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In Defence of Appreciation: Pater's 'Charles Lamb'

By JOHN COATES

> At the same time this excellence should not blind us to the accompanying defect of Mr Pater's method. There can in fact be no thoroughly just appreciation without a mixture of depreciation.[1]

W.J. COURTHOPE'S COMMENTS REMIND US THAT, while generally finding much to admire, the first reviewers of Pater's *Appreciations* (1889) were struck by something novel in the book's critical stance. The title itself had connotations that were unfamiliar and not quite English ('"Appreciations"—a word occurring very often in the essays, and used, evidently, in the sense of the French appréciation'[2]). Pater's refusal, as reviewers saw it, 'except by implication, to condemn anything'[3] found some defenders. However, others saw it as an attitude which carried humility to excess, a critical posture of 'extreme modesty—the writer contentedly sitting at the feet of his Gamaliels and reverently transmitting to us the essence of their utterances'.[4] This last comment implies that although someone as accomplished as Pater might manage such an approach, few others could do so and, in any case, it was not what most readers understood by criticism.

Lionel Johnson's laudatory piece is perhaps the most interesting of these early responses. A close friend of Pater, and familiar with his intentions, Johnson testifies to a deliberate novelty of approach in *Appreciations*: 'To our English the word, I think, is new: and we may fancy in it a meaning more delicate and subtile'.[5] Here is evidence that what reviewers saw as new reflected Pater's chosen purpose which 'would seem to promise a quality of reserve, a judgement very personal, a fine tolerance towards the reader'.[6]

The qualities Johnson hints at here are suggestive, and it would be worth exploring 'appreciation' in a fuller and more specific fashion. For some, then and now, the term may suggest a refusal to grapple with problems and failures of writing, an acceptance of authors' intentions as achievements. Criticism (they might say) involves more than paying compliments and elucidating unquestioned successes. How exactly did appreciation work in a particular case? What was this critical technique intended to counter or correct? What intellectual assumptions (if any) sustained the appreciative approach to literature? Compared to other methods, how successful was it in clarifying the difficulties readers might have with a given author?

In 'Charles Lamb' (first published in 1878), Lamb himself exemplifies the practice of appreciation and at the same time, is a subject to which Pater applies the appreciative technique. Understandably enough, after the troubles which the 'Conclusion' to *The Renaissance* brought upon him, Pater largely refrained from manifestoes and statements of his beliefs or values.

[1] W.J. Courthope, signed review, *Nineteenth Century*, April 1890, rept. *Walter Pater The Critical Heritage* (London, Boston and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980) 239.
[2] Arthur Symons, Unsigned Review, *Athenaeum*, 14 December 1889, rept *Walter Pater The Critical Heritage*, 201.
[3] Symons, *Walter Pater The Critical Heritage*, 202.
[4] William Watson, Signed Review, *Academy*, 21 December 1889, *Walter Pater The Critical Heritage*, 205.
[5] Lionel Johnson, Signed Article, *Century Guild Hobby Horse*, January 1890, *Walter Pater The Critical Heritage*, 220.
[6] Johnson, *Walter Pater The Critical Heritage*, 220.

However, he did not forgo attempts at persuasion. Obliquely, he sought to recommend his views and to demonstrate how they operated in specific cases. 'Charles Lamb' is an example of such circumspect persuasion.

The essay opens with a gentle depreciation of abstract critical theory. Less marked than similar comments which begin 'Coleridge's Writings' or *The Renaissance*, these remarks make Pater's intention clear enough. Along with Imagination and Fancy, Wit and Humour was a distinction Romantic writers introduced in imitation of late eighteenth and early nineteenth century German critics. Pater's language here ('transplanted', 'subtleties of thought' and 'made much of the cognate distinction'[7]) hints at a quizzical detachment from these theoretical imports, which he refrains from discussing further in the body of his essay. He notices them only to grant them a limited use. They were borrowed 'not without advantage' (105), a phrase slightly grudging or qualified.

The structure of 'Charles Lamb's' opening paragraph propels his readers along the lines Pater wishes them to follow. Consisting of one long sentence, it eases a transition from theorizing to practice, from Wit and Humour viewed as distinct intellectual concepts to seeing them both as products of the 'deeply stirred soul of sympathy' (105). Pater concedes their worth only in practical terms. The distinction between Imagination and Fancy 'found its best justification' (106) (it presumably needs justification) in 'essential differences of stuff' (106) in Wordsworth's writings. Unlike the sonorous vocabulary Pater often chose, or those long savoursome Latin words, rich in second intention he recommended in 'Style', 'stuff' is one of the racy Saxon monosyllables whose occasional use he permitted. He chooses the word, at this point in 'Charles Lamb', to emphasise the physical medium in which theoretical distinctions like that between Imagination and Fancy have to be embodied in order for them to have worthwhile meaning. In the same way ('as . . . so' [105-6]) the distinction between Wit and Humour must be given concrete form in order to gain significance. It finds a 'visible interpretation and instance' (106) in Lamb's character and writings. After what has gone before, the second paragraph's concluding remark that Lamb 'lived more consistently than most writers among subtle literary theories' (106) sounds ironic. In any case, one might 'live among' ideas without being shaped by them. Neither here, nor elsewhere in 'Charles Lamb', does Pater suggest that the critics he knew or the theories they broached influenced Lamb. The absence of such a claim is significant. Implicitly, Pater regards the pursuit of supposed intellectual influences on a writer as less helpful than other kinds of examination. Instead of being a mine of ideas for the academic mind to unearth, Lamb is 'full of curious interest' to those who care for literature as a 'fine art' (106).

Next Pater invites his readers to consider the emotional climate of the age in which they themselves live. Choosing the example of Thackeray, known for his love and expert knowledge of the eighteenth century, which he recreated in several of his novels, Pater points out that this author illustrates a change in the national temper since the period he himself imitated. The 'author of the *English Humourists of the Eighteenth Century*' (106) would have found the spirit of the nineteenth century, including his own, 'deepened by the deeper subjectivity, the intenser living with itself, characteristic of the later generation' (106). Even those nostalgic for the eighteenth, are themselves forced to live in and be affected by the nineteenth century. By appealing to the evidence of a well-known figure, Pater sketches a changed emotional climate his readers must acknowledge. The complex opening of this paragraph evokes a sense of obstruction

[7] Walter Pater, *Appreciations*, 1889: rept. *The Works of Walter Pater*, London: Macmillan, 1900-1901, 8 vols, Vol. 5, 105. Subsequent references in parenthesis are to this volume.

from which the last phrase 'freer and more boisterous', frees itself. Pater both indicates and enacts the movement to 'more high-pitched feeling'. It is this movement which explains Lamb's importance.

Far from being the products of an isolated eccentric, Lamb's writings signal a 'transition' (106) between one cultural phase, one emotional climate, and another. Having marked out this, the main reason for Lamb's significance, Pater insists on the connection between his subject's life and writings ('the circumstances of his life as reflected thence into his work' [106]). The sketch of Lamb's early days which follows enforces the link between the physical and the moral qualities of his first scenes ('the aroma of a singular, homely sweetness about his first years, spent on Thames' side . . . red bricks and terraced gardens Gamaliels . . . memories of old-fashioned legal London' [106-107]). Noting the fact that he became Coleridge's 'enthusiastic disciple' (107), Pater refuses to explore this (putative) intellectual influence. The implication is that what formed Lamb's mind were moral and emotional influences assimilated to and supported by particular physical settings. Here, appreciation seeks to identify the physical embodiment of a psychological atmosphere in the subject's early life. In describing Lamb's effect on others and their response to him, Pater, again, tries to catch an idiosyncratic actuality ('a certain Jewish expression in his clear, brown complexion, eyes not precisely of the same colour' [107]).

Pater points to what a summary view of Lamb might suggest and the inner truth of his nature. In 'and the cheerfulness of all this, of the mere aspect of Lamb's quiet subsequent life' (107) 'and' and 'mere' suggest the inattention of the 'more superficial reader' who will not see what Lamb was 'in himself'. The technique of appreciation is discriminating in the objects it scrutinizes. Earlier, in 'Charles Lamb', Pater had stepped away from considering intellectual influences (Lamb's 'discipleship' to Coleridge) or the effect of theories of Wit and Humour. Here, he avoids speculation about the nature of Mary Lamb's insanity, the context of family relations in which she murdered her mother and the traces of mental imbalance in Lamb himself. The murder was simply the result of 'a sudden paroxysm of madness' (107). As with his earlier refraining from discussion of the 'subtle literary theories' with which Lamb came into contact, Pater here is practising an economy of intellectual effort, confining himself to obviously operative factors and what can really be known, while avoiding tenuous speculation. The most salient feature of Lamb's catastrophe was 'the fateful domestic horror . . . the beautiful heroism and devotedness too, of old Greek tragedy' (107). This is an example of what Pater was later to enjoin in 'Style' (1888), a resisting of the 'constant tendency' to 'efface distinctions of language'.[8] 'Greek tragedy' is not evoked casually as a synonym for something dreadful. Pater means to suggest heroism and love in the face of a terrible visitation; the love of brother and sister in Sophocles' *Electra* or the devotion of kindred in his *Oedipus at Colonus*. The madness itself is extraneous, inexplicable or, at least, not explained. In Lamb's story, what is significant is his conscious choice of one love rather than another, a casting away of the 'feverish, romantic tie' in exchange for the 'charities of home' (108). Pater presents this as a deliberate act which moulded and deepened Lamb's nature ('pledging himself . . . sacrificed himself . . . strong undercurrent of this great misfortune and pity' [108]). Insisting on the connection of life and work, between Lamb's 'actual story' and the 'humour of Elia', the appreciative technique seeks, above all, to locate its subject's emotional centre of gravity.

[8] Walter Pater, *Appreciations, The Works of Walter Pater*, Vol. 5, 13.

Following the lead of Coleridge in discussing Shakespeare or St. Beauve's moral and biographical emphasis, nineteenth century critics often sought to explain literary works in terms of the personalities of those who produced them. Pater's account of Lamb might seem another example of such as exploration. However, it differs from other instances of the kind. Pater is keen to show how Lamb's very weaknesses were transmuted, not by the conscious will of a master-spirit like Coleridge's Shakespeare, but, almost unconsciously, by the very nature of the artistic production in which Lamb engaged. Lamb is not a heroic creative genius but 'one of the disinterested servants of literature' (109) and it is through this service, through realising in prose, the principle of 'art for its own sake', that elements of his personality are metamorphosed. When Lamb forgets himself in intellectual labour, the 'almost insane fixedness of gloom' (108) perceptible in his early unsuccessful novel *Rosamund Gray*, becomes the emotional resource which makes him the 'best critic, almost the discoverer of Webster' (108). What was weakness in his own personality and a failure in direct transcription becomes a route into the strange, long-forgotten world of the Jacobean dramatists. The piled up epithets ('so sombre, so heavily coloured, so *macabre*' [108]) with which Pater characterises Webster emphasise the link with the young Lamb's 'fixedness of gloom'. Appreciation seeks out biographical information or personal characteristics only insofar as they provide the matrix for an alchemy in which human pain or failure is converted into art.

Touching on Lamb's personality and viewpoint in the beginning of the next paragraph ('for himself and from his own point of view' [108]) Pater suggests both their significance and their limits for the understanding of Elia. Consciously, Lamb saw his literary art the means to 'gild and sweeten a life of monotonous labour' (108) as a clerk. 'Gild and sweeten' suggests the sugar coating of a pill, useful enough to help bitter experience down, but not in itself of much significance. Nor did Lamb's writings seem of moment to his contemporaries ('as far as regarded others, no very important thing' [108]). Repetition of the word 'little' ('a little pleasure . . . inform them a little') emphasises the modest aims and effects of a writer unconcerned with and irrelevant to the great historical events of his time ('in no way concerned with the turning of the tides of the great world'). Pater's placing of clauses in this sentence suggests deferral, almost hesitation over matters of minor importance, whose different aspects occur, one after another, after some pause or consideration, like putting together the tesserae of a mosaic.

