The Charles Lamb Bulletin

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Contents

Editorial

Whether anyone has written at any length before on Clare and Lamb I know not; Scott McEathron's exemplary article places that intriguing friendship in context and explores the implications it has for our reading of their work - we are pleased to present it here. So far as I know, Clare had no contact with Charles Lloyd, but they did have an important friend in common - Charles Lamb. Graeme Stones focusses on Lamb's early life for his essay on *Edmund Oliver*, Lloyd's controversial novel to which Coleridge took so much exception; in doing so, he offers an original and persuasive reading of the recorded facts. Jeffrey Baker too has a story to tell - that of the Pastor from Wordsworth's *Excursion*; his sensitive reading of its subtext is both authentic and moving, and I hope it will prompt readers to reconsider that oft-neglected character. D. E. Wickham is notable not just for his able Chairmanship of this Society; he is also one of the few - if not the last - Elians in the field. I know of no other. As always, his notes come from the front-line of current research, in this case the wilds of north London. The man in the motor parts shop is his leech-gatherer, and their extraordinary encounter (uncannily Elian, in spirit and content) only goes to prove that Elians probably have a good deal more fun in the course of their research than almost any other kind of romantic scholar.

The Hon. Secretary regrets that this number of the *Bulletin* will be distributed without the Programme for the next season, 1996-7. However, details of the relevant dates are provided by her under 'Society Notes and News for Members', page 136 below.

John Clare and Charles Lamb: Friends in the Past

By SCOTT McEATHRON

IN THOMAS HOOD'S remembered tableau of the *London Magazine* dinners of the early 1820s, the figure of John Clare, seated beside Charles Lamb, appears 'shining verdantly out from the grave-coloured suits of the literati, like a patch of turnips amidst stubble and fallow'. When Clare and Lamb walked along together in isolation from the larger group, Hood adds, they made yet a stronger study in contrasts: 'the peasant and Elia, *Sylvanus et Urban*', provoked from bystanders 'the frequent cry of "Look at Tom and Jerry - there goes Tom and Jerry!"'[1] The two men seemed to hail from geographic and temperamental antipodes: Clare the struggling farm-labourer who 'long[ed] for scenes, where man hath never trod',[2] Lamb the 'inveterate old Londoner' and lover of the city's 'multitudinous moving picture'.[3]

Yet while the men's initial rapport was certainly surprising, and almost as certainly enhanced by what another member of the *London Magazine* gatherings called 'the virtues of the grape and the barley-corn',[4] Clare did not perceive their connection as ephemeral or frivolous. For Clare detected in Lamb's 'auncient voice'[5] a sensibility, like his own, attuned to 'the things / Antiquity hath charge of',[6] and in two sonnets to Lamb he explored this perceived sympathy. Written several years apart, the poems identify in Lamb a scorn for the transient and the fashionable, and commend him for being on history's abiding side - the side of remembrance, elegy, and tradition. Yet the weight of passing time and the vagaries of literary celebrity exacted their own toll on the men's friendship, and, by 1830 (the probable date of the second sonnet),[7] Clare's praise of Lamb is tempered by a sense of loss. Clare's final public words to Lamb, almost a decade after their first meeting, suggest that their disparate backgrounds were never completely reconcilable, even in mutual reveries of the past.

The poems are the most telling markers in a relationship that otherwise has few points of reference. Clare may have met Lamb during his first visit to London in March 1820, and the first of the *London Magazine* dinners at which both were present probably took place in May

[1] *Thomas Hood and Charles Lamb: The Story of a Friendship* ed. Walter Jerrold (London, 1930) (hereafter *Friendship*), pp. 112-13.

[2] 'I Am' 13. Citations from Clare's 'I Am', 'An Invite to Eternity', 'The Mores', 'The Flitting', and 'Remembrances', are from *John Clare* ed. Eric Robinson and David Powell (Oxford, 1984). All other excerpts from Clare's poetry, including his two sonnets to Lamb, are from John Clare, *The Midsummer Cushion* ed. R. K. R. Thornton and Anne Tibble (Northumberland, 1990), the only reliable source for much of Clare's middle-period work pending further volumes of Robinson and Powell's collected edition.

[3] *The Letters of Charles and Mary Lamb* ed. E. V. Lucas (3 vols., London, 1935) (hereafter *Lamb Letters*) ii. 327; *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb* ed. E. V. Lucas (7 vols., London, 1903-5) i. 40.

[4] Thomas Griffiths Wainewright, 'Janus Weatherbound; or The Weathercock Steadfast for Lack of Oil', *London Magazine* 7 (1823) 48.

[5] 'To Charles Lamb' 12.

[6] 'The Fairey Rings' 2-3.

[7] This surmise is based on Lamb's sudden prominence in Clare's letters of 1830, discussed in detail later in this essay, and on the sonnet's appearance in the 1830 *British Magazine*; Clare's magazine poems were usually published shortly after their composition.

1822.[8] Shortly thereafter, in the early summer of 1822, Clare sent Lamb copies of his first two volumes of poetry, *Poems Descriptive of Rural Life and Scenery* (1820), and *The Village Minstrel* (1821), both published by John Taylor. He followed this gift with the first Lamb sonnet, 'To Charles Lamb On His Essays', which appeared under the title of 'To Elia' in the *London*'s August number.[9] Lamb responded later that month by sending Clare the 1818 edition of his *Works* and 'such a letter' that, according to Edmund Blunden, 'it became a [Clare] family memory'.[10] This letter also, as I hope to show, complicated their relationship in such a way as to bring Clare to realize that he and Lamb could not fully share a common destiny. Aside from a meeting in July 1824 when Clare visited Colebrooke Cottage, their relationship from this point on was defined by absence: the material circumstances of Lamb's employment in London, Clare's poverty in rural Helpston, and the *London*'s sale in 1825, worked in concert to keep the men apart. Finally Clare's gathering distress over their long separation prompted him to compose the second sonnet, 'To Charles Lamb', published in *The British Magazine* in 1830, but there is no evidence that the men ever actually wrote or spoke again before Lamb's death in 1834. Taylor informed Clare of that news: 'Poor Charles Lamb is dead - perhaps you had not heard it before - He fell down and cut his face against the gravel on the Turnpike Road, which brought on erisypelas, and in a few days carried him off'.[11] Things did not go well on Clare's side either. By 1836 he was severely delusional, and in 1837 he was committed to High Beach Asylum, the first of two mental institutions in which he would stay, with only six months' reprieve, until his death in 1864.

As if to counter the fleeting nature of their relationship, Clare's sonnets to Lamb insistently pose *ars longa* against *vita brevis*. Each contrasts literary eternality with dismal temporal reality, honors the act of memory, and connects the two men through their mutual veneration of the past. The first, 'To Charles Lamb On His Essays', delights in Elia's past and future achievements:

> Elia thy reveries & visioned themes
> To cares lorn heart a luscious pleasure proves
> Wild as the mystery of delightful dreams
> Soft as the anguish of remembered love
> Like records of past days their memory dances
> Mid the cool feelings manhoods reason brings
> As the unearthly visions of romances

[8] Clare made only four visits to London during his lifetime, but precise dating of meetings and events is nonetheless difficult. A passing comment in a letter of Lamb's (speculatively dated May 1821) suggests that he and Clare were by then acquainted: 'The *Wits* (as Clare calls us) assemble at my Cell (20 Russell St. Cov.-Gar.) this evening' (*Lamb Letters* ii. 297). But even if the letter's date could be confirmed it remains possible, as Lucas notes, that Lamb was 'speaking from hearsay' and had not yet met Clare.

[9] 6 (1822) 151. Clare usually wrote without punctuation of any sort, but Taylor (as in his printing of 'To Elia') routinely added punctuation, standardized spelling, and poeticized certain word forms. While Taylor's changes certainly gave Clare's work a more literary appearance, and arguably clarified his syntax, they also tended to destroy Clare's careful ambiguities and to impose certain emphases and interpretations. Following the lead of virtually all contemporary Clare scholars, I will be using the original versions of Clare's poems here. For discussion of the complexities surrounding the editing of Clare, see the introductory material in *The Early Poems of John Clare* ed. Eric Robinson and David Powell (2 vols., Oxford, 1989), i. ix-xxxii.

[10] Edmund Blunden, *Charles Lamb and His Contemporaries* (Cambridge, 1937), p. 140.

[11] Edward Storey, *A Right to Song: The Life of John Clare* (London, 1982) (hereafter *Song*), p. 247, citing BM Egerton MSS.

Peopled with sweet & uncreated things
& yet thy themes thy gentle worth enhances
Then wake again thy wild harps tenderest strings
Sing on sweet bard let fairy loves again
Smile in thy dreams with angel extacies
Bright oer our soul will break the heavenly strain
Through the dull gloom of earths realities

Though set firmly in the present, the poem reaches back and forth across time. Clare's memory of past encounters with the essays blurs with his account of the memorializing project of the essays themselves. 'Like records of past days their memory dances' (l.5), serving Clare as metaphors for the very process of remembrance. Tagged to the octave's commemoration of Elia's 'delightful dreams' (l.3) is the real human figure of Lamb, whose 'gentle worth enhances' (l.9) his 'unearthly' (l.7) visions. Clare is eager to imagine this glorious Elian idyll carried forward into a transcendent future, but before the poem ends the picture of his mind revives again and his own grim present - 'the cool feelings manhoods reason brings' (l.6) - suddenly overspreads his eternal fancies. The poem's final two lines are pitted against one another: Clare's prediction of epiphany ('Bright oer our soul will break the heavenly strain' [l.13]) is instantly recanted as he surveys 'the dull gloom of earths realities' (l.14).

In calling Elia's essays 'Soft as the anguish of remembered love' (l.4), Clare evokes the texture of nostalgia and loss distinguishing the work of both men. Neither sought a simple recovery of a past that they understood had vanished forever - rather they mourned and honoured the mutating distance between past and present. If Lamb's melancholic reveries of 'The Old Familiar Faces' (l.3) were at least sometimes voluntary, Clare was condemned to 'Sad ceasless thoughts'[12] of the shapes and forms of his losses. He imagined virtually his entire life course as 'a ruin of the past'[13] that began with the enclosure of his cherished native landscape[14] and culminated in the loss of his very identity.[15] Clare sometimes

[12] 'Ballad' 22 (*Midsummer Cushion* 330), one of many Clare poems with this title.

[13] 'Remembrances' 10.

[14] The landscape around the tiny village of Helpston was Clare's primary source of poetic inspiration - and indeed happiness. In many poems, including 'The Fens', 'The Fallen Elm', 'The Lamentation of Round Oak Waters', 'A Favourite Nook Destroyed', and 'The Parish', Clare recounts the destruction of a limitless world of 'Still meeting plains that stretched them far away / In uncheckt shadows of green brown and grey' ('The Mores' 5-6). Helpston was enclosed in the years between 1810 and 1820, and Clare was devastated:

Now this sweet vision of my boyhood hours
Free as spring clouds and wild as summer flowers
Is faded all - a hope that blossomed free
And hath been once no more shall ever be ('The Mores' 15-18)

The alienation brought about by enclosure was painfully re-enacted only a few years later, when in 1832 Clare moved from his tiny cottage in Helpston to a larger one in Northborough, a move facilitated by several of his well-meaning patrons. Though the distance between the two villages was merely three miles, he felt utterly disoriented:

Alone and in a stranger scene
Far far from spots my heart esteems
The closen with their ancient green
Heath woods and pastures sunny streams
The hawthorns here were hung with may
But still they seem in deader green

envisioned a timeless place where this distance could be overcome, as he wrote in one of the great late poems of his misery and madness: 'The present mixed with reasons gone / And past, and present all as one'.[16]

Clare's memory of love in 'To Charles Lamb On His Essays' also links the men in specific terms. Lamb's early passion for Ann Simmons (figured variously in his essays and poems as 'Alice W--n' and 'Anna') resonated deeply with Clare, whose adolescent romance with a girl named Mary Joyce suffused his writing for 50 years after the fact. Like Alice, whom Elia in 'Dream Children' watches 'receding . . . in the uttermost distance', Mary Joyce is Clare's measure of a past that falls forever away and is yet constant:

> Those eyes that then my passion blest
> That burned in loves expression
> That bosom where I then could rest
> & now have no possession
> These waken still in memory
> Sad ceasless thoughts about thee
> That say how blest Ive been with thee
> & how I am without thee ('Ballad' 17-24)[17]

Aware that, as he told Taylor, 'tis reflections of the past & not of the present that torment me', Clare tried sporadically to push Mary's memory from his mind, declaring in 1821 that he had 'written the last doggerel that shall ever sully her name & her remembrance any more'.[18] In practice, however, Clare found it impossible to consign her to a dead past.

> The sun e'en seems to loose its way
> Nor knows the quarter it is in ('The Flitting' 49-56)

For discussions of the impact of enclosure on Clare, see John Barrell, *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place 1730-1840: An Approach to the Poetry of John Clare* (Cambridge, 1972), pp. 98-120, 189-215; Johanna Clare, *John Clare and the Bounds of Circumstance* (Kingston, 1987), pp. 36-55; and Elizabeth Helsinger, 'Clare and the Place of the Peasant Poet', *Critical Inquiry* 13 (1987) 509-31.

[15] Clare's fear that he was losing his identity becomes explicit in his writings from the asylum years, perhaps nowhere more poignantly that in such poems as 'I Am', 'Sonnet I Am', and 'An Invite to Eternity':

> Say maiden wilt thou go with me
> Through this sad non-identity
> Where parents live and are forgot
> And sisters live and know us not
>
> Say maiden wilt thou go with me
> In this strange death of life to be
> To live in death and be the same
> Without this life, or home, or name
> At once to be, and not to be
> That was, and is not - yet to see ('An Invite to Eternity' 13-22)

[16] 'An Invite to Eternity' 27-8.

[17] *Midsummer Cushion* 330. See n9.

[18] *The Letters of John Clare* ed. Mark Storey (Oxford, 1985) (hereafter *Clare Letters*), p. 206. Clare first knew Mary Joyce in school, and his biographers have speculated that class distinctions and her father's intervention discouraged their romance. Clare's move to Northborough 20 years later, however, well after his marriage to Martha Turner, placed him quite close to Mary's village of Glinton, and his writings in the two years before entering the asylum indicate that he encountered her then on at least a few occasions. His journals and poems do not make the nature of their early relationship clear; possibly his feelings were both unrequited and undeclared. Later writings hint at a deep and passionate love, but the issue is complicated irredeemably by

Though in 1820 he had married another woman, Martha Turner, whom he deeply loved and with whom he had several children, over the years Mary Joyce continued to function as his muse and, as his sanity deteriorated, assumed an ever-larger role in his memory.[19] In the words of a recent biographer, 'The more [he and Mary] were separated by time and distance, the more eloquent and moving grew the expressions of his love - a love confused, imagined, remembered and immortalized'.[20] Clare's remembrance of love's soft anguish in the first Lamb sonnet thus attempts to capture the reverence with which each man approached even the most painful of memories, while also binding him to Lamb in a communion of loss.

Keeping in mind the men's apparent sympathies, as well as Clare's emotional vulnerability in 'To Charles Lamb On His Essays' - where he confesses to a psychic emptiness that Lamb helps fill - Clare must have been somewhat nonplussed by Lamb's letter of appreciation, dated 31 August 1822. In many ways the letter is characteristically Elian: effusive, cavalier, and bluntly expressive. Lamb thanks Clare for the sonnet (just out in the *London*), acknowledges Clare's earlier gift of *Poems Descriptive* and *The Village Minstrel*, and reciprocates with a gift of his own, the two-volume Ollier edition of his collected works. But these gestures of friendship are undercut by Lamb's blithely imperious commentary on Clare's poetry. Though beginning with praise ('The quality of your observation has astonished me'), the letter quickly becomes remarkable for its general lack of sympathy to Clare's social and artistic orientation:

> In some of your story-telling Ballads the provincial phrases sometimes startle me. I think you are too profuse with them. In poetry *slang* of every kind is to be avoided. There is a rustic Cockneyism, as little pleasing as ours of London. Transplant Arcadia to Helpston. The true rustic style, the Arcadian English, I think is to be found in Shenstone. Would his 'Schoolmistress,' the prettiest of poems, have been better if he had used quite the Goody's own language? Now and then a home rusticism is fresh and startling; but where nothing is gained in expression, it is out of tenor. It may make folks smile and stare; but the ungenial coalition of barbarous with refined phrases will prevent you in the end from being so generally tasted, as you deserve to be.[21]

Whatever Lamb's motives in offering this advice, it could reasonably be described as a catalogue of the high-literary hypocrisies against which Clare would struggle for the length of his career. London-based editors, critics, and readers of the early nineteenth century demanded that their peasant poets be 'authentically' uneducated and original, but not so authentic as to descend into 'vulgar' or 'provincial' (or radical) diction. The 'rustic Cockneyism[s]' Lamb believed too 'profuse' in Clare's poetry were dialect words from his native Northamptonshire, like the 'unintelligible' terms a commentator for the *London Weekly Review* dolefully compiled from *The Shepherd's Calendar* (1827): 'crizzling-sliveth-whinneys-

Clare's loss of sanity and the consequent unreliability of his claims. There can be little doubt, in any event, of the intensity of his feelings; see *Song* 79-87, 240-67.

