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Editorial

All of the papers published in this issue of the *Bulletin* were originally delivered as papers, and it is with pleasure that we make them permanently available here. David Chandler's 'A Sign's Progress: Lamb on Hogarth' provided one of the main attractions of the 1994-5 season of Charles Lamb lectures at the Mary Ward Centre. On that memorable occasion large crowds of Elians thronged the building to hear him discourse on a subject that brings together art theory and literary studies. Aveek Sen's paper on Keats and Fuseli also discusses literature and the visual arts; Aveek will be known to Elians as the second recipient of the Charles Lamb Bursary to attend the Wordsworth Summer Conference in 1994. His paper was greeted with much acclaim in Grasmere, and it provides us with a preview of his larger study of Keats - we wish him well with it. His interest in 'enargia' (see pages 74 and 82) is shared by Richard W. Clancey. Dick's paper on 'Michael' was one of the highlights of the Wordsworth Winter School in February 1995, and it appears here in revised form. In typically incisive fashion, Dick analyses the rhetoric of Wordsworth's great poem, and in doing so takes us to its heart.

Another of our contributors, Michael Bauman, known to Elians through his articles on Southey in this journal, has just published *God and Man: Perpectives on Christianity in the 20th Century*. This fascinating collection of essays (which includes a contribution by a former Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher) addresses itself to the relationship between God and man during the last 95 years. Anyone wishing to obtain a copy of this stimulating volume should write to the Hillsdale College Press, Hillsdale, Michigan 49242, USA.

Readers with access to the Internet may be interested to hear of a project by an Elian at Oxford, Michael Laplace-Sinatra. Michael is about to start *Romanticism on the Net*, a new journal published not on paper but on ether. As he remarks: 'It is similar to a conventional journal in offering articles and reviews but the limitless amount of space on the Internet allows the editor to advertise other journals or conferences, as well as graduate courses, or offer some links to other Romantic-related sites on the World Wide Web, such as the on-line database of Romantic Poetry'. Contributors and anyone wishing to know more about this project can contact Michael at St Catherine's College, Oxford OX1 3UJ. Web users can find *Romanticism on the Net* at http://sable.ox.ac.uk/~scat0385 - and it's pleasing to be able to report that, among the other journals mentioned there, you'll find news of the *Bulletin*.

A Sign's Progress: Lamb on Hogarth[1]

By DAVID CHANDLER

'ONE OF THE EARLIEST and noblest enjoyments I had when a boy', Lamb wrote in 1811, 'was in the contemplation of . . . prints by Hogarth'. That had been at Blakesware. As the years passed his enthusiasm for Hogarth did not diminish; later in life Lamb reserved what he called his 'best room' for his 'choice collection of the works of Hogarth'.[2] The quotation with which I began this article is the opening of Lamb's most extensive critical treatment of Hogarth, 'On the Genius and Character of Hogarth; With some Remarks on a Passage in the Writings of the Late Mr. Barry', published in Leigh Hunt's *Reflector* in 1811.[3] Although the essay is partly an engaging account of Lamb's personal enthusiasm for Hogarth it also contains a revealing (though scattered and disorganized) account of the *method* Lamb deemed appropriate for appreciating Hogarth. This method deserves detailed critical attention, even though it has been afforded little in the past; it is the purpose of this article to supply the deficiency. In the first section I consider a recent critical summary of the essay by Elinor Shaffer while demonstrating how Lamb considers Hogarth's art in its relation to the 'real' world. In the second section I present a detailed account of Lamb's critical method. In the third and fourth sections I introduce and apply what I believe to be a helpful and revealing parallel in the linguistic philosophy of Condillac. In the fifth and final section I use Derrida's explication of inherent problems in Condillac's philosophy as a basis for considering parallel problems in Lamb's essay.

I

The most recent, and most serious, critical discussion of Lamb's essay on Hogarth has been that of Elinor Shaffer.[4] Arguing that Lamb's essay is a 'defense of the low' - which it indubitably is - Shaffer offers the following explanation:

> The defense of the low is not simply an argument on behalf of the merits of a particular artist [i.e. Hogarth], nor even simply an argument for a broader range of acceptable content, it is an important step in the Romantic case for the breaking down of the whole classification system and the new consideration of painting as non-mimetic. . . . Vulgarity lay not in the artist who depicted a certain class of subject but in taking that

[1] This article is based on aspects of a lecture that I read to the Charles Lamb Society on 3 December 1994. I am grateful to the Society for the privilege of being able to lecture on that occasion and to have my work discussed. I am indebted to Professor Hans Aarsleff of Princeton University for locating the 'château' passage in Condillac and to Mr Laurent Langlade of Bordeaux University who assisted with the translations from Condillac's French.

[2] *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb* ed. Edwin W. Marrs, Jr. (3 vols., Ithaca, NY, 1975-8) (hereafter Marrs), iii. 35.

[3] I have used the text of the essay in E. V. Lucas's edition of the *Miscellaneous Prose* (London, 1912) (*The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, Vol.1), pp. 81-101 (hereafter Lamb, 'Hogarth'). Page references in my text refer to this edition.

[4] 'Illusion and Imagination: Derrida's Parergon and Coleridge's Aid to Reflection. Revisionary readings of Kantian formalist aesthetics' in *Aesthetic Illusion: Theoretical and Historical Approaches* ed. Frederick Burwick and Walter Pape (Berlin, 1990), pp. 138-57 (hereafter Shaffer). This is not primarily a study of Lamb's essay. Further discussion of Lamb's essay can be found in Bill Ruddick, 'Artist or Novelist? Lamb, Hazlitt and the Nineteenth-Century Response to Hogarth', *CLB* NS 61 (1988) 145-55, and in *Lamb as Critic* ed. Roy Park (London, 1980), pp. 29-32.

description literally and making moral judgments upon what was depicted as if it were real.[5]

This explanation, I believe, is somewhat misleading. Indeed I would venture to suggest that Shaffer's explanation of the 'non-mimetic' aspect of Lamb's criticism in many ways inverts his argument: no close reading of his essay should overlook the fact that Lamb himself, with clear pedagogical intent, *does*, to a very large extent, in considering Hogarth's work, 'tak[e] the description literally and mak[e] moral judgements upon what was depicted as if it were real':

> . . . there is scarce one of [Hogarth's] pieces where vice is most strongly satirised, in which some figure is not introduced upon which the moral eye may rest satisfied; a face that indicates goodness, or perhaps mere good humouredness and carelessness of mind . . . yet enough to give a relaxation to the frowning brow of satire, and keep the general air from tainting.[6]

Interpreting these figures where 'the moral eye may rest satisfied' forms a major - indeed *the* major - theme of Lamb's essay. And Lamb's moral judgements are certainly predicated on experience of a 'real' world outside the picture. How could his description of the 'inimitable' *Election Entertainment* be considered in any other light?:

> Something of a riotous spirit to be sure is there, some wordly-mindedness in some of the faces, a Doddingtonian smoothness which does not promise any superfluous degree of sincerity in the fine gentleman who has been the occasion of calling so much good company together: but is not the general cast of expression in the faces, of the good sort? do they not seem cut out of the *good old rock*, substantial English honesty? would one fear treachery among characters of their expression?[7]

Lamb's questions, of course, presuppose that Hogarth's art is representing 'real' human nature, so that we can make the same sort of moral judgements about his painted characters as we would about their real life counterparts. Consider also his judgment of Reynolds' *Repose in Egypt* [?*The Rest on the Flight into Egypt*]: '. . . for a Madonna he [Reynolds] has substituted a sleepy, insensible, unmotherly girl, one so little worthy to have been selected as the Mother of the Saviour, that she seems to have neither heart nor feeling to entitle her to become a mother at all'.[8]

We can pursue this further and find that Lamb is not only prepared to 'mak[e] moral judgments upon what was depicted as if it were real', but to trace 'vulgarity' back to the artist. For the most part, as in the above example, he is prepared to defend the moral tone of Hogarth's art, but not on every occasion. Thus he condemned *The Four Stages of Cruelty* as 'mere worthless caricaturas', and his explanation is revealing: they were, Lamb argues, 'the offspring of his [Hogarth's] fancy in some wayward humour':[9] 'vulgarity' does lie with the artist. Similarly, in commenting on the '*Strolling Players*' (presumably *Strolling Actresses Dressing in a Barn*) Lamb remarks, with no suggestion of irony, that 'we [the spectators]

[5] Shaffer 140.
[6] Lamb, 'Hogarth' 97.
[7] Lamb, 'Hogarth' 99.
[8] Lamb, 'Hogarth' 88n.
[9] Lamb, 'Hogarth' 97.

have a right to feel disgusted'.[10] None of this is to say, however, that Lamb treated Hogarth's art as mimetic, even though he regarded it as closely related to 'real' life. As David Bindman has recently expressed the problems we face in dealing with Hogarth:

> . . . the reality we take for granted in Hogarth's paintings is . . . a creation of his own mind. . . . However there is . . . a problem with painting, for it does have, particularly in the hands of a master like Hogarth, the ability to persuade us that we are looking at a representation of real events, and that conviction can survive a full examination of the artifices used to achieve the final result.[11]

To complete this section, Shaffer's incomplete account of the question of 'vulgarity' stems from her seizing on a detail of Lamb's essay and treating it, out of context, as representative of the whole. Lamb undertook to describe 'one little circumstance' that reveals Hogarth's 'poetical and almost prophetical conception'[12] in *Gin Lane*.[13] This is the depiction, in the distance, of a gap in a wall, through which 'are seen three figures, which appear to make a part in some funeral procession which is passing by on the other side of the wall, out of the sphere of the composition.' Lamb compares this with Shakespeare's 'description of the painting of the Trojan War' in *Lucrece*, where curtailed representation again left something for the spectator's imagination to complete.[14] Lamb comments: 'This he [Shakespeare] well calls *imaginary work*, where the spectator must meet the artist in his conceptions half way'. Lamb does not make this 'little circumstance' in any sense the crux of Hogarth's design, nor does he claim that Hogarth often uses the device, but Shaffer, determined - for reasons that are not wholly clear - to relate Lamb's essay to Kant's concept of the 'parergon' ('ornament'), seizes on this detail: 'For Lamb . . . the true subject [of *Gin Lane*] was the "*imaginary work*"'.[15] This comes, I believe, close to perceptive accuracy, but it is misleading in its implication that the unrepresented displaces the represented to make the moral questions raised by the latter irrelevant. This is not the case. Lamb discovered the 'true subject' inscribed within *all* the representational codes of the painting: 'Every thing in the print . . . *tells*'.[16] In the remaining sections of this article I want to explore further Lamb's stress on the importance of the spectator's involvement, to argue that the subject is more complex than Shaffer's treatment suggests, and to show the importance of the unavoidable moral question.

II

One of the most striking features of Lamb's essay on Hogarth is its warning against taking a 'superficial' view of Hogarth's works. The 'superficial' view does, Lamb concedes, generally produce a negative impression. *Gin Lane* will 'disgust upon a superficial view'; similarly, with the final plate of *A Harlot's Progress*, 'a superficial inspection [will] provoke to laughter'.[17] Lamb insists that we take time over this art, then 'a very different frame of mind' will succeed. Commenting on the *Election Entertainment* he urges 'let a person look

[10] Lamb, 'Hogarth' 90n.
[11] *Hogarth* (London, 1981) (hereafter Bindman), p. 73
[12] Lamb, 'Hogarth' 86.
[13] See Plate 2.
[14] *Lucrece* 1422-8.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Lamb, 'Hogarth' 85.
[17] Lamb, 'Hogarth' 84-5.

till he be saturated';[18] on the penultimate scene in *A Rake's Progress*, 'Here is matter for the mind of the beholder to feed on for the hour together'.[19] We need to take time because of the sheer range of detail; Hogarth 'could crowd . . . into one small canvas . . . many diverse yet co-operating materials'.[20] And every detail is significant: 'tables, and chairs, and joint-stools in Hogarth, are living and significant things'.[21] Thus Lamb urges - and his descriptions of Hogarth's prints necessarily support this - that we initially approach one of Hogarth's pictures not as a 'whole', but as a succession of details to be independently evaluated. These details certainly seem to be evaluated initially in terms of their representational aspect, their ability to evoke 'real' human life; Lamb then brings his knowledge of the latter to evaluate the 'character' (or 'meaning') of the representation (admitting that not everybody will approach Hogarth with the same 'habit of mind'[22]):

> The conceited, long-backed Sign-painter, that with all the self-applause of a Raphael or Correggio . . . is contemplating the picture of a bottle which he is drawing from an actual bottle that hangs beside him, in the print of *Beer Street*,[23] - while we smile at the enormity of the self delusion, can we help loving the good humour and self-complacency of the fellow? would we willingly wake him from his dream?[24]

This decomposition of the aesthetic whole into a series of independent (human and non-human) signifiers allows Lamb to establish the main premise of his essay: we are to 'read' Hogarth's prints as we would a book: 'His [Hogarth's] graphic representations are indeed books: they have the teeming, fruitful, suggestive meaning of *words*. Other pictures we look at, - his prints we read'.[25] Thus Lamb's insistence that we take time over Hogarth is not an appeal for prolonged, passive contemplation (that we might give a Rothko, for example), but for an active analysis, one that crucially deprives the art work of simultaneity and confers on it successiveness. Although Lamb does make some rather superficial comparisons between Hogarth and Poussin, Reynolds, and Raphael (in each case urging Hogarth's superiority), his positive comparisons are with writers: with Juvenal, Shakespeare, Chaucer, Fielding, Sterne and Smollett. As with a literary work, the 'whole' of a Hogarth picture can only be grasped when we have 'read' it through. Having decomposed it, we can then recompose it, relating each detail to other details and establishing what Lamb calls the '*ruling character*'.[26]

The '*ruling character*' in Hogarth, Lamb shows, is almost invariably synthetic; indeed this is precisely what he admires. It is synthetic because, as noted already, Hogarth combines 'so many diverse yet co-operating materials':

> It is the force of these kindly admixtures, which assimilates the scenes of Hogarth . . . to the drama of real life, where no such thing as pure tragedy is to be found; but merriment and infelicity, ponderous crime and feather-light vanity, like twiformed births,

[18] Lamb, 'Hogarth' 98.
[19] Lamb, 'Hogarth' 87.
[20] Lamb, 'Hogarth' 90.
[21] Lamb, 'Hogarth' 98-9.
[22] Lamb, 'Hogarth' 84.
[23] See Plate 1.
[24] Lamb, 'Hogarth' 100.
[25] Lamb, 'Hogarth' 82.
[26] Ibid.

Plate 1: Beer Street

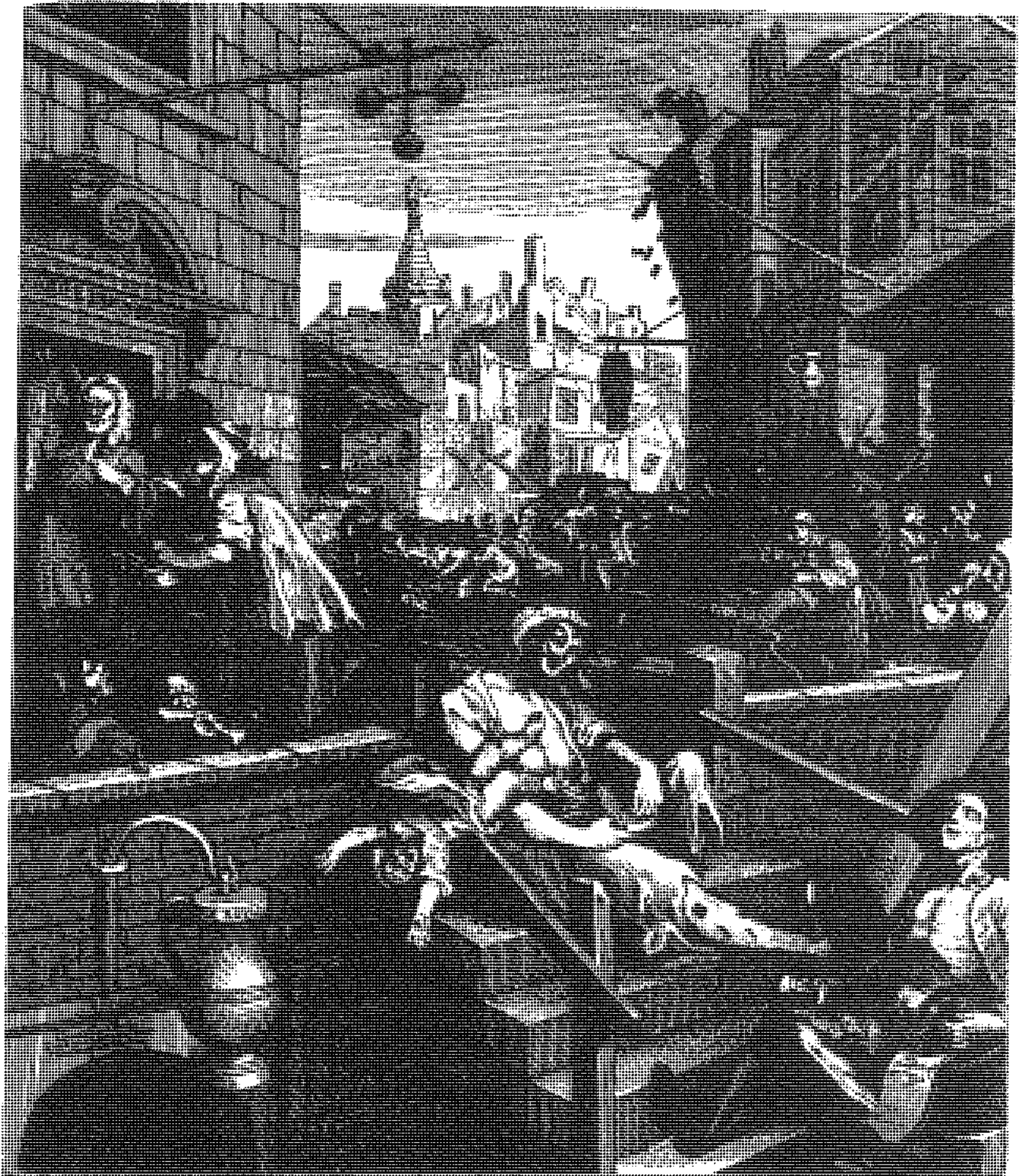

Plate 2: Gin Lane

> disagreeing complexions of one intertexture, perpetually unite to shew forth motley spectacles to the world.[27]

These 'disagreeing complexions of one intertexture' should, according to Lamb, finally resolve themselves into a moral 'whole', 'a general feeling which remains, after the individual faces have ceased to act sensibly on his [the spectator's] mind'.[28] This 'general feeling' should be 'a *kindly one in favour of* [our] *species*', although Lamb admits that this is not always the case:

> I say not that all the ridiculous subjects of Hogarth have necessarily something in them to make us like them; some are indifferent to us, some in their natures repulsive, and only made interesting by the wonderful skill and truth to nature in the painter; but I contend that there is in most of them that sprinkling of the better nature, which, like holy water, chases away and disperses the contagion of the bad.[29]

As an example of this 'sprinkling of the better nature', Lamb describes 'the mild, supplicating posture of patient Poverty in the poor woman that is persuading the pawnbroker to accept her clothes in pledge'[30] in *Gin Lane*, the 'lowest of [Hogarth's] subjects'.[31] This character, Lamb argues, 'keep[s] the general air from tainting', and he adds, 'A little does it, a little of the *good* nature overpowers a world of *bad*'.[32] It is ultimately this, rather than the '*imaginary work*', that allows Lamb to approve this particular picture. The example of *Gin Lane* is an interesting one, as Lamb's 'reading' of the print drastically de-contextualises it and hardly appears to have been the 'reading' intended by Hogarth. *Gin Lane* was, as one commentator has put it, a 'political print supporting a ministerial measure against the unlimited sale of gin'[33] - Hogarth wanted to show just how much the air had 'tainted'.