In fact, Pater only seems to hesitate in order to make his claim for Lamb, presented in the next sentence ('And yet this very modesty . . .' [108-109]) all the firmer. He undermines the scale of values by which Lamb has been judged and underrated. It was Lamb's 'unambitious way of conceiving his work' which gave it 'a certain exceptional enduringness' (109). (This short firm sentence after a long hesitant one follows a suggestion Pater was later to make in 'Style'[9]). Pater justifies his seeming paradox, that Lamb's lack of ambition promoted his work, by deprecating the 'great ideas of practice' (109) with which the 'remarkable English writers' of Lamb's generation 'greatly preoccupied themselves'. 'Preoccupied', of course, suggests engrossed but also distrait, taken up (perhaps damagingly, but certainly to the exclusion of other things). A cursory parenthesis 'religious, moral, political', demotes the ideas, as does the admission that they have 'in some sense or other' (109) entered the 'general consciousness'. Almost casually made, Pater's point is a telling one. The ideological concepts Romantic thinkers urged certainly had effect but, perhaps, not one which they had hoped or expected ('in some

[9] Pater, *Appreciations*, *The Works of Walter Pater*, Vol. 5, 16.

sense or other'). Ideas are refracted through the medium of experience in which they acquire different meanings for the following generation. Such ideas become part of a common fund of intellectual options but, often, fail to offer 'stimulus for a generation provided with a different stock of ideas'. Like merchandise (which 'stock' suggests) they go out of fashion or become shop-soiled. This conclusion is all the sadder because those who gave so much of their vital energy to these ideas ('spent so much of themselves in their propagation' [109]) thereby forfeited the effect on a later generation which they gained on their own. 'Personally interesting' since they shared 'so largely in the unrest of their own age', in terms of their 'actual work' they lost something 'to the mere course of time' (The severance of 'personality' and 'work' and the contrast Pater makes between them here is significant). It is those, like Lamb, who 'seemed to exercise themselves hardly at all in great matters', who remained scarcely serious, even 'a little indifferent' (109) about them, who are redeemed from the flow of events, 'the mere course of time'.

What, Pater asks, are 'great matters', and what are trivial? What are the conditions for the artistic work which will mean most to later generations? Rather than involvement in religious, moral, or political 'unrest', following Lamb's example, he proposes a 'working ever close to the concrete to the details, great or small, of actual things, books, persons' (109). Following one of his common stylistic and polemical procedures, Pater has prepared the ground by a number of glancing asides and hinted reservations, sapping the standing and claims of ideologies and generalising ideas before firmly dismissing them. The mark of one of the disinterested servants of literature, such as Lamb was, is that he does not allow present realities to be 'blurred to his vision by the intervention of mere abstract theories' (109). 'Mere' suggests how far the process of demotion has now gone. 'Intervention' proposes the view that many theories do not develop out of observation but are imposed upon it, intervening between object and viewer.

An interesting feature of the claims Pater makes for Lamb is his use, at this point, of the phrase 'art for its own sake' (109) which, by 1878, had become an almost hackneyed slogan. Pater sets the phrase in a context which modifies its meaning. Here, art for art's sake, above all, involves attention, a remaining sharp-eyed and focused on the texture and quiddity of events, people, objects, or books. It means avoiding the habit of generalisation, or of letting one's thinking be done and one's responses predicated by received opinion and abstract theory. Generalisation at a high level of abstraction, often accompanied by an aggressive manner, enjoyed a prestige (which it still retains). Pater felt that its results did not always justify. Rather than a short-cut to profundity, such generalisation was frequently an invitation to mental laziness and a film over the observer's eye.

Art for art's sake takes on another meaning too, through Pater's claim that it was Lamb's 'working ever close to the concrete' which gave his writings 'an enduring moral effect' (109). 'Unoccupied, as he might seem in great matters', Lamb, in fact, was in 'immediate contact with what is real' (110). 'Might seem', here, prepares for the final dethroning of 'great matters', for Pater's denial that social, religious and political movements, restlessly pursued, have an ultimate significance. They are not 'what is real'. Reality is to be found in 'caressing littleness', a deliberately challenging phrase. Profundity is best appreciated through an unassertive, gentle, almost fondling approach to what appears trivial rather than through ostensibly powerful statements on large questions. Pater is clear on the method and purpose of appreciation. Lamb succeeds because he approaches 'littleness', meeting it 'more than half-way with a perfect understanding of it' (110) and in a spirit of 'boundless sympathy'.

As an approach to life and art, 'boundless sympathy' has obvious drawbacks. Such sympathy clearly carries dangers of sentimentality and self-indulgence. Pater foresees and guards against these potential weaknesses. He makes it clear that, while Lamb's art of appreciation may have drawn its emotional force from a 'simple mother-pity . . . primitive in its largeness', (110) this pity was mediated through close observation, care for details, and concern with the actual. Lamb may have felt the 'sorrow of humanity . . . the aching of its wounds', but this emotion produced touches of pathos that were 'unexpected', produced by seeing what others had missed. Instead of some generalized, lachrymose sensibility, Lamb catches the 'quaint remarks of children which another would scarcely have heard' (110). Pater describing Lamb writing on child chimney-sweeps speaks of his 'valuing carefully their white teeth', a deliberately odd expression which reminds the reader of Lamb's sharp, idiosyncratic attention to detail. The pleasure Lamb takes in 'littleness' is an enjoyment of life in its subtleties, disciplined by the need to manage limited resources and 'refined by the need of some thoughtful economies and making the most of things'. Appreciation of this kind is far removed from self-indulgence or thoughtless sentimentality. In its procedures, it is a detailed and specific transferable skill, a cultivation by Lamb of 'little arts of happiness he is ready to teach to others' (110).

Lamb's 'exquisite appreciations' (111) of past literature draw on the same depth of emotion as his sympathy with human suffering. Pater suggests that the souls of Shakespeare and Webster must have been stirred by Lamb's comments on their work. After all, they had been the victims of so much incompetent criticism during and after their lives ('long converse with things that stopped their ears, whether above or below the soil' [111]). This amusing suggestion conveys the depth of the appreciator's involvement with the authors he studies. Lamb's criticism is an act of service to personalities conceived as, in some sense, still existing and delighting in an accurate and sensitive reading of their work. Extravagant as such a notion may seem (and the touch of humour guards against the impression) for Pater this involvement with the past offers a means of escape from one's own personal detritus, preconceptions, and vanities. It prompts 'the true scholar's way of forgetting himself in his subject' (111). Lamb's work of appreciation proceeds as 'loyal self-forgetting work for others' for 'Shakespeare's self first . . . and then for Shakespeare's readers'. An emotional bond with the past ('his own sorrows, affections, perceptions being alone real to him of the present' [111]) fuels a need, through the most careful attention, to understand its true nature. Lamb was not merely an 'expositor' but 'almost the discoverer' of Elizabethan and Jacobean drama. Here, Pater answers beforehand those critics of *Appreciations* who were to suggest that, by confining itself to explaining and justifying an author's work, the approach Pater followed could make no discoveries.

Pater readily admits the sheer pleasure Lamb took in his critical work, in putting together *Specimens of the English dramatists who lived about the time of Shakespeare*. The extracts he selected were 'sorted and stored here, with a sort of delicate, intellectual Epicureanism' (112). Such an almost physical, yet discriminating, pleasure in the material he handled was, of course, quite different from the legislative ambitions and pronouncements of many academic critics. Yet, the intervals Lamb snatched as rare hours of delight from 'the limitation of his time by business' (112) changed the nineteenth century's understanding of the Jacobeans. Lamb himself did not know 'how fresh a source of culture he was evoking for other generations'. His method was far more successful and his discoveries far more significant than he realised. It is another reminder, by Pater, of how mistaken are some of the conventional assumptions about what constitutes important thought and action or 'great matters'.

For Lamb, as for Pater, critical understanding began in the experience of pleasure, in the kindling of joy, in writing, or other art, that one had encountered. The first stage of comprehension was 'to feel strongly the charm of an old poet or moralist' (112) (Repeated three times in one sentence the word 'charm' challenges the confrontational, moralistic stance some Victorian critics and reviewers adopted). Set in contexts, or offered in ways, which do not threaten the reader, 'cast off in a stray letter often, or a passing note, or the lightest essay or conversation' (112) the perceptions of Lamb, exemplar of the appreciative critic, might seem, even to himself 'mere humble ministration'. In fact, 'he is really the creator' of what he appears merely to be handing on to others. The 'delicate, refining Epicurean approach' (113) he adopts to works of art may be born of 'a sense of veneration' (113) but it is stringent in the pursuit of truth: 'Tracking, with an attention always alert, the whole process of their production to its starting point in the deep places of the mind' (112). Appreciation demands the utmost sensitivity to verbal nuance, to 'the delicacies of fine literature especially, its gradations of expression, its fine judgement, its pure sense of words, of vocabulary' (113). In Pater's view such an awareness of fine distinctions of meaning and connotation is 'dying out' (113) among writers of his own day who, consequently, have lost the capacity to appreciate the stylistic subtleties of older English prose.

Important as such verbal sensitivity and close attention to detail may be, they are subordinate and instrumental adjuncts to a particular way of seeing which shaped Lamb's perceptions. Several times already in his essay, Pater has used the term 'retrospective' to describe Lamb's vision. (Lamb wrote 'chiefly in a retrospective manner' [108], for example, or he was in 'all his work mainly, retrospective, as I said' [111]). 'Charles Lamb' now explores and justifies this mode of perception. Pater begins by noticing what it is that, for most people, brings past times to life. It is not, chiefly, the 'more solemn and self-conscious deposits', of former ages, such presumably, as great speeches, political manifestoes, theological pronouncements, or the clauses of treaties which gave us their true flavour. Rather, 'the veritable accent of a time' (114) appears in 'traits, customs, characteristics of houses and dress'. After the passing of years, things 'common, uninteresting, or even worthless in themselves' become 'picturesque', catching in vivid detail the otherness of a former time. Pater links this (generally experienced) way of seeing the past to the manner in which we view our friends and acquaintances. In them, it is 'tricks of individuality', odd little traits or mannerisms, which 'convey to us the secret of life-like expressions' (114). The humorist who is also a critic-appreciator, like Lamb, is not an eccentric catching, somewhat perversely, at details most consider beneath their notice. Rather, 'we are all to some extent humorists' (114). A writer like Lamb shows a common characteristic but one enhanced by 'the light of an understanding more than is possible for ordinary minds' (115). He is able to look upon 'the ways and things of his own day' (114-115) in the 'pensive mood' (114) with which most people view the customs and incidents of the past.

Here, Pater follows a procedure analogous to the one he adopts on 'The Child in the House', published in *Macmillan's Magazine* (August, 1878), two months before 'Charles Lamb' appeared. In this partially autobiographical imaginary portrait, Pater connects the aesthetic appetite of the young Florian Deleal with the child's ordinary early experiences, love of the familiar sights of home or pleasure in the 'gold of the dandelions at the roadside'.[10] In 'Charles Lamb', he relates Lamb's particular vision to our common experience in considering the past or the idiosyncrasies of those we know. In both cases, he recognises and guards against his reader's

[10] Pater, *Miscellaneous Studies*, *The Works of Walter Pater*, Vol 8, 175.

possible suspicion that he is discussing something strange or even threatening by showing how much it shares with experiences they will all have had.

Where Lamb, and those minds of which he is the type, differ from others is in their enjoyment of the 'privilege' (114) of being able to look at the 'ways and things of [their] own day' (114-115) as if these were in the past. Such a view of the 'tricks and manner of life about him' would be more detached, compassionate, or amused than an observer immersed in current events could take. It would also be more understanding since, from the humorist's viewpoint, the tale had already been told. He would be able to see the connection of events, the relation of cause and effect with the 'refined, purged sort of vision' (115) many can bring to their reflections on the past, allowing the observer to see how apparently trivial details were rooted in emotional needs. Such a mind would perceive 'the manner, the outward mode or fashion, always in strict connection with the spiritual condition which determined it' (115). Peculiarly aware of the passing of time, an observer, possessed of such a vision, would see 'the characteristics of places, ranks, habits of life', things 'old indeed, but serving as an actual part of life' (115-116) passing away before his eyes and would seek to 'hand on unbroken the tradition of such a fashion or accent'.

Pater's use of the word 'transfigured' (115) to describe such a vision confirms the essentially religious nature of the habit of mind he describes. The 'gift of appreciation' depends 'on the habitual apprehension of men's life as a whole' (116). As 'habitual' implies, it is a way of seeing which may be cultivated, a mental fabric one can build for oneself. Through one's efforts, one may receive a grace, a 'gift' of the true sight of things. Avoidance of distraction, irritation, ambition, or vanity, of empty communications or idle gossip has, of course, always been a constant theme of writers on the spiritual quest. At the outset of his career, in his preliminary programme for the aesthetic life, 'Diaphaneité' (1864), Pater had borrowed the advice of Thomas à Kempis in *The Imitation of Christ*: 'Be made simple and at one with yourself' ('Sibi unitus et simplificatus esse' that is the long struggle of the Imitatio Christi'[11]). In this early essay, he had proclaimed that aesthetic appreciation was the 'very opposite' state of mind to that which sees life as a game of skill and 'values things and persons as marks or counters of something to be gained'. Instead, the appreciator 'seeks to value everything at its eternal worth' and 'sees external circumstances as they are'.[12]

In 'Charles Lamb', Pater develops this ideal in what is one of the subtlest passages in the essay and one of the most arresting in its implications. The 'gift of appreciation' Lamb enjoyed grew from an understanding of life, built up over time so that it became natural to the observer, in which nothing was trivial or irrelevant, since everything was interconnected. The smallest incidents or objects provided means of approach to the profoundest themes. Life had an 'organic wholeness, as extending even to the least things in it' (116). The minutest details of communication or social exchange within a culture are all part of a pattern existing behind and explaining them. Appreciation cultivates a 'fine perception of the congruities, the musical accordance between humanity and its environment of custom, society, personal intercourse' (116). The fact that Pater depreciates generalisation and theory as means to understand life and art does not mean that he abandons all notion of coherence. 'Congruities' and 'musical accordance' require a certain delicacy, 'a fine perception', in those who perceive them. They are intuited rather than devised; not categories the intellect imposes on the data it has gathered but a

[11] Pater, *Miscellaneous Studies*, *The Works of Walter Pater*, Vol. 8, 248.
[12] Pater, *Miscellaneous Studies*, *The Works of Walter Pater*, Vol. 8, 248.

harmony inherent within a complex system of relationship extending to the smallest, least considered part of it. The alternative to the systematising intellect, mapping out experience often in competition with other intellectual cartographers, is not a loose impressionism, touching only on particulars. What Pater recommends involves patience before cultures and their productions, a quietness and attention one would give to 'some delicate instrument on which an expert performer is playing' (116). Pater's analogy with the performance of music suggests a response to them as if they were works of art, with an expectation of pleasure and a sympathetic wish to appreciate what is beyond one's own capacity to create.