[19] Though Mary died in 1838, shortly after Clare was confined, he insisted she was still alive and in the spring of 1841 began to believe himself imprisoned for being married both to Mary and to Martha Turner. One letter, addressed to 'My dear Wife Mary', begins: 'I might have said my first wife & first love & first every thing - but I shall never forget my second wife & second love for I loved her once as dearly as yourself', and continues, 'No one knows how sick I am of this confinement possessing two wives that ought to be my own & cannot see either one or the other' (*Clare Letters* 646).

[20] *Song* 173.

[21] *Lamb Letters* ii. 328.

greening-tootles-croodling-hings-progged-spindling-siling-struttles'.[22] Both Clare's supporters and his detractors resisted this 'slang', motivated, from different corners, by concerns with decorum, marketing, and what he called 'the humbug of party cavils & party interest'.[23] Quietly Clare defended his diction and humble subject matter against the fashionable limits of popular taste:

> I felt that I'd a right to song
> & sung - but in a timid strain
> Of fondness for my native plain[24]

As he had insisted to Taylor in an earlier manuscript note, he would have no song at all if his voice was forcibly sanitized:

> 'Eggs on' in the 'Address to a Lark' - whether provincial or not I cannot tell but it is common with the vulgar (I am of that class) & I heartily desire no word of mine to be altered
>
> The word 'twit-a-twit' (if a word it can be called) you will undoubtedly smile at but I wish you to print it as it is for it is the Language of Nature & that can never be disgusting[25]

Lamb offered his aesthetic strictures on Clare's 'home rusticism[s]' within an explicitly pragmatic framework: 'the ungenial coalition of barbarous with refined phrases will prevent you in the end from being so generally tasted, as you deserve to be'. And perhaps in encouraging Clare to 'transplant Arcadia to Helpston' Lamb was simply recommending the idealizing aesthetic that had succeeded so well in his own prose - prose that Clare's 'To Charles Lamb On His Essays' had hailed for its beautiful unreality: 'delightful dreams. . . . Peopled with sweet & uncreated things' (3, 8). In the end, however, there is no escaping the class presumption of Lamb's remarks. Clare might well have wondered how Lamb's social position authorized him to render an opinion on the true rustic style - unless, of course, the 'true rustic style' perversely meant the high-literary artifice of traditional pastoral. Indeed, Lamb's unsolicited critique assumes at every turn the social difference that the men's united 'relish for eternity'[26] might, theoretically, have allowed them to forget. Though Lamb is ultimately conciliatory ('Excuse my freedom, and take the same liberty with my *puns*'),[27] the letter appears to have been a poor way to advance the friendship.

Unfortunately we know nothing of Clare's reaction to the letter other than Blunden's unelaborated claim that it 'became a family memory', though in a prose sketch probably dating from this time Clare noted that 'if [Lamb] offends it is innosently done'.[28] To

[22] *Clare: The Critical Heritage* ed. Mark Storey (London, 1973), pp. 206-7.

[23] *Clare Letters* 517. See James McKusick, 'John Clare and the Tyranny of Grammar', *Studies in Romanticism* 33 (1994) 255-77, for an excellent account of the socio-linguistic issues, including that of 'radical' diction, facing Clare and his editors.

[24] 'The Progress of Ryhme' 80-2.

[25] J. W. and Anne Tibble, *John Clare: A Life* (Totowa, New Jersey, 1972) (hereafter Tibble), p. 112, citing Pforzheimer MS A3.

[26] Clare, 'Nothingness of Life' 14.

[27] *Lamb Letters* ii. 328.

[28] *John Clare's Autobiographical Writings* ed. Eric Robinson (Oxford, 1986) (hereafter *Writings*), p. 135. Clare's short, vivid sketch sheds little light on the men's relationship, but does hint that Lamb's humour often had its edge: 'he is very fond of snuff which seems to sharpen his wit every time he dips his plentiful finger into

confound matters further, we have no evidence that any correspondence, in either direction, ever again passed between the two men. We know that two years later, in 1824, Clare visited Lamb at Colebrooke Cottage, but Crabb Robinson's report of the visit - potentially a valuable source of information - is petty and unhelpful:

> July 6. . . . Took tea with Lamb. There were Hessey and Taylor, Clare the shepherd poet, Bowring, and Elton, the translator from the classics. Clare looks like a weak man, but he was ill. Elton a sturdy fellow, more like a huntsman than a scholar. But little conversation.[29]

The record of their relationship is simply suspended at this point: not until 1830 will Lamb again become a visible presence in Clare's writings.

The years between 1822 and 1830 in fact bore out Lamb's stated concern for Clare's literary stock, and forced Clare to examine more precisely his own conflicting feelings about fame, eternality, and poetic celebrity. The problem for Clare was not that the British public was uninterested in peasant poets: to the contrary, ever since the appearance of Stephen Duck's *The Thresher's Labour* (1736), almost every poet presented to the reading public as an 'unlettered genius' - including such diverse figures as James Woodhouse, Robert Bloomfield, and Ann Yearsley - had been an object of fascination. But this attention was necessarily as brief as it was intense: while the label of 'peasant poet' guaranteed a certain level of novelty-seeking interest, it also militated against traditional conceptions of literary immortality. The nicknames given peasant poets were simultaneously endearments and diminutions, underlining their status as artistic and demographic curiosities: 'The Thresher Poet' (Duck); 'The Bristol Milk-Woman' (Yearsley); 'The Ettrick Shepherd' (James Hogg); 'The Washerwoman Poet' (Mary Collier). These figures were titillating because of their life circumstances; their writing was assumed to be as fleetingly seasonal as the produce in the agricultural markets. Thus, for example, Francis Jeffrey hurried to free Robert Burns from the suffocating label of peasant 'prodigy', countering that 'derogation' with assurances that 'the name of Burns . . . will endure long after those [biographical] circumstances are forgotten which contributed to its first notoriety'.[30]

Even at the time of Lamb's letter in 1822, public interest in Clare was waning. Two years earlier his *Poems Descriptive of Rural Life* had sold 4,000 copies, making it by early nineteenth-century standards a monumental bestseller. Taylor and Clare moved quickly to publish *The Village Minstrel* (1821), though both feared that the echoes of Beattie in the title would damage Clare's credibility as an independent voice. Though it quickly sold 800 copies, the decline was ominous. Clare, still living in poverty in Helpston, was sickened at having been made a passing spectacle, and yet suggested that the manic rise and fall of his readers' interest was a fitting complement to his own crass desire for fame: '[L]et me wait another year or two & the peep show will be over', he wrote to Taylor, '& my vanity if I have any will end in its proper mortification to know that obscurity is happiness'.[31] If at this relatively early date Clare assumed the role of flagellant, punishing himself for sinful desires, he would for years hear a siren song 'Humming of future things . . . burn[ing] the mind / To leave

his large bronze colord box and then he sharpens up his head thro[w]s himself backward in his chair and stammers at a joke or pun with an inward sort of utterance ere he can give it speech till his tongue becomes a sort of Packmans shop turning it over and over till at last it comes our whetted keen as a razor[.]'

[29] *Henry Crabb Robinson on Books and Their Writers* ed. Edith J. Morley (3 vols., London, 1938) i. 310-11.

[30] *Burns: The Critical Heritage* ed. Donald A. Low (London, 1974), p. 178.

[31] *Clare Letters* 215; to Taylor, 6 September 1821.

some fragment of itself behind'.[32] Fully ten years after the disappointing sales of *The Village Minstrel* he described himself as taken and tempted by 'the spirit of fame'; the ambition 'of living a little after life like a name on a conspicuous place', he confessed, 'urges my blood upward into unconscious melodys'.[33]

Clare's almost visceral longing for adoration - and his hope that earned poetic renown would lift him beyond the temporalities that bound him - is captured in an account from his journal of 1824, during his third visit to London. Wandering the streets one afternoon he came across a crowd gathering for a funeral procession and 'knew it was not a common one by the curiosity that kept watch on every countenance'. His intuition was correct: it was Byron's. As the cortège appeared, Clare recalls,

> a young girl that stood beside me gave a deep sigh & uttered 'Poor Lord Byron'[.] I looked up at the young girls face[.] it was dark and beautiful and I coud almost feel in love with her for the sigh she had utterd for the poet[.] it was worth all the News paper puffs & Magazine Mournings that ever was paraded after the death of a poet[.][34]

This was the kind of authentic, uncontaminated celebrity that Clare envisioned for himself, and elsewhere he granted Byron a pure genius that surpassed the constraints of time:

> The labours of small minds an age may dream
> & be but shadows on times running stream
> While genius in an hour makes what shall be
> The next a portion of eternity[35]

But if Byron had somehow passed directly from universal renown into eternity,[36] Clare, over the decade of the 1820s, came increasingly to doubt that worldly recognition brought passage to the eternal, the infinite, and the one. The quest for fame, he began to think, was 'a sorry game', founded on the delusive and seductive conceit of 'think[ing] ones name / Buoyant with visions of eternity'.[37] More and more in his poetry Clare represented fame and eternality as fundamentally opposed, and he detected intimations of immortality only in the lives of creatures who remained simple and obscure:

> The little robin in the quiet glen
> Hidden from fame & all the sons of men
> Sings unto time a pastoral & gives
> A music that lives on & ever lives[38]

[32] 'The Shepherds Tree' 13-14.

[33] *Clare Letters* 595.

[34] *Writings* 147; punctuation added.

[35] 'Lord Byron' 11-14.

[36] Years later Clare's interest in Byron turned into delusional identification, and he composed 'additions' to Byron's *Don Juan*, *Childe Harold*, and 'Hebrew Melodies'. One of Clare's regular asylum visitors, G. J. De Wilde, remembers 'on one occasion in the midst of conversation in which he betrayed no signs of insanity, he suddenly quoted passages from Don Juan as his own . . . "I'm the same man", he said, "but sometimes they called me Shakespeare and sometimes Byron and sometimes Clare."' *Sketches in the Life of John Clare, by Himself* ed. Edmund Blunden (London, 1931), pp. 39-40.

[37] 'Vanity of Fame' 7, 8-9.

[38] 'Eternity of Nature' 43-6.

It was a philosophical position encouraged by the collapse of his public career. Though it contained his most mature poetry to that point, *The Shepherd's Calendar* (1827) attracted very little audience, and virtually no critical attention. By 1832 he could not even get *The Midsummer Cushion* published.[39] He repeatedly wished that he had been 'Left in some lone place where the world is wild / & trace of troubling man was never seen',[40] and often turned his apparent failure inwards: 'I sit sometimes and wonder over the little noise I have made in the world until I think I have written nothing as yet to deserve any praise at all'.[41] His elegy for Robert Bloomfield, another peasant poet whose torrential early success trickled down into indifference, reads like a lament for his own career:

> While feeding on the publics gross supply
> Times wave rolls on - mortality must share
> A mortals fate & many a fame shall lie
> A dead wreck on the shore of dark posterity
>
> Sweet unassuming minstrel not to thee
> The dazzling fashions of the day belong
> Natures wild pictures field & cloud & tree
> & quiet brooks far distant from the throng
> In murmurs tender as the toiling bee
> Make the sweet music of thy gentle song
> Well nature owns thee let the crowd pass by
> The tide of fashion is a stream too strong[42]

By the end of the decade, Clare, though living with his wife and family, was being gradually overcome by a cumulative sense of isolation, sorrow, and failure. 'I live in a land overflowing with obscurity & vulgarity', he wrote to Taylor, 'far away from taste & books & friends'.[43] He complained that he could not 'hear of any . . . old acquaintances now except by accident'.[44] The distance that had come between himself and Lamb (now an 'exquisite oddity of friendship')[45] weighed especially heavily on his mind. Appealing to H. F. Cary in January 1830 for information about Lamb's whereabouts, Clare was desperate:

> [W]here is Charles Lamb[?] I have never seen him since the year 1824 what a season - where is Charles Lamb[?] do you ever see or hear anything of him now or do you know where he is to be found[?] if I could procure his address I wanted to write to him but nobody can tell me where he lives now further than that it is 'some distance from London' which is a bad direction to find him with[.][46]

Cary's reply four months later assured him at least that Lamb and his sister were still alive, and Clare mentioned to Taylor on 1 July that he was pleased to have heard news of him. But

[39] The last volume published within Clare's lifetime was *The Rural Muse* (1835), but he went on to write some of his greatest poetry in the years after his confinement.

[40] 'The Happiness of Ignorance' 6-7.

[41] *Clare Letters* 595.

[42] 'To The Memory Of Bloomfield' 11-22.

[43] *Clare Letters* 550.

[44] Ibid. 511.

[45] Ibid. 515.

[46] Ibid. 494. In all the long citations from Clare's letters that follow, the bracketed punctuation is my own.

in elaborating these feelings in a letter to Edward Hessey several weeks later, he spoke fearfully of the oblivion that seemed to await the old *London Magazine* circle:

> Charles Lamb I want to write to[.] will you tell him so when you see him that he may leave his address with you[.] poor Miss Lamb I hope she will recover - there is hopes & there is mercey to hope it - Hazlitts death I saw in the papers[.] I read it twice over before I dare believe it was Hazlitt that I had met & whose writings I had read with so much gratification & it shocked me much to think another acquaintance had made a blank in our memorys. . . . it seems that he died in the character of Genius - neglected and forgotten - when will the cant & hypocrisy of trifling be out aside & the sterling merit of superior minds be so valued as to be considered worthy of universal reward & the humbug of party cavils & party interest be done away with - I doubt never[.][47]

Despite Clare's manifest urgency, he never reached his friend from the past: a year later his letters still plaintively asked, 'where is Charles Lamb'.[48] What resulted instead from his consuming fear of loss and isolation was the second sonnet, 'To Charles Lamb', which appeared in the *British Magazine* for 1830.

Here again Clare preserves and honours his memory of Lamb - and, as in the first sonnet, honours the act of memory itself. But the burden of the difficult eight years since the first poem is palpable, and makes 'To Charles Lamb' a more troubled work. The 'luscious' past commemorated here is a specifically literary one.[49] Lamb's estimable regard for literary antiquity, set off against the superfluities that drive contemporary literary fashion, makes him a lonely paragon of integrity amongst the capricious arbiters of 'vain fashions foils' (l.10), the one man in London who can distinguish 'tinsels gauds' from timeless 'gold' (l.8). But the past, from Clare's current spot of time, now also includes Lamb's vexing criticism and his sustained absence. Though 'To Charles Lamb' begins by remaining indifferent to Lamb's critique from all those years ago, it ends by suggesting that Clare has not forgotten it entirely.

> Friend Lamb thou chusest well to love the lore
> Of our old bygone bards whose racey page
> Rich mellowing Time made sweeter then before
> The blossom left for the long garnered store
> Of fruitage now right luscious in its age
> Although to fashions taste - what more
> Can be expected from the popular rage
> For tinsels gauds that are to gold preferred
> Me much it grieved as I did erst presage
> Vain fashions foils had every heart deterred
> From the warm homely phrase of other days
> Untill thy muses auncient voice I heard
> & now right fain yet fearing honest bard
> I pause to greet thee with so poor a praise

[47] Ibid. 517.

[48] Ibid. 551.

[49] The poem appeared with the subtitle 'On Reading "John Woodvil," A Tragedy', when it was published in *The British Magazine* 2 (1830) 92, suggesting an immediate occasion for its composition. Consideration of the men's relationship makes clear, however, that the context for the poem was ultimately much more complex.

The rhetoric of humility, class deference, and even vassalage that closes the poem, while not uncharacteristic of Clare's thought and writing in general, is new in his discourse about Lamb. Indeed, the little that we know of their first meetings (in which Lamb called him 'Princely Clare' and 'Clarissimus')[50] suggests that it was Lamb's disregard of social formality which Clare, once the darling and now the victim of rustic 'manners', found so initially winning. Perhaps after so many years of separation and at such a low ebb in his professional self-esteem, Clare no longer feels confident of a friendship formed in the days when he still had hopes for acceptance in the larger literary world.

