The Charles Lamb Bulletin

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Contents

Editorial

I regret to report the sad death of the first editor of the *Charles Lamb Bulletin*, Basil Savage, from pneumonia, on 29 May, shortly before this issue went to press. For tributes and obituaries see pages 112-13, 114-15.

Heartiest Elian congratulations are due to Professor Yasuhiko Ozawa, whose monograph, *Charles Lamb: A Study from the Viewpoint of the History of his Criticism*, was published on 15 May by Shinozaki-Shorin, Tokyo. This valuable new work contains two important bibliographies: one of Lamb's writings published in Japan, 1877-1945; the other of reviews of Lamb's works in British and American periodicals, 1798-1995. The latter will be invaluable to all Elians, and should be a first port of call for all those researching the works of our writer. Anyone wishing to consult this work will find it in the Charles Lamb Society collection at the Guildhall Library, in London, to which Professor Ozawa has kindly donated a copy.

One last mention of the Kilve Court Weekend, 5-7 September, which will this year consider Coleridge's relations with female writers of the day. Speakers will include Seamus Perry on 'Coleridge and the Women'; Mary Wedd on 'Mary Lamb'; Duncan Wu on 'Anthologising Women Romantic Writers'; Jane Stabler on 'Space for Speculation: Anna Barbauld and STC', and Kathleen Jones, author of *A Passionate Sisterhood: The Sisters, Wives, and Daughters of the Lake Poets*. There will, as always, be an opportunity to visit the newly-refurbished Nether Stowey Coleridge Cottage and to inspect the newly-acquired artefacts there. The programme will conclude with a reading of appropriate texts on Saturday evening. Full board is £115, or £105 if you are a Friend of Coleridge; for further details please contact Shirley Watters, 11 Castle Street, Nether Stowey, Somerset TA5 1LN (01278 733338).

A Study of Lamb's 'Living Without God in the World'[1]

By DAVID CHANDLER

Mystery of God! thou brave and beauteous world,
Made fair with light and shade and stars and flowers,
Made fearful and august with woods and rocks,
Jagg'd precipice, black mountain, sea in storms,
Sun, over all, that no co-rival owns,
But thro' Heaven's pavement rides as in despite
Or mockery of the littleness of man!
I see a mighty arm, by man unseen,
Resistless, not to be controul'd, that guides,
In solitude of unshared energies,
All these thy ceaseless miracles, O world!
Arm of the world, I view thee, and I muse
On Man, who trusting in his mortal strength,
Leans on a shadowy staff, a staff of dreams.
We consecrate our total hopes and fears
To idols, flesh and blood, our love, (heaven's due)
Our praise and admiration; praise bestowed
By man on man, and acts of worship done
To a kindred nature, certes do reflect
Some portion of the glory and rays oblique
Upon the politic worshipper,—so man
Extracts a pride from his humility.
Some braver spirits of the modern stamp
Affect a Godhead nearer: these talk loud
Of mind, and independant [*sic*.] intellect,
Of energies omnipotent in man,
And man of his own fate artificer;
Yea of his own life Lord, and of the days
Of his abode on earth, when time shall be,
That life immortal shall become an art,
Or Death, by chymic practices deceived,
Forego the scent, which for six thousand years
Like a good hound he has followed, or at length
More manners learning, and a decent sense
And reverence of a philosophic world,
Relent, and leave to prey on carcasses.
But these are fancies of a few: the rest,
Atheists, or Deists only in the name,
By word or deed deny a God. They eat

[1] This article is based on a lecture read to the Charles Lamb Society on 6 December 1996. I am grateful to the Society for the privilege of being invited to speak, and the opportunity afforded to discuss my ideas on 'Living Without God in the World'.

Their daily bread, and draw the breath of heaven
Without or thought or thanks; heaven's roof to them
Is but a painted ceiling hung with lamps,
No more, that lights them to their purposes.
They wander 'loose about', they nothing see,
Themselves except, and creatures like themselves,
Short-liv'd, short-sighted, impotent to save.
So on their dissolute spirits, soon or late,
Destruction cometh 'like an armed man',
Or like a dream of murder in the night,
Withering their mortal faculties, and breaking
The bones of all their pride.

IN 1799 THE ABOVE fifty-odd lines of blank verse by Lamb appeared in Robert Southey's *Annual Anthology* under the title 'Living Without God in the World'.[2] Some of them had already appeared in a note to Charles Lloyd's *Lines suggested by the Fast, appointed on Wednesday, February 27, 1799*, Lloyd introducing them as a 'striking extract, from some lines, intended as a satire on the Godwinian jargon', and quoting from a manuscript different from that supplied to Southey.[3] In a letter to Southey of 28 November 1798, Lamb had stated: 'I can have no objection to your printing "Mystery of God" with my name, and all due acknowledgments for the honor and favor of the communication; indeed tis a poem that can dishonor no name.'[4] The *Annual Anthology* lines thus pose immediate problems. Are 'Mystery of God' and the 'lines, intended as a satire on the Godwinian jargon' the same poem? What relation do either bear to 'Living Without God in the World'? These questions will be returned to in the conclusion to this article. The bibliographic history can be concluded by noting that Lamb chose not to publish the poem again (did he think it a failure?), but that in 1829 it was located and published by the editors of the pirated Galignani (Paris) edition of *The Poetical Works of Rogers, Campbell, J. Montgomery, Lamb, and Kirke White*;[5] this was the second published appearance of the poem.

'Living Without God in the World' has received little scholarly attention, despite being the poem of Lamb's that most obviously requires exegesis. The only extended critical treatment the poem has received appears to be Nicholas Roe's, first included in his article 'Remembering Émile Legouis', then, slightly reduced, in his book, *The Politics of Nature*.[6] Roe's main concern was the date and context of the poem, for both of which he furnished a precise explanation: the

[2] The *Annual Anthology* (2 vols., Bristol, 1799-1800), i. 90-2. The poem, unlike many others in the *Anthology*, appeared with a full signature.

[3] *Lines suggested by the Fast* . . . (Birmingham, 1799), p. 3. A collation follows: 23 modern stamp] *modern sort* 24 nearer:] nearer; 25 intellect,] intellect; 26 Of energies] And energies man,] man; 27 man of] man, of fate artificer;] fate, Artificer, 28-9 Yea of his own life Lord, and of the days / Of his abode on earth, when time shall be,] Yea, of his own life, Lord! When time shall be 30 art] Art 31 Death, by chymic practises deceived] Death by chemic practices deceiv'd 32 years] years, 33 he has followed, or] he's follow'd; and 34 sense] sense, 35 philosophic world] *philosophic world* 36 Relent, and leave] Relent and cease

[4] *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb* ed. Edwin W. Marrs, Jr. (3 vols., Ithaca, NY, 1975-8) (hereafter Marrs), i. 150.

[5] 'Living Without God in the World' appears at p. 26 of the Lamb section (each poet's works had separate pagination).

[6] 'Remembering Émile Legouis', *CLB* NS 68 (1988) 265-8 (hereafter Roe); *The Politics of Nature* (Basingstoke, 1992), pp. 66-70.

poem was probably 'an immediate response',[7] 'an explicit reply'[8] to James Gillray's well-known 'New Morality' cartoon published in August 1798. The cartoon showed a wide cross-section of British radicals and freethinkers—men as diverse as Fox, Godwin, Thelwall, Paine, Priestley, Coleridge, and Lamb himself—paying homage to the minor French 'philosopher' La Reveillère Lepaux. Roe's evidence for 'Living Without God in the World' being 'an explicit reply' to this rested on four assertions: first, that the poem attacks Godwin, which it certainly does; secondly that the poem attacks Paine and the 'secular reformists',[9] which is dubious; thirdly that Lamb's statement 'We consecrate our total hopes and fears / To idols' (ll. 15-16) 'effectively gloss[es] Gillray's image';[10] fourthly that the title 'Living Without God in the World' was suggested by George Canning's poem that accompanied the cartoon and described the assembled throng as '*Men without a God!*'. Obviously only the latter two would directly associate the poem with the cartoon, and both, to my mind, are unconvincing. In the conclusion to this article I suggest that the section of 'Living Without God in the World' that (implicitly) attacks Godwin may very well have been written as early as 1796, but the question of the poem's date can be reasonably held in abeyance while its literary genetics are examined. Of all Lamb's poems, this is the one that most benefits from such a study.

The (published) title is the obvious point at which to begin; it is—*pace* Roe—a quotation, and a quotation from a particularly revealing text: the preface to Joseph Priestley's *Letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever*. Priestley's attack on Hume and his followers advanced the claims that 'An atheist cannot have that sense of *personal dignity* and *importance* that a theist has',[11] and that a theist who has considered his principles must be 'a being of unspeakably greater dignity and value'.[12] Priestley then continued:

> This, however, from the nature of the thing, must depend upon the *attention* that a theist gives to his principles, and to the situation in which he believes himself to be placed. And therefore, it is very possible that a merely *nominal believer* in a God may be a *practical atheist*, and worse than a mere speculative one, living as *without God in the world*, intirely thoughtless of his being, perfections, and providence.[13]

Distinguishing between 'speculative' and 'practical' atheists, Priestley makes a distinction that had been memorably pointed out by Richardson in *Clarissa*: Belford writes to Lovelace 'we are not atheists, except in *practice*'.[14] In a letter to Coleridge of 31 May 1796 Lamb declared of Priestley: '1 love & honor him almost profanely'.[15] On 2 January 1797 he wrote 'I wish I could get more of Priestly's [*sic*] works',[16] and a week later he again referred to Priestley 'whom 1 sin in almost adoring'.[17] These sentiments readily explain Lamb's choice of title, which to the knowing would have specifically aligned the ensuing poem with Priestley's Unitarian polemic

[7] Roe 266.
[8] Roe 267-8.
[9] Roe 267.
[10] Roe 268.
[11] *Letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever* (Bath, 1780) (hereafter Priestley), p. x.
[12] Priestley xii.
[13] Priestley xii-xiii.
[14] *Clarissa* ed. John Butt (4 vols., London and New York, 1932), iii. 314.
[15] Marrs i. 12.
[16] Marrs i. 84.
[17] Marrs i. 88.

against atheism—more particularly 'practical' atheism.[18] What must be kept in mind, however, is that the title was (apparently) Lamb's retrospective addition to the poem, possibly attached as much as two and a half years after much of it was written. It does not prove that the poem was begun with a corresponding programmatic intention—indeed, I shall argue that it was not—but it is invaluable as a pointer to what Lamb finally felt that the poem was doing, and the way in which he wanted it read.

The opening lines are surely not the most obvious introduction to an attack on 'practical' atheists:

> Mystery of God! thou brave and beauteous world,
> Made fair with light and shade and stars and flowers,
> Made fearful and august with woods and rocks,
> Jagg'd precipice, black mountain, sea in storms,
> Sun, over all, that no co-rival owns,
> But thro' Heaven's pavement rides as in despite
> Or mockery of the littleness of man! (ll. 1-7)

Taking lines 2-4 first, it can be observed that they are concerned with a distinction between the sublime and the beautiful, a fairly standard distinction after Edmund Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* of 1756. But Burke was not the first to make the distinction, and he was importantly anticipated by Mark Akenside, whose enormously successful poem *The Pleasures of Imagination*, published in 1744, distinguished between the 'Sublime' and the 'Fair' (i 145-6).[19] 'Fair', in this sense, was a key word in *The Pleasures of Imagination* and it seems a telling point that Lamb uses it here. By 1800 Lamb was using 'akensidish' as an adjective, which suggests that he had thoroughly assimilated the earlier poet's work.[20] *The Pleasures of Imagination* was in fact a poem that almost any young literary man at that time would have known. Coleridge was thoroughly acquainted with it by the mid-1790s, and used several lines from Akenside's poem as a motto for his 'Religious Musings'.[21] More significant from Lamb's point of view, *Blank Verse, by Charles Lloyd and Charles Lamb* (1798) carried a motto from *The Pleasures of Imagination* (probably Lloyd's choice—see below). Most suggestive of the opening of 'Living Without God in the World' is a passage in the first Book of Akenside's, where Akenside describes how God:

> deep retired
> In his unfathom'd essence, view'd the forms,
> The forms eternal of created things;
> The radiant sun, the moon's nocturnal lamp,
> The mountains, woods, and streams, the rolling globe . . .
> . . . in time complete
> What he admired and loved, his vital smile

[18] Lamb follows Priestley in attacking both types of atheism, but his title would seem to place the emphasis on 'practical' atheism. Note that after the long digression on Godwinian 'speculative' atheism, Lamb checks himself here with the reminder that 'these are fancies of a few' (l. 37).

[19] Quotations from *The Pleasures of Imagination* are taken from *The Poetical Works of Mark Akenside* ed. George Gilfillan (Edinburgh, 1857).

[20] Marrs i. 222, 226.

[21] It is worth adding that James Gillman later used a significant quotation from *The Pleasures of Imagination* as a motto for his *Life of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (London, 1838).