Pater's mention, at this point in 'Charles Lamb', of Montaigne and George Fox may be seen, partly, as a polemical device, analogous to the way in which Aristotle and Locke are evoked in 'The Child in the House'. By connecting it with established and respectable figures, Pater seeks to sustain an approach he recommends but about which he senses some of his readers may have concerns. It is generally accepted that it was Montaigne's doubts about the intellectual systems and language of his day, such as Aristotelian and scholastic philosophy, legal terminology, and the controversies of theologians that, in part, led to his development of the essay form. Montaigne's approach, of 'never judging system-wise of things, but fastening on particulars' (116), was a deliberate (and most would say a highly effective) response to an intellectual impasse. The modesty of Montaigne's stated intention was belied by the scale of his effect on the educated mind of his time. He taught his contemporaries new and subtler ways of thinking and feeling. As Pater put it, Montaigne, 'a casual writer for dreamy readers', was 'always giving the reader so much more than he seemed to propose' (116).

Pater's likening of Lamb's temper to that of the founder of Quakerism, George Fox, is equally significant. Fox's 'belief in the inward light' (116) was an intellectual and spiritual response to the elaborate (and bloodthirsty) theologies of the seventeenth century, which, in his view, delighted to judge and condemn. Illumination coming 'to one passive, even to the mere wayfarer, who will be sure at all events to lose no light which falls by the way' (116-117) was an alternative to a maze of acrid controversy, of shrill and futile argument.

Montaigne and Fox are not merely generally respected figures. They are individuals who had a profound effect on their own and subsequent times. Implicitly, Pater is claiming that, far from being ineffectual, an avoiding of the combative and judgemental, and a proceeding by quiet receptiveness might be widely influential. In 'Diaphaneite', Pater had been far more overt in condemning a 'violence, an impossibility about men who have ideas'. They were abstract fanatics who could not change society except by an 'unlovely straining from its true order'. By contrast, the receptive aesthete, appreciating the world around him, was a model for the future: 'A majority of such would be the regeneration of the world'.[13] In 'Charles Lamb', the claim is more circumspect and muted, but in recalling Montaigne and George Fox, Pater provides convincing instances of how such regeneration might work.

Lamb and his two exemplars have a philosophical as well as a moral significance. In Pater's view, Lamb, Montaigne, and Fox approach an understanding of the world through 'glimpses, suggestions, delightful half-apprehensions, profound thoughts of old philosophers, hints of the innermost reason in things, the full knowledge of which is held in reserve' (117). Here, what Pater advocates is a position of modified scepticism. Objective truth and meaning, external to the observer, do exist but, either through the limitations of our faculties or the given nature of the

[13] Pater, *Miscellaneous Studies*, *The Works of Walter Pater*, Vol. 8, 254.

universe itself, we are not able entirely to apprehend them. It is better to approach the 'innermost reason in things' gently and circuitously, being content with partial knowledge. We may be sure individual human life, general history, and the world of nature have meaning but our intimations of what lies behind the world of appearances must be momentary and imperfect. One cannot found a system on glimpses and suggestions but one may build a quiet, unassertive yet fulfilled life upon them. Man's past attempts at understanding the world ('profound thoughts of old philosophers') are valuable as means to sharpen our own perceptions rather than as systems into which experience may be tidied. Lacking the intellectual weight philosophical schemes supposedly possess, such an approach to truth may claim the freshness of discovery, and the teasing out of elusive meanings that makes thinking a pleasure ('delightful half-apprehensions'). The appeal of this approach explains the long success of the essay form, built as it is upon the 'varied stuff' (117) of impressions and recollecting.

In the course of a paragraph, Pater has given the appreciation stance a respectable intellectual ancestry in Montaigne and Fox, dispelling notions that appreciation is inevitably trivial, solipsistic, and incapable of producing serious effect on the minds of others. In fact appreciation is rooted in an attitude to the pursuit of truth which, well able to define and defend itself, has had beneficial cultural consequences.

Pater deals next with another charge brought against the kind of criticism he advocates, that it is excessively personal and impressionistic. Acknowledging no general theory, or being unwilling to discuss whatever intellectual scheme he tacitly embraces, the impressionistic critic can only offer his personal predilections, perhaps even his private whims and caprices. Some of Pater's contemporaries were happy enough with such a stance. A few years later, Anatole France declared that criticism was only a form of autobiography whose pretence of objectivity was the most fallacious of illusions and that 'the good critic is he who relates the adventures of his own soul among masterpieces'.[14]

Pater's handling of the role of personality in critical writing is more nuanced. In the 'Preface' to *The Renaissance*, he had firmly denied the value of abstract terms and universal formulae except as vehicles of 'suggestive and penetrating things said by the way'.[15] The fundamental question the critic should ask of any work of art was 'what effect does it produce on me?' In 'Charles Lamb', Pater modifies this stress on the personal. Lamb, the epitome of appreciative criticism, was indeed concerned primarily with his own personality and responses. For him, this concern was 'below all more superficial tendencies, the real motive in writing at all' (117). Such a need was not, as France was to suggest, the inevitable consequence of solipsism, of our being 'shut up in our own personality as if in a perpetual prison'.[16] Rather, it was the result of cultural and literary changes which had produced 'that intimacy, that modern subjectivity which may be called the *Montaignesque* element in literature' (117). Moreover, Lamb's concern with his own personality took the form of 'self-portraiture'. He wished to 'acquaint you with his likeness', indeed, but only 'indirectly'. 'Fuller revelations of his personality were always more or less reserved for himself and his friends' (117). As it appeared in his writings, personality was constructed out of the material of his emotions and responses, but these were mediated through a highly self-conscious process of selection and emphasis. In both life and art, Lamb adopted a

[14] Anatole France, *La Vie Littéraire*, 4 vols. 1888-1892, trans. A.W Evans, *On Life and Letters*, 2 vols. (London: The Bodley Head, 1923), Vol. 1, 7.
[15] Pater, *The Renaissance, The Works of Walter Pater*. Vol. 1, 7.
[16] France, *On Life and Letters*, Vol. 1, 8.

mode of artifice. Since friendship and communication counted 'for so much' with him, he was 'jealous of anything that might jar and disturb' them. Thus, he welcomed 'a little touch of the artificiality of play to sweeten the intercourse of actual life'. 'A sort of insincerity' had its part in social or written relations. The presentation of personality could never be confessional or self-indulgent. It was found to be a form of conscious art relying on a large measure of authorial self-knowledge. It is hardly necessary to dwell on the point that Pater's own guarded self-revelation, the presentation of his personality in 'imaginary portraits' and appreciations followed the method he attributed to Lamb. Here, as elsewhere in the essay, it is clear that in defending Lamb's approach he is justifying his own.

Modified by the writer's selection and emphasis, his presentation of personality depends also on the reader's capacity and effort. As in 'Style', Pater stresses the importance of a 'contention' between studious writer and painstaking audience. It is only the 'duly meditative reader' of Lamb (and Pater) who receives a 'very delicate and expressive portrait' (117) of them. The long sentence which that last phrase begins (117-118), adding aspects of Lamb's character together, gives an effect of layer upon layer of individual discoveries and insights, disparate, contradictory, and surprising. In capturing the facets of this contradictory personality, Pater evokes and imitates Lamb's own approach to old literature, preferring the 'sudden, surprised apprehension of beauties' (118) to generalisation, which often smoothes away oddity and contradiction. The method of appreciation involves 'the dextrous availing oneself of accident and circumstance in the prosecution of deeper lines of investigation' (118). As well as being circuitous, gentle and seemingly casual, it is also helpful to remember that truth is often caught on the wing in an unexpected revelation. Those who wear a heavy carapace of prescriptive theory lack the nimbleness to seize truth's sudden disclosures.

Pater's essay concludes by discussing Lamb's religious dimension, noticing, first, his love of 'household warmth', of the 'tempered atmosphere' a house acquires over time 'by men's living with them'. It was the 'yearning for mere warmth against him in another' which made him prefer the love of brother and sister to the '*passion of love*'. (The relevance of these comments to Pater's domestic and emotional life and to his close relationship with his own sisters is obvious). Beneath Lamb's 'subtle capacity for enjoying the more refined points of earth, of human relationship' (119) lay an ability to see the beauty or humour of 'what seemed common or threadbare'. His 'enthusiasm of discovery' (120) in the byways of old literature, for recalling obscure or half-forgotten figures or works, was underpinned by a love of 'what is accustomed in literature, connected thus with his close clinging to home' (120). It is interesting to compare the way in which Pater shows how Lamb's aesthetic curiosity was grounded in a love of the simple, domestic, and customary with a similar emphasis in the semi-autobiographical 'The Child in the House'. In the latter, Pater carefully pointed out that the aesthetic appetite was not a quest for the recherché but an instinct nurtured in the infant's first experience of the objects of home. Here, and in 'Charles Lamb', he is trying to ward off charges brought by Mallock and other critics, of exclusivity and a cultivated remoteness from ordinary feeling.

Lamb's (and Pater's) 'clinging to home and the earth' (120) was congruous with a 'love of the accustomed in religion'. There is a clear connection between this taste, which Pater approves in Lamb, and his own sedulous church attendance and sympathetic portrayal of the 'religion in Numa' in the opening chapter of *Marius the Epicurean*. In 'Charles Lamb' he seeks to give a temperamental bias intellectual backing. It is part of a wish running through the essay, to make Lamb's attitudes, which Pater shares, comprehensible and sympathetic, by relating them to well-

known and respected cultural, literary, or philosophical traditions. Earlier, he had sought to connect Lamb's distaste for abstract theorizing and for controversy, with the attitudes of Montaigne and George Fox. Here, he connects Lamb's 'old world sentiment' (120) in matters of religion with a view handed down through English culture. 'Based upon feelings of hope and awe' (120) rather than upon intellectual demonstration, this 'religion of men of letters' is the product of a culture rather than the conscious choice of an individual. Rather than a drama played out in the mind of a particular person, it is a 'high way of feeling' (120), a path well-marked over generations in a society, received 'on the authority of a long tradition'. It is a 'system of received sentiments and beliefs' linking itself over a long period 'in a thousand complex ways to the conditions of human life' (120). Such a connection for so long to the lives and experiences of so many is a test of value, if not of literal truth. 'Religion as understood by the soberer men of letters' (120), a humane and civilised heritage, augmented over the generations by 'Addison, Gray and Johnson; by Jane Austen and Thackeray', later gains significance from its central place in the culture and through the testimony of the fine minds who have found in it sources of beauty and meaning, 'no more questioned now than the feeling one keeps by one of the greatness - say! Of Shakespeare'.

Pater's definition of this religious sentiment as 'the solemn background' (121) to the 'nearer and more exciting objects' of 'immediate experience' recalls the account Pater was to give of the meaning and psychological effect of his own reverent agnosticism in 'Prosper Merimée' (1890): 'an atmosphere, hazy perhaps, yet with many secrets of soothing light and shade, associating more definite objects to each other by a perspective pleasant to the inward eye against a hopefully receding background'.[17] The sense of a background of suggestions, intimations, and emotional colourings makes one's life more stable and gives one's judgements balance.