Present in these lines, I would suggest, is Clare's growing suspicion that this has never been a relationship of equals. His deference may be grounded in admiration: if he believes Lamb's literary judgement superior, as the poem itself contends, then Lamb's 1822 critique may have assumed a retrospective authority that Clare now seeks to acknowledge. Even so, there is an angry sense of desertion here as well: the same anger that prompted Clare to remark, in a draft letter of September 1830, 'I am glad to hear the names of my old friends repeated for I still believe them as such tho I have a heavy catalogue of sins against most of them'.[51] Perhaps Clare has come to feel that Lamb, for all his integrity, shares with the superficial arbiters of literary success an underlying contempt for his work; perhaps the contempt is his own. But clearly the 1822 letter had demonstrated a lack of sensitivity to the cultural imperatives that framed Clare's diction and poetic vision.

This supposition is greatly strengthened by a manuscript comment of 1830 or 1831, in which Clare, yearning for renewed contact with Lamb, figures the distance that has come between them in nakedly class terms:

> Where is Friend Lamb the keenest & the wittiest Lampoon in the world & the heartiest fellow upon earth[?] where is Charles Lamb[?] is he grown into a gentleman & got above us in parading with country esquires[?] be as it may he is not a publisher & though he had no further interest in our friendship then good wishes he had no interest to forget us[.][52]

Even within this short space we see rehearsed the almost literal unveiling of Clare's burgeoning anxieties. His great fondness for Lamb is inexorably overwhelmed, first by anger, then by self-loathing. Searching for an explanation for Lamb's absence - and without any real evidence except his own distant memories - Clare surmises that Lamb's contact with faceless 'country esquires', 'gentlemen', and 'publisher[s]' has overpowered and finally obliterated his singular character. The bitter lesson this yields is obvious enough: in a world where class is constitutive of identity, friendship itself becomes a superannuated notion.

Though 'To Charles Lamb' begins in celebration, its muted, elegiac conclusion bespeaks Clare's recognition that even the abstract respect for the eternal he and Lamb shared cannot bring back their private golden age. In a letter the following year to Cary, the only *London Magazine* friend he then had left, Clare alludes directly to Lamb's most pointed poem of loss, 'The Old Familiar Faces':

[50] Hood implies that Clare was quite comfortable with the *Londoners* and felt liberated in their society. He remembers a 'bright happy look' on Clare's face as he 'inwardly contrast[ed] the unlettered country company of Clod, and Hodge, and Podge, with the delights of "London" society - Elia, and Barry [Procter], and Herbert, and Mr. Table Talk, *cum multis aliis* -- *i.e.* a multiplicity of all' (*Friendship* 113).

[51] *Clare Letters* 515.

[52] Tibble 274, citing Peterborough MSS. The bracketed punctuation is mine.

> I thought my old friends had all gone away with the world but I find I have one almost 'the last of the flock' living still in my ways . . . our affections increase as our fellowships diminish & I may be happily disappointed by the many & once more see the 'old familiar faces' as earnest in their affections as ever & then I shall shake hands with old time & be more happy then when old time was new to me[.][53]

Finally here is the confession that lost companionship cannot be found in the timeless realms of word, text, and memory. Nonetheless, assured at least for this moment that one friend's love has lasted, Clare is thus reconciled to all other loss, ready with his affections, prepared to 'shake hands with old time'.

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[53] *Clare Letters* 596.

Charles Lloyd and *Edmund Oliver*: A Demonology

By GRAEME STONES

ON 16 JANUARY 1797, Lamb sent Coleridge a poem which celebrates a mutual friend:

> Long, long, within my aching heart
> The grateful sense shall cherish'd be:
> I'll think less meanly of myself
> That Lloyd will sometimes think on me.[1]

Lloyd had turned up, unannounced, on Lamb's doorstep shortly before. They had not previously met, though they were in a manner of speaking well-acquainted, and had much in common. Lloyd, in flight from his Quaker family's mercantile ambitions, had sought shelter with Coleridge, first in Bristol in the autumn of 1796, then at Nether Stowey. Lamb shared in that friendship by proxy, through letters and poetic collaboration. He and Lloyd had similar sensibilities, though Lamb's was tougher. In 1795 Lloyd had dedicated himself to the 'pure ardour of universal benevolence'. He was determined to seek, 'by active usefulness, not by unintelligible dogmas, to diffuse good and enlarge the confin'd limit of human felicity.'[2] This Rousseauism was a little stiffened by reading in Priestley and Godwin.

E. V. Lucas' description echoes Lloyd's contemporaries: 'a contemplative, self-conscious, sensitive youth, continuously afflicted with nervous weakness.'[3] De Quincey was to describe him as 'cursed with the most exquisite sensibility', and having 'great goodness of heart'.[4] Lloyd was unsurprisingly captivated by Coleridge, who stayed with the family early in 1796, and again later in the year on return from Derby: 'Charles Lloyd was then again living at home, building castles in the air which bore as little resemblance as might be to the family bank.'[5] Coleridge offered to rescue Lloyd from daydreams, with disciplined and rigorous tutorials. Lloyd's father was persuaded, after another visit by Coleridge in September, a visit abbreviated by news of the birth of Hartley - at which Lloyd was bundled into a Bristol-bound carriage to share Coleridge's elation. For the next 18 months his affairs were inextricably Coleridgean. Although Lloyd clearly worshipped Coleridge, the friendship was not so unequal as later reported.

> Charles Lloyd wins upon me hourly - his heart is uncommonly pure, his affections delicate, & his benevolence enlivened, but not sicklied, by sensibility. - He is assuredly a man of great Genius; but it must be in tete a tete with one whom he loves & esteems, that his colloquial powers open. . . . His Joy, & gratitude to Heaven for the circumstances of his domestication with me, I can scarcely describe to you.[6]

[1] 'To Charles Lloyd, An Unexpected Visitor', *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb* ed. Edwin W. Marrs Jr. (3 vols., Ithaca, NY, 1975-8) (hereafter Marrs), i. 93.

[2] Letter to Robert Lloyd, 29 November 1795, quoted by E. V. Lucas in *Charles Lamb and the Lloyds* (London 1898), p. 14.

[3] Lucas, *Lamb and the Lloyds* 12.

[4] *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, March 1840, reprinted *Recollections of the Lakes and the Lake Poets* ed. David Wright (Harmondsworth, 1980), pp. 319, 321.

[5] Lucas, *Lamb and the Lloyds* 16.

[6] Letter to Thomas Poole, 24 September 1796, *Collected Letters* ed. E. L. Griggs (6 vols., Oxford, 1956-71) (hereafter Griggs), i. 236-7.

At Bristol Lloyd published his *Poems on the Death of Priscilla Farmer*, in memory of his grandmother. Lamb was writing similar poetry, and Lloyd welcomed Lamb's 'The Grandame' into the handsomely produced volume. 'I cannot but smile to see my Granny so gayly deck'd forth' wrote Lamb.[7] It was the beginning of a series of co-operative ventures between the three poets, and of a harmony of spirit which seemed full of promise. Coleridge was in pursuit of a shrunken, Stow-ic form of pantisocracy (to be funded largely by fees for Lloyd's tutorials),[8] and the group seemed naturally to complement each other. Physically separated, they were bound together - literally - in print. It was a community of, and committed to, the written word. Barred from the paradisal Susquehanna, Coleridge still sought a communal haven:

> We'll smile at wealth, and learn to smile at fame,
> Our hopes, our knowledge, and our joys the same,
> As neighbouring fountains image each the whole:
> Then when the mind hath drunk its fill of truth
> We'll discipline the heart to pure delight,
> Rekindling sober joy's domestic flame.[9]

In 1794 the matrix of pantisocracy had been political radicalism, and its aims resolutely - fallibly, as it turned out - practical and worldly. This coalition was looser. There were no optimistic estimates about land-clearing, no apprehensions of 'hostile Indians' or 'Byson' or 'Musquitoes'. But as in 1794, Coleridge continued to have three emphases (shared with Akenside) in mind: Nature as Divine alphabet; a poetic elect as interpreters and proselytisers of God's Word; and the pleasures of Imagination. 'In mind' is appropriate. This was now an internalised utopianism, a wiser, post-lapsarian quest - for a textual rather than agrarian paradise, cultivated by:

> eloquent men, who dwell on earth
> To clothe whate'er the soul admires or loves
> With language and with numbers.[10]

For all three this second descent, into language, promised to be the truly Fortunate Fall. Coleridge was devoted to the Word, Lloyd to the dissemination of 'universal benevolence' in print, and of all three Lamb perhaps was the most in love with the actual substance of language. His word-games, his playfulnesses show - the paradox would delight him - how constant his heart truly is, flirtatious only because confident of his affections.

If the new Pantisocracy lacked the political immediacy of the old, its *lingua franca* should not be underestimated. As David Fairer has pointed out, there are good reasons why the *Anti-Jacobin* marked Coleridge, Lloyd and Lamb for attack - fearing a poetic radicalism that 'sees revolution in terms of fostering an inner truth and virtue'.[11]

Sadly, although the attachments of the trio were so close, and so apparently unselfish, in this second Eden they were to quarrel over the same issue that ended the dreams of life

[7] Marrs i. 74.

[8] See Coleridge's *Letters*, various from the autumn of 1796. The pun is Coleridge's.

[9] 'To a Young Friend, on his proposing to domesticate with the Author', *Poetical Works* ed. E. H. Coleridge (2 vols., Oxford, 1912) (hereafter *Poetical Works*), i. 155-7, ll. 69-74.

[10] Akenside, *The Pleasures of the Imagination* (1770), iv 102-4.

[11] 'Baby Language and Revolution: The Early Poetry of Charles Lloyd and Charles Lamb', *CLB* NS 74 (1991) 33-52 (hereafter Fairer), p. 40.

beside the Susquehanna: *Property*. This time, however, it was literary property.Coleridge, happy to take more liberties with language than the other two poets, in his accounts later inserted a letter here: *Propriety*. This was inventive, but misleading.

Coleridge had learnt a lesson in self-interest at Southey's hands in 1794, and applied it from the outset in the new pantisocracy. Apparently anxious to share his own literary good-fortune, Coleridge wrote to Cottle soon after taking residence in Nether Stowey, to insist that Lloyd's poems, 'which I give to you on condition that you print them *in this volume*' (Coleridge's italics), now accompany his own (and a few of Lamb's) in the planned *Poems by S. T. Coleridge, second Edition*. But throughout this soft-of-heart adventure, Coleridge was hard-headed about print. Friendship with Lloyd had straightforward commercial advantages. 'Now for the saleability,' Coleridge added to Cottle, 'Charles Lloyd's connections will take off a great many more than a hundred, I doubt not.'[12] Lloyd was a useful disciple. When he began to find words of his own, and an independent authority over them, the community disintegrated.

Lloyd's visit to London was opportune. For some time Lamb had been 'beset with perplexities', lonely, depressed, and lacking the peace of mind necessary for writing. In this Slough of Despond he had two consolations: the 'midnight darlings' of his library, and his intermittent contacts with the 'Elysium upon earth' which Coleridge and Lloyd seemed to have established together in the South West. Books were closer to hand. Lamb's attachment to them is remarkable for warmth and physicality, for what Hazlitt called 'gusto'. Like the Hazlitt of 'On Reading Old Books', Lamb cherished an 'intimacy' with the word, in which to recover something of the living relationships from which he was at times cut off:

> Yet I rejoyce, & feel my privilege with gratitude, when I have been reading some wise book. . . . in the thought that I enjoy a kind of Communion, a kind of friendship even, with the great & good. Books are to me instead of friends,- I wish they did not resemble the latter in their scarceness.[13]

Shaking off self-pity, Lamb recovers a community in the word and cherishes, where he finds them, the amicable languages of truth and disinterested benevolence. Lamb's attachment to the form, the material, of print was touching - his 'treasures are rather cased in leather covers than closed in iron coffers'.[14] Yet he was the least possessive, the most receptive of readers, when it came to the spirit of a text.

Coleridge handled books differently. He was, he said with some pride, a 'library cormorant', hungry and appropriative. With this appetite for content went disregard of containers, and their ownership. If you must lend books, advises Lamb drily, in a comment which contains more pain than at first appears, lend them to 'such a one as S.T.C.- he will return them (generally anticipating the time appointed) with usury; enriched with annotations'.[15] The gaps in Lamb's shelves yawned, while times appointed came, went, and were forgotten. Coleridge swallowed books whole, or brought them back scored with marginalia. In 'The Two Races of Men', from which these comments are taken, Lamb moves from the fiscal to the textual, from outer to inner worlds. His distinction between those who borrow and those who lend is played out in terms of community. Lamb's ideal conception of

[12] Griggs i. 313. Coleridge later claimed it was Lloyd who insisted on the inclusion.
[13] Marrs i. 89.
[14] 'On the Two Races of Men', *Works* ed. E. V. Lucas (6 vols., London, 1912) (hereafter *Works*), ii. 29.
[15] 'On the Two Races of Men', *Works* ii. 31.

that, as retrieved from the ironic dexterities of the essay, is democratic. Coleridge claimed not to be possessive - famously, 'I regard truth as a divine ventriloquist: I care not from whose mouth the sounds are supposed to proceed'.[16] In fact he was textually acquisitive, and autocratic.

After Coleridge has handled a book, it can be difficult to separate what that text originally said from his usurping commentaries. Nowhere is this more apparent than in Lloyd's novel *Edmund Oliver*, the book which Coleridge blamed for the loss of his second paradise - and worse. In a continuation of the personification of books, an unusual peopling of narrative which is present all through this affair, the novel was characterized by Coleridge as a kind of demonic text, sent out to corrupt the innocent. Like many fiends, Edmund Oliver was said to be a changeling, a shape-changer, a parodic *doppelgänger* who could masquerade as Coleridge himself. Like the devil of Hogg's *Confessions*, this Edmund Oliver could take on the shape of an interlocutor, repeating and distorting his words. At other times, *Edmund Oliver* took the form of a textual visitor from Porlock, rudely interrupting the poet's genius. *Edmund Oliver* became almost tangible, a vengeful incarnation of Lloyd's diseased mind sent out into both public and printed worlds to torment Coleridge.

Distance ought to bring dispassion. Here, as often in matters Coleridgean, the opposite has occurred. Coleridge's version of events became a paper avalanche, into which Lloyd disappeared almost unmourned. Lloyd has been dismissed as a 'spiteful, self-indulgent and Fortune-favored rich young man',[17] who passed the time by cruelly parodying the man who had been generous enough to guide and shelter him:

> Lloyd also published a novel, *Edmund Oliver*, in which he mercilessly satirized Coleridge - his sloth, his pretensions, his use of opium.[18]

> The 'rascal' and 'madman' Charles Lloyd - a minor novelist whom he had tutored and who parodied him in his novel, *Edmund Oliver*.[19]

> a work of blatant calumny which could only inflict the cruellest possible wound on Coleridge - who had so lately begun to put behind him the chaotic indiscretions of his youth. . . . the brazen and libellous text of *Edmund Oliver*.[20]

Walter Jackson Bate encourages Coleridge's fable of wounded genius, driven by betrayal into what would become addiction:

> One of his notes speaks of his need, after the shock of Lloyd's novel, to retreat to a farm between Linton and Porlock when, because of his distress, he had his 'first recourse' to opium.[21]

Kathleen Coburn allows Coleridge's coda - laying everything at Lloyd's door - that the quarrel with Lloyd 'prevented my finishing the Christabel'. *Edmund Oliver* was published at the end of April 1798:

[16] *Biographia Literaria* ed. James Engell and Walter Jackson Bate (2 vols., Princeton, NJ, 1980), i. 164.

[17] David Erdman, 'Coleridge as Nehemiah Higginbottom', *Modern Language Notes* 73 (1958) 569-80, p. 576.

[18] Walter Jackson Bate, *Coleridge* (London, 1968) (hereafter Bate), p. 88.

[19] Laurence S. Lockridge, *Coleridge the Moralist* (Ithaca, NY, 1977), p. 39.

[20] John Cornwell, *Coleridge: Poet and Revolutionary, 1772-1804* (London, 1973), p. 219.

[21] Bate 88.