In discussing *Gin Lane*, Lamb refers to the 'imagination' the print exhibits: 'that power which draws all things to one, - which makes things animate and inanimate, beings with their attributes, subjects and their accessories, take one colour, and serve to one effect'.[34] It is thus the artist's imagination that organizes the details, the 'disagreeing complexions of one intertexture', into a coherent, improving, moral 'whole' - one that produces a residual 'general feeling'. This omnipresent spirit Lamb also calls 'thought':

> Hogarth's mind was eminently reflective; and, as it has been well observed of Shakspeare [*sic*], that he has transfused his own poetical character into the persons of his drama (they are all more or less *poets*) Hogarth has impressed a *thinking character* upon the persons of his canvas. This remark must not be taken universally. . . . But I think it will be found to be true of the generality of his countenances.[35]

'Imagination' and 'thought' are thus closely related in Lamb's 'Essay', and are what he bases his 'defense of the low' on. It is, Lamb argues, 'the quantity of thought' that can 'level the

[27] Lamb, 'Hogarth' 89.
[28] Lamb, 'Hogarth' 99.
[29] Lamb, 'Hogarth' 100-1.
[30] Lamb, 'Hogarth' 97.
[31] Lamb, 'Hogarth' 85.
[32] Lamb, 'Hogarth' 97.
[33] Joseph Burke and Colin Caldwell, *Hogarth: The Complete Engravings* (London, 1968), note to plates 221-2.
[34] Lamb, 'Hogarth' 85.
[35] Lamb, 'Hogarth' 90-1.

distinction' between 'high' and 'low' art.[36] In other words, interpreting the artist's controlling, synthesising, moral vision should be the basis of aesthetic judgements. The picture becomes a 'moral emblem'.[37]

III

In his posthumous *Logique* (1781), the French philosopher Étienne Bonnot de Condillac (1715-80) made a more general statement of the distinction Lamb made between a superficial, 'overall' view of Hogarth, and an analytical, decompositional one: 'Un premier coup-d'œil ne donne point d'idée des choses qu'on voit'.[38] Imagine, says Condillac, arriving by night at 'un château qui domine sur une campagne vaste, abondante, où la nature s'est plue à répandre la variété, et où l'art a su profiter des situations pour les varier et embellir encore.'[39] The following morning the windows (shutters) are briefly opened to admit a view of the landscape. That first glimpse, argues Condillac, 'ne suffit pas pour nous faire connoître cette campagne, c'est-à-dire, pour nous faire démêler les objets qu'elle renferme'.[40] Indeed even if we viewed it as a 'multitude d'objets différens' all day, we would still have got no further. We must decompose:

> Pour avoir une connoissance de cette campagne, il ne suffit donc pas de la voir toute à-la-fois; il en faut voir chaque partie l'une après l'autre; et, au lieu de tout embrasser d'un coup-d'œil, il faut arrêter ses regards successivement d'un objet sur un objet. Voilà ce que la nature nous apprend à tous.[41]

But this is only half the story: 'nou ne décomposons que pour recomposer'.[42] The eye takes in a series of separate impressions, but the mind organizes them into a coherent 'whole', in effect a mental model of the landscape. The mind, as Condillac puts it, can see more than the eye, and he draws a distinction between what we perceive and what we see.

The mind can see more because it creates language: 'L'analyse ne se fait et ne peut se faire qu'avec des signes' and, again, 'Nous ne pouvons analyser que par le moyen d'un langage'.[43] Condillac stresses that 'nous ne pensons qu'avec le secours des mots'.[44]

[36] Lamb, 'Hogarth' 87.

[37] Lamb, 'Hogarth' 84.

[38] 'The first glimpse does not provide an idea of things one sees'. There is no modern translation of *La Logique*, so I use the French text with a literal English translation in the notes. The text of *La Logique* is taken from *Oeuvres philosophiques de Condillac* ed. Georges le Roy (3 vols., Paris, 1947-51), ii. (hereafter *Condillac*). References to this edition are given in the notes; here p. 374. The ideas discussed here were not new in *La Logique* and can be traced back to Condillac's *Essai sur l'origine des connoissances humaines* (1746); I have used *La Logique* because of the exemplary status of the 'château'/'fenêtres' example, and because Coleridge owned it (see note 16, below). For a valuable discussion of Condillac's importance in the history of the philosophy of language see Hans Aarsleff, *From Locke to Saussure* (London, 1982) (hereafter Aarsleff).

[39] 'a castle overlooking a vast, abundant plain, where nature has lavishly spread variety, and where art could take advantage of circumstances to add to variety and embellishment' (ibid.).

[40] 'is not enough to make us know the country scene, that is, to disentangle all the objects to be found in it' (*Condillac* 375).

[41] 'To acquire knowledge of this country scene, therefore, it is not enough to see it all at once; one has to see every part one after another, and instead of encompassing everything in one glance, one should look successively from one object to another. This is what nature teaches everybody' (ibid.).

[42] 'we decompose only in order to recompose' (*Condillac* 376).

[43] 'Analysis can be done only with signs', and 'Analysis is made possible only with language' (*Condillac* 398, 396).

[44] 'we can think only with the help of words' (*Condillac* 396).

Thought and language developed hand in hand and 'l'art de raisonner se réduit a une langue bien faite'.[45] This is because primitive man's first view of the world corresponded to the momentary view from the château: a chaos of individual objects. Only when he had started to classify these into certain general classes with denominating signs - Condillac takes the example of 'tree' - could he order his ideas:

> . . . former une classe de certains objets, ce n'est autre chose que donner un même nom à tous ceux que nous jugeons semblables; et quand de cette classe nous en formons deux ou davantage, nous ne faisons encore autre chose que choisir de nouveaux noms, pour distinguer des objets que nous jugeons différens. C'est uniquement par cet artifice que nous mettons de l'ordre dans nos idées . . .[46]

By extension, we name not only the classes of objects, but the qualities that define them. Decomposition - analytical thought - is thus crucially dependent on signs, and these signs, being classifying terms, are necessarily abstract.

IV

Condillac's account of the decomposition / recomposition by which we make sense of the world provides a useful paradigm against which to consider Lamb's approach to Hogarth.[47] In particular, I think, it goes some way towards explaining Lamb's central metaphor - that Hogarth's pictures are 'books', with 'the teeming, fruitful, suggestive meaning of *words*'. In Lamb, as in Condillac, the unwinding of the simultaneity of the picture (or view) into the successiveness of language (a notion that was one of Condillac's most important contributions to eighteenth-century thought),[48] is a necessary step towards freeing it from the confusion of unanalysed perception. Only with the move into language can classification begin, or, conversely, as soon as we classify what we see, we use language. In Lamb's treatment of Hogarth this is primarily a moral classification, the analysis of virtue and vice necessarily drawing on abstract general categories - categories that, as suggested above, Lamb implicitly expects the viewer to be equipped with from his/her experience of life. It is noteworthy that Lamb nowhere in the 'Essay' discusses the formal aspect of Hogarth's work. He is only interested in the *theme*; the unity he praises is not a formal, but a thematic one, and a 'theme' in this sense demands an abstraction that is already essentially linguistic.

One of the most revealing aspects of Lamb's 'Essay' is his argument that Hogarth's works, *in themselves*, anticipate this movement into abstraction: 'The faces of Hogarth have not a

[45] 'the art of thinking can be reduced to a well made language' (*Condillac* 401).

[46] 'Forming a class of certain objects is tantamount to giving the same name to all those we deem to be similar; and when, from this class, we made up two or more, we merely choose different names for objects we look upon as different. It is only through this artifice that we order our ideas . . .' (*Condillac* 380).

[47] I am not claiming that Lamb was directly influenced by Condillac, but the latter's ideas were 'in the air', and Lamb was probably aware of at least as much as I have summarized here. Coleridge planned 'Condillac - & a philosophical examination of *his* Logic' as part of his 'Organum verè Organum'; *The Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* ed. E. L. Griggs (6 vols., Oxford, 1956-71) (hereafter Griggs), ii. 947. He owned *La Logique* (Griggs ii. 1139). Intriguingly, his copy was in Lamb's possession for a while, for on 28 May 1803 we find Lamb writing to Coleridge: 'I have booked off your watch . . . and with it Condillac and all other books of yours which were left here' (Marrs ii. 113). Whether Lamb looked into the volume or not, he can be assumed to have gained some idea of its contents from Coleridge's conversation. For a discussion of Wordsworth's relationship to Condillac's ideas, see Hans Aarsleff, 'Wordsworth, Language, and Romanticism', *Essays in Criticism* 30 (1980) 215-26, reprinted Aarsleff 372-81.

[48] For a discussion of this see Aarsleff 157-8.

mere momentary interest . . . they are permanent abiding ideas. Not the sports of nature, but her necessary eternal classes'.[49] It is here, most crucially in Lamb's argument, that 'the spectator must meet the artist in his conceptions half way'. It is not so much that 'the spectator' brings an imaginative supplement to the work, as in Shaffer's argument, rather he/she must recognize that the picture itself occupies a mid-space between 'reality' and 'meaning', an imaginary space where reality becomes meaningful and meaning becomes reality. When Lamb refers to the 'conceited, long-backed Sign-painter' he is treating the visual unit not wholly unlike Saussure's linguistic sign, the *signifié* being 'conceit', the *signifiant* the represented sign-painter.

Needless to say, this is a significant departure from eighteenth-century approaches to Hogarth, here described by Bindman:

> We find, particularly in the eighteenth century, that the assumption is made almost universally that most of the characters in Hogarth had a real prototype, that each setting was precisely observed from a particular episode in his life, and one frequently encounters in memoirs and biographies people who have claimed for instance to have witnessed the Tavern Scene in *The Rake's Progress* when one prostitute spits in the other's eye across the table, or to have visited the very room in which the young couple are sitting in the second episode of the *Marriage-a-la-Mode*.[50]

Thus we might say that the eighteenth-century mimetic model could be represented thus:

Reality ⊖ Representation ⊖ Reality,

while Lamb's non-mimetic model is:

Reality ⊖ Representation ⊖ Meaning.

The *dominant* movement here is left to right, thus it can be seen how in Lamb's model both reality and representation become steadily effaced. The represented sign-painter in *Beer Street* obviously refers back to a 'real' world of sign-painters, as well as to a class imposed on that world of people whose most striking characteristic is conceit. But successive considerations of the picture make it first increasingly irrelevant that the sign-painter is *a* sign-painter, then increasingly irrelevant that 'he' is represented at all. This is because, as in Condillac, the sign (no pun intended) takes over; the abstract quality 'conceit' displaces the representation which had already displaced an unorganized 'reality'. But the process does not stop there. Other parts of the picture have been reduced to other abstract signs, and these in turn are then reduced, as we have seen, to a 'general feeling', in which 'conceit' itself is displaced by (ideally) 'a *kindly* [feeling] *in favour of* [our] *species*'. On the other hand, this 'general feeling' can be, as Lamb says, 'disgust'. Clearly the determining factor is the artist's imagination, the faculty by which the artist imposes a moral unity on the diverse materials of life.

V

In his discussion of Condillac, *L'archéologie du frivole* (1973), Derrida demonstrates that Condillac's concept of the imagination provides the most problematic aspect of his

[49] Lamb, 'Hogarth' 90.

[50] Bindman 73.

philosophy.[51] Condillac himself admitted to using the word in two different senses. On one hand, in Derrida's words, 'imagination is purely *reproductive*, it "retraces" the perceived':[52] that is, it produces a mental image of 'the lost object of perception'.[53] On the other hand, imagination is a '*productive* force'[54] because in creating the sign it creates something new. And it is 'between the two senses of the word *imagination*', in Derrida's summing up, that 'all the problems are spread out'.

There is not space here to treat *L'archéologie du frivole* in any sort of depth, but Derrida's conclusions are relevant to our discussion and can be summarized. Derrida shows that in Condillac's account of human development, the sign 'is never (*posited*) at the beginning',[55] there is always an age before the sign, an age, moreover, when human beings functioned successfully. 'Practical knowledge', therefore, 'does not need signs'. Condillac, of course, can offer no explanation of why humankind first needed to adopt the sign, having managed perfectly well without it, except that it is teleologically apparent that they must have done so. And to Derrida this is precisely the point and the paradox: 'the possibility of the arbitrary sign governs, but from its end, the totality of the progress'.[56] In setting out to trace the 'natural' development of man's thinking, Condillac is forced to root history in nature:

> Apparently, everything returns to a theory of genius. The advent of a new science depends on the stroke of genius, and of an individual genius. Genius's essential quality seems to be imagination. But imagination only invents what it must in order to follow nature's dictate and to know which way to begin.[57]

So imagination makes language (makes history) possible, but is itself natural. It is here that the two senses of the word become problematic. Condillac would like to have made it faithful to nature (definition one), and making language, explaining history (definition two). But the very fact that this led him to two different concepts of imagination indicates the *aporia* in his argument. And in practice, according to Derrida, Condillac always aligns himself with the arbitrary sign in its freedom from nature:

> From the outset . . . the whole process is magnetized toward the greatest *mastery* possible, that is, the institution of arbitrary signs which are entirely at our *disposal* or *control*. Let us follow the progress of repetition which assures passing from perception to imagination and from one sign to the other: it is on the march toward freedom . . . . The sign's active essence, its energy, is freedom.[58]

To Condillac this freedom, though necessary, had proved troublesome. To him all 'bad' metaphysics was the result of 'bad' language: the misuse of signs. As soon as humankind began to think in signs they were liable to err. What Condillac would *like* to think is that if man had been faithful to the dictates of nature, nature itself would have led him to a 'good' sign system, therefore to a 'good' metaphysics. Human beings went astray when they abused

[51] Translated and introduced by John P. Leavey Jr. as *The Archeology of the Frivolous* (Lincoln, Nebraska and London, 1980) (hereafter Derrida). Translation and page references are to this edition.

[52] Derrida 76.

[53] Derrida 71.

[54] Derrida 76.

[55] Derrida 95.

[56] Derrida 112.

[57] Derrida 63.

[58] Derrida 110.

the freedom allowed them by the sign. Thus Condillac's texts return restlessly to the question of origins, seeking to restore a natural progress that had unnaturally gone wrong.

In Lamb's account of Hogarth similar tensions are at work. Lamb's view of Hogarth's imagination, as we have seen, introduces complications that parallel those of Condillac's imagination. Hogarth is both faithful to nature, and freely creative, unconstrained by nature. But, ideally, Lamb would like to think, nature itself led Hogarth to this freedom and thus the freedom itself is natural - an extension of, not a departure from, nature. Hogarth's art is not frivolous, it reproduces nature's 'necessary eternal classes'. The viewer too is expected to be faithful to this version of the origin of the visual sign, recognizing that the sign's status is between 'reality' and (moral) 'meaning', and interpreting it with a proper view to (Lamb's idea of) Hogarth's (assumed) intention. The viewer thus completes a movement that, faithful to nature, also ensures the 'mastery' of the human mind over nature.