> Unfolded into being. Hence the breath
> Of life informing each organic frame;
> Hence the green earth, and wild resounding waves;
> Hence light and shade alternate, warmth and cold,
> And clear autumnal skies and vernal showers,
> And all the fair variety of things. (i 64-8, 71-8)

Here are found the 'light and shade', mountains, woods, stormy sea, and sun of Lamb's lines. Akenside's 'fair variety', later described as the 'kindred power of . . . discordant things' (iii 307), was what Lamb wanted to evoke. Moreover the Akenside passage explains as efficiently as any paraphrase why Lamb introduced his evocation of the 'fair variety' with the exclamation 'Mystery of God!'. Despite a striking correspondence, *The Pleasures of Imagination* is obviously not the sort of clear-cut 'source' for Lamb's opening lines that Priestley is for the poem's title. Nevertheless, these lines are closer to *The Pleasures of Imagination* than to any other poem that Lamb can be proved or conjectured to have known, the (considerable) significance of this being that Akenside was a Deist, and *The Pleasures of Imagination* a thinly veiled manifesto for his Platonic Deism, with a conclusion that stated:

> the men
> Whom Nature's works can charm, with God himself
> Hold converse; grow familiar day by day,
> With his conceptions, act upon his plan . . . (iii 629-32)

'Nature's works' thus displace the Bible. Coleridge could greatly admire *The Pleasures of Imagination* in the mid-1790s, but then he was not above the suspicion of holding Deist views; Thomas Poole, meeting him in autumn 1794, found him 'In religion . . . a Unitarian, if not a Deist'.[22] Priestley, however, had 'repeatedly stepped forwards [*sic.*] to defend the common cause [revealed religion] against not only the open attacks, but the most artful insinuations of Deism'[23] and Lamb's failure to develop his opening is best read as an anxiety about his proximity to Akenside's Deism. This is confirmed by the disproportionate emphasis he places on the sun, which seems at first to be another example of the 'akensidish' sublime, but then to mutate into a more orthodox *vanitas* symbol. This shift is important, for the poem's opening lines implicitly suggest that nature should be celebrated for its ability to fill the human spectator with lofty conceptions—Akenside's position exactly—and it was surely not without a struggle, or at least a sense of retreat, that Lamb contrived to end this sentence with a deflating reminder of the 'littleness of man'.

Lamb's sentiments regarding the sun are suggestive because they are directly opposed to those expressed by Edward Young in *Night Thoughts* (1742-6). In Night the Ninth, Young had associated the highest religious emotion with contemplation of the night sky: 'O majestick NIGHT!', he sung, 'fated to survive the transient Sun!' (ix 551, 553).[24] There is a clear tendency to demean the sun, as when Young prays 'Loose me from *Earth*'s Inclosure, from the *Sun*'s / *Contracted* Circle set my Heart at large' (ix 588-9), or states '*One* Sun by Day; by Night *Ten thousand* shine; / And light us deep into the DEITY' (ix 748-9). Elsewhere he even describes the

[22] Jack Simmons, *Southey* (London, 1945), p. 43.

[23] Quoted from Christopher Moody's review of Priestley's *Discourses on the Evidences of Revealed Religion*, *Monthly Review*, NS 16 (1795) 383.

[24] Quotations from *Night Thoughts* are taken from Stephen Cornford's edition (Cambridge, 1989), hereafter Cornford.

sun as a 'Rude Drunkard' (v 191). These sentiments were repeated even more emphatically by Mrs. Barbauld, the best-known Unitarian poet of the late eighteenth century, in her major religious poem, 'A Summer Evening's Meditation' (1773), which took the line '*One* Sun by Day . . .' as a motto.[25] Lamb had certainly read *Night Thoughts* by 9 June 1796 when he wrote to Coleridge, commenting on the latter's 'Religious Musings', 'is not that thought & those words in Young, "Stands in the Sun?"? or is it only such as Young in one of his *better moments* might have writ?',[26] and he probably knew Barbauld's poetry through Coleridge, who was a passionate admirer.[27] Young and Barbauld faulted the sun for *limiting* the human observer's ennobling imaginative engagement with the grandeur of God's works, but Lamb bluntly rejects such a flattering view, presumably understanding it as a Deistic conceit. For him the sun, far from restricting man's spiritual strength, proves man's weakness, his 'littleness'. As Charles Lloyd wrote in a poem of 1797, 'Man's strength is weakness; him / It booteth most to feel that he is frail'.[28] By immediately following his initial rapt response to the 'brave and beauteous world' Lamb's sentiments respecting the sun pose an obvious question: should perception of the natural world ennoble or humble man? The opening sentence of 'Living Without God in the World', which seems to pull first in the one, then in the other direction, reveals Lamb as uneasy on this point. In the context of eighteenth century English poetry his predicament derives most obviously from *Night Thoughts*, where Young had memorably described man as:

> *Midway* from *Nothing* to the *Deity!*
> A beam etherial sully'd, and absorpt!
> Tho' sully'd, and dishonour'd, still Divine!
> Dim Miniature of Greatness absolute!
> An Heir of Glory! a frail Child of Dust!
> *Helpless* Immortal! Insect *infinite!*
> A Worm! a God! (i 74-80)

If Young, then, enters 'Living Without God in the World' in an oppositional sense as the debaser of the sun, he stays as the framer of a dilemma faced by Lamb. Indeed *Night Thoughts* was undoubtedly the major influence on Lamb's poem, and the following lines seem to derive fairly directly from Young's religious 'epic':

> I see a mighty arm, by man unseen,
> Resistless, not to be controul'd, that guides,
> In solitude of unshared energies,
> All these thy ceaseless miracles, O world! (ll. 8-11)

[25] Akenside, too, was (as Browning described Shelley) a 'Sun-treader' though he does not display the same tendency to demean the sun. See in particular *The Pleasures of Imagination* i 183ff.

[26] Marrs i. 18. Interestingly, the answer to Lamb's question is 'no'. Edwin Marrs' suggestion that *Night Thoughts* v 190-1 was in Lamb's mind (Marrs i. 24) is mistaken. Lamb was actually thinking of a passage in *The Pleasures of Imagination* where the 'high-born soul' is described 'hovering round the sun' (i 183-95) which certainly is the source of Coleridge's lines; he was probably confusing it with *Night Thoughts* vii 1354. Lamb's confusion of *Night Thoughts* and *The Pleasures of Imagination* on this occasion is very suggestive for the sort of reading of 'Living Without God in the World' that I am attempting.

[27] *The Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* ed. Earl Leslie Griggs (6 vols., Oxford, 1956-71) (hereafter Griggs), i. 197, 201, 341, 393.

[28] *Blank Verse, by Charles Lloyd and Charles Lamb* (London, 1798) (hereafter *Blank Verse*) 12.

The arm of God, quite often referred to in the Old Testament, is there evoked in the context of God's martial might—his destructive potential. Lamb's 'mighty arm', associated with the 'ceaseless miracles' of nature, has a distinct provenance in *Night Thoughts*. In Night the Ninth —to which we have already seen Lamb responding—Young asks how, in the face of the night sky, man can ask for miracles 'To give his tott'ring Faith a solid Base': 'When Mankind falls asleep, / A *Miracle* is sent' (ix 1248-9). Young then continues:

> BUT, Miracles apart, who sees HIM not,
> *Nature*'s CONTROULER, AUTHOR, GUIDE, and END?
> Who turns his Eye on *Nature*'s Midnight-Face,
> But must inquire—'What hand behind the Scene,
> What Arm Almighty, put these wheeling Globes
> In Motion, and wound up the vast Machine?
> Who rounded in his Palm these spacious Orbs?
> Who bowl'd them flaming thro' the dark Profound . . . ?' (ix 1272-9)

So similar in context to Lamb's poem as this is, it is surely reasonable to assume that the regular miracle of Young's night sky, leading the spectator to imagine the 'Arm Almighty' 'behind the Scene', lies behind Lamb's imaginative glimpse of 'a mighty arm' that 'guides' the world's 'ceaseless miracles'. Of course it is only fair to note that Young, unlike Lamb, imagines the 'Arm Almighty' more as an image of '*Nature*'s . . . AUTHOR' than of '*Nature*'s CONTROULER [and] GUIDE', but the point of the *Night Thoughts* passage is that these are inseparable, as the sequence 'CONTROULER, AUTHOR, GUIDE' suggests. Although Lamb's slight revision of emphasis seems to point to his desire to avoid any possible suspicion of Deism (despite Young's opposition to Deism, *Night Thoughts* contains many Deist-sounding statements[29]), it must be stressed that Lamb's emphasis on his privileged insight—'*I see* a mighty arm, *by man unseen*'—is much more characteristic of Akenside than Young. Indeed immediately after the passage from *The Pleasures of Imagination* quoted above, Akenside had continued 'But not alike to every mortal eye / Is this great scene unveil'd' (i 79-80), proceeding to affirm that the privilege of reading 'The world's harmonious volume' as a 'transcript' of God was the preserve of the few (i 100-101). Tellingly, though, in line 12 of 'Living Without God in the World' the significance of the 'mighty arm' shades off towards its Biblical sense as Lamb again arrives at a conventional statement of man's feebleness and misplaced pride. In the process he virtually eradicates any notion of an 'akensidish' spiritual hierarchy (confirmed in the transition '*We* consecrate our total hopes and fears / To idols . . .'). The 'arm of the world' now might be compared, for example, with God's asking Job 'Hast thou an arm like God? or canst thou thunder with a voice like him?',[30] while the ultimate paradigm for the succeeding view of 'Man' is the parable of the foolish man who built his house upon the sand.[31] The thematic movement of the first seven lines is thus repeated. At first the 'mighty arm' seems to signal an experience of privileged, spiritually-ennobling insight, but it quickly comes to highlight man's common 'littleness'. This time the shift is decisive: no more is heard of the ennobling observation of God in nature.

[29] See for example the passage in Night the Ninth where Young, describing the night sky, exclaims 'DIVINE INSTRUCTOR! Thy *first* Volume, *This*, / For *Man*'s Perusal; All in CAPITALS! / . . . fairly writ / In Language universal, to MANKIND . . .' (ix 1659-65).

[30] Job 40:10.

[31] Matthew 7:26-7, Luke 6:49.

The succeeding image of man leaning 'on a shadowy staff' descends from the Bible via Young. In one of the most celebrated passages[32] of *Night Thoughts*, Young had advised Lorenzo, his addressee, against '*Here* presuming on the Rights of Heaven' (iii 142):

> For Transport dost Thou call on every Hour,
> *Lorenzo*? At thy Friend's expence be wise;
> Lean not on Earth; 'twill pierce thee to the Heart;
> A broken Reed, at best; but, oft, a spear;
> On its sharp point Peace bleeds, and Hope expires. (iii 143-7)

Young adapted this image from a passage in Isaiah in which Egypt is characterised as a 'broken reed'.[33] The scriptural passage, which Lamb probably knew, of course, makes explicit what is implicit in Young: the 'leaner' imagines the 'broken reed' to be a 'staff'. Young's adaptation was much to Lamb's purposes, for although in Lamb we find man leaning not 'on Earth' but on his own 'mortal strength' the sense in each case is the same. In Isaiah the false 'staff'—contrasted with God, the true 'staff'—pierces the hand of the 'leaner', and Young develops this to create a parallel with the spear that pierced Christ's side.[34] Lamb dispenses with this part of the image, leaving the issue of painful awakening from delusion to the final lines of his poem, and describing first just what sort of a false 'staff' human beings will trust.

'Living Without God in the World' continues: 'We consecrate our total hopes and fears / To idols . . .'. The plural pronoun comes as something of a surprise, and there is undoubtedly an awkward crux here, the most obvious explanation being that there is a 'join' at this point; this is a hypothesis that will be returned to. Roe has characterised this passage as an 'effective gloss' of the 'New Morality' cartoon, but the sentiment is too conventional to prove such a specific connection, and Lamb's (hypothetical) reasons for wanting crudely and reductively to paraphrase the message of a print that had attacked *his* (and Godwin's, and others) allegiance to the radical French *philosophes* are not explained. Given the extent to which Lamb turned to the vast quarry of *Night Thoughts* in the first part of the poem, it may be suggested that Young could equally easily lie behind this passage. The false reverence that man gives to the merely human is a (one might say obsessively) reiterated sentiment in Young's poem, and it underlies much of Night the Sixth. Night the Fourth, however, contains the passage that is perhaps most likely to have been in Lamb's mind, given the subsequent development of his own poem. In this passage Young accuses those apostles of false '*Reason*' who destroy '*Faith*' and thence 'tenfold Terror give to Death' (iv 764). He then continues:

> Learn hence what Honours, what loud *Pæans* due
> To those, who push our *Antidote* [that is faith] aside;
> Those boasted Friends to *Reason*, and to *Man*,
> Whose fatal Love stabs every Joy, and leaves
> Death's Terror heighten'd gnawing on his Heart.
> These pompous Sons of *Reason* Idoliz'd,
> And Vilify'd at once; of Reason dead,
> Then Deify'd, as Monarchs were of old,

[32] Cornford 19.

[33] Isaiah 36:6. Stephen Cornford mistakenly annotates this with reference to Isaiah 42:3 (Cornford 330).

[34] See Young's reference to the spear that pierced Christ's side as the pen that writes the names of the elect in the Book of Life, *Night Thoughts* iv 312-17.