> April was a month richly productive of poems, and after that, perhaps, the agitations caused by the merciless and faithless exposure of Lloyd's hardly-disguised portrait in the novel were enervating and depressing.[22]

Richard Holmes finds Lloyd's 'later vengefulness against Coleridge (a premonition of Hazlitt's) difficult to understand'.[23] Attentive readers of the novel itself will find the high temperature of these remarks equally difficult to understand. However, it is certainly a tangled episode, and before turning to the text it is necessary to explore further the contexts and personalities of the novel.

In the autumn of 1796 Coleridge was unsettled and unsettling, distracted by alternatives, frequently depressed, morbidly excited by illness, and soon dosing himself with laudanum for neuralgia. He was the worst possible refuge for Lloyd, whose mental health was visibly damaged by each period of close association. Lloyd himself, poignantly unconscious of the cause and still certain that Coleridge was his intellectual and moral saviour, wrote after returning home for Christmas that 'My Health has been very good ever since I left you'.[24] If Coleridge was unaware of the effect he had on the precariously sane, he was informed of it by others. 'I tell you again', wrote Lamb to Coleridge of Lloyd, 'that his is not a mind with which you should play tricks',[25] and soon afterwards of Coleridge's offer to shelter Mary:

> you have a power of exciting interest, [o]f leading all hearts captive, too forcible [to] admit of Mary's being with you - . I consider her as perpetually on the brink of madness - . I think, you would almost make her dance within an inch of the precipice.[26]

Lloyd's father also had misgivings. Coleridge ignored these reminders, indulging a propensity for encouraging and draining admirers, and then reproaching them for misplaced adulation:

> Both you & Lloyd became acquainted with me at a season when your minds were far from being in a composed or natural state & you clothed my image with a suit of notions & feelings which could belong to nothing human. *You* are restored to comparative saneness, & are merely wondering what is become of the Coleridge with whom you were so passionately in love. *Charles Lloyd's* mind has only changed its disease, & he is now arraying his ci-devant angel in a flaming Sanbenito . . .[27]

What Holmes called Lloyd's 'later vengefulness', like Hazlitt's, is only protest over manipulations by Coleridge which distort every exchange so that it leaves him the injured party. Hazlitt's conclusion that Coleridge 'is without a strong feeling of the existence of any thing out of himself'[28] is supported by the freedom with which Coleridge rearranged 'things'. In this affair with Lloyd, Coleridge created patterns which are usually a mirror image of the truth.

[22] *Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* ed. Kathleen Coburn et al. (Princeton, NJ, 1957-), iii. note to entry 4006.

[23] *Coleridge: Early Visions* (London, 1989), p. 142.

[24] Quoted by Coleridge in a letter to Poole, 13 December 1796, Griggs i. 275.

[25] 20 September 1797, Marrs i. 123.

[26] 28 January 1798, Marrs i. 127.

[27] Coleridge to Lamb, early May 1798, Griggs i. 405.

[28] Hazlitt, 'Mr. Coleridge's Lay Sermon', *Works* ed. P. P. Howe (21 vols., London, 1930-4), vii. 117.

His claim that Lloyd betrayed his weaknesses to mutual friends and then to the world, for example, is characteristic. He charges Lloyd with transgressions he himself had previously committed. As early as December 1796 he copied both to Benjamin Flower and Thelwall 'LINES, to a Young Man of Fortune who abandoned himself to an indolent and causeless Melancholy', an aside at Lloyd's expense which was subsequently published, in the same month, in the *Cambridge Intelligencer* - shortly after Lloyd had returned to his family suffering from rather more than melancholy. The 'LINES' also divert attention from Coleridge's own depression.

In his parents' house Lloyd recovered from nervous prostration and did not return to Coleridge until early in Febuary 1797. By late March a distressing breakdown impelled him to Lichfield for recuperation at Erasmus Darwin's sanatorium. Coleridge plainly lost interest once Lloyd was removed from his immediate ambit. He ignored Lloyd's letters, and transferred his emotional enthusiasms to Poole, Thelwall, and soon Wordsworth.

Lloyd seems to have learnt some caution in Lichfield. He sought less debilitating friendships, among them those with Lamb and Southey - at a time when Southey in particular saw Coleridge with hard-earned detachment. He also fell deeply in love, involving Southey in dramatic pursuits of his beloved, an affair which affected him more profoundly than mere friendship, even that with Coleridge. By 11 November he had poured much of the experience of the preceding two years into a novel, and Southey, looking over Lloyd's shoulder, knew better than anyone what was driving him:

> Lloyd is here. He has met with a heavy and unexpected disappointment, but he bears the inconstancy of a woman as a man ought to bear it. His mind is now employed in developing all his feelings and principles in the form of a novel, and exposing the evil tendency of other systems.[29]

Impassioned 'feelings and principles' are what it contains, and the evil tendencies it attacks are primarily rationalism and promiscuity, neither of which were Coleridgean tendencies. The title *Edmund Oliver* was suggested by Southey, who had sketched out a novel using it, which he failed to finish. '[Charles Lloyd's] infirmities have been made the instruments of another man's darker passions' wrote Coleridge.[30] If this were so, Southey would have been disappointed when the novel was eventually published. *Edmund Oliver* is not 'satirical', 'cruel', or 'merciless'. It is not even parodic. It is purposive, and deeply felt, but its passions are intellectual - the collision with Godwinian rationalism in particular - and not malign.

Although the novel's genesis is complicated, the text itself is simple in content, structure, style and ambition. Edmund's looks, character, habits and history contain elements of Coleridge. So far, so true. However, there is no parody in the resemblance. Southey, writing at the time of Lloyd's writing of the novel, and with no knowledge of the storm which was soon to break, testifies to absence of rancour:

> Lloyds opinion of Coleridge is what I apprehend yours to be - a perception of his inconsistencies but a belief that he never acts wilfully wrong: he has the opinion of his talents which every body must have, and that love for him which few others possess.

[29] To John May, 6 October 1797, *New Letters of Robert Southey* ed. Kenneth Curry (2 vols., New York, 1965) (hereafter Curry), i. 152.

[30] To John Prior Estlin, 18 May 1798, Griggs i. 410.

'This state of mind', continues Southey unequivocally, 'I have no wish to alter', though he did not entirely endorse it.[31] His comments are pertinent. Coleridge is recognizable in the novel in *exactly* the terms Southey describes here. Lloyd was no longer blind to Coleridge's faults, and that is all.

During these disruptive and formative years, despite his mental problems, Lloyd had demonstrably matured in personality and intellect, acquiring balance and a certain fragile poise. Instead of the vindictive misanthrope of Coleridgean fable, attention to Lloyd's writing in this period after the break with Coleridge reveals a sociable and self-aware young man. He is outgrowing many of his adolescent frailties - his escapism, his febrility - and he knows it. Lloyd now finds himself unmoved by 'hopes that stand aloof / From common sympathy', and weary of 'pampering delicate exclusive loves, / And silly dreams of rapture'.[32] There is a marked contrast here, early in 1798, to the self-indulgent melancholy of earlier times, and no indication of lasting resentment or parodic venom.

Parody consists in a repetition with distortion - the art of imitating using exaggerations marked enough to introduce irony. In *Edmund Oliver* Lloyd does not exaggerate. At worst, there is only an imitation of Coleridge's period as a cavalryman. Reflecting those vaudeville follies, the novel merely echoes Coleridge's own burlesquing of the whole affair. No doubt he was distraught at the time; nevertheless, Coleridge mined his misadventures for all they were worth, right from the outset. Silas Tomkyn Comberbache is not the pseudonym of a man resistant to the absurdity of his own actions. He confessed to 'being a very indocile Equestrian'[33] caught up in melodrama, tragic at times and transparently ludicrous: 'I have been, deeply do I feel that I have been, the dupe of my Imagination, the slave of Impulse, the child of Error and Imbecillity'.[34] A simple imitation of burlesque is neither a parody nor a satire. In any event, given the reality, Lloyd's treatment of Edmund's enlistment in a 'regiment of light horse' is remarkable for its abstentions. At most Edmund's actions are muddled and precipitate. He is a careless horseman - at one point letting his mount wander off alone, at another needing a reminder that the animal is drenched and needs attention. In the stables his own dejection preoccupies him more than his duties.

All of this is perfectly in keeping with Edmund's unworldliness, his excessive sensitivity, his self-absorbed and passionately emotional nature. Lloyd shared these qualities with Coleridge, and embodied them here, with feeling and conviction, in a composite character - for purposes more innocent than lampoon. Subsequent parodists showed what could be done with horse-play[35] but Lloyd had no interest in parody, in this novel or elsewhere. His intentions were always more earnest. His real reason for having Edmund enlist is to express indignation at the brutality of army life, incorporating actual incidents Coleridge had described - the whipping of a woman, a hanging-by-the-thumb, and a flogging - which had horrified the delicate Lloyd:

[31] To Charles Danvers, 5 September 1797, Curry i. 144.

[32] 'London' 40-1, published in *Blank Verse*, with Lamb, in the spring of 1798. For a full discussion of this impressive poem, see Lucy Newlyn, 'Lamb, Lloyd, London: A perspective on Book Seven of *The Prelude*', *CLB* NS 47-8 (1984) 169-87.

[33] To James Coleridge, 20 February 1790, Griggs i. 66.

[34] To George Cornish, 12 March 1794, Griggs i. 73.

[35] For example, in 'The Book of the Season', *Fraser's Magazine* 11 (April 1835), no.64, p. 422. For Coleridge's burlesques on himself, see Joseph Cottle, *Reminiscences of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Robert Southey* (Highgate, 1970), particularly pp. 280, 281, 287.

> The incidents relative to the Army were given me by an intimate friend, who was himself eyewitness to one of them, and can produce testimony to the truth of the other two.[36]

The nearest Lloyd ever comes to satire is a skit on society women, using the Misses Clutterbuck, an episode unrelated to Coleridge and about as barbed as Henry Mackenzie's writing. The novel's closest relative is not Smollett's *Sir Launcelot Greaves*, or William Beckford's *Modern Novel Writing*, or Peacock's *Nightmare Abbey*, or any of the satirical parallels suggested by Coleridge's putative injuries. It is, instead, Lamb's *Rosamund Gray*, written at the same time, in a similar frame of mind, with comparable aims and effect. A verse of Lloyd's gave Lamb the title, and Lloyd was deeply interested in the book.

Lamb too drew on the pooled characteristics of the New Pantisocrats, and their affairs, for his characters and action. There is much of Lloyd as well as Lamb in the Allan of *Rosamund Gray*, whose 'temper had a sweet and noble frankness in it, which bespake him yet a virgin from the world'. There is something of the idealized friendship Lamb sought with Coleridge in the relationship between Elinor and Maria, just as there is something of the Lloyd-Coleridge dependency in that between Edmund and his mentor Maurice. There is even an aside in *Rosamund Gray* which may be read as being at Coleridge's expense, when Allan's school-friend finds himself neglected, and pens 'a doleful sonnet about a "faithless friend," - I do not find that he ever finished it - indignation, or a dearth of rhimes, causing him to break off in the middle.'[37] Like Allan of *Rosamund Gray*, Edmund Oliver is a new Man of Feeling whose self-portrait, evocatively Coleridgean, invites parody rather than contains it:

> My mind was active, but slow to receive impressions from others: it felt its own shapings more interesting than any ideas suggested from foreign sources: it was too full of itself to be passive to the mouldings of authority or experience. From this restlessness of spirit, supported by a warm and impetuous temperament, and connected with solitariness of habits, I soon acquired imagination; or the faculty of ever combining the moral with the physical world; or on the other hand, of embodying intellectual conceptions in the borrowed shapes of the visible elements.[38]

There is nothing acid in Lloyd's writing, or never more than the faintest taste of vinegar. The novel is ingenuously moral and sentimental; its central preoccupation is with Godwin rather than Coleridge, and here too Lloyd's allusions are not malicious.[39] Lloyd lacked not only malice but even mischief - he hadn't enough humour for either. 'Lloyd had no drollery in his nature' said Southey.[40]

Edmund physically resembles Coleridge, but there is no travesty in this or any other resemblance. In life, Edmund's crowded sensibility was shared by Lloyd as much as Coleridge:

> His quick and delicate feelings seized every shape, every combination of nature with such indescribable avidity. He peopled it, tenanted it instantaneously with beings, with

[36] Lloyd in introducing the novel, *Edmund Oliver* (Bristol, 1798), i. xii.

[37] *Rosamond Gray* (1798), pp. 43, 50-1.

[38] *Edmund Oliver* i. 14-5.

[39] Lloyd's relationship with Godwinism is not straightforward. For a pertinent account, unsympathetic to Lloyd, see Nicola Trott, 'The Coleridge Circle and the "Answer to Godwin"', *Review of English Studies* 41 (1990) 212-29.

[40] Quoted by Lucas, *Lamb and the Lloyds* 50.

> modes so nicely adapted to its character! A view was not merely a view to him! It was a scene where he formed plans, conceived new schemes of society, imagined suitable characters, sketched out day-dreams of unheard of happiness, and embodied the unshaped sensations of his fervent spirit![41]

This passage is not only not parodic at Coleridge's expense, it is almost an unconscious recipe for a novel as written by Lloyd - for this novel, in fact, peopled with combinations of nature, composite tenants drawn from Lloyd's recent friendships, and nicely adapted to sketch the moral improvements of Lloyd's own fervent spirit.

Edmund *is* a drinker and opium-user and in this more directly descriptive of Coleridge, a point hounded to death by Lloyd's detractors: 'I have at all times a strange dreaminess about me which makes me indifferent to the future, if I can by any means fill the present with sensations'.[42] But again there is no parodic exaggeration, and again this is faithful to Edmund's excess of sensibility. Indulgences are forced on him as on Chatterton or Werther by existential anguish: 'any thing that will stupefy and corporealize my feelings, is better than this gnawing of my heart'.[43] The mundane truth might have been more damaging - that Lloyd watched Coleridge take laudanum not for heartache, but toothache. It is typical of the whole episode that Coleridge can imply almost in the same breath[44] that Lloyd betrayed his private weaknesses and travestied his impulses, and (contradicting that altogether) drove him to opium for the 'first' time - to stupefy the gnawings of his heart.

The parallels with Coleridge are a natural part of the novel's real purposes, which are those of the literature of sensibility. Edmund is a vehicle for protest over hypocrisies and corruptions (particularly promiscuity). His rites of passage are conventional, and better crafted than in many such novels - pathos, impassioned innocence in distress, loss of all except an inviolable heart, recovery of a qualified but wiser felicity. In both strengths and failings, Edmund is a mixture of those dispositions which Lloyd and Coleridge shared. His path to maturity records Lloyd's idealism under the influences of Coleridge, love, and sad experience. In the novel, as in the poems of this same period, Lloyd was 'asserting the regenerative possibilities of the secret cell from which all experience grows'.[45] *Edmund Oliver* was indiscreet, and no more - this was Lloyd's perennial weakness, and a small one.

Why then the outcry? Without mentioning Coleridge Lloyd wrote an acutely perceptive letter about such friendships to his brother Robert in 1811:

> the secret why persons of extreme sensibility seldom or never agree long together is, that there are few of that temperament, perhaps none, such is the constitution of the world, that do not suffer very much - and, as I said before, they rather want *to impress* than *to be impressed*. Now they cannot excite an entire sympathy except where they meet with a sensibility *equal*, and an experience *similar*, to their own; but here in all probability, tho' the charm will be great at first, the want on both sides will be alike, *i.e.*, an impatience to *act upon* rather than *be* acted upon, and these *fine minds* will quarrel very *vulgarly*. Such is in my opinion the sketch of the history of almost all sentimental friendships, especially when they are founded on the wish,

[41] *Edmund Oliver* i. 176.
[42] *Edmund Oliver* i. 245.
[43] *Edmund Oliver* i. 247.
[44] That is, in the notebook entry quoted below.
[45] Fairer 47.