The fact that this does not happen, that even intelligent viewers like James Barry[59] persist in perverse, irresponsible 'interpretation' is the main burden of Lamb's essay, indeed, it seems, its raison d'être. False interpretation is something like Condillac's false metaphysics. By abusing the sign it contaminates the sign's origin in nature. Lamb, like Condillac, has to go back to first principles, inscribing interpretation in nature; he evokes a stage where 'reading' can begin, where the picture is first reduced to signs. It is not surprising to find that the following statement by Barry offended Lamb the most:

> . . . perhaps it may be reasonably doubted, whether the being much conversant with Hogarth's method of exposing meanness, deformity, and vice, in many of his works, is not rather a dangerous, or, at least, a worthless pursuit; which, if it does not find a false relish, and a love of, and search after satire and buffoonery in the spectator, is at least not unlikely to give him one.[60]

Lamb comments:

> A person unacquainted with the works thus stigmatised, would be apt to imagine, that in Hogarth there was nothing else to be found but subjects of the coarsest and most repulsive nature. That his imagination was naturally unsweet, and that he delighted in raking into every species of moral filth.[61]

Barry had, in fact, in the passage quoted by Lamb, spoken up for Hogarth's 'satire, which is . . . often highly moral . . . seldom or never employed in a dishonest or unmanly way'. He was, in other words, defending Hogarth's *intention*, while suggesting that *in practice* his work might have a pernicious effect. Lamb utterly refuses to acknowledge the distinction; in his gloss on Barry, he distorts the latter's sense to suggest that a pernicious effect can only stem from an 'unsweet' imagination. And the equation is reversible: if Hogarth's imagination is healthy, only perverse interpretation can make the effect of his work pernicious. For Lamb, a 'natural' interpretation of Hogarth - one that 'reads' Hogarth's work carefully enough - will

[59] James Barry (1741-1806), Professor of Painting to the Royal Academy, 1782-99. 'His enthusiasm for historic art was combined with a contempt for all those who followed the lower branches of the profession' (*DNB*). He was a natural target for Lamb, who quotes a long section from Barry's *Catalogue of a Series of Pictures upon the Subject of Human Culture, Painted for the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce* (London, 1783). It is worth noting that this minor work was nearly three decades old when Lamb attacked it.

[60] Quoted Lamb, 'Hogarth' 93.

[61] Lamb, 'Hogarth' 96.

(once a few aberrant examples have been discarded) find it morally uplifting. At the same time it will recognize that the moral effect stems from a moral imagination, moreover that the moral imagination is conditioned thus by nature. Morality has been derived from nature, via signs, just like Condillac's 'good' metaphysics. Nature imposes a controlling destiny on the sign, thus the sign's progress, as I have called this article, is the becoming-meaningful - becoming-moral - of nature, *through* a work of imaginative art that dictates the terms in which it can be interpreted.

We should not overlook, however, the fact that at bottom Lamb's Essay is an *appeal.* Everything he says is predicated on opposition. As with Condillac's philosophy there is a sort of innate circling movement. Language should never have developed unnaturally, but it is because it did that Condillac's works exist to restore nature. Hogarth should never have been misread, yet it is in the face of constant misreading of Hogarth's work that Lamb's essay exists to restore a natural and inevitable 'reading' that had never been. In Lamb's case, the issue comes down to the question of how much a work of art can dictate the terms in which it is seen. One passage in the essay in particular reflects Lamb's anxiety:

> In the perusal of a book, or of a picture, much of the impression which we receive depends upon the habit of mind which we bring with us to such perusal. The same circumstance may make one person laugh, which shall render another very serious; or in the same person the first impression may be corrected by after-thought. The misemployed incongrous characters at the *Harlot's Funeral*, on a superficial inspection, provoke to laughter; but when we have sacrificed the first emotion to levity, a very different frame of mind succeeds, or the painter has lost half his purpose.[62]

These three sentences both sum up and reveal the problematic limitations of Lamb's argument as a whole. By a sleight of hand the problem of subjectivity is dispatched. The semicolon that divides the second sentence represents a face-saving turn, but in no sense a resolution, despite the apparent confidence of the final plural pronoun. Nowhere later in the essay does Lamb return to this *aporia*, indeed he proceeds as though it had never occurred: as though, after all, all 'habit[s] of mind' *can* and *should* receive the same impression if the work of art is 'read' correctly. Barry's views are thus not simply different from Lamb's, but are erroneous and can be shown to be so. Reducing pictures to language - interpreting them - is not a license to freedom, because, as we have seen, like Condillac Lamb believed that linguistic reduction was - could be - properly guided. But, as we have seen with *Gin Lane*, Lamb's 'reading' is a superior gesture, not particularly concerned with Hogarth's intention, and indulging, it must be said, in some capricious judgements.

In conclusion, then, it seems appropriate to point out that Barry's belief that interpretation (reduction of the picture to words) was not necessarily faithful to Hogarth's intention - indeed that Hogarth's intention might be irrelevant - not only strikes a modern note, but also anticipates, in effect, Lamb's treatment of a work like *Gin Lane*. Lamb's counter-view that Hogarth's (sometimes subconscious) imaginative intention (as distinct, it seems, from his cruder practical intention) will be accessible to the spectator who pauses long enough before the artist's visual language is bold, even if, as I have tried to show, problematic. It is an important link in a chain of appreciation uniting life to art, art to morality, and it is the earnestness with which Lamb pursues this chain that is finally tremendously impressive. Like all great enthusiasts he found it painfully hard to think that others could hold different

[62] Lamb, 'Hogarth' 84.

opinions from his own, and though this very human failing leads to a serious *aporia* in his argument on Hogarth's behalf, we might think that it also goes some way towards providing a solution. For Lamb's is an infectious enthusiasm, full of deep love for his subject, full, we might say, of a subjective quirkiness that sits oddly with his main argument. It would obviously be inappropriate for me to fall into Lamb's impasse and suggest that it will always win the attentive reader over the essay's logical problems, but, no doubt, it often will.

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'Frigid Ecstasies':
Keats, Fuseli, and the Languages of Academic Hellenism

By AVEEK SEN[1]

ON 20 SEPTEMBER 1819, probably the day after he composed 'To Autumn', Keats was writing from Winchester to his brother George and sister-in-law Georgiana about his inability to convey in a letter the expressiveness and animation of spontaneous gestures: 'Writing has this disadvan[t]age of speaking. one cannot write a wink, or a nod, or a grin, or a purse of the Lips, or a *smile* - . . .'. The terms in which Keats goes on to appeal to his addressees to supplement their readings of his letter with this intimate language of presence show Keats's easy familiarity with the preoccupations and personages of the world of the visual arts:

> . . . in all the most lively and titterly parts of my Letter you must not fail to imagine me as the epic poets say - now here, now there, now with one foot pointed at the ceiling, now with another - now with my pen on my ear, now with my elbow in my mouth - O my friends you loose the action - and attitude is everything as Fusili said when he took up his leg like a musket to shoot a swallow just darting behind his shoulder.[2]

Keats links 'attitude' - a key term in neoclassical aesthetics - with the problem of representing 'action' in epic narratives, a problem that varies (and Keats inscribes an awareness of this variation as well) in nature and in degree with the aesthetic media of painting, sculpture, poetry or drama. This humorous and informed mimicking of neoclassical 'cant' significantly leads to a mock-heroic caricature of one of the most renowned painters and Royal Academicians of Keats's time - Henry Fuseli.

In this essay, I wish to read Keats's 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' in some of its original contexts of aesthetic debate.[3] The poem was first published in the January 1820 issue of *Annals of the Fine Arts*, a 'combative and controversial'[4] periodical edited by the architect and antiquary James Elmes, whose mission was to create a forum that would concern itself - perhaps for the first time in England - almost exclusively with the aesthetics and politics of the visual arts. The inaugural volume for 1816 is dedicated to the 'Select Committee of the House of Commons' who 'by duly estimating the value and recommending the purchase of the Elgin Marbles to the British Legislature, have created an epoch in the history of their country'. Thus situating the arts centrally in national politics, Elmes addresses his readers as 'members of the republic of the Fine Arts'.[5] Elmes's formulation invokes the discourse of 'civic humanism', whose development and attenuation determined the political theories of the visual arts from the early decades of the eighteenth century up until the times in which Keats, Hazlitt and Haydon were publishing in the *Annals*.[6] Traditional civic humanism, as John

[1] I am grateful to the Charles Lamb Society for awarding me a bursary to attend the Wordsworth Summer Conference 1994, where a version of this paper was read.

[2] *The Letters of John Keats* ed. Hyder E. Rollins (2 vols., Cambridge, Mass., 1958) (hereafter Rollins), ii. 205.

[3] On the idea of 'aesthetic debate' see Gillian Beer, 'Aesthetic Debate in Keats's Odes', *MLR* 64 (1969) 742-8.

[4] Ian Jack, *Keats and the Mirror of Art* (Oxford, 1967), p. 46.

[5] *Annals of the Fine Arts* ed. James Elmes (5 vols., London, 1817-20) (hereafter *Annals*), i. p. iii.

[6] For 'civic humanism' in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England, see John Barrell, *The Political Theory of Painting from Reynolds to Hazlitt* (New Haven, 1986) (hereafter Barrell).

Barrell explains, understood this 'republic of the Fine Arts' to be 'structured as a political republic' in which 'the most dignified function' aspired to by the visual arts was 'the promotion of the public virtues'.[7] The framework of historical development that Barrell outlines briefly in his introduction is relevant to my contextualization of Keats's ode. The values of the civic discourse in the sphere of the arts - enunciated by Shaftesbury, Jonathan Richardson and Sir Joshua Reynolds, and finally institutionalized with the foundation of the Royal Academy in 1768 - find a late and already problematic articulation in Fuseli's writings on art. Fuseli's awareness of and compromises with the emergence of a 'complex, modern, commercial society', indicates, according to Barrell, the beginnings of an attenuation within the discourse of civic humanism.[8]

Barrell goes on to chart the course of this 'attenuation' in terms of a narrative that places Hazlitt at its culmination for having launched 'the first fundamental attack on the civic humanist theory of art and the "public" painting it promoted'.[9] Barrell has been criticized for thus constructing a 'monist discourse' that presses into a single mould the complex histories of a 'host of other contending discourses that helped to shape the practice or theory of an artist or connoisseur' in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[10] Hazlitt, especially, has been abstracted from the specific political context that is indispensable for an understanding of his anti-academicism:

> The sequence of the book from Reynolds to Hazlitt makes it seem as if somehow the Academy ceased to be a theoretical centre in the early nineteenth century, whereas in fact academic theory was restated and somewhat reformulated by a succession of Professors of Painting. . . . The attacks on the Academy by Haydon and Hazlitt need to be situated in relation to this continuing output of theory and more importantly to the politics of the newspaper and periodical discourse of which they were originally a part.[11]

My consideration of the *Annals* as an important context to Keats's ode attempts to investigate the nature and extent of his paticipation in this 'politics of the newspaper and periodical discourse'. The *Annals* - together with the *Champion*, *Examiner*, *Morning Chronicle* and *London Magazine* (all familiar to Keats, and in most of which he published) - represent the 'bourgeois radical journalism' which made itself heard as an 'oppositional discourse' in the increasingly repressive political climate of Regency Britain.

Although the inaugural volume of the *Annals* declares its commitment to the arts in traditional civic humanist language, the periodical's political stance remains staunchly anti-academic. The preface to the third volume, in which Keats's Elgin Marbles sonnets appear, extends the explicit criticism of the Royal Academy and of the shortcomings of the British monarchy and nobility as patrons of art to embrace a larger critique of the social order:

> Historical painting, which was the object of the Academy's foundation, and which is now the pretence of the Royal Academicians, totally unable to rear its head in the favoured institution of the Monarch, is left to fight its way to the hearts of the people

[7] Ibid. 1.

[8] Ibid. 63.

[9] Ibid. 64.

[10] Ronald Paulson, 'Single-Barrelled', *TLS*, 19 February 1993, p. 20.

[11] Andrew Hemingway, 'The Political Theory of Painting Without the Politics', *Art History* 10 (1987) 381-95, p. 391.

> by its own vigour; oppressed by those who pretend to assist it, neglected by the government, because the government is not aware of its importance. . . . To conclude, we conceive the Royal Academy to be a perverted institution, and that the members make use of the powers intrusted to them, to the destruction, *instead* of the assistance of that style of art, for which that power was created.[12]

The *Annals*' championing of 'history painting' and of the need of public exhibitions is thus expressed in an overtly political language that appropriates the vocabulary of 'civic humanism', dissociating it from its original academic affiliations in order to articulate an anti-academic agenda:

> If we admit with Pope, and the pages of history bear witness to the truth of this remark, that 'Freedom and arts together fall', we must surely allow that the improvement of the arts is favourable to the extension of liberty. The truth is, that the Fine Arts can never be generally encouraged in any country, without producing a correspondent expansion of the public mind; and the knowledge and feelings which attend the cultivation of the intellectual faculties, are as completely inimical to the sway of despotism, as they are to the dogmas of superstition.[13]

The picture that emerges from this appropriation of vocabularies across political boundaries, and more generally from the interrelations between 'the babel of . . . art-related discourses'[14] in the *Annals* is more complex than Barrell's account of the increasing 'privatization' of aesthetic experience. The *Annals* never failed to sustain its conviction of the crucial public function of the arts in the cause of nationalism and liberty, expressing this conviction repeatedly in much the same terms as did traditional civic humanism, even while undermining some of the fundamental premises of this discourse by adopting an anti-academic stance.

The fifth volume of the *Annals* reprints from *The Champion* Hazlitt's essay entitled 'An Inquiry, whether the Fine Arts are promoted by Academies and Public Institutions', in which Hazlitt summarily rejects the transferred republicanism of civic humanism, its cherished model of 'the republic of the Fine Arts':

> The principle of universal suffrage, however applicable to matters of government, which concern the common feeling and common interests of society, is by no means applicable to matters of taste, which can only be decided upon by the most refined understandings.[15]

Hazlitt's notion of the political implications of private spectatorship opens up a problematic fault-line between principles of taste and of politics. Here - as in his essay on Shakespeare's Coriolanus (which Keats knew well)[16] - we get a glimpse of the tensions in his thought between the 'aristocratical' categories and imperatives of Art and the democratic or 'republican' values of Jacobinism, the former affirming itself in a 'language of power' that

[12] *Annals* iii., 'Preface'.

[13] *Annals* iii. 54; from 'An Account of the New Picture Gallery at Dulwich' by John Britton, Esq. F.S.A.

[14] Paulson, 'Single-Barrelled', p. 20.

[15] *Annals* v. 293-4. *The Champion* published Hazlitt's essay, entitled 'Fine Arts. Whether they are Promoted by Academies and Public Institutions', in three instalments on 28 August, 11 September and 2 October 1814. The *Annals* reprinted a slightly altered version of the second instalment.

[16] See Rollins ii. 74-6.

must necessarily be at odds with the demystifying negativity of the latter.[17] This ambivalent relationship between the aesthetic and the political in the private spectatorship of art as experienced by the 'educated, displaced urban' representatives of what Marilyn Butler has called 'the liberal new wave of 1816-19'[18] informs the range of art-theoretical texts I will be looking at in this essay. Keats's representations of 'the modern spectator, individualised and isolated'[19] in the four poems published in the *Annals* can be understood better in the discursive and political contexts of their publication.[20]

* * *

I want to work around some of the key words in Keats's ode - 'express', 'attitude', 'passion', 'historian', 'truth' - exploring their contemporary semantic fields in relation to two sets of texts. First, I shall be looking at the development of Fuseli's definitions of 'expression', 'passion' and 'attitude' from his popular 1765 translation of Winckelmann's *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in der Malerei und Bildhauerkunst* (1756) to his Royal Academy lectures on painting, delivered from 1801 to 1825.[21] I will then go on to contrast this development with some of the explicitly anti-academic writing that Hazlitt and Haydon published in the *Annals*, focussing specifically on their pronouncements on academic idealism, historical painting and private spectatorship. I want, thus, to show the extent to which Keats uses in the ode a contemporary public language of aesthetic criticism and philosophy to describe an apparently solitary confrontation with works of art that are themselves at the centre of public discussion and debate. Keats's initial inability and eventual refusal to 'speak / Definitively'[22] about what is profoundly meaningful yet incommunicable in the private spectatorship of art become complex and poignant when perceived in conjunction with his eagerly aspiring insistence on being heard in a public, politicized forum like the *Annals*.

[17] *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt* ed. P. P. Howe (21 vols., London, 1930-4) (hereafter Howe), iv. 214. See also Jonathan Cook, 'Hazlitt: Criticism and Ideology', in *Romanticism and Ideology: Studies in English Writing 1765-1830* ed. David Aers *et al.* (London, 1981), pp. 137-54., esp. pp. 153-4.

[18] Marilyn Butler, *Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries: English Literature and its Background 1760-1830* (Oxford, 1981), pp. 172-3.

[19] Barrell 63.

[20] The poems are 'To Haydon with a Sonnet Written on Seeing the Elgin Marbles', 3 (April 1818) 171-2; 'On Seeing the Elgin Marbles', 3 (April 1818) 172; 'Ode to the Nightingale', 4 (July 1819) 354-6; 'On a Grecian Urn', 4 (January 1820) 638-9. These are the titles given in the *Annals*.

