or what is not worth knowing'.[22] The aesthetic values of this person are, he tells us, formed by Dr Johnson, Hume and Adam Smith, which lead him, among other things, to think 'Milton's pedantry a great blemish in his writings, and that *Paradise Lost* has many prosaic passages in it'.[23] Could it be that in the course of their dealings Hazlitt had conversed with Place about that distinguished former inhabitant of 19 York Street, and that Place had ventured some off-the-cuff criticisms of the great epic? Quite possibly, because as he itemizes the failings of the commonplace critic, Hazlitt drops an important detail: 'He thinks Jeremy Bentham a greater man than Aristotle'.[24] There were few people of his acquaintance who would fit the bill, Place being one of the most likely. Had he read this (which with his unhealthy interest in Hazlitt's publication record he almost certainly did), Place would have supposed it to be aimed as much at himself as at Hazlitt's landlord, particularly if he knew that its author, 'Z', was the bothersome tenant of 19 York Street.

It would not be long before Hazlitt's relations with his landlord would be complicated by money. By June 1815 he had fallen into arrears with his rate payments.[25] The efficiency of the

[18] See Place to Ensor, 13 October 1816; BL Add. MS 35152, 221v.
[19] *The Examiner*, 29 September 1816, p. 617.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Place to George Ensor, 13 October 1816; BL Add. MS 35152, 221v.
[22] Wu ii 136.
[23] Wu ii 137.
[24] *The Examiner*, 24 November 1816, p. 745.
[25] Westminster City Archive, E2875 Rate Books for Absey Division, Petty France, June 1815.

local bailiffs ensured that he paid up by December, but that was a harbinger of what was to come. For it is clear that, at some point during 1817, Hazlitt stopped paying his rent. In October, Bentham wrote the following letter to his factotum, John Herbert Koe.

> Your letter says nothing about Lady Mary's Rent or No. 19's for authorities for distraining I sent two blank signatures in my letter to Place. . . . As to the other, whether to make the distress and when, will depend upon information which Place I imagine is more likely to possess or acquire than you. The man it is said is no object of compassion: for that his gains are considerable, even ample, though his habits profuse and negligent.[26]

The 'man' was Hazlitt, and though not mentioned by name, it is clear that (contrary to subsequent claims) Bentham was aware not only of his identity but of much else, not least his income and 'habits'. This information must have come from Place. Besides revealing that Bentham was meditating Hazlitt's eviction over two years before the event, it also exposes the surreptitious manner in which he and his circle were wont to operate.

It was probably Place who advised Koe to talk to Hazlitt's friend Basil Montagu. Having done so, Koe reported to Bentham on 5 November 1817:

> Hazlitt. To Basil Montagu I have talked about him and he says though with abundant lamentations, that he fancies the only way to take, is to threaten him very severely with legal proceedings if he does not pay: This I have already done without any avail. He at one time owed Montagu about £500 for money lent by him to Hazlitt, and that debt has been gradually reduced to £50: Montagu is to see him Saturday Evening: he will then learn from him particularly what his means are and if it be not then put in some train of settlement, I shall on Monday distrain upon him. Montagu says there is no danger but that you will ultimately get your money.[27]

Montagu's involvement in this is surprising. He had been a friend of Hazlitt's for over a decade, instrumental in the promotion of his career well before he became a journalist. That he was counselling Hazlitt's creditors was disloyal, to say the least. All the same, despite his assistance, Koe's 'distraint' did not bring forth the unpaid rent, and a week later the frustrated Koe wrote to Bentham with another ploy, devised by Montagu.

> Hazlitt. Montagu recommends the getting the money from Dr Stodart. I have got an introduction to him and intended to have gone there on Monday: but I have had some drawing which has kept me constantly here: but I hope to finish this night and I will certainly call there tomorrow so that you shall hear something about it by tomorrows or Saturdays Post: that is if I find him at home.[28]

[26] *The Correspondence of Jeremy Bentham* Volume 9 January 1817 to June 1820 ed. Stephen Conway (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 91.
[27] Ibid., p. 113.
[28] Ibid., p. 118.

One wonders whether Montagu was deliberately leading his creditors down a blind alley. No one had been more energetic in denunciation of John Stoddart than Hazlitt. Stoddart had opposed his sister's marriage to Hazlitt from the outset, they had never got on, and since early 1814 Hazlitt assailed him regularly from all available platforms. As recently as December 1816 he had published in *The Examiner* one of his most scathing, witty attacks on Stoddart, in which he described him as 'an apostate from principle, a sophist by profession, a courtier by accident, and a very headstrong man with little understanding and no imagination, who believes whatever absurdity he pleases, and works himself up into a passion by calling names'.[29] On another occasion Hazlitt referred to Stoddart's 'public prostitution' because his paper, *The New Times*, was funded by Lord Liverpool's government. In short, it was an act of utter naivete to believe that Stoddart would for a moment have countenanced the prospect of paying his brother-in-law's debts, and one wonders whether Montagu made the suggestion out of a desire to obstruct Hazlitt's creditors. Somehow, the money must eventually have been found, because the Hazlitts would remain at 19 York Street for another two years.

Hazlitt had a final, spectacular brush with Place over his part in the Westminster by-election of February 1819. By publicly attacking the Whigs as a 'corrupt and profligate faction' on the eve of the election, Place encouraged them to field their own candidate, Sir George Lamb, who won. This was widely regarded as a disaster for the Reformers: had it not been for Place's ill-timed intervention, their candidate John Cam Hobhouse (for whom Hazlitt voted) would have won. Hazlitt was infuriated by what he saw as an egotistical, self-important intervention, and vented his spleen in the Preface to *Political Essays*, published in August, where Place was described as follows:

> a patriot of this stamp is really indifferent about every thing but what he cannot have; instead of making his option between two things, a good or an evil, within his reach, our exquisite Sir sets up a third thing as the object of his choice, with some impossible condition annexed to it, – to dream, to talk, to write, to be meddlesome and troublesome about, to serve him for a topic of captious discontent or vague declamation, and which if he saw any hopes of cordial agreement or practical co-operation to carry it into effect, he would instantly contrive to mar, and split it into a thousand fractions, doubts, and scruples, to make it an impossibility for any thing ever to be done for the good of mankind, which is merely the plaything of his theoretical imbecility and active impertinence! The Goddess of his idolatry is and will always remain a cloud, instead of a Juno.[30]

Hazlitt named the butt of his criticism as 'Mr Place, of Charing-Cross'. He must have known that this was not likely to improve his standing in York Street, but must have decided it no longer mattered. If he pondered the consequences, he did not have long to wait. Place must have seen Hazlitt's remarks when, on 20 August, he wrote to Hobhouse to dissuade him from looking kindly on one of those who had cheered him at the hustings: 'You seem to have made a mistake or two or I have misled you respecting Hazlitt – & I draw no inference from his hurraing for

[29] 'The Times Newspaper', *The Collected Works of William Hazlitt* ed. P. P. Howe (21 vols., London, 1930-4), xix 182.
[30] Wu iv 12-13.