> selfish at bottom, rather to pour out your own feelings than to be impressed by the feelings of others.[46]

Lloyd understood by then that even inward-looking, aesthetic pantisocracies cannot agree on divisions of responsibility, labour and property. Coleridge poured out his own feelings in 1810 in a less candid summary:

> If ever there was a time and circumstance in my life in which I behaved *perfectly* well, it was in that of C.Lloyd's mad quarrel & frantic ingratitude to me . . . there succeeded on his part a series of wicked calumnies & irritations - infamous Lies to Southey & to poor dear Lamb - in short, a conduct which was not that of a friend, only because it was that of a madman/On my side, patience, gentleness, and good for evil - yet this [ef][47] supernatural effort injured me - what I did not suffer to act on my mind, preyed on my body - it prevented my finishing the Christabel - & at the retirement between Linton & Porlock was the first occasion of my having recourse to Opium.[48]

There is one particular chronological confusion which this note, along with myths about 'Kubla Khan', has done much to promote. Untangling it is complex but necessary. Coleridge and many commentators refer to 'the' quarrel with Lloyd, as if to a singular event consequent on the publication (in May 1798) of the novel. The results vary slightly, but, to summarize, are in effect that he then retired, stricken, to a lonely farmhouse, took to opium, wrote 'Kubla Khan', and at the same time was somehow too devastated to complete 'Christabel'. When 'Kubla Khan' was separated from a supposed 'first use' of opium, and the retirement near Porlock redated more probably to some time in October 1797, the story began to crumble, but the impression that Lloyd was to blame persists. Coleridge's correspondence provides his side of the story. Little of Lloyd's has survived.

In fact, 'the' quarrel was a protracted series of upsets, and not a consequence of Lloyd parodying Coleridge, but completely the reverse. By the autumn of 1797 Lloyd was warier of Coleridge, had no doubt learnt some objectivity from Southey, and had also no doubt been indiscreet to both Southey and Lamb about Coleridge, or rather had passed on Coleridge's indiscretions to those who were the subject of them.[49] But there had been no overt rupture, nor - it must be said again - is there either open or covert evidence of schism in the novel, which was complete in manuscript early in November. However, later that month Coleridge sent to the *Monthly Magazine* the three 'Sonnets Attempted in the Manner of Contemporary Writers', in the name of Nehemiah Higginbottom, which parody Lloyd foremost, apparently Coleridge himself, and also Lamb. Lucas's description of the effect on Lloyd reverses the claims of injury:

> [Lloyd] was . . . as Coleridge perfectly well knew, a sensitive, affectionate, unworldly creature, destitute of fun and rich in ideals, who could ill understand an old friend and

[46] Quoted by Lucas, *Lamb and the Lloyds* 248.

[47] Scored out in notebook.

[48] *Notebooks* iii. 4006.

[49] The most damaging of these was Coleridge's use of himself as example of genius with Lamb as one of talent; and Coleridge's invitation to 'Poor Lamb' that 'if he wants any *knowledge*, he may apply to me'; see Winifred Courtney, *Young Charles Lamb* (London, 1982) (hereafter Courtney), pp. 171-2.

> erstwhile spiritual guide making a public mock of him and the poetry that had cost so much dear effort.[50]

This was the main offence, and if anyone was faithless and cruel it was Coleridge rather than Lloyd. 'How deadly the thrust is for both Lamb and Lloyd', wrote David Fairer of the second of the three sonnets, adding that 'The cruelty of this tactic should not be underplayed.'[51]

Coleridge condensed his version of events into an epigram, 'To One who Published in Print what had been entrusted to him by my Fireside':

> Two things hast thou made known to half the nation,
> My secrets and my want of penetration:
> For O! far more than all which thou hast penn'd
> It shames me to have call'd a wretch, like thee, my friend![52]

Coleridge's complaints are largely specious. He had long since made known to his own audience - larger and more deferential than Lloyd's - weaknesses Lloyd had felt safe to admit at this fireside. Among such strident misrepresentations, such masterful public inversions of events, Lloyd's incoherent protests were barely audible.

The failure of this new pantisocracy was as damaging as that of the old. The friendship between Coleridge and Lloyd would never be repaired - though Lloyd retained his respect for Coleridge's mind. Relations between Coleridge and Lamb were abruptly broken off. As is well known, correspondence between them closed after Lamb's letter (May 1798) on the eve of Coleridge's departure for Germany, with its sardonic 'Theses Quaedam Theologicae'. The 'Theses', which may have been composed with Lloyd at Lamb's elbow, were provoked by that remark of Coleridge's, 'Poor Lamb . . . if he wants any *knowledge*, he may apply to me'.[53] The first available letter of their resumed relationship is from late January 1800. Recollections of this period were a source of distress to both Lamb and Coleridge for many years. There are two points to be made about this. Firstly, that Lamb's position on *Edmund Oliver* is not known, and whatever it was, the novel was not in itself the problem. The source of estrangement is essentially the same as it was with Lloyd - Lamb's need to find a language and status of his own. Secondly, that when the friendship resumes, it is the healthier for Lamb having acquired more independence.

Between 28 January and *c.* 23 May 1798, there are no surviving letters from Lamb to Coleridge.[54] This adds to the confusion. One would give much to have Lamb's spontaneous reaction to either the manuscript or published text of *Edmund Oliver*, but there is no direct evidence of his response at all. Once the friendship with Coleridge was repaired, Lamb distanced himself from Lloyd - this was not a matter in which Coleridge would tolerate toleration. In later years Lamb was ambivalent about Lloyd, sometimes disapproving,

[50] *Charles Lamb and the Lloyds* 46.

[51] Fairer 45.

[52] 'Epigram' (first pub. *Morning Post*, 23 September 1802), *Poetical Works* ii. 964.

[53] See footnote 48, above.

[54] Marrs believes there *were* letters between these dates which could reveal more information. See Marrs i. 129.

sometimes cautiously sympathetic.[55] But he does not refer to the novel, in any extant letter or writing.[56]

Edmund Oliver is dedicated to Lamb, and it is inconceivable that he did not read it, given the circumstances. Immediately after publication, Lloyd and Lamb were very close - Lamb arrived to stay with the family in Birmingham on 23 May, and it is probable he and Lloyd were together in Bristol immediately before this, perhaps travelling on to Birmingham together. 'Lamb quitted me yesterday', wrote Lloyd in June, 'after a fortnight's visit. I have been much interested in his society. I never knew him so happy in my life.'[57] The indirect evidence points to no disapproval of the novel by Lamb at the time - it is never mentioned among Lamb's subsequent criticisms of Lloyd. Given Lamb's tenderness for slighted books, he was unlikely to have expelled it from the community of his shelves without a fair hearing.

The story of Lloyd's subsequent decline makes sad reading. More to the point, the injury to Lloyd's reputation has proved almost fatal. This is deplorable for wider reasons:

> In examining the nature of Lloyd's and Lamb's early poetic radicalism I found myself becoming increasingly puzzled by the extent to which Lloyd's early poetry has been overshadowed by the work of his better-known friends. He strikes me as having produced some of the most interesting poetry of the decade. Lamb's verse gains in depth to the extent that it relates to his, and the poetry of Wordsworth and Coleridge finds fresh nuances when read in the context of Lloyd's development as a poet.[58]

The darkest shadow cast over Lloyd's poetry is that of his novel as interpreted by Coleridge. Lloyd was never a major writer, but if his work is to slip from notice it should be for deficiencies in literary quality - not for parody and spite which, in a dispassionate reading, *Edmund Oliver* does not contain.

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[55] 'And should you see Charles Lloyd', Lamb wrote huffily to Dorothy in 1804, 'pray *forget* to give my love to him' (Marrs ii. 139). There is no shortage of examples; Lamb is of course also more ambivalent about Coleridge than he once was.

[56] Lucas at first thought an aside in a letter to Robert Lloyd of October 1799 referred to *Edmund Oliver* (see *Charles Lamb and the Lloyds* 105), but later changed his mind, suggesting Lloyd's *Isabel* instead; see *The Letters of Charles and Mary Lamb* ed. E. V. Lucas (London, 1935), i. 161. Marrs confidently plumps for *Isabel* (Marrs i. 171). See also Courtney 168-9.

[57] Lucas, *Life of Charles Lamb* (2 vols., London, 1905), i. 130.

[58] Fairer 35.

The Pastor's Love Story

By JEFFREY BAKER

IN HIS REVIEW of *The Excursion* Charles Lamb speaks of 'that finer species of humour, that thoughtful playfulness in which the author more nearly perhaps than in any other quality resembles Cowper'.[1] Lamb had particularly in mind the tale of the Hanoverian and the Jacobite, but he might equally have cited the Pastor's tale of unrequited love, in which the playfulness is not merely thoughtful, but allusively erudite, and the vehicle for a species of therapeutic mockery.

All the most effective parts of the churchyard tales we hear in *The Excursion* are written, contrary to common belief, in an undecorated, unemphatic manner. Nevertheless there are many passages in the Pastor's narrations displaying an elevated style, elegant beyond anything we would find in *Lyrical Ballads*. But in the tale of the rejected suitor the artfulness at first seems excessive and inappropriate. Take for example the manner of the opening. The questions the Pastor asks of the Solitary: 'At morn or eve, in your retired domain, / Perchance you not infrequently have marked / A Visitor . . .' (vi 95-7). 'Domain', 'perchance', 'not infrequently' - the preciousness is thrust at us. The mannered style, though punctuated from time to time with judicious melodrama, is maintained throughout. The unhappy lover who sued in vain was

> Rejected, yea repelled; and if with scorn
> Upon the haughty maiden's brow, 'tis but
> A high-prized plume which female Beauty wears
> In wantonness of conquest, or puts on
> To cheat the world, or from herself to hide
> Humiliation . . . (vi 121-6)

There is just too much alliteration - 'sued - scorn', 'rejected, yea repelled', 'high-prized plume', 'wantonness - world', 'herself - hide - humiliation', - and much too much poetic diction. Even in the later Wordsworth it is wise to be alert when we encounter female Beauty wearing high-prized plumes, and scorn on haughty maidens' brows. Something is afoot, we may suspect, a dissident spirit at work not beneath, but within, the surface, so that we sense in the well-bred figures and tropes that which Hazlitt once detected in the poet's features - 'a convulsive inclination to laughter'.[2] A highly intelligent and articulate man, even one in holy orders, might well have a taste for the sort of humour that we shall find in this story, though it is not easy to imagine any real Pastor, standing on hallowed ground beside an open grave, using such teasing drollery. The tale itself fulfils the Pastor's purpose, the character of the principal protagonist shows the resilience and nobility that constitute evidence of 'the virgin ore, that gold' which the Solitary is so disinclined to perceive in humankind. But the manner and strategy of the narrative suit the authorial purpose superbly - the voice is Wordsworth's throughout. Elsewhere Wordsworth certainly uses elegant, euphuistic artifice for purposes of burlesque - one recalls the Solitary's speech on Mutability, for example:

[1] *The Works of Charles Lamb*, with an introduction and notes by Alfred Ainger (7 vols., London and New York, ?1900), ii. 19.

[2] 'My First Acquaintance with the Poets', in *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt* ed. P. P. Howe (21 vols., London, 1930-4), xviii. 118.

'crowned with garlands in the summer grove / The poet fits it to his pensive lyre' (iii 444-5). On that occasion the Solitary was undoubtedly a proper object of mockery, but at the beginning of this tale we have the uncomfortable feelings that we are being asked to laugh at the sufferings of a young man who has died for love. Even in comic opera we do not laugh at the death of Jack Point. Yet there does seem to be some form of leg-pulling going on here, and we need to know exactly what we are being asked to laugh off the stage.

The answer is found, I believe, in the sequence of the narrative. The Pastor asks his question about the 'Visitor in quest of herbs and flowers', and the Solitary responds in characteristic fashion:

> Such a Form
> Full well I recollect. We often crossed
> Each other's path; but as the Intruder seemed
> Fondly to prize the silence which he kept,
> And I as willingly did cherish mine,
> We met, and passed like shadows. (vi 102-7)

The word 'Intruder' comes oddly from one who is himself not native to the vale, and one who has seemed to convict its dwellers of lack of social charity. 'Cherish', however, is even more telling, suggesting an indulgent pride in half a lifetime of embittered sulks. In the next sentence though, one detects a more obnoxious note. He has heard from the shepherd that the Intruder is 'crazed in brain / By unrequited love'. The tone here recalls the Solitary's attitude to the slow-witted Pensioner. Within a few moments the Intruder will change from an object of mild contempt to one of intense interest. The Pastor points to an open grave in which the unhappy man will be buried on the following day, and smiles as he does so. If the Pastor's euphuisms have not already given a signal to the reader, his smile should do so. The Solitary, however, seems not to notice the smile, and eagerly snaps at the bait: 'Died he then / Of pain and grief? . . . Do not believe it; never could it be!' (vi 115-17). This is a rhetorical flourish merely, the maggot has been taken. The Solitary's real implication is that the man should have survived to endure a lifetime of suffering, as he himself has done. It is the duty of a man so cursed by life's vicissitudes to dree his weird in perpetuity.

The Pastor, confident that his fish is hooked, continues the story almost ostentatiously without making the matter clear. When the young man heard that his beloved had married someone else

> Then pity scarcely could have found on earth
> An object worthier of regard than he,
> In the transition of that bitter hour!
> Lost was she, lost. (vi 131-4)

The melodramatic inversion in that final cry identifies the laboured periphrasis of the whole. The Pastor's speech is not an imitation of elegance, it is a burlesque of romantic posturing. Reason, however, keeps breaking in. The rejected suitor acknowledges that the lady has not trifled with him, nor thrown herself away on some rural caitiff - 'nor could the Sufferer say / That in the act of preference he had been / Unjustly dealt with; but the Maid was gone!' (vi 134-6). The sufferer himself, it seems, did not romanticise his case, great though his torments were, but the Pastor is doing so with, it seems, heartless relish. The next four lines may be unique in Wordsworth, for one cannot readily think of another example in his work of teasing sexual innuendo - indeed it is scarcely innuendo; more nearly comic euphemism. The Maid

Had vanished from his prospects and desires;
Not by transition to the heavenly choir
Who have put off their mortal spoils - ah no!
She lives another's wishes to complete. (vi 137-40)

It is difficult not to suppose a certain archness in the Pastor's tone at the phrase 'mortal spoils' - and perhaps at 'complete'. But these suggestive terms remind us of the true nature of the young man's pains - almost unbearable as they may for a time be, they are not uncommon or romantically significant, they spring from a universal hazard of the human condition.

At this point, it seems, the Narrator and the Wanderer are as much misled by the Pastor's strategy as the Solitary is. Yet we feel that not all three are equally the targets of this wry burlesque. The intended victim is indicated by the wretched young man's anguished benediction on the fortunate lovers: '"Joy be their lot, and happiness," he cried, / "His lot and hers, as misery must be mine"' (vi 141-2). There is real pain and nobility in this, and the Pastor is not mocking it. He *is* mocking, however, the young man's conception that misery is to be his lot throughout his mortal existence, though it is the chosen and well-nourished misery of the Solitary that is the main target.

The Pastor's account is not entirely satirical: he shows genuine compassion for the suffering of the unhappy lover. We must assume that in the lines following the young man's cry of despair we are meant to sympathise fully with a strong healthy young man pierced by the intensest kind of emotional distress:

Such was that strong concussion; but the Man,
Who trembled, trunk and limbs, like some huge oak
By a fierce tempest shaken, soon resumed
The steadfast quiet natural to a mind
Of composition gentle and sedate. (vi 143-7)

We need to remember that Wordsworth is using the word 'concussion' in its ordinary, not its medical sense, signifying a violent shaking, as the next two lines confirm. It is an effective evocation of the dreadful shudder that may overwhelm the body and nerves of someone who is experiencing terrible fear or devastating news. There is no ambiguity of tone here - the Pastor sympathises with the man, and so does the reader. The Pastor approves too of the man's resolve to overcome his emotions by returning to his scientific studies even more diligently than before. However the mockery returns immediately when he reports the failure of the lover's efforts, though his target is not the young man himself, but the Solitary, along with the Wanderer and the Narrator, who are all expecting the traditional outcome, as, almost certainly, the first-time reader is at this point.