What Conduct plants proud Laurels on their Brow? (iv 766-74)

Young proceeds to illustrate how the 'Sons of *Reason*' make idols out of the productions of their own intellect; in other words, just as they are idols, so are they idolaters. Lamb rather emphasises what is only lightly implied in Young: that the act of idolising the 'Sons of *Reason*' 'reflect[s] / Some portion of the the glory and rays oblique / Upon the politic worshipper'. Roe comments that 'Lamb turns . . . to the secular reformists whose politics were based upon the rights of man and the "kindred nature" of humanity. In *The Rights of Man* Paine had used the American Revolution to prove that regenerated mankind "sees his species, not with the inhuman idea of a natural enemy, but as kindred; and the example shows to the artificial world, that man must go back to Nature for information"'.[35] In the passage which Roe cites Paine was not, in fact, concerned with the American Revolution but with the conditions that preceded it. In America, Paine argues, Europeans had encountered 'Nature . . . in magnitude'; both the grandeur and the physical challenges of that 'Nature' had made them more inclined to meet 'not as enemies but as brothers'.[36] The relevance to 'Living Without God in the World' is obscure, for Lamb is there concerned not with the act of brotherhood (close communual relations were, after all, part and parcel of the apostolic church), but with the act of worshipping other human beings, and, more broadly, human reason. The *Night Thoughts* passage, with its specific attack on the 'Sons of *Reason*', actually seems to provide an allusive bridge to Lamb's attack on the Godwinians in the following lines, clarifying a movement of thought that is perhaps not very clear in his poem.

William Godwin, well known as a speculative atheist, and the most prominent 'Son of *Reason*' in Lamb's intellectual world, published his *Political Justice* in 1793. This included a discussion of the problem of population increase, to which Godwin added an argument that he said 'must be considered in some degree as a deviation into the land of conjecture':

> Let us . . . return to the sublime conjecture of Franklin, that 'mind will one day become omnipotent over matter.' If over all other matter, why not over the matter of our own bodies? If over matter at ever so great a distance, why not over matter which, however ignorant we may be of the tie that connects it with the thinking principle, we always carry about with us, and which is in all cases the medium of communication between that principle and the external universe? In a word, why may not man be one day immortal?[37]

In the context of 'Living Without God in the World' there is no need to go further into the details of Godwin's argument. Lamb was concerned with sarcastically describing the presumption of the idea as a whole, not giving it the respect of dissection and evaluation. Limitations of space must prevent a detailed discussion of lines 23-36, but the passage becomes clear enough in the light of the quoted extract from *Political Justice*, and the elucidation of 'source' material for Lamb's mild satire would be a project of rapidly diminishing returns. This was the passage that Lloyd quoted as 'a satire on the Godwinian jargon'. Satire there may be, but there is virtually no 'Godwinian jargon' beyond the line 'Of mind, and independent intellect'. In fact the phrase 'independent intellect' seems careless rather than pointed, for this was Godwin's solution to the 'evils attendant' on cohabitation:

[35] Roe 267.
[36] *Political Writings* ed. Bruce Kuklick (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 152-3 (Introduction to *The Rights of Man*, Part II).
[37] *Political Justice* (2 vols., London, 1793), ii. 862.

> . . . in order to the human understanding's being successfully cultivated, it is necessary that the intellectual operations of men should be independent of each other, and that we should avoid all those practices that are calculated to melt our opinions into a common mould.[38]

The idea of 'independent intellect' thus has nothing to do with that aspect of Godwin's thinking that Lamb was really concerned with, namely the presumptuous supposition that man might be 'one day immortal'.

The passage on the Godwinians seems disproportionately long in a poem entitled 'Living Without God in the World' and, by extension, supposedly describing / attacking 'practical' atheists. Whatever the textual explanation, however, one does not need to read very far in *Night Thoughts* to understand why Lamb felt he could include it in a poem in which Young's presence is everywhere felt. In *Night Thoughts* man's refusal to admit to, and confront, the issue of his mortality receives its grandest treatment in eighteenth century literature. In Night the Third Young even details the horror of the 'shocking Thought' of what it would actually be like to live perpetually on earth, to 'Live ever in the Womb' (iii 325, 328). And *Night Thoughts* clarifies just why Godwin's thinking about death was so insulting and irrelevant from a Christian perspective. In line 31 of his poem Lamb explains the Godwinians' views as merely a 'deception' of hungry 'Death', but Christ destroyed 'Death': as Young exultantly sings in Night the Fourth, 'Who is the King of Glory? He who slew / The ravenous Foe, that gorg'd all human Race!' (iv 280-1). For all this, though, line 37—'But these are fancies of a few . . .'—seems designed to characterize the passage on the Godwinians as a digression, and from line 37 'Living Without God in the World' finally gets to grips with the 'practical' Atheists, thus explaining Lamb's choice of title. As the title appears to have been a late addition to the poem, it is reasonable to suppose that Lamb grafted this passage on to the existing lines on the Godwinians, attempting to give the growing poem a rather broader application.

In describing 'the rest' as 'Atheists, or Deists only in the name' (l. 38) Lamb repeated and endorsed a traditional critique of Deists which denied that Deism could be a resting place for thought. In his enormously successful manual of eighteenth century theology, *A Discourse Concerning the Being and Attributes of God*, Samuel Clarke had maintained, for example, that:

> A constant and sincere observance of all the Laws of Reason, and Obligations of Natural Religion, will unavoidably lead a Man to *Christianity* . . . all Others, who pretend to be Deists without coming up to this, can have no fixt and settled Principles at all; upon which they can either argue or act consistently; but must of necessity sink into *downright Atheism* . . .[39]

This became the standard orthodox position; in typically bluff fashion Johnson told Boswell that 'no honest man could be a Deist; for no man could be so after a fair examination of the proofs

[38] *Political Justice* (2 vols., London, 1796), ii. 497. Although dated 1796, this edition was published on 26 November 1795 (Don Locke, *A Fantasy of Reason: The Life and Thought of William Godwin* (London, 1980), p. 91). In the 1793 edition the corresponding passage referred to 'individual' rather than 'independent' 'intellectual operations' (i. 848). It is worth remarking the proximity of the passage on the 'evils attendant' on cohabitation to Godwin's 'conjecture' on immortality which appears in the following chapter (in the 1796 edition at ii. 511). Perhaps Lamb looked at the latter passage in disgust, then flicked back a few pages, alighted on the former passage, and subsequently associated the two. For another theory, see Roe 267.

[39] 8th edition (London, 1732), pp. 158-9.

of Christianity'.[40] If Lamb had found the idea nowhere else, he would have discovered it in Priestley, who in his *Letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever*, for example, claimed:

> Whenever . . . I shall hear of the conversion of a speculative atheist to *serious deism* (an event which has never yet come to my knowledge) I shall have little doubt of his soon becoming a serious christian. As, on the other hand, the same turn of mind that makes a man an unbeliever in christianity has, in fact, generally carried men on to a proper atheism.[41]

He would also have found it in *Night Thoughts*, where in Night the Seventh Young states 'An *honest* Deist, where the Gospel shines, / Matur'd to nobler, in the *Christian* ends' (vii 1349-50). Lamb thus followed Priestley and Young, who in turn followed a well-established orthodoxy in denying that one could be a Deist in any morally valid way. Important to keep in mind is the fact that in the tense political situation of the 1790s Unitarianism was itself often regarded as a significant step towards Deism, and hence towards atheism. This is illustrated in the very title of a sermon that Joseph Toulmin, a prominent Unitarian, preached in July 1797, and that was published the same year: *The Injustice of Classing Unitarians with Deists and Infidels. A Discourse Written with Reference to Some Reflections from the Pens of Bishops Newton, Hurd, and Horsley, Doctors White, Knox, and Fuller, Mrs Piozzi, and Others*. Lamb, like Toulmin, doubtless felt angered at this common 'injustice', and, again like Toulmin, he attempted to distance himself from Deism.

Lamb imagines the 'Deists' as 'practical' atheists, 'hav[ing] no fixt and settled Principles at all':

> They eat
> Their daily bread, and draw the breath of heaven
> Without or thought or thanks; heaven's roof to them
> Is but a painted ceiling hung with lamps,
> No more, that lights them to their purposes.
> They wander 'loose about' . . . (ll. 39-44)[42]

Most interesting here are the lines on the pseudo-Deists' perception of 'heaven's roof' for they link back to the first part of the poem where the question of man's (proper) response to the natural world is raised. The pseudo-Deists' view of the night sky is obviously opposed to that which Young celebrates in *Night Thoughts*, but Young himself had offered the contrast, breaking off his interpretation of the night sky to caution Lorenzo, his addressee:

> In thy nocturnal Rove, one Moment halt,
> 'Twixt Stage and Stage, of Riot, and Cabal;
> And lift thine Eye . . .
> To yonder Stars: For other Ends they shine,
> Than to light Revellers from Shame to Shame . . . (ix 675-80)

[40] *Boswell's Life of Johnson* ed. George Birkbeck Hill, rev. L. F. Powell (6 vols., Oxford, 1934-50), ii. 8. In (partial) contradiction of this assertion Boswell mentioned Hume, certainly no Deist, thus demonstrating a very typical eighteenth century tendency to bracket together atheists and Deists.

[41] Priestley xvi-xvii.

[42] Roe points out that 'loose about' is from Milton's *Samson Agonistes*, l. 675,(Roe 268).

Lamb derives a description from Young's accusation, but the sense remains the same. Moreover Lamb appears to allude to Mrs Barbauld's 'Summer Evening's Meditation', a poem, as noted already, heavily influenced by Young. Barbauld had described the stars as 'For ever streaming o'er the azure deep / To point our path, and light us to our home' (ll. 38-9),[43] and Lamb seems to parody her phrase in his 'that lights them to their purposes'.[44]

'Living Without God in the World' ends with a chilling prophecy respecting the 'practical' atheists:

> So on their dissolute spirits, soon or late,
> Destruction cometh 'like an armed man',
> Or like a dream of murder in the night,
> Withering their mortal faculties, and breaking
> The bones of all their pride. (ll. 47-51)

Of this conclusion Roe remarks 'The closing lines of the poem prophesy imminent destruction, coming like the 'armed man' of *Proverbs* 24:34 . . . the poem concludes with an oblique reference to the horrors of [Lamb's] own recent experience . . .'.[45] The 'recent experience'—which in Roe's dating of the poem would have been almost two years earlier—was the man-slaughter of Lamb's mother by his deranged sister. This occurred on 22 September 1796, not, it may be added, at night.

The reference to Proverbs is certain, but the passage is worth quoting at length to bring out the full import of the allusion:

> 30 I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding;
> 31 And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and *nettles* had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down.
> 32 Then I saw, *and* considered *it* well: I looked upon *it*, *and* received instruction.
> 33 *Yet* a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep:
> 34 So shall thy poverty come *as* one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man.

Lamb quotes from an attack on the slothful and ignorant. This is particularly interesting given his expressed view of Deists, for this view was predicated on the notion that Deists had not thought through their position. Moreover Priestley firmly associated all types of atheism with intellectual slothfulness: 'we pass our time in a kind of *reverie*, or absence of thought, inattentive to the most obvious connections and consequences . . . with a total *listlessness and unconcern*, a man may rest *any where*', he writes in the *Letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever*.[46] Lamb's meaning is helped out when the following line is considered.

In his 'Destruction . . . / . . . like a dream of murder in the night' it is hard, if not impossible, given the context, to believe that Lamb wanted to 'obliquely refer' to the fatal stabbing of his mother. For anyone who does want to read the line as a reference to a real incident, the death of Coleridge's father fits better: John Coleridge dreamed that 'Death' appeared to him and touched

[43] Text quoted from *The Poems of Anna Letitia Barbauld* ed. William McCarthy and Elizabeth Kraft (Athens, Georgia, and London, 1994).

[44] The simplest explanation for this would be that Lamb was faulting the 'practical' atheists for not responding to the night sky in the way that Barbauld had memorably urged, but it is also possible that Lamb was (consciously or subconciously) expressing hostility to the (clear) Deistic tendency of Barbauld's poem.

[45] Roe 268.

[46] Priestley xvi-xvii.

him with his dart—and then died the following night.[47] But the line probably has a largely literary provenance. Indeed one could very well start with Lamb's sonnet, 'Was it some sweet Delight of Faery', probably written in 1795, in which he imagined 'Despair' armed with a 'murdering knife'.[48] Further, there are three suggestive 'dream[s] of murder' in Shakespeare, almost certainly familiar to Lamb. In *Richard III* Richard dreams that the ghosts of his victims appear and curse him; he wakes up and exclaims that he is afflicted by 'coward conscience' (V iii 180).[49] In *Julius Caesar* Calphurnia dreams of her husband's murder the night before it occurs, but Caesar refuses to take her advice not to go to the Senate. In *Macbeth* one of Duncan's sons, observed by Macbeth, shouts 'Murther' in his sleep (II ii 22). He and his brother awake, and one of them exclaims 'God bless us!' (II ii 26), to which Macbeth is unable to add 'Amen', despite his effort to do so. Macbeth, an extreme type of 'practical' atheist, then realises that he has cut himself off from God's mercy and that his crime will only bring him misery. All these Shakespearean 'dream[s] of murder' carried an appropriate significance that could very easily have brought them to Lamb's mind. Moreover, all are associated in some way with 'armed m[e]n'. Richard tells Ratcliffe that the dream 'struck more terror to the soul of Richard / Than can . . . ten thousand soldiers, / Armed in proof' (V iii 218-20). Caesar is stabbed to death by the conspirators, and in the immediately preceding scene in *Macbeth* Macbeth sets off to kill Duncan after his famous 'Is this a dagger. . .' speech (II i 33ff). Taken together, these Shakespearean 'dream[s] of murder in the night' certainly repeat and reinforce the sense of the Proverbs passage: they mark irreversible turning points. Lamb describes that climactic moment in which the 'practical' atheist, having refused to believe, becomes incapable of belief, yet also realises the pointlessness of his existence. It is a state well illustrated in Macbeth's haunting 'To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow' speech. The final lines appear to take up an idea from the earlier 'We consecrate our total hopes and fears / To idols, flesh and blood'. The 'practical' atheist does not physically die before he has seen his 'flesh and blood' idol—ultimately himself—'wither' and 'break'. The man he has imagined himself to be must perish before the man God knows him to be dies. He really has been leaning on a 'staff of dreams'.