Hobhouse – if I had it would have been that he was a crazy kind of fellow wholly impelled by his feelings.'[31] It was Hazlitt's misfortune to be surrounded by people ever willing to do him a bad turn. Place had his revenge by writing privately to Hobhouse in order to smother any likelihood of his making Hazlitt's acquaintance. It was a shame. They had much in common, and he could have been a useful friend.

But Place did not stop there. Until now, it has been assumed that the Hazlitts were evicted because of non-payment of rent. Jones writes: 'He had fallen into arrears with his rent, and Bentham sent in the bailiffs.'[32] However, I find nothing to support this in any of the archives I have surveyed. It is true that Hazlitt fell behind in his rent, but that was in 1817. After that point *no further reference* is made to the fact throughout the Bentham or Place papers. It is inconceivable that Koe, Bentham and Place would have maintained a concerted silence even in private correspondence had it been the cause of the Hazlitts' departure from York Street in 1819. There remains another possibility.

It has not previously been observed that the only reference to Hazlitt in Bentham's correspondence of 1819 comes in a letter of 6 November to none other than Francis Place. Referring to a recent visit from Place, Bentham says: 'When you were with me, neither of us could think of No. 19. Have you communicated with Carr? If not, do so, as soon as may be: were it only to stop me from being bothered with his Attorney on Tuesday when Koe is to be here.' The meaning of this is not entirely clear, and the surrounding correspondence does not clarify it. Significantly, there is no mention of rent arrears, though it would appear that Bentham and Place both considered 19 York Street to be a matter of concern. It is impossible to say why, but it evidently has something to do with Place's recent visit to Bentham. Perhaps he had come across some further piece of disquieting information concerning Hazlitt, or perhaps he wanted to revive the school-building project. At all events, Bentham's renewed anxiety arose from their meeting, and it can be no coincidence that the 'execution' took place a mere six weeks later.

My surmise is that money had little to do with it. The Hazlitts were evicted from York Street because Place, stung by Hazlitt's recent attacks, was moved firstly to scotch any possibility of friendship between him and Hobhouse, and secondly to prompt Bentham to purge his tenant once and for all, leaving the way clear for the Chrestomathic School. That this took place without any financial failure on Hazlitt's part was what he meant when he told Hunt that Bentham '*philosophically* put an execution in my house'.

No wonder Bentham pretended not to know the identity of his tenant in later years. He was ashamed of his conduct. For not only was he well aware of Hazlitt's identity, but he enlisted Place as a spy, who provided him with information including details of Hazlitt's income and spending habits. As far as Place is concerned, the entire episode reveals both his talent for intelligence-gathering and his vindictiveness. All of which places in stark relief those qualities that set Hazlitt apart from the Utilitarians. The sensibility that led Bentham to evict Hazlitt on Christmas Day, and to regard the commemorative tablet to Milton with 'lacklustre eye', could hardly be further removed from that which made Hazlitt such an acute and sensitive writer. The enforced termination came at the end of a busy and turbulent year during which Hazlitt published three major works, and it would precipitate separation from his wife and young son. His father, whom he loved, was in failing health and would die the following July. Against this backdrop,

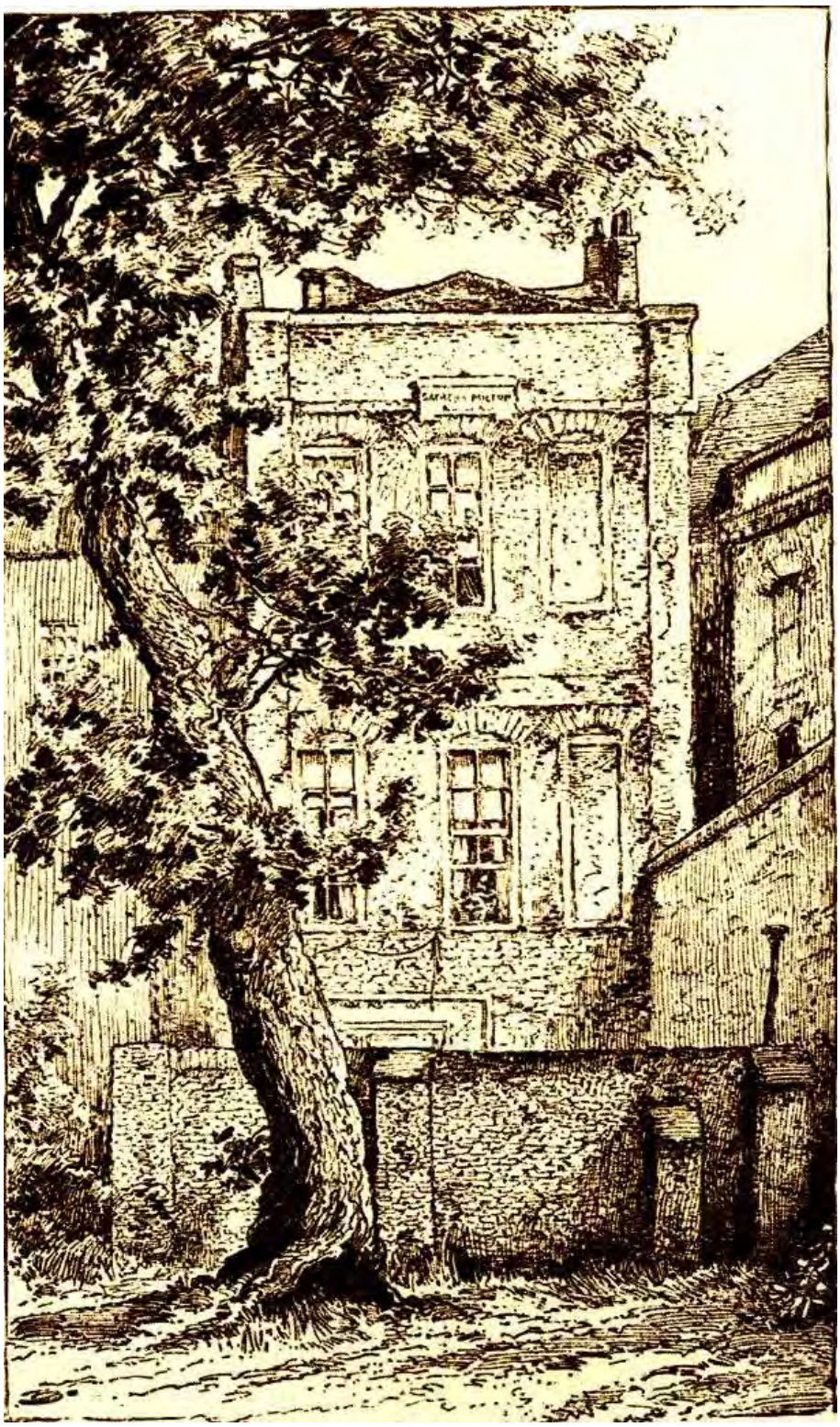
[31] British Library Add. MS 36457, f.340.
[32] Jones 305.