[21] *Reflections on the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks: with Instructions for the Connoisseur, and an Essay on Grace in Works of Art* tr. Henry Fusseli [*sic.*] (London, 1765; repr. Menston, England, 1972) (hereafter Fuseli (1972)). For a modern translation of the *Gedanken*, see *German Aesthetic and Literary Criticism: Winckelman, Lessing, Hamann, Herder, Schiller, Goethe* ed. H. B. Nesbit (Cambridge, 1985). Fuseli's lectures and other writings are collected in *The Life and Writings of Henry Fuseli* ed. J. Knowles (3 vols., London, 1831) (hereafter Knowles). See also E. C. Mason, *The Mind of Henry Fuseli* (London, 1951). It is useful to study the reception of the *Gedanken* through the *Annals*, which published, in three lengthy instalments an exhausted and annotated 'Bibliographical Guide to a Collection of Books, Elementary, Historical and Critical, on the Art of Painting' (*Annals* iv. 82-91, 254-63, 418-25). The *Gedanken* is listed here in a French translation of 1756, as is Lessing's *Laocoon* (*Annals* iv. 262). Fuseli's translation is extensively used and acknowledged in George Stanley's 'An Essay on the Superiority of the Ancient Greeks in the Fine Arts . . .' (*Annals* v. 37-57).

[22] 'To Haydon with a Sonnet Written on Seeing the Elgin Marbles' 1-2. All quotations from Keats's poems are from *The Poems of John Keats* ed. Jack Stillinger (London, 1978).

Keats, in his early sonnets on the Elgin Marbles, shows a sensitive awareness of the existence of what Fuseli calls a 'vocabulary of technic expression'[23] which demands from its users a degree of seriousness and precision that could intimidate naïvely enthusiastic lovers of art like himself:

> Haydon, forgive me that I cannot speak
> Definitively on these mighty things.[24]

His early ekphrastic poetry can therefore only capture 'a shadow of a magnitude'.[25] But by the time Keats writes the 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' he displays a sophisticated familiarity with the contemporary 'cant' of aesthetic criticism, and is even able to affect the mode of 'speaking / Definitively' in an exalted style that is assertive and self-assured.

In a fictitious letter, entitled 'Sendschreiben über die Gedanken', appended to the *Gedanken* by Winckelmann himself in the guise of an 'objector' to his own Hellenism, the apparently anonymous writer criticizes the 'peremptory style of the legislator' with which the author 'lays . . . down' the tenets of his neoclassicism.[26] This anticipates the objections of the *Critical Review* to the tone of authoritarian prescriptiveness in Fuseli's translation: 'we cannot help thinking that in his observations on taste and beauty he has been somewhat arbitrary, and that in the rules and standards he lays down, he pronounces too dogmatically and has taken many controversial points for granted.'[27] When Keats makes the urn speak his ode's conclusion, he mimics this sweepingly aphoristic and universalizing voice of a particular form of legislatorial neoclassicism, a mode of address also adopted by the anti-academic Haydon or Hazlitt in the *Annals*.[28]

Yet Keats's mastery of this academic discourse in the ode is ironically rendered a non-achievement by the urn's resistance to the intrusive energies of interpretation and ekphrasis. Between the initial inaccessibility of an academic discourse in the sonnets and the subsequent opacity and intractability of the aesthetic object itself in the ode, Keats, as a spectator of art, remains framed out, so to speak, fixed in an apparently disabling exteriority, that must seek out its own creative mode of expression in either case.[29]

[23] Inaugural Academy lecture on 'Ancient Art', Knowles ii. 21. All quotations from the lectures and aphorisms are from this edition.

[24] 'To Haydon with a Sonnet' 1-2.

[25] Ibid. 14.

[26] Fuseli (1972) 103.

[27] *Critical Review* 19 (1765) 443-50, p. 449. Another review is in the *Monthly Review* 32 (1765) 456-6.

[28] See also Fuseli's *Aphorisms on Man* (1789) and *Aphorisms on Art* (publ. 1831) in Knowles iii. In his fourth Academy lecture, Fuseli characterizes the 'epic plan' behind the narratives of Homer, Phidias and Michelangelo as 'the sublime allegory of a maxim' whose 'aim is to astonish while it instructs': 'Here Invention arranges a plan by general ideas . . . visibly to substantiate some great maxim. . . . if it selects characters to conduct its plan . . . their features reflect, their passions are kindled by the maxim, and absorbed in its universal blaze: at this elevation heaven and earth mingle their boundaries, men are raised to demi-gods, and gods descend' (ii. 194).

[29] For a reading of the Elgin Marbles sonnets in terms of a creative use of failure and inarticulateness, see John Whale, 'Sacred Objects and the Sublime Ruins of Art', in *Beyond Romanticism: New Approaches to Texts and Contexts, 1780-1832* ed. John Whale and Stephen Copley (London, 1992), pp. 218-36. For 'framing devices' in Keats's poetry, see Marjorie Levinson, *Keats's Life of Allegory: The Origins of a Style* (Oxford, 1988), p. 20.

Keats's ambivalence regarding the vocabularies of academicism and connoisseurship contrasts significantly with Byron's superior detestation of 'antiquarian twaddle',[30] a contrast that operates predominantly along the axis of social class, involving Keats's sense of 'what it is to be under six foot and not a lord'.[31] Captivated by the Medici Venus in Florence, Childe Harold flamboyantly rejects academic 'cant' for an immediate and unabashedly sensuous subjectivity, what Byron's friend and the poem's first commentator, John Cam Hobhouse called 'the sensual imagination of the descriptive poet':[32]

> . . . there need no words, nor terms precise,
> The paltry jargon of the marble mart,
> Where Pedantry gulls Folly - we have eyes:
> Blood - pulse - and breast, confirm the Dardan
> Shepherd's prize. (IV st.50 447-50)

'Pedantry' and 'Folly' reappear a few lines later as 'the artist and his ape' - in the context of this essay, like a travesty of Haydon and Keats viewing the Elgin Marbles together:

> I leave to learned fingers, and wise hands,
> The artist and his ape, to teach and tell
> How well his connoisseurship understands
> The graceful bend, and the voluptuous swell:
> Let these describe the undescribable:
> I would not their vile breath should crisp the stream
> Wherein that image shall for ever dwell . . . (IV st.53 469-75)

Byron and Keats both address the difficulty of inscribing the ineffable in poetry. Byron, in his characteristically 'worldly, theatrical and pantomimical' 'temper of mind'[33] flaunts a drastic rejection of the academic, whereas Keats struggles towards a profounder critique by working through failure and diffidence towards a representation of the 'undescribable feud'.[34]

In contrast to Keats's feeling of being an outsider to the world of academic discourse, Fuseli is anxious, as an academician, to 'speak / Definitively'. His writing on the arts is informed by a concern with standardizing the technical vocabulary of art criticism and history, thereby creating a theoretically sophisticated and expressive language that combines ekphrasis, interpretation and judgement, and can be shared by student, artist and connoisseur.

In his translation of Winckelmann, Fuseli uses 'Expression' as a title to the climactic fourth chapter in which the Laocoon and the Raphael Madonna at Dresden are reified as embodiments of the Stoic-Hellenic ideal:

> The last and most eminent characteristic of the Greek works is a noble simplicity and sedate grandeur in Gesture and Expression. As the bottom of the sea lies peaceful

[30] Quoted in Stephen A. Larrabee, *English Bards and Grecian Marbles: The Relationship between Sculpture and Poetry especially in the Romantic Period* (New York, 1943), p. 149.

[31] Letter to the George Keatses, 14 February 1819, Rollins ii. 61. See also 'Keats's Attitude towards Byron', in Beth Lau, *Keats's Reading of the Romantic Poets* (Ann Arbor, 1991), pp. 128-37.

[32] John Cam Hobhouse, *Historical Illustrations of the Fourth Canto of Childe Harold* (1818). Reprinted in Lord Byron, *The Complete Poetical Works* ed. Jerome J. McGann and Barry Weller (7 vols., Oxford, 1980-93), ii. 235. All quotations from Byron's verse are from this edition.

[33] Letter to the George Keatses, 14 October 1818, Rollins i. 396.

[34] 'On Seeing the Elgin Marbles' 10.

> beneath a foaming surface, a great soul lies sedate beneath the strife of passions in Greek figures.[35]

'Expression' has aesthetic as well as ethical implications here. It is the ability of the 'soul' - the profoundly inward, spiritual resources of a human being - to make itself visible in his or her face and person. The 'expressive' icon thus resolves the dichotomies of internal and external, physical and spiritual, body and soul in a sublime transparency: ''Tis in the face of Laocoon this soul shines with full lustre'.[36] In Greek figures, expression is associated with silence, stillness, balance and repose, and can only be an ideal quality engendered in a mind that combines the faculties of the artist and the philosopher. To this idea of expression Winckelmann opposes the notion of 'parenthyrsos', associated with the violence of passion stimulating spectatorial desire, and with audaciously mannered 'contortions','postures' and 'contrasts'.[37] If expression characterizes the highest achievements of ancient art, then *parenthyrsos* is an essentially 'modern' quality to be found, for instance, in the works of Michelangelo.

In the essay 'On Grace' appended to the 1765 edition of the *Gedanken*, 'attitude' functions as a cognate to this idea of expression:

> The attitude and gestures of antique figures are such as those have, who, conscious of merit, claim attention as their due, when appearing among men of sense. Their motions always shew the motive; clear, pure blood, and settled spirits . . .[38]
> The gestures of the hands of antique figures, and their attitudes in general, are those of people that think themselves alone and unobserved . . .[39]

Poised ambiguously here between public oratory and solitude, 'attitude' becomes subtly gendered in the figure of Niobe, the feminine counterpart of Laocoon's 'expression' (a gendering that is retained in Keats's 'fair attitude'):[40]

> The ancients seem to have taken advantage of that situation of the soul, in which, struck dumb by an immensity of pains, she [Niobe] borders upon insensibility; to express, as

[35] Fuseli (1972) 30. See Marcia Allentuck, 'Fuseli's Translation of Winckelmann: A Phase in the Rise of British Hellenism with an Aside on William Blake', in *Studies in the Eighteenth Century II: Papers Presented at the Second David Nichol Smith Memorial Seminar Canberra 1970* ed. R. F. Brissenden (Canberra, 1973), pp. 163-85. See also David Irwin, *Winckelmann's Writings on Art* (London, 1972); Alex Potts, *Flesh and the Ideal: Winckelmann and the origins of art history* (New Haven, 1994); M. K. Flavell, 'Winckelmann and the German Enlightenment: On the Recovery and Uses of the Past', *MLR* 74 (1979) 79-96.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Fuseli (1972) 32-3.

[38] Fuseli (1972) 276.

[39] Fuseli (1972) 280.

[40] For the contrasting significances of Laocoon and Niobe in Winckelmann, see Alex Potts, 'The verbal and visual in Winckelmann's analysis of style', *Word and Image* 6 (1990) 226-40, esp. pp. 235 ff. For Keats's awareness of the neoclassical iconography of Niobe, see Rollins i. 174, and *Endymion* i. 337-43. For Niobe in the *Annals*, see Jack 152-3 and 267n27. The *Annals* reports, in terms that echo my first quotation from 'On Grace', that '*The group of Niobe and her children* is put up in the riding room at Carlton-house. They are exceedingly beautiful, but of a more artificial and academical style than the Elgin Marbles: everything is as it were in an attitude; the heads and limbs look conscious of their own grace . . .' (iv. 151). For a fascinating instance of the gendering of 'attitude' by an eroticized and antiquarian male gaze, see K. G. Holmström's discussion of Lady Hamilton's 'attitudes' in *Monodrama Attitudes Tableaux Vivants: Studies on some trends of theatrical fashion 1770-1815* (Stockholm, 1967), pp. 110-40.

> it were, characters, independent of particular actions; and to avoid scenes too terrifying, too passionate, sometimes to paint the dignity of minds subduing grief.[41]

As this passage suggests, both 'attitude' and 'expression' imply an abstraction of the icon from the individualizing particularities of 'character', 'action', narrative and history, in order to make it a 'situation of the soul'.[42] This idea of attitude seems 'insipid and spiritless' to the modern artist and spectator, as 'the expression of modern sorrow' is 'quite the reverse of the antique'.[43]

There is a significant redefinition of the same cluster of words in Fuseli's glossary of 'Technical Terms' in the 1805 edition of Reverend Pilkington's *Dictionary of Painters*.[44] 'Expression' is here associated with 'action' and 'motion' (p. xvii), and though distinguished from 'passion' is extended to include it: 'every passion is an expression, but not every expression a passion' (p. xx). 'Attitude' is similarly grounded in 'action', 'motion', 'mind' and notably in 'character' and 'sentiment', rather than being abstracted from these, as it had been in Winckelmann (p. xv). Fuseli also defines 'charge' and 'contrast' as positive qualities, whereas in Winckelmann they were both relegated to the realm of 'parenthyrsos' in opposition to 'expression' and 'attitude' (pp. xvi-xvii). In the 1805 lecture on Composition, the definition of expression draws together all the new associations that cluster around the term in the Pilkington glossary:

> Expression is the vivid image of the passion that affects the mind; its language, and the portrait of its situation. It animates the features, attitudes, and gestures, which invention selected, and Composition arranged; its principles, like theirs, are simplicity, propriety, and energy.[45]

It is, however, in the *Aphorisms chiefly relative to the Fine Arts* - worked on intermittently from 1788 and published posthumously in 1831 - that Fuseli revolutionizes his notion of expression. He still uses the word in relation to Greek sculpture and Homeric epic; but the terms in which expression, in the aphorisms, elicits an affective response of sympathetic engagement from the modern spectator are entirely new. In the corollary to Aphorism 93 Fuseli illustrates how expression, in Homer's delineation of his epic heroes, achieves a unique and humanely engaging synthesis between the actual and the ideal, genius and tradition:

> Homer invested his heroes with ideal powers, but copied nature in delineating their moral character. Achilles, the irresistible in arms, clad in celestial armour, is a splendid

[41] Fuseli (1972) 278.

[42] In his *Discourses on Art*, Reynolds characterizes Michelangelo's figures in terms of a similar notion of 'attitude': '. . . his people are of a superior order of beings; there is . . . nothing in the air of their actions or their attitudes . . . that reminds us of their belonging to our own species' (Joshua Reynolds, *Discourses on Art* ed. Robert R. Wark [New Haven, 1975], p. 83). This passage was copied by Keats's friend, Charles Cowden Clarke, into his commonplace book. See John Barnard, 'Charles Cowden Clarke's "Cockney" commonplace book', in *Keats and History* ed. Nicholas Roe (Cambridge, 1995), p. 78.

[43] Fuseli (1972) 276, 279.

[44] Revd. M. Pilkington, *A Dictionary of Painters, from the Revival of the Art to the Present Period* ed. Henry Fuseli (London, 1805). Fuseli's 'Explanation of Technical Terms used either by Artists or Authors, on the Subject of Painting' (pp. xv-xx) collates, in the form of a glossary, the theoretical formulations of major English and continental writers like Alberti, Montesquieu, Felibien, De Piles, Richardson, Houbraken and Chambers, cited in footnotes and listed in a bibliography. Fuseli's edition of Pilkington, together with a number of similar dictionaries and handbooks, were regularly reviewed and listed in annotated bibliographies in the *Annals*.

[45] Knowles ii. 255.

> being, created by himself; Achilles the fool of passions, is the real man delivered to him by tradition.[46]

By extending the scope of the word, Fuseli opens out the exclusiveness of Winckelmann's ideal in order to accommodate the specificities of individual character and experience within the most exalted achievements of ancient art. The epic ideal is, therefore, rendered more inclusive in human terms:

> The expression of the ancients, from the heights and depths of the sublime, descended and emerged to search every nook of the human breast; from the ambrosial locks of Zeus, and the maternal phantom fluttering around Ulysses, to the half-slain mother, shuddering lest the infant should suck the blood from her palsied nipple, and the fond attention of Penelope dwelling on the relation of her returned son.

Fuseli's idea of expression then ranges beyond human pathos 'to roam all the fields of licit and illicit pleasure'.[47]

Parallel to this development, there is another sequence of aphorisms which formulates an aesthetic of response that provides the spectatorial complement to the extension of the idea of expression outlined above. This aesthetic, grounded in the idea of 'private sympathy', undermines the ideal status of the neoclassical notion of Beauty, recasting it as something palpable and humane whose warmth and pathos can be enjoyed and participated in:

> Sensibility is the mother of sympathy. How can he paint Beauty who has not throbbed at her charms? How shall he fill the eye with the dew of humanity whose own never shed a tear for others? . . .
> Dive in the crowd, meet beauty: follow vigour, compare character, snatch the feature that moves unobserved and the sudden burst of passion - and you are at the school of nature with Lysippus.[48]

Predictably it is Shakespeare, rather than the ancients, whose art has the strongest claim to what Fuseli has called, in another aphorism, 'the lasting empire of the human heart': 'Shakespeare wept, trembled, laughed first at what now sways the public feature; and where he did not, he is stale, outrageous or disgusting'.[49]

Fuseli returns to the Laocoon at the end of his first lecture on Ancient Art. By deliberately coming back to Winckelmann's central icon, and by using it to embody his own idea of expression, Fuseli foregrounds his critical distance from 'the frigid ecstasies of German criticism'.[50] Expression unifies and dignifies, but does not abstract or idealize by refining away the actualities of Laocoon's pain and struggle. The dignifying principle is not, as in Winckelmann, Laocoon's imperturbable Stoic inwardness, but his human capacity for suffering pain:

> . . . the prince, the priest, the father are visible, but, absorbed in the man, serve only to dignify the victim of *one* great expression . . . this tempestuous front, this contracted

[46] Knowles iii. 91.
[47] Knowles iii. 92-3.
[48] Knowles iii. 88, 113, nos. 82, 139.
[49] Knowles iii. 138, 137, nos. 201, 200.
[50] Knowles ii. 71.

nose, the immersion of the eyes, and above all, that long-drawn mouth, are separate and united, seats of convulsion, features of nature struggling within the jaws of death.[51]

* * *

In the issue of the *Annals* immediately preceding the one in which 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' was published, Elmes printed the third instalment of Hazlitt's critique of Reynolds's *Discourses on Art.* Hazlitt's essay places a similar emphasis on expression to redefine art's relationship with nature, history and human particularity.[52] This redefinition occurs within an ideological context the elements of which constitute the principal agenda of the *Annals*: firstly, the critique of Reynolds's notion of 'ideal beauty';[53] secondly, the definition and championing of 'historical painting'; and thirdly, the attempt to assimilate or appropriate the contemporary critical debate over the Elgin marbles to this critique and to this generic redefinition. The first helps us to reinterpret Keats's use of 'beauty' in the ode in contemporary theoretical, rather than metaphysical or platonic, terms; the second suggests a similar theoretically-informed specificity in the ode's use of 'historian' and 'truth'; and the third reinforces these applications by establishing a direct connection between these theoretical discourses and the contemporary reception of the Elgin Marbles. Together, these contextualizations illuminate Keats's political and aesthetic stance against academic neoclassicism in writing the poem and agreeing to publish it in the *Annals*.