In following the thematic movement of 'Living Without God in the World' it has been suggested that both internal and external evidence point to more than one period of composition. At the heart of the published poem there seems to lurk an ur-poem which was specifically a satire on Godwin and his followers. Quite possibly this was considerably longer than the extract which survives in 'Living Without God in the World'. It can be conjectured that Lloyd had a manuscript copy of this ur-poem, from which he quoted in his *Lines suggested by the Fast*, thus preserving a valuable fragment. The ur-poem was possibly written as early as summer 1796, when Lamb was eagerly expecting Coleridge to resume publication of *The Watchman*. 'Why sleep the Watchman's answers to that *Godwin*?', he wrote to Coleridge impatiently on 6 July,[50] having already expressed the hope that he could be a contributor to the new *Watchman*.[51] Indeed there is some striking, but overlooked, evidence that he submitted a poem, for on 10 December 1796 he wrote to Coleridge:

[47] Griggs i. 355.

[48] *Poems, by S. T. Coleridge, Second Edition. To which are now added Poems by Charles Lamb, and Charles Lloyd* (Bristol, 1797), p. 217. Lamb was doubtless recalling Collins' '*Distress* with Dagger keen' ('Ode to Pity' 4).

[49] All Shakespeare quotations are from the (second) Arden edition.

[50] Marrs i. 40.

[51] Marrs i. 12.

> Thy Watchman's, thy bellman's, verses, I do retort upon thee, thou libellous varlet,—why, you cried the hours yourself, and who made you so proud? But I submit, to show my humility, most implicitly to your dogmas. I reject entirely the copy of verses you reject.[52]

Edwin Marrs here notes that 'the rejected verses' are unidentified, but suggests Lamb's poem 'To a Young Lady Going out to India' as a possibility.[53] This seems most unlikely, for the clear implication—'you cried the hours yourself'—is that the rejected poem was comparable in aim to Coleridge's *Watchman*, therefore a 'present state of society' piece.[54] The further suggestion, surely, is that the rejected poem had been submitted for the planned (but never published) new *Watchman*, and that Lamb is now getting in a little dig at Coleridge for abandoning his duties as a 'watchman', while he, Lamb, *had* been acting as one. Very few of Lamb's surviving poems could be characterised as 'cr[ying] the hours', but 'Living Without God in the World' undoubtedly best fulfils the description. Given Lamb's eagerness for *The Watchman* to attack Godwin, it is a reasonable conjecture that his 'Watchman's . . . verses', criticised by Coleridge on this occasion, correspond to the 'satire on the Godwinian jargon' later known to Lloyd. Indeed it is striking, if this was the case, that Lloyd and Southey were responsible for the eventual publication of these 'verses', for both would certainly have taken a delight in promoting something of Lamb's that Coleridge had 'rejected'. Moreover, Lamb's pledge to Coleridge that he would 'reject entirely' the poem was, to a certain extent, borne out if these 'verses' were the original of 'Living Without God in the World'. Lloyd and Southey ensured that they were published, but Lamb himself, as noted already, excluded 'Living Without God in the World' from his collected poems.

If the central section of 'Living Without God in the World' was written in 1796, critically mauled by Coleridge, then laid aside for some considerable time before reworking, the awkward transitions in the finished poem, particularly that between lines 14 and 15, are understandable. Lamb's attempt(s) to salvage part, or perhaps all, of the earlier poem, and to expand upon it, can be studied in the *Annual Anthology* text. Probably he began by adding the final fifteen lines, for this would have produced a poem that was coherent and rounded—indeed somewhat more coherent than the final version. Lamb's intention, one assumes, was to broaden the base of his satire and add an appropriate *memento mori*. At any time after this revision was planned the usefulness of taking a title from Priestley's attack on atheism could have occurred to him. It is worth reading the poem as it would have stood at this (conjectured) stage, for the exercise highlights how awkwardly assimilated the opening lines are. What was Lamb's purpose in attaching these prefacing lines? Did they previously comprise part, or all, of a separate poem (perhaps the 'Mystery of God' that Southey saw in 1798)?

Taking the second question first, it is hard to believe that Lamb told Southey he could publish an independent 'Mystery of God', then assimilated part or all of that poem into the longer 'Living Without God in the World' and asked him to publish that instead. It is surely more reasonable to suppose that the 1798 'Mystery of God' does, more or less, correspond to the final *Annual Anthology* poem, but as 'Mystery of God' is quite inapt as a title for this, it is probable that it was a nonce title. This, however, merely provides a *terminus ad quem* for the addition to the satirical lines, and does not disqualify the possibility that the additional lines had previously comprised

[52] Marrs i. 77.
[53] Marrs i. 79.
[54] In the second number of *The Watchman* Coleridge published an extract of 'Religious Musings' under the title 'The Present State of Society'.

part or all of a separate poem. I think the question must be kept open; but, either way, Lamb's reasons for attaching them to the satirical lines can be profitably explored. The best explanation that I can offer is that he was responding to Charles Lloyd's contributions to their slim collaborative volume, *Blank Verse*, of early 1798. As noted already, this collection entered the world with a significant motto from Akenside, and the choice can be assumed to be Lloyd's, for his contibributions are clearly influenced by *The Pleasures of Imagination*, while Lamb's are not (it might be added that Lloyd certainly wrote the dedication, which was to Southey). In these poems Lloyd frequently counterbalances the inevitable misery the good man must feel at the evils in society with the 'akensidish' delights that the same man can experience in the face of nature. Yet in the most thoughtful piece, 'London. A Poem', he confesses that this consolation is somewhat problematic, and, in any case, only available to a few (Akenside's spiritual hierarchy again). The key passage is worth quoting at length because it also shows Lloyd responding to just that passage of *The Pleasures of Imagination* which lies behind the opening of 'Living Without God in the World':

> Methinks he acts the purposes of life,
> And fills the measure of his destiny
> With best approved wisdom, who retires
> To some majestic solitude; his mind
> Rais'd by those visions of eternal love,
> The rock, the vale, the forest, and the lake,
> The sky, the sea, and everlasting hills.
> He best performs the purposes of life,
> And fills the measure of his destiny,
> Who holds high converse with the present God
> (Not mystically meant), and feels him ever
> Made manifest to his transfigur'd soul.
> But few there are who know to prize such bliss.
> And he who thus would raise his mortal being
> Must shake weak nature off, and be content
> To live a lonely uncompanion'd thing,
> Exil'd from human loves and sympathies.[55]

While his satirical lines on the Godwinians and 'practical' atheists presented a uniformly gloomy view of mankind, Lloyd's 'present state of society' poems seem to have inspired Lamb to recast his material in a manner a little reminiscent of Keats' change of heart with regard to *Hyperion*. Drawing on Akenside, or having already drawn on him, he decided to present himself as one 'Who holds high converse with the present God', thus establishing, indeed recommending, the point of view from which the Godwinians and 'practical' Atheists were to be attacked. The ensuing problems have been examined in detail. Lamb was uneasy about Akenside's Deism (particularly so, one assumes, if these lines were purpose-written to preface an attack on 'Atheists, or Deists only in the name'), so instinctively turned to *Night Thoughts* and the Bible instead. This left the 'akensidish' voice in a sort of limbo, its authority isolated, threatened, and of uncertain relevance. The result is that 'Living Without God in the World' is hardly what

[55] *Blank Verse* 61-2. Fielding's 'Man of the Hill' (in *Tom Jones*) is brought to mind, but for the thematic movement of this passage see *The Task* i 220-51, where Cowper considers first the merits, then the demerits, of living in a remote cottage.

Coleridge would later call 'a *legitimate* poem . . . the parts of which mutually support and explain each other',[56] but, like Michelangelo's unfinished slaves that wrestle to free themselves from the unworked material of their being, the poem has a fascination of its own, and takes us close, particularly in those first fourteen lines, to the flux and reflux of the creative process.

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[56] *Biographia Literaria* ed. James Engell and W. Jackson Bate (2 vols., Princeton, 1983), ii. 13.

Charles Lamb Society Birthday Lunch

By T. W. CRAIK

Delivered at the Charles Lamb Society, 15 February 1997

IN REPLYING TO the toast, 'The Immortal Memory of Charles Lamb', I have a somewhat uncomfortable—not to say ridiculous—sense of *standing in* for the person whom today we unite to honour. The very worst I could do in this situation would be to try and upstage him—why is there no word to express the *opposite* of upstaging?—it makes one reflect on the fallen moral nature of humanity—and therefore it seems to me that the best I can do is, as far as possible, to stand back myself and let Lamb do the talking. Ben Jonson was fond of the aphorism 'Speak, that I may see thee'; when Lamb speaks we always do see him.

You will remember that he is the central figure in the discussion reported in Hazlitt's essay 'On persons one would wish to have seen'. 'Lamb it was, I think', Hazlitt begins, 'who suggested this subject, as well as the defence of Guy Faux, which I urged him to execute. As, however, he would undertake neither, I suppose I must do both—a task for which he would have been much fitter, no less from the temerity than the felicity of his pen'. The whole discussion between them and their friends really feeds the mind, from its beginning, in which Lamb declines to see Locke and Newton because for him they have no existence outside their books, to its end, where he proposes the names of Guy Faux and Judas Iscariot:

> I cannot but think that Guy Faux, that poor, fluttering annual scarecrow of straw and rags, is an ill-used gentleman. I would give something to see him sitting pale and emaciated, surrounded by his matches and his barrels of gunpowder, and expecting the moment that was to transport him to Paradise for his heroic self-devotion; but if I say any more, there is that fellow Godwin will make something of it. And as to Judas Iscariot, my reason is different. I would fain see the face of him who, having dipped his hand in the same dish with the Son of Man, could afterwards betray him. I have no conception of such a thing (not even Leonardo's very fine one) that gave me the least idea of it. . . .
> 'There is only one other person I can ever think of after this', continued Lamb; but without mentioning a name that once put on a semblance of mortality. 'If Shakespeare was to come into the room, we should all rise up to meet him; but if that person was to come into it, we should all fall down and try to kiss the hem of his garment!'[1]

This discussion took place about 1806, though Hazlitt's essay was not written for another twenty years. In 1810 Lamb returned to the subject of Guy Fawkes in an essay of his own. He quoted the burning words of Jeremy Taylor's sermon, written when the Gunpowder Plot was a recent memory, and contrasted its tone of indignant horror at the conspiracy with the way in which the Fifth of November was commemorated in his own times:

> To us, to whom the tradition has come slowly down, and has had time to cool, the story of Guido Vaux sounds rather like a tale, a fable, and an invention, than true history. It supposes such gigantic audacity of daring, combined with such more than infantile stupidity in the motive,—such a combination of the fiend and the monkey,—that credulity is almost swallowed up in contemplating the singularity of the attempt. It has accordingly, in some

[1] References are to *The Works in Prose and Verse of Charles and Mary Lamb*, Vol. 1, ed. Thomas Hutchinson (Oxford, 1908) (hereafter *Works*).

> degree, shared the fate of fiction. It is familiarized to us in a kind of serio-ludicrous way, like the story of *Guy of Warwick*, or *Valentine and Orson*. The way which we take to perpetuate the memory of this deliverance is well adapted to keep up this fabular notion. Boys go about the streets annually with a beggarly scarecrow dressed up, which is to be burnt, indeed, at night, with holy zeal; but, meantime, they beg a penny for *poor Guy*: this periodical petition, which we have heard from our infancy,—combined with the dress and appearance of the effigy, so well calculated to move compassion,—has the effect of quite removing from our fancy the horrid circumstances of the story which is thus commemorated; and in *poor Guy* vainly should we try to recognize any of the features of that tremendous madman in iniquity, Guido Vaux, with his horrid crew of accomplices, that sought to emulate earthquakes and bursting volcanoes in their more than mortal mischief.[2]

He then hopes that it will not 'be considered a profane sporting with the subject' if he imagines, not too seriously, what would have been the consequences of the plot 'if it had had a successful issue'. In 1997, which is to see a General Election, his fancies have a pleasing topicality:

> To assist our imagination, let us take leave to suppose,—and we do it in the harmless wantonness of fancy,—to suppose that the tremendous explosion had taken place in our days;—we better know what a House of Commons is in our days, and can better estimate our loss;—let us imagine, then, to ourselves, the United Members sitting in full conclave above—Faux just ready with his train and matches below; in his hand a 'reed tipt with fire' —he applies the fatal engine—
>
> To assist our notions still further, let us suppose some lucky dog of a reporter, who had escaped by miracle upon some plank of St Stephen's benches, and came plump upon the roof of the adjacent Abbey, from whence descending, at some neighbouring coffee-house, first wiping his clothes and calling for a glass of lemonade, he sits down and reports what he had heard and seen (quorum pars magna fuit) for the *Morning Post* or the *Courier*,—we can scarcely imagine him describing the event in any other words but some such as these:—
>
> 'A *Motion* was put and carried, That this House do *adjourn*: That the Speaker do *quit the Chair*. The House ROSE amid clamours for Order.'
>
> In some such way the event might most technically have been conveyed to the public. But a poetical mind, not content with this dry method of narration, cannot help pursuing the effects of this tremendous blowing up, this adjournment in the air *sine die*. It sees the benches mount,—the Chair first, and then the benches, and first the Treasury Bench, hurried up in this nitrous explosion; the members, as it were, pairing off; Whigs and Tories taking their friendly apotheosis together, (as they did their sandwiches below in Bellamy's room). Fancy, in her flight, keeps pace with the aspiring legislators, she sees the awful seat of order mounting till it becomes finally fixed a constellation, next to Cassiopeia's chair,—the wig of him that sat in it taking its place near Berenice's curls. St Peter, at Heaven's wicket,—no, not St Peter,—St Stephen, with open arms, receives his own.—
>
> While Fancy beholds these celestial appropriations, Reason, no less pleased, discerns the mighty benefit which so complete a renovation must produce below. Let the most determined foe to corruption, the most thorough-paced redresser of abuses, try to conceive a more absolute purification of the House than this was calculated to produce;—why, Pride's Purge was nothing to it;—the whole borough-mongering system would have been got rid

[2] *Works* 307.