the likes of Bentham and Place, who called themselves reformers, conspired to throw him out of his home. No wonder he fulminated at the ready acquiescence of the Hunt circle in all this. And no wonder for the rest of his life he remained suspicious of Utilitarian theory. Of course, as a disinterested philosopher, Hazlitt's view of Bentham's thought was reached solely on intellectual grounds – but there can be no doubt that his respect for the great Utilitarian and his disciples was not enhanced by his personal knowledge of their deviousness. His experience of them revealed that here, as on the political stage, so-called radicals were more interested in fighting each other than a common enemy. He might well have agreed, on this occasion, with the comment of his acquaintance John Rickman when writing to Thomas Poole in 1806:

> A curse on all Reformers; the few that do good, bear no proportion to those who do mischief: — a bad breed who might all be hanged with material benefit.[33]

*St. Catherine's College, Oxford*

[33] Rickman to Poole, 30 April 1806; British Library Add. MS. 35345, 49r.



‘19 York Street (now Petty France) seen from the back garden of Jeremy Bentham’s house in Queen Square Place, *c*. 1819. Hazlitt rented the house from May 1813 to December 1819. The stone plaque, visible in the picture over the middle window on the second storey, read: “Sacred to Milton / Prince of Poets”’.

# ‘What were the leaders of the Revolution to do?’: Hazlitt on Revolutionary Terror in his *Life of Napoleon*

*By* SYBIL OLDFIELD

‘I AM A REVOLUTIONIST’, HAZLITT WROTE in chapter 34[1] of his *Life of Napoleon*:

> . . . What I have staked health and wealth, name and fame upon, and am ready to do so again and to the last gasp, is this, that there is a power in the people to change its government and its governors….This is the only remedy mankind have against oppression . . .

Two beliefs are necessary for all Revolutionists:

1. That their Revolution is just and will produce a less cruel, tyrannical society.
2. That we human beings are capable of producing this better society, where *liberté, égalité, fraternité* can flourish - ‘*Alle Menschen werden Brueder*’ as Schiller sang in his ‘Ode to Joy’.

Hazlitt declared himself a revolutionist unrepentant, unashamed even after the French Revolution was long over—finally defeated, as he saw it, at Waterloo.

He was still a ‘Jacobin’, even then, and shocked his readers by defiantly declaring in 1817 that ‘To be a true Jacobin a man must be a good hater’. The love of liberty, he believed, *has* to entail the hatred of tyrants, for the love of liberty is the love of oppressed mankind. (‘The Times Newspaper – On the Connexion between Toad-eaters and Tyrants’, 12 January, 1817, republished in *Political Essays*, 1819). Hazlitt’s hatred, therefore, in his view was righteous hatred of the unclean side.

But did that mean that he was deaf and blind to the cruel, even tyrannical, actions perpetrated by his own side? How revolutionists wrestle—or don’t wrestle—with the crimes committed by their own political group is, of course, the litmus test for the radical conscience.

Did Hazlitt wrestle?

Before I try to answer that question, it is necessary to remind ourselves that Hazlitt, unlike Wordsworth, had been too young to struggle in spirit with the French Revolutionary Terror while it was actually happening. For by 1794, when the original, bright-eyed libertarian Revolution had already suffered all the *pathos* of its first, internally inflicted defeat, Hazlitt was still only 16 years old. For the rest of his youth and early manhood up until 1815, he was left to prophesy that if Buonaparte, ‘the Child and Champion of Jacobinism’—(as both he and Buonaparte’s enemies saw him)—were defeated, it would mean the restoration of all the evils of all the Ancient Regimes in Europe. As, indeed, it proved.

The restored Bourbon Louis XVIII of France reintroduced the Slave Trade, the Pope re-instituted Civil Disabilities against Jews, the restored Bourbon Ferdinand VII of Spain brought

[1] The chapter references are to the 2nd edition of the *Life of Napoleon*, published by the Illustrated London Library, in 4 volumes, 1852.

back torture, the Inquisition and the punishment of the galleys, the King of Prussia reneged on his promise of liberal constitutional reform, the Tsar of Russia executed the Decembrists; while in Britain Habeas Corpus was suspended, 'Blanketeer' hunger marchers and Luddite machine-breakers were hanged, and unarmed political demonstrators charged and sabred in 1819 in St. Peter's Fields.