Central to Hazlitt's third critique of Reynolds is the opposition between 'expression' and 'abstraction'. 'Abstraction' implies all that Reynolds's theory of the *beau ideal* stands for - the elevation of art above the 'substance and accident' of nature resulting in a disembodied and universalizing aesthetic that leads, according to Hazlitt, to the 'easy down-hill pass of effeminate, unmeaning insipidity'.[54] Expression, on the other hand,'connect[s] individual nature with an imaginary subject'. This connection implies not only the transmutation of the concrete and the particular in all its historicity of 'character' by the creative imagination, but also the commerce between this transmuted product and the spectatorial imagination.[55] The power of expression to grasp what is peculiarly individual in the subject and communicate that in all its concreteness and immediacy preserves in art the sense of the subject's active presence in history: 'The keeping in the character, not the want of character, is the essence of history'.[56] This commitment to particularity, to the subject's presence in nature and in history is, for Hazlitt, a commitment to 'truth'. Raphael's cartoons embody this ideal conjunction of 'truth' and 'beauty' in 'expression'.[57] Hazlitt perceives this 'spirit of . . . truth' also in Shakespeare's characters and in Hogarth's pictures. Hazlitt's assimilation of Hogarth to the idea of the 'historical' in art is particularly close to the qualities of Keats as a spectator of life and art, especially of life in terms of art.[58]

[51] Knowles ii. 72.

[52] *Annals* iv. 385-97.

[53] See Barnard, 'Clarke's commonplace book', p. 78.

[54] *Annals* iv. 388.

[55] This was more fully theorized in Hazlitt's essay 'On Gusto' in the next issue where Keats's ode is also published (iv. 543-9).

[56] *Annals* iv. 387.

[57] *Annals* iv. 392.

[58] For a brief account of the 'strong anti-academic tradition represented by Hogarth' in his graphic art and in his art treatise, *The Analysis of Beauty*, see Paulson, 'Single-Barrelled'; for Hazlitt's use of Hogarth as the 'protagonist' in his own critique of academicism, see Paulson, 'Shaftesbury Meets Karl Marx', *The New*

Keats describes to his brother Tom a scene, encountered while walking with Charles Brown from Belfast to Donaghadee on 8 July 1818, that would haunt his memory for a long time:

> On our return from Belfast we met a Sadan - the Duchess of Dunghill - It is no laughing matter tho - Imagine the worst dog kennel you ever saw placed upon two poles from a mouldy fencing - In such a wretched thing sat a squalid old Woman squat like an ape half starved from a scarcity of Buiscuit in its passage from Madagascar to the cape, - with a pipe in her mouth and looking out with a round-eyed skinny lidded, inanity - with a sort of horizontal idiotic movement of her head - sqab and lean she sat and puff'd out the smoke while two ragged tattered Girls carried her along - What a thing would be a history of her Life and sensations.[59]

Keats's description is a perfect example of Hazlitt's notion of expression connecting 'individual nature with an imaginary subject'. The 'Duchess of Dunghill' embodies a sordid actuality that filled Keats with 'absolute despair' during his walking tour of Ireland - 'the worse than nakedness, the rags, the dirt and misery of the poor common Irish'.[60] But Keats's depiction is also an extraordinary feat of *enargia* - making the absent vividly present to another person by combining empathy with a graphic pictorial and literary imagination that confronts the grotesque with humour and verve. Hazlitt's comments on Hogarth in the *Annals* essay help us to read Keats's description as a condensed 'historical' piece in the Hogarthian mode:

> Is there anyone who can possibly doubt that Hogarth's pictures are perfectly and essentially *historical*? or that they convey a story perfectly intelligible, with faces and expressions which every one must recognise? They have evidently a common or general character; but that general character is defined and modified by individual peculiarities, which certainly do not take away from the illusion or the effect any more than they would in nature.[61]

Hazlitt articulates here another important aspect of the historical genre - how a historical scene inscribes or implies a diachronic narrative within its necessarily synchronic frame, suggested in history's etymological link with narration. The 'historical' must 'convey a story', must 'tell': 'Those details or peculiarities only are inadmissible in history, which do not arise out of any principle, or tend to any conclusion . . . which do not *tell*'.[62] It is here that the spectatorial imagination performs its most crucial role. In the description of the 'Duchess', Keats as spectator is aware of the exciting possibilities of transforming the static, tableau-like scene into a Hogarthian 'progress' narrative - 'What a thing would be a history

Republic, 10 and 17 August 1987, pp. 39-42, esp. p. 41. See also Howe xviii 21-4 and 37-8, and for a comparison of Hogarth with the Elgin Marbles as 'true history', see pp. 161-2. For an extended appreciation of Hogarth in contrast with the academicism of Reynolds and Poussin, see Charles Lamb, 'On the Genius and Character of Hogarth' (1811, 1818), repr. in *Lamb as Critic* ed. Roy Park (London, 1980) (hereafter Park), pp. 315-34. See also Bill Ruddick, 'Artist or Novelist? Lamb, Hazlitt and the Nineteenth-Century Response to Hogarth', *CLB* 61 (1988) 145-55.

[59] Rollins i. 321-2.

[60] Rollins i. 321.

[61] *Annals* iv. 389.

[62] *Annals* iv. 394-5.

of her Life and sensations'.[63] This idea of spectatorship as an empathetic and diachronizing imaginative activity informs Keats's confrontations with art, especially with historical painting.[64] The collaborative relationship between a work of art and its spectator has, for him, the charge or 'intensity' of an erotic engagement with and participation in its 'close relationship with Beauty & Truth'. The logic of 'reading' a work of art is constituted by a dialectic of desire and ravishment whose energies must also be able to accommodate a 'momentous depth of speculation':

> . . . went the next morning to see *Death on a Pale horse.* It is a wonderful picture, when West's age is considered; But there is nothing to be intense upon; no women one feels mad to kiss; no face swelling into reality. the excellence of every Art is its intensity, capable of making all disagreeables evaporate, from their being in close relationship with Beauty & Truth - Examine King Lear & you will find this examplified throughout; but in this picture we have unpleasantness without any momentous depth of speculation excited, in which to bury its repulsiveness . . .[65]

This 'intensity', or what he calls elsewhere 'the emphasis of Painting',[66] like Hazlitt's 'gusto', resides at the interface between spectator and aesthetic object, between text and reader. The picture brings to the spectator its intrinsic intensity even as it provides him with something 'to be intense *upon*', their relationship constituted by an almost teasing play between autonomy and complementarity.

By investing the urn's completeness with what seems, at certain times, to be a teasing reticence, and, at other times, an elevated silence gathering up within itself a bewildering succession of fragmented or suspended narratives, Keats questions some of the fundamental principles of neoclassicism. Neoclassical theories of epic narration in the visual arts persistently associated formal wholeness with universal intelligibility. In his fourth Academy lecture, Fuseli's articulation of this principle in theorizing the narrative mode of 'history painting', sheds a profoundly ironic light on Keats's urn as 'historian':

> The first demand on every work of art is that it constitute one whole, that it fully pronounce its own meaning, that it tell itself; it ought to be independent; the essential part of its subject ought to be comprehended and understood without collateral assistance, without borrowing its commentary from the historian or the poet; for as we are soon wearied with a poem whose fable and motives reach us only by the borrowed light of annexed notes, so we turn our eye discontented from a picture or a statue whose meaning depends on the charity of a Cicerone, or must be fetched from a book.[67]

This sublime intelligibility is the product of what Fuseli calls 'Historic Invention', a process of judicious 'selection' and 'connection' of the 'most important and significant moments of the story' into a 'Cyclus' or 'historic series'.[68] The result is an art 'which is confined to the

[63] Cf. Lamb on the rake's face in the *Rake's Progress*: 'the long history of misspent life is compressed into the countenance as plainly as the series of plates before had told it. . . . Here is matter for the mind of the beholder to feed on for the hour together, - matter to feed and fertilize the mind' (Park 321).

[64] See Rollins ii. 19.

[65] Rollins i. 192.

[66] Rollins i. 264.

[67] Knowles ii. 190.

[68] Ibid.

apparition of single moments', whose unity and interconnectedness remain unaffected, if the Invention is skilled, by the temporal 'chasms' that separate these narrative 'moments'.

The spectator's gaze, in Keats's ode, dwells, however, upon these 'chasms' within the 'Cyclus' of the urn's representations, and between the urn and himself. 'Historic Invention' is possible here only as an invention of history, that must necessarily happen outside the representational limits of the urn, in the medium of poetic (rather than pictorial) narration:

> What little town by river or sea shore,
> Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
> Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn?
> And, little town, thy streets for evermore
> Will silent be: and not a soul to tell
> Why thou art desolate, can e'er return. (ll. 34-40)

In the stillness of this imagined town, the 'silence' and 'quietness' initially associated with the urn are taken up into a very different order of desolation and loss, and the the 'folk''s inability to 'tell' its history becomes an almost tragic actualization of the urn's richly inflected muteness. The turnings and re-turnings of the urn's eternal 'Cyclus' bring home to the spectator history's irreversible linearity.[69] The impossibility of 'return' is also the inability 'to say or state by way of reply or answer' (*OED* 19b),[70] frustrating the attempt to transform spectatorship into a consoling dialogue with the past.

Here, too, Keats is questioning the assured and assuring voice of academic theory, even while using its vocabulary:

> Historic Invention administers to truth. History, as contradistinguished from arbitrary or poetic narration, tells us not what might be, but what is or was; circumscribes the probable, the grand, and the pathetic, with truth of time, place, custom . . . its agents are the pure organs of a fact.[71]

Keats's critique, here, is twofold. Even while bringing a general scepticism to bear on 'Historic Invention''s claim to mediating the 'truth of time, place, custom', he claims back for his own medium, 'poetic narration', the power to imagine, however imperfectly, this 'truth'.[72]

The idea of the 'historical' with its associated anti-idealist criteria of 'truth' and 'beauty' was championed in the *Annals* not only in connection with painting; the entire discourse was appropriated for the purposes of discussing sculpture as well. This appropriation becomes most relevant for our understanding of Keats's ode in the writings on the Elgin Marbles by Hazlitt and Haydon. For Hazlitt, the marbles were authoritative embodiments of his critique of Reynolds's *beau ideal*: 'The process of fastidious refinement, and flimsy abstraction, is certainly not visible there. The figures have all the ease, the simplicity, and variety of nature,

[69] See 'Ode on Indolence' 7-8, 59-60.

[70] See 'return'd' in *A Concordance to the Poems of John Keats* ed. M. G. Becker *et al.* (New York, 1981), p. 431, for numerous instances of this usage in Keats.

[71] Fuseli's fourth lecture, Knowles ii. 194.

[72] In this, Keats's ode can be read as a 'paragone', a critical genre dealing with the competitive relations between the sister arts. See Leonardo da Vinci, *Paragone: A Comparison of the Arts* tr. I. A. Richter (Oxford, 1949); J. H. Hagstrum, *The Sister Arts: The Tradition of Literary Pictorialism and English Poetry from Dryden to Gray* (Chicago, 1958), pp. 66-70; R. W. Lee, *'Ut pictura poesis': The Humanistic Theory of Painting* (New York, 1967).

and look more like living men turned to stone than anything else'.[73] Thus their 'truth' was a 'truth to nature', and their 'beauty' not 'a perfect idea of beauty' nor 'a voluntary fiction of the brain', but derived 'immediately and entirely' from 'what is fine in nature'.[74]

Haydon's writings in the *Annals* also stridently asserted the marbles' claim to 'truth', understood in this specific sense. 'You will see in these divine things', he writes to Alexis Olenin, President of the St. Petersburgh Academy of the Arts, 'that the Greeks never sacrificed truth to an artificial "beau ideal" of shape, where it could not be preserved without the violation of truth'.[75] Comparing the horse's head then thought to be by Lysippus to the Parthenon head in the Elgin collection, he dismisses the former as 'all manner' whereas the latter is 'all truth'.[76]

Compared to the naturalistic rendering of the human body in the Elgin Theseus or Hercules, the Apollo Belvedere and the Farnese Hercules were relegated to inferiority as representatives of 'ideal beauty' although it was precisely this quality that excited Winckelmann into ekphrastic rhapsodies in the previous century: 'Roam over the realms of incorporeal grace, invoke angelic nature to conceive his perfection; here sick decay, and human flaws dwell not, blood palpitates not here'.[77] Hazlitt associates them with the mannered artificiality of 'attitudes', and, lacking 'gusto', they fail to engage the spectator at any other level but the cerebral or intellectual: 'It seems enough for them *to be* without acting or suffering. Their forms are ideal, spiritual. Their beauty is power. "By their beauty they are raised above the frailties of pain or passion, by their beauty they are deified"'.[78] Yet the tone of this passage is not simply dismissive. Hazlitt's words are also an elegy for the *beau ideal* which he recognizes as deficient but, more importantly, as understandable in aspiration and, unfortunately, catastrophic in its notion of 'power'.[79]

In Keats's ode these two contrasting sets of art objects are collapsed into a composite artefact, resulting in the ode's ambivalence and its shifts in tone and perspective. The urn is silent, inviolable and transcends 'human passion'; yet, its marble men and women *breathe* far above human passion, and when it finally speaks as 'a friend to man' it invokes the criteria of beauty and truth that would immediately suggest (to the readers of the *Annals*) the anti-idealist aesthetic associated with the Elgin Marbles.

My discussion of the narratology of history painting, of the spectator's locating of the depicted scene within an imagined 'history' or narrative, can be applied to sculpture. Firstly, just as the urn is ambiguously poised between tumult and stillness, it was entirely up to the imagination of the spectator to decide whether some of the artefacts in the Elgin collection represented figures in motion or in repose. Haydon quotes Visconti's description of the Elgin Ilissus:

> Ce personage demicouché semble, par un *mouvement subit, se lever avec impetuosité, saisi de joie* à la nouvelle agréable de la victoire de Minerve. *L'attitude instantanée*

[73] *Annals* iv. 392.

[74] *Annals* iv. 394.

[75] *Annals* iii. 70.

[76] *Annals* iii. 177.

[77] 'Description of the APOLLO in BELVEDERE and the BORGHESE GLADIATOR. From the Idea of Abbé WINKELMAN', *The Universal Museum* 4 (February 1768) 56.

[78] *Annals* iv. 548.

[79] See L. M. Trawick, 'Hazlitt, Reynolds and the Ideal', *Studies in Romanticism* 4 (1964-5) 240-7, and Paul Hamilton, '"A Shadow of a Magnitude": The Dialectic of Romantic Aesthetics', in *Beyond Romanticism*, pp. 11-31, esp. pp. 25-7.

> que ce mouvement lui donne est une des plus difficiles à saisir que l'on puisse imaginer. . . . Ce mouvement fait paroitre la figure *animée* . . . (Haydon's italics)

in order to disagree vehemently with him: 'If there ever was a figure in art that exhibited a perfect specimen of intense repose without any of the consequences on the body of excitement or action, it is the Ilissus'.[80]

Secondly, the urn's refusal to capture on its surface the 'legend' that haunts about its shape arouses and frustrates a specific form of spectatorial desire - the desire to 'tell', to transform the work's 'co-existence in space' into a 'succession in time', using Lessing's distinction between the visual and the verbal arts in *Laokoon*.[81] Fuseli's first lecture describes his contemplation of the statue of Apollo, providing us with a far greater insight into the mechanism of aesthetic perception than into the statue itself:

> . . . what hinders us when we consider the beauty of these features, the harmony of these forms, to find in them the abstract of all his other qualities, to roam over the whole history of his atchievements? we see him enter the celestial synod, and all the gods rise at his august appearance; we see him sweep the plain after Daphne; precede Hector with the aegis and disperse the Greeks; strike Patroclus with his palm and decide his destiny. - And is the figure frigid because its great idea is inexhaustible?[82]

In the 'pure mythic elaboration' of Fuseli's ekphrasis, the statue of Apollo 'is neither a real object nor an imaginary object', but 'the infinitely available site of subjective investments'.[83] The spectator achieves here all that he fails to do in Keats's ode, counteracting the statue's imperious self-sufficiency with history and 'legend', making the unyielding opacity of the urn's medium surrender to the pressure of language and of the desiring imagination.