> of, fairly *exploded*;—with it, the senseless distinctions of party must have disappeared; faction must have vanished; corruption have expired in air.[3]

Lamb republished this essay thirteen years later, in 1823, with a long preliminary paragraph quoting from a recent essayist, 'a very ingenious and subtle writer, whom there is good reason for suspecting to be an Ex-Jesuit, not unknown to Douay some five-and-twenty years since':

> Guy Faux was a fanatic, but he was no hypocrite. He ranks among *good haters*. He was cruel, bloody-minded, reckless of all considerations but those of an infuriated and bigoted faith; but he was a true son of the Catholic Church, a martyr and a confessor, for all that. He who can prevail upon himself to devote his life for a cause, however we may condemn his opinions or abhor his actions, vouches at least for the honesty of his principles and the disinterestedness of his motives. He may be guilty of the worst practices, but he is capable of the greatest. He is no longer a slave, but free. The contempt of death is the beginning of virtue. The hero of the Gunpowder-Plot was, if you will, a fool, a madman, an assassin; call him what names you please: still he was neither knave nor coward. He did not propose to blow up the Parliament and come off, scot-free, himself; he showed that he valued his own life no more than theirs in such a cause—where the integrity of the Catholic faith and the salvation of perhaps millions of souls was at stake. He did not call it a murder, but a sacrifice which he was about to achieve: he was armed with the Holy Spirit and with fire: he was the Church's chosen servant and her blessed martyr. He comforted himself as 'the best of cut-throats'. How many wretches are there who would have undertaken to do what he intended for a sum of money, if they could have got off with impunity! How few are there who would have put themselves in Guy Faux's situation to save the universe! Yet in the latter case we affect to be thrown into greater consternation than at the most unredeemed acts of villany, as if the absolute disinterestedness of the motive doubled the horror of the deed![4]

I have not enquired further into the authorship of this quoted essay, but I should suppose, from its sentiments and from its style—those Shakespearean allusions (not a murder but a sacrifice, the best o'th' cut-throats) and those transfigured biblical echoes ('The contempt of death is the beginning of virtue'; 'with the Holy Spirit and with fire')—I should suppose, I say, that it was Hazlitt's; in which case Lamb's solemn deduction that the author was an Ex-Jesuit is typically fanciful. The best example that I know of Lamb in this vein is his 'Biographical Memoir of Mr Liston', which appeared in 1825 when the comedian had been delighting London audiences for twenty years and would do so for another twelve. John Liston, though a tall and handsome man, excelled in Tony Lumpkin, the Gravedigger in *Hamlet*, Sir Andrew Aguecheek, and similar parts. Even his factual entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography* makes entertaining reading:

> For his benefits Liston ventured on singular experiments. He played Romeo on 16 June 1812, Ophelia in Poole's *Hamlet Travestie* on 17 June 1813, and, after the fashion of Joe Haines and subsequent comedians, delivered an epilogue from the back of an ass.

Lamb's fantasy-biography traces his descent from a Kentish Norman family who came in with the Conqueror, gives him a Puritan ancestor Aminadab Liston who wrote a tract against actors

[3] *Works* 309-10.
[4] *Works* 303.

in 1617 (here follows a long paragraph of Jacobean invective from this imaginary work), and brings him through a severe attack of the measles in his fourth year:

> His recovery he always attributes (under Heaven) to the humane interference of one Doctor Wilhelm Richter, a German empiric, who, in this extremity, prescribed a copious diet of *Saur Kraut*, which the child was observed to reach at with avidity, when other food repelled him; and from this change of diet his restoration was rapid and complete. We have often heard him name the circumstance with gratitude; and it is not altogether surprising, that a relish of this kind of aliment, so abhorrent and harsh to common English palates, has accompanied him through life. When any of Mr Liston's intimates invite him to supper, he never fails of finding, nearest to his knife and fork, a dish of *Saur Kraut*.[5]

Lamb piles invention on invention with irresistible gusto:

> At the age of nine we find our subject under the tuition of the Rev. Mr Goodenough (his father's health not permitting him probably to instruct him himself), by whom he was inducted into a competent portion of Latin and Greek, with some mathematics, till the death of Mr Goodenough, in his own seventieth, and Master Liston's eleventh year, put a stop for the present to his classical progress.
>
> We have heard our hero with emotions, which do his heart honour, describe the awful circumstances attending the decease of this worthy old gentleman. It seems they had been walking out together, master and pupil, in a fine sunset, to the distance of three quarters of a mile west of Lupton, when a sudden curiosity took Mr Goodenough to look down upon a chasm, where a shaft had been lately sunk in a mining speculation (then projecting, but abandoned soon after, as not answering the promised success, by Sir Ralph Shepperton, Knight, and member for the county). The old clergyman leaning over, either with incaution, or sudden giddiness (probably a mixture of both), suddenly lost his footing, and, to use Mr Liston's phrase, disappeared; and was doubtless broken into a thousand pieces. The sound of his head, &c., dashing successively upon the projecting masses of the chasm, had such an effect upon the child, that a serious sickness ensued, and even for many years after his recovery he was not once seen so much as to smile.
>
> The joint death of both his parents, which happened not many months after this disastrous accident, and were probably (one or both of them) accelerated by it, threw our youth upon the protection of his maternal great aunt, Mrs Sittingbourn. Of this aunt we have never heard him speak but with expressions amounting almost to reverence. To the influence of her early counsels and manners, he has always attributed the firmness with which, in maturer years, thrown upon a way of life, commonly not the best adapted to gravity and self-retirement, he has been able to maintain a serious character, untinctured with the levities incident to his profession. Ann Sittingbourn (we have seen her portrait by Hudson) was stately, stiff, tall, with a cast of features strikingly resembling the subject of this memoir. Her estate in Kent was spacious and well-wooded; the house, one of those venerable old mansions which are so impressive in childhood, and so hardly forgotten in succeeding years. In the venerable solitudes of Charnwood, among thick shades of the oak and beech (this last his favourite tree), the young Liston cultivated those contemplative habits which have never entirely deserted him in after years. Here he was commonly in the summer months to be met with, with a book in his hand—not a play-book—meditating.

[5] *Works* 317-18.

> Boyle's Reflections was at one time the darling volume, which in its turn was superseded by Young's Night Thoughts, which has continued its hold upon him through life. He carries it always with him; and it is no uncommon thing for him to be seen, in the refreshing intervals of his occupation, leaning against a side scene, in a sort of Herbert of Cherbury posture, turning over a pocket edition of his favourite author.[6]

It is at this point that Lamb adds his most daring touch, his assertion that Liston became subject to hallucinations:

> At Charnwood then we behold him thoughtful, grave, ascetic. From his cradle averse to flesh meats, and strong drink; abstemious even beyond the genius of the place; and almost in spite of the remonstrances of his great aunt, who, though strict, was not rigid; water was his habitual drink, and his food little beyond the mast, and beech nuts, of his favourite groves. It is a medical fact, that this kind of diet, however favourable to the contemplative powers of the primitive hermits, &c., is but ill adapted to the less robust minds and bodies of a later generation. Hypochondria almost constantly ensues. It was so in the case of the young Liston. He was subject to sights, and had visions. Those arid beech nuts, distilled by a complexion naturally adust, mounted into an occiput, already prepared to kindle by long seclusion, and the fervour of strict Calvinistic notions. In the glooms of Charnwood he was assailed by illusions, similar in kind to those which are related of the famous Anthony of Padua. Wild antic faces would ever and anon protrude themselves upon his *sensorium*. Whether he shut his eyes, or kept them open, the same illusions operated. The darker and more profound were his cogitations, the droller and more whimsical became the apparitions. They buzzed about him thick as flies, flapping at him, flouting him, hooting in his ear, yet with such comic appendages, that what at first was his bane, became at length his solace; and he desired no better society than that of his merry phantasmata. We shall presently find in what way this remarkable phenomenon influenced his future destiny.[7]

Leaving the reader in suspense on this important matter, Lamb abruptly changes the scene of Liston's fortunes to the eastern Mediterranean:

> On the death of Mrs Sittingbourn, we find him received into the family of Mr Willoughby, an eminent Turkey merchant, resident in Birchin-lane, London. We lose a little while here the chain of his history; by what inducements this gentleman was determined to make him an inmate of his house. Probably he had had some personal kindness for Mrs Sittingbourn formerly; but however it was, the young man was here treated more like a son than a clerk, though he was nominally but the latter. Different avocations, the change of scene, with that alternation of business and recreation, which in its greatest perfection is to be had only in London; appear to have weaned him in a short time from the hypochondriacal affections which had beset him at Charnwood. In the three years which followed his removal to Birchin-lane, we find him making more than one journey to the Levant as chief factor for Mr Willoughby, at the Porte. We could easily fill our biography with the pleasant passages which we have heard him relate as having happened to him at Constantinople; such as his having been taken up on suspicion of a design of penetrating the seraglio, &c.; but, with the deepest convincement of this gentleman's own veracity, we think that some of the stories are of that whimsical, and others of that romantic nature,

[6] *Works* 318-19.
[7] *Works* 319-20.

which, however diverting, would be out of place in a narrative of this kind, which aims not only at strict truth, but at avoiding the very appearance of the contrary.[8]

Could biographical scrupulousness go farther?

> We will now bring him over the seas again, and suppose him in the counting-house in Birchin-lane, his protector satisfied with the returns of his factorage, and all going on so smoothly that we may expect to find Mr Liston at last an opulent merchant upon 'Change, as it is called. But see the turns of destiny! Upon a summer's excursion into Norfolk, in the year 1801, the accidental sight of pretty Sally Parker, as she was called (then in the Norwich company), diverted his inclinations at once from commerce; and he became, in the language of common-place biography, stage-struck. Happy for the lovers of mirth was it, that our hero took this turn; he might else have been to this hour that unentertaining character, a plodding London merchant.
>
> We accordingly find him shortly after making his *debut*, as it is called, upon the Norwich boards, in the season of that year, being then in the 22d year of his age. Having a natural bent to tragedy, he chose the part of Pyrrhus in the Distressed Mother, to Sally Parker's Hermione. We find him afterwards as Barnwell, Altamont, Chamont, &c.; but, as if nature had destined him to the sock, an unavoidable infirmity absolutely discapacitated him for tragedy. His person at this latter period, of which I have been speaking, was graceful, and even commanding; his countenance set to gravity; he had the power of arresting the attention of an audience at first sight almost beyond any other tragic actor. But he could not hold it. To understand this obstacle we must go back a few years to those appalling reveries at Charnwood. Those illusions, which had vanished before the dissipations of a less recluse life, and more free society, now in his solitary studies, and amid the intense calls upon feeling incident to tragic acting, came back upon him with tenfold vividness. In the midst of some most pathetic passage, the parting of Jaffier with his dying friend, for instance, he would suddenly be surprised with a fit of violent horse laughter. While the spectators were all sobbing before him with emotion, suddenly one of those grotesque faces would peep out upon him, and he could not resist the impulse. A timely excuse once or twice served his purpose, but no audiences could be expected to bear repeatedly this violation of the continuity of feeling. He describes them (the illusions) as so many demons haunting him, and paralysing every effect. Even now, I am told, he cannot recite the famous soliloquy in Hamlet, even in private, without immoderate bursts of laughter. However, what he had not force of reason sufficient to overcome, he had good sense enough to turn into emolument, and determined to make a commodity of his distemper. He prudently exchanged the buskin for the sock, and the illusions instantly ceased; or, if they occurred for a short season, by their very co-operation added a zest to his comic vein; some of his most catching faces being (as he expresses it) little more than transcripts and copies of those extraordinary phantasmata.
>
> We have now drawn out our hero's existence to the period when he was about to meet for the first time the sympathies of a London audience. The particulars of his success since have been too much before our eyes to render a circumstantial detail of them expedient. I shall only mention that Mr Willoughby, his resentments having had time to subside, is at present one of the fastest friends of his old renegado factor; and that Mr Liston's hopes of

[8] *Works* 320.

> Miss Parker vanishing along with his unsuccessful suit to Melpomene, in the autumn of 1811 he married his present lady, by whom he has been blest with one son, Philip; and two daughters, Ann, and Augustina.[9]

If we thought that that final statement at least might be true, the *Dictionary of National Biography* assures us otherwise: the marriage took place in 1807 and the children were John and Emma.

This biographical memoir was published in *The London Magazine* in January. The February number included a piece headed 'Autobiography of Mr Munden' (Joseph Munden, the comedian, who had retired from the stage in the previous year, 1824). At his retirement performance he had acted two of his most famous roles, neither from a wellknown play, Sir Robert Bramble and an old sailor by the name of Dozy. He writes in the style of the former.