Hazlitt thought he had enough to do over the decade after Waterloo to fight this hydra-headed monster 'Legitimacy'—abandoned, as he felt, by all his former radical literary friends—('Shall I who heard him then, listen to him now?' as he said of Coleridge.) And it was not until 1825-6, as he researched the first part of his *Life of Napoleon* in Paris libraries, that Hazlitt *made* himself confront close-up the crimes committed by the French Revolution in the name of Liberty.

* * *

The three classic defences of doing evil that good may come through revolution are all arguments from Necessity.

1. Necessity defined as what is determined by the *past*—the cumulative impact of all the previous centuries of oppression and repression that finally trigger an inevitable violent reaction;
2. Necessity defined as the only available response to the crisis of the immediate, conflicted revolutionary *present*;
3. and those two grim necessities of past and present are then joined by Necessity as vindication from the perspective of the *future*—for only by doing thus and thus could a better life for the unborn have been ensured.

In his 'Preliminary Remarks on The French Revolution', in chapter three of his *Life of Napoleon*, Hazlitt tries all three arguments. He indicts the centuries of misery endured in pre-revolutionary France—'the thousand years of arbitrary power and exclusive privileges'. He indicts the foreign governments who, urged on by émigré royalists, had tried once the Revolution had erupted, to *re*-impose by force their bondage upon the French. And he blames both of these—the wrongs of the past and the immediate threat of the present—for causing the Terror—'the horrors and excesses of the period':

> It was the pressure from without that caused the irregularities and conflicts within, . . . it was necessary either to inflict or to endure the last injury and degradation . . . to do the greatest right, [- emancipation of the people] - much wrong was done. . . . The horrors of the French Revolution did not arise out of the Revolution but from the dread of the Coalition formed against it.

Hazlitt *does* call horrors and wrong, 'horrors' and 'wrong'—not just 'mistakes', let alone breaking eggs to make an omelette. And he does actually try to count the dead of the other side, computing the number of victims of the Terror in Paris as having been between 3,000- 4,000—in contrast to Southey's estimate in *The Quarterly* of 80,000 and H.A.L. Fisher's estimate of 2,600 in his later *History of Europe*.

After those general, rationalizing 'Preliminary Remarks' in chapter 3, Hazlitt then goes on to revisit the whole sore subject of The Terror in much greater detail in his chapters 4-8,—two hundred pages of such anguished *engagement* with the eternal dilemma of ends and means that they become a kind of *Laocoon* in prose .

Anyone interested in this subject must read for themselves all Hazlitt's feverish writhing, his leaping back and forth, his arguments and counter-arguments with himself, torn as he is in chapter 4: 'Breaking out of the French Revolution'; chapter 5: 'The Coalition against France'; chapter 6 : 'The National Convention'; and chapter. 8: 'The Quelling of the Sections'. All I can do here is try to give some slight indication of his mental fight.

* * *

What, for example, does Hazlitt say in his chapter 4 about the burning of the *chateaux* in the countryside? On the one hand he numbers it among 'other unjustifiable excesses', but on the other he sees it as 'almost inevitable', given the long-standing 'ill-usage of the peasantry'. Could there not have been found some middle way to prevent or end such 'excesses'? No, the right of prescription for the few and the right of public good for the many are 'absolutely incompatible' so 'It is in vain to regret the catastrophe'. (But Hazlitt then proceeds again and again in the subsequent chapters, precisely, 'to regret the catastrophe'). If the past and the present are conduits of negative necessity, however, he insists that the Revolution's legacy to the future has, ultimately, been a positive one:

> The sale of church property and of forfeited noblemen's estates . . . has had the ultimate effect of giving and securing to hundreds of thousands of peasants a field, a cottage, and leisure to read. Benefit unspeakable of the Revolution, its sheet-anchor, its pride and strength! (chapter 4.)

But then, ominously, Hazlitt adds just a little later: 'reformers in general are *not satisfied* [my emphasis] unless they can proceed from the solid and practical to the doubtful, . . . the violent, the extravagant, and the obnoxious parts of their system'.

In chapter 5, what did Hazlitt say about the September Massacres of royalists, aristocrats and churchmen in the Paris prisons? He is anxious to place those massacres very exactly in their immediate historical context—a war (and one that was then going very badly for the French) with its concomitant total polarization between 'friend' and 'enemy'. He reminds the reader that on 25 July 1792 the proclamation of the Duke of Brunswick, leader of the Prussian and Austrian troops on France's border, had insisted on an immediate regime change in France, and threatened martial law against any French who resisted as well as the destruction of French cities, above all Paris. On 30 August, these Allies had begun bombarding Verdun. Both France and the Revolution were now under threat of extinction. There followed the news of 1-2 September that the enemy had captured Verdun, and would next attack Paris, and Danton's grim judgement: '*Il faut faire peur aux royalistes*'!

So the September Massacres, the first act of The Terror, however terrible, were necessary? Hazlitt adds '*perhaps*':

> However great an evil in every point of view, it [the reign of terror] was, perhaps, necessary to France to enable her to weather the storm. This is not meant as a compliment either to France or to the reign of terror. To no other country in the world would it have been necessary; but such as her old government had made her, such she must show herself, in order to shake off that government. . . . A massacre was . . . a necessary prelude to a victory. (chapter 5.)

But then, a few sentences later, when he forces himself to imagine and write down what he sees in his imagination—'a prison-floor turned into a shambles, . . . a bleeding head stuck upon a pole in honour of liberty', Hazlitt recoils and quotes the Girondin Louvet, who said at that time: 'A great people know how to defend their capital without massacring prisoners'.

What of the execution of Louis XVI in chapter 6? For Hazlitt that act, although grim, was politically necessary given that Louis himself was incapable of non-resistance to the attack on his kingly power and thus, in his very person, constituted the rallying-cry for the invasion of France by all royalists, headed by the Allied Crowned Heads of Europe. But the King's downfall should *not* have been accompanied by public mockery and insult. Hazlitt asks for an impossible compartmentalization—'the King was assailable, the man was sacred', adding categorically 'the treatment of the Dauphin [was] another abomination'.