When the Pastor, with an apparently inappropriate smile, had pointed to the young man's waiting grave, he resumed his misleading narrative with the words, 'He loved . . . / Loved fondly, truly, fervently; and dared / At length to tell his love . . .' (vi 118-20). De Selincourt notes that this last phrase had originally been 'When he had told his love', and was probably altered in 1827 to avoid invidious comparison with Viola in *Twelfth Night* II iv 113-15: 'She never told her love . . .'[3] Possibly not though, since in the line we actually have, the allusion

[3] *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth* ed. Ernest de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire (5 vols., Oxford, 1940-9), v. 457.

to Viola remains equally strong. The associative factor is not in the form of the verb, but in the ambiguity common to Shakespeare's lines and Wordsworth's. Viola's line could mean 'She never told anyone about her feelings', or 'She never told her beloved' - an ambiguity the more striking because both meanings are true of Viola's subject, who is Viola herself. The Pastor's line could mean 'He finally found courage to tell other people about his feelings', or 'He was finally bold enough to tell the lady that he loved her'. The next phrase 'but sued in vain' resolves the ambiguity immediately, but for a moment the reader has experienced it, and the connection with *Twelfth Night* is made. The Pastor's romanticising audience will now be expecting a worm in the bud, and a wasting cheek. And sure enough when the Pastor returns to the Shakespearean allusion, he obliges expectation:

> Of what ensued
> Within the heart no outward sign appeared
> Till a betraying sickliness was seen
> To tinge his cheek; and through his frame it crept
> With slow mutation unconcealable. (vi 154-8)

Rejection in love is so appallingly painful that one may expect the victim to show visible signs of torment and depression. But life is being turned into literature here, the poor man's suffering has become a text. This observation needs explanation. For us, Wordsworth's readers, the young man's story *is* literature, the Pastor and his audience are personae in a literary work. But if we imaginatively join the Pastor's audience, then we are hearing a story of real life and death. However, the Pastor is suggesting by his diction and allusions that reality will take the shape suggested by literary conventions and parallels, and the expectations they will promote. So the elevated allusiveness goes on: ''Tis affirmed / By poets skilled in Nature's secret ways / That love will not submit to be controlled / By mastery' (vi 161-4). In other words, no resolution on the sufferer's part will cure his passion. De Selincourt claims to have found two sources for these lines: Chaucer's *Franklin's Tale* 36-8. and Spenser's *Faerie Queene* III i 25. But these sources seem to imply that one cannot compel someone else's love, not that one cannot subdue one's own affection. The form of the words is enough for the Pastor - he wishes to tell us the attempt failed, but he wishes to do so allusively, and so continue to make life into literature.

The device is repeated in the next stratagem suggested by the young man's friends - or at least in the manner in which the Pastor tells us of it. Abstract scientific studies having failed, the man must take to field work, get out into the fresh air of nature, and construct 'a calendar of flowers' (vi 174). It seems evident that what they actually mean by this is a catalogue of herbs, the gathering of which may in itself be a healthful activity, but may also offer a more direct therapy. At the beginning of the tale, in reply to the Pastor's initial inquiry whether or not he had seen the man, the Solitary says:

> . . . he scaled the rocks,
> Dived into caves, and pierced the matted woods,
> In hope to find some virtuous herb of power
> To cure his malady. (vi 109-12)

However the phrase 'calendar of flowers' can also mean a collection of seasonal plants, which may be used symbolically to represent the stages of human life. There may be an allusion here to *The Winter's Tale*, where to those on whose life winter seems to have settled, rosemary and rue are given, and to those whose spring of life is blighted, 'pale primroses /

That die unmarried' (IV iv 74 and 122-23, my italics). The person distributing the flowers is Perdita, the lost girl ('Lost was she, lost . . . . the Maid was gone').

The Pastor's mockery is erudite indeed, but his target is an educated man. The point of this embedded literary gamesmanship is to encourage the Solitary, already so-minded, to perceive the story as it would have ended in folk-song, not as it probably would have ended in the everyday world. Both the Solitary and the reader have been led up Barbara Allen's garden path.

The calendar of flowers, undertaken 'how hopelessly' (vi 177), fails in itself, but Nature, to whose care and healing power, divine grace, so the Pastor avers, commends the honest young man, does better, being

> . . . assisted in her office
> By all the elements that round her wait
> To generate, to preserve, and to restore;
> And by her beautiful array of forms
> Shedding sweet influence from above; or pure
> Delight exhaling from the ground they tread. (vi 183-8)

At this strong hint the Wanderer rumbles the Pastor's game, and belatedly joins the joke with a question brazenly euphuistic in manner: '"Impute it not to impatience, if", exclaimed / The Wanderer, "I infer that he was healed / By perseverance in the course prescribed"' (vi 189-91). He is right, of course; the young man gradually recovered from his love-sickness, as the vast majority of rejected suitors do, in life, if not in ballads. His early death was caused by fever, not love. At his death he had not lost all feeling for the lady, but had retained an affection and tenderness for one whom he had once passionately desired, and as a symbol of his now settled and unhurtful liking, he made a farewell gift to her of a book with pressed flowers. Poseurs take their postures from fiction, not from the common business of human kind. The Solitary has been misled in order to be mocked, and mocked in order to be rebuked.

Chester-le-Street, Durham

Notes from Hoxton

By D. E. WICKHAM

(i) The Hoxton Madhouse Located? The Case for Hoxton House

HOXTON IS A DISTRICT of London, a mile or so east of Elian Pentonville and Islington. It is a very poor working-class inner city area, with none of Islington's claims as a desirable enclave. When Charles and Mary Lamb were young, Pentonville, Islington and Hoxton were similar, up-and-coming countrified places on the edge of the house-filled City suburbs. At that time there were several, even many, private madhouses in Hoxton, rather as today there are nursing homes in Kingston. The Hoxton asylum in which Charles Lamb was confined at the turn of the year 1795-6, and in which Mary Lamb was apparently also restrained, seems never to have been identified. A quick search through Claude Prance's *Companion to Charles Lamb*, Lucas' *Life*, and Winifred F. Courtney's *Young Charles Lamb 1775-1802* did not help. Mary Balle, researching the subject of Mary Lamb's mania, recently told me that the madhouse could have been any one of several.

Miss Joan Coburn, Head Archivist of the Greater London Record Office, wrote to me of various Hoxton asylums which might have housed the Lambs, one source suggesting a building apparently too far north - that is, further north than the Geffrye Almshouses, now the Geffrye Museum in Kingsland Road - another source mentioning at least three such institutions, Holly House (prop. Mr Burrow in 1827), Hoxton House (prop. Mr Wastell in 1827), and Whitmore House. There was also, coincidentally, an eminent psychiatric physician named Thomas Arnold (1742-1816) who may conceivably be a member of the family of Mr Bening Arnold who is mentioned in (iii) below and who started all these hares running. The GLRO has no archives of any of these private asylums.

Miss Coburn also mentioned that an Act of Parliament for regulating madhouses in London and Middlesex, passed in 1774, required five members of the Royal College of Physicians to inspect and license private madhouses. This Act was repealed in 1828, when responsibility for inspecting and licensing private asylums in London passed to the Metropolitan Commissioners in Lunacy. This may underline the air of mild amateurism which sometimes strikes us when we read of an asylum being carried on in a private house. Perhaps we should consider how far there is a modern equivalent in certain small residential homes for the elderly.

The following three items are printed here for the record and in reverse order of apparent interest and importance. The third was thought to be decisive until contradicted by the first. The second was then found and seems to lie neatly between the others. Readers will remember Barry Cornwall's remark: 'he would take her, under his arm, to Hoxton Asylum. It was very afflicting to encounter the young brother and his sister walking together (weeping together) on this painful errand'.[1] If this is factually correct rather than just generally sentimental, Charles and Mary Lamb would have walked from Pentonville eastward, a little over a mile across the farmland and past the new houses where Shepherdess Walk and New North Road now run. This would have brought them directly to Hoxton Street.

(i) Long after this paper was first drafted and while the CLS Archives were being sorted before they were sent to the Guildhall Library, I discovered an incomplete and unsigned letter addressed to 'Dear Mr Secretary Crowsley', dated 19 March 1935. It was identifiable from

[1] *Charles Lamb: A Memoir* (London, 1869), p. 37.

the address as having been sent by F[rank]. V. Hallam, sometime Secretary of the Islington Antiquarian and Historical Society, who enthusiastically supported the first glimmerings of the Charles Lamb Society. The relevant passage tells how, during a recent visit with the Islington Antiquarian [and Historical] Society to Hackney and its Public Library, 'the Librarian showed me a print apropos of Charles and Mary Lamb - it was of Baumes or Balms House, formerly the seat of Sir George Whitmore. It was first built in 1580. This is said to have been the mental home at Hoxton where Charles used to take Mary. I find that the apparent contradiction of Hoxton and Hackney being confused or interchangeable in this connection, is due to the fact that the house was in Hackney and the gardens (which were extensive) in Hoxton. The site as near as possible is in Kingsland Road, facing the Metropolitan Hospital. I also ascertained from the Librarian (Mr Parker) that Lamb was also in lodgings at Hackney, probably at the time Mary was at Balms[2] House but the exact house is not known. When Charles and Mary were in Chapel Street, Islington, Mary was also taken (so I have ascertained) to a mental home in the Lower (Essex) Road, but here again the exact site is not known.'

Mr Hallam led a Charles Lamb Society group round Islington on 10 July 1937. The tour was reported in a Supplement to Old Series *Bulletin* No. 23 of September 1937. He made the same suggestions again but with a little more detail. He believed the Hoxton madhouse where Lamb, as he wrote to Coleridge, spent six weeks 'very agreeably' and to which he escorted his sister 'across the fields of Islington', was probably Baumes House. In 1937 its site was partly occupied by the Metropolitan Hospital in Kingsland Road. He now believed that, in the Lower Street (Essex Road), nearly opposite Cross Street which still (1994) runs a little to the north of Duncan Terrace in Elian Islington, was Fisher House, which became an asylum 'where, in all probability, Charles took his sister during her periodic attacks'.

A London street atlas of 1888 shows that the Metropolitan Free Hospital was (then) on the west side of Kingsland Road and on the south side of St Peter's Road, now St Peter's Way. This is far to the north of Mail Coach Yard mentioned in (iii) below. An unattributed note in *CLB* NS 69 (January 1990) 184 records an October 1989 small ad for an end of terrace house which may be connected: '"De Beauvoir", Balmy Pleasaunce, Close site fashionable Victorian asylum (Mary Lamb inmate . . .)'.

(ii) Charles Lamb's original letter proposing marriage to Fanny Kelly was newly discovered when it was published in an article by John Hollingshead in *Harper's Monthly Magazine* for September 1903 (Rich Collection XIII. 158). Hollingshead took the opportunity of saying of Charles and Mary Lamb that 'they glorify the old madhouse in the High Street, Hoxton,[3] which still stands [c.1903] as it stood in 1800, with the large brass plate on the door of the chief dwelling and entrance, inscribed with the single word "Miles"; they sanctify the "Cat and Mutton Fields", over which they walked, hand in hand, from Hackney to Hoxton, when they felt the mental curse was coming on them . . .'

Scrutiny of various maps has shown that, in 1888, a building marked 'Lunatic Asylum' stood on the east side of Hoxton Street, more or less opposite the surviving Aske Street, though this does not cut through to Hoxton Street. Depending on the extent of the two properties, it would be quite feasible for the asylum grounds and those of the paper mill in

[2] Cf. 'barmy' or 'balmy', though the 'mad' inference seems to be a mid-19th century derivation from a usage meaning a state of drunkenness.

[3] Presumably what is now Hoxton Street is intended.

Mail Coach Yard, mentioned below, to abut. Modern maps show that Hoxton House School stands at least partially on the site of the Asylum building.

(iii) The following handwritten letter was the first of these three items found. It was a chance discovery in the Archives of the Elian (Society) now preserved with the Charles Lamb Society's Archives at Guildhall Library.

> Camelot, Surrey Road
> Bournemouth West
>
> 30 July 1924[4]
>
> Dear Sir,
>
> In reply to your enquiry respecting Charles Lamb I regret to say I never knew anything of him but what I have gathered in books, except this, - the madhouse in which both he and his sister were confined was situated at the back of a paper mill which was carried on by my grandfather.[5] The entry to the madhouse was in Hoxton [Street], but the paper mill was in Mail Coach Yard, Kingsland Road. My grandfather was saluted daily when he went into the mill yard by a man in the madhouse, and the two conversed together, but I do not suppose for a moment that the madman was Lamb.
>
> Lamb was buried in Edmonton churchyard near relations of mine (grandfather on mother's side and others) of the name of Acott.
>
> I am an idolator of Lamb, and often call to mind 'You may take my word for it, and say it was a fool who told you, He that hath not a dram or two of folly in him hath many pounds of something much worse'.
>
> Yours faithfully
> B. Arnold
> Born 25 May, 1824

The *Daily News* of 2 April 1925 (Rich I. 184) referred to Mr Bening Arnold, who had recently written to *The Times* (1 April 1925) at the age of 101, and made the points that Charles Lamb was known personally to Mr Arnold's [paternal?] grandfather, that the latter was buried in Edmonton churchyard beside the Lamb grave [this was certainly his maternal grandfather, Acott], and that Charles Lamb could look from the Hoxton madhouse upon the Arnold paper-mill.

Just before Easter 1993, I walked round the immediate district mentioned in the Bening letter, but it is not somewhere to go for pleasure. The area is very dilapidated and even derelict. It is on the borders of E2 and N1, a hundred yards or so south of the Geffrye Museum, once almshouses built by The Ironmongers' Company and specially sited in a rural district, which are on the other side of the main road, Kingsland Road, which leads to Dalston where Charles Lamb sought peace and quiet in rustic 'Dalstonizing'. There are lock-up shops along the main road, the establishments of 'little masters', tyre fitters, shoe wholesalers, sandblasters, and a stained glass maker.

I failed to identify Mail Coach Yard but tried again 18 months later, on 1 September 1994. The man in the motor parts shop on the southern corner of Redvers Street thought I might be from the Council, or the VAT office, or the tax office - the giveaways being my tie and my briefcase. Having reassured him, we moved from current bogeymen through local history to Charles Lamb. Fortunately I had a copy letter on the Society's headed paper with me and

[4] For 1925?

[5] By implication, named Arnold.

he was soon anxious to help. When I suggested the theory that the asylum was a considerable distance north of where we were standing, he insisted on the primacy of the area of Mail Coach Yard. He was able to confirm many of the details mentioned above, which I already knew but which thus seem to survive in local knowledge and not just in the Archives of the Charles Lamb Society. He also confirmed that the next alley southwards was Mail Coach Yard.

It is difficult to find the first time so I record full directions. Walking north on the west (left-hand) side of Kingsland Road from, say, Shoreditch Church, one goes under the railway bridge and then passes various named and unnamed turnings. Then one sees a street-sign with the name of Basing Place, then the name of Caroline Gardens, then the Jobcentre building, which I called the employment exchange and he called the labour exchange and implied as jobless itself. Next there is an unnamed private road which is Mail Coach Yard. Right beside this is a private courtyard, then Redvers Street, which is also named and contains sagging brick walls and ancient woodwork which I originally hoped might have belonged to the paper mill, particularly if it had been of any reasonable extent.

The un-signed Mail Coach Yard first runs beneath the upper floors of an oversailing modern building, just like the entrance to a proper coaching inn yard. It then becomes a wide flat alley with a stark 1950s office building to the left (south) and the boundary fence of the private yard to the right (north). A discreet inspection shows no obvious relics of the paper mill but, at the far end, the trees and bushes and unidentifiable buildings of the school in Hoxton Street can easily lead one to believe that one is still looking at the anonymous asylum where Charles and Mary Lamb were housed.

All these minor entries along the west side of Kingsland Road are cul-de-sacs, running towards high walls and concrete barriers. The area between Kingsland Road and Hoxton Street, to the west, is largely taken up with blocks of flats, both Victorian and post-war, and a school, once known as Hoxton House School. The latter is all that might be brought to mind by the term Board School and it would also be a good stand-in for the House of Usher. Just about where the madhouse entrance could have been, in Hoxton Street, is a gateway to the school yard, stone-faced, metal plated, and with wall-top railings and wire all about. Above it looms a gable of the school. Opposite is a sad little parade of modern shops. There, but there only, one can imagine coming to the depressing equivalent in Charles Lamb's time, buying some sweets or flowers, and going through the portal to make one's duty visit.

(ii) Bening Arnold (1824-1930): A Great Non-Elian

Mr Bening Arnold's above-mentioned letter about Charles Lamb and the reference to *The Times* encouraged me to see what the Index to that newspaper offered, at least from January 1923 onwards. It showed that Mr Arnold, though not really an Elian, was a fascinating character on the edge of our Elian world.

He was born in London on 25 May 1824, the son of Mr Edward Arnold, the papermaker said to have introduced the first papermaking machine into England, in 1815. The son was apprenticed as a printer and set a book of music which was published by Vincent Novello. He was 'formerly of St Magnus House, Monument Street', London EC, but had later become a dealer in antique silver. He lived in Bournemouth for his last 32 years, at Camelot, Surrey Road, West Bournemouth.

His only contribution to *The Times* during 1923 was of some quotations on rabbits, taken from *The Times* of 1823, which were printed in the earlier editions on 3 August 1923, but

these were not published in the Royal Edition which is the basis of the microfilms which have replaced the original copies in most libraries.