At the heart of the religious attitude Pater attributes to Lamb, and which, in his later career, he himself adopted, was 'a profound quiet, that quiet which has in it a kind of sacramental efficacy' (121). What Pater envisages psychologically is analogous to the theological concept of Prevenient Grace, formulated by Augustine in answer to the teachings of Pelagius. Instead of regeneration through act of will, it proposes the '*opus operatum*', the self-fulfilling work by which the Act of Grace accomplishes itself in the responsive soul. This attitude, in which 'physical stillness' is no 'merely negative thing' (121) and quiet is a 'necessary atmosphere' provides the fundamental rationale of appreciation. If one believed, as Pater did, that passivity, calm, and inner quietude were the necessary conditions of a process, working 'almost without any cooperation of one's own, towards the assertion of a higher self', then combativeness, harsh judgements and controversy, would destroy what one most valued and hoped to achieve.

Most unusually in Pater's writings 'Charles Lamb' ends with a direct personal reminiscence. (It is difficult to remember another example of the kind). Pater recalls the fringes of London as Lamb knew them, at Enfield or Hampton, 'fields fresher and coming nearer to the town then' (122). These 'green places' in which Lamb and Pater himself played as children were 'tame enough' even 'humdrum' or 'dingy' but their 'suburban pastorals' (123) gathered a 'certain quality of grandeur from the background of the great city' and the 'portent of storm' in its changes of light. Interesting in itself, the imagery of this passage gains significance from parallels elsewhere in Pater's writings. It recalls the juxtaposition in 'The Child in the House' of the beautiful and the menacing in Florian's childhood. The 'high garden-wall, bright all summer-

[17] Pater, *The Works of Walter Pater*, Vol. 8, 15.

time with golden-red' is 'not far beyond the gloom and rumours of the town'.[18] In 'A Prince of Court Painters', the elegant figures 'playing the drawing room or garden comedy of life' in Watteau's paintings, do so against the background of an impending storm 'always brooding through the massy splendour of the trees'.[19] What these various images convey is a sense of beauty threatened, of the fragility of scenes of aesthetic delight. In each case, the threat comes from processes of historical change, from economic, social, or political movements which will sweep away private worlds of enjoyment. It is not possible to extrapolate a consistent political attitude from the three examples of the garden and the darkening sky. Watteau's aristocrats may be destined to destruction in the French revolution but Florian's garden or the suburban pastorals of London's green fringes are humble places, not the preserves of some elite. Pater is not concerned with the justice or necessity of historical processes but with the edge of poignance they give to the pleasure taken in those things they will devour. The last ingredient in appreciation as an art lies in the feeling that time may be running out, that every moment of delight is precious.

In 'Charles Lamb' Pater presents Lamb as an exemplary figure whose characteristics offer a pattern and a defence of appreciation. The essay's undermining of the status accorded to abstract ideas and 'great matters'; its questioning of the scale of values by which Lamb is placed as a minor or eccentric writer; the way in which Pater sets Lamb in an intellectual tradition descending from Montaigne and George Fox and establishes him as a crucial figure in changes of emotional tempo which produced the world inhabited by Pater and his readers; the treatment of Lamb's deeper sadness as central to his approach to the art of living, a view not all Pater's contemporaries accepted;[20] all these, and other insights and arguments of the essay are calculated to remove misunderstandings of appreciation, voiced by some of Pater's readers and sometimes still heard.

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[18] Pater, *Miscellaneous Studies*, Vol. 8, 176.
[19] Pater, *Imaginary Portraits*, 1887 rept. *The Works of Walter Pater*, Vol. 4, 32.
[20] It was rejected by Oscar Wilde for example. Oscar Wilde, signed notice, *Speaker*, 22 March 1890, *Walter Pater The Critical Heritage*, 235.

A Genetic, Epistemological Reading of the Lambs' *Tales from Shakespear* and Persian Folktales

By DAVOOD KHAZAIE and
MORTEZA KHOSRONEJAD

AMONG THE MAIN SOURCES FOR CHILDREN'S LITERATURE are folktales as well as classical works of literature. Of the first category, Sobhi's *Collection of Tales* is considered to be a classic in Iran. So is Grimms' *Fairy Tales* in Europe. Of the second category, we can think of works by Ferdowsi, Rumi, and Sa'di in Iran and Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Milton in England. The focal points in this study are Charles and Mary Lambs' *Tales from Shakespear* and Sobhi's *Tales*. The assumption is to demonstrate a theoretical, common track between the two.

The initial question is, 'How can we be sure that a text for children is verified as successful', or 'What are the characteristics of a successful text for children?'[1] Following these scholars, Khosronejad[2] – based on a Piagetian view – has analyzed 71 Persian folktales and based on this analysis, he believes that vacillation between centration and decentration is the main feature of these tales. He assumes that these folktales can be considered as successful texts for children because they have proved capable of establishing communication with children through centuries. To narrow the question further, it can be framed, 'How successful are Lambs' *Tales* as children's literature?' or 'How much can we find the features found in Persian folktales in Lambs' *Tales*?'

It seems useful to find some principles or rules which can direct children's literature writers or classical works rewriters. This directing finds shape in two categories. First, which classical works are more liable to be rewritten for children, and which rules should be taken into account in doing this task? The principal features governing this task should concur with some features of the audience. In other words, if the works are to communicate with the child, they should have something in common, or the works should meet some need in the child.

One of the theories of high concern to developmental psychology of the child, though being open to criticism in recent years, is still that of Jean Piaget (1896-1980) – the Swiss epistemologist – whose theory is well known as genetic epistemology. As Sinclair et al. assert, 'Piagetian epistemology is ''genetic'' - that is, in its theoretical construction, it uses data from child development'.[3] This theory treats the cognitive development of the child and explores the nature of knowledge through this medium. Centration and decentration, the central issues treated in this study, are the constructs coined by Piaget through which he explains the mechanisms of the child's cognitive development. According to Ginsburg and Opper, the 'Centration-Decentration' dimension embraces general patterns of thinking and is regarded as

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[1] C. S. Huck, *Literature for Children, Contemporary Criticism* (London: Routledge, 1993); Perry Nodelman, 'Pleasure and Genre: Speculations on the Characteristics of Children's Fiction', *Children's Literature* 28 (2000): 1-14; Aidan Chambers, 'The Reader in the Book', *Booktalk, Occasional Writing on Literature and Children* (London: Bodley Head, 1985) 24-58. These studies enumerate some features of the successful children's works.
[2] Morteza Khosronejad, *Innocence and Experience: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Children's Literature* (Tehran: Nashre Markaz, 2003).
[3] Hermine Sinclair et al., *Infants and Objects: The Creativity of Cognitive Development* (New York: Academic Press, 1989) 2.

the foundation of mind structures.[4] Centration means to be assimilated in one particular point of view and remain incognizant of others, while decentration denotes a thoroughly opposite trend.

The classic example of examining centration in children is Piaget's Three Mountains Task. In this task a model of three mountains is put in front of the child. Each mountain is identifiable from the others. There is snow on one, a cross on the other, and a house on the summit of the third. They are also roughly put in a triangular position. Some pictures taken previously show different perspectives. A doll is sometimes used in the experiment. The doll is put in different positions, and the child is asked to choose the picture which shows the doll's point of view. Preschool children mostly select the picture which is identical to their point of view, not the doll's. In other words, it seems that they cannot share others' perspectives.[5]

The selection of Lambs' *Tales*, from among all other rewritten tales based on Shakespeare, has been due to some reasons of which the main is that they have endured the test of time. As Cecil points out

> …the *Tales from Shakespear* achieved the status of a children's classic.... This is a little surprising; for the tales are told in a gentle undramatic manner, unlikely, one would have thought, to excite children in Lamb's day, let alone many years later.[6]

The role of the *Tales* in popularizing Shakespeare should not be overlooked. Though a tinge of exaggeration is seen in Thomson's view – as quoted by Coldwell – when he calls the *Tales* 'one of the most conspicuous landmarks in the history of the romantic movement', he is right in asserting that it was the 'first book which, appealing to a general audience and to a rising generation, made Shakespeare a familiar and popular author'.[7]

In their Preface to the *Tales*, Lambs identify two groups of audiences for the book: 'It has been wished to make these Tales easy reading for very young children. To the utmost of their ability the writers have constantly kept this in mind; ... For young ladies, too, it has been the intention chiefly to write'; because they add that girls were not permitted 'to look into this manly book' in their fathers' library as early as their brothers.[8] What is of paramount significance in this study is the first audience, that is, very young children.

Armstrong, in an introduction to the *Tales*, points out the afore-mentioned audience and remarks, 'The upper and lower age limits of the very young child have not been mathematically established, but it will probably be agreed that the child who has completed his or her seventh year has passed out of this category'.[9] With this in mind, it is useful to consider Piaget and the theory of cognitive development. Of the four major levels that Piaget considers for child's development, the second is called 'The preoperational thought period – about age 2 to age 7'.[10] This limitation – with minor hesitancy for the beginning of the period

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[4] Herbert Opper and Sylvia Ginsburg, *Piaget's Theory of Intellectual Development* (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1988).
[5] Helen Bee and Denise Boyd, *Life Span Development*, 3rd. ed. (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2002) 158.
[6] David Cecil, *A Portrait of Charles Lamb* (London: Constable, 1983) 127.
[7] Joan Coldwell, *Charles Lamb on Shakespeare* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1978) 15.
[8] Charles and Mary Lamb, preface, *Tales from Shakespear* (London: Collins, 1953) 11.
[9] Martin Armstrong, introduction, *Tales* 12.
[10] R. Murray Thomas, *Comparing Theories of Child Development* (Boston: Wadsworth, 1992) 290.

and with considering differentiation in tales for children of different ages – might actually be taken for Charles's 'very young children'.

The children in this period experience some thought inadequacies. The issue of centration-decentration turns out here. The child envisions a pivotal role in the universe for her/himself. S/he thinks that everything moves because of her/him. S/he centers her/himself in the world and only understands her/his own point of view and is incapable of looking at problems from other angles. That is to say, the child experiences egocentrism and cannot share others' perspectives. But in real life s/he is forced to decenter, or s/he would never be able to manage the problems s/he encounters. It is also necessary for her/him to look at a problem from different perspectives if s/he is to solve it. Communicating with others also necessitates understanding their points of view. So s/he must engage in the decentration process. But then again, after each decentration the child centers, but at a new level. This vacillation between centration and decentration is the foundation of cognitive development.

To discover whether there is a theoretical, common track between Lambs' *Tales from Shakespear* and Shobi's *Tales*, it is constructive to review the techniques of decentration, as enumerated and defined by Khosronejad, and then to examine Persian folktales for the use of similar techniques with those in Lambs' *Tales*. These techniques are: The Intrusion of the Narrator, Happy Ending, Exaggeration, Inversion, and Self-Revelation.[11]

Narrator's Intrusion refers to the technique used to form aesthetic distance between the audience, the narrator, and the text. Such a technique prevents the child from being completely absorbed by the text. The story usually tries to make the reader immersed in it and to influence her/him affectively. That is why the narrator always tries to use some techniques such as magic, speaking animals, animism, etc. Narrator's intrusion awakens the child from the magical dream of the tale and helps her/him activate her/his logic rather than yielding her/himself completely to the tale. Sometimes this technique is used more than once in one tale and with very brief sentences. One such example follows: 'The girl said, "OK, I'll climb the tree and wait till you go to town and return". She went up the tree and the boy set out. *Keep the girl up the tree and listen to fair games of the Fate*'.[12]

In Lambs' *Tales*, the same technique is used in some comedies such as *The Winter's Tale* (one time), *Much Ado About Nothing* (three times), *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (one time), *Cymbeline* (one time), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (two times), *The Comedy of Errors* (one time), and *Pericles***,** *Prince of Tyre* (five times). As an example, the following section can be given: '*It only remains to be told* that Dionysia, the wicked wife of Cleon, met with an end proportionate to her deserts'.[13] With respect to tragedies, only in *King Lear* (two times) we encounter the narrator: '*So we will leave this old king in the protection of his dutiful and loving child ... Let us return to say a word or two about those cruel daughters*'.[14]

Happy Ending, generally agreed to be a characteristic of the children's tales, is also treated as a decentring element. When the child listens to some tales with happy endings, s/he unconsciously knows about the ending and does not worry about it. So, s/he focuses her/his attention on the processes and adventures in the tale, rather than the ending and interacts with the work more logically than emotionally. In this way, the process of decentration which develops the cognitive structures is aroused.

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[11] Khosronejad 173-78.
[12] Sobhi (Fazlollah-e-Mohtadi), *Sobhi's Collection of Tales* (Tehran: Jami, 2001) ii.76.
[13] Lambs' *Tales*) 253.
[14] Ibid., 121.