The Terror then, in Hazlitt's view, became a kind of collective insanity (or what we now call a collective psychotic reaction) in response to the bad war news. The revolutionary generals were either being defeated or defecting. And at each new frightening bulletin from the various battle fronts, both the Commune and the Jacobin Clubs, under the pressure of panic, scapegoated anyone they could charge with lukewarm 'Moderatism'. Even the Revolutionary Girondins were now suspect as secret traitors. The situation for the Revolution *was* desperate, Hazlitt acknowledges, but the remedy taken—purge after purge after purge—he sees as both irrational and tragic and his response oscillates between sorrow and horror. Sorrow at the historical inevitability of the situation—for only fanatical extremists like Marat and Robespierre will be trusted as 'sincere', totally committed, popular leaders in such an abnormal emergency—'He who was maddest was wisest'. And horror as he spells out roll call after roll call of the idealistic Revolutionaries martyred by the Revolution, in the name of the Revolution. Lavoisier, Malesherbes, Condorcet, Madame Roland, Brissot, Vergniaud . . .–concluding 'the sun of Liberty was in eclipse'.

And as if that darkness in Paris were not enough, Hazlitt does not allow himself to look away from the terrible scenes of righteous extermination then being enacted in the provinces also—and not only in the Vendee:

> Lyon was made a terrible example of. . . . At Nantes ship-loads of victims were sunk in the river, and young men and women tied naked together and drowned in this manner, which was called *a republican marriage* . . . .Whole families were led to the scaffold for no other crime than their relationship; . . . innocent peasant girls for dancing with the Prussian soldiers, a woman giving suck; and whose milk spouted in the face of her executioner at the fatal stroke, merely for saying as a group were conducted to slaughter, 'Here is much blood shed for a trifling cause!' (chapter 6). We feel, as he must have felt who makes us feel it, that France had come a very long way from the *liberté, égalité, fraternité* of a just revolution against tyranny.

The recourse to violence, Hazlitt now comes to realize, has a momentum and logic of its own. It brutalizes everyone within its reach and becomes addictive for both perpetrators and spectators alike.

> Sights of horror grew familiar to the mind, which had no other choice than that of being either the victim or the executioner . . . What at first was stern necessity or public duty became a habit and a sport . . . The habit of going to the place of execution resembled that of visiting a theatre . . . Legal murder was the order of the day, a holiday sight, till . . . the Revolution [was] a stage of blood!

'[The] love of shedding blood will [become] an appetite' Hazlitt observes, and he grimly concludes 'The act will oftener soil the motive than the motive will purify the act'.

The very defence, which had been Hazlitt's own defence, of 'Necessity for the public good' he now declares to be suspect in the mouths of fanatical, would-be dictators: 'The action alone is certain; the motive is hid; the future benefit doubtful'. The chief actors in the Terror 'will not be absolved by posterity', he says, even though they were perpetrating a lesser, transient evil 'than the evil aimed at by the opposite side—the final extinction of the hopes, rights, and dignity of human nature'.

But then, Hazlitt reminds himself yet again that France *was* being forced to fight two wars simultaneously, a war against foreign invasion *and* a civil war, and he veers around once more, crying out with a great, unanswered cry: 'What were the leaders of the Revolution to do? Were they to suffer a renewal of the massacres of Ismail and Warsaw . . .'

And here he tries to find a resting-place in the reflection 'When it comes to the abstract choice between slavery and freedom, principles are of more importance than individuals'. Chilling words—but not his last word.

Yet again abstraction is counter-posed by concrete example when, in chapter 8, 'The Quelling of the Sections', we are astonished to find Hazlitt forcing himself to return to Nantes. Yet again he enumerates the sadistic atrocities committed there and the 'barbarous levity' with which horrors like its 'republican marriages' were received. Now Hazlitt gives as his judgement:

> An act of lawless cruelty and revenge may be endured, while it is deeply lamented, in a dreadful crisis; but that it should be a subject of sport and merriment, is not to be endured or palliated under any circumstance.

He voices two last reflections on the Terror in volume 1 of his *Life of Napoleon*. First he argues that the very horrors perpetrated by these men who had had 'a Bourbon education' constituted in themselves an argument for the necessity of revolution—'[It] would lessen the value of the change, if a people suddenly emancipated from a long, ignoble . . . servitude all at once displayed the wisdom and manliness of the [free]'. If oppression ennobles, why try to end it?

Secondly, Hazlitt puts the terrible question to us:

> whether this stain of cruelty and intolerance, instead of being confined to the French Revolution and the French character, is not too applicable to all ages and nations, whether free or enslaved, refined or barbarous; and how far is this original and rancorous bias in

> our own breasts is merely hindered from breaking out by circumstances, or 'skinned and filmed over' by custom and appearances. Very common characters would work up into Revolutionary monsters'!

He seems almost to be anticipating Golding's conclusion about the 'darkness in the heart of man' in *Lord of the Flies*.

Despairing of human nature is not pleasant to any one but it is unbearable to a Revolutionist who *has* to hope that humanity can become more humane. Hazlitt had despaired before, of course, many times. He had despaired at Waterloo, at the time of the Queen's Trial, and at one abomination after another committed by 'Legitimacy'. Indeed many of his greatest essays seem to me to be workings out of a counterpoint between 'the Everlasting Yea and Nay' as he struggles to master the great rage in him, desperate *not* to despair.

One remembers, for instance, in 'Why Distant Objects Please'(1822) how he reminds himself that there is a counter to the abstract hatred of a political adversary in the man's concrete, physical presence: 'If you come into a room where a man is, you find, in general, that he has a nose upon his face. "There's sympathy!" . . . He does not bite. That's something'. It is a joke, of course, but there is a sob behind the joke. And in 'Whether Genius is Conscious of its Powers' (1826) after yet another fantastic, breathless tirade against victorious 'Legitimacy' Hazlitt seems suddenly to shake himself clear:

> I look out of my window and see that a shower has just fallen; . . . a shepherd-boy has just brought some pieces of turf with daisies and grass for his young mistress to make a bed for her sky-lark . . . my cloudy thoughts draw off, the storm of angry politics has blown over – Mr. Blackwood, I am yours – Mr. Croker, my service to you – Mr. T. Moore, I am alive and well . . .