His next appearance was in *The Times* for Tuesday, 27 May 1924, when he was reported as celebrating his 100th birthday on the preceding Sunday by taking part, on the Monday, in a bowling match arranged in his honour and receiving an illuminated address from his fellow bowlers [of the Alum Chine Bowling Club] and a congratulatory letter from the King and Queen. There is no reference to Charles Lamb and so, unless someone happened to know of Mr Bening and his background, this cannot be the direct stimulus for the letter sent by the Secretary of the Elian to which Mr Arnold replied on (apparently) 30 July 1924.

The Times of 1 November 1924 printed his letter about how, at the age of 22, he had been present on the platform at the very first performance of Mendelssohn's oratorio *Elijah*, conducted by the composer in Birmingham Town Hall in 1846, when the soloists were Grisi, Mario and Lablache. *The Times* of 4 December 1924 printed another letter from him containing the incomparable statement 'For quite 90 years I have been a daily reader of *The Times*' and he went on to write of the steam-printing of the newspaper and about his grandfather's mill for making mill-boards and paper.

The Times of 30 March 1925 carried an anonymous article of more than a column marking the centenary of Charles Lamb's leaving 'the d----d India House for Ever': 'Yesterday fell and today will be celebrated one of the pleasantest anniversaries in literature'. The issue of 31 March printed a column and a quarter reporting details of the Superannuation Dinner.

It was presumably the first of those articles which prompted Mr Arnold's letter to *The Times* of 1 April 1925 which some may think echoes the true Elian spirit:

> Sir, - Delightful reading all about Charles Lamb! Like Oliver Twist, we want more. Tell us all about Mackery-end, his walk there with his sister, and their walk together hand in hand to the Hoxton Mad House, whence he could look down upon my grandfather's paper mill. Though I shall be 101 in May, it is not long ago that I made a journey to Edmonton to see Lamb's grave and found it side by side with my mother's father's grave. Tell us how he became Pope Innocent. Such charming foolery! But, as he says, 'He that hath not a dram or two of folly in him hath many pounds of something much worse'.

This printed letter could well have been the stimulus for the enquiry from the Secretary of the Elian, which reached Mr Arnold in time for a reply, if misdated by a year, on 30 July 1925.

Mr Arnold's birthdays were briefly noted in *The Times* each year, usually with a reference to bowling, and claiming him as the oldest bowler in the world in May 1927. He died at Camelot on 17 August 1930 aged 106 and believed to be the oldest man in England. *The Times* printed his obituary on 19 August 1930. He had taken up bowls at the age of 85 and played frequently until he was over 100. He celebrated his 101st and 102nd birthdays by taking part in games of bowls, played at least as late as three weeks before his 103rd birthday, and last visited his club in September 1928. He remembered *Elijah* and the Chartist riots (1830s and 1840s); indeed, he had a wonderful memory and 'was able to write as any man of 60 when he was 100 years of age' (whatever that means). He retained his faculties to a remarkable degree until a short time before his death and had been seen taking a walk by himself quite recently. He wished to be buried at Kensal Green. *The Times* published his will on 29 October 1930. It was remarkably uninteresting.

Belvedere, Kent

Reviews

CHARLES AND MARY LAMB, *Mrs Leicester's School*. Spelsbury: Woodstock Books, 1995. ISBN 1 85477 182 5. Pp. 196. £27.50 hardback.

WHAT A JOY to have *Mrs Leicester's School* added to the list of Woodstock Books! This is a facsimile of the second edition, of which Lucas says, 'the Lambs' final text is probably to be found there'. Readers will notice that the original title-page does not mention Mary or Charles Lamb. Mary did not put her name to any of her work, the *Tales from Shakespear* being attributed to Charles only, probably by Godwin. Here the subtitle covers the anonymity while indicating the scheme of the book, 'The History of Several Young Ladies Related by Themselves'.

Rereading these stories, one is struck by the deceptiveness of their apparent simplicity, which hides a most skilful and delicate art. The tales are told through a child's eyes but often with a piercing adult irony. The combination of the child's acceptance of the incomprehensible behaviour of grown-ups with her own clear feelings, which unwittingly pass judgment on her elders, provides scope for some devastating implications. In 'Visit to the Cousins' the cruelty of the cousins and the uncle and aunt with whom Emily Barton is left for a year arouses the same sense of helpless anger that Kipling, in similar circumstances, conveys in *Baa Baa Black Sheep*. The *coup de grace* is given when Emily's father comes for her and she does not recognize him.

Or, as Jonathan Wordsworth says in his admirable introduction, in Ann Withers' tale Mary 'reverses generations of changeling denouements by concerning herself with the one who was *not* the princess. . . . Drawing on the strength and the wisdom derived from her own "experience in sorrow", Mary creates a story that is compelling and sustained'. He goes on to say, quoting Crabb Robinson, that it is 'full of deep feeling, and great truth of the imagination'. I am sure Landor was not the only one to weep when reading 'The Father's Wedding-day', in which the little girl says, 'When I was dressed in my new frock, I wished poor mamma was alive to see how fine I was on papa's wedding day; and I ran to my favourite station at her bedroom door'. Fortunately, there are kind and understanding grown-ups, like the stepmother in this tale or the Sailor Uncle or Atkinson in Charles' story 'The Sea Voyage', and for the children 'a happy issue out of all their afflictions' at warm-hearted Mrs Leicester's school, so that the young readers are consoled with a happy ending.

There are, of course, celebratory stories without dark undertones such as 'The Farm-house', which Jonathan Wordsworth says has 'no great emotional depth' but which he cannot resist quoting: 'Grandmamma says a hen is not esteemed a very wise bird'.

In the absence of any modern edition of *Mrs Leicester's School* in print, Elians who are also book-collectors may well wish to launch out and acquire a copy of this enchanting little book.

Sevenoaks MARY WEDD

ANTHONY JOHN HARDING, *The Reception of Myth in English Romanticism*. Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1995. ISBN 0 8262 1007 4. Pp. xiv + 289. £35.95 hardback.

HARDING'S FIRST BOOK, *Coleridge and the Idea of Love*, one of the best in the field, was followed by *Coleridge and the Inspired Word*. Now he is back again, with a consideration of the Romantic period in general from the specific vantage-point of its mythopoesis. Myth, one of Harding's abiding interests, is a broad church here. For one thing, it is enlarged beyond its Greek and Roman originals to include folk-tale as well as biblical narrative. More importantly, its semantic range is widened, almost to endlessness, by the titular notion of 'reception': this is a book about interpretation as such. Its focus is the 'hermeneutic effort' that is involved in every,

historically particular, act of appropriation. Harding's larger ambition is to suggest a new kind of myth-criticism, which sets itself against Frye's totalizing anatomy of archetypes, and aims instead to be 'sensitive', both 'to the strategies by which texts use, interpret, ironize, or subvert myths, and to its own historical situation'. These self-awarenesses are meant to ensure that, just as Romantic mythopoesis is no post-Enlightenment 'reversion to credulity', so there is no simple mirroring of the critic's life and times in his construction of the 'Romantic'.

Like all good myth-analysts, Harding is a powerful synthesiser. One of the most impressive aspects of the book is its integration of modern critical materials; only occasionally, as in the reading of Keats' *Isabella* (where Heinzelman is allowed to dominate) does the interpretative field feel rather swamped. Overall, Harding moves with considerable adroitness between the firmness of old-fashioned scholarship and the fizz of modern theory. He also covers a lot of carefully selected ground: there are two chapters on Coleridge (the *Mariner* and *Christabel*), three on Wordsworth (from the 1798-9 *Prelude* to 'Home at Grasmere'), two on Shelley (*Queen Mab* to *Mont Blanc* and beyond), one on Keats (from *Endymion* to *Hyperion*), and one shared between Coleridge and Shelley (on the *Prometheus* of Æschylus). The great gap here is of course Blake, but, as Harding's Introduction reasonably explains, the exclusion is made on the grounds of historical heterogeneity.

A little unfortunately, perhaps, the book begins where it is already at its most sophisticated. The patient reader will be rewarded, however. Whilst one may not wish to follow Harding all the way in his interpretation of *The Ancient Mariner*, this first chapter makes a concerted attempt to get beyond those critics (among whom Harding engagingly includes, not just Robert Penn Warren, but his former self), who seek 'a systematic mythmaking within the poem'. Instead, Harding's Mariner emerges as 'the primitive man postulated by Enlightenment mythographers', who responds 'to the activity of the elements . . . so as to lay the groundwork of a new mythology'. The *Rime* thus becomes 'a poem about the making of myth', rather than a coherent exemplification of one. Harding shares the tendency of recent critics to chastise the prose gloss; but his significant point is that the poem's mediations of myth are best seen contextually and historically, in Coleridge's relations to two, opposing schools of mythography - the orthodox comparatist view that pagan myths are 'fallen' versions of revealed truth, and the heterodox thesis that all religious beliefs are to be traced to a primitive religion of Nature. This concern with the interpretative structures informing Coleridge's poetry is carried into the chapter on *Christabel*, whose 'gothic' elements are said to be more profoundly understood in terms of their 'poetic and mythopoeic logic', referring on the one hand to 'the Christian reading of the serpent-woman myth', and, on the other, to a dream of '"*the re-union of what in this world is divided*"'.

The chapters on Wordsworth are central to Harding's receptive method, since it is here that Romanticism's 'antimythological myth' is at its strongest, and yet here, too, that we find myth in its most 'modern' form - the form, that is, which 'subtly and silently' appropriates the mythic, by 'fragmenting and decontextualizing its narrative elements'. The Two-Part *Prelude* of 1798-9 is intriguingly returned to its late eighteenth-century folkloric and animistic origins, as opposed to being cast forward into the as-yet-unconceived shape of the long poem Wordsworth first completed in 1805. Harding asks that the ur-*Prelude* be read without the distorting lens of Coleridge's later animadversions on 'Greek' fancy and its inferiority to an Hebraic imagination. He has interesting things to say, too, of the shifts by which the early evocations of polytheistic beings and presences come, in the Two-Part *Prelude*, to represent 'forces that authorize Wordsworth's narrative'.

In the essay on Keats, Harding casts new and subtle light on the old question of the poet's aspirant relation to a glorious, mythological past. Tradition is no longer, as Jackson Bate proposed, an invariably burdensome aura, but is figured as a propitiation of the antithetical powers of Diana and Apollo - that is, of awed silence and poetic utterance, or the anamnesis

which 'brings creative power out of seeming passivity'. So conceived, Keats' poetry does not describe a progress (as from a sacred, but ultimately deathly, silence to the ample satisfactions of speech), but rather a perpetual mindfulness of the one in the other - a self-doubting stance in which we recognize, says Harding, 'the very moment of the modern reception of myth', 'the activity of interpretation as the post-Englightenment writer must approach it'.

That Keats' questioning of his poetic vocation should extend to his metaphors of speech and silence is most suggestive, and begins to ramify everywhere you look. A great many confirming phrases are teased out of Keats' poetry by Harding himself - though, surprisingly, perhaps, he does not include the miraculously death-defying music of the Glaucus and Scylla episode in *Endymion*III. He also, it seems to me, neglects that inarticulate *tertium quid*, between speech and silence, which is so prominent as almost to amount to a poetic of *dis*harmony. Harding's quotation of the (wonderful) 'ghostly under-song' of Lorenzo's shade in *Isabella* put me in mind, not just of the formal rhetoric of plaint or lament with which Keats' verse is charged, but of its many identifications of agonized or stifled speech with suffering humanity, from the 'Shrieks, yells, and groans of torture-pilgrimage' undergone by Circe's victims in *Endymion*, to the discordant recitative of the *Ode to a Nightingale*, 'Here, where men sit and hear each other groan'.

Harding's interests are, admittedly, elsewhere. His most sustained theme is not so much history as language; and his thinking about Romanticism is to a large extent driven by rival language-myths, which readily remind us of the debate between the symbolic or correspondent and the sceptical or deconstructive theories of our own day. The book is often at its liveliest when most dialogical: in the essay on Keats, the rivalry is between human language, '"frail", accessible but impermanent', and the 'language of stable terms', which a 'mythopoeic imagination' assigns exclusively to the gods; in Shelley, between Apollonian lucidity and order, and Pan-like deception and displacement; in Wordsworth, 'between the powers ascribed to the goddess and the male poet's assumed privilege of interpreting her', a privilege Wordsworth is said to be increasingly eager to enjoy. The dialogic structure is felt at a thematic level, too. With admirable circularity, the final chapter returns to Coleridge by way of a brilliant and elaborate contrast between his and Shelley's interpretations of Æschylus's *Prometheus*. Harding painstakingly leads us from Coleridge's early understanding of Greek myth (as a necessary, if limited, first step in man's spiritual and moral development) to the later ideological realignments in which Greek and Hebrew are fixed in opposition. By the time he lectures to the Royal Society of Literature on the *Prometheus* (1825), the coalescence of Greek polytheism with Coleridge's old enemies, materialism and pantheism, is complete. Ever the de-synonymizer, Coleridge also distinguishes, according to Harding, between your common-or-garden myth and the philosophic philosopheme: while the polytheistic cults at best refine upon the world of sensible phenomena, the philosopheme offers occult representation of the timeless and transcendent origins of human reason. In Æschylus's play, then, the stolen fire marks the difference-in-kind of the reason from those faculties that are evolved from man's animal nature.

Although Harding's prose is almost without exception lucid, his book does not offer itself as light reading. (Not for nothing is Harding an editor of Coleridge's *Notebooks*.) It manages a great deal more than is likely to meet the eye at first sight. The strength and daring of the enterprise should not be underestimated. For scholarly expertise, as well as an original and incisive investigation into a relatively neglected subject, *The Reception of Myth* takes some beating.

University of Glasgow NICOLA TROTT

Rosemary Ashton, *The Life of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*. Blackwell: Oxford, 1996. ISBN 0 631 18746 4. £25 hardback. Pp. 480.

My dear Lamb,

Another Life! And not even an Anniversary to excuse it's birth! The reading it (for you know we library cormorants have most prodigious gullets) has thrown me into a sore confusion of Thoughts, Guilts, & Regrets. With each successive book the sundry accidents of earthly existence recompose that Image of my Life-in-Death by which it seems I must be ever haunted. What oceans of noncompletion, what tempests of ill health have I once more navigated! While I digest, let me sit on this rock of friendship, preen my wings, and chatter a little . . .

It is, I think I may say without vanity, a Moral Life. However far short it fell from the Ideal, there was always an Ideal, a Moral Measure by which it *might* be judged. And the writer-professor at the new university in London upon which I once intended to lecture as an approximation to the Ideal (another noncompletion there!) - knows as much, choosing quietly to relate and to balance, without that wild rhetoric of advocacy or that mountebank wish to paint a stage-scene which have marred much writing from our day to this. At first, I confess, *mirabile dictu*, my old life seemed *dull*, a mere pedestrian journey through an immense heap of familiar things. No more than a well-worn peripatetic tale. So I thought for the space of, say, three minutes. . . . There are, you must know, other 'biographies' of me now at the booksellers which give a tuppence-coloured picture of your obedient S.T.C. 'What need, then,' thinks I, 'for this modest new usurper of the shelves?'

A book must, surely, answer the very same questions as its mortal maker: 'For what was I made?' 'In what relation do I stand to the world of makings gone before?' You, my shrewdly-gentle Charles, may have noticed how books about S.T.C. are most often stitched to familiar patterns: most are written in a spirit of advocacy (either 'This S.T.C. was a fine fellow, a free-thinking man not unlike his biographer: all must be forgiven!' or 'This S.T.C. was an erstwhile-inspired hypocrite, turned sot and wretch: alas! and there's an end of it!'). Most of the first kind, written in sympathy with S.T.C., break off *in medias res*, leaving our pastoral poet of the Quantocks piping as though he should never be old . . .

Oh, Charles, Charles, is it not with Books as with Life? - those who forgive anything and everything for a cherry-faced young man, full of germinating powers, are reluctant even to recognize the same fellow no longer young, no longer interesting! Yet how may those who refuse to embrace the wrinkled old polyp of Highgate Ponds effect that reconcilement of First and Last Things which makes the work of Art we call a Life? And this, I venture to believe the good Professor Ashton has intended. Perhaps I, above all mortals who have ever heard the dread precept of Juvenal which Jemmy Bowyer once thundered in our ears - 'Know Thyself!', can least tell if the Life was indeed Art. We all, Livers and Writers alike, need our Charitable Redeemer, though you, dear kind Unitarian fellow, may not wish to bandy theology upon the point . . .