Out of the 71 Persian tales studied, as Khosronejad points out, only two conclude unhappily.[15] In the case of Lambs' *Tales*, there are fourteen tales with happy endings, which are the comedies, and six with unhappy conclusions. The study discovers a new kind of happy ending in two comedies, and that is a kind of pre-cognizance about it, not encountered in Persian tales. The narrator reveals the end before coming to the end. This will underscore the effect of the technique because in the middle of action the audience is not kept in suspense any longer. In *As You Like It* we read, 'Ganymede, who well approved of this arrangement, said that if Orlando really loved Rosalind as well as he professed to do, he should have his wish; for on the morrow he would engage to make Rosalind appear in her own person, and also that Rosalind should be willing to marry Orlando',[16] and in *Twelfth Night; or, What You Will*, 'for, as will afterwards appear, Sebastian was also saved'.[17]

It should be mentioned that this kind of pre-cognizance is not confined to the comedies and their happy endings. In *Romeo and Juliet* and *Othello*, such a hint foreshadows the unhappy ending; 'This was but the beginning of the tragedy of this pair of star-crossed lovers',[18] or 'A good advice of Iago, if it had not been given for wicked purposes, which will after appear'.[19]

Another kind of pre-cognizance implemented in Lambs' *Tales* stimulates the audience's expectancy about the coming events. An example of this point is this phrase in the beginning of *Measure for Measure*, 'the saintly-seeming Angelo'.[20] The paradoxical and balanced structure of the phrase – with 'saintly' and 'Angelo' on two sides and the dubious word *seeming* in middle – invites the child's mind to expect something hideous to happen.

Exaggeration in Persian tales refers to magnifying some mean features of characters such as mind-stagnation and feeble-mindedness which is mostly tinged with satire. In *The Madding Crowd*, *Aunt Frog* and some other tales, there are shining examples of this technique presented very deftly. An episode from *The Madding Crowd* may suffice,

> Many men and women are there and there is a clamor of talks. Qobad [the protagonist] noticed a bride standing at a door. It was the bridegroom's house and the bride was to get in for the night of the wedding. She was too tall to pass the doorway. Some (those on the bride's side) say to demolish the upper frame of the door so that she can get in. Some others (those on the bridegroom's side) say, 'why to drop the door, behead the bride and let her in!'[21]

The 'black-white' or 'either-or' thinking as Khosronejad indicates, finds shape in its lowest and most exaggerated form in this scene.[22] The magnifying of such feeble-mindedness unconsciously works as a powerful shock and will make an enduring effect – possibly for ever – on the child's mind.

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[15] Khosronejad 174.
[16] Lambs' *Tales* 71.
[17] Ibid., 178.
[18] Ibid., 209.
[19] Ibid., 234.
[20] Ibid., 165.
[21] Sobhi ii. 196-97.
[22] 176.

In Lambs' *Tales*, exaggeration – in the sense used in Persian tales – is not evident, but is presented in another way. In Persian folktales exaggeration is seen in one episode of the tale or in one feature of the characters, not in the form of a process. But in *The Comedy of Errors* the tale is conceived with the problem of two identical twins in the outset, and this problem of identicalness grows slowly and the body of exaggeration is formed. The comedy of errors that occurs repeatedly swells and finds shape in the form of exaggeration as a process.

Inversion, as another technique, refers to attributing qualities to someone who is naturally and normally devoid of them. In some Persian tales like *The Lion-Hunter* and *The Old Fox*, the donkey, normally characterized as the symbol of idiocy, acts completely differently, that is, it cheats and saves others and even satirizes them with its witty remarks. In *The Lion-Hunter*, the donkey deceives its owner and goes to the woods. There it confronts a lion and after some interesting adventures, the lion escapes from the donkey – as the lion-hunter – and saves his own life. Such an inversion of characteristics is not found in Lambs' *Tales*.

Self-Revelation, though can be regarded as a branch of narrator's intrusion, refers to the processes, methods, and purposes of creating tales. This technique provides the reader with an outlook to comprehend the mechanisms of shaping tales consciously. Such a self-revelation is rarely used in Persian tales, and it is a complicated, very attractive, and influential technique to utilize. Sometimes the narrator uses a rhymed verse as wordplay in the end of some Persian tales. An instance of such a verse is reproduced herein – with some manipulation in translation, of course. The original version in transliteration reads as

Baalaa raftim, maast boud,
Ghesseye maa raast boud,
Payeen aamadim, dough boud,
Ghesseye maa dorough boud

And the English version reads as

We went up, all was milk,
The tale was only true,
We came down, all was cheese,
The tale was all untrue.

This utterance reminds the child of the imaginative and fanciful aspect of the tale and draws her/him out of the world of dreams. The rhyming structure itself sounds pleasant to the child.

This technique is also used in the beginning of the tale *The Prince and the Snake* and makes the audience aware of how the tale takes shape. The outset reminds us of the Prodigal Son in the Bible,

> A king had two sons. The people deprived his sons of kingship after his death and appointed someone else as the king. So, they divided the inheritance between themselves and tore apart. The older son lost everything in merriment in two or three years, but the younger went to another city and began to earn a living by purchasing and selling things and stored a lot of money. *Let him alone because no wonder is found in*

> *his story, but listen to the story of the older son.*[23]

The last sentence elucidates the way a tale is created. Without the presence of wonder, incognizance, mistake, or wrongdoing – or at least an element which is cognitively and behavioristically criticizable – no tale would come into existence.[24] The story 'Of Man's First disobedience, and the Fruit / Of that Forbidden Tree'[25] is no exception to this rule. Self-Revelation makes the child aware of the difference between the world of reality and that of the tale and develops her/his cognition.

It seems that in Lambs' *Tales* the technique of Self-Revelation is confined to *Much Ado About Nothin*g, *Cymbeline*, and *King Lear*, and the interesting point is that in all three it appears in the ending. One such example is '*and to complete the history*, Don John, the contriver of the villainy, was taken in his flight, and brought back to Messina …'.[26]

In *Cymbeline* and *King Lear* it can be supposed that even the kind of Self-Revelation is rather different because, after narrating what happens concisely, the narrator somehow ironically tells us that these happenings were not supposed to be told:

> How Cymbeline's wicked queen, through despair of bringing her projects to pass, and touched with remorse of conscience, sickened and died, having first lived to see her foolish son Cloten slain in a quarrel which he had provoked, *are events too tragical to interrupt this happy conclusion by more than merely touching upon. It is sufficient that all were made happy who were deserving …*[27]

The question of vacillation between centration and decentration should not be overlooked. In Persian folktales and Lambs' *Tales*, the characters vacillate between centration and decentration and this coming and going, which happens in a child's mind as well, develops the child's cognition and emotions. Any character who is incapable of decentring is doomed to defeat. With this background in mind, some spectacles of this vacillation in tales are provided.

In the tale *In Quest of Destiny*, a poor man in search of fortune gets to the wolf, the king, the fish, and the Destiny, respectively. All these characters except the Destiny have their own problems. The poor man is in search of fortune, the wolf suffers from a splitting headache, the king loses the battles, and the fish's nose itches constantly. They demand that he ask the Destiny about the solutions to their problems. He gets to the Destiny, who appears in the form of a gardener and shows a withered bush of flowers to him and tells him to water it and return. The man is not aware – and that is the outcome of his incapability of decentration – that this is the flowing of fortune toward him, not the fortune itself.[28] On the way back, he meets the foretold characters in reverse order. He tells the fish that there is a pearl in her/his nose and someone should get it out. The fish tells him to get it out and have it, but he says he has found his fortune and does not need the pearl. The king asks about the problem. He says that she is a girl in the disguise of a king and should get married if she is to win the battles. She asks him to marry her but he evades with the same excuse. Then he comes to the wolf and says that it

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[23] Sobhi i. 172.
[24] Khosronejad 178.
[25] John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, The Riverside Milton, ed. Roy Flannagan (Chicago: Houghton, 1998) I: 1-2.
[26] Lambs' (*Much Ado About Nothing*) 59.
[27] Ibid., 109.
[28] Khosronejad 195-96.

should eat the brain of an idiot man to cure the headache and relates what happened. The wolf who can decenter listens and then answers, 'Good, Wherefrom can I find someone more idiotic than you!'

This tale includes the dimensions of child's thinking which can be outlined in three categories: 'Centration-Decentration', 'Irreversibility-Reversibility', and 'Static-Dynamic'. Ginsburg and Opper refer to Piaget's conception of these aspects of thought as interdependent and write: 'If the child centers on the static aspects of a situation, he is unlikely to appreciate transformations. If he does not represent transformations, he is unlikely to reverse his thought. By decentring he comes to be aware of the transformations, which thus lead to reversibility in his thought'.[29] Therefore, the man focuses on the static situation of actions and cannot make a change in fixed schemes of his mind. In that case he is incapable of transformation, that is, a change in his fortune, and thinking of being king. The structures of his mind are irreversible, and thus he cannot decenter the situation. That is why he is doomed to defeat. *In Quest of Destiny* holds another feature, the route of the journey. The poor man goes to the Destiny and returns the same way. This going and coming acts as an effective impulse to the child's mind to improve the power of reversibility in pre-operational period.

Reversibility, by definition, is the capacity to execute the same action in both directions but being conscious that we are dealing with the same action.[30] The following example makes this point clear. Take three glass beakers, namely, A, B, and C. A, and B are both tall and identical, but C is wide and short. Now, pour the same amount of water in A and B and ask the child if the amount is the same. The answer is yes. If you pour the water from B into C and ask the same question about A and C, the answer will be no, and s/he mostly says that the water in A is more. In other words, s/he can only focus her/his attention on one static situation, height or width, not both of them simultaneously. Now pour the water from C into B again, that is the same action in reverse order and ask the same question. The answer is yes again. Pre-operational children cannot reverse the situation in their minds. After repeating this action – and if the child her/himself does it – s/he understands the state of reversibility and might be able to accommodate her/his mind. The same thing happens in the previous tale. Because of this process of irreversibility versus reversibility, the change in point of view is also included in the tale. If the man could make his dialogues with the characters reverse, he could decenter the situations and escape being torn apart by the wolf. Piaget's Three Mountains Task depicts the changes of point of view which are comparable to *In Quest of Destiny*.

As stated above, the child's thinking in pre-operational stage is affected by egocentrism. This egocentrism as Eysenck indicates, results in realism, animism, and artificialism.[31] By realism the child attributes physical existence to psychological events. Animism results in attribution of psychological qualities to physical objects and events; and the creation of physical objects and events by people is signified by artificialism. All these features find shape in Lambs' *Tales* and Persian folktales. In *Othello*, the Moor believes in Desdemona's infidelity. In *The Winter's Tale* the statue walks and speaks, and in *The Tempest*, Prospero is responsible for the events.

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[29] 155.

[30] A. M. Battro, *Piaget: Dictionary of Terms*, trans and ed. Elizabeth Ruetschi-Merrmann (New York: Pergamon Press, 1973).

[31] M. W. Eysenck, *A Handbook of Cognitive Psychology* (London: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1984) 236.

In *King Lear* centration is the source of all that happens; thus, Lear who is terribly egocentric cannot recognize the source of his older daughters' flattery. Cordelia experiences centration and decentration at the same time. She knows about her sisters' intentions and can look at events from their perspectives, but cannot or does not want to be like them and falls into centration of her mind. Kent, and the King of France are the two others capable of decentring in this scene. In the end when Lear kneels down before Cordelia, he turns to decentration and knows what he has done. The Fool is possibly the most decentring character. He follows Lear everywhere and mocks him for his centration. Goneril and Regan are also afflicted by centration in the end and face their deaths proportionately.

Antonio in the beginning of *Merchant of Venice* does not discern that Shylock is not making a sport, so he is in the state of centration. In the trial scene, Shylock – repeating 'A Daniel is come to judgment!' – is the character in the state of centration against Portia, who is capable of decentring. The vacillation between centration and decentration is apparent in this scene.

A new feature of centration-decentration in Lambs' *Tales* is the vacillation between grief and happiness. Cognitive structures, generally speaking, tend to do assimilation rather than accommodation because it is easier and more pleasurable for the mind. Happiness, in this sense, tends to capture mind structures easier than grief. The vacillation between the two, which is very comprehensively dealt with in some of Lambs' *Tales* like *The Winter's Tale*, *Merchant of Venice*, *As You Like it*, and *Pericles* can be counted as a rather new one. In some Persian tales like *Forty-Locks* or *Orange and Citron*, the audience also tends to vacillate between happiness and grief but more slightly.

Of other impulses for the improvement of irreversibility-reversibility state, much used in comedies, one can refer to disguises and death plays. In most of the happy ending tales the girls disguise themselves as boys and then appear in their original form. Such reversal in action – repeated on and on – influences the child's mind as an exercise in irreversibility-reversibility. The death-plays also work on the same principal. It is interesting to know that such disguises and death-plays appear in Persian tales as well, but with some differences. The ones who disguise themselves do not appear only in the form of boys or girls, but in shapes of animals, and other creatures as well and death – mostly in the form of murder – actually captures the hero/heroine but then the hero/heroine revives. This life-death-life cycle can be accounted as a presentation of irreversibility-reversibility experiment which also contains other domains of cognition.