In the very last months of his life, I think, 'the storm of angry politics', fuelled by righteous hatred, really did blow over for Hazlitt. And it is possible to wonder whether his recent brooding over the bloody tragedy of the French Revolutionary Terror might not have contributed to this.

Therefore I end with two of his very late sentences—written in April 1830 in his essay 'Party-Spirit'. Here Hazlitt is no longer the 'good hater' and unashamed that he had been in 1817. Instead, it is hate, or righteous enmity, that *is* the problem, he writes:

> Party spirit is one of the *profoundnesses of Satan*, or in more modern language, one of the dexterous *equivoque*s and contrivances of our self-love, to prove that we, and those who agree with us, combine all that is excellent and praise-worthy in our own persons (as in a ring-fence) and that all the vices and deformity of human nature take refuge with those who differ from us. . . .We thus desolate the globe, or tear a country in pieces, to show that we are the only people fit to live in it; and fancy ourselves angels, while we are playing the devil.

I need not say that the most important word in those tremendous, all too prescient sentences, is 'We'.

*University of Sussex*

# Reviews

SARAH BURTON. *A Double Life—A Biography of Charles and Mary Lamb*. Viking, an imprint of Penguin Books, 2003. Pp. x + 446. ISBN: 0-670-89399-4. £16.99. (A Penguin paperback version was published in 2004, priced at £8.99.)

> The extent to which friends of Charles, like Godwin, invited his advice and comments on their work is sometimes surprising. . . . Although his remarks uniformly mingle praise with criticism, the candour with which he habitually addressed them evidently occasionally stung. —Burton, page 188

SARAH BURTON GAVE US THE LECTURE which was printed in *The Charles Lamb Bulletin* for October 2003, New Series No. 124, as the brilliant paper 'Toothache and Gumboil: Biographical Dilemmas'. I have not read every recent piece of Elian research, but that struck me as a real contribution to knowledge, a surely new and terrifying consideration of the possibilities of Mary's life in madhouses.

*A Double Life* opens with a stunning *coup de théâtre*, an original newspaper report of the inquest on Mrs Lamb, as Prologue. Then the basic details and all the expected anecdotes turn up in due course, including a slightly mishandled version of the turnips/boiled mutton joke. There are even two anecdotes which are new to me. One, from Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, tells how 'my' Mr Alsager, Citizen and Clothworker, a cultured and important businessman who married scandalously 'beneath him', finally introduced the young and luscious Mrs Alsager to his friends, whereupon she assured them that 'Oh, Alsager and me, we lives like doves'. The other, from Haydon, has brother John showing Princess Charlotte, who has always seemed to me a likely problem, round an exhibition of paintings: he indicates a portrait of Elizabeth I, to which she responds, loudly enough to be overheard, 'Christ! What a fright!' There is also a Lamb joke (page 168), new to me at least, to the effect that government spin-doctors (surely her phrase rather than his?) were so adept at twisting the truth that one who swallowed a nail would excrete (a shorter, shocking word, surely?) a corkscrew.

The book seems to be based entirely on secondary printed sources, though Sarah Burton does occasionally amend readings in Marrs's version of the earlier letters. Thus much of the factual detail is like a *précis* of Lucas, but Sarah Burton has a delightful talent for making a point or drawing what sounds like a fresh conclusion. No wonder Charles Lamb was as he was, given his string of childhood illnesses, perhaps including polio. Did he and Mary treasure memories of their childhoods not because they were uniformly happy but because, in those days before the murder, they were safe? Mary Lamb was allowed to boss Coleridge around because she had first known him when he was a schoolboy and she already a young woman. Grandmother Field's cancer is identified as breast cancer. During the Mangate holiday, Mary was twenty-five and Charles fourteen. Charles had a 'Winnie-the-Pooh-ish appetite' for something or someone pleasant to appear. Sarah Burton takes apart (is this 'deconstruction'?) the episode of the cake and the beggar and gives excellent thumb-nail sketches of Christ's Hospital, the East India Company, the situation in private madhouses,

and of Manning and Cambridge. She considers, in real detail, the events leading up to the matricide and closes that chapter with a ghastly tableau. Later she uses a sly ambiguity, telling how the animals at Exeter Change were 'a great favourite with children in general and Charles in particular'. She contrasts the differing ideas of parenting developed by Coleridge and Godwin. She makes me wonder if we have been correct to correct people's incorrect pronunciation of 'Elia' all these years but incorrect to have corrected them incorrectly. We all know that 'Elia' is an anagram of 'alie', but I cannot trace the reference, surely Lamb's own, where 'Elia' with a long 'e' is said to be wrong. Surely it continues that 'Elia' with a short 'e' is right? Sarah Burton writes (page 318) that, 'pronounced correctly', so no wriggling there, it is a homophone for 'a liar'. She also compares letters of the time, which might be circulated among friends, with particularly amusing e-mails today, both likely to lose details of their origin on the way. There is a wonderful, if unexpectedly cruel, dig at 'Coleridge [who] had been threatening to die for much of his life. Eventually it proved one of the few intentions he saw through'.

Sarah Burton's even more extended views on brother John would have been welcome. Admittedly, no one likes him very much because he washed his hands of Mary. Sarah Burton calls him pompous and an obsessive about stopping cruelty to animals, but she misses the opportunity to wonder why he was his mother's favourite, his grandmother's favourite, attracted a wife, outshone Mary, held down a good job, was much missed by Charles when he died at only fifty-eight—and, of course, he gave Hazlitt a black eye. [Cheers and counter-cheers!]

Sarah Burton grasps several worthwhile nettles. She wonders if there was hereditary insanity in the family. She does not pussyfoot round Charles's tendency to become tired and emotional, as a modern English political euphemism has it. In one of her thumbnail sketches of Lamb and Coleridge she recalls 'the many nights the two young men spent in the smoky little room at the Salutation and Cat', then remarks on Charles's 'uneasy relationship with alcohol'. Of course, an alcoholic does not necessarily have to drink a lot to be overcome but she makes her points forcefully and it is clear that Charles never took account of a merely weak head for drink, if that was the difficulty. She gives numerous chapters and verses for why we should seriously consider him as an embarrassing problem-drinker. We reach a point where, to one's surprise, Thomas Carlyle's opinion of him is quoted and, perhaps for the first time, even the sympathetic Elian agrees with Carlyle, realizing that what we have always regarded as whimsical good fellowship (those 'amusing' letters of apology after drunkenness, for example) was actually dreary and uncontrolled befuddlement, with the 'inner circle' on pins that he might disgrace himself and shame them. With scrupulous fairness Sarah Burton then explains away her case for the prosecution, with Charles's need to assuage his loneliness and worry and how his early life-style contributed to this, the combination of heavy drinking and his two jobs, at East India House and newspaper hackwork, both needed to provide essential income. Indeed, I think she overdoes her frequent allusions to the Lamb family's poverty or straitened circumstances, especially when Charles and Mary were adults.