I make bold to *hope* this book will live, replacing for a span that earlier, ill-natured thing, produce of some Oxford Chambers, which has gathered, and cast, dust from the library shelves these fifty years. For Professor Ashton is judicious and displays as much charity as is proper to one whom you ever knew well was but a fallible Navigator in this passing world. I commend her to you, though you must buy your own copy. Mine is too overfraught with marginal glosses and cogitations. And you must find your copy fresh from the press. It will, I venture, be some time before this work is confined to the London barrows.

Your old friend,

S.T.C.

Nether Stowey REGGIE WATTERS

Society Notes and News from Members

From the Hon. Secretary

1996-7 Programme

At the time of writing (20 May!) it may not prove possible to issue the 1996-7 Programme until the October *Bulletin*. In the meantime please note the dates, all at the Mary Ward Centre, 42 Queen Square, London WC1, at 2.30pm, except for Lamb's Birthday Celebration Luncheon. 1996: 12 October, 2 November, 7 December; 1997: 11 January, 1 March, 10 May (AGM). Carolyn Misenheimer opens our new session on Saturday 12 October with a lecture, 'Dr Johnson and Charles and Mary Lamb: Intellectual Assumptions on Writing for Children'.

The Birthday Celebration Luncheon

This is planned for 15 February 1997 (details in the October *Bulletin*). We are delighted that Professor Tom Craik has accepted our invitation to be Guest of Honour.

Annual General Meeting

At the AGM held on Saturday 11 May 1996, members enthusiastically elected three additional Vice-Presidents, all of whom have made outstanding contributions to the Society. They were Basil Savage, Mary Wedd, and Dr D. G. Wilson. The existing Officers and Council were re-elected for the ensuing year, but we still urgently seek a Treasurer to take over from Nick Powell. In proposing the adoption of the 1995 accounts, the Treasurer gave a very full report on the financial health of the Society. He said: 'The largest single expense is, of course, the production of the *Bulletin*. I believe this is a most valuable activity, which attracts the vast majority of our members. Indeed, without the *Bulletin* the Society would in my view rapidly dwindle. It is right that the bulk of our resources should be devoted to it. My job, nevertheless, is to ensure that the Council of management maintains a balance and limits the expenditure to a level that ensures the Society's ability to sustain its production, as well as the Society's other areas of activity, in the future.' He recorded our gratitude to Florence Reeves and Winfred Gadbury whose bequests to the Society of £1584 and £500 respectively were extremely welcome.

A donation of £700 from the British Academy for the October 1996 *Bulletin* had been received.

The Chairman reported projected improvements in the housing of our books at the Guildhall Library.

Expanding your Library?

The residue of books from our 1995 book sale is shrinking at a pleasing rate. Michel Jolibois boarded Eurostar on 30 April 1995 laden with Lamb books, and other volumes are promised good homes. (Our Chairman has bespoken the *Exotica* - Lamb's *Tales* in Japanese!) On receipt of a SAE, I will supply a (fairly) up-to-date list of what is still available. These books are *free* to members (apart from the cost of postage) but a modest donation to the Society's funds will be welcome.

From the Editor

Romanticism in Perspective

Anyone with an interesting book up their sleeve on some interdisciplinary aspect of romanticism now has a prestigious publishing opportunity in the shape of Macmillan's forthcoming series, 'Romanticism in Perspective: Texts, Cultures, Histories' co-edited by Marilyn Gaull and Stephen Prickett. It will range from European romanticism to African and even Asian romanticisms, taking in art, architecture, economics, technology, and aesthetics. Forthcoming volumes include Malcolm Kelsall, *Jefferson and the Building of Montecello*, Peter Davidhazi, *The Romantic Cult of Shakespeare*, and David Jasper, *Preserving the Sacred Truths: The Sacred and Secular Canon.*

So if you have 80,000 words of discursive matter on some similar topic in your head or on your word-processor, send them to either Professor Stephen Prickett, Department of English Literature, University of Glasgow, Glasgow G12 8QQ, or Professor Marilyn Gaull, Department of English, New York University, 19 University Place, Room 212, New York, NY 10003, USA.

Kilve Court Weekend 6-8 September 1996

A brief reminder that the Kilve Court Weekend is fast approaching. All those who have attended in earlier years will know what an excellent occasion this is - not just for learning more about Coleridge and the other romantic writers, but for meeting like-minded enthusiasts. This year the theme is 'The Romantic Child', and speakers include David Fairer and Roy Kennedy (on Blake), Reggie Watters (on Coleridge), John Powell Ward (on Wordsworth and Coleridge), Roger Robinson (on Hartley Coleridge), and Raymonde Hainton (on Derwent Coleridge). Alas, pressure of work prevents me from attending this year, but I hope to include a report on the Weekend in the *Bulletin* for January 1997. Dates: Friday 6 September to Sunday 8 September; for further information contact Mrs Shirley Watters, 11 Castle Street, Nether Stowey, Somerset TA5 1LN (tel.: 01278 733338).

Wordsworth Summer Conference 1996

As the *Bulletin* goes to press the lecture programme for the 1996 Wordsworth Summer Conference has just been published. Numerous Elians and friends of the Society will be speaking at this year's gathering; speakers include Richard Gravil, Robert Barth, Rachel Trickett, John Beer, Michael Foot, W. J. B. Owen, Thomas McFarland, Marilyn Gaull, and Robert Woof. Elians may be interested to note that Professor Frederick Burwick from UCLA will be speaking on 'Lamb, Hazlitt and De Quincey on Hogarth'. Lamb's criticism of Hogarth is a topic that has preoccupied a number of contributors to the *Bulletin* in recent years, not least Bill Ruddick (NS 61) and David Chandler (NS 94). It is possible to attend individual lectures (£5) as well as to attend by the day (£35). Further details are available from the Conference Administrator, Dove Cottage, Grasmere, Cumbria LA22 9SH, tel.: 015394 35544.

Wallace Nethery

As I send this number of the *Bulletin* to the printer, I learn, with profound sadness, of the death in February of the distinguished Elian, bibliophile, and man of letters, Wallace Nethery. He will be remembered for his numerous contributions to Elian scholarship, and notable appearances in the *Bulletin.* I am grateful to his widow, Corry, for sending his final note on Lamb for publication in the forthcoming October number, where it will appear alongside an appreciation by D. E. Wickham. In the meantime I am sure Elians everywhere will wish in turn to send her sincere condolences.

Notes and News from Members

The Annual General Meeting of the Alliance of Literary Societies

Once again the tile and terracotta splendour of the Birmingham and Midland Institute, which every year for six years echoed to 'mere chat about Shelley' (or Hardy, or Dickens, or Lamb) was rejected in favour of the Quakerish New Unitarian Hall (or New Unitarian Hall, as it might more properly be called) by those who arrange the AGM of the ALS. The venue, however, did not deter the faithful. This year saw a particularly large crowd of delegates from literary societies around the country. There was an even more ambitious diorama from the Thomas Lovell Beddoes Society and even less interest shown in the works of Dr Francis Brett Young. Luckily, there was a good deal of buzzing around the CLS display, with its piles of promotional leaflets and controversial collage. This year was also the second successive year in which no one at all

came up to me with interesting information about how they had learnt off by heart 'Mrs Battle's Opinions of Whist' at school.

The AGM produced few surprises. The principal officers were re-elected, though long-serving Chairman Joseph 'Mr BMI' Hunt provoked a minor panic by announcing that he intended to retire as soon as a suitable successor could be found. No one present could envisage this prospect. Two delegates - from the George Eliot and Jane Austen societies - were added to the committee. The Keats-Shelley Memorial Association was admitted to the Alliance. Of the issues discussed three might be of concern to the CLS:

(i) Public Liability Insurance, which is a group scheme whereby member societies contribute a small sum towards a premium designed to provide cover in the eventuality of accidents occurring to individuals while on visits to libraries, writers' homes, and the like. I don't know how many Elians would be likely to knock to the ground a rare polychrome delft charger or spill house red onto the manuscript of 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality', but it's a thought. The scheme will be put to the committee.

(ii) An entry for the ALS on the internet (whatever that is)

(iii) The Secretary to hold a number of promotional leaflets from each member society. These last two proposals were approved.

With the day's business done everyone except the very poor trooped off for lunch at Will Self's favourite eatery - the nearby Tesco restaurant, which offered (could it be?) a pink dessert called 'angel foam' amongst other delicacies. I sat next to a delegate from the John Clare Society and so naturally the conversation turned to Geoffrey Grigson and (of course) Charles Lamb, before veering off into a tirade by yours truly against the iniquities of the WEA. The rest of the afternoon was devoted to the life and work of Alfred Edward Housman, whose *A Shropshire Lad* was published a century ago. I don't know whether Housman relished the work of Lamb, but I feel that the latter would have enjoyed the professor's darkly comic verse, which reminded me strongly of Harry Graham's *Ruthless Rhymes for Heartless Homes* with a dash of Thomas Hood. This side of Housman, which was a revelation to me at least, was brilliantly captured by our President Gabriel Woolf, whose readings from the poet's work rounded off the afternoon perfectly.

This year we celebrated *A Shropshire Lad.* Next year it's the turn of a Shropshire lass: on 19 April 1997 the Mary Webb Society will host the AGM. R. M. Healey

The Fifth Annual Conference of 18th- and 19th-Century British Women Writers

The Fifth Annual Conference of 18th- and 19th-Century British Women Writers was held 21-3 March 1996 at the University of South Carolina in Columbia, hosted by Sid Watson, Becky Lewis, and Ellen Arnold. Unfortunately, the much anticipated spring weather did not materialize, but the stimulating papers on women writers from Eliza Haywood to George Eliot more than made up for it, and, of special note to Elians, four papers were presented on Mary Lamb, illustrative of an exciting increase in interest among academics in Mary Lamb's works.

The conference began on a cold, windy Thursday afternoon, but debates quickly heated up in sessions focused on women poets and romantic politics, transgressions and detection in women's novels, women's cultural spaces in the Restoration, and gender and genre. Donna Landry from Wayne State University brought the day's concerns together in her plenary session 'Riding a Country, or Walking in the Countryside? Gender and the Politics of Culture'. She proposed that modern bourgeois gender difference was secured in the shift from the traditional practices of hunting and gathering in the country to the sportsman and woman riding to hounds on the countryside in what became the dominant image of Englishness to be exported throughout the world: the English fox-hunt. She examined such writers as Dorothy Wordsworth, Ann Yearsley, and Jane Austen for clues as to what women may have gained or lost in these historical shifts.

On Friday the sessions continued with such interesting topics as women's travel writing, women's biography, crones, hags, and old maids, women writing law, women's writing in periodicals and annuals, and women acting up. My own paper, examining Mary Lamb's writing in the context of her madness, was included on the panel 'Women's Dis-ease', along with presentations by A. Elizabeth McKim (St. Thomas U.) on Jane Cave Winscom's poetry of pain and Anna K. Silver's (Emory University) talk on anorexia in Victorian culture - all seemingly unfortunate topics for 8 am. Luckily the audience didn't seem to mind. The midday plenary session featured Gary Kelly from Keele University on 'Bluestocking Feminism'. Kelly argued that Bluestocking feminism was an early professionalization of upper-class culture which feminized what were otherwise considered masculine discourses, such as gentry agrarian capitalism and social activism.

A panel on 'The Controversial Mary Lamb' was among those on Saturday, the final day of the conference. Papers included 'The Education of Displacement in *Mrs Leicester's School*', (Elisabeth Peter, Tufts University) and '"A Very Improper Book": Gender, Religious Controversy, and Mental Illness in Mary Lamb's "The Young Mahometan"', (Julie D. N. Straight, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill). Next year the conference will be held at the University of California at Davis, 28-30 March, where I hear the weather is fine all year round; for more information contact Kari Lokke, Department of English and Comparative Literature, University of California at Davis, Davis, CA 95616, USA, for details. Bonnie Woodbery

FROM D. E. WICKHAM

Societies: For the Record

The second volume of the *Lyttleton Hart-Davis Letters*, pages 44-45, includes the following, from Lyttleton:

> Those societies - Dickensians, Baconians, Johnsonians etc. - are always dreary affairs. Do you remember how Henry James shuddered - in about a thousand words - when John Bailey asked to address the English Association. The notion that creative literature, or indeed literature of any kind, could be in any way helped or profited by an association clearly seemed to him sheer indecency. . . . Have you ever known anything but a 'pin-drop' silence when questions are asked for? At the Ascham Society meetings at Eton the same sequence was always in evidence. After a minute or two, Broadbent would utter a complicated sound composed in equal proportions of a snore, a belch and a groan. Toddy Vaughan then gallantly saved the tottering situation with a question which proved, instantly and without a peradventure, that he had been unconscious throughout the paper. But what did it matter? In those spacious days the refreshment afterwards was toothsome, various and unstinted.

Scandal in Queen Square: A Ghostly Intervention?

Dr Harriet Jump decided not to speak on *Godwin and Wollstonecraft: A Literary Relationship* 'as billed' for the meeting on 5 March 1994, but about the second Mrs Godwin instead. She had told us about Charles Lamb's cutting references to her; how she had set her cap at Godwin, become pregnant, and insisted on marriage; how the Godwin household had once included five children under eight, legitimate and illegitimate, and all of different parentage; how the Godwins were caught out in flagrant examples of telling what might be termed 'social lies' (terribly sorry but X has a cold and so we cannot visit you - but X is then seen in the street, perfectly well); the activities of under-age girls; and how various people went off to Italy, which seemed to be the usual place at that time if one wished to live in an irregular liaison. 'Thou Paradise of exiles, Italy!' interjected Charles Branchini.

At this point S. E. Wickham pointed out, in view of the Prime Minister's new cliche about going 'Back to Basics', that we must all be careful not to go back too far. 'Oh', said Dr Jump, 'I haven't told you everything. There were the Williamses: he stayed in Italy, she came back to live with Hogg, Shelley's friend . . .'

Suddenly, though neither the object nor the table on which it stood had been touched, our photograph of Charles Lamb's portrait by Meyer, which presides ceremonially at all meetings of the Charles Lamb Society, fell flat on its back!

New Members

The Society warmly welcomes the following new members: Catherine Boyle, Simon Curtis, Penelope Hughes-Hallett.

50 Years Ago: from *CLS Bulletin* No. 72 (Twelfth Year) July 1946

From the Chairman

Mr and Mrs Walter Farrow extend a cordial invitation to all members of the CLS to an 'At Home' at 'Falaise', Harmer Green Lane, Welwyn North, on Saturday, 13 July 1946 from 3pm to 8pm. The Dramatic Group will give an Open Air performance of Charles Lamb's Play *The Wife's Trial* in the garden at a time of the year when 'lovely, leafy Hertfordshire' should be looking at its best.

The Formation of Branches [in 1946]

Members will recall that one of the matters which was to receive the consideration of the Council was the possible formation of branches of this Society. After due deliberation a *modus eperandi* for such branches has been prepared. Mr Crowsley will be pleased to send a copy of this memorandum to provincial members who are in a position to create branches in their districts.

from *CLS Bulletin* No. 73 (Twelfth Year) September 1946

'At Home' at Falaise

Amid the rural surroundings of 'Falaise', North Welwyn, a goodly number of members foregathered in the afternoon of 13 July at the invitation of the Chairman and Mrs Farrow who were 'At Home' - a post-war revival of a pre-war felicity. Here in an alfresco atmosphere the Dramatic Group presented their second venture, *The Wife's Trial*, a dramatic poem in two acts, written by Charles Lamb in 1827, first published in *Blackwood's Magazine* and for which Lamb received £20. Lamb in a letter to Patmore described it as a tragi-comedy and said 'it will be refused or worse: I never had luck with anything my name is put to'. Crabb Robinson wrote in his Diary that 'it was a piece of great feeling but quite unsuitable for performance'. The Dramatic Group confuted his sweeping condemnation, convincing the audience that the tragi-comedy was suitable, at any rate, for private performance.

Then followed tea - refreshment in widest commonality spread - after which a vote of thanks in metrical form was proffered by Mr H.G. Smith in appreciation of the hospitality of the Host and Hostess, and also as a tribute to the sterling qualities of Mr Farrow as Chairman, Guide, Philosopher and Friend to the Society since its formation in 1935.

The vote of thanks was supported in undistinguished prose by the Vice-Chairman [Mr S. M. Rich], whose manner of leading the musical honours, although unorthodox, and far from 'musical', left no doubt that the guests regarded Mr and Mrs Farrow as 'Jolly Good Fellows' indeed.