In summary, this study demonstrates that all techniques of decentration in Persian folktales, except Inversion, are present in Lambs' comedies, signifying that rendering the comedies is more appropriate for children than the tragedies. The capability of Genetic Epistemology – Piaget's theory – in interpreting literature should not, therefore, be overlooked.

Thus the key to the immortality of Persian folktales and Lamb's *Tales* based on the findings of this study is their conformity to cognitive structures of the child's mind. These works also help genetic epistemologists and other scholars in related areas thread their way in the maze of the mind. They are, to borrow Charles and Mary's words, 'enrichers of the fancy, strengtheners of virtue, a withdrawing from all selfish and mercenary thoughts, a lesson of all sweet and honourable thoughts and actions, to teach courtesy, benignity, generosity, humanity'.[32]

[32] Lambs' *Tales* 17.

These tales from Persia mingled with those of the Bard were souvenirs of our research, but that is not all, since heard tales 'are sweet, but those unheard are sweeter'.

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Hazlitt's Mousetrap: A Reassessment of 'On the Pleasure of Hating'

By PHILIP CARDINALE

WILLIAM HAZLITT'S ESSAY 'ON THE PLEASURE OF HATING' became a weapon against him shortly after its publication. An anonymous reviewer of the 1826 *Plain Speaker*, in which this essay first appeared, called it 'worthless and degraded' and quoted from it at length to identify Hazlitt as its author and subsequently to disparage him.[1] A friendlier reviewer, Leigh Hunt, could only dismiss the essay as the venting of his colleague's 'spleen and impatience'.[2] More recent criticism has neglected this work or broadly echoed these responses. A 2001 *Times Literary Supplement* article entitled 'He Loved to Hate', for example, calls 'On the Pleasure of Hating' a 'miserably disillusioned article' that reveals how much Hazlitt 'enjoyed despising others'.[3] The following will suggest a different interpretation.

'On the Pleasure of Hating' closes with a sustained flurry of invective against a vast range of subjects, and in the final sentences the writer's hatred recoils, as he asks and answers a crucial question:[4]

> [H]ave I not reason to hate and to despise myself? Indeed I do; and chiefly for not having hated and despised the world enough∗ .

Here Hazlitt somewhat resembles Hamlet. Shakespeare's prince tries to reason himself into hatred and never quite manages it. Instead of becoming calculated and detached like Iago, Hamlet falls like Othello into a fury that quickly dissipates. Yet it is Hamlet's incapacity for sustained hate, and his flirtations with self-hatred instead, that arouse our pity. T.S. Eliot's Prufrock demurs, 'I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be', but the soliloquies of both reflect plights of sensitive people of feeling in worlds demanding less empathy. In this manner they parallel the dilemma of Hazlitt's speaker, whose justification of self-hate precisely because of his incapacity to act sufficiently hateful toward the world is perhaps, in essence, a wish that he were more ruthless. If he were, he could have easily trampled the spider that crosses through his study in the first sentence of the essay.

The 'web of human life' seen chaotically 'unravelling . . . into its various threads of meanness, spite, cowardice' *et cetera* in the flurry of invective in the final paragraph of 'On the

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[1] Anonymous, 'The Plain Speaker', *Monthly Review*, 3-2 (June, 1826) 113-22, 116; reprinted in J. Houck, *William Hazlitt: A Reference Guide* (Boston, 1977) 56.
[2] L. Hunt, 'Remarks Suggested by the Perusal of Mr. Hazlitt's *Plain Speaker*', *Companion* (12 March 1828) 113-28, 125; also Houck 60.
[3] A. Hayter, 'He Loved to Hate', *Times Literary Supplement*, 12 January 2001, 4-5, 4.
[4] W. Hazlitt, 'On the Pleasure of Hating', *The Selected Writings of William Hazlitt*, ed. D. Wu, 9 vols. (London, 1998) VIII.118-26, 126. Subsequent page numbers for this essay will be cited parenthetically.

Pleasure of Hating' (125) has an intrinsic relation to this web-spinning spider. But first to review: 'On the Pleasure of Hating' begins when Hazlitt sees a spider crossing his study but cannot bring himself to step on it. He feels hatred, yet cannot justify its 'practical exertion' (118). A hundred years earlier, he reflects, 'a child, a woman, a clown, or a moralist' would have readily crushed the spider (118). But he does not, even though he hates seeing it, and remarks that it will take 'another hundred years of fine writing and hard thinking' to remove this prejudice (118). Even then, however, Hazlitt recognises that the 'pleasure of hating' will persist, making religion into bigotry, patriotism into a pretext for war, and virtue into censoriousness (120), making us turn on our friends and then on ourselves, ultimately 'because pleasure asks a greater effort of the mind to support it than pain' (125).

Alethea Hayter observes: 'Hazlitt's essays sometimes end by fatiguing the reader by their persistent hard-hitting; it is like watching for too long a series of smashing unreturnable serves at Wimbledon'.[5] Indeed the reader may feel repelled at the series of hateful statements that conclude 'On the Pleasure of Hating', and can look up from the finale wondering whether the author has any hope in humanity whatsoever. In these circumstances it is easy to miss the asterisk attached to the final sentence—'Indeed I do; and chiefly for not having hated and despised the world enough'✳. Despite their peripheral appearance, this asterisk and its note are crucial to the argument. A clue: In the typography of 'On the Pleasure of Hating' in the *Plain Speaker*, this asterisk appears with eight prongs (✳), as opposed to the six-sided symbol (*) familiar to modern readers. Thus by an apt circumstance (most likely a coincidence) it visually resembles the spider that Hazlitt spots at the beginning of the essay, creeping on its eight legs across the page.

An indicator of how much this symbol and note have been overlooked is demonstrated by the *Oxford Book of Essays*, which has reprinted 'On the Pleasure of Hating' several times but (apparently due to an editorial decision) always suppressed its endnote.[6] This excision is repeated in the essay's only current hypertext version which, like the *Oxford Book*, is a place where first-time readers are likely to encounter the essay.[7] The omission obscures the significant way in which the spider in the essay's first sentence connects with the 'unravelling . . . web' in the finale. Hazlitt concludes his main body of text with an implicit question: Is there any redemption for humanity's hatred? His exposition hints at an answer, through the seemingly offhand comment that 'fine writing' will eventually teach men to pity spiders. Hazlitt does not develop this argument until the end of his essay, when his footnote allows the reader the false impression that it is a mere afterthought:

> * The only exception to the general drift of this Essay (and that is an exception in theory—I know of none in practice) is, that in reading we always take the right side, and make the case properly our own. Our imaginations are sufficiently excited, we have nothing to do with the matter but as a pure creation of the mind, and we therefore yield to the natural, unwarped impression of good and evil. Our own passions, interests, / and prejudices out of the question, or in an abstracted point of view, we judge fairly and

[5] Hayter, 'He Loved to Hate,' 4.
[6] J. Gross, ed., *The Oxford Book of* Essays (Oxford, 1991), re-issued as a paperback in '92 and '98. The excision of Hazlitt's note appears an editorial decision in this case since other essays retain their notes.
[7] See http://www.blupete.com/Literature/Essays/Hazlitt/Hating.htm.

> conscientiously; for conscience is nothing but the abstract idea of right and wrong. But no sooner have we to act or suffer, than the spirit of contradiction or some other demon comes into play, and there is an end of common sense or reason . . . .

The footnote undercuts the essay's ostensible point, redirecting final emphasis from the pleasure of hatred to its possible redemption in reading. Only in reading (and, presumably, writing) do our minds yield to 'the natural, unwarped impression of good and evil'. Viewed in this light, Hazlitt's essay becomes not so much about hatred, but about its antidote in literature. To prove his point he adds later in the note: 'On the stage, every one takes part with Othello against Iago' (126). One way that this allusion fits is that these Shakespearian characters evince a distinction between styles of hatred: intellectual versus emotional. Iago is impelled by a hatred that has transcended emotion and lodged in his mind. His actions are patient, calculated and self-loving. By contrast, those of Othello—who hates with his heart more than his head—are impatient, inspired and ultimately self-hating.

One gets the sense that Hazlitt might as well have directly invoked the play that Hamlet puts on for the King, since the idea that literature triggers conscience—or 'the abstract idea of right and wrong'—has its most famous expression there. ('The play's the thing, wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king', as Hamlet says.) Indeed, *Hamlet*'s play-within-a-play, which he mockingly titles 'The Mousetrap', is an important subtext. Hazlitt subtly echoes Shakespeare several times in this essay, and thrice returns to this section of *Hamlet*—in the first allusion, midway through the essay, saying that strong-willed people 'outdo termagant' (in the phrase of Shakespeare's Player with high dramatic ambitions) (120) and the second, toward the essay's end, in wondering whether there is something that could be thrown up 'as a perpetual barrier between mischance and me' (quoting the Player Queen) (125). A third *Hamlet* echo recalls the prince's discourse with Ophelia just before the players arrive.[8] The presence of these allusions argues for reading the footnote to 'On the Pleasure of Hating' as a planned extension of the essay rather than a peripheral aside.

This operation of the footnote is akin to the 'rub' in Hazlitt's self-hating 'To be or not to be' soliloquy. It is a remembrance that dramatically paralyses the sentiments above. Especially in Hazlitt's essay, the paralysis of physical hatred is its redemption. 'We give up the external demonstration, the *brute* violence', says Hazlitt when he lets the spider escape, even though he says, ' . . . we cannot part with the essence or principle of hostility' (118).

Four years prior to writing 'On the Pleasure of Hating', Hazlitt defended himself against the accusation that he 'hated everything' in his *Letter to William Gifford* of 1819:

> The affectation I have been accused of was merely my sometimes stating a thing in an extreme point of view for fear of not being understood; and my love of paradox may, I think, be accounted for from the necessity of counteracting the obstinacy of prejudice. If I have been led to carry a remark too far, it was because others would not allow it to have any force at all. My object was to shew the latent operation of some unsuspected principle, and I therefore took only some one view of that particular subject. I was chiefly anxious that the germ of thought should be true and original; that I should put others in

[8] 'This was some time a mystery: but the time gives evidence of it' (*Selected Writings*, 125 and n) echoes *Hamlet*, III.i.113-14.

> possession of common sense, and to have its excesses corrected by other causes… You reproach me with the cynical turn of many of my Essays, which are in fact prose-satires; but when you say I hate every thing but washer-women, you forget what you had before said that I was a great imitator of Addison, and wrote much about 'poetry and painting, and music and *gusto*'.[9]

This passage can serve as a blueprint for 'On the Pleasure of Hating'. There are four important points: (1) Hazlitt uses paradox as a device to counter 'the obstinacy of prejudice'. The essay on hating is rife with paradoxes, including one in the title and the final sentence. Man's hatred of spiders is labelled a 'prejudice', and superstition, a frequent source of prejudice, is similarly thematic. For this reason 'On the Pleasure of Hating' appears in the *Plain Speaker* under the heading, in large bold type, 'Essay XIII', an unlucky number to the superstitious. (2) Hazlitt can tend toward overstatement, and this leads to a discrepancy between his ostensible and real motives. (3) His overstatement is softened by understatement. In the case of the essay on hating it is a literal understatement. The 'germ' Hazlitt speaks of is allowed to rise on its own from a seed literally planted underneath the essay in the fine print of a footnote. (4) Finally, charged with 'hat[ing] every thing', Hazlitt responds that his essays 'are in fact prose-satires'. Not only is he 'a great imitator of Addison', but he is also close to the great prose satirist, Swift.

Swift's 1704 *Battle of the Books* may have influenced Hazlitt's use of the spider. Hazlitt acknowledges that his arachnid is 'of the same edifying breed' as one allegorised in Leigh Hunt's 'To a Spider Running Across a Room', [10] but it is not the same. Swift's essay offers an intriguing source for the symbol. The *Battle* satirically recounts a military exchange between the books of the ancients and the moderns 'fought last Friday in St James's Library'. The ancient poet is symbolised by the bee, who collects honey from wildflowers, and the modern poet is the spider, spewing out his excrement into silken webs he hangs in corners.[11] (The distinction parallels M.H. Abrams's mirror-and-lamp metaphors for Neo-Classical and Romantic writers; the former reflects sources outside itself, and the latter forges them within.[12]) Swift glosses portions of his *Battle* with several lines of asterisks per page, and leaves its outcome in doubt by ending it with an almost full page of asterisks. Swift's original edition printed these asterisks as five-sided stars, but the 1812 version of the *Battle* uses eight-legged asterisks (which seem to have been decidedly more common in the nineteenth century). This can give the impression of armies of spiders hobbling by, like the symbol at the end of 'On the Pleasure of Hating'.[13] Swift's use of this image seems to have been commonly known, and finds another close echo in Keats's letter to Reynolds of 19 February 1818.[14]

In terms of Hazlitt's philosophy, the essay on hatred has been described as a reversal. One critic writes:

> 'On the Pleasure of Hating' reverses the perspective on the power principle presented in

[9] Hazlitt, *Selected Writings*, V.358.
[10] 'To A Spider Running Across a Room', *The Liberal*, 3-2 (April 1823) 177-80; reprinted in Selected *Writings of Leigh Hunt*, ed. R. Morrison and M. Eberle-Sinatra (London, 2003) 159-61.
[11] See Jonathan Swift's *A Tale of a Tub* (London, 1812) 254-8.
[12] M.H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp* (New York, 1953).
[13] Compare Swift's *A Tale of a Tub* (London, 1704) 223-78 with *A Tale of a Tub* (London, 1812) 235-86.
[14] *John Keats*, Ed. E. Cook (Oxford, 1990) 378.