To my mind she is also carried away (pages 104-5) when she suggests a modern psycho-therapeutic analysis, asking whether there might be other causes of stress within the Lamb

family by the time of the murder, causes which history has rendered invisible but which might include child abuse or domestic violence! At least she always stays outside the bedroom door, but one can hear footsteps on the landing while the relationship between Emma Isola and Charles Lamb is investigated and Mary regains her sanity directly Emma is married.

The book contains some interesting points about Mary. Her longest period of uninterrupted health *ever*, it is claimed, was from June 1800 to March 1803. Thereafter her psychosis was to seize her every year for the rest of her life and the bouts of madness extended in length: Talfourd is quoted as saying that she suffered for weeks, latterly months, every year. Hence the need for a straitjacket.

Sarah Burton is to be praised for joining Samuel Rich, the catalogue of the Society's collection at the Guildhall Library, and the British Library in referring to P.G. Patmore's *My Friends and Acquaintance*. I am shocked to find that, among those who mention the book, an extra 's' is added to the end by Lucas (*Life*), Lucas (*Letters*), Claude Prance, Will D. Howe, A.C. Ward, and Katharine Anthony.

The text closes with a splendidly Wickhamian detail, just the sort of thing I could not have resisted including: how Shakespeare was introduced to Samoa, apparently in the 1930s, by translations freely adapted from the Lambs' *Tales from Shakespeare*.

So much for the gold stars. Now for the demerits. There are so many demerits that I had at first expected to summarise *A Double Life* as 'woefully uneven'. From a plain critical point of view some chapters sparkle and skim over their subjects, while others tediously drag their slow lengths along.

Sarah Burton gives the general impression of being a real expert in her subject. She thanks twenty-three people, none of them known to me, and the Charles Lamb Society (!) for their help. Did no one see the faults and errors or draw them to anyone's attention? Or should Penguin/Viking be ashamed of itself for ignoring such messages? Admittedly a couple of mis-spacings do occur, but very few printing errors ('typos' to the professionals) and none that cannot be put down to probable authorial carelessness. The Index is mildly inadequate and contains too many questionable usages differing from the text (De Quincey, de Quincey, Grice, Le Grice) and strange punctuation ('Thames River' or 'Thames, River'?).

The numerous factual errors in the text are so footling and yet so blatant to those that know that one is embarrassed to mention them—but I shall persevere. 'Mr Alspaper' (page 5 and Index) is clearly 'my' Mr Alsager, correctly recorded elsewhere. The Lamb parents did not marry in the non-existent church of St Dunshan's-in-the-Field (page 13 and Index); it was 'in-the-West', near the Temple. An argumentative footnote on page 16 takes umbrage at the conflation of the Lambs' Aunt Sarah with Elia's Aunt Hetty, the one name not being a diminutive of the other; this makes no allowance for a remote cousin of mine, named Elizabeth but invariably known, during many decades and to several generations of family and neighbours, as 'Aunt Cis'. The hen lays more eggs than she wants because she is a 'hospitable' bird, not a 'hospital' one (page 26 and *Mrs Leicester's School: Louisa Manners*). The plural of 'roof' is not 'rooves' (page 35). Button Snap (page 36) is regarded as a place with a cottage in it and I am not sure that The Adelphi (page 336) is perfectly understood. Christ's Hospital is almost always referred to as 'Christ's'. 'Reverend Russell'

(pages 357-8 and Index)? There are the over-pluralled 'Misses Buffams' (page 365), the misleading even if strictly correct statement (page 381) that 'most of the Lamb buildings have disappeared', a Restoration playwright named as 'Sir George Etherage' (page 186 and Index) and the invariable use of Sadler's 1869 edition of Henry Crabb Robinson, but never a mention of Professor Edith J. Morley's 1938 edition, which might have been better. Anyway, poor Professor Edith is handsomely confused (pages 84-5) with Frank Vigor Morley. The authority cited is F.V. Morley, described as 'she' and an 'academic', and the source as referring to Lamb's 'early literary endeavours' and published in 1932. Surely that has to be *Lamb before Elia* and Frank V. Morley, who wrote it, was a mathematician and publisher, according to Claude Prance's *Companion*, though I have known strange errors in that publication.

Is 'dissipate' (page 224) ever an adjective? Is 'decimating' correctly used (page 274) to describe Charles and Mary cutting out every picture they could find in their library? Actually, of course, it may be, depending on the number in each book, but such usage is always dangerous. 'A friend' arranged the breakfast for N.P. Willis to meet the Lambs (page 206): why not identify him as Henry Crabb Robinson, easily confirmed and already appearing many times in the Index? In 1813 Leigh Hunt and his brother John (page 267) are said to have been imprisoned in Surrey Gaol: Lucas says that they were in separate gaols, but why not call that one Horsemonger Lane like everyone else and locate it more easily, i.e. in Newington Causeway. John Hunt was in Coldbath Fields prison in Farringdon Road. Similarly, 'an unidentified "Mrs H"' is left hanging in the text (page 280) when the note follows Marrs in suggesting that she is Mrs Joseph Hume with a question mark.