> HARK'EE, Mr Editor. A word in your ear. They tell me you are going to put me in print—in print, Sir. To publish my life. What is my life to you, Sir? What is it to you whether I ever lived at all? My life is a very good life, Sir. I am insured at the Pelican, Sir. I am threescore years and six—six; mark me, Sir: but I can play Polonius, which, I believe, few of your corre—correspondents can do, Sir. I suspect tricks, Sir: I smell a rat; I do, I do. You would cog the die upon us; you would, you would, Sir. But I will forestall you, Sir. You would be deriving me from William the Conqueror, with a murrain to you. It is no such thing, Sir. The town shall know better, Sir. They begin to smoke your flams, Sir. Mr Liston may be born where he pleases, Sir; but I will not be born at Lup—Lupton Magna, for any body's pleasure, Sir. My son and I have looked over the great map of Kent together, and we can find no such place as you would palm upon us, Sir; palm upon us, I say. Neither Magna nor Parva, as my son says, and he knows Latin, Sir; Latin. If you write my life true, Sir, you must set down, that I, Joseph Munden, comedian, came into the world upon All-hallows' day, Anno Domini, 1759 —1759; no sooner nor later, Sir: and I saw the first light—the first light, remember, Sir, at Stoke Pogis—Stoke Pogis, comitatu Bucks, and not at Lup—Lup Magna, which I believe to be no better than moonshine—moonshine; do you mark me, Sir? I wonder you can put such flim flams upon us, Sir; I do, I do. It does not become you, Sir; I say it—I say it.[10]

Need I add that Munden's actual life-story knows nothing whatever of Stoke Pogis?

Lamb's biography of Liston and his autobiography of Munden show that, in spite of what some philosophical people like to argue, the function of laughter need not be to intimidate by humiliating. They are pure humour.

My last reading is from 'A Character', another periodical essay of 1825. The name Lamb gives the person described, Egomet, is from the Terentian tag '*Proximus sum egomet mihi*' (I am nearest to myself, that is, I put my own interest first).

> A desk at the Bank of England is *prima facie* not the point in the world that seems best adapted for an insight into the characters of men; yet something may be gleaned from the barrenest soil. There is EGOMET, for instance. By the way, how pleasant it is to string up one's acquaintance thus, in the grumbler's corner of some newspaper, and for them to know nothing at all about it; nay, for them to read their own characters and suspect nothing of the matter. Blessings on the writer who first made use of Roman names. It is only calling

[9] *Works* 321-2.
[10] *Works* 339-40.

Tomkins —Caius; and Jenkins—Titus; or whipping Hopkins upon the back of Scævola, and you have the pleasure of executing sentence with no pain to the offender. This hanging in effigy is delightful; it evaporates the spleen without souring the blood, and is altogether the most gentlemanly piece of Jack-Ketchery imaginable.

EGOMET, then, has been my desk-fellow for thirty years. He is a remarkable species of selfishness. I do not mean that he is attentive to his own gain; I acquit him of that commonplace manifestation of the foible. I shoot no such small deer. But his sin is a total absorption of mind in things relating to himself—*his* house—*his* horse—*his* stable—*his* gardener, &c. Nothing that concerns himself can he imagine to be indifferent to you.—He does my sympathy too much honour. The worst is, he takes no sort of interest whatever in *your* horse, house, stable, gardener, &c. If you begin a discourse about your own household economy and small matters, he treats it with the most mortifying indifference. He has discarded all pronouns for the first-personal. His inattention, or rather aversion, to hear, is no more than what is a proper return to a self-important babbler of his own little concerns; but then, if he will not give, why should be expect to receive, a hearing? 'There is no reciprocity in this.'

There is an egotism of vanity; but his is not that species either. He is not vain of any talent, or indeed properly of any thing he possesses; but his doings and sayings, his little pieces of good or ill luck, the sickness of his maid, the health of his pony, the question whether he shall ride or walk home to-day to Clapham, the shape of his hat or make of his boot; his poultry, and how many eggs they lay daily—are the never-ending topics of his talk. *Your* goose might lay golden eggs without exciting in him a single curiosity to hear about it. . . .[11]

I said before, he is not avaricious—not egotistical in the vain sense of the word either; therefore the term selfishness, or egotism, is improperly applied to his distemper; it is the sin of self-fullness. Neither is himself, properly speaking, an object of his contemplation at all; it is the things, which belong or refer to himself. His conversation is one entire soliloquy; or it may be said to resemble Robinson Crusoe's self-colloquies in his island: you are the parrot sitting by. Begin a story, however modest, of your own concerns (something of real interest perhaps), and the little fellow contracts and curls up into his little self immediately, and, with shut ears, sits unmoved, self-centered, as remote from your joys or sorrows as a Pagod or a Lucretian Jupiter.[12]

This is a piece of penetrating observation—we have all met people like Egomet—but it is not a sour-spirited criticism, and it is not even a mere letting-off of steam. Egomet, without being either *un*friendly or *ill*-humoured, conspicuously lacks the Elian spirit; and Lamb arms fellow-Elians against such encounters, making them tolerable and even enjoyable. When we next meet Egomet, we have only to *remember the parrot.*

Durham

[11] *Works* 353-4.
[12] *Works* 355.

Reviews

The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge no. 11 in 2 vols.: *Shorter Works and Fragments*. Ed. H. J. Jackson and J. R. de J. Jackson. Bollingen Series LXXV. Princeton University Press: Princeton, N.J., and Routledge: London, 1995. ISBN 0 415 03010 2.

THESE TWO LARGE VOLUMES of miscellaneous short writings, some previously unpublished, others published only in recondite sources or in different forms, have been, as we have come to expect of the works in the Bollingen Series, impeccably edited, with generous regard for the use readers and scholars will want to make of what the editors rightly call 'a sort of microcosm of the whole' of Coleridge's enormous output. The pieces collected here provide a luminous example of Coleridge's omnivorous mind, his character as a 'library cormorant', and the wide range of his intellectual interests throughout his life. Arranged chronologically, they manifest Coleridge's characteristic miscellaneousness, yet also his lifelong returning to certain topics, issues, and interests of abiding concern.

It is therefore appropriate, and somehow inevitable, that the first and last items reproduced here - separated by 47 years and over 1400 pages—should complete a circle. The first is a set of short school exercises done at Christ's Hospital, concerning 'Temperance'. At 15, Coleridge writes that the intemperate man, 'like a Ship driven by Whirlwind, drives on from one excess to another, till at last he splits on the Rock of Infamy'; at 18, he delivers the pithy, if pious, statement that 'at the moment we contract a habit, we forego our free-agency'. In 1830, after more than 30 years of opium addiction and the torturing guilt it brought with it, which he so often expressed in variations of the early metaphors of the shipwreck and the whirlwind, Coleridge writes 'My Nightly Prayer', full of contrition about his corrupted will and the 'wreck' of his sins. Moreover, he begs for the strength to 'make compensation to thy Church for the unused Talents thou hast entrusted to me, for the neglected opportunities, which thy loving kindness had provided'. And the last item of all, 'A Prayer to be Said before a Man Begins his Work', written in the last year of his life, asks God's blessings on his labour and God's help in avoiding the despair so finely expressed in the late poem 'Work Without Hope'.

In between is a feast of Coleridgeana, including fragments which have a kinship with the jottings in the Notebooks, the lectures, the letters, and the published works—on optical illusions, English prosody, the soul and the universe, Greek grammar, miracles, hypochondria, Shakespeare, free will, the decline of trade, animal magnetism, architecture, Spinoza, fickleness, German verbs, Church and State, and many, many more topics.

Among the most useful republishings are some well known, but difficult to obtain, occasional writings. These include the disapproving review of Matthew Lewis's *Monk* in the *Critical Review* (1796); Coleridge's account, published in the now scarce *Researches, Chemical and Philosophical: Chiefly Concerning Nitrous Oxide* (1800) by Humphry Davy, of his experience as a willing guinea pig for Davy's experiments with laughing gas in Thomas Beddoes's Pneumatic Institute at Clifton, Bristol; his one and only review for Francis Jeffrey's *Edinburgh Review*, an article in praise of Thomas Clarkson's work on the abolition of the slave-trade (1808); and some variations on his well-known pamphlets supporting Sir Robert Peel's Bill to restrict child labour in cotton mills and factories (1818).

One of the most interesting of the hitherto unpublished pieces is Coleridge's essay on scrofula, written in 1816 to help James Gillman, who planned (but failed) to complete it for submission for the annual essay competition run by the Royal College of Surgeons. The essay deals robustly and wittily with the history of the disease, known as 'the King's evil' because of the ancient

traditional belief that it could be cured by the reigning monarch's touch. Coleridge's particular scorn is aimed at the Stuarts' effort to revive the tradition, and at Richard Wiseman's 'Treatise' on the subject in the reign of Charles II: 'His first Chapter is devoted to the confirmation of the miracle and to expressions of the pious wonder, that filled his loyal heart while he contemplated the multitude, and evidently supernatural nature, of the cures worked by the royal touch of that merry Saint his restored Master the *2nd* Charles.'

Still on the subject of miracles, about the existence and proving of which Coleridge was always—and somewhat surprisingly—relaxed to the point of scepticism, a manuscript scrap here signed and dated 1807 by Thomas Poole is not only interesting in itself as the earliest extant statement of Coleridge's views, but also provides an excellent example of the Jacksons' knowledgeable, concise, and helpful editing. The fragment is prefaced by an exemplary headnote, half a page long, in which it is related to Coleridge's other remarks about miracles, as expressed in letters, in several Notebook entries, and in *Aids to Reflection,* and in which the editors also draw the reader's attention to Coleridge's recent experiences of Catholic beliefs during his stay in Malta. Coleridge has indeed been fortunate in his posthumous editors, not the least assiduous and delicate of whom are the editors of the present volumes.

University College London ROSEMARY ASHTON

LEE ERICKSON. *The Economy of Literary Form: English Literature and the Industrialization of Publishing, 1800-1850.* The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996. ISBN 0-8018-5145-9. Pp. xii + 220. £29.00 hardback.

'O all pervading ALBUM!', Lamb cried to Bernard Barton in late 1827. 'All over the Leeward Islands, in Newfoundland, and the Back Settlements, I understand there is no other reading. They haunt me. I die of Albo-phobia!' Lamb's distress is directed toward the new and enormous popularity of Album books and literary Annuals such as *The Forget Me Not*, *The Literary Souvenir* and, most famously, *The Keepsake*, all of which were designed for sale as gifts to women during the Christmas season. The rise of these books had been swift, and the ways in which they quickly undercut the market for individual volumes of poetry is only one of several fascinating shifts in the early nineteenth-century literary marketplace that Lee Erickson analyzes in his fine new book. Erickson presents a classical free-market examination 'of poetry, the essay, and the novel after the developments of the Fourdrinier papermaking machine, stereotyping, and the power press had industrialized printing, thus making economies of scale possible in publishing and so allowing more readers to read than ever before.' He demonstrates that the periodical press became the most dominant publishing format in the first half of the nineteenth century because it was the most dependably profitable one, and it gathered to it some of the finest writers of the day because its profits meant that it was able to pay so much better than any other literary format. As Hazlitt put it in 1823, 'the only authors who, as a class, are not starving, are periodical essayists.'

The essay as a literary form was more popular in the 1820s than at any time before or since because of the interest in discursive, familiar prose by a new and burgeoning readership. In the 1830s this was displaced by a stronger and more enduring demand for short and serialized fiction. Writers responded to the buying trends of the reading public, for the 1820s and 1830s are part of the gradual shift from the private patronage of literature typical of much of the eighteenth century to the literary marketplace of the nineteenth. 'There are still many who refuse to read Adam Smith and believe in Marxist economics,' Erickson observes wryly in his Introduction, 'in much the same way, I think, as there are still those who refuse to read Darwin and believe in creationism.' That is, a writer chooses a literary form that will sell. There are individual chapters

on poetry, the essay, and the novel, and Erickson further substantiates his central economic argument by devoting chapters to the reasons behind Wordsworth's fight on behalf of the Copyright Bill of 1842, the structure and effect of Carlyle's 'anticlimactic rhetoric', and the importance of the circulating libraries to, and in the works of, Jane Austen. The book is filled with illuminating quotations and remarkable statistics: for example, in 1810, 'a book in great demand sold ten to twenty thousand copies . . . in 1850, after the technological revolution in printing and with the general rise in the standard of living, a very popular book would sell several hundred thousand copies.'

There are a few minor slips, such as the assertion that *Fraser's Magazine* was 'founded in 1831' (it was 1830), and the claim that 'Coleridge never wrote for *Blackwood's*' (he did). Occasionally there is some fuzziness in the argument, as at the close of the chapter on 'The Economy of Novel Reading', when Erickson notes that 'reading was generally felt to represent a withdrawal from a woman's proper social concerns', and then less than a page later observes that 'circulating libraries . . . made reading a social activity in which women could usually properly participate.' In the final chapter Erickson argues that, in working for the periodicals, writers were having to submit themselves to a 'destructive element', and that many writers 'fear[ed] rightly that their work was too much constricted' by the periodical format. This is certainly disputable. Contributors often felt ambivalent about writing for the periodical press, but that medium seems to have brought out the best in many of them, and fostered a remarkable spirit of camaraderie, innovation and immediacy. Lamb's *Essays of Elia* and *The Last Essays of Elia*, De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*, Wilson's *Noctes Ambrosianae*, Hazlitt's *Table Talk* and *The Spirit of the Age*, and Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* all appeared in the magazines between 1820 and 1835, and this is to say nothing of the novels of Dickens and Thackeray that were soon to follow. 'How it occurs, I know not', wrote William Harrison Ainsworth in 1830, 'but some people never read so well as in a magazine. Wilson, for example, and Lamb.' In the first half of the nineteenth-century, the periodical press was surely at least as 'productive' as it was 'destructive.'