> the *Essay on the Principles of Human Action* . . . As self-love is capable of direction into benevolence in the *Essay*, the hatred of others is shown, conversely, to translate at last into self-hate. The reversal between the two visions, the first contained in his early writing, the second, in some of the last essays that Hazlitt wrote, could be treated, as he himself seems occasionally to treat it, as a chronological development, a progressively dawning realization culled from the experiences of his own life.[15]

Though written from a different perspective, this essay does not necessarily repudiate benevolence. If the qualifying footnote is considered, the essay can be thought of as a double feint, wherein Hazlitt turns full circle back to his original stance. It is significant that hatred ultimately becomes a vehicle for sympathy. Says Hazlitt: 'I have quarrelled with almost all my old friends (they might say this is owing to my bad temper), but they have also quarrelled with one another' (121). As R.L. Brett has noticed, hatred is 'not something which separates him from his fellows, but something which unites him to them'.[16]

One obstacle to viewing this essay as benevolent rather than misanthropic is that Hazlitt defines his argument that 'in reading we always take the right side' as a theoretical rather than a practical 'exception'. However, this statement is somewhat confounded in that Hazlitt follows it immediately with what seem to be practical exceptions: for example, audiences universally side with Othello against Iago, and all readers wish success to Jeanie Deans in Sir Walter Scott's *Heart of Mid-Lothian*. The dilemma is left to the reader to consider, as illustrated by the fact that Hazlitt's footnote ends on a question: 'Do young boys at school, in reading Homer, generally side with the Greeks or the Trojans?' Generally, he seems to be suggesting, children sympathise with the defensive party, but (unlike the other examples he cites) the sentiments are not presented as universal.

Another complication is that Hazlitt equates his hatred of old friends with old books. Like friends, beloved books lose their lustre and are laid aside, feared lest they be redefined when the owner returns to them. This statement, however, could be taken as not so much a critique of the act of reading as a critique of unvaried reading, or an endorsement of promiscuous reading. Additionally, despite finding no books that he does not weary of over time, Hazlitt significantly does find an artist and a painting that he can almost throw up as his 'perpetual barrier between mischance and me'. The artist is Titian, and the painting depicts a 'child, yet grown; with an air of rustic innocence and the graces of a princess' (124). She has bejewelled hair, an antique dress and a look of pleasure dimpled about her face.[17]

It was not unknown during this period for Hazlitt to allow his essays to digress into effusions on Sarah Walker,[18] the much younger woman whom he had courted in 1820-22 with disastrous results. Hazlitt recounted the failed courtship in *Liber Amoris*, a novel published in May 1823, just half a year before 'On the Pleasure of Hating' was written at Winterslow Hut in November/December 1823. In the intervening months Hazlitt had become the target for a firestorm of personal criticism.[19] The reaction to *Liber Amoris* had not only exposed him as the

[15] U. Natarajan, *Hazlitt and the Reach of Sense* (Oxford, 1998) 124-5.
[16] R.L. Brett, *William Hazlitt* (Essex, 1977) 35.
[17] The picture is Titian's *Portrait of a Lady in White* (1553, Dresden Gallery), and is viewable on the Internet at http://www.abcgallery.com/T/titian/titian100.html.
[18] See, for example, the 1822 manuscript of 'The Fight' in Hazlitt, *Selected Writings*, VII.250.
[19] Hazlitt, *Selected Writings*, VII.xiii-xviii.

book's anonymous author, but subjected his private life to public ridicule. The author's obsession with Sarah Walker continued as late as March 1823, when he recruited a friend to try to seduce her as a way of proving to himself that she was no longer interested in him.[20] Thus when Hazlitt wrote 'On the Pleasure of Hating', it is likely that this woman would still be in his thoughts—perhaps not so much as an object of hate but as someone he could not, despite his continuing humiliating experiences, hate. We cannot know what associations Titian portrait's had for Hazlitt, but the thought is tempting that (in an essay about frustrated hatred) he could have taken as his heroine against that principle an image that reminded him of this woman. A precedent exists in the opening lines of *Liber Amoris*, in which a portrait (which Sarah dismisses as looking nothing like her) becomes the emblem for his idealisation of her.[21] This is one of many ways in which the essay on hating aligns human and aesthetic sympathy.

Since the safeguard offered by the Titian image is offset by Hazlitt's assertion that the mind needs more effort to sustain ideas of pleasure than pain, the reader is left with an author at war with his 'old opinions'. 'I am heartily sick of them', writes Hazlitt, arguably just before reverting to them. It is important to remember in this essay that Hazlitt's hate never becomes detached or intellectual; it is always paralysed by sympathy. Furthermore, Hazlitt's essay can be seen as an effusion of the particular rhetorical type that he delineated four years earlier in the *Letter to William Gifford*. Disguised as a rant, it in fact masterfully positions the reader for the planned reversal.

This reversal plays upon the reader's predisposition toward footnotes, a predisposition that can itself be equated with the idea of 'prejudice' that is at the heart of Hazlitt's essay. Traditionally, and even more so in the modern reader's eyes, footnotes are tangential, supportive and often extraneous. Hazlitt's frustration of this expectation unifies his content and style. His dramatic employment of the footnote has an analogy, among other places, in Iago's speeches. Time after time, in advising Othello on how to love well, Iago's parting words contrarily and subtly encourage hate. Hazlitt, citing hatred's pleasure throughout the essay and then parting with a subtle encouragement toward benevolence, reverses Iago's technique.

This device has the rhetorical advantages of (1) recapturing the audience's attention by a sudden reversal, (2) maximising surprise by placing that reversal in conclusion, and (3) introducing confusion over the speaker's intent, which allows his reverse psychology unfettered play. It also forces the reader into a final state of introspection, and that seems to be the author's aim. As Hazlitt asserts in his letter to Gifford, he provides 'the germ of thought' and leaves his audience in the hope that they will correct his excesses. The footnote, it should be added here, in its idealised view of reading is arguably just as excessive as some of the overstatements in the body of text.

It is true that Hazlitt's writing is often venomous, but in claiming the pleasures of hatred the essay on hate instead subtly encourages reconciliation. It begins by complimenting Hunt, whom Hazlitt later describes as an old friend now distant (122). Mercy is shown to a spider. In another seemingly peripheral remark, Hazlitt says 'I must be friends with [Charles] Lamb again' (122). Hatred is overall presented as a communal bond, and Titian's painting arguably becomes an allegory of the author's incapacity for hating Sarah Walker. However, the plainest example of Hazlitt's latent 'germ' is his prediction in his opening paragraph that 'another hundred years of

[20] Hazlitt, *Selected Writings*, VII.11.
[21] Hazlitt, *Selected Writings*, VII.2, 7.

fine writing' will teach men to pity even spiders. In this statement the 'exception' that Hazlitt labels 'theoretical' in his footnote shows itself to actually be 'practical'. History has proven Hazlitt correct: Within a century man was largely cured of his prejudice that spiders are evil beings. Today 'a child, a woman, a clown, or a moralist' will just as soon pity the creature as step on it, and this is in great part due to 'fine writing'. A massively popular children's book such as E.B. White's *Charlotte's Web* (1952), or the comic hero Spider-Man, would have been unthinkable in Hazlitt's day, but no one bats an eye at them today. From the first sentence of Hazlitt's essay onward, the arachnid—in terms like those through which Swift presented the creature—is a form of muse. The author's pity for it becomes *de facto* a plea for pity toward himself, and reflects a part of himself that he ultimately can not trample. Hazlitt reflects in one of the article's key phrases, 'Nature seems (the more we look into it) made up of antipathies', and this essay is supremely antipathetic. Just like its author.

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Reviews

Wordsworth in American Literary Culture. Edited by Joel Pace and Matthew Scott. Foreword by Stephen Gill. Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. Pp. 248. ISBN: 1403 901 333. £45.

STEPHEN GILL IN HIS FOREWORD TO THIS BOOK draws a nostalgic picture of the 'one small table' in the then Dove Cottage Library in the 1960s which he shared with scholars from both sides of the Atlantic. A little later and in a much more modest capacity I too found myself at that table with W.J.B. Owen on one side of me and Karl Ketcham on the other, all of us peering at one of Wordsworth's illegible words in the margin, in that terrible handwriting that Lamb said had 'deoculated' Mary and Dorothy, his much more comprehensible scribes. Where indeed would Wordsworth studies have been without the 'Anglo-American collaboration' in devoted editorial and critical labours, culminating in the wonderful Cornell Edition? There can be no doubt of Wordsworth's debt to American scholarship but this interesting book redresses the balance and explores what Wordsworth gave to 'nineteenth-century America'. The editors affirm that this cannot be confined only to 'literary influence' but must also involve 'exploring the larger historical and socio-political significance of Wordsworth's legacy'.

The eleven distinguished contributors to the book illustrate this by the fascinating variety of their viewpoints. The first, Susan Manning, explores briefly the nature of 'influence' and suggests a preference for 'meshing systems' rather than 'hierarchical' ones before illustrating 'the possibilities for specificity offered by stylistic analysis'. In passing, she makes the useful distinction between 'influence or confluence' and stresses the idea of what the editors call 'a horizontal motion of influence as it moves transatlantically and transnationally by bridging the Atlantic'. She starts from a comparison of quotations from *Tintern Abbey* and Margaret Fuller's *Summer on the Lakes* and widens out by reference to a variety of other writers of both nationalities.

Richard Gravil, founding Editor of *Symbiosis*, examines the development of James Fenimore Cooper's character, Natty Bumppo, in his various manifestations, over the sequence of novels between 1823 and 1843, relating it to the change in the reputation and influence of Wordsworth over that period.

Bruce Graver shows how Whittier shares both Wordsworth's appreciation of landscape, in this case of New England, and his social conscience. As Wordsworth does in 'Michael', Whittier laments the sorrows of the dispossessed, here in the shape of the indigenous American Indians, while appreciating their failure in the treatment of women similar to that shown in 'Ruth', 'The Thorn', or 'The Mad Mother'. The use of Indian names and, in the requiem of Weetamo, even the 'refrain in the Pennacook tongue' emphasizes the guilt of the conqueror and the loss of 'a state of Nature we will never see again, and where we do find it, we must work to preserve it'.

Joel Pace demonstrates how a study of Wordsworth's influence is complicated, as the Editorial Introduction puts it, by 'directly opposed American interpretation of his poetry' particularly, but not only, in relation to 'racist fears' and racial guilt. The examination of works by Hawthorne, Poe, Chopin, Cable, and Chesnutt in illustration of his thesis is interesting but he sums up by acknowledging what the reader has already concluded. 'As Wordsworth's conventions are taken up by a transatlantic conversation that redefines them with every repetition, there comes a point when they are, arguably, no longer identifiably Wordsworthian'.

In an interesting and unusual study of the mutual respect between Wordsworth in later life and Bishop Doane, 'the second Episcopalian Bishop of New Jersey (consecrated 1832)' Adam Potkay includes the relationships between them and Wordsworth's American editor, Henry Reed. The

Ecclesiastical Sonnets, including those of 1842 on 'Aspects of Christianity in America' are, I think, little read now but it is in the note to these that Wordsworth mentions Doane and Reed and Bishop White, who is the subject of the Ecclesiastical Sonnet XV and whom Potkay describes as 'the chief architect of the Protestant Episcopal Church in America'. 'While Theodore Parker and his Boston circle', Potkay says, 'saw in the older (indeed post-1807) Wordsworth effeminacy and decline, Wordsworth's career was viewed as perfectly integrated, and integrally High Church, by Bishop Doane and his Delaware valley friend … Henry Reed'. In a time when an approximation to the Boston view is generally accepted, it is refreshing to reconsider an alternative picture. What Wordsworth wanted to preserve was 'the bonds that hold people, a Church, and a language together'. Potkay shows how Emerson uses 'Wordsworth's isolated line – "A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn" – to conjure a preference for a polytheistic sense of nature over a Christian one, and a properly Transcendentalist sense of nature over a polytheist one'. On which Potkay comments, 'Wordsworth was rarely so programmatic, and was certainly not so here'. Such downright comment surely deserves a cheer.