Sarah Burton advances the superficially attractive theory (page 420) that Lamb's long letter of 30 November 1829 to James Gillman, printed, she says, as Lucas.II.pages 821-3 (this is the reference in the 1905 edition, but the version printed in 1935 is Lucas.III, pages 235-7, No. 814, at least has longer notes) is actually addressed to Coleridge. This involves reading 'Dear G' as "Dear C' and noting the name 'Coleridge' poked into a paragraph as if Lamb is checking that the correct addressee is concentrating. Unhappily, this ignores the fact that, five lines later, the next paragraph begins, 'Now, Gillman again . . .' and that the letter ends 'Yours and yours'. Don't miss *Amicus Redivius* on page 330 and in the Index! Finally (page 440) the Index offers 'Merchant Taylor's School': the misplaced apostrophe is one of the perpetual misunderstandings in the non-livery company world and is actually repeating Lamb's own error, though I am glad to see that Marrs feels ethically able to quote the error in his letter-text but spell it correctly in his notes.

Oh, and Penguin/Viking does have reasons to be ashamed of itself. Not a single illustration appears in either version of the book, apart from the C.E. Brock double-portrait drawing dated 1899, split into halves and appearing like two postage stamps on the dust-jacket but not at all on the paperback's collage cover. There are no running chapter titles and the end-notes have to be searched for, back and forth, with no hint of the text-pages involved, though the book closes with several blank pages, showing that space was not a problem.

Am I making a fuss unnecessarily? I think not and can give two reasons and two Elian-ish quotations to explain why. Firstly, I have confined myself to errors found in the general or positively Elian sections of the book. Where Sarah Burton writes of Coleridgean aesthetics

or descends into the engine-room of Wordsworthian poetics, I do not claim to be any kind of expert and have simply followed her guidance. Secondly, the reviewers I have read all seem to love the book unreservedly, perhaps because they are seeking other things or because their emphasis on phrases like ‘meticulous research’ may suggest how much *they* know. Thus the book may well come to be used as the new medium-length Lamb life for the foreseeable future and so it should be accurate.

Then we have our own Mary Wedd (Mary R. Wedd, *Born for Joy*, 1969, page 32), being advised by one of her primary school pupils: ‘You should lam about with a ruler a bit’.

Lastly, there is George Dyer (E.V. Lucas, *The Life of Charles Lamb*, page 182) expensively suppressing the five hundred copies of his *Poems* as they were about to be delivered to subscribers, because he no longer agreed with a principle he had stated on the very first of the eighty pages of his preface, because ‘Sir, it’s of great consequence that the *world* is not *misled*!’

D.E. Wickham

# Society Notes and News from Members

## CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

The Society would like to congratulate Seamus Perry and Nicola Trott, both valued members of the Editorial Board of the *Bulletin*, on the birth of their daughter, Hester Jane!

We are sorry to have to record the death of member, Chris Rubinstein. A retired solicitor, Chris was an occasional participant in our meetings, but was a regular at the Coleridge conferences organised by The Friends of Coleridge as well as a keen supporter of the Blake Society, whose T-shirts he often sported. Extremely well-read, Chris often made acute observations in discussions and had the distinction of being the great-great-grandson of David Moses Dyte, the man credited with saving the life of King George III at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane in 1800.

The Society has received numerous letters of appreciation from other literary societies, thanking us for hosting the 2005 ALS weekend in May. Next year's ALS annual meeting is to take place in Bath, courtesy of the Jane Austen Society.

The 2005-6 season of meetings opened on 8 October with an enjoyable lecture from Kate Beavers of the University of Greenwich examining the early epistolary dialogues between Lamb and Coleridge.

The Birthday Celebration Luncheon will take place on Saturday 18 February 2006 and we are delighted that the guest of honour will be Professor Nicholas Roe, editor of the journal *Romanticism* and author of many acclaimed books, most recently *Fiery Heart: The First Life of Leigh Hunt*. Application forms for tickets accompany this *Bulletin*.

## FROM D.E. WICKHAM

*Another London Rhapsody?*
May I suggest that the first of these three paragraphs could have been written by Charles Lamb as another of his London rhapsodies?—though the second and third paragraphs could surely not have been written by anyone other than the author of them all.

> [The coach] rattled on through the noisy, bustling, crowded streets of London, now displaying long double rows of brightly-burning lamps, dotted here and there with the chemists' glaring lights, and illuminated besides with the brilliant flood that streamed from the windows of the shops, where sparkling jewellery, silks and velvets of the richest colours, the most inviting delicacies, and most sumptuous articles of luxurious ornament, succeeded each other in rich and glittering profusion. Streams of people apparently without end poured on and on, jostling each other in the crowd and hurrying forward, scarcely seeming to notice the riches that surrounded them on every side; while vehicles of all shapes and makes, mingled up together in one moving mass like running water, lent their ceaseless roar to swell the noise and tumult.

> As they dashed by the quickly-changing and ever-varying objects, it was curious to observe in what a strange procession they passed before the eye. Emporiums of splendid dresses, the materials brought from every quarter of the world; tempting shores of every thing to stimulate and pamper the sated appetite and give new relish to the oft-repeated feat; vessels of burnished gold and silver, wrought into every exquisite form of vase, and dish, and goblet; guns, swords, pistols, and patent engines of destruction; screws and irons for the crooked, clothes for the newly-born, drugs for the sick, coffins for the dead, and churchyards for the buried—all these jumbled each with the other and flocking side by side, seemed to flit in motley dance like the fantastic groups of the old Dutch painter, and with the same stern moral for the unheeding restless crowd.
>
> Nor were there wanting objects in the crowd itself to give new point and purpose to the shifting scene. The rags of the squalid ballad-singer fluttered in the rich light that showed the goldsmith's treasures, pale and pinched-up faces hovered about the windows where was tempting food, hungry eyes wandered over the profusion guarded by one thin sheet of brittle glass—an iron wall to them; half-naked shivering figures stopped to gaze at Chinese shawls and golden stuffs of India. There was a christening party at the largest coffin-maker's, and a funeral hatchment had stopped some great improvements in the bravest mansion. Life and death went hand in hand; wealth and poverty stood side by side; repletion and starvation laid them down together.

In fact these are consecutive paragraphs from near the start of Chapter 32 of Charles Dickens' *Nicholas Nickleby*, 1839, just before Nicholas hears his sister's name spoken by Sir Mulberry Hawk. I transcribed them from pages 307-8 of my own copy of the First Edition, First Issue bound as a book rather than from the parts. (Sorry, I could not resist that!)