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[80] *Annals* iv. 50-1.

[81] See Grant F. Scott, 'Beautiful Ruins: The Elgin Marbles Sonnet in its Historical and Generic Contexts', *Keats-Shelley Journal* 39 (1990) 123-50, esp. p. 140.

[82] Knowles ii. 69-70.

[83] Roland Barthes, 'Is Painting a Language?' in *The Responsibility of Forms* tr. R. Howard (Oxford, 1985), pp. 149-52, p. 150.

Wordsworth's *Michael* and Poetry Come Too Late

By RICHARD W. CLANCEY

AN INEVITABLE TIMOROUSNESS arises as one writes about Wordsworth's *Michael.* It is one of the most popular of his poems and one of the most appealing works in English Romantic literature. Wordsworth himself reveals a strong attachment to the poem by the elaborate induction he employs at its beginning. In the first 39 lines he invites his readers to climb Green-head Gill; he admits its difficulty and calls out, '[C]ourage!', and promises a vision. An idyllic world lies ahead; it is an almost enchanted spot, yet one completely natural:

> The Mountains have all open'd out themselves,
> And made a hidden valley of their own. (ll. 7-8)[1]

Further on he calls the scene 'an utter solitude' (l. 13), and yet here is to be found a human object of considerable affective significance, 'a straggling Heap of unhewn stones' (l. 17). But this is an 'object which' one 'might pass by . . . and notice not' (ll. 15-16). '[A] Story appertains' to this spot, a very special pastoral tale, which the voice came to know as a boy and which he will personally share with us now (ll. 18-39).

The critical commentary on *Michael* is rich, varied, and almost universally positive. Karl Kroeber has called it 'the high point of Wordsworth's narratives'.[2] Geoffrey Hartman notes that '"Michael", the last poem to enter *Lyrical Ballads* . . . is one of Wordsworth's great poems of fortitude'.[3] Stephen Parrish regards *Michael* and *The Brothers* as crucial works, 'poems which carried the social message [Wordsworth] . . . wished to implant in the minds of his readers'.[4] Parrish also points out that the pastoral was a major preoccupation with Wordsworth: 'we should understand that in 1798 and 1800 and even later he was attempting to create a distinctive - we need not say original - kind of pastoral, suited to his own talents and answering his own purposes'.[5]

David Simpson summarizes a number of outstanding qualities in *Michael*:

> 'Michael' is . . . one of the great achievements of English poetry. Here, in some of the finest blank verse in the language, and in a diction that perhaps comes as close as poetry can come to the language of ordinary men, is Wordsworth's most detailed exposition of the virtues of the rural statesman's life, and of the tragedy of its disappearance.[6]

Bruce Graver carefully traces the relationship of *Michael* to Virgil's *Georgics* and thereby demonstrates that 'Wordsworth has created' a work that is truly unique, 'a poem that is neither wholly pastoral nor wholly georgic, but an essentially new generic hybrid: a georgic

[1] William Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads, and Other Poems, 1797-1800* ed. James Butler and Karen Green (Ithaca, NY, 1992) (hereafter Butler and Green), p. 253. All quotations are from this text.

[2] Karl Kroeber, *Romantic Narrative Art* (Madison, 1960), p. 80.

[3] Geoffrey H. Hartman, *Wordsworth's Poetry 1787-1814* (New Haven and London, 1964 and 1971), p. 261.

[4] Stephen Maxfield Parrish, *The Art of the Lyrical Ballads* (Cambridge, MA, 1973) (hereafter Parrish), p. 182.

[5] Parrish 180.

[6] David Simpson, *Wordsworth's Historical Imagination: The Poetry of Displacement* (New York, 1987) (hereafter Simpson), p. 141.

pastoral'.[7] Graver shows how *Michael* as 'generic hybrid' reflects much more than Wordsworth's creative development of the pastoral; the poem participates in Wordsworth's quest for a richer poetics.

Though there is some negative commentary on Michael as a father,[8] most critics see the poem positively as arresting, poignant and real. The poem's rather direct and complex social commentary has received varied but generally very positive evaluation. This area of criticism is especially interesting because, as one studies the varieties of critical approaches to the social doctrine so central to *Michael*, one immediately realizes that this narrative poem is an emphatically rhetorical work.[9] Wordsworth's *Michael* definitely is 'poetry that has a palpable design upon us', to use the famous expression of Keats.[10] I find that the success of *Michael* as poetry lies in its sophisticated and intricately rhetorical urgency. The argumentative force in the poem is felt immediately. Wordsworth is a honest, not a covert, rhetorician. His skill lies in the art of his rhetoric, an art so winning that great rhetoric and great poetry fuse perfectly and one artistic structure emerges as text.

Two masterful achievements enable *Michael* to be such a rhetorical and simultaneously poetic success, the poet-narrator and his skill in graphic description. Wordsworth's voice in *Michael* is special and his descriptive prowess amazingly captious. Don Bialostosky has demonstrated how one of Wordsworth's narratological methods in his 'poetics of speech' is that 'the poet speaks himself and impersonates the voices of others. . . .'[11]

[7] Bruce E. Graver, 'Wordsworth's Georgic Pastoral: *Otium* and *Labor* in "Michael"', *European Romantic Review* 1 (1991) 119-34 (hereafter Graver), p. 119.

[8] John P. Bushnell, '"Where is the Lamb for a Burnt Offering?": Michael's Covenant and Sacrifice', *The Wordsworth Circle* 12 (1981) 246-52 (hereafter Bushnell), builds on Sheldon Halpern's criticism of Michael as a domineering father, '"Michael": Wordsworth's Pastoral of Common Man', *Notre Dame English Journal* 8 (1972) 22-33. Bushnell holds that Michael is blindly attached to his land and that, despite his affection for Luke, he 'excludes' him from his 'world' and 'chooses solitude over family', p. 249. As I hope to show, I see Michael as a tragic figure precisely because he cares so deeply for *both* his son and his property.

[9] Michael H. Friedman, *The Making of a Tory Humanist: William Wordsworth and the Idea of Community* (New York, 1979); see esp. pp. 186-90 and 202. Friedman gives an excellent account of late eighteenth-century social history and points out, 'As social history "Michael" is relatively accurate' (p. 187). He also notes that works like *The Idiot Boy*, *The Thorn*, *Michael* and *The Brothers* 'were meant to correct the false and shallow conceptions that the governing class had . . .' (p. 202). James K. Chandler, *Wordsworth's Second Nature: A Study of the Poetry and Politics* (Chicago, 1984), sees *Michael* as a testimonial to Wordsworth's doctrine of the transmission of culture, '"Michael" is a tradition that describes and enacts a tradition'; the poem's 'special character is the relation it establishes between the various senses of tradition thus invoked' (p. 162; see also pp. 163-8, 180, 287-9). See Simpson for detailed discussion of the economic realities of the Lake District at the end of the eighteenth century. Simpson's view is that Wordsworth sacrificed realistic detail for the sake of a story that makes Michael more than mere victim of economic oppression but an agent in his own fall (pp. 141-9).

[10] Letter to John Hamilton Reynolds, 3 February 1818, John Keats, *Selected Poems and Letters* ed. Douglas Bush (Cambridge, Mass., 1959), p. 263. The connection between *Michael* as social document with a political-economic purpose and *Michael* as poem is richly detailed by Marjorie Levinson, *Wordsworth's great period poems: Four essays* (Cambridge, 1986), 'Spiritual economics: a reading of "Michael"', pp. 58-79, 147-52. I am much indebted to the way Levinson separates the social-political central narrative from 'the editorial commentary supplied in the poem's frame (lines 1-39 and 448-82)' (p. 60). My line of analysis differs somewhat from hers: 'Michael's tragedy figures as a blessed instruction. . . . The reader is urged to believe that Michael's existence is consummated by the poetic articulation of that existence' (pp. 75-6). As will be shown ahead, I see the text's essential nature as tragic and its poetic and tragic features developing organically throughout the entire poem.

[11] Don H. Bialostosky, *Making Tales: The Poetics of Wordsworth's Narrative Experiments* (Chicago, 1984) (hereafter Bialostosky), pp. 14 and 13.

Bialostosky offers a sample of approving critics who find the narrator in *Michael* to be one of Wordsworth great poetic voices. He is especially impressed with the way the narrator has distanced himself from certain aspects of his material. But, though 'tactful in his explanations', he is 'certainly not unobtrusive'.[12] Still, the narrative voice is hardly domineering or pedantic. Though committed to every facet of Michael's person and tale, this narrator does not moralize and respects us as readers, 'as people capable of judging his meaning on our own'.[13]

Bialostosky is valuable for his emphasis on the distanced yet involved narrator in *Michael* because it is that seemingly contradictory dynamic, being engaged and detached simultaneously, that makes the rhetoric of *Michael* so formidable and yet so interesting. To see just how rhetorically committed Wordsworth is in this poem, we need only note his letter to Charles Fox, the liberal politician. The letter was sent with complimentary copies of the two volumes of *Lyrical Ballads* (1800). Wordsworth honours Fox for 'sensibility of heart' and concern for human beings 'as individuals'. He recommends *Lyrical Ballads* especially because of *Michael* and *The Brothers*,[14] poems which are 'faithful copies from nature', made by Wordsworth 'that they may excite profitable sympathies in many kind and good hearts, and may in some small degree enlarge our feelings of reverence for our species, and our knowledge of human nature. . . .'[15]

Given the comments of Bialostosky and others on the 'tact' of the narrative voice in *Michael*,[16] one wonders how such an emotively charged rhetorical goal could be achieved. The poem's purpose is to excite 'profitable sympathies' in the reader, and these 'sympathies' are to be of a special nature. Wordsworth hopes to demonstrate 'that our best qualities' are found among those whom we are 'too apt to consider' in ways by 'which they manifestly differ from us'.[17]

Wordsworth does not claim *Michael* and *The Brothers* demonstrate or prove; these poems simply present their meaning with frank directness: 'In the two Poems . . . I have attempted to draw a picture of the domestic affections as I know they exist amongst a class of men who are now almost confined to the North of England.'[18] Further on Wordsworth says he wants 'to shew that men who do not wear fine cloaths can feel deeply' and that these 'poems are faithful copies from nature'.[19] His method is basically a sharing of his vision and experience at as graphic a level as language can supply. His method is as egalitarian as his goal. If only we can see what he sees in the regular course of his daily life, we can sympathize, care, and identify as he does.

The success of *Michael*, its appeal despite and even because of its argumentative insistence, thus derives from these two facets of the text, Wordsworth's special narrative voice and the

[12] Bialostosky 100; see also pp. 96-7, 191-2.

[13] Bialostosky 101.

[14] William Wordsworth, *Wordsworth's Literary Criticism* ed. W. J. B. Owen (London, 1974) (hereafter *WLC*), p. 100.

[15] *WLC* 102.

[16] '[T]he story . . . is cleanly told, with the least intervention of the author . . .' (Hartman 262); speaking of how 'close to heartbreak' Michael is at the end of the tale, Hartman says 'we feel it in the absolute tact with which the poet begins to describe him . . .' (p. 265). See also William Wordsworth, *The Ruined Cottage, The Brothers, Michael* ed. Jonathan Wordsworth (Cambridge, 1985) (hereafter Jonathan Wordsworth), pp. 22, 25-6.

[17] *WLC* 102.

[18] *WLC* 101.

[19] *WLC* 102.

descriptive vividness so abundantly textured in the poem. This vividness is a key rhetorical device called *enargia.* Richard Lanham defines this device, well known among the ancients, as follows. *Enargia* is '[a] generic term for visually powerful, vivid description which recreates something or someone, as several theorists say, "before your very eyes"'.[20] Lanham cites several rhetorical figures associated with *enargia.* Three of these also prove important in the success of *Michael, characterismus,* or '[d]escription of the body or mind',[21] *geographia,* '[d]escription of the earth',[22] and *ethopoeia,* 'delineation of character', and in some instances, '[p]utting oneself in the place of another, so as to both understand and express that person's feelings more vividly. . . .'[23]

Jack Stillinger reminds us that, in their classic text *Understanding Poetry,* Brooks and Warren point out the power of Wordsworth's narrative skills. It is through his insistent but unostentatious 'accumulation of detail' that Wordsworth enables us to understand Michael.[24] The narrator 'does not insist on the pathos, but lets the reader discover it for himself'.[25]

But what is at stake in *Michael* is more than the pathetic. Here is a tale which argues an economic theory: material independence is absolutely required as the essential basis for the domestic feelings Wordsworth has made the subject of his poem. For Michael, his very identity as a human being as well as his freedom as a human agent results from his identification with his land. The poem must not only enable us to sympathize with Michael, but to empathize with his attachment to his land. Thus the wealth of description: the cottage, The Evening Star, the lamp, the sheep shearing, the sheepfold itself are all important so that we feel at home in Michael's world, that we in some way are his environmental and emotional kin.

The elaborate induction at the beginning of the poem arouses the reader to imaginative and empathetic identification. We are led up a mountain, as noted above, but we are also led into a special world which narratologically is equivalent to Alice's going through the looking glass. The voice urges us into an imagistic recovery of the world that belonged to Michael:

> The Mountains have all open'd out themselves,
> And made a hidden valley of their own.
> No habitation there is seen; but such
> As journey thither find themselves alone
> With a few sheep, with rocks and stones, and kites
> That overhead are sailing in the Sky.
> It is in truth an utter solitude,
> Nor should I have made mention of this Dell
> But for one object which you might pass by,
> Might see and notice not. Beside the brook

[20] Richard A. Lanham, *A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms* (2nd ed., Berkeley, 1991) (hereafter Lanham), p. 64. See also John Garetson Dings, *The Mind in Its Place: Wordsworth, Michael and the Poetry of 1800* (Salzburg, 1973) (hereafter Dings), for the view that 'the poem . . . is chiefly a portrait rather than a story . . .' (p. 127); the poem focusses heavily on objects by which we 'remember' Michael (p. 128); the poet 'builds a portrait in the reader's mind. . . . [And this] is accomplished . . . by an act of sympathetic imagination' (p. 130); we 're-create [Michael's] . . . life for ourselves . . .' (p. 132).

[21] Lanham 33.

[22] Lanham 81.

[23] Lanham 71.

[24] *William Wordsworth Selected Poems and Prefaces* ed. Jack Stillinger (Boston, 1965), p. 525.

[25] Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren, *Understanding Poetry* (Rev. ed., New York, 1951), p. 37.

There is a straggling Heap of unhewn stones;
And to that place a Story appertains,
Which, though it be ungarnish'd with events,
Is not unfit, I deem, for the fire-side
Or for the summer shade. (ll. 7-21)

Wordsworth's narrator does not say, 'Once upon a time a man named Michael lived in a particular place', etc. The narrator locates us in that place. The skilful use of the present tense enables us to be in Green-head Gill now: 'Mountains have all open'd', present perfect with present force; 'is seen'; 'such . . . find'; 'overhead are'; '[i]t is . . . solitude'; 'is a straggling Heap'; 'a Story appertains'. Interestingly, though the tale of Michael 'appertains' here and now to what the narrator would have us believe are the ruins of his sheepfold, the voice also admits that this tale was told when the voice was a child and that the voice then was more attached to the locale of the story than to the shepherd protagonist. And here we have a major illustration of the voice as committed narrator. We are introduced to both a place and a process. The voice would teach us as it was taught. We enter upon a tale and a tirocinium.

It is also the *enargia* of our being located in the story that adds enormous force to the narrator's identification with his audience. The story can be told anywhere, any time, 'fire-side / Or for the summer shade'. But the audience presumably is select: 'a few natural hearts', or even more select because the story is told 'with yet fonder feeling, for the sake / Of youthful Poets, who among these Hills / Will be my second Self when I am gone' (ll. 20-39). But to claim a highly selected audience is a bit disingenuous because the tale is told so openly. The reader, any reader, need only be alert in order to see what the narrator sees and thus be able to climb up and into the locale of the story. The rhetoric is sweeping; any reader can be one of the 'natural hearts' or even - metaphorically - 'youthful Poets' who will be heirs of the narrator in handing on the tale. Just as the narrator is Michael's heir and succeeds Luke,[26] so any sensitive reader can succeed to the office of poet and be the narrator's heir if the reader attends to the 'straggling Heap of unhewn stones' (l. 17). These are the remnants and symbol of Michael and his story. '[To] see and notice' carefully (l. 16) these stones and the world they symbolize are at the heart of being Michael's heir.

But argumentatively the reader must do more than see and empathize. Michael's world is not only his home but it embodies a kind of fundamental economic order. The poem asks the reader to cherish the basics of that order if not the actual details by which it works. Michael risks his son in order to save his patrimony. We can fault him for so doing, but we must also see that his person is so rooted in his land that his land gives him his identity and the only security and independence he has ever known.