The essay goes on to show how Doane and Reed emphasized the importance of childhood upbringing and companionship in marriage with respect for the woman's part in it, as demonstrated by Wordsworth, whom Reed called the poet of 'homely life and household affections', Doane quoting 'To a Skylark', 'True to the kindred points of Heaven and Home'. Potkay ends with Reed's comparison of Wordsworth's poetry over his lifetime to 'a gothic cathedral' appropriate to 'the High Church image of Wordsworth … as an important aspect of what nineteenth-century Anglo-American continuities could mean outside Massachusetts…'.

Lance Newman starts from the success of the 1835 publication in America of *Yarrow Revisited and Other Poems* and, two years later, of Wordsworth's *Complete Works*, so that 'By 1840, Emerson was able to declare that "the fame of Wordsworth is a leading fact in modern literature"'. In this case it is not so much religion that feels his influence as politics. It has been for so long the received opinion that Wordsworth in later life betrayed his youthful idealism that it is difficult for the modern readers to see him otherwise. As Newman says, 'For since Percy Bysshe Shelley so forcefully claimed that in becoming the Poet of Nature, Wordsworth abandoned his duties as the Prophet of Democracy', it has been difficult to see that many of his readers felt that these two roles were cognate. In fact, many of New England's bourgeois radicals in the 1830s felt that 'the turn to nature was a turn to the people'. At a time when in the U.S. 'Class conflict, sometimes violent, had become an inescapable new reality', Wordsworth seemed to offer a means of reconciliation and democracy: 'restorative contact with the eternities reflected in nature makes possible "a noble and a true generosity" towards humanity' which 'teaches us to sympathize, and therefore to be democratic'. As Emerson put it, 'Let our affection flow out to our fellows: it would operate in a day the greatest of all revolutions'. (It would indeed – but one would have first to change human nature.) Against this background Newman sets Thoreau who 'for the first decade of his adult life' … 'thought of himself mainly as a practising poet'. 'During this time, his primary model, the main poet he emulated and against whom he rebelled, was Wordsworth'.

Newman ends with the publication of *The Prelude* in 1850 and the influence his reading of it may have had on Thoreau's rewriting of his prose masterpiece *Walden*, 'From early 1852 to 1854'. 'The rewritten book amounts to an aestheticist manifesto, an extravagantly confident paeon to the power of the creative, self-reliant individual to inspire organic, wholesale social change'.

Karen Karbisner, under the neat title 'Intimations of Imitation', examines Whitman. Despite his 'attempts to disregard or quietly discourage comparisons between himself and Wordsworth', perhaps due to his disapproval of 'the American public's fondness for British literature' which he saw as preserving the interests of the colonial tyrants, 'the commonalities between them have continued to

intrigue scholars'. In particular, here, she quotes Whitman's 'A Child at the Tomb' which the editors describe as 'a cleverly altered prose transcription of Wordworth's "We are Seven"'. She leaves us pondering with Tony Tanner, whom she quotes, 'that "Song of Myself" seems to have much in common with *The Prelude*'.

Richard Brantley explores the ambivalent nature of Emily Dickinson's use of her 'Romantic Heritage', including the legacy of Wordsworth, particularly in the 'creative tension' of 'the split between science and religion' or 'between nature and spirit'.

Elizabeth Fay traces in *Lyrical Ballads* and particularly in Wordsworth's Prefaces to them the language and ideals of Arthurian chivalry and honour, which through a sequence of subsequent literary and artistic developments led to the work of Edwin Austin Abbey and the Boston Public Library murals.

In a fascinating study James A. Butler demonstrates the shared qualities of Wordsworth's outlook and Owen Wister's in *The Virginian*. It is particularly gratifying to read of Channing's theory of education being influenced by 'Wordsworth's impassioned call for national education in Book IX of *The Excursion*', for which enlightened sentiments he has surely not been given due credit in this country. Butler says Wister was able to 're-imagine in American terms three great (and related) themes of British Romanticism: (1) the importance of the feelings and language of common people; (2) the opposition of nature to civilization; and (3) the revolutionary hopes for a new Eden, for a recovered paradise'.

Finally, Matthew Scott tackles the profound problem of human suffering and the failure of mankind's imagination to comprehend the suffering of others, as Susan Sontag discusses in her essay on the subject. Scott asks, 'What can we do when faced with a verbal or visual image that is affective and yet whose portrayed suffering we can do nothing to alleviate?' In answer, Scott refers us to the Wordsworthian forms of 'wonder' which is 'very much a curative emotion promoting reflection upon the human condition and upon man's situation in relation to a world that he cannot hope completely to understand'. Like John Stuart Mill, William James found consolation in reading Dante and Wordsworth and spoke of 'the extraordinary tonic and consoling power of their verse'. The essay ends with a consideration of Geoffrey Hartman's statement that 'the more successful an expanding sensibility becomes, the more evidence we find of actual insensibility'. For example, we watch television images of suffering with 'a mixture of shock and diversion that prevents emotional involvement'. In our Anglo-American society 'there are questions about the limits of sympathy that were raised by a young English poet two centuries earlier in a different political climate. They have failed to go away'.

This book is surely a rich feast of depth and variety which should expand our horizons as we contemplate 'Wordsworth in American Literary Culture' as well as in his home country.

Sevenoaks, Kent

Society Notes and News from Members

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

At Home with Charles and Mary Lamb

The first day conference to be devoted to the Lambs for many years was held under the auspices of the Department of English at Oxford University on Saturday 11 November in the august surroundings of Christ Church. The Society was a sponsor of the event, in which some 35 academics and Elians took part.

Proceedings were opened by the Society's vice-chairman, Professor Duncan Wu, who welcomed all conferees and extolled the virtues of belonging to the Society! Ten papers were delivered, grouped into four Panels on the themes: Friendly Conversation; Performance and Style; Elia and the Periodical; and Lives and Afterlives.

Ivan Wise, editor of *The Shavian* (the journal of the Shaw Society), examined Lamb's attitude to and practice of friendship; how his lack of any malice enabled him to get away with much ridicule; the crucial importance of his friends in his unusual family circumstances; his paradoxical complaints of sometimes having too many social calls; his regret at the loss of friends to marriage, parenthood and death. Katy Beavers of the University of Greenwich provided a comparison of the ways in which Lamb and Coleridge responded to the extraordinary political context in which they found themselves as young men, as revealed in the two friends' correspondence.

After the Remembrance Day silence and coffee in the McKenna Room, surrounded by chiefly ecclesiastical portraits, we moved on to the second theme of Performance and Style. Jim Davis, Professor of Theatre Studies at Warwick University, demonstrated that early nineteenth century theatre criticism was characterised by nostalgia, laughter and sociability – all very Elian. Davis focused on Lamb's writings on the comic actor, Joseph Munden. In Lamb's fictitious autobiography of Liston published in *The London Magazine* in January 1825, followed by the spurious letter from Munden objecting to his own life being so treated, Lamb was going beyond anything produced at the time by Hazlitt or Leigh Hunt; in a sense Lamb was *performing* or *embodying* Munden. Alistair Heys illustrated by reference to Walton's *The Compleat Angler* the way in which Lamb hovers on the boundary between liking simplicity and avoiding over-simplicity. Of *The Compleat Angler* (he owned the 1760 edition) Lamb said 'the dialogue is very simple, full of pastoral beauties' and he once likened reading it to reading parts of *The Excursion*. Lamb's affectionate portrait of his father included calling him 'a brother of the angle and just such a man as Mr Isaac Walton loved to go fishing with', yet Lamb was perhaps mildly uncomfortable with the sport, referring to anglers as 'those patient tyrants' and 'cool devils'.

The morning closed with a paper from Sara Lodge of the University of St Andrews on Lamb and the pun. Hood said that 'some of Lamb's puns contained the germ of whole essays' and punning became a central activity among the circle of *London Magazine* contributors. None the less, the pun was always considered a low form of humour and associated with the lower middle classes. Lamb's puns often perched on the brink between pleasure and embarrassment, between wit and excess.

Understanding the contest over the nature of the pun that had raged in Augustan critical circles helps to appreciate what Lamb, J.H. Reynolds and Hood were doing in their celebration of word-play. For Lamb, the worst puns are best; it is the flaw within the pun that makes it work for us.

A very splendid buffet lunch (excellent sausages, devils on horseback, exquisite sandwiches, etc., etc.) – such as Lamb would have revelled in – was provided by the Christ Church kitchens. Then our attention turned to Lamb and the Periodical, with an opening paper by Jane Aaron, Professor of English at the University of Glamorgan and author of *A Double Singleness: Gender and the Writings of Charles and Mary Lamb* (OUP, 1991). In this she re-examined the essay, 'Imperfect Sympathies', and corrected her 1991 published suggestion that there is an element of racism in Lamb. There is an obvious disparity between the claimed attitude of the author of the essay as ambiguous or hesitant in his opinions and the bigotry towards Jews, Negroes and Quakers which follows. As the very title of the essay confesses, irony in Lamb's highly developed form is at work here.

With papers on 'The Power of Prosaic Dreams: Elia and the Metropolitan Self' given by Simon Hull of Bristol University and 'Flying Words and Scraps of Sentences: Lamb's Conversation and Magazine Style' by David Stewart of Glasgow University we were plunged into the magazine culture of the 1820s. Hull asked whether Lamb is absorbed by the *London Magazine* context or whether he appropriates it as his own, and argued for the latter. Stewart drew out Lamb's cleverness and awareness of this culture and the way in which his magazine writing is informed (perhaps haunted) by his very personal conversational style.

Our final theme after tea saw Kathy Watson, author of *The Devil Kissed Her: The Story of Mary Lamb* (Bloomsbury, 2004) describe her struggle to 'see' Mary Lamb when writing her book. From a euphemistic account of Mary (from an English teacher at the age of 11) onwards , the author had to contest with a succession of barriers: the lack of information on Mary's early life, the silence over her illness, the chivalrous protections erected round her by friends, the lack of information on her asylum, and, most seriously, the 'twinning view' of her life: seeing it as inseparable from that of her brother. Mary needed to be shown as, above all, a writer. *Mrs Leicester's School* is, essentially, her story. Charles saw the relationship as 'a double singleness'; Mary herself did not. Finally, Felicity James of Oxford University, placed Lamb's essay *The Convalescent* published in the London Magazine in 1825 with Virgina Woolf's essay *On Being Ill* written almost exactly one hundred years later and published in T.S. Eliot's *New Criterion* in 1926. The former had been written during an attack of nervous fever as Lamb was adjusting to his retirement from the East India office; Woolf's piece was also written in difficult circumstances as she struggled with great anxieties and the task of completing *To the Lighthouse*. The two used the experience of illness in similar fashion. Woolf paid explicit tribute to Lamb in her comment on a third essayist, Beerbohm, that he shows the 'spirit of personality' in his essays, which she says 'had been in exile since the death of Charles Lamb'.

Closing words from Tim Milnes of the University of Edinburgh rounded off the conference. A wine and cake reception followed in the Bayne Room of Christ Church, the cakes having been home-baked by Felicity James! Many thanks to her and Tim Milnes for jointly organising a very well arranged and most enjoyable event.

Cecilia and Nick Powell

Oxford in the Vacation

'Only in Christ Church reverend quadrangle I can be content to pass for nothing short of a Seraphic Doctor,' asserts Elia in 'Oxford in the Vacation'. Despite Lamb's own affections really being more Cantabrigian, there was therefore something fitting about celebrating *At Home with Charles and Mary Lamb* in that quadrangle. The seminar was intended to celebrate the steadily growing resurgence of critical interest in the Lambs, thanks to the dedicated work of Lamb scholars and of the Charles Lamb Society and *Bulletin*. The success of the Hazlitt Day Schools prompted us to organise a similar gathering to allow graduate students, researchers, academics and Elians to exchange ideas. In a series of excellent papers and discussions the Lambs were remembered in all sorts of contexts, as radicals, readers, and writers. The theme of sociable creativity and familiar conversation which our speakers illuminated in the Lambs' work was in turn, we think, embodied by the fruitful discussion during the day. We were delighted to have so many enthusiastic participants making long journeys to converge on Christ Church, bringing such a wide range of interests and approaches to the subject. One of the most rewarding aspects of the seminar was the broad range of interests and approaches to the subject brought by all our participants, who responded to the talks with insights on, to name but a few, Charles's time at Christ's Hospital; his reading of Cowper; and Mary's narratives in *Mrs. Leicester's School*. We would like to thank the Charles Lamb Society for their very generous support of the event and hope it may happen again.

Felicity James and Tim Milnes

To the Editor

When I took my October *Bulletin* from its envelope I thought I must be dreaming! Please may I thank you for organizing this too flattering issue and also the distinguished contributors for agreeing to appear in it. I don't feel I deserve it but I am both touched and grateful. The Charles Lamb Society has meant a great deal to me over many years and still does. Thank you all.

Mary Wedd