Erickson's book is handsomely printed and lucidly written. His contention that literary forms are the result of the intersection between readers' desires and authors' aspirations is ably supported and highly persuasive. In its range and resourcefulness, the book makes a major contribution to our understanding of the literary marketplace during the first half of the nineteenth century.

Acadia University ROBERT MORRISON

Society Notes and News from Members

FROM THE HON. SECRETARY

Basil Savage

Member since 1970

Editor of the *Bulletin* 1972-77

Joint Editor 1977-9

Vice-President of the Society 1996

Basil Savage died on 29 May 1996, aged 78 years. *Bulletin* NS 81 (January 1993) was dedicated to Basil in recognition of his achievement in planning and producing the first of the New Series in January 1973.

Madeline Huxstep and Charles Branchini represented the Charles Lamb Society at the funeral on 9 June at Kensal Green (West London Crematorium): in the cemetery are buried George Dyer, Thomas Hood, and Leigh Hunt. Surely their spirits would have welcomed a true Elian!

Recently ill health prevented Basil from attending our gatherings but his interest in the Society never waned. Our 1996 AGM elected him as a Vice-President as a tribute to one who had contributed so much to the spread of the knowledge of Charles Lamb and his circle.

For further recollections of Basil, see pp. 114-15.

Annual General Meeting

At the AGM on 10 May 1997, Mary Wedd was elected Chairman, in succession to David Wickham who did not seek re-election. With an ingenious quiz culled from David's own writings, Tim Wilson presented him with a cheque in appreciation of his six-year tenure of the chairmanship. (We gather David will use the gift to purchase the new Garrick Club portraits catalogue—chiefly nineteenth-century theatricals before 1850 and thus very Elian.) Mary thanked Norah Wickham for her past services as Registrar, and welcomed to the Council Veronica Finch and Michael Laplace-Sinatra. She also thanked Nick and Cecilia Powell for ensuring the smooth transition of our membership and subscription records following the sad death of Audrey Moore.

Kilve Court Weekend, 5-7 September

Added attractions to those mentioned in *CLB* NS 98 are contributions from Jane Stabler, who also features in the CLS programme on 6 December this year, and Kathleen Jones. Members will recall her talks to the Society on Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle (1992) and on Christina Rosetti (1993).

A Visitor from Australia

David Conley, our member from Queensland, managed to fit in an amazing number of Lamb sites in one day before returning home. He writes:

> I had an interesting self-tour of the Temple and was pleased to see it as much a centre of London life now as it was in Lamb's day. Fortunately Sandra Knott's daughter was at home when I arrived at Lamb's cottage and let me look around the place. It is an inspiring site and I was amazed/amused by the low ceilings and creaky/wobbly floors. The Society must feel fortunate that it is in such grand shape after 200-plus years, and has such affectionate owners.
>
> I also spent a little time at the Lamb gravesite and noted that it was four days before the 150th anniversary of Mary Lamb's death. I laid some roses on the gravesite and was delighted to meet the nearest resident, Rosemarie Zajonc. She is an asset to the Society in that she keeps an eye on the gravesite and has expressed concern about vandalism of some of the graves. She expressed a hope that the Society might find some way to upgrade the Lambs' grave and make it a little more special. Possibly a small concrete flower-box could be built around it or at the foot of it so that it could bloom, at least in summer!

In gratitude David sent us a membership subscription for Ms Zajonc, whom we are delighted to welcome as a member.

The Council will discuss at its next meeting what more can be done to improve the Lambs' grave.

For Crossword Addicts

Clue: Samuel's teacher has a name for writing essays. (Answer: ELIA)

BASIL SAVAGE

Basil Savage died on 29 May 1997. The Society owes him a great debt for having founded the *Charles Lamb Bulletin* in its present form, and establishing it as more than just a newsletter, but as a respected academic journal. I first met him in 1992, when I had lunch with him, Mary Wedd, and Bill Ruddick, prior to a meeting of the Society. On that occasion we conducted the interview that was reported in Basil's 'How It All Began' (NS 81 (1993) 2-4). He was kind, helpful, and retained a concern with the continuing progress of the *Bulletin*. He served as a member of its editorial board for the last four years, and his death is a sad and grievous loss for the Society. Two of Basil's friends recall him in these pages: firstly, Mary Wedd, who took over from him as editor of this journal in 1979; secondly, Marilyn Gaull, who was one of the beneficiaries of his generosity when she founded *The Wordsworth Circle*. Duncan Wu

In Memorian: Basil Savage by Mary Wedd

It was a great shock to hear, early in June, of the death of Basil Savage, for so long a pillar of the Charles Lamb Society. I first met him at the Wordsworth Summer Conference, where in 1972 I observed him at Charlotte Mason College pinning up a notice asking for subscribers to the New Series *Charles Lamb Bulletin*, which he was about to launch. I immediately signed up, and this was my introduction to the Society and the beginning of a lasting friendship with Basil himself. He had been a member of the Charles Lamb Society from 1970, and in 1972 took over from Mr H. G. Smith as editor of the old-style *C.L.S. Bulletin*, which he later described as 'a likeable journal', consisting of 'eight sides of closely-printed double columns, typeset by the printer; no covers, and very miscellaneous indeed in its contents'. Basil transformed this in the New Series into a journal which, while preserving its function of providing Society News for members, also aimed at a wider academic and library public. Its initial issue in January 1973 began with the first of a series of annual lectures in memory of the Society's founding Secretary and guiding light Ernest Crowsley (on this occasion given by Basil Willey, speaking in the anniversary year of Coleridge's birth on his friendship with Lamb). This distinguished start was to prove a foretaste of the admirable fare with which Basil continued to provide his readers, with the kind help and support of many fine scholars.

That Summer Conference of 1972, through the encouragement of Richard Wordsworth, heralded an interplay and mutual help between the Lamb Society and the Wordsworth Trust, and also, through the generous support of Marilyn Gaull, led to a co-operation and friendship with *The Wordsworth Circle* in America, both of which have lasted till this day. Basil bequeathed to his successors as Editor a fund of goodwill which he had built up on all sides.

In those days money was very short and, so as to be able to have more pages, Basil typed out the first six *Bulletins* himself! Luckily for me, he then engaged the wonderful Miss Stephenson, without whom I would have been quite lost when I took over as editor. We were only allowed twenty pages or very occasionally twenty-four, and apart from the typist and printer all labour was entirely voluntary, including for some years the sending out of the copies which was done by a noble member of the Society. Basil bequeathed to his successors a whole system of organization which stood us in good stead for years until the coming of less straitened times and the computer age allowed new ways.

It was no exaggeration when, in the *Bulletin* on the twentieth anniversary of the New Series, we called Basil its 'onlie begetter'. Yet we remember him, too, as an active member of the Society and a faithful friend. He was closely involved with the transfer of the Society's Library to the Guildhall and with its care and cataloguing thereafter, a task ably carried on recently by David Wickham.

Basil had been a higher Civil Servant before his retirement and was consequently occasionally irked by our somewhat cavalier approach to protocol, as he saw it, though it seemed to us that we always observed due forms! About this we had our little spats, but his commitment was never in doubt and, on a personal level, a kinder and more considerate man it would be hard to imagine. In recent years ill health prevented him from coming very often to meetings but we kept in touch by post and phone. We shall miss him very much and we owe him a great debt of gratitude, not only for what he did but for what he was.

Recollections of Basil by Marilyn Gaull

Basil Savage was an essential part of my life; he remains a treasure to me, a source of great wisdom, a gentle gentleman, a colleague, a man of letters, always genial, good natured, and a model of civility. He initiated correspondence with me when I started *The Wordsworth Circle.* He offered his services as a UK representative and in turn we publicized the Lime Tree Bower Press and the *Charles Lamb Bulletin* in its revival. It was thus in a rare and co-operative spirit that we joined our activities, although I believe I received more from him than he did from me.

A memorable conversation, a revision of 'Resolution and Independence': we were walking in the garden at Rydal Mount during the first summer conference, Basil listening quietly, his beamy face and sprarkling eyes, while I fussed about not being able to answer all the correspondence that the journal and the summer school had generated. Here was someone who had a full professional life, ran a press and a journal as hobby, and never showed any stress. His advice: put all the letters that need replies in one pile, on the right. Take them one at a time, answer them, and put them in a pile on the left. I can assure you this system is not simple. Twenty-seven years later, and I still have to remind myself, when the chaos sets in, how Basil would have done it—mainly, however, that Basil would have done it. He was, of course, always grateful for a letter and answered immediately—a combination of information, grace, and personal concern.

Basil was always generous with his time and exceptionally thoughtful to me. During one visit to London, he took me on an outing to Greenwich by boat on a very lovely Sunday afternoon. We visited bookshops, enjoyed a lovely tea, and all the way back on the boat discussed the wonderful books he had bought. Then he gave me his favourite. It was a perfect day, a day more suited to painting than a photo. I think of Basil that way: special, formal, vibrant, unique. I am pleased that I had a chance to know him.

Society Notes and News from Members

Alliance of Literary Societies

On 19 April 1997 the AGM of the Alliance of Literary Societies was once more held in Birmingham. Of the 73 constituent members 25 sent delegates, thought most societies were represented by more than one society member. It seemed to be a better turn-out than last year and the usual Romantic interest (Lamb, Beddoes, Clare) was augmented by the presence of Mr David Leigh-Hunt, a descendant of the great man, who represented the Keats-Shelley Memorial Association. The Charles Lamb stall, though perhaps not the richest in terms of memorabilia and first editions did (once again) have the advantage of a most artistic collage (Kurt Schwitters—eat your heart out!), which tended to attract punters, one of whom bought a copy of 'Charles Lamb's London'. Our donated copy of Prance (*A Companion to Charles Lamb*) was also eagerly snapped up at the raffle.

During the AGM the Council—apart from two delegates, who were replaced—were re-elected *en bloc*. Chairman Joseph Hunt was replaced *pro tem*, due to illness, by another octogenarian,

Mr Herbert Woodward. The remaining executives were re-elected *nem con.* The Treasurer revealed the healthy financial state of the Alliance (£1,384 in the bank) and suggested that more of its funds should be spent on projects. As in 1996 the most discussed issue was group insurance. A leading insurer had offered a deal that would give member societies cover of up to £2 million for a premium of £28 a year, though this could only be achieved with a block policy. However, it was not made clear whether such generous cover could be extended to ambitious outside events involving members of the public, such as the rollerblade version of *Mr H.* We shall see.

Chapter One editor, Kenneth Oultram, seemed happy with the unusual level of response to his various questionnaires over the past year. As a result he was able to compile a lengthy feature on literary cookbooks which, judging from the editorial tone, is by no means a leg-pull. (Does anyone recall the Samuel Beckett Cookbook in Craig Brown's hilarious *Marsh-Marlowe Letters*?) Space has also been given to correspondence, among which is a *cri de coeur* (alas, cut to ribbons) from your delegate. The editor was less hopeful about persuading the Post Office to celebrate literary anniversaries. This year, seemingly ignoring suggestions from a number of societies, the theme of 'horror' was chosen for a series of stamps. What price portraits of Messrs Wordsworth and Coleridge for next year's *Lyrical Ballads* bicentenary? Or will Lewis Carroll and Mr Gladstone be first and second class males?

The rest of the day was hosted by the Mary Webb Society, who brought along four speakers, the best of whom was Ms Gladys Mary Coles, author of a recently-reprinted biography of the Shropshire novelist. Throughout her illustrated talk the question as to whether Ms Coles adopted or was given the same first names as her heroine jostled in my imagination with the romantic aspects of Webb's life, notably a Brontë-esque childhood, chronic ill-health, and death aged 46. Romantic too was her Hardyesque attachment to Shropshire and choice of London home—a bijou cottage on Hampstead Heath, deep in Keats and Leigh Hunt country.

As always, the afternoon closed with a splendid performance by ALS President Gabriel Woolf—this time aided and abetted by BBC's Rosalind Shanks, whose readings from Webb's novels and poems made great play with the Shropshire accent.

Next year's ALS AGM will take place on 25 April. Robin Healey

John Lamb's 'Literary Exercises'

E. V. Lucas, in *The Life of Charles Lamb*, writes of John Lamb's tract on cruelty to animals that 'The only copy of the pamphlet that is now known is in America, in the possession of a collector whose interest in literature takes the form of refusing to allow a transcript to be made' (p. 478 of the 1914 one-volume edition).

Lucas goes on to quote from three of John Lamb's letters to the *Examiner*, concerning the hardship caused by the Corn Laws, and remarks that one passage 'might almost have been written by Charles Lamb himself'. Lucas then comments: 'Of John Lamb's literary exercises I hope some day to learn more. It is impossible that so ardent a philanthropist should have written only these letters, the "Beggar Man", and the Humanity pamphlet'.