Wordsworth gives us a new pastoral. The bucolic masquerade is over. We have a real shepherd because first of all we have the real world such a shepherd occupies. But simultaneously and using the same *enargistic* elements of realistic presentation, Wordsworth gives us a shepherd hero, a hero whose domain, expertise, and nobility of achievement are so abundantly enriched by that land that together land and shepherd become twin agents in

[26] Hartman eloquently identifies a major goal of the poem: 'But the land cannot retain its hold on Luke's imagination'. Can Wordsworth, 'Michael's true heir', enable us to share in that heirship, through 'restoring the covenant once more by wedding the mind of man to this goodly earth?' (pp. 265-6) Dings is very clear on this point: 'The poet's covenant is of course the poem itself, and by entering into it we agree to be his second self among his hills when he is gone' (p. 125).

a great enterprise. Michael is described as having 'unusual strength' and a 'mind [that] was keen' and 'apt' and he was 'watchful' in all that pertained to a 'Shepherd's calling' (ll. 44-7). He is also presented as almost preternaturally gifted in his sensitivity to his work and the elements in his environment:

> he had learn'd the meaning of all winds,
> Of blasts of every tone, and often-times
> When others heeded not, He heard the South
> Make subterraneous music. . . .
> . . . .
> 'The Winds are now devising work for me!' (ll. 48-55)

Michael's whole life and character are bound up with his land. It was in his 'Fields where with chearful spirits he had breath'd / The common air'; and it was his 'hills . . . which had impress'd / So many incidents upon his mind . . .' (ll. 65-8). It was his land that 'like a book preserv'd the memory' of all he had done in caring for his sheep (ll. 70-4). Here was Michael's existence, his vocation, the core of his personality:

> these fields, these hills
> Which were his living Being even more
> Than his own Blood - what could they less? had lay'd
> Strong hold on his Affections, were to him
> A pleasurable feeling of blind love,
> The pleasure which there is in life itself. (ll. 74-9)

What emerges in this passage is the intimacy of the bonding between nature and Michael. He is her agent and yet she is also his coadjutor. There is a confederacy between them. We are reminded of nature's vital and directive presence in *Tintern Abbey* and *The Prelude.*

The emphasis Wordsworth places on the bonding between Michael and his land, the degree to which his identity is tied up with his patrimony, takes us back to his letter to Fox. Wordsworth hopes that *Michael* and *The Brothers* will 'enlarge our feelings of reverence for our species'.[27] But Wordsworth also speaks of the economic order that is reflected in these poems, the pastoral world of the north of England. The protagonists in these narratives are like many of his neighbours 'small independent *proprietors* of land . . . called statesmen' (his italics). These men are virtually identified in and through the property they possess:

> they are proprietors of small estates . . . descended to them from their ancestors. . . . Their little tract of land serves as a kind of permanent rallying point for their domestic feelings, as a tablet upon which they are written. . . . It is a fountain fitted to the nature of social man from which supplies of affection, as pure as his heart was intended for, are daily drawn.[28]

Very clearly the letter to Fox is a direct commentary on Michael's attachment to his land. But Wordsworth's letter to Fox does not necessarily argue a particular agrarian system any more than *Michael* as a pastoral sustains a particular pastoral mode. It is arguable that *Michael* as pastoral eludes the kind of precise economic detail that would turn it into direct or realistic social commentary. As Simpson points out, Wordsworth is concerned with the

[27] *WLC* 102.
[28] *WLC* 101.

power of human motivation, with 'a high degree of self-determination' on the part of Michael, not with economic forces.[29]

What Michael represents, idealizes, and symbolically argues for, is the kind of community and economic independence that land ownership makes possible. Wordsworth is concerned with domestic feelings and their possible disappearance. Such feelings are tied to 'the spirit of independence' cherished by his neighbours, pastoral or otherwise, their 'almost sublime conviction of the blessings of independent domestic life'.[30]

Ultimately what Wordsworth wants *Michael* to argue is the principle he urges Fox to continue to champion: 'You have felt that the most sacred of all property is the property of the Poor'.[31] That property enables people to be independent and such independence is a primary basis for 'the blessings of independent domestic life', the *locus* of domestic affections.

In terms of the doctrine of independence and community which Wordsworth argues, land tenure is crucial; for Michael it is an absolute. But here in his attachment we see a paradox. So far the poem has enabled us, with a holistic sensibility, to sympathize with and respect Michael's world. But the strength of the narrative without any editorial voicing also enables us to perceive the dangers in that attachment. Michael's land secures his freedom, but that same land tethers him to itself by strong emotional ties. Wordsworth now discloses the darker side of heritage. There is an argumentative logic as well as a plot in the progress of the poem. For Michael, his sheep farm is indeed a 'rallying point', 'a tablet', 'a fountain . . . [with] supplies of affection, as pure as his heart was intended for. . . .'[32] He has become absolutely one with his land. When his nephew defaults and his land is threatened, Michael cries out to Isabel:

> 'I have been toiling more than seventy years,
> And in the open sunshine of God's love
> Have we all lived, yet if these fields of ours
> Should pass into a Stranger's hand, I think
> That I could not lie quiet in my grave.' (ll. 238-42)

At first he speaks of himself and further on he speaks of the land:

> 'When I began, my purpose was to speak
> Of remedies and of a chearful hope.
> Our Luke shall leave us, Isabel; the land
> Shall not go from us, and it shall be free,
> He shall possess it free as is the wind
> That passes over it.' (ll. 252-7)

The land shall be free, but Luke must be indentured that it may be free. There is an ominous ring in the way Michael speaks of Luke's leaving and his ultimate possession of the land: 'He shall possess it free as is the wind . . . '; the daring simile would seem to prophesy certain failure. Here ineluctably the poem's logic brings about a metamorphosis; our pastoral has become a species of domestic tragedy. Graver has already persuasively observed that *Michael*

[29] Simpson 144.
[30] *WLC* 101.
[31] *WLC* 101.
[32] *WLC* 101.

is a 'georgic hybrid',[33] a pastoral with the moral purpose and didactic force of georgic poetry. He also suggests an added dimension of seriousness in the poem because it reflects both Michael's failure as shepherd and Wordsworth's own concern over the worth of his own poetic vocation.[34]

The term tragedy is often used in connection with *Michael.* Jonathan Wordsworth calls it 'a sternly tragic poem'.[35] The term is fully justified because the poem's rich detail firmly establishes the classic excellence of Michael as protagonist. He possesses 'age, dignity, and passionate integrity of life', but he is '[t]oo strongly identified with his land'.[36] But the argumentative thrust of the poem establishes other figures as full participants in real tragedy. The land, the patrimony of Michael and Luke, by its austere power and hold on Michael's affections contends against Michael's full concern for Luke. The poem is authentically tragic because it presents a special form of conflict of wills and especially a conflict in the will of Michael.

In speaking of domestic tragedy, I do not suggest any great deliberateness on Wordsworth's part to appropriate theatrical domestic tragedy to pastoral poetry or to use anything other than a reflexive impulse that reminds any writer that tragedy in the broad sense is frequently associated with all kinds of genres, fiction, drama, ballad, etc. Wordsworth pursues the tragic motif with directness and vigour. The special locale of the sheepfold in Green-head Gill, 'a hidden valley' (l. 8), suggests a kind of fate operating in the background of Michael's story. Michael's age reminds us of Biblical narratives but also adds to the stature of Michael as exotic parent and natural patriarch.

Michael's relationship with his land, as we have seen, is so absolute it is as though the very land itself is a fourth character in the narrative. His family's relationship with their patrimony seems to echo mythology. In his final discourse with Luke, Michael recounts how his zealous care of his son was but repayment for a 'gift' he had received:

> 'I still
> Remember them who lov'd me in my youth.
> Both of them sleep together: here they liv'd
> As all their Forefathers had done, and when
> At length their time was come they were not loth
> To give their bodies to the family mold.
> I wish'd that thou should'st live the life they liv'd.' (ll. 375-81)

Further on he speaks of his own coming of age and coming into his inheritance. When he speaks of his parents joining the earth, surrendering their 'bodies to the family mold', Michael does not seem so much as to inherit and possess, but as to take on custodial responsibilities:

> 'These fields were burthen'd when they came to me,
> 'Till I was forty years of age, not more
> Than half of my inheritance was mine.
> I toil'd and toil'd; God bless'd me in my work
> And 'till these three weeks past the land was free,

[33] Graver 129.

[34] Graver 129-30.

[35] Jonathan Wordsworth 26. I am much indebted to Mary Wedd for many of my ideas on 'Michael' as a tragedy.

[36] Jonathan Wordsworth 21.

- It looks as if it never could endure
Another master. Heaven forgive me, Luke,
If I judge ill for thee, but it seems good
That thou should'st go.' (ll. 384-92)

We should note that it is the land which is '"burthen'd"' and not that Michael is in debt. He worked to discharge the debt so that the land might be '"free"'. It is the land itself which seems incapable of accepting '"Another master"'. The powerful personification bespeaks a personage ancient and determining. The aura of fate hanging about the land and Michael's family is intensified.

Michael is tragically ensnared. He sends Luke off because the land and its destiny seem to require his going, and yet - like the biblical story of Abraham and Isaac also suggested here[37] - Michael seems to know very clearly that he is sending Luke away forever. This pained dismissal of his son is poignantly marked in the lines shortly to follow where Michael asks Luke to lay the first stone, '"[L]et this Sheep-fold be / Thy anchor and thy shield . . . An emblem of the life thy Fathers liv'd . . . "' (ll. 417-20). The overhanging force of fate particularly intrudes as Michael prophetically anticipates his son's defection and yet Michael pledges to love his son always. He begins speaking of the sheepfold, but its symbolic importance is dimmed in the glowing warmth of a father's pledge of absolutely unconditional love:

'Now fare thee well:
When thou return'st thou in this place wilt see
A work which is not here, a covenant
'Twill be between us - but whatever *fate*
Befall thee, I shall love thee to the last,
And bear thy memory with me to the grave.' (ll. 422-7; my italics)

The tragic nature of *Michael* becomes painfully clear in this leave-taking scene with Luke (ll. 332-433). Here too, sharply etched, are key features of the intriguing and highly suggestive characterization of Luke. Though I would agree with the possible Abraham and Isaac biblical echoes in seeing *Michael* as tragic, I veer away from the interpretation of Bushnell:

> Michael seems to me a perverse hero. . . . [He is] darkly contradictory, for while wholeheartedly embracing a natural tie between himself and the land, he turns away from other natural ties of love, especially between himself and his son. . . . [H]e *cannot* integrate his love for his son (or anyone) into the love he bears for his property. His ties with Nature have led to the need to maintain a specific way of life and to a consequent exclusion of other human beings.[38]

Michael fails to rouse Luke to a sustained attachment to their patrimony, but not because he cannot share his affection for his land with his son. The process of affective identification of the land with Luke and Luke with the land has already started. As we shall see, Michael's zealous tutelage of Luke, though problematic, has already begun to bear fruit. In much of the critical discussion of *Michael*, too little attention has been paid to Wordsworth's deft characterization of Luke. As the poem develops and assumes a more solemn tone, Luke

[37] Bushnell 246-8 and 250-2; Peter J. Manning, '"Michael", Luke, and Wordsworth', *Criticism* 19 (1977) 195-211 (hereafter Manning), p. 202.

[38] Bushnell 251; his italics.

emerges in quiet but firm contrast to the richly embossed presence of Michael. The text denies us access to Luke with any fullness and that denial adds to the tragic character of the poem. But the text discloses certain key features which tell us much. These will be examined ahead.

This section of the poem, the departure rite of Luke, a scene characterized by Peter Manning as a 'ritual': Michael wishes to incorporate Luke 'into the changeless pattern of his family',[39] contains some of Wordsworth's most eloquent poetry. Here *enargia* takes on the added dimensions of *characterismus* and *ethopoeia* whereby the rhetoric reveals the intimate details of the mind of the subject of the discourse.[40] In this long sequence Michael recounts the history of his relationship with his son, the joy in the lad's birth, their companionship: '"[W]e were playmates, Luke; among these hills . . ."' (l. 363). This reference recalls an earlier comment of the narrator, 'Old Michael, while he [Luke] was a Babe in arms, / Had done him female service . . .' (ll. 163-4). Michael reminds Luke that he never lacked '"any pleasure which a boy can know"' (l. 366). At this comment Luke 'sobb'd aloud' (l. 368), and here we find one of the few instances in the poem when a serious reaction of Luke is directly revealed.

Michael goes on and recounts the history of his family and the present necessity of sending Luke to a relative. Michael also comments that he knows Luke would never wish to leave him, but Michael also admits that Luke's '"heart these two weeks has been beating fast / With many hopes - it should be so - yes - yes . . ."' (ll. 408-9). Here we have a second reaction directly attributed to Luke in this context, and the only other recounts Luke's stooping and laying '[t]he first stone of the Sheep-fold . . .' (l. 430). The next morning, the boy 'put on a bold face' and went off to London (l. 436), a final suggestion of Luke's dispositions.

From lines 88 to 456, Luke is clearly a dominative person in the narrative reference. However, though he is richly characterized, he is presented with amazing understatement. Not one word spoken by the lad is recorded in the entire poem. Perhaps the most dramatic revelation of Luke's feelings comes, as we just saw, in his tears as his father recounts their life together. One of the few instances when we catch his thoughts comes when his mother expresses alarm at Luke's leaving; he is their only child. To her plea, '"[D]o not go away, / For if thou leave thy Father he will die"', Luke's response is strange: 'The Lad made answer with a jocund voice . . .' (ll. 307-9).

Luke's characterization is subtle but informative. His reaction to his mother is consistent with the mischievous little boy who apparently - despite his father's reproofs - enjoyed teasing the sheep while they were being shorn (ll. 180-6). In a passage not used in the final version of *Michael*,[41] there is a marvellous sequence depicting Michael and Luke on the heights of a mountain after it had snowed all night. In his glee the boy had caused his father to be distracted a bit from his serious purposes. Luke would send snowballs rolling down the mountain side and, as they broke apart and fanned out, 'the lad would whoop for joy . . .' (l. 21). There is a paragraph of description just in the word 'whoop'.

The final text reveals a number of instances in which Luke is a close companion to Michael. The most touching of these describes Luke's early duties 'as a Watchman'. He was 'equipp'd' with 'a perfect Shepherd's Staff', and was to control the passing of the sheep. In these instances he was '[s]omething between a hindrance and a help' (ll. 193-9).

[39] Manning 201.

[40] Lanham 33 and 71.

[41] Butler and Green 327.

Their relationship was possibly marred by one trying element, Michael's incessant hard work.[42] The whole family was famous, 'as a proverb in the vale / For endless industry' (ll. 96-7). They worked all day and then into the night (ll. 104-11). It is not surprising that Luke was delighted when the invitation came from their London relative: 'Nor was there at that time on English Land / A prouder heart than Luke's' (ll. 324-5).

We can understand the lad's mixed feelings at leaving the security of home; he wept when reminded of his father's close association with him. But we can also understand and perhaps sympathize with his not sharing, or possibly not *yet* being able to share his father's absolute commitment to land and family heritage.

I hardly think Michael can be seriously faulted for anything in his relationship with his son. Wordsworth is careful and detailed in documenting Michael's love for Luke from his birth: there were 'acts of tenderness . . . he had rock'd / His cradle with a woman's gentle hand' (ll. 167-8). The narrative voice is eloquent in attesting to Michael's deep and constant affection for his son as he matures. The voice balances the movements of Michael's heart for Luke, the 'hope' the boy brings necessarily to an aged father (l. 155), with the plain and fundamental affection of a father for his son. This latter is beautifully rendered with biblical and classical solemnity as 'that instinctive tenderness, the same / Blind Spirit, which is in the blood of all' (ll. 152-3); and again in summary the voice intones:

From such and other causes to the thoughts
Of the old Man his only Son was now
The dearest object that he knew on earth.
Exceeding was the Love he bare to him,
His Heart and his Heart's Joy! (ll. 158-62)

From the age of ten the boy became a working associate with his father. He 'could stand / Against the mountain blasts . . .' (ll. 204-5), and willingly, it surely would seem, shared his father's work and accepted his destiny. But we do not know. This is perhaps related to 'the silences in the poem' referred to by Manning.[43] What is clear, however, is that the lad had transformed Michael's world. Here again the declamatory emphasis of the narrative voice underscores the rhetorical force of our tale and contributes to its ultimately tragic configuration:

[W]hy should I relate
That objects which the Shepherd lov'd before
Were dearer now? That from the Boy there came
Feelings and emanations, things which were
Light to the sun, and music to the wind,
And that the Old Man's Heart seem'd born again. (ll. 208-13)

Even nature, the sun and wind, enthusiastic avuncular witnesses, share in the joy Luke brings Michael. The presence of sun and wind remind us of the agency of fate that seems to brood about the land and Michael's family destiny. What are the 'objects . . . dearer now?' What part of Michael's patrimony has Luke begun to invest with his spirit or the shaping of his

[42] Bushnell 248; Graver 127.

[43] Manning 195; Manning details key difficulties in Michael's relationship with Luke, especially the lad's insecurities and ultimate failure, pp. 200-8; I shall focus on the lack of communication, possibly the most acute of the 'silences' in the poem.

labour and skill? We do not know, but we see a complex young man emerging. He has won his father's heart and has begun to shape his father's world. He must 'put on a bold face' as he goes to meet the world, and here he is like most of us as we went away from home for the first time. But Luke's pride has been kindled and his heart beats faster in expectation. And here again, is Luke that different from most eighteen-year-olds (l. 125) who are offered a chance for change and adventure?