I wonder if any more of John Lamb's 'literary exercises' have come to light since then and, in particular, if any more has been heard of the pamphlet. David Crosher

FROM D. E. WICKHAM

An Interview with Charles Lamb

This interview 'by T.W.' originally appeared in *Eliza Cook's Journal* No. 55, dated 18 May 1850, pp. 34-7, and what follows is copied from the cutting in the Rịch Collection (ix 26-9). One

first supposes that it may be another of the several published versions of Thomas Westwood's memories of Charles Lamb but I can find no reference to this particular one in Lucas' *Life of Charles Lamb*, nor in Talfourd. It reads like a genuine record of a meeting with Charles and Mary Lamb, but not like the work of Thomas Westwood (1814-88), i.e. of a man of thirty-six recalling a meeting which occurred when he was seventeen, who had known the Lambs as next-door neighbours for two years before that (1827-9) and as his parents' paying guests at Westwood Cottage, 89 Chase Side, Enfield, for the next four years (1829-33), including the time when this interview is supposed to have occurred.

'T.W.' is almost certainly Mr Sergeant Wilde, later Lord Truro, or perhaps his wife, Mrs Thomas Wilde. He (or she) feels it necessary to describe things which Thomas Westwood might have ignored as self-evident, was not to see Charles Lamb again during the last three years of his life, and asks questions to prompt answers which will clearly interest others and be worthwhile records for the future. The note mentioned towards the end fits in well with the details of the notes to Mr and Mrs Wilde printed among Charles Lamb's letters as Lucas ii. 878 and 879. 'Your Initial in the Second Page' mentioned in No. 879 refers to the second poem in *Album Verses*, 1830: *In the Autograph Book of Mrs Sergeant W----*. The 'we' of the memoir may mean two (or more) people or it may be the authorial plural.

Notes of an Interview with the late Charles Lamb [by T.W., probably Mr Sergeant Wilde or his wife]

It was in the year 1831 when we had our last interview with Charles Lamb. He was then residing at Enfield. His abode was a small, neat, rural habitation, in a quiet and almost sequestered neighbourhood, and presenting a perfect contrast to the scenes of activity, noise and bustle in the midst of which the greater part of his previous life had been spent. The thought entered the mind, as we approached his residence—How can you, Elia, be happy here, with your tastes and decided predilections for the animation, variety, and energy of life in the metropolis? On the occasion to which this paper refers, we had a literary favour to request of him, which we were well assured, from our knowledge of his kindness, he would grant in the readiest manner: nor were we disappointed. The door was opened by his sister, who welcomed us in her usual polite and agreeable manner. She was a staid, respectable, domestic, and matronly, kind of a person, without the slightest affection or pretension and was very pleasant in her demeanour. You could feel at home with her at once, and you loved her for her brother's sake. We waited a few moments in a plain and neat front parlour, while she went to inform her brother, and, on her return, we were introduced to Charles Lamb, in a little back room, plainly furnished, and evidently used as his study. There was a select, but by no means a large, library; and we could not help observing the number of folios which it contained. He received us in his usual quiet and urbane manner, without any form, or peculiar warmth. This was characteristic of him.

As soon as we were seated, we saw that we were in the presence of a superior man—a man of cultivated, powerful, and original mind. There was something about him which impressed us at once, and which we cannot adequately describe. He was stationed at a small table, and had before him an old folio—an ancient edition of the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher. His frame was slight and fragile, and his countenance was pensive and solemn. He was attired in clerk-like black, and presented a very grave and clerical appearance.

We were always struck with his head, and never more than on this occasion. The form of the head was the most dignified, and its expression the most agreeable and sweet.

[T.W. then quotes Talfourd's description of Lamb ('his eyes softly brown'), gains the literary favour solicited, then asks questions on books and literary subjects and quotes Hazlitt's description of Charles Lamb at such a time.]

'You have caught me reading', said he, 'and reading a large book.'

'Do you spend much time in reading?' we enquired.

'Yes, the mornings invariably; and sometimes the evenings too.'

[He approves of 'close, careful, meditative' reading and says that 'a disciplined mind can scarcely read too much'.]

'There is nothing like the fine old folios of our ancestors; what solidity—what breadth—what printing—what margin—to me, what beauty! I can scarcely endure your octavos and duodecimos. I have been so accustomed to the fine old folio [sic.], that I find it almost difficult to read with comfort a book of small size; and, sure I am, I do not receive half the benefit. 'Here', said he, 'is a favourite volume of mine',—taking up a folio edition of Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* [followed apparently by a folio of Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*. He commends the work of Jeremy Taylor and cannot help liking Barrow:] 'He is dry, and often tedious, but what energy and felicity of language, which force of argument, what clearness and power of thought, what rich diversified illustration! I wish all would read Barrow.'

[He prizes Boswell's *Life of Johnson*:] 'It is often prosy, garrulous and small in its talk and details; still who would be without such a book - such a portraiture.'

[He was asked if he had studied Cudworth's *Intellectual System* and replied that he had. He also admired Dryden and valued Goldsmith. T.W. mentions how he valued and admired some of Charles Lamb's essays, which he had recently read.] He responded, 'You are very polite and kind. The public has been very indulgent towards them. Whatever their faults, I endeavoured to write them with discrimination and care. The little *Essays*, by Elia, have not been despised.' He seemed gratified and a smile played on his pensive and intellectual countenance. 'When I am gone', he touchingly remarked, 'I shall be remembered by a few choice and kindred spirits.'

'Not by a few', we ventured to add, 'but by many—very many.'

He bowed and asked, 'Have you got *John Woodville* in your library? It is a thing of no importance, but I should like you to have a copy.' On informing him that we had not, he procured from an upper shelf a volume of this play; and writing his name on the flyleaf, and adding 'to his affectionate friend', put it into our hands. That little book we have prized ever since, and now that the hand and head of the writer have mouldered in the grave, we never take it up without pensive and solemn emotions being awakened. Previously to leaving, on the occasion to which this paper relates, Elia wrote for us a kind and generous note—penned in his neat and peculiar style; we have it before us now, and shall ever prize it as a little epistolary composition of the taciturn, the pensive, the grave, but gentle, true-hearted kind-hearted Elia. This was our final interview with the late Charles Lamb, but we never open a volume of his writings without having his countenance and form before the mind's eye, as he appeared at the period respecting which we write.

It is well known that Elia died in consequence of a trifling accident which occurred to him while taking one of his regular morning walks on the dusty London road, and he lies in Edmonton churchyard. He had marked the spot himself, a short time previously, while walking there with his sister, 'as the place where he wished to be buried'.

The spot, 'as has been observed', is by no means romantic, though something of the kind might easily have been found among the mossy, mouldering, carved vaults and tombs, at remote corners, beneath old yew-trees, dense blackthorn hedges, or beside the venerable buttresses of the old church walls. Lamb, however, preferred to be located, not only where the place was pretty thick with companionable tombs, but where he could be nearest the walks of human life. His gravestone accordingly stands at a little distance, facing a footpath which leads to the lanes and fields at the back of the church. The inscription on it is simply—

To the memory of Charles Lamb. Died 27th Dec., 1834; aged 59.

Just at the maturest stage of his mind, and the primest part of his days!

There, in fixed peacefulness, among a crowd of familiar names—names known from infancy—we often see it stand with pallid smiles just after sunset, while sparrows fly chirping from tomb to tomb, and ruminating sheep recline, with half-closed eyes, against the warm flat stone or grassy mound.

How many a literary pilgrim, and fond admirer, has been almost ready to shed a tear, when looking at the quiet grave which contains the mortal remains of the pensive, gentle, and noble Elia!

T.W.

E. V. Lucas did not use the above paper in his *Life of Charles Lamb* but he did quote (pp. 825-7) an interview published by J. Fuller Russell, written in 1834, first published in the *Guardian* of 6 May 1874 and again in *The Bookman* for January 1897. The latter is preserved as a cutting in the Rich Collection (ii 121-2) and this seemed a suitable place to record Lucas's very minor amendments from that previous appearance.

1) It begins: 'On Tuesday, August 5, 1834, I walked over from Enfield to Edmonton, and on reaching Mr Lamb's cottage—which stands back from the road (nearly opposite the church) between two houses which project beyond it, and is screened by shrubs and trees—I found that 'Elia' was out, taking his morning walk. I was admitted . . .'
2) There is no paragraph between ' . . . usual draught.' and 'On each visit . . .'
3) ' . . . the deep pathos of his voice gave great weight to the impression made by his [corrected by Lucas to 'the'] poetry.'
4) There is an extra sentence and no paragraph at ' . . . the character of Charles Lamb. There was nothing of that point in his conversation which we find in William Hone's. I remember . . .'
5) 'Of [conversational] Sharpe's *Essays* . . .' is corrected by Lucas to take account of the subject's nickname.
6) 'I think he undervalued Coleridge's poetry.' To avoid confusion with Wordsworth, Lucas inserted the explanatory '[Lamb]'.
7) The passage omitted after ' . . . productions in verse' reads: '—the former, in his opinion, was miserably clumsy in its arrangement, and the latter was injured by the "mastiff *bitch*" at the beginning. Coleridge was staying with him when he wrote it, and, thinking of Sir William Curtis, he (Lamb) advised him to alter the rhyme thus: "Sir Leoline the Baron *round*, / Had a toothless mastiff hound." He thought little of James Montgomery. . . .'
8) 'Taylor's' is not printed.
9) Two sentences are omitted after 'the *Quarterly*', i.e. 'When at Oxford, he saw Milton's MSS. of *L'Allegro*, etc., and was grieved to find from the corrections and errasions [sic] how the poet had laboured upon them. He had fancied that they had come from his mind almost spontaneously. He said . . .'
10) The passage omitted after ' . . . nothing about it' reads 'Coleridge used to write on the margin of his books when staying at his house. It was during one of these visits that he translated *Wallenstein*. Mr Lamb thought . . .'
11) There is no paragraph at 'He told me that . . .'
12) The passage omitted after '. . . said about him' reads 'He showed me a copy of Coleridge's will, and observed, with some indignation, that the conductors of the *Athenaeum* journal had written to him for reminiscences of his old friend. It was very indelicate, he said, to make any such request, and he refused. He had written . . .'

Cradle with a History

The following details were alluded to in the feature *Fifty Years Ago* in *Bulletin* NS 65 (January 1989) 33, based on a Columbia Pictures publicity magazine. My recent discovery of an original cutting contributed under the above heading by the New York reporter of the *Daily Sketch* dated 12 September 1938 (Rich Collection xi 141) suggested that it deserved fuller exposure.

> The cradle in which generations ago Charles Lamb was rocked to sleep is to be used in a film, because one of his descendants, Edith Fellows, is now a leading screen actress. Edith, who told me, 'I always wanted to use the cradle in one of my pictures', offered it to the studio when a scene in her new picture *Thoroughbred* [which is not listed in two comprehensive film guides], called for a cradle.
>
> The cradle is nearly 4ft long and made of hand-carved oak. Charles Lamb's Aunt Martha used it for her family and left it to her son, William, who came to America 40 years ago, bringing the cradle with him. After his death it went to his sister, Mrs Elizabeth Lamb Fellows, who is Edith's grandmother.

What's that American phrase? Shooting fish in a barrel? Beachcomber made quite a thing out of the missing fourth Brontë sister, Doreen, but before we start suggesting that the cradle story must involve Charles' celebrated American Aunt Martha Washington Lamb, whose son William Hazlitt Lamb married Emmy-Lou Leigh Hunt, 'the Emily Dickinson of Cheyne Walk', and had three sons named Samuel, Taylor, and Coleridge, we might remember that (1) an ancestral Charles Lamb need not be 'our' Charles Lamb, (2) the word 'descendant' is used far too loosely in terms of the second half of the anecdote, (3) John Lamb Jr., our man's elder brother, had step-children and a strong possibility of at least one irregular liaison, (4) Legends are usually attached to a more famous person than to a less famous one, which implies that a 300-year-old cradle, as the Columbia Pictures magazine described it, would be more likely to attract a connection with, say, Queen Elizabeth I or King Charles I than with a relatively obscure Limey journo unless there was an honest family belief in the truth of the story as stated, and (5) as the historian E. A. Freeman (1823-92) said of the Glastonbury Legends, 'We need not believe that . . . legends are records of facts; but the existence of those legends is a very great fact'.

50 Years Ago: from *CLS Bulletin* No.78 (July 1947)

[Summary, not quotation.] A review of George Sampson's *Seven Essays* (Cambridge University Press, 1947) refers to his consideration of a 1941 report on uniformity of marking English essays in a First School Certificate Examination and applies the results to *Old China*. (1) Sense: despite the title and some introductory sentences (to be penalised for facetiousness) and one brief remark at the close, it has nothing to do with old china. (2) Spelling: the printer has seen to that. (3) Punctuation, including Formal Paragraphing: two consecutive paragraphs contain less than two lines; one paragraph contains a bare line and a half; another contains 26 lines, others are of almost that length, and the final paragraph contains nearly 37 lines: formal paragraphing is thus *bad*. In punctuation, the stop most frequently used is the long dash—there are thirteen in one paragraph alone: *bad*. (4) Grammar: in general correct, but so involved as to leave the reader uncertain of syntactical relations and some of the paragraphs would defy formal analysis: unworthy of a high mark. (5) Vocabulary: generally good but sometimes over-elaborate, e.g. 'optics' for 'eyes': a good mark for trying to use a variety of words. (6) Sentence Structure: see Grammar, Punctuation and Formal Paragraphing. (7) General Impression: a jumble of unrelated ideas—china, poverty, clothes, book-buying, print-buying, reminiscences of the theatre, walks, food, youth, age, etc., without the least evidence of a Plan with duly related co-members, and the titular subject is never discussed.