Simpson describes how challenging the economic status was for shepherds in the Lake District in the general time frame of Wordsworth's narrative. But Simpson also emphasizes how unspecific Wordsworth is in blaming particular outside forces for Michael's difficulties.[44] He suggests that Michael's 'family tragedy [is] largely self-incurred', even though 'Michael . . . could hardly have done otherwise than help his kinsman'.[45]

It seems logical, then, that Wordsworth would have at least a vague sense of how hard a shepherd's life was and he had his personal experiences and convictions about the state of London, thus he would have Luke tempted to go off from home and then be corrupted by the handy vices of urban life. The last reference directly revealing Luke's feelings, '[T]he Boy / Wrote loving letters full of wondrous news . . .' (ll. 441-2), offers no more than what one would expect. It is the lad's speedy collapse and running off in shame that seem startling. The decline and fall and remainder of the boy's life are summarily dispatched in five lines of poetry (ll. 451-6).

At the beginning of this essay we suggested that the attraction of *Michael* lies in the artistry of its argument, a rhetoric so supple and warm that it constitutes a poetic resonance in itself. The thrust of the argument, its voice and *enargia* so make use of the narrative materials of the poem, the locale, plot, people, that these materials themselves became persuasive powers. We have come to see and feel what Michael's world meant and we have felt the affective appeal of the contours of his life. In all this we are reminded of Kenneth Burke's illustrative dictum on the capacities of *enargia*:

> Paper need not *know the meaning* of fire in order to burn. But in the 'idea' of fire there is a persuasive ingredient. By this route something of the rhetorical motive comes to lurk in every 'meaning'. . . . [W]herever there is 'meaning', there is 'persuasion'.[46]

But we have also noticed that Michael is so attached to his world, its intrinsic demands and textures, that this world has largely determined his personality. We almost became partisans with him in all he sought and did, but because the narrative voice by its genius of counterpointed gestures of commitment to the tale of Michael and almost simultaneous gestures of courteous withdrawal has allowed us to see that world in all of its tedious demands, we have come to realize that ironic forces are at work and that the new pastoral has become domestic tragedy. The very textual agents that substantiated Michael as a heroic human being, also simultaneously, like admonishing choric voices, have enabled us to realize how heavily entailed Michael's inheritance is especially in its fateful familial demands upon him. We have come to see, as the tale reaches its conclusion, Michael himself sacrificing the last member of that family in an effort to save, whole and entire, what the family had built up over generations.

[44] Simpson 142-4.

[45] Simpson 148-9.

[46] Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (Berkeley, 1969), p. 172, his italics; Burke uses the spelling '*enargeia*', p. 171.

It would seem as though Wordsworth is subverting his own text. In his letter to Fox he claims that the 'property of the Poor' must be cherished and saved because it forms a 'permanent rallying point for their domestic feelings, as a tablet upon which they are written which makes them objects of memory in a thousand instances when they would otherwise be forgotten.'[47] But Wordsworth has forgotten, or perhaps through the power of irony, he wants to emphasize, two necessary co-agents which must also work in conjunction with place in order that people may identify emotively with one another and truly bond with one another as family.

Wordsworth does not speak of time to Fox and yet he emphasizes time so strongly at the beginning of his tale. Long before he could identify with shepherds, when 'yet a boy' he was led by 'Nature, by the gentle agency / Of natural objects' to care for - eventually - 'man, the heart of man, and human life' (ll. 27-33). All this took time. Has Luke been allowed enough time and enough experience to come to understand and cherish not simply his father and their ancestral world, but especially his father and that world as they are so necessarily constituted in and by and through each other?[48]

Time reminds us of Luke's youth and callow state, and these in turn remind us of another association made with Luke, that of the Prodigal Son.[49] Here we should recall two key instances when Luke's character is clearly revealed. When the invitation came from the family kinsman to go to London, Luke's 'heart' bounded with pride (l. 325). When Michael bids his son goodbye, he admits Luke's '"heart . . . has been beating fast / With many hopes . . ."' (ll. 408-9). These simple instances betray Luke's eagerness to leave his home.[50]

When we put these instances together with the pictures of a lively boy working with his father, and the young man who could react to his mother's worries with a jocular dismissal, we have a lad who very much has a mind of his own. Tragedy is constantly configured through irony. The patrimony Michael wants to share with Luke is seen by Wordsworth as one of the typical 'properties' of statesmen, to be honoured as the foundation for 'the spirit of independence', and a source for 'domestic affections'.[51] How ironic if Michael occasions in Luke a taste for a fuller freedom than the land can give and a curiosity about community beyond his home. We cannot be sure, but the tragic power of the poem lies in its suggestiveness with respect to Luke.

Luke's youth and opaque ambitions lead to a second element required that a family can function as a sustaining community: language or discourse. We recall Luke's almost silent presence in the text, and we must notice again in this regard Wordsworth's letter to Fox and especially its quotation from the rhetorician Quintilian: 'Pectus enim est quod disertos facit, et vis mentis. Ideoque imperitis quoque, si modo sint aliquo affectu concitati, verba non desunt.'[52] These lines can be translated as follows: 'It is [the heart] feeling and the force of the mind which make people eloquent. Even uneducated people can speak out if only they are strongly moved'. The reason for the quotation is to illustrate the thesis Wordsworth's letter urges in general: even humble folk can feel deeply. But the special pertinence of this

[47] *WLC* 101.
[48] Bialostosky 102.
[49] Manning 202-3.
[50] Manning 200.
[51] *WLC* 101.
[52] *WLC* 102.

comment to *Michael* goes beyond the feelings of ordinary people and foregrounds expression[53] and even poetic utterance. These too are possible for everyone.

As we noted, one of the most eloquent passages in the poem is Michael's final discourse with Luke. He forgives his son in anticipation of anything that may happen; he pledges to bear the boy's memory with him even to the grave. The diction is colloquial, familial, '"When thou, a feeding babe, didst in thy joy / Sing at thy Mother's breast"' (ll. 358-9); '"But we were playmates, Luke; . . . in us the old and young / Have play'd together . . ."' (ll. 363-5). The boy sobs and Michael's mild reproof is also homely and kind, '"Nay do not take it so - I see / That these are things of which I need not speak"' (ll. 369-70).

The imagery is direct and biblical: '"[T]hou art the same / That wert a promise to me ere thy birth"' (ll. 343-4); his parents lived as had theirs before them, '"and when / At length their time was come they were not loth / To give their bodies to the family mold"' (ll. 378-80); Michael poignantly characterizes Luke's affection, '"[T]hou hast been bound to me / Only by links of love . . ."' (ll. 411-12).

Peter Manning reminds us that all that remains of Michael's world is '"A Pastoral Poem", a literary landscape, a creation of the mind'.[54] He further observes that our vision, sharpened through the experience of the world of this poem, shows us something of the 'insufficiency of nature', 'an elegy for the securities we all no longer know'.[55] Graver ends on a similarly solemn note, 'Wordsworth's georgic rewriting of pastoral elegy thus leaves us with little consolation'.[56]

Despite Manning and Graver, I find *Michael* a powerfully positive poem and even in the light of its tragic nature because of that second co-agent required for a pastoral or any world in order that it may be humanly sustaining. Michael's beautiful discourse to and with Luke and the textual quietude that follows in the rest of the poem point out how crucial verbal sharing is. There are several references in the text to Michael's offering Luke directions and at times reproof. Even when the lad began with his staff his fumbling chores as helper to his father, even then he did not always secure 'from his Father hire of praise' (l. 201).

At the end Michael proves himself a poet with a biblical eloquence. But his discourse is also real, filled with kindly repetitions and embarrassed dislocations and homely turns of phrase. It is 'language really used by men' and it is surely also poetry of the highest kind.

One cannot help but wonder, since the question is so true to most lives, what might have happened if Michael had spoken thus more often with his son? As important as the land is, it is poetry that has always made the pastoral. Even in its effete, exhausted stages, pastoral poetry always had some kind of hold on the imagination. *Michael* reminds us how important poetry is in all human contexts. Wordsworth's Preface enunciates the doctrine that 'the real language of men' can be poetic. Michael's last discourse with Luke demonstrates how such poetry comes to be.

It is assumed that the tragedy of *Michael* is that Luke is sent away. But there is abundant evidence that Luke has a mind of his own and really was eager to leave. Two things happen to Luke that are not necessarily connected. He does not return and he disgraces himself. He may not have returned in any case. The tragedy of *Michael* is not that Luke is sent away but

[53] Scott Harshbarger, 'The Rhetoric of Improvisation: *Michael* and Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*', *The Wordsworth Circle* 24 (1994) 37-40, provides a commentary on the background and use of Quintilian and comments on the excellence of Michael's final discourse with Luke, pp. 39-40.

[54] Manning 210.

[55] Manning 211.

[56] Graver 132.

that Michael could not persuade him to want to return. We must wonder why it is that Michael's great eloquence, his poetic power, has been muted so long and appears so late in the poem.

Because Wordsworth has composed *Michael* with such care, using so many disparate sources, his rejected versions are worth considering.[57] Among the many texts in the *Michael* MSS not used in the final version, there are three passages which attest to a poetic eloquence in Michael. In one[58] Michael is recorded as reliving his youth as he watches Luke grow up. He shares his feelings with his son: 'he to the present time / Link'd the dear memory of old histories, / Not with the loose and garrulous tongue of age / But even as with a young man's eloquence . . .' (ll. 18-21).

In another rejected passage,[59] Michael is credited with a poet's gifts:

> And if it was his fortune to converse
> With any who could talk of common things
> In an unusual way . . .
> . . . .
> . . . this untaught Shepherd stood
> Before the man with whom he so convers'd
> And look'd at him as with a Poet's eye. (ll. 12-21)

In the final passage, one sent to Tom Poole in 1801 for his advice as to its being included in the next edition of *Lyrical Ballads*,[60] the conversations between Michael and Luke are referred to as being usually 'small interchange of speech', but on other occasions their discussions were 'wise and pleasant', filled with 'shrewd remarks', 'cloth'd in images / Lively and beautiful, in rural forms / That made their conversation fresh and fair . . .' (ll. 2-7).

The text goes on to describe Michael himself:

> and the Shepherd oft
> Would draw out of his heart the obscurities,
> And admirations, that were there, . . .
> . . . .
> . . . [he] would let loose
> His tongue, and give it the mind's freedom, then
> Discoursing in remote imaginations, strong
> Conceits, devices, day-dreams, thoughts and schemes,
> The fancies of a solitary Man! (ll. 8-16)

Given Wordsworth's concern for his text, we cannot help but wonder why he excluded these passages and denied Michael a consistent eloquent resonance in the poem. The Michael in the final version speaks poetically with his son in only the one belated instance. The Cornell editors suggest that Wordsworth may have had his brother John in mind when he speaks of the '"Shepherd . . . with a Poet's eye"' because he had 'memorialized' John 'as "a silent Poet"'.[61]

[57] See Butler and Green 400-3, for an account of the various sources Wordsworth definitely or probably used, everything from tales of Ann Tyson to experiences of previous occupants of Dove Cottage.

[58] Butler and Green 328, 'Among the hills' (DC MS 30).

[59] Butler and Green 330, 'No doubt if you in terms direct had ask'd' (DC MS 31).

[60] Butler and Green 334-5, 467, expansion of *Michael* 131-5 (DC MS 31).

[61] Butler and Green 466.

Is Michael so much '"a silent Poet"' or simply a poet who is also a parent, very private and constrained, 'a solitary Man' too long? Is Michael's tragedy that he became a father so late that his eloquence fails him, that he needs to be prodded to use his gift of language, that for too long his habit has been to deny a voice to his spontaneous feelings?

Does the appeal of 'Michael' arise for us because we all know so well the sad truth that far too often the poetry comes too late?

John Carroll University, Cleveland, Ohio

Society News and Notes from Members

FROM THE HON. SECRETARY

Annual General Meeting

This will take place on Saturday 11 May 1996 at the Mary Ward Centre, Queen Square, London WC1 at 2.30pm. Nominations for officers and members of the Council should reach the Hon. Secretary by 7 May.

Alliance of Literary Societies

The AGM and seminar will be held on Saturday 20 April 1996 at the New Unitarian Hall, Ryland Street, Birmingham, from 10am to 4pm (not 27 April as stated in the programme). The seminar will be hosted by the Housman Society, celebrating the centenary of the publication of *A Shropshire Lad.* As we do not have a CLS meeting in April we hope a contingent from our Society will attend this event. Travelling expenses can be refunded. Details from our ALS representative, Robin Healey, 80 Hall Lane, Great Chishill, Royston SG8 8SM (tel.: 01763 837058) or from me.

If winter comes . . .

Looking forward to summer outings, I have details of guided tours of the George Eliot country, starting from Nuneaton. Elians will be especially interested in a major exhibition on Benjamin Robert Haydon to be held at the Wordsworth Museum, Grasmere, in the summer. I shall be happy to send details of these and other literary events (a SAE would be appreciated). I hope to arrange a tour of Horace Walpole's fascinating Strawberry Hill, Twickenham, on a Sunday afternoon in July or August. The cost would be £3.50 per person, with concessions for senior citizens. Please let me know if you would be interested (0181 940 3837).

1996/7 Programme

We are in touch with the John Clare Society and the Keats-Shelley Memorial Association and hope to include joint meetings in the next programme. Suggestions for speakers/topics will be most welcome. The Dickens Fellowship has a ramble in Brentford led by our member Edward Preston on Saturday 31 August (meet Kew Bridge station at 2pm).

Expanding your library?

We have small stocks of J. E. Morpurgo's excellent *Charles Lamb and Elia* and of Claude Prance's *Companion to Charles Lamb*, as well as a miscellaneous array of books by and about Charles Lamb - the residue of our book sale in April 1995. Please contact me for details.

Lake Poets Society - Greta Hall, Keswick (see Bulletins 89 and 91)

In November we heard from the Secretary regarding progress in establishing Greta Hall as a literary and educational centre. It is hoped to secure funding of some £600,000 from the National Heritage Memorial Fund lottery money, but this depends on raising some £100,000 'partnership funding' by the Society. They were close to obtaining registration as a charity, after which fund-raising will begin in earnest.

Lamb's Birthday Celebration Luncheon

Lamb's birthday was celebrated this year on Saturday 17 February at the Royal College of General Practitioners, Kensington. Professor John Beer presided over the 51 members and guests who attended, including four Grecians from Christ's Hospital - Mark Winnacott, Zoe Palmer, Sally Kirby, and Anna Trapmore. The Guest of Honour was Professor J. R. Watson of Durham University. It was a special pleasure to meet again Mary Balle and her husband from the USA, and M. Michel Jolibois who made the day-trip from Paris via the Channel Tunnel (rather more

speedy than Charles and Mary's journey in 1822!).

The Ultimate Crossword Clue
Faultless piece C. Lamb composed (Impeccable)

Any offers?
The editor of Branwell Brontë's works is looking for possible sources of the following phrases quoted by Branwell: 'To the rendezvous of Nations and queen of the Globe', 'Death's loud and billowy waters', 'something dreadful in the gale', 'at the sweet hour of dawn', 'young dove give play', 'Oh Physician thou dost deserve thy fee', 'Ned o Tims'. If any readers are struck by a shock of recognition could they kindly drop a note to John Beer at Peterhouse, Cambridge CB2 1RD, and he will pass on any information received.

50 Years Ago

from *CLS Bulletin* No.70 (Eleventh Year) March 1946

Charles Lamb and Emma Isola - Letter from Mr Neil Bell to Mr Crowsley
'I notice your subscriptions have gone up so I had better increase my annual tribute. The extra half-crown will perhaps entitle me to a word with your Brains Trust. A question was recently asked its members about my novel of the life and times of Charles Lamb, *So Perish the Roses*. While not in the least admitting my "many errors" in topography nor my "lack of sources", I suggest that such errors in a biography are gross but in a novel trifling. But in the matter of love between Lamb and Emma Isola I submit that the answer of your Brains Trust was dishonest or ignorant. Crabb Robinson says that Mary told him that Charles and Emma loved one another but that the disparity in their ages was too great. And what does the Brains Trust mean by "psychologically erroneous"? That a man of forty and a girl of fourteen could fall in love? Rubbish, it is a commonplace. All the evidence (except to the wilfully blind) points to the love of these two people for one another.'
(*Perhaps the dishonest, ignorant, and wilfully blind Brains Trust had noted that Mary's remark was made on 12 January 1835, when she had just returned from confinement, and that Robinson admitted that 'every other judgement was utterly wild and groundless'. - Editor [1946]*)

from *CLS Bulletin* No.71 (Eleventh Year) May 1946

An article by W[illiam] Kent on *Charles Lamb's Old Familiar Places* ('I wish I could say of these, what Lamb's immortal liar said of the Colossus of Rhodes, that they are a little damaged. Alas, it is otherwise. Scarred would be an understatement: battered they are in truth. This particularly applies to the Temple, wed more to Lamb in the mind of the book-lover than to any other author') is accompanied by an untitled photograph of a man standing in front of a bookcase but with the line 'With cordial greetings from the Editor' printed below. The photograph is clearly of Mr S. M. Rich, who was then the Society's Editor, and his Lamb library. He and it are the subject of two similar photographs and a part-chapter in William Kent's *London for the Literary Pilgrim* (1949) where, at the end of the three-page entry for LAMB, CHARLES (1775-1834), there is a sudden crashing of gears and Kent devotes nearly five pages to THE LAMB OF STREATHAM, Samuel Rich and his collection.

Obituary - Mr Charles Lamb
Mr Charles Lamb of Wood Green, who died on 5 January last, was a frequent attendant at CLS meetings since he joined us over three years ago. We shall miss his cheery presence, and the amused smile with which he invariably greeted references to the identity of his name with that of the Society's hero.